

## THE SAGA OF THE SHIFTING STONES

By Robert Williamson

Stones, specifically, tombstones are not intended to be nomadic. Their purpose, size and weight preclude mobility. Therefore the premise of our title makes this story extraordinary. It begins in the late 1980s when my former Delta Collegiate English teacher and Barton Stone Church archivist, Gordon Allison, was replacing old broken heritage tombstones in the Terryberry / Young pioneer cemetery plot. Dr. David Faux, a Terryberry descendant living in Hagersville, having written a 35-page Young genealogy, retrieved the three least damaged stones: Ann (Young) Terryberry, her nephew William M. Terryberry and Elizabeth (Young) Swift. Thus the itinerant stones began their journey. Before it was over they would be relocated five times; capture the interest of Hamilton's cemetery expert, Robin McKee, in his famous "Stories in the Stones" tours; and gain the attention of an international fraternity of Terryberry descendants.

Through the early 1990s, the tombstones were stored in David Faux's garage until he was uprooted to California. The Hagersville house was quickly put up for sale and the tombstones forgotten. In 1997 Debra Mills purchased the house and to her surprise, inherited the tombstones by default. Fortunately she was a practical and heritage minded woman. She utilized the tombstones as a decorative heat reflector behind her livingroom wood stove, where they were perfectly safe and warm for the next decade. Then Debra moved into a heritage Victorian home in Hamilton's Durand neighbourhood in 2007. The tombstones now a family conversation piece, fit in perfectly with the heritage decor. But when she moved again into a modern home in the Mountain's Buchanan neighbourhood, that sheltered life of the stones changed. They could not be housed and were displayed along a garden fence.

Fortuitously in 2008 Debra attended one of Robin McKee's Cemetery Tours and she found, as Anne of Green Gables would say, a kindred spirit. He provided historical background for her and suggested that she contact the Terryberry Library on Mohawk Road.

In the passage of time, serendipity came into play. Kathryn (Morrison) Kohut coincidentally a Terryberry descendant with roots in Ancaster, now living in California, came to visit her mother in Hamilton. She picked up one of Robin McKee's Cemetery Tour flyers and was intrigued by the opportunity to visit her past. You can imagine how surprised she was to hear about Debra's tombstones. She notified her cousins, Tom Nelson (Toronto) and Dr. David Faux, (Caledonia) both keenly interested in their family heritage. She then contacted the Hamilton Library's History and Archive section to accept a donation of these moving monuments, a rare piece of Mountain memorabilia, along with a current draft of a Terryberry family heritage paper written by David for display purposes.

The Hamilton Public Library is now considering using the stones as part of an artifact display in the Terryberry Branch. It stands across Mohawk Road from the heritage site of the former Terryberry Inn, owned by William and Ann (Young) Terryberry 1778-1869. The timing is right. Ann died 150 years ago this year. In a sense, she will have come home to rest thanks to those who participated in the Saga of the Shifting Stones. The original headstone of Ann's husband, William Terryberry Sr. (1779-1847) was damaged beyond repair and lost.



Photo by Debra Mills

The traveling tombstones salvaged from the Barton Stone Church Cemetery some 30 years ago, are a Terryberry family heritage time warp awaiting an unveiling at the Terryberry Library.