

One morning in Boston I went to visit the old Granary Burying Grounds. Like all tourists, I like to read the head stones on John Hancock's and Samuel Adam's graves and think about what serious matter gaining and keeping our independence was.

The ones who have a skull and cross bones carved on their markers- A guide in a Scottish cemetery once said that was a symbol used by an early day religious group, however, my dictionary only credits it to pirates' flags and the labels on bottles of poison.

One test I use is that if the wife is buried alongside the husband. I give more weight to markers that say he was a kind and loving man. One slab, dedicated to a Judge Increase Summers, made his honor sound like he was so far ahead of the celestial angels that the hereafter was going to have to be reorganized to find him a place.

Some of our forefathers were probably pretty testy at home after they'd spent all day shouting about liberty and justice and packing a big sword, or wearing a hot wig in a stuffy meeting hall. However, I don't mind the parts that are left out as long as historians don't insist on changing the few facts that I can remember.

For example, I refuse to believe that Mr. Revere had a sore throat on the night of his ride and failed to shout that the British were coming. It's bad enough to know that he had a stand-in helping him that never even got a second billing in my history classes.

Historians are also great to wear out the subject of a worthy's personal financial struggles. Once they learn that the wife and kids had to shine shoes at the tavern and polish silver buckles for the public, and that he himself had to bum snuff from the delegate from Georgia, they couldn't be shut up with a face full of pancake batter.

I suspect that's the reason more of us herders aren't in the history books. In the life span of our game, there's only about an hour when we aren't in a tragedy that'd make the savings and loan losses sound like Peter Pan reading the minutes of the last meeting to his gang of fairies.

I like to wander about those shrines to the hardheaded colonists who won our independence from one of the world's then greatest powers.