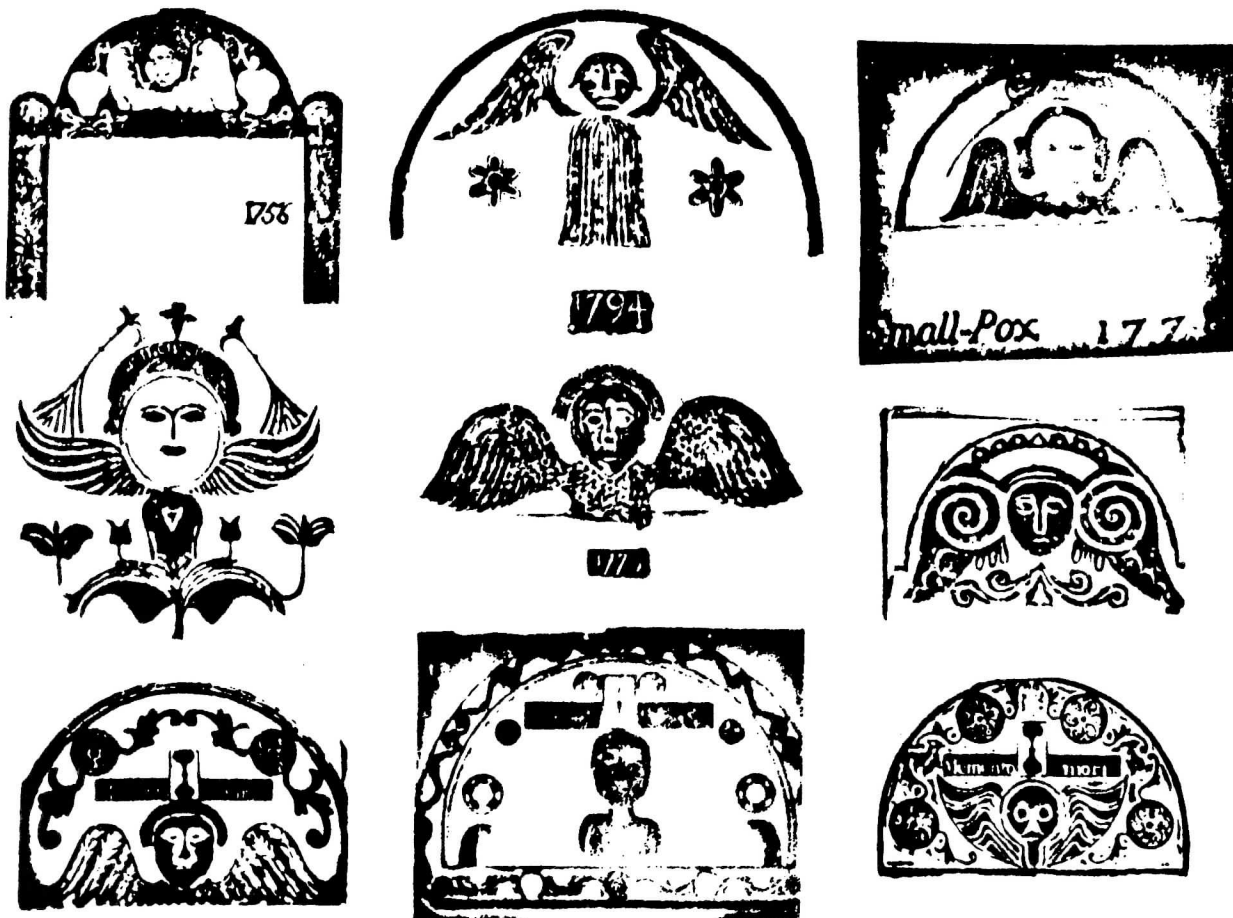


History at the cemetery



That's right, the cemetery. That's where you're going today.

No, it's not scary there.

What? No, there aren't any ghosts and vampires, but there's a lot of backyard history to be found in a cemetery. Some of your own personal history too, if any of your ancestors are buried there.

Afraid of going alone? You can take a friend . . . yes, a big friend's all right . . . but you may find you won't be alone at all at the cemetery.

Here's why. In a special survey some people spent a lot of time observing and talking to folks visiting cemeteries in the Boston area. They found that most of the people (726) were there, as you might expect, to visit family gravesites. But almost as many people (657) were making historic gravesite visits. Others came just for a walk, to play games, to pick berries, to make stone rubbings, and to photograph historic tombstones.

So there, you see, you won't be alone. There'll be lots of backyard historians to keep you company.

What are you supposed to do when you get there?

Visit the graves of your ancestors if any are buried there. It's a good time to check out the dates you need for your family tree. You'll also find out the maiden names of some of the women way back in your family's past.

Often, there is engraved on the stone a favorite saying, or poem, or picture. There's a tombstone of an old railroad man, in an Arkansas cemetery, that has a photograph of his 1880's steam locomotive under a little oval of glass right there at the top of his stone. His tombstone also carries information about his run. (Railroad men used to spend much of their lives on one preferred run.)

Some tombstones list the person's children.

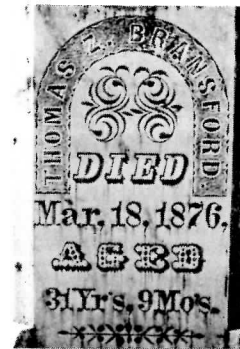
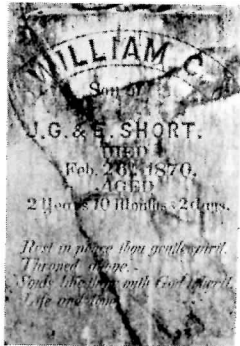
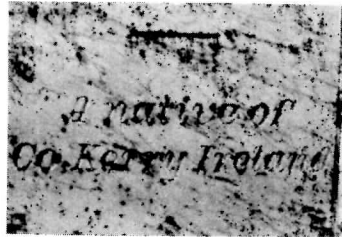
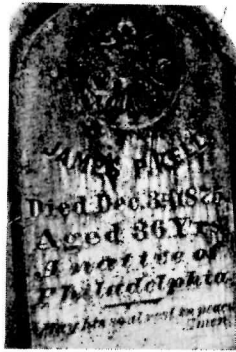
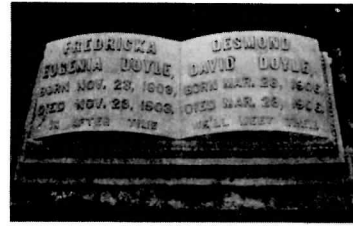
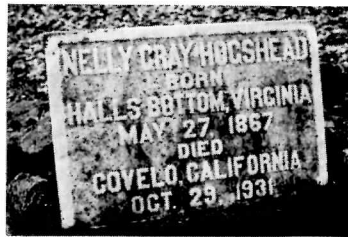
Tombstones of soldiers tell about the battles and wars they fought in and, perhaps, died in.

The large number of children's tombstones from the 1800's tells us something about how hard it was to survive then.

Large numbers of tombstones from the same year or two often reveal epidemics in the past. If many of the stones have the same date on them, checking the newspaper for that day might show that there was some kind of catastrophe, like a flash flood, a tornado, or big accident.

Cemeteries can also serve as a kind of census of a town for a certain period, telling us





something about the nationalities, occupations, and family patterns of the people who first settled there. They also tell us when large numbers of immigrants from a certain country arrived in the locale.