

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 25, 1952

Heroes, Authors and Mrs. Goose

It may seem strange to our readers that the author of the Diary would motor all the way across the continent of the United States to visit burial grounds. But that is exactly what I have been doing and it has been an exciting and interesting experience. In Boston cemeteries lie sleeping many of our heroic dead and most noted authors and statesmen.

To begin the story, we must first visit Boston Common. This is a 50-acre tract of land bought in 1634 by Gov. Winthrop and others from William Blaxton, who held his title by right of possession gained prior to the settlement of Boston in 1630. It was set apart for common use as a cow pasture and training field, and – so a folder on the historic Boston says – amusingly still retains that status. In a small cemetery on the Boylston St. side of the Common lies buried Gilbert Stuart, the noted portrait painter, and many other notables. On the tall old iron fence there is a bronze artist pallet to the memory of Stuart, whose portraits of Washington are probably best known.

One cannot visit these burying grounds in Boston without connecting the visit with a church of the very early days of the settlement of this Commonwealth or with the many works of art the tourist sees on every side. We were very happy to stand in admiration before the Shaw monument by Augustus St. Gaudens – a memorial to Col. Robert G. Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry – and be proud of the fact that Monterey also has an original St. Gaudens' work in the bronze relief of Robert Louis Stevenson which hangs in the Stevenson House on Houston St., the gift of Mr. and Mrs. W.R. Holman.

We next stepped into the interior of Park Street Church – erected in 1810 on the site of the Granary where the sails of the Constitution were made. Brimstone was stored in the basement in 1812, giving the church the name "Brimstone Corner" Here, on July 4, 1832, the song "America" was first publicly sung. It is a beautiful church, very colonial in style, with high walled enclosed pews, red brocade upholstery, and many marble and bronze memorial tablets to the memory of those who signed the Constitution of the United States, and who fought in the Revolutionary War.

Next to Park St. Church is the burying grounds we most wanted to visit. We had a strong inclination to pass the Franklin monument, Paul Revere's tomb, John Hancock's, and all the rest of the notables, and ask the gardener at once to direct us to Mother Goose's grave. We resisted and tried to find it without help. At last under a beautiful elm tree, we parted the overhanging branches and read upon a slatestone slab these words: Here Lyes y Body of Mary Goose, wife of Isaac Goose, aged 42 years. Died October 19, 1690. Here lyeth also (her daughter) Goose, died August 9, 1687."

Next to Mary Goose's grave is the grave of Thomas Fleet, who arranged and published the Mother Goose rhymes.

Ten early governors of Massachusetts are buried in this cemetery. Paul Revere's tomb is well marked. The parents of Benjamin Franklin and 13 of their children are interred in a mound in the center of the grounds and surmounted with a tall shaft. Franklin himself rests in Philadelphia. The oldest marker we saw in "Old Granary" is that of Hannah Allen (1667).

The Irish gardener who made friends with us immediately when we revealed our name, pointed out the fact that all the slatestone markers were carved with a skull with angel wings, so all those buried in this lovely, revered ground are without a doubt occupants of Heaven. We were amused but joined in his fervent belief that they deserved their reward.

Next, we visited King's Chapel burial ground. This chapel was established in Boston in 1686 by Rev. Robert Ratcliffe, the private chaplain of King James II who had come from England to establish a Church of England in the colony. The burial ground was probably established about 1630. The earliest interment on record was that of Gov. Winthrop in 1649. The story is told that Sir Isaac Johnson came to Boston with the governor and the city was named for his home city in England. On his deathbed Sir Isaac expressed the wish that he be buried in the upper end of his lot, and so he was on Sept. 30, 1630. Before long, according to the story, a friend died and wished to be buried beside Brother Johnson. And was. The old-time records read: "Brother Johnson's garden is getting to be a poor place for vegetables." That garden is now King's Chapel burial ground.

Interred here are Gov. Winthrop, William Dawes Jr., (who rode with Paul Revere) and Mary Chilton, the only Pilgrim who came to live in Boston, the first white

woman to live in Boston, and the first Pilgrim to step on
Plymouth Rock.