

# Your Reputation Will Matter To Descendants You Will Never Meet

I have to admit I was a little disappointed when I learned my line of farming ancestors was interrupted by the presence of a banker. Now I mean no offense to the wonderful, hardworking, and valuable members of the banking community, but this Walpole of the 1800s threw a cog into my romantic historical conception of our family as agrarian types.

But it turns out the story was a bit more complicated than that. If I remember my historical findings aright, he was not a fat-cat - but he was a highly competent bank teller, detector of counterfeit currency, and “reputed one of the foremost of the banking officials of the city”. He lived and worked in Mobile, Alabama before returning (out of a sense of loyalty to place, I read) to Charleston, South Carolina. And, most importantly, he was “noted for his strict business integrity and his courtesy, and the community suffers great loss in his death.”

It gave me a lift to know that this man, as complicated and flawed as he must have been, was considered a decent and honorable man in his time.

Lest you argue that this is an “irrational” thing to be happy about, just consider the difference which having a dissolute father has versus having an upright one. The same difference applies with grandfathers, great-grandfathers, great-greats’, and so on (though to a lesser degree). Character flows down to the present day in both nature and nurture, so it’s important for people to have things to prize about their forefathers.

All of this is a reminder that your character may one day mean a lot to some kid who decides to be curious about his family history. Live well.

*Originally published at [JamesWalpole.com](http://JamesWalpole.com).*