

Symbols in the Cemetery

Symbols and their meanings



- Acorn:** strength, independence
Alpha & Omega: Beginning and End (Greek Alphabet)
Anchor: Steadfastness; attributed to St. Nicholas, Patron Saint of Sailors
Angels: Going to Heaven, Guide to Heaven
Anvil: Martyrdom
Apples: Salvation, Sin
Arch: Triumph, Victory
Armor: Protection from evil
Arrows: Martyrdom
Axe: Death
Banner: Triumph, Victory
Bat: (Rare to find) Death, Misfortune, Underworld
Battle axe: Martyrdom
Bees or Beehive: Chastity, Resurrection
Bells: Death Tolls, Call to Worship
Bird: Symbolizes the soul or spirit
Boat: (See Ship)
Book: Wisdom, (Bible)-Clergy or Deeply Religious Person
Bones: Death, Decay
Butterfly: Resurrection, Soul Leaving the Flesh/Body
Candle: Devotion
Candle Flame: Life
Candle Snuffer/Being Snuffed: Putting out life's light
Candlestick: Christ, Devotion
Celestial Bodies: (Moons, Stars, Sun)-Heavenly Home, End of Life on Earth Beginning in Heaven
Chain: (with one broken link)-Loss of a family member (three connecting links with IOOF or FLT with eye/handshake)-Member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows-IOOF, FLT-Friendship, Love, Truth
Chair, Vacant: Usually symbolizes the Death of a Child
Chalice: Eternity
Cherubs: Innocence, Happy, Divine Wisdom, Justice
Child, Sleeping: Child's Grave (Victorian symbol of the Death of a Child)
Clock: Passage of Time
Clouds: Transition to the Afterlife, Divine Abode
Coat of Arms: Genealogical, Lineage, Wealth Status
Coffin: Death, Death of the Flesh/Body
Columns: Supporting roof of Heaven, Entrance to Heaven (Broken)-Broken Life, Sorrow
Compass: Member of the Society of the Freemasons
Corn: Body of Christ
Cornucopia: Full of Life, Fruitful Life, Harvest is the End of Life
Cross: Traditional Symbol of Christianity, Salvation (With Rays of Sun)-Glory (With Winding Sheet)-Descent from Cross
Crossed Bones: Represents Place Occupied by Death
Crown: Faithful, Loyalty, Righteousness
DAR: Daughters of the American Revolution, women's organization for the descendants of American Revolutionary War Veterans
Death Heads: Puritan Symbol of Immortality, The first generation of decorative art
Demon (Imp): Form Serving the forces of Death, Rarely seen after early 1700s
Door: Portal, Entrance into a New Life, House of the Dead, Passage to the Unknown
Deer, Male (Buck): Faithful, Christ Slaying Satan
Dog: Loyalty, Watchfulness, Fidelity, vigilance
Dove: Christianity, Holy Ghost, Peace, Innocence (With "R" and Half Moon)-Member of the Rebekah Lodge, the female equivalent of the Odd Fellows)
Drapery Over Anything: Mourning, Sorrow
Eagle: Ascension, Fierce (With "FOE")-Member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles; (With Spread Wings, holding arrows and olive branch in its feet with Celtic cross behind it)-Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, (Double-Headed Eagle)-Masonic Symbol of the 32nd



Classic "Death's Head" with wings motif.

Degree Mason

Earth: New Life

Elk: (With "BPOE")-Member of Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

Eye: God's Eye Watching Over Christians

Father Time: Passing of Time, Inevitability of Death

Feathers: Soul's Flight to Heaven

Fig: Prosperity, Happiness

Fish: Christian Plentifulness

Figure Arising: Rebirth

Flame from Urn: Eternity, Essence of Life

Flowers: Life, Frailty of Life, (Broken or Budding)-Life Ended in Bloom-An Untimely or Premature Death, (Bouquet)-Sweet thoughts, Tribute

Acanthus: One of the oldest of all ornamental motifs in classical architecture, Heavenly Gardens

Calla Lily: Beauty, Marriage

Daffodil: Beauty, Deep Regard

Daisy: Youth, Innocence, Purity, Gentleness

Dogwood: Resurrection, Christianity

Hollyhock: Nature, Ambition, Productiveness

Ivy: Friendship, Faithfulness, Undying Affection, Eternal Life, Christian Constancy

Iris: Eloquence, Protection, Message

Laurel: Special Achievement, Distinction, Success

Lily: Purity, Flower of the Virgin

Lily of the Valley: Purity, Humility, Happiness, Children, Bride

Lotus: Regeneration, Youth, Immortality

Morning Glory: Farewell, Mortality, Departure

Narcissus: Death of Youth, Memory, Beauty, Music

Olive Branch: Peace

Pansy: Meditation, Thoughtful Recollection, Remembrance

Poppy: Eternal Sleep, Consolation, Rest, Peace

Rose: Love, Simplicity, Modesty, Mother, Brevity of Earthly Existence

Thistle: Independence, Earthly Sorrow, Scottish

Shamrock: Trinity, Irish

Passion Flower: Christ's Suffering, Passion,

Crucifixion

Wood Anemone: Immortality, Resurrection

Fleur de Lies: Virgin, Trinity

Fox: Cunning, Cruelty

Frog: Resurrection

Fruit: Product of Growth, Righteous Life, Abundance

Fugit Hora: Latin for "Hours are Fleeting"

Gate: Death, Departure from Life, Heaven's Gate

Garlands: Victory of a Pure Life

Goats: Non-believers

Gourd: (Squash) Scriptures, Ministry, Deliverance from Grief

Grapes: Blood and Body of Christ, Wine, Divine Fluid

Griffin/Gryphon: (Lion with head & wings of an eagle)

Ancient Greek Symbol of Superiority, Invincibility, Wisdom, Watchfulness

Hammer & Nails: Crucifixion

Hand with Heart in Center: Charity, A symbol of both the Masons and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows

Hand, Pointing: Pointing toward Heaven

Hands, Clasped: Look at the cuff to distinguish between a man's or woman's hand, a woman would have a frilly cuff. The person who died first holds the other's hand, guiding the spouse to heaven.

Hands: Embracing Rebirth, Embracing Life,

(Handshake)-God welcoming to Heaven,

(If wearing gloves/clothing)-Marriage

Hands Open with Touching Thumbs: Member of the Priestly line of Aaron (Jewish Stones)

Hands Praying: Pious Devotion

Harp: (Lyre) Heavenly Music, Joy, (Broken Strings)-No longer functions, Musician's Grave

Heart: Soul in Bliss (Colonial Times), Romantic Love (Victorian Times), Soul's Love of God, Charity, (Often with Wings)-Flying to Heaven, (If in the middle of

Death Head)-Triumphant Soul emerging out of Death

(With Cross & Anchor)-Faith, Hope and Charity

Heavenly Bodies: (Moons, Stars, Sun)-Heavenly Home, End of Life on Earth Beginning in Heaven

HIS: Abbreviated form of Jesus, Latin derivation of IHC, meaning *Jesus, the Savior of Men*

Hourglass: Passage of Time, Inevitability of Death, (Sometimes shows with wings or skeleton)

IHC: Monogram for Christ using first three letters of the Greek spelling of *Christ*

INRI: Jesus

Ivy: Friendship, Immortality, Memory

K: (Large "K" in a Circle)-Member of the Kiwanis civil service club

Keys: (Crossed) Saint Peter

Ladder: Passion, Jacob, Aspiration

Lamb: Innocence, Most Popular for Children's Graves,



A pair of illegible tombstones in Harper's Ferry Cemetery.

(If lying down)-the Suffering of Christ, (If standing)-Christ Risen

Lamb with Banner: Resurrection

Lamp: Word of God, Truth, Knowledge, Wisdom, Good works, Guiding Light, (If extinguished)-Death

Lance: Martyrdom

Laurel: Victory over Death

Leaf: Happiness

Lighthouse: Safety, Final Port, Watchfulness

Lion: Strength, Bravery, Courage, Royalty, (If two lions' heads, back-to-back, with a circle with an "L" in center)-Member of the Lions civil service club

Memento Mori: Latin for "Remember Death"

Mermaid: Represent the dualism of Christ, Half God, Half Man

Military Trappings: Occupation or Station in Life

Moon: Renewed Life, (Crescent Moon)-Virgin, (Crescent Moon with One Star)-Symbol of Islam

Moose Head with Antlers: Member of the Loyal Order of the Moose civil service club (PAP, their motto: Purity, Aid and Progress)

Mortar & Pestle: Found on the graves of Pharmacists and sometimes doctors

Nails, Three: Crucifixion of Christ

Owl: Wisdom, Watchfulness

Ox: Patience, Strength

Palm of Victory: Righteous Person, Salvation

Panther: The Lord's Power to Attract All Men

Peacock: Fabled Incorruptibility of Flesh, Resurrection, Beauty of Soul, Eternal Life, Immortality, Vanity, Pride

Pear: Christ's Love for People

Pelican: Ancient Symbol of Atonement (since it feeds its young with its own blood)

Phoenix: Immortality, Baptism

Pitcher: Symbol associated with the Levites who washed the hands of priests prior to religious service

Pick Ax: Grave Digger's Tool

Pick & Shovel: Implements of Death, Death's Reminder

Pineapple: Hospitality

Plow: Harvest, Reaping of Life

Pomegranate: Resurrection, Immortality, Unity

Ram: Sacrifice

Rabbit: Humility, Gentleness, Self-Sacrifice

Rings, Interlocked: Marriage

Rock: Steadfastness, Stability

Rosary: Devotion to Mary

Rosette: A Soul Effigy

Rooster: Calling attention to a passing life, Vigilance, St. Peter awakens from his fall from grace, Awakening to Repentance

Scales: Equality, Justice, Archangel Michael holding scales to weigh the souls of the departed, May indicate profession

Scallops Shell: Humans' Earthly Pilgrimage, Decoration, Birth, Resurrection, Traditional symbol of Puritans

Scroll: Law, Scriptures, Wisdom

(If on Jewish grave)-Divine Presence

Scythe: Passing of Time, Cuts Down Life

Serpent with Tail in its Mouth: Ancient Symbol of Eternity, Unity

Sheep: Christian

Shell: Resurrection, Life Everlasting, Man's Earthly Pilgrimage, (Conch Shell)-Female Reproductive Tract

Shrine: Knowledge of Antiquity

Shield with Anchor and AOUW: Ancient Order of United Workmen

Shield with Celtic Cross placed like an X behind it: Member of the Knights of Columbus

Ship: Occupation, Humans' Journey through Life, Hardship, early symbol of the church, carrying the Christian across the wild sea of life to the port of eternal joy, Heavenly Voyage, Crossing Over to the Other Side, Sometimes on graves of those lost at sea

Shoe: Loss of a Child

Sickle: Death the Reaper

Skeleton: Death Figure

Skeleton with Laurel: Death as Conqueror

Skull: (Sometimes winged)-Sin, (With Crossbones)-Mortality of Humans, (On Pillar)-Triumph of Life, (Wearing Wreath)-Victory of Death over Life



Sleeping Child Tombstone typical of the Victorian Era.

Sleeping Child: Child's Grave (Victorian Symbol of the Death of a Child)

Snake: Sin, Satan, Fall of Humans

Soul Effigies: Souls in Flight to Heaven

Spade: Grave Digger's Tools

Squirrel with Nut: Religious Meditation, Christian forethought, Spiritual Striving

Stag: (See Deer)

Stars: The Hope of a New Life

Strawberry: Righteousness, Humility, God or Sun

Sun: Renewal of Life, Symbol of Glorified Souls, (Sun Rising)-Resurrection, (Sun Setting)-Death, (Winged Sun)-Ancient Egyptian Symbol of Divine Protection

Sword: Martyrdom, Courage, Warfare

Tablets, Two Joined: Symbolizes the Ten Commandments

Tassels: Homelike, Comfortableness, Popular during Victorian Times

Tempus Erat: Latin for "Time is Gone"

Torch: (If elevated)-Resurrection, (If lowered)-Death, (If Inverted)-End of Family Line

Three Points, Leaves, Etc.: Trinity

Trees: Tree of Life, God's Family in a New Land, Paradise, Represents Human Life, (If springing from Tomb or Urn)-Rebirth, (If fallen on a stone)-Death of a Person

Almond: Favor from God, Virgin Birth

Cedar: Strong Faith, Length of Days, Success

Connecticut Marriage Tree: (These were planted by newlyweds) Uprooting-Separation

Cypress: Sorrow, Death, Eternal Life, Roman Symbol for Mourning

Evergreen: Immortality

Hawthorn: Springtime, Hope

Oak: Supernatural Power and Strength, Eternity, Honor, Liberty, Hospitality

Olive: Peace, Healing, Faith

Palm: Victory, Martyrdom, Reward of Righteous,

Pine/Pinecones: Boldness, Fidelity, Stability, Fertility, Healing

Willow: Grief, Death, Nature's Lament for the Departed Soul, Symbolic Tree of Human Sadness, Carried at Masonic Funerals

Yew: Immortality

Tree Stump: Usually marks the graves of Woodmen of the World members. Broken branches on the tree symbolize a life cut short.

Train with BRT: Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen

Triangle/Trefoil/Three Interwoven Circles: Father, Son and the Holy Ghost

Trumpet: A Call to the Glory of Resurrection

Urn: Death of the Flesh, Shrine, Temple, Portal through which Soul passes to Immortality, Soul, (Draped Urn)-

Sorrow

Urn with a Flame: Soul Rising from Earth

Umbrella: Protection of Life by Religion

Vines: Replanted in the Soil of the New World, Wine, Divine Fluid

Vine and Corn: Blood and Body of Christ

Weeping Woman: Mourning, Sorrow

Wheat: Deceased had a Full Life, Harvest, Prosperity

Wheel: (Winged)-Holy Spirit, (Broken)-End of Life, Break in the Circle of Life

Woman, Clinging to Cross: Symbolizes Faith, A soul lost in the sea of sin whose only hope is to cling to Christ's cross

Woman, Holding Anchor: Hope

Woman, Holding Cross: Faith

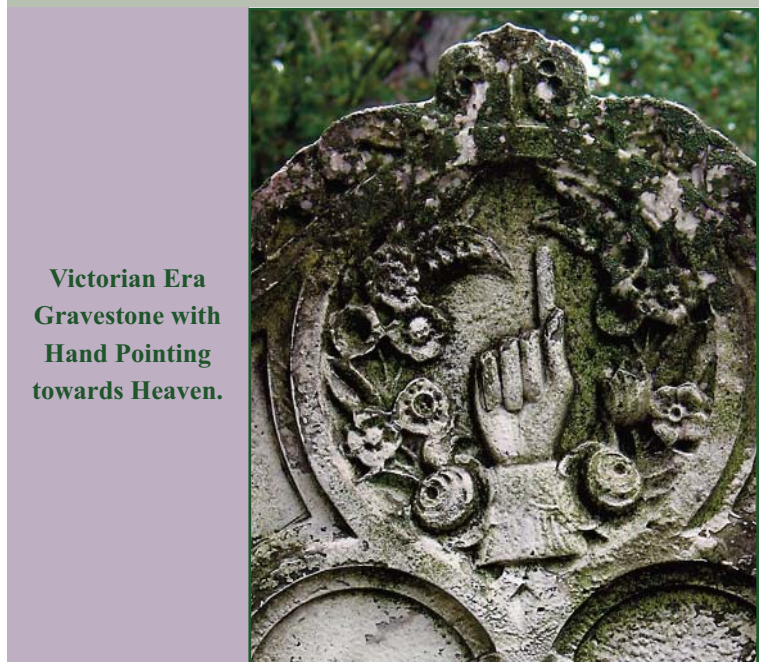
Woman, Weeping: Mourning, Sorrow

Wreath: Mourning, Victory (Worn by Skull)-Death's Victory over Life

Yoke: Burden Bearing, Service, Patient



Weeping Willow Tree with Urn.



**Victorian Era
Gravestone with
Hand Pointing
towards Heaven.**