

<b>Gravestone Symbolism</b>	<b>AHA, October 11, 2007</b>
Acanthus	Long life. Very common, ancient leaf symbol often only decorative.
Alpha/Omega (ΑΩ)	The first and last Greek letters symbolizing the start and end of life. Usually overlaid.
Anchor	Hope, Seaman
Angels	Resurrection, protection, wisdom, mercy, divine love
Ankh (Cross Topped by a Loop)	Eternal life, peace, truth
Anthemion	Classical architectural ornament. Foliage, often acanthus and honeysuckle arranged singly or in a row
Anvil	Martyrdom, blacksmith
Arch	Victory in death, rejoining partner in death, passage to heaven
Arrow	Mortality
Bee	Resurrection
Beehive	Domestic virtues, education, faith, piety
Bell	Mourning
Bird, (See also Dove)	Eternal life, spirituality
Boat	Seaman, crossing over
Book, Bible	Good deeds, accomplishments, clergy, religious devotion
Broken Bud or Branch	Premature or untimely death
Burning Flame	Resurrection
Butterfly	Resurrection
Calla Lily	Beauty, marriage
Candle Being Snuffed	Time, mortality
Caterpillar	Life's changes
Circle	Eternity, life everlasting. Ancient and Christian symbol used in many variations
Chain, Broken, Unconnected Links	Death, loss in the family
Chain with Three Links	The Trinity, faith. Also a fraternal society symbol.
Column	Noble life
Column, Broken	Premature or untimely death. Death of head of the family
Compass and Square with G	Masonic symbol. The G stands for God
Corn	Old age. Also fertility, rebirth
Crescent Moon	Virginity, rebirth, victory. Also a Shriner symbol
Cross, Celtic	Latin cross with circle connecting the four arms
Cross, Greek, Maltese	Looks like a "+"
Cross, Latin	Most important Christian symbol
Cross, Orthodox	Latin cross with an additional short bar above and angled bar below.
Crown	Victory, righteousness, resurrection
Cup or Chalice	Eucharist
Curtain or Veil	Passage from one life to another
Daisy	Innocence, death of a youth

Dog	Fidelity, loyalty, vigilance
Dove	Peace, ascension to heaven, ancient symbol and one of the most common
Drapery	Mourning
Egg and Dart	Birth, life (egg) and death (dart)
Eye	All-knowing and seeing God, often in a triangle denoting The Trinity
Fern	Humility, sincerity
Fish	Faith, spirituality
FTL	Friendship, Love, Truth, associated with the Odd Fellows. A number on the stone signifies the local lodge
Furniture, Empty	Loss of loved one, often a child's grave
Gate	Entering heaven
Grapes	Christianity, Eucharist
Grim Reaper	Mortality
Hand	Symbol of the Almighty, presence of God
Hand; Pointing up	Righteous reward, life after death
Hand; Pointing down	Mortality, sudden death
Hands; Clasped or Shaking	Farewell to this world, couples reunited, marriage
Harp	Hope, praise to god
Heart	Soul in heaven, love
Hibiscus	Delicate beauty, brevity of life
Horus, Egyptian Sky God	On a frieze, symbolized as a sun disk, often accompanied by 2 asp heads, flanked by hawk's wingspan
Hourglass	Passage of time, shortness of life
IHS	The first three letters in Jesus from the Greek alphabet (iota, eta, sigma). When overlayed, looks like a dollar sign.
Ivy	Friendship, Immortality, Fidelity
Keys	Spiritual knowledge, means to enter to heaven
Knot	Resurrection. Celtic symbol
Ladder	Ascension to heaven
Lamb	Innocence, death of a child
Lamp	Wisdon, fidelity
Laurel Wreath	Someone accomplished in the arts, sports or military. Also chastity and immortality
Leaves	Regeneration, immortality
Lily	Beauty, purity, chastity
Lion	Many purposes including courage. A winged lion or Griffin can also represent St. Mark
Lotus	Purity, resurrection, perfect beauty, spiritual revelation. Important symbol in ancient Egypt and the Orient.
Menorah	Jewish symbol, often seen on women's graves
Morning Glory	Resurrection, youth, love
Oak	Longevity, endurance, maturity
Obelisk	A very popular architectural form. It was <b>not</b> a death symbol in ancient Egypt; it was a tribute to their sun god.
Olive Branch	Peace, healing, the most cited tree in the Bible
Owl	Wisdom, watchfulness

Palm	Victory over death
Passionflower	Christ's suffering and redemption
Peacock	Immortality, beauty of the soul
Pebble Placed on a Grave	Ancient Jewish custom to symbolize visitation, respect
Pine Cone	Full life with children
Pitcher	Virtue, control. Also a Jewish symbol for a Levite
Poppy	Eternal sleep
Pyramid	Eternal life
Rabbit	Humility
Ram	Sacrifice
Rod or Staff	Aid to the departed, comfort for the bereaved
Rooster	Repentance
Rose	Beauty, purity, often on the graves of women
Scepter	Fortitude
Scroll	The Scriptures, law, life's journey
Scythe, Sickle	Death
Shell	Rebirth, reincarnation, wisdom, journey of life, crossing over. Ancient and Christian symbol.
Shriner Symbol	Scimitar, crescent moon and star.
Skull, Skeleton	Death, mortality; Winged version stands for ascension to heaven
Stag, Male Deer	Traditionally referred to as a Hart. Symbolizes faith, piety
Sleeping Child	Victorian symbol for death, usually of a child
Star	Divine presence, many other meanings
Star of David	Jewish descent
Sun, Shining	Eternal life
Sunflower	Devotion to God
Swords, Crossed	Ranked militaryman, may denote life lost in battle
Thistle	Scottish descent, earthly sorrow
Torch	Eternity, enlightenment, upside down symbolizes death
Tree	Tree of life, love of God
Treestone or Tree Stump	Victorian symbol similar to the broken column, often a platform for other symbols
Triangle, Trefoil, Shamrock	The Trinity, Irish descent
Urn	The soul, ancient symbol for mourning
Vine	Relationship between God and man
Wheel, Broken	The end of life's journey
Wheat Sheaf	Productive life, old age
Willow	Mourning
Wreath	Victory in death
XP	XP (chi and rho) are the first two letters of the Greek name for Christ. Usually overlaid.

<b>Glossary</b>	
Catafalque	Intricate, decorated, stationary bier for funerals. Also, elaborate shrine with an open platform as a central structure
Cenotaph	A monument to the dead whose remains are elsewhere. Literally "empty tomb"
Crypt	A concrete enclosure for entombment.
Epitaph	An inscription on a gravesite in memory of the entombed
Exedra	As a memorial, a large, open plot with seats, columns, recesses, etc. Often semicircular but not exclusively so.
Lich, Lych	Old english term for body, corpse. Often a prefix for other cemetery terms e.g. lychgate, lichstone, etc
Mausoleum	An above-ground building for the entombment of the dead
Ossuary	A container for the bones of the dead
Ostensorium or Monstance	Something that holds the Eucharist. Usually depicts the grave of a clergyman.
Sarcophagus	Stone coffin
Sepulchre	Burial place
Tumulus	Earthen burial mound, ancient origins
White Bronze Monuments	Bluish-gray, cast zinc grave markers made from the 1870s to 1912 by the Monumental Bronze Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut and its subsidiaries.