

## **GRAVESTONE SYMBOLS and THEIR MEANINGS**

Following are some of the more common symbols found on gravestones and their meanings.

ANCHOR - a symbol of hope, or the deceased was a seaman.

ANGEL - a guide to Heaven.

ARCH - symbolizing a triumphant entry into Heaven or victory over death.

ARROW - symbolizing mortality or martyrdom.

BEEHIVE - symbol of abundance in the Promised Land or piety or domestic virtue or faith.

BELL - a symbol of religious faith or religion.

BIRD - a symbol of eternal life, spirituality, Messenger of God, or peace.

BOOK - a symbol of the Divine Word or the deceased's lifetime accomplishments.

BURNING FLAME - a symbol of eternal life or resurrection.

BUTTERFLY - a symbol of resurrection.

CELTIC CROSS - a symbol of faith and eternity.

CIRCLE - a symbol of eternity, life never ending.

CLOUDS - a symbol of the Divine abode, Heaven.

CROSS - a symbol of faith and resurrection. Many military markers, in particular for Veterans of World War I, have a cross etched into the gravestone.

CROWN - a symbol of glory of life after death.

DOVE - a symbol of love, purity, resurrection and or the Holy Spirit.

EAGLE - many gravestones of Civil War veterans were engraved with images of eagles.

FINGER (pointing downward) - a symbol of calling the earth to witness.

FINGER (pointing upward) - symbolizing the pathway to Heaven or the deceased found Heavenly reward.

FISH - symbolizing spiritual nourishment, faith, or deceased was a Christian.

FLOWER - a symbol of immortality.

FLYING BIRD - a symbol of rebirth.

GARLAND - symbolizes victory over death.

GRIM REAPER - a symbol found on many early gravestones, meaning the inevitability of death.

HANDS (CLASPED) - a symbol meaning farewell and the hope of meeting again in eternity.

HARP - a symbol of hope.

HEART - a symbol of love, devotion, joy, and/or mortality.

HOURGLASS - a symbol of the swift passage of time, as in the shortness of life on earth.

LAMB - a symbol meaning innocence; used primarily on an infant's or a child's gravestone.

LILY - a symbol of purity and/or chastity.

MYRTLE LEAVES - a symbol of undying love and/or peace.

OAK LEAVES - a symbol of faith and virtue and/or endurance.

OBELISK - a symbol quite popular during the 1880's through the 1930's, meaning rebirth, connection between earth and Heaven.

OLIVE BRANCH - a symbol of peace, forgiveness, one's humanity.

OPEN GATES - a symbol of afterlife and the deceased's soul entering into Heaven.  
PYRAMID – a symbol meaning resurrection, eternal life, enlightenment, spiritual attainment.  
RAINBOW – a symbol of union, fulfillment of the promise of resurrection.  
ROPE CIRLE - a symbol of eternity.  
ROSE - a symbol of love, victory, triumph, and/or purity.  
SCYTHE - symbol of a life cut short, death, or the final harvest.  
SHEAF of WHEAT - a symbol of old age, a fruitful life.  
SKULL - a symbol used in the early to mid-1800's representing mortality and or penitence. A winged skull meant that the deceased ascended into Heaven.  
SLEEPING CHERUB - a symbol of innocence used primarily on an infant's or a child's gravestone.  
SWALLOW – a symbol of motherhood, the spirit of children, or a symbol of consolation.  
SWORD - symbolizes the deceased's military service.  
SWORDS (CROSSED) - symbolizes that the deceased died in battle.  
TREE – a symbol of life, knowledge, the fall of man through sin, or human frailty.  
TREE STUMP - symbol of a life interrupted.  
TRUMPET - symbol announcing the resurrection of the deceased's soul entering into Heaven.  
URN - symbol for the soul, immortality or penitence.  
WHEEL - symbolizes the cycle of life, enlightenment, spiritual power.  
WREATH of ROSES - a symbol of Heavenly joy and bliss.