

## Meanings of Carvings on Old Tombstones

Arches.....	Victory in Death
Arrows.....	Mortality
Bouquets/Flowers.....	Condolences, grief, sorrow
Buds/Rosebud.....	Morning of Life or Renewal of Life
Roses.....	Brevity of earthly existence
Portals.....	Passageway to eternal journey
Bugles.....	Resurrection and the Military
Crossed Swords.....	High-ranking military person
Flying Birds.....	Flight of the Soul
Fruits.....	Eternal plenty
Garlands.....	Victory in death
Imps.....	Mortality
Shells.....	Pilgrimage of Life
Thistles.....	Remembrance
Tombs.....	Mortality
Trees.....	Life
Trumpeters.....	Heralds of the Resurrection
Willows.....	Earthly Sorrow
Morning Glory.....	Beginning of Life
Butterfly.....	Short-lived; Early Death
Full-Blown Rose.....	Prime of Life
Palm Branch.....	Signifies Victory and Rejoicing
Ivy.....	Friendship and Immortality
Laurel.....	Fame of Victory
Oak Leaves & Acorn.....	Maturity, Ripe Old Age
Weeping Willow.....	Emblem of Sorrow
Corn.....	Ripe Old Age
Sheaf of Wheat.....	Ripe/Divine Harvest, Time
Poppy.....	Sleep
Lamb.....	Innocence
Dove.....	Inn., Gentle, Affection, Purity
Cherub.....	Angelic
Cross.....	Emblem of Faith
Anchor/Ships.....	Hope or Seafaring profession
Broken Ring.....	Family Circle Severed
Broken Column.....	Loss of Head of Family
Torch Inverted.....	Life Extinct
Urn with Blaze.....	Undying Friendship
Handshakes.....	Farewell
Hearts.....	Soul in Bliss or Love of Christ
Horns.....	The Resurrection
Hourglass.....	Swiftness of Time
Open Book/Bible.....	Deceased Teacher, Minister, etc.

Lily or Lily of Valley.....	Emblem of Innocence, Purity
Tree Stump w/lvy.....	Head of Family; Immortality
Urn with/Wreath or Crepe.....	Mourning
Stars & Stripes Around Eagle.....	Eternal Vigilance, Liberty
Hourglass w/Wings of Time.....	Time Flying; Short Life
Candle being Snuffed.....	Time, Mortality
Coffin, Father Time, Picks/Shovels, Darts.....	Mortality
Hand of God Chopping.....	Sudden Death
Winged Effigies.....	Flight of the Soul

I have found on various headstones, where there are 3 links of a chain(?), and inside each link is a letter - F L T. This is the symbol for the Oddfellows organization--3 interlocking oval rings. The F.L.T. stands for friendship, love and truth.

Here is a list of other common (and not so common) tombstone symbols. You might want to print this off and carry it with you when you go tombstone hunting :

Religious:

Angels - Angels mean spirituality and they guard the tomb.

Bible - A single Holy Bible is often found on Christian stones.

Holy Books (2) - on Mormon headstones indicates the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Holy Books (3) - on Mormon Headstones, these indicate The Scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine & Covenants.

Chalice - Usually used to represent the Sacraments.

Crescent - the deceased was probably a Muslim.

Crown - The soul's achievement and the Glory of life after death.

Cross - the Cross is an emblem of faith. There are many different types of crosses and each may mean something different. For a good explanation of the various types of crosses, see <http://www.alsirat.com/symbols/cross.html>, a part of The City of the Silent.

Heart (Sacred) - Usually found in Catholic cemeteries, this heart refers to the suffering of Christ for our sins.

Menorah - An emblem of Judaism

Star of David or Mogen David - Recognized as the international symbol of Judaism.

Mortality:

Arrow - Mortality

Broken Column - This image represents the decay. It usually represents the loss of the Family head.

Candle being Snuffed - Loss of life.

Coffin - mortality.

Figure with Dart - Mortality

Grim Reaper - Death personified.

Hourglass - Time has run out.

Scythe - An instrument of the harvest, death cuts us down.

Skull and or Skull/ Crossed Bones - Death.

Spade or Crossed Spade and Shovel - Death

Trade and Occupation: (emblems that MIGHT indicate a person's occupation in life)

Barber Bowl (for bleeding) & Razor.

Butcher - an axe, steel knife and cleaver.

Farmer: - Coulter (type of hoe), flail (threshing implement), swingletree (rod for beating flax), stalk of corn.

Gardener - Rake & Spade.

Mason - Wedge & Level

Mariner: - Anchor, Sextant & Cross Staff.

Merchant - Scales, some type of sign.

Minister - Bible

Shoemaker - Leather cutter's Knife, Nippers, Sole cutter & Awl

Smith - Crown, Hammer & Anvil

Teacher - Open Book.

Weaver - Loom, Shuttle & Stretchers.

Wright - (a worker skilled in the manufacture especially of wooden objects -- usually used in combination (shipwright) (wheelwright) - Compasses  
Resurrection, Eternal Life, Immortality:

Angel, Flying or Trumpeting - Rebirth; Resurrection.

Bird or Bird Flying - Eternal life, Resurrection.

Cross: - The Cross means resurrection to many Christians.

Dove, Flying - Resurrection.

Flame, Light, Lamp or Torch: - Immortality of the Spirit, Resurrection.

Garland or Wreath - Symbol of saintliness and glory, Victory in death.

Horns -- The Resurrection

Ivy - Immortality

Rooster- Awakening; Resurrection.

Star - Death could not overpower the Light of the Spirit which still shines in the darkness.

Sun - A symbol of light and warmth, renewed life and life everlasting.

Trumpeters -- Harbingers of the Resurrection

Urn - Immortality (The storing of the vital organs was of extreme importance to the ancient Egyptians who believed that life would be restored through the vital organs placed in the urn).

Animals:

Birds - Eternal life or resurrection.

Butterfly - Short-life.

Dog - Implies a good master worthy of love.

Dove - Seen in both Christian and Jewish cemeteries, the dove means innocence and/ or peace.

Lamb - Usually marks the grave of a child and means Innocence.

Lion - The Lion's eternal watch guards the tomb and stands for Courage.

Rooster - Awakening; Resurrection.

Plants:

Fruits -- Eternal plenty as in the fruit of life.

Full-Blown Rose - The deceased died in the prime of life

Ivy -- Ivy stands for friendship and also immortality.

Laurel -- A symbol of worldly accomplishment and heroism.

Lily - The virgins' flower and also the symbol of innocence and purity.

Morning Glory - Signifies the beginning of Life

Oak., Oak Leaves and Acorn - Oak leaves on tombs can stand for power, authority or victory. Often seen on Military tombs.

Palm Branch - Signifies Victory and Rejoicing

Poppy - Eternal Sleep.

Roses - Roses signify completion and the brevity of earthly existence.

Rosemary - Rosemary is for remembrance. Thistles can also stand for remembrance.

Thistle - Deceased was of Scottish descent.

Tree or Trees

A Tree stands for life.

A Tree Sprouting stands for life everlasting.

Tree Trunk stands for the brevity of life.

Stones shaped like Tree Stumps usually signify that the deceased was a member of The Woodmen of the World Weeping Willow Tree - Perpetual Mourning; Grief.

Wheat Strands or Sheaves - The divine harvest.

Miscellaneous:

Broken Ring -- The family circle has been severed.

Cherub - Cherubs are angelic and signify innocence.

Crossed Swords - Military person of high rank.

Hands:

Hands in cemeteries are usually in one of the following four positions; clasping, praying, pointing, and blessing. Hand, Pointing Up - Pathway to heaven.

Hands, Clasped - Farewells or the bond of marriage

Hands, Praying - Asking God for Eternal life.

Hands, Blessing - Blessing of those left behind.

Harp - Praise to the God.

Heart - Love. Stylized hearts stand for the affection of the living for the dead. Two joined hearts on a stone mark a marriage.

Rod or Staff - Comfort for the bereaved.

Stars and Stripes Around Eagle -- Eternal vigilance and liberty. Often seen on military markers.

Urn with Flame -- Undying remembrance

Initials of Fraternal Organizations:

AOH- Ancient Order of Hibernians

BPOE- Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks

CAR- Children of the American Revolution

DAR- Daughters of the American Revolution

FOE- Fraternal Order of Eagles

FOP- Fraternal Order of Police

F&AM- Free and Accepted Masons

GAR- Grand Army of the Republic

I.O.R.M.- Improved Order of Red Men

IOF- Independent Order of Foresters

IOOF- Independent Order of Odd Fellows

IOJD- International Order of Job's Daughters  
J.O.A.M.- Junior Order of American Mechanics  
J.O.U.A.M.- Junior Order of United American Mechanics  
K.of C.- Knights of Columbus  
K.of P.- Knights of Pythias  
KT- Knights Templar  
LOM- Loyal Order of Moose  
M.W.A. Modern Woodmen of America  
N.O.W. Neighbors of Woodcraft  
RA- Royal Academy  
RA- Royal Arcanum  
R.A.M.- Royal Arch Masons  
\*R.N.A. Royal Neighbors of America  
SAR- Sons of the American Revolution  
S.F.W.C. Supreme Forest Woodmen Circle  
U.S.A.- United States Army  
U.S.A.F.- United States Air Force  
U.S.M.C.- United States Marine Corp  
U.S.N.- United States Navy  
YMCA- Young Men's Christian Association  
YWCA- Young Women's Christian Association  
W.C. Woodmen Circle  
W.O.W. Woodmen of the World  
W.O.W. Women of Woodcraft

#### FRATERNAL ACRONYMS:

AAONMS Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Masonic) "The Shriners")  
AASR Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (Masonic)  
ABA American Benefit Association  
AF&AM Ancient Free and Accepted Masons  
AMD Allied Masonic Degree  
AMORC Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis(Rosicrucians)  
AMOS Ancient Mystic Order of Samaritans (see IOOF)  
AOF Ancient Order Of Foresters  
AOH Ancient Order Of Hibernians  
AOKMC Ancient Order Of Knights of Mystic Chain  
AOUW Ancient Order Of United Workmen  
ALOH American Legion of Honor  
APA American Protective Association  
AUM Ancient Order of Mysteries (MASONS)  
AUSA Association of the United States Army  
AUV Association of Union Veterans  
BARE Benefit Association Of Railway Employees  
BAY Brotherhood of American Yeomen

BKA Benevolent Knights Association  
BKofM Black Knights of Molders  
BPOE Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks  
BPOEW Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World  
BofRTM Brotherhood of Rail Road Track Men  
BLE Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers  
BLF&E Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen & Engineers  
BRT Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen  
CBL Catholic Benevolent Legion  
CD of A Catholic Daughters of America  
CKofA Catholic Knights of America  
CMBA Catholic Mutual Benefit Association  
COOF Catholic Order of Foresters  
CTAS Catholic Total Abstinence Society  
CBKA Commandery Benevolent Knights Association  
CCTAS Crusaders-Catholic Total Abstinence Society  
DAC Daughters of the American Colonists  
DAR (NSDAR) National Society Daughters of the American Revolution  
DAV Disabled American Veterans  
D of A Daughters of America  
DoL Daughters of Liberty  
DAN Daughters of the Nile (Masonic)  
DOKK Dramatic Order Knights of Khorassan (Knights of Pythias)  
DOLLUS Dames of the Loyal Legion of the United States  
DUV Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
ECV E Clampus Vitus  
EAU Equitable Aid Union  
EBA Emerald Beneficial Association  
FAM Free and Accepted Masons  
F&AM Free and Accepted Masons  
FCB Knights of Pythias  
FLT Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
FOE Fraternal Order of Eagles  
FOAST Fraternal Order of Alaska State Troopers  
FOF Fraternal Order of Firefighters  
FOP Fraternal Order of Police  
GALSTPTR German American Legion of St. Peter  
GAR Grand Army of the Republic  
GLAUM Grand Lodge Ancient Order of Mysteries- Masonic Order  
GLDS Grand Lodge Daughters of Scotia  
GUOOF Grand United Order of Odd Fellows  
HZ Haro Zaro  
IBBH International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths and Helpers  
ICBU Irish Catholic Benevolent Union  
IHSV Red Cross of Constantine  
IOA International Order of Alhambra



IODE Independent Order, Daughters of the Empire  
IOGT International Order of Good Templars  
IOH Improved Order of Heptasophs  
IOHH International Order of Hoo-Hoo  
IOI Independent Order of Immaculates  
IOKP Independent Order of Knights of Pythias  
IOOF Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
IOOF-PM Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Past Master  
ISH Independent Sons of Honor  
IOStL Independent Order of St. Luke  
IOF Independent Order of Foresters  
IORM Improved Order of Redmen (Sons of Liberty)  
IOR Independent Order of Rechabites  
IOV International Order of Vikings  
IUOM Independent United Order of Mechanics  
IWW Industrial Workers of the World  
IOF Independent Order of Foresters  
IOOF Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
IOJD Independent Order of Job's Daughters  
IORG International Order of Rainbow Girls (Masonic)  
ISDA Italian Sons and Daughters of America  
JOAM Junior Order of American Mechanics  
JOUAM Junior Order of United American Mechanics  
JAOUW Junior Order-Ancient Order of United Workmen  
JOUAM Junior Order-Order of United American Mechanics  
KC Knights of Columbus  
KGC Knights of the Golden Chain  
KGC Knights of the Golden Circle  
KGE Knights of the Golden Eagle  
KGL Knight Grand Legion  
KLH Knights and Ladies of Honor  
KM Knights Militant (See KKK)  
KofC Knights of Columbus  
KofFM Knights of Father Matthew  
KFM Knights of Father Matthew  
KofH Knights of Honor  
KOL Knights of Labor  
KofL Knights of Loyola  
KM Knights of Malta (Masonic)  
KMC Knights of the Mystic Chain  
KOTM Knights of the Macabees  
KPC Knights of Peter Claver  
KofTM Knights of the Macabees  
KP Knights of Pythias  
KofP Knights of Pythias  
KSC Knights of St. Columbkille

KG Knights of St. George  
KSTG Knights of St. George  
KSTI Knights of St. Ignatius  
KofSJ Knights of St. John  
KSTJ Knights of St. Joseph  
KSL Knights of St. Lawrence  
KSTM Knights of St. Martin  
KofSTP Knights of St. Patrick  
KSTP Knights of St. Paul  
KSTP Knights of St. Peter  
KSTT Knights of St. Thomas  
KofSTW Knights of St. Wenceslas  
KT Knights of Tabor  
KofT Knights of Tabor  
KT Knights Templars (Masonic)  
KWM Knights of Wise Men  
KGE Knights of Golden Eagle  
KHC Knights of Holy Cross  
KKK Knights of Klu-Klux Klan  
KOTM Knights of Macabees  
KSF Knights of Sherwood Forest  
LAOH Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians  
LDG Independent Order of Foresters  
LGAR Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic  
LKofA Loyal Knights of America  
LOL Loyal Order Orange Lodge (The Orange Order){Orange Men}  
LOM Legion of the MOOSE  
LOOM Loyal Order of the MOOSE  
LOVUS Legion of Valor of the United States  
MBS Mutual Benefit Society  
MOLLUS Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States  
MOOSE Loyal Order of the Moose  
MOPH Military Order of the Purple Heart  
MOVPER Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Mystic Realm (Grotto)  
(Masonic)  
MRA Royal Arcanum  
MCL Marine Corps League  
MWA Modern Woodmen of America  
NCOA Non-Commissioned Officers Association (Military Society)  
NEOP New England Order of Protection  
NOK New Order Knights (see KKK)  
NL Navy League  
NSDAR National Society Daughters of American Revolution  
NSSUP National Society Sons of Utah Pioneers  
NU National Union  
OofA Order of Amaranth (Masonic)

OCF Order of Chosen Friends  
OofUF Order of United Friends  
OGC Order of the Golden Cross  
ODHS Des Schwestern Verbandes (Sisters of the Federation)  
OES Order of the Eastern Star  
OSC Order of Scottish Clans (St. Andrew's Societies)  
OUAM Order of United American Mechanics  
PFofA Patriotic Friends of America  
PH The Order of Patrons of Husbandry (The Grange)  
PM Patriarchs Militant (Independent Order of Odd Fellows)  
POSA Patriotic Order of the Sons of America  
RA Royal Academy  
RA Royal Arcanum  
RAM Royal Arch Masons  
RC Republican Club  
RMOKHSJ The Religious and Military Order of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem  
RSGF Royal Society of Good Fellows  
RSM Royal and Select Masons  
ROJ Royal Order of Jesters (Masonic)  
RSTV Rite of St. Vaclara  
RSTV Rite of St. Vita  
RK Roman Knights  
RTT Royal Templars of Temperance  
SAR Sisters of the American Revolution  
SAR Sons of the American Revolution  
SBCL Saint Bonifazius Catholic Union  
SBL Society B. Lafayette  
SCV Sons of the Confederate Veterans  
SofE Sons of England  
SMAA Scandinavian Mutual Aid Association  
SNA-AUM Shrine of North America  
SR Scottish Rite (Masonic Order)  
SofSt.G Sons of St. George  
ST Sons of Temperance  
ST.G SoNY St. George's Society of New York  
SUVCW Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
SV Sons of Veterans of the United States of America  
TCL Tall Ceders of Lebanon (Masonic)  
TH Temple of Honor and Temperance  
Templars of Honor and Temperance is a fraternal order based on Christian values and practicing complete abstinence from alcoholic drinks. Its purpose is to instill high morals and ideals in its members. <http://www.tempelriddareorden.org>  
TPLF Temple of Honor and Temperance  
TROA The Retired Officer's Association  
UAOD United Ancient Order of Druids  
UCV United Confederate Veterans

UDC United Daughters of the Confederacy  
UFL Union Fraternal League  
UFM United Friends of Michigan  
UOPF United Order of Pilgrim Fathers  
VFW Veterans of Foreign Wars  
WKSC White Knights of the Southern Cross (See KKK)  
WOW Woodmen of the World  
YMCA Young Men's Christian Association  
YWCA Young Women's Christian Association

Initials after ancestors' names may provide useful information. The following list includes initials you may come across when reading old wills or other documents.

a.a.s. died in the year of his/her age (anno aetatis suae) (86 y/o died in year 86)

d.s.p. died without issue (decessit sine prole legitima)

d.s.p.l. died without legitimate issue (decessit sine prole mascula supersita)

d.s.p.m.s. died without surviving male issue (decessit sine prole mascula supersita)

d.s.p.s. died without surviving issue (decessit sine prole supersita)

d.unm. died unmarried

d.v.p. died in the lifetime of his father (decessit vita patris)

d.v.m. died in the lifetime of his mother (decessit vita matris)

Et al. and others (et alia)

Inst. present month (instans)

Liber. book or volume

Nepos. grandson

Nunc. Nuncupative will, an oral will, written by a witness

Ob. he/she died (obit)

Rel. or Relict. widow or widower (relicta/relictus)

Res. or Residue. widow or widower

Sic. so or thus, exact copy as written

Testes. witnesses

Ult. late (ultimo)

Ux. or vs. wife (uxor)

Viz. namely (videlicet)

<http://www.ajlambert.com>