

Tombstone Carvings and Their Meanings:

Did you know that tombstone carvings/symbols have certain meanings to them?

Here is a list of common carvings/symbols and their meanings:

Taken from Michigan Traveler Number 146 October 2004:

Anchor/Ships

Hope, the cross, or a mariner/member of the navy

Angels

Messengers and attendants of God

Acorn

Fertility and life, strength<

Arches

Door to salvation, journey to heaven

Arrows

Mortality, death, hunting or military profession(if with other weapons)

Bed

Visual denial of death; not dead, but resting

Bird

Eternal life

Bird flying

Resurrection, flight of the soul

Book open

Teacher, wisdom

Bible open

Minister

Bouquets/flowers

Condolences, grief, sorrow

Broken column

Loss of head of family

Bugles

Resurrection or military

Butterfly

Short lived, early death

Calla lily

Marriage, fidelity

Candle being snuffed

Time, mortality

Chain

Earthly existence, broken chain for end of Earthly existence, three links for International Order of Oddfellows

Cherub

Angelic, usually on children's stones

Circle

Eternity, never-ending existence, eternal union

Crossed Swords

High ranking military person

Daisy

Innocence of the Christ Child, children, young people, or a young beautiful woman

Eagle

Christian soul strengthened by grace, nationalism, military profession

Elk

Membership in Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks

Gate

Death, heaven

Grapes

Blood of Christ

Hands

Shaking hands mean farewell, male and female represent union of marriage, hand of God chopping means sudden death

Hourglass

Swiftness of time; life is short

Iris

Death, afterlife

Ivy

Friendship and immortality

Lamb

Innocence, gentleness, often found on children's graves, devout Christian if found on adult's

Lily or Lily of the Valley

Emblem of Innocence and purity

Log

Part of the "rustic" movement, Woodsmen of the World Symbol

Musical Instruments

Heavenly music, musician

Oak leaves

Maturity, ripe old age, strength

Palm branches

Signifies victory and rejoicing

Picks and Shovels

Mortality

Pinecone

Fertility and regeneration

Poppy

Sleep

Portals

Passageways to eternal life

Rings broken

Family circle severed

Rope

Binding together, usually through a fraternal organization

Rose bud

Morning of life, renewal of life

Rose fully opened

Prime of life

Roses

Brevity of earthly life, immortal love, death of a child or young woman, motherhood, Virgin Mary

Shells

Pilgrimage of life

Star

Christ, divine guidance, Eastern Star organization emblem

Stars and Stripes on Eagle

Eternal vigilance, liberty

Sun

Resurrection, heavenly light

Swords

Military profession; points down means death during military service, crossed swords represent ranking military person

Thistles

Rememberance

Tombs

Mortality

Torch

Life and truth, often war commemoration

Torch inverted

Life extinct

Tree stump with Ivy

Head of family, immortality

Urn with blaze

Undying friendship

Urn with wreath/crepe

Mourning

Vine

Marriage, fertility, family

Weeping willow

Emblem of sorrow

Wheat sheaf

Ripe for harvest, divine harvest , time

Willow

Earthly sorrow

Winged Effigies

Flight of the soul