

Alpha and Omega: Symbol of the beginning and the end; the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet

Anchor: Hope or eternal life, often found on the graves of sailors or Masons

Angel: Resurrection, agent of God, messenger

Ankh: An Egyptian symbol for eternal life

Anvil: Symbol for the creation of the universe; also found on blacksmiths' graves

Apple: Symbol of salvation or of sin

Arch: The passage to Heaven

Arrow: Symbol of martyrdom and mortality

Artillery: Symbol of military service

Beehive: Symbol of faith, education and domestic virtue, often used by Freemasons.

Bell: Representative of religion

Bible: Often found on the gravestones of clergymen and also of very devoted religious individuals

Bird: Peace, messenger of God

Boat: Crossing over to the other side

Bones/Skeleton: Death or decay

Book: The book of life, knowledge

Book (open): Symbol of a person's good deeds recorded in the book of life

Broken branch: Untimely or premature death, often on the grave of a young person

Broken chain: Family loss

Butterfly: Freedom, resurrection, metamorphosis

Chair, empty: Symbolic of the death of a child

Circle: Eternity, perfection, completeness

Clasped hands: Farewell to earthly life

Clock: Passage of time

Coffin: Mortality, death

Column: Commemoration, mortality

Column, broken: Life cut short

Corn: Rebirth, fertility

Cornucopia: Symbol of a fruitful life

Cross: Christianity

Crown: Triumph over death

Daisy: Innocence, often found on children's graves

Dog: Loyalty, fidelity, watchfulness

Dove: Love, purity, peace

Drapery: Mourning

Eagle: Sometimes found on the gravestones of veterans of the Civil War

Eagle, double-headed: Symbol of the Masons, Scottish Rite

Egg and dart: Life and death

Eucharist: Symbol of the body and blood of Christ, often found on the graves of priests and nuns

Eye: Masonic symbol, often found in a triangle or a sunburst

Fern: Humility and sincerity

Figure of an elderly man with hourglass and sickle: Father Time

Finger pointing downward: Mortality, "calling earth to witness" or the hand of God descending from heaven

Finger pointing upward: "Gone to heaven"

Fish: Christianity

Flag: Often found on the graves of veterans

Fleur-de-lys: The Holy Trinity

Flower, broken: Premature death

Garland: Victory in death

Gate: Passage from earth to heaven

Grapes: The Blood of Christ

Greek Catholic Cross: Three bars symbolizing the cross on which Christ was crucified

Hammer: The power of creation

Hand holding a heart: Charity, often used by fraternal organizations, the Masons and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows

Hand shown writing: Writing names in the book of life

Hands praying: Pious devotion

Hands reaching from above and below: God reaching down from Heaven for the hand of the deceased

Harp: Praise to God; a broken string on the harp represents a break in mortal life

Heart: Spirit or soul

Horse: Death

Hourglass: Passage of time

Hourglass, winged: "Time is fleeting"

Hummingbird: Often found on infants' or children's gravestones

IHS: The first three letters of Jesus' name in the Greek alphabet

Interlocking rings: Marriage

Ivy: Friendship, fidelity

Knot, tied: Marriage, unity

Lamb with a cross or a banner: Agnus Dei, the lamb of God

Lamb: Good Shepherd, innocence, often used for commemorating children

Lamp: Faithfulness, wisdom

Laurel: Represents the memory of the deceased

Lily: Purity

Lily of the Valley: Purity, innocence

Lion: Strength

Lion, winged: Symbol of St. Mark, one of the four evangelists

Lotus: Creation and rebirth

Lyre: Symbol of the end of life; often found on the gravestones of musicians

Menorah: Divine wisdom

Moon: Rebirth

Morning Glory: Beauty, youth

Mortar and Pestle: Often found on the gravestones of doctors or pharmacists

Oak Leaf: Longevity

Owl: Wisdom, watchfulness

Ox: Patience, strength

Ox, winged: Symbol of St. Luke, one of the four evangelists

Palette and brush: Sometimes found on the gravestones of artists

Palm frond or tree: Victory over death

Pitcher: Virtue and control

Plow: Harvest, the reaping of life

Poppy: Eternal sleep

Portrait: A likeness of the deceased

Rabbit: Humility, gentleness

Rifle: Sometimes found on the graves of veterans

Rooster: Vigilance, an awakening

Rosary: Symbol of constant prayer for the deceased, usually found on Catholic gravestones

Rose: Beauty

Scales: Symbol of the legal profession

Scarab: Renewal of life

Scroll: Scriptures

Shell: Rebirth, the baptism of Christ, Christian pilgrimage, maritime

Ship: Sometimes found on the graves of sailors or those who died at sea

Shoes, empty: Loss of a child

Sickle: Reaping of life

Skull: Death and immortality

Skull and crossbones: Death, mortality

Skull, winged: Ascension into heaven

Sleeping child: Victorian symbol for death

Snake wrapped on a cross: Masonic brazen serpent

Snake, forming a circle: Eternal life

Soldier on a horse: A soldier's grave. Traditionally, in statuary, when a figure is seen atop a horse in memorial, there are the three meanings: two of the horses' feet raised symbolize death in battle. One of the horse's legs raised fully off the ground symbolizes death caused by wounds suffered in battle. If the horse is standing at rest, the deceased individual likely served in battle but died of natural causes.

Sphinx: Guardian

Square and Compass: Often found on gravestones of members of the Freemasons

Staff entwined by two snakes: Caduceus, sometimes seen on the gravestones of physicians

Star, 5-pointed: Star of Bethlehem

Star of David: Divine protection, symbol of Judaism

Star, 6-pointed: Creation

Star, Cross and Shepherd's Crook: White Shrine of Jerusalem, a society for women related to a Master Mason in good standing.

Sun: Soul rising to heaven

Sun disk, winged: Divine protection

Sunflower: Devotion to God

Sword: Martyrdom, justice, courage

Sword, Crescent and Sphinx: Symbol of the Shriners

Swords, crossed: Often seen on gravestones of veterans, particularly officers

Tablets, double: The Ten Commandments

Thistle: Earthly sorrow; also found on Scottish gravestones.

Torch: Eternity, immortality, liberty

Torch (inverted): Life extinguished

Tree, fallen: Mortality, death

Triangle with square, spade and keys: York Rite of Masonry

Tulip: Love and passion

Urn: The soul

Urn, draped: Traditional symbol of death, sorrow

Veteran of the Cross – A veteran member of the Methodist Church

Wheat: Symbol of the harvest

Willow tree: Sadness, mourning

Woman crying: Mourning, sorrow

Woman holding or draped on a cross: Faith

Woman holding an anchor: Hope

Wreath: Victory in death

XP, overlapped: Chi-Rho, the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ

Yin yang circle: Harmony, balance, birth and death

Maple Hill Cemetery Association
68 East St. Mary's Road
Hanover Township, PA 18706