



SYMBOLISM E-NEWSLETTER

Burial Hill, Plymouth, MA (1657-1892)

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The ear of corn cut by a sickle being held by a hand is the symbol of life cut short and mourning or death. The hand can also be a reference to God and the idea that God chooses when and where we all die. Even though we die here on earth, we will have eternal life. Also, the epitaphs on this stone are pretty remarkable. At the top, we see "the Reapers are the Angeler" and the bottom, we see "as a Shock of Corn in His Season." In other words, God decides when it is one's time to go. The ear of corn is a symbol of fertility and rebirth. Burial Hill (1657-1892) is one of the first burial places for American Pilgrims. Overlooking the famous Plymouth Rock and Harbor, it is the final resting place of Governor Bradford.



*Hand Cutting an Ear of Corn,
Burial Hill*

Congressional Cemetery, Washington, DC (1807)

The Lamb is the symbol of God. Jesus is referred as being a shepherd and believers being his sheep and also the lamb of God—John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The lamb is the messenger from God. One sees lambs on children's graves, symbolizing innocence.



*Lamb of God,
Congressional Cemetery*

Congressional Cemetery, in Washington, DC, was originally founded as a burial place for U.S. Congressional Members. For example, John Quincy Adams was buried here and later moved to Quincy, MA and buried next to his father, John Adams. For a different perspective of the Congressional Cemetery, go to:

www.cemeterydogs.com

Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta, GA (1850)



*Our Thomas, Oakland
Cemetery*

In Oakland Cemetery, many grave markers have symbols related to children dying young. Unlike today, the early city dwellers of Atlanta did not have vaccinations and immunizations for small pox, diphtheria and influenza. It was a very common occurrence for children to die very young. For example, near Margaret Mitchell's grave monument, one finds the Bloomfield markers which records the deaths of four sisters (ages 2 through 8) who died within 10 days of each other in January, 1863. The sexton or superintendent, at the time, recorded the cause of death as diphtheria, a highly contagious disease of the upper respiratory system which was once one of the most common causes of death among children.

Therefore, on children's graves such as Our Thomas, one sees the boy has turned into an angel and will fly to heaven. Angels are thought of as guardians, protectors of death and messengers from God. Boy and girl angels are the symbols of innocence. Also, note that Our Thomas kneels on a pillow and the pillow is a symbol of sleeping since the word cemetery means sleeping or resting place. This whole idea of the cemetery being a resting or sleeping place is a far cry from the burial ground being a place to bury the body and in some cases, not Oakland, folks were buried on top of each other. For example, Highgate Cemetery, in London, England, this is certainly the case.

Other symbols one sees on young persons' graves: the tree stump is life cut short; dove is Holy Spirit; and lamb is messenger of God.