



SYMBOLISM E-NEWSLETTER

Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta, GA (1850)

Issue 13, July 1, 2007

The butterfly and cocoon motif on an oak leaf is very rare in Oakland and is the symbol of resurrection because the butterfly was originally a caterpillar. One has immortality versus mortality because the cocoon and oak leaf are symbols of earthly life and the butterfly is a symbol of heavenly life. The oak leaf also represents strength, honor, eternity, endurance, liberty, hospitality, regeneration, bravery and humanity. Another interpretation of the oak leaf is that life here on earth must end, but if it has been a life of integrity, one may meet death with a calm courage.



Graceland Cemetery, Chicago, IL (1860)

The Peacock symbolizes solar glory, immortality, royalty, incorruptibility, and pride. The majesty of the male peacocks' display is the origin of the bird's association with immortality through its link with the sun as an undying entity. Peacocks are seen in many cultures and religious including Eastern where its many eyes of its tail feathers can symbolize the universe, the moon, the sun, or a starry sky. Its many eyes can represent the all-seeing church or on all-seeing God in the Christian faith.



Santa Maria del Tiglio, Gravedona, Italy (12th Century)

The Greek mythological Centaur on the left pursuing and shooting a deer on the right is an early Christian symbol of the persecution of the church.

The Centaur symbolizes lust, with all the brute violence which can reduce mankind to the level of beasts unless it is counterbalanced by spiritual strength.

Like the peacock, the deer has different symbols in different cultures. For example, in central Asia, the deer was a conductor of souls.

