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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Maypole is associated with the beginning of spring
- Ivy conveys fidelity and eternal friendship
- The rose is the universal symbol of perfect love
- The month of May conveys the beginning of new life

MAYPOLE

The Maypole is associated with the May Day Celebration which takes place May 1. The photo to the right are villagers and Morris-men dancing beside the Maypole on Ickwell Green, Bedfordshire, United Kingdom at dawn on May 1, 2005.

It has its roots in Germanic cultures as a Pagan right and is very popular in Sweden, Austria, United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden.

In the 16th Century United Kingdom, Maypoles were communal symbols, being erected as group activities of parishes throughout the area.

In the late 16th and early 17th Century, Maypoles were banned because the Evangelical

Protestants felt that the celebrations were connected to mixed-gender dancing, drunkenness, and general merry making on Sundays.

In the 19th Century, the Maypole was folded into the symbology of "Merrie England." The addition of ribbons was influenced by a combination of 19th Century theatrics and John Ruskin.

The Maypole tradition still continues today with many high schools and colleges celebrating the rites.



LUSTY MONTH OF MAY

The title for this month's newsletter comes from a song called the "Lusty Month of May" in the musical Camelot. The original Broadway production opened in 1960 and the idea of Camelot has always been associated with the Kennedy Administration. The original story line dates back to the legendary

story of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere and all the wonderful magic related to that story.

The song "The Lusty Month of May" is sung by Queen Guinevere about how the month of May makes us feel alive and well. It takes place during a May Day celebration.



## VIRGIN MARY

This particular mosaic of the Virgin Mary is from San Michele Cemetery Island in Venice. May is known as the Virgin Mary month because on May 31 Mary visited her elderly cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth sensed that Mary was the mother of Jesus.

To the right, the Virgin Mary is dressed in blue and the color blue conveys heaven, inspiration, sincerity and spirituality. Another reason that she was portrayed in blue, especially in paintings, is that the color

blue was very expensive and artists used it sparingly.

Other symbols related to the Virgin Mary include: sun and moon = perpetual chastity; star = eternal life; lily = purity; rose = love and beauty; enclosed garden = Annunciation; palm = spiritual victory over death; olive = peace, hope and abundance; globe = sovereignty; snake = sin and Satan; apple = fall of man; pomegranate = hope; dove = Holy Spirit; ears of wheat = the bread in the Eucharist; and grapes = wine of the Eucharist.



## IVY

This grave marker to the right is the Sullivan monument near the front gate and in the original six acres of Oakland Cemetery.

Some of the symbols on this marker include: crown and cross motif with the cross being how Jesus died his earthly death to become king of heaven (mortality versus immortality) and conveys sovereignty of the lord and victory over death; Lily is purity and innocence; IHS is the monogram of Jesus (the first three letters of Jesus name in

Greek.)

An acanthus leaf, an ornamental motif in classical architecture, conveys heavenly gardens, the fine arts, artifice and persistence. Drapery conveys mourning and death. Also, in Victorian Atlanta homes, heavy draperies with tasseled chords reflected worldly success and this was transferred over to the ornate tassels on the monument.

Ivy is connected to the Virgin Mary because its symbol of fidelity and eternal friendship

On the backside of the monument are daisies which symbolize the Virgin Mary because like Mary's love, daisies can grow anywhere and relates to love and innocence.

If you are familiar with Oakland, you probably know a similar marker to this one on the O'Keefe lot near the Bell Tower.



## ROSE

The rose is connected to the Virgin Mary because it is regarded as the "queen of flowers" and she is known as the "queen of heaven".

The marker to the right is from the Douglasville City Cemetery in Douglasville, GA. Thanks to Rosalind Hillhouse suggesting that I visit.

It is also the universal symbol of perfect love, its color, perfection of form, and fragrance, as well as its thorns signifies Mary's role in salvation history as the Mother of the Savior who was crowned with thorns and shed His blood on the Cross for love of mankind. Notice the rose branch has three flowers in

different stages of life. Also, the hand refers to the Hand of God who is holding a Bible or some other religious book.



## MAY

We believe that May is named after the Greek Goddess Maia, who was known as the goddess of spring.

She was the mother of Hermes or Mercury, the messenger god. The month of May has always conveyed the beginning of new life. In the Greek culture, it was dedicated to Artemis, goddess of fecundity. In the Roman culture, May was associated with Flora, goddess of flowers and blooms. It is associated with the Roman *Iudi florales* (literally: floral games) at the end of April asking for the

intercession of Flora for all that blooms. It is also related to the medieval practice of expelling winter. May 1 is always considered the beginning of growth.

A very famous painting related to an important event in the history of Spain is to the right: Goya's *The Third of May 1808*, which commemorated Spanish resistance to Napoleon's armies during the occupation of 1808. Notice the sharp contrast between the whiteness of the man's shirt and the soldiers' black hats.



## EMERALD

The stone of May and birthstone of Gemini is the Emerald and generally conveys victory over the flesh; spring; hope; rebirth; immortality; true love; and the overcoming of temptation. In Christianity, it conveys faith, purity, chastity and it connected to the pope.

The word "emerald" comes from Latin *smaragdus*, via Greek *smaragdos*, its original source being a Semitic word *izmargad* or the Sanskrit word, *marakata*, meaning "emerald" or "green".

One of the more colorful anecdotes about the Emerald comes from the 16th Century Historian Brantome. He states that the impressive stones that Cortez brought back from Latin American were emeralds.

On one of Cortez's most notable emeralds he had the text engraved *Inter Natos Mulierum non sur-rexit mayor* (Among them borne of woman there hath not arisen a greater Man) which referred to John the Baptist.



## LILY OF THE VALLEY

This Lily of the Valley to the right is a photo by Kim Jacobson at Oak Hill Cemetery, Moundville, Hale County, Alabama.

It conveys daintiness; sweetness; humility; return of spring; return of happiness; attribute of the Virgin Mary; Christ; the Immaculate Conception; Advent; emblem of Israel; and associated with Gemini.

It is also a favorite flower of brides and conveys happiness and perfect bliss.

Also, the Lily of the Valley is connected to the Tree of Life planted in the Garden of Eden, since it is the Lily which restores a pure life, the promise of immortality and salvation. According to legend, Eve wept when she and Adam were expelled from the Garden of Eden. The flowers

sprang from her tears.

There is actually a song by Judy Collins called Lily of the Valley about a woman who lived by the river.



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## SYMBOLS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES

### VISITING MR. AND MRS. PIGEON IN BED ONCE AGAIN

Cori Ander made the following comment about this monument: much of my research has been focused on children's cemetery markers and it is quite common for a child to be shown in a crib or bed.

However, it is rare to have adults depicted in beds as it was considered to be too much of an overtly sexual reference for those "prim and proper" Victorians. In order to downplay this connotation, note that Mr. & Mrs. Pigeon are fully dressed and that he is in a sitting position, clearly separating him from his fully reclined wife.

Additionally, his hand is propping him up, acting as a very visible and physical bar-

rier between the two figures and thereby, re-emphasizing the separation of the bodies - as opposed to the unspoken union.

As far as I am able to ascertain, the reason for the choice in using the bed image at all, knowing full well that the sexual implication would be prominent, was to show the extreme wealth of the inventor portrayed by the very elaborately embellished prop. Ergo making the socially approved statement that Mr. Pigeon has achieved a highly regarded state of affluence, an equivalent to the American Dream! The cross-cultural statement being that given the choice between a scan-

dalous image or a statement of wealth, wealth will always win out because, after all, we have our priorities straight! As far as I know, this monument is very unique and therefore, special.

However, if anyone has other photos of adults in a bed, I would be very grateful to have copies of them to further expand my research.



## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



The painting above is Caravaggio's Narcissus.

Thanks for continuing to send in your comments, questions and opinions. They are always very helpful.

As many of you know, I do a symbolism tour of Oakland Cemetery the first Saturday evening from 6:30 to 7:30 pm during the Twilight Tours Season April to October. The next one is May 2. The cost is only \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children and senior citizens. All proceeds go to Historic Oakland Foundation for their preservation efforts.

Take care,

Richard Waterhouse