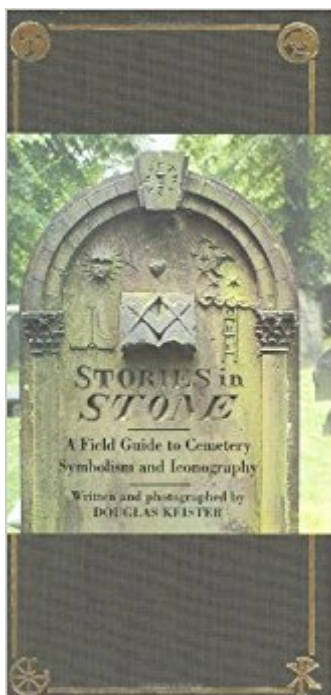


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# Stories In Stone: A Field Guide To Cemetery Symbolism And Iconography



## Synopsis

Certain symbols abound in modern Western culture that are instantly recognizable: the cross signifies Christianity, the six-pointed Star of David is revered by Jews, the golden arches frequently means it's time for lunch. Other symbols, however, require a bit of decoding-particularly those found in cemeteries. Cemeteries are virtual encyclopedias of symbolism. Engravings on tombstones, mausoleums and memorials tell us just about everything there is to know about a person- date of birth and death as well as religion, ethnicity, occupation, community interests, and much more. In the fascinating new book *Stories in Stone: The Complete Guide to Cemetery Symbolism* by noted author Douglas Keister, the secrets of cemetery symbolism are finally revealed. For instance, did you know that it is quite rare to see a sunflower on a tombstone? Did you know that the human foot symbolizes humility and service since it consistently touches the earth? Or the humble sheaf of wheat-while it is often used to denote someone who has lived a long and fruitful life, do you know other meanings it might carry? *Stories in Stone* provides history along with images of a wide variety of common and not-so-common cemetery symbols, and offers an in-depth examination of stone relics and the personal and intimate details they display-flora and fauna, religious icons, society symbols, and final impressions of how the deceased wished to be remembered. Douglas Keister has created a practical field guide that is compact and portable, perfect for those interested in family histories and genealogical research, and is the only book of its kind that unlocks the language of symbols in a comprehensive and easy-to-understand manner. Douglas Keister has photographed fourteen award-winning, critically acclaimed books (including *Red Tile Style: America's Spanish Revival Architecture*, *The Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Home*, and *Storybook Style: America's Whimsical Homes of the Twenties*) earning him the title "America's most noted photographer of historic architecture." He also writes and illustrates magazine articles and contributes photographs and essays to other books, calendars, posters, and greeting cards. Doug lives in Chico, California, and travels frequently to photograph and lecture on historic architecture and photography.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Stories in Stone The Complete Illustrated Guide to Cemetery Symbolism The language of symbols is one that has been with us from the beginning of recorded history. Our everyday life is full of symbols. We see many of them when we are driving: arrows point us in the right direction, upside-down pyramids tell us of slow-moving vehicles, and octagons caution us to stop. There are multitudes of business symbols we encounter everyday: a stylized pair of golden arches indicates there's a McDonald's restaurant located nearby; a checkmark called a "swoosh" subtly informs that its owner is wearing a Nike product; a polychrome apple with a bite taken out of it whimsically announces that its product is an Apple computer; a storefront displaying a symbol of three balls shows that its business is a pawn shop. The meaning of most symbols has remained fairly consistent through the centuries: crosses for Christians, six-pointed stars for Jews, the yin-yang symbol for Buddhists-and hearts speak of love, lambs of innocence, and circles of completeness and immortality. But, nowhere is the language of symbols more apparent than in cemeteries. Dead men may tell no tales, but their tombstones do. Besides informing us of people's names and dates of birth and death, tombstones often tell us what religion they affiliated with, what ethnicity they descended from, what clubs and organizations they belonged to, what occupations they worked in, and what thoughts they held on the afterlife. Journey with us now into the little-known world of cemeteries. The author provides fascinating information and stunning full-color and black-and-white images of funerary architecture designed for eternal life, from mausoleums, chapels, and offices, to tombs, sculptures, and memorials. He then draws us into the very personal area of stone relics designed especially for the deceased, from likenesses of plants, animals, mankind, and mortality, to icons of religion, societies, clubs, and final impressions of how the occupant wanted to be remembered.

Chico, California-based photographer Douglas Keister has photographed twenty-two award-winning, critically acclaimed books. His seventeen books on architecture include four books on Victorian homes (*Daughter's of Painted Ladies*, *Painted Ladies Revisited*, *America's Painted*

Ladies and Victorian Glory); three books on bungalow homes (The Bungalow, Inside the Bungalow and Outside the Bungalow), a book on 1920s whimsical homes (Storybook Style) a book about cemetery art and architecture (Going Out in Style), a book on Spanish architecture, (Red Tile Style), six books on bungalow details and Classic Cottages, that will be published by Gibbs Smith Publisher in the Spring of 2004. Keister photographed and wrote an award winning children's book (Fernando's Gift), has two monographs of his personal work (Black Rock and Driftwood Whimsy), a book on classic travel trailers, (Ready to Roll) and a book on cemetery symbolism, Stories in Stone: The Complete Illustrated Guide to Cemetery Symbolism, that will be published by Gibbs Smith Publisher in the Spring of 2004. His wealth of books on architecture has earned him the title, "America's most noted photographer of historic architecture."

Good information and reference materials.

I read this book when I worked in the cemetery I got to recognize all the old signs that were up chiseled on the gravestones very interesting

Great little book. I have some old cemeteries around me and this was helpful

This is a fascinating book. I wish I lived in an area with old cemeteries so I could take up the hobby of reading old headstones, some of which can really tell a lot about who is buried there. If I lived in New England, or England for that matter, I'd keep this book in my car and whenever I found a likely cemetery I'd go inside and read the messages from the past. This book is enjoyable for anyone.

This is a fabulous little book for anyone interested in the meaning of symbols on gravestones. It is exquisitely produced with glossy pages and superb photos. The size is such that you could carry in your pocket to a graveyard, but it is too nice to take outside. It is very well written and explains the meaning of symbols in an understandable manner. Unlike most gravestone books, it has a welcome touch of humor on some conventional beliefs but in a respectful manner to all religions. If possible, I would give this ten stars except for the fact that there is only very brief coverage of the symbolism on seventeenth and eighteenth century New England gravestones. While the illustrations of monuments in Italy are beautiful and interesting, more on the early gravestones of America and how they evolved would be much more useful to those of us not likely to get to Italy. Despite this omission, the book is useful for the US cemeteries from the nineteenth century on.

STORIES IN STONE; A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography by Douglas Kaiser is a unique compilation of funeral art, symbolism, and architecture that will amaze any reader. This is actually a very good and informative reference book that not only teaches but, magnifies and helps to unravel the mysteries of symbolism and, its impact upon man at his most fearful hour. Regardless of any prior negative comments or reviews, the author has done an extremely good job of laying out concise information by categorizing various elements and facets of this unique topic. Not only is this a book on funeral art and symbolism, but... it is also a book filled with numerous historical snippets' that the student of history will never find in any boring text. Walking through old cemeteries can be a humbling and reflective time for each of us. A meditative stroll through any "Gardens of Stone" will become even more meaningful if, you can just... carry this book along with you. I believe this is to be a superb book for...a superb price!

This book provides great explanations of the symbols found in cemeteries. It was extremely helpful when working on my cemetery project.

I love wandering around cemeteries; such history and monuments of local culture. This book has added another layer to the experience by helping me to interpret the symbolism. The examples represented in the book are fascinating, too, and I'll be making stops to see them if I'm ever in the areas.

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