

### #13: Warsaw Cemetery a/k/a City Cemetery (725 East Main Street)

Within Warsaw's first and oldest cemetery lie many old-time Warsawians who lived through the historical incidents that impacted the future of our area. Many tall zinc tombstones are evident throughout, as they were less expensive and marketed as "white bronze", which made it sound fancy and resembled stone.

Made in Warsaw and patented 1894-190 by Warsaw Monument Works. There were 346 graves originally, with the oldest being from 1818.

There are 10 Zinc Monuments in the cemetery as of 2021. Research has been conducted to find out the meaning of the symbols on the monuments.

Jonas Alexander, a well-known man of color, is buried in this cemetery. He was considered "the best dressed man in town" and one of the very few black citizens in Warsaw. He worked as a janitor, shoe shiner, grocery clerk and was regarded as a super-deft with a pair of dice. Mr. Alexander was believed to be 108 years old and probably the oldest man in the State of Missouri at one time. You can find more information on Mr. Alexander at the Benton County Museum.

An index of those buried can be found at <http://www.looktothepast.com/index130.html>

#### **Clasping Hands**

The white marble obelisk displays one of the most common motifs found in American cemeteries—clasping hands. Clasping hands can represent the brotherhood of the union, symbolizing the brethren of workers clasped in the making of something together, sharing their labor bonded by common work. The motif can also depict a farewell handshake to life on earth, representing the welcome to Heaven, leaving behind what they have known on earth for the sublime pleasures of Heaven. The clasping hands on this gravestone, however, represent holy matrimony, symbolizing the holy union between a man and a woman. S you face the gravestone, the hand on the left side of the motif is clearly the hand of the female, her cuff is ruffle. The hand on the right side is the males, with a shirt's cuff visible. Above the bas-relief is a banner that reads: "FAREWELL" seemingly as their last goodbye.

#### **The Broken Chain**

The bas-relief sculpture in the rounded-top white marble tablet depicts the hand of God or an angel descending from Heaven holding a broken chain. In the cemetery, much of the iconography represents a life ended—the winged death's head, the hanging bud, the broken wheel, the incomplete circle, the column that is broken, and the broken chain. The broken link of a chain represents the life that was ended. The broken link of chain represents a life that has ended. This symbolism dates back to medieval times when people believed that the soul could be held to the body by a golden chain. Once the chain was broken, the soul took flight and rose from the body leaving Earth and ascended to Heaven.

#### **The Torch**

The shaft of the zinc marker depicts a fairly common image found in cemeteries—the torch. The flame or fire is symbolic of the soul. The torch is also seen as an instrument that

illuminates the darkness representing enlightenment. It can symbolize zeal, liberty, and immortality. The torch is also often depicted inverted torch which symbolizes a life that has been extinguished.

### **Odd Fellows**

Broken chain links often symbolize death. However, in this case, the three links of the chain represents the Odd Fellows Fraternal Society. Odd Fellows is an fraternal organization that formed in England in the 1700s as a service organization. The American association was founded in Baltimore, Maryland, on April 26, 1819. According to the I.O.O.F. Website, "Thomas Wildey and four members of the Order from England instituted Washington Lodge No. 1. This lodge received its charter from Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows in England." This marker the main symbol of the Odd Fellows: the three links of the chain. Within the three links are three letters, F L T, which signify the organizations motto: Friendship, Love, and Truth.

### **The Urn**

According to James Deetz and Edwin S. Dethlefsen, in their groundbreaking article, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow" the willow first made its appearance in cemeteries in the early 18th century. The motif represented a break from the stark and cold reminders that death would bring that the Puritans carved into their gravestones—flying death's heads, skulls and crossbones, and gravedigger's equipment. In addition to the grim reminders of the inevitability of death Puritan gravestones often accompanied the haunting imagery with blunt words such as, "*Here lies the body.*" Nothing subtle there. The willow and the urn, however, represented a more sentimental view of death. There was a softening of Puritan views during the Great Awakening and the beginning of the Romantic Era. Often the willow and urn is accompanied with words like, "*In memory of*" or "*Sacred to the memory of*". This represented a softer approach. Like many symbols found in the cemetery, they can have multiple meanings, or there can be disagreement about the meaning of the motif—the Willow and urn is no exception. Christians saw the ability of the tree to live seemingly no matter how many of the branches were cut from the tree as a symbol of immortality. Others, however, suggest that the willow and urn predate Christianity to Roman times. The urn was used by Romans to store cremated remains and the willow was associated with the Persephone, the goddess of the underworld. Combined they represent the soul's journey from the Earthly Realm to the Heavenly Realm. This design coincided with a neo-classical revival that took place mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century in America.

### **The Willow**

The willow as a symbol is sentimental and hints at the human emotions felt during grief. The willow motif represents what one might expect; sorrow and grief, it is after all a "weeping" willow. An epitaph found on a grave in Harrison County, Iowa, on a child's grave speaks of the grief that the parent's felt:

A light from our household is gone  
A voice we love is stilled  
A place is vacant in our hearts  
That ne'r can be filled  
There's a fresh little mound neath the willow  
Where at evening I wander and weep

There's a dear vacant spot on my pillow  
Where a little face used to sleep.

### **Government Issue**

In national military cemeteries across the United States standing tall and straight are rows of “Government Issue” white marble gravestones. Those gravestones are a third iteration. Not long after the start of the Civil War, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs was charged with burying the soldiers being lost in each successive battle of the war. The soldiers close to the front in Washington D.C. were being buried in military cemeteries around Arlington. By May of 1864, soldiers were buried on the grounds of Arlington House—the Ancestral home of Robert E. Lee.

The first markers constructed for the fallen soldiers were made of wood but decayed at a very fast rate. It was clear very quickly that wood would not be a permanent solution. The second solution was to make the markers out of cast iron. To prevent rusting the outside of the marker was to be coated in a veneer of zinc. Only one of these markers remain in the Arlington national Cemetery, that for Captain Daniel Keys. The zinc coating gives the marker a faint blue cast. One side of the marker depicted a soldier, the other side had the fallen soldier's information.

The military decided wood nor zinc-coated cast iron was the right material. White marble was chosen as more traditional and appropriate. Each white marble gravestone is to be 13 inches wide, 4 inches thick and 42 inches tall—with 24 inches to show above ground. Soldiers who fought for the North have segmented (or rounded tops) while their Confederate counterparts were issued pointed top tablets.

These “Government Issue” markers also mark the graves of soldiers in cemeteries buried all across the United States.

### **Wheat**

Wheat's origins are unknown but is the basis of basic food and a staple in many cultures. Because of wheat's exalted position as a mainstay foodstuff, it is viewed as a gift from Heaven. Wheat symbolizes immortality and resurrection. But, like many symbols found on gravestones, they can have more than one meaning. For instance, because wheat is the main ingredient of bread, the sheaf of wheat can represent the Body of Christ. Wheat can also represent a long life, usually more than three score and ten, or seventy years.

The sickle and scythe implements to gather the wheat are used in funerary symbolism to represent a “harvesting of souls.” The tools can be shown alone or coupled with another object—such as a sheaf of wheat or with the Grim Reaper, himself!

### **Obelisk**

In 1928, the Georgia Marble Company of Tate, Georgia, produced a marketing piece in the form of a book titled, *Memorials: To-Day for To-Morrow* written by William Henry Deacy. The book was designed to showcase their memorial designs by highlighting them in the book with lush full-color watercolor illustrations of the various memorials. Along with the illustrations the book provided explanations of the symbolism found in the memorials. The book also coupled an

architectural drawing of how the memorial is to be made. The monument they chose to highlight on pages 62-64 was the obelisk.

After the French and British occupations of Egypt, there was a renewed interest in Egyptian architecture and symbolism in America, including the obelisk, those tall thin four-sided columns that tapered upward and then end in a pyramid at the top. The obelisk is a ubiquitous gravestone shape found in American graveyards.

The author, Mr. Deacy, makes the following claim in the Georgia Marble Company book (page 63), *“The steeple of the Church symbolizes the spiritual and uplifting power of religion and the moral aspiration of man. It was evolved from the obelisks which stood before Egyptian temple— emblems of the sun god Ra and the regeneration of man. It has long been a favored form for the civic and private memorial. Towering heavenward from a slightly (sic) location, the obelisk probably ranks among the most simple and impressive of all monuments.”*

The book goes on to say that the obelisk is highlighted best when it is featured by itself, with no other monuments nearby to distract from its elegant and graceful shape. It also says that, *“various pedestal forms are used to support the shaft or spire...and while they attain a rather graceful continuity of line, nevertheless, no type of base or support rivals the simple three steps, which if properly subordinated in scale, tend to increase the effect of height...”*

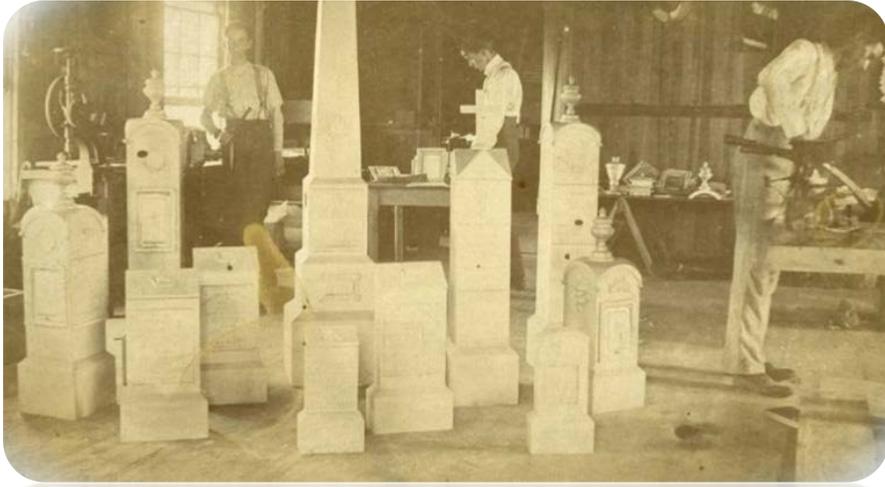
If you want to find out more about the source of the information the entire book can be found at the Quarries and Beyond

Website: [http://quarriesandbeyond.org/cemeteries\\_and\\_monumental\\_art/cemetery\\_stones.html](http://quarriesandbeyond.org/cemeteries_and_monumental_art/cemetery_stones.html).

The Quarries and Beyond Website was created by Peggy B. and Patrick Perazzo. It focuses on historic stone quarries, stone workers and companies, and related subjects such as geology. Whenever possible links of finished products are provided on the Website. There is a “Quarry Articles” section that presents articles, booklets, and links from the late 1800s to early 1900s, including the 1856 “The Marble-Workers’ Manual.” The “Cemetery Stones and Monuments” section provides references and resources, including many old monument magazines, catalogs, price lists, and a photographic tour “From Quarry to Cemetery Monuments.”

### **The Floral Wreath**

This is a common Victorian funerary motif. The Victorian Era lasted from about 1832 until Queen Victoria’s death in 1903. The era was an eclectic period in the decorative arts with several styles—Gothic, Tudor, Neoclassical—vying for dominance. The period was marked by ornamentation. This was true in architecture, furniture, and funerary arts. In cemeteries gravestones became taller, ornamented, and sentimental. The floral wreath here is expressing the transitory nature of life.



Warsaw Zinc Monument Works 1903 by T.B. White collection P0018 State of Missouri Collection The State Historical Society of Missouri