

Nowhere is the language of symbols more apparent than in cemeteries, which are virtual encyclopedias of symbolism. As the old saying goes... "Dead Men Tell No Tales, but Their Tombstones Do".



**Elizabeth Weaver Bacon - Died 4/7/1853**—"A French Pleurant, or Mourner, Gazes Forlornly" - The Mourner leans upon a column topped by an urn. The urn represents finality and death. The urn is a reverential place holding something very valuable, like the life of the person. Below the urn is an inverted torch. The inverted torch is a purely funerary symbol. It is unlikely that it will be found anywhere but the cemetery. The inverted torch comes in 2 forms: the most common is the torch with a flame burning, which symbolizes death, suggests that the soul (FIRE) continues to exist in the next realm. The other version is an upside down torch without flame, simply meaning life is extinguished. Notice the hourglass. The symbolism is clear: time is passing quickly and every day, one comes closer to the hour of their death. An additional interpretation of the hour glass suggests that since it can be inverted over and over again, it symbolizes the cyclic nature of life and death. The flowers surrounding the hourglass reminds us of the beauty of life.

### **Andrew Russel - Died 1/2/1803**

The Broken Column—"Life Cut Short"

This broken column is a symbol for the end of life and more specifically life cut short. It is one of the most popular mortality symbols of the 19th century because of its visual impact. A cross covered with ivy symbolizes immortality and fidelity. Ivy is eternally green even in harsh conditions. As it clings



and is supported by the column, it suggest attachment, friendship and undying affection. Its three pointed leaves are the symbol of the Trinity. The cross symbolizes religion and Christianity. There are dozens of styles of crosses that adorn a cemetery and grave. The Maltese cross looks like a plus sign and symbolizes fraternal organizations such as Knights Templar.



### **Dollie Reilly - Died 5/4/1874**

"The Veil between Heaven and Earth." The veiled urn, above two columns, symbolizes the veil between Heaven and Earth. The draped urn is probably the most common 19th century funerary symbol. Some 19th century cemeteries seem to be filled with urns, as here in this section of Baber Cemetery. The drape can be seen as either a reverential accessory or as a symbol of the veil between earth and the heavens. The urn is to ashes as the sarcophagus is to the body, which makes the urn a very curious 19th century funerary device, since cremation was seldom practiced. Today, the word "ashes" has been replaced with the words cremated remains. But, in the 19th century, urns seldom contained ashes. Rather they were used as decorative devices perched on top of columns, sarcophagi and mausoleums and carved into tombstone doors and walls. They actually were one of the first symbols to replace death's head symbolism. Notice the columns which are Corinthian. They are the most notable style found in cemeteries. Flowers are featured to represent the beauty of the person's life.