

# Common Symbols Found on Tombstones

## **Sons of the American Revolution**

[National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution](#) was organized on April 30, 1889 -- the 100th anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as our nation's first President. We have used the acronym SAR to identify ourselves for over 100 years. The SAR was conceived as a fraternal and civic society composed of lineal descendants of the men who wintered at Valley Forge, signed the Declaration of Independence, fought in the battles of the American Revolution, served in the Continental Congress, or otherwise supported the cause of American Independence. The National Society was chartered by an Act of the United States Congress on June 6, 1906. The charter was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, who was a member of the SAR. The charter authorizes the granting of charters to societies of the various states and territories and authorizes the state societies to charter chapters within their borders.



## **Daughters of the American Revolution**

The [DAR](#), founded in 1890, is a volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history, and securing America's future through better education for children.

As the most inclusive lineal society in the country, DAR boasts 170,000 members in 3,000 chapters across the United States and internationally.



## **Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War**

The [Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War](#) was a creation of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) which was formed in 1866. Wanting to pass on its heritage, the GAR in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania created a Corps of Cadets in 1878 which later became the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (SV). The SV units functioned much as National Guard units and actually served along with state militia during the Spanish American War. In 1904, the SV elected to become a patriotic education society and in 1925 changed its name to Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW). However, to keep the military aspect alive, the SUVCW created within the organization the Sons of Veterans Reserve (SVR) which was carried on the Army rolls as a Reserve contingent. Some SVR units served with the Army during World War I. After World War I, the SVR was listed as a training company of the U.S. Army. In more recent years, the SVR's mission has become historic, ceremonial, and commemorative. Prior to disbanding and before the death of its last member, the GAR officially designated the SUVCW as its successor and heir to its remaining property. The final Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic was held in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1949 and the last member, Albert Woolson died in 1956 at the age of 109 years.



## **Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War**

May 30, 1885 ~ Five young women, Harriett Knapp, Frances Merwin, Olive Howard, Eva Merwin, and Bertha Martin, stood at the edge of the Massillon, Ohio cemetery while Memorial Day services were held. They watched as their brothers and other young men, members of the Sons of Veterans, honored their fathers who had so valiantly fought for the Union Cause in the Civil War. They decided to form a group of daughters of Union Veterans so that they too could honor their fathers and other Union Veterans. They agreed to meet June 3, 1885 at the home of Eva Merwin. These young ladies were aged 15 and 16. It was from this beginning that The Massillon Daughters of Veterans grew to be [Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War](#), 1861-1865, Inc., a national, federally chartered, organization.



## **Sons of Confederate Veterans**

The citizen-soldiers who fought for the Confederacy personified the best qualities of America. The preservation of liberty and freedom was the motivating factor in the South's decision to fight the *Second American Revolution*. The tenacity with which Confederate soldiers fought underscored their belief in the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. These attributes are the underpinning of our democratic society and represent the foundation on which this nation was built.



## **Daughters of the Confederacy**

**Those eligible for active membership are women no less than 16 years of age who are blood descendants, lineal or collateral, of men and women who served honorably in the Army, Navy or Civil Service of the Confederate States of America, or gave Material Aid to the Cause. Also eligible are those women who are lineal or collateral blood descendants of members or former members of UDC.**



## **Masonic Lodge**

[Freemasonry](#), a worldwide fraternal organization, often calls itself "a peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." Its members are joined together by high ideals, of both a moral and metaphysical nature (and, in the majority of branches, by a common belief in a Supreme Being). Freemasonry is an "esoteric art," in that certain aspects of its internal work are not generally revealed to the public. Masons give numerous reasons for this, one of which is that Freemasonry uses an initiatory system of degrees to explore ethical and philosophical issues, and this system is less effective if the observer knows beforehand what will happen.



## **Eastern Star**

[Eastern Star](#). The women's auxiliary to the Masonic Lodge



## Odd Fellows

[Oddfellows](#). In 17th century England, it was odd to find people organized for the purpose of giving aid to those in need and of pursuing projects for the benefit of all mankind. Those who belonged to such an organization were called "Odd Fellows." Odd Fellows are also known as "The Three Link Fraternity" which stands for Friendship, Love and Truth.



Many times the FLT will be found on a flag holder or on the tombstone with each letter in a link of a chain. This is actually the described logo for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.). The letters stand for: Friendship, Love and Truth. The symbol of the three-link chain goes hand-in-hand with the three words.

The I.O.O.F. is probably the only fraternal organization that offers a death benefit to its members and actually has developed, supported, and maintained their own cemeteries and homes for the aged.

The only requirement for becoming an Odd Fellow is that the applicant believe in a Supreme Being. The Order is nondenominational.

## Rebekahs

Odd Fellowship became the 1st national fraternity to include both men and women when it adopted the beautiful Rebekah Degree on September 20, 1851. This degree is based on the teachings found in the Holy Bible, and was written by the Honorable Schuyler Colfax who was Vice President of the United States during the period 1868-1873. Odd Fellows and Rebekahs were also the first fraternal organization to establish homes for our senior members and for orphaned children.



## Woodmen of the World (WOW)

Woodmen was one of the first fraternal benefit societies in the United States. Founded in Omaha, Nebraska, on June 6, 1890, by Joseph Cullen Root, the Society had a humble beginning with very little capital and no office space.



It was also reported that Root's idea for "Woodmen" came from a speech he heard about woodsmen clearing away forests to provide shelter for their families. Others speculated that Root visualized himself as the root that would grow into a shelter, protecting members from financial disaster.

## Royal Neighbors

[Royal Neighbors](#). The Women's auxiliary to the Modern Woodmen of America.



### **Improved Order of Red Men**

The [Improved Order of Red Men](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/red_men.htm) Fraternity was founded in 1765 and was originally known as the Sons of Liberty. These patriots concealed their identities and worked "underground" to help establish freedom and liberty in the Early Colonies. They patterned themselves after the great Iroquois Indian nation and its democratic governing body. Their system with elected representatives to governing tribal councils had been in existence for several centuries. See also

[http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/red\\_men.htm](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/red_men.htm)



### **Degree of Pocahontas**

[Degree of Pocahontas](#). The women's auxiliary to the Improved Order of Red Men.



### **Knights of Pythias**

The [Knights of Pythias](#) is a social brotherhood founded at Washington, D.C., February 19, 1864, by Justus Henry Rathbone and four others, to promote the principals of friendship, charity, and benevolence (FCB). The fundamental tenants of the order are "toleration in religion, obedience to law, and loyalty to government."



### **Grand Army of the Republic**

[cemeteries.wordpress.com](http://cemeteries.wordpress.com)

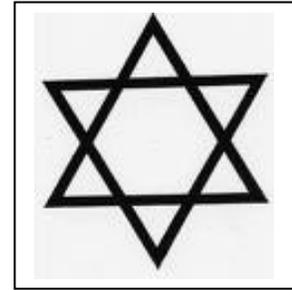
The [Grand Army of the Republic](#) (GAR) was a fraternal organization of honorably discharged Union Civil War veterans. Some of their rituals were based on Freemasonry. The GAR was founded in 1866 by Benjamin Franklin Stephenson in Decatur, Illinois. By 1890 they had 409,000 members. The GAR was involved in charity and politics, and they lobbied for soldiers homes and pensions. They also began the tradition of Decoration Day on May 30th, now called Memorial Day. Five presidents were members of the GAR: Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Benjamin Harrison and William McKinley. The last GAR member, Albert Woolson, died in 1956 at age 109 (although census research indicates he may have been 106 or 108). He was also the last undisputed surviving Civil War veteran on either side.



## Jewish Symbols

### Star of David

The Star of David also known as the Magen David or Shield of David expresses a spectrum of meanings from the spiritual to the practical. It seems to interlock two triangles forming a strong hexagonal structure. Some view the two opposing triangles politically: representing the unceasing conflict within and surrounding the Jewish nation. Others perceive it to represent the sacred union of opposite energies or Yin Yang.



### Menorah

The menorah (Hebrew: מְנוּרָה), is a seven-branched candelabrum which has been a symbol of Judaism for almost 3000 years and is the emblem of Israel. It was used in the ancient Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Lit by olive oil in the Tabernacle and the Temple, the menorah is one of the oldest symbols of the Jewish people. It is said to symbolize the burning bush as seen by Moses on Mount Horeb (Exodus 3).



### Good

GOOD is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to saving lives, raising awareness for organ, eye and tissue donation, correcting misconceptions about donation and increasing the number of people willing to donate life.



[Good's](#) "Circle of Life" newspaper campaign helps people understand more about the donation process, gives donor and recipient families a way to tell their important stories about donation and provides newspapers, organ procurement organizations and funeral homes the information they need to become participating "Circle of Life" Partners

### Knights of Columbus

On Oct. 2, 1881, a small group of men met in the basement of St. Mary's Church on Hillhouse Avenue in New Haven, Connecticut. Called together by their 29-year-old parish priest, Father Michael J. McGivney, these men formed a fraternal society that would one day become the world's largest Catholic family fraternal service organization.



They sought strength in solidarity, and security through unity of purpose and devotion to a holy cause: they vowed to be defenders of their country, their families and their faith.

These men were bound together by the ideal of Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of the Americas, the one whose hand brought Christianity to the New World. Their efforts came to fruition with the incorporation of the Knights of Columbus on March 29, 1882.

They were Knights of Columbus.

The Order has been called "the strong right arm of the Church," and has been praised by popes, presidents and other world leaders, for support of the Church, programs of evangelization and Catholic education, civic involvement and **aid to those in need**.

Father McGivney's founding vision for the Order also included a life insurance program to provide for the widows and orphans of deceased members. The Order's insurance program has expanded substantially to serve more effectively the Knights' growing membership.

Year after year, the Knights of Columbus has earned the highest possible quality ratings for financial soundness from A.M. Best and Standard & Poor's. The Order provides the highest quality insurance, annuity and long-term care products to its members, along with many other fraternal benefits.

The Supreme Council is the governing body of the [Knights of Columbus](#) and is responsible for the development of the organization as a whole. Supreme Council duties include establishing the Order in new regions and setting up regional authorities, defining and advancing its values and goals, undertaking organization-wide initiatives, promoting awareness of the Knights' mission worldwide, and protecting the families of members through its extensive insurance program. Members working in local, or subordinate councils, however, carry on the majority of the Knights' beneficial work.

### Veterans

As a tribute to those who have served our country.



### Military Markers:

When a Veteran was buried in a private cemetery, an application for a Standard Government Headstone or marker (VA Form 40-1330) can be submitted by the next of kin or a representative, such as a cemetery or cemetery association official along with the veterans military or discharge documents.

Military markers are free with free shipping for any war from the American Revolution to the present service (exception, Texas Revolution for Independence, 1836). <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/40-1330.pdf>

Military Grave Flag Holders: <http://www.flagguys.com/gmarker.htm>