

Glossary of **Terms** for Studying Cemeteries

TERM	DEFINITION	TERM	DEFINITION
AE	Age. In Latin, “anno aetatis suae” means “in the specified year of a person’s age.”	H.S. (Latin)	Here is buried.
B.P.O.E.	Benevolent Protective Order of Elks	I.H.S.	Greek spelling of Christ.
Catacomb	An underground network of chambers with recesses in which to place the dead.	Inter	To bury or put a dead body into a grave.
Cemetery	A place for burying the dead.	I.O.O.F.	Independent Order of Oddfellows
Columbarium	A vault with niches for urns containing ashes of the dead.	Mausoleum	A large stately tomb.
Consort	A wife, husband, or companion.	O.E.S.	Order of Eastern Star
C.S.A.	Confederate States Army	Obit	Died
D.S.P. (Latin)	decessit sine prole, meaning died without children.	Obit Sine Prole	Died without children.
D.V.P. (Latin)	decessit vita patris, died in father’s lifetime	Plat/plot	A small piece of ground
D.Y.	Died young	Potter’s Field	A place where unknown persons are buried.
Epitaph	Aa brief saying or literary note, inscribed in a grave marker	Relict	A Widow
Footstone	A stone marking the foot of the grave.	Sarcophagus	A stone coffin, often ornamental
G.A.R.	Grand Army of the Republic	Sepulcher	A burial vault or crypt.
Gravestone	A stone that marks a grave.	V.F.W.	Veterans of Foreign Wars
Headstone	A flat, slab-like stone grave marker placed at the head end of a grave.		

The beginning of symbolism and terminology on gravestones is closely associated with the Victorian Age. Early stones or markers were functional, showing the location of the deceased. They may be a wooden cross or a simple stone. Even table tops or larger markers, while hosting long epitaphs or descriptions, lacked the decoration of later stones. The Victorian age, with its emphasis on art and a reawakening of religious storytelling, gave rise to elaborate use of symbols and language on gravestones.