Isabella and The Pot of Basil was a poem written in 1820 by the English poet John Keats, who borrowed his narrative from the Italian Renaissance poet Giovanni Boccaccio. Isabella was a Florentine merchant’s beautiful daughter whose ambitious brothers disapproved of her romance with the handsome but humbly born Lorenzo, their father’s business manager.

The brothers murdered Lorenzo and told their sister that he had traveled abroad. The distraught Isabella began to decline, wasting away from grief and sadness. She saw the crime in a dream and then went to find her lover’s body in the forest. Taking Lorenzo’s head, she bathed it with her tears and finally hid it in a pot in which she planted sweet basil, a plant associated with lovers.

The painter Jason White Alexander used theatrical effects to render this grim scene, isolating Isabella in a shallow niche and lighting her from below, as if she were an actor on a stage illuminated only with footlights.

This eerie light, the cold monochromatic palette, and the sensuous curves of Isabella’s gown all draw the viewer’s eye to the loving attention Isabella gives the pot, which she gently caresses. Isabella seems lost in an erotic spectral trance, oblivious to the world and to observers. With his strange subject, Alexander created an extraordinary and mysterious image of love gone awry.

This work can be visited at the Boston MFA.

Isabella and the Pot of Basil, 1897
Jason White Alexander (1856-1915)

Isabella and The Pot of Basil

STAINED GLASS WINDOW IN SAINT PATRICK’S
DAFFODILS
EERINESS OF ST. MICHA’S VAULT
GLASNEVIN CEMETERY
UNKNOWN SYMBOL FOR GLASNEVIN
SAND DOLLAR
MORE UNKNOWN SYMBOLS

This is a reproduction of a Fraktur Bookmark, from Winterthur, and is made of watercolor and ink on paper. It is from eastern Pennsylvania, circa 1790-1820. The writing at the bottom is wonderful:

Now see, my child, the group of birds,
in spring, when they are singing, on green branches, pair by pair,
their God a sacrifice, pair by pair,
So sing my child, until you must journey there in heaven’s paradise
The iconography in this beautiful stained glass window to the right is Psalm 150 in which the people are urged to praise God on trumpet, cymbals, organ, harp and bells.

The trumpet conveys the call to action, the call of the spirit, power, glory, war, the yearning for power, glory, fame, praise, death, rallying cry, resurrection and the call to worship.

Cymbals convey vanity, religious order and the dance (especially two cymbals).

The organ conveys the universe, the praise of God from the church and harmony.

The harp conveys a bridge between heaven and earth, contemplation, joy, praise, poetry, music, worship in heaven and sadness.

Bells convey virginity, alarm, death, fertility, health, Health, the heavens, call to worship and the coming of Christ in the Eucharist.

An artist’s creation should be a social force that creates a stir in the world.

Reginald Marsh

I always think of daffodils as one of the first flowers you see when the beginning of spring unfolds. These were photographed in Phoenix Park, Dublin, which is an urban park. It includes large areas of grassland and tree-lined avenues, and since the seventeenth century has been home to a herd of wild Fallow deer. The English name comes from the Irish fionn usce meaning “clear water”.

The daffodil conveys unrequited love, herald of spring, courage, dancing, short-lived beauty, death, mourning, spiritual rebirth (connected to the fact that the flower blooms year after year) and gracefulness. It is associated with Aquarius, the number six and is the emblem of Wales. In flower language, it is known as the great yellow daffodil.

One of our journeys in Dublin was to visit the vault of Saint Michan’s.

Underneath the church are five long burial vaults accessed through doors in the graveyard. The exact dates of construction in unknown but may well date to 1685 when the church was rebuilt. The constant dry atmosphere has caused the mummification of the of the bodies and the preservation of the coffins.

Since Victorian times, visitors have descended the steps to see the mummies and Bram Stoker, creator of the Dracula stories is believe to have visited the vaults in the company of his family.

In one vault can be seen the remains of the famed Crusader, although in reality he never lived to see the crusades. Your guide will even let you touch his finger for good luck!
This monument to the right was commissioned by the friends of James O. Connor, M.P. to commemorate the tragic decimation of his family at one fell stroke. On a June evening in 1890, they had cooked and eaten mussels collected near their home at Seapoint. However, the pond from which the meal had been gathered had become fouled by sewage, and within hours, O’Connor’s wife and four of his five children were dead. The carving shows the cherub-heads of the children protectively enclosed within the mother’s, whilst the wave lashing the pebbled shore presumably indicates the scene of their demise. (text from the book “Death & Design in Victorian Glasnevin”).

Cherubs convey religion, vigilance, “keeper of the threshold”, and executor of God’s will. Four conveys the earth and the material aspect of life. Waves convey regeneration, righteousness, maternity, death and the flux and reflux of life.

I have always heard the Christian legend of the sand dollar. It is connected to the birth and death of Jesus found in this lowly shell. If you examine closely, you will see that you find four nail holes and a fifth one by a Roman’s spear.

On one side is the Easter lily, its center is the star that appeared unto the shepherds and led them from afar.

The Christmas poinsettia, etched on the other side reminds us of His birthday, our happy Christmastide.

Now break the center open, and here you will release the five white doves awaiting to spread good will and peace.
Diane wonders about the Santiago marker is the cross with Loyalty Patience Fidelity Love.
Please let me know if any of these look familiar and I will pass them onto Diane.

If you have any suggestions about these markers, please let me know.