The oldest grave marker in the cemetery belongs to John Rowland, who was William Workman’s friend and business partner. You might think or wonder about many things while looking at his grave.

John Rowland’s Monument

The marker is quite large. Large monuments like this, often meant that the person buried there was wealthy. This was true for Rowland, who was a successful rancher and farmer.

Does the tall stone shaft with what looks like a pyramid on top look familiar? It’s called an obelisk, and it’s the same shape as the Washington Memorial. Obelisks were traditionally used to mark a special location. Some people think they were a popular shape to use on grave markers because they point to the sky, or heaven. Others think they became popular during the late 1800s because of people’s growing interest in ancient Egypt (Egyptians made obelisks to honor their gods).

Many people have statements printed on their grave markers that have a special meaning. These are called epitaphs. “Rest In Peace” (R.I.P.) is an example you may have seen before. Rowland’s epitaph is “Gone Home,” which refers to the Christian idea of going to heaven.

Do you see the cross on the monument? That symbol tells us that Rowland was a Christian (a follower of the teachings of Jesus Christ). If you look closely at the cross, you will notice that it is wrapped in ivy, which symbolizes friendship. People often put things on their tombstones that have special meaning. (See “Symbols in a Cemetery” for more information.)

Symbols in a Cemetery

When you visit an old cemetery you may notice many different pictures or symbols on or around grave markers. Some of these images have roots that go back thousands and thousands of years, and others are more recent. People who lived in America during the Victorian era (between 1837 and 1901), for example, used some of the following symbols on their tombstones to express messages or information about themselves to others:

- Clasped Hands = Farewell or Marriage
- Dog = Loyalty
- Ivy = Friendship
- Lamb = Innocence
- Laurel Wreath = Immortality (everlasting life)
El Campo Santo (The Sacred Ground)

While some people think of cemeteries as scary or sad places, others find them interesting and comforting. People visit cemeteries for many reasons. Some visit to remember loved ones who have died, or because they like history. Some even visit because they like to look at the sculptures and symbols found in old cemeteries.

The Workman family created El Campo Santo around 1855. There were not many people living around Los Angeles at the time, and very few cemeteries. If you owned a large piece of land like the Workmans did, it was common to set aside a small portion to use as a cemetery. It showed that the family felt a strong connection to their land. The Workmans even built a small chapel and surrounded the cemetery with a brick wall. Unfortunately, the chapel burned down in 1903. When the Workmans’ grandson, Walter P. Temple, and his family took over the ranch about 15 years later, they built the mausoleum that you see today where the chapel once stood.

St. Nicholas Chapel

El Campo Santo Jumble
Unscramble the words below. Hint: You can find these words used somewhere in the handout.

HAPCLE
ETRYEMCE
REULAL TERWAH
VRAEG KRAMRE
KBLISEO

Now that you have unscrambled the words, match them with their definition.

_____________________ A tall four-sided pillar made of stone that narrows to a pyramid shape on top.

_____________________ An area of land used to bury those that have passed away.

_____________________ An object, usually carved from stone, that identifies who and where a person is buried.

_____________________ An image on tombstones that means immortality or everlasting life.

_____________________ A place of worship.