Understanding
Treasure Signs and Symbols

Charles Garrett
Front cover photo:
These boulders mark the location of a treasure hidden by an Indian tribe in the Western United States. This tribe hid its tribal wealth in a cave prior to a conflict with the federal government in the 1880s. They planned to recover the treasure after the war. This is one of several treasure markers examined in later years in this area. Remember, when searching for hidden treasure signs always search diligently for “out-of-place” markers. See other such marker photos in this book.

Rear cover photo:
Explorers often discover ancient signs and symbols such as these petroglyphs on this boulder. No one should ever deface such precious historical works of art.
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Author Charles Garrett, seen on one of his expeditions through Arizona, regards treasure signs and symbols in the field as road-maps to old treasure.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more than 45 years, Charles Garrett has pioneered the development of the modern metal detector, demonstrated its capabilities in searches throughout the world and devoted himself to teaching others to use detectors. He has recovered treasures of all types while searching all over the world. Garrett has encountered various treasure signs and symbols in the field, some the ancient pictoglyphs of Native Americans and others such as age-old symbology of Spanish people.

The author’s lifetime interest in treasure hunting prepared him to excel in that field. After earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering, Charles Garrett worked at Texas Instruments and Teledyne Geotech developing systems and equipment required by America’s fledgling space effort. While devoting himself to his hobby, he designed and built his own metal detectors. This avocation became a career when he and his wife, Eleanor, founded Garrett Electronics in 1964 to manufacture and market his inventions.
Garrett quality is praised today throughout the world. From the beginning, Garrett vowed “to practice what I preach” by field-testing his equipment—to insure that each detector works for customers regardless of ground conditions and environment. He has become recognized as an unofficial spokesman for the hobby of treasure hunting and the metal detecting industry through a long list of honors, personal appearances and books.

This book on early treasure signs and symbols marks the latest installment in Charles Garrett’s pocket-sized treasure hunting field guides. He is devoted to disseminating such knowledge in a format that is both convenient and effective for helping individuals recover more treasure with their metal detectors.
INTRODUCTION

I am excited to release this fifth volume in the Garrett treasure-hunting field guide series because treasure signs and symbols have always been a great fascination of mine. I have encountered these marks during my many years in the field and can say with experience that understanding them can truly help you uncover great riches, just as it has helped me.

Many of these early guides to treasure in the West originated from Native Americans of North America and Spaniards exploring their new land. The use of such field markings actually dates back to the beginning of mankind. Cavemen painted on cave walls with charcoal sticks. Early Europeans designed special crests or family symbols. Ancient civilizations around the globe created their own symbols for communication, identification and education.

As people hid things of value, they created treasure symbols to help guide them back to their treasure trove later or to enable them
to describe the location to others. Pirates and outlaws used signs and symbols to mark their buried booty. The outlaw Jesse James carved a particular “J” into trees to pinpoint his caches. One such Jesse James symbol—on a section of tree that was removed and sent to me—is currently on display in Garrett’s treasure museum in Garland.

There are far too many symbols and combinations of them to fully cover in this book. I will, however, present basic symbols, key signs and words that you may encounter in your quest for treasure. You should learn to properly interpret these symbols after you find them in order to be successful.

Your final step in recovering an old cache is to use a high-quality metal detector that can help you pinpoint the coveted treasure. I trust that this book will become another valuable tool in your treasure-hunting arsenal.

I’ll see you in the field…

Charles Garrett

Garland, Texas
EARLY TREASURE SIGNS

Man has always concealed his treasures and other valuable possessions. People hid riches, food, weapons or even sacred burial sites. In many cases, such possessions were stored in remote caves, on mountainsides, under rock outcroppings or near some geographic landmark that could later be recognized. In order to relocate their caches or describe their location to others, individuals marked the landscape to guide them back to their stash.

In some cases, this was accomplished by stacking rocks in a particular manner. Native Americans often bent young trees and tied them off so that they would continue to point in a particular direction as they matured. Such early monuments and trail markers were meant to appear natural to the casual passer-by. But those who knew what they were looking for found trail markings as good as a modern road map.

Early tribesmen, Mayans, Incas and Aztecs used pictographs and petroglyphs to help them remember where they concealed their precious
goods. Hernan Cortes and the early Spanish explorers were wise to learn the Indian symbols and soon adapted some of them with Spanish variations. Some of the Indian tribes were reported by the Spanish to display vast amounts of gold, silver, pearls and jewelry—some of which was doubtlessly cached away and never recovered. Such riches were hidden after the Indians learned that Spaniards were willing to kill them for their precious possessions.

Numerous other cultures—including Spaniards, Mexicans, Egyptians, Romans, Greeks and Phoenicians—also left cryptic signs and symbols as guides to their concealed items. These pictorial guides were carved into trees, etched or painted onto rocks or printed on animal skins or maps. Pirates, bandits and prospectors adopted many of the same emblems.

Symbols have even been used to help people survive. In the era of the Great Depression in the United States, hobos left special symbols to mark places that provided their greatest treasure—life-sustaining food. Special marks denoted where a generous person lived or the
location of a business that might offer a hand-out. Hobos even made symbols to warn their companions of a mean dog or other menaces.

Those hiding treasure caches certainly did not want to make them easy to find, so one symbol might lead the searcher to a spot where a second symbol or map could be found. In some cases, the person hiding the goods expected not to return for years or perhaps even not at all. Yet, they wanted to leave some path that could lead others to what they had stashed.

The person hiding the treasure even needed to give himself a reminder of where to dig for his hidden loot. Some of the symbols that were left behind could therefore indicate a number of things: the treasure itself, directions, distances, time, personal identification, landmarks or even warnings related to the treasure trove’s location.

Florida Indians were known to carve symbols into conch shells or onto hammered-out Spanish pieces of eight. Pirates often incorporated astrological, zodiac, Masonry and even witchcraft symbols into their “treasure maps.” Trees were often carved with multiple symbols
and sometimes other trees or rock formations in the same area provided additional clues. The navigational marks on one old tree might very well lead to another marked tree and so on.

Many symbols used in different cultures have similar shapes and meanings. In some cases, not all symbols can be understood—particularly those where a person created a personal emblem for recognition purposes. Only an individual who knew a great deal about that other person might be able to spot and interpret such a personalized symbol.

This field guide simply does not have the space to cover all known treasure signs and symbols. I will, however, present some of the more common signs that today’s treasure hunter might have the good fortune of encountering. The key to finding an old treasure cache is good research and learning how to find and interpret the clues that were left behind.
SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Before we discuss the various symbols themselves, I’ll relate a few of my own encounters with treasure-hunting signs and symbols. Some have led to great treasures, while others have caused me to conduct research to decipher just what the map symbols were saying.

Javiere Castellanos, one of the author’s companions on a treasure expedition into Mexico, points to a circle on a mountain slope. Such circles served as clues, or markers, that helped lead Garrett’s team to silver caches.
In the early 1970s, a group of men joined me for a treasure-hunting expedition into Mexico’s Sierra Madre. We journeyed to the primitive village of Batopilas, a centuries-old gold and silver producing area. On several Batopilas area mountains are caves perched high upon the slopes. Caves such as these were often used by travelers and outlaws alike to hide themselves or things they didn’t want others to find.

The Garrett search team followed painted white symbols in the mountains to recover these nuggets of silver ore.
We were searching for a famed silver ore cache that was reportedly hidden in this mountain range. Clues were evident along the slopes of this region. Circular painted symbols had been applied to the rocks as location markers leading to the treasure. We followed these painted symbols and, with the aid of our metal detectors, were able to discover sacks of silver ore nuggets that had been hidden in this area decades before.

Indians often marked trees to pinpoint their trails or to indicate directions to a treasure trove or some sacred location. The young trees which they bent, twisted or tied into a particular direction often grew into malformed adult trees. In areas were trees were not available or practical for carving, Indians marked their trails or caches in other ways.

Roy Lagal—my treasure hunting buddy—and I have encountered several piles of stones that had been used by Indians as markers. We have found large rocks stacked in peculiar ways or moved into positions that could not have occurred naturally. Roy and I quickly learned to
Indians often tied off young trees to point out a trail or the path to a treasure. Even in its old age, this deformed oak still clearly points toward some old trail.

fire up our metal detectors when something just seemed out of place.

During one expedition into old Indian country, Roy and I were eagerly searching an area that offered us great hope based on our research. We scoured the rugged terrain for half an hour before we found a lucky marker.

“Do you see it?” Roy yelled excitedly.

It took me a couple of minutes staring in the direction Roy was pointing—but then I saw it.
These heavy boulders, located in a fairly remote area, were obviously propped against each other to serve as a guide. The treasure hunters who noticed this unnatural marker found an Indian cave cache site nearby.
A large, flat piece of shale (similar to that shown in the photo on the preceding page) suddenly became an obvious treasure marker to me. This particular rock—roughly six inches thick, three feet wide and about eight feet tall—was wedged down between two adjacent boulders. The rock was left sticking up about two feet higher than the boulders it was wedged between. It was clearly something unusual and out of its natural place.

This particular area was off the beaten path for most people. We knew it was an old Indian sign that likely indicated a hidden cache. The marker led us to a small cavern tucked away in the rocky bluffs below. The main area of the cave was void of stashed goods or treasure. We realized that other people had been in this particular cave in recent years. (They left clues of their presence which were not hard to decipher.) Momentarily disappointed, Roy and I completed a thorough sweep of this cave with our metal detectors. Our reward was finding a tomahawk and cache of weapons up on a small ledge that the Indians had stashed during the 19th century.
Another odd rock formation led me to a great silver cache on a treasure expedition in the 1980s in Canada. By chance, I spotted the top of a large rock that seemed oddly unnaturally protruding from the ground. I scanned around this rock and picked up two strong metallic signals, one on either side of the rock. After digging enough soil around this rock, I removed it and realized that it had been wedged down
into a hole to conceal what was under it. Sure enough, on either side of the base of this five-gallon-can-sized rock, my detector picked up nice silver readings. I soon recovered two caches of high-graded silver ore that a miner had hidden here many decades before.

The moral to both of these examples is to be aware of your surroundings at all times and to look for things that seem out of place. Even today, people use signs and symbols to mark treasure caches. I recovered a decades-old coin

Mroczkowski felt that this “bursting sun” pictoglyph was an indication of a nearby buried treasure.

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The author holds pieces of high-graded silver ore from two caches he discovered in Canada by observing a treasure sign in the field.
cache by spotting a spike that had been driven long ago into an oak tree. It had been driven under the bottom side of a limb and was not easy to see. I ran my detector below where the spike was directing me and—bingo!

My advice is to keep a sharp eye out for the unnatural in your surroundings.

You should also have a good understanding of the symbols outlined in this book. I’ve long treasured such knowledge. An old hunting friend of mine named Bill Mahan put out a great pamphlet in 1963 called *Early Spanish Treasure Signs & Symbols*. I literally wore the cover off that little booklet in my many years of consulting Bill’s guide.

I hope this guide will serve you as well. Today’s treasure hunter can also find a wealth of information about Spanish and Indian treasure symbols on the Internet.
INTERPRETING YOUR DISCOVERY

The symbols in this book are important to understand in order to help find your treasure. When you discover that first symbol, then the real fun begins: the quest to solve an ages-old challenge!

Some symbols simply will not be understood. Some will be the unique mark of the

This serpent symbol, outlined in white to highlight its details, was presented to the author and is on display in Garrett’s treasure-hunting museum in Garland, Texas.
maker, a primitive personal logo if you will. That person’s “crest” might just be the proof that this position is indeed the correct location.

Take care to document the symbols you find. Take a photo, if possible. Photos, however, often will not show the finite details of a symbol carved into a tree. It is therefore a great idea to sketch out the symbol you see. If the symbol is carved into a rough stone surface you might even be able to carefully transfer it to a sheet of paper by tracing the outline or lightly rubbing a pencil against the paper.

You can also use white poster paint or chalk to highlight or outline the symbols before you photograph them. Do not use permanent paint! Your highlights should be easily rinsed off with water or by nature’s next rain. Symbols should by treasured for the rare guideposts they are; don’t destroy them by carving or defacing them in any way.

This is especially true if you encounter ancient Indian pictoglyphs on stones. Report or record your discovery but never destroy such a rare piece of history. Remember the treasure
This old tree section contains a specific “J” symbol that was reportedly used by the outlaw Jesse James to mark an area where he had hidden a cache. This symbol, again highlighted in white to show the detail, is also on display in Garrett’s museum.
hunter’s code of ethics which we should all follow as responsible searchers. Simply put, I’ve always preached that you should leave a place in better condition than you found it.

Check out the area around the location of any treasure symbol. Draw a map of the area, marking any symbols you find along with precise distances and directions between them and nearby landmarks. Take note of these significant landmarks—rivers, creeks, old trees, rock formations, etc. Try to research this area to find who might have left these signs.

Use your metal detector to search the area where the treasure clues seem to be steering you. If you can’t find anything, study your map and its symbols again.
COMMON TREASURE SYMBOLS

Many signs and symbols can have multiple meanings—an important fact to consider as you attempt to interpret an old drawing or map. Some early Indian pictographs—which can be found in all parts of the United States—simply cannot be interpreted. Many, however, are quite clear and point toward the location of an item or where an event once happened.

Spaniards later used some of the same early Indian signs and symbols with only slight variations. While space limits the volume of such symbols that can be discussed, I will begin by covering some of the more commonly encountered treasure glyphs.

**Sun Symbols**

A circular sun may often be found with various accompanying signal clues. For example, a setting sun would indicate that you should look toward the west.
Distance and Measurement Symbols

The Spanish word “vara” was an early measurement of distance used by land surveyors. A vara measured 33 inches or about the normal stride of a Spanish soldier. Another common Spanish land measurement was the league. The land measurement of a league varied from 2.12 to 2.18 miles.

Estado was a term used to indicate the minimum depth that items of importance were to be buried, set at 5 feet 7 inches. Pirates and sailors also used the term braza to indicate a depth of 5’7” for treasure. On their maps, the pirate replaced the term braza with paces or varas. A tall man’s pace could be significantly different from that of a short man; but the pirate knew to use the braza distance of 5’7” for each vara or pace distance indicated on a map.
Distance and Measurement Symbols

- **MINUTE OR FEET**
- **INCHES OR SECONDS**
- **MASONRY SIGH = 4 VARAS, FOLLOW POINT OF TRIANGLES OR ARM WITH 4 MARKS**
- **5 VARAS TO LEFT, 5 SECONDS OR 5 INCHES TO LEFT.**
- **4 TIMES DISTANCE, FOLLOW POINT, 4 VARAS**
- **2 VARAS**
- **HAND WITH 3 FINGERS = 3 VARAS, 3 ETC., DIRECTION POINTER**
- **STILL FARTHER**
- **UP 4 FEET OR 4 VARAS**
- **ONE FINGER AND HAND = ONE VARA, ONE ETC., FOLLOW DIRECTION OF FINGER**
Arrows and Directional Symbols

The arrow was a very common symbol that indicates the direction or distance necessary to travel toward something.
Understanding Treasure Signs and Symbols
Compass Degree Symbols

Some old maps will contain symbols of compass degrees to help steer you toward your treasure.

**Semi-Sextile = 20°**

**45°**

**Sextile = 60°**

**90°**

**120°**

**150°**

**180°**

**Infinity**

**Perpendicular**

**One and a Half Quadrates = 135°**

**Conjunction**

**Same Longitude, Right Ascension**

**SQUARE, 90°**

**Apart in Longitude or Right Ascension**
Treasure Direction Symbols
You may also encounter a wide variety of symbols which offer information on how to proceed to the next sign or to the cache.

- **TREASURE BELOW**
- **TREASURE ABOVE**
- **KNIFE POINTS TO TREASURE OR TO NEXT SIGN**
- **CAVE OR SHAFT, FILLED, STEPS**
- **POINTING TO NEXT SIGN**
- **PIPE = STEM POINTS TO TREASURE OR NEXT SIGN, FOLLOW STEM, TO ONE SIDE**
- **TREASURE IN MOUNTAIN OR CAVE, TUNNEL, LOOK UP, OVER DEPOSIT**
- **MARKS SPOT, ON LINE, FOLLOW LONGEST ARM, SWORD**
Treasure Direction Symbols

- **Church Treasure**: Follow large knob, church objects here.
- **Rocks Enclose**: Follow triangle.
- **Mark Spot**: Follow point of longest arm.
- **Variation**: Follow point to treasure.
- **Around Bend**: Away from triangle.
- **Around Hill**: Etc., then to right.
- **Rocks Enclose Treasure**: In triangle.
- **Go Up Slope**: Go up slope.
- **Go Down Slope**: Go down slope.
Treasure Direction Symbols

- MEASURE OFF CURVE
- SHOE POINTING, IN ROUTE
- GOING IN RIGHT DIRECTION
- DEER TRACKS OR OTHER ANIMAL TRACKS = PLENTY GAME, FOLLOW TRACKS
- TURKEY TRACKS, CROW TRACKS, FOLLOW DIRECTION

TAKE RIGHT HAND
TAKE LEFT HAND
Treasure Direction Symbols

- PAN, HANDLE POINTS IN TREASURE DIRECTION
- HORSE SHOE WITH DOT = CHECK FOR SOMETHING BELOW
- PATHS CROSS, THIS PLACE, HERE
- HORSE SHOE POINTING IN DIRECTION TO CONTINUE
- HORSE POINTING DOWN = TREASURE OR NEXT SIGN BELOW
- VARIATION IN TRAIL = FOLLOW POINT
- ANCHOR, FOLLOW, ARROW

Understanding Treasure Signs and Symbols
Treasure Location Symbols

- FOLLOW POINTS, THE FOUR GREAT PRIMARY FORCES, GO OPPOSITE

- TREASURE CLOSE BY, LOOK FOR LAST SIGN

- TREASURE BELOW IN HOLE, CAVE OR TUNNEL

- SAME, LOOK ABOVE AND BELOW, 2 LOCATIONS

- CIRCLE OF ROCKS AROUND TREE = TREASURE HERE

- BELL = NEAR TREASURE, FAVORITE PIRATE SYMBOL

- CIRCLE OF ROCKS ON INDIAN MOUND OR HILL = TREASURE HERE

- TREASURE BELOW

- CLEAR DEPOSIT IN TRIANGLE OF TREES OR ROCKS

- GOLD

- NEW MOON DIG HERE

- BOX OR CHEST, BURIED HERE, TO BREAK, ON LINE

- VARIANT OF CROSS CHECK SOMETHING NEARBY, OR 4, OR TREASURE IN CENTER ROCK, LANDMARKS, TRIANGLE OF TREES, 18&19 OF GOLD TREASURE BELOW

- ROCK, LANDMARKS, TRIANGLE OF TREES, 18&19 OF GOLD TREASURE BELOW

- OR HILL = TREASURE

- ROCK, LANDMARKS, TRIANGLE OF TREES, 18&19 OF GOLD TREASURE BELOW

- TURTLE OR ANIMAL GO UP SLOPE GO DOWN SLOPE

- HOLE, TREASURE IN TUNNEL MARK SPOT, FOLLOW POINT

- SHAFT FILLED, TREASURE HERE OR CONTAINING COVERING LOCATION

- CHURCH TREASURE, AROUND HILL, STONE, IN TRIANGLE ETC., THEN TO RIGHT OF LONGEST ARM PATHS CROSS, BELOW TREASURE IN TUNNEL MARK SPOT, FOLLOW DIRECTION LOOK BELOW OR TREASURE BELOW TREPARE DIRECTIONS TREASURE DIRECTIONS

- FENCE OR CAVE OR TUNNEL TREASURE IN FLAT STONE OR STONES CIRCLE OF ROCKS AROUND

- ARROW POSSIBLE CONTAINING SHAFT FILLED, TREASURE HERE OR COVERING LOCATION AWAY FROM TRIANGLE (ANY OF 3 DIRECTIONS) CHURCH OBJECTS HERE FOLLOW POINT TO TREASURE ETC., THEN TO RIGHT CHURCH TREASURE, AROUND HILL, STONE IN TRIANGLE ETC., THEN TO RIGHT TO TREASURE OF LONGEST ARM PATHS CROSS, BELOW TREASURE IN TUNNEL MARK SPOT, FOLLOW DIRECTION LOOK BELOW OR TREASURE BELOW TREPARE DIRECTIONS TREASURE DIRECTIONS

- FENCE OR CAVE OR TUNNEL TREASURE IN FLAT STONE OR STONES CIRCLE OF ROCKS AROUND

Understanding Treasure Signs and Symbols
Treasure Location Symbols

- **Treasure Here or Pointing to Treasure (Any of 3 Directions)**
- **Treasure Below**
- **Turtle or Animal Symbol = Treasure Below**
- **Holds In or Containings**
- **Wells or Shaft Filled, Possible Containings Treasure**
- **Check Something Below**
- **Flat Stone or Stones Covering Location**
- **Triangle of Trees, Rock, Landmarks, Treasure in Center**
- **Treasure in Cave or Caves**

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Treasure Location Symbols

NEW MOON POINTING DOWN, DIG HERE, SILVER, CAVE NEARBY, OVER CAVE

LOOK IN TUNNEL OR MINE SHAFT

SYMBOLS OF GOLD

SYMBOLS OF GOLD

BOX OR CHEST, BURIED HERE, OR SQUARE FOOT

SYMBOLS OF GOLD

RISING SUN = TREASURE BELOW

ON LINE, LAND MARK, OR TO BREAK, TO DIVIDE, OR 10

PRECIOUS STONES NEARBY, OR 4, OR VARIANT OF CROSS

MINE OR TUNNEL CLOSED, ROCK ROOM, LIVING QUARTERS

SHAFT TO TUNNEL AT FOOT OF HILL

STEPS TO TREASURE OR IN CAVE, 3 CHEST OR 3 ETC.
Treasure Location Symbols

- LADDER = CLIMB TO TREASURE
- DAGGER = TREASURE BELOW
- ANCHOR = TREASURE BELOW, FAVORITE PIRATE SYMBOL, STOP HERE
- TREASURE BELOW
- TREASURE ABOVE
- TREASURE IN TUNNEL OR SPRING, LOOK IN HOLE
- GOLD OR ORE NEARBY
- HORSESHOES = TREASURE BELOW
- POT = TREASURE HERE
- OPENING, MINE OR CAVE CONCEALED

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Treasure Location Symbols

- WINDLASS = MINE OR TREASURE BELOW
- BRACKETS = TREASURE NEARBY
- CHANGE DIRECTIONS
- GO UP
- FOLLOW 90º OR FOLLOW POINT
- ON COURSE, FOLLOW IN EITHER DIRECTION
- FOLLOW TO EAST (CAN BE A “W”, “S” OR “N”)
- NORTH OR FOLLOW OPPOSITE COURSE TO SOUTH
Treasure Location Symbols

- **Pointing Limb =** Follow Limb, often used by Spaniards, Pirates
- **Gold Neaby**
- **Treasure in Opening**
- **Hole in Tree =** Sight Thru hole to location
- **Chest or Box, 180° to Treasure**
- **Triangle of Trees, Rocks, etc. Treasure on Open Side**
- **Follow Longest Point for 4 Varas, etc.**
- **Treasure Here**
- **Spathe = Dig Here**

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Understanding Treasure Signs and Symbols
Turtle Signs and Symbols

The turtle is an important treasure symbol used to point to a trail or to give direction to a hiding place. If you see a turtle with markings on his shell, each mark represents 1 vara in distance. The number of marks is often followed by a vara arrow pointing in a particular direction. Three marks followed by a down-pointing arrow would indicate to proceed 3 varas south.

A turtle with its head removed indicates that the treasure has been removed. If the head seems to have been recently removed from the original carving or sketch, it is possible that another hunter is hoping to frustrate you from searching any further. My advice is...don’t give up!

FOLLOW TURTLE, TREASURE, TO NEXT SIGN

FOLLOW TURTLE, TREASURE, TO NEXT SIGN BY FOLLOWING HEAD
Turtle Signs and Symbols

- 3 DIAMONDS AND VARA SYMBOL INDICATES TO GO 3 VARAS IN THIS DIRECTION
- SHELL MARKED TO MEAN "GO 4 VARAS IN DIRECTION OF TURTLE’S HEAD"
- FOLLOW TURTLE BUT GO IN DIRECTION OF HIS TAIL
- STOP, DANGER, OBJECTS HIDDEN
- SLOW, NOTE FEET CLOSE TO BODY
- FEET ARE OBVERSE = ON RIGHT SIDE
Snake Signs and Symbols

The turtle was also commonly used as a warning or to indicate the direction to travel. Some were drawn or carved as mere curved lines with a triangular or oval head.

COILED SNAKE = TREASURE BENEATH, OR HEAD OR TAIL POINTS TO LOCATION, DISTANCE 3 VARAS

HEAD UP = GO IN DIRECTION OF HEAD TO NEXT SIGN

HEAD POINTS DOWN = GO IN DIRECTION OF HEAD, 10X DISTANCE, TO GROUND, TO TREASURE, OR TO SIGN

HEAD OR TAIL TO NEXT SIGN

RATTLESNAKE = PROCEED WITH CAUTION

HEAD POINTS TO TREASURE
Snake Signs and Symbols

BLACK SNAKE = SAFE TO FOLLOW

HEAD = DIRECTION OR ENEMY

FOLLOW AROUND TO LEFT

STAY ONLY TO RIGHT

HEAD POINTS TO TREASURE

TO THE LEFT, DANGER

SNake GOING DOWN = MEASURE TIP TO GROUND, 10X TO NEXT SIGN OR TREASURE

HEAD = DIRECTION OR ENEMY

FOLLOW AROUND TO RIGHT, ALSO TO TREASURE BENEATH

DOWN, BENEATH

HEAD = DIRECTION OR ENEMY

FOLLOW AROUND TO LEFT

STAY ONLY TO RIGHT

HEAD = DIRECTION OR ENEMY

FOLLOW AROUND TO RIGHT, ALSO TO TREASURE BENEATH

HEAD POINTS TO TREASURE

TO THE LEFT, DANGER
Sample Tree Markings

GOLD, THE ATTAINMENT, TREASURE

HORN, HARMONY

RATTLESNAKE, HEAD POINTS TO LOCATION

TREASURE TO THE LEFT

MOON WITH DIRECTIONAL MARKS TO THE RIGHT

EYE WATCHING LOCATION

Arrows

4 & 5

GOLD, THE ATTAINMENT, TREASURE

EYE WATCHING LOCATION

RATTLESNAKE, HEAD POINTS TO LOCATION

TREASURE TO THE LEFT

MOON WITH DIRECTIONAL MARKS TO THE RIGHT
Moon Symbols

MOON IN CLOUDS, FAR Ther, LOOK HIGHER
ASCENDING MOON
NEW MOON, GO TO RIGHT, TIDES, TIDAL WATERS
DESCENDING MOON
GO TO LEFT
GO TO RIGHT
MOON IN WOODS, LOOK IN FOREST
MOON, ALSO SUN, FIRE, FACE OF WATER
WANING MOON, LOOK BELOW
SPANISH SYMBOL = MOON, MONTH, TIME
ECLIPSE, DANGER, LOOK HERE

MOON OVER MOUNTAINS, TRAVEL TO MOUNTAINS, WEST

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Understanding Treasure Signs and Symbols

Time Markings and Symbols

SUN SYMBOLS = HAPPINESS, DAYS JOURNEY, NUMBER OF DAYS

HOURGLASS, 1 DAY
MOON = 3 MONTHS
SUN = 3 DAYS
SHORT TIME, SHORT DISTANCE
DAY, A DAY JOURNEY
SUN = 4 DAYS
NUMBER OF DAYS JOURNEY, LOGIC AND REASONING
NUMBER OF DAYS AND NIGHTS
SUNDIAL = 1 DAY, FARTHER TO GO
Danger Symbols

VARIATIONS OF STARS WHICH INDICATE DEATH

LEO THE LION OR DANGER

DO NOT RECOVER IN DAYTIME

WAR

WARRIORS OR DEATH

POISONOUS

VERY POISONOUS

FOUR POINT STAR INDICATES GRAVE DANGER

SPANISH LIGHTING BOLT OR ABSOLUTE DEATH; CAN ALSO INDICATE THAT A DEATH TRAP IS NEAR THE TREASURE

SIX POINT STAR INDICATES MORE GRAVE DANGER
Danger Symbols

BATTLE AXE, DEATH OR DANGER

DEAD PERSON

DEFEAT OR DEATH

DEATH OR CAMPFIRE

WATER OR DEATH

IMMINENT DANGER
HOSTILE INDIANS OR LONG STRETCH WITHOUT WATER

DANGER, POISON OR RATTLESNAKE JAW

DANGER, LOOK HERE

GILA MONSTER, DESERT, POISON

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Crosses and Religious Symbols

EARLY CROSS

OR

AMONG THE
FIRST SIGNS

EARLY CROSS

LATIN CROSS

LATIN CROSS

VARIATION

ST. PETERS
CROSS

GREEK CROSS

PERUVIAN CROSS

ST. ANDREWS CROSS,
THE ROMAN CROSS
OR “BARRIER”

CHURCH CROSS =
RELIGIOUS ARTICLES

CROSS OF LORRAINE,
THE PATRIARCHAL CROSS

ST. ANTHONY’S
CROSS, VARIATION

CHURCH CROSS

CROSS ON SPANISH
SILVER BARS

JESUIT SYMBOLS
OF GOLD,
THE ATTAINMENT
CROSSES AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

ST. ANTONY’S CROSS, VARIATION

CHURCH CROSS

CROSS OF LORRAINE, THE PATRIARChAL CROSS

CROSS ON SPANISH SILVER BARS

CHURCH CROSS = RELIGIOUS ARTICLES

JESUIt SYMBOLS OF GOLD, THE ATTAINMENT

ST. PETERS CROSS
SPANISH TREASURE TERMS

Treasure hunters who have studied old maps or written notes regarding a treasure often encounter the Spanish language. As Spain expanded into the New World, many words from its language made their way into other cultures and will be found during your research of land grants, waybills or field surveys.

The way a Spanish word is interpreted today might be quite different from its meaning hundreds of years ago. Along the same lines, a unit of measure might be slightly different in different cultures or in different countries.

One such troubling treasure word is *vara*, a word commonly used by Spaniards, Mexicans, Indians and even early Texas settlers to measure distance. The length of one vara, however, has varied over time from 30 inches up to 35.9 inches and was once inconsistent even between the different provinces within Spain. In general a vara was approximately 32 or 33 inches in length, or about the normal stride of an average
Spanish soldier. Fortunately, Spain accepted the metric system in the late 1860s but treasure terminology prior to that time frame will often involve varas. Treasure symbols for vara can indicate how many paces or sets of these 33-inch lengths must be stepped off to reach a particular point.

In North America, the vara had slightly different measurement lengths. In Mexico, the vara’s equivalent in inches was 32.99. This was later rounded to 33 inches in California while Texas used a 33.33-inch vara for early land measurements.

Many other words of Spanish origin will likely be encountered in your research of old documents. Although I recommend adding a Spanish to English dictionary to your treasure-hunting arsenal, it is worth considering a few other significant treasure words that are of Spanish origin. For example, the terms braza and estado were also used to measure distances.

Pirates and sailors used the term braza as a measuring distance of 5 feet 7 inches. Each “pace” or vara distance given on a map was
thus walked off in lengths of 5 feet 7 inches. The term estado, used by Spanish Jesuits or Catholic priests, was also measured as 5 feet 7 inches. One estado was the minimum depth measurement that items of importance were to be buried.

The term *league* is another important word in determining distances to treasures. The statute (land) league was a distance that varied between 2.12 and 2.18 miles while a nautical league varied between 3.18 and 3.27 miles. There are far too many words to cover in this book but the treasure hunter should be aware of at least some common terms of measurement that can be quite troublesome.

The following brief list includes translations of common Spanish words that could be encountered on treasure-related documents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>alhaja</em></td>
<td>jewel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cajón</em></td>
<td>large box, chest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cavar</em></td>
<td>dig, excavate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>cobre</em></td>
<td>copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>codo</em></td>
<td>half of a vara (16”*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Word</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entierro</td>
<td>hidden treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>escondida</td>
<td>hidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>este</td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harqueta</td>
<td>fork in trail or stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iglesia</td>
<td>church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joya</td>
<td>jewels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>llano</td>
<td>plain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loma</td>
<td>small hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marca</td>
<td>mark, sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moneda</td>
<td>money or coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>norte</td>
<td>north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oeste</td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oro</td>
<td>gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pasada</td>
<td>passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patacón</td>
<td>silver coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plata</td>
<td>silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quilate</td>
<td>carat (24 carat gold)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sur, sud</td>
<td>south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tesoro</td>
<td>treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiro</td>
<td>mine shaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vena</td>
<td>vein of ore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPECIAL ADVICE

• Make sure you have a trustworthy hunting partner. There’s nothing more heart-breaking than to track down a treasure, solve the clues of the symbols and then get double-crossed. Trust me...I’ve been taken before. I worked closely with someone I trusted to successfully locate a cache site in Louisiana. We planned to excavate the area the next morning but I returned to find nothing but fresh dirt and a hole where something large had been removed!

• Consult a specialist if you find words from another language you are not familiar with. In the Spanish language, for example, word combinations might be interpreted differently in various regions.

• Be wary of trickery when following directions from a group of treasure symbols. Some signs, seemingly clear, might actually be pointing you in exactly the opposite direction.
Other treasures could be buried *in the middle*—halfway between your first symbol and the point you believed to be the ending spot. Use your metal detector to sweep the whole area from one end to the other.

- **Research source materials.** Old family stories, tribal legends, court and church records, diaries, wills and archival documents sometimes prove to be just as productive as a genuine treasure map. Legends from the old days usually contain a certain degree of historical fact, even when intertwined with the hyperbole.

- **Depend on items that have not changed with time.** When following signs, remember that the treasure you are seeking was probably hidden long ago. Trees and shrubs have grown while rock formations, although weathered, have remained essentially the same.

- **Never destroy or alter signs or symbols** that you may encounter. Follow them and appreciate them but leave these ancient artifacts
alone so that others may learn from and enjoy them in their original state.

- **Pay close attention to symbols of danger when they are presented.** Some were meant to scare off treasure seekers while others could be an indication of a trap that was set. Death traps have been found where a heavy boulder is propped in a precarious position—ready to fall on the unwary fortune hunter who digs in the wrong spot!

- **Use logic and a little imagination** when reading a sign. Some treasures have been found by simply following the ancient directions. Other treasures await only those who can “think outside the box”—misdirection was a common tactic of those who left symbols. A little luck and perseverance are often just as productive as knowledge. Mine entrances, mines shafts and cave entrances have also been booby-trapped to protect treasures. The *lightning bolt symbol* indicated that a large gold or silver treasure was nearby but that deathtraps were present.
• I’ll leave you with the best treasures signs advice I know to offer. **Look for something or things unusual or out of place.** Anything you can spot that could *not* have happened naturally is important. Such abnormalities, although often subtle, might be just the treasure clues that could lead you to great discoveries!

    I wish you good health, good hunting and the good fortune to find your own treasure signs and symbols.
    I’ll see you in the field!
OTHER RAM BOOKS

Please note that RAM Books, the publishing division of Garrett Metal Detectors, continues to release new titles each year related to treasure hunting, gold prospecting, coin hunting and relic recovery.

To see a current list of titles available from RAM Books, please consult a Garrett Metal Detectors hobby catalog or visit:

www.garrett.com

After reaching Garrett’s website, visit the Hobby Division section and select “RAM Books” to see all of our current titles. An order form is available on our site which can printed and mailed with your requested titles and payment.
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