

HERALDRY

Heraldry is defined as the art or science of blazoning or describing in appropriate technical terms coats of arms and other heraldic and armorial insignia. The system is of very ancient origin. We can trace it back to the Jewish tribes; and subsequently we find it in a more elaborate form in the leading families of Greece and Rome, who bore distinguishing symbols, illustrative of, or pertaining to, deeds of valor or merit performed by their ancestors.

In its modern sense, however, the heraldic art dates from the time of the Crusades, and was reduced to its present perfect system by the French; and it was not until that period that the crest or cognizance was generally adopted. The crest is a device worn on top of the shield, usually placed on a wreath, and was borne by knights and other personages of rank, when clad in armor, to distinguish them in battle, and as a mark for their followers and supporters. At first these badges were worn on the helmet, to render them more plainly visible, or on the arm, but in later times were transferred to the shield or armor. Many families have preserved their mottoes, or watch-words, which usually represent some characteristic of the family, or sometimes the war cry of the clan. Others never adopted a motto, just as many never adopted a crest.

An erroneous idea is entertained by some that heraldic symbols denote an aristocratic or exclusive class and is undemocratic in its origin and permanency. On the contrary, these badges of distinction were the reward of personal merit, and could be secured by the humblest as well as the highest. They are today the testimonials and warrants of bravery, heroism, and meritorious deeds of our ancestors; and they appeal to the pride of the intelligent and enlightened descendants of these distinguished families today, as the vallant deeds and self-sacrificing acts of contemporary persons would to their posterity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following books, found in most libraries, will be of particular help in genealogical work.

Surnames

ENGLISH SURNAMES. By Bardsley.
BOOK OF FAMILY NAMES. By Baring-Gould.

Heraldry

COMPLETE GUIDE TO HERALDRY. By Fox-Davies.

General

COMPENDIUM OF AMERICAN GENEALOGY. Edited by Virkus.
GENEALOGIST'S GUIDE. By Marshall.
COLONIAL FAMILIES OF AMERICA. By MacKenzie.
THE CENSUS OF 1790.
THE ART OF ANCESTOR HUNTING. By Stetson.

Note

Bardsley's book gives the origin of family names and Fox-Davies gives the origin and meaning of heraldic symbols.

HERALDIC DESCRIPTION OF NORTHAM

ARMS - Per pale gules and azure, a lion rampant argent.

CREST - A fox rampant gules.