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ARMS AND CRESTS FOR AMERICANS.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON HERALDRY,
SUBMITTED BY THE CHAIRMAN,
JOHN ROSS DELAFIELD, A. M., LL. B., Colonel, C. A. C., N. Y. G.,
Major, U. S. Army.

As the United States has made no provision for the grant or registration of arms or crests, it is of interest to note under what circumstances Americans may bear them, and even sometimes acquire them. The great majority of our people are descended in the male line from ancestors who lived in Great Britain or Ireland, making the treatment of this subject as it relates to these countries the more important; and this report is limited accordingly.

That many of our ancestors in the Colonial days of America bore arms is well established, and was so firmly rooted and recognized that the separation from the old country and the formation of the Republic did not do away with the practice, but recognized and tacitly confirmed it. The new country adopted the arms of the Washington family, with its stars and stripes, as the basis of the flag we love so well. And the new State of New Jersey for a time officially used as its seal the arms of the Livingston family, because of William Livingston, the famous war governor of that State. The use of arms by those entitled to bear them has not since diminished in favour in this country. Indeed the custom has grown to be so popular that many persons who are not members of armigerous families have assumed and used arms, and by doing so unintelligently tend to bring the custom into disrepute. Why the United States Government has failed to recognize officially and systematize the use of family names and family marks, such as arms and crests, is not the subject of this article. It is, however, worthy of study and discussion, leading perhaps to legislation. Our Government is based on the family as its fundamental unit. The desire to have a mark for your family, as well as a name, is primeval; very probably older than the use of family names. Arms are the marks generally used. Finding no regular mode of gratifying this instinct, many persons and families, who should have arms, have endeavored to satisfy it by assuming arms and crests. They have generally adopted the arms of some other family of the same name. By so doing, they have generally quite unwittingly followed the least desirable course, for the identity of arms will, in a generation or two, lead to the belief that they are related to the other family, an error which the exact methods of genealogical research will inevitably expose, to the mortification of the then living members of the family, and the discredit of the use of arms. Identity of family name does not indicate relationship. If you think of assuming arms, first make sure that you are not descended in the male line from some family entitled to bear arms. Then take great care to choose arms that are different

from any others, particularly from those borne by other families of the same name. You or some of your descendants may become, by some chance, British subjects, or the jurisdiction of the College of Arms may be extended to correspond with that of Ulster King of Arms. Then if you have used the above precautions, the arms can be confirmed. Otherwise there will have to be another change.

The Americans, who can with entire confidence use arms, are those belonging in the male line to families recognized as armigerous in the countries of their origin, or those who can and do obtain grants of arms from the countries of their forefathers.

The official agencies for the grant of arms, confirmation of arms, and registration and matriculation of pedigrees are: in England, the College of Arms; in Scotland, Lyon King of Arms; in Ireland Ulster King of Arms. The jurisdiction of each is generally as follows:

The College of Arms, the Earl Marshall with the official heralds, are the authorities for grants of arms for all British subjects resident in England and in every other part of the British Empire excepting Scotland and Ireland, and excepting also British subjects of Scotch or Irish descent in the male line not resident in England. Such Colonials may, however, in their discretion apply to the College of Arms for grants of arms. Welshmen have no separate office of arms, and are on the same footing at the College of Arms as Englishmen.

The Lord Lyon has jurisdiction for all Scotchmen and Colonials of Scottish descent in the male line, though a Colonial of Scottish descent may apply to the College of Arms for a grant.

So also Ulster King has jurisdiction for all Irishmen and Colonials of Irish descent in the male line, though these may apply to the College of Arms. Ulster has also the power to grant arms to persons of Irish descent in the male line who are not British subjects, an opportunity of which many Americans will, no doubt, in time take advantage.

It is a principle of heraldry that a family once armigerous is always armigerous. Hence a member of an armigerous family and his descendants in the male line, for no matter how many generations, may bear arms, no matter where he may live or of what nation he may be a citizen or subject. Furthermore, his pedigree and that of his descendants may be registered from time to time in the office of the official Herald of the land of his origin or in the College of Arms, and thus a record is kept showing his right to bear the family arms.

In the office of the Lord Lyon, the registration takes on a special character, and is called matriculation. The reason for this is that, under the Scottish system, only the oldest descendant in the male line may use the simple arms; all others must add special marks to show to which branch of the family he belonged. These marks are a combination system of the marks of cadency of the English and various forms of bordures, and are definitely assigned to each

individual at his registration or matriculation. The oldest son and the daughters, on their lozenges, use the same marks as their father; the other sons must matriculate. The marks of cadency for English and Irish are fixed and in both instances the same. However, their use is not compulsory, yet they have long been used in this country, as, for example, the arms shown on the book-plate and seal of the celebrated patriot, General Philip Schuyler of the War of the Revolution, who charged his shield with a crescent, indicating that he was the second son.

Americans of English or Irish descent in the male line have sometimes been made armigerous through a confirmation of arms to their British ancestor. In England and Ireland, grants of confirmation are sometimes made on the application of a British subject whose family have actually and openly used arms for a number of generations. These confirmations relate back sometimes two generations, to the applicant's grandfather; seldom further back. In such case, all the descendants in the male line of that grandfather may bear the arms.

In this connection, it may be well to state that the College of Arms and Official Heralds of England, Scotland and Ireland take the greatest care not to grant or confirm to any family the identical arms or crest borne by any other family, whether of the same or another name.

It may not be amiss here to say that Holland has never had an official herald, and that arms were not there granted or recorded. As a result, there are many families of Holland origin which have borne arms for centuries, and yet can show no grant nor official recognition. The official Heralds of Great Britain and Ireland would, no doubt, confirm these arms to members of these families who became British subjects, and as quarterings to the descendants of British subjects who had married heiresses from these families.

Registration in the College of Arms is not confined to British subjects. Many foreign pedigrees are registered there with proofs and evidences of the arms and crests borne and used. But such registrations are not to be confused with grants or confirmations of arms. Registration alone gives no sanction or authority for the use of the arms concerning which evidences are registered.

The finding of arms for one's name, or even for one's proven ancestor, in an old edition of Burke's *General Armory*, or in Papworths' *Ordinary*, or in Matthew's *American Armory and Blue Book*, or in some other printed work, does not prove that one's family is armigerous. This fact can only be ascertained through an exact knowledge of one's pedigree for many generations back and a search made in the records of the official Heraldic Office of the country from which one's ancestor in the male line came.

Your Committee on Heraldry respectfully reports that it has not learned of any satisfactory mode by which Americans can be assisted in establishing armorial bearings other than as above outlined.