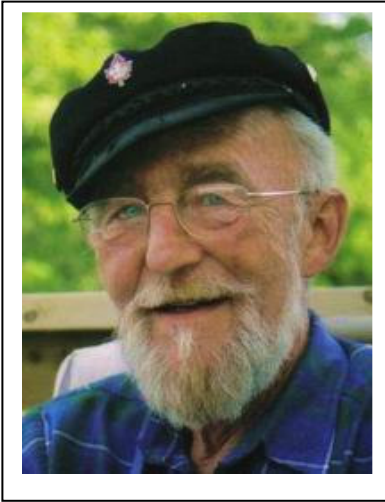


# The Family Historian

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Column #12

## Coats of Arms



If you are able to trace your ancestry back to an individual who was armigerous (had the legal right to bear arms), you may be able to find the record of the grant of arms. The files will usually include a detailed list of his forebears, which could take you back many generations.

The first thing to be clear about is that there is no such thing as a family coat of arms (despite what the hucksters try to sell you). Arms are granted to an individual and only that individual has the right to bear them. Children of that person can bear the father's arms differentiated to show where they stand in the succession. When the father dies and the oldest son inherits the arms the differentiation is removed.

The authorities for granting arms that are of interest to most Canadian researchers are: Scotland: Lyon King of Arms, New Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YT; England, Wales and Northern Ireland: The College of Arms, Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4BT; Ireland: the Chief Herald of Ireland, Genealogical Office, 2

Kildare Street, Dublin 2, Eire; Canada: The Canadian Heraldic Authority, The Chancellery, Office of the Secretary to the Governor General, 1 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A1, 1-800-465-6890. A search by any of these offices will usually cost a fee.

Heraldic officials in Ireland follow British laws of primogeniture whereas much of the Irish nobility that predates the imposition of English Laws follow the old Irish Brehon law, which is quite different.

The best known armorial which contains much of the information on lineages is Sir Bernard Burke's *General Armory* (last edition 1884), which lists families in alphabetical order and describes the arms they used. It is unofficial, incomplete and often inaccurate; though a useful general guide. It should be used with the greatest care. A W Morant's additions and corrections to Burke's list are to be found, edited and augmented by C R Humphery-Smith, in *General Armory Two* (1973).

The Reading Room of the Ottawa Archives, which houses the files and library of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada, has a fair collection of Burke's Peerages. It is located on the first floor of the Bytown Pavillion in the former City Hall at 111 Sussex Drive.

I find Heraldry a fascinating hobby and if you would like a little more information on it, The Royal Heraldry Society of Canada has produced an excellent little book called *A Canadian Heraldic Primer* that sells for \$14.95. You can contact them at: P.O. Box 8128, Station T, Ottawa, ON K1G 3H9. For a quick fix, here is a website that explains the basics of it:

[http://www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/lesson19\\_text.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/lesson19_text.html)

## Looking for Family in Maine?

If you have relatives who emigrated to Maine, you will find that vital records are maintained at the municipal level. If you don't know what town they lived in, you should be able to find out from census reports. Each town does things in its own way. I phoned one town clerk and they had it all computerized. She gave me the information over the phone. Another told me they would be happy to do a search but first I had to send a letter with a cheque for U\$7.00.

I don't know about non-Catholic churches but the Catholic ones do not retain their Parish Registers. These are deposited at the Archdiocesan Archives in Boston and if you have enough data, they will do a search for you for \$25.00US.

The website of the Maine Genealogical Society at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~megs/index.htm> is very helpful. Among other things they have links to two data bases from the state archives: an index to marriages 1892-1996 and an index to deaths 1960-1996. Check out their whole site. They are willing to do lookups in return for a donation to the society.

Usually my first stop in visiting a new country, state, or county is their GenWeb page. This will often have resources on it and is a portal to many other resources and local pages. The Maine GenWeb site is at [www.rootsweb.com/~megenweb/](http://www.rootsweb.com/~megenweb/).