

**CROZIER'S GENERAL
ARMORY: A REGISTRY OF
AMERICAN FAMILIES
ENTITLED TO COAT ARMOR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649028726

Crozier's General Armory: A Registry of American Families Entitled to Coat Armor by
William Armstrong Crozier

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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TO COAT ARMOR

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"A gentleman well bred and of good name"

—KING HENRY V

PUBLISHED FOR

The Genealogical Association by
FOX, DUFFIELD & COMPANY
NEW YORK MDCCCIV

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WILLIAM ARMSTRONG CROZIER.

The Crow Press, New York

Coat Armor in America.



THE STUDY OF HERALDRY has been regarded by many as dry and unprofitable, yet on the least inquiry into its origin and intent it will be found not only interesting to the layman, but in many respects essential to historians and antiquaries. The pride of ancestry is innate in nearly every one, and many incidents faintly written upon the pages of history would forever have remained dark but for the light flashed on them by the torch of Heraldry. Americans are very ardent genealogists, and in many cases have as full a title to armorial bearings as their foreign cousins, so that it is only natural that they should share with the world in general some curiosity as to the right to bear arms.

The arms-bearing families in the United States are principally those who trace their origin to the Knickerbocker families of New York, the Cavaliers of the South, the Puritans of New England, the Quakers of Pennsylvania and Huguenot exiles of noble blood. It must be remembered that the early settlers, although often styled merchants and yeomen, were mostly men of good family, their seals and much of the plate brought with them from the Old World being engraved with their Arms. The War of the Revolution destroyed Britain's domination over the Colonies, but it did not, and could not, abrogate the right of Americans to Coat Armor. If such eminent patriots as the Lees, Carrolls, Adamases, Franklins, Jays and Livingstones did not hesitate to use their armorial bearings, their descendants of the

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present day, entitled to the same distinction, need not fear to follow. Most conclusive, however, of all proofs of the American right to use Coat Armor is the ruling of Washington himself, who said :

“ It is far from my design to intimate any opinion that Heraldry, Coat Armor, etc., might not be rendered conducive to public and private use with us, or that they can have any tendency unfriendly to the purest spirit of republicanism. On the contrary, a different conclusion is deducible from the practice of Congress and the states, all of which have established some kind of Armorial devices to authenticate their official instruments.”

The science of heraldry or armory is indeed of very ancient origin. When the College of Heralds was established in England, in 1488, its business was to register Grants of Arms and to see that such distinctions were not borne illegally; in other words, to bring order out of chaos that must have existed for a long time. As many abuses found their way into all matters touching descent and Arms, the Heralds' Visitations were later instituted, in the early sixteenth century, for the purpose of revising and recording the pedigrees of families entitled to Coat Armor; and the business of distinguishing between proper and improper assumptions of Coat Armor is still an important one.

All persons who can deduce descent from an ancestor whose armorial ensigns have been acknowledged in any one of the Visitations, are entitled to carry those Arms by right of inheritance. When, however, no such descent can be shown, a person must, if it is possible, prove himself to be descended from some one whose right has been admitted; from a Grantee, or in fault of that proof must become a Grantee himself.

During the Revolutionary and Civil Wars in this country, many public and private records bearing seals and impressions of

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Arms were destroyed. Seals are of all records those on which the greatest reliance can be placed; for being contemporary witnesses no doubt can exist of their historical value. These records were frequently the only proof extant that certain families were entitled by inheritance to Coat Armor, and as the descendants of many of these families have continued to use a Coat of Arms, the following authority for their so doing is of importance.

In the Lansdown MS. 870 (Fo. 88) William Dugdale, Garter King of Arms, under date of 15 June, 1668, writes as follows:

“ It is incumbent that a man doe look over his own evidences for some seals of armes, for perhaps it appears in them, and if soe and they have used it from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth’s reigne, or about that time, I shall then allowe thereof, for our directions are limiting us soe to doe, and not a shorter prescription of usage.”

Here we have the highest heraldic authority in the kingdom, Garter King of Arms, expressly stating that a man is justified in using a Coat of Arms, *providing* that it has been in use by his family for one hundred years, or about that time. We must also bear in mind that this opinion was given at a time when the Heralds’ Visitations were still in force. At the present day, Dugdale’s ruling is followed by Ulster King of Arms, who will confirm by Patent any Arms which have been continuously borne for at least three generations, or else for at least one hundred years. These rulings do away with the quibble raised by a well known historical society that the usage of Coats of Arms in any manner, shape or form should be discountenanced, for the reason, as alleged, that so few families trace their ancestry to the parent stock across the water.

In this second edition of the present work data relative to eight hundred additional families have been included, so that the Registry now offers descriptions of nearly two thousand coats of

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arms, with the name of the first of the family in America, the date of his arrival and place of settlement, and, in the majority of instances, the town or country whence he came.

The plan of the work resembles in the main that of Burke's *General Armory in England*, except that the latter includes only the arms of persons of British ancestry, whereas the American book goes farther, including the arms of those whose ancestors came from Continental Europe. The descriptions of the arms, and the data, carefully collated and verified, have been inserted only when actual examination of the necessary records has shown the family to be entitled to the distinction.

The scope of the Registry, not being limited to any prescribed locality, but embracing the known arm-bearing families of all the States in the Union, makes it the most comprehensive book of the kind published. Its very unusual interest to Americans desiring for any reason to have records of their descent is self-evident.