

The Canadian Heraldic Authority and the Loyalists

by John E Ruch, UE, Hon.FHSC

Two busy years have passed for the new Canadian Heraldic Authority since its establishment under the Governor General's aegis was reported in *The Loyalist Gazette*.¹ The Canadian heralds are Robert D. Watt, Chief Herald of Canada, August Vachon, Saint Laurent Herald and Charles R. Maier, Athabaska Herald. Their office has been flooded with enquiries about, and over 300 petitions for new arms. Many coats-of-arms have been designed and granted, examples of which are given below. The heralds are also among the most popular and interesting after-dinner speakers, being well-versed in their subject.

In many cases of heraldic design for individuals the Canadian heralds have encountered specifically Canadian problems or requirements for which exact precedents do not exist at home or abroad. They have had to formulate new principles and incorporate new material heraldically appropriate to Canada and Canadians. The process is a slow and continuing one. A major problem lies in creating symbols to express the diverse origins of this country's peoples, of whom a prime example is the Loyalists. "Heraldry," to quote an official release of the Canadian Heraldic Authority, "is the study, use, and regulation of armorial bearings, commonly referred to as coats-of-arms. These arms and symbols are distinguishing marks of honour and indicate sovereignty, authority, ownership, and identity. Heraldry continues to flourish in contemporary society, partly because the symbols that are created within this tradition are artistically pleasing and rich with historical association, and partly because its long and ancient history has given it a timeless quality that transcends the logos and wordmarks of a particular time and place."

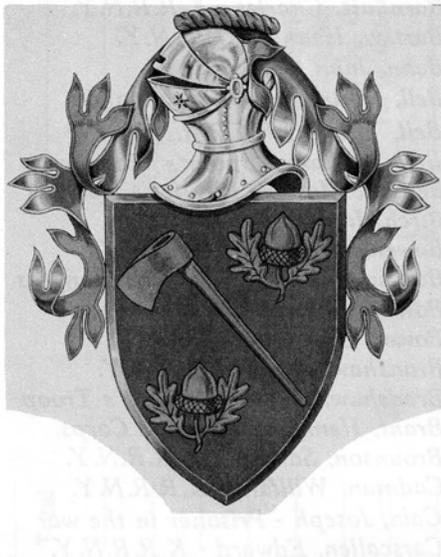
Scholarly investigation, to which the Canadian heralds have contributed considerably, has increased understanding of our colourful legacy of symbols used in Canada during the past 400 years. There has long been widespread use of symbols and heraldry, e.g. coats-of-arms granted to cities, municipalities, corporations, associations, provinces and territories, as well as individuals. These have enriched and touched the lives of all Canadians.

Our heraldry was first developed in the symbolism of our Native Peoples. It was augmented, beginning in the 15th and 16th centuries, by symbolic representations of European heraldry first brought to these shores by Cabot and Cartier. Since those days, that legacy has been woven into the extraordinary, multicultural tapestry that is now Canada. Today, Canadians share heraldic traditions that have been brought to this country from virtually every part of the world. Our heraldry has become a unique expression of our nation and our people, its symbols defining us as Canadians and reflecting our pride in who and what we are. Among the earliest coats-of-arms issuing from the Canadian Heraldic Authority are two examples shown here. These are particularly interesting not only because they belong to two noted heraldic experts, but also because they exemplify two usages of importance in legitimate heraldic practice.



Arms of Haws D. Birk, FHSC, of Scarborough, Ont. Formerly recognized in Germany as his arms, they have recently been authorized for Birk's use in Canada by the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

The design of the arms of the artist and historian Hans D. Birk of Scarborough, Ontario (who specializes in ethnic heraldry) had existed previously in Europe. The arms were already recognized as belonging to him in his native Germany, but he wanted them to be legally authorized in this, his country of adoption. Under a warrant from the Deputy Herald Chancellor the arms were entered in the public Registry of Arms, and were duly authorized by the Canadian Heraldic Authority on May 1st, 1989.



Arms of J-P Daniel Cogné, FHSC, of Hull, Que. The arms play upon his surname since, in Quebec, a felling axe is called a "cogné."

In the best tradition of heraldry, symbols in most coats of arms are meaningful, containing references to one or more characteristics of their owner: his or her name, ancestry, location, accomplishments, profession, etc. This can be demonstrated by the newly created bearings of J. P. Daniel Cogné, a leading authority on early Canadian heraldry, especially French-Canadian.

The central feature is a “cogné,” a tree-felling axe, a sure indication of his surname. This is accompanied by oak twigs bearing acorns and leaves referring back to the ancestral arms used by his mother's family. In keeping with the 17th century French tradition, the helmet does not have a crest.

In Canada a fascination for heraldry developed along with the great resurgence of interest in genealogy during the last few decades. In this new wave the first heraldic landmark was the creation of a new Canadian Hag in 1963-1964.² Several knowledgeable amateurs had been involved in discussions over the flag and realized how little the nature and uses of heraldry were understood by the general public. Shortly afterward in 1966 they proceeded to found the Heraldry Society of Canada. In essence its purposes may be stated as (a) to promote a general interest in heraldry in various specific ways, and (b) to encourage the establishment of just such an official heraldic authority as became a reality in 1988.³

Heraldry "buffs" speaking in the community helped to stimulate interest in their subject, and opened the way for the professional heralds. In the forefront of this have been some very knowledgeable amateurs of heraldry like Lt.Col. Strome Carmichael-Galloway, well known for his longtime involvement with heraldic projects and publications.⁴ News releases from the Canadian Heraldic Authority help to increase the public's awareness of the continued existence of heraldry, but it still takes the personal touch of a good speaker to kindle a genuine curiosity about coats of arms in an audience. An example of this was Loyalist Rean Meyer's talk to Sir Guy Carleton Branch in Ottawa in September, 1988, on the history and significance of heraldry. It was so enthusiastically received that Chief Herald Watt was subsequently invited to speak to the branch about the Canadian Heraldic Authority itself and its work.⁵

Heraldry and the Loyalists

A number of our own Association's members are or were also members of the Heraldry Society of Canada, which now has branches of its own in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. Foremost among these is His Honour John R. Matheson who was chairman of the parliamentary committee which selected the design for the new Canadian flag in 1963-1964, and who was also among the founders of the Heraldry Society at a meeting held in his office. Other members of both organizations include Lt.Col. Knox K. Thomson and the late Howard Warner (both of whom were among the founding members of Sir Guy Carleton Branch, United Empire Loyalists' Association), and also Lt.Col. Gordon S. Way.⁶ The interest aroused in heraldry by such people together with the fact that Dr. Conrad Swan, also of Loyalist heritage, had recently become the first Canadian to be appointed as a member of the College of Arms in England, was responsible for our Association's acquisition of its own coat-of-arms. Dr. Swan, now York Herald, is an honorary vice-president of our Association.⁷



The Loyalist military coronet, can be used in the arms of a person who has a proven direct descent from a military Loyalist.

For two centuries previous to the establishment in 1988 of the Canadian Heraldic Authority, Canadians who wanted a grant of arms had to apply to the British heralds either in the College of Arms, London or to the Court of Lord Lyon, Edinburgh. All of the above-mentioned Loyalists obtained arms from Britain. The United Empire Loyalists' Association itself applied to the English heralds, and was granted splendid armorial bearings in 1972.⁸ In recognition of the historic significance for the British Empire of the Loyalists as a group, the arms were marked by three royal symbols — symbols which can be granted only with Her Majesty's permission: the Royal Crown, the old Union Banner, and the Royal Cypher of George III. To receive any one of these is regarded as an especial honour, but to be given three is very rare indeed.

Those Loyalists who were conscious of their U.E. descent sometimes asked the overseas heralds to indicate this symbolically in their arms. However, the heralds were chary of creating a specific, uniform mark and preferred rather to allude to the ancestry in an unobtrusive way. Knox Thomson was one of those who asked for recognition of his heritage. For a crest he was given trilliums in a chalice, i.e. the provincial flower of Ontario in a ritual vessel, thus signifying an honourable link to the pioneers of the province.⁹ Loyalist ancestry was rarely cited in the accompanying text. Thus the posthumous grant of arms for their father obtained by the Dow sisters from Lord Lyon in 1982 is unusual in that it specifies the entry of United Empire Loyalist ancestry into the Dow family through their great-grandmother Alice Markell, and cites each of her descendants as a "United Empire Loyalist".¹⁰ Among the last of the Canadians to apply to the College of Arms, London for a grant of arms is Lt.Col. William A. Smy whose petition was already "in the works" in 1988.

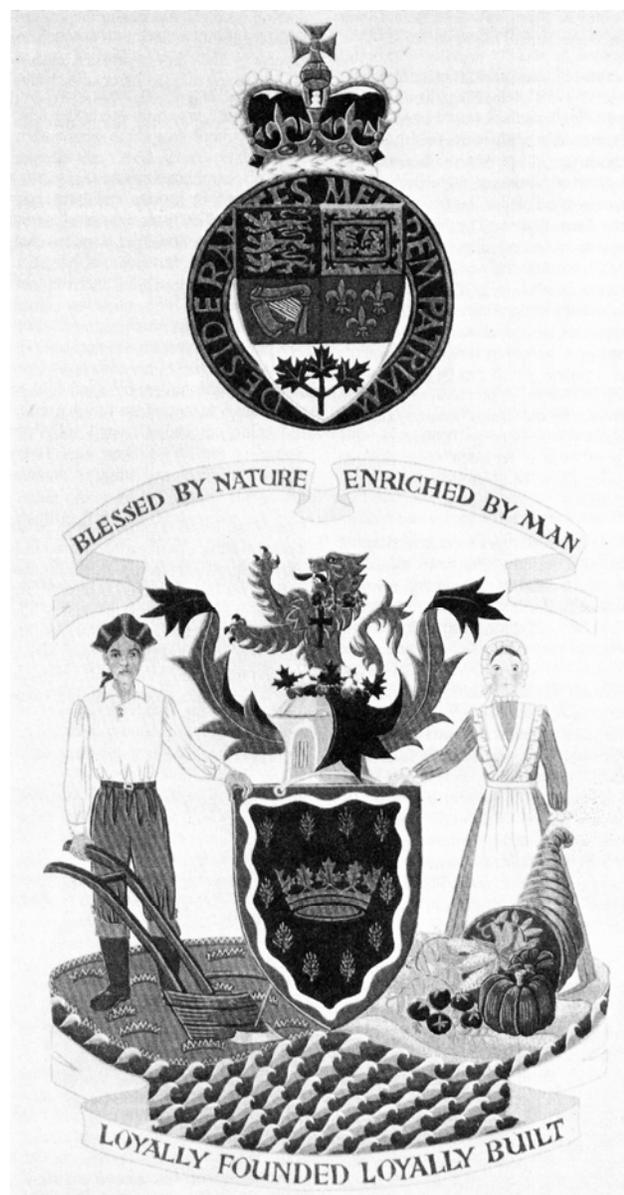
Creating characteristic symbols to indicate descent from specific groups of our pioneers, such as the loyalists, was of a higher and more immediate priority for the Canadian heralds than it had been for the British. The Royal marks already used in the corporate arms of the Association are inappropriate for an individual's arms in which one expects to find clues to personal ancestry — and in any case the Association badge, which all regular members of the Association are entitled to wear, has its own purpose.

Loyalists loom large as one of Canada's chief founding groups and have been among the earliest to receive attention from the new heralds. The Chief Herald of Canada, Robert Watt, announced at the U.E.L. Convention in May 1989, that two new heraldic "charges" or symbols were developed for situations where honouring Loyalist heritage or ancestry is important. The two Loyalist charges are coronets — one civil, the other military.¹¹ It should be noted that Watt himself has Loyalist ancestry, being descended from Capt. Peter Ruttan, of the 4th Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers, a maternal 4th-great grandfather.

One of the Loyalist coronets is to be included in the design of particular arms only after the applicant has proven a direct connection with one or more Loyalists.¹² The County of Prince Edward in Ontario, having been settled by Loyalists, had no difficulty providing evidence of this. It was granted arms bearing the Loyalist civil coronet which figures prominently as the main feature of the shield.

Right: Prince Edward County in Ontario, has been granted arms bearing the Loyalist civil coronet. This figure prominently as the main feature of the shield.

Below: The Town of Picton received the Loyalist civil coronet as part of its crest. This civil coronet consists of a gold rim crested by alternate red maple and green oak leaves.



On the other hand, the Town of Picton received the same coronet as part of its crest. This civil coronet consists of gold rim crested by alternate red maple and green oak leaves. Ordinarily this coronet will be used on the shield or crest of new arms for a corporation of institution similarly founded or developed by Loyalists, or for an individual of Loyalist descent.

The other Loyalist charge, the Loyalist military coronet, can be granted to persons who have proven a direct connection with a military Loyalist, that is one who was a member of a Loyalist service unit during the American Revolution. The Loyalist military coronet consists of a gold rim crested by paired swords arched over leaves, red maple alternating with green oak. In some cases all the leaves will be of red maple. No individual arms have yet been granted bearing this coronet, but several are in progress of production at the moment of writing, including my own.

I want to thank the Canadian Heraldic Authority for information (upon which the first part of this article is largely based) and photos, and also the Heraldry Society of Canada for photos.

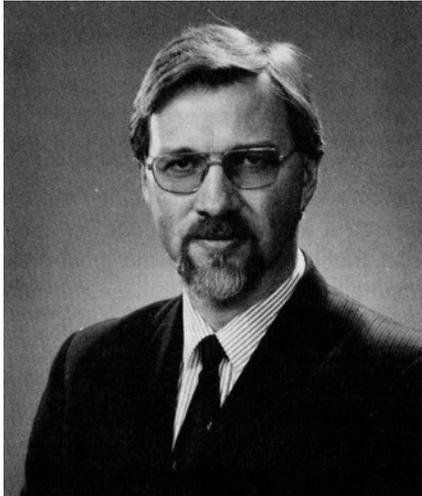
For information on the granting of arms and costs write to:

The Canadian Heraldic Authority
The Chancellery
1 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A1

Footnotes:

1. John E. Ruch, "An Heraldic Authority for Canada", *Loyalist Gazette*, Fall, 1988, p.33. The June 1990 issue of *Heraldry in Canada*, which is devoted to this subject, arrived in September, too late for review here.
2. For information, see John R. Matheson's definitive study *Canada's Flag, the Search for a Country*, Belleville, 1986 and also a special issue of *The Archivist* "The Canadian Flag", Ottawa, vol. 17, No.1 (Jan.-Feb.1990)
3. "What Are The Aims of the Heraldry Society of Canada?", *Heraldry in Canada*, Ottawa, Sept.1986,p.107
4. As well as being author in his own right, Galloway was for very many years editor of the quarterly *Heraldry in Canada*, and also edited *Beddoe's Canadian Heraldry*, Belleville, 1981.
5. Meyer is a member of Sir John Johnson-Centennial Branch. He now winters in the southern U.S.
6. Among others forwarding the project was E. John Chard, founding president of Sir Guy Carleton Branch and former editor of the *Loyalist Gazette*.
7. The contributions of some Loyalist descendants to heraldry and the Society have been recognized by the award of Fellowships and X Fellowships of the Heraldry Society of Canada. These men are: Fellows B.W. Beatty, J.R. Matheson, C.M. Swan, R.D. Watt and X Fellows D.R. Michener, J.R. Osborne, J.E. Ruch, G.F. Stanley, G.S. Way.
8. Sir Conrad M. Swan, "The Armorial Bearings of the United Empire Loyalists' Association", *The Loyalist Gazette*, Vol. X, No.2 (Autumn 1972)pp. 1,3-6. There have been numerous articles on, and references to, heraldry of the original Loyalists in *Heraldry in Canada* by Ruch and others, e.g. many seals of Maritime Loyalists discovered and published by Daniel Cogne.
9. Alan B. Beddoe, *Canadian Heraldry*, Belleville, 1981, ill. crest p.32, shield p.35. Gordon Way also has trilliums on his crest symbolizing a connection with farming in Ontario, *ibid.* ill. shield p. 135, no.225, description p. 137

10. Helen J. Dow, "Canada's Hereditary Honours," *Heraldry in Canada*, March 1984, esp pp.22-23, and 29. See also her update on arms "The Individuality of Heraldic Arms", *ibid.* Sept.1987, pp.20-21
11. Such "heraldic" or "armorial" coronets differ from the coronets of the European nobility in that the Loyalist coronets do not indicate ranks in society but rather ancestral allegiance and service. Decorative variations in design of the "heraldic" coronets on arms usually distinguish among different functions, callings, professions, etc. of their owners by using characteristic symbols — stone walls for cities, anchors and sails for sailors, stars and wings for airmen, grenades for grenadiers, and so on.
12. The heralds require copies of the documentation upon which proof of the Loyalist connection rests, e.g. that accepted by the Dominion Genealogist for regular membership status.



*Chief Herald of Canada,
Robert D. Watt*