

The Glidden Family Heraldry by Jeanette Volintine

The Glidden Surname

The Glidden surname was adopted after the Norman Conquest of 1060/66 in 1300 AD. The name “Glidden” comes from three sources, they are: fish, birds, and quadrupeds. The Glidden Clan was known for their swift moving hunting ability.¹ In England, the name Gliddon has twenty-one different spellings, they are: Glydan, Glydden, Glyddon, Glydon, Giddon, Gldon, Gladdon, Gleadden, Gledden, Gleddon, Gledin, Gledon, Glidden, Gliden, Gliddo, Glidon, Glidoo, Glidten, Gludden, Gluden, and Gludon.² Glidden is a very rare English name, which means “descendant of Gladwin.”³ Through the use of the Glidden coat of arms, the Glidden family had the satisfaction in connecting the present with their honored past. The Glidden family did not erase their families’ past, rather they linked their families honored past by firm ties to the future. Heraldry and coat of arms are very important to understanding family history, because they are used for remembering the past, which can bring a new awareness to the present, and they are a standard of noble and/or knightly behavior.

Heraldry in America

In America, most ancestors had the pioneer spirit, because they left their homes in other countries and came to live in America. This is the same for the Glidden family. In America, heraldry was first established by European settlers who brought with them the heraldic customs of their countries. The use of coat of arms was seen as a custom of nobility and royalty, but according to George Washington, “heraldry is not incompatible with the purest ideals of

¹ Doris Bobzin Glidden and Charles Edward Glidden, *Glidden Genealogy: The Fit of the Glidden Genes* (Plainfield: Glidden Genealogical Publishing Inc., 2005), 10.

² George Walter Chamberlain and Lucia Mabel Glidden Strong, *The Descendants of Charles Glidden of Portsmouth and Exeter, New Hampshire* (Boston: Higginson Book Company, 1925), 24.

³ Sharon Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America* (Halbert’s Inc., 1982), 10.

republicanism.”⁴ Additionally, several of the founding fathers engaged in heraldic customs and a number of Americans continue to do so. The Americans who continue to use heraldic customs have three reasons for doing so. First, they live in a place where laws offer heraldry protection. Second, they use their coat of arms in the context of an organization in order to be given official status. Lastly, they want to establish a heraldic connection with the country that their ancestors immigrated from.

The situation of heraldry in America has changed vastly throughout American history. Before the Revolutionary War, America was under British control. There was general regulation of the right to bear arms, but no effort that was made by the colonial government to force citizens to abide by their laws. As a result, the later colonists began to display anything that struck their interest on their coat of arms. By the end of the 17th century there was an illegal use of coat of arms by a Boston carriage painter named Gore.⁵ Gore created coat of arms without authority.⁶ During the 18th and 19th centuries the unwarranted use of coat of arms reached huge proportions and most people used coat of arms without an ancestry/bloodline claim or right due to the American interest in heraldry. The use of heraldry and coat of arms in America is a matter of personal taste. In using coat of arms and following heraldic customs an individual should stand by the laws governing its use in the country from which the coat of arms was granted. The right to bear arms in America is limited to those few families who can show a direct descent from a coat of arms bearing ancestor. Today, the demand for a coat of arms is great, because successful men and women want individuality and they want to display their coat of arms to decorate their homes and mark their prized possessions.

⁴ Stephen Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry: The Development of Coats of Arms and Heraldic Symbols, with 575 Illustrations* (Wigston: Anness Publishing Ltd, 2012), 43.

⁵ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 43.

⁶ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 43.

Heraldry and Coat of Arms

Heraldry was developed as a means of identifying an individual. Heraldry can strengthen family ties and family pride, which enriches our life and strengthens our community.⁷ Heraldry is associated with coat of arms, because of the role the herald plays in recording the blazons. Blazons are used to describe the textual description of the coat of arms.⁸ Heraldry offers an interesting study of medieval lifestyles. Coat of arms acquired a number of new accessories as heraldry developed. For example, the family crest that is supposed to be worn on top of the helmet and is depicted above the shield in the coat of arms. Later developments included mottos, supporters that were either human figures or beasts that support the shield on both sides, and other embellishments, which together are known as the achievement of arms.

Heraldry was commonly displayed on carriages and coaches and on armorial bookplates. It is interesting to note, that the design of a coat of arms is rendered in white and black hatches for a bookplate. The achievement of arms can be reproduced on bookplates, which is expensive, but the bookplates last a long time and can be used repeatedly. Generally, the family name does not appear with the coat of arms, because it is considered a redundancy.⁹ The most attractive coat of arms design appears on armorial jewelry such as brooches, cuff links, and pendants. The displaying of heraldry on carriages and coaches is similar to placing the coat of arms on an individual's car or boat. Coat of arms can be used to decorate any household object, but they are typically used on porcelain, silver, and glass tableware. Consequently, these objects and jewelry can be used as family heirlooms.

The development of the coat of arms created an ideal symbol to confirm the idea of a stable, ancient and exclusive bloodline. Coat of arms have been associated predominantly with

⁷ James S. McGivern and H.D. Birk, *Your Name and Coat-of-Arms* (Ontario: Paper Jacks, 1971), 17.

⁸ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 50.

⁹ McGivern and Birk, *Your Name and Coat-of-Arms*, 17.

Europeans and they are recorded in heraldic archives. The symbols used in coat of arms are meant to represent the achievements of the person, countries, or corporations to whom the arms were granted. In the 12th century, coat of arms began to be used as a hereditary device in England.¹⁰ Coat of arms identifies an individual, act as status symbol, and can convey information about marriages and maternal ancestry. Coat of arms are designed and used by Catholic Bishops, corporations, countries and their military establishments, sororities and fraternities, but they were initially issued to and registered for individuals. Coat of arms have become the sign of integrity in the turmoil of modern time. For example, a family in danger of breaking apart and being dispersed can reassemble under their coat of arms, like the knights of old did around the shield, banner, and crest of their leader.¹¹ “Under most heraldic rules, only first sons of first sons of the recipient of a coat of arms may legally bear their ancestor’s arms, while younger sons may use a version of their father’s arms, but the rules of heraldry say that they must be changed.”¹² If the bearer of the coat of arms dies without male heirs, his daughter may combine her father’s coat of arms with her husband’s coat of arms; this action is called impaling, which will be discussed further in the next section.

There are six elements in a coat of arms, they are: motto, shield, helm or helmet, wreath, mantle or mantling, and crest. The motto can be in any language, but English or Latin are the most common. The motto is not a required element and the location, placement, and lettering style of the motto is up to the artist. The shield is called the escutcheon, which refers to the physical form itself.¹³ On the shield, the colors and designs are part of the display, but the shape of the shield is not. The shape of the shield varies according to the time period and the

¹⁰ McGivern and Birk, *Your Name and Coat-of-Arms*, 17.

¹¹ McGivern and Birk, *Your Name and Coat-of-Arms*, 17.

¹² Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 14.

¹³ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 50.

geographical origin, while the artist decides the shield's style and the angle of the shield. The decorative designs on the shield are known as charges, the metal elements are referred to as tinctures, and ordinaries refer to the basic patterns on the face of the shield, which break the shield into sections.¹⁴ Colors, furs and wreaths are also decorative elements that appear on coat of arms. "The helmet is believed to denote the rank of the wearer, but more recently it is within the discretion of the artist which the helmet is used."¹⁵ The helm or helmet varies according to the bearer's rank, the artist's or herald's preference or the century represented. The helmet is placed above the shield and beneath the crest, while the wreath is placed on top of the helmet to support the crest. The wreath consists of a metal and a color; it is represented by a twist of two smooth cords, one tinctured like the metal and the other like the color in the coat of arms. The design of the mantle or mantling varies with the artist's or herald's preference. The mantle is represented by "the cloth that hangs from the wreath and protects the back and sides of the helmet and the wearer's neck from the elements, even though it is depicted more like the leaves of a plant."¹⁶ The mantle is displayed behind the rest of the coat of arms. The crest appears above the shield and the wreath. The crest was originally the ornament decoration of the helmet, but later the crest came into general use. Therefore, not all coat of arms has a crest.

During the Middle Ages, more armor was added to a knight's battle uniform until the medieval warrior was protected from head to toe.¹⁷ The suit of armor included a helmet to protect the head, which made it impossible to tell one knight from another. Consequently, in order to prevent any mishaps on the battlefield a means of identification was necessary. The solution to misidentification on the battlefield was the coat of arms. At first, knights colored

¹⁴ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 48.

¹⁵ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 58

¹⁶ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 57.

¹⁷ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 14.

patterns on their shields and then the patterns were woven into cloth, which were worn over the suit of armor.¹⁸ The individualized identifications became as important as the individual's name and they were displayed with great pride. When describing a coat of arms, it is important to note that the shield is described from the bearer's position behind it and the heraldic right (dexter) and the heraldic left (sinister) are the opposite to the normal right and left.¹⁹

Impaling or Combining Coat of Arms

A man's coat of arms could create a pictorial family tree that contained the coat of arms of each family from whom he inherited it. When a woman marries she loses the distinction of her father's coat of arms; she is expected to place her family coat of arms alongside those of her husband's, that is, on the shield in his coat of arms.²⁰ "If a woman becomes a widow, she may continue to display the combined coat of arms of her husband and her father, but she must replace the shield devoid of its crest."²¹ If the woman remarries, then she abandons her first husband's coat of arms. If the representatives of two coat of arms bearing families married, then the union would be represented by a merged coat of arms; the wife's coat of arms would be placed on the viewer's right, while the husband's would be situated on the viewer's left.²² Therefore, the husband's coat of arms is pierced or impaled with his wife's coat of arms.²³ If the daughter (the wife) was her father's heir or if she eventually became so by her brothers dying, then the right to bear her family's coat of arms and land property would pass to her husband's family. This was indicated by dividing the shield in a coat of arms into quarters, with the husband's coat of arms in the first and fourth quarters from the viewer's top left and the wife's

¹⁸ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 14.

¹⁹ Slater, *The Story and Language of Heraldry*, 47.

²⁰ Marvin Grosswirth, *The Heraldry Book: A Guide to Designing Your Own Coat of Arms* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1981), 78.

²¹ Grosswirth, *The Heraldry Book*, 78.

²² Grosswirth, *The Heraldry Book*, 78.

²³ Grosswirth, *The Heraldry Book*, 78.

coat of arms in the second and third quarters.²⁴ For example, Abigail Glidden (5th generation) who married Stephen Hurd, and Josiah Willard Glidden (6th generation) who married Mary Powell McConnell, combined their families' coat of arms into two new coat of arms. This example is depicted in the Hurd and Mackonel/McConnell coat of arms (image 1).

Image 1: Hurd and Mackonel/McConnell coat of arms²⁵



The Glidden Coat of Arms

There are two different but similar Glidden coat of arms. Based on the shape of the shields in the two Glidden coat of arms they date from the late 12th century to the early 15th century. The first Glidden coat of arms is presented on a wooden plaque (see image 2). It depicts a shield, which is located below a knight helmet and a wreath that is situated above the knight helmet. The wreath alternates in white and red colors. Above the knight helmet, is a lion crest holding a gold sword with its paw. There is filigree mantling coming from behind the knight helmet on both sides and continues from the lion crest to the bottom of the shield. This Glidden coat of arms is described as “ermine on upper third blue, over all on a red diagonal band of silver sword handle of gold, and on a natural color mound a silver lion attacking strewn over with red

²⁴ Grosswirth, *The Heraldry Book*, 78.

²⁵ Picture taken by author. Hurd and Mackonel/McConnell family impaling Coat of Arms in frames. Located in the Glidden Collection at the Glidden Homestead in DeKalb, Illinois.

drops in the right paw a gold sword erected.”²⁶ On the shield, are the colors silver or white, blue, and red. Silver is a metal and it is illustrated by a blank area. Silver represents serenity, nobility, cleanliness, wisdom, innocence, peace and joy.²⁷ Blue is portrayed by horizontal lines and it denotes loyalty, splendor, truth, strength, and steadfastness. Red is illustrated by vertical lines and it signifies creative power, patriotism, fortitude, martyrdom, and eagerness to serve his country.²⁸

The first Glidden shield also includes a red diagonal bend, a blue chief, and ermine. The diagonal bend and a chief are two of the seven principal ordinaries, which are geometrical figures used as charges on the battlefield.²⁹ Ermine is a type of fur that is used in coat of arms; it gets its name from an animal that is a member of the weasel family, which has a coat that turns white in winter.³⁰ Ermine is depicted by a white field with black spots and it symbolizes nobility and dignity.³¹ Inside the shield, located in the red bend, is a silver sword situated diagonally with its gold handle on the viewer’s right side pointing to the left corner of the shield. The sword emblem in the shield and the sword that the lion is holding represents justice, freedom, and military honor.³² Above the knight helmet, is a silver or white lion crest covered in red drops sitting on a flat, green hill. The lion emblem symbolizes undying courage, hence that of a valiant warrior.³³ The red on the lion represents a warrior, eagerness to serve his country, fortitude,

²⁶ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 14.

²⁷ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

²⁸ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

²⁹ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

³⁰ Grosswirth, *The Heraldry Book*, 53.

³¹ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

³² John Burke and John Bernard Burke, *Encyclopedia of Heraldry, Or General Armory of England, Scotland and Ireland: Comprising A Registry of All Armorial Bearings from the Earliest to the Present Time, Including the Late Grants by the College of Arms* (London: Henry G Bohn, 1844), xx.

³³ Burke and Burke, *Encyclopedia of Heraldry*, xx.

creative power, patriotism, and martyrdom.³⁴ The green from the flat hill that the lion is sitting on, which is depicted by diagonal lines running from top left to bottom right, signifies hope, vitality, plenty, loyalty in love, joy, freedom, beauty, and health.³⁵ The decorative writing or design below the shield is unknown, but that is the place where the motto of the family would be placed at on a coat of arms.

Image 2: Glidden Coat of Arms on a wood plague³⁶



The second Glidden coat of arms is presented on a piece of paper that is in a frame (see image 3). It depicts a shield below a blue and silver or white knight helmet. On top of the knight helmet, is a wreath with alternating colors gold and blue. Situated above the knight helmet, is a wolf crest wearing a gold collar with its tongue sticking out of its mouth. On both sides of the knight helmet and coming from behind the helmet, is filigree mantling, which is wrapped around the coat of arms. The filigree is gold on the inside and blue on the outside. Below the shield, is a ribbon that contains the word “SPE,” which is the Latin ablative singular form of the noun

³⁴ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

³⁵ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

³⁶ Picture taken by author. The Glidden Family Coat of Arms on a wood plague. Located in the Glidden Collection at the Glidden Homestead in DeKalb, Illinois.

“Spēs,” which means hope, and means in/through/by the hope.³⁷ This word, “SPE,” may have been the Glidden family motto, because this is where the family motto is placed at on a coat of arms. The shield is gold with a blue bend. On the blue bend are three gold shells. Gold is a metal and it is portrayed by small dots. Gold represents generosity, valor, perseverance, understanding, respect, virtue, and elevation of the mind.³⁸ The blue illustrated by horizontal lines, that is depicted throughout the second Glidden coat of arms, specifically in the bend behind the gold shells, the filigree, the wreath, and the wolf crest symbolizes strength, steadfastness, splendor, loyalty, and truth.³⁹ The bend is one of the seven principal ordinaries, which are geometrical figures used as charges on the battlefield.⁴⁰ The shell emblem signifies protection of providence, a successful leader or one who has made long journeys.⁴¹ On the blue and silver knight helmet, is a small color of red located on the viewer’s left corner of the helmet. Red is depicted by vertical lines and it symbolizes fortitude, eagerness to serve his country, patriotism, creative power, and martyrdom.⁴² Silver is a metal and it represents peace, wisdom, serenity, joy, cleanliness, innocence, and nobility.⁴³ The wolf emblem represents valor, guardianship, and reward from perseverance in long sieges and/or hard industry.⁴⁴ The wolf emblem also symbolizes the ability to be cruel and merciless.⁴⁵

Image 3: Glidden Coat of Arms⁴⁶

³⁷ <http://latindiscussion.com/forum/latin/spe.7948/>

³⁸ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

³⁹ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

⁴¹ Burke and Burke, *Encyclopedia of Heraldry*, xxiv.

⁴² Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17

⁴³ Taylor, *The Amazing Story of the Gliddens in America*, 17.

⁴⁴ Burke and Burke, *Encyclopedia of Heraldry*, xxvi.

⁴⁵ Burke and Burke, *Encyclopedia of Heraldry*, xxvi.

⁴⁶ Picture taken by author. The Glidden Family Coat of Arms in a frame. Located in the Glidden Collection at the Glidden Homestead in DeKalb, Illinois.



Conclusion

Heraldry and coat of arms are used for remembering the past, which can bring a new awareness to the present, and they are a standard of noble and/or knightly behavior. Heraldry and coat of arms are very important to understanding history! For example, the Glidden family did not erase their families' past, rather they linked their families honored past by firm ties to the future. In America, the use of heraldry and coat of arms is a matter of personal taste. In using coat of arms and following heraldic customs an individual should stand by the laws governing its use in the country from which the coat of arms was granted. The right to bear arms in America is limited to those families who can show a direct descent from a coat of arms bearing ancestor. Currently, the demand for a coat of arms is great, because successful men and women want individuality and they want to display their coat of arms by decorating their homes and marking their prized possessions. There are two different but similar Glidden coat of arms. They both have a shield, a knight helmet, a wreath, filigree mantling, and a crest. However, they have different designs and colors on the shield, one has a readable motto and the other does not, the helmets are slightly different in shape and design, the wreaths have different colors, they have different crests, and the Glidden name is placed in different locations.