The Ives Coat of Arms

Compiled by David J Ives 23 September 2024

There is nothing in United States law to prevent you from purchasing and using an Ives "coat of arms" or "family crest" as a wall hanging, beer mug, mouse-pad, wine glass, plaque, tee-shirt, baby bib, key chain, or in any other imaginable form. BUT – it is extremely unlikely (infinitesimally so) that an Ives in the New World (or in most of the rest of the world) is legitimately entitled to use ANY such 'Ives' coat of arms or family crest.

But, even given the facts presented below, I do not think that there is any "harm" in purchasing a plaque or beer mug or paperweight bearing an Ives coat-of-arms (they can be quite colorful). Just be aware that while the name on the coat-of-arms says, "Ives," it is a one-in-a-million chance (or greater!) that that 'Ives' has anything at all to do with your own particular Ives ancestry or lineage; and that legally it is not "yours". Just celebrate the fact that an Ives, somewhere in England, was at some time granted the individual right to bear those particular arms.

And, of course, the companies that are ready to sell you these decorated gimcracks and gewgaws are well aware that you have no heraldic "right" to claim that particular crest as yours or as that of your family. But they are in the business of selling gimcracks and gewgaws, not in adhering to the rules and regulations of the Great Britain College of Heralds.

Some Ives crests ---

Sa. on a fesse betw. three goats pass. ar. attired, bearded, and unguled or, as many crescents gu. Crest — Out of a ducal coronet gu. an Indian goat's head ar. guttee de sang, attired or

Arms assigned to Ives of Northamptonshire, England (https://coadb.com/surnames/ives-arms.html)
(page 533, Burke's 'General Armory')

Arms given to Ives of Bradwell, Norfolk, England (http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6326) (https://coadb.com/surnames/ives-arms.html)

Ar. a chev. sa. betw. three blackamoors' heads couped ppr. Crest — A boar pass. ppr. collared and chained or (page 533, Burke's 'General Armory')

Arms supposedly granted to: Jeremiah Ives of St Catherine's Hill, Norwich, Norfolk, England in the early 1800's (http://www.historylines.net/lishi/)

Ar. three torteaux betw. two bendlets.
(https://archive.org/stream/generalarmoryofe00burk/generalarmoryofe00burk_djvu.txt)
(https://coadb.com/surnames/ives-arms.html) (page 533, Burke's 'General Armory')

The Facts Of The Matter

As the British College of Arms notes:
"Coats of arms belong to specific individuals and families and there is no such thing as a coat of arms for a family name. From their origins in the twelfth century to the present day arms have been borne by individuals, and by corporate bodies, as marks of identification. They have also been used to denote other characteristics, which have changed over the centuries as society and culture have evolved. New coats of arms have since the fifteenth century been granted both to individuals and corporate bodies by the senior heralds in Royal service, the Kings of Arms." (http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/)

And... "There is no such thing as a 'coat of arms for a surname'. Many people of the same surname will often be entitled to completely different coats of arms, and many of that surname will be entitled to no coat of arms. Coats of arms belong to individuals. For any person to have a right to a coat of arms they must either have had it granted to them or be descended in the legitimate male line from a person to whom arms were granted or confirmed in the past." (Ibid.)

And from an excellent web site regarding the hawking of stuff bearing "your family coat of arms" –
"Most Americans seem ignorant of one very basic fact: in Western Europe and in the British Isles, there is no such thing as a "family coat of arms." A coat of arms is issued to one person, not to a family. After that person is deceased, his eldest heir may apply for the same coat of arms. Again, when he dies, his heir may apply. The rules for determining who is eligible to display a coat of arms are very similar to the rules for becoming King or Queen of England. However, even the proper heir cannot display the coat of arms until he or she has received authorization (been confirmed) by the heralds. At any one time, only one person may rightfully display a coat of arms." (https://blog.eogn.com/2016/06/14/pssst-want-to-buy-your-familys-coat-of-arms/#more-13766)

And... "According to the American College of Heraldry, 'While Americans are usually fascinated by the beauty of heraldry, they are rarely familiar with its meaning and traditions and, therefore, often misunderstand and even abuse this rich cultural heritage. They seldom understand that a coat of arms is usually granted, certified, registered or otherwise recognized as belonging to one individual alone, and that only his direct descendants with proven lineage can be recognized as eligible to inherit the arms. Exceptions to this rule are rare" (Ibid.)

And... "The American College of Heraldry also says, 'It is highly inappropriate for one to locate the arms of another person sharing the same surname, and to simply adopt and use these arms as one's own.' My interpretation of this is that, if you are displaying an unauthorized coat of arms, you are impersonating someone else." (Ibid.)

In short – IF you can prove that 1) you are THE heir of the direct lineage of the individual Ives who was granted a coat of arms AND, 2) that the Great Britain College of Heralds has approved the passing of these arms to you as the individual heir, then that particular coat of arms can legitimately be claimed as "yours;" but it would not be your brother's, uncle's, children's, or cousin's coat of arms... just yours, for your lifetime. If you cannot prove BOTH of the aforementioned factors, that you cannot claim that that coat of arms is "yours!" To the best of my knowledge, no Ives in the New World, nor almost any Ives in the Old World can legitimately and validly make such a claim.