

FAMILY COAT OF ARMS (HERALDRY)

Coats of arms were developed during the 1100's as a way to help a knight's followers recognize him on the battlefield during the Crusades. Coat of arms were used mostly in western Europe and Scandinavia. The colors, designs, lines, and cadency (status) symbols became standard and were used in different combinations according to specific rules. Coat of arms were first displayed on the shields of Knights and Vikings.

Heraldry also served as a means of identification in civilian life and for genealogy purposes. Later, arms appeared on flags, clothes, and other possessions of the upper classes. The upper classes consisted of royalty, nobility, and clergy. Members of these classes identified their possessions and official documents by marking them with their coat of arms.

By the 1300's, heraldry had become firmly established as a system of identification. Upper-class families passed their coats of arms down from one generation to the next. By custom, and eventually by heraldic law, no two families could use the same coat of arms.

These two (black and white copies) of our ancestors' coat of arms were amongst the Knaphus' genealogy paperwork. It is clearly evident in our genealogy, that we had individuals whose names included "Viking". Most likely these two coats of arms were among several more which our Viking ancestors' families used.

What we know about these two arms is only the following:



Losna-linjen.

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Of Torleif and Andrew's paternal line, Losna is a family line who lived in the County of Sogn Og Fjordane (north of Bergen on the west coast of Norway). Losna is the farm or area where our line of ancestors lived between about 1285-1400 AD. Besides their respective patronymic names, they also took on the second last name of Losna. "linjen." is the abbreviation for line or lineage. The detail of this coat of arms is intricate but unfortunately doesn't demonstrate the color significance.



Sigurd Ormsens segl.

Sigurd Ormsens Segl.

Also of Andrew and Torleif's paternal line, Sigurd Ormson (or Ormsen) was born about 1309 AD. For two or three generations before and after this Sigurd Ormsen, both Sigurd and Orm were common family names. Even our ancestor named "Viking Ormsen Maseg" probably used his grandfather's coat of arms. The "fleur-de-lis" on this coat of arms is the cadency (status) symbol meaning "the sixth son". "Segl." is an abbreviation for seal. It is presumed that Torleif sketched this seal from something he found since it was not a photo like the Losna-linjen. arms of the two dragons.

Any other details, as to the families' coat of arms' origin and meanings, are appreciated.