

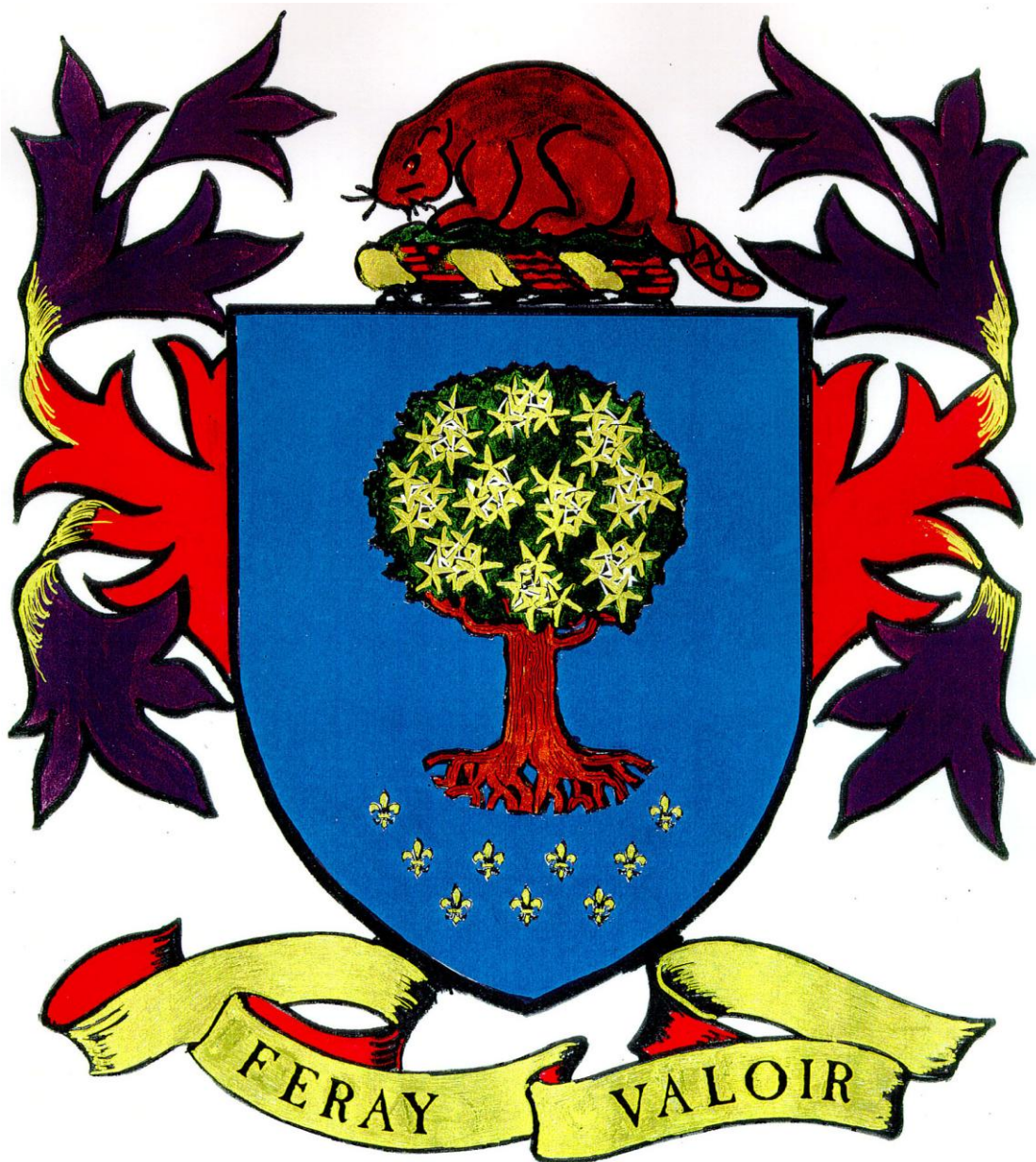
Vermont French-Canadian Genealogical Society

OUR COAT OF ARMS

by Andre Senecal 1996

The Shield

An azure (blue) field charged with an eradicated oak proper (displaying its roots and depicted with its natural colors), fructed with ten clusters of *quinte-estoiles-or* (bearing ten clusters of five golden stars), growing from a ground of *fleur-de-lis-or* (gold).



The blue field stands for the land of Québec and Acadia, the origin of the Franco-Americans. The oak symbolizes the science of genealogy and the living continuity of the family. Illustrators often use the

oak as a graphic device when they lay out a family tree. This particular species stands for majesty, long life, and endurance against adversities, all common Franco-American attributes.

The oak is fruited, it displays its fruits. For our purpose we have lent the noble tree ten clusters of five stars; fifty in all. The symbolism is evident. The fifty stars refer to the present, to our taking root and flowering in all the states of our great country. In the society's depiction of the oak, the tree is shown eradicated, that is, with its roots exposed. We use this device of the bared roots to link the fleur de lis with the symbolism of the tree and to underline the importance and the continuity of one's ancestry. The roots are imbedded in a field of fleur-de-lis, the symbol par excellence of France, of Québec, and Acadia. Before all, the *fleurdelysée* field stands for the period of New France, when most of our ancestors made the long crossing to the New World and settled along the Saint Lawrence Valley and the coast of Acadia.

The crest - A beaver.

The beaver reminds us of our Canadian origins. It stresses not only that the word *Canada* was once reserved for the Saint Lawrence lowlands, but that our ancestors staked the entire continent in search of this animal's pelt. It also reminds us that when the basic institutions of the Franco-American community were set up in Vermont, the beaver was a rallying symbol used by the Catholic Church, the various Sociétés Saint Jean Baptiste and other fraternal associations of the nineteenth century. One finds the beaver on the masthead of the *Protecteur Canadien*, the Franco-American newspaper published in St Albans, Vermont, in 1869 - 1871. The same symbol decorates the founding documents of the Sociétés Saint Jean Baptiste of Winooski and Burlington, and the Cercle Champlain of Winooski. In the church of Saint Joseph in Burlington, one can admire a sumptuous carving of a castor sculpted in the ceiling of the narthex.

The wreath - The wreath alternates *or* (gold) with *purpure* (purple).

Originally, the wreath was a band of twisted material worn about a medieval helmet. In heraldry, the wreath is depicted, according to all conventions, as having six visible twists of alternate tinctures (colors), the tincture on the *dexter* (the right) always being of a metal; *or* (gold) or *argent* (silver).

The mantling - The mantling is displayed in *gules* (red) with a *purpure* (purple) lining.

The mantling was originally a protective cloth affixed to the helmet. It probably refers to the knight's costume during the crusades when a piece of cloth was worn over the helmet to shield it from the sun's heat. In the society's coat of arms, the mantle is seen as a highly stylized decoration flowing beneath the wreath (in the absence of a helmet). The red of the mantle stands for the heroism of our people, of the thousands who gave their blood for the United States in the Civil War, in the "War to End All Wars", in the war against Japan and Germany, in the Korean Conflict, and in Indochina. It also stands for the thousands: men, women and children (some as young as eight years of age), who gave their lives, their limbs, their health in the mills. The lining of the mantle is purple, the color of majesty. It consecrates and commemorates the silent deeds of our quiet presence.

The motto scroll

To remain authentic, and lend our coat of arms all the authority of tradition, we chose to state the motto in French and to write our inspirational statement as medieval scribes would have: *Feray valoir* ("I will give it meaning and worth"). This phrase is almost as old as the science of heraldry. In modern French, one would add the pronoun "*Je*" and would write the future of intention and dedication as "*ferai*": "*Je ferai valoir*"