



**THE ARMORIAL BEARINGS
OF THE
GOVERNOR AND COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS OF ENGLAND
TRADING INTO HUDSON'S BAY**

by Larry Gingras, F.R.N.S., F.C.N.R.S.

During Feudal times it was common practice for knights to carry armorial devices on their shields for identification purposes, but as time went on they often abused the practice by assuming whatever insignia pleased them. To bring order to this chaotic situation, King Edward IV of England established the College of Heralds in 1483 and gave it complete authority over the supervising and granting of armorial bearings. Among those who are now entitled to armorial bearings are: individuals, families, kingdoms, peers, towns, bishops and corporations.

Before the College can grant arms it is necessary that an accurate and specific written description of the arms be submitted for their approval. This description is called the blazon and it is supposed to be followed to the letter. In spite of regulations laid down by the College, we find many individuals and organizations, not only in the past but at the present time, have used arms for which no grant has been given. There are also cases where grants have been given but the blazon not always adhered to.

One might imagine that the Hudson's Bay Company, one of the greatest corporations the world has known, a corporation born, bred and governed in England, in the very heart of heraldry, would not fall into one of these categories, but an examination of the arms used by the Company on their medals, tokens, notes, seals and documents will show many irregularities.

The original charter of 1670 stipulated that the company . . . "may have a common seale" . . . "and that itt shall and may bee lawfull to the said Governor and Company and their successors the same seale from tyme to tyme at their will and pleasure to breake change and to make a new or alter as to them shall seeme expedient."

This was Royal approval to use arms but you will notice the Company was permitted to break alter or change them. Because of this we may excuse them for the many variations found in the arms they used during the first 250 years they were in business.

It should not be necessary to go into detail, in this brief discussion, on the many symbols used in heraldry but to understand this work better it would help to know that colours are represented by certain hatchings and figures.

The first table below shows some of the variations found in the arms used by the Company on tokens, medals and notes up to the year 1921.

In 1921, Deputy-Governor Charles Vincent Sale, on behalf of the Company, made formal application for arms to the College of Heralds. Arms were granted to the Company on September 26th of that year.

In heraldic terms, the blazon in the grant reads:

SHIELD—Argent, a cross gules between four beavers sable.

CREST—Upon a cap of maintenance gules turned up ermine, a fox sejant proper.

SUPPORTERS—On either side an elk proper.

Translated to every day language this means:

SHIELD—A red cross between four black beavers on a silver shield.

CREST—A red cap with ermine trim, a sitting fox, in its natural colour.

SUPPORTERS—An elk in its natural colours.

This should mean that from 1921 onward the Company would no longer be permitted to alter their arms at will and yet here again we find several cases where the arms they used on documents and medals since that date do not coincide with the blazon. It should be noted that in drawing arms from the blazon the artist is allowed a certain amount of leeway. For example, he may show the tail of the fox in any position he desired because this is not specified in the blazon, but he would not be permitted to show the animal in any other position than sitting.

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There are some who are of the opinion that the supporters were intended to be the European Elk (like the Canadian Moose) rather than the Canadian Elk (Wapiti), but I can find little to substantiate this claim.

The supporters on the Company's earliest seals and documents resemble the Wapiti more so than the Moose, and the fact that the fox and particularly the beaver, which were two Canadian animals of vital importance to the Company, have always been shown in the arms. I believe it is quite reasonable to assume the Company also intended the supporters to be a Canadian animal. Just as the fox and the beaver were an important source of furs so also was the Wapiti an important source of food for the early fur traders.

My assumption is borne out by the fact that the official drawing of the arms accompanying the 1921 grant shows the Wapiti. It is unlikely the Company would have submitted such a drawing to the College of Heralds had they not intended it to be so.

While it is true that since 1921 a few medals issued by the Company show the likeness to a moose, this may be accounted for by the fact that the medals were engraved by European artists who were not familiar with the Canadian Elk.

Table 1

	Shield Cross	Cap	Trim	Supporters
Indian Chief medal	Silver red	Silver	Ermine	Wapiti *Helmet
Brass MP tokens	Silver silver	Red	Ermine	Wapiti
Promissory notes	Silver red	Red	Ermine	Wapiti *Helmet xBeaver
Long Service medal 1920	Silver gold	Silver	Silver	Wapiti
250th Anniversary medal, 1920	Silver gold	Silver	Silver	Wapiti

(Continued on page 324)

* Corporations cannot wear helmets

x The beavers should be facing right (dexter) as viewed by the bearer of the shield.

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY'S EAST MAIN DISTRICT TOKENS IN PRESENTATION CASES

by Larry Gingras, F.R.N.S., F.C.N.R.S.

A near sensation was caused at a recent coin show in the greater Vancouver area when a dealer purchased and displayed one of the Company's East Main District tokens in a presentation case. The token was the brass ½ Made Beaver piece, commonly known as Breton 927.

This is not the first time I have seen these presentation cases cause excitement among collectors, and I recall one particular occasion where I sat on the sidelines amusingly listening to two collectors arguing about them, and each being positive that his theory as to why and when they were presented was correct.

To set the records straight we must go back to 1958 when on the 28th of May that year Trans Canada Air Lines inaugurated a flight from Vancouver to London, England, using Super-Constellation aircraft. Because the route taken by the aircraft going to and from London was over Hudson's Bay it was appropriate that it be designated as the "Hudson's Bay Route".

With this theme in mind the Public Relations Department of Trans Canada Air Lines approached the Hudson's Bay Company at Winnipeg and was able to secure less than 100 of the tokens in presentation cases. These, among other favours, were presented to all passengers on the inaugural flight.

TOKENS ATTRIBUTED

by Ken Palmer, F.C.N.R.S.

C.N.R.S. No.

128 Christie & Caron. (McColl No. 399)

Aylmer, Ontario

This is definitely Aylmer, Ontario. According to Lovell's Directory, 1896/97 and the St. Thomas Centennial edition of the Times Journal, G. R. Christie and W. S. Caron operated a general store on Talbot St. E., Aylmer, Ontario.

208 East End Bakery, W. Buchanan

St. Catharines, Ont.

Between 1899 and 1906 listed in the St. Catharines City Directories as Wm. Buchanan. This ties in with a token in my collection which reads:

The East End/Bakery/Buchanan's/Geneva St./St. Catharines, Ont.
Good for/1/loaf of bread

Buchanan was located at 69-71 Geneva St. In 1905 Wright's Bakery bought 67 and 73 Geneva St. and Buchanan disappeared shortly.

McColl No. 1024 lists W. Buchanan, Sarnia ½ loaf. No one to my knowledge has ever seen this token. McColl could have erred in his location, or there could have been a bakery in Sarnia by this name, although no existing Sarnia directory shows one.

It is possible that C.N.R.S. No. 209, A. McLaughlin, East End Bakery is from St. Catharines also. The bakery could have been taken over by Buchanan but the directory listings do not go back far enough to indicate this.

361 Madame Ireland

Montreal, Quebec

Exhibition souvenir of 1892. McColl No. 177. Leroux No. 996.

I am personally satisfied that this souvenir piece should be attributed to Montreal. It was issued for distribution at the Montreal exhibition held in Montreal in 1892, as were many other pieces. It bears exactly the same reverse as the Witness piece issued in 1891 (see Breton 609). Most likely made by a Montreal firm trying to copy Banfield's Roman Penny reverses. The fact that it was listed by Wright in WM means nothing; he listed so many Canadian tokens, the Galt Post Office piece of 1890 being a good example (McColl No. 145). I have no information on who manufactured or distributed the Mdme. Ireland cosmetics.

510 F. M. Moore

Weston, Ontario

This is a bar check used in the Eagle House Hotel, Weston Road and Lawrence Ave., Weston, Ontario. Owned by the Moore family for many years. After prohibition (circa 1917) it became a rooming house and at present is a boarding and rooming house. Source of information—Mary Hosking, Librarian, Weston Public Library.