

INTRODUCTION & GENERAL NOTE

The path back to the past knows but one true division line marked off at regular intervals by nature and that is the "generation." In each is found the real history of the civilised world. Could the details of every family since its beginning and adoption by general use of the surname, have been preserved in writing we would have a perfect history of every state, city, and town in Europe and America. This will be found true in time to come regarding thousands of genealogies already written. The designating individuals with two or more christian or given names is now absolutely necessary to distinguish persons of the same family. Before 1800 it was rare that a person had more than one given name joining his surname. In time to come it will be necessary to have from five to six or even more personal names to identify the various members using a common surname.

To those who have given this subject thought the invention of the surname is a wonderful thing. Usage has developed a certain sound inflected properly which indicates to the listener the name of a family, and denotes that such who use it belong to that particular house or family, in most cases derived from a common progenitor. But even before this a system of indicating the father of each person—above the peasant or serf—was in use. It came down from the dawn of known history, the Hebrew "ben" always connecting father and son—the Roman "filius"—the Welsh "ap," the Gaelic "mac" and "o'," the Norman "fitz."

Between these two usages heraldry began and many surnames sprang from the heraldic device or charge. It is undoubtedly here that the idea of a generic or birth-right surname began, and there is little doubt of armorial bearings being the real source of many modern surnames.

An idea of the real significance of ancestral progenitors may be gained by reading the following:

As we go back there are 2 parents, then 4 grandparents, then 8, and so on. As each generation is added, the number of grandparents increase. Thus: In the 11th gen. there are 2,048 distinct surnames, the 15th gen. has increased to 16,384 ancestors. There are many families who trace back this distance with ease and certainty in the paternal surname, but is there one among them who can give even half out of the above number of ancestral surnames.