



Village of Rochester

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The History and Symbolism of the Village of Rochester's Coat of Arms Rochester, Illinois

According to Dr. David P. Johnson, of the American College of Heraldry, who researched and designed the Village's Coat of Arms, the name Rochester can be traced to one of three sources. All three of these sources are found in Great Britain.

According to Dr. Johnson's research, all cities, villages and towns throughout the world, were named after either one of the two great Rochester families of Great Britain or they were named after the City of Rochester, located in County Kent, England.

It is unknown whether Rochester, Illinois was named after the city or the family.

Dr. Johnson's research found that the shield design for the name of Rochester was indicated by the use of a "chief" shield. This is a shield that has the top 1/3 of the shield separated from the rest of the shield by a single horizontal line. In the design of our Coat of Arms, tradition dictated that a "chief" shield be used by the Village as well.

During his research Dr. Johnson also discovered that the name Rochester refers to a "fortified bridge", from the Old English word "hrof" meaning roof or bridge and the Latin word "castra" meaning a fortified military camp. In the text of The Veneable Bede (c.730) the original City of Rochester was called Hrofoecoestre.

Because of the derivation of the name Rochester, it was determined that a stone (fortified) bridge would be displayed within the top 1/3 of the shield.

The shield of the City of Rochester, Kent England has the lower 2/3 of the shield divided into quadrants by the use of the Cross of St. George. It was decided that our shield would also be so divided. Additionally, Dr. Johnson was able to determine that the traditional colors of both the Rochester families and the City of Rochester are red and gold (yellow). It was decided that our shield would display a red Cross of St. George on a gold (yellow) background.

In August of 1819, a German traveler named Ferdinand Ernst was passing through the Rochester area and marveled at the "splendid fields of planted corn and the enormous sugar maple groves of the San-gam-ma" (Sangamon River). So the quadrants of the shield are symbolic of the original impressions left on a traveler through this region almost 200 years ago - that being the green sugar maple leaf and the brown shocks of harvested corn.

Within the Coat of Arms, you will find the helmet which sits on top of the shield. Attached to the helmet is the mantle, which is a cloth that was traditionally attached to the helmet for protection. The Rules of Heraldry dictate that the mantle is to be lined in either gold (yellow) or silver (white) and that the outer color of the mantle is to be the primary color of the Coat of Arms. As can be seen by our Coat of Arms the mantle is deep red and lined in gold (yellow).

Located above the helmet is the crest. Our crest is referred to as a "Sun in its Splendor". It is used in heraldic designs to symbolize an ideal place to live, one of great energy and dynamic development.

Located within the "Sun in its Splendor" are two white Federal Stars, symbolizing National Union and two yellow fluer-de-lis, symbolizing State Sovereignty (our State motto). Also located within the "Sun" are two white feathers which symbolize the Indian heritage that is responsible for the name of the county in which Rochester is located - Sangamon County. The name Sangamon comes from the Indian word San-gam-ma, meaning mouth of river.

The Village of Rochester's Coat of Arms was registered nationally in 1991 by the American College of Heraldry and can only be displayed by the government of the Village of Rochester or any of its sub-divisions.