

Information to historical background and components of the Wieland family coat of arms

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Coats of arms dating back to the 12th century

Coats of arms emerged in the age of chivalry for military purposes, in Europe they have been attested since the 12th century. Suits of armors were worn by knights to prevent injuries during battle with helmets forming an essential part of the suit protecting the knight's head. Typically, a frog-mouth helmet (also known as jousting helm or 'Stechhelm') would cover the entire head and face, only leave a small vent for the eyes. As a consequence it was difficult to make out whether a knight belonged to one army or the other. The identification of individuals distinctly labeling the battle shields with differing color markings facilitated the identification of individuals.

The composition of these battle shields soon became ever more sophisticated. During peaceful occasions, in particular at knight tournaments, the delicately and beautifully designed escutcheons extolled the reputation of their carriers. At these tournaments, knights were also able to wear special crests or helmet decorations (ornaments of sort) attached to their helmets thereby displaying their affiliation to their respective families.

Over the course of the 15th century armors became less and less important with artilleries and firearms becoming the primary military weapons in the 16th century. Escutcheons and coat of arms, which by that time were frequently equipped with another type of helmet, merely served as a representation of societal standing and repute.

Up until the beginning of the 19th century the conferment of a coat of arms was strictly regulated. It was the preserve of a sovereign, the king or the emperor. While the innumerable awarding of coats of arms could be deferred by a sovereign to an official representative, other privileges, such as the conferral of titles, were up until the end reserved for the emperor.

After the last emperor of the Holy Roman Empire abdicated in 1806, Germany for decades thereafter remained without a common head of state and many separate, independent countries instead. Becoming a sovereign country that same year was the state of Württemberg, where Friedrichshafen is located.

Emergence of the Wieland coat of arms in Wiggenhausen around 1870/80

With the change in the political situation, the acquisition of a coat of arms became possible without the formal consent of a sovereign at the beginning of the 19th century. This was possible under the condition that purchased coats of arms were required to refer to previously existing coats of arms that had appeared in one of the more than 300 published books of heraldry in Germany.

A dealer in coats of arms was able to win the farmer Fidel Wieland (* 1822, + 1898) in Wiggenhausen near Friedrichshafen and his wife (∞ 1864) Agathe, née Eberle (* 1836, + 1908), to acquire new personal coats of arms for both their families. Since there had not been a coat of arms of any Wieland family in the Friedrichshafen area and the whole region around Lake Constance, the dealer looked for other suitable templates in old books of heraldry for both the Wieland as well as the Eberle family. He chose models from Bavaria (printed for 'Wielandt') and Franconia, which is situated to the north of Bavaria and reaches up to Frankfurt (printed for 'Eberlein') to draw from.

Subsequently he designed a new coat of arms for both the Wieland and the Eberle family in the area of Ailingen near Friedrichshafen, which have been used since (1870/80) by the descendants of Fidel.

Explanations of the components of the Wieland coat of arms

A coat of arms is typically made up of five primal components: the shield or escutcheon, the helmet (or helm), the crest coronet (in some cases a wreath or crown), the crest (or helmet decoration) and the mantle (or mantling).

Shield: it was required for the coats of arms to contain at least two fields, for one a precious metal field (in gold or silver, yellow and white being accepted as a substitute) and a color field (such as black, red, green or blue). Metal fields were not allowed to touch other metal fields and similarly color fields were not allowed to touch color fields. Some of the oldest types of composition of shields were the basic forms of a horizontal or vertical split.

In the Wieland family coat of arms black was chosen for the color field and silver (or white as a substitute) for the precious metal field.

Helmet: The old form of frog-mouth-helmets has been explained earlier in the historical background. Only towards the end of the age of chivalry, when helmets hardly required to serve as a protection against injuries anymore, tournament helmets developed. This type of helmet left a generous space for the eyes and thus allowed the wearer a decent field of sight. They were first and foremost worn by nobles and also included into their coats of arms, with simple people mainly remaining with frog-mouth-helmets.

The Wieland family coat of arms contains a tournament helmet, blue on the outside, red on the inside with golden strips (clasps) covering the eye part and a golden necklace with an appending jewel.

Crest coronet: the transition from the helmet to the crest was initially formed by a "torse" (a roundly wreathed cloth), later it could also be configured as a cushion or a crown, the latter primarily used in noble coats of arms. Wieland's: golden leafy crown, beaded with eight jewels in different colors. Whether a crown was already included in the old models from Bavaria that was used for the new coat of arms designed in 1880 is unknown.

Crest: The crests or helmet decorations, which emerged in the 15th century, were specifically crafted and used as a distinction of the wearer of the coat of arms, in particular during knight tournaments. In this way, they became elements of a coat of arms that was ever more delicately and elaborately designed. Their shape was left to the imagination, it could range from body parts (such as torsos in special clothes, heads or arms) to animals (such as birds, lions and fish) or objects of all sorts (such as towers or trees).

Wieland's: two large, closed wings (as opposed to spread wings) matching the silver/white and black color pattern of the shield. It is unknown, when and from whom this crests decoration (as special meaning?), which the coat of arms dealer used as a model, was taken from.

Mantle: Presents a figurative representation of a cloth originally used for neck protection.

Wieland's: black on the outside, silver/white on the inside, cut in a manifold way (as in most coats of arms) and thus widely voluptuous.

Given that the Wieland coat of arms contains a tournament helmet, as well as a crest coronet, which were primarily used by nobles, the impression might arise that the Wieland's ancestors were nobles. That is not the case, the Wieland family has been attested as modest peasants for centuries.