

Would you please tell me about the Kappa crest? The Kappa insignia you asked about is the Fraternity Coat-of-Arms. The “crest” is only one part of a coat-of-arms and always appears above the helmet. According to Webster’s, a coat-of-arms is “a shield with heraldic emblems as the insignia of some group” and a crest is “a heraldic device placed on seals, silverware, etc.” Let’s look back at the development of Kappa’s Coat-of-Arms.

It was 101 years ago when the Fraternity first discussed having a Coat-of-Arms. At the 1905 Council meeting, the Grand Treasurer was asked to confer with the chapters about designs. A Standing Committee was appointed and served for the next four years; however, the members of the committee changed from time to time. They collected designs from the chapters and brought them to the 1906 and 1908 Conventions. It was not until the 1909 Council meeting that an appointed committee achieved the desired result. Chairman Mary Brown Moore, *Wooster*, made it her personal responsibility to understand the rules which govern heraldry with the help of both Joanna Strange, *DePauw*, head of the reference department of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh and the designer of the Sigma Nu Coat-of-Arms.

Margaret wrote an article for *The Key* which presented the official plate in color. “The language of heraldry is exceedingly complicated. Each part of the arms and each charge has significance peculiar to itself. The shield has nine parts. . . . There are definite rules for the description of coats-of-arms in the books of the heralds or in private archives.”

In 1910, the Convention delegates realized that Margaret must have expert help if the Fraternity was to have a piece of work technically correct, so they voted to permit her to consult an authority. She worked with Marc J. Rowe of Philadelphia, the authority on heraldry in America. He rendered her ideas in a watercolor sketch that presented them correctly. The sketch, which was adopted by vote of the chapters in 1912 as the official Coat-of-Arms of Kappa Kappa Gamma, is the result of the collaboration between Margaret Moore and Marc J. Rowe.

At the 1912 Convention in Evanston, the delegates voted to have the shape of the key conform to the one-inch measurements and its corresponding proportions, rather than have the symbolic key that was on the original print. Although it does not conform strictly to the requirements of heraldry, it was voted at the Convention to allow the six Greek letters to appear on the badge in the Coat-of-Arms.

The description of the Coat-of-Arms as it appears in the present Fraternity *Bylaws* is the same as the original technical description but expressed in terms which translate the other words.

“The following is the description of the Fraternity Coat-of-Arms:

1. The shield shall be azure*, bearing in the honor point the golden key of the Fraternity, in the middle base a golden owl, these two charges being separated by a chevron of silver on which lie three fleur-de-lis of azure.
2. The crest shall be a wreath of azure and silver resting on the helmeted head of Minerva, thereon a Sigma in Delta in azure hues.
3. The motto shall be the Greek letters ΚΚΓ (Kappa Kappa Gamma) in silver resting on a ribbon of azure.
4. The mantling shall be silver and azure.” (Article XXII, B, 1-4)

The next time you look at the Fraternity Coat-of-Arms, study the various parts and you’ll understand the significance of what was used: the general outline of the mantling and ribbon is supposed to suggest the conventional fleur-de-lis; the key is in the honor point; the chevron is protection, accomplished by some work of faithful service; fleur-de-lis is purity and light; owl is vigilant and of acute wit; key is guardianship and dominion; blue is truth and loyalty; silver is peace and sincerity; gold is generosity and elevation of mind.

Margaret urged the Fraternity to protect the design so that “the technically perfect Coat-of-Arms will not be lost to us.” She expressed a wish that there should be perfect dies for stamping in gold and silver as well as plates for printing on documents and reports. Cleora Wheeler, *Minnesota*, prepared such plates and dies. The College of Arms in England was consulted before Cleora cut her die in filigree and it was made after the others that were modeled in the regulation way. When these were done, Margaret Moore declared that perfect reproductions had been made.

* Azure is the term used in heraldry for blue.