

*The Armorial Bearings
of the Province of*



Prince Edward Island

***O*n December 13, 2002, Her Excellency Adrienne Clarkson, the Governor General of Canada, presented a Full Achievement of Arms to the Province of Prince Edward Island. This honour was requested by Premier Pat Binns in 2001, the 150th anniversary of the granting of responsible government to Prince Edward Island.**

The new arms was authorized by Vice-regal Warrant dated April 26, 2002, and by an act of the Legislature, the Coat of Arms Act, proclaimed to come into force on December 13, 2002.

1. Shield
2. Helmet
3. Crest
4. Supporters
5. Compartment
6. Motto



The new Armorial Bearings is based on a design by David Webber of Charlottetown. The final artwork was prepared by Linda Nicholson of Fergus, Ontario, a heraldic artist associated with the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

The 2002 Coat of Arms includes the following features:

Shield: This is the familiar emblem granted as Armorial Bearings in 1905 by Royal Warrant of His Late Majesty King Edward VII “to be borne for this province on shields, banners, flags or otherwise according to the Laws of Arms.” The upper section of the shield features the English heraldic lion which appeared both on the Coat of Arms of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, for whom the province is named, and

on that of King Edward VII himself. The lower section shows a large oak tree on the right and three young saplings on the left. The mature tree was originally intended to represent England, while the three saplings stand for the three counties into which the province has been divided since 1767. All rise from the same foundation, as both Britain and the province are islands.

Incorporation of the Shield of Arms as the centrepiece of the augmented Armorial Bearings recognizes that period of Prince Edward Island's history as a British colony, while the new elements illustrate significant characteristics of the province, its position in the Canadian federation, its founding peoples and its natural resources.

Helmet: The golden helmet between the shield and the crest is a symbol of sovereignty representing Prince Edward Island's co-sovereign status in Confederation. The helmet has mantling and a wreath in red and white, the national colours of Canada since 1921.

Crest: A Blue Jay, the official avian emblem of Prince Edward Island, stands proudly on a grassy mound holding in its beak a leaf from the province's official silvan emblem, the red oak. The jay wears a replica of the Royal Crown of St. Edward, used since 1661 at the coronations of most British monarchs. The Royal Crown is the symbol of ultimate constitutional authority. Its inclusion in these Armorial Bearings is an honour granted by the Queen.

Supporters: Two silver foxes serve as supporters. In the late 1800s the rare silver fox was native to the region, and its pelt was highly prized in many parts of the world. It was in Prince Edward Island that the art and science of breeding furbearing animals was

developed and refined, and the ranched fur industry born. Fur farming made a tremendous contribution to the early 20th century economy of the province; and the skill and knowledge of the Island pioneers of the industry, as well as the superior quality of their product, was appreciated worldwide. In heraldry, the fox often symbolizes sagacity, wit and wisdom, characteristics that may also be attributed to Islanders. These foxes, being representative of the genesis of an international industry, further symbolize inspiration, ingenuity and perseverance.

For centuries the people of Prince Edward Island have prospered through living and working in harmony with the land and the sea. Agriculture and the fishery are represented in the decorations adorning the supporters. One of the foxes wears a garland of potato blossoms around its neck – the other, a length of fishing net.

Compartment: At the centre of the compartment lies an eight-pointed star, a symbol used by the Mi'kmaq people for centuries to represent the sun, which plays a central role in traditional spiritual life of these, the earliest known inhabitants of the region. This star is drawn as if woven of porcupine quill, a popular Mi'kmaq art form. Floral representations of other founding peoples are located around the star.

The rose symbolizes the English and the lily is a symbol of the French, while the Irish and Scottish settlers are exemplified by the shamrock and the thistle respectively. Framing the base of the shield are two Lady Slippers, the floral emblem of Prince Edward Island.

Motto: In 1769, what was then known as St. John's Island became a separate colony and received a Great Seal bearing an early representation of today's Shield of Arms. Underneath was the inscription *Parva sub Ingenti*. This is traditionally translated as "the small under the protection of the great," and when chosen was perhaps intended to define the relationship of a colony to England, the mother country.

On July 1, 1873, the colony, by then named Prince Edward Island, became a province in the Canadian Confederation. This event then brought about reinterpretation of the motto on the Great Seal, which had continued in use, to refer to the relationship between the great new country and its geographically smallest political entity.

The motto is taken from the work of the Roman poet Vergil. In Book II of Vergil's *Georgics*, a didactic poem on agriculture, the following lines appear: "..... *etiam Parnasia laurus parva sub ingenti matris se subicit umbra.*" Translated as, "..... so too a small plant, beneath its mother's mighty shade upshoots the bay-tree of Parnassus,"

in its full context the motto of Prince Edward Island suggests nurtured growth from small beginnings to greatness. Although the motif of the Great Seal had not formally served as arms for the province, it was so widely regarded as such that when Prince Edward Island was granted arms in 1905, the design from the Great Seal, including the motto, was used to form an integral part of the Coat of Arms.

Sources:

Callbeck, Lorne C.; The Cradle of Confederation, A brief history of Prince Edward Island from its discovery in 1534 to the present time; An Atlantic Advocate Book, Brunswick Press, Fredericton, New Brunswick; 1964.

Swan, Conrad, York Herald of Arms; Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty; University of Toronto Press, Toronto and Buffalo; 1977.

Appreciation:

The Province of Prince Edward Island expresses special thanks to Robert D. Watt, Chief Herald of Canada, for assistance in the development and presentation of the 2002 Armorial Bearings.



www.gov.pe.ca