

Small Categories Series

Crests

While I don't collect this particular category, it's always been one that had special appeal to me since I teach Medieval history, and family crests for noble families developed in the Middle Ages. Today, we're mainly familiar with such crests by way of knights, who, on the battlefield, were unidentifiable when fully armored and so began to wear crests on their shields to signify who they were.

Anyone who's really into heraldry will tell you that, technically, the "crest" only refers to the shield design. The entire "coat-of arms" is made up of the crest, standards on either side (such as the two horses below), the family's motto on the bottom, and graphic above the crest (often some type of helmet or crown).

The great attraction that this category has to offer is the attractiveness of the designs and colors. Some are plain and simple; others are complex and intricate, but they're all interesting to look at. And, the designs lend themselves to a variety of ways in which to organize such covers into an actual collection. You could try to organize them by country (perhaps the motto, for example, is in French, or the country's national symbol is on the crest); you could organize them by color, standards, animals used, weapons used, etc. You could put all the eagles together, all the horses together, all the helmets together, and so on.

This is a small category, but we could be talking BIG numbers here. You find lots of crests on Hotel and Restaurant covers, especially. Marie Harbison, PA, reported having 1,306 in her collection in 1993.

