

Morris

The surname of MORRIS was derived from the Old English word 'moris' a nickname for one with a swarthy complexion and dark hair. Surnames having a derivation from nicknames form the broadest and most miscellaneous class of surnames, encompassing many different types of origin. The most typical classes refer adjectivally to the general physical aspect of the person concerned, or to his character. Many nicknames refer to a man's size or height, while others make reference to a favoured article of clothing or style of dress. Many surnames derived from the names of animals and birds. In the Middle Ages ideas were held about the characters of other living creatures, based on observation, and these associations were reflected and reinforced by large bodies of folk tales featuring animals behaving as humans. The name was also borne by several minor early christian saints, including a 3rd century Swiss martyr. Following the crusades in Europe in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, a need was felt for a family name to replace the one given at birth, or in addition to it. This was recognized by those of noble birth, and particularly by those who went on the Crusades, as it added prestige and practical advantage to their status. The name is also spelt MORRISS, MORRISH, MORRICE, MORSE, MAURICE and MORICET, to name but a few. Early records of the name mention MAURICUS de Edlington de Creona who was recorded in 1176 in Leicestershire. Ricardus MORRISON of Yorkshire was listed in the Yorkshire Poll Tax of 1379. Robert Wolf married Johannes MARRYS at St. James's, Clerkenwell, London in 1515. Israll Garrett and Alice MORRICE were married in the same church in the year 1602. MORRIS was the name of an extensive and powerful family in colonial North America, who played a leading part in the emergence of the nation. They were descended from Richard MORRIS (died 1672), who had fought in Cromwell's army and then became a merchant in Barbados. His son Lewis (1671-1746) established the 'manor' of Morrisiana in New York State. His grandson Lewis (1726-98), 3rd owner of that manor, was a signatory of the Declaration of Independence. Two other grandsons, Richard and Gouverneur, were also key figures in the Revolution. However, their half-brother Staats MORRIS (1728-1800) was a general in the British Army and governor of Quebec.

ARMS - Per fess or and gules a lion rampant between
three quatrefoils within a border indented charged
with eight annulets all counter-changed

CREST - Upon a mount vert a lion rampant or semee of quatrefoils
and holding in the dexter paw an annulet gules

MOTTO - - PRO REGE SEMPER
For the king always