

Sir Edmund Coke and Friends

The term "gentleman" given by Sir Edmund Coke of England distinguished persons who were not entitled to a coat-of arms.

Nevertheless, it appears that a substantial number of persons legally entitled to display coats-of-arms on deeds and other documents was in wide use by at least forty-seven families who resided in Essex, Lancaster and Middlesex Counties. In other words, the descendants of ancient nobility who were not the eldest son and thus did not inherit the family seat, became adventurers to the plantations.

An examination of 17th century court house documents reveals the impression of the family "seal". In fact, those adventurers occupying the highest positions in the Colony were natives of England.

Just as families of the same rank in England acknowledged the leading families in the surrounding shires, the prominent families of Virginia were well acquainted with the social antecedents of each other in the Mother Country. Before departing England, some of the emigrants took care to have their coats-of-arms confirmed.

In 1633, Moore Fauntleroy obtained such a confirmation from the Office of the English Heralds, who reported that this coat-of-arms had been enjoyed by the Fauntleroy's "time out of mind." Source: Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. Vol. I, page 224. List of Traced Virginia Families on this website