

THE NAME AND FAMILY

of

RAMSEY

Compiled by

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The name of RAMSEY or RAMSAY is believed to have been of local origin and to have been taken by its first bearers from their residence at a place of that name, possibly in Huntingdonshire or County Essex, England. One historian, however, states that the names were of separate origin and that Ramsay was derived from one Simon de Rameseia or Ramsey of Argyleshire, Scotland, in the year 1140, who was probably of German ancestry. This does not seem as probable as that the Ramseys of Scotland were descended from the Ramseys of England.

Some writers state that the above-mentioned Simon de Ramsey was laird of Dalhousie, Scotland, and was possibly the father of a son named William. It appears probably that this was the line from which all the other Scottish branches were descended, the most prominent of which was that of Bamff, of which one Nessus or Neis Ramsey was the representative in the year 1232.

Neis Ramsey was the father of Malcolm, father of Adam, father of Adam the Second, father of Nigel, father of Gilbert, who was probably the father of Thomas, who had a son named Finlay, father of, among others, Alexander, who had Gilbert, Finlay and David. Of these three sons, Gilbert had a son Neis the Second, who succeeded his grandfather about the year 1504 and was the father by his wife, Janet Auchinleck, of Alexander the Second, father of George, who died in 1580. George left issue by his wife, Elizabeth Wood, of George the Second, John, Thomas, Samuel, Janet, Katharine, and Margaret. of whom the first had issue by his wife, Elizabeth Mercer, of Gilbert the Second, David, Alexander, Thomas, George, and Jean of whom the first was married about 1600 to Isobel Ogilvy, by whom he had Gilbert the Third and six daughters. The last mentioned son was married in the early seventeenth century to Elizabeth Blair and was the father by her of Thomas, James, and several daughters.

One English line of the family descended from John de Ramsey of Somersetshire, England, in the latter part of the thirteenth century. He was the father of Walter, who married Lady Catherine Orchardleigh and had a son John, who was the father by his wife Margery of Sir Walter, father of Thomas. This last-mentioned son was the father of possibly among others, Marian, Sir Thomas, and Walter, all of whom probably left issue.

Another English line was that represented in the early sixteenth century by John Ramsey of London, who was the father of William, Sir Thomas, Richard, Jone, and Elizabeth. The son, Sir Thomas, was Sheriff of London in 1568 and later became Mayor as well.

While it is not definitely known in every case from which of the many lines of the family in Great Britain the first emigrants of the name to America were descended, it is generally believed that most, if not all, of the Ramsays and Ramseys derive from a common ancestor of a remote period.

Among the first of the name to come to America were Thomas Ramsey, of Gloucester, Va., before 1631, who is believed to have had a son Captain Edward Ramsey living in James City County in 1663; Samuel Ramsey, of Charles City County, Va., in 1635; William Ramsie, of Virginia, in 1652; James Ramsey of Westmoreland County, Va., in 1654; and John Ramsey or Ramsay, of New England, in 1675. None of these men, however, left any definite records concerning their immediate families or descendants.

In the early eighteenth century, James Ramsey emigrated from Ireland to Lancaster County, Pa. He had issue by his wife, Jane Montgomery, of three sons, William, of Fairfield, Conn.; Nathaniel, of Cecil County, Md; and David, of Cecil County and later of Charleston, S.C.

William Ramsey of Scotch-Irish ancestry came to America in 1741 and settled at Warwick, Bucks County, Pa. By his wife, Jane Brady, he was the father of Patrick, Hugh, John, William, Jennet, Jean and Robert.

Sometime before the year 1744, William Ramsey of Galway, Scotland, came to Alexandria, Va. There he married Ann McCarty, who gave him at least two sons, Colonel Dennis and Dr. William, both of whom fought in the Revolutionary War, and possibly others as well.

As early as 1755 and probably before James Ramsey or Ramsay came from Glasgow, Scotland, to York County, Pa. He married Mary Porter in 1746 and was the father by her of Mary, James, and two others who died young.

Patrick Ramsay, son of one Andrew of Glasgow, Scotland, settled at Blandford, Bristol Parish, Va., sometime before 1760, in which year he married Elizabeth Poythress. They were the parents of, among others, Andrew and Elizabeth, of whom the first was the father of Brigadier General George D. Ramsey of the United States Army.

Hugh Ramsey emigrated to America from Ireland in 1768 and settled in Bucks County, Pa., where he was married in 1779 to Jane Thompson. His children were Margaret, John, William, Mary, Thompson, Hugh, Elizabeth, Jane, Nancy and Sarah.

Sometime before 1770, Reverend John Ramsay was rector of St. Anne's Parish, Va. His death is recorded in that year. It is thought possible that the brothers John, Alexander, and William Ramsay, of Albemarle County Va., at slightly later dates, were his sons, but this is not certain. Of these brothers, William married Margaret Wallace and had issue by her of three sons, Andrew, John, and William.

James Ramsey, whose father emigrated to Derry and Hancock, N.H., from Scotland about 1770, was the father of, among others, Betsey and John. He probably also had a brother named David, who had, among others, a son named James.

In 1772 Samuel Ramsey of Scotland emigrated with his son John to Albany, N. Y.

About 1781, James Ramsey of Washington County, Pa., was married to Margaret Scott. It is possible that he was a descendent of one of the earlier lines in America rather than an original immigrant. His children were Jane, James, Elizabeth, Mary, Margaret, Martha, Hugh, Sarah, Rebecca, and twins, Anna and John.

Later representatives of these and possibly of other branches of the family in America have scattered to many parts of the country and have contributed as much to the advancement of American Civilization as their ancestors did to its first establishment on this continent. They are known, on the whole, as a sturdy race, energetic, industrious and thrifty. Possessed in many cases of rather high intellectual ability and capacity for leadership, members of the family have been successful in various lines of endeavor.

Among those of the name who fought in the War of the Revolution were Lieutenant Alexander Ramsay, of Pennsylvania; Surgeon David Ramsay of Virginia; Colonel Nathaniel Ramsay, of Maryland; Lieutenant Allen Ramsey, of North Carolina; Captain Matthew Ramsey of North Carolina; and numerous others from the various other New England and southern states.

William, Adam, Thomas, Alexander, David, Gilbert, James, Walter, George, Hugh, Andrew, John and Samuel are some of the Christian names most favored by the family for its male progeny.

A few of the many members of the family who have distinguished themselves in America in more recent times are:

Ersline Ramsay (b.1864) of Pennsylvania, corporation official.
 Robert Lee Ramsay (b.1880), of South Carolina, professor of English.
 Robert Lincoln Ramsey (b.1877), born in England and came to the United States at the age of four, lawyer and Congressman from West Virginia.
 George Ramsey (b.1878), of Ohio, patent lawyer.
 Horace Marion Ramsey, (b.1880), of Oregon, clergyman.
 Leonidas Willing Ramsey (b.1891), of Mississippi, advertising counsel.
 Rolla Roy Ramsey, (b.1872), of Ohio, professor of physics.
 Williw Hinksman Ramsey (b.1861), of Ohio, manufacturer.
 Alexander Ramsey (b.1815-1903), of Pennsylvania, politician and Cabinet Officer.
 Francis Monroe Ramsay (1835-1914) of Washington, D.C., naval officer.

One of the most ancient and well known of the coats of arms of the British family of Ramsey or Ramsey is that described as follows, (Burke, General Armory, 1884):

Arms -- "Argent, an eagle displayed sable, beaked and membered gules."

Crest -- "A unicorn's head couped argent, armed or."

Supporters -- "Two griffins proper."

Motto. -- "Ora et labora." ("Pray and Labor.")

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