

## Concept of an American Nobility

In the case of the United States becoming a hereditary monarchy, the question will undoubtedly be raised of granting hereditary titles outside the immediate Imperial Family (assuming that the monarch will be in the rank of Emperor). While new grants are rare worldwide, hereditary nobility, in most countries, exists either as a legally protected or as a historical and socially relevant albeit unofficial class.

Albeit aristocratic families exist in the United States that are comparable in status with European nobility, the only types of formal nobility existing within the country are foreign (mostly English, Scottish and Irish) nobility as well as the nobility of the hereditary chiefs of Federally and State-recognized Indian Tribes, who can be said to derive their position from the fact that the Nobility Clause does not apply to tribes.

The main difference to Europe is that America's historical upper class is much more regionalized and every distinct cultural region, at least in the eastern part of the country, which had enough time to develop an "old money" class, has its own aristocratic traditions. While they are unfortunately retreating in all parts of the country, the distinct regional identities are maintained. The general population of the United States has clear regional differences stemming from different European regional and religious backgrounds, and the same applies to the upper class.

The creation of an official American nobility would necessarily result in the unification of these distinct structures, the formation of a unified national hierarchy and law. Certain regional differences can and must be accorded for, but the general principles of nobiliary law will stay the same throughout the whole country.

The following paper serves as a concept for a hypothetical American nobility, based largely on the British system but eliminating intricacies such as female succession and the unclear status of untitled nobility.

## **General principles of nobility**

The quality of nobility (gentility) and titles of nobility (thereafter referred to as “Nobiliary dignities” or “Dignities”) as well as coats of arms, tied to noble status, shall be acquired by law through the means described below as well as through a concession through Letters Patent issued by the Emperor. It shall be the unlimited prerogative of the Emperor to regulate and issue nobiliary dignities.

The usage of nobiliary dignities and coats of arms shall be supervised by a College of Arms based in Washington, DC and headed by the Chief Herald of the United States, who appoints Heralds and Pursuivants at his discretion.

The illicit usage of nobiliary dignities or coats of arms shall be punishable as a misdemeanor and, in aggravated cases, as a felony.

Taken from the British system, with which Americans who think of nobility are usually most familiar, is the principle that except for the qualifications Gentleman and Esquire, the qualification Lord, and the various forms of address, each title is, in principle, substantive. This means that it is either for life, or transmitted only upon death, and only to a singular heir. Also taken from the British system is the association of armorial bearings with nobility.

Taken from the Continental system is the principle of Salic law, which maintains that status may only be inherited through the male line if not acquired through a grant, and that the wife always takes the status of her husband. This serves to streamline the nobiliary system and addresses the same concern that was cited when the Italian government abolished female succession in 1926: that the title of an illustrious family may, despite agnates existing, fall to a less illustrious and deserving one, that a family may be deprived of a title through the sole accident that a single branch, not the whole one, lacks sons. Of course, the transmission of titles to and through daughters is permitted in exceptional cases, only with the permission of the Emperor, which must be expressed through the issuance of new Letters patent. “Exceptional cases” generally means cases in which a family is about to die out in the male line completely and the title may go extinct.

Further taken from the Continental system is the state regulation of untitled nobility. While the British gentry, or untitled nobility, is a clearly existing class, it is not statutory but a matter of customary law, which not only from time to time leads to internal conflicts when this customary law is not clear enough or not known but can also make the reception of a British gentleman on the continent as a nobleman difficult.

Taken especially from the Russian system is a generous way of acquiring personal or hereditary nobility through office, rank or state decorations. Due to America’s large population, it would be imprudent to limit the acquisition of nobility to direct grants by the Emperor, at least for the first decades, until the nobility consolidates sufficiently.

The heraldic system is based on the British one, but with several differences.

## **Titles and ranks of the American nobility**

### **Rules of inheritance and marriage**

All titles and ranks, except when explicitly stated otherwise, confer hereditary nobility, meaning that all descendants of the holder, in the legitimate, direct, biological, unbroken male line are noble and at least have the dignity of Gentleman or Gentlewoman.

All titles that are hereditary, i.e. unless specified otherwise any title except for that of knight, are hereditary by the right of agnatic linear primogeniture among the descendants of the first holder. The qualities Gentleman, Esquire and Lord (the latter, when not used as a form of address for a Peer) are not titles but orders of untitled nobility.

A noblewoman who has no dignity in her own right bears until marriage by courtesy the dignity derived from her father, i.e. the feminine version of the dignity of a cadet brother, and in marriage forfeits it. She does not retain it by divorce or in widowhood. A married woman without a dignity in her own right is only entitled to the dignity of her husband if it is lower than that of her birth. She retains it in widowhood until remarriage. This means that a noblewoman who marries a non-noble man can lose her nobility altogether. In divorce, a woman retains the dignity acquired through marriage if it is lower (or the lack of dignity), but loses any higher dignity than held by birth.

### **Transfer in the female line through Letters Patent**

In the case a title, or an exceptionally distinguished untitled family as evidenced by a coat of arms, is about to die out through the lack of male heirs in the whole family, the senior daughter may petition the Emperor to permit her to become a heraldic (and, if applicable, titular) heiress, and carry the dignity of her family for her own lifetime in her own right. She will, in that case, transmit it to her children as if she were male, the arms necessitating appropriate differencing or quarterings, but to her husband only if stipulated by the license or a separate one is obtained for him, and in all cases without giving him the right to transfer it to his children not of this marriage.

The same regulations apply whenever a woman is granted a nobiliary dignity in her own right due to her own merits.

### **Heraldic Heiresses**

Generally, a woman is considered to have a dignity in her own right if she:

- Has been granted the permission to inherit and transmit her family's title and/or coat of arms, regardless of whether she has already inherited it.
- Has been granted or acquired a dignity herself.

**Table of ranks, heraldic additaments, styles and forms of address**

Unless specified otherwise, the feminine versions apply both when the dignity is held by courtesy from the husband and suo jure.

“HA.” applies to the heir apparent by the rule of linear agnatic primogeniture, i.e. the eldest son, or if he predeceases the latter, his eldest son etc.

“Ch.” applies to sons and unmarried daughters.

“GCh.” applies to male-line grandsons and unmarried male-line granddaughters.

“F.” applies to further male-line male descendants and unmarried male-line female descendants.

“Hon.” means “Honorable”

Rank/Title	Form of address	Style	Post-nominal	Descendants	Heraldry
Duke Duchess	His/Her Grace	Lord Lady		Ch. Lord or Lady, The Honorable GCh. Esquire (thereafter by primogeniture in the line of each grandson) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Supporters Duke's coronet
Marquess Marchioness	The Most Honorable	Lord Lady		Ch. Lord or Lady, The Honorable GCh. Esquire (thereafter by primogeniture in the line of each grandson) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Supporters Marquess' coronet
Earl Countess	The Right Honorable	Lord Lady		Ch. Esquire, The Honorable (thereafter by primogeniture without The Hon. In the line of each son) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Supporters Earl's coronet
Viscount Viscountess	The Right Honorable	Lord Lady		Ch. Esquire, The Honorable (thereafter by primogeniture without The Hon. In the line of each son) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Supporters Viscount's coronet
Baron Baroness	The Right Honorable	Lord Lady		Ch. Esquire, The Honorable (thereafter by primogeniture without The Hon. In the line of each son) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Supporters Baron's coronet
Chief (male or female)	The Honorable	Lord Lady		Ch. Esquire (thereafter by primogeniture in the line of each son) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Supporters Chief's coronet <sup>1</sup>
Baronet Baronetess (suo jure) Lady (wife)		Sir Dame Lady	Bt. Btss.	HA. Esquire F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	Baronet's coronet
Knight Dame (suo jure) Lady (wife)		Sir Dame Lady	Kt. Dme.	HA. Esquire (thereafter by primogeniture) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	
Lord (by courtesy) <sup>2</sup> Lady (by courtesy)	(The Honorable)			Ch. Esquire (thereafter by primogeniture in the line of each grandson) F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	
Esquire <sup>3</sup>			Esq.	Primogeniture if applicable F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman	
Gentleman Gentlewoman			Gent. Gent.	F. Gentleman, Gentlewoman if applicable	

<sup>1</sup> Alternatively the specific chief's coronet of the individual tribe, as recognized by the Chief Herald

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking a higher qualification of Esquires when used as a courtesy for untitled persons

<sup>3</sup> No female equivalent, but wives and daughters are said to be “in the rank of an Esquire”, above mere Gentlewomen

### **Automatic acquisition of dignities**

The following dignities shall be acquired in the following ways automatically, without the requirement for an explicit grant or confirmation from the Emperor.

- **Baronet**

Hereditary Members of the Society of the Cincinnati, the Baronetcy, given to the surname of the original member, being transmitted with the membership under the condition that the new member be of male line descent from the original member and be the only one representing him.
- **Knight**
  - Recipients of the:
    - Congressional Medal of Honor
    - Imperial<sup>1</sup> Medal of Freedom with Distinction
    - Imperial<sup>1</sup> Medal of Freedom
    - Congressional Gold Medal
- **Esquire (personal)**
  - Recipients of the
    - Distinguished Service Cross
    - Navy Cross
    - Air Force Cross
    - Coast Guard Cross
    - Congressional Silver Medal
  - Presidents
  - Vice-Presidents
  - Governors
  - Lieutenant Governors
  - Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States
- **Gentleman**
  - Recipients of grants of arms.
  - Commissioned officers ranked OF-6 to OF-10 and corresponding ranks in the civil service
  - Commissioned officers ranked OF-5 who have served gallantly for 30 years and have participated in combat
- **Gentleman (personal, i.e. non-hereditary nobility)**
  - Commissioned officers ranked OF-1 to OF-5 and corresponding ranks in the civil service

The Emperor may institute dynastic orders which may also have nobiliary effects depending on the particular rank.

These measures, of course, apply retroactively for the descendants of deceased persons who would have fulfilled the conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> It is assumed that all awards named “Presidential” are renamed to “Imperial”

## **Chiefs**

The title of Chief, its holder having precedence before Baronets but after Barons, is not granted by the Emperor based on merit but recognized for the Chiefs, elected or hereditary, of Federally or State-recognized Indian Tribes, Traditional Villages and other units of recognized Native American governance, provided the Chiefs are chosen in a traditional way or inherit their position and are not elected by the whole tribe unless it was the case before colonization. Chiefs of Scottish and Irish clans living in the United States are also recognized as Chiefs, provided their claim is recognized by Lord Lyon King of Arms in the case of Scottish chiefs.

## **Recognition of foreign dignities**

The Emperor recognizes foreign dignities and arms held by American citizens or granted to American citizens by foreign powers at his discretion, through Letters Patent which count as a new grant. The right to a foreign dignity must be proven, if it is recognized in civil law, through the authorities of the respective country. The College of Arms will

Dignities that were forfeited in order to fulfill the prerequisites for obtaining American citizenship can be restored in the persons of the legitimate heirs under the rules that were to apply if the dignity were still extant. Foreign dignities that do not conform to the principles of American nobiliary law are recognized only exceptionally, especially if they may be inherited in the female line. If a dignity forfeited due to immigration is restored, it is generally not restored in a way that allows for further inheritance in the female line, even if it was possible originally.

## **Ennoblement Policies**

While arms and thus hereditary nobility will be granted to distinguished and meritorious citizens of the general population, titles should be special favors granted either for continued distinguished service to the state and to society in various fields as well as for extraordinary acts of bravery and heroism and for achievements of national importance. Titles should generally be hereditary, the lack of any hereditary privileges meaning that there is no reason why new titles should only be for life. The titles Duke and Marquess should generally only be granted to descendants of Presidents and figures considered of historical importance for the whole United States. It is important to integrate not only families living in America that might have noble status already, but also those families that have been denied nobility due to America's republican history. This includes descendants of important Presidents, statesmen or military commanders. The heads of such families should be granted hereditary titles.

It should generally be the objective that when the nobility is consolidated, it should encompass 0,2-0,3% of the population of the United States, comparable to European countries. This would, from a population of 340 million, mean 680.000 to 1.020.000 persons.

## Heraldry

### Principles of heraldry

Only noble persons may use officially registered coats of arms. It shall be legal for commoners to use arms but without any nobiliary additaments, only consisting of a shield, a plain helmet and a torse, and without official registration on federal level. States can establish their own heraldic agencies in cooperation with the College of Arms to register the arms of commoners. Noble arms shall be inherited by all descendants bearing the surname in the legitimate, direct, biological, unbroken male line of the first holder. Differencing is not necessary but can be used voluntarily if there is historical precedent for the family (i.e. only Scottish families with arms recognized by Lyon).

All hereditary nobles shall be entitled to a grant of arms. Worthy persons not in possession of hereditary nobility, may also receive a grant of arms at the discretion of the Chief Herald, and receive hereditary nobility with that. A change of surname requires differencing of the arms. A combination of surnames with another armigerous family, or transfer of arms in the female line through an Imperial Letters Patent, require quartering.

### Signs of rank

All nobles are entitled to a barred, gilded helm with a crest coronet of the type denoting nobility on the European continent. One can also opt for a torse.<sup>1</sup> Quartered arms permit to use the helms of all arms together. Titles beginning with Baronet have coronets of rank, which shall be modeled after the British system.

*Duke*



*Marquess*



*Earl*



*Viscount*



*Baron*



*Chief*



*Baronet*



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<sup>1</sup> The usage both of a torse and a coronet in the same crest is discouraged.

## **College of Arms and Honors Council**

### **College of Arms**

The College of Arms, headquartered in the Capital, shall be the body responsible for regulating heraldry and nobiliary favors in the United States. It shall be headed by a Chief Herald of the United States, who shall enjoy the rank and precedence of a Member of Cabinet.

The Chief Herald shall appoint heraldists and genealogists to the positions of Heralds and Pursuivants to assist him in his duties.

The College of Arms shall:

- Devise armorial bearings for nobles, and, at the discretion of the Chief Herald, for non-nobles and holders of personal nobility, who in receiving them acquire hereditary nobility
- Supervise the observance of American nobiliary law, register and regulate claims to titles
- Make recommendations on the recognition or non-recognition of foreign dignities
- Make recommendations on the further development of American nobiliary law
- Prosecute the abuse of nobiliary dignities and coats of arms

It is possible for States to institute their own heraldic authorities, for regulating communal heraldry and granting arms to burghers. These shall be subordinate to and under the supervision of the College of Arms.

### **Honors Council**

The Honors Council shall be the body responsible for making recommendations to the Emperor on the awarding of national orders and the creation of new titles of nobility. It shall be modeled after the Belgian Conseil de Noblesse and consist of a mixture of nobles and commoners, including representatives of the various Hereditary Societies, all branches of the Armed Forces, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, the most important Churches present in America and the College of Arms.

It shall present, every year, 20 to 30 candidates to the Emperor, from which he shall choose those that will receive grants on Independence Day.