

### Spencer Line History

In the 11th century, one of the principal residences of William the Conqueror in Normandy was at Lillebonne, a small village on the Seine, about thirty miles up the river from LaHavre. In earlier times, it had been a Roman town. Remains of a Roman theater have been excavated, and the castle of William the Conqueror is nearby. There is now little left of it except three or four towers, which are in a poor state of preservation. It was here in the great banqueting hall of the castle - no longer extant - that William assembled his barons and principal supporters, and laid plans for the invasion of England, his outraged pride forcing a conquest to overthrow King Harold, who William felt had usurped the throne rightfully his.

About three miles from Lillebonne on a high bluff overlooking the Seine is the ancient castle of the Tancarvilles, the parent family of the Spencers. Although the castle has fallen into sad disuse, enough remains to show the early magnificence of the ancient stronghold. The Tancarville family probably took its name from **Tancred** about 912 A.D., whose fief on the settlement of Normandy by the Vikings was named 'Tancardivilia.'

**Rabel I**, son of **Tancred**, left his name to 'Rabel's Isle' and 'Rabelsfoss' mentioned in early records. In the next generation, **Gerard**, Baron of Tancarville, was the father of **Rabell II** or **Raoul** towards the end of the tenth century in the time of Duke Robert of Normandy, father of William the Conqueror. **Rabel II** had two sons who went by the name **D'Abbetot**, **Raoul** or **Ralph** and **Almeric**.

The Tancarvilles had been made hereditary Chamberlains of Normandy. Raoul D'Abbetot de Tancarville was guardian of Duke William (who latter became the Conqueror) while he was a minor. Raoul was also the founder of Boscherville Abbey in the year 1023. At the time of the invasion of England in 1066, William the Conqueror was accompanied by two of Raoul's sons, Urse and Robert D'Abbetot. Robert was one of William's barons as well as his Steward or Dispensator; hence the name 'De Spencer,' which his English and American descendants have used ever since.

The castle which they left behind near Lillebonne remained the chief stronghold of the Norman French Tancarvilles till 1320, after which it fell into ignoble hands. It was burned by Henry V of England on 1437, and further destroyed and plundered at the time of the French Revolution in the 18th century. Perhaps it is the few perfect bits remaining that seem to make life real here, as well as inexpressibly sad. The hearths and chimney pieces are still in place, round which gathered so many brave and chivalrous spirits.

In the tower beside the gate house the walls are nine feet thick. The chapel with its graceful pointed arches, the Salle de Chevaliers, and its fireplace may still be made out. There are subterranean dungeons and ancient torture rooms called the Tour du Diable where the 'Evil One' was exorcised by the Cure of Tancarville. Close by is the tower Coquisart, sixty feet high, shaped like a triangle, with curved sides. There were five stores here, but all the roofs have fallen in, and much of the original architectural beauty is destroyed.

The castle stands on an abrupt elevation 300-400 feet above the Seine valley, and was of great importance to the Dukes of Normandy and their successors, the Kings of France. It was here that Robert, one of the later Lords of Tanarville, had a famous duel with the Sire de Harcourt in the presence of the Kings of France, England, and Navarre, which excited the admiration of the royal spectators to such a degree that the King of France terminated the contest on order to spare the lives of the combatants.

From the top of the hill on which Tancarville Castle stands, one can obtain a view of many miles over river and low lying plains. At a distance of about three miles, Lillebonne is seen, with its factories on the waterfront, together with the Spire of the village church and the castle of William the Conqueror. The relationship between the family of Tancarville and Duke Robert, father of William, was of an intimate character, and continued so during the life of the Conqueror.

William had been born into this turbulent world in 1027 or 1028. His father was known as 'Robert the Devil,' and William himself in his lifetime as 'William the Bastard,' for Robert had caught the eye of a girl named Herleve (or Arlette) who was the daughter of a tanner in Falaise. Not long after William was born, Duke Robert decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and before he went on the dangerous journey, it was necessary to decide the succession to the Dukedom. He called a meeting of the powerful men of Normandy and presented William as his heir. The assembly

reluctantly paid homage to the child. Robert set off on his journey but died on the way, so at the age of seven, William became the Duke of Normandy. His guardian was Raoul D'Abbetot de Tancarville.

By 1066 when William was 38 or 39, he had spent the whole of his life either in war or in the sports that were training for war. He was probably illiterate, barbarous and primitive, devoid of any intellectual or artistic interest, God-fearing, just when he was not angry, and absolutely intolerant. He also controlled the Church and religious decision in Normandy.

On 5 January 1066 Edward the Confessor (who ruled from 1043-1066), last of the Angle-Saxon Kings of England, died without naming a successor. The 'witan,' the country's advisory council, chose Harold, his Danish cousin, as King. But Duke William of Normandy had been led by the vacillating Edward and by Harold, both of whom were distant cousins of Scandinavian heritage, to believe that he would have been crowned instead. William felt betrayed, and determined to take the title by force.

Plans were quickly made. Hundreds of ships were build. Volunteers came pouring into Normandy, knights and their attendants, foot soldiers alone and in hands from every nearby province and country. It became widely known that William was offering landed estates in England to his fighting leaders, with booty for everyone; while to anyone who died in this holy cause, which had been endorsed by the Pope in Rome, the church would offer absolution. A fortune if they succeeded, or heaven if they failed

- calls which have attracted armies throughout history.

The small seaport of Dives on the coast of Normandy was the rendezvous for the Conqueror's fleet on 1066, and it was in the ancient Church at Dives that William prayed for success just prior to setting sail from Normandy. On a tablet there was found the names of Robert (D'Abbetott) Le Despencer - among others. As William's Stewart, Robert was an administrator or supervisor who managed the Duke's property, finances, and household affairs.

Harold was in his early forties when he was chosen King, tall, handsome enough, healthy and strong, and a courteous cheerful companion. He was patient and kind to men of good will, but threatened with the terrible face of a lion those disturbers of the peace, thieves, and robbers. He was liberal in his loves, but there had not been much time in his life for domesticity. Harold grew up with a respect for learning. Cultured Englishmen had to be linguists then - they could not expect anyone else to speak English, so Harold understood French, probably Norse and Flemish, and possibly Latin. At the same time, he had a reputation for marching faster and farther than anyone else thought possible.

The story is told that when eight miles north of Hastings the night before the battle with Harold, William made a vow to the Virgin Mary that if he should be successful in the pending battle, he would erect and dedicate a Church to her. Whether the Virgin did intercede in his behalf may be open to question, but there is no doubt that the terrible rumor was spread that King Harold had been excommunicated by the Church in Rome, and that the same fate

hung over any man who fought for him.

William won the battle, and on the battlefield at the place where Harold fell, he erected a Church, and it was called the Church of the Holy Virgin. Near the Church, William erected an Abbey, called Battle Abbey, in which were kept lists of the principal men who accompanied him from Normandy, together with their heraldic arms. The names d'Abbetot and de Spencer appear on all the lists.

In England, Robert Despencer became 'a very powerful man,' as recorded by the monks of Worcester, from whom he wrested the lordship of Elmleigh, which they could never afterwards regain. His name appears as a witness to some of the Conqueror's most important charters. He is mentioned among the Bishops and Barons assembled in Council with William in London in 1082 at which time they set their hands and seals to the charter of William de Carilepho, Bishope of Durham. The next year Robert was witness to a charter of the King at Westminster, in Council, for removing the secular canons from that church, and placing monks in their stead. He was afterwards witness to a grant of the King of the whole city of Bath, with the coinage and tolls thereof, belonging to John Bishop of Bath.

Robert Despencer had, by gift from the Conqueror, the following manors which he held at the time of the general survey, according to the Domesday Book, which was compiled in 1086 on William's orders to record the ownership and taxable value of England's landed estates.

- Moreton, Leth, Filingeli, and Bertanstone in Warwickshire:
- Tozintone, Scrivelsbin, Ilgesby, Endrebt, Partenai, Butide, Tadewelle, Tulestone, Rosctune, Curinigsbic, Menughs, Herdertly, Stepings, Langstone, and Holtham in Lincolnshire:
- Legre, Torp, Redeclive, Cuningstone, Odestone, Esmonditone, Chilbarde, Norton, Wicote, Stantone, Sucowe, Sacrestine, Suarchtone, Flechone, Wistanton, Tileton, and Sumerdeberis in Leicestershire:
- and Wicrene in Grelestaine Hundred, Gloucester.

William the Conqueror had hoped to rule a willing peaceful people, but he destroyed that hope as soon as he began to distribute the lands of England to his followers. It took him five years of ruthless oppression to put down the active revolts and bring the country under his power. People especially resented the eviction of every inhabitant from huge stretches of the countryside to provide new forests for his sport, and laws which were far more vindictive than those of the English earls and kings. William never came to like the people or the countryside, and he spent as much time as he dared in Normandy. England remained a burden to him all his life.

Whether his steward, Robert Despencer, had a wife and left children is not known for a certainty, but since the office of royal steward was an hereditary one, as the Duchess of Cleveland suggests, it may be presumed that his successor to that office about 1100 A.D., William Despencer, possessor of the manor Elington, was his son. William became steward to King Henry the

First (reigned 1100-1135), youngest son of the Conqueror, who had succeeded his brother, William Rufus, 'the Red,' who was king from 1087 to 1100.

Thurstan Despencer was either a son or brother of William; in either event, he inherited the office of steward to King Henry I. Of this steward, the following story is told: In the time of Henry I it was the custom of the court, that books, bills, and letters, should be drawn and signed by servitor in court, concerning their own matters, without fee. But at this time Thurstan, the king's steward, or Le Despencer, as they then called him (from whom the family of the Lord Spencer came), exhibited to the king a complaint against Adam of Yarmouth, clerk of the signet (clerk of the Light), for, that he refused to sign, without a fee a bill passed for him. The King first heard Thurstan commending the old custom at large, and charging the clerk for exacting somewhat contract thereunto, for passing his book. Then the clerk was heard, who briefly said, 'I received the book, and sent unto your steward desiring only of him to bestow upon me two spice cakes made for your own mouth; who returned for answer, he would not, and thereupon I desire to seal his book.'

The king greatly disliked the steward for returning this negative, and forthwith made Adam sit down upon the bench, with the seals and Thurstan's book before him, but compelled the steward to put off his cloak, to fetch two of his best spiced cakes for the king's own mouth, to bring them in a fair white napkin, and with low curtsie to present them to Adam, the clerk. Which being



accordingly done, the King commanded Adam to seal and deliver him his book, and made them friends, adding this speech - 'Officers of the court must gratifie and show cast of their office, not only one to another, but also to strangers, whensoever need shall require.'

Stephen of Blois, grandson of the Conqueror, was the last Norman King of England (from 1135-1154), for by this time it had become evident that by giving away English land, William the Conqueror and his successors had brought his conquest into the humblest cottage, so that even the children were made to know they were a beaten race. Yet those children won the victory in the end. They never became Norman; they remained most stubbornly English, absorbed the invaders, and made of the mixture a new kind of Englishness.

Henry II, grandson of Henry I, succeeded King Stephen, and through his father, Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, became the first of that line of rulers of England. He was King from 1154-1189, married Eleanor of Aquitaine, and was ruler of the Angevin Empire, including all the western part of France. He was the father of Richard I and John.

According to Collins (loc cit), Thurstan Despencer had four sons:

- Walter Despencer, Lord Stanley, who was Usher to the Chamber of King Henry II; he died early without issue;
- Hugh Despencer, who accompanied Richard I (Coeur de Lion in a Crusade to the Holy Land in 1190;
- Geoffry Despencer; and

- Almeric Despencer, who succeeded his older brother, Walter, as second Lord Stanley.

Almeric Despencer was sheriff of Ruthlandshire in the 34th year of King Henry II, as well as under his successor, Richard I (King of England, 1189-1199). Almeric was also steward to Richard I.

In the eighth year of the reign of Richard I, Almeric Despencer was relieved of the third scutage - i.e., tax normally paid in lieu of military service in Normandy. In the fifth year of King John (reigned 1199-1216), he received confirmation in fee of the lordship of Stanley in Gloucester, and Wurdie, also previously given to his brother, Walter, for his homage and service. Almeric was required to pay for these with a pair of gilt spurs, or twelve pence yearly into the Exchequer at the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, and to offer the service of half a knight's fee.

In 1205 he paid a fine of one hundred twenty marks and one palfrey so as to be exempted from attending King John in his proposed expedition beyond the seas.

Almeric Despencer married Amabil Chesnoi, daughter of Walter de Chesnoi, by whom he had three sons, the eldest of whom, Thurstan Le Despencer, was his heir.

Thurstan Le Despencer, with his brother Almeric and other barons, took up arms against King John, for which the King seized the lands of Almeric Le Despencer and gave them in the 18th year of his reign to Osbert Gifford, his own natural son, having the year before committed the custody of Thurstan to Sir Rowland Blewit,

whose daughter Elizabeth, Thurstan's brother Almeric had married. King John inspired neither affection nor loyalty, and by the end of his reign, much of the magnificent Angevin Empire of his father, Henry II, had been dissipated.

In the 19th, 20th, and 22nd years of Henry III (1216-1272), Thurstan Le Despencer was sheriff of Gloucestershire. In the 26th year of Henry III he was commanded to attend the King with horse and arms at Xancton to vindicate the injuries the King had received from Louis IX, King of France, who invaded Poictiers.

Thurstan Le Despencer died prior to 1249, for in that year the wardship of his lands in the counties of Wilts, Surrey, Gloucester, Oxon, and Worcester, during the minority of his heir (Geffrey), was committed to Adomare de Lizighian, and the manor of Ervelme in Oxon was assigned to Lucia, his widow, for her maintenance till her dowry should be determined.

Thurstan was the father of Geffrey Le Despencer, Lord of Marchly in Worcestershire, who died about the year 1251. Sir Geffery left two sons:

- Hugh Le Despencer who became the chief justiciat of all England in 1260, the 44th year of Henry III; from his line came the Earls Winchester and Gloucester; and
- Geoffrey Le Despencer, from him came the Duke of Marlborough and the Spencers of Bedfordshire, England, and of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

At the time of the death of Geoffrey (second of that name) in 1242, his wife Emma, was appointed guardian of their under-age son,

John Le Despencer. When he became of full age, in the fortieth year in the reign of Henry III, John was called to receive the honor of knighthood, and was known as Sir John Despencer, holding estates valued at sixty pounds per annum in Southampton.

In 1256 Pope Alexander IV directed a bull to the Bishop of Salisbury in which he set forth that John Despencer, by petition prays that he may build a chapel and have a chaplain in his manor of Swalefield, which he is ready to endow, it being in a forest where he lives, and that it is unsafe for him and his family to go to the mother church because of many thieves harbored in the forest, and because of inundations in winter. The pope referred the matter to the Bishop for determination.

Sir John Despencer and others of his family took part with the barons in their wars against Henry III, who was untrustworthy, inconsistent, unmartial, and regarded as simple. Sir John was taken prisoner in April 1264 at the battle of Northampton, after which his manors of Castle-Carlton and Cavenby in Lincolnshire, which he held by right of his wife, Joan de Lou, were taken by the King. But when the barons later took that Prince prisoner at the battle of Lewes on 14 May 1264, Sir John Despencer was released by mutual agreement, and by the King's writ to Roger de Mortimer dated 4 Jun 1264, he was ordered to bring Sir John, among other prisoners who had been taken in the Northampton fight, to London to be set at liberty.

Sir John Despencer was married to Joan, daughter of Robert de Lou. He held several properties in her right, but having no

children by her when she died, some reverted to her family. At that time Sir John was thirty years old. By his second wife, Anne, he had two sons:

- Adam Le Despencer, who died young, and
- William Le Despencer of Belton and Defford.

King Henry III died in 1272 and was succeeded by his son, Edward I, who reigned until 1307. Sir John Le Despencer died in 1274, and at a hearing the next year at Gertre in Leicestershire, it was recorded that he died having a manor at Beransby and a moiety (part) of Wigan, de le More, as well as several other lands, and also Beaumaner previously held by Hugh Despencer, including the house and parks there, in socage - i.e. land tenure by a tenant not a knight in return for agricultural services. He had also been restored his manors of Castle-Carlton and Cavenby. Additionally, at another hearing the same year at his manor of Marteleyiu, Wigorn, he was said to die possessing a presentation (or summoning) of the Church, which his father had by gift of King Henry. William Le Despencer was the sole heir-in-law of his father, Sir John.

William was one on the jury at an inquiry at Bredon, 8 June 1306, concerning the right of electing a prioress of Langley in Leicestershire. He resided at Defford in Wigorn, and died in 1328 in possession of that estate, as recorded at a hearing held at Pershore. That inquiry also shows that he left a son and heir who was then of full age named John Le Despencer.

King Edward II had succeeded his father on the throne of England in 1307. He was better suited to being a farmer than heir

to a great throne was much more interested in horses and cattle and in a camel kept in the royal stables than he was in efforts to teach him Latin. He was happier helping to plant turnips than in mapping the strategy of a battle campaign. One of the prominent barons of his day was brother of Geoffrey Le Despencer, Hugh le Despencer, Earl of Winchester, who had been Chief Justice of England under King Henry III, and held extensive lands in the western Marcher country. He had stood at his King's side at all stages of the continuous hostilities between the ruler and dissenters headed by the Earl of Lancaster. Hugh Despencer Sr. was endowed with gentility; he was courteous, urbane, and easy in his dealings with friend and foe. In addition, he was a man of parts, a clever diplomat, and a good soldier. He had achieved a favored position with the unstable King Edward II, dictated, in the opinion of those who knew him well, by avarice. It was his insatiable desire for land and money which led him to seek the ear of the King and not a liking for power in itself.

His son, Hugh Le Despencer the younger, had been knighted and married Eleanor, the oldest of three daughters of Gilbert de Clare, one of the wealthiest peers in England. He might well have been content with such prospects, but he shared the traits of his father to such a remarkable degree that he was never satisfied. He was clever and ingratiating and handsome in face and figure, characteristics which were much to the liking of Edward II. The King showed a predilection for this amiable and plausible aide - a fondness for his company - an aspect not on Queen Isabella, the

she-wolf of France, whose observant eye detected these familiar symptoms on the part of her errant husband. However, Hugh the younger was ruled by such a passion for wealth that he was blind to the risks he took to obtain yet more possessions. He paid no heed to the growing enmity of others barons, and used influence over the King to get more and more land.

The Hugh Le Despencers - father and son - built a close barricade around the king, excluding almost everyone from intimacy with him, even the Queen. They had their hands on everything, suggesting all manner of legal twists to take power and property from others, begging for or this, demanding that. The king was either unable to stand up against their insidious influence, or was happy to lavish his favors on them. They inspired a growing sense of fear and insecurity in the baronage.

The kingdom, long tired of the rule of this king and his favorites, finally forced Edward II to retreat with the Despencers to the main base of their strength in the west of England. The tragedy was slowly played out. The elder Despencer was sent to Bristol on the hope that he could hold that city in the King's interest, but Bristol had become filled with fervor for the cause of the Queen. Despencer, clad in his armor, was brought before her. The doddering old man realized that there was no hint of mercy in her handsome eyes. He had still enough courage to say to her, 'Ah, Madame, God grant us an upright judge and a just sentence.' His sentence may not have been just, but it was speedy. Hugh Le Despencer Sr. was immediately taken out and hanged in his

armor.

The King was soon captured with the sorry remnants of his following, including 'Nephew' Hugh Le Despencer the younger, and was surrendered into the hands of the Queen. She led her army to London in a triumphal procession. However, there was one participant in this journey who did not display the enthusiasm of the others - Hugh Le Despencer Jr. The marshal of the Queen's forces saw to it that the captive favorite of the King rode in the back of a small and mean specimen of a horse. In every town and village they reached, trumpets sounded and heralds called attention to this once powerful man perched on his mangy steed, a form of derision to which Despencer paid little heed. He was refusing food and drink, and grew steadily weaker. Not to be cheated of their revenge, at Hereford the barons quickly placed him on trial before a member of the justiciary, who sentence the deposed favorite in the following terms:

"Hugh, all the good people of the kingdom, great and small, rich and poor, by common assent do award that you are found as a thief and therefore shall be hanged; and you are found as a traitor, and therefore shall be drawn and quartered; and for that you have been outlawed by the king and by common consent, and returned to the court without warrant, you shall be beheaded; and for that you abetted and procured discord between king and queen, and others of the realm, you shall be disembowelled and your bowels burned; and so go to your judgement, attainted,



wicked traitor."

Accordingly, Hugh Le Despencer the younger was robed in a black gown with his escutcheon upside down and a crown of nettles on his brow. He was dragged to the place of execution, a gallows fifty feet high, where the grim and savage ritual was carried out. The Queen was present.

King Edward II was imprisoned by the Queen's order in Corfe Castle. On the night of 21 September 1327, the other inmates were aroused from their slumbers by shrieks coming from the malodorous cell in which the deposed King was confined. Horror and agony were in the sounds. Edward of Caernarvon, once Edward of England, was dying a violent death. He was buried with much stateliness and pomp in the Abbey of St. Peter's. There was gold leaf on the coffin and lions of pure gold on the hearse, but nothing could be done to remove the imprint of horror on the once handsome features of this weak and unfortunate king, nor to allay the wave of grief and anger which swept over the country.

Edward II was succeeded by his son, Edward III, ironically the most spectacular of the Plantagenet Kings. Through the vagaries of genetics, he was fair, of goodly proportions, with the face of a demigod; a conqueror, brave, vainglorious, extravagant, and ostentatious who ruled the country for 50 years.

These were the days when chivalry reached its greatest height in England. Knighthood was in full flower. John Le Despencer had allied himself with the Lancasters, and was in the retinue of John of Gaunt, son of King Edward III (Duke of Lancaster, 1340-1399),

nominal king of Castile, on his voyage to Spain, and because of that had letters of protection from King Richard II (1377-1399) for one year, bearing the date March 1386. Richard II of Bordeaux was a grandson of King Edward III and the last of the Plantagenets. He was succeeded by Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt, and the first King of the House of Lancaster. John Le Despencer was afterwards Esquire of the Body to his successor, Henry V King of England (1413-1422), keeper of his Great Wardrobe (which included all the King's household departments, as well as the household troops, the War Office, and the Admiralty, and attended the King on his warring expeditions. John Le Despencer was with the King at the siege of Rouen.

His wife was Alice, daughter of Giles Deverell, by whom he had a son, **Nicholas Le Despencer** of Defford. Nicholas was married to Joan, daughter of Richard Polard of Kent, by whom he had two sons:

- William Despencer, who married another daughter of Gilbert de Clare, by whom he had one son, John, who died in 1456 without issue. and
- **Thomas Despencer**, eldest son and heir of Nicholas and Joan Despencer.

Thomas was the father of **Henry G. Spencer** of Badly Northamptonshire, as determined by a receipt dated in the 13th year of Henry VI for subsidies aid to that King, who reigned from 1422-1461; 1470, 1471. He was the last of the House of Lancaster.

The 'Middle Ages' were drawing to a close, and it was about this time that the prefix 'De' was omitted from the Despencer

family name, and ever since it has been called 'Spencer.'

Henry G. Spencer married Isabel Lincoln, daughter of Henry Lincoln, and by her had four sons. The eldest, John Spencer of Hodnell and Wormleighton, was ancestor of the Dukes of Marlborough. From the second son, Thomas F. Spencer of Eton Secon, born before 1433, come the Spencers of Bedfordshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

Henry G. Spencer died about 1477, the sixteenth year of the reign of King Edward IV. Henry's last will and testament was dated 1476 in which he appoints his eldest sons, John and Thomas, executors of his will, and Isabel, his wife, overseer of his estate. The family arms appear on the seal of his last will. They are 'quarterly in the first and third, a fret over all, on a band, three escallops (shells).'

Badby, Northamptonshire, the home of Henry G. Spencer, adjoins Eton Secon, Bedfordshire, where his second son, Thomas, resided in 1433, the year of the first official notice of the Spencer family in Bedfordshire. At that time an official document was issued by commissioners appointed by King Henry VI as the result of an inquiry made by authority of the House of Commons in Parliament. This inquiry arose from complaints that the country swarmed with robbers, oppressors of the people, and various other evil doers, and determined that certain commissioners in every county should have the power to summon to them all persons of quality, and to administer to them an oath for better keeping of the peace and observing the King's laws, both as to themselves and to their

retainers. The list of persons of quality thus summoned included the names of Thomas Spencer and Johannes Spencer.

The coat of arms of the Bedfordshire Spencers was the same as in Northamptonshire with only one slight difference: the three escallops were replaced with three fleurs-de-lis. The crest was exactly the same: 'a griffin's head between two wings expanded, emerging out of a mural crown.'

Thomas F. Spencer of Eton Secon left three sons, the second named **Robert Spencer** of South Mylles, Bedfordshire (later St. Albans). He probably married Ann Peck (Peake, Peak, Peek, Pack), by whom he had four sons, the second named **John Spencer Sr.**

**John Spencer Sr.** married Christian Baker in Edworth, Bedfordshire. They had three sons, the youngest named **John Spencer Jr.**, before John Sr. died in St. Albans in 1533.

In the year 1553 a Royal Charter was given to the town of St. Albans by King Edward VI. One of the chief burgesses, or aldermen, at the time was John Spencer Jr. Shortly afterwards he moved to Kempton and then to St. George Parish, Edworth - his mother's home. He married Anne Lymer, and had four sons, the oldest being Michael Spencer, who is the ancestor of the Massachusetts and Connecticut Spencers.

The family of John Spencer Jr. occupied a farm at Edworth as lessee of Robert Parry of Ellington, who was then Lord of the Manor. Rev. Holding describes it:

'Edworth is a parish on the borders of Herefordshire, and is situated half way between Baldock and Biggleswade.

There have always been two large farms in Edworth comprising really the whole land in the parish, with the exception of about eight acres as glebe land, attached to the rectory, giving a total of about 1122 acres. The Spencer farm covered about six hundred acres in extent, a large farm even at the present time, and gave employment to half the laboring poor of that place.'

John Bunyan, preacher-author of "Pilgrim's Progress," lived in Edworth in the 1600s. At the present time (1977), a road sign is still marked 'Edworth,' but the village has disappeared. The hall or Manor House where the Spencers lived is still in use, but must now be reached via a narrow dirt road that winds between the barns of the farm (now occupied by the Smyth family). The old Parish Church is still standing, although services were discontinued as parishioners dwindled away. The old baptismal font is still in place - the same font at which the Spencer children were christened. And the sun still glistens through the magnificent original 14th century stained glass windows. On an interior wall of the church is a mounted brass tablet reading:

In Memoriam

John and Ann Spencer

1558 - 1560

John Spencer Jr. was buried at Edworth on June 9, 1558; his widow, Anne, two years later on June 16 1560. The Parish Register calls her:

"the good hospitallity keeper: and she did give to

the towneship of Edworth two of her best bease to be lett to two pore folks in the towne for three shillings a cow & the parson & churchwarden to have the letting of them & the distibuting of the money to the poore & to se the stock mainteined etch of them to have four pence of the six shillings for ther paynes to se this truly done acording to her last will."

The first wife of Michael B. Spencer was Anne Lorimer (Agnes Limer), whom he married on 22 January 1555/6. They had three children in Edworth before she died and was buried 23 February 1561/2. Not long after, Michael married second, Elizabeth, who bore him eight more children. He must have given up tenancy of the farm in Edworth, for by 1576 there is initial evidence of his being in nearby Stotfold where the register of St. Mary's Parish Church records the baptism of their son, Gerard Spencer on 20 May 1576. Richard, the 1st son of Michael and Elizabeth Spencer, was born in 1580 and later went to London.

Rev. Holding says while Richard and another brother, Thomas, were flourishing in London, Michael Spencer and his sons, who remained in Stotfold seem to have been less prosperous, for we find Michael filing a bill on chancery in 1581. Later we find Gerard Spencer, his son, and his wife, Alice, leasing their land in Stotfold to Thomas, his brother in London, in 1615; the next year they conveyed these lands to Thomas. The deterioration of the fortunes in Gerard's branch of the family no doubt was one great reason for the subsequent migration of most of his children to New

England.

Gerard Spencer had married at Upper Gravenhurst on 10 November 1600, Alice Whitebread, daughter of John and Eleanor Whitebread. They had nine children in Stotfold between 1601 and 1614, the youngest son also being named Gerard (sometimes Jared). But life was difficult there for multiplying families, and about 1632, and six of the living Spencer children - William, Elizabeth, Thomas, Michael, and Gerard Jr. - came to America. John came in 1634 and later returned to England, but the others remained and founded most American Spencer families. Rev. Holding says:

"I do not think that religion or religious persecution had anything to do with their leaving England. Men [who were] engaged in commerce at that time could, and did, prosper, but the lot of the agriculturist - owing to heavy taxes on the land of an exhausting and harassing nature - was pitiable in the extreme, and almost intolerable. The political atmosphere of England at that time was so dark and threatening that we cannot wonder at such men leaving for better prospects and a more cheerful sphere of enterprise across the sea."

In some American references the name of Gerard Spencer Jr. is given as 'Jared,' a phonetic adaptation which is literally incorrect. He was named after his father, who spelled his name 'Gerard,' like earlier members of the family with that name. The Stotfold Parish Church register is very clear as to the spelling.

Gerard Spencer Jr. and his brothers settled first in Newtown (now Cambridge), Massachusetts, but by 1637 Michael and Gerard had moved to Lynn. Of the four brothers who remained in America, William and Gerard Spencer appear to have become most prominent as they held many important positions in the colonies and became large landowners.

Gerard was made a Freeman of the Massachusetts Colony in 1637 when he was in Lynn. He had earlier married Hannah probably in 1634/5.

In the Will of their Uncle, Richard Spencer of London, dated 17 March 1645, Gerard Spencer Jr. and his brother, Thomas, were each bequeathed a legacy of fifty pounds. Gerard is mentioned further on 9 March 1653 when 'the administration of the estate of [his deceased brother] Michael is granted to Gerard Spencer, of Lynn, and he is to bring in an inventory of his estate the next session.'

Gerard was ferryman in Lynn in 1655. He was listed as Sergeant that same year, and in June 1656 was commissioned as Ensign in the Train Band. He remained in Lynn through 1659, and he served as Grand Juror there that year. In 1660 Gerard Spencer moved with his family to Hartford, where his brothers William and Thomas had previously settled, and on 20 August of that year was admitted as an Inhabitant.

In March of 1661 Simon Lobdell of Hartford brought a suit against Mr. Spencer and his 21 year old daughter, Hannah, alleging a breach of promise on the part of Hannah, recovered a judgement,



the jury finding in a special verdict the breach of a positive promise to marry. In 1664 she married Daniel Brainerd instead.

Jared [sic] Spencer's part in the settlement of Haddam, or 30 Miles Island Plantation, in 1662 was a most important one. The town was named after Haddam, England, and was located on a grant of land encompassing both sides of the Connecticut River. The deed was obtained from the Indians, and covered 100,000 acres - six miles east and west - from Middletown to Chester. The consideration was thirty red coats, which may have been worth about \$100 at the time.

Spencer's contribution to the Proprietor's Fund of Haddam was rated at 219 pounds, 6 shillings, and was next to the highest contribution of William Clarke in amount. Within 15 years after the settlement, Jared's sons Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, William, and Nathanael, were householders in the new town. Beyond question, Jared Spencer was the patriarch of Haddam.

Jared Spencer, James Bates and Simon Smith were the first townsmen chosen on 9 February 1664, the year of the settlement, to order the affairs of the town for the year. In the record, the word 'town' was used, although town powers were not actually conferred by the General Assembly until 1668. Mr. Spencer held different town offices and served upon important committees. He represented Haddam as Deputy at the General Assembly at ten Sessoins beginning with the October Session in 1672, and ending with the October Session on 1683.

Ensign Jarrad Spencer was the first military officer in the town of Haddam prior to the Session of the Assembly. That choice was subsequently accepted and confirmed, and he was so styled by the General Assembly in October 1668 when town privileges were officially granted to the settlement. In June 1672 he was presented for a Freeman of the Connecticut Colony under the name and style of Ensigne Jarred Spencer. He appeared as a Deputy from Haddam under the same name and style at the October 1674 Session, and at the Session in July 1675 he was listed as a Deputy under the name of Ensign Gerard Spencer.

"At a meeting of the Council at Hartford, 14 September 1675, present, William Leets, Esq. Deputy Governor, Major John Talcott, Henry Wolcott, Captain John Allyn, Major Robert Treat, Captain Benjamin Newberry, and Mr. John Wadsworth, the inhabitants of Haddam having presented Gerard Spencer for an ensign for their train band, affirming him to be legally chosen, the Council do accordingly commission him to be their ensign, and to command them according to law."

Gerard Spencer served in King Philip's War that year, some of the family records say as Colonel.

Mrs. Hannah Spencer died before her husband, Gerard, and after 1677 he married Rebecca Porter Clark, baptized in Felsted, Essex, England. Gerard Spencer also outlived his second wife by several years and died in June 1685 in Hartford. His Will dated 17 September 1683 was inventoried the month of his death. In it he

gave his homestead to his youngest son, Nathanael, and his large lands at Macha Moodus to his other sons - not to his daughters - as was the custom of the time. He remembered the others, however, and gave a rapier to Thomas son Jarrad, his carbine to grandson Jarred Cone, and made provision for his other children and grandchildren. Son William Spencer and son-in-law Daniel Branerd were administrators.