

John SPENCER (B.1505)

From an extensive search of records in Bedfordshire Mr Holding ascertained to his satisfaction that John Spencer, the 18th in descent from Robert the steward of King William, was the John Spencer who resided at St.Albans, England in the 1553, and who later moved to Kempton and Edworth, Bedfordshire, and is the ancestor of the Massachusetts and Connecticut Spencers.

In the year 1553 a Royal charter was given to the town of St. Albans by Edward VI. One of the chief burgesses or alderman was John Spencer. Shortly afterwards he moved to Edworth, where he died a few years later, in 1558, and where his family resided. He was buried at Edworth. In the parish register is this entry: John Spencer, Senior Buried June 9, 1558 Anne Spencer died June 16, 1560. She left a will bequeathing her property to her children, and to certain public charities. The Will is set forth at length in the brochure of the Rev. John Holding.

He says: "There is every indication that previous to his advent at Edworth. John resided at St.Albans, where he was held in such high esteem as to be chosen one of the first chief burgesses of that town, and as such is named in the Royal charter granted to that town by King Edward VI in 1533." From research made by Mr. Holding it appears that John Spencer occupied a farm of about 600 acres at Edworth, as lessee of Robert Parry of Ellington, who was then lord of the Manor. Writing of the Will of Anne Spencer, Mr Holding says: "It is interesting as showing the position in life she occupied, and her kindly, thought nature. The enumeration of stock and chattels, and her bequests certainly show that the family was at least that of a prosperous gentleman." "She nowhere makes mention of land or tenements belonging to her. There is only the lease of the farm which evidently refers to the ones of which she was then the tenet and which is handed on to her oldest son Michael."

Regarding the Edworth farm Mr Holding says: "Edworth is a parish on the borders of Hertfordshire, 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 8 acres glebeland attached to the rectory, giving a totla of about 1122 acres." "So that the Spencer farm would cover about 600 acres in extent, a large farm even at that present time, and gave employment to half the laboring poor of the place. The Hall, where the Spencers resided, is still standing, although much modernized. It is now occupied a gentleman named 'Smyth'."

In 1923, H.R. Spencer, author of the Spencers of East Haddam, visited Edworth. The old church is still standing, in the same shape as when John and Anne Spencer worshiped there. The old Baptismal font is still in use-the same font at which the Spencer children were christened. The church register is still in a good state of preservation, and dates back several hundred years prior to the time when John and Anne Spencer resided there. Original entries show the dates of christening the Spencer children, and the date of the death of both John and Anne Spencer. There is nothing in the churchyard to indicated at what precise spot John and his wife are buried. On the interior wall of the church H.R. Spencer placed a brass tablet containing the words: In Memorial John and Anne Spencer 1558-1560