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CHARLES SULLIVAN

VIENNA, VIRGINIA



A VIEW OF EARLY VIENNA

Charles Sullivan (1794-1867) was a prominent landscape painter in Ohio during the nineteenth century. He studied art under Thomas Sully at the Pennsylvania Academy before moving to Marietta, Ohio, in 1833. Sullivan became known for his landscape paintings depicting scenes along the Ohio River. His 1835 painting “Vienna, Virginia” shows a view of early Vienna and islands along the Ohio River. The painting is part of the collection of the Campus Martius Museum in Marietta.

ANCESTRY OF THE

SPENCERS



o tell the story of the Spencers in Vienna and America is to tell a long tale of travels, wars, and monarchs far across the Atlantic.

The ancestry of Spencers in America traces back to a long line of noblemen, knights, barons, and senior royal officials under the English monarchy; however, none of these positions and titles would have been bestowed if the Vikings had not invaded Normandy in the 10th century.

VIENNA'S FOUNDER

Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr. (1749-1824) is considered the founder of Vienna, West Virginia. After purchasing approximately 5,000 acres once owned by the Briscoe family, Dr. Spencer moved with his wife Deborah and their children from East Haddam, Connecticut, to what is now Vienna in 1794 and established the first permanent settlement in the area.

THE DANES AND ORIGINAL SPENCER HOME

The story of the Spencers begins with the Danish army's attack on West Francia (France). Led by Viking chieftain Rollo, the Danes claimed an area near the Seine River. The king of West Francia, Charles the Simple, negotiated the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte in the year 911, which named Rollo as the first ruler Normandy in exchange for his loyalty to the king. Conditions of the agreement included Rollo's conversion to Christianity and marriage to the king's daughter, Gisela. Although Rollo is often referenced as the first Duke of Normandy, he never officially held the title. His great-grandson, Richard II, was the first Duke of Normandy.

One of Rollo's companions in the Danish army was Tancred. Following the treaty, Rollo awarded Tancred lands near and east of the River Seine. The property was awarded as an allodium, which signified absolute ownership, as opposed to a "fief" (lands held subject to the king or another noble). Tancred built a large fortified castle guarding the mouth of the Seine. This area came to be known as Tancarville and the castle was named Château Fort de la Ville Tancred.



An etching of the Château Fort de la Ville Tancred as it stood at the mouth of the Seine River.



THE RISE OF DISPENSER

Rollo's descendants ruled Normandy and held the Dukedom for more than a century. His great-great grandson, Duke Robert the Magnificent, was the father of William the Conqueror.

Tancrède's great-great-great grandson, Raoul FitzGerald le Chamberlain de Ville Tancrède (Raoul D'Abbetot de Tancarville) was a baron and an officer in Duke Robert's army. Raoul had a close relationship with the Duke. When Duke Robert left on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Raoul was appointed as William's guardian.

Robert died during the journey, making William Duke of Normandy at age 7. William lived with Raoul and his family at Château Fort de la Ville Tancrède, where Raoul was responsible for William's education and protection while he was a minor.

Raoul's son, Robert D'Abbetot, was one of Duke William's barons and served as his royal steward, or dispensator. This role required him to supervise all of William's property, finances, and household affairs. Robert accompanied William when he invaded England and defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings on October 4, 1066.



(Above) The tower of the Château Fort de la Ville Tancrede is what remains today.

(Left) The names of those who fought with William the Conqueror were etched onto a plaque at the Battle Abbey where the Battle of Hastings was fought. The name D'Abbetot was among them.

► *William the Conquerer became the first Norman monarch of England, and Robert D'Abbetot was his royal steward who handled his finances. The English referred to him as "Despenser," and thus changed his name to reference his position.*



King William I became the first Norman monarch of England. As a result, Robert became a very rich and powerful man, gifted many estates by the king. He continued to serve as the royal steward. This office was a hereditary one that was passed to his son William.

Robert's name changed to "Despencer," which was how the English referred to him. There are many variations of this name noted when referencing Robert and his descendants: le Despenser, le de Spencer, de Spencer, and Despencer. In 1366, the name was changed to simply "Spencer" with the birth of Sir Thomas F. Spencer, son of Nicholas le Despenser.

Over several centuries, Robert's descendants held noble titles such as Lord, Baron, and Knight in the English monarchy. They were also appointed as royal officers and burgesses and owned many estates until the late 1500s.

MIGRATION TO AMERICA

In the early 1600s, economic hardships in England due to poor grain harvests and a war with Spain forced families to make difficult choices. The monarchy continued to collect heavy taxes to avoid bankruptcy. Gerard Spencer Sr. suffered financial deterioration like many others and was forced to sell his lands to his brother Thomas.

With the religious and political climate in chaos, many people in England decided to leave the country. During what became known as the "Great Migration," approximately 80,000 people left England and settled in Ireland, New England (American colonies), the West Indies, and the Netherlands.



JOSEPH SPENCER SR.

Gerard's sons William, Thomas, Michael and Gerard Jr. left England during this time to seek their fortunes in America. The brothers first landed in Newton, Massachusetts, in 1634. Gerard Jr. moved to Lynn where he worked as a ferryman for two years before moving to Haddam, Connecticut, in 1662, where his family became some of its first settlers. Gerard Jr. was instrumental in settling the town, holding a multitude of offices and serving on various committees.

Gerard Spencer Jr. had five sons: Thomas, Samuel, Timothy, William, and Nathanael. All of his sons became homeowners in Haddam. Samuel Spencer was the grandfather of Joseph Spencer Sr.

Joseph Spencer Sr. was born in East Haddam, Connecticut. He attended Yale, where he earned his law degree and practiced law until he became a judge in 1753. He was active in the militia, serving in King George's War and as a Lieutenant Colonel of the Middlesex militia in the French and Indian War. By the time of the American Revolution, he achieved the rank of Brigadier General in Connecticut's militia. He was promoted to Major General in 1776.

Spencer first served on the Connecticut Council (or Connecticut State Senate) in 1776. He was sent to represent Connecticut a delegate in the Continental Congress in 1779. In 1780, he returned to the Connecticut Council, where he served until his death in 1789. He is buried in Nathan Hale Park of East Haddam, where a monument stands in his honor.

Major General Spencer was the father of 6 sons, one of which was Joseph Spencer Jr.

JOSEPH SPENCER JR.

Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr., considered the founder of Vienna, was a surgeon and served as an aid to his father during the American Revolution. After purchasing approximately 5,000 acres once owned by John Briscoe, Spencer moved with his wife Deborah and their children from East Haddam, Connecticut, to what is now Vienna in 1794. Others came with the family to settle the area.

On December 1, 1795, the Virginia General Assembly incorporated Vienna with an official decree. Originally, 100 acres of land were to be laid off into lots and streets. In 1799, the Virginia General Assembly reduced the area to 60 acres. The initial attempt to found Vienna in this manner was not successful, with only a few plots purchased. Between 1804 and 1812, Spencer sold off many his holdings, and Vienna remained farmland and orchards until the early 20th century.

Dr. Spencer served as a doctor and justice of Wood County. He was also one of the first deacons of the First Congregational Church in Marietta, Ohio. Founded on December 6, 1796 with 31 members, the First Congregational Church in Marietta also served as the Muskingum Academy, the first higher education institution in the Northwest Territory, which became Marietta College in 1835.

Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr. had 11 children. His son William owned and operated a three-story hotel called Spencer House in Parkersburg. His two other sons, Samuel Selden Spencer and David Brainerd Spencer, built houses and lived in Vienna. His daughter, Eliza, married Brigadier General Lewis Cass, who became the second governor of the Michigan Territory and served as U.S. Secretary of War, U.S. Secretary of State, and an ambassador to France. Eliza Spencer Cass traveled with her husband to the French court and was a U.S. "cabinet lady."

Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr. died in his home in Vienna on May 11, 1824. He was buried in what is now known as Spencer Memorial Park in Vienna.



(Left) The grave of Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr. and his wife Deborah, located in Spencer Park in Vienna.

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