

**Research by John Edgar Spence son of.  
John Small Spence & Elizabeth Johnston son of  
David Spence & Jane Eccleston son of  
Alexander Spence & Esther Edwards.**

**March 16th and 17th 1950.**

History of the Spence Family

Lot No 20 In Concession 1, Amaranth township, known as Rich Hill Farm, was originally a "Soldier's Grant". The Crown Deed is printed on sheepskin parchment and bears the date of Oct, 20th 1836, and is signed by Francis Bond Head who was governor of Upper Canada during the MacKenzie rebellion period. The Deed was issued to one Patrick Henderson of Toronto, as assignee of Patrick Hartigan, a discharged sergeant of the 49th Regiment, who had left the Province. It is almost certain that Hartigan was a veteran of the war of 1812. Five days after Henderson got the deed he sold the farm to James Saxon and James McKnight, who in turn sold it to a John Wilson in February 1856, from whom Robert Spence bought it in November of that year. Robert Spence died on August 2nd 1859, being at that time Deputy-Postmaster at London Ontario and leaving no family. His brother David bought the land from the executors to help settle up the estate, and moved to it in 1860, being the first owner to live on it.

The word Spence means, in old French, a pantry, or place of storage, so the name may indicate that its first bearer was a sort of quarter master in feudal times. It was anciently spelled Spens, as in "The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens". Other forms are Spenser and DeSpenser, which might more correctly be spelled "Dispenser". The name Spence first appeared in Ireland in the year 1618 when King James 1 carried out the "Plantation of Ulster" by having most of that province settled by a population of Scottish Protestants to maintain law and order as a sort of semi-military garrison and police force. The Scottish Spences are listed as a branch of the Highland Clan of MacDuff, of which the Dukes of Fife are the hereditary chiefs. In the year 1920 the books in the office of the Ulster King-at-Arms in the Record Tower of Dublin Castle listed 18 Ulster families of the name who were entitled to use armorial bearings, all such use being governed by the Scottish laws of Heraldry. Other Spences of the 17th Century were amongst the Scottish mercenaries who served in the Protestant armies of the Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus in the "Thirty Years' War", and the descendants of one are still listed in the Swedish Peerage as The Counts Von Spence of Engelsholm Gotts, in Gottland. The Spences of Rich Hill are descended from a soldier in the army of William 111, Prince of Orange. His regiment having halted for noon on a march, a protestant girl refugee in hiding behind a hedge and clad only in a nightgown, came out in the hope of finding food. Spence gave her his cloak and took her on his horse to a place of safety. Later they were married and received a grant of "Forever" land, a lease at a fixed rental of a shilling per acre for "as long as grass grows and water runs", in the townland of Drum-a-Tee near the village of Market Hill in the County of Armagh in Ulster, where some of their descendants still live.

David Spence was the first of the Amaranth Spences to come to Canada. His father was Alexander Spence, a yeomanry veteran of the 1798 known as "Little Alec" and his mother's maiden bane was Esther Edwards. Alec sold his 5 acre farm in Drum-A-Tee and bought one of 15 acres in the near by townland of Ballynewry. David was born on March 18th 1818. He learned the trade of linen-weaving, which was carried on in the home, his brother Robert also became a weaver, and his brother James a maker of weaver's reeds. Later all three of them became school teachers. The school at Mull-A-Brack was taught for more than a century by members of the Spence clan. David also was clerk and precentor (with 18 other Spences in the choir) in Mull-A-Brack church when Lord John Beresford (father of Admiral Charles Beresford) was the minister.

David Spence came to Canada in 1844, coming to his Aunt Susan Spence, who had married John Arnott and come out in 1821 to settle near Churchville in Peel County. He sailed from the port of Newry and the voyage lasted 8 weeks. Emigrants supplied their own food which was sometimes spilled and wasted in scuffles for a place at the cooking fires. David taught in the school at Churchville for 7 years at a salary of 50 pounds per year, teaching 5 1/2 days per week the year round. He married Jane Eccleston on July 27th 1845. She was the daughter of James Fortescue Eccleston and Margaret Small and was born in

Dundalk in County Louth, Ireland, on May 22nd 1814. One of her playmates later founded and named the village of Dundalk in Grey County, Ontario. When Jane was 3 years old her mother died, and Jane was brought up and educated by her uncle John Small of Market Hill. She taught in the school in the village of Clare on the Cusher River near Market Hill, and in 1845 came out to her sister Bess (Mrs. Grindley) in Hamilton, Ontario. She sailed from Ballyshannon on the river Erne. The voyage lasted 8 weeks and 3 days. The ship got amongst ice and once ran so near to an iceberg that the yard arms scraped along the face of its ice cliffs. A great fire in the city of Quebec destroyed the homes of more than 25,000 people the day that Jane's ship reached that port.

The Trustee Board of the school at Churchville refused to grant their teacher a day's leave of absence to go to be married so David walked to Hamilton on Saturday afternoon and he and Jane were married and walked back to Churchville on Sunday. In the house where they set up housekeeping Jane carried on a private finishing school for girls, teaching languages, art, music, needlework, etc. Their first child was born on July 16th 1848 and named James Alexander, after his two grandfathers. Their second child, David Robert Morrison, was born on January 12th 1851. He died on May 8th 1852. While this baby was only two weeks old David and Jane moved to a bush farm - W-1/2 Lot 12, Con 1, Amaranth. James Crombie, whose wife was an Arnott, had settled on Lot 13 Con. 2, before that, and Thomas Whitten had built a house on Lot 12 for David and Jane. He made the shingles for its roof at his own home and carried them on his back the mile and a half or more through the bush to lot 12. The house had neither windows nor doors when the Spences came to it in late January or early February, so quilts were nailed over the door and window openings, and Jane and her baby were wrapped in other quilts until the stove could be set up and a fire kindled. They lived on lot 12 for 9 years, clearing it from bush, building a barn, digging a well, planting an orchard, etc.

1854 was the first year that Amaranth township elected a reeve of its own, separate from Garafraxa, and John Curry of Farmington was chosen for that office. David Spence was the next, being reeve from 1855 to 1858 inclusive, and then serving as township clerk from 1859 to 1869 inclusive. He also was appointed a Justice of the Peace. He had some knowledge and skill in surgery and was often called on to attend to axe cuts and other hurts. He probably had a part in the forming of School Section No 2 in 1855, for he had arranged a sort of classroom in his barn, where Jane gathered the children of the neighbourhood and taught them. The first teacher hired for the new school No 2 was Mr. Dodds, and he carried on his work in Spence's barn until the unfinished log schoolhouse at 15 sideroad on the 2nd line could be completed and equipped. The school site was the first clearing at that crossroads where the village of Whittington grew up later. The Spences were Anglicans, but Methodist Missionaries of the Circuit Rider type used their home on Lot 12 as a preaching place until the little congregation built a log church about 1857 or 1858 on ground given by James Crombie on Lot 13, Con. 2. It was called Salem. Dick Chapman suggested that a churchyard be set apart as a cemetery, and this was done. Dick himself was the first to be buried in it.

David and Jane organized a Sunday School about October 1856, which met in the public schoolhouse. As the neighbourhood had not yet a place name this was at first called Spence's Sunday School. About 1860 or 1861 Robert Bowsfield opened a Post Office in his store and hotel and named it Whittington, and the Sunday School became known as the Whittington Union Sunday School, for it was not denominational. About 1873 the Methodist congregations at Salem on Lot 13 and at Rich Hill on Lot 20 united to form the Whittington congregation and bought the log schoolhouse to use as a preaching place, and the Sunday School then became Methodist.

During the period 1851 to 1860 David Spence's brothers Robert, James and Adam, his sisters Elizabeth, and Margaret (widow of T. Pedlowe) and his widowed mother came to Canada.

Robert taught school for a time, then entered the Postal Service, and became Deputy Postmaster at London, Ontario and married Maria Lafferty. He died on August 2nd 1859, aged 34 years, leaving no family.

James also taught, then clerked in a store at Norval, worked in a newspaper office, and may have kept a store in Waldemar until 1857, when he became the first Schoolteacher, first storekeeper and first Postmaster at Lot 10 on 5th Line. He named the Post Office Laurel from a Laurel bush at his former home in Ireland. HE served for 2 years in the township council and was

married to Martha Curry. He died in August 1864 leaving no family.

Adam bought the W1/2 Lot 18 Con. 1 from John Large about 1857, married Mary Curry about 1859. Their family were Robert, Ester (Mrs. J. Keyes), Jane, (all 3 of whom went to Baltimore in Maryland U.S.A.) and Martha (who died young) and Florence, who married George Torrance, Lot 24 Con. 4 Amaranth. Adam's second wife was Nancy Kincaid. They had one daughter Margaret who married George Burrows of Brampton. In 1876 Adam sold his farm to Chas. Anderson and moved to W 1/2 Lot 20 Con.6. He took an active part in the affairs of the Amaranth Agricultural Society which held show fairs at Whittington from 1867 to 1876 inclusive. He lived near Creemore for a time, and died in 1899 aged 72.

Esther Edwards Spence, widow of Alec, and her daughters Margaret and Elizabeth came to Canada in 1853, sailing from Belfast. She made her home with Adam and died there in December 1867, aged 73 years.

Margaret (Pedlowe) married James Arnott of Churchville, and had one daughter, Esther.

Elizabeth married Atkinson White and lived on East-1/2 Lot 21, Con. 2 Amaranth. Their family (beside one that died in infancy) were 1. Margaret (Mrs. Thos. Arnott) 11. Robert (married a Sproule, and went to Manitoba, 111. Esther (Mrs. John Marshall) 1V. James, who married Rebecca Hamilton, lived on E 1/2 Lot 20, Con 2 Amaranth and later on W 1/2 Lot 15 Con 3 W. Mono. Their family - Elsie (Mrs. J. Greason) Margaret (Mrs. Morley Veitch) Ernest, (an Insurance Actuary in Toronto) John (Now a dairyman in Grand Valley and Gladys (Mrs. J. Ritchie). V. Atkinson married Gertrude Ledlow, and have sons Harold and William Danby. VI. Minnie (married Wm. McCutcheon).

Two more children were born to David and Jane Spence while they lived on Lot 12 - John Small on Jan 19th 1853, named after his great-uncle and Esther Margaret on March 9th 1856.

When David and Jane Spence came to Lot 20, Rich Hill, in 1860 they found that one Robert Henderson had "squatted" on it. He really owned the E1/2 of Lot 19. He had chopped about 12 or 14 acres on Lot 20, and cleared and fenced about 2 1/2 acres and built a shanty on it. There was some difficulty in evicting him. David and Jane lived on this farm until about 1885, cleared most of it from bush, fenced it, under-drained the wettest parts, built a log house and barn, and later a frame house about 1870 and frame barns from 1868 to maybe 1874, dug wells, planted orchard and garden and shade trees, etc. The usual pioneer conditions were experienced - such as bears raiding the pigpens, wolves a nuisance, the neighbours' bush fires threatening the buildings, etc. Crops grew bountifully. Once a piece of meadow grew a hay crop so heavy that it could not be cured on the area it grew on, but had to be spread more thinly on a greater space. In 1873 there were found 45 oat stalks 4 feet 8 inches tall grown from one seed and bearing 100 kernels on each stalk. At the Fall Fairs that were held annually by the Amaranth Agricultural Society at Whittington, from 1867 to 1876 inclusive, David's team of horses took first prize in their class every year, until they were ruled out in order that others might have a chance. The first (maybe the only) plowing match conducted by the Society was held on Rich Hill Farm. Ground for building a Hall was deeded to Rich Hill L.O.L. No. 1099 named after the village of Rich Hill in Ireland, in 1862, the deed specifying that the Hall was to be available for use by any Protestant denomination, must not be used a Dance Hall, and that liquor must not be brought into it. It was used a a preaching place for a time by Methodist and Anglican congregations, as a meeting place for a Temperance Lodge from 1873 to 1885, as a meeting place and a cooperative grocery store by a branch of the Grange in 1875 to 1889, and in the nineteen-twenties by a United Farmers of Ontario Club. The Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway built its narrow gauge line to Owen Sound in 1871-1873, and while the line was being built through Amaranth some men of Contractor Frank MacAuley's crew boarded at the Spence home, and James A. and John S Spence worked for a time on the contract of clearing the right-of-way and grading the road bed. They both served with the Whittington company of the 30th Wellington Rifles Militia Battalion, James holding the rank of Captain from 1874 until the company headquarters was transferred to Palmerston in 1883. They also operated a threshing machine for about 8 or 10 years in the 1870 period, before steam engines came into common use, and while 5 teams of horses were used on a "horse-power" to drive the machine. David Spence was Postmaster of the Whittington Post Office about 1883 to 1885, the office being moved to Rich Hill for the time. He and Jane moved to Creemore, Ontario about 1885 to live with their daughter Esther (Mrs. Simon Plewes). David died on May 22nd 1893 aged 75 years and Jane died on November 8th 1897, aged 83 years.

James Alexander Spence married May Jane Arnott in 1874, and farmed on Lot 16, con 2. Amaranth until 1884 when he moved to Creemore to go into partnership with Simon Plewes in a flour mill and electric light business. He was the first reeve of Creemore village when it was incorporated. In 1898 he took over an electric light plant at Colborne, Ontario. It was burned down, and in 1901 he moved to a farm near Palermo in Halton county. He lived for 6 years near Campbellville and in Toronto for about 3 years. He died on April 10th 1925 aged 76 years. His widow died on May 29th 1925. They had 5 children. James, Susan, Mary, Annie (Mrs. J. Farnworth) and Sarah.

John Small Spence married Elizabeth Johnston on January 21st 1880 and took over from his parents the management and ownership of Rich Hill Farm. He took part in local activities such as membership and office in the Orange Lodge, Temperance Lodge, The Grange, School Trustee Board, Church Board of Trustees and Stewards, Church Choir, and Sunday School Teaching Staff. He was elected to the township council in 1897 and 1898, was reeve in 1899 to 1902 inclusive, and a member of Dufferin County Council in 1905 and 1906, and was appointed a Justice of the Peace. He re-built the barn on Rich Hill farm in 1902, and veneered the house with brick in 1903. Ground for the Rich Hill school yard was taken over in 1903. Elizabeth shared in the work of the Temperance Lodge, and various branches of the Church Choir, Sunday School, Missionary Society, etc. They moved to Orangeville in 1921. John S. Spence died on March 10th 1933 aged 80 years. His widow returned to the farm at Rich Hill, where she died on April 1st 1943, aged 88 years.

Their family:-

David E. After some experience with the C.P. Railway, and in Western Canada, is farming on W 1/2 Lot 22, Con. 1, Amaranth. He married Maude Hamilton in June 1911. She died in August 1912, leaving one daughter, Marjory, now Mrs. Chas. Ashley, of Hamilton. She has 3 children.

Elizabeth Annie, married Russell R. Hamilton in November 1905 and lived 5 years on E 1/2 Lot 16 con. 5, Amaranth. They went to Saskatchewan in 1910 and returned to Ontario in 1923. They have 3 children - Kathleen (now Mrs. L. Silvester), Roy S. with the Young Co. London Ontario, and Robert R., practicing optometry in Quelfh, Ontario.

Sarah Ethel died in infancy, 1884.

John E. carried on the farm at Rich Hill after the parents retired in 1921. Served in militia in young days, was one of 3 non-com's. chosen to represent 36th Peel Infantry in the contingent sent to the Coronation of George V in 1911, was commissioned Lieutenant in 1914 but was several times rejected for service with the expeditionary force 1914 - 1918. Was elected to Amaranth township council for 1942-45, was deputy reeve in 1946. Sold Rich Hill Farm to Lloyd and Kathleen Silvester in 1946.

William A., Roy J. & James Earle H. Spence all attended Orangeville High School and Moose Jaw Normal School, and taught in Saskatchewan schools, and studied in and graduated from Toronto University.

William A. married Alma Rawn of Wroxeter Ontario and is practicing Dentistry in Toronto.

Roy J. married Agnes Richardson, of Harriston Ontario, has two daughters - Jane (Mrs. J. Lovering) and Mary, and is practicing medicine and surgery in Toronto. Was appointed a coroner.

James Earle H. married Clara O'Neil of Toronto, served as medical officer with a mining company in Pennsylvania, and with the Pennsylvania Railway, and is now with the West Maryland Railway.

Sarah Jane Pedlow and grandmother Esther Edwards Spence and Esther Edwards Spence's sons David, Robert, James and Adam and Jane Eccleston Spence and infant son David R. M. and her sons James A. & John S. and their wives and James's daughter Mary and John's infant daughter, and David E. Spence's wife Maude Hamilton Spence, all rest in the Forest Lawn Cemetery at Orangeville.