



Clan SPENS

ARMS

Or, a lion rampant Gules surmounted by a bend
Sable charged with three mascles Argent

CREST

A hart's head erased Proper

MOTTO

Si deus quis contra (If God is for us, who is against us)

SUPPORTERS

Dexter, and elephant Proper; sinister, a mallard, wings close, proper

This name is believed to be derived from the old French, 'dispense', used to describe the custodian of the larder. This may originally have been an office within the monastic system, but from the thirteenth century onwards the name Spensator Dispensa, is used to describe royal officials. Roger 'dispensator' witnessed a deed recording the transfer of lands near Dallas in Inverness-shire in 1232. John Spens is listed as Baillie of Irvine in 1260. Henry Spens witnessed a charter by Robert, Earl of Fife, in 1390, and it was in that ancient earldom that the family was to prosper. Henry de Sens of Lathallan swore fealty to Edward I of England, and his name appears on the Ragman Roll of 1296. He died around 1300, when his son, Thomas, succeeded. He is mentioned in two charters of Robert the Bruce.

By the early fifteenth century, the family had risen to considerable prominence, which entitled John Spens of Lathallan to sit in the Parliament called by James I at Perth in 1434. John married Isabel, daughter of Sir John Wemyss, and had three sons. Patrick, the youngest, was a member of the Guard of Scots Archers sent by James II to Charles VII of France in 1450. He settled in France, and his descendents were the prominent family of Spens-Destinot de Lanere. The 'Garde Ecossaise', as they were later known, were to become the personal bodyguard of the French kings until the revolution of 1789. Thomas, the second son, entered the Church and rose to high office. He was appointed Bishop of Galloway and later Lord Privy Seal, a post he held until 1470. He was translated to the bishopric of Aberdeen in 1459, and being considered a clever and shrewd negotiation, he was regularly employed on state business. In 1449 he was sent to conclude a marriage contract between the heir to the Duke of Savoy and Arabella, sister of James II. Two years later he was sent as ambassador to negotiate a truce with England. He died in Edingurgh in 1480, and his tomb is the splendid chapel of Roslin.

The heir to Lathallan, Alexander Spens, married the sister of the great Scottish admiral, Sir Andrew Wood, and received a charter from James II, creating him constable of Crail harbor. The Spens link with the sea may have been forged two hundred years earlier in the exploits of Sir Patrick Spens, possibly from the cadet house of Wormieston, commemorated in the ballad which bears his name. Sir Patrick was in command of the ship which took Princess Margaret, daughter of Alexander III, to Norway for her marriage to King Eric in 1281. On the return voyage, the Scottish ship went down with all hands.

During the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, the loyalties of the family were divided. Sir John Spence of Condie was Lord Advocate, but adhered to the reformed Church. When commanded by the queen to prosecute the reformer, John Knox, for alleged treason, he did so with no great zeal, and Knox was acquitted. David Spens of Wormieston, however, was a loyal subject of Mary, and was denounced as a rebel by the Parliament summoned by Regent Lennox in August 1571. David was one of the ringleaders of the attempt to seize Lennox at Stirling in September of that year, and he was given the task of taking the regent personally to hold as hostage. According to one narrative, Spens followed his orders to keep Lennox secure so literally that when some of the conspirators decided to kill the regent, Spens stopped a pistol shot by throwing himself in front of his prisoner. Tragically, when supporters of Lennox came to his rescue, they killed Spens on the spot, despite the regent's attempts of saving his unlikely savior. However, the family were later reconciled to James VI, who sent Sir James Spens of Wormieston as ambassador to Sweden, where a branch of the family settled, rising high in the Swedish nobility as counts Spens.

Dr Nathaniel Spens of Craigsanquhar in Fife was president of the Royal College of Physicians in 1794. He was a prominent member of the Royal College of Physicians in 1794. He was a prominent member of the Royal Company

of Archers (the monarch's bodyguard in Scotland) and a famous portrait of him hangs in Archer's Hall in Edinburgh. One of his descendents, Sir William Spens, was vice-chancellor of Cambridge University from 1931 to 1933. Another kinsman, John Spens, WS, is the Albany Herald to the Court of the Lord Lyon, King of Arms.

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Clan SPENS Septs – SPENCE, SPENS

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The Scottish Society of Louisville, Inc.
PO Box 32248
Louisville, KY 40232-2248