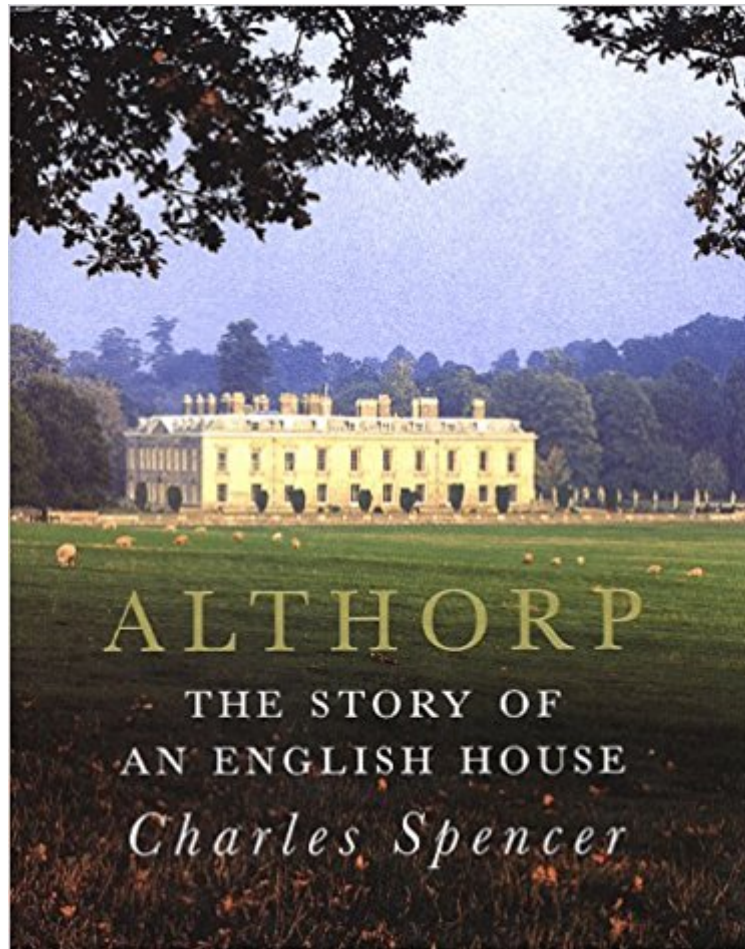




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Althorp: The Story Of An English House



Synopsis

The great house and grounds of Althorp in Northamptonshire have been home to the Spencer family for nearly 500 years. They first leased farm land in the area of grazing in 1486, and in 1508 Sir John Spencer acquired the 300-acre estate on which he built the first house. Since then, Spencers have lived and died at Althorp for twenty generations, and the Park has now taken on an added significance as the burial place of the most loved princess of the twentieth century. Charles Spencer, who became the ninth Earl in 1992, has a deep love and knowledge of the house, reflected in the fact that he acted as a guide there when he was just twelve years old and in the tremendous redecorative work he has undertaken in recent years to restore it to its former glories. In 1998 there was further major work with the adapting of the quite beautiful Stable Block--once home to 100 horses and forty grooms--into a center for visitors incorporating an exhibition celebrating the life of Diana. Earl Spencer has written a fascinating account of the house that combines the details of art and architecture (Althorp has one of the greatest private art collections in the country, including paintings by Van Dyck, Rubens, Reynolds, Stubbs and Gainsborough) with a personal appreciation of all its qualities. He also provides a first-hand description of the many changes that have occurred in recent years. With splendid photography, some of it from Althorp's archives and some of it specially commissioned, this new book offers the perfect guide to one of England's greatest houses.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This account of Althorp, his family seat, by Charles, the ninth earl Spencer, only scratches the surface of its 500-year history. Nevertheless, whether he is describing the sleepless nights of his

childhood, the ticking of clocks "always ... too subtle a sound, getting absorbed in the oak of the floorboards and the fabric of the tapestries," or appraising the forbidding character of his grandfather, the "Curator Earl," Spencer casts a candid, evocative light on his subject. Indeed, Spencer's own efforts on the estate have been considerable. First comes the business of repairing the predations of his "short-termist stepmother," Raine, the countess of Dartmouth, who has laid down wall-to-wall oatmeal carpet in a 115-foot-long Tudor picture gallery. Now comes the death and burial on the estate of his sister, Diana, the princess of Wales. That Charles must now curate the family home as a site of global mourning is a trial quite the equal of anything the estate has ever faced. Subtitled "The Story of an English House," the book has a structure, dividing the subject into buildings, grounds, family history, and collections, that is entirely conventional. Yet Spencer surprises by packing in many details about the social and political vicissitudes that shaped his family's wealth and taste. In doing so, he eschews his grandfather's regrettable elitism, while losing none of the old man's dedication to the family's heritage. Like all good introductions, this book suggests a world and time far exceeding its little compass. --Simon Ings

Charles, Viscount Althorp, became the ninth Earl Spencer on the death of his father in 1992. Since then he has undertaken extensive refurbishment of Althorp and supervised the changes made to accommodate the many thousands of people who wish to visit the home and grounds since the death of his sister. He was educated at Eton College and obtained his degree in Modern History at Magdalen College, Oxford.

Enjoyed Charles Spencer's history of his family and their ancestral home Althorp but was very disappointed that there were no accompanying photographs as was in the print edition. Only giving this two stars as I feel rather cheated as in many places the narrative assumes the reader is also referencing photographs of the rooms or works of art being discussed. Without any accompanying photographs, this Kindle Edition of the book is disappointing.

The story of the many Earls of Spencer is one that is completely captivating. I now know so much more about the Spencer family and the family history with its' place in English history. I did not have a hard time keeping the different Earl's straight (as another reviewer complained) thanks to a chart of Spencer descendants in the front of the book. A handy floor plan also in the book was a great reference tool also. This family, though perhaps not quite as distinguished as some others is certainly more "Royal" than those presently residing at Buckingham Palace. It is an amazing story of

the family over the centuries: the building of the home and the way in which different generations had to cope with taxes, building remodels, upkeep and general changing times. The current Earl Spencer does touch briefly upon his sister, the famous Lady Diana, but graciously does not use her as a pawn to sell his book. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning the history of Lady Diana's family and the history of one magnificent family home.

Loved reading this book, learning it's history thru the eyes of Earl Spencer. I wish i had purchased the paper copy instead of the kindle, as no pictures in the kindle.

The information in this book was fascinating, but the misspellings, incorrect grammar, punctuation errors and other mistakes were laughable. One fellow went to "prop" school, and one room was a "silting" room. One example of poor grammar was " the public do" something or other. One mistake was so funny I laughed right out loud in the airplane coming home from Costa Rica. Wish I could remember what that one was. There were spaces in words (li ke) It was getting so that I was looking for errors more than reading the book. He needs a better editor..

Having always admired Princess Diana, it was a joy learning about her childhood home and final resting place.

This is a fascinating book, filled with family stories going back five centuries. It's obvious that Charles Spencer has great pride in his ancestors, while realistically recounting their foibles as well as their great successes. I would have given it 5 stars, but the constant and repetitive spelling errors detracted from my enjoyment of the content. Still I recommend it, despite every single use of the word earl being written as Karl among the other misspellings.

Having been a huge admirer of Diana, Princess of Wales, I jumped at the chance to read this book. I was not disappointed! It was a most interesting history of Althorp and of the Spencers through the years. Anyone who is interested in English history and English historic houses this is a must read. And not just because it was Diana's ancestral home. I highly recommend Althorp: The Story of an English House!!

Comes across as cashing in on his sister's death.

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