

Talk by Robert Spring (decendant of the Lavenham Springs)

15 September 2024

Good morning, everyone. I'm a university professor who's used to yelling to the back to make sure everyone stays awake, so I'm sorry. Yes, I'm a direct descendant of Thomas Spring, and we knew this. Growing up, my grandparents had a picture of the church on their wall, and we always wondered about this. My great-grandfather was also an academician, and he was able to visit, he was teaching at Cambridge, I believe, he was able to visit and took a photograph which was hanging on their wall for years. But nobody travelled back then, it was a different time. The first time somebody came here was, I think, in 1980. There was a Spring family confluence. We were invited, but I had just started, I was a college professor, I just started teaching, and those of you who know about college professors, assistant professors are not paid very well. So we didn't make it, but we saw all these pictures. My parents came when my father retired and sent back all these pictures, and we thought, 'We have to go.'

Now, we are Episcopalians, which means we're the Anglican church in the United States. And we go in Phoenix, Arizona, where we live, we go to an old church. It's the Cathedral for the Diocese, and it was built in 1922. That gives you a feeling of old churches in the United States. In any event, in 1995, we made our first visit here, and it was an incredible time. I have to tell just a really quick story. We walked in, and this was before digital cameras, and we walked in and I had my camera and I was taking pictures like crazy. The bookstore was a little different back then, it was just a little table back there. This woman came up and she said, 'Do you mind this as a church?' She said, 'Who are you?' I said, 'My name is Robert Spring.' She grabbed me by the arm and she said, 'That's completely different', and took me all over the church, and I took two rolls of pictures then. I was able to perform then; I'm a clarinetist; and it was a really incredible experience. We've come back many, many times since. It's hard to state going back and finding your family like this.

We met a war bride when I was teaching in Texas who was from the area, and she actually traced it back even further to about 1,200 in Houghton Le Spring and a man named John Le Spring. We visited that church yesterday, and it's just an incredible experience. My wife and my daughter and my son-in-law are here with me today, and I'm just very happy to be here. By the way, next summer, I'm going to be doing a concert to help celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Bell Tower, which, by the way, I did walk up this morning. My legs can attest to that in my nearly 70-year-old age. But I'm going to be here, and as a university professor, I can say this, attendance is required. Thank you for letting me speak. Thank you, everybody.