

SAMLESBURY OLD HALL

*Near Preston and
Blackburn in the
County of Lancaster
. . . . England . . .*

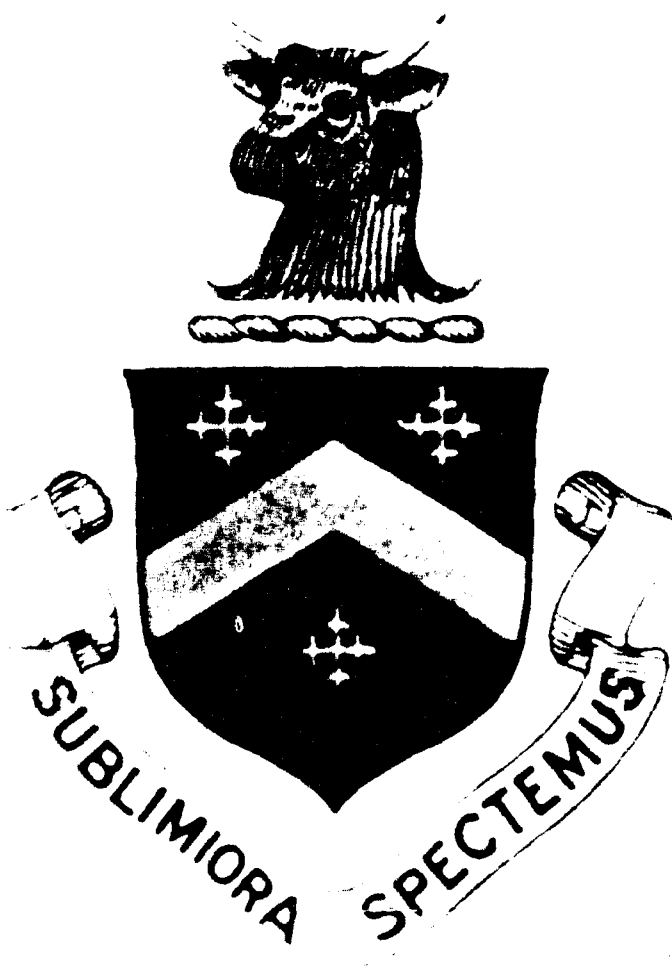
*For three hundred and fifty years
The Home of the Southworths*

**SAMLESBURY
OLD HALL**

*I*N the summer of 1927 it was my good fortune to motor along some of the lovely highways of Lancashire, to cross and recross the winding River Ribble as it dances over its shallows or lounges along under grassy banks, and to wander through the fields in footpaths worn centuries ago by the feet of my ancestors as they went and came on errands of peace and war. My chief objective was Samlesbury Old Hall, and when I found it, calm and stately and very dignified, triumphant over all the forces that have beaten upon it through the centuries, I was so charmed that I resolved to share my visit with my kinsfolk in the home land. So please accept, you sons and daughters of the ancient line of Southworth, this little memorial of the House of our Fathers, for I, too, am to the manor born, being the second son of Charity Southworth Ensign, 1834-1920, youngest daughter of the Reverend Constant Southworth, 1794-1870, son of Constant, 1764-1827, son of Constant, 1730-1813, son of Nathaniel, 1692-1730, son of William, 1659-1718, son of Constant, 1615-1679, who was born in Leyden, son of Edward Southworth and Alice Carpenter Southworth, members of that little band of Pilgrims who fled from their ancestral homes in search of spiritual peace. Edward, son of Thomas and grandson of Sir John Southworth, was probably born at Samlesbury Hall. His line goes back directly to the builder, Sir Gilbert de Southworth.

FOREST C. ENSIGN.

State University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
December 25, 1927



The Southworth Coat-of-Arms

SAMLESBURY HALL

THE ANCIENT HOME OF THE SOUTHWORTH FAMILY



APPARENTLY all the Southworths now living in England and the United States are able to trace their ancestry more or less directly to the Sir Gilbert de Southworth who built the first unit of Samlesbury Hall, probably about the year 1350. Only thirty miles from Liverpool and about forty-five miles from the heart of the "Lake Country", easily accessible on a lovely paved road (the "New Road", completed about 1825,) this excellent example of early English half-timbered architecture is visited by many an English wayfarer on business or pleasure bent, and by not a few Americans.

Since 1925 the Hall with its garden of about five acres remaining from the original manor of some five or six thousand acres, has been held for the public by a Board of Trustees whose worthy aim is to preserve it as a place of antiquarian and historic interest and to render it of service to the people.

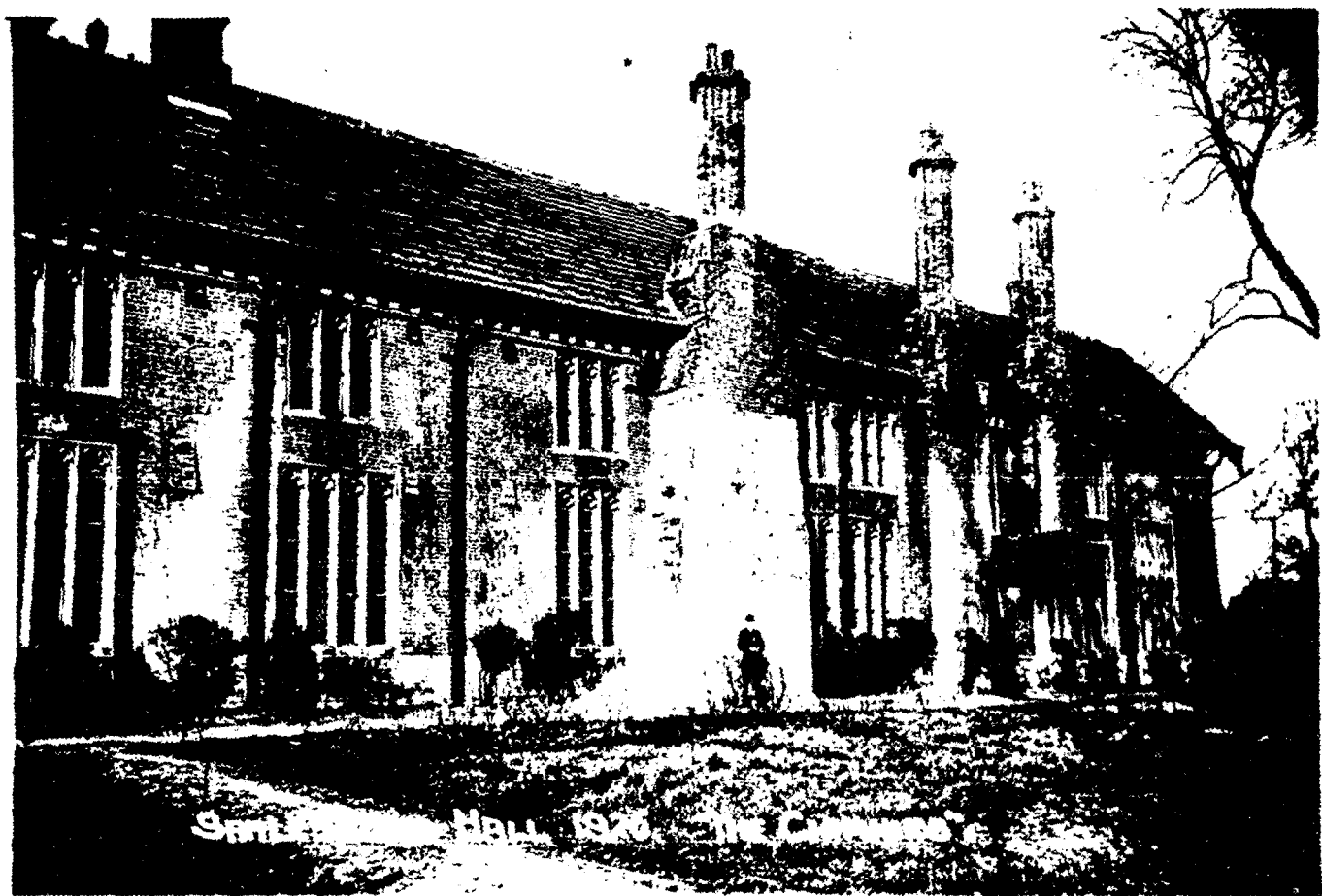
Before Samlesbury manor became the property of the Southworths it was in the possession of the Dewyas (or D'Ewyas) family, and the Hall, long known as Samlesbury, was farther north on the banks of the beautiful River Ribble. This house was entirely destroyed by the Scots on one of their many raids into northern England following the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Before the year 1332, Sir Gilbert de Southworth married Alicia



Dewyas, sole heiress of this ancient family, and the manor was held by him and his descendants for three centuries and a half.

When, in the year 1350, Sir Gilbert set about the building of a new manor house he selected a site remote from the ruins of the earlier one and some distance from the river, a point on rising ground about half way between the present-day prosperous towns of Preston and Blackburn, but he retained the historic name, Samlesbury. Today one may board a public bus at either of these places (an American would call them cities for each has a population of over sixty thousand) and in a few minutes be knocking at the door of Samlesbury Hall, but it was remote enough then, behind its moat and protected by great forests until the "New Road" came through, passing between the house and the near-by quarry which provided stone for the builders of the several wings during the centuries our ancestors, with four other knightly families, ruled this side of the River Ribble.

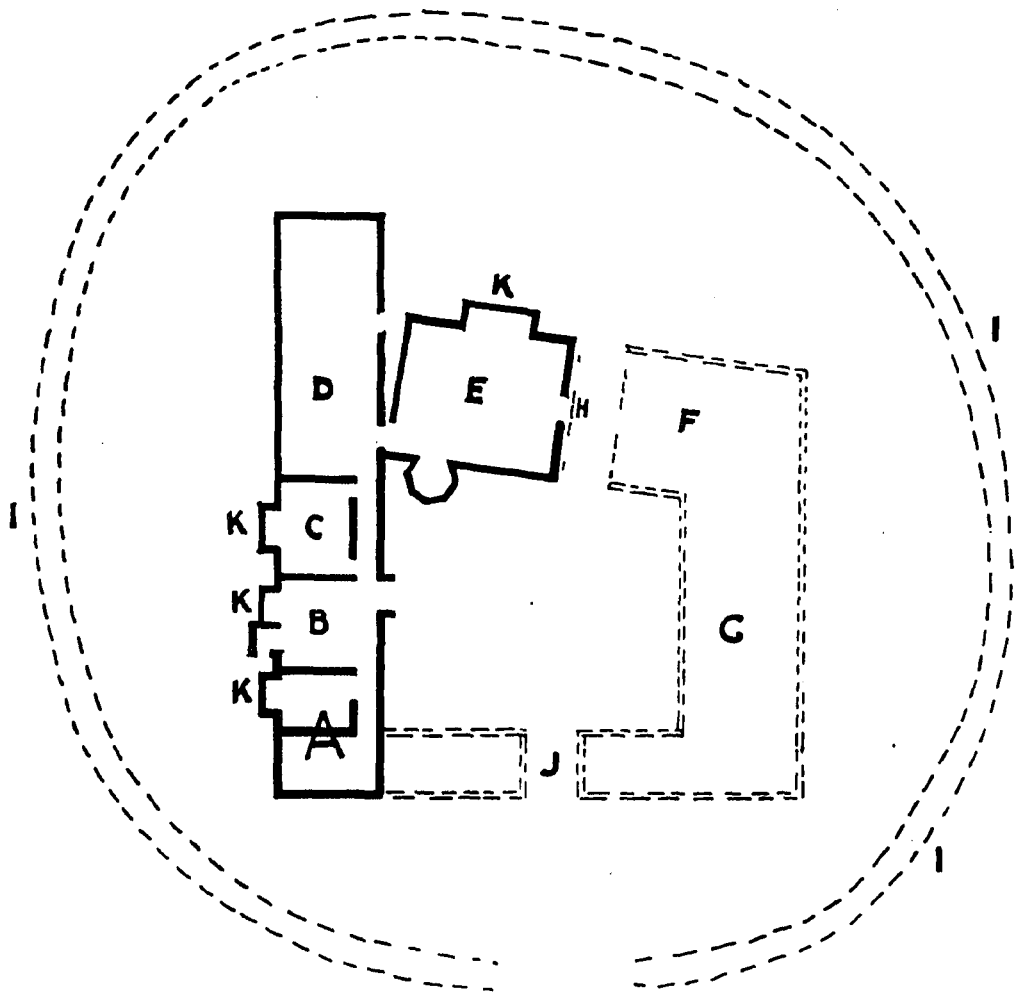
Sir Gilbert built the "Great Hall", the portion appearing at the right in the picture, a crude, barn-like structure, with frame of mighty oak timbers now blackened by smoke, bearing the mark of ax and adz, but not of saw. The walls were mostly stone, as was the roof, the floor of beaten clay. Antiquarians do not agree as to whether the "Great Hall" as it stands today is the original of the year 1350, or a "restoration" of the following century. The major opinion favors the former, though of



course the interior has been much modified. A gigantic chimney has taken the place of the opening in the roof through which, in Sir Gilbert's time, the smoke was hopefully expected to escape. The earthen floor has given way to flagstones, a monster fireplace at one side serves instead of the circle of stones in the center of the room, and windows of a later age have been cut through the stone walls. Back of the "Great Hall" were private apartments which were torn away when the South wing was built, and to the right, butteries and kitchens.

The "South Wing", constituting by far the larger portion of Samlesbury Hall as it stands today, was built, most likely, by Sir Christopher de Southworth, soon after 1485, at the end of the Wars of the Roses in which he had a part. A chapel had been erected by Sir Thomas, grandson of Sir Gilbert, and Sir Christopher either included this chapel in the great south wing, or pulled it down and built another as a portion of his new construction. At any rate in the east end of the south wing was undoubtedly a chapel, originally open from floor to roof with a gallery above separated from the rest of the building by a carved, late Gothic screen. In this gallery the family and guests sat during service, the retainers and other members of the manorial community sitting below. The piscina in the chapel is a reconstruction, but probably marks the position of an earlier one. A large late Gothic window in the chapel is said to have been brought here after the Dissolution from Whalley Abbey, ten miles to the north.

Ground Plan of Samlesbury Old Hall



PORTIONS NOW STANDING IN BLACK.

CONJECTURED PORTION IN DOTTED LINES.

A—Chapel.
B—Entrance Hall.
C—Parlour.
D—Modernised Portion.
E—Great Hall.
F—Kitchen Buttery, etc

G—Servants' Quarters.
H—Movable Screen.
I I—Moat.
J—Main Entrance.
K K—Chimneys.

A later Sir Thomas Southworth (the *de* is omitted after the period of Sir Christopher, the chief builder) who died about the middle of the sixteenth century, made many interior improvements. His name appears upon the minstrels' gallery in the Great Hall, with the date 1532, and upon a very fine mantel-piece in the parlour with the date 1545. Here also, is the Coat-of-Arms of the Southworks flanked by those of allied families.

The Southworth line that continued so long in possession of Samlesbury Hall seems to have kept faith to the last with the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed it was their zealous adherence to the Church of their fathers that finally brought ruin to the family through heavy fines for "recusancy" which, after the Dissolution, brought much treasure to the public coffers and much tribulation to the faithful. But this same zeal for the Mother Church also brought to Samlesbury Hall the two ghosts that, appearing at certain intervals to those spiritual enough to discern them, add to the attractiveness of the place. One of these ghosts is the spirit of a priest who was attached to the family in the time of Elizabeth, and who met death at the hands of men who were determined to eliminate from the country all traces of "Popery". The other spirit is that of Dorothy Southworth who, to the great annoyance of her brothers, fell in love with a Protestant youth. Coming one night to the garden just outside the moat to keep tryst with the fair Dorothy, the young man and his one retainer were slain by these very pious

brothers in the maiden's presence. True to form, she mourned her life away, but returns each year on the anniversary of her lover's death, and wanders about the garden.

In 1678-9 the impoverished Southworths sold what remained of the manor to a Mr. Braddyll. The glory of the ancient seat was no more. The Hall was presently divided into tenements, the homes of weavers and labourers in those days when industry was gaining its first footing in Lancashire. When "New Road" was made, about 1825, it became an inn. Still later, about 1850, it came into the hands of John Cooper who leased it to a Mrs. Harrison of Bradford who established here a school for small boys and girls.

In the year 1862 Mr. Joseph Harrison, of Blackburn, bought the place and restored it as a residence for his family. It had suffered greatly since 1679, especially during the years it had served as a tenement and as a public house. But nothing except fire could destroy all the beauty and dignity of this fine old mansion. Mr. Harrison spent large sums in restoration and reconstruction, being careful to preserve all the work of the ancient builders that remained.

Finally, in 1925, the Hall and garden were purchased by public subscription, and now, so long as fire may spare it, the descendants of the fierce old warriors that built Samlesbury Hall may, for sixpence, tread the ancient flagstones, wander about the garden amongst trees also of a newer generation,

re-people this lovely but rather lonely corner of England with the men and maidens of long ago, and, if rich and generous, aid the Trustees in their slow task of freeing this glorious old family seat of the debt they assumed in order that we and our children might share in some slight degree the inheritance of our Fathers.

