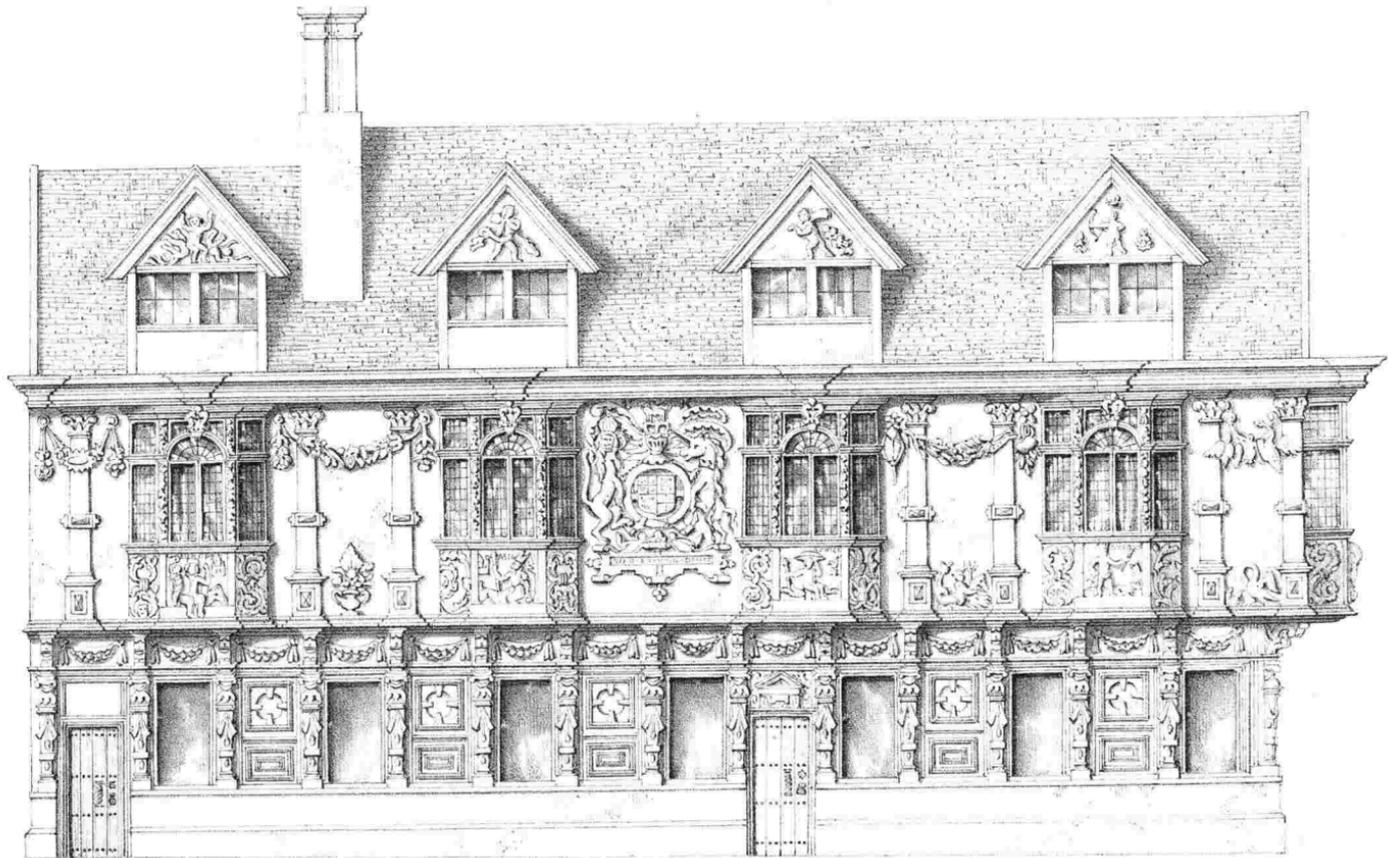


## SPARROWE'S HOUSE, IPSWICH.

I HAVE been unable to obtain any positive data from which a satisfactory conclusion could be drawn as to the exact period of the erection of this very interesting building. The information to be gleaned from documents in the possession of the Sparrowe family, and in the hands of collectors of deeds and papers connected with the locality, is so meagre as to be of little service in elucidating the question. It is therefore, only by investigating its architectural characteristics that a solution of the problem can be arrived at. After a minute and careful inspection of its details in every part, I feel satisfied that the house, as we now see it, cannot be referred to any one period, but has been the accumulated work of a lengthened series of years, extending over probably nearly two centuries. The earliest portion of the edifice, with the exception of the foundations, which cannot now be examined, is undoubtedly a hammer beam roof of three bays, the wall plate of which is 21 feet from the ground. The existence of this roof was for many years unknown, a floor having been thrown across its whole area just below the level of the cornice. When it was discovered in 1801, several wooden angels, &c., were found upon the floor, having doubtless fallen from the ends of the hammer beams and intersections of the ribs, their fastenings (wood pins) still remaining in their original position. This roof is of the date of Henry VII, and probably belonged either to a chapel, the usual adjunct to a mansion of that period, or it might have been the roof of the hall, which often took this form, as may be seen still at Helmingham and Gifford's halls, in this county. The external wall from which this



Scale 10 ft. to an Inch

R. M. Phipson del.

Sparrowe's House, Ipswich. Front Elevation. 1855

risers has been so re-cased some hundred years since, as to leave no indications of either door or window openings.

Next in date I imagine is a wooden corridor forming two sides of a court yard, adjoining the hall or chapel (*see plan*). This is formed by flat arches springing from columns with rude Ionic capitals, supporting a closed gallery lighted by six long but low windows divided by heavy mullions and transoms, the walls being constructed of ornamental studding and pargetting. This is evidently early Elizabethan work. Referrable to this period too, is the dining room, which is pannelled in oak, and contains a fire-place with but little carving, and that in very low relief, with pedimented doors at each side, one of which bears the letters G. C. and the date 1567. These initials, as set forth in a deed still in existence, are those of George Coppinge who owned this property before it came into the possession of the Sparrow family, in 1573. ? ?

The façade of the building, which is of a highly decorative character, is an unique and most interesting specimen of ornamental wood-work and pargetting (*see plate*), and from its essentially differing from any other building now in existence, it is difficult to assign to it its exact date. From an examination of the costume of the figures, I am inclined to attribute its workmanship to the latter part of the reign of James I., or the beginning of Charles I.

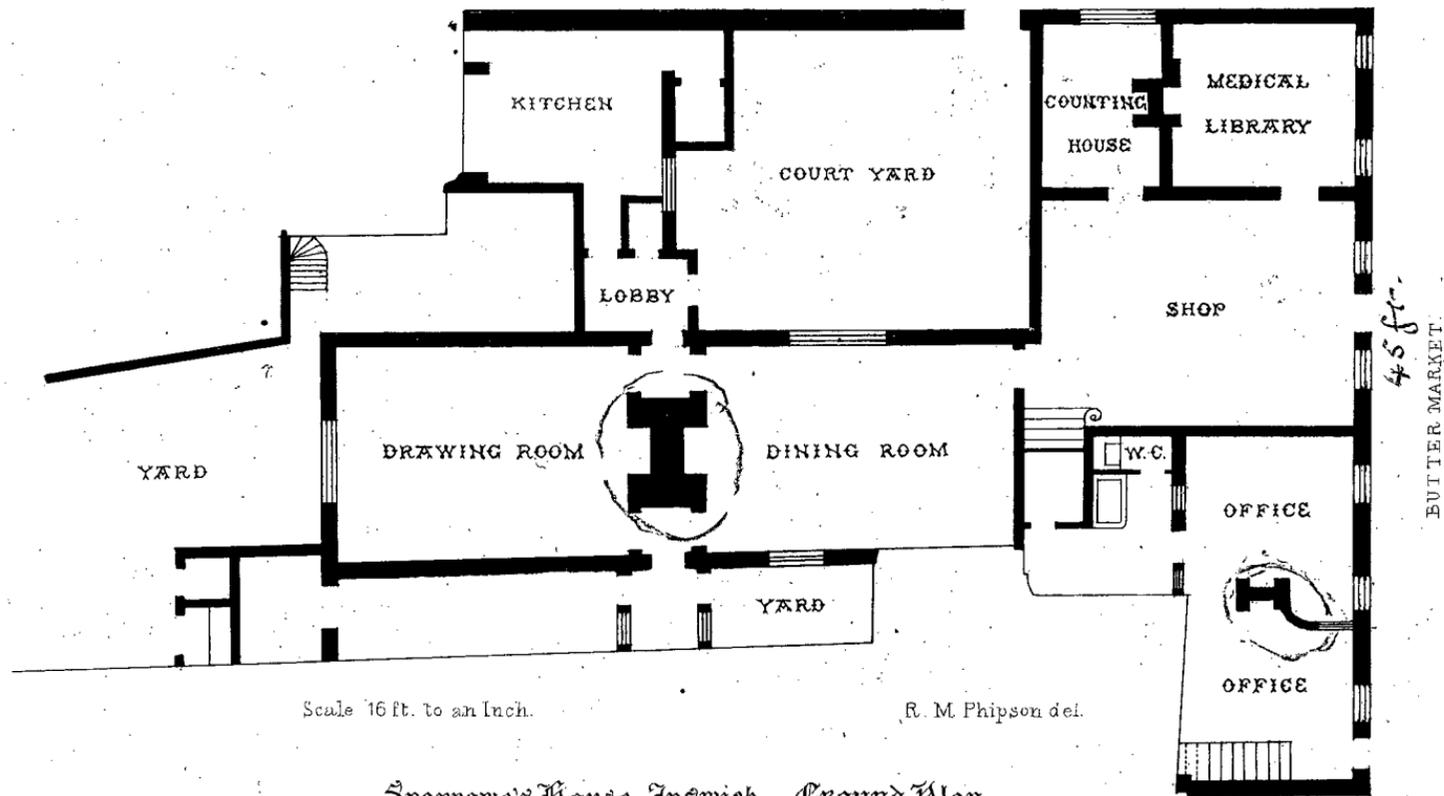
The arms of Charles II., prominently displayed between two of the large bay windows above the centre doorway, is evidently an insertion at a subsequent period, most probably either at the restoration of the Stuarts or in commemoration of the king's visit to Ipswich, in 1668. The lower portion of the building consists of 15 compartments divided by enriched pilasters boldly carved in oak. Each bay alternately contains a window and a deal panel, and over each is a wreath of fruit and flowers in plaster work.

The first floor of the house, which considerably over-hangs the basement, contains four large bay windows in the front, with a similar one at the end, the whole of which probably opened originally into one room, extending the whole length of the mansion. Each window contains on its lower portion a subject in alto relievo, modelled in plaster. These sub-

jects represent, beginning at the west end, 1st, Atlas, bearing the globe; 2ndly, America, a standing figure of an Indian, holding a bow and arrow; 3rdly, Africa, with an arrow and umbrella in either hand, sitting on a crocodile; 4thly, Asia, seated, with a camel's head by her side; and 5th, a sitting figure of Europe holding a sceptre and cornucopia, by her side a horse's head. In the spaces between the bay windows, commencing at the left or east end are, 1st, the emblems of the earth, viz., a festoon of fruit and flowers, and, below, a vase with flowers. In the 2nd, the armorial bearings of Charles II., as before mentioned. In the 3rd, the emblems of water, viz., a festoon of fish, and Neptune with a trident triumphing below; 4th, emblems of air, viz., a festoon of birds above a pelican in her piety. By the side of the east window is a pastoral, which by some is supposed to represent Tityrus and Melibœus, but this is evidently erroneous, as one of the figures is a female.

Above the huge over-hanging eaves are four dormers running into the main roof, which terminates in a gable. The pediments of the dormers contain, with the end gable, five other subjects, which are difficult to determine, except the last, which represents St. George slaying the dragon. The figures on the dormers appear to be children; the 1st, at the end to the right, has a bow and arrow; the 2nd, is dragging a festoon of fruit; the 3rd, has a club or thyrsus in his hand; and the 4th contains three children joined together by their backs. These subjects have been much weather worn and have also suffered from careless reparation.

On one side of the court yard (that next to the house) plaster figures again occur, representing a procession, consisting of a car containing a crowned male figure, a female with a dove on her head, and in the front an emblematic figure of Justice. This equipage is drawn by two horses and approaches a tree, amidst whose foliage is standing a boy. Its meaning I do not pretend to decipher. It is evidently one of those allegories so common to the period. A room at the back of the house, now used as a drawing room, appears to have been panelled at the same period as the decoration of the exterior. On the fire-place, a fine specimen



Scale 16 ft. to an Inch.

R. M. Phipson del.

Sparrowe's House, Ipswich. Ground Plan.

of carving, are the initials of William Sparrowe and the date 1609.

I have now alluded to everything of interest about the place, with the exception of two full-length figures, about four feet high, of Mars and Pallas, painted on Dutch tiles, which form the wall surface of a small court yard giving light to the dining room (*see plan*). These are very curious and rare specimens. The tiles are about five inches square, and are accurately fitted together.

The principal stair-case, ceiling of shop, and other internal work are worthy of little notice, being of the Hanoverian period, with the exception of the long great room on the first floor which has a bold ceiling plaster, coeval with the front of the house.

Charles II. is said to have been the guest of the Sparrowe family, and also George I. visited Mr. John Sparrowe, bailiff of Ipswich, and presented him with his full-length portrait, painted by G. Fountain, in 1727. This picture still hangs on the staircase. The present owner of the property, Mr. John Eddowes Sparrow, also possesses two portraits of Charles II. and one of Mrs. Lane, supposed to have been a Royal gift to one of the members of the family.

Before closing this short and I fear imperfect and unsatisfactory description of the building, I may perhaps be permitted to express a hope that so curious and interesting a structure, setting forth as it does the excellent knowledge and good taste of our ancestors will not be allowed to fall into decay, or what is, I fear, more probable, be swept entirely away by the ruthless march of so mis-called modern improvement.

R. MAKILWAINE PHIPSON.