When I first began to consider the need for a life of Spenser, I thought that the project should be undertaken by a historian and tried to recruit Norman Jones. Norm told me that I had to do it and promised his assistance. I studied the secretary hand with Anthony G. Petti, and Norm has patiently answered my questions over where to look for things and how archives are organized. He also very graciously read the very first draft of this manuscript. I also owe much to my colleague and friend Andrew Hadfield because his 2012 biography has replaced Judson (1945) as the standard life of Spenser and has made it possible for me to focus more narrowly on Spenser’s early life and try to make sense of the facts we have – while pointing out the gaps in our knowledge. My thanks also to Richard McCabe, whose dependable and painstaking edition of Spenser’s shorter poems made my work much, much easier. For Robert and Peter Brink, thanks for computer tips and for functioning as my non-specialist, but educated, general readers.

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