

**Generation Two**  
**Thomas Pierce and Mary Fry Pierce**

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| <p><b>2. Thomas (1635-10/26/1706) m. 8/3/1661</b><br/>         3. Thomas (8/3/1662-1730?) m. 11/13/1707<br/>         3. Mary (3/15/1665-7/4/1743) m. by 1696</p>  | <p><b>Mary Fry (1641-3/22/1704)</b><br/>         Sarah White (1670-10/19/1759)<br/>         Moses Payne, Paine (3/26/1660-6/22/1746) of Braintree, house carpenter<br/>         Abigail Thompson of Braintree</p> |
| <p><b>3. John (8/27/1668-1/27/1744) m. 1/6 /1692/93</b><br/>         3. Robert (4/26/1673-12/4 /1698)<br/>         3. Samuel (7/238/1676-12/26/1698)<br/>         3. Sarah (4/5/1679-10/2/1764) m. 11/1/1704<br/>         3. Elizabeth (6/18/1682-11/12/1702)<br/>         3. Hannah (6/9/1685-11/7/1688)</p> | <p>James Trott (6/2/1671-9/27/1719)</p>   |

Thomas Pierce inherited the Pierce lands when his father Robert died in 1664. He had been married for three years to Mary Fry, from Weymouth, and the two of them, with their son Thomas, may have lived with the senior Pierces. When his father died, however, Thomas's independence was still circumscribed, as his mother, who retained her half share of the property, lived for another thirty-one years. Thomas and Mary had seven more children, four of whom survived long enough to be mentioned in Thomas's will in 1704. Although children most commonly died in infancy or early childhood in the seventeenth century, seven of the Pierce children lived at least into their early twenties,<sup>1</sup> and the family household during those years was large and multi-generational.

Unlike his father, Thomas Pierce did become a freeman, for he was chosen constable in 1674, and only freemen were eligible to hold that position. His other responsibilities within the town were typical of the seventeenth century. In 1667 he was appointed to view the fences in the Neponset area, and he also served as one of the "sup'visors of county and towne highways," seeing to their upkeep and repair. Pierce also signed an agreement to build a fence on the Great Lots and six-acre lots, and presumably he fulfilled that responsibility. Thomas and Mary Pierce joined the Dorchester Church in 1665.<sup>2</sup>

Over his lifetime Thomas Pierce added extensively to the Pierce family holdings, including the homestead now known as the Pierce House and its surrounding twenty acres of upland. Some of Thomas's acquisitions were in what is present day Dorchester, but he also obtained property in the part of town that was to become Milton and in the New Grant "beyond the Blue Hills." Together his inherited lands and his acquisitions totaled about 230 acres, with at least seventy-five acres south of the Neponset River, and his properties included at least three houses, the inherited Robert Pierce House and two purchases. Exact boundaries are difficult to determine, but there are some "clusters" of property holdings, concentrations of the Dorchester lands in Pine Neck and in the Great Lots, along both sides of the Lower Road.<sup>3</sup> Thomas's added parcels included a variety of types, consistent with the continuing pattern of mixed-use farming. Inheriting twenty acres at Pine Neck from his father, he purchased ten more acres of the salt marsh land from James Minot whose family, like the Pierces, had been original settlers there. Thomas also bought an additional one acre of woodlot on the Cow Walk, on a peninsula north of Savin

Hill, a property representing a rare purchase in upper Dorchester; the family’s orientation was clearly toward lower Dorchester and the outlying lands.<sup>4</sup>

Most of Thomas Pierce’s Dorchester acquisitions consisted of approximately one hundred acres of upland and meadow which lay in the western part of the Great Lots, bounded by a fence that ran along the Upper Road (Washington Street) and by the Lower Road (Adams Street); a few parcels extended into the Great Lots to the west of the fence. One of the properties, purchased from Jonathan Hill in 1680, consisted of a five-acre lot, with a house, garden, and outbuilding, which lay between the two roads. Thomas and Mary Pierce and their family may have lived in this house at some point, with Thomas’s mother Ann remaining in the Robert Pierce House or perhaps moving with them. Thomas also seems to have been looking to the future of his oldest son, Thomas II, in purchasing this and other lands in the western Great Lots, “settling” him at some point in this house and in land along the road. This property eventually passed on to Thomas II and his descendants.



Thomas Pierce House, 1795. Photograph, Leon H. Abdalian, 1930.

Courtesy Boston Public Library

In 1696 Thomas Pierce also purchased from James Minot twenty acres of upland, “together with all and singular the housing Ediffices, buildings, and Fences standing thereon Yard Garden...”<sup>6</sup> This property, which included the Pierce House, lay along the Lower Road not far from the Robert Pierce House, with the house situated in the northwest portion, on a crest which sloped down hill to the south and east toward the Neponset River. Built in 1683 by a member of the Minot fam-



Pierce House as originally built. Conjectural drawing.

Mark Harland Johnson

Oct 7, 1701

Know all men by these Presents That I Thomas Pierce of the Town of  
 Dorchester County of Suffolk and Province of Massachusetts in N<sup>o</sup> England for  
 diverse good Causes and Considerations mee hereunto moving but Especially for the Love that  
 I do bare unto my Son John Pierce and His wife of the Town and County  
 above said have given granted alienated and confirmed and do by these presents give  
 grant alienate and confirm unto my abovesaid Son John Pierce his heirs Executors  
 Administrators and Assignes a Certain parcel of Land lying and being in the  
 Town and County abovesaid containing six Acres more or less bounded in manner  
 following Easterly on the Land of Thomas Pratt Easterly on the Land of Benjamin  
 Leed, Northly on an high way to Neponsett Mill Southly on the Land of the  
 abovesaid Thomas Pratt together with the housing & Barn Tenning Orchard Conditias  
 & Appurtenances belonging therunto This I do give to my Son John his Heirs Executors  
 Administrators and Assignes as a Part of their Intended Portion So that My Son John  
 his heirs Executors Administrators or Assignes shall Have & Hold Use occupy possess  
 and Enjoy the Whole & Every part of the abovesaid Premises for a true just and  
 lawfull Inheritance free from any Molestation from mee the abovesaid Thomas Pierce  
 My heirs Executors Administrators &c Or any other person or Person whatsoever buying  
 any Claim or Title therunto or any part thereof as derived from mee & the abovesaid  
 Thomas Pierce do hereby warrantize the same that the abovesaid housing Lands &c  
 are mine to make such disposal thereof free from all Bills of Sale Mortgages Dower  
 Grants whatsoever To the abovesaid Premises, I the abovesaid Thomas Pierce do set  
 to my hand and Seal this October the Seventh Anno Domini 1701

Signed Sealed and delivered  
 In the Presence of Us.  
 Edward Tompson  
 Elizabeth peccors

Thomas pears

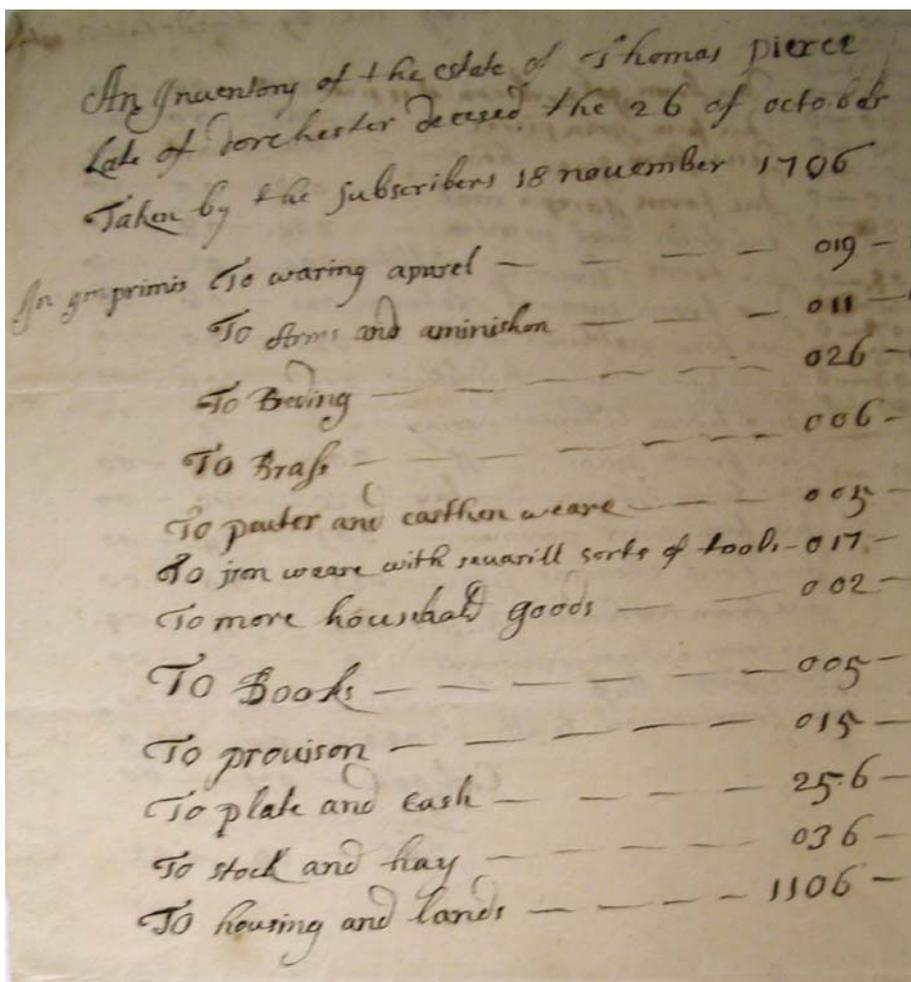
October 7<sup>th</sup> 1701.

Thomas Pierce's will, 1701.

ily, the house was part of James Minot's inheritance from his father, but James, a teacher and physician, had moved to Concord, Mass., in the 1680s. Elegant and fashionable, the house had characteristic First Period detail, including a gabled roof and small, diamond-paned windows. A two-and-a-half-story structure, with two rooms on each floor, plus an attic, it was also a large house for its time.<sup>7</sup> With various additions and alterations over the years, it would be the Pierce family home for eight more generations.

With land still so abundant in the seventeenth century, Thomas Pierce also acquired large tracts

of land in Milton, which had incorporated in 1662, and in the New Grant, or the land that in 1637 extended the boundaries of Dorchester all the way to Plymouth and Rhode Island. The Milton lands included eighteen acres in “Purgatory Swamp,” which lay between the Neponset River and the Dedham line, and twenty-five acres just below the Neponset River. Thomas, Sr. purchased a fifty-acre tract of upland and swamp in the New Grant in 1698 and then re-sold it to his son Thomas, Jr. in 1704.<sup>8</sup> For Thomas Pierce these extensive additions to his holdings had several meanings. Land represented the ability to care for one’s family, to provide food for consumption, and to trade for those articles the family could not produce on its own. A farmer needed different types of land, and he needed to be able to plant new fields as older ones became worn out. Land was also a measure of wealth in New England, and, when he died, Thomas Pierce’s “lands and housing” represented about three quarters of his estate.



Inventory of the belongings of Thomas Pierce, 1706.

things;” John previously “hath had forty pounds in housing and lands.” John’s portion, which his father had given him in 1701, was in fact his grandparents’ house, the home that Robert Pierce had built in the six-acre lots and which Thomas had inherited.<sup>9</sup> Except for John’s house and its surrounding acreage, Thomas, Sr. did not specify which particular properties were to go to each child, but other documents make clear that John received the Pierce House and twenty-acre home lot and that Thomas II retained much of the property between the Upper and Lower

Finally, land represented a way of providing for the next generation, particularly sons. In his will Thomas left his lands to his five children, but he continued the English practice of favoring the eldest son by granting Thomas, Jr. a double share, or two fifths; the others—John, Mary, and Sarah—each received one fifth. Thomas directed that those who had already received goods from him during his lifetime should include the value of those grants as part of their inheritance, so that there was an overall equality among the children. Mary’s portion was her dowry, “30 pounds seven shillings in household and other

## Endnotes Generation Two

1 See Laura Driemeyer, Anne Grady, Susan L. Porter, and Susan Walton, Pierce House Historic Property Report (HPR), Appendix A – Pierce Family Genealogy, 2005, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA, and Thomas Pierce, Will, Suffolk County Probate, Docket No. 3006, 1706. Thomas and Mary’s son Samuel, for example, was killed at age twenty-two when he fell from a tree on Thompson’s Island.

2 Edward Zimmer and Andrea Greenstein, “Pierce Family Genealogy,” Generation 2, p. 4, unpublished paper, undated, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA, Boston, MA.

3 Thomas acquired some of his land from town divisions and some from men who moved away from Dorchester. For a listing of Thomas Pierce’s land transactions, see Pierce House HPR, Appendix B—Summary of Pierce Lands—Section B, Thomas Pierce. See also, David Starbuck, ed., *Seventeenth-Century Historical Archeology in Cambridge, Medford, and Dorchester*, Boston University, 1980, pp. 118-119, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA, and Zimmer and Greenstein, Appendix A, pp. 2-5.

Thomas may also have acquired an additional 110 acres of land from town divisions of the land that later became Stoughton, including portions of Bear Swamp and Horseshoe Swamp. It is unclear from the town records whether the grants were to Thomas Sr. or Thomas Jr. See Proprietor’s or Town Records, February 13, 1726/27.

4 James Minot to Thomas Pierce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, May 26, 1696, Pierce Family Papers, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA; Samuel Clap to Thomas Peirce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, March 6, 1703/04, Pierce Family Papers.

5 Jonathan Hill to Thomas Pierce, Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, 74/88, March 19, 1680.

6 James Minot to Thomas Pierce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, May 26, 1696, Pierce Family Papers. Thomas and his family could have occupied the house prior to 1696, since James Minot had moved to Concord, although there is no direct evidence. Thomas Pierce was the first to occupy what we now know as the Pierce House.

7 Laura Driemeyer, Pierce House (Evidence of who originally occupied the house), and Summary of Pierce Lands, 1650s to Present, Research Files, Historic New England/SPNEA. Recent dendochronology dates the house to 1683, when the Minots owned the property. The house resembled the nearby Minot House, which had been built earlier on what is now Chickatawbot Street; that house burned down in the 1870s. See also Pierce House HPR, Section V—Architectural Analysis—Original Construction.

8 Proprietor’s or Town Records, Dec. 14, 1665, copy in Pierce Family Papers; Samuel Daniel to Thomas Pierce, Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, 12/338, July 12, 1682; Proprietor or Town Records, July 29, 1698, copy in Pierce Family Papers; Thomas Pierce to Thomas Pierce, Jr., Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, 74/87, May 11, 1704.

9 Thomas Peirce to John Peirce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, Oct. 7, 1701, Samuel Pierce Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

10 Thomas Pierce, Will; John Pierce, Unrecorded document, “John Pierce reserved as part of his portion given by his honored father’s will,” Dec. 17, 1706, Pierce Family Papers. The inheritance of the Pierce House by a younger son, rather than the oldest, was a pattern often seen in later generations of the family.

On the Thomas II line, see Pierce House HPR, Appendix B – Summary of Pierce Lands – Section B, Thomas Pierce and transcript of interview with Anne Shaughnessey by Susan Porter, June 26, 2001, p.28-29, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA.