

**Generation Four**  
**Samuel Pierce and Abigail Moseley Pierce**

- 4. Samuel (10/30/1702-9/16/1768) m. 12/7/1732 Abigail Moseley (c1711-1/10/1776)**
- 5. Samuel (1/30/1733/34-4/4/1736 or 2/25/1737)
  - 5. Edward (5/5/1735-2/22/1818) m. 1) 11/1/1763 Hannah Tolman (5/11/1736-7/10/1775)  
 2) 4/29/1777 Sarah Wiswall (12/18/1733-9/26/1780)  
 (his first cousin)  
 3) 3/28/1782 Relief Foster (1/26/1758-3/1805)
  - 5. Samuel (9/5/1737-2/25/1737/8)
  - 5. Abigail (9/5/1737-11/4/1741)
  - 5. **Samuel (3/25/1739-6/4/1815) m. 10/24/1765 Elizabeth Howe (6/9/1744-12/18/1797)**
  - 5. Rebecca (12/23/1740-10/7/1778)
  - 5. Abigail (11/26/1742-1780) m. 3/19/1767 Ebenezer Blake (3/26/1736-?), s. of Ebenezer and Relief, b. of Increase
  - 5. Hannah (12/17/1744-1/2/1750)
  - 5. Daniel (10/18/1746-5/27/1748)
  - 5. Sarah (8/28/1748-?) m. 10/14/1773 Increase Blake (11/2/1741-?), s. of Ebenezer and Relief, b. of Ebenezer
  - 5. Ann (11/12/1750-?) m. 10/14/1773 John Baker (11/2/1741-?), s. of James and Priscilla

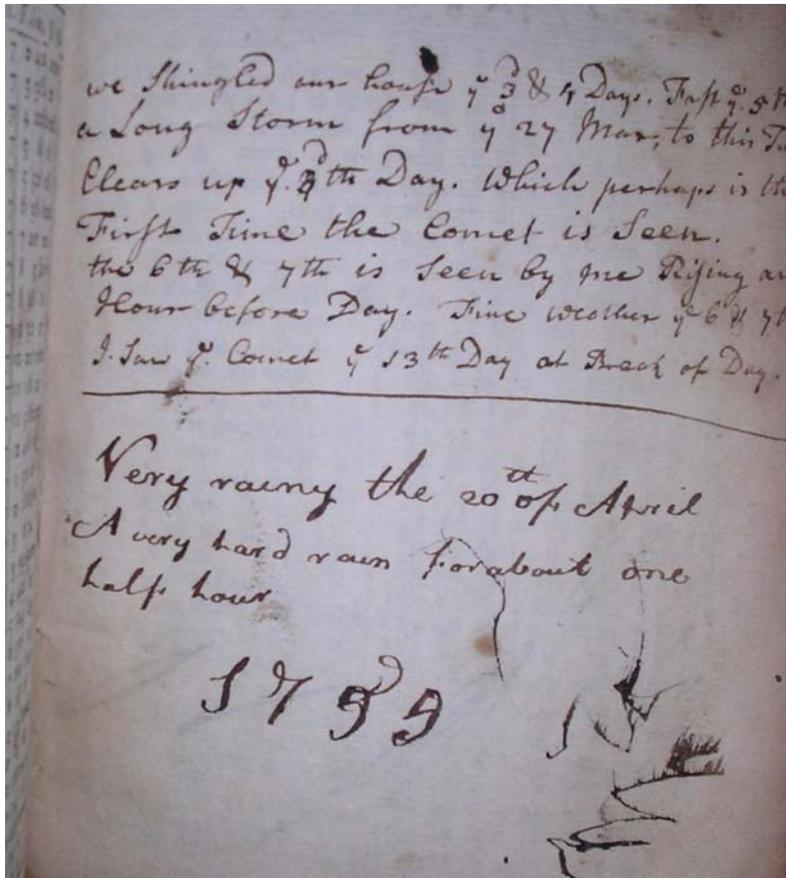
Samuel Pierce inherited the Pierce family home and approximately seventy acres of land from his father John Pierce in 1744. Aged forty-two, Samuel had been married to Abigail Moseley, also of Dorchester, for twelve years, and the couple had four young children; two more daughters were born in the late 1740s.<sup>1</sup> The family had been living in the Pierce house with Samuel's parents, John and Abigail, and the widowed Abigail continued to live with them until her own death in 1747.

Over the next twenty-five years Samuel Pierce and his son, also named Samuel, made various additions and improvements to the family home and farm. A later family historian, George Francis Pierce, described Samuel as a man of comfortable circumstances and good taste, referring not only to his property holdings but to such things as a collection of family china,<sup>2</sup> and the alterations to the house reflected these attributes as the dwelling was enlarged and more attention paid to elegant detail. At some point between c. 1712 and 1765 either John or Samuel Pierce added a lean-to



Mark Harland Johnson.

Pierce House with the East Addition built by Colonel Samuel Pierce for his parents, 1765. Conjectural drawing.



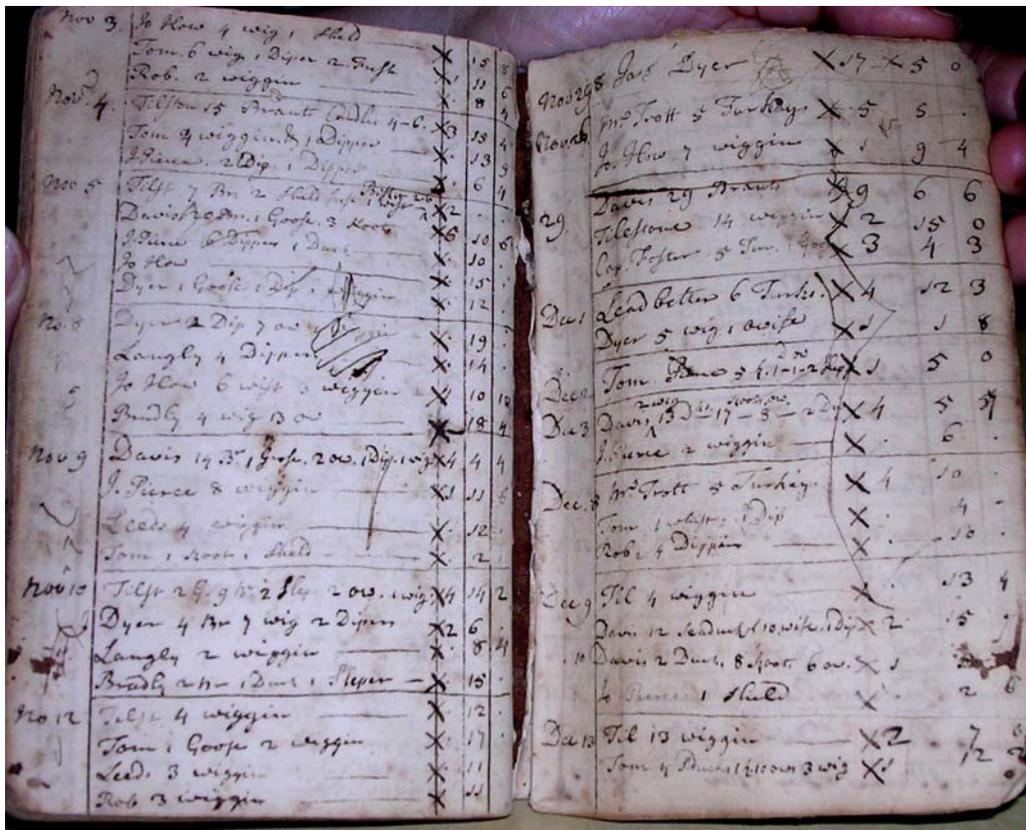
Notes in Samuel Pierce's Almanac, 1759.

family's possession, and it offers a visual image of an eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century farm and the variety and complexity of the tasks that farming involved.<sup>5</sup> Primarily a farmer, Samuel was also a sportsman like his father, hunting and selling brants, geese, quail, and other game birds to a steady clientele.<sup>6</sup>

Samuel Pierce's status in the community is reflected in the public offices which he held and in the value and productivity of his property. In the 1740s he served as a town constable, collecting taxes due the British treasury, and during the 1750s he served as a selectman, a position generally held by the more prosperous and respected men in the community.<sup>7</sup> A 1768 Dorchester tax assessment, taken shortly before Pierce died, provides another indication of Pierce's relative status within the community.<sup>8</sup> Recording both polls, or voters, and the types and the values of property held by Dorchester residents, it offers information on Samuel Pierce and his sons and also about the town as a whole. Like his father, Samuel Pierce continued the family pattern of tending both crops and livestock, including a horse, a herd of several cows, and a pair of oxen. On three acres of tillage the tax assessors estimated he could harvest fifty bushels of grain and corn, an amount well over the thirty bushels necessary to support an average family.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Pierce had ample pastureland, meadow, and salt marsh to support his livestock, and he also had an orchard. Among those who owned property in Dorchester, Samuel Pierce emerges as a man of standing. The total valuation of the Pierce House, the two-thirds apportioned to Samuel, Sr. and the one-third apportioned to Samuel, Jr., was one of the highest for

across the back of the house, perhaps to create additional cooking space as room usage became more specialized.<sup>3</sup> In 1765 Samuel, Jr. constructed a two-story addition onto the eastern end of the house, incorporating newly fashionable Georgian decorative elements. Samuel, Sr. and Abigail occupied these rooms, a lower room with a separate cooking fireplace and an upper bedroom chamber, while Samuel, Jr. and his new wife Elizabeth Howe Pierce lived in the older center portion of the house.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Pierce, Sr. also added to the row of outbuildings that stretched eastward from the house itself. This collection of buildings—woodshed, gate, corn barn, pigpen, shop and tool house, carriage house, cowyard, and barn—was depicted in an 1877 painting now in the Pierce-Shaughnessey

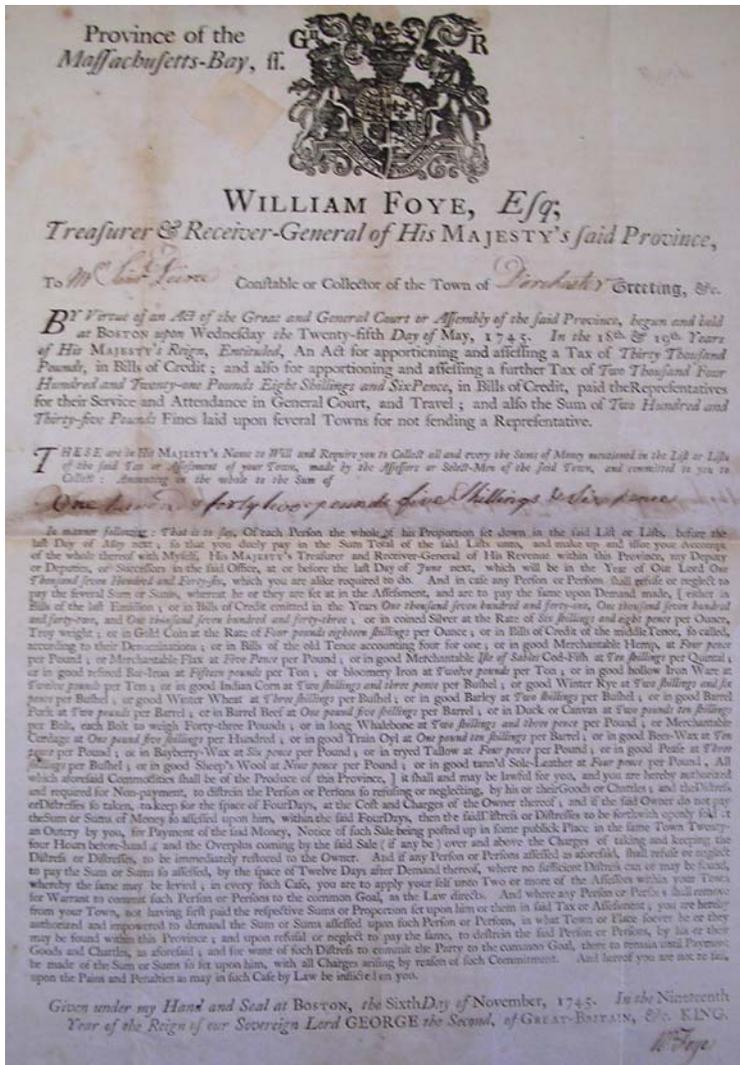


Samuel Pierce Accounts of Wild Fowl, shot and sold, 1745.

any single dwelling in the town, and the value of Pierce's other real estate put him in roughly the top ten percent of property holders. In addition, Pierce was a significant creditor. Both the tax valuation and the inventory of his estate, taken only a few months later, list "money at interest," or notes and bonds due to

him, and only a small number of others on the tax record had accounts of comparable value. Even his yoke of oxen signified Pierce's status in the community. About half the farmers had a dairy cow or two, but less than fifteen percent listed oxen, which were necessary for plowing and harvesting; the others would have had to borrow or hire a team to work their land.<sup>10</sup> In addition, in contrast to Pierce, there was in Dorchester a significant group that held no housing or real estate, since the abundant land available in the seventeenth century and in the earlier eighteenth century had been circumscribed by continued land division, private transactions and bequests, and population growth. Some in this group were sons waiting for their inheritance, but others may have worked as agricultural laborers, or perhaps rented land or a shop, without prospects of land ownership in Dorchester. Although the Pierce family enjoyed secure status and the potential to provide for the next generation, others faced the likelihood of moving from the town.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike his father and grandfather, Samuel added very little land to his estate, and he probably sold his inherited lands in Stoughton.<sup>12</sup> Because he chose to pass his real property only to his two surviving sons, Samuel and Edward, however, he was able to provide adequately for each of them. Edward, a housewright, moved into his own house in 1764, following his marriage to Hannah Tolman some four months earlier.<sup>13</sup> With the assistance of his brother Samuel, he had built a home nearby, on land owned by his father; his house was south of the older dwelling, also along the Lower Road, and his proximity fostered continued ties to his parents and to his brother. Title to this land passed to Edward at his father's death, when he received five acres of



Massachusetts Bay Province, Appointment of Samuel Pierce as Tax Collector, 1745.

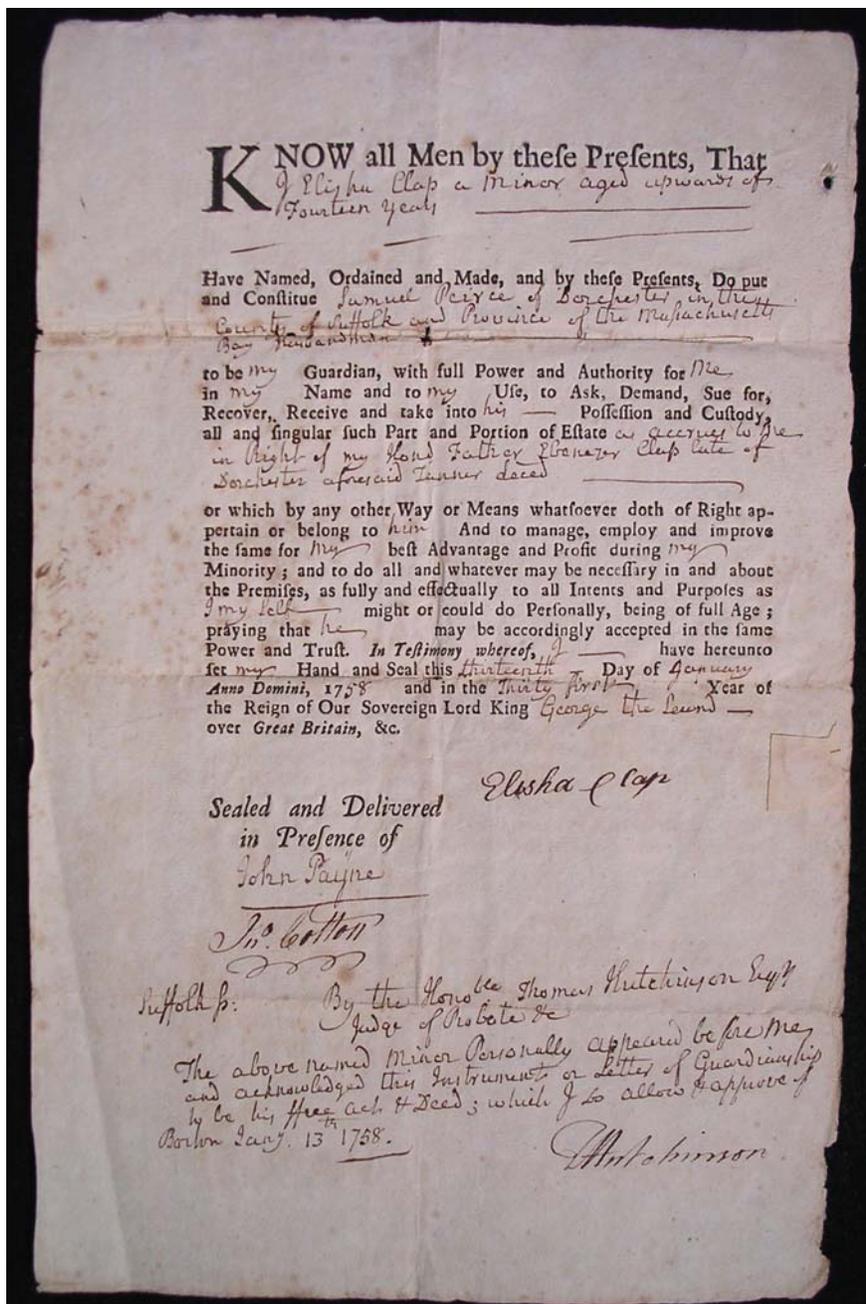
the older homelot. One parcel, of two acres, ran from "Edward's House by the Great Trees;" he also received another three-acre section of the houselot and three other scattered holdings. The bequest to Samuel, Jr. included the Pierce House and out-buildings, the remaining fifteen acres of the homelot, fourteen acres of pasture and meadow, and his share of his father's salt marsh and woodland.<sup>14</sup>

Samuel Pierce followed his father's example in the provisions he made in his will for his wife and daughters. His widow Abigail was to have the use of a third of the house until her death; her portion was the eastern addition that Samuel, Jr. had recently completed, in which she and her husband had been living. She was allowed to keep a cow and a pig, and Edward and Samuel were to provide her firewood. One daughter, Abigail, had married, and she was to receive a sum of money as her share of the estate. The three unmarried daughters were to receive equal sums, half at Samuel's death and the rest when Abigail died; if they married before that, they would receive their entire share immediately. While unmarried,

| Names    | 1768        | 1769 | 1770 | 1771 | 1772 | 1773 | 1774 | 1775 | 1776 | 1777 | 1778 | 1779 | 1780 | 1781 | 1782 | 1783 | 1784 | 1785 | 1786 | 1787 | 1788 | 1789 | 1790 |
|----------|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Jonathan | Dorchester  | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Samuel   | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| John     | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Abigail  | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Samuel   | Pierce Junr | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Edward   | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Benjamin | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Daniel   | and         | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Joseph   | Dorchester  | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| John     | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| John     | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Samuel   | Pierce      | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |

Pierce Families listed on Dorchester 1768 tax list. Courtesy Massachusetts State Archives.

the three girls were to live in the west portion of the house, the addition built by Thomas Pierce, and they had the privilege of fetching water from the well and planting a garden. Abigail and her daughters were to share the household goods from Samuel's estate; the male heirs shared the "outdoor moveables," or tools and agricultural implements, the livestock, the guns, books, and his canoe, since presumably their wives would bring household items as part of their own dowries.<sup>15</sup> Samuel, Jr. and his family, then, were to inhabit only the central portion of the Pierce House, the oldest section, until he came into his complete inheritance following his mother's death and his sisters' marriages. Once again the household included multiple and over-lapping generations—Abigail, Samuel and his wife Elizabeth, their son Samuel III, and Samuel's three adult sisters.



Samuel Pierce became the guardian for orphaned Elisha Clapp in 1758.

## Endnotes Generation Four

- 1 Abigail Pierce gave birth to eleven children, but only six survived early childhood. As was common, she became pregnant approximately every two years. 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, Boston, MA.
- 2 Edward Zimmer and Andrea Greenstein, “Pierce Family Genealogy,” Generation 4, pp. 2-3, unpublished paper, undated, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA.
- 3 See Pierce House HPR, Section V – Architectural Analysis – Overview of Alterations and Framing. Construction dates for the lean-to are unknown; it may have been built in at least two phases.
- 4 See Pierce House HPR, Section V – Architectural Analysis – Overview of Alterations; Samuel Pierce, Jr., Journal, March 19 and 20, May 18, and Oct. 23, 1765, Pierce Family Papers, Historic New England/SPNEA. See also Generation Five.
- 5 David Starbuck, ed., *Seventeenth-Century Historical Archeology in Cambridge, Medford, and Dorchester*, Boston University, 1980, pp. 96, 377, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA. For more detail on farming, see Generation Five, especially the section on “The Agricultural Community.”
- 6 Samuel Pierce, Account Books, 1741-1763, Pierce Family Papers.
- 7 William Foye to Samuel Pierce, Appointment as Constable or Collector for the Town of Dorchester, May 2, 1746, Pierce Family Papers. Massachusetts State Archives, Vol. 23, pp. 346, 467; vol. 24, pp. 113, 165-167, and 169; vol. 33, p. 24. The records from the Massachusetts State Archives refer to Pierce as a selectman in 1757 and 1759. A more extensive search of town records might reveal additional terms as a selectman and/or other public positions and responsibilities.
- 8 Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1768, Massachusetts State Archives, vol. 132, pp. 1-18, Town Valuations. The findings from the Tax List are from preliminary study; further analysis of the various categories may refine the conclusions.
- 9 Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1768; Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, “Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 41 (July, 1984), 338-354.
- 10 If one compares the Dorchester tax list to Bettye Pruitt’s study of all Massachusetts towns in 1771, she found a greater percentage of farms with dairy cows and with oxen. Certainly Pierce’s son, Colonel Samuel Pierce, regularly hired out his team of oxen, along with his plow; see Generation Five.
- 11 Uneven gender ratios indicate that this out-migration was underway. A census taken in 1765 counted 404 females over the age of sixteen, and only 343 males; numbers of males and females under the age of sixteen were almost even. Justin Winsor, ed., *The Memorial History of Boston* (Boston, 1881), Vol. II, p. 362.
- 12 See Pierce House HPR, Appendix B – Summary of Pierce Lands – Section D, Samuel Pierce, Jr. Pierce bought two acres of pasture before inheriting the family land. He purchased two acres of salt marsh in 1762 and roughly another acre of pasture in 1767. Property records for the Stoughton lands have not been traced, but the land does not appear in the inventory of Pierce’s estate. John Tolman to Samuel Peirce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, May 4, 1743, Pierce Family Papers; Israel Leadbetter to Samuel Pierce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, March 16, 1762, Pierce Family Papers; and Jonas Tolman to Samuel Pierce, Unrecorded Warranty Deed, Aug. 3, 1767, Pierce Family Papers.
- 13 Samuel Pierce, Jr., Journal, Feb. 2, 1764, Pierce Family Papers. Journal entries for 1763 and early 1764 describe Samuel’s help in the various stages of building Edward’s house. Edward was a well-known and active

builder who worked in Dorchester and Quincy, where he built two iterations of the Josiah Quincy house. Additional information on Edward is included in Generation Five.

14 Samuel Pierce, Will, Suffolk County Probate, Docket No. 14318, 1768.

15 Samuel Pierce, Will.