

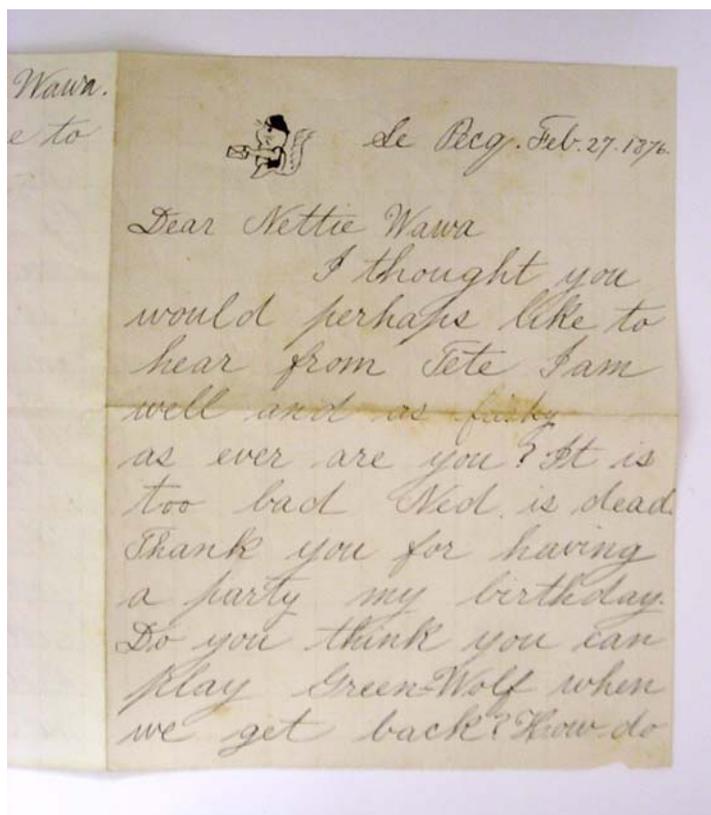
Generation Eight
Antoinette Pierce and George Frederick Pierce

8. Antoinette Louise (12/16/1863-10/26/1937) m. 1883 George Frederick Pierce (9/24/1858-1934)

- 9. baby unnamed (1886-1886)
- 9. Allen Tucker (1887-1887)
- 9. **Roger Grenway (7/20/1888-1968)** m. 2/26/1919 Marjorie Hazel Curtis (1895-1941?)
- 9. Harold Winslow (1892-1969) m. Edith E. (1892-?)
- 9. Frederick William (1895-1951)
- 9. Winthrop Leeds (1897-19?) m. 4/4/1923 Mildred Marie McManus
- 9. Robert (1900-1914)

Antoinette Pierce holds a unique position in the Pierce family history; she was both the only daughter to inherit the Pierce House and the only heir not to live there as an adult. Until the age of five or six Antoinette lived with her parents, William Augustus and Antoinette Read Pierce, and her grandparents Lewis and Sarah in the Pierce House, but by 1870 William Augustus and Antoinette and their daughter were renting a house nearby on Minot Street. The family moved in 1872 to the corner of Adams Street and Ashmont Avenue, still not far from the family home-

stead, and Antoinette's later recollections and her affection for the "Old House" suggest that she spent considerable time there. Antoinette moved back to the Pierce House with her parents after Lewis's lands were broken up in 1876, when she was thirteen. Antoinette attended Dorchester High School, where she was the valedictorian for her class in 1881, and



Note from George Frederick Pierce to Antoinette Louise Pierce, 1876. Antoinette was 12 years old.



Antoinette Louise Pierce at six months, 1863.

two years later she married her distant cousin, George Frederick Pierce, who was descended from Robert and Ann Pierce through the Thomas line. Antoinette, or “Nettie,” and George Frederick, or “Fred,” had known each other since they were children. Both were only children, and they grew up together as neighbors and playmates, affectionately referring to each other as Tete Wawa (Fred) and Nettie Wawa in childhood letters.¹



After their marriage the young couple lived briefly with Fred’s widowed father, Frederick Leeds Pierce, in his home at 827 Adams Street, not far from Antoinette’s family, but by 1886 they had built their own home next door, on Frederick Leeds’ property.² Ironically, both houses were across the street from the location of the original Robert Pierce house, but by the late nineteenth century family legend maintained that the Oak Street house had been the first family homestead.³

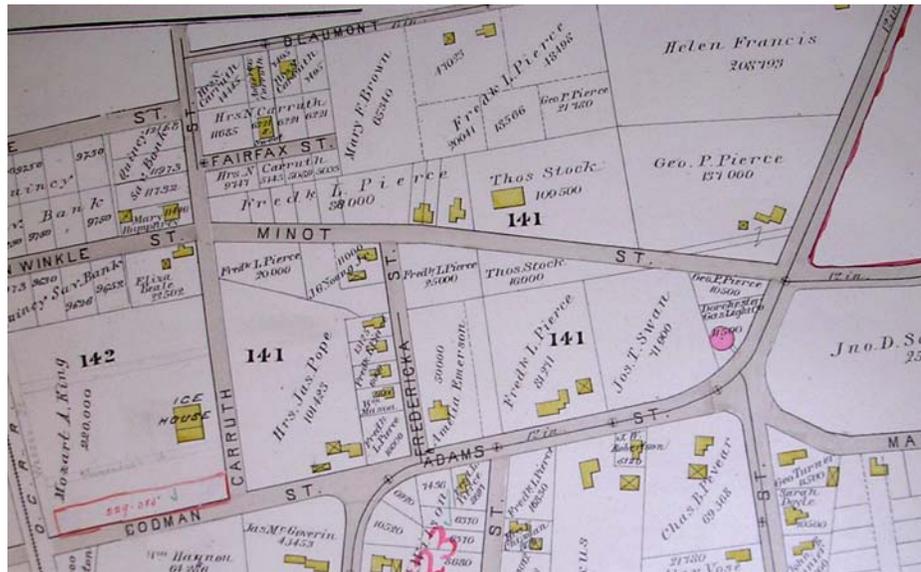
Antoinette Louise Pierce and George Frederick Pierce built this house on land belonging to Frederick Leeds Pierce soon after their marriage in 1883.

Like Antoinette’s grandfather, father, and uncles, George Frederick Pierce was a mason who worked in partnership with his own father, Frederick Leeds Pierce. Again, like Lewis and his sons, the two developed property and built and sold houses in Neponset. Their holdings and their activity, however, were much more extensive than those of Antoinette’s branch of the family. Lewis and his sons had developed portions of land they already owned, and Lewis Francis later subdivided the family property and sold the plots off to others; William worked as a mason on others’ buildings and did not accumulate or develop additional property himself. In contrast, Frederick Leeds and George Frederick Pierce were entrepreneurs as well as craftsmen, juggling property acquisitions and sales, mortgages, development, and construction, and George Frederick held a related political position as a member of Boston’s Board of Assessors.⁴ Although Boston city directories continued to identify them as masons, both men were more generally viewed not as artisans or craftsmen, but as successful examples of American free enterprise, “self-made men.”⁵ Over the years Frederick Leeds Pierce, and then Frederick Leeds in partnership with George Frederick Pierce, and finally George Frederick Pierce as his father’s sole heir were the owners and developers of numerous properties, most in the Neponset area. Both men were also involved in other business ventures, some related to their role as developers; Frederick Leeds Pierce, for example, invested in the Freeman Water Meter Company, as well as mining and oil companies.⁶

In their positions as successful businessmen, both Frederick Leeds Pierce and George Frederick Pierce belonged to civic and community organizations that provided a milieu for social and business connections. Frederick Leeds and George Frederick were founding members of the neighborhood Codman Club, a men’s social club that built its clubhouse on land along Adams

Street purchased from Frederick Leeds Pierce in 1892. The club had bowling alleys and pool and billiard tables, as well as rooms for cigar smoking and for social events with wives and guests, and there were plans for tennis courts and a croquet ground. Frederick Leeds Pierce served as a director of the club, and other family members, including George Francis Pierce and William Augustus Pierce, were also members.⁷ Frederick Leeds Pierce and George Francis Pierce were also members of both the Masons and the Odd Fellows, fraternal and benevolent organizations in which members forged social, business, and political connections. Proclaiming non-sectarian but vaguely Christian religious and ethical standards, both the Masons and the Odd Fellows supported various charitable endeavors, and their rituals, ceremonies, and symbols were intended to elevate moral character and strengthen bonds of masculine identity.⁸

Frederick Leeds Pierce had grown up in Neponset, in his father Thomas's old family home along Adams Street, near Minot, and he lived on Chickatawbut Street when he bought the land that was to be the site of his and then his son's home. The property, which he bought in 1869 from the heirs of Captain Micah Humphreys, was along the "jogging" part of Adams Street, now Gallivan Boulevard; it adjoined the old Thomas



Hopkins Atlas of Dorchester, 1884, showing Frederick Leeds Pierce's properties.

Pierce family homestead, which Frederick Leeds' brother, George P. Pierce, would inherit when Thomas died in 1875. Frederick Leeds Pierce also inherited land from his father, including a large lot along what was to become Beaumont Street. Over time Pierce purchased much of the property adjacent to his house on Adams Street; the land was subdivided into house lots along both sides of the newly created Fredericka Street, along both sides of Minot Street, and up Carruth Street toward Ashmont. Frederick Leeds had also purchased property from the old Newall estate near Neponset Avenue, which was then subdivided and developed, and he built and sold several houses on lots along Marsh Street, near Davenport Creek. When Frederick Leeds Pierce died in 1910, his son, and sole heir, inherited the family masonry firm, F. L. Pierce and Sons, and all of his father's property, and he continued to be active in development and in the real estate market.⁹ By 1920 the family had sold off a number of houses and house lots, built a number of houses that may have been rental properties, and held some remaining open lots along Minot and Fredericka, in addition to their own extensive homelot along Adams Street.¹⁰ In 1932, however, Fred Pierce and his family moved to Milton, and before or shortly after this move he began selling his Dorchester properties; by 1933 virtually all of the holdings in Neponset had passed from the family's possession.¹¹

After Frederick Leeds Pierce's death in 1910, George Frederick and Antoinette moved next door into his father's large white house with their five sons, Roger, aged twenty-two; Harold, eighteen; Frederick, fifteen; Winthrop, thirteen; and Robert, ten; Robert would die four years later. Fred and Antoinette lived in this house until they moved from Dorchester to Milton in 1932, and by the early 1930s they had also bought a cottage in East Harwich, on Cape Cod. Antoinette had inherited the



Frederick Leeds and Ann F. Pierce (later Antoinette Louise and George Frederick Pierce) House on Adams Street.

Pierce House when her father William Augustus died in 1905, but she never returned there to live. Instead, Antoinette rented the Pierce House to a series of tenants over the next twenty-five years. Her first tenant was a cousin, Edmond Pierce, and during the 1920s she rented the house to several families, all named Kendall and probably related. Elmer H. Kendall, a laborer and city watchman, occupied the house for seven years, and for at least three of those years he and his family shared the house with Waldo H. Kendall, a laborer and cemetery caretaker, and his family; as many as twelve people lived in the house in 1920. During three other years Elmer E. Kendall, a painter, was Antoinette's tenant.¹² In 1929, Antoinette's oldest son, Roger Pierce, and his family moved into the house, and for a while he also paid his mother rent; however, when Frederick and Antoinette mortgaged the property to fund a series of repairs and renovations, Roger assumed the mortgage payments.¹³

During the years that Fred Pierce worked as mason and real estate developer, Antoinette's interests and activities centered on home, family, community involvement, fashion, and self-improvement. Although the Pierces continued to employ household help and the homemaker's work load was reduced by new technologies such as vacuum cleaners and the wide commercial availability of food and clothing, women re-

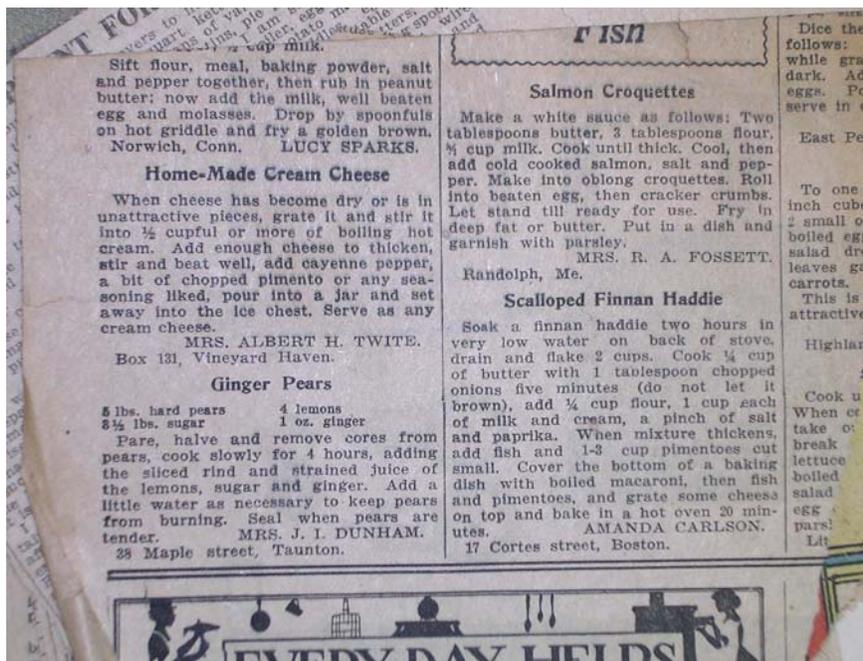


Photograph of Antoinette Louise Pierce, George Frederick Pierce, and their five sons, c. 1911.

mained responsible for over-all household management and for child-rearing. Antoinette was a typical turn-of-the-century middle-class woman who protected her family's health, comfort, and well-being. She took her responsibilities as housekeeper, mother, and wife seriously, and she accumulated a variety of helpful health and household "hints"—including how to treat a cold and sore throat, to make mayonnaise, to cure headaches, and to banish flies from the house. Antoinette took her sons to their doctor's appointments, attended school functions, kept track of family birthdays, and arranged the celebrations.¹⁴ Antoinette took her own health seriously as well; over the winter of 1908-1909 she undertook a health and weight loss program designed specifically for women, Susanna Cocrofts's Physical Culture Extension Society, a unified program of exercise, diet, and "poise," or posture, that Antoinette apparently followed faithfully and successfully.¹⁵

In addition to her home and family concerns Antoinette Pierce, like many other middle-class women, belonged to a number of social, cultural, and civic women's clubs. As a member and officer of the Ladies' Alliance at her church, the Third Religious Society in Dorchester, Antoinette worked on church fairs,

learned church and religious history, and participated in educational programs.¹⁶ Antoinette also joined groups that knitted for the Red Cross during World War I; like so many other women, she put traditional feminine skills to use for the public good. The women knitted socks, caps, and bandages for wounded soldiers and assembled "Comfort Bags" of toiletries and stationary items to be sent to American soldiers and sailors.¹⁷ Antoinette's strongest interest and the ongoing focus of her civic role was local and family history. Like her cousin George Francis Pierce, she was particularly proud of her colonial and Revolutionary heritage, and she was an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1930 Antoinette served on the committee to plan Dorchester's Tercentenary, a celebration of the Yankee tradition and culture of which Antoinette felt her family was such a central part.



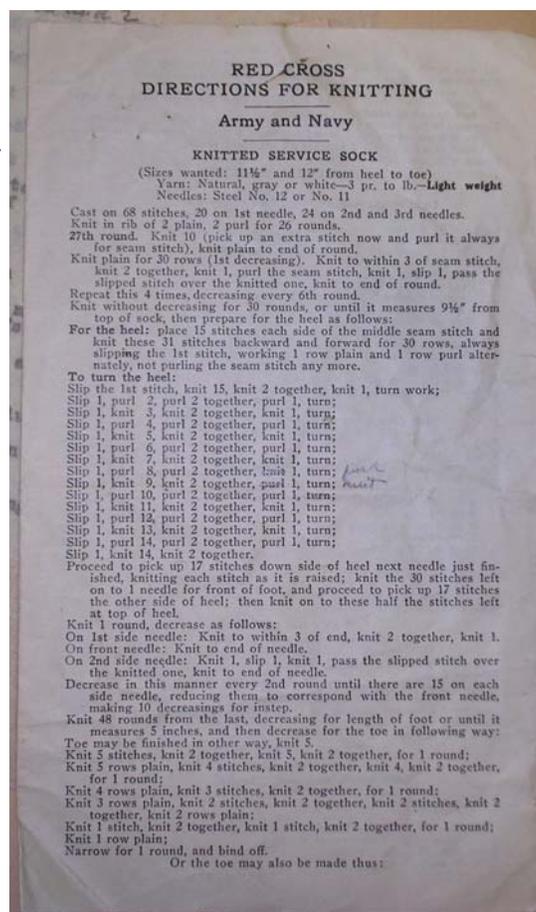
Recipes from Antoinette Louise Pierce's scrapbook.

Although Antoinette chose not to live in the Pierce House as an adult, she took great pride in its long history and in her family heritage and wanted to preserve and pass along both the house and the family memories it held. She and George Frederick chose Grenway as their son Roger's middle name, an indication of their tie to family tradition, and Antoinette wrote an

eighty-four stanza poem, “The Rhyme of the Old Pierce Tree,” that traced each Pierce generation. The poem emphasizes the importance of family connection and continuity and captures intimate details of the Pierces’ history—a little girl licking the cookie bowl, the ticking of Colonel Samuel’s clock, the foxglove and larkspur growing in Aunt Melissa’s garden. Antoinette, who was born in 1863, even remembered the “old barn and the hay-mow/ Where she jumped from the beams,/ Walked rickety-fences,/ and climbed on the teams.”¹⁸ These recollections reinforce the transitional nature of the Pierces’ experience in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the overlap of traditional agricultural life with modern property development and new careers, and the nostalgia for rural life that continued even after the balance had permanently shifted.

In addition to preserving family memories, Antoinette wanted to preserve the family homestead and to share its history with others. In 1929, as regent of the Old Blake House Chapter of the D.A.R., Antoinette led a tour of the Pierce House, with chapter members attired in colonial dress. The D.A.R. chapter historian noted that, although the house had been updated to meet more current heating and plumbing standards, it “still retained much of its old time charm and atmosphere.”¹⁹ Antoinette was well aware of the house’s status as a Dorchester landmark, a tangible reminder of the town’s colonial past in a rapidly changing present. Antoinette also returned to her ancestral home to observe milestones in her own life. In 1933, although they had moved to Milton, Antoinette and George Frederick feted their fiftieth wedding anniversary at the Pierce House, where her son was then living, and the event was a celebration of the house, its history, and the family’s history as well as the couple’s own marriage.²⁰

In her will Antoinette formalized her vision of the Pierce House’s historic as well as family importance. George Frederick Pierce had died in 1934, and Antoinette, like previous generations of Pierces, divided her property among her sons at her own death in 1937. She left her house in Milton and the cottage in East Harwich to her unmarried son, Frederick William, and after



WWI Red Cross directions for knitting socks, from Antoinette Louise Pierce’s scrapbook.

THIRD GOLDEN WEDDING IN SAME FAMILY AND SAME HOUSE

Henry H. Pierce, Who Will Attend Celebration Tomorrow of Mr And Mrs George F. Pierce of Milton in Dorchester Homestead, 293 Years Old, Was Present at the Other Two



MR AND MRS GEORGE FREDERICK PIERCE AND THE HOME OF THREE GOLDEN WEDDINGS

making specific bequests of prized furniture to each son, she distributed her remaining personal estate, which included significant savings, among them.²¹ However, Antoinette was determined to save the Old House as family property, specifying that Roger and his family remain in the house. To that end she bequeathed to Roger “the land and buildings located at 24 Oakton Avenue. . . , a property which has been owned and occupied by members of my family for about eight generations past, together with all articles of furniture, ornamentation, and personal property,” items which included such treasured possessions as John Pierce’s shaving mirror and the oak chest and piece of “Old Bread” said to have come from England on the “Mary and John.”²² Antoinette’s poem had conveyed her pleasure in the continuity of generations in the house, with her images of children asleep in the old bedroom, the family antiques carefully placed where she recalled them from her childhood, and the family stories passed to a new generation. Now her will formally passed the weight of family responsibility to Roger and, looking into the future, to his children. If any of them proved unwilling or unable to stay in the house, Antoinette desired that it be given “to some museum or historical society which will keep it up...” and also display the family’s prized antiques and heirlooms.²³ Having witnessed threats to other historic houses, such as Dorchester’s Blake House, and the demolition of other houses in her neighborhood, including Edward Pierce’s house and Lewis Francis’s and George Francis’s former family home at 31 Oakton Avenue, which was replaced by a school in 1926, Antoinette clearly sought to avoid a similar fate for her beloved Pierce House.²⁴

*The Rhyme of the
Old Pierre Tree*



He found a man,
Whose whole business had been,
To restore old houses,
And put them in trim.

He papered and painted,
And made the house new,
Worked early and late,
Knew just what to do.

While he blackened hinges,
The boys painted each floor,
Did lots of odd jobs,
And made fun galore.

With the help of a carpenter,
The work was complete
And a happier household
T’would be hard to meet.

From our Ancestors we’ve had
Gifts of courage, noble thoughts
Patience, truth and piety,
Treasures that cannot be bought.

To our descendants may we pass,
All this wealth that has been ours,
Love of honor, Christian faith,
Ever blooming like God’s flowers.

Antoinette Louise Pierce

Endnotes Generation Eight

1 United States Census (1870) Schedule 1 (Population); Dorchester City Directory, 1868; Boston City Directories, 1869-1877; Antoinette Pierce, Valedictory Speech; Fred Pierce to Nettie Pierce, Dec. 16, 1874 and Feb. 27, 1876; and Nettie Pierce to G. F. Pierce, Dec. 13, 1877, Pierce Family Papers, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA, Boston, MA.

2 Frederick and George followed the typical colonial pattern of providing land for a son on the father's property before the father's death. See Edward Pierce, for example, Generation Six.

3 It is somewhat curious that knowledge of the Robert Pierce house was "lost," since references to the location of his earlier Pine Neck house persisted into the nineteenth century. For example, George Francis Pierce, Antoinette's cousin, wrote that the well for that house "is now covered over near the lower part of Walnut street in Port Norfolk." George Francis Pierce, Copybook, 1875, Pierce Family Papers. In 1884 Frederick Leeds Pierce owned property across from his house on Adams Street, along Malvern Street, in the general location of the Robert Pierce house.

4 Boston City records should be searched for the dates of Pierce's term or terms on the Board of Assessors.

5 Obituary notice, *The Dorchester Beacon*, no date, in Antoinette Pierce Scrapbook, Pierce Family Papers.

6 See stock certificates held by Frederick Leeds Pierce in the Freeman Water Meter Company, 1889-1891, and the National Insulator Company, 1885-1886, for example, and by George Frederick Pierce in the War Eagle Mining Company, 1902, and the Norfolk Oil Company, 1904, Pierce Family Papers.

7 Codman Club, Minutes, June 6 and 24 and August 4, 1892 and January 11 and 14, 1893, Pierce Family Papers. Pierce also held a mortgage on the property, which financed construction of the clubhouse. The Codman Club was "exclusive" in that new members had to be proposed by a member and endorsed by two more members, and any two "black balls" during the secret vote of the Executive Committee was cause to deny membership.

8 Newspaper clippings, obituaries for Frederick Leeds Pierce and George Frederick Pierce, Antoinette Pierce Scrapbooks, Pierce Family Papers. On the Masons, see Gretchen Arndt "Freemasons," <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Masons.html>. See also, Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago, 1990) and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern* (New York, 1993). Fred Pierce was a Thirty-Second Degree Mason, also called a Shriner.

9 Frederick Leeds Pierce, Will, Suffolk County Probate, Docket 150338, 1910. Pierce left all his property to his son, with the provision of a trust for his grandsons. The two double houses on Minot Street were to be held in trust, with the rental income accumulating; as each grandson reached the age of twenty-four, he was to receive \$500, and he was to receive an additional \$1,500 at the age of thirty. When each grandson had received his share, the property or the proceeds of its sale would revert to Frederick Pierce and his heirs.

10 Further research is needed about Frederick Leeds and George Frederick Pierce's landholdings and property development and any extant buildings. Frederick and Antoinette's house at 835 Adams Street (now 452 Gallivan Boulevard) is still standing. Research files at Historic New England/SPNEA contain copies of grantor and grantee lists from the Norfolk and Suffolk County Registries of Deeds, which provide a good starting point, as do the maps in the Boston Atlases of 1874, 1884, 1894, 1918, and 1933. The Pierce Family Papers also contain numerous deeds and mortgage documents for Frederick Leeds Pierce and George Frederick Pierce.

11 Compare maps of Neponset in the Boston Atlases for 1918 and 1933 to see the changes in ownership of the Pierce properties. Specific sales could be traced through the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds. The effect of the Depression on Pierce's economic status should also be studied. The network of purchases, mortgages, and development that had previously proved successful probably faltered in the Depression years of the early 1930s, and resulting debt could have forced Pierce to sell his holdings. The inventories of his estate and that of Antoinette at

her death indicate that they had sold a number of properties, as Antoinette had bank savings of over \$23,000. In contrast to their extensive real estate holdings and transactions from the 1880s through 1920, the family in 1934 held mortgages on only two properties, one along Minot Street and one on Marsh Street.

12 Edward Zimmer and Andrea Greenstein, "Pierce Family Genealogy," Generation 9, p. 2, unpublished paper, undated, Library and Archives, Historic New England/SPNEA; Boston City Directories, 1919-1930; and United States Census (1920), Schedule 1 (Population.) The three Kendalls—Elmer H., Elmer E., and Waldo—were probably related, but the relationships are unknown at this time. Elmer H. and Waldo, who are listed in the Pierce House in the 1920 Census, were not brothers, but could have been cousins or even father and son. Waldo, who was younger, named one of his sons Elmer H. and a daughter Henrietta, which was the name of Elmer H.'s wife. In 1920 the two families, twelve people, lived in the house—Elmer H., his wife Henrietta, and their three children, and Waldo, his wife Margaret, and their five children. Boston City Directories for 1923 and 1924 also list both Elmer H. and Waldo as residents of 24 Oak Avenue, and Elmer H. Kendall is also listed for 1919, 1921, 1925, and 1926. Elmer E. Kendall is listed as the resident in 1922, 1927, and 1928.

13 Roger Pierce, Account Book, 1929-1934, Pierce Family Papers. See Generations Nine and Ten for more information on Roger Pierce and the reasons for his move into the Pierce House.

14 Antoinette Pierce Scrapbooks and Antoinette Pierce Almanac for 1924-1925, Pierce Family Papers.

15 Crocroft sold the subscribers to her Physical Culture Extension Society a series of lessons which consisted of numerous illustrated exercises, diet instruction, and supplemental health booklets on such topics as the Nervous System, Foods, and Vital Organs. Subscribers sent Crocroft information about their weight, measurements, and any particular health problems. Crocroft sent individual replies, answering questions about the exercises, giving health, diet, and beauty tips, and providing encouragement and support. "Give me good, hearty, enthusiastic work, won't you?" she exhorted Antoinette when she began the program in November of 1908. Several weeks later she wrote that she was "delighted to note the reduction of five pounds as it shows that the exercises are beginning to take hold of you just as they should. The fact that your husband can already notice a change in your appearance is most encouraging and should be an incentive for you to do your best." By late January Antoinette reported that she had lost twenty-eight and a half pounds, but handwritten notes on her exercise sheets suggest that she needed to repeat the program over the winter of 1916-1917. Crocroft suggested that her program was also suitable for "Club work," as her belief that thought, mind, and character were closely related to a healthy body might be an appropriate topic for the many early twentieth-century women's clubs that devoted themselves to education and self-improvement. Antoinette collected the exercises and her letters from Crocroft in a scrapbook, and the exchange contains revealing material on marketing and women in business as well as women's health and their self-images of weight and beauty. Much of Crocroft's program sounds familiar—regular exercise, a diet of lean meat, fruits and vegetables, several glasses of water daily, fresh air, and good posture. See Susanna Crocroft to Mrs. A. L. Pierce, November 14 and 30, December 16 and 31, 1908, and January 16 and 27, 1909, with Exercises, Physical Culture Extension Society, Antoinette Pierce Scrapbook, Pierce Family Papers.

16 Third Religious Society in Dorchester, "One Hundredth Anniversary" (1913); American Unitarian Association, "100th Anniversary Program" (May 1925); Antoinette Pierce, Talk on History of Cape Cod, for Ladies Alliance, Notebook (1933-1934), Pierce Family Papers. Antoinette's parents, William Augustus and Antoinette, shifted their allegiance from the Congregational church to the Unitarian church, and Antoinette and George Frederick followed their lead. See Wedding Invitation for Antoinette Pierce and Frederic Pierce, Oct. 9, 1883, and obituary for William Augustus Pierce, unidentified newspaper clipping, Antoinette Pierce Scrapbook, Pierce Family Papers. Antoinette and Fred's son Roger and his family re-joined the Congregational church, Second Church in Codman Square; it is not known what affiliation, if any, their other sons maintained.

17 Antoinette Pierce Scrapbook, Pierce Family Papers. Antoinette's scrapbook contained the rules and point count for auction bridge, a social and competitive pastime that was extremely popular in the 1920s; she may have belonged to a bridge club.

18 Antoinette Pierce, "Rhyme of the Old Pierce Tree," Pierce Family Papers.

19 Zimmer and Greenstein, "Pierce Family Genealogy," Generation 9, p. 3.

20 Antoinette and George Frederick had been married in the Unitarian Harrison Square Church, not the Pierce House, in 1883, although many nineteenth-century weddings still took place at home. Wedding Invitation for Antoinette Pierce and Frederic Pierce, Oct. 9, 1883, Pierce Family Papers. Newspaper accounts of their golden anniversary noted that it was the third such celebration to be held in the house, following Lewis and Sarah Pierce and George Francis and Melissa, but Lewis Francis and Melissa probably had their party in their own house at 31 Oakton Avenue. (See Generation Seven-A.) Antoinette would have been twenty-two at the time of that anniversary and undoubtedly attended, but the story of the three anniversaries at the Old House fit her associations of family, history, and continuity. "Third Golden Wedding in Same Family and Same House," unidentified newspaper clipping, Antoinette Pierce Scrapbook, Pierce Family Papers.

21 Antoinette Pierce, Will, Suffolk County Probate, Docket 91003, 1937. Neither the Milton house nor the cash savings, which may have represented part of the proceeds from the sale of the family's various Dorchester properties, were in George Frederick Pierce's estate. Fred had died without a will, and Antoinette was the administrator. Presumably the property was already in her name. George Frederick Pierce, Administration, Suffolk County Probate, Docket 83201, 1934.

22 The antiques included items her cousin George Francis Pierce had left Antoinette in his will.

23 Antoinette Pierce, Will.

24 Antoinette's scrapbooks contain clippings about other old houses in the Boston area, and she participated in the successful effort to save the Blake House.