

1982-71

New Hampshire Historical Society
Manuscripts Division

BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Register

Compiled by
Thomas E. Camden
November 1982

Original

New Hampshire Historical Society
Manuscripts Division

BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Biographical Sketch

- 1757 December 25, born in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, the son of Benjamin and Elizabeth (Merrill) Pierce
- 1763 death of father, Benjamin Pierce
- lived and worked with his uncle, Robert Pierce, also of Chelmsford, Massachusetts
- 1775 April 25, enlisted in the 27th Massachusetts Regiment under Captain John Ford
- participated in the maneuvers around Boston and in the Saratoga campaign, and was stationed at Valley Forge and in the Hudson Valley
- 1777 promoted to Sergeant
- 1780 promoted to Lieutenant
- 1784 February 5, mustered out of the Continental Army
- 1785 became an agent for Samson Stoddard of Chelmsford, Massachusetts to explore the land owned by Stoddard in New Hampshire and Vermont
- 1786 purchased a farm in Hillsborough, New Hampshire
- 1786-1807 served as Brigade Major and Inspector for the County of Hillsborough, resigning with the rank of Brigadier General
- 1787 May 24, married Elizabeth Andrews, daughter of Isaac Andrews of Hillsborough, New Hampshire
- 1788 August 13, Elizabeth Andrews Pierce died
- 1789-1792 served as Representative for the town of Hillsborough
- 1790 February 1, married Anna Kendrick, daughter of Benjamin Kendrick of Amherst, New Hampshire
- 1791 served as a member of the state constitutional convention

1803-1809	served as a member of the governor's council
1809-1813	served as sheriff of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire
1814-1818	served again on the governor's council
1818-1827	served again as sheriff of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire
1827	elected Governor of the state of New Hampshire on the "farmer's party" ticket
1828	unsuccessful bid for re-election as Governor of the state of New Hampshire
1829	elected Governor of the state of New Hampshire again on the "farmer's party" ticket
1832	served as Democratic elector
	retired to his farm in Hillsborough, New Hampshire
1839	April 1, died in Hillsborough, New Hampshire

CHILDREN:

by marriage to Elizabeth Andrews:

Elizabeth Pierce (married John McNeil)

by marriage to Anna Kendricks:

Benjamin Kendrick Pierce
Nancy M. Pierce (married Solomon McNeil)
John Sullivan Pierce
Harriet B. Pierce (married Hugh Jameson)
Charles Grandison Pierce
Franklin Pierce
Charlotte Pierce (died in infancy)
Henry Dearborn Pierce

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BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Scope and Content Note

Acquisition records for the Benjamin Pierce Papers are nonexistent. It is thought that these papers were originally combined with the Franklin Pierce Papers and the John McNeil Papers, although documentation for this does not exist. For ease of access, a current accession number has been assigned to the collection.

The collection, consisting largely of personal and official correspondence and legal documents, comprises one document box and one oversize folder and spans the years 1802-1847. The six oversize documents are justice of the peace commissions and appointments as Sheriff of Hillsborough County. These documents are all signed by the Governor, then in office, and date from 1811-1826. All documents are arranged by type of material and then chronologically within those areas.

Benjamin Pierce was born in Chelmsford, Massachusetts on December 25, 1757. After the death of his father in 1763, Pierce went to live with his uncle, Robert Pierce, of the same town. Although he received under the roof of his uncle all the kindness and affection that he might have gotten in his own home, his means for obtaining an early education were extremely limited. Chelmsford, being then almost the fringes of the new settlement, offered very limited opportunities for instructing young people: in fact, there were few men or women in the country towns who were qualified to teach. Three weeks schooling in a year was all the education originally received by Pierce previous to his entering the Army. During this time, he advanced no further than being able to "write and cypher." While an officer in the Army, he met a former school master who instructed him further, particularly in mathematics.¹

Pierce participated in most of the hard-fought battles of the Revolutionary War. His practical knowledge as a soldier and his bravery attracted the attention of the officers and he was rapidly promoted. After the Army was disbanded, he returned to Chelmsford in the spring of 1784, after an absence of nearly nine years. The following year he entered into the employment of Colonel Samson Stoddard, of Chelmsford, a wealthy merchant who had made large investments in land in New Hampshire and Vermont. Among other lands, he owned a tract between the Contoocook and Connecticut rivers, now known as Stoddard in Cheshire County. It was this land that Benjamin Pierce undertook to explore for Colonel Stoddard in an attempt to estimate their capacity as timber and farming lands. After completing his expedition and on his return to Chelmsford, Pierce purchased a piece of land which "appealed to his fancy" and in the spring of 1786, he settled upon his land in the southern part of the town of Hillsborough.²

Even though he was relatively isolated and lived a hard life on his farm, Pierce maintained his intense political convictions, particularly in his

support of Jefferson and Jackson. He quickly became a leader of his party in New Hampshire and attained great prominence in his town as shown by the fact that he was chosen to represent it in the state legislature successively from 1789 to 1801.³

As Governor (1827, 1829), Pierce brought to the position "a fund of practical knowledge, and this, guided by sound judgment, attended with prompt action, and accompanied with a courteous deportment" made him one of the most able "chief magistrates" of the state of New Hampshire.⁴

Benjamin Pierce retired from public office to his farm in Hillsborough, New Hampshire in 1832. He died there on April 1, 1839.

¹The Farmer's Monthly Visitor. Manchester, New Hampshire. Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 1, April 1839.

²The Farmer's Monthly Visitor. Manchester, New Hampshire. Vol. XII, No. 7, pp. 195-196, July 1852.

³Ezra Stearns, ed. Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire. (Lewis Pub. Co: New York), 1908, Vol. II, pp. 558-559.

⁴The Farmer's Monthly Visitor. Manchester, New Hampshire. Vol. XII, No. 7, p. 198, July 1852.

SOURCES CONSULTED:

Malone, Dumas, ed. Dictionary of American Biography. (Charles Scribners Sons: New York), Vol. 14, 1934.

Stearns, Ezra, ed. Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire. (Lewis Pub. Co: New York), Vol. II, 1908.

The Farmer's Monthly Visitor. Manchester, New Hampshire. Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1839.

The Farmer's Monthly Visitor. Manchester, New Hampshire. Vol. XII, No. 7, July 1852.

The New England Historical and Genealogical Register. (Samuel G. Drake: Boston), Vol. VII, No. 1, 1853.

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BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Inventory

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	Correspondence. Benjamin Pierce. Personal and official. 1802-1819
	2	1820-1821
	3	1822-1824
	4	1825-1826
	5	1827
	6	1828-1829
	7	1830-1831
	8	1832-1833
	9	1834-1835
	10	1836
	11	1837
	12	Jan-June 1838
	13	July 1838-1844
	14	Undated
	15	Legal Documents. Benjamin Pierce. Deeds, indenture, claims etc. 1809-1847
	16	Legal Documents. Benjamin Pierce. Will and Estate Proceedings. 1839-1846
	17	Revolutionary Reminiscences delivered at a dinner given by Benjamin Pierce. December 1824
	18	Printed Material. Proceedings and Address of the New Hampshire Republican State Convention 1828
	19	Proclamations by Governor Benjamin Pierce concerning Fast Day and boundary lines. 1828-1829
	20	Photocopies and miscellaneous materials

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Manuscripts Section

SEPARATION RECORD

Acc. Number 1982-71 (0)

The following items have been removed from the collection:

BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Item	Disposition
1. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1811 (signed by John Langdon)	transferred to oversize storage
2. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1816 (signed by William Plumer)	transferred to oversize storage
3. Appointment as Sheriff of Hillsborough County, 1818 (signed by William Plumer)	transferred to oversize storage
4. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1821 (signed by Samuel Bell)	transferred to oversize storage
5. Appointment as Sheriff of Hillsborough County, 1823 (signed by Levi Woodbury)	transferred to oversize storage
6. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1826 (signed by David Morrill)	transferred to oversize storage

All of the above items in fair to poor condition

New Hampshire Historical Society
Manuscripts Division

BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Correspondents

Ballard, John Osgood	Waldron, Richard
Bartlett, Richard	Walker, Lyman B.
Bell, Samuel	Whiting, Fabius
Bowers, J.	Wombaugh, A.K.
Brewster, Amos A.	
Brodhead, John	
Brooks, Isaac	
Burnham, John	
Committee of the Bunker Hill Monument Association	
Davis, Charles S.	
Dearborn, Henry	
Dinsmoor, Samuel	
Eayres, James	
George, Paul	
Gray, F.C.	
Hatch, Reuben	
Hill, Isaac	
Hubbard, Henry	
Jackson, E. Jr.	
Jameson, H.	
Keith, Caleb	
Kent, William	
Livermore, S.K.	
Lord, N.	
McNeil, Ann (granddaughter of Benjamin Pierce)	
McNeil, Benjamin Pierce (grandson of Benjamin Pierce)	
McNeil, Elizabeth (daughter of Benjamin Pierce)	
*McNeil, John (son-in-law of Benjamin Pierce)	
McNeil, Scott (grandson of Benjamin Pierce)	
Nichols, Moses	
Parker, David	
Parker, N.	
Parker, W.B.	
Pierce, Anna K. (wife of Benjamin Pierce)	
Pierce, Benjamin Kendrick (son of Benjamin Pierce)	
Pierce, Franklin (son of Benjamin Pierce)	
Pierce, Harriet (daughter of Benjamin Pierce)	
Pierce, John Sullivan (son of Benjamin Pierce)	
Richardson, William M.	
Sawyer, Joseph	
Stark, Caleb	
Sullivan, G.	
Tudor, W.	
Tuttle, Jacob	
Uphaus, N.G.	

*denotes extensive correspondence

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGING DIVISION - MANUSCRIPTS SECTION

DATA SHEET FOR THE NATIONAL UNION CATALOG OF MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Name of Repository: New Hampshire Historical Society

Reported by: Thomas E. Camden

Date: November 18, 1982

1. Name of collection and inclusive dates of material:

Benjamin Pierce Papers, 1802-1847

2. Principal name around which the collection is formed; i. e., person (full name, birth and death dates), family, business, society, governmental agency, or some other corporate body:

Benjamin Pierce, 1757-1839

Give relationship to the collection; i. e., writer X, addressee X, collector , other (specify)

3. Occupation or type of activity of the principal person, family, or corporate body; significant events and dates in the career or activity; and place of residence or location of activity:

Public Official, Governor of New Hampshire

4. Number of linear shelf feet (if 1 foot or more) ; or number of items 1 box (known or estimated).

5. If the collection contains copies of manuscripts, describe the form (s) of reproduction (handwritten or typewritten transcripts, positive or negative photocopies, positive or negative microfilm with no. of reels) and give the number (or fraction of total) of each kind. Give location of originals, and dates and circumstances under which the copies were made:

6. Full citation of any published or unpublished description, guide, index, calendar, etc.:

Benjamin Pierce Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society
Unpublished guide available in repository

7. Research access restricted , unrestricted X. State nature of restriction and when it will be terminated:

--OVER--

8. Information on literary rights available in repository: Yes X, Do not know .

9. Nature of acquisition (gift, ^{permanent} deposit, etc.), date (s) and source (s) of acquisition and former owner (s):

Nature, date, and source of acquisition unknown

10. If this is, or was, part of another collection, state name and relationship:

It is thought that these papers were originally combined with the Franklin Pierce and John McNeil Papers, although documentation for this does not exist.

11. DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT AND SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION.

This description should cover: types of papers (e. g., correspondence, letters, diaries, documents, etc.); dates, subjects, and types of groups of materials that bulk largest; relationship of the material to specific phases of the career or activity of the principal named in item 2; full names, dates, and biographical identification of other persons and names of corporate bodies significant (by quality and quantity of material) to the collection, showing dates, types, and subject matter; geographical areas covered; specific events, topics, and historical periods with which the materials deal; and particular items of extraordinary interest.

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Description, contd.

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