New Hampshire Historical Society
Manuscripts Division

BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Register

Compiled by
Thomas E. Camden
November 1982
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
1839 retired to his farm in Hillsborough, New Hampshire
April 1, died in Hillsborough, New Hampshire

CHILDREN:
by marriage to Elizabeth Andrews:

Elizabeth Pierce (married John McNeil)

by marriage to Anna Kendrick:

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 McNeill 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.

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.

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.

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SOURCES CONSULTED:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Correspondence. Benjamin Pierce. Personal and official. 1802-1819</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>July 1838-1844</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Undated</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Legal Documents. Benjamin Pierce. Deeds, indenture, claims etc. 1809-1847</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Legal Documents. Benjamin Pierce. Will and Estate Proceedings. 1839-1846</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Revolutionary Reminiscences delivered at a dinner given by Benjamin Pierce. December 1824</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Printed Material. Proceedings and Address of the New Hampshire Republican State Convention 1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Proclamations by Governor Benjamin Pierce concerning Fast Day and boundary lines. 1828-1829</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Photocopies and miscellaneous materials</td>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>Disposition</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1811 (signed by John Langdon)</td>
<td>transferred to oversize storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1816 (signed by William Plumer)</td>
<td>transferred to oversize storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Appointment as Sheriff of Hillsborough County, 1818 (signed by William Plumer)</td>
<td>transferred to oversize storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1821 (signed by Samuel Bell)</td>
<td>transferred to oversize storage</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Appointment as Sheriff of Hillsborough County, 1823 (signed by Levi Woodbury)</td>
<td>transferred to oversize storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Justice of the Peace Commission, 1826 (signed by David Morrill)</td>
<td>transferred to oversize storage</td>
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</table>

All of the above items in fair to poor condition
New Hampshire Historical Society
Manuscripts Division

BENJAMIN PIERCE PAPERS

Correspondents

Ballard, John Osgood
Bartlett, Richard
Bell, Samuel
Bowers, J.
Brewster, Amos A.
Brodhead, John
Brooks, Isaac
Burnham, John
Committee of the Bunker Hill Monument Association
Davis, Charles S.
Dearborn, Henry
Dinsmore, Samuel
Dayres, 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 materials:
   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, address X, collector X, 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 X, unrestricted X. State nature of restriction and when it will be terminated:

   --OVER--

64-38 (rev 2/64)
8. Information on literary rights available in repository: Yes, Do not know.

9. Nature of acquisition (gift, 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, etc.); dates, subjects, and types of groups of materials that bulk largest; relationship of documents, etc.; dates, subjects, and types of groups of materials that bulk largest; relationship of 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 area 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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