MICHAEL PIERCE: MY 7TH GREAT-GRANDFATHER (1615?-1676)

INITIAL INFORMATION: Names, Origins, Marriages, Births, Deaths, Families

I have developed a special interest in my seventh great grandfather, Michael Pierce. What follows is a progress report on my efforts to tell his story.

Although my last name is Lange, my mother's maiden name is Pierce. It is through her that I am related to Michael Pierce. Putting together the pieces of Michael's life has been an interesting journey, even if at times complicated and confusing. I have learned to evaluate sources that tell different stories and cannot agree on what one might think are basic facts like when and where someone was born. I have learned to accept and live with these and other ambiguities.

Michael Pierce: The Basic Story

For starters Michael Pierce's last name could have been spelled in at least three different ways: Peirce, Pearce, Perse. With the name originating in France, I have run across even more spellings, such as Pears, Pearse, Pers, Piers. And there may be even others. The spelling of his first name in 17th Century documents is almost equally as diverse, such as Mihiel, Mihil, and Michaell.

The place of his birth and the specific date are both unknown in spite of much speculation both on <u>ancestry.com</u> and <u>familysearch.org</u>. It appears nobody has any actual documentation of either. For example, I possess a published genealogy that states that Michael Pierce was born "possibly at or near St. George, Fordington, Dorsetshire 1615.1" The reasoning for this location rests on the closeness of Michael's time of arrival in Hingham of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1644²), marriage to Persis Eames (1644/45³), and the birth of their first child, Persis Pierce (1645/46⁴). Then a probe of <u>familysearch.org</u> finds that Michael was born "about" 1615 in Wigan, St. George, Lancashire, England.⁵ This second guess is among many others in this same search engine claiming that Michael was born in England at such various places as Hingham, Kent, Bristol, York, Devon, and others around this same time, but showing no careful documentation. I think I have made my point.

There is good reason to believe that Michael Pierce was born in England, however. He arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony at Hingham in 1644.⁶ (Hingham is about 25 miles to the north of Plymouth, MA.) I have not discovered a clear reason for Michael's immigration to New England, although there are several people with the name Pierce who have both preceded and followed him with this name. His death and burial is documented as 26 March 1676, in what is now called Pierce Park, Central Falls, Providence County, Rhode Island.⁷ He died while

serving as a Captain in the Plymouth Militia fighting in the King Philip's War. There is more to be recounted on this event..

Marriages and Children

Michael married Persis Eames, daughter of Anthony Eames and Margery Pierce in (1644/458). Persis was born about 1621 and baptized 28 October 1621 in the parish church of St. George at Fordington, Dorset, England, although her birthdate is not specifically known.⁹ With Michael she was the mother of 12 children: Persis (who died early in childhood), another Persis, born 1662, Benjamin (the progenitor of my line), John, Ephriam, Elizabeth, Deborah, Abiah, Ruth, Anna, Abigail, and Mary. Persis Eames Pierce died, 31 Dec 1662, shortly after the birth of her last child Mary. Her burial place is not known. Probably in order not to be alone in bringing up a large family, Michael marries a second time. His second wife is Anna Allen ¹⁰, about whom little is known, the widow of John Allen. There were no children from this second marriage.

The line from Michael and Persis Eames Pierce to my mother, Mildred Ruth Pierce appears as on the next page. See p. 3.

Explanatory Website: www/dalelange/info

There is a story for each one of these names and their related families that is slowly being built on the Lange-Pierce and Related Families Website (<u>www.dalelange.info</u>). So far in 2023, there are more than 3500 individuals that have been included with more to come.

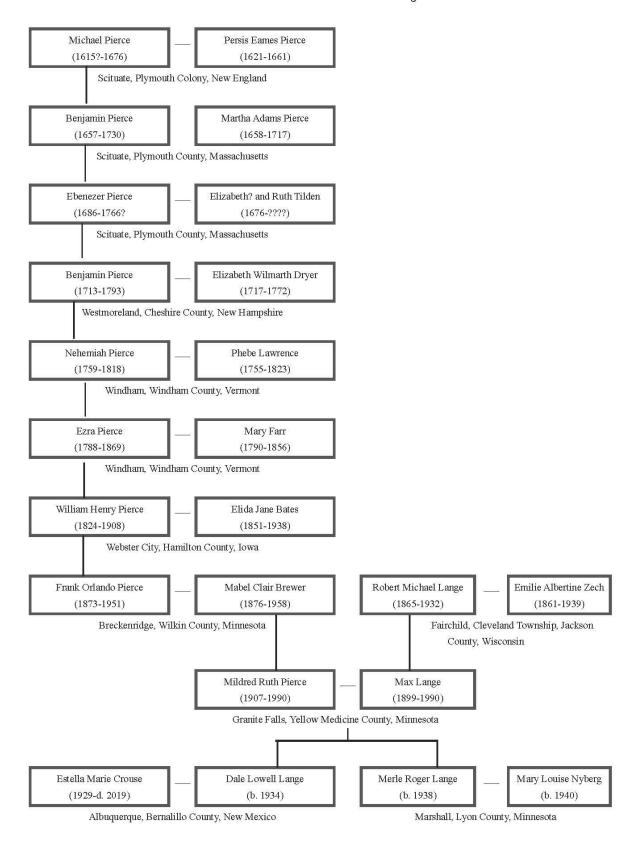
Eames Family: Anthony Eames and Margery Pierce

Like Michael Pierce's birth date and place, there is uncertainty about his parentage Several Pierce couples have been designated as Michael's parents in both <u>ancestry.com</u> and <u>familysearch.org</u>, both leading to Charlemagne;¹¹ however, this is an issue that I do not wish to resolve here. The parents of Persis Eames, Michael Pierces's first wife, are better documented. They are Anthony Eames (1592?-1684) and Margery Pierce (About 1598?-1662)¹². Anthony and Margery were married in England in 1615¹³. Like many New England families of this time, there were several children in the Eames family. In addition to Persis, wife of Michael Pierce, there were six: Millicent, Mark, John, Elizabeth, Justus, and Margery. All of the children were born in England prior to Migration to New England.

Anthony was a yeoman¹⁴ and could not own land; he was also not a Freeman and could not vote. Therefore, it is probable that land ownership, greater religious freedom as a Pilgrim, and economic development were the important factors in his decision to move to the New World.¹⁵

In demonstrating these factors in Anthony's life, I will draw on two articles that give indications of their fulfillment.¹⁶

Anthony Eames lived in three New England towns to accomplish his goals: Charlestown (1634), Hingham (1636), and Marshfield (1652) where he died in 1684. Charlestown and Hingham are in the Massachusetts Bay Colony; Marshfield in the Plymouth



Colony. A summary of his attainments demonstrate the value of his move to the New World. The Eames Family only stayed in Charlestown two years. The move to Hingham was more advantageous. He became a **Freeman** in Hingham in 1636, but was also on the roles of Freemen in Plymouth Colony in 1653, 1658, and 1670. Thus, as a Freeman, he could vote and own land. And he was a **Landowner** in both the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies. He owned land in Hingham, and Marshfield, the latter with his son, Mark, which they bought together in 1652. In terms of **Economic Development**, Anthony was Deputy for Hingham to Massachusetts Bay General Court eight times from 1637-1644 and Deputy for Marshfield to Plymouth General Court nine times, on various issues, including land development matters. **Military Involvements** were another of Anthony's interests. In Hingham (1637/38, Anthony was the Hingham member of the Massachusetts Colony Committee to appraise the colony towns' expenses in the Pequot War. He was also chosen Sergeant, then Lieutenant of the "train band" in 1637 and promoted to Captain in 1645 for a short period of time. He was also a member of the Plymouth Colony Council of War in 1657. After so much duty and service, he retired, but lived until 1686. Neither the gravesites of Anthony nor Margery have ever been located.

Michael Pierce in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony

To elucidate the life of Michael Pierce in Hingham has been rather difficult because the three volume history of Hingham¹⁷ only provides a very short genealogical sketch of Michael Pierce and his family with both erroneous and incomplete information. Michael lived in Hingham from about 1644-1666. Having been an early settler, married there, with a family of 12 children, and lived there for about 20 years, it could have been expected that his life and that of his family would have shown up in the history of this town. The two *Great Migration Series* of Robert Charles Anderson and Robert Charles Anderson, et al¹⁸ could not have been any help because Michael did not appear in New England until the 1640s. Thus, I will have to rely on other resources in Plymouth Colony, largely after 1666 and during King Philip's War to explicate Pierce's life as I can find them. However, there is enough information to proceed with Michael's life in Hingham.

A Family Man: In an earlier paragraph, there was mention of a relatively large family generated after his marriage to Persis Eames. The marriage produced 12 children. Those details now follow:

Persis Pierce. born. probably 1645, christened, 7 Jan 1645, Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony, New England. ¹⁹ ²⁰ Persis probably died in childhood. No record can be found of her death. The name Persis is a feminine given name meaning "from Persia."

Abigail Pierce. Baptized in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony, 9 May 1662, the same year as a sister Anna.²¹. Abigail died 29 Sept 1723, ²²thus, her birth year is calculated from her death at Scituate, Plymouth Colony. She lived 77 years. Thus, 1723-77= 1646. Abigail married John Holbrook abt 1670. The couple brought seven children into the world.²³

Elizabeth Pierce: There is no credible information either from <u>ancestry.com</u> or Family Search to substantiate birth ca. 1650 and death ca. 1670 or the many other dates that have been indicated that fit this Elizabeth Pierce. May have been born in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony, without evidence to substantiate such a claim. An Elizabeth Pierce is mentioned in the Will of Michael Pierce.

Sarah Pierce: Probably born in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony. She is mentioned in Michael Pierce's will.²⁴ No further credible information about this person has been found.

Ephraim Pierce: Although the assumption is that all of the Michael Pierce- Persis Eames children were born in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Ephraim may have been born 1647 in Scituate, Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts,²⁵ although a range of dates from 1647-1651 have shown up on **ancestry.com** and Family Search. Ephraim and Hannah Holbrook were united in marriage in 1670 at Weymouth, Norfolk County, Massachusetts.²⁶ Hannah is the daughter of John Holbrook and Elizabeth Stream. She was born in Weymouth, Norfolk County, Massachusetts in 1650 and died in Warwick Kent County, Rhode Island in 1721.²⁷ This marriage may have produced eleven offspring.between 1671 and 1693.

Anna Pierce: After exhaustive search, Anna may have been born in 1657 in Plymouth, Plymouth Colony, **not** Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony, and died 9 May 1665, probably at eight years of age in the same place. Anna was named in Michael Pierce's will. No grave has been found.²⁸

Mary Pierce: b. 26 May 1654, Scituate, Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts, not Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony; married 23 Jun 1675, Medfield, Norfolk County, Massachusetts to Samuel Holbrook, b. Mendon, Worchester County, Massachusetts. Mary d. 26 April 1735 and is buried Groveland Cemetery, Scituate Plymouth County, Massachusetts. Samuel died 29 October 1719 in Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts, and is buried in Groveland Cemetery as well. Mary was mentioned in the will of Michael Pierce. The marriage of Mary and Samuel Holbrook produced eight children.²⁹

Benjamin Pierce: The gravestone indication of the birth of Benjamin Pierce is 1657, which may also be the source for the Ancestry reporting of his birth in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony.³⁰ However, there are three sources that indicate 1646 may be the date of his birth in Scituate, Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts.^{31 32 33} Those sources are also provided. He married Martha Adams, (b. 6 March 1658, Marshfield, Plymouth County, Massachusetts,³⁴) daughter of John Adams and Jane James, 5 February 1678 in Scituate, Plymouth, Massachusetts.³⁵ Martha died 29 December 1717 in Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts County.³⁶ Benjamin and Martha produced 10 children. Benjamin remarried to Elizabeth Lobdell Perry, 23 July 1718, Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts, but with no children.³⁷ Benjamin was the executor of the will of Michael Pierce, his father, as well as benefactor of the will.. Benjamin died 3 May 1730 in Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts.³⁸

Abiah Pierce: Clear and accurate information about Abiah is difficult to find. She may have been born in 1650 in Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts³⁹, not Hingham,

Massachusetts Bay Colony. She married Andrew Ford probably in 1682 in Weymouth, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. 40 They had at least three children together. Andrew, b. 1651, Weymouth, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, died 24 August 1725 in Abington Plymouth County, Massachusetts. 41 Andrew's parents were Andrew Ford and Ellen Lovell. Abiah died most likely in Abington, Plymouth County, Massachusetts also in 1725. She is mentioned in the will of her father, Michael Pierce.

John Pierce: It appears that John Pierce was born in Scituate, Plymouth Colony in 1660, not in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony.⁴² He was married to Patience Dobson, 12 December. 1683 in Scituate, Plymouth County Massachusetts, daughter of Anthony Dodson and Mary Williams⁴³.. John and Patience were the parents of nine children. Patience was born 1664 in Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts;⁴⁴ She died 3 November 1738 in Somerset, Bristol County, Massachusetts and is buried in the Hathaway-Chace Cemetery in Somerset.⁴⁵ John Pierce died 8 September 1750 in Somerset, Bristol County, Massachusetts and is buried beside his wife in the Hathaway-Chase Cemetery also in Somerset, Massachusetts. John was mentioned in the will of his father, Michael Pierce. John held the rank of Captain in the army during the Revolutionary War.

Ruth Pierce: Ruth's records are found in Family Search under the surname: Ruth Pierce was born 1661in Hingham, Suffolk County, Massachusetts Bay Colony, British Colonial America. 46 Nothing further has be found about her.

Persis Pierce: This last child of Michael and Persis Pierce was born 26 December 1662 in Hingham, Massachusetts Bay Colony.⁴⁷ She carries the name of the first child of Persis Eames and Michael Pierce. She married Richard Garrett 3 December 1695⁴⁸ Richard Garrett was born in 1653 in Scituate, Plymouth Colony and died 7 June 1742 in Plymouth, Plymouth County, Massachusetts.⁴⁹ Richard is the son of Deacon Richard Garrett and Lydia Tilden. The marriage of Persis Pierce and Richard Garrett gave life to five children. The grave of Persis Pierce Garrett is found in Groveland Cemetery, Scituate Plymouth County, Massachusetts; that for Richard Garrett is not known, but may be in Groveland Cemetery also.

Next on my to do list is to document Michael Pierce's role as 1) a landowner and community contributor and 2) his experience as a military officer in King Phillip's War.

Dale L. Lange December 2023

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- ⁵ <u>Michael Pierce</u>. <u>https://familysearch.org/search/linker?ark=/ark:/61903/1:1</u>"FZ3W-KMS&id=L5FQ&hinting=/tree/person/details/
- ⁶ See Reference 2.
- ⁷ Michael Pierce, burial. (2012). *Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database online]. Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. Memorial ID 52532104. Place: Pierce Park and Riverwalk, Central Falls, Providence County, Rhode Island.
- ⁸ Again, see Reference 2.
- ⁹ Anthony Eames in McKormick, Elizabeth D. & Robert H. McCormick, III. (1957). *McKormick-Hamilton Lord-Day Ancestral Lines*. Privately printed, 421-23. See also, Bishop's "Transcripts from Fordington St. George, Dorset, 1577-1675," in Chamberlain, George W. (1923). *The Spragues of Malden*. Massachusetts. Boston: Printed for Private Circulation Only.
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- ¹¹ This is my personal criticism of both <u>ancestry.com</u> and <u>FamilySearch.org</u> although I use them both, mainly as document sources.
- ¹² I have not found exact birth dates for either Anthony Eames or Margery Pierce in searching Internet sources or sources at the New England Historic Genealogical Society Library. However, it appears that Margery Pierce Eames died 31 Dec 1662, Marshfield, Plymouth Colony, New England. [www.findagrave/memorial/3779210/margery-eames.]. Evidence suggests that Anthony Eames died 6 October 1686; http://www.opcdorset.org/fordingtondorset/fFiles/FordingtonAnthonyEames.html. Michael Russell, compiler. (2009). Pilgrims from Fordington, The EAMES Family, An Account of the Life of Captain Anthony Eames (1595-1686) Churchwarden of St Georges church & Constable of Fordington Manor. 29 pp. See page 16.
- ¹³ Anthony Eames-Margery Pierce marriage, 1615. 2004, Yates Publishing. U.S. and International Marriage Records, 1560-1900 [database online]. Provo, UT: <u>ancestry.com</u> Operations, inc.

- ¹⁴ This issue is complicated. A simple definition that fits Anthony Eames is from *Oxford Languages:* "a man holding and cultivating a small landed estate; a freeholder." A more complete and complicated definition can be obtained from Wikipedia, Yeoman.
- ¹⁵ This information comes from a now current distant relative of Anthony Eames with whom I have communicated by email. He has written a short article on the life of Anthony Eames, but has asked me not to quote from it or use it as a reference, although he is allowing me to use content from it. I am abiding by his request.
- ¹⁶ "Anthony Eames," Robert Charles Anderson, George F. Sanborn, Jr., and Melinde Lutz Sanborn. (2001). *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England, 1634-1635.* Volume II, C-F. Great Migration Study Project, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, 738; see pp.387-392; See also, tp://www.opcdorset.org/fordingtondorset/fFiles/ FordingtonAnthonyEames.html Michael Russell, compiler. (2009). *Pilgrims from Fordington, The EAMES Family, An Account of the Life of Captain Anthony Eames (1595-1686) Churchwarden of St Georges Church & Constable of Fordington Manor. 29 pp.*
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- ²³ See. www.dalelange.info/abigail.pierce/
- ²⁴ Michael Pierce of Scituate, Will, Plymouth Probate Records, Document Set 374, p. 128-32.
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