

## John Pierce: Yankee Social Historian

BY JAMES R. MCGOVERN

REV. John Pierce, D.D., (1773–1849) was Secretary of the Board of Overseers, serving four Harvard presidents from 1816 to 1849. Were it only for his neat script in this function or his role as one of Harvard's first professional Harvard men, he would hardly merit the attention of scholars and their readers. But this mild and unassuming man was also like Pepys and Sewall, a type of social secretary to his age. He was an outstanding chronicler by virtue of his wide acquaintance with the prominent men and movements, especially in New England, and his dutiful desire to record his experiences for posterity. As such he is invaluable for the social historian of the early and middle nineteenth century and it is difficult to understand why he has received so little attention.<sup>1</sup> The following article will suggest the possible uses to which his vast writings may be put by various types of historians.

Pierce was pastor of the First Congregational Church in Brookline<sup>2</sup> which he served from 1797 to 1849 and held numerous civic offices there. Indeed, in the minds of his friends, his name was synonymous with Brookline.<sup>3</sup> But his contacts ranged far beyond his home community. In an age that prized the principle of voluntary organization he might be seen as one of its consummate practitioners, an indefatigable joiner and ceremonialist. Sibley describes him as "present on every public occasion," always "welcome everywhere" and "more

extensively known than any other clergyman" in the Boston area.<sup>4</sup> As a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society he conversed with such men as John Q. Adams, George Bancroft, Nathan Appleton, Jared Sparks, Samuel Hoar, Rev. Samuel Ripley, and George Tichnor.<sup>5</sup> He belonged to and regularly attended meetings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Phi Beta Kappa,<sup>6</sup> and the Boston Association of Congregational Ministers. He was a founder of the Massachusetts Bible Society and an honorary member of the American Statistical Society and the New England Historical Genealogical Society. He records his attendance at the dedication of 39 churches, 42 funerals of ministers and several hundred ordinations. He was invariably present at exhibitions, commencements, and public functions at Harvard.<sup>7</sup> His close friend the Baptist minister in Brookline, Rev. Shailer, observed "to no public institution has he devoted more time and over none has he watched with more interest than Harvard University."<sup>8</sup> His numerous trips about the state of Massachusetts to "exchange pulpits" with other ministers, or to visit Dorchester where his family roots could be traced to the 1630's or to his wife's family, the illustrious Tappans of Northampton, Mass., afforded still other opportunities to extend his acquaintances. He may have been, as one of his friends judged, the best known man in the state of Massachusetts.<sup>9</sup>

While there were probably very few persons in New England of his period so conversant with its prominent men and major institutions, there were surely none who preserved such a detailed record of his activities and associations with them.<sup>10</sup>

His writings consist principally of eighteen volumes of Memoirs and Memorabilia, Account and Expense Books, both deposited in manuscript form in the Massachusetts Historical Society, Parish Records of the First Congregational Church and numerous handwritten sermons found in the Brookline Public Library and his numerous letters in the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. It would seem reasonable to estimate close to ten thousand manuscript pages in the first two collections, which deal almost exclusively with his public life. Letters written by him and members of his family also number into the thousands. These were released for historical inquiry by his descendants as recently as 1965 and are very revealing about such questions relating to family as roles, nurture, education, and values.<sup>11</sup>

The overall records of Pierce encompass such detailed information as a list of the authors and titles of the 1489 books which he read from January 1, 1814 to the end of his life.<sup>12</sup> An intellectual history of the literate Yankee mind of the period may be reconstructed from its contents. While many of the books, perhaps two-thirds, deal with devotional matters, homilies (*Death Bed Scenes*), and sermons, the remainder underscore his sophistication and catholic tastes. He read 8 volumes of Shakespeare's plays; *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones*, *Pitcairn's Island*, *Oliver Twist*, *Two Years Before the Mast*, and *Ivanhoe*. He also read two of Catherine Maria Sedgwick's novels. *Means and Ends*

and *Live and Let Live*, Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* and Irving's *Sketch Book*, proving that some people at least were reading American books at this time. Poetry read included Spenser, Longfellow, two volumes of Miss Sigourney and five volumes of Wordsworth. European didactists were readily consumed: Cicero, Pliny, Thomas A. Kempis, Erasmus, Pascal and Madamede Stael. American books in the same mode included nine volumes of Franklin, three volumes of Bancroft's histories and W. E. Channing's writings. While Pierce's fondness for history is illustrated by his numerous readings about the Puritans and Pilgrims, especially authors Winthrop and Bradford, he stayed abreast of the fashions and events of his own day by reading the works of European travellers, especially Harriet Martineau (9 volumes) and Charles Dickens. The writings of Horace Bushnell, Frances Wayland and a study of Charles Bulfinch are listed. There are also travel books to nearly every part of the world and studies of major events in European history.<sup>13</sup>

John Pierce's Account Books may contain the most detailed statement of family economics in American History. In them he lists every purchase made by his household, as well as the presents his family received along with the market value of the gift, for every year from 1802 to 1848. We learn that the minister paid from 30 to 45 dollars for a suit between 1804 and 1807, \$1.50 for an iron rake in 1805, \$1.00 for a "fine razor" and \$1.16 for two pairs of shoes for children in 1806, \$8.75 for seven and one half yards of silk for a gown for Mrs. Pierce and \$1.50 for Hyson tea in 1810.<sup>14</sup> The impact of America's China trade is illustrated in such presents awarded Dr. Pierce in 1810-1813 as a "very elegant tea caddy"

from Canton \$5.00, a box and small waiters from China \$2.00, and an elegant tea set from China \$65.00.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the accounts show when household fixtures are introduced. An entry for June 2, 1845 records a present of a shower bath valued at \$5.00.<sup>16</sup>

To supplement his regular income of \$400.00 a year salary plus small amounts aggregating less than one hundred dollars for other services in Brookline and at Harvard, Pierce calculated in 1844 that he had received over \$11,000 in presents of goods and money from friends and parishioners<sup>17</sup> and more than four thousand dollars from his wealthy brothers-in-law John, Lewis, Charles and Arthur Tappan.<sup>18</sup> The presents together with his purchases tell us much about his family's life style. They reveal, for example, the essential menu of this Yankee family with its heavy reliance on pork, beef, fish, bread and milk (the Pierces' consumed 15 quarts a week for a household of nine in 1816).<sup>19</sup> The presents also declare what the society valued as delicacies—special treats which the minister, as his purchases attest, could not ordinarily buy, oranges 6 for \$.50 in 1810,<sup>20</sup> chocolate 6 pounds for \$1.20 in 1811, a keg of Sicily grapes (presented January 29, 1811,<sup>21</sup> and valued at \$1.00), 2 pounds of very fine Chinese tea \$5.00 in 1816, a drum of figs (\$1.50) and a yearly present of a large box of raisins or prunes by merchant S. Pierce.<sup>22</sup> Cocoa four pounds for \$.66 and lemon syrup, 3 bottles for \$1.50 in 1831, etc. An itemization of Pierce family purchases for the year 1838 reveals that it spent approximately 16% of its \$1004.58 total outlay on foods, principally for meats, fish and milk, 15% for transportation, principally on trips taken by Mrs. Pierce, 14% for wearing apparel either as finished or unfinished materials, 14% in loans to sons William and John, 6% on

insurance, 5% for a domestic, 4.8% for coal, 4.3% on books and papers, 2% for hired help other than the maid, 1.3% on postage and the rest on miscellaneous items such as charities and "to a black," washing 12 windows, \$2.00.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Pierce's *Memoirs and Memorabilia* are laden with facts which justify the observation of the gentleman who introduced him at the Phi Beta Kappa meeting in 1848 with the observation he was "such a busy collector of facts" as "to create the suspicion that he will leave nothing for the Recording Angel to do."<sup>24</sup> They provide a veritable compendium of the organizational and intellectual life of the Boston area. Summaries of college commencement addresses, ministerial conferences, Phi Beta Kappa addresses, temperance meetings, sermons, genealogies, and copies of letters written to him by prominent people punctuate its pages.<sup>25</sup> In addition, he had a fascination for obituaries and wrote them for many prominent Bostonians based on his personal contacts with the deceased. Pierce also recorded in both letters and memoirs many valuable views of his leading contemporaries and the historical movements of his time.

He often dined with John Adams and later with John Quincy Adams and records information of a highly personal nature about both.<sup>26</sup> "Last Sabbath," he wrote to his friend Rev. Abiel Abbot, "I had the honor of dining with Vice President Adams . . . I confess I expected to find him a different man from what he appeared. Instead of that forbidding dignity and volubility of tongue which have by fame been ascribed to him, one discovers a pleasing affability: he is far less fluent in speech than I had imagined."<sup>27</sup> Adams' pessimism about the state of the country under Republican administration is reflected in informing

Pierce in 1804 "it is his comfort that he shall find a shelter from these calamities in the friendly silence of the grave."<sup>28</sup> In a more optimistic vein, Adams described his revulsion against dogmatic religion at an early age. This occurred when a minister addressed him as a freshman at Harvard in 1757, "Young man, I suppose you are intended for the ministry. I advise you to begin your studies in this profession by gaining a complete knowledge of Williard's body of Divinity. You will then be prepared to study the Bible and the good books."<sup>29</sup> Dining with President John Q. Adams in 1826, Pierce reported the President to be "highly instructive and entertaining in conversation." He revealed that "when he was in St. Petersburg, he became acquainted with the Head of the Jesuits; and that his Holy Father sometimes attempted to convert him to the Catholic faith," but Adams professed he could forsee "no prospect of my ever embracing the doctrine of transubstantiation."<sup>30</sup> Later in life when President John Q. Adams was eighty years old, Pierce reports a valuable psychological insight, "when I alluded to his mother, he was sensibly afflicted, and remarked that he could never hear her name mentioned without tears."<sup>31</sup>

Pierce's sermon to the artillery company of Boston on its election in 1813 is a classic summary of enlightened Federalist antagonism to the War of 1812.<sup>32</sup> Usually a very mild man who shied from polemics, Pierce apparently felt a consensus of anti-war sentiment in his audience. He lamented the breakdown of industry and commerce in New England resulting from the war and deplored its accompanying vice and idleness. America had escaped similar calamities earlier because "we had then a Washington at the head of affairs, who knew too well the evils of

war to expose us to its hazards and sacrifices without the most pressing necessity." Pierce weighed each possible justification for the war. "For what then are we contending?" He dismissed territory, honor, neutral rights, seaman's rights, the hostilities committed by the Indians with ample argument and concluded we could only be fighting "with a nation which is preeminently the bulwark of the religion we profess" for perverse and sinful reasons. Opposition to such a war, far from being unpatriotic, was essential for the preservation of our heritage and recovery of moral purpose.<sup>33</sup>

Pierce provides interesting data on the slave question. His own position was moderate. While he attended meetings of the Anti-Slave Society, he was disturbed by their speeches "addressed to the passions and prejudices, rather than to reason and understanding."<sup>34</sup> At the same time he decries those who would prevent them from speaking in Boston, "the (supposed) headquarters of good principles."<sup>35</sup> When the controversy threatened the peaceful life of his church because a few parishioners felt strongly that blacks should not have to attend church in a special pew to themselves on the second floor, Pierce left the parties concerned to "fight it out."<sup>36</sup> The Church was subsequently "integrated" briefly when Mr. Samuel Philbrick, an abolitionist, took a "black child" into his broad aisle pew. The incident caused such a "rage" that Mr. Philbrick subsequently withdrew from the church and the church remained segregated. Pierce's support of the segregationists is implied in his unusually strong criticism of a member of his congregation who persisted in his plans to secure integration. Pierce described a "printed bill of the ign . . . (ignorant), imp . . . and shameless

SAW (S. A. Walker)" which read, "a abolitionist lecture will be delivered at Lyceum Hall . . . a large delegation of the sable hue are expected from the city. Ladies and gentlemen are informed that cologne . . . will be dispensed . . . all those in favor of black servants occupying the broad aisle of the church in Brookline will please take seats . . . directly in front of the speaker."<sup>37</sup> His remarks about the Grimke sisters who visited Brookline in 1837 are informative but non-committal. They also record a disinclination of Brookline ladies to enlist in the abolitionist movement. After the sisters described the "cruel treatment of the slaves" one of them remarked that they had received word from their mother they no longer be safe to visit their home in Charleston, S.C., Pierce recorded "it appeared to be their object to induce our ladies to organize and abolition society. But attendance was far from general, and those who were present did not seem disposed to volunteer in this business."<sup>38</sup> The Grimke meeting was also noteworthy for the presence of "a Mr. Whittier from Haverhill", not yet distinguished in literature.

Pierce has rewarding anecdotes about other reformatory movements of the period and their leadership, especially educational reform. He quotes Horace Mann's remarks to him "that one good way to teach spelling is by giving a word to the class; and after giving them time to think, to call on one to spell it. This will help to fix the right spelling on the minds of all." And, another good way is "putting out poly-syllables, to let one child spell one syllable, another, another till the word is finished." He records Mann's aspiration to locate a Normal School in every county in Massachusetts. Pierce noted with regret, however, a diminution of corporal punishment in schools which

he judged the most significant change in the manners and customs of society during his life time<sup>39</sup> Although he acknowledged the great severity in discipline at Boston Latin School still caused graduates, now old men, to "awaken from sleep with tears of recollection," Pierce feared "the tendency now is toward the opposite extreme" and that "evil consequences would spring from laxity."<sup>40</sup> Toward women's education, he displayed an unusual fondness for his times, perhaps indicative of his tender feelings for his mother who died as a young woman when Pierce was at Harvard. He professed that if men should be the heads of their families, women should be the necks and the head should follow the neck in every direction. He was proud of the quality of Brookline's public education for girls and recorded (favorably) news from Oberlin which had just become co-educational. "President (Asa) Mahan says that, for the two years in which the experiment has been tried, there are fewer engagements to be married, than were formed by the students of Andover (Andover Seminary) while he resided there. So strict is the surveillance that a youth from New York by merely entering the chamber of a female without leave was required to make a public confession for violating the laws before the whole institution."<sup>41</sup>

The Pierce letters provide still other gems on the democratic spirit of this age of American nationalism while they sometimes express concern over its lack of refinement. An example may be found in Elizabeth Pierce's letter to her father, August 10, 1824, from aboard a steamboat on the Hudson.

Just at dusk an occurrence took place, that caused considerable excitement on board. It was no less than the accession to our party of M.G.W. La Fayette who had been visiting at a county seat, upon the

river about West Point. Unfortunately there were no musical instruments in the boat and the company could only welcome him by cheers as he came on deck with his head uncovered, the passengers seemed excited beyond all reflections and the majority rushed forward with the utmost eagerness to see and shake hands with him . . . For my part, I was sadly disappointed in his aspect. His dress was ordinary, his manners by no means French and his whole appearance indicated simplicity. He received attention with ease and seemed ready and willing to converse with any who wished it. There were a great many people on board and the boat was really crowded. Upon returning to rest, the sleeping apartments present a ludicrous spectacle. Every cabin was filled to overflowing. In ours, ladies, servants and children were strewn about in all directions.<sup>42</sup>

Other observations of note in Pierce's writings include portraitist Gilbert Stuart's anecdote on George Washington and John Adams. He remarked to Pierce personally "you may perceive by their likenesses their leading traits of character. Adams' mouth is partly open, implying that he could conceal nothing, but always frankly uttered his thoughts. On the other hand, you may perceive Washington's lips to be shut close. Nobody could open those lips . . . but I could open them."<sup>43</sup> There is an analysis of the personality of Harriet Martineau ("She is simple and unaffected in her manner, social in her disposition, and converses with the utmost ease upon every topic, as it is stated"),<sup>44</sup> the speaking styles of Daniel Webster, John Gough ("His thoughts are uttered at random in words which flow spontaneously")<sup>45</sup> and Dr. Horace Bushnell whom Pierce describes as "an acute reasoner" but so "abstruse and metaphysical" as to preclude an adequate summarizing of his address to the Divinity School at Harvard.<sup>46</sup> A description of the Great Revival in Northampton in

1826 is reported by Pierce's wife "I think nearly half of people present were men and boys. It is impossible to give you an adequate idea of the scene . . . a great many near me were bathed in tears. You might have almost heard a pin drop such a breathless silence prevailed."<sup>47</sup> Pierce, having been born in Boston and not needing to be reborn, was less impressed upon seeing evangelist Charles G. Finney. "His gesticulations were very violent. I should think above the tastes of our northern latitudes. At times he screamed with little mercy to himself or the tympana of his auditors."<sup>48</sup> Pierce summarizes Francis Wayland's Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard in 1836 with its "deep feeling" concerning the dangers to the Republic from the despotism of the many" and the "prejudices of the vulgar."<sup>49</sup> He included an extensive description of the elegant house and furnishings of his friend and philanthropist to the blind, Colonel Samuel G. Perkins, including its prints copied from great paintings with "too many naked beauties for the contemplation of the young."<sup>50</sup> Other noteworthy vignettes include a summary of Caleb Cushing's address to the Brookline Lyceum based on his experiences as America's first commissioner to China<sup>51</sup> and a description and criticism of the Nat Turner rebellion by a southern minister.<sup>52</sup> Students of the Tappan family and abolitionism will find a useful source in the Pierce materials. Mrs. Pierce makes frequent visits to her home and describes the Tappans in her letters to her husband. Furthermore, several of the Pierce girls, especially Elizabeth, Sarah, and Mary lived with the Tappans and wrote home regularly about their doings. Pierce himself enters an extensive correspondence with Benjamin Tappan, the father of the family. Much can be inferred about the rigid standards impelling Lewis and

Arthur Tappan over the slavery issue from the rigorous religious demands which he attempted to impose on Rev. Pierce and his family. Lewis Tappan was particularly critical of Pierce for his seeming compromises with Unitarianism. He even attempted to influence two of Pierce's daughters to renounce their membership in his church. Pierce denounced his brother-in-law for untempered religious zeal and interference in his family affairs. "A rumor has just reached my ears that Sarah joined Uncle L's Lewis Church, last Nov . . . If so, I suppose I must set it down as another of his kind affairs since he has been unable to flatter, coax, draw, drive or frighten me into his exclusive and denunciatory measures."<sup>53</sup> Tappan's persuasion supposed that "her father was not a Christian minister" and so Pierce continued "what are we coming to if children are to be encouraged clandestinely to desert their parents even in the tenderest point?" Pierce added, with anxiety, "my dear wife I think you had better shorten your visit lest attempts be made to alienate you from a husband who can't be happy without you."

Pierce's letter, May 16, 1836, to his daughter Mary, then sixteen, who was to live in Northampton at the home of a Tappan while she attended a seminary for girls reflects his anxiety about the undue influence the Tappans might try to exert. It is also a classic exposition of family roles and responsibilities and reflects the great utility of the Pierce collection for students of family history.<sup>54</sup>

My Dear Daughter Mary,

As you are again about to leave the parental roof, I cannot release you from our family circle without a few paternal comments and monitions.

I. Be it your first care to "know the God of your fathers, and to serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing

mind." "Love the Lord Jesus with sincerity." Let no day pass without reading and meditating a portion of God's holy word, and without twice at least praying to "your Father, who is in secret, and your Father, who seeth in secret, will reward you openly."

II. Be respectful to your uncle and aunt, and kind to every member of the family. Relieve, as far as may be consistent with your other indispensable engagements, the cares of your beloved aunt. She will supply the place of your mother; and you may learn much from her excellent instructions and examples.

III. My desire is that you should attend steadily her place of worship. But on no account offer yourself for communion with any church in Northampton. Such a step would be likely to be attended with greater trials both to yourself and your parents, than can probably arise from any other course.

IV. In this day of religious wrangling, whenever such men as The Rev. Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia, and The Rev. Dr. Beecher, of Cincinnati, are under discipline, as heretics, there can be no wonder, if some, with whom you may come in contact, in your school, and elsewhere, should call in question your father's soundness, without knowing any thing of him, but by heresy, and should officiously labor to convince you, that your own profession of religion, should they ascertain the fact, is no better, than solemn mockery. But let them do, or say what they will, they can exercise no "dominion over your faith," unless you voluntarily place yourself under their watch and discipline. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty, wherewith," you conscientiously apprehend, "Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled in any yoke of ecclesiastical bondage." Your second sister has been made wretched enough, by such a surrender of her reason and conscience, to operate as a warning to you.

V. Avoid, as the pestilence, religious disputation. "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." If any of your companions suspect your soundness, because they have heard ill reports of that portion of the country, from which you originate, or from other causes,

“answer not again.” “Have a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed, that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

VI. I hardly need remind you of the importance of fidelity in attention to your studies. At your time of life, and with the expense, which must necessarily be incurred in completing your education, it is perhaps more expedient to warn you against excessive application, than to stimulate you to industry.

VII. Be careful of your health. For the preservation and enjoyment of this blessing, much, under God, depends on early rising, stated exercise, both in the house and in the open air, and an habitual cheerfulness. “A merry heart doth good, like a medicine.” This long experience and almost uninterrupted health have taught me. It is also my firm conviction, that both of your grandfathers were much indebted to this for their protracted and rigorous old age.

VIII. Be in the constant practice of committing your thoughts to writing. Nothing contributes more effectually to intellectual improvement, than this habit. “Nulla dies sine linea” is a direction of long standing, and of excellent use. Your correspondents will be likely to require as much of your time, as you can well spare. But whatever friends you neglect, write regularly to your parents jointly. If you have privacy with your mother, this can be communicated by a sealed letter within your journal. Be free in the communication of your thoughts. Let nothing be withholden, which calls for the kind aid of parental counsel.

IX. Be sure to attend to your manners and to neatness in your dress and personal appearance. It was said to have been a maxim of Whitfield, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” These last I number among “The tithes of mint, cummin, and anise;” but they are not to be neglected more than “the weightier matters of the law.”

God bless you my dear daughter! So will ever pray your affectionate father,  
John Pierce

Some of the most useful information in Pierce’s writings centers on the religious controversies and schisms of the period. Temperamentally, Pierce felt at home with the manner and biblical emphasis of Unitarianism. His own style was simple, natural, based on the Bible, and devoid of narrow sectarianism. Pierce, like Joseph Buckminster, whose sermons he read, regarded himself as a “gentle knight” who wished “to guard the seats of taste and morals.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise Pierce emphasized the importance of embodying rather than discussing Christianity and wished to avoid, as did Channing, all rancor over religion.<sup>56</sup> He chose not only to be on friendly terms with those more orthodox in his own communion but to dine with Catholic priests and bishops and attend Catholic and Episcopal services and to be a close friend of the Baptist minister who opened a church in Brookline in 1828. Yet, if Pierce sympathized with the spirit of tolerance and freedom in Unitarianism, he was a liberal Christian, not a Unitarian. Pierce based his faith on repentance toward God, “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” love to God, and love to man.<sup>57</sup> He had no doubt about the authenticity of the miracles of the New Testament<sup>58</sup> and chided Theodore Parker for his “very offensive sermon” maintaining that other Christs would be likely to appear.<sup>59</sup> He expressed dismay over the erosion of faith in the “liberal churches” and was severely aggrieved when Lewis Tappan accused him of being a Unitarian. Pierce’s middle of the road position was undoubtedly a compromise which acknowledged the bitter divisions within his own church. The records of those developments and summaries of speeches of protagonists in the theological disputes, including a yearly report on the Berry Street Conference of liberal theologians are present diffusely throughout Pierce’s writings.

As a social observer and commentator, Rev. John Pierce may be likened to Samuel Sewall his predecessor by only one hundred years. Sewall may be more valuable because the literary record of his age is sparser than Pierce's and he is more colorful, more inclusive in topics and more concerned with useful trivia. However, both men manifest an unflinching curiosity towards the people and events of their respective milieu and both keep long and continuous accounts of their activities and associations. Since neither were original thinkers, they lend themselves readily to descriptive and representative thought. Similarly, both men concentrate on external events rather than the soul searching which characterizes the diaries of Michael Wig-

glesworth and Cotton Mather. The recent availability of Pierce's family letters provides a rounded view of him in society and gives us richer insights into subjects of family history than we find in the writings of Sewall. These enhance his utility for the social historian over and above the numerous subjects for which his manuscripts have long provided rewarding information for the period 1800-1850: the town of Brookline, statistics on prices, Harvard College, travels in New England, reform movements, social customs and attitudes, prominent politicians and intellectuals, churches, religious conflicts and other developments. His history, like Sewall's, is truly a chapter in New England living.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> There is no scholarly biography or article on Dr. Pierce. The author of this article is presently undertaking a study to be entitled "The Social History of a Yankee Family", which will deal with the Pierce family and its descendants. The best characterological analysis of Pierce with a brief resume of his life is probably George F. Putnam, "The Rev. John Pierce, D.D.," *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, CLVII, 447-455 (Nov. 1849). Harriet F. Woods, *Historical Sketches of Brookline, Mass.* (Boston, 1874), 251-265 and Charles Lowell "Memoirs of Rev. John Pierce," *Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. 1, 4th series, 277-295, provides the best efforts at historical analysis. See also John G. Curtis, *History of the Town of Brookline Massachusetts* (Boston, 1933), 72-93, 216-217. He is mentioned in John Langdon Sibley, *Private Journal*, Vol. 1, 26-27, 31-32, 192, (Widener Library Rare Book Room).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example John Pierce, *Annals of the First Parish Brookline*, XII, n.p. (1838).

<sup>3</sup> Woods, 351.

<sup>4</sup> Sibley, Vol. 1, 192, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Pierce, *Memoirs*, New Series I, (Massachusetts Historical Society).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 252. Pierce's attendance at Phi Beta Kappa dinners was, however, curtailed be-

tween 1824 and 1840 "on account of the Bacchanalian character of the entertainment". *Ibid.*, VIII, 503.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, n.p.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, V, New Series, 88.

<sup>9</sup> Putnam, *Christian Examiner*, CLVI, 448 (Nov. 1849).

<sup>10</sup> Sibley joked about Rev. Pierce's well known penchant for facts, envisioning him raising his head at the time of his funeral to call attention to the fact that three Harvard presidents, Quincy, Everett and Sparks, were present and saying "it is a remarkable fact that there should be three presidents at my funeral—never was such a thing known before." Sibley, *Private Journal*, Vol. 1, 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> Letters by Dr. Pierce and members of his family may be found in the Poor Family Papers in the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.

<sup>12</sup> Poor Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, unclassified.

<sup>13</sup> Another catalogue of 470 books in the Pierce collection useful in social and intellectual history is the *Catalogue of Library of Brookline First Parish Sunday School* (Boston, 1841) found in Brookline Public Library.

<sup>14</sup> John Pierce, *Accounts Books, 1804-1810* (Massachusetts Historical Society).

- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1810, 24; 1812,31; 1813,34.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, June 2, 1845, 93.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1844, 92.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.
- <sup>19</sup> John Pierce, Accounts Book. 1816-47. In 1838, a time when the household consisted of six persons, the family still averaged a consumption of eight quarts of milk a week, *Ibid.*, December 1838, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1810, 23. The next entry for a present of oranges is *Ibid.*, 1832,77.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 1811, 29.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1837, 83; *Ibid.*, 1842, 91.
- <sup>24</sup> Pierce Memoirs, New Series, VI 35.
- <sup>25</sup> The Massachusetts Historical Society has published some of this material in its *Proceedings*. See account of Yale Commencement for 1795 in *Proceedings of Massachusetts Historical Society*, III, Second Series, 45-47; on Harvard commencements and vital statistics at Harvard 1803-1848, V, Second Series, 167-258, notes on Phi Beta Kappa exercises (1803-1848), IX, Second Series, (110-143).
- <sup>26</sup> John Pierce to Benjamin Tappan, September 6, 1826, Schlesinger Library, Poor Papers, #8. Pierce records he "often visited" President John Adams. He called on John Quincy Adams six times. Pierce, Memoirs, New Series, II, 244.
- <sup>27</sup> John Pierce to Abiel Abbot, November 1, 1796, Poor Papers, #3.
- <sup>28</sup> John Pierce to Benjamin Tappan, November 15, 1804, Poor Papers #8.
- <sup>29</sup> John Pierce Memoirs, II, 237. See Samuel Williard, *A Complete Body of Divinity in Two Hundred Fifty Expository Lectures* (Boston, 1726).
- <sup>30</sup> John Pierce to Benjamin Tappan, September 6, 1826. Poor Papers, #10.
- <sup>31</sup> John Pierce, Memoirs, New Series, IV, 253. See Proceedings of Massachusetts Historical Society, second series, 384-386, for publication of an interview between Rev. Pierce and John Q. Adams (1844).
- <sup>32</sup> John Pierce, Memoirs, II, 38-47.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> Pierce, Memoirs, VI, 387.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 57.
- <sup>36</sup> Lucy Pierce to Lucy Pierce Hedge, June 29, 1837, Poor Papers, #18.
- <sup>37</sup> Pierce, Annals of the First Parish, XVI, 7, 1842.
- <sup>38</sup> Pierce, Memoirs, VII, 406-407. Pierce also recorded that the Grimkes preferred to speak where there were no men present and that they offered their own prayers at the meeting ("The first I ever heard from a woman in public").
- <sup>39</sup> Pierce, Memoirs. New Series, II, 88.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 179.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 429.
- <sup>42</sup> Lucy Pierce to John Pierce, August 10, 1824, Poor Papers, #5 (enclosure by Elizabeth Pierce).
- <sup>43</sup> Pierce, Memoirs, New Series, III, 270.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Memoirs, VI, 356.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, New Seriesx I, 209.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 286-287.
- <sup>47</sup> Lucy Pierce to John Pierce, June 15, 1826, Poor Papers, #5.
- <sup>48</sup> John Pierce to Elizabeth Pierce, November 17, 1826, Poor Papers, #12.
- <sup>49</sup> John Pierce, Memoirs, VI, 440.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, New Series, III, 421.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 400-401. The minister was Rev. Bennet Taylor Blake from Raleigh, North Carolina who was visiting in Boston.
- <sup>53</sup> John Pierce, Annals of the First Church Brookline, 1831, (Brookline Public Library).
- <sup>54</sup> John Pierce to Mary Pierce, May 10, 1836. Poor Collection, Unclassified.
- <sup>55</sup> Joseph S. Buckminister, *The Monthly Anthology*, VI, 4 (1809).
- <sup>56</sup> William H. Channing, *The Life of William E. Channing*, Boston, 1880, 184-185.
- <sup>57</sup> John Pierce, Memoirs, New Series, IV., 491.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 1845, 64-65.