

PIERCE FAMILY PAPERS, 1865-1969

Collection #
M 0226
OM 0338

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Processed by
Charles Latham
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 manuscript boxes, 2 photograph boxes, 2 oversize folders
COLLECTION DATES:	1865-1969
PROVENANCE:	H. Douglas Pierce, Indianapolis, IN, 1965-1968
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	(SC 2180) Indianapolis Propylaeum; (M 0478) Indianapolis Woman's Club; (M 0462 Box 2 Folder 20) William Fortune
ACCESSION NUMBERS:	1965.0201, 1967.1209, 1968.0410

HISTORICAL SKETCH

This collection concerns two generations of the descendants of Winslow S. Pierce and Almus E. Vinton, and the house at 14th and Meridian Streets in Indianapolis, which was the family home for seventy years.

Winslow Smith Pierce (1819-1888) was born in Boston, the son of Moses and Mary (Barron) Pierce. A graduate of Dartmouth College (1841) and Harvard Medical School, he practiced medicine in Indiana and Illinois before going to California in 1849. He became Comptroller of California in 1851, helped start a line of steamships running from Panama to San Francisco, and was involved in preliminary plans for the Union Pacific Railroad. A friend of Stephen A. Douglas, he named his son after him.

Moving to Indianapolis about 1855, Pierce married (in succession) two sisters of Thomas A. Hendricks. He was also involved in promoting coal mines and rolling mills, and was said to have established the first blast furnace in Indiana. He spent the last twelve years of his life in Brooklyn, New York.

Almus Eugene Vinton (1821-1870) was born in Cincinnati. His parents were natives of Massachusetts. He spent his youth in Ohio, and in 1846 married Theresa Stallo of Miamisburg. In 1850 he moved to Indianapolis, and was a partner with J. W. Hasselman in the Washington Foundry, which manufactured agricultural implements and portable engines (some of the latter used in the oil fields of Pennsylvania). When Vinton retired in 1865 because of poor health, the foundry was reorganized as Eagle Machine Works.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, when Republican Governor O. P. Morton was in a deadlock with a Democratic General Assembly, Vinton used his personal credit and connections to obtain rifles for Indiana troops. His foundry cast small brass cannon for the artillery. He was also associated with Richard J. Gatling in arranging for production of the Gatling Gun by the Colt Company.

Vinton was an incorporator of Crown Hill Cemetery, and a charter member of the association from which developed the Indianapolis Public Library.

Toward the end of his life Vinton bought a country place on four acres of land at what became 14th and Meridian Streets. The house, built by William Henderson in 1862 and said to have been designed by Francis Costigan, was a landmark until it was destroyed in 1936.

One source says that Henry Douglas Pierce (1848-1929), the son of Winslow S. Pierce, was born in Madison, Indiana; another, in Rock Island, Illinois; and a third, while his parents were en route to California. He attended Hay's Academy in Indianapolis, and graduated from Princeton in 1868. He studied law in the office of his uncle, Thomas A. Hendricks, and medicine at Ohio Medical College and Berkshire Medical College. Admitted to the bar in 1870, he practiced law first in the firm of Hendricks, Hord & Hendricks, and then in partnership with David Turpie. He served briefly as assistant U. S. Attorney, and even more briefly as a temporary judge of the Circuit Court. In his later legal work he specialized in corporate law, particularly with railroads.

Pierce was a man of far-ranging interests. He traveled widely, and was said to have explored all the principal rivers of the world. For many years he was interested in the construction of an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua, and was a director and vice president of a Nicaragua Canal Company.

Pierce spoke and wrote well and often, and enjoyed the public eye. He was not hesitant to give the public the benefit of his views and experiences. Toward the end of his life he had some reputation as a political prophet, tarnished somewhat by his predicting "unhesitatingly" that Alfred E. Smith would be elected President in 1928.

In 1875 Henry D. Pierce married Almus E. Vinton's daughter, Elizabeth Stallo Vinton (1855-1936). The couple lived first in a Queen Anne house they built just above the northeast corner of 14th and Meridian Streets (then 729 North Meridian). They later moved into the handsome Vinton house next door to the south (then 725 North Meridian, later 1415), and lived there until their deaths.

Elizabeth Vinton Pierce was educated in private schools, and attended Vassar College, though family affairs prevented her graduation. She was active in many women's organizations, notably the Indianapolis Woman's Club (president

1896-1897), the Propylaeum (co-founder 1888, longtime treasurer and president), and the Indiana Vassar Club (founder 1902). Like her husband, she did not avoid publicity. One issue on which she spoke out was her opposition to renaming Riverside Park after its founder, Thomas A. Taggart.

The elder daughter of Henry D. and Elizabeth Vinton Pierce, Theresa Vinton Pierce (Krull) (1877-1963), was born and lived in Indianapolis. She graduated from Indianapolis High School, in 1896 and from Vassar College in 1900 (and became the first president of the local Vassar Club in 1902). She married Frederic Krull, a composer known for producing music for James Whitcomb Riley's poems. She became a feature writer for the Indianapolis Star, specializing in educational, historical, and patriotic subjects. She was a charter member of the Arthur St. Clair Chapter of the D.A.R., and spent years becoming an expert and lecturer on St. Clair. She also gave lectures about costumes and fabrics.

Her younger brother, Henry Douglas Pierce, Jr. (1883-1969), was born in Indianapolis, and attended school there and at Mercersburg Academy in Pennsylvania. He graduated from Princeton University in 1906 and from Harvard Law School in 1909. Passing his bar examinations in 1909, he worked first in the firm of Walker and Hollett, and then established his own office. His family connection made him head of the Vinton-Pierce real estate firm, which managed many properties, including an office block at the southwest corner of Pennsylvania and Market Streets. Before World War I, Pierce was active in Republican politics at the precinct level. He served one term (1915) in the Indiana General Assembly. In World War I he was a first lieutenant in the Motor Transport service. Pierce had an intense interest in the history of Indianapolis and of his family, and this collection is the result of that interest.

Sources: Materials in collection

Indiana Biographical Series, vol. 24 p. 3, vol. 62 p. 19, vol. 69 p. 97

Biographical Directory of Indiana General Assembly

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection, filling two manuscript boxes, two photograph boxes, and two oversize folders, contains correspondence, legal papers, clippings, cards and invitations, photographs, and glass-plate negatives from the period 1865-1969. It is arranged by correspondent, and chronologically within correspondent.

In Box 1, Folders 1-2 contain biographical material on the Vinton and Pierce families. In Folder 3 is a copy of the 1865 agreement by which Almus E. Vinton gave up control of his foundry. Folders 4-13 contain material about and by Henry D. Pierce, including an early scrapbook, correspondence, and many clippings. In Folders 14-21 are items relating to Elizabeth Vinton Pierce, including clippings, club papers, and memorials. Folder 22 contains articles about the Vinton-Pierce house at 1415 North Meridian Street, and in Folders 22-23 are newspaper articles and other items by and about the Pierces' daughter, Theresa V. P. Krull.

In Box 2, Folders 1-7 concern H. Douglas Pierce, Jr. Folder 1 contains three thank-you letters he wrote in 1904 after a visit to Louisville, and in Folders 2-5 is a collection of invitations, dance cards, and social correspondence from the years 1908-1911 which gives a picture of Indianapolis social life of that period. In Folder 8 is a 1907 clipping about the younger Pierce daughter, Elizabeth. Folders 9-12 contains material about the Vinton-Pierce real estate firm. In Folder 13 is a leaflet with views of the Indianapolis flood of 24-27 March 1913.

Box 3 contains photographs. Vinton family members are in Folder 1. In Folder 2 are a class picture from Public School 11 about 1890, and a group of three men clowning about 1885 (the one in the middle is Albert J. Beveridge). Folders 3-5 contain photographs, mainly early, of Henry D. Pierce; Folder 6, portraits of Elizabeth Vinton Pierce; and Folders 7-8, of their children Theresa and Douglas.

Folders 9-13 contain photographs and glass-plate negatives of the Vinton-Pierce house at 725 (later 1415) North Meridian Street, taken about 1890. In Folder 14 are snapshots of scenes during the 1913 flood, especially of the Meridian Street bridge over Fall Creek, which had been swept away.

Box 4 contains stereographs taken about 1880: eleven views of the Pierce house at 729 North Meridian; four views of its interior; and seven views of the Vinton-Pierce house next door.

In OM 0338, Folder 1 contains two deeds of 1870 and 1880, and Folder 2 a sale poster for horse-drawn vehicles from the Vinton-Pierce carriage house.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box 1: Genealogical and biographical; Henry D. Pierce; Elizabeth Vinton Pierce; Theresa V. P. Krull FOLDER CONTENTS

- 1 Genealogical and biographical-- Vinton
- 2 Genealogical and biographical-- Pierce
- 3 Agreement-- Eagle Machine Works 1865
- 4 Henry D. Pierce -- scrapbook 1860s-1880s
- 5 Henry D. Pierce -- father's letter about him ca 1870
- 6 Henry D. Pierce -- Turpie and Pierce 1880s
- 7 Henry D. Pierce -- description of Pierce real estate 1884
- 8 Henry D. Pierce -- correspondence 1897-1927
- 9 Henry D. Pierce -- Nicaragua canal 1888-1927
- 10 Henry D. Pierce -- passports 1926, 1928
- 11 Henry D. Pierce -- news articles by HDP
- 12-13 Henry D. Pierce -- news articles about HDP
- 14 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- letter to EVP about son's birth 1884
- 15 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- clippings re: Propylaeum 1891-1911
- 16 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- gift of books to Butler library 1931
- 17 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- gift of Alhambra model to Arsenal Tech 1932
- 18 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- clippings and press releases
- 19 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- club papers
- 20 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- cards and brochures
- 21 Elizabeth Vinton Pierce -- memorials
- 22 Articles about Vinton-Pierce house
- 23-24 Theresa Vinton Pierce Krull

**Box 2: H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.; Vinton-Pierce real estate
FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.-- letters written on movie flyers 1904
- 2 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.-- invitations 1910-1914
- 3 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.-- dance programs 1908-1909
- 4 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.-- dance programs 1910-1911
- 5 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.-- correspondence in tiny envelopes ca 1911
- 6 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.-- correspondence 1943
- 7 H. Douglas Pierce, Jr.- speech at Hoosier Salon n.d.
- 8 Elizabeth Pierce-- clipping 1907
- 9 Deeds 1865-1873
- 10 (OM 0338) Deeds 1870, 1880
- 11 Vinton-Pierce Building and real estate
- 12 Brochure for PennMar sign
- 13 Brochure of views of 1913 flood
- 14 Miscellaneous flyers

**Box 3: Photographs
FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 (VC) Mrs. Almus E. Vinton; David Vinton
- 2 (VC) Men clowning ca 1885; P. S. 11 class
- 3-4 (VC) Henry D. Pierce
- 5 (VC) Four-State Auto Tour July 1912
- 6 (VC) Elizabeth Vinton Pierce
- 7 (VC) Theresa and Douglas Pierce 1890-1900
- 8 (VC) Douglas Pierce as boy
- 9 (VC) 1415 N. Meridian St.
- 10 (VC) 1415 N. Meridian St. from glass plate negatives
- 11 (VC) 21 5"x 8" glass-plate negatives of 1415
- 12 (VC) Horse-drawn vehicles at 1415

- 13 (VC) 2 large views of 1415 (graphics storage)
14 (VC) Snapshots of Indianapolis flood, 24-27 March 1913

Box 4: Stereographs (fliptop box 2 1/2 by 7 1/2 by 6 inches)

- (VC) 11 views of Pierce house 729 N. Meridian ca 1880
(VC) 4 interior views of 729 N. Meridian St. ca 1880
(VC) 7 views of Vinton-Pierce house at 725 (later 1415) N. Meridian St. ca 1880

OM 338
FOLDER CONTENTS

- 1 Deeds 1870, 1880
2 Sale poster for horse-drawn vehicles at 1415 N. Meridian St. ca 1936

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's [online catalog](#)
2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

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