For some 140 years, many of the Captain Michael Pierce genealogies have contained serious errors that render these genealogies false in that they present a family history that did not exist. This paper addresses the following subjects:

1. Michael Pierce’s father was not Richard, James, or Azrikam.
2. His brothers were not William, John, Richard, or Robert.
3. Michael Pierce was related to Thomas Pierce of Charlestown, Massachusetts, but how they were related is unknown. Testing of Michael and Thomas’s descendants show shared DNA.
4. Michael Pierce did not have a middle name or initial. This one is not really the fault of FC Pierce except in perhaps an indirect way.
5. Deacon Mial Pierce was the son of Ephraim Pierce and Hannah Holbrook. He was not the son of Ephraim Pierce Jr. and Mary Low.
6. Judith Round’s maiden name was not Ellis.

Many family genealogists of Michael Pierce (ca. 1615/20-1676) have used four Pierce genealogy books as their main source for their family research. Frederick Clifton Pierce wrote three of these books and contributed heavily to the fourth. There have been a few other books that have influenced family historians. For the most part these books have borrowed heavily from FC Pierce and contain the same errors, and occasionally have added new inaccuracies.

Over a period of nine years FC Pierce evolved a false narrative on Captain Michael Pierce that, unfortunately, has been exacerbated by the continuous copying forward his flawed research into many Pierce genealogies. Most Pierce genealogies are patently wrong on subject of the name of Captain Michael Pierce’s father and on the names of any siblings he might have had. They are wrong in giving Michael Pierce a middle name he did not have.

So, how did we get this point where the overwhelming majority of genealogies of Captain Michael Pierce’s family tree have this information wrong?

The story starts with Frederick Clifton Pierce and his three Pierce/Pearce genealogies, and a fourth publication by Frederick Beech Pierce in which Frederick Clifton was a major contributor. The story continues to move forward as many genealogists fail to question FC Pierce’s false assertions.

1880: FC Pierce published the genealogy of his ancestor John Pers of Watertown, Massachusetts. Here after “John Pers Genealogy.” The full title of this book and the other three Pierce books are given at the end of this paper.
John Pers was a weaver who came America from Norwich, Norfolk, England in 1637. The research on John Pers appears well documented.

In the beginning of the “John Pers Genealogy” FC Pierce has a short piece on John Peirce of London who was one of the Merchant Adventurers, a group London business men involved in investing in the American Colonies. No family connection was made or inferred between John Peirce and John Pers. FCs Pierce says that John Peirce’s son Richard was a resident of Pemaquid (Maine). There are no sources or documentation on this, and it has no bearing on the family of Captain Michael Pierce.

“John Pers Genealogy” includes a section on the genealogy of Robert Peirce who probably arrived in Dorchester in the early 1630s. No family connection with John Pers or John Peirce is inferred.

1882: Frederick Beech Pierce, with the help of Frederick Clifton Pierce who supplied much of the family history, published the “Thomas Pierce Genealogy.” This is the genealogy of Thomas Pierce of Charlestown, Massachusetts, who came to America around 1633.

This book contains the same short article on John Pierce that was in the “John Pers Genealogy.” John Peirce’s name is now spelled Pierce.

On page viii of this work there is a little piece by Frederick Beech Pierce on “The English Family.” He asserts that since there was a Thomas Pierce in Norfolk County, England in the 1500s, so Thomas Pierce of Charlestown, Massachusetts had to be of that family. The logic of that statement is incomprehensible because it defies logic. It is like saying because there was a John Jones in New York in 1900, then John Jones living in Phoenix in 2000 must be of that family. Dorset, England Parish records show 10 entries for Thomas Pierce from 1583 to 1615. They were not all for the same Thomas. Similar numbers would probably be found in other English parishes.

FB Pierce concludes, without any proof, that Thomas Pierce of Charleston was from Norwich, England, and that he was the brother of John Pers of Watertown and Robert Peirce of Dorchester. So, now we have the erroneous claim that Thomas, John, and Robert were brothers.

Ironically, we now know, through DNA testing, that Thomas Pierce was related to Captain Michael Pierce. How they were related we don’t know. Descendants of the two men share DNA. As with Michael we don’t know who Thomas’s father was, and neither one has been found on any ship passenger list. Thomas was born about 1584 and Michael was born about 1615-1620, which would mean the chances of their being brothers is unlikely.

None of the other Pierce lines have DNA matches to Thomas or Michael.

1888: FC Pierce published the “Richard Pearce Genealogy.” He is now Colonel Frederick Colonel Pierce. Interesting. Frederick Clifton showed a lot of imagination as this book takes the family back through the Percy family, all the way back to 972, and the purported Percy/Pierce ancestor, “Manfred, the Dane.”

Manfred: Supposedly born about 972, Manfred is presented as an ancestor of Agnes de Percy.
There no documentation to prove this assertion. In his 1902 book *A History of the House of Percy From Earliest Times Down to the Present Century*, Gerald Brenan says, “There exists...a specious pedigree to deduce the line of Perci from Geoffrey Fitz-Mainfred...” He further says, “But no trustworthy evidence can be set forth of a Danish Mainfred’s existence or even of the source from which the race of Perci sprang.”

**Percy to Pierce:** FC Pierce ties the famous and powerful English Percy family to the Pierce family. This appears to be a fanciful invention of Frederick C Pierce. He gives quite an extensive history of the House of Percy, but then makes a specious jump from the Percy family to the Pierce family. There no known connection to the Percy family. That is not say the name Pierce could not have been a variant of Percy, but there is just no proof of that. The Pierce name probably derived from the name Piers or some other variant of Peter.

FC Pierce states that a Richard Percy founded Pearce Hall in York, England. I have yet to find any credible source that can attest that there was ever a Pearce Hall in York, England, or anywhere in England. Even if it existed that would not establish any connection to Richard Pearce of Rhode Island and William Pierce the mariner. Richard supposedly had a son Richard, and he in turn had two sons, Richard born in 1590, and William.

Colonel Pierce also says Richard sailed to America in the ship *Lyons* with his brother William Pearce who was the ship’s master. I can’t find a Richard Pearce on any passenger lists for the ship *Lyons or Lyon*. The ship *Lyon* captained by Pierce (most likely William Pierce) made four voyages to America between 1630 and 1632. There is no known passenger list for one of the voyages. Anne Stevens on Packrat-pro.com has a very good listing of early 1600 ships and passengers that traveled to America. Richard Pearce is not on the three passenger lists for the ship *Lyon*. There is no evidence that Captain William Pierce was a relative of Richard Pearce who settled in Rhode Island.

**1889:** Fredrick Clifton Pierce published the “Michael Pierce Genealogy.” He is no longer a Colonel. He says John the Merchant Adventurer, Captain William, and Captain Michael were brothers. It is odd that he doesn’t claim Richard as brother, although just a year earlier he said Richard and William were brothers. However, it is probable that, although the Michael Pierce book was published after the Richard Pierce book, the Michael Pierce book was written first. So, his conclusion that Richard was the father of Richard, William, John, and Michael was arrived at after the Michael book was completed, but before it was published. In the preface of the Richard book he comments that the Michael book is to be published soon.

There is a section on Captain William Pierce in this book. It should be noted that FC Pierce conflates information about a Captain William Pierce of Virginia, a militia captain, with the mariner Captain William Pierce. It has been said that William Pierce sailed the *Mayflower* to America on its second voyage in 1629. But just to clear the record, he did sail a ship of that name, but it was not the 1620 *Mayflower*. Inquiries about the supposed second voyage were made at Plymouth this past summer. It seems that when they were doing the research needed to build the replica of the *Mayflower* they found that there were more than 20 ships with that name and that the original *Mayflower* was sold for scrap just a year or two after its historic voyage to America.
No credible evidence or documentation is provided to show that John, William, and Michael were brothers. The connection to John and William is based upon John’s failed attempts to send the ship Paragon to America in 1622. FC Pierce on page 11 of the “Michael Pierce Genealogy” states that the Paragon was captained by John’s brother William. I have been unable to find any documentation that says William Pierce was the captain of that ship. Even if he had been the captain it would not signify any familial relationship.

John Pierce financed two failed attempts to get the Paragon to America and suffered financially from the failures. In The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, January 1913, Vol. LXVII, pages 147-153 is an article by J. Gardner Bartlett, “John Peirce of London and the Merchant Adventurers.” In a 1627 Chancery Bill court transcription John Peirce does mention his brother Richard who helped him financially. However, this could not be the Richard Pearce of Rhode Island, who would have only been about 7 years old in 1622 at the time of the Paragon failed voyages.

During King Philip's War, Michael Pierce was killed on 26 March 1676. FC Pierce connects William to Michael on page 19 of “Michael Pierce Genealogy” when he writes, “Captain Michael Pierce of Scituate was a brother of Captain William Pierce of London [Drake’s Indian Chronicle, pp 307, in News from New England, 1676.].” This is referring to The Old Indian Chronicle; Being a Collection of Exceeding Rare Tracts, Written and Published in the Time of King Philip’s War, by Persons Residing in the Country. To which are now added an Introduction and Notes, By Samuel G. Drake, By Samuel A. Drake, 1867. A section of the book is titled “News From New-England.” This portion of the book was written by an unknown person in England from information sent to him by another unknown person living in New England at the time of King Philip’s War. It is this section where we find the quote about Captain Michael Pierce’s brother. The actual quote is “...Captain Pierce, Brother to Captain Pierce of London...” It does not say William Pierce. We don’t know who this Captain Pierce of London was. It sounds like he was a contemporary of the writer. Captain William Pierce was killed 35 years earlier, so it is doubtful that the Captain Pierce of London was the same person.

Summary of the four Pierce Genealogy Books:
1880 Family: John Pers.
1882 Family: Brothers Thomas, John Pers, and Robert.
1888 Family: Father Richard, sons Richard and William with the family going back to Manfred.
1889 Family: Brothers John (Merchant Adventurer), William, and Michael.
As can be seen there was no consistency in trying to establish these relationships. The only consistency was that Frederick Clifton Pierce was always wrong.

1904: Lora S. LaMance published The Greene Family and Its Branches. She does not cite FC Pierce, but it is apparent she relies on him since she says that John the Merchant Adventurer, Robert Pierce, William Pierce, and Michael Pierce were brothers. LaMance also contends some of the other early Pierce immigrant were cousin. She then comes up with an entirely unique and dubious pronouncement on who Michael Pierce’s father was.

LaMance contends that these four “brothers” were the sons of Azrikam Pierce and the grandsons of ____ Pierce and Anteres Lascelle Pierce. There is nothing factual here. Michael did
have a grandson named Azrikam, but that in no way that can lead to a conclusion that his father was named Azrikam.

She, like FC Pierce, confuses the Captain William Pierce of Virginia with Captain William Pierce the mariner. Probably because she took that information from his book. LaMance states that Michael Pierce served as an ensign under Miles Standish, which is doubtful since Miles Standish seems to have ended any active military duties after about 1635. The first record of Michael Pierce’s name being connected with the military was in 1673 when a force of men was raised in anticipation of being needed during an English and Dutch conflict. Michael Pierce was nominated as Ensign (Plymouth Colony Records, Vol V, page 136). She also claims that “He was the greatest Indian fighter of the King Philip War.” If that were only true, but leading your company into an ambush and getting it almost annihilated is hardly the stuff of being a great Indian fighter. There is no record of him being in any other Indian wars where a reputation could have been built.

1927: Clifford George Hurlburt published *Pierce Genealogy being a Partial record of the Posterity of Richard Pearse, an early inhabitant of Portsmouth in Rhode Island, who came from England and whose Genealogy is traced back to 972*. This is a rehash of FC Pierce books, giving the Percy family tree and then the same dubious transition to the Richard Pearce. He says William is the son of Richard and the brother of Richard, but he does not try to tie in the other Pierces.

1936: Harvey Cushman Pierce published *Seven Pierce Families* This is the genealogy of seven Pierce families that were early settlers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He makes no claim of that all these early Pierce families were related other than as noted below. He relied to the three FC Pierce book and the FB Pierce book along with some other publications. It doesn’t appear that he did much in the way of original research.

Here are the seven Pierce families:
Abraham Peirce of Plymouth, Massachusetts: No claim of relationship to the other families.
Daniel Peirce of Newbury, Massachusetts: No claim of relationship to the other families.
John Pierce of Watertown, Massachusetts: No claim of relationship to the other families.
Michael Pierce of Scituate, Massachusetts: He claims William was his brother apparently based on FC Pierce’s claim.
Richard Pearce of Portsmouth, Rhode Island: Based on FC Pierce’s book on Richard, Harvey Pierce restates the fallacy that the family history goes back to 972, and that William was Richard’s brother.
Robert Peirce of Dorchester, Massachusetts: No claim of relationship to the other families.
Thomas Pierce of Charlestown, Massachusetts: No claim of relationship to the other families.

Harvey Cushman Pierce tied William to Michael and Richard, but like FC Pierce, he did not tie Michael to Richard.

1947: Bernard L. Colby published *Thirty-One Generations A Thousand Years of Percies and Pierces 972 to 1948*. He rehashes the Manfred/Percy story for which, as stated previously, there is no proof. He presents Richard, John, William, Michael as the sons of Richard, apparently tying together the last two Frederick Clifton Pierce books.
Colby makes the same dubious claim as LaMance that Michael Pierce served as an ensign under Miles Standish.

LaMance, Hurlburt, Harvey C Pierce, Colby, and others carried forward the main erroneous assertions made by Frederick Clifton Pierce, while sometimes adding their own specious variations to the story of Captain Michael Pierce.

**Michael Pierce had no middle name or initial!**

Lately, many family trees are seen with Michael Pierce given a middle name of James or an initial “J.” Captain Michael Pierce had no middle name. No source has been found for this fallacious middle name/initial. There is not one document concerning Michael Pierce that shows him with a middle name or initial. In reviewing the *Plymouth Colony Records*, Michaell Peirse’s name appears a number of times in Volumes 5 and 6, and never with a middle name or initial. His name appears on the following pages: 13, 32, 36, 56, 92, 104, 106, 136, 187, 208, and 275.

People just did not have middle names during that period. A check of names from that time period will show few, if any people with a middle name. It wasn’t until the late 18th century that middle names began to be used, and even then, few people had a middle name.

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**Michaell Peirse’s name from his will as written by himself. No middle name or initial.**

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**Signature of Michaell Peirse** from the *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol. 5, page 122 in the printed records. The original documents that has this signature is believed to be in the Plymouth County vaults.

Perhaps the reason someone assigned a middle name comes from the mistaken belief that Captain Michael Pierce’s father’s name was James, although that would be an odd reason to assigning a non-existent middle name. When FC Pierce transcribed Michael’s will he mistakenly read “my father Eames” as “my father James.” Perhaps by some tortured logic someone thought that if his father was James then Michael must have had a middle name of James.

It is clear that in his will Michael was referring to his father-in-law, Anthony Eames. Below are the sections of Michael Pierce’s will where he refers to “my father Eames” and to “my brother Mark Eames.” Also, Michael Pierce wrote the name William James in reference to some land he bought from him. The difference between Eames and James can be readily seen.
Michael Pierce was not in the Great Swamp/Narragansett Fight.
Although many family trees maintain that Michael Pierce was in the Great Swamp/Narragansett Fight of 19 December 1675, FC Pierce did not. It was Samuel Deane in *The History Scituate, Massachusetts, From Its First Settlement To 1831*, (published 1831), where the first reference is found to Michael Pierce being in that fight. On page 326 he says that Michael Pierce was in the Narragansett/Great Swamp Fight. When discussing the Narragansett Fight and Pierce Fight earlier in the book on pages 120 and 121, he does contend that Michael Pierce was in the Narragansett Fight. The Plymouth Regiment commanded by Major William Bradford had three companies in the Narragansett Fight. Bradford commanded of the first company. Captain Robert Barker and Captain John Gorham were in command of the other two companies. Michael Pierce made his will in January 1675/76 just after the Narragansett Fight because he was now to command a company going out to take up the fight. His name does not appear on any records of the Narragansett Fight.

There is no Family Crest.
Despite the different so-called Pierce family crests seen on different web sites or in publications, there was no Pierce family crest. Crests were normally awarded to individuals, not families, and there is no historical evidence of a Pierce being awarded a crest.

A little speculation
No documentation has been found to show where Thomas and Michael came from in England. Michael’s wife was Persis Eames. He named two daughters Persis, (one dying young). Thomas had a daughter Persis born in England in 1626. Persis is an unusual name, so it is interesting that the name was in both the Eames family and the Thomas Pierce family some years before Persis and Michael were married. However, there is no proof that the Pierce and Eames family knew each other prior to immigrating to America.

It could be completely coincidental that both Anthony Eames and Thomas Pierce named daughters Persis. Michael naming his daughter Persis after his wife was not unusual. In addition
to Persis, both Michael and Thomas had children with the following names: John, Mary, Abigail, Hannah, Benjamin, and Elizabeth.


Anthony Eames’s brother, Richard had married an Alice Sprague in Fordington in 1615, so the Eames and Sprague families were acquainted in England.

There is a possibility Anthony Eames’ wife Margery was a Pierce, but the only evidence is on page 238 of Clarence Almon Torrey’s New England Marriages Prior to 1700, published by the Genealogy Publishing Co., Inc, Seventh Printing 2004. The entry is “EAMES, Anthony & Margery [Pierce?] ; b 1616; Charlestown/Hingham.” The 1616 date is the date for the birth of their first child. Torrey does not show his source for the record. Michael Russell in “Pilgrims from Fordington The Eames Family,” says that, according to a Wilder family source, Thomas Wilder married Hannah Eames (alleged sister of Persis Eames Pierce), and identifies her parents as Anthony Eames and Margery Prisse, but no source was given. There is no evidence that Anthony and Margery Eames had a daughter Hannah.

Although it is fun to speculate, the circumstantial evidence is not enough to prove that the two Pierce families and the Eames family knew each other prior to immigrating to America, or that they came from the same place in England.

**Mial Pierce’s parents**

FC Pierce created another controversy when he incorrectly placed Captain Michael’s grandson Mial as the son of Ephraim Pierce Jr. and Mary Low. Mial was the son of Ephraim Pierce and Hannah Holbrook.

Michael and Mial are the same name. Mial, in its various forms, appears to be a phonetic spelling of Michael as it was pronounced during that period. The unknown author of “The Pierce Lineage of Isaac Washington Pierce, 1811-1841, Through Daniel Pierce, 1746-1839, to Capt. Michael Pierce, 1615-1676” presents three examples where Captain Michael’s name was written phonetically in a form that would be pronounced as Mial. It was written as Mihel Peirce in two Suffolk County court records in 1674 and a 1675. It was written as Mihill Peirse in a 1675 land transaction. Carole Gardner in “Capt. Michael Peirse” cites a 1665 town record from the book, The Seventeenth-Century Town Records of Scituate, Massachusetts by Jeremy Dupertuis that shows the name as Mihill Pearse

The problem with placing Mial as the son of Ephraim Jr is that is that Mial was born on 24 April 1693. Ephraim Jr and Mary Low were not married until 16 April 1697. In current times couples might have children years before they marry, or never marry, but that did not happen in Puritan America. Ephraim and Mary’s first child Mary was born on 16 November 1697. Some have argued that Ephraim Jr and Mary Low were married in 1692 not 1697. The record is clear that
their marriage took place in 1697. Also, Michael Pierce is included Ephraim Pierce Senior’s will of 18 July 1718.

Birth of Mial (Michael) Pierce (Vital Record of Rehoboth, page 700)

Marriage of Ephraim Jr and Mary Low. Notice the marriage of Ephraim’s brother Azrikam (Ezariakam) in 1696. (Vital Records of Swansea, Massachusetts, page 22)

Original marriage entry for Ephraim Jr and Mary Low.

Birth of Ephraim and Mary’s first child (Vital Records of Swansea, Massachusetts, page 14)

Ephraim Pierce’s will 18 July 1718, Warwick, Rhode Island

There have been those who say that Ephraim Sr. could not be the father of Mial because he already had a son Michael born in 1676. FC Pierce shows a Michael Pierce born to Ephraim Sr. in 1676. The only source for this is FC Pierce, so there is a good possibility that he erred, and there was no Michael Pierce born in 1676. If there was a Michael Pierce born in 1676, then that child probably died young. When a child died it very common to give a later child the same name.

Mial’s wife was Judith Round.

One more controversy created by FC Pierce was when he stated that Mial Pierce’s wife was “Judith Ellis, the daughter of Judge Ellis.” There is no record of any Ellis family in Rehoboth, Swansea, or any of the surrounding towns during that time period. To further confuse things the marriage record for Mial and Judith has her name as Joanah Round. This is almost certainly Judith Round. It probably an error of the town clerk who recorded the marriage.
Miele Peirce and Joanah Round were married November ye 26:1711

Marriage record of Mial Pierce and Judith Round. (Vital Records of Swansea, Massachusetts, page 188)

Judith had to be the daughter of John Round as her name appears in his will. The will was written in 1710, before Judith was married. It is Mial and Judeth in all the birth records for eight of their children. No birth record has been found for their son Joshua. The death record for Mial’s wife gives her name as Judeth.

The 1710 will of John Round of Swansea lists Judeth Round as one of his daughters.

Birth of Mail and Judith’s son Ephraim (Vital Records of Swansea, Massachusetts, page 60)

Birth of Mail and Judith’s son Wheeler (Vital Records of Swansea, Massachusetts, page 161)

Record of the birth of 6 of Mial and Judith’s children (Vital Record of Rehoboth, page 700)

Record of Judith’s death (Vital Record of Rehoboth, page 859)

Martha Stuart Helligso writes in “Captain Michael Pierce Including One Line of Descent” that a correspondent wrote to her that “In a book found in the old Thurber house were notes of the family written by a descendant of Mial’s which states ‘my father, Mial Pierce departed this life Oct 18, 1786 in the 94th year of his life; my mother, Judith Rounds, wife of Mial departed Oct 6, 1744.’” The existence of this note can’t be verified.

Frederick Clifton Pierce did a prodigious amount of work in nine years. Much of what he did is helpful for those trying to trace their Pierce families, but it is a mistake to rely solely on FC Pierce. His work has to be corroborated with other sources. The damage he did by including clearly false and fanciful family relationships has been tremendous.
Full titles of the Pierce genealogy books that have adversely influenced generations of genealogist:

*Peirce Genealogy, Being the Record of the Posterity of John Pers, An Early Inhabitant of Watertown, In New England; With Notes on the History of Other Families of Peirce, Pierce, Pearce, ETC.* By Frederick Clifton Peirce, Esq., 1880.

*Pierce Genealogy, Being the Record of The Posterity of Thomas Pierce, An Early Inhabitant of Charlestown, And Afterwards Charlestown Village (Woburn), In New England, With Wills, Inventories, Biographical Sketches, ETC.* By Frederick Beech Pierce, Of Boston, Assisted and Edited by Frederick Clifton Peirce, Esq., 1882.


*Pierce Genealogy, No. IV, Being the Record of the Posterity of Capt. Michael, John and Capt. William Pierce, Who Came to This Country From England,* By Frederick Clifton Pierce, 1889