

THE LIFE AND FAMILY OF JEROME PIERCE

~ Born circa 1848 to 1850 – Died 1945 ~

(Earlier spelled Pearce)

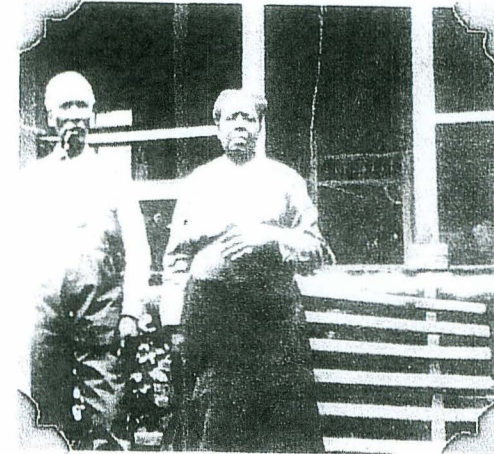
by Ray Willis ~ Nov. 2007

The Mother of the first known Jerome Pierce was known only as Maw. While she was a slave and served as a cook for a Kingsport white family, the Pierces, she became pregnant. Her baby boy was born circa 1848 – 1850. She named him Jerome Pierce. They lived in a one-room dirt floor log cabin.

When he was around 15 or 16 years old (1863), he decided to run away from the Pierce farm with 2 other slaves. Each one was going to bring supplies such as matches, side of meat, bread and blankets. One person failed to meet at the rail fence, so they called it off which probably saved their lives. That night was the biggest snowstorm of the year.

Later he, Andrew Bachman and other slaves joined the Union Army to fight the Confederate Army of the

South. They walked to Bristol to catch the train to Roanoke, Virginia but the rebels had destroyed the bridges for all railroads and they were forced to hike and live off the land.



Jerome Pierce and Wife Alice Luvenia.

They had no uniforms, no food and would kill farmer's animals (sheep) or forge for food. They received Union uniforms and ten dollars per month pay. Jerome could not read or write or count money because it was against the law for slaves to attend school. He learned to count money and saved his monthly wages to purchase his mother, Maw, out of slavery.

His primary job in the army was hauling supplies such as flour, corn and equipment to the Union Army in the South. With the bridges gone, they had to ford all the rivers and creeks with all the barrels of flour and supplies. The U.S. Army required one soldier

to ride the lead horse pulling the wagons. This was usually Jerome Pierce.



Jerome Pierce (on horse), sons - Albert J. Peirce and Samuel Patton Pierce, 1927-28, Kingsport, TN., Bays Mountain. Hauling logs on Studebaker Wagon.

At the end of the Civil War, he had to walk home from the North but he had to hide his blue Union coat because of hostile Confederates. When he got to the Pierce home his mother's whereabouts were unknown. Ruth Coley, a Great Grandchild, had always heard Maw had been sold. No one knows for sure.

Along the trail of Southern Baptist Retreat Center, there was an old log cabin that could have been Jerome's early home when he returned from war. Jerome G. Pierce, his grandson, said he built a log cabin on the side of Bays Mountain. When he returned, the only black men he knew were Andrew Bachman and Scott McConnell with whom he worked logging, hauling, farming and improving his

horsemanship skills. Jerome's skill with horses and mules became renown.

Once he bet some men in Jonesboro that he could turn his team of horses and wagon in the Jonesboro Square without touching the curb. Every time the horses would approach the curb, he would crack his whip and the horses would jump back. He won.

Recorded in Deed Book 76, Page 452, on March 27, 1888, Jerome bought 2 tracks of land from Aunt Nan (Nancy Hayes or Vincent) for \$53. Parcel #1 was 73 2/3 acres and Parcel #2 was 89 3/4 acres. Nancy Hayes Vincent reserved the right to live in the house until the day she died. She was the widow of Primus Hayes. Nancy and Jerome signed their names with an "X" on the deed in the presence of notary Alvin Roller and witnesses N.B. Owens and B.F. Hood.

Recorded in Deed Book 22, page 225, "on July 11, 1863, Primus Hayes (Vincent), "a man of culler", paid \$100 to George W. Vincent and Thomas F. Vincent for 210 acres more or less under the will of John Vincent, deceased. It is the same track of land that Primus now lives upon". This land is part of the 28.4 acres that was bought from the Pierce Family by Bays Mountain Park in April, 2006. The purchase price was \$750 an acre, \$21,300 total. This Pierce Plot serves as a buffer zone for the Park. The land is very steep and rocky, but this purchase protects the plants, trees and wildlife from logging and development. Mike Stone appraised the mountain property at \$745 an acre.



Albert J. Pierce and wife Lena Fitzgerald Pierce.

Names of Pierce sellers to Bays Mountain Park on April 6, 2006 were:

1. Jerome G. Pierce
2. Jack & Betsy Pierce
& Virginia Pierce Leeper
3. Jerome G. Pierce, Jr.
(son of Jerome G.)
4. Aleea Pierce (daughter of Jerome G.)

As of 2007, the old home of Jerome Pierce has been rented for 41 years by Charles Clyde Nunley (Bud) and his wife Barbara. The home is owned by Sherry Pierce Grimes, Jerome G. Pierce's daughter.

In 1915, the Clear Creek Water Company purchased 1,000 acres and built a dam for Kingsport's water supply. The lake was 28 acres. For 15 months, 35 or 40 men worked on building the dam. The rocks



Samuel Patton Pierce, February, 1967.

were cut out of a limestone quarry located right below the dam. The Pierces helped construct the Bays

Mountain Park Dam. They hauled the heavy stone and concrete to the dam site with large Belgium horses. The horses were similar to the Clydesdale horses we know today. With their large feet and strength, they could pull the heavy loads through the muddy roads. The Pierces transported worn railroad rails to be placed in the concrete of the dam for the reinforcement. They devised a set of rails and a wooden sled called a "lizard" to convey heavy loads to the muddy dam site. Jerome and his son, Albert Pierce, hauled rock, sand and cement for Bill Roller to help build the First Baptist Church at the Kingsport Church Circle in 1925 - 1927.

Jerome Pierce, the Civil War Veteran, taught his sons, Albert J. and Samuel Patton Pierce, how to work and care for horses. Albert, at one time, owned a total of eighteen horses. He moved his family to "Old Kingsport" and worked for Bill Roller and Pet Dairy. He was widely known for his expertise as a blacksmith or farrier (one who shoes and takes care of Horses). He would charge 25 cents a foot for a regular iron shoe, while a metal shoe with rubber would cost 50 cents a foot. Pet Dairy required the rubber shoes for the horses pulling the milk wagons on the concrete streets of Kingsport. The rubber shoes prevented them from sliding and making too much noise on the hard surfaced streets. Jack Pierce, son of Albert Pierce has donated Bays Mountain Park one of these old iron and rubber horse shoes. During World War II, Samuel worked for Frazier and Brace Company, who built the Holston Ordnance Plant. He cared for the horses that the security guards used to protect the huge ammunitions plant. In the late 1920's, the Tennessee Eastman Company hired many men from four states to log timber. The

Eastman sold the lumber, but used the bark, limbs and mill waste to make methanol and later acetic anhydride in the process of filmmaking. The Pierce's were an important family in logging and getting the logs to the Eastman sawmill. They used a Studebaker wagon that had wide wheels to help pull loads through muddy roads. They soaked the wooden spokes in creeks for them to swell to keep them tight.

Jerome wanted each of his five children to learn to read and write. The teacher, Headmaster Dolan, did not want any of the white families to know he was teaching the Pierce children. Jerome had to promise to keep the teaching a secret. Mr. Dolan would bring his slates and chalk and often ate supper with them.

Jerome's only daughter, Virginia, married Alfred Bond. Jerome built Virginia and Alfred a one-room cabin on 30 acres more or less of land that was bought on November 4, 1990 by the Sullivan Baptist Association. Sixteen of Virginia's children and grandchildren signed the deed. The one-room cabin

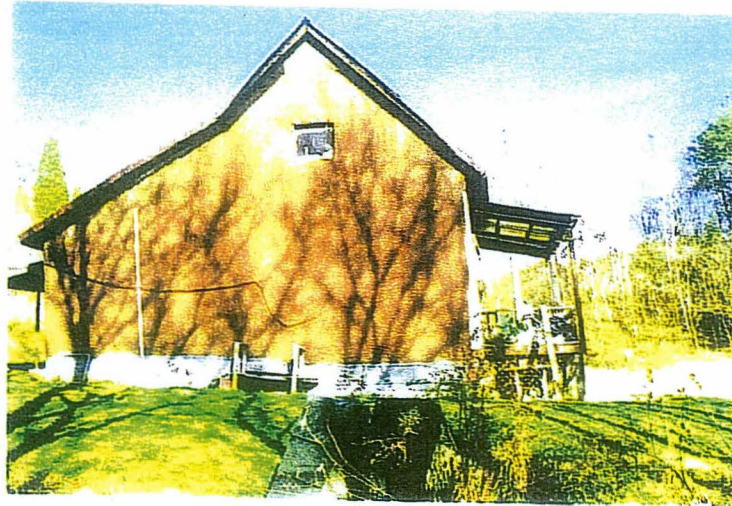
was chinked with clay and hog hair between the logs. Virginia raised twelve children and the boys slept in the loft while the parents and daughters slept down below. Circa 1936, Oscar, an older son, built them a new house in front of the cabin. Many relatives of Jerome Pierce have been given the names of Jerome and Virginia to honor their ancestors.

The Pierce Bond Family later built a combined school and church situated at the Pierce Cemetery on 1820 Seavers Road toward Hilltop Mission Church. The old church and school has been sold because it was abandoned and vandalized. Jerome died in 1945 from old age and was buried along with his wife, Alice Luvenia 1864 - 1928, in the Pierce Cemetery. The cemetery became an historical landmark in 2002.

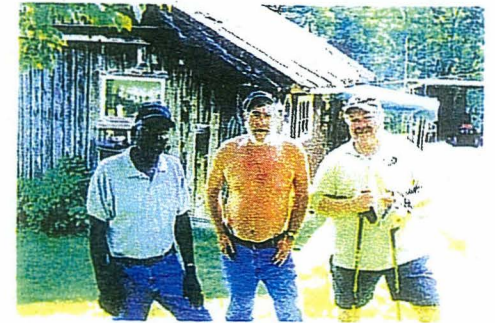
The Jerome Pierce Family has been an asset to Kingsport and the surrounding communities. They have often endured hardships and difficulties, but always have provided hard work, prominent athletes and leadership for their communities.



Jack Pierce.



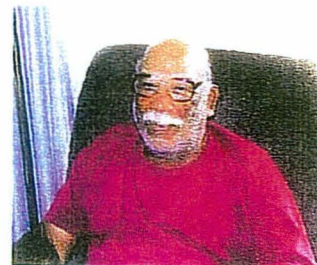
Jerome Pierce's Homeplace at the foot of Bays Mountain.



Backyard of Pierce Homeplace - (L to R.) Jack Pierce, Charles Hunley (Bud), and Fred Hilton (Bays Mtn. Naturalist).



Jerome G. Pierce and wife Elizabeth.



Grandson of Jerome Pierce, Jerome G. Pierce.

Signing of the deed of Jerome Pierce's original land (28.4 acres) over to Bays Mountain Park.



Rick Currie, attorney and commissioner on Park Commission, and Jerome G. Pierce



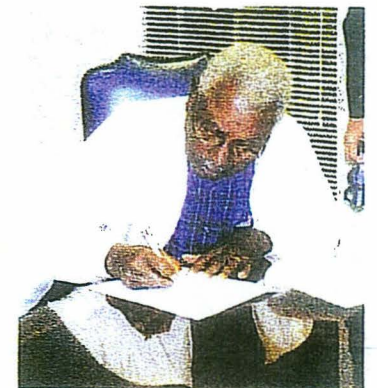
Bays Mountain Park Library - Jack Pierce, Anna Ruth Coley (Great Granddaughter).



Virginia Pierce Leeper.



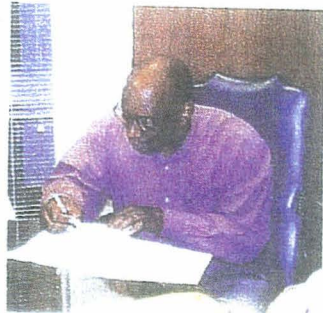
Tom Bowman - Park Director, Betsy Pierce and Rick Currie.



Jack Pierce.



Jerome G. Pierce and grand-daughter Elizabeth (Beth) Pierce.



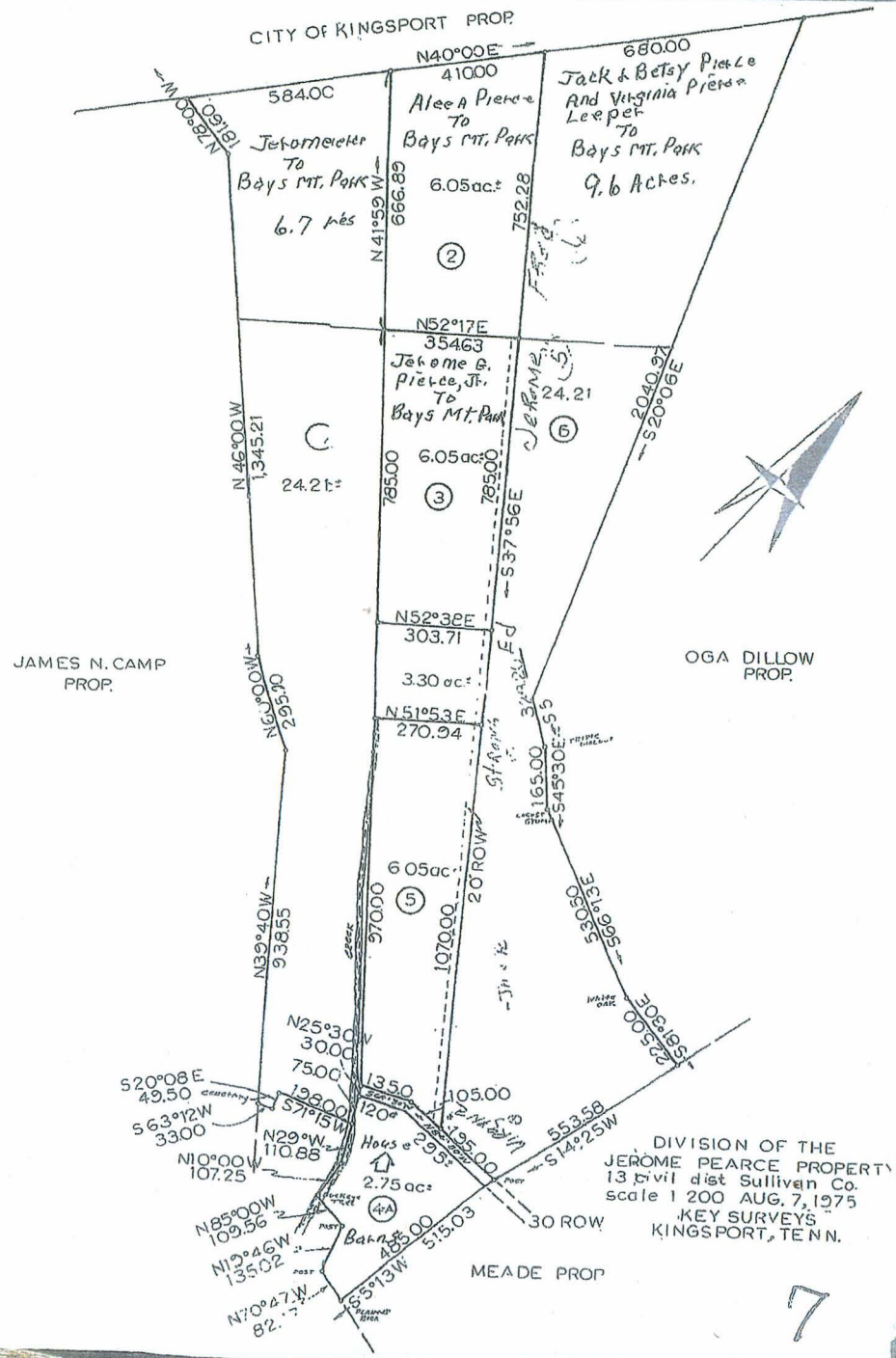
Jerome G. Pierce, Jr.



Eastman Chemical Co. video tape.



Elizabeth (Beth) Pierce, Virginia Pierce, Jack Pierce, Mary Cunningham (chair person of Park Commission) and Jerome G. Pierce, Jr.



Nancy Hayes or Vincent.
to
Jerome Pearce.

Know all men by
these presents: That
J. Nancy Hayes or

Vincent, now deceased, have this day bargained and
widow of Priscilla Hayes or Vincent, now deceased,
have this day bargained and sold and do hereby transfer
and convey in consideration of the sum of fifty-three
dollars to me in hand paid the receipt whereof is hereby
acknowledged, all the right, title, claim and interest
that I have in and to, two lots or parcels of land, lying
in the 13th Civil District of Sullivan County, Tennessee,
and described as follows:

Lot, or parcel, No. 1. Beginning at a platted rock
near the Liev Spring, B. F. Hood's corner; thence with
thirteen of his lines, N. 72 1/2° W. 5 1/2 poles, N. 22° W. 8 poles.

The last four lines and five ^{corners} were equal to
and established by J. Dodson and Jerome Pearce, in our
presence. Thence along the said Mountain about
S. 38° W. 114 poles to a high pine, Mrs. Short's corner,
thence with five of his lines S. 19 1/2° E. 86 poles to a
post oak on a spur, S. 61° E. 10 poles to a platted rock,
S. 5 1/2° E. 24 poles to a red oak bush, S. 52° E. 21 poles to a platted
rock, S. 39° E. 45 poles to the beginning, containing 87 7/8
acres, be the same, more or less.

To have and to hold the said two lots or parcels of land
as above described, to the said Jerome Pearce, his heirs
and assigns forever. And I hereby bind myself to
warrant and defend the title hereby conveyed against
the lawful claims of all persons whatsoever.

But a home on said land and a reasonable sup-
port from the same, for my wife, is hereby re-
served for, and during my natural life.

Signed, sealed and ^{delivered} in the presence of March 27th 1888
N. B. Owens, B. F. Hood, Nancy Hayes or Vincent

Mr. George W. Vincent and Thomas S. Vincent of
Sullivan County in the State of Tennessee, for the consideration of
one hundred dollars to us paid, have this day conveyed and
quit claimed unto Priscilla Hayes a tract of ceder of the
County and State aforesaid all our interest which we have by
reversion or in expectancy under the last will of John Vincent
deceased, a tract of land in the State of Tennessee in Sullivan
County in Civil District No. 13 adjoining the lands of N. Parkman
and others, containing two hundred and ten acres be the same
more or less, it being the same tract of land that said Priscilla
now lives upon, and occupies under the last will of the said
John Vincent dec'd with the appurtenances.

And we hereby convey and confirm and quit
claimed unto said Priscilla also our undivided interest in said
land free from any person claiming through or by us but
no further. In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands
and seals this 11th day of July 1863.

Witness
William Mullerix
A. B. Masterson

G. W. Vincent ^{res} (Seal)
T. S. Vincent (Seal)

Pierce Land Values
January 26, 2006

Bibliography
Interviews:

Grandchildren:

Jerome G. Pierce,
Virginia Pierce Leeper,
and Jack Pierce.

Charles Clyde Nunley (Bud)

Great Granddaughter Ruth Pierce Coley

Essay, "Butterfly Community" by Jimmy Jones

Eastman Chemical Company 1920-1995 - Video Tape

Wanda Valentine - Eastman Chemical Co. - Pictures

Deed Books 22 and 76 - Blountville Record of Deeds