

## *Sunnycroft: A Scituate Summer Estate*

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**Abstract:** Sunnycroft in coastal Scituate, MA was the summer estate of a prominent Boston family. Its history illustrates how wealthy Bostonians created country estates to escape the city's summer heat in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It is significant as the creation of a woman, Lucy (Peirce) Nichols, in a period when most of these estates were built by men. It is also significant that she created the estate by transforming a historic house rather than building a new estate, as most others did. Through four generations, Sunnycroft housed leaders of the Silas Peirce & Co. grocery store in Boston (not to be confused with S.S. Pierce & Co.), as well as a top executive of Rockland Trust. The Silas Peirce firm in its time was America's oldest grocery business. The Peirce family, with roots in colonial America, contributed greatly to the business, cultural, educational, and social lives of Boston and Scituate. Sunnycroft remains a good example of an early twentieth-century summer estate of wealthy Bostonians.

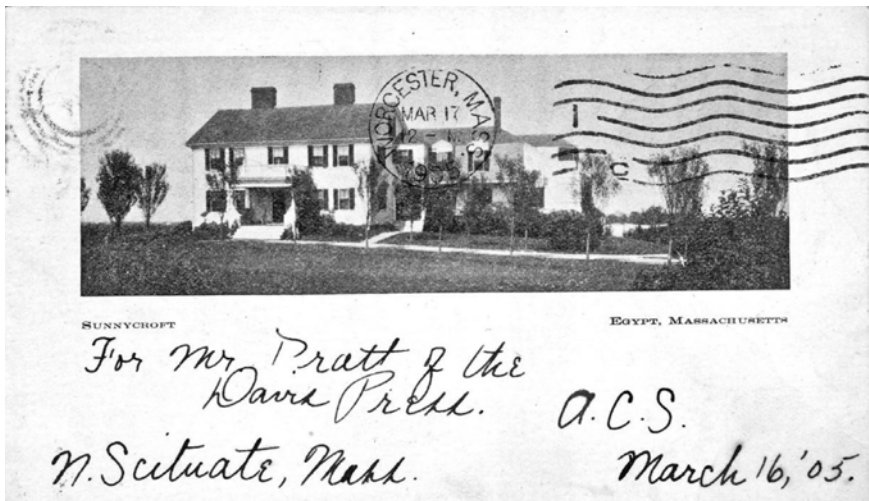


Figure 1: Sunnycroft, Egypt, Scituate, MA, private mailing card, dated and postmarked 1905.  
Courtesy of George B. White.

This is a tale of two country estates for a prominent Boston family. Generations of the Peirce family had their ancestral home, Meadow Crest, in Scituate. In the late 1800s, the family branched out when Lucy (Peirce) Nichols transformed a nearby old house into a fine country estate, Sunnycroft. That estate is the focus of this article. For a woman to implement her vision while preserving a historic house was uncommon. Sunnycroft became home to four generations of Peirce descendants until 1990, and it remains in existence today.

As shown in more detail below, Sunnycroft's history illustrates how Americans escaped the summer heat of the city in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and how wealthy families established country estates. Coastal Scituate, about thirty miles southeast of Boston, became an attractive destination, easily accessible after the railroad arrived in 1871.<sup>1</sup>

Sunnycroft is significant because it was created by a woman, Lucy (Peirce) Nichols (1853–1910), at a time when American country estates were mostly created by wealthy men. In addition, she created it by transforming a historic house rather than building new, as others did.<sup>2</sup>

Lucy's father, Silas Peirce II (1826–1898), was a member of the well-known Peirce family. The family's Boston firm—Silas Peirce & Co. (not to be confused with S.S. Pierce)—was, in its time, America's oldest grocery business, lasting 111 years.

Lucy's father acquired the property that became Sunnycroft in the late 1800s. The property included a residence previously owned by members of the Litchfield family that dated to about 1800. After her father died in 1898, Lucy had the residence moved and renovated, improved the property, and turned it into a fine summer estate. Its name was likely bestowed by Lucy. It was home to her and other Peirce family members including several leaders of the Peirce firm, as well as a top executive of Rockland Trust. Rockland Trust, established in 1907, is a leading commercial bank in the greater Boston area. Sunnycroft remained in the family for nearly a century, passed down through four generations. It still stands today, at 108 Captain Peirce Road, a road named for a family ancestor from the 1600s who is discussed later in this article.

Below is a history of Sunnycroft and the families who lived there. It starts with the Litchfields, then turns to the Peirces. The latter has roots deep in American history, and it had an ancestral home, later called Meadow Crest, near Sunnycroft. From the Peirce family and Meadow Crest springs the story of Sunnycroft. Both homes were in a part of Scituate known as Egypt. The discussion below ends with a note containing a partial genealogy of the Peirce family.

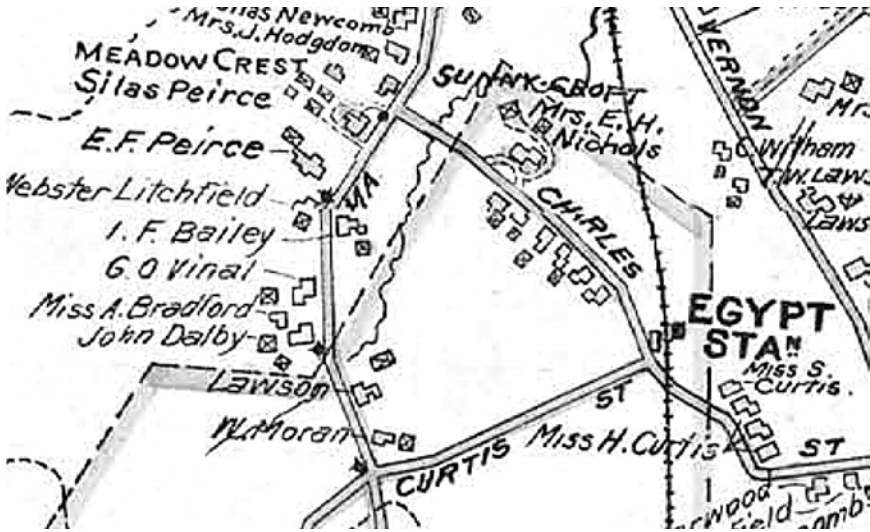


Figure 2: J. E. Judson 1903 map, plate 31 detail with Meadow Crest, Sunnycroft, and Egypt Station. Courtesy of Massachusetts State Library.

### Litchfields

The residence later known as Sunnycroft was built in the Georgian style in about 1800. Stephen Litchfield (1771–1843) owned it, according to Samuel Deane’s 1831 history of Scituate. The Litchfields were prominent and numerous in Scituate. Stephen Litchfield was married to Rebecca Cudworth. In 1837, he conveyed his property, including the residence, to five of his sons. A deed from 1838 locates the residence north of a road that could only be Charles Street (now Captain Peirce Road), which runs generally east to west.<sup>3</sup>

The 1838 deed conveyed the interests of three of the sons to two other sons, Turner Litchfield (1811–1899) and Warren Litchfield (1813–1908). For consideration of \$3,240, Turner and Warren received title to about 112 acres of fields and pasture and “with the Buildings thereon, the lot on which the Buildings stand in which our Father Stephen Litchfield now lives containing forty nine acres,” along with other parcels.<sup>4</sup>

Turner and Warren shared their property in common, allowing each to access all its parts, including the residence. In 1844, about when their father died, they formally divided the property, with a line through the center of the residence. They specifically partitioned the kitchen, too. Warren owned the cupboard in the northwest corner of the kitchen. Their division deed reads in part:

Of the buildings said Turner Litchfield is to have the west half of the house, running through the centre, excepting so much of the kitchen chamber as is now partitioned off, and reserving to said Warren to pass into the garret from his kitchen chamber as the stairs now stand. Said Turner to own, and have the kitchen below as now partitioned off, with a right to pass from his part through said Warren’s kitchen etc. to the well room and out both doors north and south, and to his wood house through said Warren’s. Said Turner to have the westerly half of the porch below, and the north half of the well room. Also, all the Chambers easterly of the east portion of the well room, also about twelve feet of the wood house the easterly half, and lying under the shop. Also the west half of the Chaise or Carriage house, said Turner to pass into the Cellar at the east end of the house from the yard, said Turner to have all necessary privileges in front of the wood and Chaise house, and in rear westerly to his land. It is agreed that the Corn house, hog house, and well room in front of barn shall stand where they now do so long as owned & improved together. The Cupboard at the N. West corner of the kitchen chamber is to belong to said Warren, said Turner not land wood in front of the wood house [sic]. Said Warren Litchfield to own, and have, all the house and buildings not heretofore set to said

Turner Litchfield including forty feet of the east end of the barn and it is agreed that so much of the same as stands upon said Turner's land shall remain so long as it stands. Said Warren to have a privilege of passing to his garden by the east end of the Chaise house, and to the necessary, which it is agreed they shall improve together. Said Warren to pass through the west porch which belongs to said Turner. The front door, entry, & stairs to be improved by both as they now are. Said Turner to pass from the well room up stairs to his shop and Chambers.<sup>5</sup>

We do not know why they divided the property. Perhaps it was because they had two growing families in the same house, which could have covered 3,000 square feet. Turner, born in 1811, had six people in his household in 1840 and 1850. Warren, born in 1813, saw his household grow from two in 1840 to nine in 1850. That made fifteen people in the same house.<sup>6</sup> An 1879 map lists "W & T. Litchfield" at about this location. It was the only house on the north side of Charles Street, west of the Egypt railroad station. Railroad service arrived in 1871.<sup>7</sup>

### Peirces

Next, we turn to the Peirce family. Their ancient homestead was just a short walk down the road from the Litchfield house. The Peirce family's history in America goes back to the 1640s. Captain Michael Peirce became a resident of Scituate, and he was killed in King Philip's War in 1676. His descendant, Hayward Peirce, Esq. (1753–1826), evidently had a home on the east side of Country Way (originally called Main Street). He and his family lived there until about 1810. Then they moved across Country Way to a large house on the west side of the road. That house came to be called Meadow Crest, and it still stands today at 545 Country Way. After Hayward Peirce died, his son Elijah Peirce (1789–1848) acquired the property, which included some seventy-seven acres.<sup>8</sup>

The place in Scituate was already called "Egypt" in Samuel Deane's 1831 history of Scituate. It was a Peirce, probably Hayward, who gave it the name, according to an 1874 newspaper account. He was a local merchant whose store sold rum, among other things. Residents came by his store during a shortage of corn in other parts of town, and

he facetiously asked them, “Well, boys, are you going down into Egypt to buy corn?” (This echoed the biblical story in Genesis 41 when Egypt stockpiled grain before a widespread famine.) That is how Egypt got its name. Interestingly, this name arose in other towns, some after corn crop failures in the “year without a summer” in 1816.<sup>9</sup>

While Elijah Peirce inherited the Country Way property, his younger brother Silas Peirce (1793–1879) had long before left his Scituate birthplace to make his mark in Boston, where he founded the Silas Peirce grocery business in 1815. Here we must explain the different Silas Peirces. Elijah had a son, also called Silas. This Silas, whom we call Silas Peirce II (1826–1898), was born in Scituate like his namesake uncle. He was occasionally called “Jr.” even though he was not his uncle’s son. Throughout this paper, numerals are added to reduce confusion. Silas Peirce II later owned the family’s Country Way homestead that came to be called Meadow Crest. It was the childhood home of his children, Lucy, Silas III, and Susan.<sup>10</sup>

Meadow Crest was built before 1851, according to an estimate by its renovator. Hayward Peirce’s family moved there from across the road about 1810.<sup>11</sup> Meadow Crest may even date to colonial times, as suggested in this 1899 *Boston Globe* article after the death of Silas Peirce II:

Mr Silas Peirce [III] and family have taken possession of a house in North Scituate that was built by an ancestor before the revolution. The house has been remodeled and improved recently, and is a fine specimen of old colonial architecture. Capt Michael Peirce received a grant of the land in 1647, and Capt Hayward Peirce, a revolutionary soldier, lived in the house which now is the home of the ninth generation bearing the Peirce name.<sup>12</sup>

The article is flawed, however, because it conflates Meadow Crest with the family’s previous house on the other side of Country Way. Only four later Peirce generations lived in Meadow Crest. However, it is likely that Meadow Crest and the previous house (and even nearby Sunnycroft) were built on the same parcel of land that Captain Peirce owned, thus making nine family generations on the same land. Historian Harvey Pratt wrote in 1929:

[Peirce] had erected his home on the Egypt farm purchased from the Conihasset partners. Nine generations of his descendants have dwelt upon and tilled these same acres, Silas, the third of that name, occupying it at this writing. There is an element of devotion in this, frequently found in Pilgrim and Puritan families, but seldom in so marked a degree as the Peirce family. It began with Benjamin Peirce, son of Michael, who by the will of his father, made just before the latter started for Rhode Island in Phillip's [Philip's] War where he was soon to meet his death, came into possession of the homestead.<sup>13</sup>

Meadow Crest had significant renovations in 1883/1884, when the house's \$2,500 value doubled, and again in 1885/1886, when its value increased from \$5,000 to \$7,000. In 1884/1885, the country estate added an observatory (probably used as a water tower). The observatory was gone by 1891. The estate took on a prosperous Victorian appearance, captured in an 1884 painting by noted painter Frank Henry Shapleigh. The estate was then owned by Elijah Peirce's son, Silas Peirce II.<sup>14</sup>

As noted above, Elijah's brother, the original Silas Peirce, had gone to Boston. He founded the grocery firm Silas Peirce & Co. in 1815. He thus carried on his father's retail trade at Egypt in rum, corn, and other food items. Silas's business was an early grocery firm, primarily wholesale with some retail, offering sugar, molasses, tea, coffee, oranges, figs, raisins, soap, cigars, and perhaps rum, among other items. The company prospered, and by 1890, when it celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary, the *Boston Globe* reported that it was the oldest wholesale grocery firm in the country. The Peirce firm later had a grocery store chain, opening stores in the early 1900s in Portsmouth (NH), Fitchburg, Plymouth, New Bedford, Framingham, and Brockton.<sup>15</sup>

Silas Peirce II, nephew of the original Silas Peirce, entered the family grocery business and later led the firm, from 1857 until his death in 1898. He spent summers at the family homestead on Country Way, along with his wife, Almira, and their children, Lucy (named for Silas's mother), Silas III, and Susan. He was a prominent Methodist, and this prominence continued in his family, as noted below.<sup>16</sup>

In 1868, Edward H. Nichols (1843–1913) began working at the Silas Peirce firm. He was the son of a retail grocer in Lowell. In 1874, he married the boss's daughter Lucy. In 1876, Nichols became one of the members (partners) of the firm, along with Silas Peirce II and two others. He was always pleasant and courteous, according to the biography of the company written by another partner of the firm.<sup>17</sup>

After his wife, Almira Hall Peirce, died, Silas Peirce II contributed money to build the Peirce Memorial Library on Country Way in North Scituate as a memorial to her. The library was not far from his estate. Opening ceremonies for the library in 1894 included remarks by Silas Peirce II and his son-in-law, Rev. Dillon Bronson. The library continued until 1978, when the building became a private residence.<sup>18</sup>

Silas Peirce II began acquiring property in Scituate, including on Second Cliff in 1878. In the 1890s, he acquired much or all of the Turner and Warren Litchfield property on Charles Street (now Captain Peirce Road) close to Meadow Crest. Three deeds were involved. An 1892 deed, accompanied by a plan, included fourteen acres and what had been Turner's half of the residence. An 1895 deed acquired Warren's half of the residence, along with several other parcels north and south of Charles Street, all for \$4,000. An 1897 deed shows acquisition of a small lot southwest of the residence along the north side of Charles Street. With these purchases, Silas Peirce II appears to have bought back land that once belonged to his ancestor, either Michael or Hayward Peirce. The land included the Litchfield house, valued at \$2,000, with its barn (\$580) and corn house (\$30), along with the land. This was to become Sunnycroft.<sup>19</sup>

### **Lucy's Sunnycroft**

Sunnycroft, along with Meadow Crest, soon became a home for family members in the summer. The families spent the rest of the year in greater Boston. In 1898, Lucy and Edward Nichols were living at The Westgate on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, along with Lucy's father, Silas Peirce II, who died later that year. Lucy's brother, Silas Peirce III, and his wife lived on Vernon Street in Brookline. In 1900, Lucy and Edward Nichols lived in Brookline with their daughter Myra H. Nichols, age twenty-three. Myra graduated from Radcliffe College in 1899, a member of Phi Beta Kappa.<sup>20</sup>



After Silas Peirce II died, the family estate on Country Way went to his son, Silas Peirce III (1860–1922), who led the Silas Peirce firm until his death. Like his father, throughout his life, Silas Peirce III maintained a strong connection with the Methodist church. He was a trustee and the treasurer of Boston University, which has Methodist origins. He was a prominent Methodist layman. His wife, Annie Kendig, was the daughter of a well-known Methodist minister. His sister Susan married a Methodist minister, Rev. Dillon Bronson.<sup>21</sup>

Sisters Lucy Nichols and Susan Bronson were also active in church-related activities, following the example of their mother, Almira. As members of the Boston Young Women's Christian Association, they made a large donation of \$10,000 for a new building in Boston. They also donated money for an American Methodist school building in Darjeeling, India, built in 1902. It was named the Almira Hall Peirce Memorial after their mother. The school, formerly named the Queen's Hill School, still exists as the Mount Hermon School, although evidently without the Peirce Memorial building.<sup>22</sup>

With their father's death, Lucy and her siblings acquired what became Sunnycroft. In 1901, Silas Peirce III and his sister Susan transferred to sister Lucy the ownership of the property on Charles Street. Lucy must have been the one who named the place. She evidently commissioned private mailing cards (postcards) from as early as 1905 on which Sunnycroft is named and pictured. Sunnycroft appears on a 1903 map, labeled as the home of "Mrs. E. H. Nichols," Lucy's married name. The map also shows the house where Lucy grew up, Meadow Crest, just west of Sunnycroft. That was the summer estate of her brother Silas Peirce III. At the time, Lucy's place was still the only house on the north side of Charles Street west of the Egypt railroad station.<sup>23</sup>

The railroad station was close to Sunnycroft and Meadow Crest. Leaders of the family firm could easily commute to their business operations in Boston during the summer. Given the railroad access and the family grocery business, the two estates must have been well-provisioned for their summers, which lasted up to five months.<sup>24</sup>

Lucy created the estate by making significant improvements to the Litchfield house, parts of which had burned about 1900. Its central

chimney was removed, along with its old wings. Its old interior features remained. The house was moved down Charles Street to a knoll and set on a higher foundation. A water tower with observation deck was added.<sup>25</sup>

The 1903 map shows some of the changes compared with prior maps and plans. The Litchfield house was now southeast of its location on the 1879 map. The main block of the house was re-oriented to be in line with the street, not angled as on the 1892 plan. The barn near the street was moved behind the house and another structure (the water tower) was added in back. The rectangular block in the back part of the original house was replaced with a lengthy wing on the east side of the house.<sup>26</sup>

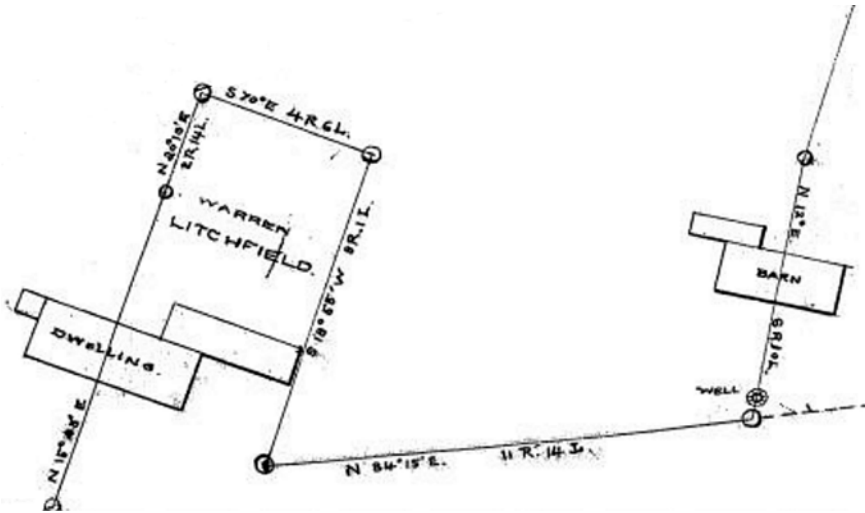


Figure 3: Litchfield dwelling on 1892 Bailey plan (detail), at angle to street.



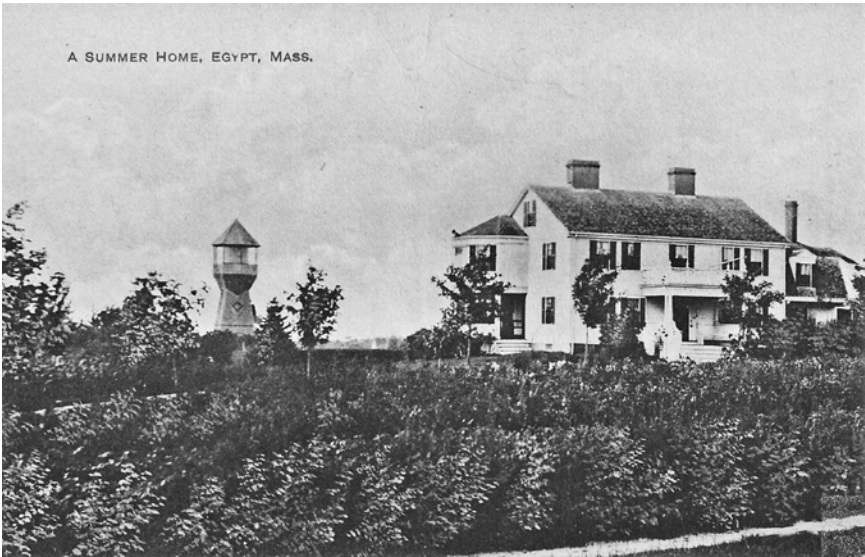


Figure 5: “A Summer Home, Egypt, Mass.” commercial postcard from early 1900s showing Sunnycroft with its water tower. Author’s collection.

These improvements were reflected in the tax valuation of Sunnycroft. The residence’s value jumped from \$2,000 in 1899 to \$6,000 in 1900. It also included a stable valued at a hefty \$1,000 and a water tower valued at \$700 by 1901. These are perhaps the three structures shown on the 1903 map. The property included more than eighteen acres. In 1906, the structures had these same valuations. That placed the residence in the town’s top ten most highly valued residences.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, Lucy’s brother, Silas III, got the family’s Meadow Crest estate, with a value even higher than Sunnycroft. In 1900, the Meadow Crest residence alone was valued at \$9,000, along with two stables (\$3,265), a bowling alley (\$2,500), seven hen houses (\$250), and many other properties, including at least eighty-four acres of land.<sup>29</sup>

Soon after Lucy’s improvements, legendary Boston stock promoter and businessman Thomas Lawson built his Dreamwold estate almost next door to Sunnycroft. There was no way to match his huge estate. His residence alone was valued at \$30,000 in 1906, and his water tower was valued at \$10,000. His total estate of nearly 400 acres

was valued at \$381,000. Lucy's, as valuable as it was, was overshadowed by the two higher-valued estates, Lawson's and her brother's.<sup>30</sup>

### **Sunnycroft's Place Among Country Estates in Eastern Massachusetts at the Turn of the Century**

The late 1800s and early 1900s were peak years for the creation of grand country estates in eastern Massachusetts, fueled by the accumulation of family wealth during the Industrial Age. The Gilded Age mansions of Newport and the Berkshires gave way to the country estates of the Country Place Era. A good example is Essex County, a coastal county in northeastern Massachusetts that became a leading place for imposing mansions. Most were used as summer retreats. Most were created by men. Most were built new, with architect-driven structures adopting English styles, such as Elizabethan, Georgian, or Tudor. For such an estate, it was uncommon to find a woman as owner or creator, and rare to find a historic structure as a basis for the estate. In Pamela W. Fox's comprehensive survey of fifty-nine Essex mansions during this period, only five were owned or created by a woman, and only two used or repurposed a historic house.<sup>31</sup>

Women may have played important roles in creating these country estates, but the prevailing sentiment appears to have relegated them to designing and decorating the interiors. A 1903 book on stately homes mentioned an estate (probably not Sunnycroft), saying:

It is significant that what is probably the most beautiful residence on a generous "palatial" scale as yet composed in this country has been planned by a person who was not professional and who was doing it for personal comfort and amusement. That person, it so happens, is a woman; and we imagine that in the near future the process of individualizing the interiors of the greater houses will be chiefly the work of women.<sup>32</sup>

Lucy's Sunnycroft bucked the trend of men building new country estates, and so did several other estates in Scituate. The 1903 map gives us a window into Scituate's summer estates. It maps many residences and gives the names of their owners. It includes a handful of estates with names, in large capital letters. Those and several others with large tax valuations were:

- Ellsberg, W. B. Ellis (Walter B. Ellis)
- Highland Farm, Everett Torrey
- Meadow Crest, Silas Peirce
- Sunnycroft, Mrs. E. H. Nichols
- Dreamwold Hall, Thomas W. Lawson
- Bulrush Farm, Wendell F. Brown (but his wife, Harriet L. Brown, was the actual owner)
- Estate on Hatherly Road, not named, Mrs. J. C. Howard
- Estate on Border Street, not named, Eliz. E. Parker
- Estate on Mann Hill, not named, Elizabeth C. Hood
- Estate on Mann Hill, not named, Mary B. Stone

We don't know why Sunnycroft was the only named estate that listed a woman as owner. Nonetheless, at least five of these ten estates were created by and/or for women, a large proportion for that period. In addition, the first four of these ten, including Sunnycroft, were transformations of existing houses. (Elizabeth Parker owned a historic house that she evidently renovated, but her main project was building a new estate across the street.) Thus, Sunnycroft was the only estate here—and a rare example in Massachusetts during this period, given the Essex County example—that was created by a woman who transformed an existing historic house. Lucy's decision to use the house showed a respect for the town's history and her family's own historical connections with the town.<sup>33</sup>

### **Myra's Sunnycroft**

In 1904, Lucy and Edward's daughter, Myra Nichols (1877–1952), married Frank O. (Owen) White (c.1876–1936), a lawyer. He had graduated from Harvard in 1899, the same year Myra graduated from Radcliffe, near Harvard in Cambridge. In 1910, the couple lived in Brookline with Edward and their sons, Edward P. [Peirce] (five years old) and Frank O. Jr. (six months old). Lucy died that year without a will, as did Edward sometime later. Sunnycroft passed through probate to Myra, their only child.<sup>34</sup> Myra and her family entertained guests at the estate. At one point, it was noted for raising muskmelons. In addition, Myra planted most of the trees on the site that still exist.<sup>35</sup>

In 1916, the Scituate Historical Society was established. Myra's uncle, Silas Peirce III, was the first president of the society from

1916 to 1922. Scituate was having a growing regard for its history.<sup>36</sup> In 1917, the town renamed many streets to honor its early settlers. The road in front of Sunnycroft, Charles Street, was renamed Captain Peirce Road. Myra, at Sunnycroft, and her uncle Silas Peirce III, at nearby Meadow Crest, must have been pleased. The Street Naming Committee reported:

Charles Street, which runs easterly from Main Street past Egypt Station, was originally a part of the farm of Capt. Michael Peirce, whose lineal descendants in nine generations have owned and occupied the family acres. Michael Peirce himself was a great Indian fighter, brave to recklessness, and gave up his life in the war against King Philip. No better tribute to his memory can be offered than to give to this street the name of Captain Peirce Road.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, in 1917, Myra's husband was on a committee with local dignitaries to honor the first anniversary of the Scituate Historical Society. The *Boston Globe* featured a cartoon of the occasion, depicting him, along with Silas Peirce III and others.<sup>38</sup>

When Silas Peirce III died in 1922, it marked the end of 107 years with a Peirce at the head of the Silas Peirce firm. Myra's husband took over as president. Then, in 1926, the firm merged with Rival Foods, Inc., and White was named chairman. Rival Foods continued into the 1960s.<sup>39</sup> Before its merger with Rival Foods, the Silas Peirce firm had set the record for longevity in the American wholesale grocery business at 111 years (1815–1926).

The firm's record was later broken by S.S. Pierce & Co. (note the difference in spelling). S.S. Pierce was founded by Samuel Stillman Pierce, who was not related to Silas Peirce. S.S. Pierce also began in Boston, but not until 1831. It built a brand that eventually obliterated that of the Silas Peirce firm. People still fondly remember S.S. Pierce for delivering groceries to homes (usually once a week) and for its gourmet foods, wines, and liquors. It lasted until it was sold in 1967 (Laird & Co.), 1973 (Seneca Foods, which adopted the S.S. Pierce name until 1986), and 1982 (Kraft, which bought the S.S. Pierce food service business, which perhaps later became a part of Alliant and then US Foods).<sup>40</sup>

After leading the Silas Peirce firm, White had a troubled life. He suffered from depression, receiving treatment in a hospital, and he suffered from mental illness that a psychiatrist testified was probably related to premature arteriosclerosis. In late 1929, he converted a \$10,000 check for his own use instead of giving it to the William L. Underwood estate for which he was co-trustee. As a result, in 1931, he was charged and pleaded guilty to larceny and was sentenced to eighteen months in the Deer Island House of Correction. He was disbarred as a lawyer in 1934, and he died in 1936.<sup>41</sup> In the midst of all this, in 1934, Frank and Myra White's son, Edward Peirce White (1905–1979), married Sylvia Whitaker (1911–2007). According to the *Boston Globe*:

Announcement is made of the recent marriage at Philadelphia of Sylvia H. Whitaker of that city to Edward P. White of Egypt, son of Mr and Mrs Frank O. White. He is connected with the Rockland Trust Company. Mr and Mrs White will spend the Summer at Sunnycroft, the White Summer estate at Egypt.<sup>42</sup>

### Later Sunnycroft

Edward and Sylvia White made Sunnycroft their year-round home after the end of World War II. They added central heating, as well as a garage designed by Royal Barry Wills. They took twenty-five feet of the house and had it moved across the street where it became 95 Captain Peirce Road. They removed the old water tower by 1946.<sup>43</sup> Edward White prospered with Rockland Trust. He became its executive vice-president, running the company for fifteen years until becoming its president from 1962 to 1971. In 2018, the bank was in the process of becoming the largest independent retail bank based in the state.<sup>44</sup>

After Edward's death in 1979, the Sunnycroft estate went on the market in 1989. It was sold in 1990. In 2017, the residence was again sold, along with about one and a half acres. The sellers retained the remaining acres and the seventeenth-century barn. The barn has been used by the seller since 2002 to produce fine furniture that reflects the designs and techniques of the Georgian and Federal periods.<sup>45</sup>

The 1990 sale marked the end of nearly a century of Silas Peirce descendants occupying Sunnycroft. However, a descendant of



the Peirce-Nichols-White families still lives next door. In 2009, the town corrected the sign for the road on which Sunnycroft is located to Captain Peirce Road (not Pierce). Sunnycroft remains there as a good example of an early twentieth-century summer estate of wealthy Bostonians, and a link to earlier generations of Peirces. Families who lived there contributed greatly to the business, cultural, educational, and social lives of both Boston and Scituate.<sup>46</sup>

**Lyle Nyberg is an independent scholar and historian.**

#### Notes

1. Virginia and Lee McAlester, *Great American Houses and Their Architectural Styles* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 219, 229 (Stan Hywet Hall); Catharina Slautterback, “*Always Delightfully Cool*”: *Summer Vacations in Northern New England, 1825–1900* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 2008); Cindy S. Aron, *Working At Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press 1999), 21; Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 74–76.

2. See discussion and notes below on *Sunnycroft’s Place Among Country Estates in Eastern Massachusetts at the Turn of the Century*. Country estates, including Sunnycroft, appear in an important 1903 atlas. See

*Town of Scituate* [map], 1 inch = 1700 feet, in J. E. Judson, *Topographical Atlas of Surveys: Plymouth County together with the town of Cohasset, Norfolk County, Massachusetts* (Springfield, MA: L. J. Richards & Co., 1903), plate 31, including insets for Village of Scituate, North Scituate Beach, etc., and subplan plate 12, State Library of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Real Estate Atlas Digitization Project (hereafter “1903 map”), accessed May 12, 2022, <http://hdl.handle.net/2452/206055>, <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/oversight-agencies/lib/massachusetts-real-estate-atlases.html>; Sunnycroft is featured on a private mailing card, copied at the beginning of this article, presumably created by or for Lucy Nichols. Lucy sent it to Mr. Pratt of the Davis Press. The Davis Press was founded in Worcester in 1901. It was noted for *The School Arts Magazine* (now the *SchoolArts Magazine*). Its editor from 1903 to

1917 was Henry Turner Bailey. Bailey was a notable Scituate native and resident, whose house “Trustworth” (1889) was about a mile northwest of Sunnycroft. “Trustworth: Bailey, Henry Turner House,” 23 Booth Hill Rd, SCI.7, Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), online database, <http://mhc-macris.net>; 1903 map, plate 32 (“H. T. Bailey” in inset, on Blossom Street); “Our History,” Davis Press Website, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.davisart.com/about-us/history/>.

3. “Litchfield, Stephen and Warren House,” 108 Captain Peirce Road, SCI.20, MACRIS; Samuel Deane, *History of Scituate, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to 1831* (Boston: James Loring, 1831), 243, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/historyofscituate-00deane>; Stephen Litchfield to Stephen Litchfield, Jr., et al, deed, July 8, 1837, recorded June 4, 1838, Plymouth County Registry of Deeds (PCRD), online , book 194, page 53; Stephen Litchfield Jr., Orange Litchfield, and Ira Litchfield to Turner and Warren Litchfield, deed, February 28, 1838, PCRD, book 190, page 157. The 1838 deed identifies at least the three grantors as sons of Stephen Litchfield, and the two grantees, Turner and Warren Litchfield, were also his sons by Rebecca Cudworth. *Annual Report of the Town Officers of the Town of Scituate For the Year ending December 30, 1899* (Plymouth: printed by The Memorial Press, 1900), 53 (Turner death), and *Annual Report of the Town Officers of the Town of Scituate For the Year ending December 31, 1908* (Scituate: printed by Bound Brook Press, 1909), 106 (Warren death). The Scituate Historical Society house file for the property has notes suggesting that the house was built between 1771 and 1798, citing Isaac Litchfield to Stephen Litchfield, deed, October 13, 1798, PCRD, book 89, page 147. That 1798 deed conveys: “four certain pieces or parcels of Land with all the building[s] thereon standing, lying & being in said Scituate, viz, first piece, containing about Sixty Acres, it being the whole of my Right & Interest in the homested [sic] farm on which I now live lying on both sides of the highway. Together with the building thereon standing. Second piece of Land containing about twenty one Acres with a Dwelling house thereon standing, lying on both sides of the highway, by the name of my Peirces place; . . .”

4. Stephen Litchfield Jr., et al, to Turner and Warren Litchfield, deed, 1838; *1899 Town Report* and *1908 Town Report*.

5. Turner Litchfield and Warren Litchfield, division deed, January 5, 1844, PCRD, book 210, page 264 (search online for pages 527–529); “Search Vital Records (1841–1910),” website of the Massachusetts Secretary of State, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/vitalrecordssearch/VitalRecordsSearch.aspx> (Stephen Litchfield death).

6. Author’s calculation of house size based on 1892 plan, Frederick T. Bailey, C. E., “Litchfield to Peirce” plan, scale 3 rods = 1 inch, 1892, filed April 25, 1893, PCRD, plan book 1, page 132, sheet 4 of 6, at about 2 x 3.5 rods (1,600 sf) per story with two stories; 1840 US census and 1850 US census, AncestryHeritageQuest (Turner and Warren Litchfield, Scituate)

7. “Town of Scituate Mass.,” in *Atlas of Plymouth County, Massachusetts* [map], 1 inch = 135 rods (Boston: Geo. H. Walker & Co., 1879), sheet 33 (and see 36), State Library of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Real Estate Atlas Digitization Project, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://hdl.handle.net/2452/205573>, <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/oversight-agencies/lib/massachusetts-real-estate-atlases.html> (for detailed view), and <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mastatelibrary/8881938110/in/album-72157633790765207/>; Louis P. Hager and Albert D. Handy, eds., *History of the Old Colony Railroad: A Complete History of the Old Colony Railroad from 1844 to the Present Time, Parts 1–2* (Boston: Hager & Handy, 1893), 107, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=dIUkuaxycdAC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=dIUkuaxycdAC&source=gbs_navlinks_s).

8. Frederick Clifton Pierce, *Pierce Genealogy, Being the Record of the Posterity of Capt. Michael, John and Capt. William Pierce, Who Came to This Country from England*, vol. 4 (Albany, NY: by author, 1889), 18, 41, 62, 70, 105, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/piercegenealogyn00pier/page/n7>; Joe Doherty, *Blood on the Blackstone* (2006–2007), serialized book, part of Our River series, online, accessed May 12, 2022, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190827172114/http://www.blackstonedaily.com/ourriver.htm> (Part 2 is “Peirce’s Fight”); Hayward Peirce [by heirs] to Elijah Peirce, deed, March 9, 1829, PCRD, book 165, page 256; John Bouvé Clapp, *A Century of Service, 1815–1915* (Boston: Silas Peirce & Co Limited, 1915), accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=4EPCVY3eCmkC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=4EPCVY3eCmkC&source=gbs_navlinks_s); William F. Moore,

*Representative Men of Massachusetts, 1890–1900: The Leaders in Official, Business and Professional Life of the Commonwealth* (Everett, MA: Massachusetts Publishing Company, 1898), 207–209, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=jL00LUqXp\\_hwC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=jL00LUqXp_hwC&source=gbs_navlinks_s).

9. 1874 *Boston Journal* article, copied in “How Egypt Got Its Name,” Scituate Historical Society website, accessed March 31, 2021, <http://scituatehistoricalsociety.org/how-egypt-got-its-name/>, but now available instead at <https://web.archive.org/web/20170412220428/http://scituatehistoricalsociety.org/how-egypt-got-its-name/>; “Along the South Shore,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, vol. LVII, no. 337 (New York, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, June 1878), 1–14 at 8, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=lEtOAAQAAMAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=lEtOAAQAAMAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s); Lisa Kashinsky, “Beyond the Beach: Egypt ‘pretty sleepy,’ just as folks like it,” *Quincy (MA) Patriot Ledger* website, posted July 26, 2012, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.patriotledger.com/article/20120726/NEWS/307269737>. For similar stories, see Jack E. Hauck, “A History of Wenham As Seen Through Maps From 1644 to 2012,” 432 (Little Egypt in Wenham, MA, 1816), accessed May 12, 2022, <http://hwlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/22-Maps.pdf>; Vicki Masters Proffitt, “Illuminating Cyrus Packard and Oliver Loud,” Illuminated History website, posted October 5, 2015 (Egypt in eastern part of Perinton, NY, 1810 and 1816), accessed May 12, 2022, <https://illumhistory.wordpress.com/tag/egypt-ny/>; H. S. Stone, “Making ‘Egypt’ a Dairy Country,” *Kimball’s Dairy Farmer*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Waterloo, Iowa: Fred L. Kimball Company, January 15, 1918), 1 (Egypt area of southern Illinois, pioneer days 100 years before), accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=fOHEinQ2BlgC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=fOHEinQ2BlgC&source=gbs_navlinks_s); Robert E. Hartley, *Paul Powell of Illinois: A Lifelong Democrat* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 3–4 (Egypt or Little Egypt in southern Illinois, “deep snows and low temperatures of northern regions in 1830.”), preview accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=eha7G3BeQFOC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=eha7G3BeQFOC&source=gbs_navlinks_s); Deane, *History of Scituate* (1831), 162, 252.

10. Pierce, *Pierce Genealogy*, 18, 62, 105; telephone conversation with George B. White, a descendant, September 5, 2018; 1903 map; Jeanne Mills, “Peirce Memorial Library,” *South Shore News*, April 3, 1974, 25, on file in Scituate Historical Society, Libraries-Peirce file; Ruth

Thompson, “This old house earns new beginning,” *Scituate Mariner*, B4, and same article “Scituate man brings new life to Silas Peirce Homestead,” *Scituate Mariner* website, posted July 9, 2015, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://scituate.wickedlocal.com/article/20150709/NEWS/150707157>, and <https://web.archive.org/web/20151021123159/http://scituate.wickedlocal.com/article/20150709/NEWS/150707157>; author’s visits. Elijah Peirce had another son named Elijah Foster Peirce who inherited land surrounding Meadow Crest, as noted in the Bailey 1901 plan cited below.

11. Ruth Thompson, “Scituate Historic House: Breathing new life into an old home,” *Scituate Mariner* website, posted April 24, 2014, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://scituate.wickedlocal.com/article/20140424/News/140428119>; Clapp, *Century of Service*, 2; Peirce, Silas House (“Meadow Crest”), 545 Country Way, SCI.1252, MACRIS. A photo of the house, probably before 1884, has a caption saying the home of Capt. Michael Peirce stood within the wall shown in the foreground, which is across the road (Country Way) from the Silas Peirce house (Meadow Crest); Wilford J. Litchfield, *The Litchfield Family in America*, part 1, no. 5 (Southbridge, MA: Wilford J. Litchfield, Oct. 1903), 216–217 (photo), accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/litchfieldfamily13sout/page/n5>.

12. *Boston Globe*, August 27, 1899, 32.

13. Harvey Hunter Pratt, *The Early Planters of Scituate: a History of the Town of Scituate, Massachusetts from Its Establishment to the End of the Revolutionary War* (Scituate: The Scituate Historical Society, 1929), 325–329 at 326, accessed July 22, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/earlyplantersofs00prat/page/348/mode/2up>, quoted in “Michael Peirce” on The Lange, Pierce, and Related Families Website, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.dalelange.info/getperson.php?personID=I992&tree=DL01>.

14. *Valuation Lists* for Town of Scituate, 1883–1886 (lists are on file in Scituate Town Archives); Frank Henry Shapleigh (1842–1906), *Home of Silas Pierce, Scituate, Massachusetts*, copy, courtesy of Frank Snow; SCI.1252, MACRIS.

15. Clapp, *Century of Service*; “The Oldest Grocers; House of Silas Peirce & Co. Celebrates; It is 75 Years Old and the Oldest in the

Country,” *Boston Globe*, April 2, 1890, 4 (list of members); “Romance Even in Groceries; Century of Silas Peirce & Co Was Celebrated Last Night—Humor Found in Ledgers Precisely Kept by Quill Pen,” *Boston Globe*, April 4, 1915, 66.

16. Clapp, *Century of Service*, 1, 43; telephone conversation with George B. White, September 5, 2018; “Death of Silas Peirce; End Came This Morning at His Scituate Home; Interesting Life History of One of Boston’s Most Prominent Business Men,” *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1898, 10.

17. Clapp, *Century of Service*, 43; Moore, *Representative Men*, 207–209; “Saw Monitor-Merrimac; Edward H. Nichols, to Be Buried Tomorrow, Was Early in His Career a Page in the State House,” *Boston Globe*, December 17, 1913, 6.

18. Scituate Historical Society, Libraries-Peirce file; “Pierce [sic] Memorial Library,” 701 Country Way, SCI.66, MACRIS; telephone conversation with George B. White, September 5, 2018. It appears from “Search Vital Records (1841–1910)” that Almira H. (Hall) Peirce died in Boston in 1893. See also “Meeting of Beneficent Society of N. E. [New England] Conservatory of Music,” *Boston Globe*, February 12, 1902, 2: “Mrs Silas Peirce [wife of Silas Peirce II’s son Silas Peirce III], Mrs E. H. Nichols [the former Lucy P. Peirce], and Mrs. Dillon Bronson [the former Susan Hall Peirce] have given \$1000 in memory of their mother, Mrs Silas Peirce, a charter member of the society and for many years upon the official board.”

19. William L. Reed to Silas Pierce Jr., David Townsend, and Nathan Cushing, deed, April 30, 1878, PCRD, book 447, page 64, and subsequent deeds to the partners; Charles I. Litchfield and Henry H. Litchfield to Silas Peirce, deed, April 23, 1892, PCRD, book 646, page 347; Bailey, “Litchfield to Peirce” 1892 plan; Warren Litchfield to Silas Peirce, deed, October 14, 1895, PCRD, book 697, page 533 (third parcel is “piece of land on which my dwelling house now stands”); Charles I. Litchfield and Henry H. Litchfield to Silas Peirce, deed, June 8, 1897, PCRD, book 743, page 297 (“lot of land with the tomb thereon standing”); *1896 Valuation List*, 107. Evidently, Charles I. Litchfield and Henry H. Litchfield acquired or inherited Turner Litchfield’s interests. Their ancestor Stephen Litchfield acquired the “Peirce place” and other property in 1798. Litchfield, *The Litchfield*

*Family in America*, part 1, no. 5 (Oct. 1903), 169–170; see note above, quoting 1798 deed. The 1896 Valuation List for Silas Peirce lists no water towers.

20. Moore, *Representative Men*, 207–209; Clark's *Boston Blue Book*, *The Elite Private Address*, *Carriage and Club Directory*, etc. (Boston: Edward E. Clark, 1898), 60, 424, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=9ncBAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=9ncBAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s); 1900 US census, AncestryHeritageQuest (Nichols, Brookline); "Mrs. Myra N. White," obituary, *Boston Globe*, January 4, 1952, 24; *The Radcliffe News*, February 26, 1915, 3, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/radcliffenews00collgoog/page/n73>. Suffragist Maud Wood Park graduated from Radcliffe, Phi Beta Kappa, the year before Myra. *The Radcliffe News*, February 26, 1915, 3.

21. Clapp, *Century of Service*, 67; Frederic T. Bailey & Co., *Plan of the Estate of Silas Peirce, Esq., at Egypt, Mass., To accompany a division made 1901*, scale 1 in. to 100 ft., PCD, plan book 1, page 770; Robert Allan Hill, "POV: BU Continues to Reflect Its Methodist Origins: Learning, virtue, and piety endure on campus," Boston University website, posted November 4, 2013, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.bu.edu/today/2013/pov-bu-continues-to-reflect-its-methodist-origins/>; David R. Cook, "Fond Memories of BU," letter to the editor, *Bostonia*, Winter-Spring 2019, 3 (Daniel Marsh, for whom BU's Marsh Chapel is named was Methodist minister, married the writer's parents; writer later was sports reporter while attending BU and socialized with Marsh), accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2019/letters/>; "Rev Dr A. B. Kendig," obituary, *Boston Globe*, January 21, 1909, 16; *Boston Globe*, February 12, 1902, 2; "Silas Peirce Dies Suddenly; Boston Merchant Stricken in Brookline Home; Was a Prominent Layman in New England Methodism," *Boston Globe*, December 11, 1922, 6.

22. Clapp, *Century of Service*, 29–30; "New Building Needed; Annual Meeting of the Young Women's Christian Association – Donations During the Past Year \$80,701," *Boston Globe*, March 5, 1901, 6; Emma L. Knowles, "Almira Hall Peirce Memorial Dedication," *Woman's Missionary Friend*, vol. 34 (Boston: The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1902), 305, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=MqTNAAAAMAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=MqTNAAAAMAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s); "History," Mount Hermon

School website, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.mhsdarj1895.org/#blank>; “Minutes of the Fifteenth Session of the Bengal Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Held at Calcutta, January 2–6, 1902” (Calcutta: Methodist Publishing House, 1902), 32, Yale University Library Digital Collections, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:504234>; “Minutes of the Sixteenth Session of the Bengal Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Held at Calcutta, January 22–26, 1903” (Calcutta: Methodist Publishing House, 1903), 34, Yale, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:503716>; “A Brief History of Mount Hermon School,” Old Mount Hermon Students’ Association (UK) website, accessed March 31, 2021, <http://www.oldmhs.com/>, now available instead at <https://web.archive.org/web/20210515223513/http://www.oldmhs.com/>, at “History of MHS” and “Pictures of the Old School.”

23. Silas Peirce [III] and Susan Bronson [brother and sister of Lucy] to Lucy Nichols, deed, April 22, 1901, PCRD, book 825, page 422 (lot D on 1901 plan by Frederick Bailey and other property), and other deeds for lots A, B, and C; copy of private mailing card (postcard) provided in email by George B. White, September 2018; 1903 map. Lucy was no stranger to the graphic arts; she evidently commissioned a bookplate created by noted artist Amy M. Sacker with Lucy’s name, a seated woman, and a Radcliffe college seal. Amy M. Sacker, John Henry Nash, *The Book Plates of Amy M. Sacker* (Boston: printed by the Troutsdale Press and sold by Charles E. Goodspeed, Boston, 1903) (one of 12 bookplates).

24. Charles E. Fisher, *The Story of the Old Colony Railroad* (n.p., 1919), 19, 63, 83, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=oL8pAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=oL8pAAAAYAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s); Moore, *Representative Men*, 209.

25. Draft Form B dated 1984 by Sylvia White, who married the grandson of Lucy Nichols, on file in Scituate Historical Society, house files.

26. Author’s analyses of (a) 1903 map and comparison of it with 1879 map and 1892 plan cited elsewhere, (b) various tax valuation lists cited elsewhere, and (c) copies of old family photos. A 1921 book reported that the Cowen house from the late 1600s “stood where the



old Warren and Stephen Litchfield house stood until it [the Litchfield house, presumably] was bought and moved by Mrs. Lucy Peirce Nichols." Chief Justice Cushing chapter, *Daughters of the American Revolution, Old Scituate* (Boston: DAR, 1921), 24, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/oldscituate00chapgooq>.

27. Copies of family photos and postcards provided in emails by George B. White, September 2018; postcards on file in Scituate Historical Society, Twomey/Jacobson Collection, Egypt section. A postcard from the early 1900s shows Sunnycroft with its water tower. "A Summer Home, Egypt, Mass." No. 28202, published by Edna Litchfield, Egypt, Mass, printed in Germany, with trademark of H. A. Dickerman & Son, Taunton, Mass., author's collection.

28. *1896 Valuation List*, 241 (Peirce: "Litchfield house"); *1899 Valuation List*, 111 (Peirce Estate: "Litchfield House"); *1900 Valuation List*, 108 (Peirce Estate: "Nichols house," stable, and water tower, with note "Mrs Lucy Nichols"); *1901 Valuation List*, 105 (Nichols: "Nichols house"); *1902 Valuation List*, 106; *1906 Valuation List*, 118 (Lucy Nichols, Brookline); author's analysis of residence values based on town tax valuation lists in Scituate Town Archives.

29. *1900 Valuation List*, 108 (Silas Peirce Estate).

30. *1906 Valuation List* (printed in Town Annual Report), 143–145. See Carol Miles and John J. Galluzzo, *Beauty, Strength, Speed: Celebrating 100 Years of Thomas W. Lawson's Dreamworld* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co. Publishers, 2002).

31. National Landmark Nomination form for Naumkeag in Lenox, MA, 34–35 (estate built 1885–1886 for attorney Joseph Hodges Choate, with few major changes in residence until 1920s, under Choate's daughter Mabel Choate, who also arranged for the property's extensive gardens), <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/63793637>; Pamela W. Fox, *North Shore Boston: Houses of Essex County: 1865–1930* (NY: Acanthus Press, 2005). Fox's book covers seven estates built from 1890 to 1899, and sixteen built from 1900 to 1909. A woman is mentioned as owner and/or creator for only two at most: Glen Magna Farms, 104 (Eileen and William Endicott), and Turner Hill Farm, 156 (Anne and Charles Rice). Only one is mentioned as using a historic house: Glen Magna Farms, p. 104 (late eighteenth century, remodeled

late 1890s and early 1900s). In the back of the book is a Portfolio summarizing 59 estates. Only three mention a woman as owner or creator during this period, all on page 318: Ox Pasture Hill Farm (Pauline Fenno), Innisfree (Margaret Cumminge), and Rockledge (Mrs. L. M. Sargent). Only one is mentioned as using a historic house: Rock Maple Farm, 316 (major remodelings in 1902 and 1917 of an existing house). See also Lyle Nyberg, "Craigston," 57 Dodges Row, Wenham, WNH.232, MACRIS, and sources cited therein. The noted novelist Edith Wharton (1862–1937) designed the country house and gardens of "The Mount" in Lenox, MA, owned the property, and may have bankrolled its construction in 1901–1902; she lived there from 1902 until about 1911. The house is a National Historic Landmark. "Wharton, Edith House - Mount, The," LEN.164, MACRIS, with National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form; "The Mount, Edith Wharton's Home," official website, <https://www.edithwharton.org/>.

32. Harry W. Desmond & Herbert Croly, *Stately Homes in America: From Colonial Times to the Present Day* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1903), Ch. I ("Men Who Build Fine Houses"), 448, 464–467 (source of quote), <https://archive.org/details/statelyhome-sinam00desm/page/n17/mode/2up>. An earlier example is Naumkeag, where Joseph Choate "left the interior décor to his talented wife" and there were few major changes until the 1920s. McAlester, *Great American Houses*, 169. A later example is Stan Hywet Hall in Akron, Ohio, opened in 1915, where Gertrude Seiberling was responsible for gardens and interiors. McAlester, *Great American Houses*, 224.

33. 1903 map; 1896 and 1906 *Valuation Lists* (printed); MACRIS documentation for: Ellsberg, "Bailey, John Wade - Ellis, Walter Bailey House," 709 Country Way, SCI.136; Highland Farm, see "Torrey, Everett House," 111 Kent St., SCI.1241; Meadow Crest, "Peirce, Silas House," 545 Country Way, SCI.1252; Sunnycroft, "Litchfield, Stephen and Warren House," 108 Captain Peirce Road, SCI.20; Dreamwold Hall, see "Lawson, Thomas W. House," 74 Branch St., SCI.14; Bulrush Farm, "Bulrush Farm, Brown, Wendell F. House," 64 Sedgewick Drive, SCI.1253. Information on the last four is based on *Valuation Lists* and the author's unpublished research. By comparison, the 1903 map's coverage of Scituate's neighbor, Cohasset, on plates 36–37, shows about twenty-two named estates, with women listed as owners or occupants for four and a half of them (20%):

Oakcroft, “Cled-Dwr,” Cedar Ridge, The Ledges, and half of Black Rock.

34. “Search Vital Records (1841–1910)” (1904 marriage, Lucy 1910 death); *Harvard College Class of 1899 List of Addresses, Occupations, Marriages, Births and Deaths* (n.p., June 1905), 27 (lawyer), 45 (marriage to Myra, birth of Edward Peirce White), accessed May 12, 2022, [https://books.google.com/books?id=6dYnAAAAYAAJ&source=gs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=6dYnAAAAYAAJ&source=gs_navlinks_s); Mary Caroline Crawford, *The College Girl of America* (Boston: L. C. Page, 1904), 104–106, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/collegegirlamer00crawgoog/page/n126/mode/2up>; 1910 US census; Myra N. White to Edward Peirce White, deed, August 10, 1936, PCRD, book 1713, page 270 (Lucy and Edward died intestate).

35. *Boston Globe*, June 18, 1916, 4; *Boston Globe*, September 18, 1925, 10; “Fine Muskmelons Being Harvested at Scituate,” *Boston Globe*, September 23, 1925, 15; telephone conversation with George B. White, September 5, 2018.

36. “The History of the Scituate Historical Society 1916–1991,” Scituate Historical Society Bulletin, [vol. XLIV, no. 3.] 1991, 3, accessed March 31, 2021, <http://scituatehistoricalsociety.org/newsletter-archive-03/>, but no longer available online; Scituate Historical Society, *Scituate, Then & Now* series (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 94.

37. *Annual Report of the Officers of the Town of Scituate, Massachusetts, For the Year ending December 31, 1916* (Scituate: printed by Boundbrook Press, 1917), Report of Street Naming Committee, 132 (source of quote); *Annual Report of the Officers of the Town of Scituate For the Year ending December 31, 1917* (Scituate: printed by Boundbrook Press, 1918), Report of Town Clerk, 93 (Town Meeting, Article 10, on renaming streets).

38. *Boston Globe*, September 2, 1917, 2.

39. “Silas Peirce Dies Suddenly,” *Boston Globe*; “Silas Peirce & Co in Merger May 1; Becomes Rival Foods, Inc, With Two Other Firms,” *Boston Globe*, April 28, 1926, 9; *Portsmouth (NH) Herald*, June 24, 1967, 3 (Rival Foods), accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www>.

[newspapers.com/newspage/56531445/](http://newspapers.com/newspage/56531445/).

40. Anthony Sammarco, “S.S. Pierce by Anthony M. Sammarco,” Anthony Sammarco’s History website, posted May 11, 2011, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://anthonyssammarcoshistory.blogspot.com/2011/05/ss-pierce-by-anthony-m-sammarco.html>; author’s review of Samuel Stillman Peirce lineage back to 1600s on geni.com; Aline Kaplan, “The Mystery of 10 Tremont Street,” The Next Phase Blog, posted July 28, 2017, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://aknextphase.com/tag/samuel-stillman-pierce/>; Dorothy M. Anderson, *The Era of the Summer Estates: Swampscott, Massachusetts 1870/1940* (Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing, 1985), 81; “S.S. Pierce,” Wikipedia article, accessed May 12, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.S.\\_Pierce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.S._Pierce); Nancy Hale, “Pierce’s,” *The New Yorker*, November 19, 1955, 46 (oddly enough, old-timers and old Mr. Pierce insisted on pronouncing Pierce as “Perse” just as the Silas Peirce family did); Joseph E. Garland, *The North Shore: A Social History of Summers Among the Noteworthy, Fashionable, Rich, Eccentric and Ordinary on Boston’s Gold Coast, 1823–1929* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 2003), 346 (“City Service at the Seashore”); S.S. Pierce Facebook page, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/pg/S-S-Pierce-863179193714089/posts/>; Vartanig G. Vartan, “Laird & Co. Group To Buy S.S. Pierce,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1967, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/1967/06/13/archives/laird-co-group-to-buy-ss-pierce-laird-co-group-buys-ss-pierce.html>; “Seneca Foods Corporation,” Grocery.com website, posted 2015 or earlier, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.grocery.com/seneca-foods-corporation/> (corporate history); “Seneca Foods Corporation History,” FundingUniverse website, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/seneca-foods-corporation-history/> (renamed Seneca in 1986); “Kraft buys Pierce food service business,” UPI archives, April 7, 1986, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1986/04/07/Kraft-buys-Pierce-food-service-business/3492513234000/>; John Gorman, “S.S. Pierce 4<sup>th</sup> Food Service Added by Kraft in 2 Months,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 1986, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1986-04-09-8601260152-story.html>; Hawk, “S.S. Pierce obituary [sic],” InsideFood Message Board, posted September 18, 2015, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://insidefood.forumchitchat.com/post/s-s-pierce-obituary-7658582> (“I fear we will never see another distributor as grand as S.S. Pierce . . . everything today pales by comparison. The place went downhill quickly . . . and

has never recovered whether it be called Kraft, Alliant or US Foods.”). Today, the largest privately held wholesale grocer in America is C&S Wholesale Grocers, founded in Worcester in 1918, so it still has a few years to go to surpass the record set by the Silas Peirce firm. “About,” C&S Wholesale Grocers website, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.cswg.com/about>. The S.S. Pierce brand continues today, at least for alcoholic spirits. M.S. Walker, Inc., website, accessed May 12, 2022, <http://www.mswalker.com/index.php/brands18/about>.

41. “White Surrenders in \$10,000 Larceny; Boston Attorney Sent to Psychopathic Hospital,” *Boston Globe*, July 27, 1931, 12; “18-Month Term for Atty White; Admits \$10,000 Theft from Underwood Estate,” *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1931, 8; “Frank O. White is Disbarred: Psychiatrist Believes He Has Mental Disease,” *Boston Globe*, May 17, 1934, 25; Myra White obituary, *Boston Globe*. It appears that members of the Underwood family, whose ancestor founded the first American packers of canned food in 1822, had married daughters of Hayward Peirce Cushing, who was a partner of the Silas Peirce firm. “Henry O. Underwood Dies at Age of 63; Many Years Business Man of Boston; End Comes at Nantucket – He and Daughters Built Hospital There,” *Boston Globe*, August 23, 1921, 9 (married Jennie Cushing, daughter of Hayward Cushing); “Vassar Graduate Dies in Belmont; Mrs William L. Underwood Noted for Charity Work,” *Boston Globe*, December 26, 1922, 4 (daughter of Hayward Peirce Cushing).

42. *Boston Globe*, April 18, 1934, 15. Mrs. Frank Owen White is listed in Egypt in *The South Shore Social Register and Who’s Who on Cape Cod* (Boston: Davis Pub. Co., 1938), 125.

43. Myra N. White to Edward P. and Sylvia W. White, deed, December 31, 1945, PCRD, book 1896, page 560; telephone conversation with George B. White, September 5, 2018; email from George B. White, September 11, 2018; *1945 Valuation List, L–Z*, 205 (tower’s tax valuation reduced from \$700 to \$250) and *1946 Valuation List, L–Z*, 207–208 (no tower listed).

44. “Edward P. White, 74, Was Rockland Trust president,” *Boston Globe*, November 12, 1979, 36; “Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Rockland Trust Company!” Anniversary Issue 2007 of Independent Banknotes newsletter by Rockland Trust, online, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://www.lacp.com/2007inspire/ccpdfs/6810.pdf>, but no longer

available on the internet; “Rockland Trust chief says revived Worcester lured bank,” *Boston Globe*, November 20, 2018, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2018/11/19/rockland-trust-chief-says-revived-worcester-lured-bank/p02k6OR4hc-3QWRBXHA319H/story.html#comments>. Rockland Trust was founded in 1907 and one of its original directors was Wendell F. Brown of Bulrush Farm in Scituate, not far from Sunnycroft and Meadow Crest. “Rockland Trust Co. Opens Hanover Branch; Notes 50<sup>th</sup> Year of Service to Area,” *South Shore News/Scituate Herald Edition*, October 24, 1957, 1; “Bulrush Farm,” 64 Sedgewick Drive, SCI.1253, MACRIS.

45. *Boston Globe*, September 24, 1989, 156 (eleven rooms, seven bedrooms, twelve acres, two-story barn, \$499,000); Sylvia W. White to Albert G. Bangert, July 17, 1990, deed, PCRD, book 9855, page 234; Donna L. Bangert and Albert G. Bangert to Michael J. Foley and Megan Sheehy Foley, deed, September 14, 2017, PCRD, book 48924, page 266; Albert Bangert, “Welcome to Sunnycroft Woodworks” website, accessed September 22, 2018, <http://www.sunnycroft.com/pages/1/index.htm>, available March 31, 2021, but now available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20190120231147/http://www.sunnycroft.com/pages/1/index.htm>; email from Al Bangert, September 7, 2018.

46. Conversations and emails with George B. White; Dennis Tatz, “Scituate finally fixing misspelled street sign named for colonial soldier,” November 2, 2009, *Patriot Ledger*, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.patriotledger.com/article/20091102/News/311029601>. The author would like to thank George B. White and the White family for their cooperation and copies of old family photos, and thanks to the editors and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on the different versions of this article.

Following is a partial genealogy of the Peirce-Nichols-White families.

- Hayward Peirce, Esq. (1753–1826), with sons including Silas Peirce (1793–1879) and Elijah Peirce (1789–1848).
- Elijah Peirce (1789–1848), 1825 m. (2d wife) Lucy P. (Nash) Litchfield (1793–1839), with children Silas Peirce II (1826–1898), Elijah Foster Peirce (1827–1906), Sarah Bailey Peirce (1829–1882), and Elizabeth Bourne Peirce (1833–1876).

- Silas Peirce II (1826–1898), 1852 m. Almira Hall (1827?–1893?), with children Lucy (Peirce) Nichols (1853–1910), Silas Peirce III (1860–1922), and Susan Hall (Peirce) Bronson (1870?–after 1922) (who in 1894 m. Rev. Dillon Bronson).
- Silas Peirce III (1860–1922), m. Annie Kendig, with children Mrs. Richard F. (Peirce) Fuller, and Mrs. S. Theodore (Peirce) Bittenbender.
- Lucy (Peirce) Nichols (1853–1910), 1874 m. Edward H. Nichols (1843–1913), daughter Myra Hall (Nichols) White (1877–1952).
- Myra Hall (Nichols) White (1877–1952), 1904 m. Frank Owen White (c.1876–1936), with children Edward Peirce White (1905–1979), Frank Owen White Jr. (d. 1979), and Hayward P. White (d. 1981).
- Edward Peirce White (1905–1979); 1934 m. Sylvia H. (Whitaker) (1911–2007), with children Edward P. White Jr. (c.1935–2019), Elizabeth H. White (1938–1943), Lucy N. (White) Dean, Prudence O. (White) Miller, George B. White.

Sources: Pierce, *Pierce Genealogy*, 18, 62, 105; “Elijah Pierce [sic] [1789–1848],” Find A Grave website; *Vital Records of Scituate, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850, vol. 1-Births* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1909), 157 (Almira Hall baptism 1827), 290–291 (Elijah and Lucy P. children’s births: Silas Peirce 1826, Elijah Foster Peirce 1827, Sarah Bailey Peirce 1829, Elizabeth Bourne Peirce 1833); *Biographical Review, Vol. XVIII: Containing Life Sketches of Leading Citizens of Plymouth County, Massachusetts* (Boston: Biographical Review Publishing Co., 1897), 462 (E. Foster Peirce), accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/biographicalre-vi1897biog>, and [https://books.google.com/books?id=7qd5EML7tYYC&source=gb\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=7qd5EML7tYYC&source=gb_s); *Vital Records of Scituate, Massachusetts, to the Year 1850, vol. 2-Marriages and Deaths* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1909), 231 (Elijah and Lucy marriage 1825), 433 (Elijah death 1848); Wilford J. Litchfield, *The Litchfield Family in America*, part 1, no. 2 (Southbridge, MA: Wilford J. Litchfield, Nov. 1902), 104 (Lucy Peakes Nash, widow of a Litchfield, married Elijah

Peirce 1825), accessed May 12, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/litchfield-family12sout/page/n6>; “Search Vital Records (1841–1910)” (Elizabeth Bourne Peirce death 1876); *Annual Report of the Town Officers of the Town of Scituate For the Year ending December 31, 1906* (Plymouth: The Memorial Press, 1907), 96 (Elijah Foster Peirce death 1906); sources cited above. Many Peirce family members are buried in Groveland Cemetery, near Meadow Crest and Sunnycroft.