



Kathryn Toomey  
Register of Deeds

# Worcester Registry of Deeds

# Newsletter

Issue #4, January 2021

**H**APPY NEW YEAR!

We have had a busy year in real estate regardless of the Pandemic. I am proud to say we never had to stop working. The recording and support staff that is the Registry of Deeds Worcester South, are my heroes. We modified our work routines, we closed our space to the public, but continued to record all documents presented without interruption. In the calendar year 2020 we recorded 165,494 documents.

I hope this is the Final Surge of the Pandemic, the vaccines are here and people are reporting getting their shots. The light is bright at the end of our tunnel that was 2020.

Why does the Registry of Deeds have a newsletter?

I am a new Register, I was sworn into office January 2, 2019. This project came about in 2020 when I wanted to interact with people but could not see them personally. I am passionate about property and title. I decided I would share my love of the communities that comprise the Worcester District.

## What's Inside?

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We are 55 of the 60 communities of Worcester County. There are 5 communities in North Worcester County that have a separate Registry located in Fitchburg.

We have published, electronically, 3 issues of our Newsletter and we are enjoying the feedback. Each month we chose a community to spotlight, and a specific location, business, monument or landmark to highlight. My hope is that people who live near and close learn something about our rich region.

I encourage anyone who receives any of our newsletters to contact me with suggestions, comments or questions. Our goal is to share with the world all the information we have to offer. If you are unfamiliar with our office, we hold all land and title documents for the 55 communities dating back to 1731. All of our records and accessible to the public for free.

## Community Statistics

**406**

Number of Recordings in December

**\$139**

Median home price per sq. ft

**\$237K**

Median sold home price

**3%**

Sale price above asking


**1 of 2**

Cities in Worcester County

# Town Spotlight

S.K. Pierce Furniture  
Makers & Mansion

## Gardner



**N**orth Worcester County is known as the furniture making center of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Gardner, MA is “Chair City.” One of the most recognized manufacturers of furniture was S.K. Pierce. The brief history of this family of furniture makers began with a non-family member, Stephen Taylor, who was the owner of the chair shop circa 1830. He sold his business to brothers Jonas and Sylvester Pierce.

**J**onas was not long for the furniture business but Sylvester thrived. Under Sylvester Pierce the company grew into factory buildings both on South Main Street ([Book 293, Page 391/392](#)) and East Broadway in Gardner. In the 1850s the S.K. Pierce Company was best known for chairs, including but not limited to chairs for chamber suites, dining chairs, rockers with cane and cobbler seats, and screw and spring office chairs.

Sylvester Pierce, commonly known as S.K. Pierce, died in 1888. Upon his passing, Frank Pierce took control of the furniture business and ran the business until it closed its doors in 1937.

With every famous Mansion comes lots of stories and folklore.  
The Pierce Mansion is no different.

In or about 1875, S.K. Pierce built an iconic Mansion across from his factory. The property address is 4 West Broadway Gardner ([Book 530, Page 215/216](#)). The home is a 6,661-square-foot, 26 room Victorian that had 70 windows and ten bedrooms. The design boasted five bedrooms for his family and five bedrooms for his on-site servants. The Mansion also featured 68 closets, marble fireplaces, hand-carved moldings, and a billiards room. It took over a year and a half to build the Mansion and by more than 100 men.

Given a mansion of such grand caliber, you can imagine a guest list that would include: President Calvin Coolidge, P.T. Barnum, Norman Rockwell, Bette Davis and Minnesota Fats.

With every famous Mansion comes lots of stories and folklore, and the Pierce Mansion is no different. A home of this vintage has had many owners, guests and stories worth exploring.

Today the home is owned by a married couple from New Jersey (Deed in [Book 54044, Page 302](#)) and if you google the Mansion beyond the Registry of Deed you will see the Web presence is maintained by: The Dark Carnival, purveyor of haunted attractions from New Jersey. <http://www.skhauntedvictorianmansion.com/>

## Land and Units of Measure

*By Kathryn Toomey, Register, Worcester South Registry of Deeds*

I have been diving deep into old deeds and other recorded documents both for research on our town spotlights and for people who have called to inquire as to documents and property in our region.

Until English King Henry VIII seized the lands of the Roman Catholic Church in 1536, land measures as we now know them were essentially unknown. Instead a narrative system of landmarks and lists was used. Henry wanted to raise even more funds for his wars than he'd seized directly from church property and implemented a method of surveying land developed by an English monk named Richard Benese.

Our Deeds and records date back to 1731. (See [Book 1, Page 1](#))

I wanted to highlight some units of measure used to identify the metes and bounds and explain their value.

The **acre** is a unit of area equal to 43,560 square feet, or 10 square chains, or 160 square poles. A square mile is 640 acres. The “perfect acre” is a rectangle area of 43,560 feet, bounded by sides 660 feet long (a furlong) and 66 feet wide, or 40 rods by 4 rods.

A **chain** is a unit of length, known as *Gunter's chain*. The term was adopted from heavy chain of 100 links that was used by surveyors to measure property bounds. Gunter's chain is defined as a unit of length equal to 66 feet, or four poles. This unit was defined as one tenth of a *furlong*, a common unit of length in the old days. The *mile* was redefined from 5,000 feet to 5,280 feet in order to be an even multiple of furlongs. A mile is 80 chains. An engineers' chain is a 100 foot long chain containing 100 links of one (1) foot apiece.

A **pole** is a unit of length and area, also known as a perch or rod. It is equal to 16.5 feet. One acre is 160 square poles. It is common to see it referred to as 87 acres, 112 poles. Surveyors use the **rod/perch/pole** in its defined amount of 16.5 feet or 1/320 of a surveyor's mile otherwise known as a quarter of a surveyor's chain and is approximately 5.0292 meters. The rod is a useful unit of length because whole number multiples of it can form one acre of square measure.

Historically, surveyor rods such as used by *George Washington* were generally made of dimensionally stable metal—semi-flexible drawn wrought iron linkable bar stock (not steel), such that the four folded elements of a chain were easily transportable through brush and branches when carried by a single man of a surveyor's crew.

In the US, the rod, along with the chain, furlong, and statute mile (as well as the survey inch and survey foot) are based on the pre-1959 values for United States customary units of linear measurement. In 1959, an international agreement (the International yard and pound agreement), defined the yard as the fundamental unit of length in the Imperial/USCU system, defined as exactly 0.9144 meters. However, the above-noted units, when used in surveying, may retain their pre-1959 values.

*(Continued, next page)*

## Land and Units of Measure (cont.)

As of 2020 there are plans by U.S. National Geodetic Survey and National Institute of Standards and Technology to replace the definition for the above-mentioned units by the International 1959 definition of the feet, being exactly 0.3048 meters.

In many measurement systems based on former English units, the link has remained fixed at 0.66 feet, therefore 0.22 yards or 7.92 inches; it is the absolute length of the yard that has varied. A rare remaining application of the link is in the service of some surveying in the United States, which relates to the definition of the survey foot. During most of its useful life, a modern degree of precision in the link's measure was neither expected nor possible.

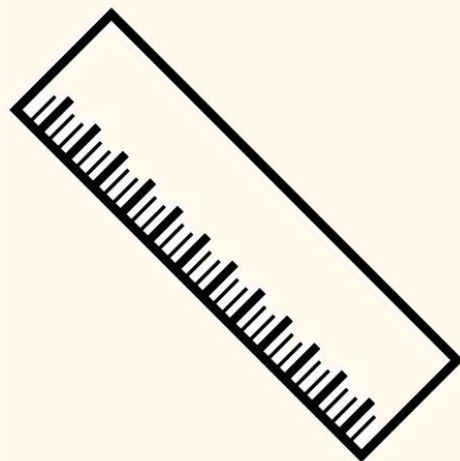
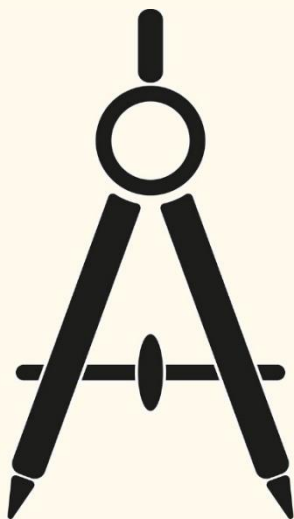
With various definitions, 1 link is equal to:

- exactly 201.168 mm (based on the International 1959 foot)
- approximately 201.167 652 mm (based on the per-1959 imperial foot)
- approximately 201.168 402 mm (based on the U.S. survey foot)

As records are reviewed you will see land descriptions appear to change; that is not the case, the measurements and methods of measuring are defined by governments and entities, and they are codified and updated to streamline the process.

**Note:** The fact remains, you own the property as described in your metes and bounds. It is not changed by the method of measurement used in 1800 versus 2021. Our use of these terms is to explain to the world the precise measurements of the land owned.

I encourage everyone to visit [www.masslandrecords.com/](http://www.masslandrecords.com/) and review deeds, the history is rich and the math or measurement is engaging.



# WORD SEARCH

This puzzle contains 22 words beginning with the letters "snow" (not including the one circled). Find the words, then write them at the bottom of the page.

C	S	S	S	N	O	W	M	O	B	I	L	E	E	M	S
Y	I	N	N	L	P	L	N	L	X	E	S	S	N	S	N
S	M	S	O	O	Y	Y	L	M	U	E	N	W	S	N	O
N	R	Z	N	W	W	A	O	S	K	R	O	S	N	O	W
O	X	S	O	O	B	S	E	A	J	G	W	N	O	W	M
W	V	N	N	W	W	R	L	G	X	E	B	O	W	D	A
S	S	H	O	O	I	F	E	I	P	Y	L	W	P	R	K
U	J	N	G	T	W	N	A	A	D	K	O	I	L	I	E
I	S	S	W	O	A	S	C	L	K	E	W	N	O	F	R
T	N	O	N	M	P	S	T	L	L	H	E	G	W	T	B
R	N	S	W	Y	W	Q	L	O	E	H	R	N	K	G	U
S	P	O	S	O	Y	O	W	Y	R	E	W	K	K	L	L
Q	N	S	N	O	W	L	E	S	S	M	T	Z	S	U	B
S	P	S	K	S	N	O	W	S	H	O	E	S	Z	N	C
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