

4. GEORGE W. PIERCE'S PASSION

While Peter Shields was the driving force for the creation of a University State Farm, George Washington Pierce Jr. was the driving force for siting it at Davis.

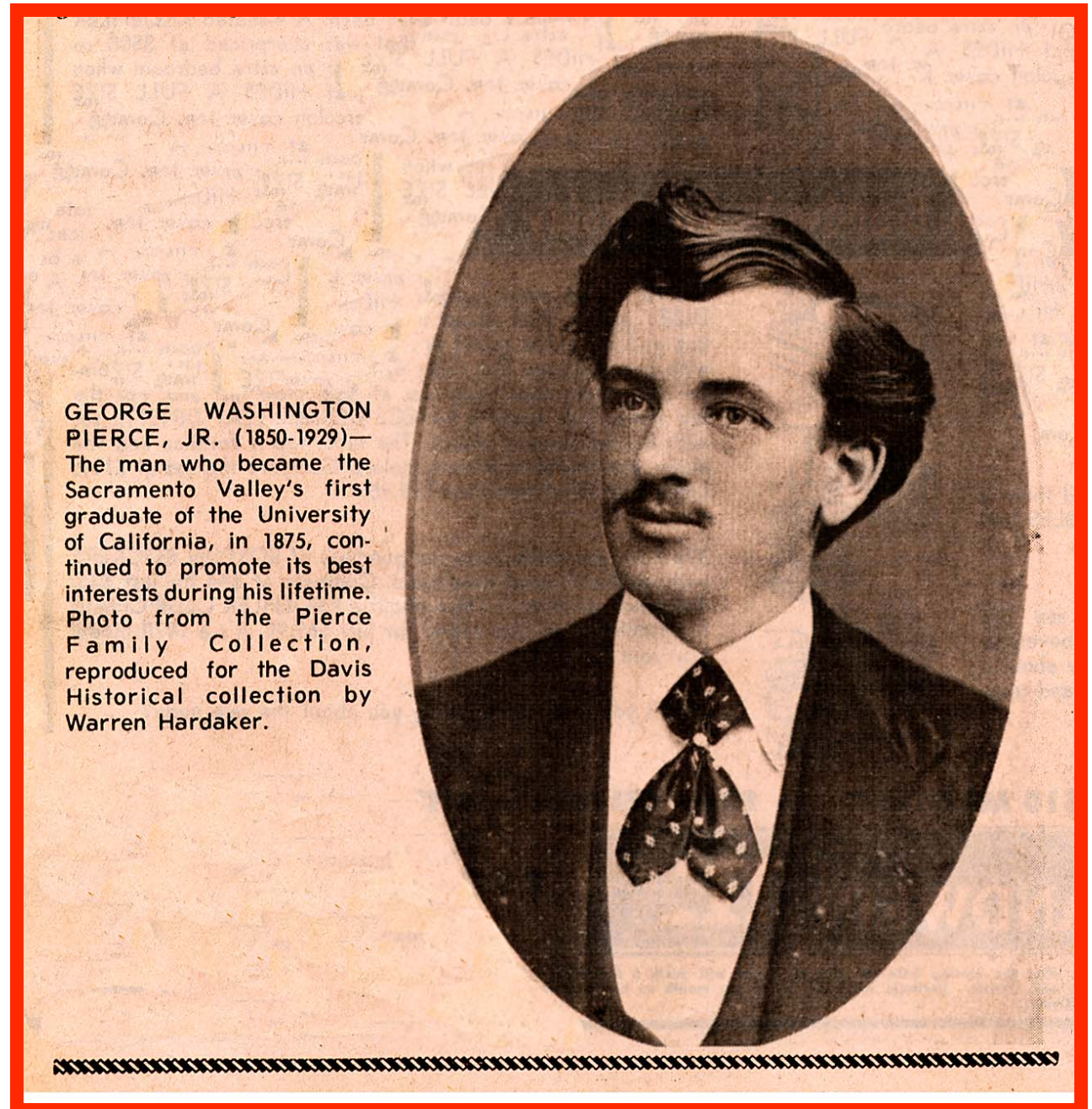
In this section we introduce Pierce as a person. In other sections that follow, we report on his extensive State Farm campaign activities, along with those of other principals in our story

Upper
photograph:
George
Pierce as a
Young Man.
Born in
1850, he
was 18 years
old at the
time
Davisville
was founded
in 1868.

(Photo from Joann Larkey,
"Portraits of the Past" series, *The
Davis Enterprise*.)

Lower
photograph:
George
Pierce family
picture

(Photo from Joann Larkey,
Davisville '68,)



GEORGE WASHINGTON
PIERCE, JR. (1850-1929)—
The man who became the
Sacramento Valley's first
graduate of the University
of California, in 1875, con-
tinued to promote its best
interests during his lifetime.
Photo from the Pierce
Family Collection,
reproduced for the Davis
Historical collection by
Warren Hardaker.



*Mr. and Mrs. George Washington Pierce,
Jr. and sons, George Gardner and
Dixwell Lloyd.*

In her *Abundant Harvest*, Ann Scheuring provides brief biographies of the Pierce and the LaRue families, who had neighboring farms west of Davis and abutting the "Sparks Place."

The Pierce and La Rue Families



YOLO COUNTY ARCHIVES

Local landowner George Pierce, Jr. helped bring the University Farm to Davisville.

PROMINENT LANDOWNERS west of Davisville played a key role in locating the University Farm in southern Yolo County. George W. Pierce Jr. and Jacob E. La Rue were neighbors and farmer/managers of two prosperous ranches along the north bank of Putah Creek not far from town. Both were educated men and knew the value of education—and doubtless recognized the potential economic opportunities in having a major institution located nearby.

Pierce's father settled in Yolo County in 1853 and over several decades developed more than a thousand acres of land as a grain and stock farm. In an era when most farmers did not go to college, young George had the distinction of being the first graduate of the University of California from the Sacramento Valley. In 1875 he received a degree in civil engineering and was preparing for a career with the railroad when he was called home because of his father's health problems. Later he thought of studying law, but gave up that idea because of family responsibilities. For the rest of his life he competently managed his family's diversified farming operation, also serving as the president of the Davisville Almond Growers Association and the California Almond Growers Association for some years.

La Rue's father, Hugh, started farming in Yolo County in 1866, gradually developing 2,000 acres into "Arlington Farm," which produced grain, livestock, and orchard crops and boasted about 200 acres of vineyard. Hugh La Rue maintained his chief residence in Sacramento, where he was a delegate to the 1879 Constitutional Convention and served 20 years as a member of the Board of Directors of the prestigious State Agricultural Society, three years as its president. La Rue also served as Speaker of the Assembly in 1883 and 1884, a title that made him an ex officio Regent of the University of California. Three of his sons attended UC Berkeley, and one became a state senator around 1900. When his son Jacob married in 1887, a big Victorian home was built for the young couple on the Yolo County farm, and Jacob took over the farming operation.

The Pierces and La Rues were sophisticated people with a variety of social and political connections not only in Yolo County but in the capital. Pierce was elected to the State Assembly in 1898, becoming acquainted with many of the state representatives who would later vote for the University Farm bill. He also had a long-standing acquaintance with Governor George Pardee, with whom he had attended boarding school in his youth.³³

From 1890 to 1928, Pierce kept a journal in which he made daily reports on his activities. These volumes are among the Pierce Papers now held by UCD Special Collections.

The volume for 1905 is pictured to the right.

We report his journal habit because he produced a remarkable record on which we and others have drawn.

