

THE FRANKLIN PIERCE HIGHWAY: NH ROUTE 9

From the Franklin Pierce Bicentennial Web Site: www.franklinpierce.ws



Insights into the life and world of Franklin Pierce are easily accessible to the visitor today along New Hampshire Route 9. Named the “Franklin Pierce Highway” almost a century ago, the road traces his life from birth in Hillsborough, to college in Bowdoin, Maine, to legal studies in Portsmouth, to political career in Concord. For almost a century Route 9 has been officially called the Franklin Pierce Highway. Today the New Hampshire Department of Transportation has signed it as such from Chesterfield to Portsmouth.

Hillsborough:

Hillsborough began at Hillsborough Center in the middle 17th Century when Europeans first settled the area under a grant from Colonel John Hill of Boston (who lent his name to the settlement). By 1772, Hillsborough incorporated as a town, and held its first town meeting on November 14, 1772.

Soon, there would be more Hillsboroughs: Hillsborough Bridge, the mill town on the Contoocook river that is today’s downtown, and the Lower Village with its stately homes along the Second New Hampshire Turnpike.

The cabin that Franklin Pierce was born in on November 23, 1804, is today located at the bottom of Franklin Pierce Lake, on the Hillsborough-Antrim line. The lake was created in the 1920s, and may be viewed (and enjoyed) from Hillsborough's Manahan Park, off of Rt. 9.

Chamber of Commerce: 603-464-5858, www.hillsboroughnh.org/

Franklin Pierce Homestead (Rt. 31 N. of Rt. 9)

This was the boyhood home to the 14th President of the United States. Built in 1804 as a home to Benjamin Pierce, hero of the Revolutionary War and twice New Hampshire governor. Franklin Pierce spent half his life in this elegant mansion. The Homestead is a living museum and has been restored to its early 19th century appearance. It features original stenciling, 1824 wallpaper, period furnishings, and historical mementos of the Pierce family. Open for tours every day in

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July and August, and weekends June, September, and the first half of October. Adults pay \$3 admission; children enter at no charge.

Information: 603- 478-3165

Hillsborough Lower Village (South on Rt. 31 from Rt. 9)

This was Pierce's neighborhood. This grouping of early houses, surrounded by forests, is both rich in character and history. Many homes date to the early 19th century, and the Union Chapel is a noteworthy white clapboard church. Many famous Americans came from this small village, including a founder of American Express, the father of vaudeville, a railway magnate, and a U.S. President. Pierce's parents are buried in the cemetery on Route 31 just north of the Lower Village and the Homestead.

Hillsborough Center

In history, the Center earned its name, for it served as a center of local life in Pierce's day. Pierce got his first public education here in a one-room schoolhouse, and later presided over town meetings at the old Townhouse. It retains the feel of a 19th century New England town, with its central "Common," or public green, lost animal pound, horse sheds, burial ground, schoolhouse, and churches. The original nucleus of homes, many still owned by the families that built them, served as a community center with taverns, shops, a post office, and a blacksmith. Today, artists, a pewter smith, and an auctioneer occupy them.

Stone Arch Bridges

Just as Senator Franklin Pierce was returning to his home state from Washington, the town of Hillsborough began an ambitious project to build a series of stone arch bridges over its many streams and rivers. Once home to more than a dozen stone arch masonry bridges, Hillsborough now has seven of these gems, four of which are used everyday to support auto, bike and foot traffic. The oldest Hillsborough stone arch bridge was built in 1866 by Reuben Loverin and can still be seen at the junction of Routes 9 and 202 where it has had its traffic diverted, and will soon be home to a small garden park for picnicking. The other four bridges, built around 1880, are of unknown builders, but believed to have been the work of Scottish and Irish stone masons

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who emigrated to Hillsborough in the 19th century. Each of these lovely examples of bridge building craft is still in place with original keystones and held together without the benefit of mortar.

Pierce Barbecue Pit

Located just beyond the famed Kemps Truck “museums”(open exhibit, and can be found on River Street, the first right). The remains of this stone pit were used for Benjamin Pierce’s annual barbecue, and to stage a huge celebration to send Franklin off to Washington.

Concord:

If Hillsborough was Pierce’s first home, then Concord (the state capital and seat of State government) was to be his second home. The city took its name in honor of the Patriots who resisted the British at Concord, Mass., in 1775. It was here that Pierce both began and ended his political career.

Chamber of Commerce: 603-224-2508, www.concordchamber.com

Statehouse (Main Street)

New Hampshire’s statehouse is the oldest state capitol where the Legislature still meets in its original chambers. The marble and granite dome was put on top of the building in 1818. Over the years, the Statehouse has been enlarged and renovated to accommodate 424 lawmakers (The New Hampshire House's 400+ members make it the third-largest parliamentary body in the English-speaking world: trailing only the U.S. Congress and Britain's Parliament). Pierce came here fresh out of college as a representative from Hillsborough, and soon became the state’s youngest ever speaker of the house. A huge portrait of Pierce hangs in the hall of representatives, and a portrait of his father, governor Benjamin Pierce, is just to the left of the second floor governor’s office. A statue of Pierce stands at the edge of the statehouse lawn. It is the only statue of Pierce in his home state and was erected in 1914, on city property (thus not officially on the statehouse lawn). Self-guided tours of the statehouse are available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Guided tours are offered with reservations. Information: 603-271-2154.

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Pierce Manse

The 1838 Greek Revival Pierce Manse was the home that Pierce and his family lived in between the Senate and the presidency. The house has been restored to how it might have been when the Pierces lived here with their two children. Many of the furnishings belonged to Pierce or other members of his family. Some items are known as "White House Pieces."

When he moved into this house, he had just resigned his post as U.S. Senator to carry on his law practice, and it was here that he was exerting every effort to land some type of government position for his lifelong friend Nathaniel Hawthorne.

He left the house in 1846 to go off to the Mexican War, while his wife and little Benny went to stay with relatives. It is likely that they did not return to 18 Montgomery Street after the war because the rooms would have been haunted by the memory of their son Franky's death. A unique portrait of this child is one of the treasures of The Manse. Open weekdays from mid-June to Labor Day and by appointment. The hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Information: 603-225-2068.

Pierce and his immediate family are buried a few blocks away in the **Old North Cemetery**. The home that Jane and Franklin lived in after the Presidency stood on Main Street until a fire 40 years ago destroyed it.

Museum of New Hampshire History

Across from the statehouse stands the Museum of New Hampshire History, administered by the New Hampshire Historical Society. The Museum of New Hampshire History, at 6 Eagle Square in Concord, New Hampshire, is one of northern New England's finest history museums. It is the single best source for information and educational materials on the state's history. It offers exhibitions on the state's rich heritage and traditions as well as a variety of programs for children and adults throughout the year. The museum store features a selection of New Hampshire's books, products and crafts. Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday evenings until 8:30 p.m. Sunday 12 noon to 5 p.m. Also open Monday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. from

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July 1 through October 15 and in December. Admission: \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$2.50 for children 6-18. Information: 603-228-6688, www.NHHistory.org.

New Hampshire Historical Society Tuck Library (30 Park Street)

The Tuck Library holds the State's largest collection of Pierce papers and images. Their collection (including a library catalog of books, manuscripts, newspapers, etc) is open to researchers and the public Tuesday through Saturday from 9:30 am to 5 p.m. There is a daily user fee for non-members, and no charge for students and Society members. Call 603-224-0463 for more information, or e-mail to library @nhhistory.org. Website: www.NHhistory.org

Former Pierce Law Office (Gallagher, Callahan & Gartrell- 214 N. Main Street)

Not open to the public without prior notice. The building at 214 North Main Street was built in 1826 as the home of the Merrimack County Bank; it is believed to be the first three-story brick building on Main Street. Designed and built by local architect/builder John Leach in the Adamesque Federal style, it features tall recessed arches with stone imposts on the facade reminiscent of the Boston work of Bullfinch, and step-gable ends and square, simple-capped chimneys. Originally built with double entries on Main Street, the building's occupants included Franklin Pierce. Gallagher, Callahan & Gartrell is a multidisciplinary government and regulatory law firm serving New Hampshire and New England
Information: 800-528-1181. www.gcglaw.com

Franklin Pierce Law Center

For more than twenty-five years, Franklin Pierce Law Center has offered training leading to the Juris Doctor (JD), the basic degree for the practice of law in the U.S. More recently, it has also awarded advanced degrees, diplomas and certificates in education law and intellectual property--subjects of ever-increasing national and global importance.

Centrally located in Concord, the state capital of New Hampshire, FPLC enjoys an enviably diverse student body. Students typically represent every continent, and graduates work in legal, governmental, business and educational organizations in over fifty nations.

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Franklin Pierce College

Franklin Pierce College's curriculum is a blend of traditional liberal arts, preprofessional study, teacher preparation programs, and a nationally recognized core curriculum - "The Individual and Community."

Franklin Pierce is a four-year, coeducational, nonsectarian college located in the State of New Hampshire. The main campus in Rindge, New Hampshire is situated on over 1,200 wooded acres on the shore of Pearly Pond near the base of Mount Monadnock. From this site, we serve an enrollment of nearly 1,500 undergraduate students. The College also operates six Graduate & Professional Studies centers in Concord, Keene, Lebanon, Nashua, Portsmouth and Salem.