

GENEALOGY

PART I: THE FIRST SEVEN GENERATIONS

I. Josiah Churchill

Josiah was chosen as a starting point in our family history because we have no records of his parents, hence can go no farther back. Also because he was (as far as we have been able to determine), the first in our direct line of descent in America. The exact date of his birth is not known, but Virkus (34) states that he was born in England about 1615.

No information has been found regarding when or on what ship Josiah came to America. It would give us a certain family pride if he came to this country on the Mayflower with the Pilgrims in 1620; likewise if we could show that we were descended from the English John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough. However on both counts the proof is lacking and the evidence is negative. First, consider the case of the Mayflower. The log of the Mayflower contained 102 passengers made up of 41 family names. This list (3) has been published in several books including the Encyclopedia Americana and does not include any Churchills. Their destination was Virginia but because of storms they actually landed near Plymouth Massachusetts, where they settled the Plymouth Colony. Most of these people were Pilgrims, some had been living in Holland for several years. The Pilgrims were Separatists from the Church of England; originating in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire,

and Nottinghamshire in northeastern England. Although there is no proof, Josiah more probably came from southwestern England (Devonshire or Somersetshire). Josiah probably was not a Pilgrim but a Puritan since he settled in Wethersfield, Connecticut and not in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

As to our descending from Duke John, it needs only to be pointed out that Josiah Churchill was born thirty-five years before Duke John (the Duke was born in 1650). Josiah had been living in America some thirteen or fourteen years before the Duke was born. It is possible that Josiah was related to one of Duke John's ancestors.

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill was the elder son of Lord Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill and Jennie Jerome. Lord Randolph was the third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough.

Early Wethersfield (1)

Since our ancestors lived in Wethersfield and nearby Newington for 165 years (1637-1802), and since their lives were influenced by this environment, some of the history of this area is included here. Wethersfield claims the distinction of being the oldest permanent Settlement in Connecticut. First known by its Indian name "Pyquag"; the people that first settled the town changed the name to Watertown since they had migrated here from Watertown Massachusetts of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The name was again changed, this time to Wethersfield by court action in February, 1637.

Log cabins were built for each family, and until this was accomplished no single man was permitted to build a cabin for himself. At first, meetings were held in the homes, but later (probably the following year) a town

square was laid out. This consisted of a meeting house (town hall); a parade ground for the Trainband (all able males over the age of 16 had to serve--this was changed to ages 16 to 60 in 1673); a burial ground; horse sheds (people walked or rode horseback--no wheeled vehicles were available); and Sabbath day houses (buildings where families could find shelter and eat their lunches between church services). Such were the conditions at Wethersfield when Josiah arrived.

Josiah was on a list of immigrants to Wethersfield between 1636 and 1640. He was listed as a soldier in the latter part of the Pequot Indian War (1634-1637), but was not in the list of 18 men from Wethersfield accompanying John Mason and his men on an attack of the Pequots May 26, 1637 at Groton. He married Nathaniel Foote's oldest daughter Elizabeth in 1638 and their first child Mary, was born March 24, 1639. Nathaniel (according to the Foote Genealogy), and his family immigrated to America from Colchester England, a town about 50 miles northeast of London. Nathaniel was one of the "Adventurers" that came to Wethersfield from Watertown Massachusetts in the fall of 1634. His family probably came to Wethersfield in May of 1635 with Reverend Thomas Hooker and about 100 other men, women, and children, or possibly as late as 1636. This evidence (although proof is lacking), leads the writer to believe that Josiah came to Wethersfield from England about mid-year, 1637.

By 1640 frame and stone houses were being built in Wethersfield. Typical houses were two stories with two rooms above and two below with a large chimney in the middle of the house (fire places were the only source of heat and all cooking was done there). Later the more well-to-do families added a lean-to roof on the back to the level of the first story, giving a place for three

more rooms. Such a house was sometimes referred to as a "salt-box house," and the type still exists throughout New England. By 1653 there was a brick factory in Wethersfield and bricks were used for building. Josiah eventually owned two homes in Wethersfield (as indicated in his will) and both were apparently of the frame house type of construction.

Religion was the dominant force in early Wethersfield even though no church building existed. Clark (7) states that blessings were said at every meal, and the day began and ended with scripture and prayer. All persons were required to attend worship under penalty of three shillings fine. Only members of the church could vote. Each church member was required to set down what he would pay to the church. If he refused, he would be rated according to his possessions and compelled to pay.

With such strict regulations there were sharp disagreements which often led to quarrels and a division of the church members. Such a quarrel in 1641 led to a group of 33 settlers and their families leaving the church and settling the town of Stamford, Connecticut. Josiah's name was on the list of members that remained in Wethersfield. Another disagreement in the church at Wethersfield in 1659 led to 20 members signing up to move to Hadley, Massachusetts, which they did within a year. One of these was Samuel Church and his wife Mary, the oldest daughter of Josiah Churchill.

Not until the fourth meeting house was built was there a church building as such, and this was the third meeting house taken over by the church. Throughout the lifetime of Josiah and even his son Joseph, there were no pews in the church (these were installed in 1715). Throughout their lives the men and women were seated on opposite sides of the church. People were seated on the following grounds of advancement; age, dignity of descent, place of

public trust, pious disposition, estate and "peculiar serviceableness of any kind." Not until 1764 was the seating committee instructed to allow men and women to sit together. (This writer recalls that the Free-Will Baptist Church of Fiatt, Illinois had two entrance doors, and the men usually sat on one side of the church and the women on the other. There was a partition down the center of the church as high as the back of the pews.)

One of Josiah's biggest problems must have been keeping his family healthy. Smallpox and scarlet fever were common, and there was no cure for either. It was reported that one-third of the 100 passengers that came to America in 1682 with William Penn, died enroute of smallpox. Operations, if made at all, had to be performed with nothing better than whiskey as an anesthetic (discovery of chloroform and ether was still a very long way off--1846). Furthermore the church was opposed to any operation that involved shedding of blood. The people were superstitious and still believed in witchcraft. In 1648 a Mary Johnson was executed in Wethersfield, the indictment being "familiarity with the devil." On February 20, 1651 a John Carrington and his wife were hanged for "familiarity with Satan."

By 1639 Josiah was listed as owning 12½ acres of land in the town west of the river in "Little West Field." He acquired 6 acres more land April 28, 1641, and drew 18 acres in the land distribution of 1670. He acquired other property as is indicated in his will. He served at the "Particular Court" of Wethersfield in 1643, 1649, and 1651. He also served at the "Quarter Court" in 1664 and 1665; and at the "County Court" in 1666, 1670, and 1675. He was constable in 1657 and 1670; and town surveyor in 1666 and 1673.

Josiah's will was executed Nov. 17, 1683 and probated March 15, 1686 (20). The Will follows:

I Josiah Churchell of Wethersfield do make this my last Will and Testament: I give unto my wife, Elizabeth Churchell, the use of all my estate, whether real or personal, during her natural life, excepting such parcels of land as shall hereafter be excepted, she paying all my Just Debts and after her decease my Will is that all my Land and Other Estate of mine she shall then stand possessed of, to be divided as follows: I give unto my son Joseph the House and Homelott he now liveth on, with all other Buildings thereon, and one Lott in the Little West Field, containing 10 acres, and thereon, another Lott containing 6 acres. I give unto my son Joseph my 50 acre Lott at the West End of Wethersfield Bounds. I do give unto my son Joseph after the decease of my wife Elizabeth, 5 acres in the Great Swamp, and 2 acres of Meadow lying toward the lower End of sd. Meadow, and half of my 5 acre Lott at the Upper End of the Great Meadow. I give unto my son Benjamin Churchell 6 acres in the Little West Field, also 10 acres more in the West Field. I give unto my son Benjamin, after the decease of my wife, my now Dwelling House and Homelott and other Buildings upon sd. Lott, and 7 acres of land in the Great Swamp, and 4 acres in Beaver Meadow and half my 5 acre Lott at the Upper End of the Great Meadow. My Will is that all the rest of my Moveable Estate be equally divided betwixt my daughters Marah (Mary) Church, Elizabeth Buck, Ann Rice, and Sarah Wickham. My Will is that my wife be sole Executrix.

Samuel Talcott

Witness John Deming

The will was made out in the English custom of giving all the land to the sons, the oldest son getting more than the others, and the other property to the daughters. Hannah was not included in the will, which leads us to assume she had died before the will was made out.

Family Record of Josiah Churchill

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|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| I. Josiah | b. 1615 | d. Jan. 1, 1686 |
| | married 1638 to | |
| Elizabeth Foote | b. 1616 | d. Sept. 8, 1700 |

Children

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| II-1. Mary | b. March 24, 1639 |
| II-2. Elizabeth | b. May 15, 1642 |
| II-3. Hannah | b. Nov. 1, 1644 |
| II-4. Ann | b. 1647 |
| *II-5. Joseph | b. Dec. 7, 1649 |
| II-6. Benjamin | b. May 16, 1652 |
| II-7. A son | b. (a) |
| II-8. Sarah | b. Nov. 11, 1657 |

*Indicates our direct line of descent.

(a). Date of birth not known. The child died when about one year old.

II-5. Joseph Churchill

Joseph was born and lived his entire life at Wethersfield. As a boy of seven he probably was present the day the church bell was installed at the meeting house in 1657. Before this time people had been called to church by a "roll of drums." He wore home made clothes as did all of the family (it would be another 200 years before clothing could be purchased ready made in stores). The material (flax-wool) was carded by hand and spun by hand in the home. (The spinning wheel was introduced into America during Joseph's life time.) Hand spinning was done by holding a distaff with the raw carded material in the left hand, and a spindle (small round stick) held in the right hand, twirled by hand to form a continuous thread. The house was lighted by candles also made in the home, and usually made by the women and girls of the family. The fire in the fireplace was seldom allowed to go out as the meals were cooked there and the handy friction match of today had not yet been invented.

As a boy in his early teens he probably visited the tannery and brick factory. He must have spent many hours