

## Life in Pomfret in 1850

Excerpts from a letter written by Sarah C. Churchill to her brother Charles M.F. Churchill of Milton, Mass. We do not have the original letter but have two typescript copies which were obviously done at different times, as there are slight textual differences and a few things don't seem to make any sense. There are probably some errors which is common in amateur transcriptions.

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Pomfret June 12th, 1850

Dear Brother Charles,

I arrived at this place after a tedious ride of one hundred and twenty miles on the railroad and fifteen in the stage and private conveyance....I arrived in Hartland where I took the stage for Woodstock, 11 miles [and] thought it best to take a conveyance straight on for Pomfret, 4 miles, which 4 miles he charged me one dollar which I considered taking advantage of my being alone and not able to do any other way but I was too tired and headachy to hesitate. The stage and Rockaway ride would have been delightful if I had not previously rode so far, - hills on every side making the whole country appear one mountain surface, the last mile being one almost unbroken ascent. When I did get here the first person I saw was the old gentleman (about who I had my doubts whether he was still amongst the living) turning out his horse into the pasture having just returned from sheep washing which has just been generally done hereabouts previous to shearing... Well, the old man looked at me hard but could not make me out till his wife came to the door and welcomed me. The family consists of Zebedee, the father and wife, - Zebedee, the son and wife and two children, - a girl Ellen, a little older than Mary, and a boy, Albert, 18 months...The two last daughters were married in this room the first day of May...Araph, another son, lives the next house beyond about half a mile with his wife and one child of hers, - unlike our brother, - he is childless. I expect to go there today. Mr. C. has just gone to the mill which is four miles off. Farming is the business here. I rise before five, breakfast at six, dine at noon...retire before nine, - all of which I like, it gives me such long days. Tell mother I went to bed last night by the light of a tallow candle in a brass candlestick. I have the best room for my sleeping room. They have four horses all of their own raising, cows, calves, sheep, hens, turkies and a pig. Last winter they killed a hog, weighed 612 pounds. We have pork and eggs, pie or doughnuts for breakfast, - about the same for dinner. Butternuts are abundant also beachnuts [sic], apples are the principal fruit, wild strawberries can be gathered by the quart for the picking. Zebedees wife makes butter, cheese, besides doing all sorts of work. They have sold sixty dozen eggs this spring. About butter, - tell

mother they have enough to sell but the transportation this warm weather is the danger. Zebedee has a big dog, Tiger, who is fed much in the same way that Turk is, never coming into the house.

I do not see any level ground here, - all the planting must be done on the side of the hills. The land view is a delightful change to me, - our Milton Hills sinks into insignificance

in height when compared with the lofty hills which surround me on every side above all of which, rises the Ascutney which but for its never varying position might be taken for one of the clouds.

I inquired about cows last night. Zebedee told me that the best young cows of 3 or 4 years old could be bought in the fall for \$18 or \$20 and 2 years old for \$12. I went out a short distance yesterday and gathered some slippery elm in the green state. I miss the ice water and some other trifles not absolutely essential to health or happiness but which habit makes one miss, - rusticity, simple but in somethings luxury and independence you will find here.

We had salt fish dressed in cream, a little thickened with flour and an egg broke in it for breakfast, - a rich dish. I went out to see them shear sheep this morning, - it seemed as if they were taking the skin off so close. I think the place and manner of living here more healthy than in our polished east wind towns.

Zebedee has planted 60 bushels of potatoes. The old gentleman tells me that he was named for his uncle, Zebedee, our grandfather, - his father's name was Isaac. Many of the medicinal herbs we buy grow well here and may be had for the picking such as motherwort, liverwort sarsaparilla [sic], slippery elm, etc. Tell mother I think the mountain air agrees with me so far but I do not expect a fortnight to work wonders.

I think I can mail this letter tomorrow.

Your affectionately Sister Sarah C.

They say we ought to have set a hen on our turkey eggs and let the old turkey have hatched out a second litter that is the way they do.

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### Notes from Henry Vail, History of Pomfret

According to Vail, Zebedee Churchill, born in 1780, was a son of Deacon Ichabod Churchill [although he tells Sarah his father's name was Isaac] of Woodstock, who came to that town in 1777 and was prominent in the Baptist Church there. Zebedee Churchill married 22 November, 1809, Azubah Chedel, a daughter of John Chedel. His home in Pomfret was part of the Reverend Aaron Hutchinson's farm. They had 10 children including Asaph and Zebedee mentioned in the letter. Ellen was the younger Zebedee's daughter.

