

Ezra Churchill (1827-1902)

In 1873, the Worcester Police Department established for the first time the full-time position of detective, and to that position City Marshall Ansel Washburn named officer Ezra Churchill, a 46-year-old veteran of only a few years on the force. After working in his original trade of "clicker," a cutter of shoes and boots, in several locations, Churchill had joined the force in 1868 at the relatively advanced age for such a position of 46. Apparently he had impressed the command staff with his capabilities for detective work.

The highlight of Churchill's career was his pursuit and capture of Lucius Pond in 1875, "after a chase across the continent," as *The Spy* described it, in the case covered in *Mysterious Disappearance* (*WorcesterThen*, 1915). For reason unknown, he retired from the police department in 1880 after only seven years. His remaining worklife was spent in a variety of positions, including salesman at several establishments in Worcester, and for some years he was in the wool trades in a partnership dealing in "shoddy" and rags at Washington Square. He and his wife Myra Bosworth had four children, one of whom was a son, George Bosworth Churchill, born in 1867, and the subject of a separate WorcesterThen obituary notice.

Ezra Churchill died of heart failure Jan-16-1902, the day before his 75th birthday, leaving a widow and four grown children. The notices of his death in the press (below) were very complimentary concerning his work with the police department, emphasizing the Pond case and his role in the capture of a murderer in 1876 in what was described as a very prominent case. Even though he didn't remain with the department for very long, Ezra Churchill set the bar high for detectives who would follow.

FIRST WORCESTER DETECTIVE

Ezra Churchill Leaves Record of Good Police Work.

The funeral of Ezra Churchill, who died Thursday, will be this afternoon at 2 o'clock from his home, 27 Newbury street. Rev. C. B. Lawson will officiate. The body will be placed in the tomb at Hope cemetery, and removed to Grafton in the spring.

Mr. Churchill was the first regularly appointed detective on the Worcester police force. He was born in Plympton, Jan. 18, 1827. His parents were Isaac and Mary Churchill. He learned the shoe cutting trade at his home, and afterward engaged in it at Grafton and Westboro. He married Miss Myra Bosworth of Grafton, and Oct. 20, 1901, he and his wife celebrated the 45th anniversary of their wedding.

Mr. Churchill came to Worcester in 1866, and after working in shoe shops, was appointed patrolman on the police force in 1868. In 1876 he was made a detective, and was the first to act regularly in that capacity.

His name as a detective is best remembered in connection with the famous Pond case. Lucius W. Pond, a manufacturer of machinists' tools, was discovered in October, 1875, to be a defaulter to the amount of about \$100,000. He left Worcester and covered his steps so carefully his whereabouts were unknown for a year. Finally, after careful watching for a clue, the chief of police learned that a trunk had been sent away from his house, and Mr. Churchill was sent to follow the trunk. By a varied route the trunk was traced to San Francisco. Before it arrived Mr. Churchill had found his man in a San Francisco hotel.

Ezra Churchill

Telegram, Jan-18-1902

Though clean shaven of a heavy beard, the defaulter was recognized and induced to come back to Worcester by Mr. Churchill without formal requisition. The capture was none too soon, for the man had a ticket for Australia in his pocket, and would have sailed next day. Subsequently the absconder was sentenced to 15 years in prison, and was released after eight years.

In 1876 Mr. Churchill, with Inspector Patrick O'Day, then a member of the state police, helped capture John Murphy, afterward convicted of killing John Bullard of Shrewsbury. Mr. Churchill was given a special reward for his work. His connection with the force continued till 1880, when he retired.

For some years he was a member of the Knights of Pythias. He leaves a widow and four children, Mrs. S. P. Harding, Miss Fannie Churchill, George P. Churchill, professor of English and rhetoric at Amherst, and Miss Florence Churchill. Two brothers and two sisters are living, Otis Churchill of Abington, Reuben Churchill of Boston and Mrs. Eunice Mowry and Mrs. Jane Drayton of Worcester.

FIRST MAN TO BE DETECTIVE

Ezra Churchill, Who Had That Distinction in Worcester, Is a Victim of Heart Failure After an Eventful Life

**SERVED TWELVE YEARS
IN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Capture of Lucius W. Pond After a Chase Across the Continent the Most Important Event in Connection With His Police Service

Ezra Churchill, the first regularly appointed detective on the Worcester police force, died yesterday morning about 9 o'clock, at his home, 27 Newbury Street. He had an attack of heart failure Tuesday, from which he seemed to have partially recovered. But a recurrence of the attack yesterday morning proved fatal. Tomorrow, the day of the burial, Mr. Churchill would have been 75 years old.

He was born in Plympton, adjoining Plymouth, of which it was formerly a part, Jan. 18, 1827. He belonged to one branch of the Churchill family which came from England in 1648. His parents were Isaac and Mary Churchill.

His early life was passed in Plympton and he gained his education there. He learned the trade of a shoe cutter and was employed in shoe shops in Grafton and afterward in Westboro. While in Grafton he married Miss Myra Bosworth and on the 24th of last October the couple celebrated the 45th anniversary of their marriage.

Mr. Churchill came to Worcester in 1865 and worked for a short time in shoe shops. He was appointed patrolman on the police force in 1868, the same year with the present deputy chief, Amos Atkinson. In 1876 Mr. Churchill was appointed detective and was the first person to the force in that capacity.

Perhaps the most important event in his connection with the force happened in the previous year. Oct. 4, 1875, it was discovered that Lucius W. Pond, manufacturer of machinist tools, was a defaulter to the amount of about \$100,000.

Ezra Churchill

The Worcester Spy, Jan-17-1902

He had left town and his whereabouts were not known. By order of W. Ansel Washburn, the then city marshal, Pond's house was watched and one night a trunk was seen to be given to an expressman. Mr. Churchill went after the trunk. It was sent first to Boston, thence Mr. Churchill followed it to Sacramento, Cal., where it was addressed to L. D. Wilson. He notified Wells, Fargo Express Company and the trunk was traced to San Francisco. Before it arrived, however, Mr. Churchill met his man in the San Francisco Hotel and recognized him although his appearance had been altered by shaving off his beard.

Mr. Pond at first denied his identity but finally consented to accompany Mr. Churchill to Worcester without a legal fight on requisition proceedings. When captured Mr. Pond had a ticket for Australia, good on a steamer sailing the next day. Mr. Churchill brought his prisoner back to Worcester, being met at Omaha by City Marshal Washburn.

Pond was indicted on three counts and convicted on all. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison but was pardoned after serving eight.

In 1876 Mr. Churchill was active in detecting John Murphy, who was convicted of murdering John Bullard of Shrewsbury. Mr. Churchill worked on this case with Inspector Patrick O'Day, then a member of the state police force. Mr. Churchill received \$50 for his service on this case. Mr. Churchill was a very busy and effective member of the department until his retirement in 1880. Since then he has lived quietly and has taken no prominent part in business or public affairs.

At his death he belonged to no organizations though for several years he belonged to the Knights of Pythias. Mr. Churchill was next to the youngest of 14 children and he is survived by two brothers and two sisters. They are Otis Churchill of Abington, Reuben Churchill of Boston, Mrs. Eunice Mowry and Mrs. Jane Drayton, of Worcester. Besides a widow he leaves four children, Mrs. Sidney P. Harding, Miss Fannie Churchill, George P. Churchill, professor of English and rhetoric at Amherst College, and Miss Florence Churchill.

The funeral services will be at his late residence, 27 Newbury Street, tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock.

See also the obituary notice for Ezra's son George B. Churchill, whose career was distinguished and very different from that of his father.