

HISTORY OF JAFFREY

CHAPTER I

“History is the unrolled scroll of prophecy.”

- JAMES A. GARFIELD

JAFFREY THIRTY YEARS LATER 1968-1998

After 1960 the population of New Hampshire changed as both New Hampshire and Vermont experienced accelerated growth. The most rapidly growing state in New England, New Hampshire grew at an average annual rate of 2 percent, nearly twice the national rate. With completion of the interstate highway system in the 1950s and 1960s, the accessibility to towns in southern New Hampshire had vastly improved. Concomitant road improvement in the Monadnock Region, which greatly increased mobility for Jaffrey residents and workers, led directly to the decline in the commercial segment in “downtown” Jaffrey, a trend which continues through the rest of the century. (Growth in the Monadnock Region, Blegaa & Hedegaard, Dec. 1975, part of Monadnock Region Studies.)



Main Street (facing east)

In 1970 there were four full- or part-time new car dealers in Jaffrey, but in 1995 none remained. Similarly, in 1970 Jaffrey had two grocery stores, Belletetes' and Forciers' plus several convenience stores, the smaller grocery stores having already disappeared. In 1995 Jaffrey had no grocery stores, but three convenience stores: Mr. Mike's, a convenience store co-located with a gasoline station, a ubiquitous combination; the B & B Grocery run by John and Weltha Smith on Main Street adjacent to the bridge over the Contoocook River, a site previously occupied by a gas station; and Jose Diab's convenience store on Main Street, a half mile west of the center of town, a site formerly occupied by Boutwell's Garage. Although Roy's Market on River Street, formerly run by Richard Lambert, stood empty for some time after two unsuccessful attempts by successive proprietors, new owner Michael Whitney has reestablished a convenience store and gas station at that location. Finally, new to town, the first chain fast-food establishment, McDonald's, was built and opened in 1995.

Volume III of this history says: "Probably no other facet of life in Jaffrey has changed so much during the 35 or 40 years as that of retail merchandising." Today, as more and more workers travel to near and not-so-near communities for their employment and their shopping, the mall and the super store have displaced local merchants. The Goodnow Shopping Center closed in 1967. Following Isadore Abbott's death in the early 1970s, the Abbott Clothing Company adjacent to the town offices closed. A succession of tenants followed until 1994 when General Automotive's parts store, displaced by the highway improvements at the routes 202-124 intersection, moved to the Abbott Building. General Automotive relocated to the Monadnock Plaza in mid-1995. All the other general stores formerly operating in Jaffrey, such as Godin's on Main Street, have disappeared. Marion's Boutique, occupying the corner spot in the Dillon building and offering women's clothing, is the only retail enterprise selling new clothing for adults in the town of Jaffrey. As one person remarked anonymously in response to a 1978 planning board questionnaire, "If I want something in the clothing line more complicated than a shoelace, I have to go outside of Jaffrey to get it."

Mobility is one major key to the decline of retail commerce in

Jaffrey. According to the New Hampshire Division of Employment Security, Jaffrey, with a 1995 population of 5,361, has a workforce of 2,612, almost half of whom (1,249) work outside the town. A similar number (1,425) is listed as commuting to Jaffrey for work, with over 140 of those from nearby Massachusetts communities such as Winchendon, Townsend, Ashby, and Gardner. A larger number of Jaffrey residents (217) commute to cities and towns in Massachusetts, including 15 who make the hour-and-a-half trek to communities as far away as Dedham, Massachusetts. Although no exactly comparable data is available, a survey of Jaffrey residents taken in late 1978 indicated that about two-thirds of Jaffrey's workers were employed in town and one-third in other communities. The trend toward increased mobility for both work and shopping continues. Today the ratio is about 50 - 50 working in town and commuting elsewhere.

Further, as the union of the computer and network telecommunications became a reality available to everyone in the early 1990s, Jaffrey began to see a small influx of professionals who, while living in Jaffrey, conduct their business and professional activities with associates all over the world. Three such business-consulting firms and two specialists in "camera ready" desktop publishing opened their establishments in Jaffrey in 1994 and 1995. It is hard to get a firm count on the number of Jaffrey residents who own computers or the number who subscribe to some sort of telecommunications service with access to the Internet (estimated at over 500) or for whom such electronic communication is the chief vehicle for conducting business.

Meanwhile, as in the rest of New Hampshire, agriculture continued the steady decline which commenced in the years following World War II, both as it became harder to earn a living in agriculture and as population pressures increased. In 1960 only 3.2 percent of Jaffrey's land was developed, 6.4 percent was farmland, and 86.6 percent was considered undeveloped. By 1970 the amount of developed land rose to 4.3 percent, an increase largely at the expense of agricultural land, which declined to 5.6 percent. Today only three working farms remain in Jaffrey: Archie and Helen Coll's produce and egg-production farm, Margaret and James Critser's (the former Davis) farm, and Peter and Ann Sawyer's 526-acre



Main Street (facing west).

milk production farm on Turnpike Road. Although land which can be used for growing hay remains and is so listed in the current use inventory, e.g. the Macy and Cutter properties, Jaffrey land devoted to agriculture has declined to a low of 2 percent. Consistent with this decline; in 1970 Jaffrey had two agricultural implement dealers; it had none in 1995. Sales and repair of motorized lawn and garden equipment took their place — notably Ronald Boutwell's on Sawtelle Road and Philip Coll's on Lincoln Corner Road—while Belletetes Hardware sells equipment and Robert Camire has set up a sales and repair business at his home on Woodbound Road.

CHRONOLOGY OF TOWN EVENTS 1968-98

1968: At School District annual meeting, the Jaffrey voters endorsed a proposal to establish a Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District and to submit the proposal to the voters at the earliest possible date. District was established that year.

1969: Town Meeting accepted the donation of a tract of land lying between Turnpike Road and Ellison Street (Charity Square) from the United Church of Jaffrey. Town Meeting voted to work toward establishing a Jaffrey Center Historic District. The commissioners produced a study including boundaries for the district.

1970: The Jaffrey Center Historic District was established. George Sirois was the agent for town clocks. A January 1970 report on "Refuse Disposal" predicted that Jaffrey's 1990 population would be about 7000.

1971: The selectmen reported to the town their recommendation to establish a public works system.

1972: David R. Sawyer, town moderator, school district moderator, and chairman of the Jaffrey-Rindge School Building Committee, died at the age of 45 in an airplane crash while on a trip to Alaska, along with resident Alan Wheeler.

1973: Although Jaffrey had had a planning board in place since 1960, the board received its first authorization to approve or disapprove subdivisions from the 1973 Town Meeting. The town began to recognize the need for resource conservation by voting to study recycling.

1975: Jaffrey's first Land Use and Wetlands Conservation District ordinances were adopted at Town Meeting. George Sirois was still serving as agent for town clocks. In keeping with the times, the town dump was renamed a Sanitary Landfill. Instead of hiring a recreation director, the town established its first Recreation Committee. A recreation director was hired later.

1976: PROGRESS! By Article 11, the town voted to electrify the clock in the Cutler Memorial building. The selectmen appointed Kenneth Saunders, Jr. the town's first superintendent of public works. Alfred Christian retired after 14 years as a town selectman.

1977: A Special Town Meeting in June appropriated \$350,000 for new gravel-packed wells.

1978: Jaffrey voted to join the Southwest Region Planning Commission.

1979: Lester Hammond was honored for over 20 years of service as water commissioner, selectman, state representative, and town assessor.

1980: In October the Jaffrey planning board adopted the town's first master plan. Over 50 citizens participated in the study.

1981: As fire trucks became larger and more sophisticated, the River Street fire station was no longer adequate. A study committee headed by Henry Gallup reviewed all possible sites and recom-

mended that a new fire station be constructed on town-owned land at Fitzgerald Drive and Turnpike Road. The town voted to borrow \$250,000 from the Farmer's Home Administration to build and equip the new station. When it was constructed, the police department was moved to the River Street location, a "temporary" home that would be theirs for 15 years. By acclamation, Jaffrey voters honored Albert Morin on his retirement after 27 years of service as town clerk, treasurer, bookkeeper, water commissioner, member of the Town History Committee, and library trustee. Coburn Kidd, distinguished citizen and author of the definitive book *Jaffrey Roads and Streets* died.

1982: Arthur Rivard was honored for his service as special policeman, officer, and police chief from 1956 to 1982.

1983: The town authorized the major construction of its sewer plant at a cost of \$3,200,000, 5 percent to be paid by the town and 95 percent from federal and state aid.

1984: Town meeting witnessed quite a number of resolutions recognizing people for their years of service to the town. Paul Leach retired after 18 years as fire chief. Paul, an employee of what became the Jaffrey Fire Protection Company, designed and invented for the Jaffrey Fire Department many of the fittings and nozzles for large-volume water supply capabilities now used throughout the United States. Henry Belletete retired after 28 years as road agent. Roy Stone completed 15 years as member and chairman of the budget committee. John Rich completed seven years as a trustee of trust funds. A select committee was established to investigate and report on the advisability of adopting the town manager form of government, and in December 1984 the committee so recommended.

1986: After several hearings and much debate, the town voted 489 to 294 to adopt the town manager form of government. In July Donald Rich was hired as Jaffrey's first town manager. That same year, concerned that growth and development would be more than the town's facilities could handle, Jaffrey voted 288 to 72 to enact an Interim Growth Control ordinance. Millipore Corporation was authorized to discharge wastewater into the sewer system. To get this authorization they had to fund removal of 60,000 gallons of infiltration from the system.

1987: A proposal to build an addition to the town library at a cost of \$1,270,000 was defeated. Mount Monadnock was designated a National Landmark.

1988: New Hampshire's cities, towns, and regions were faced with the closure of the old town dumps, now euphemistically termed sanitary landfills. The Ashuelot Valley Refuse Disposal District, a regional effort in southwest New Hampshire, designated Jaffrey as the location for its regional landfill. By a vote of 266 to 29, Jaffrey responded by withdrawing from the district. A second proposal to expand the town library was defeated.

1989: George Sirois was honored for his 22-year service as a water commissioner. The proposal to renovate and expand the town library, reduced to \$650,000 because of private contributions and some scaling down of the project, was approved at the March town meeting. The work was completed by R. M. Aho Construction, Nashua, New Hampshire, and John Jordan, architect, Hancock, New Hampshire.

1990: Marc Tieger replaced Bernard Hampsey, Jr. as town moderator following Judge Hampsey's appointment to the Superior Court. Since colonial times towns had had a "resident tax," but by the 1980s it became apparent that the cost of collecting and accounting for the \$10 resident tax exceeded the revenue. At the 1990 town meeting Jaffrey voted to discontinue it.

1991: Since 1972, when the Federal Clean Water Act was enacted, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulations had become increasingly stringent. Now EPA required that systems employing surface water provide expensive treatment. Jaffrey, facing these costly and severe restrictions, placed a moratorium on new connections to the town water system as it struggled to find solutions to its water supply problem. Although the town held out for several years, the voters finally changed the observance of Memorial Day from the traditional date, May 30, to the last Monday in May.

1992: In response to EPA and State of New Hampshire edicts, the unlined sanitary landfill was closed and capped. Jaffrey residents now took their waste and refuse to the town's transfer station and recycling center.

1993: Employees of the water department determined that the

town was pumping considerably more water than it was delivering to its customers, primarily because water from the town's wells was being pumped back into Bullet Pond. With the major loss eliminated, the Contoocook Lake and Turnpike Road wells were deemed sufficient for the town's needs if two storage tanks were constructed and new pumping stations built. In October 1993, \$85,000 was voted for design, and the following March the town appropriated \$2,903,000 for the necessary construction.

1994: The mid-1980s heyday of construction and inflated prices for buildings and homes gave way to recession and foreclosures on property. Although not catastrophic, unemployment and underemployment were evident throughout the region. Jaffrey, like many other communities, looked to economic development and attracting new industry as solutions. The town took a positive step toward attracting new commerce and industry by voting \$10,000 for economic development.

1995: The town needed more space for offices. The police, in their substandard "temporary" quarters needed a new station. Townspeople had made it clear to the Facilities Committee, headed by Edward (Ted) Shea, that they wanted the police station in the center of town. Directly behind the Town Office building was a wood frame structure which began its life as a warehouse for the Goodnow Stores (see *History of Jaffrey, Volume III*), but since then had been converted into an attractive office building owned by CFX (formerly Cheshire) Bank. The building was offered for sale. The Facilities Committee recommended moving the town offices to that building and renovating the former town offices to become the new police station. Town meeting appropriated \$470,000 for this purpose. Town offices opened in the new location in October 1995, and the new police station opened in March 1996. Simultaneously, the recreation department moved to its new building at Humiston Field. Jaffrey adopted Industrial Development Authority provisions as authorized by a recently enacted state law, with nine members to be appointed by the selectmen. To enhance both the appearance and the utility of downtown facilities, the town voted to encourage the Chamber of Commerce to build a riverwalk connecting Main Street to the Blake Street parking lot. This parking lot had been constructed as a result of State of New Hampshire

Highway Department improvements to the intersections of routes 202 and 124. In a related action, the Conservation Commission was empowered to purchase the old Boston and Maine Railroad bed through the town.

1996: Town meeting authorized the selectmen to sell the former police station, which had begun its existence over 60 years earlier as Jaffrey's fire station. Repair to the town clocks in the Old Meetinghouse and the Cutler Memorial building required \$650.

1997: The New Hampshire Court commission approved a new building in Jaffrey on 2.89 acres immediately north of the Monadnock Plaza, but the House Public Affairs Committee balked at purchasing the land. The town authorized the position of economic development director. The towns of Peterborough and Jaffrey agreed to hire a full-time prosecutor to serve both towns.

1998: Peter B. Davis was appointed to the position of economic development director. The Belletete family donated land for the Jaffrey-Peterborough District Court. Town Meeting approved an article encouraging the Chamber of Commerce to proceed with a "Rails to Trails" project aimed at acquiring that portion of the former Boston and Maine railway right-of-way which runs through Jaffrey and converting it to a recreational trail to be donated to the town. A Town Trust Fund was set up for the maintenance of the clock in the Womans Club building (Cutler Memorial building), and \$1000 was appropriated to be placed in that fund. The Conant High School Boys Basketball team won the 1998 State Class M crown. Rite Aid's plans for a new pharmacy building at the corner of Peterborough Street and Turnpike Road were introduced in July and approved by the planning board in November. Construction was expected to start in spring of 1999. Two changes in the Monadnock Plaza: Hitchcock Clinic closed its Fitzwilliam branch and began the expansion of its Jaffrey facility. In December the Family Dollar opened a new store.