

CHAPTER XXV

FIRES

The Hamlen estate on Mountain Road was leveled by fire on February 15, 1971. The house had been in the Hamlen family for over 50 years and contained many antiques and family heirlooms, including furniture that was made and hand carved by Captain Ewing Hamlen.

Lightning struck the Cutler Memorial building during a severe thunderstorm on July 17, 1971. The resulting fire destroyed the interior of the historic building. The clock in the steeple belonging to the town stopped at 6:45 P.M.

On December 27, 1977, a blaze in the garage of Donald Baird at 30 East Brook Street was fueled by the gasoline, kerosene, and paint sealers that were stored there. The fire melted the aluminum roof of the garage and destroyed a pickup truck, freezer, and hand tools. The building was destroyed.

Dr. Ian Ferrier was left without a home and temporarily without a medical practice following a fire that extensively damaged his one-year-old Monadnock Medical Center and adjoining residence



April 1995: Pack Rat Apartments fire

on East Main Street on March 12, 1978.

For a week in November 1979 the town was victimized by a pyromaniac as there were several minor fires. Three fires in an apartment house at 60 River Street, a grass fire off East Main Street, a couch fire at 26 Peterborough Street, and a fire at a motor home belonging to Clayton Crane of Stratton Road were believed to have been set by a juvenile.

A Lincoln's Corner Road sawmill owned by Theodore C. Miner and Sons burned to the ground on January 19, 1980. The Jaffrey Fire Department laid 10,000 feet of four-inch hose to fight the fire. No one was injured.

All that remained of the summer home of Rodney and Rose Vincent was a stone chimney and a small portion of the building when it burned on April 29, 1980. The house was located diagonally across Mountain Road from the Jaffrey Center fire station.

The Edwin Cutter home on North Street in Jaffrey was saved from destruction on October 12, 1980, by three area fire departments. Mr. Cutter was a farmer who owned 100 acres of land on both sides of North Street.

Several firemen used their Scott Air Paks to fight a fire at the home of Euclide and Lurline Blanchard on the day before Christmas 1980 as a tremendous amount of smoke filled the house. The home is located on the old Jewell farmstead.

A 1981 Easter weekend fire destroyed the workshop owned by Sally Pierce that was behind her home on Dublin Road. Miss Pierce made enamel crafts and jewelry in part of the building.

Flames destroyed the home of William T. Howe, Jr. and Sandra Blouin located off Adams Street on September 10, 1981. The building burned to the ground. No one was at home at the time.

A careless smoker may have caused the fire at 5 East Main Street that left five families homeless on December 10, 1982. There was fire, smoke, and water damage inside the 20-room building owned by Albert Forcier. Claire Moore, Jaffrey's overseer of welfare, had to find temporary housing for the families. The building had to be evacuated because there was no electricity, heat, or water.

Two employees of D. D. Bean & Sons Company were arrested for arson after setting a fire of some sort in a shower stall. The March 8, 1984, fire was extinguished by the sprinkler system and caused no damage.



June 1997: Coll property fire on Old Sharon Road

Fire caused several thousands of dollars damage to the home of Dr. Charles and Sylvia Hamilton in Jaffrey Center on March 30, 1984.

One of the apartments at a cottage at the Adullam Center was badly burned in April 1984. The occupants, Warren Monroe and his wife, were in the process of moving. The Adullam complex was located at the former Shattuck Inn.

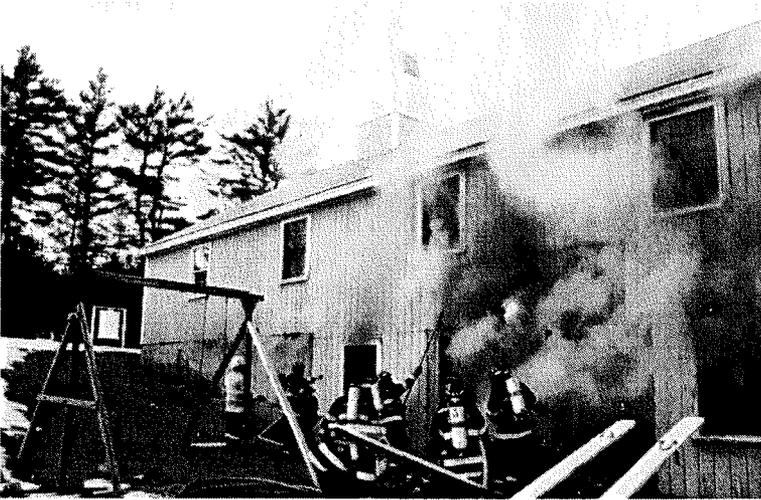
A chemical fire on May 23, 1984, at D. D. Bean & Sons Company endangered several Jaffrey firefighters when a 60-gallon tank containing chemicals exploded. Smoke from the fire filled the building on Route 202. Happily no one was injured.

The offices of Monadnock Forest Products in Squantum Village were gutted by fire on July 14, 1984. The firm made furniture-grade lumber and was owned by Brian Rohde of Rindge. Jay DeWolfe of the state fire marshal's office said, "That fire was arson and there were several different indications that it was deliberately set."

The former Ray Moore Garage was gutted on February 27, 1985, leaving three businesses damaged. The Jaffrey Auto Center, Donna's Country Kitchen Restaurant, and Ashwood Basket Company were all displaced by the blaze.

The historic home of David and Grace Gourd on Harkness Road was heavily damaged by fire on Saturday, April 13, 1985. The home was built in 1810 and is located in the midst of the historic district in Jaffrey Center.

Jaffrey continued its reputation for being “good Samaritans” when the barn at the Cutter farm burned to the ground on July 10, 1985. The Jaffrey Department of Public Works employees donated over \$6,000 worth of work, clearing the debris left by the fire. The selectmen gave permission to use town equipment to cart away the remains. Margie’s Restaurant provided breakfast for those who helped, and local merchants provided the lunches. A benefit jamboree was planned by Irvin Blood and was held at Pelto’s Barn in Troy with all proceeds going to help rebuild a new smaller barn.



April 1998: Pilgrim Baptist Church fire

On Thursday afternoon September 18, 1985, a series of explosions rocked the Atlas Display Fireworks Company, which was located on Hamilton Court in a residential neighborhood just a block away from the high school and middle school. Martin Dulfon was seriously burned by the explosions and fires. The blasts caused about \$5,000 damage to the plant, \$1,000 to a tin building, and \$3,500 to a flatbed truck and a van. After a seven-week investigation, agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms stated the explosions were the result of an “accidental industrial

mishap.”

Six people were left homeless on Monday, February 16, 1987, when a boiler-room fire penetrated into the wall of an apartment building on Goodnow Street. The actual fire damage to the structure was minimal, but the water damage made the apartments temporarily uninhabitable.

About 1,000 cases of finished matches were destroyed in a fire at D. D. Bean & Sons Company on April 23, 1987. The damage was not serious, but made the company rethink its smoking policy for employees in the workplace.

On August 14, 1988, another explosion tore through the Atlas Display Fireworks plant on Hamilton Court. A 40x30-foot two-story gambrel was consumed in the blaze. Black match, a type of fusing, was stored in the building and was probably responsible for the explosions.

Monadnock Forest Products burned again, on May 28, 1989, the company's main sawmill was totally destroyed by fire. There were several explosions at the site that could have been caused by either of two transformers, a dump truck with a 30- to 40-gallon gas tank, tanner gas, or dust. Damage was estimated to be about \$1.5 million.

Ron and Sandy's Cafeteria was burned by an extremely hot fire that started near the coffeemaker on Friday, December 18, 1991. The dining room was destroyed by the accidental fire.

Louise Marion, 89, was rescued from her burning trailer home on February 18, 1993. The fire was reported by her Forest Park neighbors when they saw smoke coming from the residence. Firefighters Michael Dansereau and Mark Bosse donned breathing apparatus and entered the burning trailer. They found Mrs. Marion in a closed bedroom and carried her outside. She was transported to Monadnock Community Hospital where she was reported to be in a stable condition.

A fire believed started by a kerosene space heater gutted a house owned by Timothy Carew. The Slade Road house was completely destroyed on March 16, 1993. Fire trucks had difficulty with the remoteness of the home and heavy snow on the roads.

Arson was responsible for a fire at Conant High School on August 12, 1993. A 22-year-old Jaffrey man set the fire in a recycling bin that was next to the enclosed walkway linking the middle school



Jaffrey Fire Truck

with Conant High School. The fire did an estimated \$10,000 damage to the building. The school board credited Officer Jeffrey Proulx and Jaffrey Fire Department personnel with preventing the fire from causing major damage to the shop, auditorium, and the middle school.