

## CHAPTER XXVIII

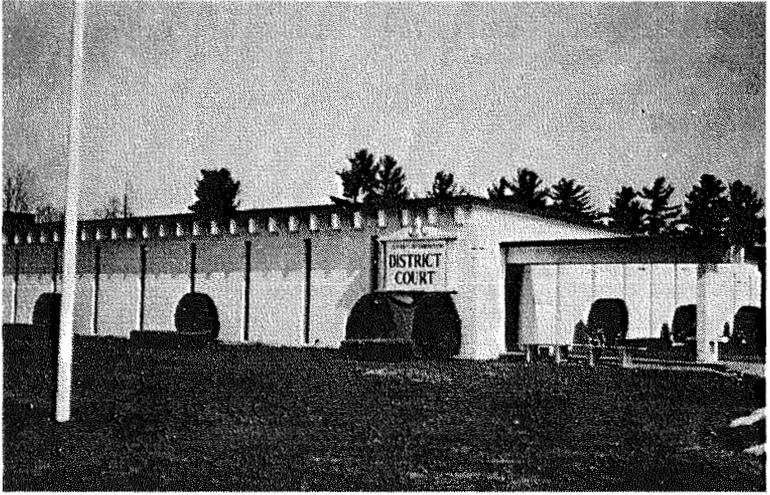
### JAFFREY-PETERBOROUGH DISTRICT COURT

In 1942 Governor Robert A. Blood appointed Jason B. Sawyer judge of the Jaffrey Municipal Court to succeed Judge George P. Wellington. Successive reappointments to the judgeship were made by governors Charles H. Dale and John King, giving Judge Sawyer a service record of 26 years.

The Jaffrey Municipal Court became Jaffrey District Court in 1968 with Judge Sawyer as the presiding justice. Bernard Hampsey was appointed special justice in April 1968. He replaced Judge Walter Gentsch who had resigned in 1960. The court's jurisdiction included Jaffrey, Rindge, Troy, Dublin, and Fitzwilliam. Judge Sawyer retired in December 1968, at which time Judge Hampsey was appointed presiding justice by Governor King. William West was appointed special justice in December 1972 and served until his retirement in May 1977. At that time William N. Prigge was appointed special justice by Governor Thomson.

Raymond Desmarais, clerk of court, was ill in the spring of 1979. Sheila Girbach, probation officer, became acting clerk until Desmarais resigned. On July 1, 1979, Pauline Tremblay was named clerk of court.

In the past the district and municipal court system was funded by the town in which the court was housed, and the court was responsible to the town and state. By January 1984 the state had full control of the district and municipal court system. At that time more work was involved and Danielle Bosse was hired full time as deputy clerk. In 1985 the town of Jaffrey needed the court space for town offices. At that time the court was held only one day a week with a day each month for civil cases. Arrangements were made by the state with the Jaffrey Woman's Club to hold court sessions in their meeting hall while moving the administrative office to the Simon Abbott building. The court moved in July 1987 to the office and cafeteria area of the New Hampshire Ball Bearings plant on Turnpike Road. By that time two full days per week were devoted to court sessions. Caseload statistics were also up to 11,000 cases per year. The staff at that time included one special justice, and one



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part-time and two full-time clerks.

In January 1988 the Jaffrey District and Peterborough District courts merged. It was the first district and county merger in New Hampshire. Problems arose, such as getting acquainted with the police departments in Cheshire and Hillsborough counties, paperwork that was required, and how the court cases were to be scheduled. These were only a few of the hurdles that had to be overcome. By working together and adjusting to new and old procedures, officials finally resolved the problems. With the merger, cases from the towns of Peterborough, Hancock, Greenfield, New Ipswich, Temple, and some from Greenville were added to the court dockets. The first judge was Kenneth Brighton of Peterborough, who served for two months before his retirement. At that time Judge Bernard J. Hampsey became the presiding justice with specials William N. Prigge and Martha R. Crocker. Barbara McFadden and Sara Hefter joined the office staff. Barbara having been the former clerk of Peterborough, was made deputy clerk. The number of cases heard reached 14,000 from October 1988 to October 1989 before statistics started to drop. At present court is held an average of four days per week.

In March 1990 Judge Hampsey was appointed as a superior court judge. Special justices Prigge and Crocker, with the assistance of

several other judges, held regular court sessions until L. Phillips Runyon III of Peterborough was appointed justice by Governor Judd Gregg in May 1990.

During the spring of 1993 the court was computerized. Many changes have taken place and continue today. Since the fall of 1994 all motor vehicle complaints filed with the New Hampshire Department of Safety, in the event of a not-guilty plea, are remanded to the local courts for scheduling and trial.

The court currently consists of a justice, two specials, a court clerk, a deputy, two assistants, and a bailiff.

Cases heard on the district court level are: motor vehicle, criminal violation-misdemeanors, juvenile, small claims, domestic violence, and civil matters.

The Jaffrey-Peterborough District Court for many years was an unresolved problem. In the 1980s the district courts of the two towns were joined by legislative action, but it had no permanent home. The new court, quickly outgrowing its first location in the Jaffrey Town Office, found temporary lodging in the unoccupied New Hampshire Ball Bearings building on Turnpike Road. During the early 1990s Jaffrey made several proposals to build or otherwise acquire a larger and more suitable home for the busy court, but these did not receive the two-thirds majority vote necessary for



*On July 24, 1998 the Belletete family donated land for the future District Court*

bonding. Throughout 1994 and 1995 representatives of both Peterborough and Jaffrey consulted with officials of the state's court system. During this period the court system's space requirements for a district court escalated considerably. In 1995 Peterborough had voted to bond one million dollars to construct a new facility and rent it to the state. By the end of 1995 that amount appeared insufficient. At the 1996 town meeting Jaffrey selectmen shelved their proposal to bond a like amount for a court in Jaffrey because the Cheshire County commissioners were desirous of keeping the court in the county. A study committee, including Jaffrey's town manager and state representatives, found a suitable site in Jaffrey. In early May 1996 the Cheshire County delegation voted nearly unanimously for a \$2.6 million bond for the court. On July 24, 1998, the Belletete family donated 2.89 acres of land at Monadnock Plaza, as part of their 100th anniversary celebration, to the state for the new Jaffrey-Peterborough District Court.