

CHAPTER XIX

TOWN OFFICERS

The titles and functions of the earliest town officers differed but little from those of the present, although some positions of old-time dignity and importance have disappeared from the list. The constable of early days warned town meetings, collected taxes, and preserved peace and order, a duty, never onerous in Jaffrey, that now falls to the charge of the chief of police. The tythingman, for many years an elective officer, no longer inquires the business of loiterers on the highways on the Sabbath, or warns the restless urchins to observe the decorum and silence due to the time and place during public worship on the Lord's day. The office of field driver is no longer filled. The name is reminiscent of a pastoral age that has nearly faded from the memory of the living. It harks back to the days of green pastures filled with grazing herds from local farms and the older "down below" towns. Before the wall-builders had completed their perfect work there were sections of pole or log fence not immune to the onslaught of breachy cattle, with the consequence that stray animals, horses, cattle, and sheep, became a problem, especially in periods of drought when feed and water in the pastures were low.

The Public Statutes of New England are still burdened with obsolete laws relating to stray animals, and in Jaffrey by-laws relating to strays adopted early in the history of the town were continued in force by annual vote for many years. Nearly every farm had a flock of sheep that was prone to stray from field or pasture and for their identification, when so found, marks or brands were adopted and recorded with the town clerk and also posted at two or more places in town, usually at the meeting-house and tavern, for the information of the public. No more characteristic scene of the times can be imagined than a knot of interested townspeople gathered around the recently posted notices of strays at the meeting-house or tavern, between services on the Lord's day. A few out of many from the town clerk's record are here given.

TAKE NOTICE

Broke into the Subscriber's inclosure on the first of June a dark bay mare seven or eight years old trots all, one white spot on her back, a little gray in the forehead. The owner is desired to prove property—pay charges & take her away

Jacob Pierce

Jaffrey June 1, 1807.

STRAY MARE

Taken up by the subscriber in Jaffrey on the 31st day of July last a light bay mare supposed to be eight or nine years old—shod all around—trots handsomely—two or three small white spots on her back probably occasioned by saddle galls—a small spot of white near the frog of the off hind foot—black mane and tail.

The owner is desired to prove property, pay charges & receive his mare again.
Abraham Ross, Jr.

Jaffrey August 3, 1809.

NOTICE

Broke into the inclosure of the subscriber on Wednesday the tenth day of October seven white sheep—Two of them cropped—one on the right the other on the left ear—The owner of said sheep is requested to prove property, pay charges & take them away.

Sam^l Patrick

Jaffrey Oct. 14, 1810—

TAKE NOTICE

Taken up damage feasant on the ninth day of June 1813 a sorrel coloured Mare supposed to be five years old, with a white face, trots all, has some white feet, is supposed to be the same owned by Capt. Joslin formerly—

The owner is requested to prove property, pay charges and receive his mare again.

Edward Spaulding
Jaffrey June 12, 1813.

This may certify to the world at large, that the mark that I claim for my sheep is, an Iron wire of the comon Size of wire for ringing hogs, twisted in the left ear of each, which mark I have made use of for twelve years and renewed it in old sheep and lambs at Shearing time of each year ever Since and mean to continue it in futre per

David Gillmore

Jaffrey Dec. 4th 1822.

NOTICE

Came into the inclosure of the subscriber on Monday the 25th inst a dark iron grey mare about midling sise, trots & corners herself handsomely The owner is requested to prove property pay charges & take her away

Jonathan Fox

Jaffrey June 28th 1821.

Come into the subscriber's inclosure on the 10th instant a red cow and calf—the cow has some white in her face & under her belly and appears to be about seven years old—The owner is requested to prove property pay charges & take her away.

Asa Thompson

Jaffrey Aug. 13, 1813.

In most New England towns, hogs, being a home-keeping species not inclined to wander far, were allowed for a part of the year to run at large provided they were “ringed and yoked according to law.”

The ring consisted of a wire twisted around the animal's snout in such a way as to make rooting painful, and the yoke was a wooden accessory fastened around the animal's neck and reaching up and down a sufficient length to prevent its breaking through fences. It was the duty of the hog reeve, or hog constable, to see that these accoutrements were provided for all hogs at large, and if lacking to furnish and apply them at the owner's expense. In its origin one of the humblest of town offices, in the course of time it had more incumbents than any of the more pretentious positions of honor and trust within the gift of the town. By it the forgotten man was remembered and once in his lifetime found himself posted in the "Hall of Fame" on even terms with the greatest. As the office ceased to be operative and lost its emoluments it became a complimentary distinction bestowed at the annual March meeting upon all legal voters who were wedded during the preceding year. It is not known how generally this practice was observed but, as Jaffrey was a fairly representative town then as now, it was probably a common custom of the times throughout New England. It supplied the one touch of humor in the severely matter-of-fact issues of town meeting day. It was the one position without alloy of disappointment and defeat to any candidate. All were elected without opposition and none declined the honor. It was a pleasing interlude when the newly elected hog reeves lined up in open meeting before the town clerk to take the oath of office. For fifty years or more, ending in the troubled days before the Civil War, the town clerk's register of hog reeves is our matrimonial index, in numbers varying from a half-dozen to sixteen or more in a year. In 1804 seven hog reeves were elected, in 1853 there were none. In the years between the record accurately portrays the ebb and flow of the matrimonial tide. The years 1827 and 1828 were specially devoted to Hymen. In the former year fifteen and the latter, sixteen hog reeves were elected and qualified.

The office of fence viewer was for many years one of judicial functions and of considerable importance. Constantly arising questions relating to the division and maintenance of fences between abutting lands were submitted to this tribunal and its well considered decisions occupy many pages in the town records. Fence viewers are still annually appointed in Jaffrey but calls for their service have greatly diminished from former years.

Tenure of office as a rule has not been long in Jaffrey. With many qualified, it has been considered fair that many should share in the honors and duties of public service. The office of moderator, always

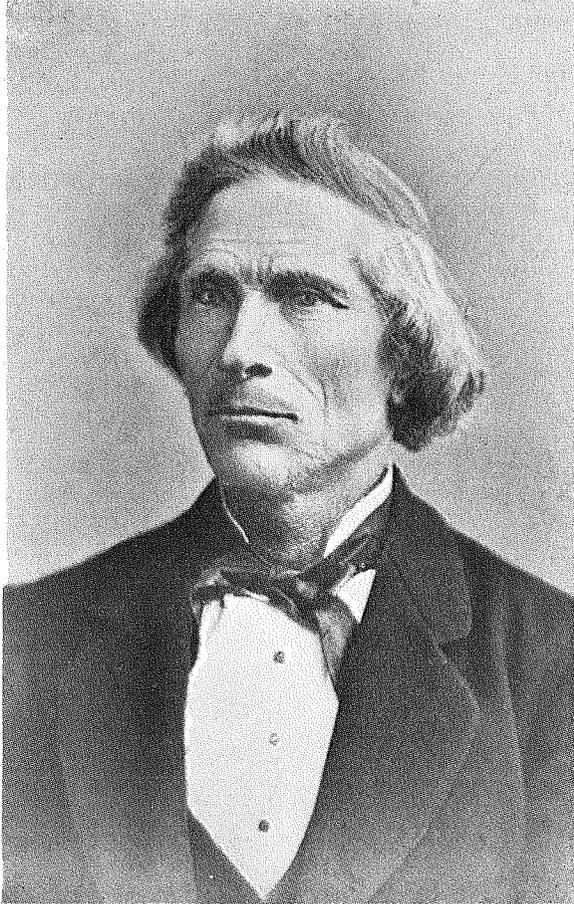
one of great importance in the efficient transaction of public business, has been an exception to the short term rule when men of demonstrated fitness for the position have been available.

In the more disputatious days, when a hundred men had opinions and the will to enforce them, no other town office called for such a combination of qualifications as that of moderator. He must have knowledge of town business, firmness, tact, quick perception, and knowledge of parliamentary rules. Two men in the history of the town have held this position with the support of all parties for so many years as to indicate beyond question exceptional ability and fitness for the place of umpire in the game of many contestants of quality and skill. These men were Charles H. Powers and Charles L. Rich, with the present incumbent of the office, George H. Duncan, bidding fair to be their worthy successor.

Charles Powers was a man of keen intelligence, quick perception, fine tact, and pleasing personality. He was courteous in manner, firm in his decisions, and fair to all. In days when party feeling ran high he encountered little opposition for the position which he held from 1856 to 1885 inclusive, with the exception of four years, 1867-70, when he held a consular position in Canada, a total of twenty-six years ending with his death. This record has been only exceeded by Charles L. Rich, who, with equal acceptability held the position without interruption from 1886 to 1921, a period of thirty-six years, the longest incumbency in any town office in the history of Jaffrey.

The record of service in the office of town clerk is held by Frank P. Wellman, who in 1911 declined re-election after a service maintained to the satisfaction of all his townsmen for twenty-five years. His record is closely approached by that of his successor, John G. Townsend, who has served in the office since 1911. But the latter adds more than twenty-three years' incumbency in the office of town treasurer and still (1933) continues in office, a record only equalled in this position by Dr. Adonijah Howe, who in the early days held the office for twenty-nine years.

In the office of selectman, one of supreme importance in town affairs, more men have served and the tenure of office has been less. The first board of selectmen chosen in 1773, Jonathan Stanley, William Smiley, and Phineas Spaulding, were all men of character and ability, but of short service. Roger Gilmore of the next board chosen, was one of our ablest and most public spirited citizens in the difficult days of the Revolution and formation of the new town government. He served as selectman for eleven years, as town clerk for



HENRY C. FRENCH
Selectman

nine years and was almost constantly in service in other town offices.

In this office those of longest service have been Jonathan Fox, with twelve years credit, Oliver Prescott, thirteen years, and, in the modern period, William F. Coolidge, eleven years, Clark M. Pierce, twelve years, and Peter E. Hogan, who died in office, May 14, 1932, after fourteen years and two months of faithful service to the town he honored and loved, holding the longest record of them all. But the record for ubiquitous town service seems to be that of Edward C. Boynton, who served six years as member of the House of Representatives, nine years Selectman, eighteen years member of the School Board, and twenty-one years Water Commissioner.

In the roster of town officers of Jaffrey there is the tradition of honorable service for more than one hundred and sixty years, in which there has been no stain of defalcation or malfeasance in office or lowering of the standard of faithful public service. It is a record to which we may point with pride for the past and gain inspiration for the future. The old order changes and new occasions bring new duties. In this period our population has doubled and our expenses for education, health, and well-being have increased ten fold. There are demands upon our town government of which the fathers never dreamed. To meet these demands we need education for the public service, vision and high ideals. The roots of the tree are in the past but the growth is in the free air and the high purposes of those who hereafter shall give of their best, out of the bounty they have received, to those who come after them.

MODERATORS

Jonathan Stanley, 1773	Moody Lawrence, 1820-1
Henry Coffeen, 1774	Edward Spaulding, 1822-4, 1838, 1841
John Gilmore, 1775	Oliver Prescott, 1825-6, 1828, 1832, 1834, 1839-40
Alexander McNeall, 1776	Luke Howe, 1827
Roger Gilmore, 1777	William Ainsworth, 1829-31
William Smiley, 1778, 1780	Asa Parker, 1833
Joseph Bates, 1779, 1781-2, 1786	John Conant, 1835-7, 1842-3, 1847, 1849-51, 1853-5
Benjamin Prescott, 1783-4, 1797	Stillman Clark, 1844
Jedediah Sanger, 1785	John Felt, 1845-6, 1848
Abel Parker, 1787-91, 1793, 1796, 1798-9, 1801, 1808	Alonzo Bascom, 1852
Phineas Spaulding, 1792	Charles H. Powers, 1856-66, 1871-85
Joseph Thorndike, 1794-5	Frederick W. Bailey, 1867-70
Simeon Butters, 1800, 1803	Charles L. Rich, 1886-1921
Adonijah Howe, 1802, 1806, 1809-19	George H. Duncan, 1922-8, 1931—
David Page, 1804-5, 1807	
Wilbur E. Webster, 1929-30	

TOWN CLERKS

William Smiley, 1773-5, 1777, 1783	Samuel Dakin, 1806-15
Robert Wier, 1776	Oliver Prescott, 1816
Roger Gilmore, 1778-9, 1795-1801	William Ainsworth, 1817-21
Adonijah Howe, 1780-2, 1784, 1786-8, 1791-4, 1802	Henry Payson, 1822-4
Jedediah Sanger, 1785	Thomas Adams, 1825-32
Abel Parker, 1789	Benjamin Cutter, 1833-9, 1842-7
Alexander Milliken, 1790	Jonas M. Melville, 1840-1
David Smiley, 1803-4	John Fox, 1848-63
David Page, 1805	Joseph P. Frost, 1864-85
	Frank P. Wellman, 1886-1910

John G. Townsend, 1911—

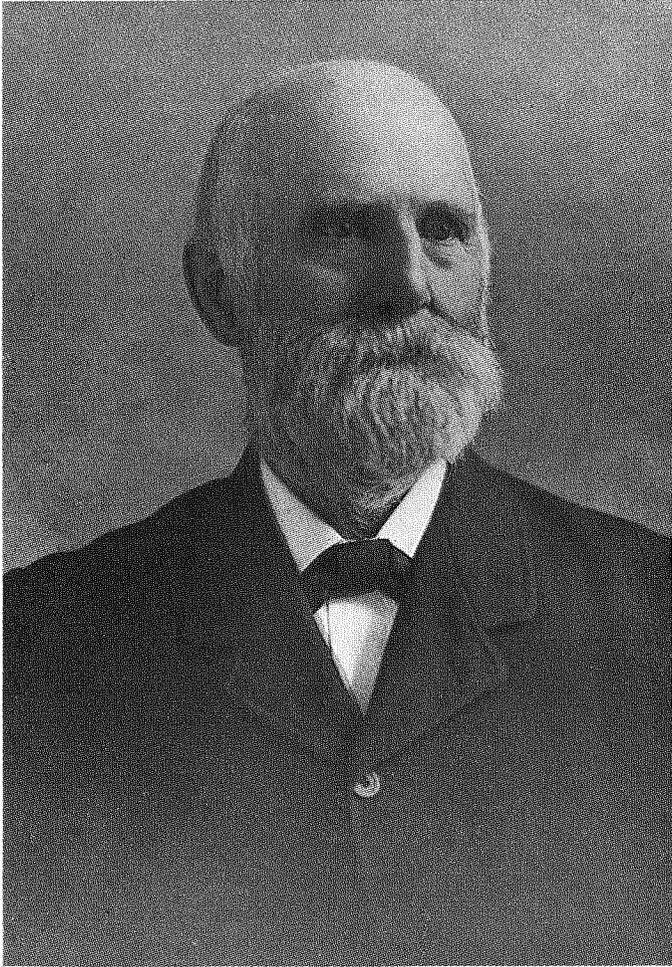
TOWN TREASURERS

William Smiley, 1778	Ethan Cutter, 1836-8
Adonijah Howe, 1781-2, 1786-7, 1789- 91, 1799-1820	Jonas M. Melville, 1839-57
Samuel Buss, 1783-4, 1792-4	John E. B. Jewett, 1858-9
Thomas Adams, 1795-7	Ebenezer Upton, 1860
Oliver Prescott, 1821	Charles H. Powers, 1861-4, 1870-84
William Ainsworth, 1825-31	Peter Upton, 1865
Asa Parker, 1832	Frederick W. Bailey, 1866-9
Isaac J. Fox, 1833-4	Jesse B. Twiss, 1885
Edward Spaulding, 1835	Marcellus M. Bascom, 1886-7
	Jonas M. Pierce, 1888-1906

John G. Townsend, 1907—

SELECTMEN

Jonathan Stanley, 1773	James Haywood, 1780
William Smiley, 1773, 1777, 1779	Thomas Mower, 1781
Phineas Spaulding, 1773	William Pope, 1781
Henry Coffeen, 1774	Benjamin Prescott, 1782
Roger Gilmore, 1774, 1778, 1779, 1792- 3, 1795-9, 1800-1	James Stevens, 1782, 1800-1
William Turner, 1774	Ebenezer Stratton, 1782
John Gilmore, 1775, 1782	Adonijah Howe, 1782, 1785, 1788, 1792
Alexander McNeall, 1775	Jedediah Sanger, 1783, 1785
Peter Warren, 1775	John Briant, 1783-4
Robert Wier, 1776	Jereme Underwood, 1783, 1790-1, 1795-7
Solomon Grout, 1776	Thomas Adams, 1784, 1789, 1794, 1802
Joseph Turner, 1776	James Gowing, 1784
Joseph Thorndike, 1777, 1794	Joseph Perkins, 1785, 1791, 1794
Daniel Emery, 1777, 1781	Abel Parker, 1786, 1789, 1791-3
Alpheus Brigham, 1777, 1787	Samuel Emery, 1786-7, 1789
Joseph Cutter, 1777, 1793	Oliver Hale, 1786
John Stanley, 1778	Alexander Milliken, 1786-8, 1790
Abraham Bailey, 1778	Silas Marshall, 1786
Hugh Dunlap, 1779	Samuel Buss, 1788, 1795, 1798
Eleazer Spofford, 1780	Simeon Butters, 1790
Joseph Bates, 1780	Moses Worcester, 1796-7, 1802



RUSSELL H. KITTREDGE

- Daniel Parker, 1798-9
 John Joslin, 1798-9
 Benjamin Haywood, 1800-1
 Rufus Houghton, 1802, 1806-7
 David Smiley, 1803-4
 Roger Brigham, 1803-5, 1807
 Jonathan Fox, 1803-5, 1808-16
 David Page, 1805-6
 Samuel Dakin, 1806-15*
 David Gilmore, 1808, 1817-26
 Joseph Joslin, 1809-14, 1822
 Oliver Prescott, 1815-21, 1828-33
 David Jewett, 1815-6
 Thomas Adams, II, 1817-20, 1826-7
 Asa Parker, 1821-5
 Levi Fisk, 1823-5, 1828
 Samuel Patrick, 1826-7, 1829-30
 Oliver Warren, 1827, 1835-6
 John Conant, 1828, 1831-4
 Edward Spaulding, 1829-35, 1841-2
 Benjamin Haywood, Jr., 1834-6
 John Felt, 1836-9
 Samuel Patrick, Jr., 1837-40
 John A. Prescott, 1837-9, 1841, 1852-5
 Laban Rice, 1840, 1842-3, 1845-6,
 1853-5
 Nehemiah Adams, 1840, 1842-4
 Oliver Bailey, 1841
 Gilman Mower, 1843-4
 David Spaulding, 1844
 Ezra Baker, 1845-7
 Robert Ritchie, 1845-8
 Rufus Haywood, 1847-9
 Jonathan J. Comstock, 1848-50
 Oliver Bacon, 1849-51
 Sylvester B. Lawrence, 1850-2
 Asa Baker, 1851-3
 William Lebourveau, 1854-6
 Daniel French, 1855-7
 John Fox, 1856-8, 1871-2
 Ambrus W. Spaulding, 1857-9
 John A. Prescott, II, 1858-60
 Samuel Ryan, 1859-61
 John Frost, 1860-2
 James R. Stanley, 1861-3
 Benjamin L. Baldwin 1862-4
 Franklin H. Cutter, 1863-5
 James L. Bolster, 1864-6, 1871
 Joseph W. Fassett, 1865-7, 1873-4,
 1883-6
 Alfred Sawyer, 1866-8, 1873-5, 1882-5
 Henry C. French, 1867, 1870-1, 1873
 Benjamin Pierce, 1868-9
 Marshall C. Adams, 1868-70
 Oliver P. Hunt, 1869-70
 John M. Wales, 1872
 Addison Prescott, 1872
 Joseph P. Frost, 1874-6
 Henry A. Turner, 1875-7
 Clarence S. Bailey, 1876-82, 1896-7
 John A. Cutter, 1877-9
 Oscar H. Bradley, 1878
 George A. Underwood, 1879-81
 William B. Robbins, 1880-1
 John E. Baldwin, 1882
 Julius Cutter, 1883-90
 Frederick J. Lawrence, 1886-91
 Russell H. Kittredge, 1887-94, 1902-3
 Joel H. Poole, 1891-5
 Will J. Mower, 1892-4, 1911
 Burt Bacon, 1895-9, 1905
 Charles S. Chamberlain, 1895
 Charles W. Fassett, 1896-8, 1907-10
 Clark M. Pierce, 1898-1903, 1908-13
 Russel B. Henchman, 1899-01, 1914-17
 George G. McCoy, 1900-4
 George H. Duncan, 1904
 Seymour H. Austin, 1904, 1923—
 Perkins B. Mead, 1905
 Myron L. Cutler, 1905-6
 William F. Coolidge, 1906-7, 1914-22
 Herbert C. Sawtelle, 1906
 Edward A. Coburn, 1907-12
 Frederick A. Stratton, 1912-13
 George A. Adams, 1913-15
 Edward C. Boynton, 1916-24
 Peter E. Hogan, 1918-32 (died May
 14, 1932)
 Fred L. Cournoyer, 1925—
 Alice E. E. Lehtinen, 1932

* Resigned 1815 and removed to New Hartford, N. Y.