

A Brief History  
of Judicial Reform  
and the District Court  
in North Carolina

*by*

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We dedicate the following pages to the attorneys, jurists, and political figures who risked their reputations and careers on the prospect of reform over fifty years ago.

*John R. Hess  
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## A Brief History of Judicial Reform and the District Court in North Carolina

“In a time when man has divided the indivisible in splitting the atom, has harnessed new sources of power and new means of overcoming distance, has found how to add satellites to the planet, has begun to explore space and is threatening to bombard or even to pay visits to the moon—in short in an era of bigness of all things—justice, the great interest of man on earth, must expand its institutions likewise to the measure of the greater tasks of a great age.”

Roscoe Pound<sup>1</sup>

**A**dministering justice has never been a simple undertaking. In the early twentieth century, the state of New Jersey was especially well-known for judicial ineptitude. One particular vice-chancellor consistently handed down rulings *years* after trial. On one such occasion, he sent his law clerk to the sole-surviving lawyer involved, who allegedly told the clerk that the vice-chancellor could “go to hell.” When confronted by the angry jurist, the lawyer replied, “No, sir, I didn’t say that. I said that my client is dead, and so far as I know everyone else who was interested in the case is dead, and I suspect they have gone to hell for what they said about you.”<sup>2</sup>

This illustration of “Jersey justice” represents only one instance of a more troubling legal phenomenon in the United States: court disorganization. The conglomeration of courts in North Carolina exemplified that disarray. The patchwork system of lower courts, in place from the advent of civil procedure during the time of the Lords Proprietors to the Judicial Department Act of 1965, profoundly—and negatively—influenced the creation, practice, and administration of law. This essay celebrates a vital change to the state’s system of courts, coordinated by a small army of reformers during the mid-twentieth century. Upon its implementation, the new District Court system untangled the twisted knot of lower courts in North Carolina, replacing stagnation with efficiency and antiquation with modernity. Such a paradigm shift was deeply rooted in old English law, steeped in the traditions of the American South, and cast by nationally recognized legal luminaries. Widely credited with restoring integrity to the justice system in North Carolina, the District Court removed countless hindrances to the effective administration of the law and remains a prominent example of the success of legal reform.

### THE EARLY FOUNDATION

The underpinnings of North Carolina’s first judicial system appear prominently in English legal scholarship. “The course of justice flowing in large streams from the king, as the fountain, to his superior courts of record; and being then subdivided into smaller channels, till the whole and every part of the kingdom were plentifully watered and refreshed.”<sup>3</sup> This elucidation on the English court from Blackstone, however hopeful, unknowingly hints at a potential flaw of the court. Indeed, with the confusing bulk of available courts, litigants often found themselves figuratively parched. The number of lower courts was so great, “(above the number of 100) ...with so many

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<sup>1</sup> Roscoe Pound, Dean Emeritus, Harvard Law School, *Toward Improving the Administration of Justice in North Carolina*, Address to the North Carolina Bar Association (Jun. 12, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> Roger Butterfield, *New Jersey Puts Its Judges to Work*, SATURDAY EVENING POST, May 17, 1952, at 31.

<sup>3</sup> 3 WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES \*31.

varieties and difficulties,”<sup>4</sup> that their duties were rarely exercised efficiently. Opposing jurisdictions among county, seigniorial (local), and borough courts further resulted in “separate bodies of law, with a separate procedure, and a separate vocabulary of technical terms.”<sup>5</sup> If we consult Pollock and Maitland’s definition of a functional court as “defining and enforcing the rules of substantive law,”<sup>6</sup> the disjointed English system may have struggled to meet the specified criteria.

## NEW BEGINNINGS—AND CHALLENGES

Into this precarious system of justice entered the new colony of Carolina with the Charters to the Lords Proprietors of 1663 and 1665. The Crown offered significant latitude to “do all and every other thing and things which unto the complete establishment of Justice...proceeding therein, do belong...*provided nevertheless*, that the said laws be consonant to reason and, as near as may be conveniently, agreeable to the laws and customs of this our Realm of England.”<sup>7</sup> The Lords Proprietors thus “adapted old customs to new traditions,”<sup>8</sup> and created a system of eight distinguishable courts in 1669.<sup>9</sup> Included in their Fundamental Constitutions were provisions for a court in each county and district, with respective jurisdiction to hear minor civil and criminal cases.<sup>10</sup> Altogether, this General Court System would remain in force with minimal changes until 1754.

The most notable courts in colonial and early North Carolina that contributed to the present-day District Court system were those of Pleas and Quarter Sessions (1670-1868). The “chief local courts” during their operation, they consisted of several justices of the peace, who heard suits under common law (pleas) four times a year (quarters). Justices of the peace were further used in Magistrates Courts (1670-1868), which had jurisdiction over small debts and petty differences, and often acted in additional capacities as county officials or commissioners.<sup>11</sup> These extensive responsibilities, enhanced by historical prestige from England, made the justice of the peace an office of significant repute in North Carolina.<sup>12</sup>

As the fledgling state marched toward the nineteenth century, fresh changes became necessary for the existing judicial system to function without interruption. The General Assembly, tasked with maintaining District Superior Courts, began to synthesize the old English system of law and equity, as “many innocent men are withheld of their just rights for want of courts of equity.” By 1818, their pursuit of a sufficient appellate court blossomed into the Supreme Court.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 4 EDWARD COKE, INSTITUTES \*365. See also *Hinson v. Adrian* 92 N.C. 121, 127 (1885), “A court is a serious tribunal, and no party before it can be allowed to trifle in its proceedings in any respect; its office and purpose is to administer exact justice as nearly as may be to all parties before it, without favor to any.”

<sup>5</sup> 1 WILLIAM HOLDSWORTH, A HISTORY OF ENGLISH LAW 634 (7th ed. 1956).

<sup>6</sup> 1 FREDERICK POLLOCK & FREDERIC WILLIAM MAITLAND, THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LAW BEFORE THE TIME OF EDWARD I 527 (2nd ed. 1959).

<sup>7</sup> *Charter to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, June 30, 1665*, in NORTH CAROLINA CHARTERS AND CONSTITUTIONS 1578-1698 94-95 (Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., 1963). Italics added.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Coates, *The Courts of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow in North Carolina*, POPULAR GOVERNMENT, March 1958 (Special Issue), at 6.

<sup>9</sup> JOHN LOCKE, THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTIONS OF CAROLINA OF 1669, § 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at § 61, § 63.

<sup>11</sup> George Stevenson & Ruby D. Arnold, *North Carolina Courts of Law and Equity Prior to 1868*, ARCHIVES INFORMATION CIRCULAR, July 1973, at 7.

<sup>12</sup> See JOAN G. BRANNON, NORTH CAROLINA SMALL CLAIMS LAW 2 (2009).

<sup>13</sup> Coates, *supra* note 8, at 8.

In the span of several decades, North Carolina's court system had become a sure product of the English judicial system, but needed continual maintenance to serve effectively the needs of a growing state.

#### SYNTHESIZING LAW AND EQUITY

Attempts to modernize the court system in North Carolina met the Constitution of 1868 with considerable optimism. In several ways, the resulting updates to the judiciary were instead a complete restructuring. "The distinction between actions at law and suits in equity...shall be abolished. There shall be in this state but one form of action...which shall be denominated a civil action; and every action...against a person charged with a public offence...shall be termed a criminal action."<sup>14</sup> Lawmakers further eliminated the county court, dividing those responsibilities between justices of the peace, the Superior Court, and newly-created county commissioners.<sup>15</sup> They provided for the general expansion of the judicial system by increasing the number of Superior Court districts and justices of the peace in each county. Most notably, they permitted the General Assembly to establish "special Courts for the trial of misdemeanors in cities and towns where [they] may be necessary." In 1875, the Constitution was amended to give the General Assembly an even freer hand to influence the judicial system, removing fixed limits on districts and justices, and muddying original jurisdiction between lower courts by removing the word "exclusive" from the 1868 version.<sup>16</sup> The inevitable consequences of such maneuvers, perhaps unforeseeable at the time, would reverberate loudly over the next decades as legislators took advantage of these new provisions.

#### A MYRIAD OF CHANGES

Changes to court structure in the nineteenth century had marked effects on court operation in the twentieth century. While the Supreme and Superior Courts retained their respective structures and jurisdictions, the lower court system fell to the mercies of constant legislative action. In 1950, noted academic J. Francis Paschal lamented the unsatisfactory patchwork: "Our State, once a leader in the administration of justice, has fallen behind. Other states have advanced while North Carolina has marked time."<sup>17</sup>

Two major headaches arose from the General Assembly's intervention. The first was a dramatic increase in the number of lower courts. Nostalgic feelings resulted in the attempted revival of the county court in 1876, followed by several attempts to institute a circuit court system—all of which failed.<sup>18</sup> Justices of the peace during the period were appointed, using a variety of methods, to varying terms. The General Assembly would occasionally pass omnibus bills in which names were included as a joke, and "where little to no attention is given to the suitability for judicial office of those whose names are included in the bill."<sup>19</sup> Incredibly, the aforementioned

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<sup>14</sup> N.C. CONST. of 1868, art. IV, § 1.

<sup>15</sup> Coates, *supra* note 8, at 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>17</sup> J. Francis Paschal, *Minimum Standards of Judicial Administration in North Carolina*, 28 N.C. L. REV. 27, 35 (1950).

<sup>18</sup> Coates, *supra* note 8, at 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> N.C. BAR ASS'N, REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON IMPROVING AND EXPEDITING THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN NORTH CAROLINA 3 (1958) [hereinafter Report of the Bell Commission].

practices were so numerous that in 1958 the number of authorized justices of the peace was unknown. Even today, no accurate count exists of justices of the peace in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

The “Special Act” Courts—numbering over 100, —created from 1905-1917 by the General Assembly were equally troublesome. These courts were amended when the need inevitably arose, resulting in “variations...so numerous that it is a misnomer to speak of a ‘system’ of trial courts of limited jurisdiction.”<sup>21</sup> The President of the North Carolina Bar Association complained in 1915:

If I could present a moving picture showing these various local courts and their varying session, their many modes of procedure, explaining the manner in which crimes are changed by crossing a township or county line, as the case may be, and the manner in which each local court bill was drafted to circumvent the plain letter of the Constitution, and above all how the city, town, township, and county have been substituted for the State in the administration of criminal law, you would be ready to designate the entire system a crazy quilt court system, a *veritable judicial Pandora’s Box*, creating judicial and court chaos.<sup>22</sup>

In response to widespread criticism from judges and lawyers alike, a constitutional amendment in 1917 attempted to provide a stopgap against General Assembly interference. This amendment prohibited “local, private, or special legislation relating to the establishment of courts inferior to the Supreme Court,”<sup>23</sup> but simultaneously granted “power to pass general laws regulating...this section.”<sup>24</sup> Such a loophole enabled the passage of a 1919 law, which attempted to establish a uniform system of recorders’ courts. This attempt, however, was blighted by legislators who hurriedly resolved to exclude their own counties. The resulting legal tussle, *In Re Harris*, saw the Supreme Court determine that “the statute is designed and intended to provide for as many as 56 out of the 100 counties of the State, and could in no sense be regarded as a local or special law.”<sup>25</sup> Such a ruling enabled a further explosion of local courts, including those of fourteen “general laws” passed by the General Assembly during the period 1917-1957. North Carolina’s complex system of local courts, cultivated by special and general acts, thus became similar to those of England and New Jersey: “Only for those who have plenty of money and time to wait for it.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 16. Brannon, *supra* note 12, at 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Bell Commission, *supra* note 19, at 2.

<sup>22</sup> Coates, *supra* note 8, at 18. Italics added.

<sup>23</sup> *In re Harris* 183 N.C. 632, 632 (1922). See *Reade v. Durham* 173 N.C. 668 (1917) and *Mills v. Comrs.* 175 N.C. 215, 218 (1918), “An interpretation of these recent amendments which would destroy or impair the legislative power...would be of such serious and threatening consequence that it should not be sanctioned.”

<sup>24</sup> Coates, *supra* note 21.

<sup>25</sup> *Harris*, *supra* note 22, at 636.

<sup>26</sup> Butterfield, *supra* note 1, at 30.



## MOBILE “JUSTICE”

The second troublesome result of the General Assembly’s intervention in the court system was a gradual deterioration of judicial quality. Justices of the peace have oft been cited as the best example of decline. They received no salary, thus, payment came in the form of fees charged—in criminal cases, they received no fee unless the trial resulted in a conviction.<sup>27</sup> From 1868 until 1955, their method of appointment vacillated between local elections, General Assembly selection, and gubernatorial selection.<sup>28</sup> Such payment and appointment techniques meant that the office of justice of the peace was often a “political football” subject to “magistrate-making mania.”<sup>29</sup> The results became readily apparent:

Most of the part-time justices are “birds on the wing,” and litigants find them on a “catch as catch can” basis. With no fixed income or place for tending to judicial business, the part-time justice of the peace can tend to business anytime or anywhere, and the records show him trying cases in his back yard, on his front porch, in the rear end of a grocery store over chicken crates, over a meat counter in a butcher shop, in an automobile, over the plow handles, in a printshop, in a garage, in an icehouse, in a fairground ticket booth, and in a funeral parlor.<sup>30</sup>

Combined with amendments to both the special act and general law courts, the period 1917-1957 was a figurative nightmare for judicial administration in North Carolina. All told, the General Assembly passed 111 acts relating to the jurisdiction of lower courts, 144 to modify lower court procedures, and 25 to abolish previously constituted courts in their entirety.<sup>31</sup> Desperately in need of reform, North Carolina’s system of lower courts instead trudged unwillingly through the the twentieth century.

## DISSATISFACTION DIAGNOSED

In a famous speech to the American Bar Association in 1906, then-Dean of the University of Nebraska Law School Roscoe Pound stated that “dissatisfaction with the administration of justice is as old as law...assuming this, the first step must be diagnosis.”<sup>32</sup> North Carolina’s pivotal incursion into self-diagnosis took hold in the form of the Committee on Improving and Expediting the Administration of Justice in North Carolina, which was appointed by the NC Bar Association in 1955 at the request of progressive Governor Luther H. Hodges.<sup>33</sup> He presented the Commission with a check for \$30,000 to commence its work, remarking, “This is the down payment, and as far as I am concerned, you are in business.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Brannon, *supra* note 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> See *Id.*, Kemp D. Battle, *Open Court*, 6 N.C. L. REV. 349, 354 (1928).

<sup>30</sup> Coates, *supra* note 8, at 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 22-23.

<sup>32</sup> Roscoe Pound, *The Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice*, Address Delivered to the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association (Aug. 29, 1906).

<sup>33</sup> N.C. Bar Ass’n, *supra* note 20, at 1.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Johnsey, *Study of N.C. Courts to Start Immediately*, GREENSBORO DAILY NEWS, June 17, 1956, *reprinted in* 2 N.C. BAR ASS’N, COMMITTEE ON IMPROVING AND EXPEDITING THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE IN NORTH CAROLINA, REPORTS (1957-58) [hereinafter Bell Commission Reports].

The establishment of the Bell Commission launched a multi-year and multi-faceted crusade to identify necessary changes to North Carolina's judicial system and recommend avenues for implementation. A noteworthy suggestion came from a judge on the Superior Court, in a compilation of comments and opinions on the current state of the court system. "[We ought to study] the New Jersey plan of evaluating the Superior Courts," he wrote, "with a view of determining whether some similar plan should be recommended for North Carolina."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the Bell Commission would draw many of its recommendations from prominent legal scholars, especially those of New Jersey.

#### VANDERBILT'S CRUSADE

Arthur T. Vanderbilt, a prominent New Jersey attorney and judge, provided "the spark that kindled the white flame of progress,"<sup>36</sup> following the efforts of Roscoe Pound and David Dudley Field.<sup>37</sup> Vanderbilt was fond of citing a study which indicated that 28 percent of the American people believed their local and municipal judges to be dishonest: "Leaving aside the question of whether this large group of people is right or wrong, the fact remains that enough judges have behaved in a way which creates a widespread impression of dishonesty," he wrote.<sup>38</sup> Vanderbilt was equally critical of disorganized lower courts, and sharpened his gaze on reform. When he became Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1948, Vanderbilt demanded strict adherence to the Canons of Judicial Ethics (which prevented judges from participating in partisan political activities), required magistrates to hold formal legal education, and brought fixed salaries to replace the questionable system of fee compensation.<sup>39</sup> His model of proper judicial structure consisted of a trial court of statewide jurisdiction, a court to hear appeals, and "chiefly as a matter of convenience" a local court to hear petty civil and criminal cases.<sup>40</sup> But Vanderbilt recognized reform as a difficult undertaking, and one which must be attempted by a steadfast group:

Manifestly judicial reform is no sport for the short-winded or for lawyers who are afraid of temporary defeat. Rather we must recall the sound advice given by General Jan Smuts to the students of Oxford: "When enlisted in a good cause, never surrender, for you can never tell what morning reinforcements in flashing armor will come marching over the hilltop."<sup>41</sup>

#### LONG-AWAITED RELIEF

North Carolina's "morning reinforcements" became the group of lawyers who desired to bring about simplicity and efficiency to the state's judicial system. Led by its namesake, Charlotte attorney J. Spencer Bell, the Bell Commission began its work by providing a comprehensive portrait of the judicial system in the late 1950s. The present court system, they argued, was one designed

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<sup>35</sup> ROYAL G. SHANNONHOUSE, COMMITTEE ON IMPROVING AND EXPEDITING THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, JUDICIAL COMMENTARY ON ADMINISTRATION OF COURTS AND CIVIL JUSTICE 22 (1957).

<sup>36</sup> ARTHUR T. VANDERBILT II, CHANGING LAW: A BIOGRAPHY OF ARTHUR T. VANDERBILT 94 (1976).

<sup>37</sup> See ARTHUR T. VANDERBILT, THE CHALLENGE OF LAW REFORM 53 (1955).

<sup>38</sup> Butterfield, *supra* note 1, at 143.

<sup>39</sup> Vanderbilt II, *supra* note 35, at 193.

<sup>40</sup> Vanderbilt, *supra* note 37, at 39.

<sup>41</sup> MINIMUM STANDARDS OF JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION xix (Arthur T. Vanderbilt, ed., 1949).

for the pioneer days of the state, when some degree of self-sufficiency and local governance was necessary.<sup>42</sup> The only acceptable course of action to advance the “feebly modernized” courts would be “the establishment of a unified court system.”<sup>43</sup>

Upon its survey of various law enforcement personnel and court officials, the Commission found broad support for reform. One respondent specifically hailed the “golden and unlimited opportunity”<sup>44</sup> to bring about real change. Many additional respondents had harsh words for the present system. They committed colorful adjectives to enunciate their opinions of justices of the peace, including “archaic,” “disgraceful,” “corrupt,” and “dishonest.”<sup>45</sup> Several subcommittees joined the cacophony of sound: “[The] lack of uniformity,” one wrote, “went so totally into every aspect of each court as to leave almost every court a stranger to its brother.”<sup>46</sup> The central challenge to the Bell Commission, thus, became the creation of a system which provided simplicity, efficiency, and usability.

## A NEW FRAMEWORK

In forming its recommendations to the General Assembly, the Bell Commission reached far into North Carolina’s judicial history, and took note of many jurists’ practical experience on the bench. The Commission released its 71-page report with recommendations to the Bar Association in December 1958. This essay will note three of its most salient recommendations to the system of lower courts and general court administration.

The Commission first recommended the establishment of a unified court system in the state, including an appellate division, a trial division of general jurisdiction, and a division of local trial courts.<sup>47</sup> Such a recommendation stemmed from a desire to eliminate competing jurisdictions, while retaining flexibility to transfer authority along the court divisions.

Second, the Commission recommended the establishment of a new district court system:

It is at the local level—the so-called “courts of limited jurisdiction”—that there is the greatest need for change in North Carolina. The Committee believes that the present functions of all existing trial courts, excluding the Superior Court but including justices of the peace and such special courts as juvenile and domestic relations courts, should be embraced within a new division of local trial courts consisting of district courts.<sup>48</sup>

The district courts would include a chief judge, assisted by associate judges in more populous counties, and magistrates, who were to be appointed upon the recommendation of the senior resident Superior Court judge.<sup>49</sup> The Commission reasoned that many of the current local court judges and staff would transition to the district court, enabling the judicial system to acquire new modes of efficiency without losing institutional memory.

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<sup>42</sup> N.C. Bar Ass’n, *supra* note 20, at 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 2, 5.

<sup>44</sup> 2 Bell Commission Reports, *Suggestions for Improving the Administration of Justice in North Carolina Received from Judges, Lawyers, Clerks of Court, Sheriffs, Police Chiefs and Other Officers and Court Officials* 38 (Royal Shannnonhouse et al. eds., 1957) [hereinafter *Suggestions for Improving the Administration of Justice in N.C.*].

<sup>45</sup> *Suggestions for Improving the Administration of Justice in N.C.*, *supra* note 44, at 41.

<sup>46</sup> Fred G. Crumpler, *Comments from Judicial Officials* 41, in 2 Bell Commission Reports (1958).

<sup>47</sup> Report of the Bell Commission, *supra* note 19, at 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 12-13.

The Commission's third recommendation served as a point of synthesis for its report. Noting that state court systems were generally characterized by

Extreme decentralization; considerable duplication of work; overlapping, conflicting and confusing jurisdiction; intricate procedures; wide diversity of local courts with marked lack of uniformity among courts of the same general purpose; a high degree of autonomy in individual courts; lowest courts threatened by incompetence or dishonesty or both; and a virtual total absence of authoritative supervision from any competent source,<sup>50</sup>

The Commission proposed an expansion of the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice into a full Administrative Office of the Courts.<sup>51</sup> Under the supervision of the Chief Justice of the NC Supreme Court, the Administrative Office would “collect proper statistics, maintain appropriate personnel records, handle the procurement of equipment, supplies and facilities for the courts, prepare and maintain fiscal records, make appropriate reports on the basis of which the Chief Justice can handle judicial assignments, and generally supervise and report on the operation of the system”<sup>52</sup>—in short, complete those tasks which had fallen by the wayside for centuries before.

By providing a framework in which North Carolina could consolidate its court system, create new efficiencies in lower court operation, and maintain accurate records, the Bell Commission hoped to permanently transform judicial operation in North Carolina for the better.

#### GRADUAL IMPLEMENTATION

The Bell Commission's ambitious recommendations, however, were met with widespread skepticism by the 1959 session of the General Assembly. Legislators watered down the provisions in fear of ceding too much regulatory authority to the court system, and supporters of reform quickly withdrew their proposal.<sup>53</sup>

Undaunted, the NC Bar Association returned to their studies in search of a compromise. Under the leadership of Howard H. Hubbard, the Committee on Legislation submitted a report to the 1961 General Assembly which encountered lesser opposition. In exchange for the safe passage of reform, the report suggested new provisions to protect legislative authority, including District Court judge oversight and the supervision of Supreme Court procedure-making powers.<sup>54</sup> This focus on flexibility enabled many of the Bell Commission's initial reforms to receive legislative approval without sacrificing necessary progress. In November 1962, North Carolina voters went to the polls and overwhelmingly (357,067 to 232,774) supported the compromise amendment to the state constitution.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Clyde L. Ball, *Report on Court Structure and Jurisdiction* 1, in 3 Bell Commission Reports (1958).

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Bell Commission, *supra* note 19, at 42.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 41-42.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Crowell, *The Origins of the North Carolina District Court*, 21 N.C. STATE B.J. 6, 7 (2016).

<sup>54</sup> N.C. BAR ASS'N, A REPORT ON THE UNIFIED COURT BILL 1 (Howard H. Hubbard, ed., 1961).

<sup>55</sup> Crowell, *supra* note 54, at 8.

With a firm legal framework in place, the 1963 General Assembly established the Courts Commission, under the chairmanship of Lindsay Warren, Jr., to implement the revised court system by 1971.<sup>56</sup> In response, the Commission drafted the Judicial Department Act (JDA) of 1965, which brought the decades-long search for tangible court reform to a close. The JDA specifically provided for the construction of the district court division of the General Court of Justice, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and financial support of the judicial department.<sup>57</sup> In doing so, the JDA fulfilled the salient recommendations of the Bell Commission, and set in motion a unified effort to provide equitable justice to all of North Carolina.

#### OPERATING AT LAST

The JDA designed the District Courts to be established on a schedule spanning five years and three phases, with full implementation in all 100 counties by December 1970.<sup>58</sup>

On paper, the JDA gave the District Court exclusive original jurisdiction over misdemeanors, concurrent jurisdiction of civil cases where the amount in controversy was \$5,000 or less, and of domestic relations cases regardless of the amount in controversy.<sup>59</sup> In practice, these provisions were to give quick relief to the Superior Court. Positive results began to trickle in to the new Administrative Office of the Courts as district courts spread to all 100 counties:

In Cumberland County there were 271 civil cases filed in the Superior Court during the year as compared with 2,043 filed during the previous reporting year. At the same time, there were 3,079 civil cases filed in Cumberland County in the District Court division.<sup>60</sup>

Statistics at the state level suggested similar results. The total number of civil cases added in the Superior Court across the state dropped from 33,020 in 1968 to only 8,251 by the end of 1971. The number of criminal and civil cases pending was equally striking, falling by over 17,000 from 1967 to 1971.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the fully-established district court division disposed of small claims cases with remarkable efficiency. A jury was impaneled in only 2.3 percent of 134,837 civil cases.<sup>62</sup> Thus, in just over a decade, the labors of countless reformers had indeed borne lasting fruit.

#### TO THE FUTURE?

Despite its significant early success and gradual administrative tweaks over the past fifty years, the District Court and judicial system in North Carolina are under constant pressure to improve *writ large*. From 1994-1996, this task manifested in the form of the Commission for the Future of Justice and Courts in North Carolina, colloquially known as the Futures Commission. Chaired by

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<sup>56</sup> LINDSAY C. WARREN, JR., THE JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT ACT OF 1965: A SERIES OF EXPLANATORY ARTICLES FROM POPULAR GOVERNMENT REPRINTED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA COURTS COMMISSION 1 (1967) [hereinafter A Series of Explanatory Articles].

<sup>57</sup> N.C. GEN. STAT. §7A-2 (1965).

<sup>58</sup> A Series of Explanatory Articles, *supra* note 56, at 3.

<sup>59</sup> ADMIN. OFFICE OF THE COURTS, ANNUAL REPORT 1966 3 (1966).

<sup>60</sup> ADMIN. OFFICE OF THE COURTS, ANNUAL REPORT 1967 6 (1967).

<sup>61</sup> ADMIN. OFFICE OF THE COURTS, ANNUAL REPORT 1971 12, 13 (1971).

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* at 40.

Wachovia executive John Medlin, the Commission included no sitting members of the court system—a means to avoid those inclined to resist change.<sup>63</sup> The Commission took special notice of developments in North Carolina both in and beyond the justice system, including a growing burden on the courts as the result of an expanding population, a shifting political climate, and rapid advancements in technology.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, it employed a public relations firm to determine public opinion of the court system. The resulting survey, conducted over several months in 1995, found that “the most frequent form of contact [51.5 percent]...is personally appearing before the court...in traffic court, a domestic court, small claims court, or a civil suit” —in principle, District Court.<sup>65</sup> 38 percent of respondents indicated a generally favorable opinion of the court, 33 percent unfavorable, and 30 percent had no opinion. “This indicates that a major segment of the adult population has major gaps in their knowledge about the court system in North Carolina,” the report concluded.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the court system as a whole ranked lower in favorability than the news media, local government, attorneys, and the state legislature.<sup>67</sup>

Faced with these challenges, the Futures Commission set about making recommendations for North Carolina’s twenty-first century court. Wanting a “recommitment to uniformity,”<sup>68</sup> the Commission reconsidered several of the proposals laid out by the Bell Commission decades earlier. First, it suggested an “enhanced role” for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, eliminating most General Assembly oversight. Second, the Commission proposed a “simpler trial court organization” in the form of a new circuit court. Such a reorganization would entail a closer case management system, justices appointed by recommendation from a State Judicial Council, and improved technological engagement and information-sharing.<sup>69</sup>

The proposals agreed upon by the Futures Commission encountered similar resistance in the General Assembly to those of the Bell Commission. The new Judicial Council lacked the authority to be any more than an advisory body, family courts—despite their overwhelming popularity among respondents of the Future Commission’s survey [84 percent]—were not uniformly established throughout the state, and no merger between the superior and district court into a circuit court was ever seriously considered.<sup>70</sup> Most importantly, legislators remained unwilling to relinquish any measure of control over the judicial branch.

## A LOOK BACK

The pursuit of justice is not an easy or simple path. As the respective sagas of the Bell Commission and Futures Commission show, judicial reforms can only be accepted and implemented with broad support from jurists, attorneys, and the public. Participants must be willing to consider

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<sup>63</sup> Crowell, *supra* note 56.

<sup>64</sup> COMM’N FOR THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND THE COURTS IN N.C., WITHOUT FAVOR, DENIAL OR DELAY: A COURT SYSTEM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY 3, 6-7 (1996) [hereinafter Futures Commission].

<sup>65</sup> COMM’N FOR THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND THE COURTS IN N.C., NORTH CAROLINA COURT SYSTEM RESEARCH 11 (Wilkerson & Associates, ed. 1995).

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.* at 49.

<sup>68</sup> Crowell, *supra* note 54, at 9.

<sup>69</sup> N.C. BAR ASS’N, COMM’N FOR THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND THE COURTS IN N.C., *supra* note 62, at 3, 4, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Crowell, *supra* note 66.

every angle, gather every data point, and compromise where compromise is possible for best results.

North Carolina's journey to and in the District Court is long and illustrious. From the early days of the Carolina colony to the present, the administration of justice in North Carolina has been a central focus of the state. With the new District Court, reformers hoped that changes made in the 1960s would allow Blackstone's vision of a court "plentifully watered and refreshed"<sup>71</sup> to be achieved. Long removed were law and equity and general and special acts courts of the early twentieth century. No more were the ethically and numerically questionable justices of the peace. Instead, North Carolina leaped to the "cutting edge of court reform"<sup>72</sup> under the guidance and practices of the legal profession's elder statesmen: Roscoe Pound, Arthur Vanderbilt, and J. Spencer Bell. The court system which once supplied justice during the pioneer days of the state had evolved into a modernized, efficient, and growing one—a mirror image of the state it served.

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<sup>71</sup> Blackstone, *supra* note 3.

<sup>72</sup> N.C. BAR ASS'N, COMM'N FOR THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND THE COURTS IN N.C., REPORT TO THE NORTH CAROLINA BAR ASSOCIATION 1 (1996).

# Appendix 1: The Courts of Johnston County and the Eleventh District, 1755-Present

JOHN R. HESS

In addition to research that examines the evolution of courts in North Carolina at a macro level, significant benefits await those who pursue more intimate study. In this appendix to *A Brief History of Judicial Reform and the District Court in North Carolina*, we sharpen our gazes on the early high courts of Johnston County and the hodgepodge of lower courts prior to the establishment of the Eleventh Judicial District. Such a narrow focus enables lawyers and the public alike to consider in finer detail how the District Court came to be.

## THE EARLIEST YEARS

Johnston County's founding in 1746 affords it prime placement in North Carolina's judicial history. Johnston justice grew initially under the General Court System, established in 1670 by the Lords Proprietors, which held jurisdiction over civil actions above £50 (approximately \$10,000 today<sup>1</sup>) and criminal actions when punishment could entail "loss of life or member." The General Court held sessions in three circuits, at Bath, New Bern, and Newton (present-day Wilmington), with general sessions in Edenton.<sup>2</sup>

In 1755, the newly established Supreme Courts of Justice funneled justice-seeking Johnstonians solely to New Bern. Divided into five districts—in Edenton, Enfield, New Bern, Salisbury, and Wilmington,—the judicial system in North Carolina attempted to reach peak efficiency by primarily servicing the needs of local communities. Simmering revolutionary sentiment in the colony and elsewhere on the Atlantic, however, meant that attempts at a speedy pursuit of justice faced major roadblocks in subsequent years.

From 1772-1778, sparring between the colonies and the royal government of England paralyzed the administration of justice in Johnston County and North Carolina. Courts of Oyer and Terminer (to hear and determine) tried only the most heinous crimes, but no civil cases over £50 could be tried during the six-year period.<sup>3</sup> Independence and statehood for North Carolina saw Johnston County return to umbrella of the New Bern District Superior Court. In 1806, the county seat of Johnston, Smithfield, erected a new superior court to serve the county. It remained the highest court in Johnston County until the Constitution of 1868.

## A SIMILAR STORY

Attempts at reform from 1868 to the mid-twentieth century (see "A Myriad of Changes") had tremendous impact on Harnett, Johnston, and Lee counties. These three locales were to compose the newly-minted Eleventh Judicial District as laid out by the Judicial Department Act of 1965.<sup>4</sup> Not much had changed in the area since the eighteenth century. A report dispatched by the

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<sup>1</sup> All currency approximations were completed using Alan Eliassen's "Historical Currency Conversions," available online at: <https://futureboy.us/fsp/dollar.fsp>.

<sup>2</sup> George Stevenson & Ruby D. Arnold, *North Carolina Courts of Law and Equity Prior to 1868*, ARCHIVES INFORMATION CIRCULAR, July 1973, at 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> N.C. GEN. STAT. §7A-131 (1965).



Court Commission found the area “moderately populated, characterized by the absence of large towns.”<sup>5</sup> In large part, the Court systems of each county reflected the report’s sentiment. Lee County had a Superior Court, a county recorder’s court (Sanford), and one mayor’s court. Harnett County operated one Superior Court and two recorder’s courts of similar jurisdiction.<sup>6</sup>

The lower courts of Johnston County presented a clearer picture of the reformers’ challenge. In the early 1960s, the county had five municipal recorder’s courts (in Smithfield, Benson, Clayton, Kenly, and Selma) and a recorder’s and domestic relations court that serviced the county *writ large*.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, mayor’s courts operated in Pine Level, Four Oaks, and Princeton, handling cases in excess of 120 per year.<sup>8</sup>

The on-the-ground administration of justice in Harnett, Johnston, and Lee counties came from an assortment of jurists and was supplied by a variety of financial practices. Johnston had the largest number of justices of the peace with 29, Harnett with 23, and Lee with 9. As was the case with justices of the peace throughout the state, “most information furnished [to the report] on the civil cases is estimated, ...obtained by personal interview with the justices of the peace who are most active in these counties.” The Clerk of Superior Court docketed only one-third to one-half of all civil cases.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, only four out of the eight total recorder’s court judges held a background in the legal profession.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to varying jurisdictions and procedures, each court had separate financial practices.

The Criminal cost of recorder’s courts varies from \$10.45 to \$25.50 with \$.50 going to the local library fund in Johnston County and \$1 going to the local library fund in both Lee and Harnett Counties. Johnston County has a local law officers fund which is \$1 per case. The average minimum cost in the three counties is approximately \$18.50.<sup>11</sup>

These practices produced somewhat surprising results for the court system. In fiscal year 1963, the recorder’s courts in Benson, Clayton, and Kenly took in a slight *profit* of \$1,879.97 (approximately \$14,500 today). Harnett County’s recorder’s courts topped their neighbor’s gains, raking in \$11,148.32 (approximately \$86,000 today).<sup>12</sup>

## REFORM

The shift to the District Court in late 1968 reverberated across each county in the Eleventh Judicial District, with generally positive sentiment. “The organization of the new court system requiring much more uniformity of procedure, costs and operation for all levels of court indicates that a

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<sup>5</sup> GEORGE B. MAST, COURTS COMMISSION, A REPORT ON THE COURTS AND COURT BUSINESS OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT 1 (1964).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 11.

more efficient and satisfactory system will be possible,” declared the *Smithfield Herald*.<sup>13</sup> Candidates for judge rushed to enter the November election that would determine the first four sitting judges of the District Court in Harnett, Johnston, and Lee counties. In total, eight Democrats filed for the May primary, and one Republican ran uncontested. Each Democrat to file had experience with the current hodgepodge: W. Pope Lyon, Elton Pridgen, and Lowry M. Betts, attorneys; C.P. Trader, E. Hughes Lamm, William I. Godwin, Woodrow Hill, and Robert B. Morgan, Sr.; each a judge on a municipal or county recorder’s court.<sup>14</sup> On November 5, 1968, voters in the Eleventh Judicial District elected the “first four” judges to sit on the District Court. Those new judges, Robert B. Morgan, Sr. (Chief), W. Pope Lyon, William I. Godwin, and Woodrow Hill, took office on the first Monday in December of the same year.<sup>15</sup> A new era of justice in Harnett, Johnston, and Lee counties had begun.

#### ROBERT B. MORGAN, SR.

Each of the initial judges to sit on the bench for the Eleventh District Court was a character in his own right, and each became well-known for his attitudes and habits. Chief Judge Robert B. Morgan, Sr. was no exception. A native of Kipling, NC, Judge Morgan received formal education at Wake Forest University and the Cumberland University School of Law in Knoxville, TN. Voters in Harnett County awarded him all but seven votes in his election as county recorder’s court judge in 1956.<sup>16</sup> Upon his election as Chief District Court judge in 1968, Judge Morgan’s court became a shining example of court reformers’ deepest wish—a transformed body with noticeably more efficient operation.

Known as an affable jurist and avid fisherman by his peers,<sup>17</sup> Judge Morgan—and his court—built an unspoken reputation as a lenient judge during sentencing. The Eleventh District Court sentenced almost one out of every five traffic convictions as “prayer for judgment continued,” a legal loophole that prevented the state from taking action against a driving license. In 1973, a Department of Motor Vehicles report identified 5.7 percent of the half a million traffic violations as a PJC. In the Eleventh Judicial District, however, that percentage swelled to 17.2 percent.<sup>18</sup> Judge Morgan responded defensively: “Some of [the cases],” he said, “you have to give PJC to induce them to plead guilty...it would take too long [for defense]...you have a pretty good idea, especially in this area, because you know all the people.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the friendly nature of jurists, attorneys, and citizens may have been unquenchable by the new District Court. “A defendant with 26 traffic violations,” reported the *Smithfield Herald*, “has been given six PJCs by Judge Morgan since 1971.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *District Courts Will Produce Many Changes in December*, SMITHFIELD HERALD, March 5, 1968, at 1A [hereinafter *Many Changes*].

<sup>14</sup> *Eight Democrats File for Four Judge Jobs*, SMITHFIELD HERALD, February 23, 1968, at 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Many Changes*, *supra* note 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Obituary, Robert Bolton Morgan, Sr.*, NEWS & OBSERVER, August 8, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> W. POPE LYON, *DE JUDGE TELLS DE TALES* 39, 41 (1986).

<sup>18</sup> *District Court Judges “Most Lenient in State”*, SMITHFIELD HERALD, November 13, 1973, at 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

## W. POPE LYON

Perhaps the most flamboyant member of the “first four” was Judge W. Pope Lyon of Smithfield. Allegedly the first person ever charged and convicted of running a red light in Johnston County,<sup>21</sup> Judge Lyon was the youngest member of the group, and also the only new jurist without previous bench experience. His ascension to the District Court was, thus, the result of twelve years as a district attorney and solicitor in the Johnston County Recorder’s Court, in addition to his leadership as chairman of the committee constructed to study the needs of the new Eleventh District.<sup>22</sup> Upon his retirement from the bench in 1984, Judge Lyon proceeded to craft a full-length book of stories with regard to his time as District Court judge, titled *De Judge Tells De Tales*. The semi-autobiography details with hokey humor his run-ins with inexperienced defendants, prideful lawyers, and his own occasional misunderstandings of the law.

## WILLIAM I. GODWIN

Judge William I. Godwin “had the looks, bearing and manner of a typical movie or television journalist,” wrote Judge Lyon. “He was tall and handsome and had the air and even some of the mannerisms of Ronald Reagan.”<sup>23</sup> Judge Godwin, previously Mayor of Selma and judge on the Johnston County Recorder’s and Domestic Relations Court, handled the large majority of the Eleventh District’s juvenile cases and domestic disputes. His efficient manner led court authorities to christen his the best juvenile court in the state.<sup>24</sup> Judge Godwin was the first of the initial Eleventh District judges to retire (1975), returning to elected office as Selma’s mayor.

## WOODROW HILL

The last of the original four District Court judges of the Eleventh District was Woodrow Hill of Dunn. Judge Hill, unlike his counterparts, had no formal legal education, but “lived and breathed politics.”<sup>25</sup> “Among his annoyances,” wrote Judge Lyon, “were the Raleigh *News & Observer*, young men with long hair, vagrants, and Buddy Jernigan [a political rival].” Indeed, Judge Hill’s disdain for vagrants appeared during his tenure as a recorder’s court judge—long before his election to the District Court. “Any and all tramps, vagrants, persons under suspicion who shall be found with no visible means of support, either male or female, shall not be allowed on the streets or other public place,” he declared to the Dunn *Daily Record*.<sup>26</sup> Although a federal judge would strike down his decision,<sup>27</sup> Judge Hill remained a vanguard of conservative values throughout his duration on the recorder’s court and District Court benches.

Upon his death in 1994, the *Daily Record* produced a gleaming editorial for Judge Hill, which spoke to his disdain for “hippies.” “Judge Hill served during a difficult period in our history when many young people began living as hippies and rebellion against the establishment

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<sup>21</sup> Lyon, *supra* note 17, at 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Pope Lyon, C.P. Trader Seek District Judgeships*, SMITHFIELD HERALD, January 19, 1968, at 1.

<sup>23</sup> Lyon, *supra* note 17, at 46.

<sup>24</sup> SMITHFIELD HERALD, October 31, 1972.

<sup>25</sup> Lyon, *supra* note 17, at 43.

<sup>26</sup> RISA GOLUBOFF, VAGRANT NATION: POLICE POWER, CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE, AND THE MAKING OF THE 1960S 176 (2016).

<sup>27</sup> *Smith v. Hill*, 285 F.Supp. 556, 559 n. 2 (E.D.N.C. 1968).

came into vogue,” the newspaper determined. “He even sent longhaired defendants to the barber shop, probably a constitutionally shaky practice.”<sup>28</sup>

#### THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Today, the District Court remains a constant presence and force in the Eleventh Judicial District. Since 1968, the number of judges has increased, from four to twelve, to meet the expanding needs of Harnett, Johnston, and Lee counties. Some trends, however, bely new institutional challenges that encompass the whole of North Carolina. In 2012, the state ranked forty-fifth against other states in terms of per capita spending on the Judicial Branch.<sup>29</sup> Institutional knowledge continues to leave the court system as experienced employees retire. Specific to the Eleventh Judicial District is the recent retirement of longtime Clerk of Superior Court Will Crocker, who “probably knows more people by their first names in the [area] than any other one person.”<sup>30</sup> These issues will remain until new public servants emerge to address them.

This appendix has addressed in a brief overview the formation, establishment, early years, and challenges facing the Eleventh District of the North Carolina Judicial System. This approach may ironically posit an injustice to those who have worked to ensure the efficient and successful administration of justice in these counties. The District Court functions well only with their constant vigilance. Thus, despite the challenges facing the District Court in the Eleventh District and across the state, those who are continually invested in the successful and efficient administration of justice will ensure that present and future challenges are met with the vigor and enthusiasm of a new century.

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<sup>28</sup> *Woodrow Hill—A No-Nonsense Judge with Common Sense*, DAILY RECORD, February 23, 1994, at 4A.

<sup>29</sup> NORTH CAROLINA JUDICIAL BRANCH, 2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT 12 (2015).

<sup>30</sup> Lyon, *supra* note 17, at 88.

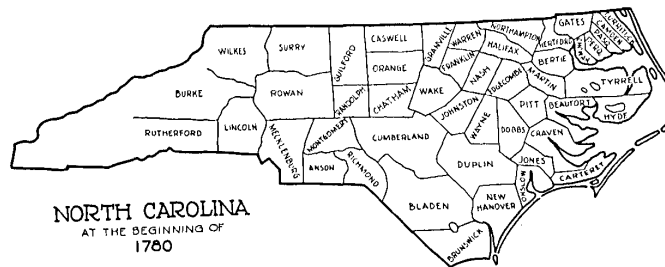
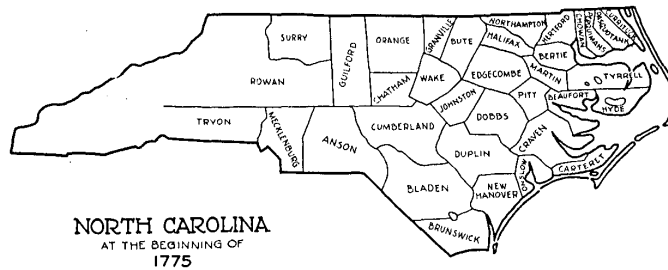
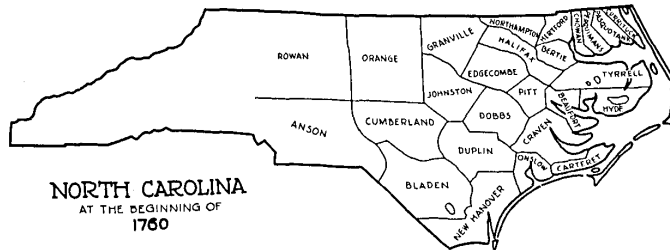
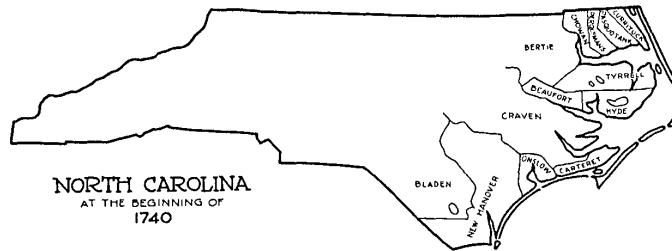
## Appendix 2: List of District Court Judges for the Eleventh District

Robert B. Morgan, Sr. (Lillington) .....	Chief, 1968-1978
W. Pope Lyon (Smithfield).....	1968-1984
William I. Godwin (Selma) .....	1968-1975
Woodrow Hill (Dunn).....	1968-1978
Elton C. Pridgen (Smithfield).....	1975-1988; Chief, 1978-1988
William A. Christian (Sanford) .....	1978-2000; Chief, 1988-2000
Kelly Edward Greene (Dunn).....	1978-1987
Edward H. McCormick (Lillington).....	1984-2004; Chief, 2000-2003
O. Henry Willis (Dunn) .....	1987-1992(?), 2009(?)-2010(?)
Tyson Yates Dobson, Jr. (Smithfield).....	1988-2002
Samuel S. Stephenson (Angier).....	1988-2000
Albert A. Corbett, Jr. (Smithfield).....	1990-2013(?); Chief, 2003-2013(?)
Franklin F. Lanier (Buies Creek).....	1992-2004
Robert L. Anderson (Clayton) .....	1999-2001
Marcia K. Stewart (Smithfield).....	2000-2005
Jacquelyn L. Lee (Smithfield).....	2000-Present; Chief, 2013(?)-Present
Jimmy L. Love, Jr. (Sanford).....	2000-Present
Addie M. Harris-Rawls (Clayton).....	2001-Present
George R. Murphy (Smithfield).....	2002-2008(?)
Resson O. Faircloth, II (Lillington).....	2004-Present
James B. Ethridge (Lillington).....	2004-2007
Robert W. Bryant, Jr. (Lillington).....	2006-Present
R. Dale Stubbs (Smithfield).....	2007-Present
O. Henry Willis, Jr. (Dunn).....	2007-Present
Charles Patrick Bullock (Coats).....	2008-2012
Paul A. Holcombe, III (Smithfield).....	2009-Present
Charles Winston Gilchrist (Clayton).....	2010-2012(?)
Caron H. Stewart (Smithfield) .....	2012-Present
Mary H. Wells (Smithfield) .....	2013-Present
Joy A. Jones (Smithfield) .....	2013(?)-Present

# Appendix 3: County Divisions in North Carolina within Present State Boundaries, 1740-1800

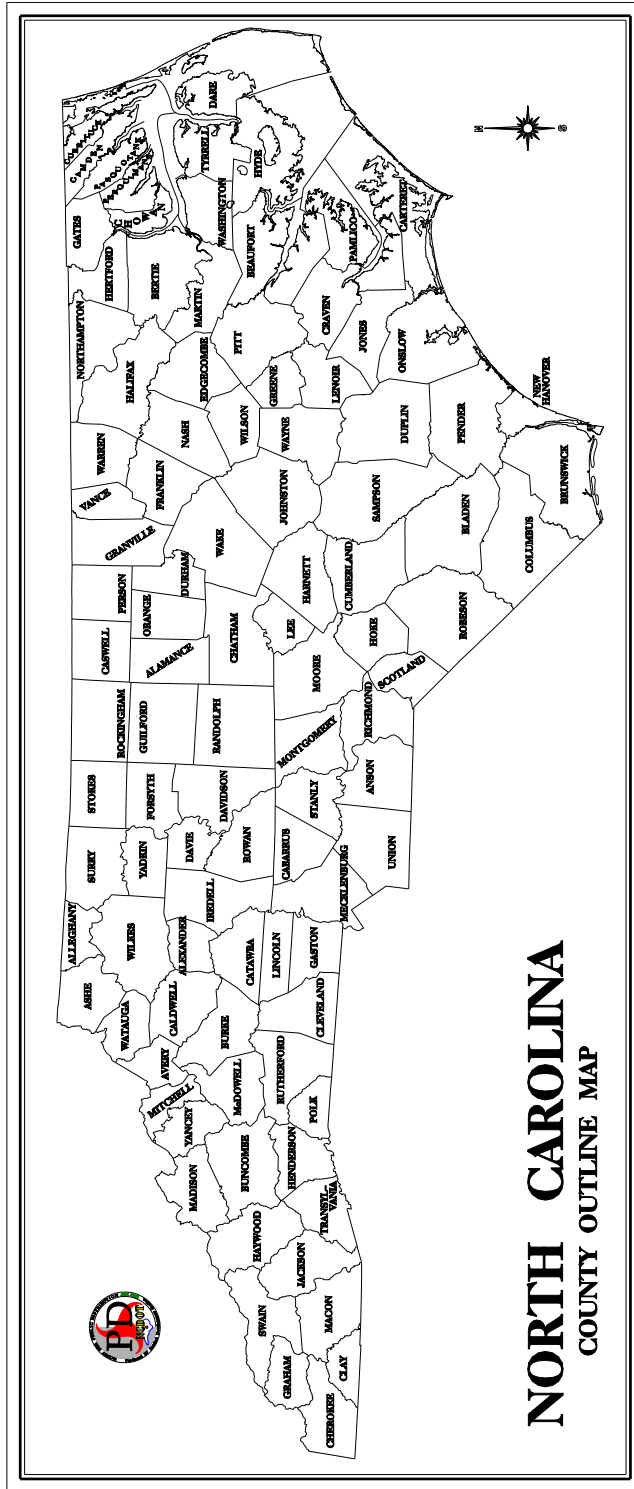
L. POLK DENMARK,

reprinted from George Stevenson & Ruby D. Arnold, *North Carolina Courts of Law and Equity Prior to 1868*, ARCHIVES INFORMATION CIRCULAR, July 1973, at 17.



# Appendix 4: Current County Boundaries

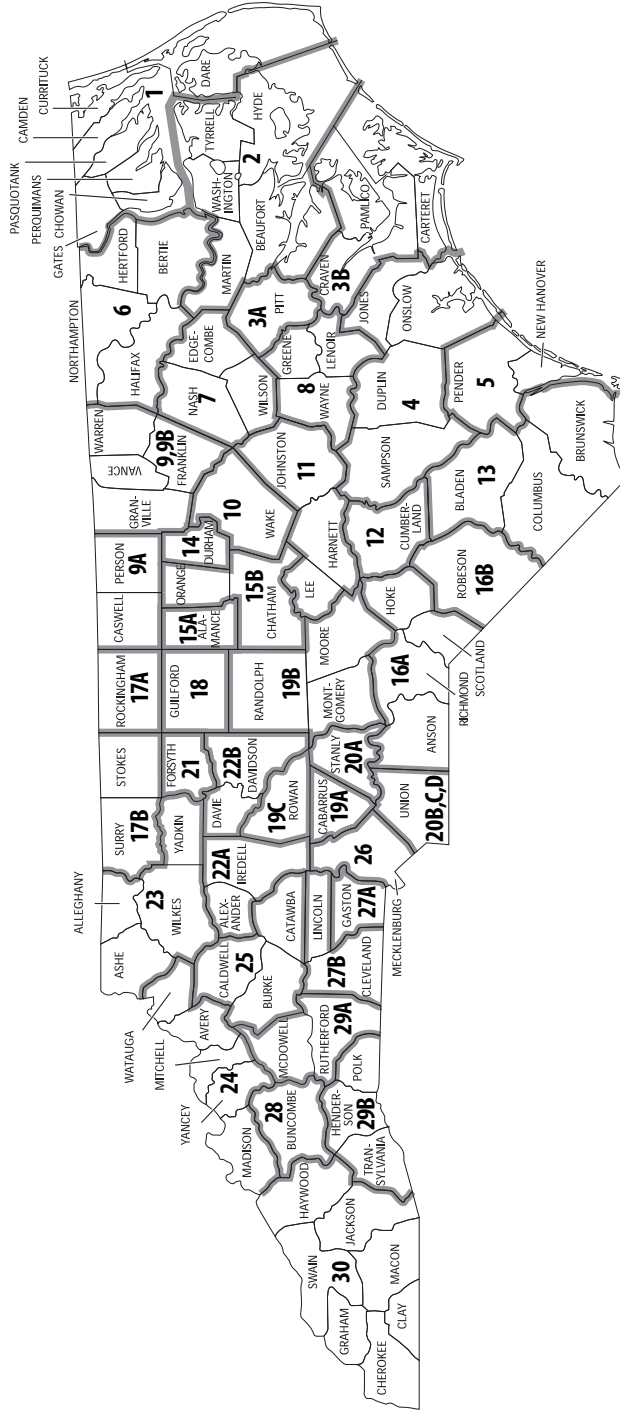
North Carolina Department of Transportation<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://www.ncdot.gov/travel/statemapping/download/nc\\_statemap\\_countyoutline.pdf](http://www.ncdot.gov/travel/statemapping/download/nc_statemap_countyoutline.pdf).

# Appendix 5: Current District Court Divisions<sup>1</sup>

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government



Note: Districts 9 and 9B, and districts 20B, 20C, and 20D are districts for electoral purposes only. They are combined for administrative purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://www.nccourts.org/Courts/Trial/District/Documents/DistrictCourtmap15.pdf>.