

NOTABLE NEW HAMPSHIRE CASES BEFORE THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

Many cases involving the state of New Hampshire or people from New Hampshire have come before the U.S. Supreme Court. The cases cited here are four of the most important cases, which had an impact on U.S. laws for a long time after the cases themselves were settled.



Dartmouth College v. Woodward (1819)

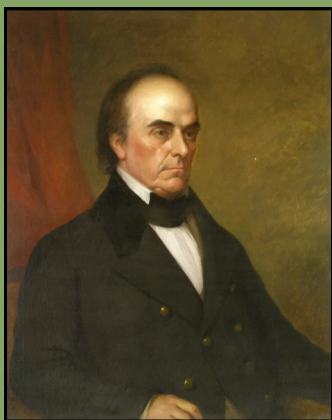
One of the most important Supreme Court decisions in American history, *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* was a complicated case about contract law. Contracts are written agreements between two or more people or organizations.

In this case, Dartmouth College was a private school, but it had received a charter from New Hampshire when it was founded. So who controlled the college and directed how it educated its students? Did the college decide, or did the state of New Hampshire? Two groups emerged in the 1810s who said they were the ones who controlled the college. One group represented the college's Board of Trustees, and the other group represented the state of New Hampshire.

When the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, the lawyer representing the Board of Trustees was a young man named Daniel Webster, who was from New Hampshire and a Dartmouth graduate. He would become one of the most influential statesmen in American history.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Webster and the Board of Trustees, arguing that the charter from New Hampshire on which Dartmouth College was founded is a binding contract that turned over control of the school to the Board of Trustees. The state cannot pass a law that changes the contract.

This ruling is the basis for American contract law, which is the foundation for the U.S. economy. In order to conduct business, people have to have confidence that their agreements contracts are legally binding and cannot be changed.



In his closing statement before the U.S. Supreme Court, Daniel Webster spoke for five hours. He ended his remarks by saying of his alma mater, Dartmouth College,

"It is, sir, as I have said, a small college, and yet there are those that love it."

This quote emphasized the students' strong connection to Dartmouth College and is often cited, even today, by those who cherish it.

State of Vermont v. State of New Hampshire (1933)

When states can't settle their disagreements with one another, they can take their case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In this case, Vermont and New Hampshire couldn't agree on where exactly the border was between the two states. Everyone knows the border is the Connecticut River, but *where* on the river? Is it the eastern bank of the river (closer to New Hampshire)? Or the western bank of the river (closer to Vermont)? Or somewhere in the middle?

In 1933, the case came before the U.S. Supreme Court, which declared that the border was actually on the west bank—the Vermont side—of the river, meaning that the river itself lies within New Hampshire. New Hampshire has had similar cases before the U.S. Supreme Court involving its border with Maine.

Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire (1942)

This case involved the right to free speech under the First Amendment.

A man named Walter Chaplinsky stood on a street corner in Rochester and loudly made comments against the American flag and the Catholic Church. When an angry crowd formed around him, he was arrested for his angry speech.

Chaplinsky argued that freedom of speech allowed him to say whatever he wanted, but the U.S. Supreme Court disagreed. The Court ruled that Chaplinsky's words were considered "fighting words," meaning their intent was to spark violence, and therefore Chaplinsky was not free to say them. This idea is called the "fighting words" doctrine, which narrows the definition of free speech.

Coolidge v. New Hampshire (1971)

A man named Edward Coolidge was arrested and convicted of murdering a young woman in Manchester in the mid-1960s.

Coolidge appealed his conviction to the U.S. Supreme Court, claiming that the police had illegally searched his home and car, and thereby violated his Fourth Amendment rights regarding "search and seizure."

The Court agreed with Coolidge and overturned his conviction. In the Court's decision, it clarified the protections offered under the Fourth Amendment and laid out rules that law enforcement had to follow when searching through someone's things.

Coolidge was later retried for the crime in a New Hampshire court under the rules outlined by the U.S. Supreme Court. He was found guilty a second time and spent many years in prison.

Types of Cases the U.S. Supreme Court Hears:

- Appeals from Other Courts
- Constitutional Questions
- Cases of National Importance

