

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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CHAPTER 97.

Municipal and Police Courts, Trial Justices; Their Jurisdiction and Proceedings in Civil Actions.

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Appointment, Qualification and Jurisdiction.

Sec. 1. Trial justices, appointment and tenure. R. S. c. 88, § 1. Trial justices shall be appointed and commissioned by the governor, with the advice and consent of the council, to act within the county for which they are appointed, and shall hold their offices for seven years from the date of their commissions.
63 Me. 268; 64 Me. 197; 96 Me. 498.

Sec. 2. Jurisdiction in civil actions. R. S. c. 88, § 2. Every trial justice may hold a court in his county, as provided in this chapter, and have original and exclusive jurisdiction of all civil actions, including prosecutions for penalties in which his town is interested, when the debt or damages demanded do not exceed twenty dollars, except those in which the title to real estate, according to the pleadings or brief statement filed in the case by either party, is in question; and except that in those towns in which a municipal or police court is established, his jurisdiction is restricted to those cases in which jurisdiction was given to justices of the peace, in the act establishing such court, and to cases wherein jurisdiction is given to trial justices in like manner.

12 Me. 18; 13 Me. 140; 15 Me. 189; 18 Me. 28; 27 Me. 95; 29 Me. 543; 35 Me. 131; 39 Me. 477; 43 Me. 432; 65 Me. 169; 78 Me. 540; 82 Me. 98; 86 Me. 80; 91 Me. 576; 102 Me. 523.

Jurisdiction of trial justices, and judges of municipal and police courts is also conferred in the following cases:

To provide for care and custody of abused or neglected children, c. 72, § 52.

To enforce liens under c. 105, § 79.

In actions of forcible entry and detainer, c. 108, § 3.

In actions for penalties for trespasses on islands, c. 109, § 14.

In replevin of beasts, c. 110, § 1, and of goods, § 9.

In cases of libels for forfeited goods, c. 112, § 8.

To act in poor debtor disclosures, c. 124, §§ 22, 68.

Criminal jurisdiction, c. 144.

Sec. 3. When title to real estate is in question, proceedings. R. S. c. 88, § 3. When it appears by the pleadings or brief statement, that the title to real estate is in question, the cause shall, on request of either party, be removed to the superior court in the county; and such party shall recognize to the other in a reasonable sum, with sufficient sureties, to enter the case at the next term thereof; and if he does not so recognize, the justice shall hear and decide the case, as if such request had not been made.

3 Me. 256; 9 Me. 113; 27 Me. 95.

Sec. 4. Copy and papers to be produced at appellate court; proceedings if not entered. R. S. c. 88, § 4. The party so recognizing shall produce at said court a copy of the record, and all such papers as are required to be produced by an appellant; and if he fails so to do, or to enter the action as before provided, he shall, on complaint of the adverse party, be nonsuited or defaulted, as the case may be; and such judgment shall be rendered as law and justice require.

Sec. 5. Writs, form and service. R. S. c. 88, § 5. The writ in civil actions commenced before a trial justice, shall be a summons, a *capias*, and an attachment, or *scire facias*, of the form prescribed by law, signed by the justice, and served not less than seven, nor more than sixty days before the return day thereof.

Sec. 6. Municipal or police court writs, when returnable. R. S. c. 88, § 6. Writs in civil actions before any municipal or police court, may be made returnable at any term thereof, to be held not less than seven, nor more than sixty-five days from their date.

84 Me. 240; 86 Me. 345; *114 Me. 441.

Sec. 7. Signature of recorder or clerk, evidence of authority. R. S. c. 88, § 7. The signature of the recorder or clerk of any municipal or police court to a complaint, warrant, mittimus, writ, or other document, purporting to come from the court of which he is recorder or clerk, shall be sufficient evidence of his authority to issue the same, without, in any way, accounting for the absence or presence of the judge of said court.

See c. 95, § 3.

Sec. 8. Actions, where to be brought, when parties live in same county. R. S. c. 88, § 8. Actions between parties residing in the same county, returnable before any trial justice, shall be commenced before some such disinterested justice residing or holding his court in the town where one of the parties, or his attorney, or person summoned as trustee in such action, resides; and if there is no such justice residing or holding his court therein, then before some such justice, if any, in an adjoining town, otherwise before any such justice in the county.

68 Me. 248.

Sec. 9. When parties live in different counties. R. S. c. 88, § 9. When the parties reside in different counties, such actions shall be commenced before any disinterested trial justice residing in the county where any defendant resides; but all trustee actions, returnable before such justice, shall be commenced within the county where some trustee, named in the writ, resides.

91 Me. 576.

Sec. 10. Jurisdiction of municipal courts. R. S. c. 88, § 10. A municipal or police court shall not have jurisdiction in any civil matter unless a defendant resides within the county in which such court is established, or is a non-resident of the state and has personal service within the county, or a party summoned as trustee resides within the county, or property of the defendant is attached within the county, in which such court is established. But in case of such personal service, trustee, or attachment, such court shall have jurisdiction to the amount of the established jurisdiction thereof.

See c. 95, § 16; 96 Me. 348.

Sec. 11. Writs issued by a justice, municipal or police court, returnable before another in same county. R. S. c. 88, § 11. 1929, c. 253. Writs issued by any trial justice may be made returnable before any other trial justice of the same county, and shall have the same effect as if signed by the latter justice.

Writs issued from any municipal or police court may be made returnable to any other municipal or police court in any county, but nothing in this section

shall be construed as permitting a defendant in one county to be summoned into a municipal or police court in another county unless one or more trustees of the principal defendant reside in a county other than the county in which said defendant resides as provided in section eighty-four, of chapter one hundred.

Sec. 12. Writ, when returnable; justice to be present with writ. R. S. c. 88, § 12. No writ shall be made returnable before any trial justice, at an earlier hour than nine o'clock in the forenoon, nor later than four o'clock in the afternoon. No judgment of such justice is valid if he is not present with the plaintiff's writ at the place, within one hour after the time therein named, unless the case is continued by some other justice, as provided in section fourteen.

^{52 Me. 246.}

Sec. 13. Nonsuit or default, after one hour; may be stricken off. R. S. c. 88, § 13. The justice may enter judgment on nonsuit or default against the party failing to appear, at the end of one hour after the time of return set forth in the writ; but may in his discretion, on motion of either party, strike off the same within twenty-four hours thereafter, upon such terms as he deems reasonable.

^{53 Me. 401.}

Sec. 14. When justice cannot attend, another may continue proceedings. R. S. c. 88, § 14. When a trial justice fails to attend at the time and place appointed by him for the trial of any suit already entered, or at which a writ is returnable before him, any other trial justice who might legally try the same, or any justice of the peace, residing in the same or an adjoining town, may attend and continue such action, once, to a day certain, not exceeding thirty days, and note the fact on the writ, and on his own docket; and if said trial justice, who so appointed such time and place, or before whom such writ is returnable, fails to attend at the time and place fixed in such continuance, such action may then and there be entered before and tried by some other trial justice of the same town, or, if none such resides therein, then before some trial justice of the same county, who may render judgment and issue execution as if the action had been originally returnable before him.

^{17 Me. 415; 18 Me. 28; 31 Me. 337; 61 Me. 579; 70 Me. 447.}

Sec. 15. Where court may be held; pleadings; limitation of costs. R. S. c. 88, § 15. A trial justice may hold a court at his dwelling-house, office or other suitable place, and the writ shall be made returnable accordingly. He may adjourn his court by proclamation, from time to time, as justice requires. In actions before him the defendant shall plead the general issue, and need not file any brief statement, except where the title to real estate is in question. When an action in which the defendant does not appear, is continued at the request of the plaintiff, only one travel and attendance shall be taxed for him, unless the defendant agrees, in writing, to such continuance.

^{70 Me. 448; 78 Me. 76.}

Sec. 16. Judgment on default, or trial. R. S. c. 88, § 16. If a person served with process does not appear and answer thereto, his default shall be recorded, and the charge in the declaration taken to be true; and on such default, and when on trial, the action is maintained, the justice shall enter judgment for such sum, not exceeding twenty dollars, as he finds due to the plaintiff, with costs, and issue execution.

^{49 Me. 413.}

Sec. 17. If plaintiff does not prevail, costs for defendant. R. S. c. 88, § 17. If the plaintiff fails to enter and prosecute his action, or if, on trial, he does not maintain his action, the defendant recovers judgment for his costs to be taxed by the justice; and execution shall issue therefor.

Appeals.

Sec. 18. Appeal, when and how claimed; its effect. R. S. c. 88, § 18. 1929, c. 170, § 1. Any party aggrieved by the judgment of the justice, may appeal to the next superior court in the same county, and may enter such appeal at any time within five days after the judgment, Sunday not included. The appellant shall within five days after judgment, Sunday not included, pay to the clerk the required fees for such appeal, including the entry fee in and cost of forwarding such appeal to the appellate court, and in that case no execution shall issue, and the clerk shall enter the appeal in the appellate court where it shall be determined as a new entry.

24 Me. 438; 57 Me. 292; 64 Me. 533; 105 Me. 262.

Sec. 19. Appeal without trial. R. S. c. 88, § 20. In actions in a municipal or police court, or before a trial justice, either party, after appearing and filing his pleadings, may waive a trial and give the adverse party judgment, and then appeal, as if there had been an actual trial.

78 Me. 76.

Sec. 20. Appellant's recognizance. R. S. c. 88, § 19. 1929, c. 314, § 2. If so requested by the adverse party, the appellant shall within one week after notice of such request, or within such further time as may be allowed by the court, recognize to such adverse party in a reasonable sum, with condition to prosecute his appeal with effect, and pay all costs arising after the appeal.

42 Me. 328; 72 Me. 486; 76 Me. 546; 105 Me. 262.

Sec. 21. On appeal copies and papers to be produced. R. S. c. 88, § 21. 1929, c. 314, § 4. When such appeal is completed the clerk shall file in the appellate court, the originals of all depositions and other written evidence or documents, and a copy of the record and all papers filed in the cause.

44 Me. 41.

Executions.

Sec. 22. Issue and return of executions. R. S. c. 88, § 22. Executions shall not be issued by a trial justice, until twenty-four hours after the rendition of judgment, and shall be made returnable in three months from the day when they are issued.

11 Me. 178; 38 Me. 532; 87 Me. 439.

Sec. 23. Executions may be directed into other counties. R. S. c. 88, § 23. When a debtor removes or is out of the county in which judgment is rendered against him by a trial justice or municipal or police court, such justice or court may issue execution against him, directed to the proper officers in the county where he is supposed to be; and it has the same force as if issued by a justice or court of the latter county.

Scire Facias.

Sec. 24. When writs of scire facias may issue. R. S. c. 88, § 24. Every trial justice may issue writs of scire facias against executors or administrators, upon a suggestion of waste, after judgment against them; against bail in civil actions, and indorsers of writs; and enter judgment and issue execution, as any court might do in like cases.

Sec. 25. Such writs and executions, when to be directed into other counties. R. S. c. 88, § 25. In cases of scire facias against bail, indorsers of writs, executors or administrators, and in all trustee processes, or original writs against two or more defendants, before a trial justice or a judge of a municipal or police

court, where the defendant or trustee resides out of the county where the proceedings are had, the justice or judge may direct the writ or execution to any proper officer of the county where said defendant or trustee resides, who shall charge fees of travel from the place of his residence to the place of service only, and postage paid by him.

Records.

Sec. 26. Records. R. S. c. 88, § 26. Every trial justice shall keep a fair record of his proceedings; and if he dies after giving judgment in a cause and before it is satisfied, any other trial justice of the county may, on complaint of the creditor, issue a summons to the person in whose possession the record of such judgment is, directing him to produce and deliver it to him; and if he refuses to produce it, or to be examined respecting it on oath, the justice may commit him for contempt, to be detained until he submits to such examination and produces the record; and when the record is so delivered, the justice shall transcribe it upon his own book of records, and return the original to the person who produced it; and a copy thereof, attested by the transcribing justice, or otherwise proved, is legal evidence in all cases where an authenticated copy of the original might be received.

61 Me. 565; 75 Me. 111.

Sec. 27. Execution may be issued on the transcribed record. R. S. c. 88, § 27. On such transcribed record, the justice may issue executions as if the judgment was rendered by himself, changing the form as the case requires; but no such first execution shall issue after one year from the time when the judgment was rendered, unless on scire facias.

61 Me. 566.

Sec. 28. On removal or death, records to be deposited with clerk; penalty for neglect; duty of the clerk. R. S. c. 88, § 28. Every trial justice, who removes from the state, shall first deposit with the clerk of the judicial courts in the county for which he was commissioned, all his official records and papers; and the executor or administrator of a deceased justice shall so deposit all the official records and papers of the deceased justice that come into his hands; and if either neglects to do so, he forfeits one hundred dollars. The clerk shall receive and safely keep such records and papers, and may grant certified copies thereof, which are as good evidence as if certified by the justice.

Sec. 29. Proceedings, if records are not completed; when an execution may be used instead of a copy of the record. R. S. c. 88, § 29. If any trial justice dies or removes from the state, without recording and signing a judgment by him rendered in an action before him, and his docket, original writ and papers pertaining thereto, and execution if any issued, are so deposited in the office of the clerk, the clerk shall, on payment of the usual fees, make out and certify copies of all the papers in such cause, and all facts appearing in such docket; and such copies are legal evidence. But if such records have not been deposited with the clerk, the plaintiff in any action may use, in place of such certified copy, an execution issued by the justice on such judgment, with an affidavit thereon made by the plaintiff or his attorney, that it is not satisfied, or satisfied in part only, as the case may be.

33 Me. 442; 60 Me. 258.

Sec. 30. Justice may certify copies and issue new executions after commission expires. R. S. c. 88, § 30. Any trial justice, whose commission expires and is not renewed, may, during two years thereafter, certify copies of judgments rendered by him while in commission, and issue and renew executions

thereon, which shall be obeyed by the officer, as if the commission of the justice had not expired; and after two years such copies may be certified and executions issued and renewed, as in case of the death of the justice.

11 Me. 380; 35 Me. 137.

Sec. 31. Unsatisfied executions of a trial justice, how renewed. R. S. c. 88, § 31. Executions remaining unsatisfied, in whole or in part, issued by a trial justice whose commission has expired, or who has removed from the county for which he was commissioned, or who has deceased, may be renewed by any trial justice in the same county, upon such vouchers as would be required by the trial justice who rendered the judgment.

See § 26.

Trial Justices and Judges of Inferior Courts not to be of Counsel.

Sec. 32. Justice not to be of counsel; abatement of action. R. S. c. 88, § 32. No trial justice shall be of counsel for or give advice to either party, in a suit before him, or be subsequently employed as counsel or attorney in any case tried before him; nor hear or determine any civil action commenced by himself; and every action so commenced shall abate.

91 Me. 201.

Sec. 33. Judge not to act in cases within jurisdiction of his court. R. S. c. 88, § 33. 1921, c. 66. No judge of any municipal or police court shall act as counsel or attorney in any case, cause, matter or thing, which depends upon or relates to any cause exclusively cognizable by the court over which he presides, or which is actually brought in said court, although concurrently cognizable by some other court.

Justices of the Peace.

Sec. 34. Ex officio, justices of the peace. R. S. c. 88, § 34. Trial justices and judges of municipal and police courts are, ex officio, justices of the peace and all their official acts, attested by them in either capacity, except those pertaining to the exclusive jurisdiction of trial justices and judges of municipal and police courts, are of equal effect.

66 Me. 271.

Sec. 35. Commissioned for the state. R. S. c. 88, § 35. Justices of the peace shall exercise their powers and duties, and shall be commissioned to act, within and for every county.

77 Me. 589.

Notaries Public and Protests.

Sec. 36. Notary's seal; authority to administer oaths. R. S. c. 40, § 24. Every notary public shall constantly keep a seal of office, whereon is engraven his name, and the words "notary public" and "Maine" or its abbreviation "Me.," with the arms of state, or such other device as he chooses. When authorized by the laws of this state or of any other state or country, to do any official act, he may administer any oath necessary to the completion or validity thereof.

Sec. 37. Duty as to protests of losses, and record and copies thereof. R. S. c. 40, § 25. When requested, he shall enter on record all losses or damages sustained or apprehended by sea or land, and all averages, and such other matters, as, by mercantile usage, appertain to his office; grant warrants of survey on vessels; and all facts, extracts from documents, and circumstances, so noted, shall be signed and sworn to by all the persons appearing to protest; he shall note, extend, and record the protest so made; and grant authenticated copies thereof, under his signature and notarial seal, to those who request and pay for them.

Sec. 38. Demand and notice on notes, bills, etc. R. S. c. 40, § 26. He may, in behalf of any person interested, present any bill of exchange or other negotiable paper for acceptance or payment to any party liable therefor; notify indorsers or other parties thereto; record and certify all contracts usually recorded or certified by notaries; and in general, do all acts which may be done by notaries public according to the usages of merchants, and authorized by law; he may do all things that justices of the peace are or may be authorized to do and shall have the same territorial jurisdiction; he shall record all mercantile and marine protests by him noted and done in his official capacity.

15 Me. 454; 16 Me. 43, 247, 260; 17 Me. 363; 18 Me. 295; 21 Me. 219; 86 Me. 214;

*113 Me. 391.

Sec. 39. Acts of notary who is interested in corporation; when unlawful. R. S. c. 40, § 27. Any notary public who is a stockholder, director, officer, or employee of a bank or other corporation, may take the acknowledgment of any party to any written instrument executed to or by such corporation, or may administer an oath to any other stockholder, director, officer, employee, or agent of such corporation, or may protest for non-acceptance or non-payment bills of exchange, drafts, checks, notes, and other negotiable instruments which may be owned or held for collection by such bank or other corporation: provided, that it shall be unlawful for any notary public to take the acknowledgment of an instrument by or to a bank or other corporation of which he is a stockholder, director, officer, or employee, where such notary is a party to such instrument, either individually or as a representative of such bank or other corporation, or to protest any negotiable instrument owned or held for collection by such bank or other corporation, where such notary is individually a party to such instrument.

Sec. 40. Copies, evidence. R. S. c. 40, § 28. The protest of any foreign or inland bill of exchange, or promissory note or order, and all copies or certificates by him granted shall be under his hand and notarial seal, and shall be received in all courts as legal evidence of such transactions, and as to the notice given to the drawer or indorser, and of all facts therein contained.

15 Me. 138; 16 Me. 43, 183, 260; 23 Me. 287, 554; *26 Me. 50; 41 Me. 304, 323;

43 Me. 154, 205; 49 Me. 27; 50 Me. 597; *53 Me. 411.

Sec. 41. When office vacated, records to be deposited with clerk of courts; penalty. R. S. c. 40, § 29. On the resignation or removal from office of any notary public, his records shall be deposited with the clerk of the judicial courts in the county for which he was appointed. Any notary public who shall, for a period of three months, neglect to comply with the above requirement, and any administrator or executor representing a deceased notary public who shall, for a period of three months, neglect to comply with such requirement, shall forfeit not less than fifty dollars, nor more than five hundred dollars.

Sec. 42. Penalty for injuring or concealing such records. R. S. c. 40, § 30. Whoever knowingly destroys, defaces, or conceals such record, forfeits not less than two hundred dollars, nor more than one thousand dollars; and is liable for damages to any person injured, in an action on the case.

Sec. 43. Duties of clerks relating thereto, and fees. R. S. c. 40, § 31. All clerks shall receive and safely keep all such records and papers lodged in their offices and give attested copies thereof, for which they shall receive the same fees as a notary; and such copies shall be as valid as if certified by notaries.

16 Me. 183.

Sec. 44. Fees for protest, and appropriation of penalties. R. S. c. 40, § 32. For each protest of a bill or note, notifying parties, making his certificate thereof in due form and recording his proceedings, a notary public shall receive one dollar and fifty cents. All penalties provided in sections forty-one and forty-two accrue half to the state and half to the prosecutor.