

New Hampshire Town and County Development

By Sherry L. Gould

In order to find many records for New Hampshire ancestors it is important to know exactly where to look. This is part one of a comprehensive list of New Hampshire town and county developments over time. Initially, New Hampshire was initially one province with an individual town government. In 1769, an act proposing the establishment of five counties to handle growing demand on government administration was sent to England for confirmation. The Crown confirmed the act in 1771 and the new system was established a year later.

What follows are descriptions of each of the first five counties, original boundaries, and the towns founded within those bounds. Each town list includes:

- The name of town with the date it was adopted
- All known previous names and date name was adopted, when known
- Date of town grant or incorporation
- Parent town set off from, when applicable and known
- Date settled
- Date of affiliation with county or counties

All information in this article regarding the formation of counties, their bounds, the towns in each county with dates, and county seats is taken from the preface of Otis G. Hammond, ed. *Probate Records of the Province of New Hampshire* vol. 39, State Paper Series (State of New Hampshire: 1941), viii. For a statewide alphabetical list of New Hampshire town names see this volume. Also Isaac W. Hammond, ed. *Town Papers, Documents Relating to Towns in New Hampshire* vol. 6-8, State Paper Series (Concord, NH, Parsons B. Cogswell, State Printer: 1891) was used to obtain information about former names and dates of settlement. When information from these sources conflicted, or dates of settlement were missing, various town histories were consulted. In addition a list of old town names arranged alphabetically found in the New Hampshire Vital Record office, Hazen Drive, Concord, NH, was incorporated. This list is not sourced and when information from the list conflicted with the State Papers series, or did not make sense, it was not used.

Part two of this article will cover later counties and associated towns.

Rockingham County was one of the first five counties established under the act of 1769. Its boundaries were then from the mouth of the Piscataqua River, along the river up to the easterly corner of New Market, then northwesterly by Nottingham, Chichester, and Canterbury to the Merrimack River, down the river to the westerly lines of Bow, Concord, and Pembroke, following the river again to the northwest corner of Derryfield (Manchester), then by the easterly lines of Derryfield, Litchfield, and Nottingham West (Hudson) to the province line first mentioned, including the Isles of Shoals belonging to this province. Rockingham County records are kept at Exeter.

Towns in Rockingham County

Town	Date Adopted	Previous/Alternate Name(s) and dates adopted *	Date of Grant or Incorporation	Parent Town	Date Settled	Date of Affiliation with County
Atkinson	1767		Incorporated, 1767	Set off from Plaistow	1728	1771
Auburn	1845	Chester Woods, Chester West Parish	Incorporated, 1845	Set off from Chester		1845
Brentwood	1744	Brentwood Parish, 1742, Keeneborough	Incorporated 1744	Set off from Exeter	bef. 1742	1771

		Parish				
Candia	1763	Charming-Fare	Incorporated 1763	Set off from Chester	1748	1771
Chester	1722	Chestnut Country, by 1719, Cheshire, 1720	Granted 1720		ca 1719	1771
Danville	1836	Hawke, 1760	Incorporated 1760	Set off from Kingston	by 1739	1771
Deerfield	1766		Incorporated 1766	Set off from Nottingham	1756	1771
Derry	1827	Nutfield	Incorporated 1827	Set off from Londonderry	1719	1827
East Kingston	by 1797	Kingston East Parish, 1738, East Kingstown, by 1784	Incorporated 1738	Set off from Kingston	bef. 1738	1771
Epping	1741/42		Incorporated 1741/42	Set off from Exeter		1771
Exeter		Squamscot Patent, 1629	not Granted or Incorporated		bef. 1638	1771
Fremont	1854	Poplin, 1764	Incorporated 1764	Set off from Brentwood		1771
Greenland	by 1739	Squamscot Patent, 1629, Greenland Parish, by 1716	Incorporated 1721	Set off from Portsmouth	late 1600s	1771
Hampstead	1749	Timberlane, 1739	Incorporated 1749	Set off from Haverhill and Amesbury, Mass. 1741	1728	1771
Hampton	1639	Winnicunet	Granted 1639		by 1638	1771
Hampton Falls	by 1709	Hampton Third Parish	Incorporated 1726	Set off from Hampton, 1712	bef. 1685	1771
Kensington	1737		Incorporated 1737	Set off from Hampton Falls	bef. 1737	1771
Kingston	1800	Kingstown, 1694	Granted 1694		1694	1771
Londonderry	1722	Nutfield	Granted 1722	Absorbed portion of Dracut, Mass. found to be in NH, 1741	1719	1771
New Castle	1693	Great Island, 1679, Odiorne's Point, Fort William and Mary, Fort Constitution	Incorporated 1693	Set off from Portsmouth	1623	1771
Newfields	1895	Newfield Village, ca 1681, South Newmarket, 1849	Incorporated 1849	Set off from New Market		1849
Newington	1714	Bloody Point Parish, "for sometime" bef.	Incorporated 1764	Set off from Dover and Squamscot	probably by 1681	1771

		1714		Patent		
Newmarket	1727	Lampreyville	Incorporated 1727	Set off from Exeter	bef. 1727	1771
Newton	1846	New Town, 1749	Granted 1749	A portion set off from South Hampton in 1748	by 1748	1771
North Hampton	1742	North Hill Parish, 1738, Little Boar's Head	Incorporated 1742	Set off from Hampton	1639	1771
Northwood	1773	North Woods	Incorporated 1773	Set off from Nottingham	1763	1773
Nottingham	1722		Granted 1722		ca 1724	1771
Plaistow	1749	Haverhill North Parish, Haverhill District, 1741	Incorporated 1749	severed from Haverhill, Mass		1771
Portsmouth	1653	Piscataqua, Strawberry-bank, 1623	Granted 1631		1623	1771
Raymond	1764	Freetown, purchased from Natives 1717	Incorporated 1764	Set off from Chester	ca 1718	1771
Rye	1726	Pannaway, Sandy Beach, bef. 1693, Odiorne's Point	Incorporated 1726	Set off from New Castle, absorbed Gosport, 1876	1635	1771
Salem	1750	Methuen North Parish, 1736, Methuen District, 1741	Incorporated 1750	Severed from Methuen and Dracut, Mass., 1741		1771
Sandown	1756		Incorporated 1756	Set off from Kingston	bef. 1756	1771
Seabrook	1768		Incorporated 1768	Set off from Hampton Falls	1638	1771
South Hampton	1742		Incorporated 1742	Severed from Amesbury and Salisbury, Mass.		1771
Stratham	1716	Winnicunet, Spuamscott Patent, 1629, Point of Rocks	Incorporated 1715/16	Set off from Exeter	1631	1771
Windham	1742		Incorporated 1741/42	Set off from Londonderry	ca 1720	1771

* Includes some village names under given towns.

Strafford County began at a point at the northwest corner of Canterbury, across the river, then down it to the Pemigewasset, then to run up Pemigewasset River to Campton, then round the westerly end of Campton and by the

northerly side lines of Campton, Sandwich, and Tamworth, then easterly to the province line on the same course with the northerly sideline of Eaton, then down the said province line to the line of the first county, then by the same to the bounds first mentioned. Because Strafford and Grafton counties were in their early growth, they were initially annexed to Rockingham and under the jurisdiction of that court. The county was given independent jurisdiction in 1773, and records since that date are kept at Dover.

Towns in Strafford County

Town	Date Adopted	Previous/Alternate Name(s) and dates adopted *	Date of Grant or Incorporation	Parent Town	Date Settled	Date of Affiliation with County
Barrington	1722		Granted 1722		1732	1771
Dover	1641	Newichwannock, Hilton's Point, 1623, Swamscot Patent, 1629, Cocheco (Point), by 1715, Dover Neck, by 1715, Northam	Not Granted, or Incorporated except as a city		1623	1771
Durham	1732	Oyster River Plantation, 1669, Oyster River Parish, 1716	Incorporated 1732	Set off from Dover	1669	1771
Farmington	1798	Farmington Dock, West Parish Rochester, ca 1774	Incorporated 1798	Set off from Rochester	bef. 1774	1798
Lee	1766	Parish of Lee	Incorporated 1766	Set off from Durham		1771
Madbury	by 1743	Barbados, Madbury Parish, 1755	Incorporated 1768	Set off from Dover, 1755	prior to 1743	1771
Middleton	by 1783	Middletown, by 1773	Granted 1749			1771
Milton	1802	Third Parish, ca 1774, Northeast Parish, by 1794, Three Ponds, Milton Mills	Incorporated 1802	Set off from Rochester		1802
New Durham	1762	Cocheco Township, 1749	Granted 1749		bef. 1762	1771
Rochester		Squamanagonnick, Gonic	Incorporated 1722		1728	1771
Rollinsford			Incorporated 1849	Set off from Somersworth		1849
Somersworth	1754	Salmon Falls, Great Falls, Sligo	Incorporated 1754	Set off from Dover, 1729	Settled early	1771
Strafford	1820	includes Bow Lake Village	Incorporated 1820	Set off from Barrington	by 1776	1820

* Includes some village names under given towns.

Hillsborough County was bounded by a line beginning at the southeast corner of Nottingham West (Hudson), then westerly by the province line to the southeast corner of Rindge, then by the easterly side line of Rindge, Monadnock Number Two (Jaffrey), Dublin, the townships Number Six (Marlborough, [now Henniker]), Number Seven (Hillsboro) and Number Eight (Washington), then to the south end of Sunapee Pond, then by the easterly side of said pond to the

north end thereof, then by the northwesterly side line of Dantzic (Newbury) and Heidlebourg (New London) , and by the northerly side lines of Heidlebourg and northwesterly side line of Emery's Town (Andover) to Pemigewasset River, down the river to the bounds of the first county (Rockingham), then by the same to the bounds first mentioned. Hillsborough County records are kept at Nashua.

Towns in Hillsborough County

Town	Date Adopted	Previous/Alternate Name(s) and dates adopted *	Date of Grant or Incorporation	Parent Town	Date Settled	Date of Affiliation with County
Amherst	1760	Quohquinapassakessanahnoy, Narraganset No. 3, 1728, Souhegan West, absorbed part of Monson 1770	Granted 1728		1735	1771
Antrim	1771	Cumberland, Society Land, by 1770	Incorporated 1777		1744	1777
Bedford	1750	Narraganset No. 5, 1733, Souhegan East	Granted 1733/34		1737	1771
Bennington	1842	Society Land, by 1770, Factory Village	Incorporated 1842	Set off from Greenfield, Francestown, Deering and Hancock	bef. 1782	1842
Brookline	1798	Old Dunstable, Hollis, Raby, 1769, Mile-Slip, 1746, Strip-Town	Incorporated 1769		1735	1771
Deering	1774	Cumberland, Society Land, by 1770	Incorporated 1774		1765	1774
Francestown	1772	New Boston Addition, Lyndeborough Addition 1753, Cumberland, Society Land, by 1700	Incorporated 1772		1760	1772
Goffstown	1761	Namaske, Amaskeage, Narragansett No. 4, 1733, Shove's Town, by 1757, Goff's Town, Grasmere Village, Pinardville	Granted 1748		1700s	1771
Greenfield	1791	Cumberland, Society Land, by 1770, Peterborough and Lyndeborough Gore	Incorporated 1791	Set off from Lyndeborough	1753	1791
Greenville	1872	Groton Gore, Mason Village	Incorporated 1872	Set off from Mason	by 1790	1872
Hancock	1779	Cumberland, Society Land, 1770, Twitchelville	Incorporated 1779		1764	1779
Hillsborough	1748	Line Town No. 7, 1735	Granted 1735/36		1741	1771
Hollis	1746	Nittisset, One Pine Hill, West Parish Dunstable, ca 1741, absorbed part of Monson 1770	Incorporated 1746	Set off from Dunstable, Mass., later W. Dunstable	1730	1771
Hudson	1830	Nottingham West, 1741	Incorporated 1746	Severed from Nottingham, Mass.	1710	1771
				Set off from		

Litchfield	1749	Naticook, Brenton's Farms, 1729	Granted 1729	Hudson, formerly part of Dunstable, Mass	ca 1673	1771
Lyndeborough	1753	Salem-Canada, 1735	Granted 1735/36		1737	1771
Manchester	1810	Namaske, Amaskeage, Narragansett No. 4, 1733, Souhegan East, Narragansett No. 5, 1733, Harrytown, Tyng's Town, Derryfield, 1751	Incorporated 1751	Set off from Chester and Londonderry	bef. 1751	1771
Mason	1768	No. 1, 1749, Groton Gore, includes part of Townsend, Mass. after 1741	Granted 1749		1750	1771
Merrimack	1746	Naticook, Naragansett No. 3, 1733, Souhegan West, Lutwyche Ferry, 1722, Thorton's Ferry, 1774	Incorporated 1746	Severed from Old Dunstable, Mass.	1665	1771
Milford	1794	Souhegan West, Naragansett No. 3, 1733, Mile-Slip, 1746, Duxbury Farm School, Duxbury, absorbed land previously chartered as Monson, Mill Ford, The Falls, Granite Town	Incorporated 1794	Set off from Hollis and Amherst	Settled early	1794
Monson	1746		Incorporated 1746	Severed from W. Dunstable, Mass.	bef. 1746, charter repealed 1770	1771
Mont Vernon	1803	Naragansett No. 3, 1733, Souhegan West	Incorporated 1803		bef. 1765	1803
Nashua	1836	Nashaway, Dunstable, 1741, Nashville, 1842	Incorporated 1746	Severed from Old Dunstable, Mass	Settled early	1771
New Boston	1751	Piscataquog, Lanes Town, 1736	Granted 1735/36		1742	1771
New Ipswich	1766	Ipswich, 1762	Granted 1735/36		bef. 1748	1771
Pelham	1746		Incorporated 1746	Severed from Old Dunstable and Dracut, Mass	1722	Rockingham 1771 Hillsborough 1824
Peterborough	1738	Noone, Souhegan, Smithville, ca 1780	Granted 1737/38		1749	1771
Sharon	1791	Rowley-Canada, 1736, Peterborough Slip, 1738, Sliptown, 1768	Incorporated 1791	Set off from Temple	1738	1791
Temple	1768	Peterborough Slip, 1738, Sliptown, 1768	Granted 1750			1771
Weare	1764	Beverly-Canada, 1735, Hale's-Town, 1735, Robies Town, 1749, Col. Weares Town	Granted 1735		1750	1771

Wilton	1762	Groton Gore, Line Town No. 2 ca 1749	Granted 1749		1738	1771
Windsor	1798	Campbell's Gore, 1768, Wheeler's Gore	Incorporated 1798			1798

* Includes some village names under given towns.

Cheshire County was bounded by a line beginning at the southeast corner of Rindge, then westerly by the province line to the western bank of the Connecticut River, up the same till it comes opposite to the northwest corner of Plainfield, then crossing the river to the last mentioned corner of Plainfield, then by the northerly side lines of Plainfield and Grantham to the northeast corner of Grantham, then by the easterly side line of Grantham and the north side line of Saville (Sunapee) to the boundary line of the third county (Hillsborough), then by the same to the bounds first mentioned. Cheshire County records are kept at Keene.

Towns in Cheshire County

Town	Date Adopted	Previous/Alternate Name(s) and dates adopted *	Date of Grant or Incorporation	Parent Town	Date Settled	Date of Affiliation with County
Alstead	1763	Line Town No. 4, 1735, Paper Village, Newton, 1752	Granted 1735		ca 1764	1771
Chesterfield	1752.	Fort No. 1, 1735, Fort Dummer, Spofford	Granted 1735		1761	1771
Dublin	1771	Monadnock No. 3, 1749, North Monadnock, 1749	Granted 1749		1762	1771
Fitzwilliam	1773	Monadnock No. 4, 1749, Stoddard's Town	Granted 1752		1760	1771
Gilsum	1763	Boyle, 1752	Granted 1752		1762	1771
Harrisville	1870	Twitchelville	Incorporated 1870	Set off from Hancock, Dublin, and Nelson	1760	1870
Hinsdale	1753	part of Northfield, Mass. bef. 1741	Incorporated 1753		bef. 1741	1771
Jaffrey	1773	Rowley-Canada, 1736, Hadley, Middle Monadnock, 1749, Monadnock No. 2, 1752, Middletown	Granted 1749		1758	1771
Keene	1753	Upper Ashuelot, 1733	Granted 1733		ca 1735	1771
Marlborough	1776	Monadnock No. 5, 1752, Oxford, New Marlborough, by 1770	Granted 1752		1764	1771
Marlow	1761	Addison, by 1753	Granted 1761		bef. 1771	1771

Nelson	1814	Monadnock No. 6, 1752, Packersfield, 1767, Munsonville	Granted 1752		1767	1771
Richmond	1752	Sylvester-Canada, 1735	Granted 1735		ca 1762	1771
Rindge	1768	Rowley-Canada, 1736, Monadnock No. 1, 1749, South Monadnock, 1749	Granted 1736/37		bef. 1750 & 1768	1771
Roxbury	1812		Incorporated 1812	Set off from Keene, Marlborough and Nelson	bef. 1797	1812
Stoddard	1774	Monadnock No. 7, 1752, Limerick, 1752	Granted 1752		1768	1771
Sullivan	1787	Limerick, 1752	Incorporated 1787	Set off from Gilsum, Keene, Stoddard and Nelson		1787
Surry	1769	Westmoreland Leg	Incorporated 1769	Set off from Westmoreland and Gilsum		1771
Swanzy	1753	Lower Ashuelot, 1733	Granted 1734		1734	1771
Troy	1815	West Hill, ca 1765	Incorporated 1815	Set off from Richmond, Marlborough, Fitzwilliam and Swanzy	1764	1815
Walpole	1761	Fort No. 3, Lunenburg, 1736, Great Falls, 1736, Bellow's Town, 1752	Granted 1736		ca 1752	1771
Westmoreland	1752	Fort No. 2, 1735, Great Meadows	Granted 1735/36		1741	1771
Winchester	1753	Arlington, 1733	Granted 1733		1732	1771

* Includes some village names under given towns.

Grafton County is the last of the five original counties established in 1771. It contains all the land in the province not included in the other counties at the time of establishment. Grafton, like Strafford, was initially annexed to Rockingham County, falling under the jurisdiction of the Rockingham court until 1773. That year Grafton County was given independent jurisdiction and records after that date are kept at Woodsville.

Towns in Grafton County

Town	Date Adopted	Previous Name(s) and dates adopted	Date of Grant or Incorporation	Parent Town	Date Settled	Date of Affiliation with County
Alexandria			Granted 1753		1769	1771
			Incorporated	Set off from		

Ashland			1868	Holderness		1868
Bath	1761		Granted 1761		1765	1771
Benton	1840	Coventry, 1764	Granted 1764		ca 1776	1771
Bethlehem	1798	Lloyd Hills 1774	Granted 1774			1774
Bridgewater	1788	New Chester	Incorporated 1788	Set off from Alexandria and Hill	1766	1788
Bristol	1819		Incorporated 1819	Set off from Bridgewater and Hill		1819
Campton	1767		Granted 1761		1765	Strafford 1771, Grafton 1782.
Canaan	1761		Granted 1761		1766	1771
Dorchester	1761		Granted 1761		aft. 1772	1771
Easton	1876	Eastern Landaff	Incorporated 1876	Set off from Landaff		1876
Ellsworth	1802	Trecothick, 1769	Granted 1769			1771
Enfield	1784	Endfield, 1761, Relhan, 1768, Upper and Lower Shaker Village, Lockehaven	Granted 1761		bet. 1768 and 1781	1771
Franconia	1782	Indian Head, 1764, Morristown, 1772	Granted 1764		1774	1771
Grafton	1761		Granted 1761		1772	1771
Groton	1796	Cockermouth, 1761	Granted 1761		1770	1771
Hanover	1761	Dresden by 1783, Mill Village, bef. 1807 which became Etna, 1884	Granted 1761		1765	1771, Succeeded to VT 1778, Grafton 1784
Haverhill	1763	Lower Cohos [<i>or Coos</i>], bef. 1763	Granted 1763		1764	1771
Hebron	1792	Cockermouth	Incorporated 1792	Set off from Plymouth and Groton		1792
Holderness	1816	New Holderness, 1761	Granted 1751		ca 1761	Strafford 1771, Grafton 1782
Landaff	ca 1770	Whitcherville, 1764	Granted 1764		ca 1770	1771
Lebanon	1761	Dresden by 1783	Granted 1761		1761	1771
Lincoln			Granted 1764			1771
Lisbon	1824	Concord in the County of Grafton, 1763, Chiswick, 1764, Gunthwaite, 1768	Granted 1763		ca 1765	1771
Littleton	1784	Chiswick, 1764, Athrop 1770, Pattenville, 1771	Granted 1764	Set off from Lisbon	1770	1771
		Elkins Grant,				

Livermore	1876	1770, Bean and Gilman Grant, 1835, Hatch and Cleaves Grant, Raymond Grant, Sargent Grant	Incorporated 1876		Unsettled (as of 1941)	1876
Lyman	1761		Granted 1761		bef. 1777	1771
Lyme	1761	Grant's Island, Lime, 1761	Granted 1761		1764	1771
Monroe	1854	Hurd's Location, West Lyman	Incorporated 1854	Set off from Lyman		1854
Orange	1790	Cardigan, bef. 1769	Granted 1769			1771
Orford	1761	Fort No. 7, 1735, Sugar River	Granted 1761		1765	1771
Piermont	1764		Granted 1764		1768	1771
Rumney			Granted 1761		1765	1771
Thornton	1763	Waterville Gore, Blanchard's Gore	Granted 1763		1770	1771
Warren	1763	Glenclyff	Granted 1763		1767	1771
Waterville	1829	Gillis and Foss's Grant	Incorporated 1829		1760s	1829
Wentworth	1766		Granted 1766		1777	1771
Woodstock	1840	Fourfold, Peeling, 1763, Fairfield, 1771	Granted 1763			1771