

Lancaster is a town in Worcester County, Massachusetts, in the United States. Incorporated in 1653, Lancaster is the oldest town in Worcester County.

Lancaster was first settled as "Nashaway" (after the local Nashaway Indian tribe) in 1643. It was officially incorporated and renamed "Lancaster on the Nashua" in 1653.

Until it was cut down in 1989 due to safety concerns, Lancaster boasted the largest oak tree in the state, called the Beaman Oak, named after settler Gamaliel Beaman (1623–1677).

Lancaster boasts being the official "mothertown" to all of central Massachusetts. Towns such as Harvard, Bolton, Leominster, Clinton, Berlin, Sterling, and part of West Boylston were all formed from territory of the original boundaries of Lancaster.

Lancaster was the site of the Mary Rowlandson (c. 1637–1711) attack in February 1676 (1675 old style calendar). During King Philip's War, which was fought partially in Lancaster, a tribe of Indians pillaged the entire town of Lancaster. Their last stop on their trail of destruction was Mary Rowlandson's house. Coming to the defense of the house was Rowlandson's brother-in-law, who was immediately shot and killed by the attacking Indians. The Indians then set fire to the house, forcing Rowlandson to exit the burning building. Upon crossing the doorstep, Rowlandson saw a scene full of carnage. The majority of her household was slaughtered, with the exception of her husband, Joseph Rowlandson Sr., who was not on the premises, their son, also called Joseph, their two daughters, Mary and Sarah, and herself. Mary, her son, and her two daughters were captured by the Indians and forced to join their travels across New England. The Indians non-fatally shot Mary Rowlandson in her side, but her youngest daughter, Sarah, sustained an injury during the attack that would later bring about her death.^[*citation needed*] After her release from captivity, Rowlandson wrote a book called *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. The book is widely considered one of the greatest examples of a captivity narrative.