

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S FIRST TOWNS

New Hampshire was one of the first colonies claimed by the British in what is now the United States. The first four towns in New Hampshire were all near the seacoast. It was important to be near the ocean so people could ship things over from England. Each town was founded by a different group of people and for a different reason.

DOVER

Original Name: Hilton's Point, then Cocheco

Founded in: 1623

Founded by: Brothers William and Edward Hilton

Dover is the oldest permanent settlement in New Hampshire. The Hilton brothers came to New Hampshire from England. A new group of colonists from England bought the town in 1633 and convinced many more settlers to come. It was famous for shipbuilding and having lots of garrisons, which are log forts.

PORTSMOUTH

Original Name: Strawberry Banke

Founded in: 1630

Founded by: John Mason's Laconia Company

John Mason made the Laconia Company for the purpose of settling in New Hampshire, but he died before he could come over from England. The settlement had a very deep harbor that was good for shipping things back and forth to England. The British also built a fort called William and Mary to protect the town and its merchants.

EXETER

Original Name: Exeter

Founded in: 1638

Founded by: John Wheelwright

John Wheelwright originally settled in Massachusetts, but he was kicked out for not having the same religious values as the leaders of that colony. He bought a piece of land from the Abenaki who lived where he wanted to build his town. The town attracted lots of people to settle there. The town had lots of farms and one of the first grist mills in the colony.

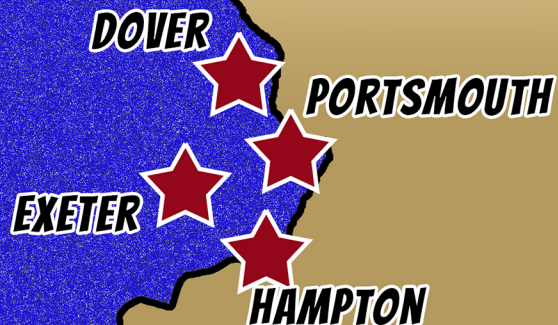
HAMPTON

Original Name: Winnacunnet

Founded in: 1638

Founded by: Colonists from Massachusetts

A group of colonists who had been living in a town in Massachusetts wanted to set out on their own. They got permission to build a new settlement further up the coast, but they kept their connections to Massachusetts. Many settlers were very religious. Most worked as farmers and fishermen. In the 1600s, Hampton was the only town in New Hampshire to ever convict someone of being a witch!



1. Why were each of the towns founded?
2. What is similar about the first four towns? What is different?
3. If you were to settle during this time in one of the four towns, which one would you choose? Why?
4. Have you been to any of these towns? Describe what you think would be the same as 400 years ago and what would be different.