

TOURING MAP

TWENTY-TWO SITES OF

EARLY SETTLEMENT



A self-guided historical
tour of the town of
Lancaster Massachusetts

Prepared by the
Lancaster Historical Society
2021

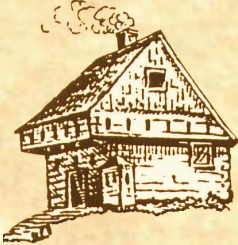
Map References

1. **Third Meeting House** – This meeting house was built in 1706 and occupied until 1743.
2. **Old Common Cemetery** – This is Lancaster’s second oldest cemetery located on land given by a member of the Wilder family.
3. **Atherton Bridge** – This early bridge site is named for James Atherton, a signer of the petition for incorporation in 1652.
4. **Ministerial Land** – This land was occupied by three early ministers, one killed by Natives, another shot by “friendly fire” and the third surviving to serve a long pastorate.
5. **Home and Rye Field of John Prescott** – This area was occupied by Lancaster’s persevering and industrious “Founder”.
6. **Ephraim Roper Garrison** – Though he escaped death during King Philip’s War, Roper, his wife and a daughter were slain during the attack of September 11, 1697.
7. **Trucking House** – Built in 1643, this trading post was the first site of commerce between the English and Natives in the Nashua Valley.
8. **Sawyer Garrison** – This was a place of refuge for settlers who survived the attack of February 10, 1675/1676 before total abandonment of the town.
9. **Sawyer-Carter Bridge** – This was one of the earliest sites used for a variety of milling enterprises through the centuries.
10. **Meeting of the Waters** – This is the place where the north and south branches of the Nashua merge. In earliest times, it was a Native fishing and planting site.
11. **Night Pasture** – This grassy, flat land along the river was fenced for the mutual protection of the early settlers’ livestock from marauding predators. This was Lancaster’s first “Common” area.

About the Early Lancaster Settlement

Though Lancaster, the oldest town in Worcester County, was officially incorporated in 1653, actual settlement began about a decade earlier.

This area, then on the western frontier, was approached by using a trail crossing over Wattaquodock Hill in present-day Bolton. Two Englishmen, with the approval of Sholan, a Native Sachem, built a trading post near the intersection of Native trails on George Hill, in present South Lancaster, to engage in the burgeoning fur trade.



About the same time, the Massachusetts General Court granted a group of ambitious entrepreneurs the right to explore the area in search of iron ore. Though this venture failed, settlement of the “Nashaway Plantation” continued through the boundless energy and perseverance of blacksmith John Prescott, considered to be the town’s founder.

With the signing of a “Covenant”, newly approved residents arrived and took their places. Lands were divided, and, a “Night Pasture” was established for common use. Most importantly, a meeting house was erected on a rise of land south of the “Meeting of the Waters”. As required, a pastor was called to settle among them. Joseph Rowlandson responded and he soon married the daughter of John White, Lancaster’s wealthiest resident. The couples garrison house was located to the west of “Meeting House Hill” and the Reverend’s pastorate continued for about twenty years.



Meanwhile, the enterprising John Prescott wasted no time in building both a gristmill and a sawmill along the Nashua. Settlers as far away as Sudbury made the trek to have their corn ground into meal. Original log structures began to be replaced by those erected using mill cut boards. These visible signs of permanent settlement were not lost on the Natives and, sadly, the peaceful co-existence of earlier times gave way to rising tensions and hostility.

On February 10, 1675-6, Lancaster was attacked during King Philip’s War. Among others, Mistress Mary Rowlandson, the minister’s wife, was taken captive. After her redemption in Princeton, MA, she wrote an account of her experiences among the Natives. This narrative, which has never been out of print, may be thought of as America’s first “best-seller” written by a woman.



Lancaster was abandoned for about four to five years. Though resettled, the area remained vulnerable into the 18th century. Surprise attacks continued as the struggle for the North American continent continued between European powers. In 1704, a second meeting house was burned to the ground. Soon, a third meeting house was built on “Bridecake Plain” now called the “Old Common”. Some of the population shifted eastward of the Nashua as it was considered safer in the event of future attack. So closes the seventeenth century and Lancaster’s earliest days of settlement.



Your Tour

We invite you to visit “Twenty-two Sites of Early Settlement” as identified in this brochure at your leisure and in any order you wish. Most sites can be viewed from the sidewalk or the street. We ask that you be respectful of private property and avoid trespassing. When visiting our cemeteries located on town land, again be respectful and remember that these are very special places. Please, take only photographs and leave only footprints. Thank you very much! We hope you enjoy your tour.

Sponsors

Made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Lancaster Historical Society and Lancaster Historical Commission. Also, in part by grants from the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area and the Lancaster Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

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Notes

Please note that the images included are artists’ conceptions. No actual renderings exist from Lancaster’s earliest times.

The Lancaster Historical Society thanks Timothy Kenny for the production of this piece.

Lancaster Historical Society

The Lancaster Historical Society (LHS) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose mission is to collect, preserve, protect and utilize a wide variety of town related documents, images and artifacts in order to highlight the remarkable achievements and rich heritage of its founding generations and the contributions of those who followed through the centuries. We are a cultural and educational organization which promotes Lancaster history by raising awareness and educating the public in numerous ways. The programs are offered free of charge and are open to the public. Nonetheless, donations are always welcomed.



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1. Third Meeting House



2. Old Common Cemetery



3. Atherton Bridge



4. The Ministerial Land



5. Home & Rye Field of John Prescott



6. Ephraim Roper Garrison



7. Trucking House



22. Sawyer Mill Capture



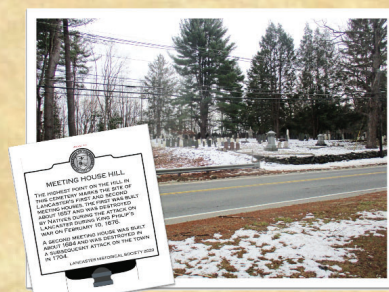
21. Rowlandson Rock



20. Old Settlers' Burial Field



19. Meeting House Hill



18. Rowlandson Garrison



17. Joslyn Garrison



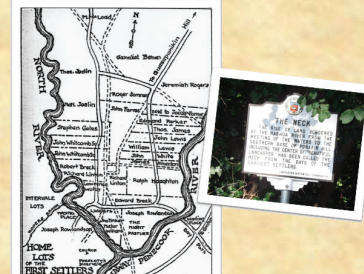
16. Macloud Massacre



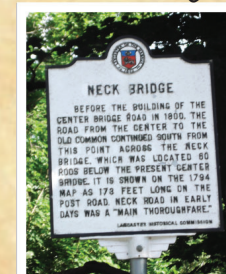
15. White-Hawkins House



14. The Neck



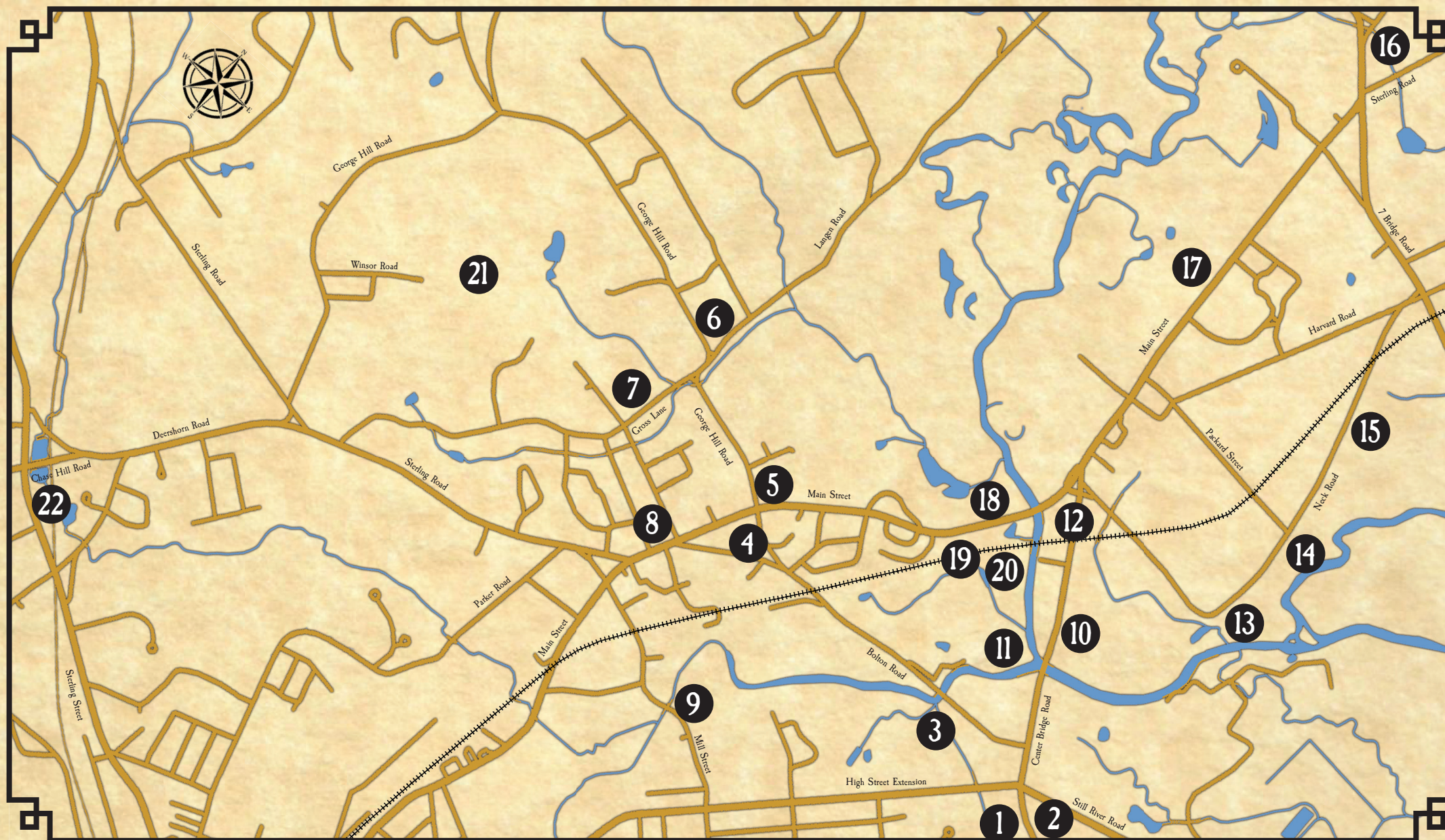
13. Neck Bridge



12. Cyprian Stevens Garrison



TWENTY-TWO SITES OF EARLY LANCASTER SETTLEMENT



8. Sawyer Garrison



9. Sawyer-Carter Bridge



10. Meeting of the Waters



11. The Night Pasture

