

Webster Community Overview

The Town of Webster, MA, was officially **incorporated on March 6, 1832** - almost 200 years ago - and is famously known for its 45 letter named Lake, which is the longest named Lake in the US and the 3rd largest place name in the World: **Lake Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg**. As Webster's primary asset, the Lake attracts many visitors to the community each year, who enjoy its recreational offerings and are drawn to local restaurants and businesses.

Samuel Slater, considered to be the **Father of the American Industrial Revolution**, moved his mills here in 1812, built a cotton mill next to the Lake and developed other local sites along the nearby French River. These factories marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the New World and brought thousands of immigrants, mostly from Europe. The Slater Mill, near the Lake, later became Cranston Print Works and today is a commercial plaza anchored by the Price Chopper grocery store. Only the original clock Tower remains. Fortunately, the new Samuel Slater Experience (museum), a museum created out of the old National Guard Armory building, teaches visitors about this time in history and keeps it fresh in the minds of local citizens and visitors alike.

With the help of Slater's friend, **the famous Senator Daniel Webster**, for whom the Town was named, Webster was forged from the neighboring towns of Oxford and Dudley. The footprint of Webster as a mill village and an industrial and textile giant, can still be seen today with many of the downtown streets lined with mill housing built by factory owners like Slater to house their workers.

It is also worth noting, that Samuel Slater's first wife of 22 years, Hannah Wilkinson, is often celebrated as **the first female inventor to receive a U.S. patent**. Her 1793 patent was for creating a new method of producing cotton-sewing thread. They had 10 children, many of whom did not live to adulthood. Hannah died in 1812, the same year Samuel Slater moved his mills here, of complications during childbirth. Samuel Slater lived in town the remainder of his life. He died at the age of 66 on April 20, 1835 and is buried in Mount Zion Cemetery. His son, George R. Slater, was one of the first selectmen in town.

The Slater Mills closed about 100 years later, most likely due to the same factors affecting other New England mills at the time, such as: the Great Depression; overproduction, which reduced the value of the textiles; competition with new technology advances in the industry; the establishment of textile mills down south, closer to where the cotton was locally grown, etc.. As a result, Webster was transformed from a company village to an area of privately owned dwellings. Today MAPFRE Insurance, an international insurance company based in Madrid, Spain, is the largest employer in Webster.

Prior to Webster becoming a Town, it was the ancestral home of the indigenous Nipmuc people who are responsible for the name of the Lake. The Nipmuc tribe is still active today. Europeans later settled the area with the Industrial Revolution attracting immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds. Today, Webster still touts vibrant Polish and Greek communities and is still attracting immigrants.

Webster's community is also diverse from an income standpoint: Lower-income housing is abundant in the former mill areas close to downtown, while more upscale homes exist around the perimeter of the Lake and surrounding scenic areas.

This ethnic and economic diversity that makes up the community of Webster, results in **creating a complex and varied population of library users**, making programming and material selection a challenge.

All this considering, the future is promising for the Town of Webster with its rich history; beautiful Lake, beach, and river walk; great food and entertainment; easy transportation access with Route 395 helping to make Webster a HUB to major cities like WORCESTER, BOSTON, PROVIDENCE, and HARTFORD; and caring Townspeople, who continue to invest in their community, with a **brand new award winning Library**, a new middle school, and a major \$100+ million renovation in store for the Bartlett HS.