



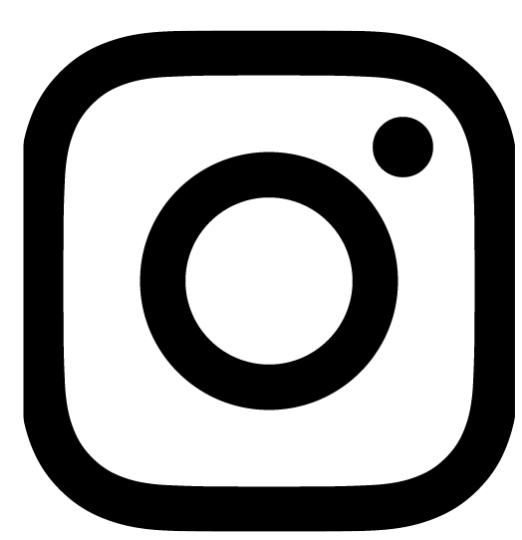
Faces of Lexington: The Munroes

“Among old Lexington families, the Munroes stand second to none. In civil life or in time of war, they were always found at or near the front.”
-Proceedings of Lexington Historical Society, 1857

The Munroe family was instrumental in the settlement and growth of the town of Lexington, as well as the events of April 18th and 19th, 1775.

By the time William Munroe IV began operating Munroe Tavern in 1775, the Munroes were a large and well-respected family. Eight of the men on the Common on the morning of April 19th were Munroes. One of the men killed that morning was Ensign Robert Munroe.

However, 1775 was not the only year of interest with this fascinating family. Enjoy their stories in this exhibit and follow our social media for more on [#MunroeMonday](#).





William Munroe I was born in Scotland in 1625. He was captured at the Battle of Worcester in 1651 and transported to America as an indentured servant. He first married Martha George, who died a young wife after bearing four children. William then married Mary Ball, and they had ten children together during their twenty years of marriage. His third wife was Elizabeth Johnson Dwyer. William, his sons, and a son-in-law purchased one hundred acres in Lexington in 1695. With increased landholdings, he was made a freeman, chosen as one of the town Selectmen, and admitted as a member of the church. William died in 1717.



William Munroe IV and his wife Anna purchased the building at 1332 Massachusetts Avenue in 1770 as a general store. In early 1775, they added a tavern. As Orderly Sergeant of the Lexington militia, William was fighting the British regulars and therefore absent from the tavern during the events of April 18th and 19th, 1775.



On the afternoon of April 19th, 1775, Munroe Tavern was abruptly taken over by British regulars during the retreat from Concord back to Boston. Earl Percy joined the regulars here with one thousand reinforcements.

As officers met to plan the retreat, the injured and wounded of the morning expedition were cared for by surgeons. Due to the availability of supplies like bandages and liquor, a tavern such as William Munroe's was a logical choice for a temporary field hospital.



When British regulars took over Munroe Tavern, Anna Munroe and her three young children (daughter Anna pictured here, later in life) fled into nearby woods to hide. Neighbor John Raymond had come to help and stayed (or was detained by British regulars). Upon returning, the Munroes found bloody bandages, broken furniture, a musket ball hole in the tap room ceiling, and the body of John Raymond on the ground outside the tavern, the last Lexington casualty of the day.



Detail of 1936 painting by Lexington painter and illustrator Philip B. Parsons (1896-1977)

Eighteen-year-old Anna and fifteen-year-old Sally Munroe, who had fled into the woods as British regulars marched onto their property on April 19th, 1775, served dinner to President George Washington during his historic visit to Lexington in November 1789. Washington was on his initial tour of the Northeast as this brand new country's first President, and he came to see where "...the first blood was spil't."



Jonas Munroe, born in 1778, was a lieutenant in the United States dragoons. He resigned his commission in 1807, but he reentered the service at the start of the War of 1812. He was known as "Uncle Jonas." He ran Munroe Tavern until the railroad ruined its profitability. Jonas drowned while swimming in Somerville in July 1860.



Before it was a museum, Munroe Tavern was occasionally opened to the public to see the spot where the British regulars staunched their wounds and Washington supped. William H. Munroe lived here in 1875, the centennial year of the Battle of Lexington. He decorated the tavern with bunting (shown here) and gave tours to various interested groups. In 1889, to celebrate the centennial of Washington's visit to the Tavern, nearly three hundred people visited. Munroe Tavern has been a museum since 1911 when James Munroe left the building to Lexington Historical Society.



Laura Muzzey Brigham was born in Lexington on July 20, 1836, the daughter of William and Abby Ann (Muzzey) Brigham. She was the granddaughter of William and Anna (Munroe) Muzzey and great-granddaughter of William IV and Anna Munroe.

Many of the Munroe family stories and artifacts were conveyed to the Historical Society by Laura.



Munroe Tavern has changed much over time. In 1798, the Tavern gained an addition that housed a Masonic hall, and in 1860, the Munroe family completed a major renovation of the Tavern. In 2011, a rear addition was removed and a new addition constructed. Lexington Historical Society will open a new archives and research center in 2019 (shown here at the back of the tavern). Designed to blend into the historic landscape as a barn-style building, it will be a state-of-the-art repository for Lexington's unique physical legacy.