

The Munroes of Lexington and Concord

The Concord Free Public Library, in collaboration with the Lexington Historical Society, is pleased to announce the opening of a new exhibit: **The Munroes of Lexington and Concord**. The exhibit will run from November 8th, 2013 to January 31st, 2014 in the library's Art Gallery.

The story of the Munroe family in America began when William Munro of Inverness, Scotland, a Royalist in the English Civil War, was taken captive while fighting against Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. He was exiled to America, arriving in Boston in 1652. In about 1660 he settled at Cambridge Farms (now Lexington), a farmer, freeman, and father of fourteen children. His great-grandson, William (1742-1827) was the proprietor of Lexington's Munroe Tavern. The Munroe family was instrumental in the settlement and growth of the town of Lexington, as well as the events of April 19th, 1775.

In the 1770s Nehemiah Munroe, a great-grandson of the original William, moved from Lexington to Roxbury. A cabinet maker by trade, he presided over a large shop that included many apprentices and journeymen, among them his young kinsman, William Munroe (1778-1861). Having completed his training, William arrived in Concord in 1800 to set up shop. His brothers Daniel and Nathaniel were already established in Concord as clockmakers, a business to which William would contribute his own considerable skills as an artisan. During the War of 1812 he became interested in the more profitable work of pencil making and by 1819 directed his efforts there, leaving behind his work as a cabinet maker and bringing his son, Francis, into the pencil making business, eventually turning it over to him in 1848.

Also included in the exhibit are later members of the Munroe clan, including William (1806-1877) founder and benefactor of the Concord Free Public Library, and Alfred (1817-1904), whose early interest in photography provides us today with many important images of late-nineteenth century Concord.

Exhibit highlights include:

- *Map of Concord Mass Central Village as it was in 1810 to 1820*. Drawn from memory by Edward Jarvis, 1883.
- A bundle of "Monroe's Best Premium Lead Pencils" [ca. 1830-1840?] and related materials, including a sheet of printed labels and an advertisement from the library's collection.

- Material relating to the founding of the library, including the holograph manuscript of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Culture* [1860], a gift of Boston publisher James T. Fields at the library's dedication in 1873.
- Selected artwork from the library's collection features May Alcott's *Lake Avernus: The Fates and the Golden Bough* [watercolor painting on paper, after J.M.W. Turner; 187-] and Henry Bacon's *The Writing Lesson* [oil on panel], Paris 1871.
- Vintage photographs of Concord by Alfred Munroe, ca. 1880-1902.
- Copy images of two newly-acquired daguerreotypes of William Munroe [ca. 1840-1845] and his son, library founder William Munroe [ca. 1850] donated to the library by Martha Cole.

The exhibit logo is a copy image of the 18th century painted wooden tavern sign for the Munroe Tavern in Lexington. Other materials from the Lexington Historical Society include deeds and objects from the Munroe Tavern taproom.

The Munroes of Lexington and Concord is free and open to the public during regular library hours. For more information, see the Concord Free Public Library's website at www.concordlibrary.org or call 978-318-3342.

Programming

Friday, December 13th, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.: David Wood, Curator of the Concord Museum, will present a slide lecture on cabinet maker William Munroe in the lobby of the Concord Free Public Library. No reservations necessary.

Sunday, January 26th, 2014: The Lexington Historical Society will offer a special open house tour and Scottish tea from noon to 4:00 p.m. at the Munroe Tavern, 1332 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, MA. Please call 781-862-1703 to reserve a place.