

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

39-3D		D AD	LEX.127
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NRHD (04/26/1976) LHD (06/11/1956)

Town/City: Lexington

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
 Lexington Center

Photograph



View from south.

Address: 1314 Massachusetts Ave.

Historic Name: Sanderson House

Uses: Present: single family residential

Original: single family residential

Date of Construction: ca. 1735, ca. 1772

Source: archival sources, deeds, visual assessment

Style/Form: Colonial/ center-chimney

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone, brick

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard & wood shingle/wood

Roof: wood shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Garage, attached, 1981

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Porch & dormers added, mid-19th c.

Wing added, mid.19th c.

Wood clapboard added to front, late 20th c/

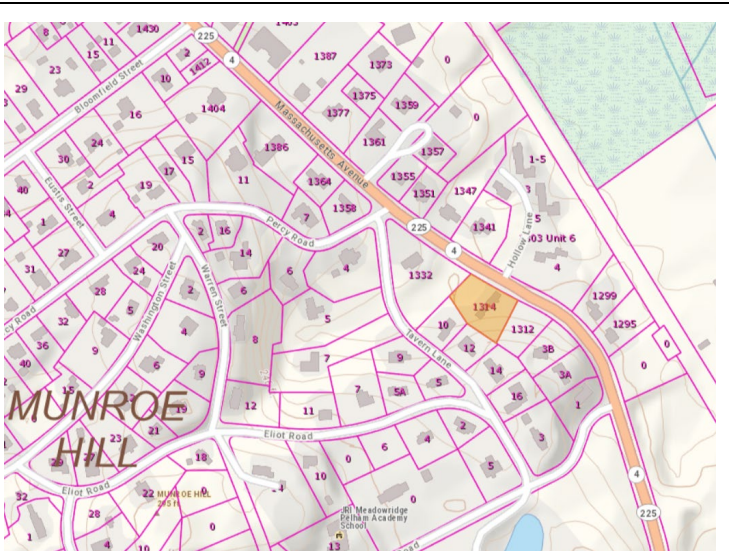
Condition: good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.626

Setting: The property is located on a major thoroughfare built out with closely-spaced houses from a broad period of development.

Locus Map



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer.

Recorded by: Neil Larson & Associates
 Neil Larson, Walter R. Wheeler, Kathryn Grover

Organization: Lexington Historical Commission

Date: June / 2021

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LEXINGTON

1314 MASSACHUSETTS AVE.

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 Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Based on field work by Neil Larson & Walter R. Wheeler

The Sanderson house is a story-and-a-half wood-frame domestic building with a gable-roof and two internal chimneys. The house is banked into its site, and its basement is partially exposed on the north side, which is quite unusual in the local context. It was built in two sections as indicated by abutting stone and brick basements visible on the north elevation. It has been believed to have been constructed in the 17th century, but this is not supported by physical evidence or historic documentation. Cased posts and beams with crown moldings in what was the original section on the east end associate it with the Late First Period houses in eastern Massachusetts.¹ In addition, the staircase has a heavy rail, turned balusters, closed stringer and paneled wainscot typical of the second quarter of the 18th century. The plan, known as lobby-entry or half-house, is approximately 25-foot square with a chimney on the west side fronted by an entry lobby and stair and containing fireplaces for front and rear rooms. An unheated room occupies the remaining space in the northeast corner.

A third fireplace with a cooking hearth is located in the basement, an equally unusual occurrence in the locality. The chimney is supported on brick piers behind the kitchen fireplace, which are fit with shelves for storage. This is a common configuration of chimney supports in Lexington. Saving on materials used for solid masonry bases, the piers were spanned by timbers or brick arches. The space in front of these piers would have been only place for a possible interior stair connecting the cellar with the first floor; it would have landed in the rear heated room on the first floor, however no evidence for such a stair has been identified. Most existing accounts of the house claim that Samuel Sanderson's cabinet shop, where he made coffins, was located in the basement and that Samuel Downing after him made carriages there. However, this is highly unlikely given the lack of workspace or a large doorway through which materials, large objects or a carriage could pass. When Samuel Sanderson sold the property to Samuel Downing in 1781, the deed noted it contained a dwelling, shop and barn. It is perhaps more likely that the small barn that existed on the property into the 20th century, or another outbuilding that was attached to the west end of the house and which was converted to a garage before being removed in 1986, was the site of the shop.

The second section has a half-house plan essentially of the same dimensions as the first with a chimney on the west end containing fireplaces for front and rear rooms. It would be expected that a conventional half-house of the period, when enlarged, would add a room on the opposite side of the existing chimney and create a third fireplace in it. However, that was not the case here and the most obvious explanation is that in its current configuration the expanded house was intended to be a two-family dwelling. It suggests that there was a second entrance and lobby at the west end and may have had a stair in front of the chimney, although an existing set of old stairs to the upper story and the basement in the northeast corner of the plan may have been substituted for them. Likewise, rather than a second entrance, both householders could have used the entrance in the first section. More detailed examination and material analysis are needed if this question is to be resolved.

Alternatively, the decision to add a second chimney rather than adapt the existing one may simply have been idiosyncratic, that is, a matter of convenience when expanding the house for single family use. The plan of the addition varies subtly from the original. The front or dining room is five-feet narrower than the front room in the east section. That left space for a small chamber in the southwest corner where the entry lobby otherwise might have been. There is a single room in the rear of the plan, and it contains a fireplace and bake oven with the back stairs on the east end and a larder, dairy or some other kitchen-associated space on the west end in what is a lean-to appended to that end of the house, perhaps an afterthought. With the addition of a more convenient kitchen, a dining room and bed chambers in the upper story, the house was emerging into the Second Period of domestic architecture in Massachusetts, which reflected modern sensibilities and refinements.

The framing and finishes in the addition are different than those in the original. There are fewer posts and beams expressed on the interior and those do not have the same level of finish on their casings and lack crown moldings. The one summer beam

¹ Abbott Lowell Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725*. Cambridge MA:Harvard University Press, 1979). "First Period Buildings of Eastern Mass. Thematic Resource Nomination," Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1990

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running front to back does not bisect the principal room; rather, it is positioned very close to the fireplace. Clearly, the framing can be dated late enough in the 18th century that its association with First Period woodworking traditions had significantly diminished. This realization comports more with the single-family house expansion scenario than with the two-family half-house model. It can be assumed that the first house was built for a member of the Munroe family, perhaps Mary Sanderson's father, William Munroe (1700-1778), and perhaps it was the Sandersons who expanded and updated the functions of the plan after they were deeded the property around the time of their marriage in 1772. And maybe the obsolete basement kitchen was repurposed by Samuel Sanderson as a workspace. (Tree-ring dating of basement beams would be a useful exercise in ending speculation about the building's construction history.)

The plan of the Sanderson House appears to be a unique survivor in Lexington, unless other half-houses are concealed in later houses, and is one of few that conform to house forms extant prior to the Revolution. Its siting makes the house even more unusual. It is not clear why brick chosen for the north wall of the basement of the addition. The south and west walls of the basement in this section, as well as the chimney base, are constructed of stone. There also would have been a stone wall on the west side of the original basement when it stood alone; a brick bearing wall is now in its place. It is a mystery why brick was used instead of stone. Another unusual feature of the house is the one-story lean-to on the west end of the addition. This portion of the house is supported on its north side by the brick basement wall, although a recent reconstruction has obscured any evidence of its original coursing or if it was an addition. The west footing for the lean-to was constructed of stone. Further investigation in the basement is needed.

The principal staircase in the east section, estimated by Frederic C. Detwiller to date 1725-1750 and by the Lexington and Massachusetts Historical Commissions as 1731-1747 in a National Register Nomination Form, is largely intact, with the exception of lengths of reused railing and balusters at the second-floor level. The balusters of the railing running across the floor's edge in the second story are similar in form, but refer to a later date, perhaps in the mid-late 19th century, and have scribed turnings. This suggests that the stair did not initially open to a hall bridging the two sections as it does at present, and that the materials to extend the earlier railing were available when that work was accomplished. This may be circumstantial evidence for a second lobby entry staircase having once existed in the house, a stair that was cannibalized for the renovation and aggrandizement of the remaining main stair. Decorative painting in gray and white paint has been uncovered on one of the risers of the stair in front of the east chimney, a decoration popular in the 19th century.

The back stairs are contained in an enclosure with a run leading up to the upper floor originating in the rear of the plan; the basement run opens in the dining room. A secondary, straight-run of stairs is located along the west side of the wall that divides the two sections of the house. The door that opens on the upward stair hangs on what Detwiller called "jimmer type strap hinges." This feature contained in the added section matches hinges on a closet door located adjacent to the fireplace in the back room of the original house. The strap hinges on these two doors have also been found in a house at 5 Harrington Road.

Alterations

ca. 1800

The sole fireplace on the second floor has a mantle that may date to ca. 1800. Its hearth dates to the early 20th century, however. First floor mantles in the living and dining rooms have similar design features; it is possible that a renovation of the house occurred ca. 1800.

The basement ceilings contain plastered panels supported on sawn lath, recessed between pairs of first-floor joists. This treatment probably dates to the second quarter of the 19th century but possibly occurred earlier. Another example of this in-fill was found at 1303 Massachusetts Avenue, which belonged to the same owner in the mid-1800s. Similar plastering has been identified in houses in the Hudson and Mohawk valleys of New York State dating 1780-1800. In the Sanderson House, the underside of the floor boards (where visible) had previously been painted, indicating that this was a treatment that was added at a later date, after the cellar rooms had been in use for some time.

ca. 1850

The arrangement of the second-floor rooms, while reflecting the first floor plan, is partitioned by stud walls erected in the mid-19th century and subsequently altered for modern living. Greek Revival architraves exist on the west hall north-south partition. The majority of door and window casings and baseboards are simple squared boards without beading, however. Doors are four-paneled, with unmolded sunk panels (the upper being elongated). These details appear to date to the later 19th century. Closets and bathrooms date to the late-20th century.

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The dormers, three in number on both the north and south slopes of the roof, have moldings that are the same as the Greek Revival work in the second floor, and so document a broader renovation that encompassed expansion of living spaces on the second floor. This renovation included the insertion of a new principal entrance door with sidelights, and possibly the construction of the pedimented front porch as well. The latter feature, if initially constructed at that time, was subsequently altered ca. 1900 with the addition of Colonial Revival moldings.

ca. 1900

A photograph dating to ca. 1900 depicts the platform of the front porch as extended to the east and west, enclosed by a railing but without a roof. This feature continues to appear in photographs of the house taken into the 1940s, but it is missing in later photographs. The older portions of the front porch may have been modified at the same time. It may be at this time that the apocryphal "1689" date was added to the south face of the east chimney. This feature is visible in photographs dating between ca. 1900 and late as the 1970s; it was removed before 2011.

Later 20th century alterations

Work was undertaken on the house in ca. 1977-78; the full extent of the renovations accomplished at that time is not presently known, however, it did include renovations to the kitchen and installation of bathrooms. It was probably at this time that the breakfast area, laundry and kitchen were planned out; this portion of the house, in the southeast corner of the main block, retains few historic details, the exception being a post in the southwest corner of the breakfast room. The work received recognition from the Lexington Historical Commission in 1978, and so likely included exterior work as well.

The living room chimney and fireplace were rebuilt in ca. April 1985. Photos taken at that time illustrate the corbelled brick chimney rising from the firebox. This feature remains largely in place. The overmantel panel was replaced at that time. A diagonal board, supporting the staircase, can be seen in photographs that depict the interior of the chimney enclosure. The dining room fireplace was rebuilt ca. 1986. This work involved reconstruction of the firebox and the lower portion of the chimney. Photographs taken during the partial removal of this feature in anticipation of its reconstruction show that the south face of the chimney mass was a vertical, plastered wall, and that at one point in time there were shelves built against this wall. At about this time the dining room floorboards were replaced.

The north wall of the kitchen was rebuilt in 1991 due to ant damage. When renovation work was undertaken in this portion of the house in 1995, a grey-painted beam and diagonal brace, projecting into the room, were uncovered, indicating a relatively low level of original finish for this space.

The master bathroom (first floor, southwest corner) was renovated in 1995. The interior surfaces were removed at that time, revealing the former presence of a wall located in-line with the south gable end of the house in this location. The implication being that the lean-to was—at least in this location—partitioned off from the kitchen.

A new roof was installed on the house in ca. 2011. Some replacement of structural components was undertaken at that time; these new pieces replicated the form of the originals.

Adjacent to the kitchen in the abutting wing on the south end of the house is an open space that likely originated as a storage area and woodshed typical of such 19th-century annexes. During the four years the Lexington Minute-Men owned the property (1974-78), they created a club room and display area in this space, exposing rafters and adding wood sheathing to the walls. Detwiller thought the wing might predate 1800, as it contained "hewn major timbers and evidence of diagonal bracing." It is now used as a family room by the current owners.

An outbuilding connected to the end of the 19th-century kitchen wing (it appears in images dating to as early as 1880) was converted in the early 20th century into a garage. It was removed in 1986, and a new garage of approximately the same size and form, was constructed on its site immediately afterward (Richard Morehouse, architect). It is possible that the outbuilding was the shop mentioned in Sanderson's deed to Downing in 1781. The location of the barn mentioned in the same deed has yet to be located, but an open space north of the house is a possible location for it, as well as the shop.

Apotropaic deposits—including a heart-shaped tin and four shoes, were found above a window when work was done on the house ca. 2005. The window is on the west side of the house and is located in what was previously identified as a "keeping room" and which is presently used as a master bedroom.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Researched and written by Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson

The history of the Sanderson House at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue has become intertwined with Munroe Tavern (LEX.128) next door at no. 1332, although it appears not to have come into possession of the Munroe family until the mid-19th century. The Scots immigrant William Munroe amassed a large holding in the vicinity after settling in Cambridge Farms (now Lexington) around 1660, and it was augmented by and divided among his heirs over the next 200 years. With its proximity to these lands, and its association with his great-granddaughter Mary Munroe Sanderson, the Sanderson House has been assumed by some to have originated with the Munroe family. Its chain of title is complicated both by the tavern's better-known history, the absence of early maps showing building footprints and owners, and the many Munroe family property transactions. Interior analysis of the house, once dated to 1689, suggests that it was built closer to 1730-1750.

However, an unsourced typescript history of the John Mason House (LEX.129) at 1303 Massachusetts Avenue, states that John Mason (1676-1738) bought the land on which the Sanderson House located from Joseph Estabrook in 1703, land that he had been renting from the grantor, his uncle, since arriving in Lexington from Newton in 1698.² Mason married Elizabeth Spring in 1699, and they had many children, the sons of whom worked in their father's tannery. When one son, John Mason Jr. married Lydia Loring in 1731, they purportedly built the first section of the Sanderson House. In 1737 John Mason Sr. conveyed title to his property to his son in consideration of "sundry sums." When his father died the following year, John Mason Jr. moved into his house (1303 Massachusetts Ave.). He sold the Sanderson House to Joshua Bond in 1749.³ Joshua Bond was a saddle and harness maker whose house and shop were burned by the British in 1775. His property was farther north, near Percy Road. By this time, reputedly in 1769, the cabinetmaker Samuel Sanderson had purchased the 1314 Massachusetts Avenue house, three years prior to his marriage to Mary Munroe. The rest of the history of the property can be substantiated.

That the house at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue was occupied during the American Revolution by Mary Munroe Sanderson (1748-1852) and her husband Samuel (1748-1803) suggests that the house and its lot may have descended from Mary Sanderson's grandfather George Munroe (ca. 1676-1746/47), the third son of the immigrant. However, the 1746/47 inventory of George Munroe's estate indicates that his house was on the east side of Massachusetts Avenue, not the west side.⁴ That the property was ultimately acquired by James Smith Munroe alternatively suggests that the house occupies land owned by George's older brother William (1669-1759), the great-great grandfather of James Smith Munroe. This William's son William (1703-47) married Sarah Mason in 1732/33; it seems possible that it was he for whom the 1314 Massachusetts Avenue was built about the time of his marriage.

William Monroe III had six children who lived into adulthood, three of whom moved away from Lexington. His two eldest sons were Edmund, born in 1736 and killed at the Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey in June 1778, and William (1742-1827). This William was an orderly sergeant in the Lexington company that fought the British on Lexington Green, and before the battle he had guarded John Hancock and Samuel Adams from British officers sent to arrest them. When he learned that hundreds of British troops were *en route* to Lexington, he sent the two patriot leaders to Woburn and returned to join the fighting on the common.⁵ This William Monroe, usually titled "Colonel," had acquired the Munroe Tavern in 1770. The tavern had passed through the family of William's married great aunt Martha Munroe Comee (1667-1730), daughter of the immigrant and his first

² Unpublished typescript, author unknown, in collection of current owners of 1303 Massachusetts Ave.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The 14 November 1716 will of the immigrant William Munroe makes clear that he had already left property to all of his sons (John, William, George, Daniel, David, Joseph, and Benjamin). He left his widowed daughter Eleanor Burgess "the sole use of my mansion house" and the right to use the barn; at her death, about 1729, the buildings passed to son George. Charles Hudson, *History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to 1868* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913), 2: 449, states of the immigrant William's son, "the site of his original house [is] still in the possession of the family," which indicates that the house was not extant. James Phinney Munroe, *A Sketch of the Munro Clan* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1900), 28, notes that the immigrant William's son George lived on his father's estate and that "the cellar of the old house, surrounded by a clump of trees, may still be seen on the right of the Woburn Road, a few rods beyond its intersection with the old Lowell Turnpike"; James Phinney Munroe was a son of James Smith Munroe. While George Munroe's inventory is extensive, his brother William's inventory does not survive. The immigrant William Munroe deeded to his son and namesake ten acres bounded on the southeast and south by Philip Russell and on the north and east by his own land; this may have been the lot on which William Jr.'s son William (1703-47) built 1314 Massachusetts Avenue (6 September 1692, MSD 17:336, not recorded until February 1714/15)

⁵ See "William Munroe," *Bunker-Hill Aurora and Farmers' and Mechanics' Journal*, 8 November 1827, 3.

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wife, Martha George, and was sold by 1768 to John Buckman Jr., who leased it to William Munroe and then sold it to him two years later. In 1774 Munroe opened it as a tavern, which he and his son Jonas Munroe (1778-1860) operated until about 1850.⁶ Whether William or Jonas or both lived at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue or in the tavern is not stated or conjectured in any known source. The house was clearly built in two stages and in a such a manner that was suitable for two separate domiciles.

One 1975 property history has stated without documentation that 1314 Massachusetts Avenue was occupied during the Revolution by Mary Munroe Sanderson and her husband Samuel.⁷ According to an account of her life published after she died in 1852, Sanderson and her husband lived in Lexington only for six years, but her time at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue was eventful:

She lived immediately in the line of the march, and when the alarm was given that the enemy was approaching, she, together with others similarly situated, retired to the houses of some distant neighbors. After the British had effected their disastrous retreat past her house, she returned to it, and found that one of their number being severely wounded, had been left to her care.

Here was a trying emergency; let her conduct in it be viewed in connection with what was the profound and all-pervading feeling of the community—that of wild alarm, and inflamed indignation. Her hospitality was invoked for one of a party, which, but a few hours before, had ruthlessly slaughtered her neighbors, Parker, Hadley, the Harrington, Muzzy and Brown on Lexington common. She very naturally partook of the profound excitement occasioned by this, and broke out in a most earnest and decided protest against allowing the Briton a shelter, or any alleviation that might be afforded under her roof. Before long, however, this tide of excited feeling measurably subsided, and she—though reluctantly—allowed the wounded man to remain until he fully recovered. Her account of his subsequent career, was, that he joined our army on the frontier, returned afterward to her house, was in time married, and remained in the country.⁸

Samuel and Mary Munroe Sanderson left Lexington in 1778 for Lancaster, Worcester County, where Samuel died in 1803. His widow remained there until 1807, when she then moved to Waltham and, in 1837, returned to Lexington but not to this house: the 1850 census lists her in a household with Caroline Goodnow and Elizabeth H. Sanderson. She died in Lexington at the age of 104 two years later.

No records have surfaced to document the Sanderson's acquisition of the house at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue. A deed exists by which Mary Sanderson's uncle Samuel Munroe (b. 1714) sold her husband, described as a cabinetmaker, a three-acre "tract of land" for seven pounds, six shillings and eight pence in 1775.⁹ However, based on the boundary description and the absence of buildings, it appears that this property was on the east side of the Scotland Road and probably part of what had been George Munroe's homestead. It is not known for what reason the transaction was made, to what use they put the property or how it was disposed of. Samuel Sanderson (1748-1803) was born in Waltham, the son of Jonathan Sanderson (1713-1780) and Mary Bemis (1724-1802). Jonathan's father, also named Jonathan, had left Cambridge for Waltham in 1689 where he was a religious and community leader, serving as a constable and selectman. His "ancient" house at Piety Corner (Lexington & Lincoln sts.) was a local landmark even after it was demolished. Not only Samuel became a cabinetmaker, but his brothers Elijah and Jacob were successful cabinetmakers in Salem.¹⁰

That Samuel and Mary Sanderson owned the house at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue is documented by their sale of it to Samuel Downing in 1783, a few years after they moved away. A deed exists by which Sanderson conveyed 1.25 acres with a dwelling

⁶ Deane Rykerson and Anne A. Grady, "Historic Structure Report, The Munroe Tavern Lexington, Massachusetts" (January 2010), states that there were buildings on the site of the Munroe Tavern from the mid-1690s, but dendrochronological analysis has found that the earliest part of the building currently on the site dates to 1735. The earlier building had been a tavern from at least 1713. William Munroe (1742-1827) ran the tavern from 1774 to 1820 and his son Jonas from 1820 to 1850. Munroe, *Sketch of the Munroe Clan*, 60-61, noted that the tavern "was kept by him and by his son Jonas as a public house until the building of the railroads changed transportation, closed most of the inns that had for so long given shelter to great companies of travelers," principal among them cattle, turkey, and sheep drovers moving livestock to the slaughterhouses and markets of Boston.

⁷ Ruth Beebe, Lexington Historical Commission, MHC building inventory form for 1313 Massachusetts Avenue, July 1975.

⁸ "Biographical Sketch," *Christian Register*, 4 December 1852, 2. Mary Munroe Sanderson was 104 when she died.

⁹ Samuel Munroe to Samuel Sanderson, 27 February 1775, transcript in possession of owner.

¹⁰ Thomas Hamilton Ormsby, "Flashback: The Sandersons and Salem Furniture," *Collectors Weekly*, 28 March 2009. <https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/the-sandersons-and-salem-furniture/>.

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house, shop and barn to Downing for 100 pounds "lawful Silver money."¹¹ The widely-held belief that Sanderson's workshop was in the basement—a most impractical space in which a cabinetmaker could work—should be dispelled by the reference to a shop and a barn in the deed. Samuel Downing was a wheelwright, which probably is what attracted him to the cabinetmaker's property. Samuel Downing (1757-1822) was born in Lynn, Massachusetts to Caleb Downing and Sarah Coates. In 1783 he married Susannah Brown (1764-1843) of Lexington, the year he purchased the Sandersons' house. Between 1783 and 1796 Susannah Downing bore at least seven children, including Samuel Jr. (1789-1864) and Lewis (1792-1873). By 1801 Samuel Downing had left Lexington for Newburgh, New York, with his wife's niece Eunice Bridge (1776-1868) and evidently married her, although there is no record of this marriage or of his divorce from Elizabeth who lived for another forty years. His son and namesake, Samuel Downing Jr (1795-1898), continued to live with his mother and maintained the wheelwright business at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue. According to his son Lewis, the family was in "low circumstances." He was "put out to live in a Publick House" before he was eight years old and supported himself with various menial jobs. When he turned sixteen, he returned home to learn carriage making in his father's shop. Lewis relocated to Concord, New Hampshire, in 1813 and began making wagons there.¹²

Between 1801 and 1815, Samuel and Eunice Downing had at least six children in Newburgh. The legendary landscape gardener and tastemaker Andrew Jackson Downing, their youngest child, was born there in 1815. Samuel Downing died in Newburgh in 1822; his wife Eunice died there in 1868.¹³ In his will, for which his eldest son Charles and his wife Eunice were his executors, Samuel Downing identified himself as a wheelwright, although he had started a nursery business.¹⁴ After providing for his wife Eunice and his Newburgh children, he bequeathed

... unto Susannah Downing one half of the house and all lands belonging to me in the Town of Lexington near Boston in the State of Massachusetts during her natural life and I do also give devise and bequeath to Samuel Downing, the son of the said Susannah, the shop and one half of the house that is standing on the said lands given to his said mother Susannah, and after the decease of the said Susannah the said Samuel shall be at liberty to pay one hundred dollars to each of his brothers and sisters now living or their heirs which when done & paid, he the said Samuel shall be entitled to the houses and lands above described forever, but if he should not choose to do so, the said houses and lands shall be sold and the money divided equally between him and his brothers and sisters this being the full proportionable part of my property.¹⁵

Samuel Downing, Jr. lived at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue until about 1836 when he moved to a farm on Lowell Street and engaged in the local milk business. His son Lewis had become a successful carriage maker in Concord, New Hampshire, first in partnership with coachmaker J. Stephen Abbot of Salem (Abbot & Downing) and later with his sons (Lewis Downing & Sons). The "Concord Coach" associated with Lewis Downing had a national reputation still widely respected today.¹⁶

A deed has yet to surface, but it can be assumed that Samuel Downing sold 1314 Massachusetts Avenue at the time he moved to Lowell Street or when his mother died in 1843, and that based on subsequent ownership history, it was restored to the Munroe Tavern property.

Colonel William Munroe is listed in federal census in this "Scotland" part of Lexington from 1790 through 1820 (with several other contemporary William Munroes from other branches of the family). His son Jonas, who married Abigail Smith (1873-1861) in 1814, apparently lived in his father's household. In 1809 William Munroe leased his property to son Jonas for \$1333.33 (or \$120

¹¹ Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Samuel Sanderson to Samuel Downing, Book 95 Page 204, 26 April 1783.

¹² <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/113733751/lewis-downing>.

¹³ Edward Manning Ruttenber, *History of Orange County, New York* (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 359. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028832693/page/n531/>. The account in Ruttenber of Downing's birth is incorrect; See NH Historical Society Database, <https://www.nhhistory.org/object/1124107/downing-samuel-1757-1822>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Last will and Testament of Samuel Downing, 22 Feb 1823. Probate Records, 1787-1916 ; Index to Surrogate's Records, 1787-1941; Author: New York. Surrogate's Court (Orange County); Probate Place: Orange, New York; Notes: Wills, Vol F-G, 1811-1824. (Ancestry.com)

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbot-Downing_Company#:~:text=11%20External%20links-,Abbot%20and%20Downing,lasted%20from%201828%20to%201847.

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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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a year), but if Jonas permitted his father to occupy and improve the property for the rest of his life he would not have to pay the yearly fee.¹⁷

In 1850 Jonas Munroe and his family are listed in the census between Abel Butterfield (shown on the 1856 map of Lexington just south of 1314 Massachusetts Avenue) and Nathaniel Mulliken, just to the north and both on the east side of the avenue. The icon for the house at 1314 Massachusetts is obscured by the end of J. (Jonas) Munroe's name, indicating his association with the tavern, and beginning of J. (James) S. Munroe's name, who was associated with both 1303 and 1314 Massachusetts Avenue. Jonas and Abigail Munroe had three children who lived into adulthood—William Henry (born 1815), Harriet (born 1816), and James Smith (1824-1910). In 1854 James S. Monroe married Alice Bridge Phinney, and the 1855 census places him and his family between Abel Butterfield and George Mulliken, which strongly suggests that he occupied 1314 Massachusetts Avenue at that time.¹⁸

James Smith Munroe began his working life in a Boston shoe store and then became a hardware merchant in the Boston firm Sewall and Munroe until about 1850, when he began to make roofing paper at a mill in Bedford. After the Bedford mill was destroyed by fire in October 1859, Munroe built another mill in that town and, by 1868, a second, larger one in Lawrence. He incorporated the company in 1881 as Munroe Felt and Paper Company, which made industrial, Kraft, and parcel post papers.¹⁹ He remained president of the firm until he died in 1910.

At the deaths of Jonas Munroe and his wife Abigail in 1860 and 1861, respectively, their property passed to their three children. In 1862 William Henry Munroe and his sister Harriet sold the former James Winthrop estate at 1303 Massachusetts Avenue, which their father had acquired in 1822, to their brother James Smith Munroe for \$3,000. The 1875 Lexington map clearly shows that James S. Munroe was living at 1303 Massachusetts Avenue but also owned 1314 Massachusetts Avenue, which he must have rented. His older brother William owned the tavern, on a large tract stretching west from Massachusetts Avenue and surrounding 1314 Massachusetts Avenue, and another undeveloped parcel just north of the tavern property.²⁰ By 1889 William H. Munroe still owned the tavern property, but his brother James S. had acquired most of the rest of his property in this neighborhood. The 1906 map is very much the same, with James owning 1303 and 1314 Massachusetts Avenue as well as another six-acre parcel with a house south of 1303 and a fourth house west of the railroad corridor (now Boston & Maine Railroad).

At James S. Munroe's death, the 1314 Massachusetts Avenue property passed to his son James Phinney Munroe (1862-1929), who appears to have lived in his father's house or one just south of it in the early 1900s. As one of two trustees of his father's will, James P. Munroe sold 1314 Massachusetts Avenue in 1920 to Robert Whitney, a Somerville native then working as a building contractor and insurance agent in Boston.²¹ The Whitneys were living here when their son Robert Jr. was born, and the 1922 Lexington directory lists Whitney and his wife Ramona Gwin Whitney at this address, then numbered 290 Massachusetts Avenue. By August 1923 the Whitneys moved to Round Hill Road and sold 1314 Massachusetts Avenue to Priscilla D. Slater, the wife of sales manager Ellis D. Slater; the couple is listed at 290 Massachusetts Avenue in the 1924 and 1926 Lexington directories.

In February 1927 the Slaters sold the property to Ruth S. Lyons (1896-1953) of Newton. At the time of the sale the *Boston Herald* described the property as a "frame house, garage, and 32,575 feet of land" and reported that Lyons, the wife of Boston attorney John A. Lyons (1896-1950), intended to live in the house "as a home."²² Between the time the 1928 Lexington directory

¹⁷ William Munroe to Jonas Munroe, 13 July 1809, MSC 184:342. This deed transferred a 12-acre parcel with buildings and another 28-acre tract.

¹⁸ "James Smith Munroe," *Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society* 4 (1910): 173-75, states, however, that for the "first year of two" of his marriage he and his wife lived in a house on Elm Avenue, no longer standing, and then moved to Winthrop House almost opposite Munroe Tavern, and then in 1873 to the Colson house, but the site of this last dwelling is not indicated.

¹⁹ Its successor firm, D. F. Munroe, became part of what is now Lindenmeyr Munroe Company in 1988.

²⁰ William H. Munroe, Philadelphia, and Harriet Munroe, Lexington, to James S. Munroe, 30 June 1862, MSD 1295:126. The 1875 map also shows J. S. Munroe's large 1303 Mass Ave parcel bisected by the Middlesex Central Railroad corridor and a planned, unnamed road east of that corridor. The Winthrop estate with its 15.5 acres and buildings was appraised at \$3125 in Jonas Munroe's probate inventory.

²¹ James P. Munroe, Boston, and Sumner Robinson, Newton, trustees will James S. Munroe, to Robert Whitney, 28 January 1920, BCD 4326:503.

²² Robert Whitney to Priscilla A. Slater, Boston, August 1923, MSD 4646:318; Priscilla A. Slater to Ruth S. Lyons, 2 February 1927, MSD 5062:291; *Boston Herald*, 16 February 1927, 32. See also Sumner Robinson and Robert H. Holt, trustees will James S. Munroe, to Ruth S.

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was published and late July 1929, Massachusetts Avenue was renumbered, and 290 became 1314. At the latter time, the Lyonses acquired 21,000 square feet of land south of the house “for protection, so that there will be no building near his property,” the *Herald* reported. “Mr. Lyons’s home is known as the old Sanderson house, a short distance down the avenue from the historic Munroe Tavern.”²³ This article may represent the moment when the house was publicly acknowledged as a significant historic house and the lore of its origins shaped.

John and Ruth Lyons had three children and lived with them and one or two maids at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue until they died. In May 1954 their eldest child Ruth sold the property to Roland M. and Irene H. Wardrobe, who would own and occupy the old house for the next two decades.²⁴ Roland Wardrobe was the manager of Wardrobe’s Drug Store at 807 Massachusetts Avenue in East Lexington; the drug store had been founded by his father George in Somerville and relocated to Lexington after thirty years at its first location. In 1974 the Wardrobes sold the house to Lexington Minute-Men Inc., another indication of its elevation to a historic relic. In this period around the time of the American Bicentennial, there was a push to inventory and designate early houses in town, particularly those linked to Revolutionary War history, led by the Lexington Historical Commission with the support of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The Sanderson House was recorded in the state’s inventory in 1975 and listed on the National Register with Munroe Tavern. It had been designated as a component of a local historic district along Massachusetts Avenue back in 1956.

After creating a museum in later kitchen wing added to the building, the Minute-Men sold the property four years later to Robert and Carol A. Snyder. In 1978 the Snyders invited Frederic C. Detwiller, an architectural historian employed by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, to provide an assessment of the house. He reported that he saw no evidence of its traditional seventeenth-century origin. Rather, he found several features associating the house with a construction date in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and supported the date 1731-47 assigned to it in the National Register nomination.²⁵ (However, an unsubstantiated 1637 construction date as the third dwelling built in the community continues to be circulated.) Carol A. Snyder attempted to open the house as a tea shop, but apparently it was not successful. The Snyders sold the Sanderson House in 1981 to Harry and Mary Petschek. The current owners, William B. and Nancy Trautman purchased the house from the Petscheks in 2005.²⁶

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²³ “Building Falls Off in Lexington,” *Boston Herald*, 28 July 1929, 29.

²⁴ Ruth S. Lyons Jr., administrator estate Ruth S. Lyons, to Roland M. and Irene H. Wardrobe, 12 May 1954, MSD 8255:160.

²⁵ Letter from Frederic C. Detwiller, SPNEA, to Robert Snyder, 16 March 1978. Original in possession of owner.

²⁶ Roland N. and Irene H. Wardrobe to Lexington Minute-Men Inc., 9 July 1974, MSD 12664:2; Lexington Minute-Men Inc. to Carol A. Snyder, 3 January 1978, MSD 13367:234; Carol A. Snyder to Harry Petschek, 2 February 1981, MSD 14206:315; Harry Petschek, 1314 Massachusetts Avenue, to Harry and Mary Petschek, 18 February 2005, MSD 44674:505; Mary Petschek to William B. and Nancy Trautman, 1314 Massachusetts Avenue, 3 May 2005, MSD 45118:205. See also “Plan of Land in Lexington, Mass.,” 21 June 1974, Plan 773 of 1974, which depicts the 1314 Massachusetts Avenue house on Lot A. Two earlier plans—“Plan of Land in Lexington, Mass., Owned by James P. Munroe et al trustees,” 26 January 1928, 5194:568, and “Plan of Land in Lexington Owned by James P. Munroe et al Trustees,” 8 January 1920, MSP 280:22—are not viewable on the Southern Middlesex County Registry website and could not be reviewed at the registry because of COVID restrictions.

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FIGURES

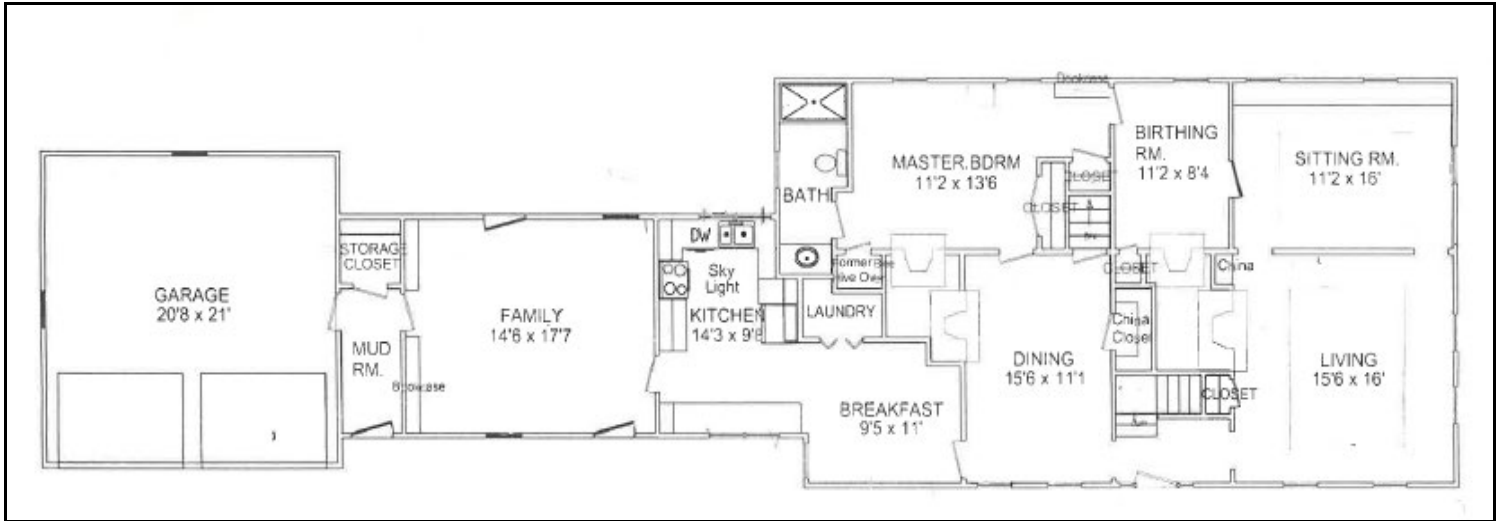


Fig.1: First Floor Plan. Generated for real estate marketing, ca. 2000.

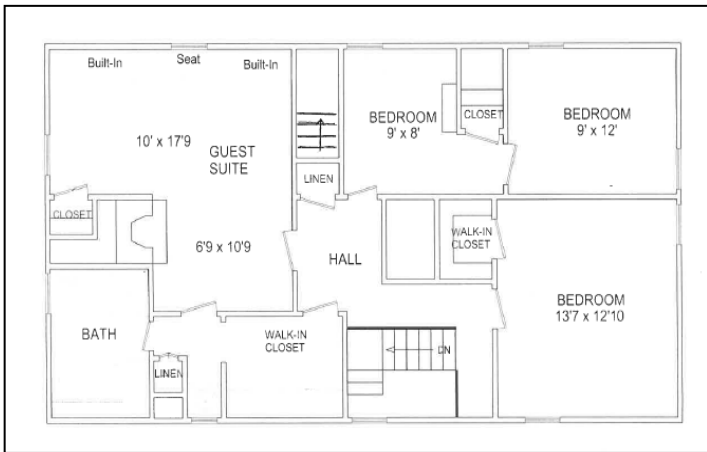


Fig.2: Second Floor plan, ca. 2000.

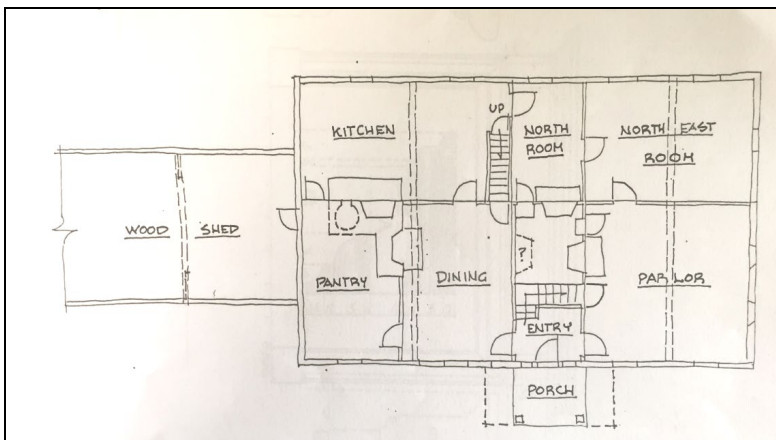


Fig.3: First Floor Sketch Plan, SPNEA, 1976,

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Fig.4: Detail of 1856 map of Middlesex County. Obscured by names and the superimposition of the G in the town's name, the icon for 1314 Mass. Ave. is sandwiched between the end of Jonas Munroe's name and the beginning of James S. Munroe's. James S. Munroe was living across the street at 1303 Mass. Ave. at the time and evidently was renting the old Sanderson house.



Fig.5: Detail of Lexington map in 1875 Beers Atlas of Middlesex County. The subject house is located on a trapezoidal parcel associated with J.S. Munroe in lower left amid property of his father W.H. Munroe (Munroe Tavern). The map indicates that J.S. Munroe's "residence" was located on the east side of the street (1303 Mass. Ave.) on a property that stretched to the east. J. Batchelder house and land originated with George Munroe, Mary Sanderson's grandfather.

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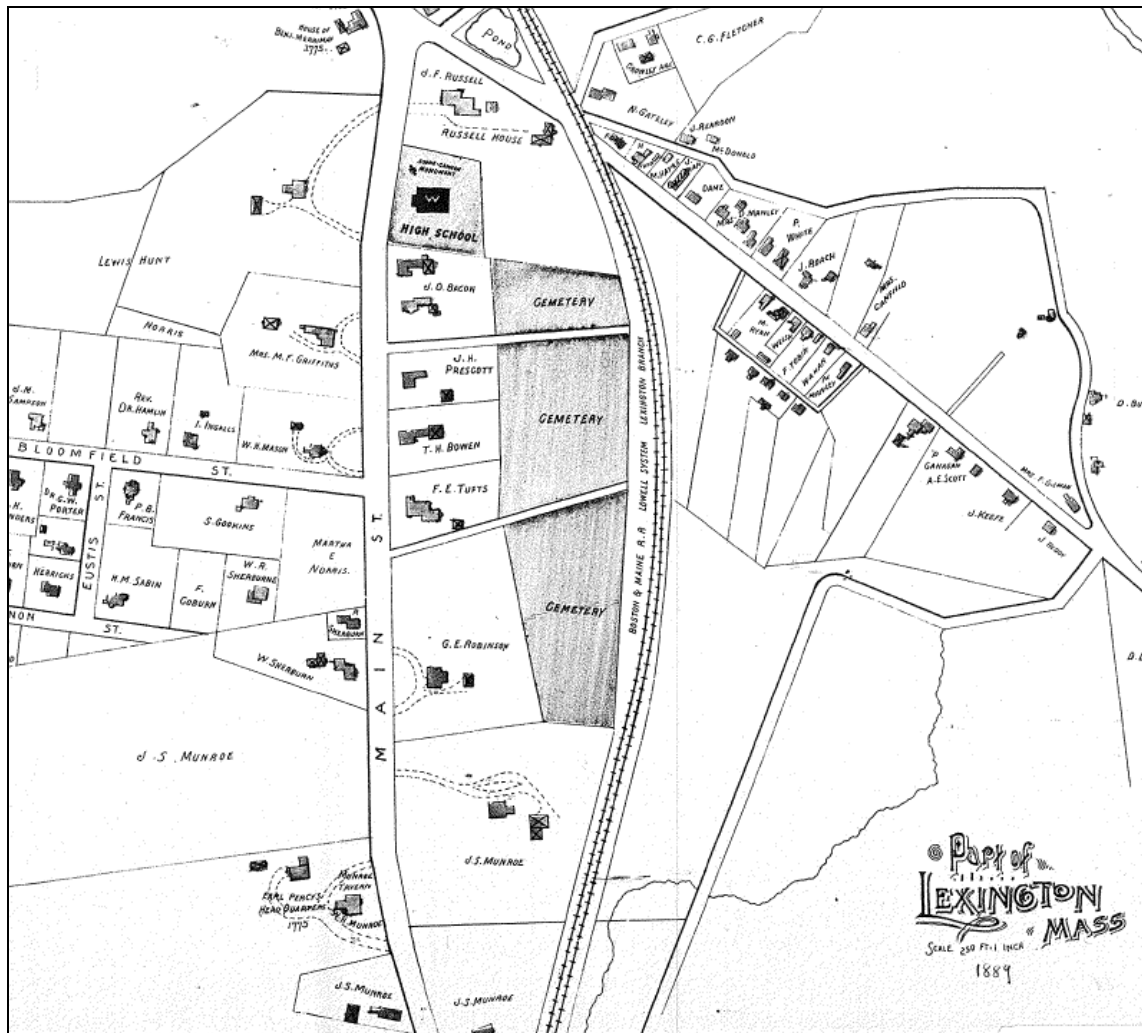


Fig. 6: Detail from South Center Sheet in 1889 Walker Middlesex County Atlas. The Sanderson House is pictured at the bottom of the map on the west side of Main St. (Massachusetts Ave.) with a barn to the west of it. It is indicated as owned by J.S. Munroe who also owned the two properties across the street. Munroe Tavern is associated with W.H. Munroe and is denoted as "Earl Percy's Headquarters, 1775."

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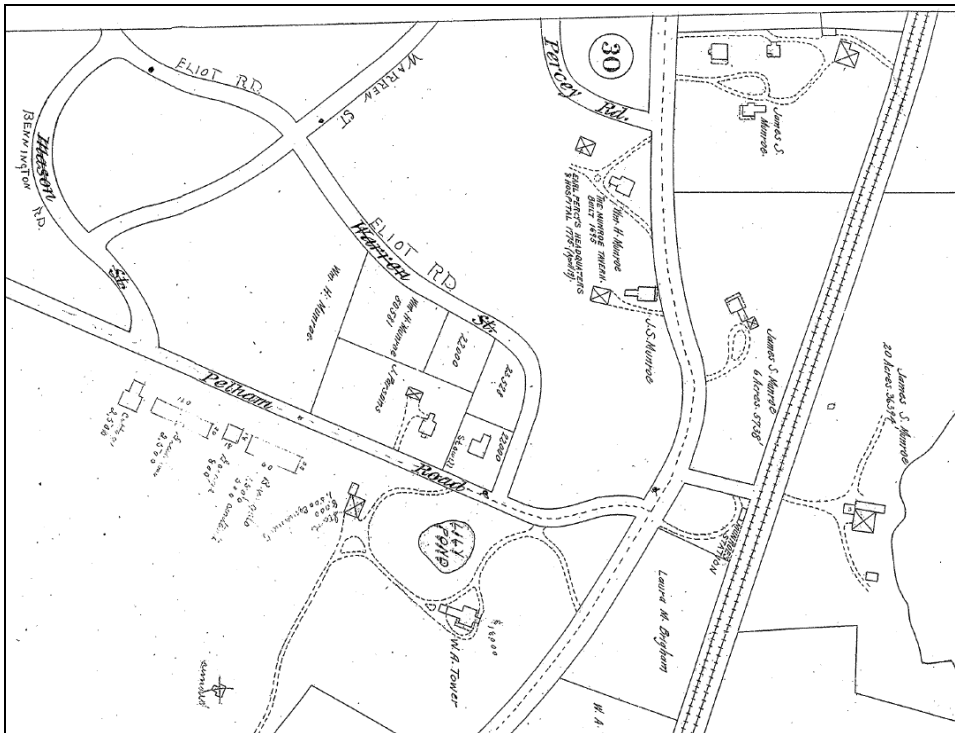


Fig.7: Detail of Sheet 31 in 1898 Stadley Middlesex County Atlas. The Sanderson House is pictured on the west side of the road with a barn and inscription of J.S. Munroe who owned three houses across the street. Munroe Tavern was in the ownership of W.H. Munroe and noted as built in 1695 and Earl Percy's Headquarters and Hospital in 1775.



Fig.8: Detail of Sheet 37 in 1906 Walker Middlesex County Atlas. Sanderson House and barn are the center with annotations for it and surrounding houses unchanged from 1896.



Fig.9: Drawing of rear of house, 1880-1890. Courtesy Lexington Historical Society.



Fig.10: Historic view of house, ca. 1900. Note open decks flanking pedimented porch and 1689 date Applied to chimney. Owner's collection.

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Fig.11: View of house, ca. 1927. Owner's collection.



Fig.12: Photograph of roof repairs made in 2011 showing replacement of principal rafters on west side of house. Owner's collection.



Fig.13: Construction of new attached garage, 1986. Owner's Collection.

Sanderson House wins local preservation prize

If the ghosts of Mary and Samuel Sanderson roam through the Sanderson House these days, it is probably with satisfaction.

Over the past year the present owners, Carol and Robert Snyder, have been involved in a preservation project in this historic house on Massachusetts Avenue near Munroe Tavern.

Recently the Lexington Historical Commission honored the Snyders with an award for the outstanding preservation project for 1978 in Lexington.

The presentation was made in connection with Preservation Month in Massachusetts.

In selecting the recipient for the award the Commission looked at a number of projects, including the Alan Bedfords' house on Harrington Road and the Hancock School conversion.

The Sanderson House project was chosen for its appreciation of the historic past and for demonstrating lasting respect for its heritage, the commission said.

The Snyders have always had a love for antique houses, they say. In designing a plan for their home they consulted a variety of sources, ranging from local historians to Williamsburg.

They have had professional help in redesigning the kitchen and bathrooms, and have undertaken do-it-yourself projects such as the stencil-

ing on the walls of their crawl room, and the embroidery itself.

"There is a belief that if one shakes the hand of a chimney sweep, good luck is assured. Perhaps it is the hug that Mrs. Snyder received after their chimney was cleaned, that helped to yield such a successful preservation project," a commission member laughed.

The Historical Commission

The Lexington Historical Commission, established at the March, 1975, Town Meeting, is the local commission charged with responsibility for historic preservation.

The commission works with town bodies such as the Planning Board and Conservation Commission, with private organizations, and with individuals, to save historical, architectural and cultural landmarks.

The commission is involved in an inventory of the town's historically and architecturally significant properties.

"The inventory's main value is in providing information," the commission said.

"As a survey it will be a convenient reference file for anyone interested in Lexington's development, since it records areas, buildings, monuments, sites, burial grounds, and structures

which are of historical, architectural, or archeological significance to the community."

The inventory procedure involves filling out a standard form recording probably age of the structure, its

architectural style, and any noteworthy historical information.

Anyone interested in helping complete the inventory should contact Sara Chase, chairperson, or Bebe Fallick.



The Sanderson House, one of Lexington's oldest houses and winner of the 1978 Excellence in Preservation Award from the Lexington Historical Commission. The National Register of Historic Places includes this house on Massachusetts Avenue near Munroe Tavern.

Miranda - man Apr. 25, 1974

Fig.14: Newspaper article, 1978. Owner's collection.

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PHOTOGRAPHS (credit Walter R. Wheeler)



Photo 1: View from SE.



Photo 2: View from SW.

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Photo 3: View from south.



Photo 4: Detail of front entrance.



Photo 5: Detail of dormer.

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Photo 6: View from SE.



Photo 7: View from NE.

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Photo 8: View from NW.



Photo 9: View of attached garage from SE.

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Photo 10: Interior side of front door.



Photo 11: Staircase inside entrance.



Photo 12: Detail of handrail showing two-part construction

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Photo 13: Parlor looking west. (Room names from Detwiller plan.)



Photo 14: Parlor looking east.

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Photo 15: Parlor fireplace.



Photo 16: North Room looking south.

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Photo 17: North Room, detail of "jimmer type" strap hinge on closet door.



Photo 18: Northeast Room, looking NE.

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Photo 19: Northeast Room, SE corner, doorway infilled with bookcase.



Photo 20: Dining Room, looking SW.

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Photo 21: Dining Room looking north. Doors to Kitchen (left), Basement (center) & closet (right).



Photo 22: Dining Room looking SE. Door to closet on left.

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Photo 23: Kitchen looking SW.



Photo 24: Kitchen, detail of fireplace.

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Photo 25: Kitchen looking east.



Photo 26: Kitchen, door to stairs (closet added)



Photo 27: Dining Room, stairs to basement.

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Photo 28: Pantry looking west into current kitchen in wing.



Photo 29: Upper level of front stairs, balustrade on right added.

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Photo 30: Detail of stairs showing exposed paint decoration.

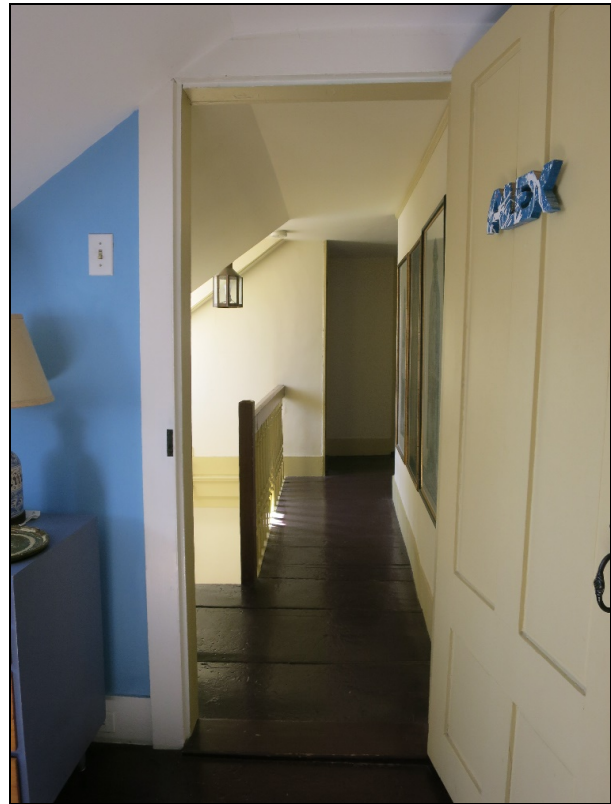


Photo 31: looking west from front bedroom across stair hall.



Photo 32: Front bedroom SE corner.

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Photo 33: Rear bedroom NE corner.



Photo 34: West bedroom looking west.

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Photo 35: Basement, east side, fireplace(infilled with shelving) with Parlor hearth support above.

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Photo 36: Basement, chimney base and brick arch supporting hearth in North Room.

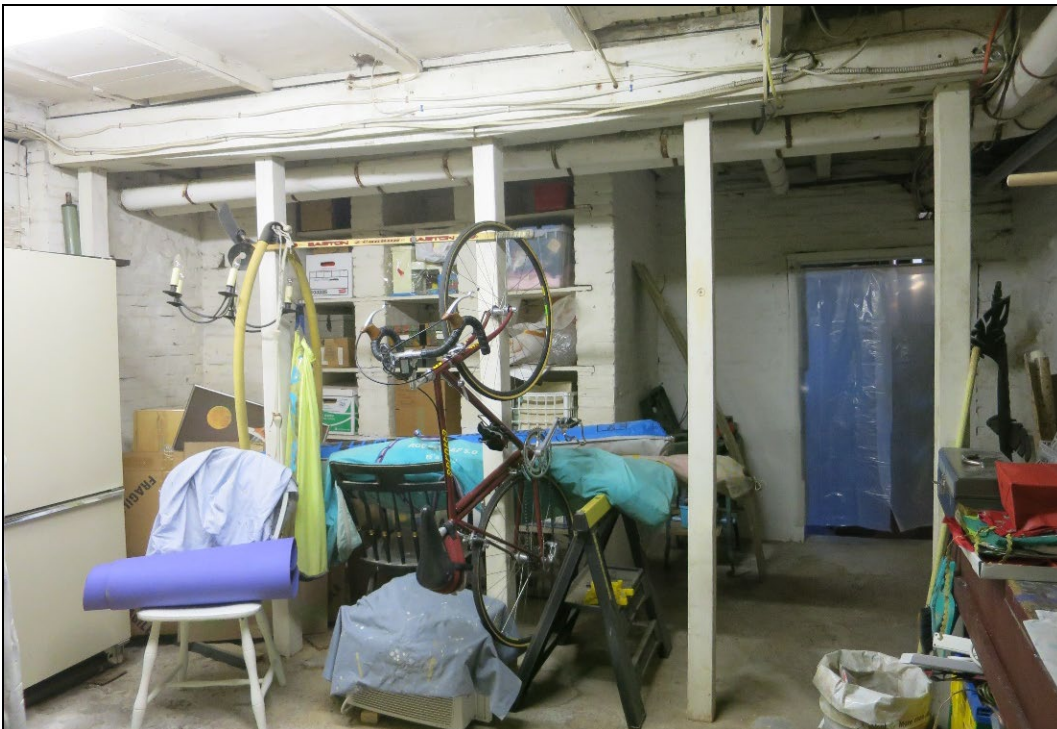


Photo 37: Basement, west side, shelving in east chimney base & doorway to east side. Carrying beam for partition between sections above.

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Photo 38: Ceiling in east basement with plaster infill between joists.



Photo 39: Detail of lath and plaster over whitewashed bottoms of floor boards.

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Photo 40: Storeroom SW corner of west basement. Stone chimney base on right; stone basement walls on left & forward.



Photo 41: Post at bottom of basement stairs.