

Area AD - Sanderson House/Munroe Tavern

The Sanderson House and the Munroe Tavern are located on contiguous lots on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue near the center of town. They were listed together on the National Register of Historic Places as a district in 1976 for their historic significance based on their shared history in April 1775.

Sargent William Munroe of the Lexington Minute Men bought what is now known as Munroe Tavern from John Buckman in 1770. Two years later his cousin Mary (Molly) Munroe married Samuel Sanderson of Woburn and moved into the adjacent c.1730 house.



Munroe Tavern, 1332 Massachusetts Avenue

On the evening of April 18, 1775 Sargent Munroe received news that a group of British soldiers had been spotted on the road out from Boston. Munroe, suspecting trouble, gathered eight other Minute Men to guard the parsonage of Reverend Jonas Clarke where John Hancock and Samuel Adams were spending the night. When fighting erupted between the Colonists and British on the 19th, both William Munroe and Samuel Sanderson were among Captain Parker's troop of defending Minute Men.

On the afternoon of April 19th, the Munroe Tavern served as a temporary field headquarters and hospital for the British Redcoats during their retreat from Concord back to Boston. The Tavern was apparently insufficient to hold all those who needed care and at least one man was deposited at the Sanderson House. General Percy, leading a relief force of British soldiers to rescue the exhausted troops, mounted two field pieces to cover the road. One of these was placed on the hill behind the Sanderson House and the Tavern, the other was across the street. When Molly Sanderson returned to her home late in the afternoon after the British had left Lexington she found the cow which had been part of her dowry slaughtered wantonly and a bleeding British soldier in the bed. Years later, she would recall that she had given him such a tongue-lashing that he was afraid to eat the food she gave him for fear of being poisoned. It is said that the soldier recovered and lived in Lexington for many years.



Both Sanderson and Munroe went on to serve in the war. After the war, both men resumed their previous occupations. Samuel Sanderson was a carpenter and cabinetmaker, building coffins in his cellar. He lived here until the end of the 18th century. William Munroe kept the Tavern until 1815; George Washington dined here in 1789. William's son, Jonas, served as innkeeper from 1815 until 1848. The Munroe Tavern was the last public house to close in Lexington. The advent of the railroad in the 1840s changed the patterns of travel, rendering taverns obsolete.



Sanderson House, 1314 Massachusetts Avenue