

## Area D — Munroe Tavern Historic District

The Munroe Tavern Historic District (Area D) was established as a local historic district in 1956. It encompasses that section of Massachusetts Avenue from Woburn Street/Winthrop Road to Marrett Road and also includes Tavern Lane. The district includes several properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the John Mason House at 1303 Massachusetts Avenue (listed as part of the First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts Thematic Nomination) and the Sanderson House and Munroe Tavern Historic District (1314 & 1332 Massachusetts Avenue). [See also Area AB & AD].

The centerpiece of the district is the Munroe Tavern, constructed c.1700 and home of the Munroe family for 150 years. On the afternoon of April 19, 1775, the Tavern served as a temporary field headquarters and hospital for General Earl Percy and his British troops during their retreat from Concord back to Boston. The Tavern is also famous for President George Washington's visit in 1789. Munroe Tavern and the land on which it sits were bequeathed to the Lexington Historical Society in 1911 according to the will of James S. Munroe. Munroe was born at the old Tavern in 1824.



*Munroe Tavern, 1332 Massachusetts Avenue*

Over the years, the Munroe family lent its name to many other places in the district. Munroe Cemetery is located behind the former High School; the original 2.5 acres was set aside in 1831. The cemetery was expanded several times in the late 19th century and includes the graves of many prominent residents from that time period. Munroe's Station railroad depot was built before 1904 and was located adjacent to the tracks opposite Pelham Road (near the present Seasons Four at 1265 Massachusetts Avenue, adjacent to Tower Park). The station was razed in 1959.



*Munroe Cemetery*



The former Munroe School at 1403 Massachusetts Avenue was constructed in 1904, designed by prominent local architect Willard D. Brown. In 1915 the building was altered and enlarged according to plans by W.R. Greeley. Brick was installed over the original wood shingles and brick wings were constructed in the front. The school is now used as an arts center.

*1403 Massachusetts Avenue*

The three houses at 1357, 1359 and 1361 Massachusetts Avenue are located in what was once referred to as Munroe Meadows, the late 19th century estate of James S. Munroe, located in front of the Munroe Station. Munroe lived in the Greek Revival-style house at 1357 Massachusetts Avenue from 1873 to 1910 after leaving 1303 Mass. Ave. The cottage at 1359 Massachusetts Avenue was apparently erected for his caretaker in 1893. The same year he purchased the former Nathaniel Mulliken House from Warren Sherburne and moved it across the street where it became 1361 Massachusetts Avenue.

Architecturally, the buildings of the Munroe Tavern Historic District represent a panorama of architectural styles. The John Mason House (c.1715) at 1303 Massachusetts Avenue and the Sanderson House (c.1730) at 1314 Massachusetts Avenue are two of Lexington's oldest surviving structures. The Mason House, in particular, is of interest as a well-preserved First Period house, notable for interior features including some rare framing techniques and the "quirk" beads on its horizontal beams and its vertical posts which display basic chamfers and in some cases, none at all. This may be because the posts were intended to be boxed. The exterior of the house exhibits later, altered features including mid 19th century exterior trim and a 20th century front porch. The original center chimney was removed in the early 19th century. [See also Area AB].



*Mason House, 1303 Massachusetts Avenue*

The Sanderson House is first mentioned in a deed of 1747 and it is believed to have been constructed c.1730 for John Mason Jr. The 1 ½-story wood-shingled dwelling is six bays wide. The roof framing suggests that the house was built three bays at a time. The northern section toward the street is slightly older than the adjacent section. The entrance porch is a later addition. [See also Area AD].



*Sanderson House, 1314 Massachusetts Avenue*

The John Mulliken House at 1377 Massachusetts Avenue is an excellent example of the Georgian style which dates to 1795. The house was built on the foundation of the Raymond Tavern and reportedly utilizes some of the timbers from the older building. Of special note are the ornate pedimented door surround centered on the five-bay façade, the two-story corner pilasters and the twelve-over-twelve double-hung windows.



*John Mulliken House, 1377 Massachusetts Avenue*

The district also includes a sampling of late 19th and early 20th century styles. Local resident John L. Norris who developed much of Bloomfield Street and Hancock Avenue and constructed the Norris Block downtown, built the Queen Anne style house at 1404 Massachusetts Avenue in 1889.



*John L. Norris House, 1404 Massachusetts Avenue*



Benjamin Fitch built himself an impressive Colonial Revival mansion at 1454 Massachusetts Avenue in 1906, but not before the earlier house on the lot was moved to 6 Rowland Avenue.



*Benjamin Fitch House, 1454 Massachusetts Avenue*

Additional construction took place on vacant lots in the district in the 20th century. The Cape Cod house at 1299 Massachusetts Avenue was moved here from Weare, New Hampshire in 1948.

The neighborhood also includes several institutional uses. Now containing condominiums and the Lexington Senior Center, the former high school at 1475 Massachusetts Avenue was initially constructed in 1902 according to designs by architects Cooper & Bailey. A substantial addition was completed in 1924 that nearly completely obscured the 1902 façade.



*1475 Massachusetts Avenue*

The side entrance incorporates two Ionic columns that were reportedly reused from the old 1854 High School/Town Hall.



The stone cannon monument in the front yard marks the approximate location where General Earl Percy planted a field piece to protect the retreat of British troops on April 19, 1775. It was erected by the town in 1884.



*Stone Cannon*

Tower Park at the south end of the district was given to the town by Miss Ellen Tower in 1928. The land was part of her father's estate which included 127 acres on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue. William Augustus Tower (1824-1904) came to Lexington in 1855 and was a successful merchant and banker. He built a Victorian mansion (no longer extant) across from the current park in 1873. Initially, his primary residence was in Boston and he summered in Lexington but later he lived here year-round. Members of the Tower family are buried in Munroe Cemetery.