

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

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| Inventory No: | CON.324 |
| Historic Name: | Munroe, William - White, Joseph House |
| Common Name: | |
| Address: | 20 Lexington Rd 7 Church Green |
| City/Town: | Concord |
| Village/Neighborhood: | Concord Center |
| Local No: | H9-9 |
| Year Constructed: | r 1750 |
| Architect(s): | |
| Architectural Style(s): | No style |
| Use(s): | Other Manufacturing; Single Family Dwelling House |
| Significance: | Architecture; Commerce; Invention |
| Area(s): | CON.A: Concord Monument Sq-Lexington Road Historic Dist. CON.DS: American Mile Historic District |
| Designation(s): | Local Historic District (03/06/1961); Nat'l Register District (09/13/1977) |
| Building Materials(s): | Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Wood; Wood Clapboard Foundation: Concrete Unspecified; Stone, Uncut |



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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Massachusetts Historical Commission

H9-9

Concord

A 

324

80 Boylston Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02116

NR: DIS; LHD



Concord

Neighborhood or village)

Concord center

19 Church Green

Name William Munroe/Ioseph White

Cottage

Present single-family dwellingOriginal single-family dwellingConstruction 17th-18th century

Wheeler

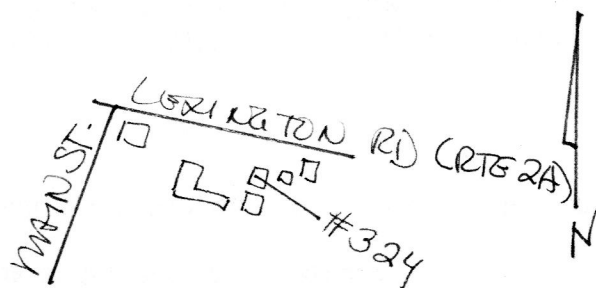
Form one-story, center-chimney cottageArchitect/Builder unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation fieldstone and concreteWall/Trim wood clapboardRoof asphalt shingleOutbuildings/Secondary Structures Five otherbuildings on property: 1st Parish Church, 1,23/25 Church Green, garage, Wright TavernMajor Alterations (with dates) 20th C.:SE ell removed, rear E. ell added(See also P. 2.)Condition goodMoved ☒ no ☐ yes Date N/AAcreage three acresSetting S. side of Lexington, at east edge ofChurch Green. Lawn and drives to west,18th-19th-C. drives to east...

Sketch Map

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets, including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.

Recorded by Anne Forbes, consultant

research by Tedd Osgood

Organization Concord Hist. CommissionDate 11/16/94

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION [] *see continuation sheet*

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

Reputed to be one of the oldest buildings in Concord, this house is a tiny 1 1/2-story, three-bay, center-chimney cottage of a form that could date to as early as the 1650's. Although most of its details have been changed, it still has the deep front roof overhang that is characteristic of First Period (pre-1725) architecture. Under the overhang is a slightly-off-center, projecting entry with a four-panel door of ca. 1850, surmounted by a four-light transom, with a wide, plain surround. The windows of most of the first story are 8-over-12-sash, in projecting frames. There are also some small 6-over-6-sash windows here. Other architectural detail includes narrow cornerboards and a bed molding under the front overhang.

A one-story ell stretching to the rear was built between 1910 and 1927.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [X] *see continuation sheet*

Explain history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This little building and its two close companions remain from several residential buildings that stood on the south side of lower Lexington Road and east edge of the Church Green in the eighteenth century, when the little area north of the Mill Brook became filled with stores, manufacturing shops, and tenements associated with Concord's earliest commercial and small-manufacturing center. Of the cluster of buildings here that once numbered over a dozen, only this cottage, the two houses at 48 and 54 Lexington Road, and #s 1 and 23/25 Church Green survive (see Forms #322, 321, 323, and 326.) Directly north of this house were two large "tenements", the "White Block" and the "Yellow Block", which both apparently dated to the eighteenth century. (See Form #322 [48 Lexington Road] for a summary of these and the other buildings in the vicinity.)

Not all the earliest owners of this cottage, which appears architecturally to predate 1725, and may have been built in the seventeenth century, are known. It stands on land that was part of the original one-acre houselot of Michael Wood in 1635, and it may have been built by him or a member of his family. In 1653 it was bought by the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, who sold it with some adjoining parcels to Thomas Dane in 1657. (See Form #309.) The property descended through the Dane family until 1724, when it was bought by Jonathan Ball. (That transaction mentions no house on the lot, but the deed does refer to a barn and a "pott house" on the former Wood property.) (Cont.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES [X] *see continuation sheet*

Maps and Atlases: Maps and Atlases: 1830, 1852, 1856, 1875, 1889, 1893, 1906. Sanborns. Concord Directories, Assessor's Records, and Lists of Poll Taxpayers. Jarvis, Edward. "Houses and People in Concord". 1882-83. Keyes/Tolman. "Houses in Concord." Richardson, Laurence. Concord Chronicle. (Cont.)

[X] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places*. *If checked, a completed National Register Criteria Statement form is attached.* *NR-listed 1977.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Concord Munroe/White Cottage

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Area(s)
A

Form No.
324

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

Close architectural inspection may indicate a more accurate construction date, and deed research will be necessary to trace its ownership in subsequent decades. Between 1811 and 1820 its occupants, although possibly not the owners, were **William Munroe** and his family. William Munroe (1788-1861) is credited with being America's first lead-pencil maker, an invention he developed while living in this house. He had begun a career as a cabinetmaker, and had previously built clock cases at his wife's parents' house at 222 Barretts Mill Road. In 1811 he and his family moved here, and during the War of 1812, when the Embargo Act provided the impetus for American manufacturers, including several in Concord, to duplicate goods formerly imported from Europe, he developed a method for making pencils. In July of 1812, after taking some samples to Boston, he received a contract that led to an extremely successful business before the war ended. He made the wooden bodies of the pencils in his cabinetmaking shop on the Milldam, but the closely-guarded grinding and filling processes were done here in the house, with the help of his wife, Martha. (See Forms #44 and 449).

By 1819 the pencil business had grown so large that Mr. Munroe gave up cabinetmaking altogether, and for a short time rented the old hat factory at the rear of the Church Green for pencil production. By 1821, however, he and his family had moved back to Barretts Mill Road, where he continued to produce pencils until 1844.

In 1841 the house, along with the two adjoining properties, came up for auction, and it was sold (by **John Safford** of Beverly) to wood-cutter **Joseph White**. He owned it through at least 1875. After the death of his widow during the 1880's, it was inherited by their adopted daughter, **Mrs. George Penniman**. According to Keyes, she sold or traded it to developer **Samuel Staples**. (See Form #132--94 Hubbard Street). He rented it out for some years, and later, probably ca. 1894, at about the same time as the parcel to the south, it was purchased by or donated to the First Parish Church.

For much of this century the house was the home of the church sexton. For the past several years the sexton has lived at #23/25 Church Green, and this house has been rented out to tenants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, cont.

Wheeler, Ruth. Concord: Climate for Freedom.
_____. "House Files".
_____. Our American Mile.