The Lyceum: 175 Years of Local History

*The Lyceum: 175 Years of Local History* is now featured in The Lyceum’s Coldsmith Gallery. This exhibition highlights The Lyceum’s history, as well as its role today as a place for exploring Alexandria’s past.

The historical objects and images on view represent The Lyceum, the community at work, and commemorations and celebrations. Throughout the exhibition, visitors are invited to “be the curator,” think about why the various artifacts are in museum’s collection, and about how these tangible representatives of the past help tell the story of Alexandria’s history.

Built by the Alexandria Lyceum and Library Company as a venue for educational pursuits, The Lyceum building opened in 1839. The Lyceum Company offered the public lectures, debates and concerts. This organization was founded by a group of educated civic leaders including Quaker schoolmaster Benjamin Hallowell, who is profiled in the exhibition. Among his many avocations, Hallowell collected specimens from nature, historical artifacts, and other items of interest that he exhibited in The Lyceum. Surviving specimens and his catalog of the collection are on view, as well as a journal of his lectures written in his own hand.

Museum visitors can also explore artifacts relating to commemorating or celebrating something important in someone’s life, or that serve as a memento representing an organization, business, or event. For example, five World War II service medals from a local soldier are on view, as well as a china pitcher promoting William Henry Harrison’s campaign for the presidency, and a colorful hand-worked quilt commemorating the Bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976.

*The Lyceum: 175 Years of Local History* includes a variety of items providing a glimpse into different types of work in Alexandria since the community was founded in the 18th century. Objects range from circa 1796 wares marked by Alexandria silversmith Adam Lynn, a circa 1880 dresser manufactured by James F. Muir and Brothers, to a collage of original photographs, from the 1970s, that document the Alexandria, Barcroft & Washington Rapid Transit Company.

*The Lyceum: 175 Years of Local History* will be on view through 2016.
You can help save two important pieces of Alexandria’s history!
The 1851 Rodgers Suction Engine and the 1858 Prettyman Hose Carriage were built for the Friendship Fire Company. After decades of hard use, they both have extensive wear, damage and deteriorating paint. City of Alexandria museum staff and the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association plan to restore both vehicles and preserve them for generations to come. A full restoration — including paint research, making repairs to wood and iron, finding or making replacements for missing pieces — will cost between $75,000 and $100,000 per vehicle. Donate online at http://bit.ly/donate2friendship. Or donate cash, or by check, at the Friendship Firehouse Museum, 107 S. Alfred Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

Thank you!