

# Spotlight on History

News from The Lyceum, Friendship Firehouse Museum & Historic Alexandria  
Spring 2013

## Friendship Firehouse Museum Walking Tour

In recognition of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, the Friendship Firehouse Museum is offering a special Civil War firefighting history walking tour.

**May 25**  
**Firefighting in Civil War Alexandria**  
**1– 3 p.m.**

When Virginia joined the Confederacy, Union troops occupied Alexandria and the city became a center for transportation, supplies and medicine. Most municipal functions were assumed by the U.S. Army under the authority of the military governor. The “We’ve Been Burned: Alexandria Firefighters During the Civil War” tour will explore firefighting during the Union occupation. How were volunteer fire companies treated by Federal authorities? Were firefighters allowed out after curfew? What happened to the firehouses and equipment? These questions will be answered as tour participants visit the sites of four of the five fire houses, and learn what happened if there was a fire in the occupied city.

The tour begins at 1:00 pm at the Friendship Firehouse Museum. Advance reservations for each



*United States Fire Department, July, 1863*

tour are required, as space is limited. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$4 for youth ages 10 to 17. (The tours will not interest small children, but may be of interest to youth 10 and older.) To make a reservation visit [www.friendshipfirehouse.net](http://www.friendshipfirehouse.net), or call 703-746-3891.



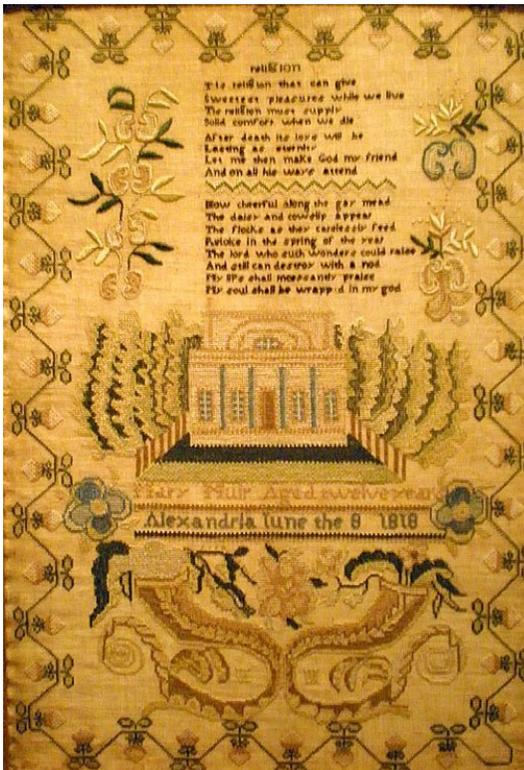
## Occupied City: Life in Civil War Alexandria Exhibition

Open daily, this exhibition at The Lyceum traces life in Alexandria following Virginia's decision to secede from the Union in May 1861. See how Robert E. Lee's hometown was transformed literally overnight from a prosperous commercial port into a supply, hospital, and transportation center for the Union Army. Find out why Alexandria became a destination for African Americans seeking freedom. Explore the experiences of townspeople and others who lived here during this tumultuous time, through their own words, as well as in period photographs and historic artifacts. For more information, please visit [www.alexandriahistory.org](http://www.alexandriahistory.org) or call 703.746.4994.

## Spotlight on: The Lyceum Collection

The Lyceum's sampler by Mary Muir, dated 1818, is one of the needlework pieces featured in the recently published *Columbia's Daughters: Girlhood Embroidery from the District of Columbia* by Gloria Seaman Allen.

Mary Muir (1805-1881) was the daughter of Scottish-born parents, John Muir, an Alexandria cabinetmaker, and Mary Lang Muir who were married in Alexandria's Presbyterian Church by the Reverend Doctor James Muir. Mary was born on November 2, 1805. Her sampler is among a group of six schoolgirl samplers Dr. Allen has documented that have similar decorative elements. All of the samplers in this group have a distinctive arcaded border of strawberries worked in queen stitch. Within this strawberry border, each girl chose from similar motifs and embroidery techniques to create their own unique sampler composition. An imposing house with blue columns flanked by quivering trees, extravagant cornucopias, a verse entitled "Religion" and a signature executed in four-sided stitch are characteristic elements of the samplers in this group.



*Sampler worked by Mary Muir, Alexandria, 1818.  
Silk on linen ground, 25 1/2" x 17 1/2"  
Purchased in tribute of Mr. & Mrs. Harry A. Councilor*

Dr. Allen's extensive research found that the needlework teacher for this design group probably belonged to one of two Muir families who operated schools for girls in Alexandria. While the families do not appear to have been related, they did know each other. Mary Muir's family were members of the Reverend Doctor James Muir's congregation, and lived nearby the Presbyterian Church parsonage. Beginning in 1790 and into the 1840s, Reverend Muir, his wife Elizabeth Welman Muir, and their three daughters, were involved in the operation of different schools that included "ornamental" subjects, like needlework, in the curriculums. During this period Mary Lang Muir was a needlework teacher. In 1820 and 1821 she advertised as a needlework instructor for boarding students. It is possible she began to teach before the date of her ad, and continued for many years. Four of the six samplers in the design group, including the piece by her daughter Mary Muir, were dated 1818 or 1819. The other two were dated 1828 and 1830.

Mary Muir married English-born Stephen Shinn, an Alexandria merchant, in 1826. They raised five children. The *Alexandria Gazette* noted Mary's death on August 6, 1881, "an old and esteemed lady. . . an invalid for twenty years having been confined to the house a major part of that time."

*Columbia's Daughters* is richly illustrated. One hundred and twenty eight samplers (four are in The Lyceum collection), and pictorial embroideries, from the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century are documented. Different sections of the publication focus on Alexandria, Georgetown and Washington City. It explores the embroiderers and their families as well as the needlework teachers and schools – within the socioeconomic, historic and geographic contexts in which the needlework was created. The reader gets a better understanding of period decorative arts, the history of education and women's history.

*Columbia's Daughters: Girlhood Embroidery from the District of Columbia* is available in The Lyceum Museum Shop.

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## American Alliance of Museums Accreditation

The Lyceum, the Friendship Firehouse Museum, and all of the Office of Historic Alexandria have achieved American Alliance of Museums (AAM) accreditation. Accredited status from the Alliance is the highest national recognition achievable by an American museum. Ford Bell, President of the Alliance, recognized the City of Alexandria for this great achievement at an event at The Lyceum on January 24.

The Office of Historic Alexandria accreditation includes all of the museums owned and operated by the City of Alexandria. Fort Ward, Gadsby's Tavern and The Lyceum were re-accredited, while Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria Black History Museum, African American Heritage Park, Friendship Firehouse, and the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary were accredited for the first time.

Accreditation recognizes high standards in individual museums and ensures that museums continue to uphold their public trust. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for more than 40 years, the Alliance's accreditation program is the field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation and public accountability.

Of the nation's estimated 21,000 museums, 995 are currently accredited, as well as 69 museum



*Jim Mackay, Director of The Lyceum and Friendship Firehouse Museum, accepts the American Alliance of Museums accreditation certificate. Ford Bell, President of AAM, stands at the far left with Lance Mallamo, director of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*

systems. To earn accreditation, a museum first conducts a year-long self-study, and then undergoes a site visit by a two-person team of peers. The Accreditation Commission, an autonomous body of museum professionals appointed by the Alliance Board, considers the self-study and site visit report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation. The Office of Historic Alexandria is one of only eight accredited municipal organizations across the country.

## Clio's Kids: A History Mini-Camp

Come join in on the fun! The Lyceum's Clio's Kids mini-camp introduces children to American history and life in historic Alexandria through artifacts, storytelling, singing and crafts, "old-fashioned" games, and visits to nearby historic places. Our theme for 2013 is "To and Fro and Away We Go!" We'll learn about transportation and travel in and around Alexandria - past and present!



The mini camp is for youngsters 5–7 years old. It will be Tuesday - Thursday, July 23, 24 and 25, 9 a.m. until noon. Campers should come prepared for outside activities each day, including sturdy walking shoes and clothing appropriate for the weather. The fee is \$105 and includes snacks and souvenirs.

Advance registration is required. [Click here to download the Camp Application](#). Or telephone The Lyceum at 703.746.4994.

## Civil War Fort Day

On June 8 visit Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site, and experience various aspects of military life in the Defenses of Washington. Join living history interpreters for a program featuring ongoing activities from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and special tours offered at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Tour fees are \$2 for adults, \$5 for families.



Program is weather dependent. Fort Ward is located at 4301 West Braddock Road. For more information see [www.fortward.org](http://www.fortward.org) or call 703.746.4848.

## Family Dig Days

Alexandria Archaeology's upcoming Family Dig Days are from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Saturday June 29, August 3, September 7, and October 5 and 26. Come and discover history at the Shuter's Hill excavation site, adjacent to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Fee is \$5 per person and reservations are required. Telephone 703.746.4399, or E-mail [Archaeology@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Archaeology@alexandriava.gov).

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Office of Historic Alexandria  
The Lyceum  
201 S. Washington Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

### The Lyceum

Alexandria's History Museum  
201 South Washington Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
703.746.4994  
[www.alexandriahistory.org](http://www.alexandriahistory.org)  
Open Monday—Saturday 10 a.m.—5 p.m.  
Sunday 1—5 p.m.

Friendship Firehouse Museum  
107 South Alfred Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
703.746.3891  
[www.friendshipfirehouse.net](http://www.friendshipfirehouse.net)  
Open Saturday and Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m.

