



## SINGLETON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Burdekin Park, Elizabeth Street, Singleton NSW 2330  
T 02 6571 1895

### Opening Hours

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Tuesday         | 10am – 1pm   |
| Saturday        | 12noon – 4pm |
| Sunday          | 12noon – 4pm |
| Public Holidays | 12noon – 4pm |

[www.singletonmuseum.com.au](http://www.singletonmuseum.com.au)

## ALEXANDER MUNRO 1812 -1889



### SINGLETON VISITOR INFORMATION & ENTERPRISE CENTRE

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**SINGLETON**  
COUNCIL



# The Alexander Munro Story

## THE BEGINNING

Alexander Munro was born in Ardersier, near Fort George, Scotland on August 9th 1812. In 1829 Alexander Munro in the company of two other youths broke into a grocery store stealing money and goods. Although it was Munro's first offence the Judge, Lord Gillies sentenced him to be transported by sea to New South Wales for a period of seven years.

He sailed from Liverpool in 1830, arriving in Sydney on the 7th February 1831. Alexander's record states that he was assigned to John Browne and he went straight to Patrick's Plains, Singleton where he began work for Mr. Browne and was shown the best ways to work towards a successful new life in an unfamiliar environment.

By April 1836, Alexander Munro had served his sentence, received his ticket of leave and was allowed to remain in the district of Patrick's Plains. In November 1836 he was given his certificate of freedom. Alexander was only twenty four years old when he purchased, with the help of Mr. Browne, a team of bullocks and begun a business transporting goods between Morpeth and Singleton, he continued this for two and a half years before venturing into other avenues such as butchering,

↓ Alexander Munro Fountain



shearing & storekeeping. Munro had a successful baking business when his bread was sent to Government House in Sydney. In 1837, Alexander Munro also bought land in the Singleton area from Benjamin Singleton, founder of the town of Singleton.

Alexander married Sophia Lovell in July 1838. Sophia had been transported from England for stealing reaping hooks, tools used for cutting grass and crops. Sophia was assigned to Francis Little of Scone and this is how she came to meet Alexander. They lived a long and happy marriage but had no children. They unofficially adopted Harriet Phillips as their daughter, following her mother's death in the 1840s. As Harriet Munro she married Walter Cousins and had children. In 1873, Mr. and Mrs. Munro were greatly distressed by the untimely death of Harriet from Tuberculosis.

In 1856, Alexander bought land along George Street and constructed a large two-storey brick building later known as the **Caledonia Hotel**, it was an impressive hotel in town with the largest parlour outside of Sydney.

In 1860, convinced that viticulture would become one of the principle industries within the area, Alexander purchased 100 acres of land on the southern approaches of Singleton and built **Bebeah House**, along with a sandstock brick wine cellar establishing his famous **Bebeah Vineyard** – the pride of the district for half a century, which became world famous by winning numerous prizes. Amidst the success Alexander bought more land to increase his wine estate and built **Ardersier House** named after his birthplace in Scotland.

## THE FATHER OF SINGLETON

Alexander Munro was renowned for his generosity to the Singleton community. Alexander gave land for a Presbyterian cemetery and left £1,000 in trust to the Presbyterian minister, for the use of the church and to form a substantial contribution to build the new church (opened 1906). He made a donation in his will of £100 to the Masonic Lodge Temple to which he had contributed in 1864 and co-founded. He gave land for a Mechanic's Institute (George St) and the Grammar School (now Singleton High School, York St) which were founded in 1875. Alexander was also a founder of the Oddfellows Lodge and a vice president of the Northern Agricultural Association from 1868. He gave more than £1,000 to build a wing and other sections of the Benevolent

Asylum (hospital) and provided a further £500 legacy as well as paying for an annual feast for all of the patients. Alexander Munro's notable donations to the town were the first gasworks which he purchased at his own expense hoping that Singleton would have been the first town in the colony to be lit by gas and secondly donated the specially designed cast iron drinking fountain to supply water for the people, horses and dogs in the main street of Singleton (George St). The **Munro Fountain** (pictured left) still stands operational out the front of the Singleton Historical Society Museum in Burdekin Park.

## MUNRO AS MAYOR

Election of Singleton's first mayor was held on the night of March 5th 1866, Alexander Munro was unanimously elected as mayor for five consecutive years. Under his direct supervision, the work of transforming Singleton as a settlement into a town commenced. Alexander Munro was proud to be called an Australian and worked tirelessly to provide a better life for himself, his family and the township of Singleton and surrounds.

Alexander Munro died at his home, **Ardersier House** (pictured below) on Saturday 2nd February 1889. He was laid to rest in the Glenridding cemetery. A tall but simple granite column which Alexander himself had purchased was erected in his memory.

↓ Ardersier House, Singleton

