

Introduction to Founders Museum

*The museum that you are about to visit allows you a glimpse into the late 19th century. In some ways, it can be compared to a time capsule. The items in the museum are mostly the private collections of the men and women who helped found the library, hence the name **Founders Museum**, who felt that it would be an educational asset to the town if the Town of Barre had a museum in which to house these items.*

The exhibits were set up and arranged in the late 1800s, in a manner that was considered pleasant and informative. Though cluttered and confusing by today's standards, these exhibits made complete sense to the visitor of the 1890s and later. To best appreciate the experience, one might consider the world as seen by most visitors when the museum opened.

There was no television, no radio, no internet, no cell phones, no tweeting and no social media. Almost no homes had electricity, running water, or bathrooms as we know them. Most people had heard or read about automobiles, but few had actually seen one and very few had ridden in one. If you wanted to go somewhere you walked or took a horse or buggy. Travel was slow and expensive.

Home entertainment was limited to reading, perhaps playing musical recordings on a wind-up phonograph, looking at black and white photographs of family, friends and travel photos of foreign places on a stereopticon, and playing a piano or pump organ, if your family could afford one. If you wanted to learn about things outside of town you probably read about them; in a newspaper or book, using a kerosene lamp. Publications had black and white engravings, or maybe photographs.

If you wanted to see things from the outside world you visited friends who might have traveled and brought home souvenirs, or you went to an exhibit or a museum.

The Barre Museum (later renamed the Founders Museum) was a rich trove of items from far and wide, and you could spend an afternoon for free, examining all sorts of interesting things alone or with friends. Here you could actually see objects that you had heard about, read about, or seen black and white photos of.

When you visit, you will see things just as someone might have seen them over one hundred years ago. Some are as rare now as they were then.

Enjoy your visit. And just a reminder that no photography is permitted in the museum nor will cases be opened by the volunteer docents during the visit.