

# **ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY**

## **Job Lane House, Bedford, Massachusetts**

Prepared by Mary S. Hafer

The Job Lane House is a wonderfully clear illustration of a New England farmhouse that has grown and adapted to changing times and tastes. The house shows two major phases, and each phase is clearly distinguishable in terms of structural practice and decorative style. There is only a small overlap of stylistic treatment (e.g., a Federal mantel in a Georgian room) and a few secondary phases of development represented by late Victorian and twentieth century windows, and the westernmost shed of late nineteenth century origin (the Garden Club shed).

### **The Great Hall**, Restored by the Bedford Minuteman Company

The room originally had vertical feather edge paneling and a large mantel-less fireplace. The room shows a sample of its earliest appearance in the area of vertical feather edge paneling to the right of the fireplace, which was concealed behind plaster until recently, and in its beams exposed below the plaster. You can see the original extent of the fireplace by observing the fill-in panel to the right of the fireplace. The chimney was rebuilt and the fireplace "Rumfordized" at the time that the West side of the house was built. The Federal mantel was also added at that time.

Count Rumford, whose ideas are demonstrated in the fireplace, was a brilliant physicist born in Woburn, Massachusetts in 1753 who began the modern theories of heat. He was a loyalist during the Revolution and went to England, where he was knighted. He later went to Bavaria where he was made a count. Prior to his studies, fireplaces were grossly inefficient. Most of the heat went up the chimney. Shallow fireplaces with sides at a 45-degree angle reflect far more of the heat into the room.

Ziba Lane was given this house as a wedding gift - a "gift of love" -from his father on January 5, 1778 (*Registry of Deeds Book 104, p. 236*). Minor architectural changes are mentioned. This would be consistent with the period of the Georgian paneling, and the cupboard in the Southeast corner of the room. The main aspect of the room is late Georgian from the remodeling. The rebuilt fireplace and mantel date from the time of the nineteenth century addition to the house. The windows have been replaced and altered several times.

The doors are low (6 feet 3 inches) and show typical 18th century hardware. There are hand wrought Suffolk latches and strap hinges fastened by wrought nails to the doors. The cupboard doors have "H" hinges, and the little cupboard to the right of the fireplace has "butterfly" hinges. All but the front girt are cased and have corner beads. The beading of the corners of the casings of the structural members in the early Georgian period is a practice directly descended from the more elaborate (but essentially medieval) practice of chamfering the corners of posts, summers, and girts in first-period frame buildings.

### **The Kitchen, *Bedford Women's' Community Club***

The Kitchen was far more extensively remodeled at the time the western portion of the house was built than was the great hall. (People are always remodeling and improving their kitchens). The small "Borning room" to the east is essentially unchanged, but the main area of the kitchen has been greatly changed. Running from either side of the fireplace to the back wall are the two chimney girts which are important elements of the structure of the original house. In the attic, it is evident from the rafters, which are continuous from the roof ridge to the back wall of the house, that the lean-to kitchen is an integral part of the original house, rather than an addition (as was common). The western of the two girts shows evidence of once having a partition wall along it. The two windows on the north wall are recent. The framing for the single earlier window may be seen below the eaves in the lean-to above. The doors to the cupboard, the cellar, and the back stairs are Federal. The fireplace is "Rumfordized" and has a Federal mantel. The original fireplace would have been much deeper. The West end of the kitchen is something of a mystery. An interior wall separated it from the kitchen. The lath of its north wall (visible in the old shed) is riven lath. The lath in the rest of the west side of the house is a later type of sawn lath. In a will (probate #13572) dated October 25, 1762, Deacon Job Lane gave the house to his son John Lane. The "old back kitchen" was given to his neighbor.

### **The Parlor, *Bedford Historical Society Room***

This room is of the Federal period and retains many of these features unaltered. The doors, the hardware, and the woodwork are nearly all original. The West window has been replaced in its entirety, although the original sill and sashes are still in existence in the attic. The two south windows have had their sash replaced, but the original molding was retained and put onto the new framing when the Dutton family replaced the sashes.

The Rufus Porter murals in this room are its outstanding feature. Unfortunately, they are greatly damaged by having had wallpaper applied and removed twice. The earlier wallpaper was put on with animal glue. It was removed in the middle of this century by Mrs. Lillian Dutton and then later covered again by the gray wallpaper that you can see on the south wall of the room behind the door. That area shows the mural as it appeared when the paper was removed. Samples of wallpaper on display in the room show how much of the detail was lost when the second paper was removed. Probably, even more was lost when the glued wallpaper was removed. Restoration consisted of washing the background with washes in various shades of gray to color the bare plaster and help blend it in with the background color. This has resulted in an overall darkening of the panels. Where remnants of stenciled lines could be discerned, these lines were filled in, restoring the outlines of the houses, a fence, and a sailboat that had nearly disappeared. Undoubtedly, many other important details, which would have given great charm to the paintings, have totally disappeared. Porter painted in the background and large trees freehand to fit the space available. Foliage was made with sponges or specially carved corks. Houses, fencing, sailboats, etc. were done with stencils.

**The Front Hall** (*called "porch" in early plans*), Restored by Friends of Job Lane House, Inc.

This area is an amalgam of the two periods of the house. The feather edge panels are of the first period of the house. The stair newels and handrail are of the second period. Upstairs, both the wood and the plastered area were wallpapered after the addition was built and the hall and stairway remodeled. A sample of the first, early 19th century paper is retained on one of the boards. Although this wallpaper was gone from the plastered area at the time of the restoration, the strong light from the south window had photographed the pattern into the plaster behind it. A sample of the rather crude "marbleizing" that was found on the treads, the risers, and the floor may be seen on the riser of the second step down from the top. The background color is a grayish green. Subsequent paint layers were gray. Marbleized floors as well as floors painted to resemble rugs were highly popular in the early 19th century.

## **UPSTAIRS**

### **The Hall Chamber, *The Brown Family Room***

Except for the windows, this room retains the earliest look of the house. The feather edge paneling and other woodwork was originally unpainted. The fireplace would have been deeper before it was Rumfordized. The raised field paneling is also a later addition. Still later, a hole for a stove pipe was cut through it. Note the gunstock corner posts and the beaded edge of the summer beam. This is the important room in which Deacon Job Lane and his wife Martha Ruggles would have entertained the minister when he came to call. Dining rooms did not exist. The master bedchamber was used instead. In the winter, a space-saving Queen Anne style of drop leaf table would have been drawn up in front of this fireplace for an important guest. If you look at the eaves outside, you will see the heads of five old second story windows. Their position was altered when the sash was replaced.

The door to the hall is "board and batten" and is very rare, not more than 50 exist.

The fleur-de-lys latch on the little door into the lean-to dates from about 1837 (Orville Carroll), indicating that this door was cut through later. It was covered with early wallpaper. It is interesting to speculate as to how access to the storage areas was made before the house was enlarged. Ladders???

### **Lean-to Area**

This would have been a COLD place to sleep in winter! We wonder how access was gained from below before the west half of the house was built and before the little door was in place. Stairs or a ladder way probably came up at the east end of the area where there are short boards. Evidence of a path in the same area may be seen in the Borning room below. Much of the structure of the house can be seen here. Note the rafters coming down unbroken from the ridge to the north wall.

## **Parlor Chamber**

### *Rotary Club Room*

The parlor chamber is virtually as it was when built. (The window sash replaced, of course.) If you look at the windows from the outside, you will see their heads just below the eaves. The original windows were higher and narrower than their replacements. A penciled line indicated that a layer wallpaper with a border was used. It is a nice example of a Federal-Greek Revival period bedchamber.

## **Back Stairway**

### *Eagle Scout project by Michael Montemagno*

The doors are Federal. The lath is sawn, consistent with the parlor, and parlor chamber, but not with the north wall of the room below. There was substantial water damage to the plaster in this room which was most skillfully repaired as an Eagle Scout project.

## **Credits:**

Much of this information has been taken directly from two reports of the Preservation Partnership (Maximilian L. Ferro, AIA, RIBA) to the Bedford Historical Commission dated October 24, 1977, and November 14, 1977.

Other information was obtained May 16, 1982, from an examination of the house by Orville Carroll, Architectural Historian, and National Park Service.

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