

# **DATING THE JOB LANE HOUSE**

by  
**MARY HAFER**

The "Deacon Job Lane House" has been extensively examined by at least three experts on historic architecture, all of whom are in agreement on the basic information. Abbott Lowell Cummings, former director of the Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities and author<sup>1</sup>, Orville Carroll, former Historical Architect for the U.S. National Park Services and Maximilian Ferro, head of Preservation Partnership of New Bedford, MA, have all examined the house and are in general agreement on dating it. They all agree that the East side is the older and was built between 1700 and 1730. Certain remodeling was done in the late Georgian era (1778), and the West side was added early in the 1800's, accompanied by additional remodeling and rebuilding of the center chimney.

Documentary research by Ina Mansur, late Town Historian has yielded additional information that clarifies and narrows down the probable dates on which the house was built or underwent major changes. She has written three manuscripts pertaining to the earliest Lanes, each with careful citing of sources, (2), (3), (4).

The first Job Lane obtained land along the Concord River in Billerica (now part of Bedford) in 1664. His homestead was built there shortly thereafter, and it was inherited by his only son, Major John Lane. John Lane died in 1714/15 without having left a will. He had three sons and two sons-in-law, who, under the supervision of the court, divided the land. The son whom we call "Deacon Job Lane" received the homestead. He was also known as "Lieutenant Job Lane", having received a commission as Lieutenant of Troops on April 16, 1724, from Governor Dummer.<sup>5</sup> From the 1715 inventory of the estate of his father, Major John Lane, the size and shape of the homestead house and the number of its rooms can be deduced. (See (4) p. 2). It was a larger, four room house with two lean-tos. The location of this house is not known. (If I were searching for remnants of foundations, I'd look for a nice piece of land on the portion that was given to "Deacon Job" that was convenient to the only means of transportation in his grandfather's time, which was by boat on the river.)

"Deacon Job Lane" married Martha Ruggles of Roxbury, December 16, or 17, 1713. This was a year before his father died. It seems logical to me that the Deacon Job Lane House was built in 1713 as a home for this young couple. This is entirely consistent with the architectural evidence.

"Deacon" Job's son John inherited this house but may have lived in a larger home north of this one. When John's son, Ziba (1755-1???) married in 1778, this house was deeded to him as "a gift of love". 1778 is a date entirely consistent with the architectural evidence of the Georgian paneling, cupboard, chair rail and, perhaps, wallpaper in the Keeping Room that has been refurbished by the Bedford Minuteman Co.<sup>6</sup>

Ziba Lane later sold the house to his cousin Stephen Lane. The west side of the house was almost certainly built by Oliver Reed Abbott, (1800-1842) a stepson of Stephen Lane, for one or the other of his two brides. His first wife, Mary A. Wilson, lived only about a month after the wedding. She died December 26, 1825. In 1827, he married again to Mary Ann Buttrick. When he died, aged only 43, the property was sold to Hiram L. Dutton from New Hampshire.<sup>6</sup>

The booklet' *The Deacon Job Lane House of Bedford Massachusetts*, compiled by Ina Mansur and Illustrated by Ellen Hatch Michaud, contains detailed information and drawings of each part of the house. It should be required reading for each tour guide.

<sup>1</sup> Cummings, Abbott Lowell. The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay 1625-1725. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press. 1979

<sup>2</sup> Mansur, Ina, "Job Laine of Malden and Billerica 1620-1697" Xerox of manuscript dated 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Mansur, Ina, "Major John Lane of Billerica 1661-1714/ 15" Xerox of manuscript dated 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Mansur, Ina, Deacon Job Lane of Bedford 1689-1762" Xerox of manuscript dated 1983.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, Abram English, History of the Town of Bedford, Bedford: Author. 1891 (1976 reprint) part II, p. 20

Mansur, Ina, comp., The Deacon Job Lane House of Bedford, Massachusetts, illustrated by Ellen Hatch Michaud. Bedford: Friends of the Job Lane House. 1984. p. 5-10.