

The Great Hall

Restored by the Bedford Minuteman Company

Welcome to Deacon Job and Martha Lane's home! This is the Great Hall, a kind of living room – dining room – family room - work room. You'll see the table is set for supper. Here you can picture the Lane family sitting down to eat – just three places tonight, but Martha and Job eventually had eleven children, though not all lived past infancy... And what would they eat for their supper? Bread and cheese that Martha had made, and perhaps leftovers from the noon meal.

The house Job built was not a rough cottage but a very nice small house. You'll see the **wood paneling** on the wall is smooth and wide. Here's some just to the left of the fireplace. (There is more in the entry hall and in the bedchamber.) These panels butt together in a handsome feathered edge. Fine carpentry. Job would have cut the trees and hauled them to the sawmill down on the river. It's worth measuring the width of the boards. In colonial times, pine trees could easily be five feet in diameter and 120 feet tall. These were the property of the King of England, and they were used for masts for the naval ships. Only trees less than two feet in diameter could be cut for private use. If he cut down a larger one, the landowner would have to pay a fine of £ 100 -- for each tree! There was, however, a loophole: if a tree fell of its own accord, it could be used, no matter its width. This was called a "windfall" – an unexpected bonus.

The house passed down through Deacon Job's son, John, to his grandson, Ziba Lane. Ziba probably remodeled this room at the time of his marriage in 1778. He added the paneling around the fireplace, the **cupboard** and the chair rail. They are typical of the Georgian period, which lasted from 1715 till after the Revolutionary War. When we were sanding the cupboard, we found that the first layer of paint was putty colored, and the blue was painted over it later. (We like the blue!) Notice that the bead of the molding is carved. After 1800 it was more common to nail the decoration into place, as you'll see on the other side of the house.

Great Hall Furniture:

- **The large spinning wheel** is known as a walking wheel, because you had to walk back and forth as you spun your wool into yarn. It was used by the women of the Davis Family here in Bedford. It works! [Belongs to the Bedford Historical Society. Many of their artifacts are on display here until they can move into a museum space that is being planned.]
- **The tavern table** is like those used in taverns and inns and in private homes. This one dates from 1750-1780. None of the furnishings in the house were Deacon Job's, but they are from the same time period. Most of

our artifacts have been donated to us. Others, like this table, we have bought with our Furnishings Fund.

- **The two ladderback chairs** in this room are eighteenth century, as is the bow back Windsor chair.
- **The corner cupboard** is unusual in that it is not a triangular shape built into the corner, but rectangular against one wall. The shelves are very narrow. It would have been used to display one's plates. We have it displaying a fine collection of candlesticks and early lamps that were a gift from Betty Slechta.
- **The triangular box** hanging on the south wall would house Job's Tricon hat. It is quite uncommon. Once owned by the Rev. Samuel Stearns, who was minister here from 1796 to 1834.
- **The footwarmer** would have held hot coals and would have been welcome in a house that was not insulated. It was quite portable and could be taken to church on a winter Sunday to keep Martha's feet warm in the unheated room.
- **The Flemish chair** to the right of the fireplace was probably imported into Boston early in Job's time. As a wealthy man, he might have owned one, although he lived in a rather simple farmhouse.
- **The desk** belonged to the Rev. Samuel Stearns, who used it to write the two two-hour sermons that he preached every Sunday.

We keep a **photograph of Louise Kirkegaard Brown**, former Town Historian, who is the person who made this museum possible. Back in 1972 when it was put up for sale, the house was in bad repair, and there was fear that it might be torn down. Knowing that it was one of the oldest houses in Bedford, Mrs. Brown thought it would make a wonderful museum for the Town of Bedford. She bought it and kept it for a year while the Town decided whether to acquire it. She then sold it to the Town for the same amount.

The Town of Bedford owns the house and barn and the five acres they stand on, and the Historic Preservation Commission oversees it all. The Friends of the Job Lane House take care of the museum day-to-day and manage the tours. Back in the 1970s, individual Bedford groups each took a room to restore. The Great Hall is the work of the Bedford Minuteman Company.

-Sharon McDonald, Curator