

Bedford's window into 18th-century daily life, the Job Lane Farm Museum on North Road, has reopened to the public.

Tours of the historic house, sponsored by the Friends of the Job Lane House, are scheduled for the second and fourth Sundays of the month from 2 to 4 p.m. through October. There's a suggested donation of \$4 per visitor. Event details can be found at [Job Lane Farm Museum](#) website.

The farm museum represents "a history of the house and a history of the early days of Bedford," said Sharon McDonald, town historian and head of the group of seven tour guides managed by the Friends.

Visitors "get a tour of the house and a tour of the barn. They can poke their nose in the gift shop," MacDonald said. "It's not just looking at things, but it's learning stories about the Lane Family, the Dutton Family, and the colonial days of Bedford."

She added, "We also have the gorgeous herb garden, medicinal and culinary herbs that are cared for by the Bedford Garden Club. Some people just come to see us at the garden."

Former Town Historian Louise K. Brown saved the Job Lane House from an uncertain future on the market when she purchased it in 1972, then sold it to the town a year later after town meeting authorization.

Dr. Roy Kring, president of the Friends of the Job Lane House, said his organization was established at that time to "support, aid, and cooperate with the Historic Preservation Commission in restoration, preservation, and maintenance of the property, to conduct programs and activities for the enhancement of the property, and other related purposes."

McDonald pointed out that it took 10 years to renovate, restore, and repurpose the house before it was opened to the public as a museum in 1983. Then after another 10 years, some 80 volunteers built and raised the barn on the property.

"The Friends' massive fund-raising event resulted in a beautiful post-and-beam construction, just a perfect addition to the Job Lane House for holding all kinds of events for children and adults," said Kring.

Board of Directors Chairperson, Judy Barber states "Through the efforts of the Friends, the museum has held an art contest, a quilt exhibit and high teas, particularly for visiting dignitaries, including Lane descendants and their families." Other events include Dairy Day, Mini Barn Raising and a Quilt Exhibit to name a few.

The barn has a collection of garden and farm tools and food preparation equipment as well as a Gift Shop offering toys, games, historic books, vintage linens, and other handicrafts.

The Job Lane House represents a specific window in Bedford's history. But McDonald considers her role as a historian and a guide dynamic. "I do a lot of research to see what I can find. Right now, I am working on indigenous people who would have lived nearby."

McDonald is trying to ascertain whether the land was purchased or expropriated. "That kind of research is going into the tour this year," she stated. Kring, in a 23-minute video recorded for students at Lane School, leads off by asserting that the land initially was the realm of Native Americans. Then he stresses that when English settlers arrived at what is now North Road, there was no indigenous community and residents were not displaced.

"The house was built, we believe, in 1713, the year Job Lane married the minister's sister, Martha," McDonald related. She explained, the right side of the house was built 100 years before the left side. "It's such a neat house." The house was originally in Billerica, she points out in the video; Bedford wasn't established for another 16 years.

The museum represented a continuous family presence until 1860. "We really try to be specific with the furnishings. People are lovely about giving us donations – two years ago a descendant of the Lane family gave us a chair. We have lots of chairs and spinning wheels."

Tour guides "talk about the architecture – -flat wide boards in the early part and then plaster in the second part." The later portion of the house is decorated with monochrome murals by Rufus Porter, the 19th-century folk artist who at one time was a Billerica resident. "It's very exciting to have these murals," she said.

MacDonald was president of the Friends of the Job Lane House for 10 years. The current president, Dr. Roy Kring, "does everything," she testified. For example, she said, the Facilities Department provided curbstones to serve as stairs to the kitchen door. "I said we need a railing and Roy was out here about two weeks ago drilling right into the granite."

The Friends are partners in a legal memorandum of understanding with the town Facilities Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Historic Preservation Commission for maintenance, repairs, and improvements.

Individual rooms have been restored by members of local organizations, McDonald related, including the Bedford Woman's Community Club, the Bedford Historical Society, and the Rotary Club of Bedford. "The subfloor was rotten in the great hall, and the Minutemen pulled up the boards and replaced the beams underneath," she said.

There were at least four men named Job Lane during Bedford's colonial period. McDonald said the original Job resided on North Road near the current Carter Way; nothing remains of that residence.

"His grandson was the Job Lane who built our house," she continued. A lieutenant in the local militia, he is the most prominent because the elementary school around the corner is named for him. His son Job Lane was wounded during the fighting on April 19, 1775. McDonald said he was disabled and lived for another 20 years on a pension. She also mentioned still another Job Lane, a nephew.