

The Kitchen

Restored by the Bedford Women's Community Club to 1825-1840

This room has changed considerably from Job and Martha's time. In 1713, it would have extended from the Borning Room only to the beam just beyond the fireplace that marked the end of the house. The fireplace would have been quite large. It was made smaller when Oliver Abbott added the west half of the house after 1826. The bake oven was added at that time as well. There would have been no plumbing; water would have to be brought from the well, which was below the shed just north of the house.

Furnishings:

- The **fireplace**, with its iron pots and cranes and reflector oven, is the centerpiece of the room. Large pots would hang over the fire, but for the smaller utensils, a pile of coals would be pulled out to the front of the hearth for a small area cooking spot.
- **Beehive Bake oven**: baking was normally done just once a week. A fire had to be made inside the bake oven and left to heat for a couple of hours until the inside was red hot. The ashes would be swept into the ash pit under the bake oven, to save for making soap. Then the breads could be placed inside on the bricks and baked.
- **Reflector oven**: This was also called a "tin kitchen." It contains a spit for skewering the meat that you were preparing. Using the handle, you rotated the meat a short distance every ten minutes until it was done – "done to a turn."
- **Irons**: The various irons that are displayed on the mantelpiece were used to press the wrinkles out of clothes. They were heated on trivets above the fireplace coals. At that time, they were called "sad irons," for the word "sad" meant "solid" or "heavy." And they are all very heavy!
- What's in the **cupboard** over the fireplace? Take a peek. We keep small cooking implements in it. Whatever the family used it for, it could not have stored much, for it is very shallow.
- Most **leather fire buckets** had the owner's name or number on it, and a man could be fined if his bucket was not present when a fire was being fought. Danger from cooking over an open fire was great, and it would also have been helpful to have a bucket of water ready should the cook's clothing catch fire.
- The **dry sink** would have been a place to wash the dishes. You would bring water in a bucket, and when you were finished, just toss the dishwater out the back door.
- On this **butter churn**, unlike most churns, the handle moves back and forth rather than up and down. You would pour in cream and churn for twenty minutes or so to make the butter. The buttermilk left from making butter was also used.

- The **large cupboard** holds small household items from past times. It was remodeled for us by Chris Matheson as an Eagle Scout project.
- The **worktable** was for preparing food, not for dining.
- **Herb List:** Lillian Dutton, the last to live in the house, had a mail order herb business. Above the worktable is a framed copy of Lillian Dutton's herb list and prices. She sold the herbs she grew to customers all over the United States. The herbs that hang to dry about the kitchen are from our colonial herb garden.

-Sharon McDonald, Curator