Welcome to the Spalding House

Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust

The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Inc. took ownership of the Spalding House in 1996 from the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 2000, the Trust was presented with a “Preservation Award” from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for excellence in historic preservation. The second floor features a 50-seat lecture hall with a unique swing-down door divider. In addition to programs and lectures held by the Trust, the House is available for special events. Please contact the office for more details.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for the people of Lowell through the creation, conservation, and preservation of parks, open spaces, and special places.

Welcome to a very special place.

The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, Inc. wishes to acknowledge the Lowell Cultural Council, the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center, the Relevance Company, the Lowell Historical Society, and the Chelmsford Historical Society for their assistance.

Based on research by Paul Hudon, Ph. D. The Spalding House and its Site, 1760-1790, 2002.

Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust

Please consider becoming a member and supporting the Spalding House Restoration Project.

Donations may be mailed to:
Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust
P. O. Box 7162
Lowell, MA 01852
978-934-0030
www.lowelllandtrust.org
The House before 1790

Known today as the “Spalding House,” because of the Spalding family’s 116 years of ownership, the property overlooking the region’s most significant natural feature, the Merrimack River, has a rich history. The house was built in 1760 in East Chelmsford, an agrarian community adjacent to the colonial town of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, which was incorporated in 1655. The Wamesit Purchase of 1726, the Merrimack River property, and the Merrimack River’s mouth to the seaport of Salem, Massachusetts. With the increase in trade there arose a demand for accommodations.

Beginning of the Spalding Ownership

Robert Hildreth owned two parcels, a 10-acre tract reaching from the Pawtucket Falls to the Merrimack River, and a third parcel up a tributary stream. The house was a center of social activity, and was often used for meetings and social events. It was also the site of various civic functions, such as town meetings and recruitment drives for the Revolutionary War.

The Hero or the Rogue?

Captain John Ford, the son of Nathaniel Ropes, was a key figure in the American Revolution. He served as a captain in the Continental Army and was known for his bravery and leadership. However, he was also a controversial figure, with some accusing him of sedition and insurrection for supporting the Shaysites in the tax revolt of 1786. After his victory, he recognized the error of his ways and accepted to take an oath of allegiance to the state of Massachusetts.

The Spalding House

The Spalding House was owned by various individuals, including Captain John Ford, Nathaniel Ropes, and Joel Spalding. It was later sold to Joel Spalding, who turned it into a museum and meeting place for the community. The Chapter operated the “Spalding House” as a museum and meeting place for 90 years.

The Magazine

M. DAVIS.

In 1768, a ten-acre parcel along the Merrimack River in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, was purchased by Robert Hildreth for $6.50 per acre. The parcel was an addition to the original 10-acre tract, and was purchased with the goal of expanding the family’s land holdings. The parcel eventually became the site of the Spalding House, which was built in 1760.

Early Spalding House Owners

Robert Hildreth   1758-1761
Reuben Hamblet    1761-1768
Moses Davis    1768-1773
Joseph Tyler, Jr.   1773-1774
Andrew Fletcher   1774-1777
Captain John Ford, Jr.   1777-1789
Nathaniel Ropes   1789-1790
Joseph Spalding & family   1790-1906

From soldier (Private Moses Davis, Captain John Ford, Nathaniel Ropes, Joel Spalding), to town selectman (Andrew Fletcher, Moses Davis), to businessmen (Robert Hildreth, Nathaniel Ropes, Joel Spalding), the owners of the house at the Pawtucket Falls were the American ideal type, the self-made man. They all worked to shape their community, their town, and their lives.