

**Spalding House Tours**  
Step-by-Step Guide for Volunteers

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**Introduction**

This step-by-step guide is meant to help volunteers who are providing tours of the Spalding House to visitors. Your willingness to assist the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust in opening up this historic house to the general public is important to preserving the house for future generations of visitors. The guide is meant to provide you with assistance in telling the house's story. It's not intended to be read, nor does every piece of information need to be covered with every visitor. Your roll is to help people see what is right before their eyes and help to enjoy and appreciate the unique experience of visiting a house that was built while this area was still under colonial rule of the England.

## **Meeting your Tour**

Assuming it's not raining, the best place to meet your tour is at the front of the house. Visitors' first inclination is to go into the house. This should be discouraged, since there is much to say first about the house from the outside and it's good to let the anticipation of seeing the inside of the house build. It makes for a better tour.

First, introduce yourself and get the names of each of the visitors. Then say some general things about the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust and give a brief background on the house. Here are some quick basics.

The Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust is a non-profit land trust which was formed in 1990. The Spalding House was built in ~1760. It was given to the Trust in 1996 by the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The house has stood through four general periods of ownership. These periods are briefly summarized below.

### **First Period of Ownership - The "Davis Inn" Period**

From *1760 to 1790* ownership changed hands eight times and when it was operated as an Inn, known as the Davis Inn after Moses Davis who owned and operated the house as an Inn for 15 of the 30 years.

### **Second Period of Ownership - The "Spalding Family" Period**

From *1790 to 1906*, the house was owned by three generations of the Spalding Family. The Spalding Family owned the house longer than anyone else, hence it continues to carry the family's name.

### **Third Period of Ownership - The "DAR Chapter House" Period**

From *1906 to 1996*, when it was owned by the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

More detail of each is provided in Appendix A.

## **Station 1 – Parking Lot Across Pawtucket Street.**

Once you have finished your general introductions and overview of the house and its history, escort people across Pawtucket Street to the Pawtucket Pharmacy parking lot. **USE CAUTION.** Pawtucket Street is busy. Time your crossing with the traffic light change and be sure that everyone crosses together.

From the parking lot you get a full view of the front of the house, including the roof and the chimney. You can start by reiterating the general history of the house. Then go into a description of its appearance and how the house has been modified architecturally over the years. Below are some suggested topics for discussion.

**Central Theme** – The evolution of the Spalding House through history from its original construction, early ownership, and changes in the house's appearance

The Spalding House on this site in ~1760. In 1758 Hildreth purchased 10 acres of land extending along the Merrimack River from Joseph Tyler, Sr.. Hildreth constructed a five-bay center entrance house that he then sold to Reuben Hamblet in 1761. Deeds from the period bracket the 1760 date. Hildreth purchased only land in 1758 and sold land and a house in 1761 (You could read some of the deed descriptions, which people may find interesting. The original land purchases were in pounds sterling, since we were still a colony of England!) It is speculated that he may have used wood sawn from a nearby saw mill that was located on the Merrimack River at this time a short distance from the house.

Between 1760 and 1790 ownership of the house changed eight times. During most of this period, the house was known as the "Davis Inn", after Moses Davis who was either owner or proprietor of the house for at least half of these first 30 years. The Inn provided lodging for barge workers transporting goods up and down the nearby Merrimack River in the period before the Pawtucket Canal was dug. During this first period of ownership, the house was expanded by two bays; a second chimney was added; and the second floor main hall with a swing-down partitioning wall was constructed. We don't know the exact date, but speculate that it was not long after the original construction. Even a year or two later.

Items to point out:

- 1) Original house and front door and two bay addition.
- 2) Chimneys
- 3) 9 over 9 window panes
- 4) Italianate hood over front door
- 5) Slate Roof and copper flashing

### Suggested questions to engage the visitor.

*Ask them why they think the window panes are so small.*

In 1760 glass panes could not be made very large. It was by spinning the glass. The ornamental bulleyes you sometimes see over the front doors of Colonial Houses is the left over piece from the center of the spinning. When you get inside the house you can see the arced curved irregularities in the old glass.

## **Station 2 – Front of House.**

**Central Theme** - This location is the best spot to describe the work that the LP&CT did to restore the house.

The Trust removed aluminum siding that the DAR placed on the building in 1969. It was done after consulting with the Society for the Preservation of NE Antiquities. It proved to protect the siding quite well and not much of the original siding needed to be replaced.

### Items to point out

- 1) Shutters – the Trust had 42 pairs of shutters reproduced from an original shutter that was found in the attic. It cost about \$15,000
- 2) Shutter Hardware – it was custom cast from a mold made of the original hardware on the same shutter. All the shutters are functional
- 3) Old Paint
- 4) Old/New Clapboards
- 5) Scarf Joints
- 6) Window sill repair replacement
- 7) Details on

### Suggested questions to engage the visitor.

*Ask why they think the shutters are closed.*

Protect the windows, control temperature in the house (no AC in 1760).

*Ask people if they can see where the old clapboards end and the new clapboards begin.* - The bottom three feet is all new clapboards. All the old clapboards were removed in 1969 in order to install the aluminum siding.

### **Station 3 – Entrance Hall.**

*Central Theme* - The central theme of this station is the house's colonial history and its connection with three soldiers who owned the house and fought in the Revolutionary War.

Items to point out

- 1) 1821 Map of East Chelmsford
- 2) Moses Davis Chair
- 3) Portrait of Mary Morrison
- 4) Colonial Musket
- 5) Solar Lamps
- 6) Window Panes – They can see the irregularity in the old spun glass. The window to the left of the front door is good to use.

### **Station 4 – Spalding Room**

*Central Theme* – The main theme to communicate in this room is the Spalding Family history in the house. The room is filled with artifacts that relate to the Spalding family.

Items to point out

The first member of the Spalding Family to own the house was Joel Spalding (1742 – 1823). He was a farmer and Revolutionary War soldier, who served in the Volunteer Company of Colonel Jonathan Reed's Regiment from September 27 to November 8, 1777. He later served in Colonel Samuel Denny's Regiment from October 23 to December 1779. He returned home from the War in December 1779 to be with his wife Phebe who was pregnant with her fourth child. On December 26, 1779 she gave birth to a baby girl. Sadly, Phebe died six days later on New Year's Day 1780. The new baby was named Phebe, after her mother. Child birth in the late 1700's was dangerous for both mother and new born babies. Of the four children that Phebe gave birth to, only two, Phebe and an older brother Jonathan, lived to adulthood. Two other boys, Silas and Otis, died shortly after they were born.

Joel Spalding purchased the house ten years after his first wife's death from a Nathaniel Ropes of Salem on October 26, 1790. He was 38 years old, his son Jonathan was 15 and his daughter Phebe was 11. Six months later, on April 25, 1791, he married his second wife Rebecca Pierce (1747-1834), who was 33.

Joel Spalding died in 1823 at the age of 61, having lived in the house for 33 years. Rebecca, with whom he had no children, died in 1834 at the age of 87. The house was then inherited by Joel's son, Jonathan, whose portrait hangs on the wall in this room. Jonathan was married to Sarah Dodge, whose portrait hangs here next to Jonathan's, on March 11, 1819. Her portrait was painted by Alfred Ordway, a well known local painter.

- 1) Spalding Portraits
- 2) Writing Desk
- 3) Masonic Plaque
- 4) Solar Lamp

## **Station 6 – Remaining First Floor Rooms**

*Station Theme* - The general theme of this portion of the tour is to point out work done in the house in 1906 when the DAR restored it for the first time. You should exit the Spalding Room back through the entrance hall.

**Stop 1 – Entrance Hall.** Stop in the front hall and show people the photograph of the front hall taken prior to the DAR's 1906 restoration. Ask them if they can find what is missing. Point out the base of the stair and notice that the doorway to the left is missing. In front of where it would be is metal ductwork, which was part of the Spalding Family's central heating system. The door was covered. You can walk the group over and show them where the floor was repaired. Then have people look at the ceiling and they'll see the hole through which the ductwork projected.

**Stop 2 – Front Room.** Proceed from the entrance hall into across the hall to the front room

Items to point out

- 1) Built in cabinet.

**Stop 3 – Tap Room.**

The DAR named this room the tap room as a romantic remembrance of the house's past use as an Inn. The DAR envisioned bargemen gathered around the fireplace telling stories and lifting a pint of ale. A reminder of the days when a tavern served as a focal point for village life is found in the woman's portrait hanging in the room.

**Stop 4 – Colonial Kitchen.**

Items to point out

- 1) Rafters
- 2) Underground Railroad
- 3) Oven
- 4)

## **Station 6 – Pentucket Hall**

*Central Theme* – The central theme of the last stop on the tour is to describe what is planned next for the Spalding House. The LP&CT has only completed the first phase of the House's restoration. The next phase calls for the house's interior restoration and the development of specific tours that focus on items such as the house's historic lighting.

Items to point out

- 1) Two entrance doors
- 2) Swing down partition
- 3) Stage
- 4) Reproduction French Scenic Wallpaper
- 5) Argand Lamps

# Appendix A

## A Brief Overview of the Spalding House's History

Prior to the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust ownership, the Spalding House passed through three periods of ownership: *1760 to 1790*, during which time its ownership changed hands eight times and when it was operated as an Inn; *1790 to 1906*, when it was owned by the Spalding Family; and *1906 to 1996*, when it was owned by the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. These three phases of ownership are described below.

### Davis Inn - 1760 to 1790

Robert Hildreth built the Spalding House on 10 acres of land that he purchased in 1758 from Joseph Tyler, Sr.. Hildreth constructed a five-bay center entrance house that he then sold to Reuben Hamblet in 1761. Between 1760 and 1790 ownership of the house changed eight times. During most of this period, the house was known as the "Davis Inn", after Moses Davis who was either owner or proprietor of the house for at least half of these first 30 years. The Inn provided lodging for barge workers transporting goods up and down the nearby Merrimack River. The house was expanded by two bays; a second chimney was added; and the second floor main hall with a swing-down partitioning wall was constructed.

Robert Hildreth built the Spalding House on 10 acres of land he purchased from Joseph Tyler, Sr. for six pounds and thirteen shillings on June 20, 1758. He constructed a five bay, center entrance house. On April 14, 1761, he sold the "land and dwellings thereon" to Reuben Hamblet for ninety-eight pounds.

Hamblet owned the house for seven years, then sold it in 1768 to Moses Davis who owned the house for five years and operated it as an Inn, known as the "Davis Inn". The house's close proximity to the Merrimack River out its back door and the county road by its front door made an excellent location for an Inn. Evidence suggests that during Davis's ownership, two additional bays and a second chimney were added to the east end of the house. The entrance hall and main stair to the second floor would have been added at this time, as well as the second floor meeting room with swinging room divider that is now known as Pentucket Hall.

Davis sold the house on September 25, 1773 to Joseph Tyler, Jr., who, a year later, on November 11, 1774, sold it to Andrew Fletcher. Though ownership of the house changed, Davis continued to live in the house. A portion of the deed from Tyler to Fletcher reads:

"Joseph Tyler sells to Andrew Fletcher, twenty acres of land for the sum of two hundred and forty-three pounds six shillings and twelve pence with the dwelling house where Moses Davis now lives and a barn that said Davis some time since built. Also a blacksmith shop and buildings used for a horse shed, all built by said Davis and some time since conveyed to me."

Three years later, on February 8, 1777, Fletcher sold the house to Captain John Ford, for one hundred eighty-six pounds, fifteen shillings and four pence. The date on the deed is noted as "the first year of the Independency of the North American States". Ford owned the house for 13 years and may have continued to operate it as an Inn,



since he also owned and lived in a house on an adjacent property at the time. In 1790 John Ford sold the house to Nathaniel Ropes of Salem.

#### Spalding Family Home - 1790 to 1906

Joel Spalding<sup>1</sup> purchased the house on October 26, 1790 from Nathaniel Ropes of Salem, Massachusetts for one hundred and thirty-five pounds. Any use of the house as an Inn probably would have ended at about this time. The Pawtucket Canal was dug in 1792 and provided a safe and convenient passage around the Pawtucket Falls. Barge traffickers no longer needed to disassemble rafts and drag goods overland to avoid the Falls. Thus a stay at the Davis Inn before beginning another days journey was no longer necessary.

Joel Spalding was a 48-year-old widower when he purchased the home and the first of three generations of the Spalding family to live in the house. He had two children, Jonathan, age 15, and Phebe, age 10. His first wife, Phebe Tyler, had died ten years earlier, on January 1, 1780, five days after giving birth to their only daughter Phebe. A year after purchasing the house Joel married his second wife, Rebecca Cary, on April 25, 1791. The couple had no children together. Upon his death in 1823 the house passed to his son Jonathan Spalding (b. July 12, 1775; d. ???), who four years earlier had married to Sarah Dodge (b.1788 d. January 12, 1827). Jonathan and Sarah had two children (Joel and Sarah) who lived beyond childhood. Both Joel and Sarah Spalding, remained unmarried and inherited the house from their parents.

The Spalding Family s used the house as their principal residence. During their ownership it is believed that several architectural modifications were made to the house. It is speculated that the ell was added during the Spaldings' ownership. A survey plan from 1825 shows (See Appendix H-3) the house with no ell attached, even though a similar house nearby clearly shows an ell. Other features added during the Spaldings' ownership include the Italianate-style hood over the front door, a small porch with double glass doors exiting on to it on the northwest corner of the house, and alterations to the configuration of the interior rooms. (See Appendix H-4 for a description of the house interior as the DAR found it.

Photos of the house interior at the time the DAR took ownership show portions of the house's interior furnished in Victorian style with decorative wall papers. (See Appendix G - Historic Photos 3 & 4.) The photograph of the front entrance hall (#3) shows a heating duct work and gas tubing to a gas fixture at the base of the main stair. Notably missing is the door at the north end of the room (to the left of photo #3) that connects the present entrance hall and what is today referred to as the "Tap Room" (to the right of photo #4).

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Joel Spalding (b. March 12, 1743 ; d. July 26, 1823) was the third child of Colonel Simeon Spalding [b. 8/4/1713 in Chelmsford the youngest son of Joseph Spalding, d.4/7/1785 at age 72] of Chelmsford and Sarah Fletcher. He was married twice. First, to Phebe Tyler [b. March 23, 1750 d. January 1, 1780]. They had four children together: Jonathan [b. July 12, 1775], Silas and Otis, who both died as infants, and Phebe [b. December 26, 1779 d. November 5, 1857]. Phebe was married to Joseph Butterfield Varnum on December 28, 1800 and resided in Dracut. Joel Spalding's second marriage was to Mrs. Rebecca Cary on April 25, 1791. He maiden name was Rebecca Pierce. She was born 1747 and died May 15, 1834 at the age of 87. They had no children.

### DAR Chapter House – 1906 to 1996

The DAR purchased the Spalding House from Mrs. Henry Lambert who purchased it on behalf of the Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in April 1906 from Miss Sarah Spalding. The house's association with three soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary War held a special appeal to the DAR<sup>2</sup>. who was looking for a place to display its growing collection of colonial artifacts. The DAR began an immediate restoration of the house to expose its colonial features. They uncovered old fireplaces, reopened old doors, and restored the second floor lecture hall. For 90 years the DAR held its regular meetings, hosted teas, staged plays, and distributed scholarships and citizenship awards. When membership in the Chapter declined in the 1980s, the DAR began looking for another local organization to assume ownership of the house and to continue to operate it as a museum.

In April 1906 Mrs. Henry Lambert purchased the Spalding House from Sarah Spalding with the intent of selling it to the newly formed Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of American Revolution. The DAR purchased the house from Mrs. Lambert for \$3,500. It was estimated that an additional \$900 would be needed for repairs to the house. The Chapter raised \$1,000 to purchase the house and secured a mortgage for the balance. In order to hold property the DAR chapter needed to incorporate, which it did on September 14, 1906. Restoration of the Spalding House began immediately and the house was formally opened and dedicated on December 18, 1906.

The DAR made several alterations to the house. In 1926 the porch on the northwest corner of the house, which the double glass doors open on to was removed. In 1969, the DAR covered the exterior of the house with aluminum siding. Records from the time indicate that the Chapter had consulted with the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities who advised them that the siding would help to preserve the exterior. The western chimney was taken down several courses in 1970 and the wooden fence at the front of the house was replaced with a wrought iron fence at about the same time.

In the late 1970s and 1980s interest and membership in the DAR began to dwindle. Keen that the Spalding House would remain as an historic home, the DAR began looking to transfer ownership of the house to a steward that would preserve its historic use. It approached representatives of the newly created Lowell National Historic and State Heritage Parks, but their missions and property acquisition programs, which focused on the Industrial Revolution, had no room for a colonial home. The Molly

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<sup>2</sup>The Molly Varnum Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was formed in 1894. There were thirty original members. The first regent was Mrs. Frederic T. Greenhalge, wife of then Massachusetts Governor Frederic T. Greenhalge. Mrs. Greenhalge had been asked by the National DAR to form a Chapter in the Lowell area. The first meeting was held in the Greenhalge home on Wyman Street in Lowell. Later meetings were held in other private homes, including the Nesmith House on Andover Street (four Nesmith women were among the 30 original members of the Chapter). By 1900 membership of the organization grew too large for private homes. The Chapter was able to secure use of a room in Memorial Hall and the members began to furnish it with relics. In June 1906 there were 225 members of the Chapter when the opportunity arose to purchase the Spalding House on Pawtucket Street. The house's association with three soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary War held a special interest to the DAR members. The house would also provide the Chapter with a location to display their growing collection of relics.

Varnum Chapter's Regent, Helen Whiting, was determined however that the house be preserved as a locally owned historic asset for the city of Lowell. Helen persistently approached and visited public and private non-profit agencies who may have an interest in owning and maintaining the Spalding House. In 1996 she contacted the Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, a private non-profit land trust to see if it would have an interest in owning the house. The Spalding House's close historic association with the Merrimack River and the area's pre-Industrial history fit with the Trust's mission to educate people about the history of the environment.



## Spalding House Tours

### Step-by-Step Guide for Volunteers

### Appendix 2- Timeline

Date	1758	1758 to 1761	1761 to 1768	1768 to 1773	1773 to 1774	1774 to 1777	1777 to 1790	1790	1790 to 1906	1906	1906 to 1996	1996 to Present
Owner	Joseph Tyler, Sr.	Robert Hildreth	Reuben Hamblett	Moses Davis	Joseph Tyler, Jr.	Andrew Fletcher	Captain John Ford	Nathaniel Ropes	Spalding Family	Mrs. Henry Lambert	DAR	LP&CT
	10 acres of land sold to Robert Hildreth on June 20, 1758	Sold "land with a dwelling thereon" to Reuben Hamblett of Chelmsford on April 14, 1761	Sold to Moses Davis on May 31, 1768	Sold to Joseph Tyler, Jr. on September 25, 1773	Sold to Andrew Fletcher on November 11, 1774- 20 acres of land with dwelling house, a barn, blacksmith's shop and buildings used for a horse shed	Sold to Captain John Ford on February 8, 1777	Sold of Nathaniel Ropes of Salem	Sold to Mr. Joel Spalding, father of Jonathan Spalding, on October 26, 1790	Mr. Joel Spalding (3/12/1742/43 – 7/26/1823) Jonathan Spalding (7/12/1775 –????). He was married to Sarah Dodge (b. 1788 d. 1/12/27 at age 49) on 3/11/1819 – They had six children (Joel, Jonathan [b. 1821 died at age 5], John [b. 1823 died at age 2], Sarah-Rebecca, George-Otis [b. 1827 died at age 1 and Jonathan-Tyler[b. 10/4/1829)) Dr. Joel Spalding (3/2/1820- ????) Miss Sarah-Rebecca Spalding (9/10/2825 -????)	Sold to the DAR		
	Six pounds and thirteen shillings	Ninety-eight pounds, twelve shillings			Two hundred forty-three pounds, six shillings and twelve pence	One hundred eighty-six pounds, fifteen shillings and four pence				\$3,500	Donated to the LP&CT 1996	

Mr. Joel Spalding was the third child of Colonel Simeon Spalding [b. 8/4/1713 in Chelmsford the youngest son of Joseph Spalding, d.4/7/1785 at age 72] of Chelmsford and Sarah Fletcher. He was born on March 12, 1742 or 1743 in Chelmsford, MA. He died July 26, 1823. He was married twice. First to Phebe Tyler [b. 3/23/1750 d. 1/1/1780]. They had four children together: Jonathan [b. 7/12/1775], Silas and Otis, who both died young, and Phebe [b. 12/26/1779 d. 11/5/1857]. Phebe was married to Joseph Butterfield Varnum on 12/28/1800 and resided in Dracut. Joel Spalding's second marriage was to Mrs. Rebecca Cary on April 25, 1791. Her maiden name was Rebecca Pierce. She was born 1747 and died May 15, 1834 at the age of 87. They had no children.

Joel Spalding was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and served in the Volunteer Company of Colonel Jonathan Reed's Regiment from September 27 to November 8, 1777. He also served in Colonel Samuel Denny's Regiment from October 23 to December 4, 1779. Joel Spalding was present at the surrender of Burgoyne.