

AUNT BETSY FRAZEE'S, 1451 Raritan Road, #6

Proceed to the back of the house first, where by the kitchen steps you can see the old brick wall of the original bee hive oven where Aunt Betsy Frazee baked her bread on that fateful, hot day in '77.

Aunt Betsy was so single-minded about getting her bread baked for the homeland soldiers, that she must not have heard the warning shouts that the British were coming. The oft-told tale has it that when surprised by the sudden appearance of two Red Coat generals, her fear that they would take the bread made her stand her ground. The generals, Lord Cornwallis and Sir William Howe, had caught the delicious odor of the bread that was baking and were tempted to ask for a loaf. She offered the loaf, yet said, feeling all a-tremble inside as she spoke: "I give this to you, Sir, in fear not in love." General Lord Cornwallis withdrew his hand. "Then, neither I nor a soldier of mine shall eat it, Madam," he said. All that day Red Coats passed her house, but did not disturb her nor ask her for a single loaf of bread. The table on which Auntie kneaded the dough was in the family of the Ellisons, and upon the death of Henry W., was sold to a junk dealer.



The inside section of the original fireplace had been walled off, but was reopened by the present owners Franklyn Tuttle Terry and his wife Louise, who maintain the house and land as "Terrilou Acres," for their unusual collection of domestic and wild animals.

Old Dutch ovens were used in this locality for more than a century. They were generally large enough to accommodate a dozen or more loaves at a time. Heat was produced by burning well-dried logs, four to six feet, inside the oven, until nothing remained but the smoldering ashes. After the ashes had been entirely removed, the chamber was dampened with a wet mop to produce steam. When the temperature "felt" right, the pans of bread were inserted and the door closed.

What is now the combination modern and first kitchen has the original solid ash beams, which are finished and tooled with the same tooling used in the Frazee-Lee house, and may have been built about the same time. A reference in the New Jersey Archives on June 10, 1678, places Joseph Frazee near a swamp in the west fields of Elizabethtown.

The entire house is floored in native ash wood, and the trimming and framing is all of oak. The beams upstairs are rough-hewn broad-axed, and the Roman numerals marking the juncture of mortise and tennon with original pegging is visible. The interior and exterior of the walls are lined with hand-made brick put into place with Mother earth and are thick enough to withstand a cannonshot.

Like most of the old houses, this farm home holds a great many rooms in its embrace. It has some rooms that are larger than ours and also some that are much smaller than we would consider usable today. In trying to guess what the use of some of the smaller rooms was we might call the little room off the narrow passageway from the kitchen, the Pellion room, once used for saddles, whips, etc. The beams of the kitchen show where a very tiny room big enough for two had been which very probably was the "powdering room," used for powdering wigs. Upstairs the very unusual feature that remains in the original state is the "open chamber." This large unfinished section of the house, which shows its cross ties and pegged beams and the original hand-hewn siding, turned its hand to whatever was demanded of it. It stored winter seed corn, or the frozen pelts of sheep, or cow-hides to be tanned, or held the great loom. On occasion, it was known to be the "ballroom."

Not to be over-looked in the living room is the built-in corner cabinet of cherry wood with grooved solid doors, the work of a real artisan. Windows in the downstairs section have the original panes of glass with bubbles.

A trip to the basement proves its very early authenticity. The walls were "laid dry" with sawdust and stones. Here was an ideal cool underground "lock" room for storing perishables, for running completely underneath the house is a spring!

Aunt Betsy got her name from her nephew Gershom Lee, who was the son of Thomas Lee, Sr., and his first wife, Sarah Littell, who died leaving the one son. Thomas' sister, Elizabeth Lee, married Gershom Frazee I, the well-known weaver, and the two of them raised the infant boy. Gershom Lee inherited the homelot at the death of his uncle and aunt, where he lived with his wife Sarah Hetfield, daughter of Daniel. When he died in January of 1845, he left the house to his two sons (Matthias) Frazee Lee and Daniel H. Lee. They were bachelors. When Daniel died first in 1888 he left all to his brother, who died the same year and gave the entire estate, estimated to be worth one hundred and fifty thousand dollars or more, to the Scotch Plains Baptist Church. With the funds the trustees were able to pay off the debt of the new brick church.