

# Chapter Two

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

**Building a Town.** The residents of Little Cow Neck during the first half of the eighteenth century enjoyed a peaceful existence, tending mainly to their farms and cattle. They set up gristmills and laid out roads for the heavy grain-laden wagons. Most of these local people attended the district town meetings held in local taverns where a social atmosphere prevailed.

In 1718 William Nicoll sold Joseph Latham, (who was the builder of the mill on Nicoll's property, some 1200 acres at £ 2250\* (or \$11,444.50). This parcel of land ran from Gildersleeve's Creek (Leeds' Pond) to what is now Northern Boulevard, and from Cow Bay (Manhasset Bay) to one quarter mile beyond the Quaker Meeting House.

Latham donated "one-half acre and nineteen square rods" of this land in 1719 for the construction of the first Quaker Meeting House at Cow Neck. Before this the Quakers had gathered in each others homes for meetings, or traveled to Flushing and Westbury for their monthly services. When the decision to build a meeting house was made, a central location had to be found so that "Friends" from the surrounding villages (Roslyn, Great Neck, Herricks) could easily attend. At that time the highway along the Shelter Rock route did not end at Northern Boulevard, but continued on to the East of the Meeting House and went directly from Herricks to the gristmill that Latham built (later called Plandome Mill). This was a central location for a place of worship since it lay at the junction of two major roadways. The Quaker Meeting House was completed in 1720 and thereafter became a point of reference for entries in the Town Records:

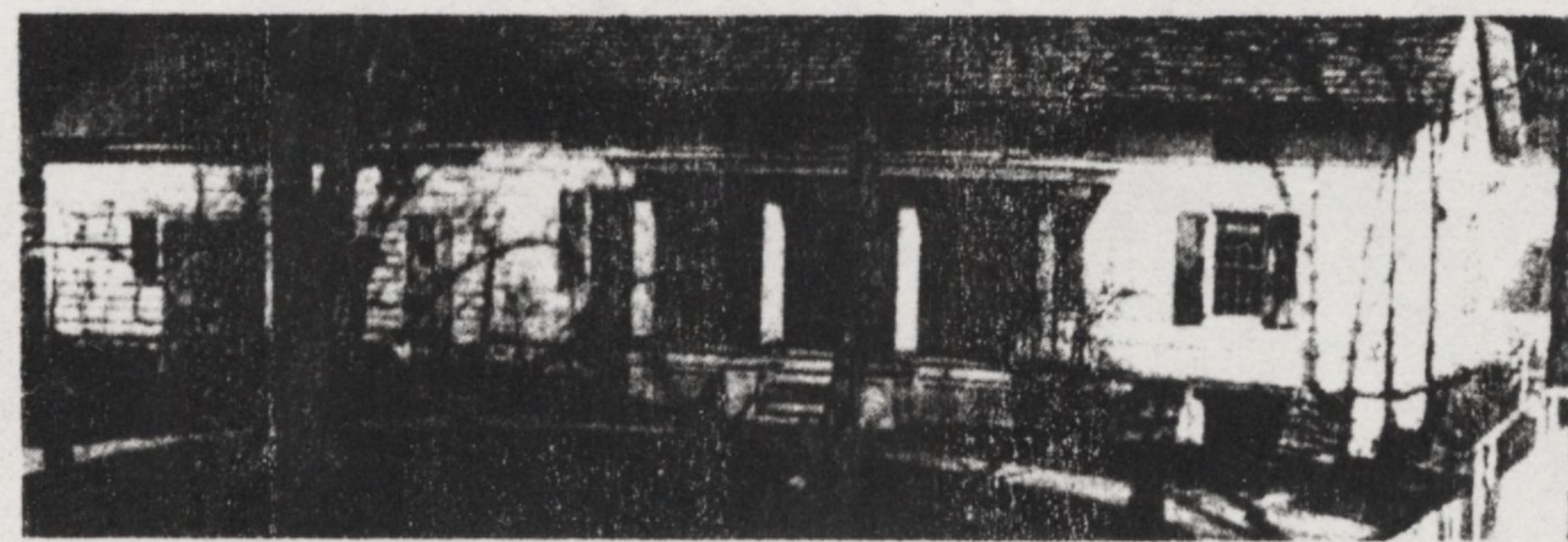
"from thence the Scanks fence is ye south bounds till it comes near the gate southward of the Meeting House and from thence eastward as the saplins are marked."\*\*

In 1725 the Schenck family built their house on the south side of North Hempstead Turnpike, opposite the Meeting House, Its architecture was typical of the old Dutch style: long and low, with a slanted roof; the front porch had a "stoep" which welcomed all those who wished to gather there at night or on Church days.\*\*\*

The typical English house however, was quite different, It was two stories high with the roof slanted down toward the rear. These houses were built with a southern exposure so the heat from the sun would penetrate the few windows that were sparingly set in small frames (glass was very expensive because it had to be imported). The Mitchell House, which stood for years on

Northern Boulevard near the Abraham and Straus store, was one of Manhasset's oldest homesteads. Previously it had stood where it was originally built—on Northern Boulevard—on land then belonging to John Hay Whitney. Unfortunately it was completely destroyed by fire in 1979.

Many people had to travel long distances to attend Sunday services. In 1734 English parishioners of Cow Neck traveled to St. George's Church, Hempstead for worship.



**Schenck farmhouse which faced Shelter Rock Road. Built in the Dutch style 1725.**

*(Nassau County Historical Museum)*

"In good weather a horse could pull a springless farm wagon the twelve miles in a little more than two hours. In bad weather it took three or more. One family even walked the twelve miles bare-foot, putting on their boots as they neared the church."\*

The Dutch were not so fortunate as the English. They did not have an existing church to attend, and so they built one. Sixty five families:

"provided the funds to build the Church in Lake Success in 1732 on Lakeville Road on the site of the present Great Neck South High School office. It was known as the Reformed Dutch Church of the Town of Hempstead."\*\*

Long trips were involved every Sunday by horse and wagon (or alone on horseback) on roads that were unpaved, in all kinds of weather. Services were lengthy and the churches were unheated which made it necessary for people to bring along metal foot warmers filled with hot coals and in some instances they also brought their own chairs.\*\*\* Parishoners who lived near the various churches were expected to keep their fires burning so that those who journeyed so far might stop in to warm themselves before and after the services.

The following account in 1751 describes Plandome Road when it was just a path and local landowners proposed to turn it into a main road.

\*British currency of currency were in general circulation.

\*\*TOWN RECORDS, Vol. III, dtd. June 16, 1729.

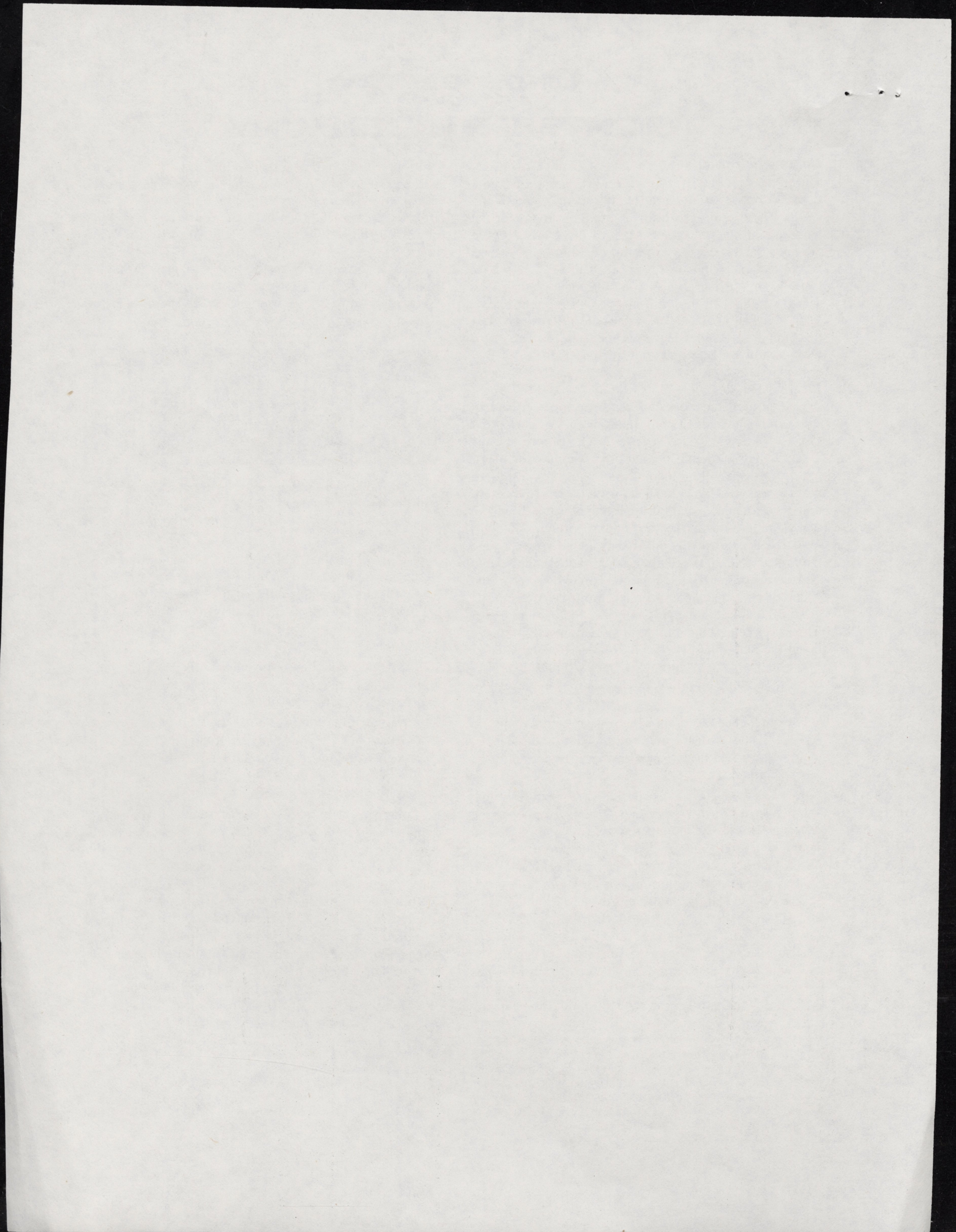
\*\*\*The Schenck house, which stood just behind the Lord and Taylor store is another of the oldest on Long Island built in the Dutch style. It can be seen today at the *Old Bethpage Village Restoration*. In 1906 Martin Schenck's children sold the property to Emma M. Chandler. It belonged to five other owners before it was moved.

\*Hopkins, M., *CHRIST CHURCH, MANHASSET—THE FIRST 150 YEARS*, Manhasset, New York, 1952.

\*\*Cummings, G. A., correspondence, dtd Nov. 1, 1979, to the author.

\*\*\*The "chair" of Daniel Brinkerhoff is on display in the museum of the Community Reformed Church.







On August 22, 1776 at 10:00 A.M. 3,000 British Red Coats landed on Long Island. They had been prevented from landing the night before by a severe thunderstorm which claimed the lives of 10 people. Later that day 10,000 more men landed on Long Island shores. On August 29, 12,000 more men landed.\*\*\*

All local men between the ages of sixteen and fifty were required to enlist in either the Continental Army or in the local militia, which was a back-up for the regular army. Most of the men from Little Cow Neck joined the local militia so that they could remain near their farms. Captain John Sands was second in command of the local militia which trained in Stonytown at Flower Hill. All soldiers were paid in British money, which was the only currency in circulation at the time. The equivalent of one thousand dollars was paid to each man who joined the Continental Army for the duration of the war.

The British, however, offered two hundred acres of land for non-commissioned officers and fifty acres for every private enlisted in their army. The British Red Coats were rewarded for bringing in recruits. Loyalists (Tories) were expected to provide the British with the names of those belonging to the rebel forces.

Justice Kissam administered oaths of allegiance.

The badge of loyalty was a red cockade, (a red ribbon around the hat and the longer it streamed down behind the more loyal) or even a red flannel rag tucked under the hat band.\*\*\*

**Revolutionary Incidents in Little Cow Neck.** During this British invasion it became increasingly difficult to farm the land because houses, goods, livestock and the land itself were confiscated at the whim of the occupying soldiers. Many of these soldiers were German Hessians hired by the British as mercenaries, and stationed in great numbers throughout the area. The Quaker Meeting House at Little Cow Neck was particularly vulnerable to these German soldiers because the Quakers were opposed to war and fighting and therefore did not protest when the soldiers entered and took over their domain. Believing that all men are created equal, they refused to sell goods to the militia or to the Red Coats. The enemy took the goods that were needed and turned the Meeting House into a barracks, making it a British stronghold in the town. The Hessian troops also seized and occupied the gristmill belonging to Dr. Samuel Latham and the Schenck House opposite the Meeting House.

The Hessians were a kind, peaceable people, inveterately fond of smoking, and pea-coffee: their offences were of the sly kind, such as stealing at night, while the British and 'New raised Corps' were insolent, domineering, and inclined to violence, robbery, and bloodshed.\*\*\*

Ardent patriots such as Adrian Onderdonk, as well as Benjamin Sands and Peter Dodge (both of Upper Cow Neck) were arrested by the British. Onderdonk was

taken from his home in September of 1776 by the British 17th Light Dragoons with the excuse that his neighbors complained of him. He was paraded through the streets of New York and incarcerated at the Provost Prison\* for a period of four weeks. During that time the British soldiers confiscated his livestock along with the produce from his farms. He returned home a changed man: thin, pale, deaf in one ear and unable to comprehend the injustices of his treatment.

Martin Schenck, leader of the rebel forces and target of the British, suffered the following injustices:

*Revolutionary Occupation Order—Jamaica 15, August, 1781* "Finding that your house will justly admit of receiving a Billet, you are therefore Directed to Provide Mr. Cutler, Forage Master to the Hessian Chassure Corps, with one good Room. The use of the kitchen and place for his servant to sleep in."\*\*

to—Mr. Martin Skanks, Cow Neck  
from—C. W. Gunn, Asst. B. M."

*Revolutionary Incident—September 25, 1782*

"At night, between nine and ten o'clock came two men by my bed and told me to come to the door they wanted to speak to me. They forced me from my house about 200 yards. The one cocked his piece at my breast, the other stood with a cutlass over my head and told me to deliver them one thousand pounds, if not they would immediately take my life and burn my house. I told them I had it not. 'How much have you' they said. I told them I did not know, I told them they could have what I had. I went and unlocked my desk. They took out of my desk 60 pounds in money, a gold seal, 3 silver buckles, and some flints, and then ordered me out of my house. I told them they had got my money and what did they want more. They still bid me go. I endeavored to make my escape and got most barbarously wounded."

Martin Schenck, Jr.\*\*

In another incident the Kissam household was involved, and this time the rebels had the upper hand.

"On Sat. nite June 30, 1781 forty rebels landed at the bottom of Cow Neck, 20 of whom marched 4 miles to the house of Justice Kissam, and took off Major Kissam, his younger brother, Benjamin T. Kissam and Thomas Pearsall a refugee. Mr. Fitch, their commander behaved with great civility to Mrs. Kissam, not suffering his men to go into the room where Mrs. Townsend, an old lady, mother to Justice Kissam was in bed.\*\*\*

On October 26, 1782 the entire town was alarmed when 20 rebels came down in whaleboats from Massachusetts in defiance of their orders, and raised havoc in the valley:

"There were two whale boats, with muffled oars. The men landed at Thorne's dock (now Judge Kissam's), and proceeded to Burr's store, (now H.

\*Ibid., documents No. 21 and No. 46.

\*\* REVOLUTIONARY INCIDENTS OF QUEENS COUNTY, Ibid.

\*\*\* Ibid.

\* A prison ship docked in New York Harbor.

\*\* REVOLUTIONARY INCIDENTS OF QUEENS COUNTY, Ibid.

\*\*\* Ibid.



