



fine, colonial homes for which he has since become so well-known. His purchase began at East High Road and at the top of Country Club Drive (the lower part of which land had previously been sold by the Munson Estate to the Levitts) extending to just beyond the fork at St. Francis Hospital. It extended back from the Boulevard to the line where the sand bank began and plots were sold almost as fast as Mr. Uhl could build houses. The last one was completed about 1947 (except for the land to the south) and when the roads were completed and the charming, comparatively small homes on comparatively small lots were finished, it was a joy to walk or drive through the Uhl development. Most of the homes had at least one room downstairs with beamed ceilings taken from old barns hither and yon, so that to own a Uhl house was to own a well-built, well-planned and substantial small home. These houses still command top prices in the current real estate market as do almost all Uhl homes anywhere.

Milton Hopkins

## NORTH STRATHMORE

In November 1933, the Great Depression reached its depth. It had not been an eventful year in Manhasset. In March the bank holiday had been accepted calmly and stoically. In April beer flowed freely in the town for the first time in years, but no one was publicly intoxicated. The Republicans carried the local elections in November but that was hardly news. But about that time a rumor began circulating in town that the Onderdonk property had been purchased by a developer, perhaps Levitt and Sons. On November 23, 1933 the news broke under the headline in the "Manhasset Mail": "Two hundred Homes Contemplated on Forty-six Acres Reported Sold to Rockville Centre Realtor".

The news was worthy of a headline. The Onderdonk family had been prominent in Manhasset's history from about the time in the seventeenth century when The

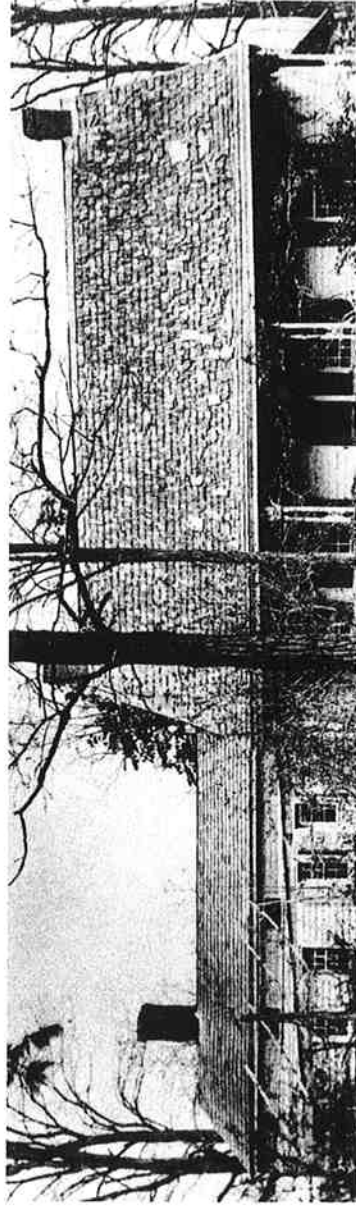
Fence had come down. The old mansion on the property had been built by Horatio Gates Onderdonk and his wife Elizabeth Schenck Onderdonk in 1836. With its balanced wings, the lovely roof with its handsome cornice and its four tall beautiful columns, it is considered the finest example of Greek Revival style on Long Island. (In 1980 it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and a grant of money was given by *The America the Beautiful Fund* towards its restoration).

After Horatio's death in 1886 the house went to his son Andrew who lived in Brooklyn most of the time. It was suffering from neglect and in 1933 the townspeople were hoping that some one would restore it and occupy it. The possibility that the Levitts might use it as an office for the new development was good news.

Work on the first seven houses and the mansion itself began at once. Roads were laid out during the winter and trees and shrubs were placed. The Levitts planned to develop the area in a style similar to their successful development "Strathmore" in Rockville Centre.

Their first efforts in drawing attention to the development, however, resulted in their receiving a gentle hint that understatement is considered good taste in Manhasset. A letter from the editor appeared in the "Manhasset Mail" early in 1934 addressed to Mr. Levitt congratulating him on the new homes and the restoration of the mansion: "However, we must disagree with your method of publicizing the development. At night the brilliant spotlights on the white house with its black blinds and the large letters most certainly give the impression of a funeral home rather than a real estate office. We are informed that the letters are to be made narrower. Why not remove them and have an attractive small sign made and placed under the steps and lighted if so desired. With a spotlight on the sign and the house lighted from within, the effect would be most attractive".

The point was well taken, and in July the development made the news again when many curious people toured the houses and the editor went to see what was



attracting so much attention. "Basement recreation rooms with bars, and the unique bathrooms with sunken tubs, black tiles and red rugs." By that time twenty-five houses had been sold.

Along with the keys to the doors and the deeds of ownership the new owners were presented with a list of rules and regulations for maintaining the appearance of the development: "No birds or fowl shall be kept or maintained either in cages or coops on the outside of any dwelling place. Dogs shall be housed in suitable kennels conforming architecturally to the dwelling house. No wash poles or wash lines shall be erected or maintained on the premises; no laundry shall be hung for drying on Sundays or legal holidays. Lawns must be cut at least once a week from April to November 1st in each year. The front of the houses were to be landscaped only with shrubs; flowers were to be grown only in the back yards." Apparently the restrictions were not onerous for by 1936 more than two hundred families were living in these attractive houses whose cost ranged from \$7,000 to \$15,000. Early residents often found themselves at bay in a Sunday afternoon foxhunt. The area had been the playground of the Manhasset estate owners and old customs die hard.

In January 1936 a steering committee of the residents met to form a civic association. Mr. Edward Mulvehill

was appointed chairman and, as the Onderdonk House was on everyone's mind, Mr. W. Carter Betsch, Mr. Henry Moore, and Mr. Joseph Gschwind were appointed to the House and Grounds Committee. In March the committee called on Levitt and Sons and were informed that the house and property had, indeed, in 1934, been deeded to a hypothetical Strathmore Association to be formed as a membership corporation at a later date. By the terms of the deed filed in 1934 the property was conveyed to Stephen Mason, Chairman of the Planning Board of the Town of North Hempstead, as Trustee, "until a membership corporation consisting of not fewer than fifty adults who were owners of Strathmore property, having as its purpose the acquiring and holding of title to property for community purposes was organized and should request, in writing, conveyance to it of the premises described in the deed and then to transfer said premises to such membership corporation."

The deed contained the further provision that if no request should be made by such a membership corporation prior to April 1st, 1939 then the Trustee should convey the property to the Manhasset Park Commission. The corporation did not wait for that particular April Fool joke to take place. The membership speedily requested conveyance of the property and it was deeded to them on December 3, 1936. In March of the next year



**The Onderdonk House restored for Manhasset's Tri-centennial celebration.**

*(photo by Christine Casey)*