

HORSENECK, HUSSUNEGK AND NORTHEAST STONE CHAMBERS

CATHY TAYLOR

The word “Horseneck” appears in colonial documentation in the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, and Ohio. This discussion will focus on three of those states, and will center around the possible use of that name to describe stone constructs. A future article will go into detail about sites in the other states.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation’s report on Horseneck Beach in Westport, Massachusetts (FIGURE 1) states, “The name Horseneck is believed to have come from the Wampanoag word *Hassneghk*, which means a house made of stone. Local lore is that the remains of a stone cellar existed in the area.” Oral history from Algonquian Tribes confirms the use of *Hussunegk* for stone chambers. There is another Horseneck Beach in present day East Greenwich, Rhode Island (FIGURE 2), and sources also state that Horseneck is the Anglicized version of *Hassunegk*, a stone hut.

Another place named Horseneck in the colonial record refers to an area with stone caves or huts. An early deed in the 1600s was for the Horseneck Plantation in present day Greenwich, CT. This was an area between the Mianus River—once known as the Aramuck river—and the Byram River—once known as the Armonk River. The Byram River was a boundary between the Dutch and the English and later between the colonies of New York and Connecticut. The “Old Indian Trail” went across this area from east to west and began with the “Great Stone” in the Bryam Brook. Today this road is known as Putnam Ave, Route 1, or the Boston Post Road.

Historically, the tribes inhabiting that area fought fiercely to keep it. The Dutch and English united to fight the four Tribes there: the Miossehassaky, Petuquapaen (Siwanoy), Asamuck and Patomuck. There are reports of massacres occurring at different times between 1642-46. The 1913 book, *Ye Historie of Ye Town of Greenwich*, reports that the “Strickland Plains” or “Cos Cob” massacre occurred in February 1644, when the entire Indian village was burned in the Cos Cob, or Petuquapaen, area. The New York State Historical Society noted in 1906 that another massacre occurred in March of 1645. It was led by Captain Underhill. Many died by fire and the remainder were sold into slavery. In Hayward’s *New England Gazette-*



FIGURE 1. HORSENECK BEACH IN WESTPORT, MA. [HTTP://DOCS.UNH.EDU/MA/FLRV93SE.JPG](http://docs.unh.edu/MA/FLRV93SE.JPG)

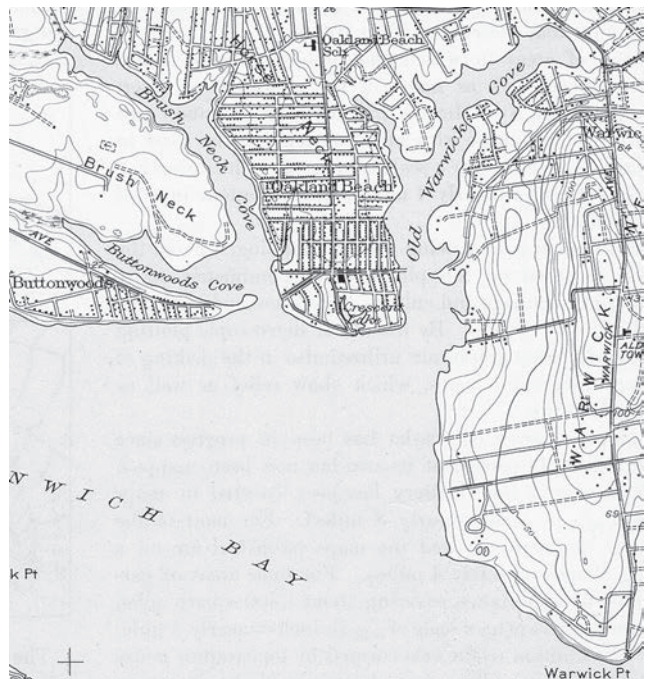


FIGURE 2. HORSENECK BEACH IN EAST GREENWICH, RI. [HTTP://DOCS.UNH.EDU/RI/ESGR44NE.JPG](http://docs.unh.edu/RI/ESGR44NE.JPG)

ter of 1839 it is noted that, “A great battle between the Dutch and the Indian occurred at Horse Neck in 1646. There was loss on both sides and the graves of the dead were seen as small hills. The Dutch prevailed and the Indians withdrew from the area.” Clearly, the area was important to both Algonquin and European people and the Algonquin people did not leave the area willingly.

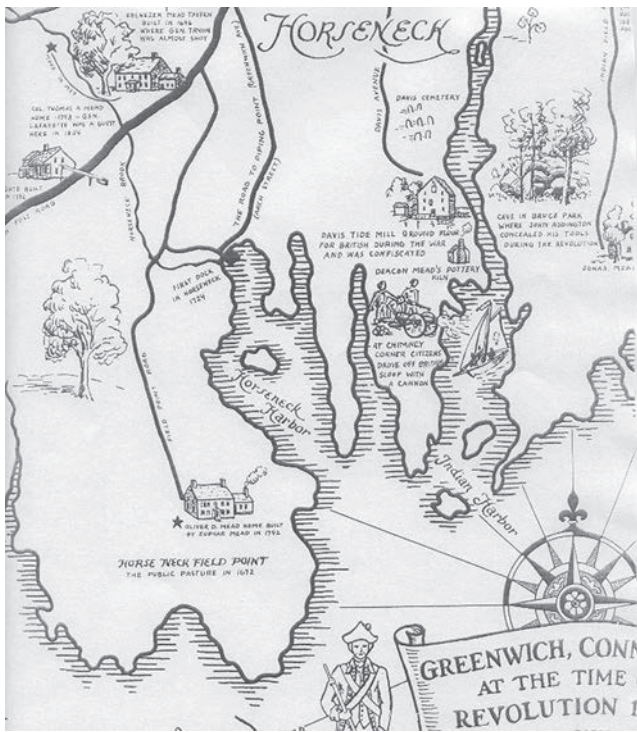


FIGURE 3. HORSENECK, GREENWICH, CT. [HTTP://WWW.GREENWICHLIBRARY.ORG/BLOG/HISTORICALLY_SPEAKING/2012/05/](http://www.greenwichlibrary.org/blog/historically_speaking/2012/05/)

In 1640, men from New Haven purchased lands from the Mianus/Asamuck River to the Patomuk River, and the area became aligned with the Dutch. In 1650, the town of Greenwich, which was comprised of land east of the Mianus/Asamuck, was established as part of the New Haven Colony. In 1665, Greenwich was established as an independent English township.

By 1669, settlers were looking to establish another township known as the Horseneck Plantation. The Horseneck area was first surveyed in 1669. Proprietors drew lots for their lands by 1672. However, the proper negotiations with the Indians took a while longer. There exists a deed for Horseneck Plantation dated 1686. Six Indians signed it: Kowaconussa, Kouko, Querrecqui, Peattun, Pakohchero, and Rumppanus. On the following day, Weskum, an older sachem of the Wappmg (Wappingers) signed a paper stating the deed was valid. The deed was not actually recorded for another 15 years, in 1701. The deed specifically stated the Indians had rights to the fenced-in land in Cos Cob (about 30 acres) for their lifetimes and the lifetimes of their children.

There are three known rock shelters in the area between the Byram and Mianus Rivers within Connecticut. There is a photo of one rock shelter in Babcock Preserve, and another rock shelter known as a wolf cave

is in Scholgalla Natural Park. Additionally, as noted by James Whittall there are stone chambers on the eastern side of the Mianus River in present day Stamford. "Only three miles out of Stamford, CT there was a cluster of 13 such dry wall huts." One is close to the Mianus River Gorge Park. It is rectangular in shape with a west-setting sun alignment. The inside corners of the chamber mark the summer and winter solstice sunset viewing points. Another chamber overlooks the Mianus River and is surrounded by stone groupings and short stone rows with quartz features.

Although some sources state that an area was named Horseneck Plantation because of horses being pastured there, the *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association: 1906 Annual Meeting* "Indian Geographical Names, Hudson's River and its Islands", state otherwise: *Hussanek* is identified as a lodge or ledge of rocks. The likelihood of Horseneck being the Anglicized version of *Hassanek* is strong, since stone huts and rock shelters are integral parts of Indian ceremonial life.

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