

## The Dr. Daniel Whitehead Kissam House (1795)

*424 Park Avenue, Huntington*

Dr. Daniel Whitehead Kissam came to Huntington from Glen Cove in 1795 to practice medicine. Huntington, a town of 4,000 inhabitants, had recently lost its two doctors – the Reverend Dr. Zophar Platt died in 1792 and Dr. James Sandford died in 1794. He purchased a new house across from the Village Green in the heart of town.

The Kissam House is the second house on this property. In 1661, John Wescott built a house here and sold it to Thomas Powell in 1663. Powell, a Quaker, left Huntington in 1695 because he did not want to pay taxes to support the official church. The house passed through several different owners and may have been used to quarter British troops during the revolution. That house may have been burnt down by the British when they left Huntington in 1783.



Timothy Jarvis, a housewright, acquired the property and built the present house. Because of its fine detailing, it is believed that he built it specifically for Dr. Kissam. Dr. Kissam had been apprenticed in New York City for his medical training and began his practice in Glen Cove in 1787. That same year he married Elizabeth Tredwell, whose cousin the Reverend Samuel Seabury became the first Episcopal Bishop of the United States.

Dr. Kissam, his wife and four children (ages 1 to 7) moved into what is known as a half house because there are rooms on only one side of the hall. The house features elegant wood moldings, especially in the front upstairs chamber. The small wing to the south was originally the kitchen with a shallow lean-to across the back. His neighbor to the north was Samuel Fleet, principal of the newly organized Huntington Academy. To the south lived Silas Wood, who was to represent Long Island in Congress and who wrote the first history of Long Island. Dr. Kissam was active in St. John's Episcopal Church, which was then located on Park Avenue across from where Huntington Hospital now stands. He also served as a trustee of the Huntington Academy. By 1800, the Kissams had three more children. Elizabeth Kissam died in childbirth in 1803. Two years later Dr. Kissam married Phebe Oakley of Huntington. They also had seven children.

In 1830, Dr. Kissam at the age of 67 suffered a stroke, which left him paralyzed on his left side. He persuaded a friend, Dr. Charles Sturges, from New York City to take over his medical practice. Dr. Sturges began tending to the sick in Huntington on September 30, 1830. Three years later he married Dr. Kissam's nineteen-year-old daughter, Margaret. The newlyweds lived with Dr. Kissam in the house on Park Avenue. In addition to his medical practice, Dr. Sturges also became active in community affairs serving as a trustee of the Huntington Academy and one of the original trustees of the Potter Fund, a scholarship to allow poor children to attend the Academy.

Sometime in the 1830s, with two families living in the house, it was remodeled. The back parlor had been converted into an apartment for Dr. Kissam and his wife. In order to compensate for the lost room and to adhere to the new fashion, the kitchen was converted into a dining room with Egyptian Revival details. An extension was built to the rear to accommodate a new, modern kitchen.

Dr. Kissam died in 1840 leaving the house to Dr. Sturges. Margaret died in 1853 and two years later Dr. Sturges married her younger sister. In 1857, he was ordained a minister and the following year left Huntington to serve as a missionary in Nebraska.

The house passed through various owners until 1967 when it was purchased by the Huntington Historical Society. In 1972, a large English style barn was moved to the property from Lloyd Harbor. Today, the house, which has been restored to its 1830s appearance, and barn are used for educational programs, tours and festivals.

*For more information contact the  
Huntington Historical Society*

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*The Kissam House is open for tours on Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.*