

La Grange

La Grange Inn is probably the oldest hostelry now operating in Suffolk County, if not on Long Island. While the exact date of the erection of the first unit of the Inn is not definitely known, it has been established that it was in operation shortly after the close of the Revolutionary War. It was until the present management took over, known as the La Grange Inn.

The property on which the Inn is located was owned by the Higbie family from the time the original inn was built until about 1918, when it passed into the hands of a syndicate. During early prohibition days it was sold to the late Eugene Freund who operated it until his death.

Clinton David Higby, author of "Edward Higby and His Descendants" (the progenitor of the family in America), states that he was keeper of La Grange Inn and died in Babylon, May 23, 1815 and is buried in the Babylon Cemetery.

The Higbies spelled the name differently, some using the "by," others "bee" and still others "bie" in constructing the final syllable. Another proprietor was Samuel Higbie who was born Feb. 29, 1792 probably at La Grange Inn. The historian Higby says: "It is probable that his grandfather, Samuel A. Higbie, built the inn, as it is said to have been a licensed place as early as 1750."

The next proprietor of La Grange was Nehemiah Higbie's son Richard Terry Higbie who conducted it until his retirement in 1871. It was then leased for many years by the family until sold as stated. The last Higbie to own the inn was the widow of John Robbins Higbie. Mr. Higbie inherited the property from his uncle, Samuel Althouse Higbie, who died in 1915.

The inn formerly stood closer to Montauk Highway and was a much smaller structure than it is now.

During the period before the main line of the Long Island Railroad was built, Samuel Higbie, one of the proprietors of the inn, operated a stagecoach line between Brooklyn and Patchogue and made La Grange a stopover point. Later, when Richard Terry Higbie was conducting the inn and the railroad had been built on the main line as far as Deer Park, he ran a stagecoach to the Deer Park station, four and a half miles distant.

The La Grange was named in honor of General Lafayette's home in France, and although some people claim the General visited the inn in 1824, when he came back to America, there is no positive proof of this. (In an interview with George L. Weeks, Jr., he said "An educated guess would be that he did visit the inn".)