

..from "Edward Higby and His Descendants,"

by Clinton David Higbie

(thanks to Harry Higbie for this article, from his personal copy of this family history)

211 RICHARD TERRY⁶ HIGBIE (*Samuel,⁵ Nehemiah,⁴ Samuel A.,³ Samuel,² Edward¹*), a hotel-keeper, born in the section known as West Islip, near Babylon, Suffolk Co., Long Island, 7 Jan. 1824. His father was keeper of the famous old Hotel La Grange at the time of Richard Terry Higbie's birth. This hotel had been kept by members of the family for several generations. It was built by his grandfather Nehemiah who kept it many years, then it was kept by his father Samuel, who for many years ran the stage from New York to Patchogue, and then by Richard Terry Higbie himself until he turned it over to his sons in 1871. The hotel was named for General Lafayette's place in France — members of the family say it was named by Lafayette himself who was a guest there in 1824, but it may have been named by Samuel M. Eytinge whose family were for over 100 years frequently guests of the hotel.

As a bit of description of life at La Grange I give the following:

"Hotel life in former days was entirely different from what it is at present; the renting of cottages was hardly known, social life centered in the hotel. Summer guests considered it their home. In fact, most of the families that located in the hamlet of West Islip and bought large places, first made their home at the hotel. Summer after summer La Grange was crowded with the same persons; and, too, many came regularly every season to enjoy the fishing and the shooting. There were a great many trout streams near by, well stocked by nature. The sportsmen were always sure of a fine mess of fish. Deer, partridge, quail, woodcock, snipe, duck and brant shooting was then the liveliest sport. Deer were in the center of the island. Quail, partridge and woodcock were abundant, and within five minutes of the hotel. Sniping parties generally shot until they were tired and brought home birds by the bagful. Ducks lined the shores with good shooting from any point, and sail boats had no trouble to get a mess in sailing to and from the coast.

The smoking-room of the hotel was indeed an interesting place; many discussions, stories and anecdotes were recited here by men from New York, old Fortyniners, old New Englanders, old Brooklynites, old Long Islanders, old traders and

old baymen. Edward Daily of Babylon who drove the horse Dexter over to La Grange here made the match between George B. Alley and Daniel Willets with a \$5000 bet on each side to trot Dexter against time of 2.19 for a mile. The race took place on Fashion Course just the other side of Jamaica, John Murphy driving Dexter a mile in 2.17 $\frac{1}{4}$, his best record.

It is almost impossible now to conceive of the old hotel life, say 100 years ago, — boots blacked free of charge, guests carried to and from the shores and depots free, children given free rides for amusement, large gardens, half an acre of muskmelons for the guests to roam in, not so much of certain kinds of meats as now, but chickens, eggs, oysters, clam, quail, venison, trout and other fish, — not cooked over hardcoal fires, but over wood coals, and then the home-made bread and pies, the fresh milk and butter! Oh, how the city people enjoyed the change in cooking! It was worth all the trouble and inconvenience. What if the men did have to go out into the wash-room in the morning to make their ablutions, or give up their rooms to ladies and sleep on cots, they had good things and all they wanted to eat, and mixed their own drinks!"

He married 24 Oct. 1854 Keziah Jones, born in the town of Huntington, Suffolk Co., N. Y., 23 May 1827, died at Babylon 26 Dec. 1904, daughter of Hallet and Mary (Peters). Shortly after his marriage he took charge of La Grange and kept the hotel until 1871, when he built himself a home across the street from the hotel and retired. He died there 3 Mar. 1888.