

The Burr Family of Commack

Prominent in the Community Since 1656

The Burr family first arrived in America from England in 1630. They arrived on Long Island in 1656, first in Hempstead and shortly thereafter in Commack where they purchased 166 acres of land. The Burrs thrived in Commack becoming quite wealthy. At one time the family farm encompassed what is now the Home Depot shopping center on the corner of Larkfield Road and Jericho Turnpike. A mid-nineteenth-century Burr family cemetery still sits in the parking lot of that shopping center.

In the nineteenth century, Smith Burr (1803-1887) operated a hotel on the northwest corner of Burr Road and Townline Road. Smith Burr also bred harness horses – including Lady Suffolk, considered the most famous Long Island racehorse. Lady Suffolk, who was owned by David Bryant (who was Burr's neighbor), competed in 162 races in seventeen states from 1838 to 1853 setting several records.

Smith Burr's son, Carll S. Burr (1831-1916), continued the family horse breeding business. Following his marriage in 1857, he purchased a farm and opened a training school to develop trotting horses. He built a half-mile track behind his house on Burr Road. The school became quite well known and kept as many as 100 horses at the same time for training, breeding, or racing. Carll Burr was active in the Republican Party and was an Elector in the Electoral College in 1880 and 1888.

Carll Burr enlarged his father's small house, which had originally been built in 1832. Although Burr first enlarged the house shortly after his marriage, his growing wealth and prominence led him in 1881 to greatly expand the house and remodel it in the then-popular French Second Empire style. The result is an imposing two and one-half story residence with a mansard roof.

His son, Carll S. Burr, Jr., joined the family business and was also elected to the State Assembly and Senate. Carll Burr, Sr. and Carll Burr, Jr. built Suffolk County's only one-mile race track on the east side of Commack Road where Commack North High School now stands. The heyday of the track ended by 1916, but it continued to be used for amateur races through the 1930s.

Carll S. Burr, III established a successful real estate business in town, which was continued by his son. The family home remained in the Burr family until the end of the twentieth century.

Adapted from Commack: A Look Into The Past, by Lucille Rosen (Commack School District, 1970)

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