

Leja Beach and Davis Park

In the early 1940's Curtis Davis donated to the Town of Brookhaven a 300 foot wide strip of barren land on Fire Island, stretching from the bay to the ocean. The town named this piece Davis Park and it became a town beach. Four owners of a construction and trucking firm, Lee Coffin, Edward Sembler, Joseph Gerard and Albert Brown purchased the land east and west of Davis Park for development. The first letters of their first names spelled Leja, which became the name for the development.

A casino was constructed on top of the dunes, using part of an existing former Coast Guard structure, which was enlarged with used lumber from an dismantled mainland home. A motel was also built in 1946.

For the service to and from Davis Park, two ferries were built in West Sayville for the Gerard Ferry

Corporation; the Leja Beach in 1945 and the Davis Park in 1946. These ferries were sold in 1947 to John P. [Hobby] Miller and Fred Sherman. This ferry company expanded over the next sixty years, adding many new ferries to their fleet. In the 1950's, a former navy PT. boat was converted and became the Highlander, the ferry Machinac came from the Great Lakes, the Bayberry Mist was converted from a former Navy target towing boat. The company built the steel-hulled ferry Meshomac on the Patchogue River. The 65 foot hull of the ferry Quiapen was built on Rhode Island and finished here in Patchogue, as was the ferry Kiki in 1982. The Bay Mist party boat was also built in Rhode Island in 1985. Later the ferry Mathabanks was added to the fleet. The Davis Park Ferry Company to this day is providing an important service, linking Fire Island to the Mainland.



Patchogue's favored ocean beach on Fire Island, Davis Park. This photo from the 1950's still shows plenty of beach in front of the dunes and the casino in the center of the picture. By 1996 so much of this beach disappeared that a winter storm was able to wash the casino into the ocean.