

## Edward H. (Beau) Lane, III on Edward Hudson Lane, Sr. and John Edward Lane

I am one of the Altavista Lanes, the oldest of my generation. My grandfather was Edward Hudson Lane, Sr. son of John Edward Lane. Being the oldest, it was my pleasure and privilege to spend more time with my grandfather than my other cousins. He shared some of his life and experiences at Esmont with me several times like the time he accompanied his father to Guthrie Hall after church. He was told to wait outside in the buggy for his father. (I believe he was maybe 16 at the time.) His father came out in a while and said "Son, I just bought Guthrie Hall." Young Ed, who was always logical even at a young age, asked why he wanted Guthrie Hall, John E. replied "I thought your mother might like it." Later while attending V.P.I. young Ed contracted the measles and was sent home to recover. His mother, Ella, while nursing him back to health caught the measles and died. My grandfather never forgave himself.



He shared many stories with me involving his father whom he loved very much. He said John would wake him up some nights saying, "wake up boy, I'm going to tell you how to make a million dollars!" At the breakfast table he would lay out his plan and Ella would say "that's a great idea, Mr. Lane, now how do we propose to pay for all this?" He was truly a visionary, the kind of man that made this country what it is.

Ella was a special woman in her own right. When they married, she was 19 and had saved several thousand dollars trading horses which they used to pay off a railroad construction loan. My grandfather was born, July 4, 1891, in a tarpaper shack while they were on a railroad job outside New Castle, VA.

While on a Lane Brothers Construction job in Georgia, J.E. met and married Rosa Thornton, a strong-minded woman that thought young Ed (the oldest son of John) had too much responsibility and the sparks flew between them. He had been placed in charge of the power house that lit Guthrie Hall and at the age of 16 kept the books for Lane Brothers Construction. One had to go and it was young Ed. John sent him to Campbell County to run a bankrupt box company that he had just purchased at auction for \$500.00; the rest is history. Lane Furniture had 12 plants and was the second largest furniture company in the world. I might mention at this point Lane Stadium at Virginia Tech is named after him.

John was sternly honest and a man of great principal but was known to gamble an entire wheat crop on a horse race. His father was in the 14<sup>th</sup> Virginia and was killed in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. The only jobs available in the south for a young man after the war was working for the railroad. He left home at 16 and went to work to help provide for his family. Henry was a younger brother and very good with numbers; they were a great team and built one of the largest railroad construction companies in America.

My grandfather loved Esmont; he kept a picture of Guthrie Hall in his office at home. He actually thought of buying it back at one time but my grandmother would have none of it. He always spoke so highly of Esmont.

Beau Lane