

Biography

While the genealogy of John Axford Higgons's ancestors remains relatively obscure, it is known that his family originated from the British Isles. Immigration was present in both his paternal and maternal lineages, as his father was an English immigrant and his mother, though born in New York, was the child of English immigrants. The surname 'Higgons' is most likely a mutation of the surname 'Higgins,' which can either be linked to Ireland or the areas affected by the Norman Conquest.¹

From the first perspective, the surname 'Higgins' can be traced to the Gaelic-Irish word for a Viking: 'Uiginn.' Through misinterpretation of accents and language, this last name would eventually become 'Higgins' or 'O'Higgins.' This development may have been catalyzed by the English asserting control over Ireland during the 1500s.² However, a discrepancy posed by the Irish-roots theory is that it is unknown when and why the Higgons family moved to England, as Jesse Thomas Higgons (John Axford Higgons's father) was likely born in Berkshire, England, given his christening in Coleshill, Berkshire.³ Additionally, Irish immigrants were almost entirely of Roman Catholic faith, while John Axford Higgons was entirely devoted to the Protestant religion. While this conversion seems unlikely, it is possible for the Higgons family to have taken this step to assimilate or out of necessity.⁴

Another plausible theory is that the Higgons family was native to England, with the 'Higgons' surname being derived from mutated surnames brought to England by the Norman Conquest. During the Norman Conquest of 1066, several Germanic, Norman, and French names (including 'Hugh', 'Hick', and other surnames with phonetic similarities to 'Higgons') spread throughout the Anglo-Saxon population.⁵ In the hundreds of years that followed, these names would continue to mutate into English surnames like 'Huggins' or 'Hickens'. From there, minor spelling errors or aural errors would create the names 'Higgons' or 'Higgins'.⁶ Assuming that this theory is true, the Higgons family would likely have resided in England for several centuries.

Concrete evidence supporting the Higgons lineage begins with John Axford Higgons's father, Jesse Thomas Higgons. Jesse T. Higgons was most likely born in Berkshire, England, in 1836, to Thomas Higgons and Mary Higgons. He was christened in Coleshill, most likely at the local church, and received the name Jesse after the father of the biblical king David of the Israelites.⁷ Though Jesse's childhood is not documented, based on the contemporary situation of

¹ "Higgins Name Meaning & Higgins Family History at Ancestry.com®," Ancestry.com, 2021, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=higgins>.

² "All about the Irish Surname Higgins," Irish-genealogy-toolkit.com, 2021, <https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/irish-surname-higgins.html>.

³ *England, Select Births and Christenings*, n.d., Ancestry.com, n.d., <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/105500799:9841>.

⁴ "Religious Conflict and Discrimination | Irish | Immigration and Relocation in U.S. History | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress | Library of Congress," The Library of Congress, 2015, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/irish/religious-conflict-and-discrimination/>.

⁵ "Hugh Name Meaning & Hugh Family History at Ancestry.com®," www.ancestry.com, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=hugh>.

⁶ Higgins Name Meaning & Higgins Family History

⁷ *England, Select Births and Christenings*

England, it is unlikely that he received a formal education (secondary or postsecondary) as England had not established a national education system. However, he seems to have received an elementary education or tutelage as he was literate.⁸ When he was in his twenties, he made the 2-week journey via ocean liner to America for better opportunities. Leaving Liverpool or some other western English port, he landed in New York around 1859 where he worked as a dealer of fancy goods (Document C) and met his wife, Sarah Manner Axford (written as ‘Sara Manner Axford’ in some official documents).

Sarah Manner Axford was an English American who was born around the same time as Jesse Higgons. Sarah was born to English immigrants in New York and was named after her mother. Her paternal ancestors may have originated from the county of Wiltshire located in central England, where the surname ‘Axford’ is abnormally prevalent. After the Norman Conquest of 1066. Over time, locals combined the Old English words ‘aesc’ (ash) and ‘ford’ (stream) into ‘aescford,’ meaning “stream with ash trees.” As was the custom during the time, defining features in a person’s environment often became their surname, and thus many inhabitants of Wiltshire took on the surname ‘Aescford.’ The name ‘Aescford’ gradually evolved into Axford.⁹

Sarah Axford Higgons’s parents met before they moved to America and Sarah was born sometime thereafter. Her father was a printer by trade and was certainly literate (Document D). She was the oldest of seven children, with her siblings (John W. Axford, Charles S. Axford, Henry M. Axford, Robert M. Axford, Ella F. Axford, and Carrie Axford) being born within 19 years of each other (Document D). Within three years of marrying, Jesse Higgons and Sarah Axford found residence at 337 West 16th Street in Manhattan (Document C).

On February 16th, 1863, Jesse Thomas Higgons and Sarah Manners Axford gave birth to their first child, John Axford Higgons (occasionally spelled as ‘John Axford Higgins’). He shared the same name as his maternal grandfather and maternal uncle. He grew up at 337 West 16th Street, Manhattan, living with his maternal grandparents, some of his mother’s siblings (Robert, Carrie, Ella, and Henry Axford), his parents, and his siblings (Document D). The Higgons family happily coexisted with the Axford family under the same roof, living together for years and collectively raising Axford-Higgons children. As previously stated, John Axford Higgons’s father, Jesse Thomas Higgons, was a dealer of fancy goods and earned generous wages (Document C). This income, aggregated with the salary of Jesse’s father-in-law, would end up supporting the entire extended family in the home. By 1870, Jesse and Sarah comfortably had four children - the youngest being two years old - and the household of the Axfords and the Higgonses was even able to afford a servant named Esther Look, aged 48 (Document D). Two years after John Axford Higgons was born, his sister, Elizabeth S. Higgons (frequently called Bessie Higgons), was born in New York, and another two years later, Emma Louise Higgons was born, with the final child, George Thomas Higgons, arriving in 1868.¹⁰ Sarah Axford and Sarah

⁸ Ogilvie, Vivian. “The History of Education in England.” *Current History* 35, no. 205 (1958): 129–33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45310096>.

⁹ “Axford Name Meaning & Axford Family History at Ancestry.com®,” www.ancestry.com, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=axford>.

¹⁰ “FamilySearch.org,” ancestors.familysearch.org, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LCXV-2SX/jesse-thomas-higgins-1836>.

Higsons were likely in charge of raising the young children, and the rest of the women of the household and most of the extended family were unemployed (Document D).

Jesse and Sarah did not raise their children in a religious-heavy environment, even though Jesse was Christian and had been baptized. The two did not baptize any of their children, (Document I), implying that they placed smaller emphasis on adhering to Christian principles.

Several developments occurred in the Higsons family during the 1870s. Jesse and Sarah Higsons had four more children: Alice Helena Higsons in 1871, Warren Westervelt Higsons in 1873, May Belle Higsons in 1876, and Claire Agnes Higsons in 1878.¹¹ John Axford Higsons had attended school since the age of six, and his siblings all followed in his footsteps. By 1880, the family relocated to 338 West 22nd Street, still in New York and not far from the original home (Document E). Around this time, John Axford Higsons left school and began working full-time as a clerk in a store, helping to alleviate his parents' financial burden of eight children and the cost of the new home, while gaining valuable work experience (Document E).

Between 1880 to 1890, John Higsons continued to work, until he decided to pursue a higher education. In 1891, Higsons enrolled at the Union Theological Seminary and pursued a three-year divinity degree (Document AL). The Union Theological Seminary, located in Manhattan and affiliated with Columbia University, was founded in 1836 and quickly became a leading center of liberal Christianity in the United States, with most of its graduating classes becoming later involved in Protestant churches, namely Presbyterian and Congregational.¹² During his time at the seminary, he resided on campus (Document G). Likely in his first year at the school, John Higsons became engaged to Ella Elmina Willard, whom he later married in 1892 (Document F).

The Willard family was long established in the Americas, present even before the United States gained its independence from Britain. Tracing its roots back to England, the Willard line of ancestry originated from the area of Kent and Suffolk, with known information going as far back as Walter and William Willard in 1208. The roots of the American Willards are linked to two brothers, Simon and George Willard (Document X, 1).

Out of the two brothers, Simon Willard is the more notable. He immigrated to America in 1634 and settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, frequently moving between towns. When King Philip's War (Metacom's War) broke out in 1675, between the colonizers and the Native Americans, he led troops in the defense of Massachusetts. He fathered 17 children and died of acute viral nasopharyngitis at the age of 71 (Document X, 5 - 10).

The exact time of George Willard's journey to America is unknown. A genealogy book speculates that George likely immigrated at the same time as his brother, but the earliest record of George in America is in the winter of 1638 in Plymouth Colony. When he did immigrate, however, it was to escape religious persecution, as his beliefs that disagreed with the Anglican

¹¹ "John Axford Higsons FamilySearch.org," [ancestors.familysearch.org](https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/K428-7B4/john-axford-higsons-1863-1951), accessed February 21, 2023, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/K428-7B4/john-axford-higsons-1863-1951>.

¹² Handy, Robert T. "Union Theological Seminary in New York and American Presbyterianism, 1836-1904." *American Presbyterians* 66, no. 2 (1988): 115–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23330460>.

church were continually challenged, even in the New World. In about 1650, records indicate that George moved to Maryland (Document X, 10 - 14).

George Willard fathered Jacob Willard, and it is unclear if Jacob was actually George's biological son (Document X, 24). Jacob Willard was a veteran of King Philip's war and became the ancestor to a long line of Jonathan Willards. The second of these Jonathans, born in 1738, married Lois Hooker (Document X, 150), a possible descendant of Reverend Thomas Hooker. Thomas Hooker played an influential role in the creation of the American colonies, as he led a group of Puritans out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and created Connecticut, earning himself the nickname "the Father of Connecticut."

Until the 6th generation, this branch of the American Willards generally stayed in the Massachusetts area until Oliver Willard (1751 - 1853) moved to Vermont, likely due to internal family conflict (Document X 151). A generation of Willards would stay in Vermont until Oliver H. Willard moved to Philadelphia in the 1850s (Document X, 570).

Oliver H. Willard was a portrait photographer from 1850-1875, specializing in wet plate and salted paper processes. He married Rebecca Ann Berstler in the Third Presbyterian Church on January 18, 1854 (Document A), and purchased a home at 1206 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia that would later house his family and his photography business. Oliver and Rebecca had their first child on October 19th, 1854, who they named Sarah Anne Willard. They had a long-term residence in Philadelphia, as shown by their marriage occurring there (Document A) and the town record in 1856 (Document B). Around three years later, Olive Rebecca Willard entered the family. Tragedy struck on January 26th, 1861 when their first-born child, Sarah, died at the age of 7, just one month before the third-born child, Oliver Harvey Jr, was born. The fourth child, Leah Laurette Willard, was born in 1863, and their final child, Ella Elmina Willard, was born on July 17th, 1865.

Oliver H. Willard died on December 19, 1875, at the age of 48. Ella continued her education before her mother passed away in 1891. About this time, Ella Willard and John Axford Higgons decided to get married. They were married on February 16, 1892, at the Third Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, the same church that Ella's parents were married in, and consummated their marriage shortly after (Document F). The newly married couple then lived separately for a few months, as John A. Higgons returned to studying at the Union Theological Seminary while Ella Willard lived in Philadelphia at 1717 N 18th Street (Document G).

John Higgons reunited with Ella Willard in Philadelphia during the summer of 1892 to finalize the legal certification surrounding their marriage. On July 6th, their marriage license was approved by the Philadelphia Court of Orphans (Document G). John Higgons would not continue his studies that fall, instead taking a year-long pause in anticipation of the birth of his first child with Ella (Document AL). The two moved to New York and took up residence in the neighborhood of Bedford Park near the present-day Bronx (Document H). On December 1, 1892, Leroy Willard Higgons was born. While at first a healthy child, the boy would, unfortunately, go on to suffer from a severe paralysis condition (Document AD).

In the fall of 1893, John Higgons returned to study at the Union Theological Seminary while Ella Higgons raised Leroy, pregnant with another child (Document AL). On January 2, 1894, John and Ella welcomed their second child, Mabel Elizabeth Higgons (Document X, 570). Unfortunately, the child died later that year (Document K), as Higgons entered the final year of his divinity degree at the seminary. On May 27th, 1895, perhaps as a requirement for graduation from the seminary or to find work as a Protestant minister, Higgons was baptized at the St. Andrews Episcopal Church in New York (Document I). He received the honor of Doctor of Divinity (abbreviated as D.D.) from the Seminary. Shortly thereafter, Ella Higgons gave birth to a third child, Gladys Louise Higgons, on July 1, 1895 (Document X, 570). It is important to note that, throughout this time, Ella Willard seems to have been minimally involved in a court case regarding the violation of building specifications on the Willard family property located on 12th and Chestnut streets. Her involvement in the case is only recorded until 1896 and does not seem to have impacted the Higgons's quality of life.

By the end of 1896, John Higgons moved with his family to Philadelphia to finalize his education at the Philadelphia Divinity School, where he is recorded as matriculating on January 19, 1897 (Document J). The Philadelphia Divinity School was founded in 1857 to graduate Christian ministers for active religious service.¹³ While no longer operational, the centerpiece of the campus, St. Andrews Chapel, is where John Higgons was educated (Document J). At the time, the Philadelphia Divinity School offered innovative hands-on clinical programs to better prepare theology students for tougher ministry duties, making it an attractive learning environment for those similar to Higgons who had already finished their theology degrees and were looking to become ministers.¹⁴ He stayed at the school until moving with his family to West Jersey, where he was ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church on July 16, 1897 (Document AL).

John A. Higgons's first assignment as a pastor was at Ocean City, New Jersey. He would serve there for a year, from 1897 - 1898 (Document AL). He would then move to Newark, New Jersey, and serve as the pastor for the Central Presbyterian Church from May 17, 1898, to circa December 7th, 1903 (Document W). The Central Presbyterian Church was founded in 1837 and is still located at Clinton and Belmont Avenues. During his time as a minister in Newark, Higgons rented a house for his family in the 14th ward at 69 Hillside Place, a few blocks away from the intersection of Clinton and Belmont avenues. He and Ella also had another child in Newark, John Axford Higgons Jr, on June 20, 1898 (Document X, 570). John Higgons became financially successful during his years in Newark and by 1900 was able to employ four people full-time and house them in his rented residence. Of these four workers, two were hired as nurses to take care of John Axford Higgons Jr., Gladys Louise Higgons, and their disabled child, Leroy (Document K).

Beginning in 1900, John A. Higgons began taking frequent hiatuses from ministry work to engage in choir and evangelical work throughout the surrounding states (Document P). While

¹³ "03/30/10, at the Former Philadelphia Divinity School Site: Discovering Inspiration from the Past and Creating Spaces to Learn and Grow - Almanac, Vol. 56, No. 27," [almanac.upenn.edu](https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v56/n27/divinity.html) (University of Pennsylvania, March 10, 2010), <https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v56/n27/divinity.html>.

¹⁴ Howe, Reuel L. "New Plan of Theological Education." Wordpress.com. Accessed February 21, 2023. https://philadelphiastudies.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/20191217155926_00001.jpg.

he traveled around the east coast (Document N), his family remained in Newark. His efforts in the surrounding areas seemed to have earned him recognition and praise as a commanding presenter. For example, on a two-week trip to Philadelphia in February of 1902, John Higgons energetically participated in a religious revival on Spring Garden Street and at the Arch Street Church, for which he was described as a “most attractive preacher and singer” and was responsible for many conversions (Document M). He was recognized by and selected to be a part of the Religious Education Association in 1903, a prestigious national religious organization with ties to the University of Chicago and Yale University. For at least the next two years, he would accept the association’s invitations to their annual conventions in Philadelphia (Document P).

Even though he was doing influential work outside of Newark, he still remained committed to his local community, providing historical and philosophical sermons at the Central Presbyterian Church (Document L). The last Higgons child, Earl T. Higgons, was born on September 15th, 1903 (Document X, 570). In 1903, while conducting evangelical services at the Faith Presbyterian Church in Baltimore and the West Hope Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia (Document N), the First Presbyterian Church of Rensselaer, New York extended a formal invitation to John Higgons to serve as their minister (Document O). John A. Higgons declined this call (Document O), but he soon stopped his evangelical work. In 1904, he accepted a call to the Central Congregational Church in Chelsea, Massachusetts (Document AL), and the Higgons family took up residence on 27 Tudor Street in Chelsea, about two blocks away from the church which was located on 5th and Walnut Street (Document V).

Life for the Higgons family carried on uneventfully as the Central Congregational Church continued to garner new members, except for some brief traveling to New York on John Higgons’s part as a guest minister in 1906 (Document Q). However, in 1908, disaster struck the Chelsea community. A fire started in the town on April 12 on Mount Bellington and spread rapidly, consuming city blocks and even the city hall itself. Firemen from surrounding counties labored in vain to fight the blaze, desperately trying to direct the flames away from buildings. Entire blocks of businesses, the Armory, several libraries, the local hospital, hundreds of acres of townhomes, and dozens of religious buildings were completely destroyed. The wounded numbered in the hundreds and were treated primarily by a military hospital nearby. The fire devastated the Higgons family: both the Central Congregational Church and their home on 27 Tudor Street were razed to the ground (Document S). The family was likely forced to spend several nights at one of the many unharmed places of worship in Chelsea that opened their doors to the thousands of homeless people. Presumably, to continue supporting his family, John Higgons spent the remainder of 1908 traveling across the east coast to deliver guest sermons in cities such as Philadelphia and Brooklyn (Document R). It is unclear where the Higgons family resided in the meantime.

Luckily for the Higgonses, the Ninth Presbyterian Church called upon John A. Higgons to join their ministry in December of 1909 (Document T). In early 1910, Higgons accepted the call, becoming pastor of the Ninth Presbyterian Church (Document U). He rented a house at 3018 Diamond Street in the 32nd Ward¹⁵ and later was able to afford the purchase of a home at

¹⁵ ancestry.com. “John a Higgins in the 1910 United States Federal Census.” www.ancestry.com. Accessed February 21, 2023.

842 S 57th Street in 1913, closer to the Ninth Presbyterian Church, which was located at 57th and Washington Streets (Document V). It is at this time that John Higgons's abilities as a persuasive and engaging minister are best highlighted. As pastor of the Ninth Presbyterian Church, John Axford Higgons was responsible for the expansion of the church by over 700 members in five years, with 70 new members joining in one month of 1917 (Document Z).

Familial developments also occurred during the family's first decade in Philadelphia. Ella and John Higgons were frequently invited to parishioners' homes (Document AB). In 1917, Gladys Higgons finished her studies at Drexel University,¹⁶ while the youngest Higgons child, Earl T. Higgons, grew to be 16. When the U.S. joined World War I in 1917, John Axford Higgons Jr. and Leroy Higgons were drafted and the family braced itself for the potential loss of a family member. Leroy would be unable to fight as he was totally paralyzed (Document Y), but John Axford Higgons Jr. was sent into battle (Document AA). Mrs. Higgons even knit a blanket for her son John, with college, fraternity, and country patches, as a show of care. (Document AP).

As the Great War ended, in 1920, John Axford Higgons Jr. returned to his studies, graduated from the University of Pennsylvania (Document AO), got married, and acquired his own residence where he started a family. Later that year, John A. Higgons and his wife Ella Higgons found themselves grandparents for the first time, as John A. Higgons Jr. had his first child, John A. Higgons III. By this time, John A. Higgons Jr. had moved to Rochelshire, New York, where he quite successfully began to operate in the sugar industry (Document AO). Leroy Higgons also enjoyed some academic success despite being disabled, writing thought-provoking and philosophical articles based on his own experiences (AD). John Axford Higgons himself gained greater recognition in the Philadelphia community. In June of 1924, he delivered a prayer and remarks at the 101st commencement ceremony of the graduating class of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. The ceremony was held on June 4th at the American Academy of Music (Document AE).

In Philadelphia, the Higgonses began to enjoy increasing financial success and were able to afford a house in Lower Merion by 1920 (Document AC). Some years before 1922, the Higgons family acquired the 1206 Chestnut St. property that was previously embattled in a court case. They received it through Ella Willard's family inheritance, and John Higgons leased the property to millinery merchant and entrepreneur Max Dann. The property underwent significant renovations throughout the years to fit the needs of Dann's headwear store, and later a shoe and retail store, a hair and beauty salon, some small industrial operations, and a luggage retailer. 1206 Chestnut Street remained a source of revenue for Higgons's estate until after his death in 1951 when it was finally sold by his estate to the Montgomery Bank and Trust Company in 1961.¹⁷ John Axford Higgons became well-known throughout the Philadelphia religious community as he became the owner of a banking business during the 1920s (Document AC), the

https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/25592525:7884?tid=&pid=&queryId=e2b35dbfb7e2ec882ee815f9ad7e06a5&_phsrc=klS228&_phstart=successSource.

¹⁶ archivalcollections.drexel.edu. "Higgins, Gladys Louise | ArchivesSpace Public Interface." Accessed February 21, 2023. <https://archivalcollections.drexel.edu/agents/people/6396>.

¹⁷ "Address: 1206 Chestnut St." *Nomination of Historic Building* (2020). <https://www.phila.gov/media/20210106155305/1206-Chestnut-St-nomination.pdf>

position becoming his main source of income for the next two decades (Document AH). His daughter, Gladys, had become a teacher at an art school by 1920 (Document AC).

In 1925, John Axford Higgons officially retired as pastor of the Ninth Presbyterian and Central Congregational Churches in Philadelphia (Document AN), but continued to work as a minister. By 1930, all of his children had left the home except for Leroy, who required special care due to his health. Gladys had married a jeweler a few years prior by the name of Robert Snyder, and the two settled in Norristown (Document AF). Earl T. Higgons, the youngest son, married and left the home in 1928 and lived nearby, working as a commercial traveler. The aging Higgons couple soon became grandparents to another child, as Earl Higgons became the father of Earl Jr. in 1930 (Document AH).

During the Great Depression, the Higgonses managed to live relatively comfortably thanks to John Higgons's diverse sources of income. Their economic stability, and even growth, is evidenced by their acquisition of another property in Ocean City on 59 Ashbury Avenue in 1937 (Document AG). John Higgons's prosperity would not last, however. As 1940 came along, it became clear that Ella Willard Higgons was suffering from several ailments, mainly due to diabetes (Document AI). Despite this, John Axford Higgons continued his work at church. A week before the 1940 census was taken, John A. Higgons worked 48 hours, and had worked during every week of the past year (Document AH). Ella's health continued to decline throughout 1941. This was aggregated to the stress that John Axford Higgons was experiencing from his sons' potential enlistment to fight in World War II.

Ella Elmina Willard Higgons began to slip away on November 5, 1941, in the Higgons's residence in Lower Merion at about 10:30 in the morning. John Axford Higgons stayed with her until her passing moment. At 11:30 that morning, John A. Higgons's partner of almost 50 years passed away, leaving John A. Higgons a widower at 78. An autopsy report showed the immediate cause of death was coronary occlusion, a condition resulting from the partial or complete blockage of a coronary artery. This condition would have ultimately led to cardiac arrest, explaining Ella Higgons's sudden death. She was buried in the Woodlands Cemetery in Philadelphia on November 8th, 1941 (Document AH). With no Ella to stay at home and take care of him, Leroy Higgons finally left his parents to live with someone who would likely be his 24/7 care.

The last decade of John Axford Higgons's life was not marked by any significant developments. Sometime after the death of his wife, it seems as though he retired completely from any profession, likely spending the remainder of his life seeing his children, Gladys and Earl, and their children, as the two lived relatively close to Lower Merion, residing in Norristown and Haverford respectively in around 1940. Death would once again threaten to take away one of John Axford Higgons's relatives. During World War Two, both his son, John Axford Higgons Jr. (Document AJ), and grandson, John Axford Higgons III (Document AK), registered for the draft, and his grandson did end up serving in the navy as an aviator.¹⁸

In early 1951, John Axford Higgons was informed that he had "cancer of the bowel," or colon cancer. He began receiving cancer treatment in his home in Lower Merion on 7

¹⁸ [www.tributearchive.com](https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/25500753/john-a-higgons-iii). "John A. Higgons III Obituary." Accessed February 21, 2023.
<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/25500753/john-a-higgons-iii>.

Montgomery Avenue, the same house he had purchased over two decades ago. On September 1, 1951, with his daughter Gladys by his side, John Axford Higgons lost his battle with colon cancer at the age of 88. He was buried in the Woodlands Cemetery in the Higgons-Willard plot alongside his wife (Document AM).

John Axford Higgons Jr. continued to be involved in the sugar industry as a broker for several sugar and coffee companies, eventually moving to New York where he rose to national positions in the industry (Document AO). After fathering two children, and becoming hugely financially successful, John Higgons Jr. died in 1965, followed by his brother, Earl Thomas Higgons, who died in 1970. Gladys Higgons died at around the same time, though her specific date of death is unknown. Leroy Higgons, the first-born son of Ella and John Higgons who almost always stayed with his parents due to his health, died in 1975.

The most famous grandson of John Axford Higgons would be John Axford Higgons III. He was quite academically successful, earning his undergraduate degree and the magna cum laude honor at Princeton and then going on to Harvard University's Business graduate school. During World War II, he served as a naval aviator and instructor for the U.S. Navy. After leaving the military, he became a renowned advertising director, executive, and consultant. In the last decade of his life, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He retired at the age of 82 and died of the illness on August 9, 2005.¹⁹

Although all that physically remains of John Axford Higgons today is a name carved into a tombstone, his legacy remains eternal. Higgons was a man who consistently stayed in pursuit of greater knowledge, character, and unity. He dedicated himself to religion and remained steadfast and determined where most others would have given up. He was a man who adored learning and was always open to new experiences, applying his background to adapt to the rapidly changing world around him. He lived through the major rises and falls of the U.S. economy, two cataclysmic wars, and the invention of revolutionary technology. He attended highly selective institutions and his intelligence, effort, and dedication were praised wherever he went. Yet, the beauty of John Axford Higgons' life lies in its simplicity. Behind all of his accreditation, he was most importantly a loving son, husband, and father, who always considered the wellbeing of his family. His dedication to those around him shone through as his family prospered through thick and thin and achieved levels of education and excellence uncommon in their day. Higgons is one of many buried in the Woodlands Cemetery today and just like him, each and every person there has a rich and beautiful story that must be discovered - let us not allow their legacies to fade.

¹⁹[www.tributearchive.com. "John A. Higgons III Obituary."](https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/25500753/john-a-higgons-iii) Accessed February 21, 2023.
[https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/25500753/john-a-higgons-iii.](https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/25500753/john-a-higgons-iii)