

Etienne J. Caire

Etienne Joseph Caire, I, was a businessman, pharmacist, planter, and banker from Edgard in St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana, who was the Republican nominee for Governor of Louisiana in 1928.

Born: September 17, 1868, Edgard; Died: July 16, 1955, Edgard, La.

Spouse: Laura Hymel Caire; Children: Sidney Caire, Sr., Denis F. Caire, Laurence Caire, James J. Caire, Etiennette Marie Caire, Therese Caire

Etienne Joseph (E. J.) Caire was the son of Jean Baptiste Caire (1823-1879) and the former Felicie Burcard (1841-1911). He attended the former Jefferson College in Convent, the seat of government of St. James Parish, Louisiana. In his working career, he operated the E. J. Caire & Company store, a business begun by his father in downtown Edgard. The store was originally known as "Caire's Landing," the name given by Jean Caire, an immigrant who journeyed to Louisiana from France in 1842. Jean Caire (aged 55) died when his son Etienne was only ten years old.

In addition to the store, E. J. Caire was one of his state's leading sugar cane planters and frequently assumed ownership of failing plantations. He was president of the Bank of St. John and the Bank of Ascension, as well as a director of the former Hibernia National Bank in New Orleans.

Caire was a trustee of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church and active in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He was a grand knight of the Catholic men's organization, the Knights of Columbus. In 1922, he established the Jesuit retreat program for Catholic laymen called Manresa and located in Convent, Louisiana. In 1929, Pope Pius XI declared Caire a Knight of St. Gregory.

In 1928 Caire headed a full slate of Republican candidates for statewide offices, the first since Reconstruction. In that gubernatorial campaign Caire polled 4 percent of the ballots cast in the 1928 general election, while Democrat Huey P. Long, Jr., a member of the Louisiana Public Service Commission known for his flamboyant, popular oratory, garnered 96 percent of the vote. Dr. Warren Francis Caire (born January 1934), a registered Democrat in St. John the Baptist Parish, recalled that his grandfather often talked about the gubernatorial race: "He would recall the story with sincerity, but we all knew that he knew he had no chance of beating Huey." Caire was the last Louisiana Republican Party gubernatorial nominee for another twenty-four years.

Caire and his wife, the former Laura Hymel (1869-1941), are entombed at the St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Edgard, along with two of their children, Etiennette Marie Caire (1889-1970), and Dennis F. Caire (1899-1974). Another child, the late Sidney Caire, Sr., was the father of twelve children, including E. J. Caire's namesake grandson, E. J. Caire, II (1921-2012). Caire, II, was a graduate of Loyola University New Orleans, a United States Navy aviator in World War II, and a long-term resident of Metairie in Jefferson Parish. He and his wife, the late Inez Sylvia Songy, had seven children. Another grandson, Gerard Walton "Ton" Caire (born April 2, 1931), is a Republican voter in St. John the Baptist Parish and a judge of the 40th Judicial District Court.