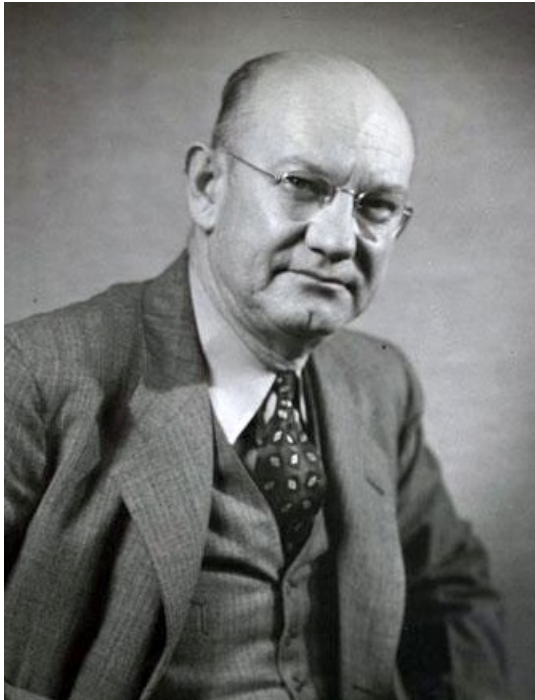


Griffin, Clarence Wilbur ^[1]

Griffin, Clarence Wilbur

by Mark Dixon Lackey, 1986

22 Mar. 1904–10 Jan. 1958



The Courier (Forest City, N.C.) "Clarence W. Griffin." Accession #: H.1958.27.13. Photograph. 1958. North Carolina Museum of History.

^[2]Clarence Wilbur Griffin, newspaper editor and historian, was born in Spindale, Rutherford County ^[3], the son of Lewis W. and Naomi Johnson Greene Griffin. After graduation from Spindale High in 1923, he studied for a year at North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering. He then was employed as an engineer by the North Carolina State Highway Commission ^[4] from 1924 to 1925.

In 1925, at age twenty-one, Griffin's interest in community affairs prompted him to seek the editorship of the *Forest City Courier*, Rutherford County's most influential newspaper. Under his guidance from 1925 until his death, this paper, renamed the *Forest City Courier-Spindale Sun* (Rutherford County Publishing Co., Inc.), became an expanding and powerful business enterprise. Beginning in 1942, Griffin was editor, general manager, and secretary-treasurer. During this time, he was also influential in such statewide press organizations as the North Carolina Press Association ^[5] (historian, 1939–58) and the Western North Carolina Weekly Newspaper Association (president, secretary).

From 1933 to 1935 Griffin served a brief stint in the North Carolina General Assembly ^[6], winning election to that office by the largest vote ever given a legislator in Rutherford County. He also was an officer of the county Democratic executive committee.

Perhaps Griffin's greatest contributions came from his work as Rutherford County historian, a position he held from 1927 until his death. Almost every historical association in the county owes some of its success to his tireless efforts to promote public interest in local and state history. In addition, he served as president of the Western North Carolina Historical Association (1955–56), as vice-president of the North Carolina Society of County Historians and of the North Carolina State Literary and Historical Association ^[7] (1929), and as a member of the North Carolina Historical Commission ^[8] (1937–58), the North Carolina Archaeological Society, and the British Society of Genealogists. An author of some note, Griffin wrote several historical treatises including *The Bechtlers and Bechtler Coinage* (1929), *Colonel John Walker and Family* (1930), *Descendants of Chisholm Griffin* (1931), *Public Officials of Rutherford County, 1779–1935* (1935), *History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties, 1730–1936* (1938), *Western North Carolina Sketches* (1939), *The Story of Our State* (1942), *Essays of North Carolina History* (1951), and *History of Rutherford County, 1937–1951*, as well as many historical pamphlets. He also was managing editor of the *Historical and Genealogical Record* and president of the Rutherford Writers Club.

His zeal for public service in his native county and state were reflected in the numerous civic organizations in which he participated, among them the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Museum Commission, National Youth Administration

(advisory council), Rutherford County Radio Company (secretary, 1948–58), Chamber of Commerce (board of directors), Rutherford County Library (trustee and director, 1939–58), Rutherford County Red Cross (chairman), Advisory Council for Emergency Education in Rutherford County, Rutherford County Club (president, secretary, treasurer), Cleveland-Rutherford Executives Club, Forest City First Methodist Church (board of stewards), Rutherford County Epworth League Union (secretary-treasurer), Forest City Kiwanis (president, secretary; Citizenship Achievement Cup, 1937), Society of Griffin Kindred (secretary-treasurer, historian), Rutherford County Piedmont Council Boy Scouts (vice-president, 1929; deputy scout commissioner, 1924–28), Order of American Pioneers, Order of the First Crusade, Society of the War of 1812, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Rutherford County Confederate Pension Board, and Sons of the American Revolution (governor, North Carolina).

In 1927 Griffin married Thelma Elizabeth Clay. They had a son, Donald Clay, and the family lived in Forest City.

Griffin poured his energy into his work until, at age fifty-four, he suffered a fatal heart attack in his office at the *Forest City Courier*. He was buried in Cool Springs Cemetery, Rutherford County.

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