

Grissom, Robert Gilliam ^[1]

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by [C. Sylvester Green](#) ^[2], 1986; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, June 2023

26 Jan. 1867–25 Oct. 1955

Robert Gilliam Grissom, businessman and tax collector, was born at Grissom, [Granville County](#) ^[3], the son of Dr. [Eugene](#) ^[4] and Mary A. Bryan Grissom. His father was a [Civil War](#) ^[5] veteran and an active [Republican](#) ^[6]. After preparatory schooling, young Grissom entered [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[7] and graduated with a bachelor of science degree in 1887. The following year he worked as a state chemist in North Carolina and became a registered pharmacist. From 1889 to 1890 he did graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1891 he was a deputy collector of Internal Revenue for the state of Colorado. Turning to the business world, he engaged in woolen manufacturing in 1903 and operated a flour mill in 1917.

Grissom was best known for his political activities in the early 1900s. He ran as the Republican candidate for Congress in 1916 but did not win. In the 1920s he served as secretary of the state Republican executive committee. In 1922 he became the collector of Internal Revenue for the state of North Carolina and served in that agency's Greensboro office until retiring from the post in 1933. Three years later he ran against [Clyde R. Hoey](#) ^[8] for governor of North Carolina. Although defeated, he polled the heaviest vote of any Republican gubernatorial candidate up to that time, receiving 140,000 votes to Hoey's 332,000. Grissom conducted his campaign on the thesis that he could cut the cost of government. He had proved that in the collector's office, where he had reduced his cost first 30 percent and later 50 percent to make it the most economical operation of any district in the United States. A news article reported of him: "He seems to have gone through these twelve years collecting several billions of dollars without making one taxpayer in North Carolina angry."

On 4 Mar. 1896 Grissom married Velma Coulter, and they were the parents of a son, Larry. He lived most of his later years at McLeansville and died at age eighty-nine in a nursing home in [Greensboro](#) ^[9], with burial in that city. He was an [Episcopalian](#) ^[10].

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From:

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