

Kennedy, John Bryan ("Jack") ^[1]



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by John Baxton Flowers III, 1988

10 Apr. 1845–27 Sept. 1915

John Bryan ("Jack") Kennedy, physician, Confederate soldier, planter, and educational leader, was born at The Meadows, four miles west of Goldsboro, the son of John Thomas and Elizabeth Anne Cox Kennedy. Young Kennedy, a birth-right Quaker ^[2], received his earliest education at home from his mother; after 1853, he attended the Wayne Institute and Normal College in Goldsboro, established that year by his father and others.

On 15 Apr. 1861, when he was just sixteen, he joined his father and other Wayne County ^[3] men in boarding a train to go to Fort Macon ^[4] on the coast in hope of taking it from Federal control. In New Bern they learned that the fort had already been secured and so returned to Goldsboro where they organized the Goldsboro Rifles, soon to become Company A, Twenty-seventh North Carolina Infantry. Kennedy was a private in the company. In February 1862 he transferred to the Thirty-fifth Regiment as a sergeant and saw service in March at the Battle of New Bern and in June and July at the Seven Days' Battle around Richmond. In July he was discharged because he was under eighteen. As soon as he was old enough, however, he reenlisted, was trained as a telegraph ^[5] operator, and was assigned to Fort Fisher ^[6] below Wilmington. He was there when the fort fell to Union forces near the end of the war and escaped capture by swimming the Cape Fear River ^[7]. Returning to Goldsboro, he joined Confederate forces in the vicinity. Soon afterwards he joined President Jefferson Davis ^[8]'s party as it moved across North Carolina and served as a bodyguard and telegrapher until they reached Washington, Ga. There he was discharged but went to Texas to join the forces of General Kirby Smith in hope of continuing the war.

After returning home briefly, Kennedy left for Mississippi in the winter of 1866 to study at an academy in Mount Pleasant, Miss. There he married his cousin, Mrs. Sarah Eliza Cox Crutcher, a widow, and they soon returned to Wayne County, N.C., which was also her birthplace. Kennedy studied medicine with a local physician and in 1868 enrolled in Washington College, Baltimore, where he studied medicine for a year before transferring to medical school in Nashville, Tenn., from which he was graduated in 1870. He set up a practice in rural Wayne County; on a large farm, he also practiced progressive farming methods.

Kennedy was active in a local medical society, presenting papers recounting his research and experience in cases of tetanus and appendicitis, and he collaborated with Dr. Hubert Royster ^[9] of Raleigh in a pioneer appendicitis operation.

To provide a means of education for local youth, he established Falling Creek Academy near his home and was a trustee for many years. He also presented a medal for scholastic excellence to the graduating senior each year. In addition, he was a strong supporter of improved public schools.

Although born a Quaker, after 1870 Kennedy was a member of the Methodist church ^[10] in which he served as a steward. His first wife died in 1882, leaving four sons: William Alfonzo, John Richard, Henry Cox, and James Matthew. In 1892 he married Katherine Amelia Bridgers, and they were the parents of Henry Bridgers and Sarah Amelia. Kennedy also reared two wards, Zebulon and Nancy Snipes, whose parents, patients of Dr. Kennedy, had died. He was buried in the churchyard at Falling Creek Methodist Church.

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