

C.W. Griffith

Clarence Wilbur Griffith (1904-1958) epitomized the hometown newspaper editor in North Carolina who combined a zeal for the future of his community with a deep devotion to its past.

As editor and then owner of the weekly Forest City Courier in Rutherford County from age 21 until his death in 1958, Griffith built an editorial following through vigorous advocacy of economic, cultural and tourist development of the mountain region of the state. His newspaper regularly won awards for its coverage of local news and for its interest in community causes.

Griffith was an enthusiastic member of the North Carolina Press Association from his earliest days as an editor. He helped establish the Western North Carolina Weekly Press Association and was its president and secretary.

Like many other hometown editors in the state, Griffith was an active politician. He served a term in the General Assembly in 1933-35 and was a longtime political warhorse on the county's Democratic Party executive committee.

Griffith participated in nearly every important booster effort in western North Carolina. He was a member of the Great Smoky Mountain Museum Commission; a leader in chamber of commerce, Red Cross, Boy Scouts; an advisor to the National Youth Administration; a trustee of the Rutherford County Library and even the North Carolina governor of the Sons of the American Revolution.

In keeping with his principal avocation, that of avid local historian, he was the historian of the NC Press Association from 1938 until his death. He also wrote a history of Rutherford County, dozens of articles and genealogical papers and essays on all phases of North Carolina history. He was president of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association in 1929 and served on the North Carolina Historical Commission, the policy board of the state Division of Archives and History from 1938 until his death.

An affable but hard-charging man, Griffith was at his desk in the office of the Forest City Courier on a cold January day, working on the next edition, when he suffered a fatal heart attack in 1958.

By Roy Parker Jr.

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