

**“Killing the Klansman, Remembering the General:
The Opposing Memories of Bryan Grimes”**

On April 9, 1905, a large crowd gathered just outside a small railroad town in Southside Virginia. They assembled around two large stone panels, shipped all the way from the mountains of North Carolina. Three years earlier, the General Assembly of the Old North State appropriated the money for a grand monument at the site of Robert E. Lee’s surrender near Appomattox Courthouse. With the memorial now finished and installed, the North Carolina chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) arranged a grand dedication ceremony. Precisely at noon on the fortieth anniversary of Lee’s surrender, the governors of North Carolina and Virginia pulled the covers off a five-thousand dollar monument. They a revealed an inscription, “First at Bethel, Farthest at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, Last at Appomattox.”¹

Walter Clark, the former Confederate officer turned unofficial state historian of North Carolina, frequently referenced the phrase as “our Civil War motto.”² The words alluded to three common-held beliefs about the Old North State’s role in the bloody conflict. As a wave of Confederate nostalgia rushed over the state in the 1880s, North Carolinians frequently claimed that their soldiers suffered the first war casualties, made the deepest penetration of the Union lines during Pickett’s Charge, and launched the final attempt to break free from Grant’s encircling army at Appomattox. Forty years later, a crowd returned to the very spot to mark the event. The General Assembly felt so strongly about the claim that the legislature ordered that the new monument contain the phrase.³

¹ Raleigh *News & Observer*, April 10, 1905.

² Walter Clark, *North Carolina Troops in the Great War, 1861-1865* ([North Carolina: W. Clark?, 1961), 5.

³ Raleigh *News & Observer*, April 10, 1905.

Despite the utmost assurances of North Carolina's elected representatives, the accuracy of "First at Bethel, Farthest at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, Last at Appomattox" remained a matter of much contention. The phrase played a leading role in the infamous dispute between North Carolina and Virginia over their respective states' contributions to the Confederate war effort. The controversy even raised its ugly head at the monument dedication in 1905. After Virginia Governor Andrew Jackson Montague accepted the North Carolina UDC's invitation to the dedication ceremony, Richmond newspapers attacked the North Carolina claim. They charged that Virginia troops made the final effort. "In his time of greatest need," the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* editorialized, "General Lee naturally turned to the soldiers of his home state for aid."⁴

Even some in North Carolina had their doubts. The namesake son of General Daniel Harvey Hill, a prominent official in the Democratic Party and a longtime administrator at North Carolina State Agricultural College, acknowledged that "we may never know who gave that last sacrifice for our glorious cause."⁵ Speaking directly about the Appomattox Monument, Hill made a further revealing statement. "This whole affair belongs to Grimes."⁶ Hill meant John Bryan Grimes, commonly referred to as J. Bryan Grimes. An up and comer within the state Democratic Party, J. Bryan Grimes won election as North Carolina's Secretary of State before he turned thirty. As a former state legislator, Grimes helped guide the bill for the Appomattox

⁴ Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, April 9, 1905.

⁵ Daniel Harvey Hill and Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *Bethel to Sharpsburg* (Raleigh,: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1926), 137.

⁶ Daniel Harvey Hill, Jr. Papers, "D. H. Hill, Jr., to Walter Clark, February 8, 1905," State Archives, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

monument through the General Assembly.⁷ His crucial role earned Grimes a highly sought after spot at the dedication ceremony.

The erection of the North Carolina monument at Appomattox culminated J. Bryan Grimes's personal crusade. His father, General Bryan Grimes, commanded the assault at Appomattox that North Carolinians now looked back to with so much pride. Following the general's death, his son embarked on a campaign to protect and defend his father's legacy. Through speeches, editorials, and books, J. Bryan Grimes trumped his father's role in the Civil War. By 1905, General Grimes held a place of high honor among North Carolina's Confederate pantheon, someone worthy of a grand monument paid for by state tax dollars. Now, after more than twenty years of toil, the new memorial marked the capstone of J. Bryan Grimes's efforts. Following the celebration at Appomattox, he wrote a short note to his brother, Junius Daniel, or J.D., Grimes, expressing his sense of fulfillment. "Our work is done, dear brother. Father's memory will live on, no matter what they say."⁸

What "they" had to say was a lot, for despite the family's attempts to cleanse and purify the story, General Bryan Grimes left a battered public legacy behind for his children.⁹ During the Civil War, a majority of his fellow officers regarded Grimes as nothing more than a political hack. According to one detractor, the former Pitt County planter owed his promotion to "the simple fact that better men keep dying in front of him."¹⁰ Grimes's naïve efforts to reach political office, both during and after the war, did not further his reputation. Invoking his Confederate credentials to legitimize white resistance to Reconstruction, Grimes failed to

⁷ Lumberton (N.C.) *Robesonian*, April 7, 1905.

⁸ Junius D. Grimes Papers, "J. Bryan Grimes to Junius D. Grimes, April 12, 1905," North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ William Blount Rodman Papers, "Robert M. Carter to William Blount Rodman, June 4, 1868," North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

effectively dominate his own county. As a final injury, the former general died in an inglorious ambush, victim of assailants unknown.

While tragic, the circumstances surrounding his death gave Grimes's memory new life. In the capable hands of close friends, his wife and eldest son, General Bryan Grimes emerged as the glorious Confederate warrior cut down in the prime of life, instead of the balding, overweight, middle-age, indebted, unsuccessful politician of reality. In their greatest act of myth-making, the family even succeeded in almost airbrushing out Grimes's leading role in the Ku Klux Klan. The Grimes family possessed personal reasons for these acts of memory management; they obviously wanted to show the general in the greatest positive light. J. Bryan Grimes, though, had an even greater reason to inflate his father's importance. Through the effective public manipulation of his father's demise, J. Bryan Grimes forged a political career that lasted over forty years. The family completed their work so well that only now can historians separate the man from the myth.

Bryan Grimes possessed a notable background. His grandfather served in the Revolution, and his father, also named Bryan Grimes, served continuously as a state senator from Pitt County from 1840 to his death in 1860.¹¹ Although by Deep South standards the Grimeses barely attained planter status, they bombastically referred to their large farm as Grimesland. The family assumed the mantle of the southern aristocracy, but with considerable friction. Although they lived in Pitt County, land ownership, shipping connections, and simple geography tied the clan to adjacent Beaufort County, a district composed almost entirely of yeoman and middling farmers. The family cultivated animosity, not love, among their neighbors. Local merchants and artisans

¹¹Ursula Fogleman Loy, Pauline Marion ed. Worthy, and ed, *Washington and the Pamlico* ([Washington: N.C.] Washington-Beaufort County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 38.

complained that Senator Grimes, “is a little high-handed, and expects the highest sales and the lowest prices.”¹² His son, the future general, aggravated the situation through his attempts to weld political influence as a secessionist Democrat in a Whig county.

Grimes and a small, but extremely loyal, group of associates stayed on the fringes of political opinion until the spring of 1861. In eastern North Carolina, as elsewhere in the state, once Abraham Lincoln called for troops, the Unionist majority collapsed. His long-held support for disunion earned Grimes a seat at the political table. Pitt County selected him as a delegate to the secession convention, and his ally William Blount Rodman won election in Beaufort County.¹³ Following the unanimous vote to leave the Union, Governor John W. Ellis commissioned Grimes as a colonel. The devout secessionist, however, possessed bigger aspirations. While his regiment trained for battle, Grimes asked allies, including his father, to solicit a promotion to brigadier-general from Ellis. In a letter to William Augustus Blount II, Ellis aired his reservations about Grimes, since “he does not possess any martial experience in the field of war.”¹⁴ The absorption of North Carolina’s troops into the Confederate military structure made the matter moot, but the affair hinted at things to come.

Considering his level of inexperience, over the next four years Grimes developed a solid reputation as a Confederate officer. Writing not long after the war ended, Jubal Early, who commanded Grimes during the 1864 Valley Campaign, called the North Carolinian a “reputable, though not brilliant, officer.”¹⁵ “A capable leader, he did everything I asked of him.”¹⁶ Other

¹² Havens Family Papers, “Jonathan Havens to John Fowle, September 21, 1854,” Genealogy Room, Brown Library, Washington, North Carolina, USA.

¹³ Lindsay C. Warren, *Beaufort County's Contribution to a Notable Era of North Carolina History : A Series of Articles* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1930), 11.

¹⁴ John W. Ellis Papers, “John W. Ellis to William Augustus Blount II, May 24, 1861,” State Archives, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

¹⁵ Jubal Early, *A Memoir of the Last Year of the War for Independence*, (New Orleans: Blelock, 1867), 61.

officers took a slightly dimmer view, describing Grimes as “a good man, but too occupied with other concerns,” namely politics.¹⁷ Grimes caused considerable outrage among his regiment in 1862 when he attempted to take up the state senate seat of his recently deceased father. Writing home, a corporal from Jones County mentioned “all the talk lately is of the old man leaving us for the state house. While we fight and die, he’ll be smoking big cigars and drinking whiskey.”¹⁸ Vocal opposition led Grimes to refuse the office, but damage to his reputation refused to heal. Although he eventually rose to the rank of major-general, Grimes never escaped the label of political appointee.

After the war, Grimes aimed to create a local power base in the east. As he revealed to his key lieutenants, the former general felt that “our recent service will do us well.”¹⁹ If Grimes counted on widespread sympathies for the defeated Confederacy, he gravely mistook local public opinion. In 1862, the Union seized a large portion of coastal North Carolina. In Beaufort County, the Federal victories resurrected Unionist feelings among the white population. Residents of Washington, the county seat, welcomed occupying Massachusetts troops with a large banner inscribed, “The Union and the Constitution.”²⁰ Local men deserted Confederate regiments in massive numbers, forcing two companies to consolidate with other units.²¹ Southern commanders launched three campaigns to retake the county and win the population

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, “D. H. Hill to James Henry Lane, October 12, 1866,” State Archives, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

¹⁸ James C. Galloway Collection, “R.S. Chapman to Thomas R. Crawford, December 19, 1862,” North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

¹⁹ Bryan Grimes Papers, “Bryan Grimes to William L. Saunders, November 17, 1868,” State Archives, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

²⁰ United States. War Dept. et al., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington,: Govt. Print. Off., 1880), Series I, Vol. 9, 269.

²¹ Thomas Sparrow Papers, “Orders to Captain Sparrow, September 28, 1864,” Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

back to their side. Harsh treatment at the hands of Confederate troops, though, pushed sentiments even further toward the Union.

As Grimes and his companions quickly discovered, southern appeals did not even work on former Confederate soldiers. Responding to an offer to join the Democrats, a Confederate veteran serving as the Republican town sheriff in Washington told a Grimes ally that “You people started this damn war, and I’m glad it’s over.”²² Unsuccessful in courting their former comrades, Grimes quickly resorted to violence. By early 1868, the general organized the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.²³ In both Pitt and Beaufort Counties, Grimes targeted freedmen and their white allies. The Republicans retaliated with both physical and legal action. Mysterious fires struck a turpentine warehouse and a bridge owned by Grimes. The local superior court judge, a man derisively labeled “Jaybird” Jones by Democratic sympathizers, threw Klansmen in jail, including Grimes associate Joseph John, or J.J., Laughinghouse.²⁴ When Grimes threatened the judge during a session of the court, Jones levied a five-hundred dollar fine against the former general.

The threats and violence failed to achieve their ultimate objective: the removal of the Republican-controlled county government. Only in 1875, when the state legislature made all county offices appointed rather than elected, did the Democrats seize control of the levers of power in Pitt and Beaufort Counties. Redemption could not end the violence, however. If anything, Democratic-domination raised the level of attacks by both sides. The Democrats feared any large gathering by Republicans, and openly used force to break them up. Republicans retaliated by striking the foremost symbol of Democratic rule: the economic power of leaders

²² C. Wingate Reed, *Beaufort County: Two Centuries of Its History* (Raleigh? N.C.1962), 202.

²³ Greenville (N.C.) *Daily Reflector*, October 26, 1926.

²⁴ Trinity College, “The Trinity Archive,” Vol. 35, No. 5, 35-37.

like Grimes and Laughinghouse. Over an eight year period, both men suffered the combined losses by fire of one cotton gin, two tobacco barns, and a grist mill, all by “culprits unknown.”²⁵

The summer of 1880 proved especially horrendous. In late June, near Falkland in Pitt County, Democrats killed three black Republicans at a political barbecue.²⁶ Three days later, a barn at Laughinghouse’s farm and the replacement grist mill at Grimesland went up in smoke.²⁷ The sheriff arrested one of Grimes’s black tenant farmers, Romeo Satterthwaite, for the mill fire. The very next night, July 19, a crowd of white and black “ruffians” broke into the Pitt County jail, grabbed Satterthwaite, took him to the train station, and put him on the next train for Baltimore.²⁸ Infuriated at Satterthwaite’s escape, Grimes threatened to sue two leading white Republicans for the loss of his mill. On July 29, members of Laughinghouse’s family began reporting signs consistent of arsenic poisoning. J.J. Laughinghouse immediately accused the same two Republicans, William B. and Howell Paramore, of trying to kill him.²⁹ With all this drama unfolding around him, Grimes attended Beaufort County’s Democratic Party convention on August 14. That night, as his wagon crossed a local creek on the way back to Grimesland, a rifle shot ended the life of Bryan Grimes.³⁰

At the time of his earthly demise, local people of commonly referred to Bryan Grimes as “the general,” but his military reputation rarely entered into conversation.³¹ As the trial of his accused killer approached, regional newspapers acknowledged local feelings of anger toward Grimes and his cohort. A Richmond paper aligned with Virginia’s Readjuster movement

²⁵ Greenville (N.C.) *Daily Reflector*, October 26, 1926.

²⁶ Greenville (N.C.) *Express*, July 21, 1881.

²⁷ Tarborough (N.C.) *Southerner*, September 9, 1880.

²⁸ Greenville (N.C.) *Express*, July 7, 1881.

²⁹ Raleigh *Observer*, August 18, 1880.

³⁰ Beaufort County, North Carolina, “Superior Court Minutes, 1880,” North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

³¹ George H. Brown Papers, “George H. Brown to Thomas Sparrow, July 14, 1881,” Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

candidly admitted that “although a majority disapproves of the ghastly way that General Grimes died, none appear especially disheartened or saddened by his death.”³² In the words of one trial bystander recorded by the *Raleigh News & Observer*, “the old son-of-a-bitch got what he deserved.” “I wished I’d bushwhacked him myself.”³³ Low opinion of Grimes even impacted the trial. The first attempt to try the accused ended in a mistrial after an elderly juror, Asa Pinkham, suffered heart palpitations. Before the judge arranged a new court date, the prosecution asked that the trial move to another county, “since the animosity toward the recently deceased prevents the state from getting a fair hearing in this county.”³⁴ Judge David Schenck moved the case to neighboring Martin County.

In June 1881, the murder trial of William Parker, Grimes’s accused killer, got underway. After three months of fruitless searching, authorities suddenly arrested Parker in November 1880 and charged him with the crime. In his diary, Judge Schenck suggested that the county sheriff selected Parker as the culprit because “he and his father are damn Republicans.”³⁵ The state’s case against him relied heavily on circumstantial evidence, including a supposed jailhouse confession heard by another prisoner. James E. Shepherd, the local lawyer hired by Parker’s father to defend the twenty-one year old farm laborer, easily indentified the logical holes in the prosecutor’s argument. Shepherd, a moderate Democrat, felt so strongly about his client’s innocence that he did not even bother to call his own witnesses. In closing arguments, Shepherd announced that Thomas Sparrow, the lawyer hired by Grimes’s family to aid the prosecution,

³² *Richmond Enquirer*, June 22, 1881.

³³ *Raleigh News & Observer*, June 24, 1881.

³⁴ Beaufort County, North Carolina, “Superior Court Minutes, 1880,” North Carolina Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.

³⁵ David Schenck Papers, “Diary-1880,” Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

had “no weapon, no gun, and no case.”³⁶ The Democratically-aligned state papers, however, firmly believed in Parker’s guilt. The *Raleigh News & Observer* believed that “the jury will quickly sentence this fiend to death.”³⁷ After two hours of deliberations, the twelve men found Parker not guilty of the crime.

The news shocked the state’s conservative elite. In their eyes, evidence of Parker’s guilt appeared overwhelming. The newspapers quickly assumed that only a conspiracy, led by Shepherd, explained the verdict. The *News & Observer* singled out the two black jurors, accusing them of taking money from Shepherd.³⁸ When the paper uncovered no evidence to support this claim, it switched the accusations to the other ten men on the panel. An investigation by the Martin County sheriff revealed nothing to support any charges of witness or jury tampering.³⁹ After a few weeks of sensational headlines, the entire episode faded from public view.

A vocal minority, however, refused to let the issue die. Grimes’s family and his close associates stood at the forefront of this effort. “We cannot let this good man’s reputation remain tarnished,” J.J. Laughinghouse wrote to Grimes’s widow, Charlotte.⁴⁰ “I aim to do anything in my power to correct this injustice,” he further stated.⁴¹ Laughinghouse knew that the Grimes supporters faced an uphill battle to win over public opinion. “The people believe that your dearest husband was a bully, but we know differently,” he wrote in a letter to Charlotte Grimes.⁴²

³⁶ Martin County, North Carolina, “Superior Court Minutes, 1881,” North Carolina Collection, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

³⁷ *Raleigh News & Observer*, June 23, 1881.

³⁸ *Raleigh News & Observer*, July 12, 1881.

³⁹ *Raleigh News & Observer*, August 2, 1882.

⁴⁰ Grimes-Bryan Papers, “J.J. Laughinghouse to Charlotte Grimes, August 13, 1881,” Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Grimes-Bryan Papers, “J.J. Laughinghouse to Charlotte Grimes, August 22, 1881,” Special Collections, Joyner Library, ECU.

Laughinghouse then asked whether the widow Grimes, “possessed any writings or correspondence that reflect the good character of that noble soul.”⁴³ She responded that yes, “I have in my possession some of the letters that the general sent to me” during the war.⁴⁴

Laughinghouse immediately offered to help Charlotte Grimes locate a publisher in Raleigh for a “collection of these important writings.”⁴⁵

In the spring of 1883, the Edwards & Broughton Publishing Company produced a slim volume with a long title, *Extracts of Letters of Major-General Bryan Grimes, to his wife: Written While in Active Service in the Army of Northern Virginia, Together with Some Personal Recollections of the War*. The book contained twenty-one edited letters from Bryan Grimes to his spouse. The publisher listed one “Pulaski Cowper” as the “editor and compiler,” but evidence indicates that J.J. Laughinghouse also had a hand in creating the letter anthology.⁴⁶ The volume contained a foreword by a “Common Confederate Soldier” that served under Grimes.⁴⁷ Based on the events and dates mentioned in the piece, in all likelihood Laughinghouse composed this introductory prologue. In a letter dated August 22, 1881, Laughinghouse further suggested to Charlotte Grimes that the book include no letters from her to the general, “since these may speak words of a most intimate character.”⁴⁸ The finished work did not contain any correspondence from Charlotte Grimes.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Charles O'Hagan Laughinghouse Papers, “Charlotte Grimes to J.J. Laughinghouse, September 1, 1881,” Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

⁴⁵ Grimes-Bryan Papers, “J.J. Laughinghouse to Charlotte Grimes, September 6, 1881,” Special Collections, Joyner Library, ECU.

⁴⁶ Bryan Grimes, *Extracts of Letters of Major-General Bryan Grimes, to his wife: Written While in Active Service in the Army of Northern Virginia, Together with Some Personal Recollections of the War*, (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards and Broughton, 1883), ii.

⁴⁷ Ibid, v.

⁴⁸ Grimes-Bryan Papers, “J.J. Laughinghouse to Charlotte Grimes, August 22, 1881,” Special Collections, Joyner Library, ECU.

Extracts of Letters of Major-General Bryan Grimes appeared at the beginning of a period of intense Lost Cause nostalgia during the 1880s. The book appeared before any account by another major North Carolina military figure reached print. By publishing not long after the general's death, Charlotte Grimes and Laughinghouse also played on nineteenth century sympathies about death and mortality. "Friends, buy this book, for we hear that the widow Grimes is not in a favorable financial shape," the *Raleigh News & Observer* reported in its review of the volume.⁴⁹ In actuality, Charlotte Grimes stood in fairly well circumstances, mainly due to a large life insurance policy that allowed her to pay off the general's outstanding debts. The endorsements by the press and high demand for Confederate memoirs meant the book sold very well. Broughton issued at least five printings.

Throughout the 1880s, Laughinghouse kept Grimes's name alive through speeches and public letters. On the anniversary of the killing, he regularly sent letters to the *Greenville Eastern Reflector* demanding "justice for an act un-avenged."⁵⁰ Like *Extracts of Letters*, Laughinghouse painted Grimes as a living embodiment of the Walter Scott tradition, *Ivanhoe* cut down in his prime. On at least one occasion, before the Ladies Memorial Association in Greenville, he even managed to call Grimes the "Ivanhoe of Pitt County."⁵¹ In addition to broadcasting Grimes's life, Laughinghouse also strove to punish the men he held responsible for the letting the killer escape. Parker's lawyer, James E. Shepherd, became Laughinghouse's principal antagonist. In 1888, moderates within the Democratic Party called for Shepherd's elevation to the North Carolina Supreme Court. Laughinghouse aimed to prevent the lawyer's election.

⁴⁹ *Raleigh News & Observer*, May 11, 1883.

⁵⁰ For example, see Greenville (N.C.) *Eastern Reflector*, April 29, 1885.

⁵¹ Charles O'Hagan Laughinghouse Papers, "Speech for Memorial Day-1887," Special Collections, Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

During this effort, Laughinghouse had a young ally at his side. Recently enrolled at the University of North Carolina, J. Bryan Grimes possessed few first-hand memories of his father since Bryan Grimes died just after his son's twelve birthday. J.J. Laughinghouse assumed the role of surrogate father for the boy, and easily enrolled him in the quest to redeem his father's reputation. J. Bryan Grimes could not vote nor serve as a delegate at the state Democratic Convention, but he played a key role in the effort to deny Shepherd the Supreme Court nomination. Using money he requested from his mother, J. Bryan Grimes paid for editorials denouncing Shepherd to appear in the state's major papers.⁵² Certainly Laughinghouse had a hand in the letters' composition, but even he admitted that J. Bryan Grimes wrote the article for the *Hickory Press & Carolinian*.⁵³ The most strident of the columns, he called Shepherd "a liar and a cheat" and a "man not possessing the moral character of a judge."⁵⁴

Shepherd viewed the accusations as so dangerous to his career that he wrote a personal response to the charges, which he published in the *Hickory* paper. "Young Mister Grimes, I mean you no harm, but you are categorically wrong about my behavior at the Parker Trial," Shepherd retorted.⁵⁵ He then went on to state that the accusations made against him simply repeated the charges disproved seven years earlier. Furthermore, Shepherd questioned the rationale behind raising these issues now. "If you wanted your concerns answered, I would more than willingly offer them to you before now."⁵⁶ Making a subtle charge against Laughinghouse, Shepherd warned the younger Grimes about the dangers of "false friends."⁵⁷ The printed

⁵² J. Bryan Grimes Papers, "J. Bryan Grimes to Charlotte Grimes, April 29, 1888," Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA.

⁵³ Trinity College, "The Trinity Archive," Vol. 35, No. 5, 33.

⁵⁴ *Hickory Press & Carolinian*, May 17, 1888.

⁵⁵ *Hickory Press & Carolinian*, May 24, 1888.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Hickory Press & Carolinian*, May 24, 1888.

response eased the concern of party bosses about Shepherd's candidacy. Writing to the judicial nominee, candidate for governor Daniel G. Fowle believed "that you answered all my concerns about this matter in a very satisfactory manner."⁵⁸

Just like the Grimes murder, though, Laughinghouse refused to let the matter rest. In July, at the state Democratic Convention, he attempted to filibuster an end to Shepherd's nomination. For three hours, Laughinghouse brought the entire proceedings to a halt while he repeated all the charges made in the earlier series of newspaper editorials.⁵⁹ Eventually, the chairman invoked a quorum call and ended the discussion, but Laughinghouse's political future lay in tatters. Fowle, the gubernatorial nominee, had a particularly harsh assessment. "That demented old fool made our entire convention an episode of derision for the opposition."⁶⁰ He requested party assurances that no campaign funds go toward Laughinghouse or any of his allies. Fowle made one exception, however. In a letter to a Pitt County supporter, he noted the "resolve and determination of General Grimes's son."⁶¹ After his election, Fowle hired Grimes as a political secretary.

The Shepherd nomination battle indicated a generational shift in the memorialization of Bryan Grimes. Marginalized by his actions at the convention, Laughinghouse slowly removed himself from the scene, only reappearing in 1922 to dictate two short essays defending his actions forty years earlier.⁶² From this point forward, J. Bryan Grimes took the initiative. Over the next twenty years, Grimes became a regular speaker at veterans' reunions and Confederate

⁵⁸ Daniel Fowle Papers, "Daniel Fowle to James E. Shepherd, May 27, 1888," State Archives, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁵⁹ *Raleigh News & Observer*, June 1, 1888.

⁶⁰ Daniel Fowle Papers, "Daniel Fowle to Thomas R. Holt, June 14, 1888," State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁶¹ Daniel Fowle Papers, "Daniel Fowle to Elias Carr, June 19, 1888," State Archives, Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁶² Trinity College, "The Trinity Archive," Vol. 35, No. 5, 21-37; "The Trinity Archive," Vol. 35, No. 6, 11-23.

Memorial Day processions. He always alluded to his father's "honor" or "valor."⁶³ His frequent invocations to his father's life played a major role in his political career. In personal correspondence, party leaders usually referred to Grimes as the "the general's boy" or "Bryan Grimes's son," never as J. Bryan Grimes.⁶⁴ Elias Carr, a mentor to the new Democratic star, openly asked whether J. Bryan Grimes "knew it was he, not his father, whose name is on the ticket."⁶⁵

J. Bryan Grimes's campaign to reestablish his father's name culminated in two key events. On Confederate Memorial Day in 1898, in an episcopal cemetery near present-day Chocowinity, North Carolina, he dedicated a marble obelisk to the general.⁶⁶ The monument did not mark the location of the general's grave; he actually lay in a private family plot several miles away at Grimesland. As Grimes explained to his brother, he wanted this memorial as a "public symbol" of his father's life.⁶⁷ Located right next to the main road into town, the obelisk lay within easy distance of not only the site of the murder, but also just a few hundred yards from the farm owned by the Parkers, the family accused of the killing. Not satisfied with local memorials, Grimes also wanted a state monument that recognized his father's sacrifice. Hence, his utmost satisfaction on that date in 1905 when his final dream became reality at Appomattox Courthouse.

The end result of this lengthy and intense campaign, a word that both Laughinghouse and Grimes used to describe their efforts, wiped clean the earlier version of Bryan Grimes's life.

Instead of a failed politician, public memory recorded a valiant Civil War general. Instead of a

⁶³ J. Bryan Grimes Papers, "Memorial Day Speech in Washington-1894" Special Collections, Joyner Library, ECU.

⁶⁴ For example, see Romulus Armistead Nunn Papers, "Charles B. Aycock to Furnifold Simmons, "January 9, 1901," Special Collections, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

⁶⁵ Elias Carr Papers, "Elias Carr to Furnifold Simmons, November 17, 1903," Special Collections Department, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

⁶⁶ Louis W. Martin, Jr., *Beaufort County Heroes, 1861-1865*, (Washington, N.C., 2003), 213-224.

⁶⁷ J. Bryan Grimes Papers, "J. Bryan Grimes to J.D. Grimes, May 27, 1898," Special Collections, Joyner Library, ECU.

Klansman that targeted opponents in their homes, people remembered the battlefield commander. The Laughinghouse-Grimes interpretation even assumed dominance in Pitt and Beaufort Counties, the places least inclined to do so. Called Boyd's Ferry for several generations, in 1887 Pitt County officials even renamed a local crossroads town Grimesland to honor the general. Local Confederate organizations, including the United Confederate Veterans, Sons of Confederate Veterans, and United Daughters of the Confederacy, also carried Grimes's name. On a far more worrisome note, the creation of Laughinghouse and Grimes permeated scholarly treatments of the man. Grimes's lone biographer even questioned whether the general belonged to the Klan, a well established historical fact.⁶⁸

In letters to his brother, J. Bryan Grimes hoped that "our work will last 'til time immemorial."⁶⁹ Like the Lost Cause in general, the celebratory version of General Bryan Grimes remained powerful for almost one-hundred and fifty years. Only in recent times have historians and scholars began to question the family's interpretation of their illustrious forbearer. This reflects a wider movement to reappraise the Civil War and Reconstruction in coastal North Carolina. Works by Barton A. Myers and Judkin Browning take issue with the traditional view of eastern North Carolina as a solid bastion of southern sympathies and white supremacy.⁷⁰ Both Browning and Myers also confronted a mountain of myth and legend. Studying the past also means an examination of the ways that people construct their memories of the past. With regard

⁶⁸ T. Harrell Allen, *Lee's Last Major General: Bryan Grimes of North Carolina*, (Mason City, IA: Savas, 1999), 267.

⁶⁹ J. Bryan Grimes Papers, "J. Bryan Grimes to J.D. Grimes, May 27, 1898," Special Collections, Joyner Library, ECU.

⁷⁰ Barton A. Myers, *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community, 1861-1865*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2009), 7; Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina*. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: UNC Press, 2011), 132.

to Bryan Grimes, public memory chose to kill the Klansman and remember the general.