

WILLIAM C. GRIMES
Acting Governor of Oklahoma Territory, 1901

By *Kenny L. Brown**



William C. Grimes

On December 2, 1901, William C. Grimes, the secretary of Oklahoma Territory, received a telegram from Secretary of the Interior Ethan A. Hitchcock instructing him to act as governor until a new appointee could take office. This belated message arrived two days after Governor William Jenkins had been relieved of his office for involvement in a controversy concerning the Oklahoma Sanitarium Company at Norman. Grimes served as acting governor until December 9, 1901, his brief administration lasting only ten days. Nevertheless, he was much more than a momentary figure who filled the vacated governor's office for a short period; he was, in fact, a major person in the development of territorial politics in Oklahoma.¹

Born near Lexington, Ohio, on November 6, 1857, Grimes spent the early years of his life on farms in Ohio. In February, 1878, at the age of twenty he left his parents and moved to Hastings, Nebraska, where he became a printer and soon was employed by the *Hastings Gazette*. The same year he momentarily returned to Harveysburg, Ohio, and married Mary Cleaver, his boyhood sweetheart. The couple then journeyed back to Hastings where Grimes worked for the *Gazette* in various capacities. In 1881, Grimes bought an interest in the *Harvard Nebraska Journal* which he promptly moved to Sterling, Nebraska, renaming the newspaper the *Sun*. While publishing the *Sun*, he also established a mercantile business which

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¹ *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), December 3, 1901, p. 1.

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specialized in agricultural implements. This enterprise thrived and became so remunerative that he sold his share in the newspaper to concentrate solely on it.²

In 1885, Grimes began his political and public service career when he was elected sheriff of Johnson County, Nebraska, on the Republican ticket. Although the youngest sheriff in the state, he was cited for bravery and efficiency in the performance of his duties. In 1887, the youthful law officer was reelected but did not serve his full term, for he resigned in May, 1889. He had made the land run into what was to become Oklahoma Territory a few days earlier on April 22, 1889, and desired to become a resident of the new area. This unique land run into the Unassigned Lands of what was then central Indian Territory, was the first of a series which settled much of present-day Oklahoma. Realizing the opportunities of the new land, Grimes lined up with the thousands of participants at the eastern Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation boundary and raced to his claim on the red rich bottom land just northeast of Kingfisher. There he developed a farm and became a partner in real estate with J. W. McLoud.³

With the swift establishment of homes and businesses also came the creation of a political life for this region that would soon become Oklahoma Territory. Grimes entered into politics, showing an intense interest in determining the governmental structure of the new area. Even before the land run, Grimes had been involved in a political gathering which established a government for Kingfisher. Many of the home-seekers who clustered at the eastern boundary of the Cheyenne and Arapaho lands planned to dash to the nearby site which had been set aside for the town of Kingfisher. Congress had made no provisions for the establishment of village governments for this area and the future citizens of the proposed town were concerned. A meeting to deal with the problem was called the night before the run. Indicating an awareness of this event, Grimes later wrote, "On this memorable night, discussion as to some form of organization to govern a city that was to be made on the following day, seemed to be the all-absorbing topic. This, to me, was very interesting, as then I could see and realize the beginning and formation by men and women, the government to be."⁴ Grimes participated in the meeting which ensued and which decided on a provisional government for the town. This temporary governing body and other similar town governments of the area had no legal standing

² *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1901), pp. 637-638.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 638; William Grimes, "A toast to the Old Timer," *Echoes of '89* (Kingfisher: Kingfisher Times and Free Press, 1939), p. 11; *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma*, p. 638.

⁴ Grimes, "A Toast to the Old Timer," *Echoes of '89*, p. 11.

before any court, but were designed to provide some restrictive force and influence for order.⁹

Soon the citizens of the impromptu territory became dissatisfied with the general martial law and provisional town governments imposed upon them. This led to the first major political gathering in Oklahoma Territory—the Anti-Provisional Government Convention which met at Frisco beginning on July 12, 1889. Grimes, showing a continuing and increasing interest in the politics of his new home, was not only a representative at this meeting but also was elected chairman of the first executive committee. The convention successfully adopted suggestions and sent them to Congress. Subsequently, on May 2, 1890, Congress passed the Oklahoma Territory Organic Act which was very similar to the ideas that came out of the Anti-Provisional Government Convention. The new territory was thus formally organized.

Grimes also became a significant contributor to partisan politics soon after he settled at Kingfisher. For instance, he attended the first Republican convention at Oklahoma City in January, 1890. The delegates to this meeting selected a candidate whom they hoped would be appointed governor by President Benjamin Harrison, a Republican. Each president customarily chose a member of his own party to fill such territorial positions; the Republicans of Oklahoma Territory felt their endorsement might be considered by Harrison. Although the president did not follow the convention's suggestion, J. V. Admire of Kingfisher was nominated and Grimes led the movement to choose him. In August, 1890, Grimes also attended the second Republican convention, held this time at Guthrie, which selected Milton Reynolds as the nominee for territorial delegate to Congress. Reynolds won the general election but died the day after his victory, not knowing the outcome.

By August, 1890, Grimes had become a leader of his party and had a large number of acquaintances, with several key figures among them. This undoubtedly aided him when he was considered for the United States marshal's position which became available with the resignation of Warren S. Lurty. He was a Virginian who had been appointed United States marshal for Oklahoma Territory but found it an undesirable place. When Lurty resigned, a telegraph campaign between Oklahoma Territory and Washington, D.C., began. The president immediately considered Grimes because he was a strong Republican, a prime consideration for such appointments. In addition, he obtained the backing of many of the territorial newspapers and the support of the entire legislature-elect. Grimes' back-

⁹ *Ibid.*



Serving as United States marshal in Oklahoma Territory from 1890 to 1893, Grimes is shown with his staff, left to right, first row: Chris Madsen, chief deputy; Miss Hitchcock, stenographer; William Grimes, United States marshal; Miss Hitchcock. Second row: Heck Thomas, jailor; I. S. Proctor of El Reno; Tillman Lilly; Warren Cleaver, chief clerk

ground as sheriff in Nebraska also proved to be beneficial, and he received the appointment.⁶

When word reached Kingfisher that Grimes had obtained the appointment, the citizens became very excited. The *Kingfisher New World* reported, "The effect was electrical and the news ran like wild fire up and down the streets of Kingfisher and the people with hardly any distinction on account of party congratulated each other on the grand victory for Kingfisher."⁷ This excitement was warranted as the marshal's position was prestigious and powerful. Like all other officials of the territory, the marshal was able to use as much patronage as he wished. Grimes took advantage of this opportunity when he appointed J. C. Robb as his chief deputy. Robb was a good friend from Kingfisher and had married Sally Belle Cleaver, the second cousin of Grimes' wife. Nepotism and other types of favoritism went with the job and were accepted customs.⁸

Although the post had its assets, the new marshal faced a monumental

⁶ *The Kingfisher Free Press Souvenir* (Kingfisher: Kingfisher Free Press, 1895), p. 10.

⁷ *Kingfisher New World*, August 16, 1890, p. 1.

⁸ *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma*, pp. 139-140.

task of enforcing laws over a large area that included the Indian reservations then located in the western half of present-day Oklahoma. Grimes began this chore by establishing a strong and effective force of deputies that ranged from fifty to one hundred men. This group included the noted "three guardsmen" of the territory—Heck Thomas, Chris Madsen and Bill Tilghman. During Grimes' three year term as marshal he and his deputies made from 1,200 to 1,500 arrests and faced such notorious outlaw groups as the Daltons, Cooks, Starrs and Poes.⁹

The difficulty of enforcing the law was further complicated because the office of United States marshal for Oklahoma Territory was new and unorganized. As Lurty had not structured the marshal's operations, Grimes was forced to develop the office. He had forms printed, built an efficient technique of bookkeeping, researched laws and statutes and contracted for jails and courtrooms; thus he laid the foundation for a system of law and order in Oklahoma Territory.¹⁰

Grimes' duties as marshal, difficult as they were, did not occupy all of his time. As an office holder, his strength in the Republican party was substantial, and he increased his political power effectively during his term in office. In 1891, he was elected a member of the territorial Republican central committee and the following year was elected chairman of that body, which he served for ten years as head. Also, in December, 1891, Grimes became involved in the movement to obtain the Oklahoma Territory governor's appointment for Abraham J. Seay, a territorial judge from Kingfisher. The executive office had been vacated by George W. Steele, Oklahoma Territory's first governor, who had decided to return to Indiana, his home state. President Benjamin Harrison was considering Seay, Angelo C. Scott and Acting Governor Robert Martin for the position. However, President Harrison felt that the appointment of any of these three might lead to factional strife among the Republicans in Oklahoma Territory; therefore he considered selecting a man from outside of the territory. Grimes, acting on Seay's behalf, approached Scott and asked him to join in a telegram to Harrison stating that no factionalism existed. Scott initially refused but later wrote a letter to the president saying that the appointment of a man within the territory would not cause problems. After receiving such reassurance, Harrison chose Seay for the gubernatorial office.¹¹

⁹ Dennis T. Flynn, "William Grimes," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (June, 1931), pp. 221-222; *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma*, p. 638.

¹⁰ Chris Madsen, "United States Deputy Marshals," in *Oklahoma Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow* (ed. by Lerona R. Morris, Guthrie Cooperative Publishing Company, 1930), p. 482.

¹¹ *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma*, p. 638; Flynn, "William Grimes," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IX, p. 222; *Oklahoma City Evening Gazette*, December 30, 1891, p. 1.

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While still marshal, Grimes became associated with Dennis T. Flynn, the strongest Republican in the territorial period. This friendship added immeasurably to Grimes' political influence. Flynn had come to Oklahoma Territory from Kiowa, Kansas, where had been an attorney, postmaster and publisher. He served as Guthrie's postmaster from 1889 to 1892 and was the first member of the Republican national committee from Oklahoma. In 1890, Flynn unsuccessfully had tried to obtain the Republican nomination for delegate to Congress, but in 1892 he won both the nomination and the election. Except for a two year term which was lost to the Democrat-Populist coalition in 1896, Flynn served as delegate from 1892 to 1902. His most prestigious accomplishment was the adoption of his Free Homes Bill by the Congress in 1900. This plan nullified all fees charged by the United States government against the settlers of Oklahoma Territory. The federal government had bought the surplus lands of the Indians in order to open the territory to white settlement; this cost was in turn passed on to the settlers. However, the Free Homes Bill, which was authored by Flynn, repealed these charges, saved the Oklahoma settlers an estimated \$15,000,000, and gained enormous political support for Flynn.¹²

Grimes and Flynn met in these early years in Guthrie. Their acquaintance developed into a working relationship as early as 1894 when Flynn was running for reelection as delegate to Congress. The energetic and efficient Grimes headed Flynn's successful campaign, showing a political talent that led to the formation of an alliance which dominated the Republican party in Oklahoma Territory for a number of years. The combination of the personalities and actions of these two men blended well and proved very valuable politically. Several years after the political machine had been established, the *Guthrie Southwest World* commented, "Flynn is magnetic and makes his constituents feel good by slapping them on the back and calling each one by name and inquiring after the wife and children. Grimes is attractive rather than magnetic and gets close to his party friends by sitting down on the sidewalk listening carefully to each man's story and telling him a way out of his troubles."¹³

Although Grimes had gained prestige politically, he was forced to give up his marshal's position in 1893. Democrat Grover Cleveland had returned to the presidency, ousted many Republicans, including Grimes, and replaced them with members of his own party. When Grimes was dismissed,

¹² United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 954; George O. Carney, "Oklahoma's Territorial Delegates and Progressivism, 1901-1907," *The Chronicle of Oklahoma*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (Spring, 1974), p. 39.

¹³ *The Kingfisher Free Press Souvenir*, p. 10; *Guthrie Southwest World*, May 4, 1901, p. 4.

he returned to Kingfisher where he became prominent in developing the city and surrounding area. By 1900, he had increased his farm adjacent to Kingfisher to 250 acres and owned 800 additional acres in the county. His chief livelihood was a furniture store with an undertaker's business as a sideline. Grimes directed other energies in building residential areas and business districts which included what was commonly called the Grimes Block. He aided also in the founding of Kingfisher College, the Kingfisher Bank, and the Guthrie and Kingfisher Railroad.¹⁴

Grimes remained active as well in politics. He served perennially as chairman of the Republican territorial central committee, thus increasing his prestige remarkably by the turn of the century. His ability to deal realistically and effectively with politics is well illustrated by his relations with the members of the territorial House of Representatives. For instance, the Oklahoma Territory legislature of 1899 faced the controversial problem of selecting sites for public institutions. Several Republican members of the House of Representatives wished to accomplish this goal in the upcoming term. However, Grimes felt that the legislature would function more smoothly if it avoided this issue. On February 1, 1899, he entered a Republican caucus with sixteen Republican representatives. Several of these men already had decided to attempt to locate the public institutions, but Grimes used strong persuasion and the caucus voted to oppose any such effort in the forthcoming session.¹⁵

Wielding so much political power, Grimes' influence grew tremendously. On May 10, 1900, he was elected national committeeman by the Republican territorial convention because his image as party leader was so well established that it was generally conceded that he deserved the post. Then in January, 1901, Grimes was boomed as a candidate for appointment as governor. Later the emphasis switched and rumors spread that Grimes would obtain the office of secretary of Oklahoma Territory. This seemed likely because the political machine of Flynn and Grimes had launched an attack against Governor Cassius M. Barnes, the head of the opposing Republican faction. The conflict between these two groups had begun early in Barnes' administration which had started in 1897. Some observers felt that Flynn would thwart the reappointment of Barnes when his term expired. They further predicted that Flynn and Grimes were supporting Secretary of the Territory William Jenkins to replace Governor Barnes. If Jenkins were appointed, this would leave the secretary's position vacant,

¹⁴ *The Kingfisher Free Press Souvenir*, p. 10; *Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma*, p. 638.

¹⁵ Flynn, "William Grimes," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IX, p. 222; *Daily Oklahoman*, February 2, 1899, p. 1.



Dennis T. Flynn, delegate to Congress from Oklahoma Territory and leader of the Flynn-Grimes faction of the Republican Party

and Grimes would then be appointed to the financially rewarding office. However, Flynn issued a statement indicating that such a plan was false, that Grimes was not a candidate for secretary and that it was an office he would not accept.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the prediction of Flynn's critics soon proved accurate. On April 13, 1901, Grimes, Flynn, United States Attorney Horace Speed and other notable territorial Republicans arrived in Washington to oppose the renomination of Governor Barnes. This delegation was successful, for President William McKinley did not reappoint Barnes; instead he chose Jenkins for governor on April 15, 1901. Because Jenkins became the governor, his former position of secretary was left vacant, and President McKinley chose Grimes to fill the office.¹⁷

The Republican newspapers of Oklahoma Territory generally favored the selection of Grimes. They pointed out that he was a shrewd businessman, was well liked by members of his party and had more extensive acquaintances than any other man in the territory. Also, with Grimes as secretary, it was possible that the factionalism would end since many members of the Barnes' faction had respected Grimes and did not object to his appointment. They probably approved because Grimes had done more political work for less reward than anyone in Oklahoma Territory. Other newspapers were less friendly, indicating that Grimes had gained the appointment due to his shady alliance with Flynn or that Grimes had used his own influence as national committeeman to obtain the position. This assessment was accurate; however, the use of influence to gain office was

¹⁶ *Kingfisher Free Press*, May 17, 1900, p. 4; *Kingfisher Times*, January 24, 1901, p. 4; April 11, 1901, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, April 13, 1901, p. 1, April 16, 1901, p. 1, April 28, 1901, p. 1.

an accepted fact at this time of Republican Stalwartism and had not yet obtained the negative connotations that it received in later years.¹⁸

Whatever the reasons for Grimes' appointment, he was inaugurated with the other newly appointed officials in an elaborate ceremony at Guthrie on May 12, 1901. After the oaths of office were taken, Governor Jenkins spoke; then Grimes addressed the crowd, expressing an opinion which typified his unostentatious attitude. Favoring simplicity, he objected to elaborate ceremonies used to induct men into office. If there was to be any public display of approval, Grimes explained that it should come after public officials had proven themselves. Indicating his policy toward the secretary's office, he promised, "to at all times try and govern myself in public affairs, that at the end, I may have gained your full and complete confidence."¹⁹

After the inauguration festivities, Grimes took charge of an office that was second in power, but plentiful in financial reward and very burdensome with duties. The Oklahoma Territory Organic Act of 1890 had established the basic obligations of the office. Under article three of this act, the secretary was instructed to record all acts and proceedings of both the governor and the legislature of the territory. He also was ordered to send copies of those proceedings and acts to the president, the secretary of the interior and each house of Congress. Finally, he was to serve as acting governor due to the death, removal, or resignation of the full-time governor. Other lesser duties required by the federal government included the disbursement of federal paychecks to officials of the territory and the responsibility of caring for all property of the national government used for legislative purposes in the territory. The secretary was to receive \$1,800 annually for performing the functions of the office.²⁰

The territorial legislature provided additional responsibilities for the secretary. For instance, Grimes issued charters for corporations, commissions for notaries public and warrants for fugitives from justice. He also acted as ex officio insurance commissioner and served on the board for leasing school lands. By law, the secretary received fees for his services in chartering corporations, commissioning insurance companies and issuing notaries public. These fees and the \$1,800 provided by the federal government made the territorial secretary's post the most lucrative in the govern-

¹⁸ *Blackwell Times-Record*, May 2, 1901; *Kingfisher Free Press*, May 2, 1901, p. 4; *Guthrie Southwest World*, May 4, 1901, p. 4; *Stillwater Advance*, May 2, 1901, p. 6; *Blackwell Times-Record*, May 2, 1901, p. 4; *Daily Oklahoman*, April 28, 1901, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Daily Oklahoma State Capital* (Guthrie), May 14, 1901, p. 2.

²⁰ W. F. Wilson, *Wilson's Revised and Annotated Statutes of Oklahoma* (Guthrie: State Capital Company, 1903), p. 71; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, February 24, 1903, p. 4; Wilson, *Wilson's Revised and Annotated Statutes of Oklahoma*, p. 79.

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ment. When Grimes took office in 1901, his predicted annual income was estimated to be from \$7,000 to \$8,000.²¹

Yet, the secretary had other duties which were outside of those stipulated by the government. Most time consuming for the office were the letters received from persons wanting favors or inquiring on a wide range of topics. For instance, in 1902, the Indian agent for the Kiowa Agency wrote Grimes asking that a Wichita Indian girl be admitted to Oklahoma Territory's school for the deaf. Less official but more unusual was a letter that Grimes received from citizens on the Isle of Pines, a small island east of Cuba. American landowners on this island wanted to be annexed by the United States rather than Cuba. They wrote to Grimes to find out the proper procedure to form a territory in the United States. The vast number of such inquiries on a variety of subjects went to Grimes' office annually, over 10,000 in 1902 alone. This volume of incoming correspondence caused a troublesome burden for the office which was undoubtedly the busiest in the territorial government and which required an able and efficient administrator. Grimes filled the position well.²²

Although the duties of his office were numerous and difficult enough, Grimes also had to face many political problems and criticisms. Democrats claimed that Grimes and Flynn would control the territory because they could easily control Governor Jenkins. This association with Jenkins proved unfortunate, for evidence was presented which indicated that Jenkins was involved in certain irregularities concerning an Oklahoma Territory contract with the Oklahoma Sanitarium Company at Norman. According to the charges, Jenkins signed an agreement saying that the asylum would take care of the insane persons within the territory. After awarding this contract, he reportedly received stock in the company. Grimes immediately came to the defense of Jenkins, stating that it was absurd to think that the government would pocket money in such a way.²³

Evidently President Theodore Roosevelt did not think the charges were so unreasonable. Roosevelt had become president on September 14, 1901, when McKinley died from wounds inflicted by an assassin. It was necessary for the new president to appoint his own officials and present the nominations to Congress. He hesitated to reappoint Jenkins when he heard that

²¹ *Guthrie Daily Leader*, February 24, 1903, p. 4; *Daily Oklahoman*, February 4, 1903, p. 2; *Kingfisher Free Press*, May 2, 1901, p. 4.

²² James F. Randlett to William Grimes, September 15, 1902, Kiowa Agency Correspondence, Indian Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; *Daily Oklahoman State Capital*, November 28, 1905, p. 7; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, February 24, 1903, p. 4.

²³ *Daily Oklahoman*, October 30, 1901, p. 1; *Kingfisher Free Press*, November 14, 1901, p. 4.

the governor might have had improper motives when he gave the contract to the asylum. After Jenkins heard that charges were being filed, he journeyed to Washington, and related his actions to Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock and President Roosevelt. Jenkins' explanation proved fatal. He said that he had accepted \$10,000 in stock that would be sold to personal friends to insure that the company would be controlled by responsible people. Roosevelt, believing that these actions were unethical, reacted negatively to Jenkins' explanation, and dismissed the governor from office on November 30, 1901. The president then filled the office with Thompson B. Ferguson, a newspaper publisher from Watonga. However, Ferguson was not inaugurated until December 9, 1901, and Grimes became acting governor during this period of ten days.²⁴

Grimes performed very few official functions as acting governor, and he did very little outside of his regular duties as secretary. For example, on December 3 and December 7 he issued corporation charters and several notary commissions. More in the role of governor, Grimes reportedly was kept busy listening to office seekers who wished to be included in the territorial administration of Ferguson. He otherwise remained inactive.²⁵

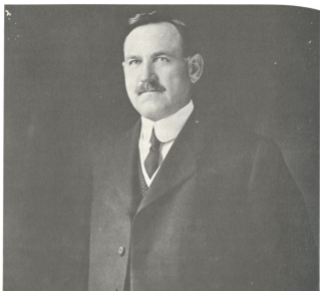
Although Grimes' term was generally uneventful, the political turmoil over his alleged involvement in the sanitarium scandal became important during his ten-day administration. Even before Jenkins was removed, Grimes had been linked with the controversy. Opponents of the Flynn political machine had asserted that Grimes, Flynn and several of their friends also owned stock in the sanitarium. Rumors soon reached Oklahoma Territory indicating that Grimes would be investigated by the Department of the Interior. He reacted to this by issuing a statement denying any involvement; it said that he had not directly or indirectly owned stock nor had he participated in contracting with the sanitarium company. This explanation did not prove satisfactory. President Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock instructed the newly appointed Governor Ferguson to return to Oklahoma Territory and investigate Grimes' participation in the affair. If Grimes had been involved, he would be as guilty as Governor Jenkins and should be dismissed.²⁶

At first Ferguson did not want to undertake the investigation. He believed that it would be inappropriate to probe the scandal before he was inaugurated as governor. However, he agreed that it was necessary and returned to Oklahoma Territory from Washington. In his personal inquiry,

²⁴ *Daily Oklahoman*, December 1, 1901, p. 1; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, December 9, 1901, p. 1.

²⁵ *Guthrie Daily Leader*, December 4, 1901, p. 1, December 7, 1901, p. 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, November 30, 1901, p. 6; *Daily Oklahoman*, December 7, 1901, p. 1; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, December 16, 1905, p. 1.



Bird S. McGuire, delegate to Congress from Oklahoma Territory from 1902-1907, and leader of the faction that brought down Grimes and Flynn

Ferguson interviewed several key witnesses but found no concrete evidence to implicate Grimes. The most damaging testimony came from J. W. McNeal, president of the Guthrie National Bank. According to McNeal, Grimes had bought stock in the company for Dennis Flynn, who was out of the territory. However, Ferguson had previously been informed by Flynn that such a transaction had occurred and that Grimes had simply acted as Flynn's purchasing agent. Ferguson consequently decided that Grimes had done no wrong.²⁷

After Ferguson took office on December 9, he sent his report to President Roosevelt. The president then agreed to reappoint Grimes as secretary of Oklahoma Territory; Congress approved his nomination on January 13

²⁷ *Ibid.*

1902. However, Grimes had not heard the last of the accusations about the scandal. The Republican Party was full of aspiring opponents who were ready to take advantage of any weaknesses of Grimes and Flynn. Allegations that both men had owned stock in the Norman sanitarium remained a stigma to their faction of the party and provided a weapon for use against them. Ironically, this same scandal that had taken Grimes to the highest position he had held would eventually aid in his downfall.²⁸

Early in 1902, Grimes was further weakened when Flynn decided not to seek reelection as the Oklahoma Territory representative in Congress. Some Republicans were upset because he chose not to run. For example, on June 11, 1902, when Grimes was visiting Washington, D.C., Governor Ferguson wrote him complaining about Flynn's decision to retire as delegate. He pointed out that a new and inexperienced representative would be less effective in the fight for statehood. Also the Republican Party would be disorganized since none of the candidates in the field had enough support to easily capture the nomination. Finally, Ferguson explained that, due to this chaotic situation, the enemies of the established Republican organization were covertly planning to elect a new national committeeman. Realizing Grimes' ability to deal with such crises, Ferguson asked him to return quickly to Oklahoma Territory and help fight the opposition. Grimes soon returned home and led a last-minute attempt to draft Flynn at the territorial convention. However, Bird S. McGuire, a zealous Republican from Pawnee, captured the nomination for delegate on June 25. The once undefeatable Flynn thus became a lame duck.²⁹

After McGuire won the general election in November, 1902, he began consolidating his power. Members of the territorial legislature boosted his strength by investigating the sanitarium scandal that had led to the dismissal of former Governor Jenkins. A joint committee was established on January 29, 1903, to undertake the inquiry. This group of legislators was particularly interested in any indications that Secretary of the Territory Grimes might have been involved. Therefore the possibility of his dismissal again arose.³⁰

The testimony of the hearings revealed that, during the time of the scandal, Grimes possibly could have owned stock in the asylum at Norman. This was based on the statement by Fred C. Dolcater, who had been cashier at the Capitol National Bank of Guthrie during the period. Dolcater said

²⁸ *Daily Oklahoman*, December 16, 1905, p. 6, January 14, 1902, p. 1.

²⁹ Thompson B. Ferguson to William C. Grimes, June 11, 1902, Thompson B. Ferguson Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; *Daily Oklahoman*, June 26, 1902, p. 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, January 30, 1903, p. 1.

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that he had seen banking papers which showed that Grimes had bought stock. Two other important persons gave similar testimony based only on hearsay evidence. Grimes, as a witness in the investigation, denied ownership in the asylum but admitted he had purchased some stock for Flynn. According to Grimes, Flynn had been interested in the stock after he had heard that Governor Jenkins had some available. However, Flynn was unable to purchase his share because he was called out of town; as a result, Grimes bought the shares of stock and held them for Flynn. After hearing this testimony, the joint committee reached no conclusions concerning Grimes' participation. However, one of the official findings of the investigating committee stated that Flynn had owned shares in the company. Consequently, the influence of the Flynn-Grimes political combination was severely limited.³¹

After the joint committee made its report public in March, 1903, the Democratic press bombarded the Flynn-Grimes political machine with biting criticism. The *Daily Oklahoman* proclaimed, "The sins of Shylock and the avarice of Fagain [*sic*] are eclipsed by this modern aggregation of festive freaks who speculate in the misfortunes of human beings to line their pockets with yellow dust."³² The *Daily Oklahoman* also emphasized that the Republicans were splitting due to the investigation. The newspaper indicated that John P. Hickam, the Republican chairman of the joint committee and an ally of McGuire, was trying to discredit Grimes and cause his dismissal. Hickam supposedly had contacted the Department of the Interior; however, it is certain that the *Enid Events*, the chief spokesman for McGuire, used the scandal and the report to weaken Grimes' political stature. Indeed, the *Enid* newspaper continuously attacked him concerning the sanitarium until he decided to refuse reappointment in December, 1905.³³

The McGuire faction of the Republican Party also hampered Grimes in other ways, the most vivid example being the reduction of the fees that he was receiving as secretary of Oklahoma Territory. Legislator Hickam again led in this attack on Grimes. On January 27, 1903, the Oklahoma Territory Council, the upper house of the legislature, passed a resolution introduced by Hickam which required that Secretary Grimes present a list of his fees and salary for the year ending December 21, 1902. In compliance with the resolution, Grimes reported his fees and salary on February 3, 1903. The information presented showed that he had received approximately

³¹ *Guthrie Daily Leader*, December 13, 1905, pp. 1 and 2, December 19, 1905, p. 2, December 11, 1905, p. 6, December 18, 1905, p. 2, December 11, 1905, p. 1.

³² *Daily Oklahoman*, March 22, 1903, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 10; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, December 27, 1905, p. 6.

\$11,393.30 for his services during 1902, a sizable income for this period. The *Daily Oklahoman* claimed that Grimes received more income than any of the president's cabinet officers.³⁴

Undoubtedly reacting to these large earnings, on March 5, 1903, the legislature of Oklahoma Territory passed the Hickam Bill. This legislation limited the secretary of Oklahoma Territory to the \$1,800 provided by the federal government and \$1,200 in fees from the territory. This was less than one-third of Grimes' previous earnings, and the excess funds were to be put into the territorial treasury. The secretary was further required to submit quarterly statements detailing the amount of fees received. The McGuire-Hickam faction had effectively weakened Grimes' financial status and had made him accountable to the legislature.³⁵

Another issue on which McGuire's group questioned Grimes was party loyalty. In 1903, the *Enid Events*, McGuire's staunch political ally, asserted that Grimes had awarded an appointive position to a Democrat, Fred S. Barde, a *Kansas City Star* correspondent stationed at Guthrie. This was highly irregular during these days of Stalwart Republicanism, and the *Enid Events* said that Grimes must have given the appointment to Barde as a reward for his numerous journalistic attacks on McGuire. Also, Grimes allegedly had given a printing contract to the Democratic *Guthrie Daily Leader* because this paper had attacked McGuire's leadership. The *Enid Events* concluded that Grimes was a divisive factor in his party.³⁶

As Grimes' term neared an end in late 1905, the press exerted intense pressure on him. The Republican newspapers that supported McGuire repeated charges that Grimes was splitting the party by siding with Democrats. The *Guthrie Daily Leader*, hoping to keep the Republicans in factional turmoil, published the entire transcript of the legislature's investigation of the sanitarium. Possibly as a result of this pressure, Grimes decided not to seek reappointment. Evidently the McGuire people had won. The *Beaver Journal* described Grimes' attitude toward McGuire's ascendancy when it said, "he not only sulked in his tent but he put on the blanket and left the reservation. . . . Grimes undoubtedly read his doom and concluded the graceful way to get out was to resign."³⁷

Although some newspapers predicted that Grimes would remain active

³⁴ *Daily Oklahoman*, January 28, 1903, p. 1, February 4, 1903, pp. 2 and 4.

³⁵ *Guthrie Daily Leader*, March 6, 1903, p. 3; Oklahoma Territory Legislature, *Session Laws of 1903 Passed at the Seventh Regular Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma* (Guthrie: State Capital Company, 1903), pp. 164-165.

³⁶ *Enid Events*, August 20, 1903, p. 2.

³⁷ *Oklahoma State Register* (Guthrie), May 11, 1905, p. 4, and June 1, 1905, p. 4; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, December 11-20, 1905; *Daily Oklahoman*, December 12, 1905, p. 2; *Beaver Journal*, December 14, 1905, p. 4.

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in Republican politics and lead the old Flynn segment of the party to a revival of power, he was relatively inactive after he left office when his term expired on January 15, 1906. When the attention of most people in Oklahoma Territory began to focus on statehood, Grimes took an increasing interest in an entirely different area—Oregon. He had made a trip to Portland in the summer of 1905, where he spent several days as a delegate to the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress. Undoubtedly he found the area to his liking, for he moved to Marshfield, Oregon, immediately after Oklahoma statehood in 1907. Building the town's banking and business interests, he lived there for ten years. Then he moved to Alhambra, California, and finally to Santa Monica, where friends from Oklahoma would often visit with him while they were on West Coast vacations. He died in that city on April 8, 1931, and was buried there.³⁸

The political and public service career of Grimes was one of the most illustrious in Oklahoma Territory. Unlike most of the territorial governors who exerted influence only during their administration, Grimes strongly affected events from the early days of territorial political life until his retirement from office in 1906. Any story of the Republican Party in Oklahoma Territory would not be complete unless it included Grimes. He became a leader of the Flynn wing of the party, perhaps the strongest throughout the territorial period, and was a part of the factionalism that resulted. Neither a calculating opportunist nor flamboyant politician, he chose rather to enhance his position through hard work and strong organization. Grimes' importance was not limited to partisan politics, moreover, for he promoted the development of one of the leading towns in the territory, established an efficient law enforcement system and served as a public official for a number of years. As a result, he is a choice example of one of the capable men who used their abilities to mold Oklahoma Territory not only for themselves but also for the benefit of others.

³⁸ *Daily Oklahoman*, December 12, 1905, p. 2; *Daily Oklahoma State Capital*, December 13, 1905, p. 4; Thompson B. Ferguson to William C. Grimes, July 24 and August 7, 1905, Ferguson Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma; Flynn, "William Grimes," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. IX, p. 222.