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Ku Klux Klan Public Relations in the Early 1920s

BY

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PREFACE

In early 1920 the revived Ku Klux Klan was a rather weak regional fraternal organization under the guidance of founder-Imperial Wizard William J. Simmons. When the Klan began to stagnate and lose money, Simmons resorted to hiring public relations assistance in the form of Edward Young Clarke and the Southern Publicity Association of Atlanta. Within a year and a half the Klan blossomed from a membership of 3,000 to a national strength of over 100,000. By 1923 Klansmen numbered in the millions.

E. Y. Clarke and his partner, Elizabeth Tyler, were seasoned promoters who had been successful in fund-raising drives in the South. In their campaign for the Ku Klux Klan, Clarke and his associates employed many acceptable tools and tactics of contemporary public relations, including a speakers bureau, house organs, press releases, press conferences, publicity photos, films, external publications, and pseudo-events of many kinds. At times, however, they also resorted to unethical practices—exaggeration, cover-ups, frame-ups, character assassination, and blackmail. This thesis is a study of that campaign and its impact on American society.

Definitions

The Southern Publicity Association operated in an era in which the function and ethics of public relations had not been clearly defined. Even today those outside the profession have difficulty distinguishing
public relations from some of its functional components such as advertising, publicity, promotion, and propaganda. Public relations practitioners are often considered "image-builders," puffy artists and cosmetitians, while the practice involves much more than just dispensing sunny-side up information. Public relations has been defined as "the planned effort to influence opinion through socially responsible performance based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication." ¹ From today's perspective the Klan's performance in the 1920s cannot be considered socially responsible. As this thesis will reveal, however, the Klan promoters influenced opinion by creating the illusion that their organization was beneficial to society. Without necessarily presenting a false impression of the Klan, they devised and presented socially destructive tenets as solutions to problems which troubled native white Americans.

If the term "public relations" does not often appear within the text of this thesis, is because the organized practice signifies a very broad and continuing process involving analysis of public attitudes, planning and decision-making, action and communication, and evaluation of results.² For this reason it is awkward to describe a particular action or reaction by Clarke or his associates as a "good" or "bad" public relations maneuver.

Some of the more specific facets of public relations need to be defined as they appear in this context, though the distinctions between them are admittedly fuzzy.

²Ibid, 186.
Promotion, as used herein, is that portion of the public relations function concerned directly with enlarging the Klan's membership—the "selling of the Klan"—which was the primary purpose for which Simmons employed the Southern Publicity Association. Promotion often involves the tools and techniques, and even the planning and organization of public relations. The distinction is primarily one of intention. In promotion there is less concern with ongoing communication, and more energies are directed toward growth and profit.

Publicity is the practice of gaining attention and exposure. It is an integral part of effective public relations, but the quantity of publicity is not necessarily proportionate to the success of a public relations program. Walking before footlights does not always guarantee applause, but performances offstage have little chance of being appreciated. Publicity is the opening curtain, the procedure of going before an audience.

Advertising is paid publicity. Unfortunately the field of advertising is often considered by both journalists and scholars to be synonymous with the practice of public relations. Advertising is one-way communication, a means by which a practitioner pays a certain fee to display his message in print or on the air. It is a tool of public relations and can be used to supplement—but never supplant—two-way communication. As will be shown, the Klan's organizers utilized relatively little advertising, relying instead on orchestrated events to gain exposure in the media.

Propaganda is a word public relations practitioners avoid as if it were an ugly unloved stepchild, hidden away in the attics of their vocabularies. The word was originated by the Vatican in the 17th century.
to describe the process of propagating the faith. The word has since fallen upon hard times, connoting something the "other side" does as an antithesis to the truth. In this context propaganda is used to denote specific ideas and doctrines spread by the Klan to influence opinion, or the particular instruments used to carry those messages.

**Organization**

The secret of the success of the Southern Publicity Association's campaign, wrote historian John Higham, "lay essentially in the mood and circumstances of 1920." The purpose of this thesis is to illustrate how Clarke and his subordinates (1) effectively analyzed that mood and those circumstances, (2) organized a drive bringing these attitudes and opinions to bear on their planning, (3) used a variety of tools to communicate those policies to their desired publics, and (4) utilized feedback to adjust some of their basic messages early in the drive. The thesis will demonstrate, in other words, that the growth of the Ku Klux Klan, an organization which in the early 1920s created severe societal cleavages, was greatly enhanced by the process of public relations.

Chapter I of this thesis tells of the conditions which helped bring about the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915 and describes the backgrounds of Simmons, Clarke, and Tyler. The second chapter concerns the circumstances under which movements such as the Klan had previously occurred and relates the particular social climate of the 1920s; it also shows how the Klan's promoters adapted their propaganda to suit those moods and anxieties and how they infiltrated towns and cities through the community power structures. Chapter III describes the specific public relations tools used by the Klan to gain publicity and recruit new
members. The next segment on the Klan press is, in a sense, an extension of the third chapter since internal and external publications are among an organization's most valuable public relations tools. The fifth chapter is a case study discussing the response of the Southern Publicity Association to the exposures by the New York World and other newspapers that led to a Congressional hearing about the Klan in 1921. Chapter VI reveals how the personal examples set by the leaders of an organization--particularly its top information officials--can seriously affect its credibility and damage the morale of rank and file members. The chapter also briefly discusses the Klan's public relations efforts after the contract of the Southern Publicity Association was cancelled. As an epilogue, the thesis traces E. Y. Clarke's protean career after leaving the Klan.

Since capitalization of the Klan's eccentric nomenclature was not consistent in the sources studied, the writer developed a rule of thumb for use in this thesis. All titles of national (i.e. "Imperial") officers were capitalized throughout, since only one person could occupy each of these offices at one time. Titles of the many state and local leaders were capitalized only when directly preceding the names of the particular officers. Under this system the designations of lesser officials such as "exalted cyclops," "grand dragons" or "king kleagles" were not capitalized when used generically, whereas "Imperial Wizard," "Imperial Kleagle," and "Emperor" were capitalized throughout, as were "Klan" and "Klansman." In quoted passages, however, the capitalizations and spellings were left as found in the original source.

Sources and Methodology

The most valuable single source of reference for this thesis was
Effective Public Relations (4th ed.) by Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center. The text, while not cited often within this paper, was an inspiration throughout.

There are few scholarly published works which deal comprehensively with the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s. Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930 (1967), though it concentrates on the development of the organization in urban areas, is the most impressively documented and detailed work on the Klan of that era. Jackson's critical bibliography was an indispensable tool for the preparation of this thesis. David M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: A History of the Ku Klux Klan (1965), the best general history of the order, is exceptionally strong on local Klan activities of the 1920s. There are also several good published regional studies of the Klan of the 1920s, the best of which are Charles C. Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest (1965), and Emerson H. Loucks, The Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania (1936). More useful for this thesis however, were several unpublished dissertations, including Benjamin H. Avin, "The Ku Klux Klan 1915-1925: A Study in Religious Intolerance" (Georgetown, 1952); John A. Davis, "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1920-1930" (Northwestern, 1966); and Norman F. Weaver, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan" (Wisconsin, 1954).

Much of the primary documentation for this thesis can be found at the Wisconsin State Historical Society (WSHS) in Madison. Located there on microfilm are the archives of the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU Archives consist of bound volumes containing mostly newspaper and magazine clippings, filed according to subject. Also at WSHS, made available only recently, are the papers of William T. Evjue who edited the
Capital Times (Madison) during the 1920s. The Evjue Papers contain a folder of Klan propaganda and correspondence.

Since much of the activity described in this thesis took place in Atlanta, the writer journeyed to Georgia twice to secure additional documentation. The periods May 20-24 and August 5-10, 1974, were spent in Atlanta where Emory University proved to be the most useful storehouse of information. The Special Collections of the Emory library contain the papers of Julian La Rose Harris, a Georgia newspaper editor who tenaciously fought the Klan in the 1920s. The Harris Papers, consisting of clippings, scrapbooks, and boxes of correspondence, are an especially rich source of materials pertaining to the Klan's propagation activities of the period. Although the writer did not originally travel to Atlanta with the intention of seeking out Klansmen of the 1920s, three former Klansmen of that period were interviewed—Imperial Wizard James R. Venable, Judge Virlyn B. Moore, and a third who did not wish his Klan affiliation to be made public. Their reminiscences provided the writer with the insight necessary to help place more scholarly material in perspective.

The period August 12-16, 1974, was spent in Washington, D.C., where the writer researched the Klan file in the Justice Department records in the National Archives. More valuable, however, were the NAACP Administrative files at the Library of Congress where they have been stored since 1972. The NAACP Papers included news releases, correspondence, and clippings concerning the Klan from 1919-1921, the period when documentation is scarcest.

Klan periodicals also proved to be very helpful in preparation of this paper, not only as examples of Klan propaganda but also as sources of factual information. Particularly useful were Dawn, the Badger American,
and the Wisconsin Kourier, all available on microfilm at WSHS, and the Imperial Night-Hawk, on microfilm at Emory. In his bibliography Kenneth T. Jackson reports that Searchlight, the organ of the Southern Publicity Association, was partially available on microfilm at the universities of Chicago and Texas. However, both written and phoned inquiries to those institutions revealed that neither had ever possessed Searchlight which is not listed in any serial catalogue. A single fragile decaying issue of the paper can be found in the Harris Papers.

Jackson also cites several legal documents preserved in records of the Cook County (Illinois) circuit and superior courts. However, investigation by the writer revealed that the particular cases cited by Jackson are missing from the Cook county repository. Cook county court clerk officials were at a loss to explain the missing records. Apparently the cases had been checked out and never returned, or they have been consolidated into a single file and the location not recorded.

In recording and then utilizing information from these diverse sources it was admittedly difficult to separate fact from fiction and exaggeration. Few people who wrote about the Klan during the 1920s were without strong biases for or against the organization. Lies and distortions--and the feelings they aroused because they were accepted as truth--helped to create the Klan and to destroy tolerance in many communities. The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s, after all, was not a fringe movement of bigots and ruffians; most were concerned Americans whose discontent and vague suspicions were crystallized into hatred by the Klan promoters.
CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

Years before the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment, the state of Georgia was as dry as Death Valley. The state's locker club law provided the only legal means for a citizen of the Peach State to process alcoholic beverages—by keeping them in his locker at his club. In 1915 a tall ex-preacher with auburn hair, pince-nez glasses and a penchant for the bottle wandered into the office of Atlanta City Clerk Walter Taylor and handed him a lengthy document.

"What do you think of it, Walter?" he asked. "The name, I mean. For a locker club. Will they join?"

Taylor perused the proposed constitution and by-laws of a new fraternal order with locker club trimmings to be known as the Ku Klux Klan, after the pre-Civil War organization of the same name.

"Naw—they all want to be animals," Taylor reportedly replied, referring to the Elks, Owls, Beavers, Badgers and other zoologically designated locker clubs that proliferated in Atlanta.1

William Joseph Simmons was undaunted. He left the city clerk's office and found more receptive ears for his scheme. Simmons was a professional fraternalist. He sold insurance for the Woodmen of the World and held the honorary rank of "colonel" in the organization.

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He also belonged to the Masons, Royal Arch Masons, Knights Templars and other such orders. But his dream was to begin his own order and model the regalia and ceremony after the Reconstruction night riders of the 1860s.

The Resurrection of the Klan

In 1865 six young hell raisers—all former Confederate officers—decided to form a club, to have a little wild fun as a relief from the dreary surroundings of post-War Tennessee. They had a great time wearing ghostly disguises and scaring suspicious Negroes who thought the figures were the ghosts of slain soldiers. For a name they chose the Greek word *kuklos*, meaning circle, which eventually evolved into Ku Klux (or Ku-klux) Klan. Word of this new order spread throughout the South and other "dens" were soon formed, though there was no central organization. In April 1867 representatives of the organization met in Nashville and formally organized the Ku Klux Klan with a constitution and official hierarchy. Former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was elected "Grand Wizard."³

The new Klan quickly became the weapon of frustrated whites who wanted to wrest control of Southern governments from the hands of carpetbaggers, skalawags and militant Negroes. Usually resorting to violence and crude intimidation, the Klan was partially successful in frightening Negroes from the polls, chasing away Northern school teachers and restoring "normalized relations" to the South.⁴

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⁴Ibid., 19.
Forrest became troubled by the degeneration of his order and dissolved the Klan in early 1869. Yet, it finally took an act of Congress (the Federal Force Act), along with eventual recovery of power by Southern whites, before the Klan disappeared.

William Joseph Simmons' father was a member of the first Klan, and as a child the future Imperial Wizard marveled at tales of the hooded horsemen. He told an interviewer in 1921 that although he used to eavesdrop on his father talking to his old cronies, the most vivid stories he heard were recollected by the family's servants:

From a child in dresses... I can remember how Old Aunt Viney, my black mammy, used to pacify us children late in the evening by telling us about the Klu Klux [sic; a common misspelling]. There was an old negro man there, too, Uncle Simon, who was a great hand at picking a banjo. He'd put his banjo aside and they would try to see which could tell us the biggest tales about the Klu Klux.

Those great grotesque stories didn't scare me, they thrilled me. From then on, all through my life I wanted to know about the Klu Klux.5

Simmons recalled that he was not inspired to form another Klan until he was 20, when he saw what he asserted was an hallucination—Klansmen on horseback galloping across his bedroom. "On horseback in their white robes they rode across the wall in front of me," he said, "and as the picture faded out I got down on my knees and swore that I would found a fraternal organization which would be a memorial to the Klu Klux Klan." In other versions, Simmons described the envisioned horsemen as ghost riders in the sky, "passing swiftly and silently, like a white cloud, across the starry heavens."6

6Ibid; Cf. William J. Simmons, The Klan Unmasked (Atlanta, 1924), 294.
He kept his plan to himself. After a brief fling in the military during the Spanish-American War (he never advanced past the rank of private), Simmons entered the ministry. He was talented in the pulpit, but he was never able to land a major preaching assignment. He rode circuit to revivals and camp meetings and served briefly as pastor to several small rural churches. He gained some fame as an evangelist but was eventually bounced out of the ministry by the 1912 Alabama Methodist Conference because he continually overspent his allowances and was running his church into debt. He drifted into fraternal work and employed his speaking skills successfully as an organizer for the Woodmen, enlisting members and selling insurance. He continued to dream of founding his own order, but it took an auto accident, the murder of a teenage girl, and a movie to provide the initiative.

The auto accident laid Simmons on his back for several months, providing him the idle hours to work out the complex ritual, ceremony and rules of his new club. He then looked for the most appropriate charter members and the most propitious time to launch his order. There were a few members of the old Klan who lived in Atlanta, where Simmons then resided, and he talked two or three of those into joining his cause. Of the remaining 34 men who met with Simmons on October 26, 1915, to discuss the formation of the Klan, most reportedly belonged to the "Knights of Mary Phagan."

Pretty 14-year-old Mary Phagan was discovered brutally raped and murdered in an Atlanta pencil factory in 1913. Her employer, a transplanted Jewish Yankee named Leo Frank, 29, was quickly convicted in a

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7 Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 29.
sensational trial that drew nationwide publicity. Although the Atlanta newspapers branded Frank as "the murderer" from the day he was arrested, the evidence brought against the mild-mannered Jew was never conclusive. Wealthy Northern Jews financed a battle for an appeal, and Frank became a symbol for everything most Southerners thought the Jew stood for—"Big Money," the Northern capitalist exploiting Southern womanhood, greed and perversion. The resultant anti-Semitism that raged through Atlanta was intensified when Georgia's governor commuted Frank's sentence to life imprisonment minutes prior to his scheduled execution. Goaded by Populist leader (later Senator) Tom Watson, Georgians boycotted Jewish merchants, staged noisy nocturnal demonstrations, and, inevitably, broke into the prison farm and lynched Leo Frank.  

The lynchers, however, were no ordinary howling mob of angry rabble insane with rage. They were the Knights of Mary Phagan, a well-organized group of prominent citizens from Marietta, the Atlanta suburb where Mary had lived. They quietly entered the prison late at night, disarmed the guards, abducted their unresisting victim and transported him back to Marietta where they hanged him at daybreak.

Though their act was officially decried across Georgia and the nation, the Knights of Mary Phagan were the folk heroes of the moment in Atlanta. Simmons apparently perceived an opportunity to inject some of their mystery and popularity into his new movement. He invited the

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Marietta night riders to form the nucleus of his charter chapter, and
his order became the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.\(^9\)

After the group voted to organize, Simmons filed for a charter with
the state and the county and began looking for an opportune time and
place for the initiation ceremonies. Simmons heard about a new motion
picture called the *The Birth of A Nation* that presented a romanticized
view of the old Klan. When an Atlanta theatre booked the movie, Simmons
decided, as he recalled later, that the picture's premiere "would give
the new order a tremendous popular boost."\(^10\) He scheduled the initiation
of his Klan on November 25, 1915, ten days before the film's opening in
Atlanta.

Simmons' ultimate plan was to conduct the first initiation atop
Stone Mountain, 16 miles east of Atlanta. On a clear day the huge slab
of granite was visible from 30 miles away; a burning cross at night would
signal to all Atlanta the Klan's arrival.

He rented a travel bus to take his disciples to the base of the
mountain, but only about 15 were enthusiastic enough to show on that
chilly evening. Simmons led his shivering entourage to the top of the
continent's biggest rock where they constructed a makeshift stone altar
and a base for the pine cross they had hauled up the slope. They covered
the cross with excelsior, soaked it in kerosene and ignited it. While
the American flag fluttered in the light of the blazing cross, Simmons

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\(^9\) Harry L. Golden, *A Little Girl Is Dead* (Cleveland and New
York, 1965), 300; Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York and

\(^10\) William G. Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Collier's*,
July 14, 1928, p. 34.
Fig. 1. Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons as he appeared in a publicity photo circa 1921. This picture was probably taken in Simmons' "Imperial Aulic"--his downtown Atlanta headquarters--prior to his move to the "Imperial Palace" on the outskirts of town. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James R. Venable).
read from the Bible (Romans, chapter 12) and administered the oath of
the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Most Atlantans who witnessed the
fiery cross from a distance were not especially awed, merely puzzled.
Some speculated that the demonstration was just a publicity stunt for
The Birth of A Nation.\(^{11}\)

Simmons persuaded the Atlanta Journal to run an advertisement he
had drawn next to ads for the film. The ad billed the Klan as "The
World's Greatest Secret, Social, Patriotic, Fraternal, Beneficiary
Order . . . A High Class Order for Men of Intelligence and Character."
It is not surprising that the cheering crowds which packed the Atlanta
Theater during the engagement were quick to associate the picture's
distorted version of the old Klan with Simmons' "High Class Order."\(^{12}\)

When Birth of A Nation had been shown in other cities, audiences
had yelled and cheered and on one occasion even shot up the screen in
an attempt to save Flora Cameron from her black pursuer.\(^{13}\) Atlanta
reacted almost as exuberantly. An Atlanta Journal reviewer wrote on
the morning after the first showing:

It swept the audience at the Atlanta Theater Monday night like
a tidal wave. A youth in the gallery leaped to his feet and
yelled and yelled. A little boy downstairs pounded the man's back
in front of him and shrieked. The man did not know it. He was a
middle-aged, hard-lipped citizen; but his face twitched and his
throat gulped up and down. Here a young girl kept dabbing at
her eyes and there an old lady just sat and let the tears stream
down her face unchecked.

For The Birth of a Nation is the awakener of every feeling.
Your heart pulses with patriotism when those boys in gray march to

\(^{11}\)Ibid., 32.

\(^{12}\)Maxim Simcovitch, "The Impact of Griffith's Birth of A Nation

\(^{13}\)Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City: 1915-1920
(New York, 1967), 3 f.
battle with banners whipping and the band playing Dixie; you are wrung with compassion for the mother and her girls desolate at home; you are shocked by the clamor of mighty armies flung hell bent into conflict; your throat chokes for a boy who dies with a smile on his face beside the body of his chum, the enemy. Then "the South's best friend" crumples under the assassin's bullet and the land of the lost cause lies like a ragged wound under a black poison that pours out upon it. Loathing, disgust, hate envelop you, hot blood cries for vengeance. Until out of the night blazes the fiery cross that once burned high above old Scotland's hills and the legions of the Invisible Empire roar down to the rescue and that's when you are lifted by the hair and go crazy!14

Birth of A Nation depicted the Klan as the Messiah of the war-ravaged South. When Simmons and his followers paraded down Peachtree Street on the night of the movie's premiere in Atlanta, firing rifle salutes in front of the theater, Georgians saw the spectacle as a Second Coming. Simmons later admitted that he could never have pushed his new order forward as quickly as he did had there been no film.15

The movie boosted the Klan to an auspicious start, but Simmons' bubble burst in 1916. Jonathan B. Frost, one of the charter members of the order and Simmons' partner in his Woodmen of the World insurance enterprise, embezzled the Klan of its accumulated funds and fled the state to form a counterfeit order. Simmons successfully sued Frost to retain sole rights over the use of the Klan's regalia and ritual, which he had copyrighted, but the affair left the organization and its founder in financial disarray.16

The Wizard mortgaged his home and managed to hold the order together during the crisis. In late 1918 the World War put the Klan back into the

16Simmons statement, Klan Hearings, 69.
spotlight. Operating most noticeably in Alabama, the Klan rode against those suspected of being alien sympathizers, idlers, or slackers who were not doing their part to support the war effort. Klansmen also chased "immoral women" away from Southern Army Camps and intervened to prevent wildcat strikes in Alabama cities. Usually a nighttime visitation with a "special warning" was sufficient to frighten the victims into compliance, but occasionally the night riders did resort to violence. When an outside labor leader came to Mobile to try to promote a strike among stevedores and washerwomen, he was mysteriously abducted by a white-sheeted platoon travelling in a squad of cars that were draped in white cloth bearing the images of fiery crosses.\textsuperscript{17}

By 1919 Simmons was plagued by reports of increasing violence by night riders alleged to be Klansmen, although there were at least two other Klan-like organizations in existence at the time. Simmons' betrayer, J. B. Frost, emerged in Tennessee as "Majestic Soveren" [sic] of the "Columbian Union," which, despite its name, was nearly a photostatic copy of Simmons' Klan. Also known as the "Sovern [sic] Klan of the World," Frost's order had lodges called Klans and had spread into Virginia.\textsuperscript{18}

Another pseudo-Klan, operating out of Charlotte, North Carolina, was known as the "Loyal Order of Klansmen, Inc." L.O.O.K. ran ads in papers throughout the South billing itself as a "Social--Fraternal--Military--

\textsuperscript{17}Littel McClung, "Ku Klux Klan Again in the South," New York Times, Sept. 1, 1918, Sec. 4, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{18}Chicago Defender, Feb. 15, 1919; Richmond Planet, July 26, 1919; in National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Papers (Administrative Files), Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, box 313, subj. file--KKK (Clippings) 1919. Hereafter cited as NAACP Papers.
Patriotic and Protective Order, A Southern Order for Southern Gentlemen.” Its trademark featured a skull and crossbones on a shield and it claimed to have roots extending back to 1248 A.D. Prospective members, according to the ads, could join for $10 if they applied within 30 days, after which the fee went up to $50. North Carolina Governor Thomas W. Bickett (who would attack Simmons' Klan two years later) denounced L.O.O.K. as "the wildest of wildcat schemes." 19

The general public saw little difference between Simmons' order and these other Klans. Simmons had shied away from deliberate publicity during these early years of his Klan; he was concerned that his organization retain its stigma of secrecy and mystery. He told an interviewer in 1921, "I was afraid somebody else would take my idea and prostitute it; make it commercial." When his worst fears were realized, Simmons turned to advertising. A quarter page ad printed in the Atlanta Constitution featured a Klansman rearing his horse under the words, "The Most Sublime Lineage In History." Simmons' ad proclaimed: "This Order is not a mere social, fraternal organization but it is the embodiment of a GREAT CAUSE that strongly appeals to sober manhood. . . ." 20 The advertising had little effect. The Klan continued to lose money and its membership levelled off at about 2,000. The Ku Klux Klan might have died out completely, driving its Wizard into bankruptcy, had it not been for a professional fund raiser and self-styled bootlegger named J. Quincy Jett. Jett saw Simmons' ad in the Constitution and wrote to the box

19Norfolk Journal and Guide, July 2, 1919, NAACP Papers, box 313, subj. file--KKK (Clippings) July to December 1919.

20Perkerson, "Why the Klu Klux Klan Has Been Revived," 1; Atlanta Constitution. Oct. 8, 1919, p. 10.
number provided. He was soon visited by the Wizard who personally signed him for the $10 initiation fee. After he heard Simmons give several sermons, he became convinced "that the only thing that would save America and the white people of the world, would be the Ku Klux Klan."21

Jett worked for his mother-in-law, Mrs. Elizabeth Tyler, and her partner, Edward Young Clarke, in an enterprise called the Southern Publicity Association. The firm had successfully managed two campaigns for the Salvation Army, which had presented Clarke with a gold watch. The Southern Publicity Association had also directed drives for the Red Cross, the YMCA and the Anti-Saloon League. Jett decided that the fund-raising techniques used by Clarke could be applied just as easily to spreading the Klan and urged Simmons to hire the publicists. The colonel was more easily convinced than Clarke. He had heard that the Klan had a reputation for being anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic. While not particularly broad-minded himself, his objections were for purely practical reasons. Catholics and Jews had been among his customers and had helped him in some of his drives. He did not want to lose their support unless it would be well worth his while. As Mrs. Tyler later recalled, "After investigating it from every angle, we decided to go into it with Col. Simmons and give it the impetus that it could get best from publicity."22

21J. Quincy Jett, Columbus (Ga.) Enquirer-Sun, Nov. 9, 1925, Julian La Rose Harris Papers, box 7, folder 4, Harris Room, Special Collections, Emory University, Atlanta. Hereafter cited as Harris Papers. Jett, who worked with Clarke and Tyler intermittently, wrote a series of articles "exposing" the Klan in 1925. The articles first appeared in the Georgia Free Lance (Dublin) and were reprinted in the Enquirer-Sun. Harris edited and published the Columbus newspaper; his crusade against the Klan is discussed in Chapter V.

Fig. 2. Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler--kingpins of the Southern Publicity Association.
Their price came high. The contract between Simmons and Clarke, dated June 7, 1920, shows that out of every ten dollar initiation fee, Clarke and his subordinates could keep eight. Additionally, the Southern Publicity Association would receive the remaining two dollars for members added within six months to Klan chapters his organization had initiated. Clarke was designated the "Imperial Kleagle," (general superintendent of the organization department) of the Klan. As a woman, Mrs. Tyler could hold no official position within the Klan.23

E. Y. Clarke -- Atlanta's P. T. Barrum

If Clarke had a natural talent for publicity, he came by it naturally. His father, E. Y. Clarke, Sr., was one of the most prominent figures in the history of 19th century Atlanta journalism. Two years after the Atlanta Constitution was founded in 1868, the elder Clarke, a former Confederate colonel, bought the newspaper and made himself managing editor, selling out several years later. While in that capacity he led the first expedition into the Okefenokee Swamp in 1875. The explorers in the Constitution Expedition--scientists, educators, surveyors and newspapermen--were the first Caucasians to enter the swamp.24

E. Y. Clarke, Sr. wrote the first history of Atlanta in an effort to put the city on the map. In the preface to his lavishly illustrated volume, he left no doubt that the primary purpose of the history was

23 Imperial Kleagle's Contract, official document, Klan Hearings, 111 f.

24 James A. Holloman, Atlanta Constitution, April 17, 1919, Georgia Clippings Scrapbooks, 12:17, Ga. Dept. of Archives and History, Atlanta. The Georgia Clippings Scrapbooks contain clippings from papers around the state; they are not indexed, however, and Klan items are interspersed with clippings concerning a great many other topics pertaining to Georgia history.
"to speedily bring thousands to our population, and add millions to our capital and taxable values." The elder Clarke remained active in various journalistic endeavors until his death in 1911.25

The younger Clarke, born in Atlanta in 1877, at first aspired to the ministry. As a Presbyterian, he clung to the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination, a belief that was reportedly enhanced when he emerged unscathed from an auto accident and claimed he had divine protection and direction. According to one of his close associates, he often asserted that his later successes with the Klan had been predestined by the Almighty.26

Clarke eventually discarded his clerical calling and, along with his brother Francis, landed a job as reporter around 1902 for the Constitution. Because of his religious training (and possibly his father's influence) he was soon promoted to religious editor. Although E. Y. spent only seven years with the paper, Francis remained with the Constitution until 1937, working his way up to managing editor. About the worst that has ever been written about Francis Clarke was that he

25 Edward Y. Clarke, Illustrated History of Atlanta (Atlanta, 1878), 5; Garrett, Atlanta and Environs, 2:569.

26 Edgar I. Fuller, The Visible of the Invisible Empire, or The Maelstrom (Denver, 1925), 26 f. Hereafter cited as Fuller, Maelstrom. After Clarke's propagation contract was cancelled he hired Fuller, a former California kleagle, and Frank N. Littlejohn to investigate the Klan. The evidence was to be syndicated in the press with Clarke receiving the lion's share of the profits. The agreement was later annulled, and the documents were published in a paperback, The Klan Inside Out, by Marion Monteval [pseud.], but the book hardly flattered Clarke. A year later Fuller published The Maelstrom with a nearly identical text, but more expensively bound and illustrated. In 1967, apparently capitalizing on the tense racial atmosphere of the decade, he published another version of the same book, this time entitled Nigger in the Woodpile (Felton, Calif., 1967).
tended to give his brother the benefit of the doubt when the latter's Klan ties were revealed by other papers.

E. Y. Clarke, Jr. was a short slender man with a thick mop of black hair that grew low on his forehead and made him appear several years younger. He wore round horn- or gold-rimmed spectacles and walked with a bouncy gait. Those who knew him personally have called him variously, "a disciple of P. T. Barnum," "a super salesman," and "a man of courage, vision, ideals, understanding, energy and undying loyalty."27

With all these positive qualities it is puzzling that Clarke often resorted to chicanery, fraud and deceit to accomplish his goals. He was certainly capable of succeeding in legitimate endeavors. After a five-year period in which he was involved in several quick-money schemes, Clarke began working for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce in 1914 and earned a respectable reputation as "The Doctor of Sick Towns." Moving into the field that his father had cultivated, city promotion, Clarke in his Chamber of Commerce position boosted Georgia communities that had stagnated commercially.28 This led to his selection as general manager of the Georgia Harvest Festival.

The week-long festival was conceived by the Atlanta Presidents Club, an exclusive organization composed of the heads of the major commercial firms in Atlanta. The year 1914 had been a grim one for farmers and thus the whole of the agricultural state of Georgia; when 1915 brought a

27 Fuller, Maelstrom, 16; interview with James R. Venable, Tucker, Georgia, May 21, 1974; J. O. Wood, Are You a Citizen? (Atlanta, 1923), 4. Imperial Wizard Venable of the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, a contemporary organization, has belonged to various Klans since 1924. He personally knew both Clarke and Simmons, both of whom he speaks very highly. His uncle, Samuel Hoyt Venable, became Imperial Klabee (national treasurer) around 1923.

bumper crop, the Atlanta club voted to sponsor a fair "in celebration of the return of prosperity and the harvest season." Although he had only a month's notice to organize, Clarke assembled what he called "a card of attractions the like of which has never been equalled in the southern states." 29

Clarke's elaborate program included nearly a dozen parades in which 30,000 people marched—a fraternal order parade, an agricultural and industrial parade, a "monster civic parade," a "floral car parade," a suffragettes march and a "perambulator parade" of 300 tots pushing baby carriages. Outside attractions brought to Atlanta by Clarke included carnival rides, a wild west show, circus stunts, three band concerts daily, open-air vaudeville acts, the world's three smallest midgets and a talented baby elephant named "Tiny May." Clarke had all of downtown Atlanta's stores festooned with red, white, and blue bunting. Red, white, and blue lights decorated the streets, stretching to a "huge electric cornucopia" in the heart of the city.

The festival concluded with a spectacular "Fighting of the Flames" exhibition. Clarke had a full-size city block of buildings constructed in the middle of Atlanta's baseball park. After preliminary events of boxing matches and a college football game, Clarke had the buildings, including a four-story "Hotel Cody," ignited. Atlanta's firemen, who had rehearsed all week for the event, then clanged into the stadium, rescued the actors leaping off the roofs of the blazing buildings, and extinguished the fire.

At the festival's conclusion, the Atlanta Journal called it "the most successful event Atlanta ever staged," and praised E. Y. Clarke for

29 Atlanta Journal, Nov. 7, 1915, p. 1; Official Program and Guidebook, Georgia Harvest Festival (Atlanta, 1915), 1.
"the highly efficient way in which all events were handled."30

However, the Harvest Festival is most notable for bringing together the talents of E. Y. Clarke and Elizabeth ("Bessie") Tyler. Far from a public relations woman, Tyler was allegedly a proprietress of a house of ill repute.31 In 1915 she was involved in a charity project, a "Better Babies Movement," visiting tenements and counseling mothers on better hygiene for their children. The movement led to a "Better Babies Show," one of the highlights of the Harvest Festival, whence her first contact with Clarke.32

Of all the principals involved in the expansion of the Klan, Tyler had the most obscure background. She was born on a farm near Atlanta, received no formal education and, by one account, was widowed with a child at 15. This is possible, since she was only in her late thirties when her daughter Doris married Jett. She was a tall, buxom woman, weighing around 200 pounds. She usually wore her long blonde hair piled high atop her head. She was inclined to dress conservatively in black satin dresses and white hose. In spite of her bulk she was usually described as an attractive woman.

Sometime during the war she combined her savings with Clarke's talents and the Southern Publicity Association was born. Clarke and Tyler were ideal complements. He was an idea man, a visionary, a schemer. She was


31Fuller, Maelstrom, 18; statement of C. Anderson Wright, Klan Hearings, 26.

32New York World, Sept. 12, 1921, p. 2. The Harvest Festival program does not list Tyler's name on the "Better Babies Show Committee" but it is possible that she played some part in the movement as she asserted in interviews.
a down-to-earth business woman, a pragmatist with a tendency toward ruthlessness. Their failures in their early endeavors were sometimes as spectacular as their successes. During a drive for the Anti-Saloon League, Clarke hired an airplane and Tyler flew over Atlanta, dropping leaflets—possibly one of the first times this publicity technique was used during those infant years of biplane aviation. Nevertheless, the enactment of Prohibition stunted the drive and the pair fell far short of their goal.  

The Plan

By his constitution, Colonel Simmons was Imperial Wizard of the Klan, Emperor of the Invisible Empire, and administrative and mystical leader of his organization. His immediate subordinates, who composed the "Imperial Kloncilium" (national cabinet), included the Imperial Klaliff (vice-president, an office Clarke assumed in January 1921), Kligrapp (secretary), Klabee (treasurer), Klokard (senior lecturer), and Kludd (chaplain). Next in line were the grand dragons (state leaders). Simmons divided the state into "provinces," headed by "great titans." The parcel of the Invisible Empire allotted to each local unit was known as a "klanton," and was presided over by an exalted cyclops."  

As Imperial Kleagle, Clarke was the chief executive of the "propagation department" which he organized as a completely separate Klan with an independent hierarchy. Rather than let the Klan grow randomly outward

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33 New York World, Sept. 24, 1921, p. 2. The World article, based on an interview with Tyler, does not give the date the Southern Publicity Association was actually founded. The organization is not listed in the Atlanta City Directory until 1920. In 1918, however, Clarke was listed as secretary of the Southeastern Exhibit Association which might have been a prototype for his later organization. In 1919 the directory gives his occupation simply as "pub" with an office in Atlanta's Flatiron Building.

34 William J. Simmons, Kloran (Atlanta, 1916), 52-54.
from Georgia, Clarke set up the framework for a national organization. He divided the country into nine "domains" of several "realms" (states) each. The "grand goblins" lorded over the domains in a capacity roughly akin to a regional sales manager. "King kleagles" supervised the organization within each state. The "kleagles" were the individual salesmen and recruiters who were dispersed to communities to initiate new chapters, or "provisional Klans." Each realm was likewise "provisional" until it received a charter designating the state as part of the Klan proper. Until a realm or klanton was chartered, all its officers were those employed by Clarke. Thus, in the Klan's early days of rapid growth, when most of the Empire was provisional, Clarke had virtual control over the organization with Simmons only a figurehead. When Simmons took an extended leave of absence in 1922 he appointed Clarke to serve as "Imperial Wizard Pro Tem" while retaining his posts as Imperial Kleagle and Imperial Klaliff. When Clarke later explained this arrangement to a U. S. Senate committee, one of the members commented, "You came pretty near being the whole shooting match, didn't you?" Clarke replied that it had just "worked out that way."35

Prior to his initiation, each new Klansman was required to pay a ten dollar "klecktoken," or "donation" (donations were not technically taxable as income). Under Clarke's commissioning system, a kleagle received four dollars for each man he recruited; his king kleagle kept one dollar; the grand goblin, fifty cents; two dollars and fifty cents went to Clarke and Tyler; and the Klan treasury received the remaining two dollars.

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According to Clarke, "there were only 10 to 15 klans, and approximately a membership of 3,000" when he signed Simmons' contract. Within three months his kleagles had added 48,000 persons to Klan rosters, causing Clarke to exclaim: "In all my years of experience in organization work I have never seen anything equal to the clamor throughout the nation."\(^{36}\) On July 2, 1921, Clarke sent a memorandum to Simmons describing his organization's growing pains:

The headquarters of the domain chiefs are located in New York, Washington, Indianapolis, Denver, Dallas, Houston, and Los Angeles. In all these cities our investigators are working eighteen hours a day, and in most instances are three months behind their list of applicants. . . . We are completely camouflaged in each of these places and it will be almost a miracle if we are located (i.e. discovered) in any city where headquarters have been established.\(^{37}\)

This memorandum, if it is authentic, indicates Clarke's effort to maintain Simmons' desired secrecy by working undercover. When an Atlanta photographer heard about the new Klan and approached Clarke and Tyler about some photos for his newspaper, he was brusquely turned away. The resourceful photojournalist, named Tracy Mathewson, was determined to get his Ku Klux pictures. He had seen Birth of A Nation and he knew what the Klan regalia looked like. For twenty-five cents a head he hired 20 men to drape themselves in the sheets and hoods he had devised; he lit a couple of crosses, took his pictures, and they began turning up in newspapers all over the country, including the New York Times' popular Sunday

\(^{36}\) Ibid.; Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 10.

\(^{37}\) New York World, Sept. 9, 1921, p. 2.
"Rotogravure" section. The photos brought the Klan its first nationwide exposure and led to an unexpected avalanche of publicity. Tyler, in expressing her amazement at the sudden attention, told an interviewer that the Klan's original external publicity was centered only in the South, "But the minute we said 'Ku Klux,' editors from all over the country began pressing us for publicity." Using Mathewson's pictures as a cue, Clarke hired a photographer and had Klansmen pose for pictures on Stone Mountain. He probably did not know that Mathewson's photos that had thrust the Klan into the spotlight were not of real Klansmen. The enterprising photographer had hired the cheapest labor available in Atlanta. Under those white hoods were black faces.  

The Early Crises

The Klan's rapid expansion in late 1920 was coupled with a revival of the night-riding tactics used by the old Klan. In October 1920 a massive night-riding campaign to force the closing of cotton ginneries (unless the price of cotton was raised) was attributed to the Klan. Masked riders clothed in white burned some of the gins and terrorized the black field hands who were sure that the ghosts of Reconstruction Klansmen had come back to haunt them.  

On October 31, 1920, the Klan released a statement to the press announcing a decree by Simmons commanding "every branch of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and all members of this organization... to use all the

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influence within their power to suppress operations of so-called 'night riders,' and to assist officers of the law in their apprehension." The release quoted Simmons as accusing the terrorists of bringing "odium" upon the Klan by clothing themselves in garments similar to those worn by the organization. 40

Simmons' decree went apparently unheeded in Florida. On the day preceding the press release, 1,000 men attired as Klansmen had marched through the streets of Jacksonville, and another 500 paraded in Orlando as a warning for blacks to shun the polls on the following Tuesday. The tension was more partisan than racial. Most of the blacks had registered as Republicans; their intimidators were Democrats. On November 2, two prosperous blacks, Mose Norman and July Perry, who had registered and had paid the poll tax, attempted to vote in Ocoee, a suburb of Orlando. An ugly confrontation ensued and a mob formed. The two blacks fled to the town's Negro settlement and barricaded themselves in Perry's home. When the mob thundered into Perry's back yard and began tearing down his door, the blacks opened fire. Two whites fell dead and the mob temporarily retreated. The whites regrouped, surrounded the settlement, doused it with gasoline and set it ablaze. Blacks who tried to escape the inferno were reportedly shot. Two churches, a lodge hall, a school and about 20 houses were destroyed. Newspapers reported five bodies discovered in the ashes, including Perry's, but unofficial death tolls ran much higher. "The total number will never be known," said one of the local ministers, "because the bones of the murdered Negroes who were burned to death, were

40 Ibid., Nov. 1, 1920, p. 27.
taken away as souvenirs by members of the mob."41

Simmons later told a crowd that "Florida killed 36 niggers" at Ocoee, though he maintained that his Klan had no connection with the massacre. Nevertheless, Simmons' order was implicated, perhaps unfairly. A threatening note which surfaced during the investigation was signed by the "Grand Master Florida Ku Klucks [sic]," Since there was no "Grand Master" in either Simmons' or Clarke's chain of command, it is possible that the atrocity was committed by another of the organized Klans or by rabble passing themselves off as Klansmen. 42

To counter these attacks of lawlessness and to distinguish Simmons' Klan from others, Clarke and Tyler sought to establish a more definitive image for their Imperial Wizard. Simmons was affable enough and could orate effectively, but he lacked what today might be called charisma. After Clarke contracted for the Klan, one of his first actions was the cancellation of all of Simmons' scheduled speaking engagements. One of Clarke's associates wrote in 1924, "Simmons possessed none of the qualities to lead a great movement or to effect a great organization of men. Clarke, then and there, made his plans to create a fictitious Simmons and to sell him to the American people."43

After some coaching and considerable speech-writing, Clarke returned

41 Report of Walter F. White, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK 1920. White was assistant secretary (to James Weldon Johnson) of the NAACP.

42 Notes taken from Simmons' speech of Jan. 24, 1921, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK January 1921; "Grand Master Florida Ku Klucks [sic]" to W. R. O'Neal, Oct. 28, 1920, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK January 1921.

43 Fuller, Maelstrom, 18.
the Wizard to the public eye. The Southern Publicity Association arranged to have a New York Herald correspondent visit Atlanta to describe the workings of the new Klan. Tyler, who had a talent for purveying sincerity, gave the Herald reporter a canned tour of the Klan's operations. He was impressed with the organization and with Simmons and returned to New York to write a series of articles that described the Klan as a benevolent and business-like fraternal order. According to a former king kleagle, the articles were instrumental in launching the Klan's drive in the East.44

Another Simmons interview, with Angus Perkerson of the Atlanta Journal, helped establish the Wizard as a man of great spiritual purpose and soul and portrayed the Klan as an upstanding law-and-order brotherhood. The Klan, he told Perkerson, did not burn the cotton gins but rather guarded them to prevent destruction, "... and, yet, some people who were ignorant or malicious charged the gin-burnings to us." Simmons asserted that wherever the Klan was strong, citizens need not fear crime:

One of the chief objects of our order is to uphold law. ... Our invisible force for law and order is so strong in Atlanta that if the entire police department, both city and county, were abolished tomorrow the city would still be protected--through the Klan. ...

The sheriff of Fulton County [J. I. Lowry] knows where he can get 200 members of the Klan at a moment's notice to suppress anything in the way of lawlessness.45

44 New York Herald, Jan. 10-14, 1921, passim; "An Imperial Wizard and His Klan," Literary Digest, Feb. 5, 1921, pp. 42 f; Wright statement, Klan Hearings, 23 f.

45 Perkerson, "Why the Ku Klux Klan Has Been Revived," p. 1 f.
Within two weeks after the articles in the Herald and the Journal, the "Fox News Weekly," a theater newsreel, also included a feature on the Klan, portraying it favorably. In spite of all this positive publicity, before the month was out the Klan was implicated in an Atlanta murder.

J. C. Thomas ran a small lunch grill in a predominantly Negro section of Atlanta. In late 1920 he began receiving letters telling him to leave town because "a thousand and one eyes were watching him." Thomas dismissed the letters as a prank and continued to sell hot dogs to his black customers. In January 1921 five men abducted him and dragged him to a nearby amusement park. The feisty vendor surprised his captors by whipping out a knife and stabbing one of them to death. The surviving attackers scattered. Thomas ran to police who promptly arrested him for murder. In the ensuing weeks, however, he was acquitted and two of his assailants indicted for attempted murder. Atlanta soon buzzed with rumors that the five abductors were Klansmen.

According to Tyler's son-in-law, Jett, Clarke and Simmons both fled the state when the incident broke, and they did not return until Tyler "got it mixed up until there was no danger." Jett did not specify how she "mixed it up," but Imperial Klounsel (attorney) William S. Coburn defended the two men. They were ultimately acquitted and the Klan was cleared of any official connection with the incident. Nevertheless, the murder temporarily blemished the Klan's law-and-order facade.

46 John A. Melby to James Weldon Johnson, Jan. 22, 1921, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK January 1921.

47 Greene, "Notes for a History of the Klan," 242; Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 32.

48 Jett, Columbus Enquirer-Sun, Nov. 9, 1925, Harris Papers, box 7, folder 4.
The Klan and the Carving

When Simmons first joined forces with Clarke, the Wizard's Imperial Aulic" (headquarters) was located in a single office in Atlanta's Silvey Building. Soon thereafter he moved into more spacious headquarters, a suite of five offices in the Haynes Building. The Southern Publicity Association's office was located in the nearby Georgia Savings Bank ("Flatiron") building. In 1921 Clarke purchased with Klan money the "Imperial Palace," an impressive, sprawling white mansion located six miles north of Atlanta in an exclusive residential area. Clarke spent $75,000 for the home and another $25,000 for landscaping and for remodeling the house into offices. The Imperial Palace became headquarters for Simmons' Klan, while Clarke's propagation department was moved into Simmons' old Aulic in the Haynes Building. Clarke and Tyler also maintained a separate Southern Publicity office in the Flatiron Building and continued to carry out their non-Klan campaigns from there.49

Details of drives by the Southern Publicity Association outside the Klan are poorly documented and difficult to find. The association did continue to advertise its services for "financial and organization campaigns" as late as 1922, as an ad in the Atlanta City Directory of that year attests. Yet, this researcher has discovered no evidence that the publicity bureau conducted any other major drives after it began promoting the Klan. The writer has uncovered, however, a letter by Clarke outlining his proposal for a fund-raising drive that he never personally conducted—the Stone Mountain Memorial campaign.

The memorial to the Confederacy was first conceived in 1916 by Sculptor Gutzon Borglum. He planned to carve, with the help of laborers

49 Atlanta City Directory, 1920-1922, passim.
and engineers, a relief sculpture depicting Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson on the rock cliff of Stone Mountain. Borglum, who would later become an active Klansman, was a renowned artist who had carved the bust of Lincoln that stands in the rotunda of the nation's Capitol. He had been among the few American sculptors to exhibit in the celebrated "Armory Show" in New York in 1911 that also brought Picasso and Matisse to American attention. The completed carved scene on the mountain would measure 200 feet high by 1,300 feet long.

Samuel H. Venable, owner of the mountain (and later Imperial Klubee), deeded Borglum the necessary portion of the cliff and tried to help him raise money for the undertaking. After the project suffered several discouraging false starts, Venable formed the Stone Mountain Memorial Committee in 1922 and Clarke offered his assistance.

Clarke wrote Venable that he believed the most difficult part of the task would be to build back the confidence of the public who had "been informed so many times that the thing was ready to go." Clarke wrote that the best way to test the drive would be to conduct a trial campaign within Atlanta, then to evaluate it for national application." He added,

you can never tell just exactly how the public is going to take any given proposition until you have tried it out on them in a fair test, and I think the Atlanta end of the campaign will be, while probably the hardest, certainly the best test as to whether it will be possible to raise the money to carry through the scheme.50

For his services Clarke demanded a fee of five per cent of the net proceeds which would have earned him $250,000 had he reached the $5 million goal. Furthermore, he reserved the right to cancel his contract.

50 E. Y. Clarke to Samuel H. Venable, Dec. 19, 1922, Venable and Smith Letters, Special Collections, Emory University.
if the pretesting in Atlanta did not meet his expectations.51

The Stone Mountain Committee apparently never enlisted the Southern Publicity Association. After Venable became Klabee in 1923, the committee used the Klan's influence to persuade Congress to approve a commemorative Stone Mountain half dollar.52 Five million coins were minted in 1923 to be sold at one dollar apiece, and Borglum started carving on the mountain. The coins should have been real collectors' items since rarely, if ever, had a government voted to assist in building a monument to the leaders of a bloody insurrection. Nevertheless, the coins failed to sell, even after the Klan reportedly picked up the bill for $100,000 worth. After quarrels with his benefactors—not to mention a demoralizing crack in Stonewall Jackson's nose—Borglum smashed his plaster models in 1925 and quit in disgust. The sculptor went on to better, if not bigger, things. He migrated to South Dakota two years later to supervise the chiselling of four heads on the cliffs of Mount Rushmore.

Another sculptor was hired to complete the Stone Mountain sculpture, but money ran out in 1928 and the project was abandoned. Work on the Confederate memorial was not resumed until 1964. With the help of modern engineering, Stonewall Jackson's nasal problems were remedied and the mammoth figures completed. In a gala ceremony in 1969, the monument to the defeated was dedicated by Vice-President Spiro Agnew.

51Ibid.

52Interview with James R. Venable, Decatur, Georgia, Aug. 6, 1974.
what one journalist described as a "many-splintered thing,"
CHAPTER II

THE ECOLOGY OF THE KLAN

For a public relations practitioner to be effective he must have his fingers on the pulse of public opinion. He should be able to perceive the moods of his time and discern the influential groups that relate to his institution. He must then adapt his message to best communicate with different publics. Monitoring the public opinion environment and coping with that environment are the basic tasks in public relations. The following chapter concerns the circumstances under which movements such as the Klan have occurred and discusses the particular conditions that existed in the early 1920s. This section will show the ways used by E. Y. Clarke and his associates to organize individual communities by adjusting their propaganda and tactics to appeal to publics with different sets of ideals and prejudices. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how the Klan's use of the public relations process had considerable impact on society by crystallizing vague attitudes into specific dogma and thus creating societal cleavages that might not have occurred otherwise.

**The Klan's Shifting Ideology**

In May 1920 a popular senator from Ohio named Warren G. Harding made a speech in Boston urging a return to "not nostrums, but normalcy." Harding's speech might have irked some entymologists, but his slogan struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many Americans who longed for a return to the simpler, less vexing life they remembered before the war.

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In less than five years Americans had been dizzied by a maelstrom of change. A dirty global war. A soaring inflation rate. Race riots. Bloody strikes. The Red Scare. The League of Nations controversy. Prohibition. The nation was caught in an accelerating spiral and the centrifugal force was scattering traditional values like jackstones across the pavement. Most Americans nostalgically wished for a return to "normalcy," the carefree life. The war and its aftermath had stranded them in a whirlpool of shifting patterns. They were confused. The armistice should have brought reconciliation, but they saw only more hatred. Where there should have been trust, there was only fear; instead of peace, chaos reigned. Their hopes were drowned in disillusionment.

In the South whites feared the blacks were returning from the war with strange ideas about equality, integration and power. In urban areas, particularly in the East, the supposed Bolshevik threat that had plunged the nation into temporary hysteria in late 1919 lingered to haunt native-born Americans. Foreigners seemed to be invading America across all its borders—Italians from the east, French-Canadians from the north, Orientals from the Pacific coast, Mexicans from the southwest. And nearly everywhere in the country there were Catholics, who many thought owed allegiance to a foreign dictator in the Vatican. All these perceived enemies appeared to be rigidly organized while native white Protestants were splintered into dozens of denominations, associations, fraternal lodges and patriotic societies, none with sufficient power to suppress the rising internal menace. None, that is, until the Klan came along, promising a unified Protestant organization of 100 per cent Americans.

In its early years the Ku Klux Klan reflected its founder. The colonel was an obstinate white supremacist, but he never envisioned the
Klan as anything other than the world's grandest lodge, "a classy order of the highest class." His "Ku Klux Kreed" dedicated the order to the supremacy of God, the Constitution and the white race. "The Imperial Proclamation," signed by Simmons on July 4, 1916, was more specific, but no more militant. The citizens of the Invisible Empire, he wrote, "are dedicated to the sublime and pleasant duty of providing generous aid, tender sympathy and fraternal assistance in the effulgence of the light of life and amid the sable shadows of death."  

Of all the goals Simmons proclaimed, only his encouragement "to maintain forever white supremacy" could be judged by contemporary standards to be less than honorable, but the doctrine of Nordic superiority was still considered holy by many Southerners in 1916.

Simmons' Kloran, the "sacred book" of the Invisible Empire, contained no passage in its "secret" contents--save the qualification that all members be native-born white Christians--that could be construed as hateful, vicious or vindictive. The same could be said for Simmons' early propaganda, which included a booklet entitled "ABC of the Invisible Empire." The letters stood for "America First," "Benevolence," and "Clannishness." Even in his early advertisements for the order, the closest Simmons ever came to a nationalistic vein was in his description of the Klan as "of and for men who are in ALL THINGS 100 per cent PURE Americans, and no other."  

In short, Simmons' Klan under the leadership of its founder was hardly different from the Masons, the Shriners, the Odd Fellows or similar fraternal societies. Even its discriminatory membership policy, Clarke

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1William J. Simmons, ABC of the Invisible Empire (Atlanta, 1917), 1. A copy of this tract can be found in the Harris Papers, box 7, folder 5.

2Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 8, 1919, p. 10.
was quick to point out, was not uncommon among fraternal orders of the day. After all, the Knights of Columbus hardly welcomed Baptists. "In point of fact there are scores of organizations composed exclusively of Catholics and Jews," he said in a statement released to the press in September 1921, "but it would be unjust to charge . . . that they are anti-Protestant or anti-Gentile, or to charge that they are making war on Protestants or Gentiles."³

Only after Clarke and his associates assumed control of the Klan did the order's propaganda change in flavor. "The Imperial Proclamation" released by Clarke in 1922 while he was acting Imperial Wizard, when compared to Simmons earlier proclamation, graphically illustrates the shifting directions Klan doctrine. Whereas Simmons' document proclaimed "honorable peace among men and nations" and "love, real brotherhood, mirth and manhood," Clarke's edict was gladiatorial. Because of "startling and indesperate facts dug up by the investigators of the Klan," Clarke declared "war to the bitter end upon all those in America who are seeking in an insidious but powerful manner to undermine the very fundamentals of the Nation." He specified as enemies, "the hairy claw of Bolshevism, Socialism, Syndicalism, I.W.W.ism and other isms destructive to the American system of government."⁴

A few months after Clarke was contracted by Simmons, the propagation staff issued to a New York newspaper a statement of the "four great fundamental principles" of the Klan. Summarized as follows, they differ radically from the gentler dogma of Simmons and resemble a political

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³New York World, Sept. 8, 1921, p.2.

⁴Dawn, Oct. 21, 1922, p. 6. Dawn was a magazine published by Chicago Klansmen.
platform more than fraternal platitudes:

1) The Klan stood "pledged to preserve" law and order in a community if the elected or appointed officials failed to uphold the law. In other words, the Klan endorsed itself as a community vigilance squad.

2) The Klan stood "unequivocably and unashamedly" for white supremacy. Here, however, white supremacy was expanded to anathematize immigrants as well as non-white races. A "rolling tide" of "colored races and foreign elements" sought to "submerge" the Caucasian race by gaining control of politics and government, and the only way that the native American white majority could successfully hold dominion was by "organizing itself into a solid concrete body of secret membership."

3) The Klan stood "unfalteringly and absolutely" for separation of church and state. Roman Catholics were not mentioned by name in this release, but a year later when Clarke reiterated these principles to a reporter in Dallas, he added, "We have no absolute assurance that the Catholic Church will ever attempt to join Church and State, but they may try it, for that is one of their principles. We are organizing for self-defense; not for offensive warfare."

4) The Klan stood "for the protection of woman's honor and the sanctity of the home"--"A man's home is his castle." In his Dallas interview, Clarke revealed the chauvinistic side of this tenet: "... Women are entering business and politics, and this is a real danger unless there is some strong organization consistently preaching that a woman's place is in the home."

5 The principles were enunciated in the New York Herald, Jan. 10, 1921, p. 2; Cf. Dallas Morning News, Jan. 22, 1922, NAACP Papers, box 113, subject file KKK (Clippings)--January 1922.
If a public figure made such a pronouncement in the 1970s, indignant feminists would probably castrate him in effigy; in the early 1920s, however, conservative men and women alike were becoming alarmed at the increasing numbers of "modern" women they saw wandering out of speak-easies, cigarettes in hand, wearing bobbed hair and scandalously short skirts.

The Klan's Predecessors

Under the guidance of E. Y. Clarke the Klan was transformed from a mildly racist fraternal society to a nativist movement akin to the "Know-Nothings" of the 1850s and the American Protective Association (APA) of the 1890s. The Know-Nothings (who were called such because they preferred to profess ignorance rather than discuss their policies openly) protested against immigration and campaigned against the election or appointment of Catholics and foreign-born citizens to official positions. The Know-Nothings combined their efforts through the American Party and amassed enough strength to carry Massachusetts in the state elections of 1854 and to poll large votes in some other states. Soon after, however, the party split over the slavery issue and rapidly disintegrated.

The Know-Nothings defined their philosophy as "Americanism," thus coining a term for the brand of Yankee nativism that remained largely dormant until the emergence of the APA in the 1890s. Nativism has been defined as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e. 'un-American') connections." Nativists sincerely believe that some influence originating abroad threatens the very life of the nation from within.6

6Higham, Strangers in the Land, 4.
These internal influences may be real, but their danger is usually exaggerated far out of proportion to their actual strength. Frustrated over uncontrollable elements preventing them from reaching their expectations, nativists channel their aggressions toward a convenient enemy in the name of patriotism. In the 1890s a depression and a bellicose nationalism provided the emotional environment for the American Protective Association. The history of the APA is similar to that of the Klan in that it was founded (in 1887) as a secret society, but it later came out into the open, combining some of the characteristics of a fraternal order with active participation in politics. The anti-Catholic organization circulated wild tales of a papal scheme to overthrow American institutions, creating widespread panic that a bloody war was at hand. The strength of the APA ebbed rapidly because of internal dissensions over political matters, though it continued in vestigial form into the early 1900s.\footnote{Ibid., 80 ff.}

Like the nativist sentiment of the 1850s and 1890s, hostile attitudes toward German-Americans during the World War were crystallized and directed by propaganda from a central organization. The Committee on Public Information, known as the "Creel Committee" for its director George Creel, was developed by President Wilson as a sort of propaganda ministry to sell his views of the war to an America that was split over the issue. Their campaign to arouse American hatred toward the enemy spilled over on German immigrants who at that time comprised the largest foreign-born nationality in the United States. The Creel Committee exacerbated antipathy toward German-Americans by distributing "Halt the Hun!" posters, pamphlets with titles such as \textit{The German Whisper}, and advertisements
proclaiming "German agents are everywhere."  

Creel and his associates designed their public relations campaign to bring the public to an emotional peak during the summer of 1919, when a major offensive was expected. He effectively bathed the country in red, white and blue and helped to work the nation into a fighting spirit that was approaching its zenith at about the time the war ended ahead of expectations in late 1918. The premature armistice left many Americans full of unexpended hate that needed an outlet. The Creel Committee had transformed America into a star-spangled Frankenstein stalking for a victim. The Bolsheviks soon became the target. In the spring of 1918 Edgar Sisson of the Creel Committee returned from Russia with documents purporting that the newly established Bolshevik regime was "not a Russian government at all but a German government acting solely in the interests of Germany." With Wilson's blessings, Creel released the story to the press on September 15, 1918. It was taken largely at face value, even though some newspapers attempted to discredit the materials as forgeries. Nevertheless, the "Sisson Documents," coupled with the fact that Russia had made a separate truce with Germany, served to inexorably link Germany with the Bolsheviks in the minds of Americans who transferred their stored animosities toward the Red Peril as soon as the war ended.  

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8 James O. Mock and Cedric Larson, Words That Won The War (Princeton, 1939), passim.


10 Mock and Larson, Words That Won The War, 314 ff.
The Committee on Public Information was not the only patriotic agency operating during the war. Independent agencies, such as the National Security league, the American Defense Society and the National Civic Federation churned out patriotic propaganda by the hogshead and converted thousands of hitherto level-headed Americans into rabid spy-chasers. Although the memberships of these societies were small, never exceeding 25,000, their activities were so extensive and well-planned that their influence far outstripped their numerical strength. Most of these professional patriotic societies remained in existence after the war and turned their sights toward the Bosheviks, or whomever they construed to be Bolsheviks. Some of these organizations were financed by a handful of America's most prominent corporate and business leaders—John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, T. Coleman Dupont, Henry C. Frick and others—who presumably had the most to lose in the event of a communist takeover. Not surprisingly, some of their campaigns to exploit patriotic impulses were directed against organized labor and the closed shop.\(^{11}\)

Two Communist parties were formed in 1919, and though their combined membership probably never exceeded 70,000, the postwar atmosphere made them appear to be a particularly dangerous threat. A great industrial unrest, culminating in over 3,600 strikes involving over four million workers in 1919 alone, aroused fears of a revolutionary proletariat. A general strike in Seattle, followed by a police strike in Boston, confirmed to many Americans what business and employers organizations had warned: the Bolshevik was an immediate danger to the American way of life.

In the ensuing hysteria from late 1919 to early 1920, nearly everyone who leaned to the left of the far right was perceived as a Bolshevik. There was no clear conception of what "bolshevism" really meant, or how it differed from socialism and anarchism. Instead, many Americans believed like E.Y. Clarke that all "isms" were "destructive to the American system of government." In the postwar paranoia, socialists, communists, progressives, liberals, radicals, anarchists, labor leaders, libertarians, aliens, reformers and crackpots were all painted in various shades of red or pink and stigmatized as Bolshevists.\(^\text{12}\)

The Red Scare reached its apex in 1920 with the "January Raids" of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his department's General Intelligence Division headed by J. Edgar Hoover. Alien members of the Communist party were rounded up in cities all over the United States and some of the leaders deported, though few had committed any crimes against the government. After a considerable proportion of those apprehended were released for lack of evidence, the nation began to see the folly (and perhaps the personal ambition) behind Palmer's excesses.

By mid-1920, when Clarke began the Klan propagation, the witch-hunting had substantially ceased, but the nation's increasing proclivity for intolerance remained. The Great War and the Red Scare ushered into the 1920s an intense nationalism grounded in unrest and insecurity. The nation had fallen into such a pattern of conformity during the war that any deviation from the narrowing conservative norm was regarded as an immediate menace to democracy. The Klan, with its elastic "fundamental principles" provided an artery for the hatred and chauvinism that throbbed in the American heart.

\(^{12}\text{Murray, Red Scare, 166 f.}\)
The Klan and the Black Man

The Southern Publicity Association inherited a Klan that was still centered in the South at a time when anxieties over the restiveness of the Negro permeated the Southern white community. During the war platoons of blacks had fought in France beside white units. Blacks had worked beside whites on assembly lines and had ridden with them on street cars. For a short time the exigencies of the war had superficially united the races toward a common goal. Negroes were learning about democracy. They were stimulated with a new sense of independence and were less likely to submit to the conditions they had endured before the war. Blacks emerged from the war with high expectations only to be put in their place once more. By 1919 Negroes began to arm and organize. The newly formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People offered them a common voice through its militant leader, W. E. B. Du Bois. In 1920 Du Bois declared that the Great War was "nothing to compare with that fight for freedom which black and brown and yellow men must and will make unless their oppression and humiliation and insult at the hands of the White World cease."\(^{13}\)

In the uneasy atmosphere of 1919 and 1920, minor racial disturbances erupted in hundreds of cities, both North and South, and some of these flared into riots of major proportions. The disturbances were usually created by initial Negro retaliation for white acts of persecution, resulting in a more violent response from whites who viewed the resistance as an effort by the blacks to "take over." In the South, where 85

per cent of all American Negroes lived in 1920, black resistance tended to collapse early in the riots.\textsuperscript{14}

In its official propaganda the Klan did not depict the Negroes as an organized conspiring menace. To have done so would have granted more intelligence and perspicacity to the black race than Klansmen were willing to concede. Colonel Simmons once wrote that the average intelligence of the Negro never exceeded that of a 12-year-old white child. "It was God's act to make the white race superior to all others," he told a reporter in 1921. "By some scheme of Providence the Negro was created as a serf. We harbor no race prejudice. The Negro never had and has not today a better friend than the Ku Klux Klan. The law-abiding Negro who knows his place has nothing to fear from us."\textsuperscript{15}

Repeating phrases like "racial purity" and "race preservation," Klan propaganda asserted that the order was not anti-Negro but merely dedicated to keeping the black man black and the white man white, to the betterment of both races. Rather than representing Negroes as inherently dangerous, Klan officials more often portrayed them as ignorant pawns of more superior races or groups. On the Pacific coast, for example, kleagles spread the rumor that the yellow races were plotting to incite blacks to rebel against the white Protestants. Other stories had the Jews or the Pope controlling the Negroes. In 1921 E. Y. Clarke told an interviewer that the term "white supremacy" had been "misused and misrepresented by enemies of both races who for various reasons want to see

\textsuperscript{14}Graham and Gurr, \textit{Violence in America}, 404.

\textsuperscript{15}Albert de Silver, "The Ku Klux Klan--'Soul of Chivalry'," \textit{Nation}, 113: 285 (Sept. 14, 1921); for reactions by an educated Negro to Simmons' statements, see statement of William M. Trotter, \textit{Klan Hearings}, 49.
trouble started; ... who want to see a polluted America instead of the America which has been handed down to us by our forefathers." 16

The Klan often made external shows of *noblesse oblige* toward blacks that was seldom proffered toward members of other groups castigated by the order. Donations to Negro churches and charities were not uncommon at the local level, and Klan newspapers often publicized good deeds done for blacks by various chapters. In one city, for example, the Klan sent out letters to members of the black community urging them to stand by the Klan in their fight against "foreign religious, political domination." 17

More often than not, the Klan's charitable donations to black institutions were small, seldom exceeding $25, and were rejected by the recipients. The acts received the desired favorable publicity, however, and provided local units with positive evidence to counter charges of terrorism against the order of its opponents. Such humanitarian overtures toward Negroes should not be construed as Klan recognition of racial equality. Both Clarke and Simmons publicly spoke out in favor of disenfranchisement of the Negro. On April 30, 1922, Simmons addressed a meeting of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM), saying:

> I am informed that every buck nigger in Atlanta who attains the age of twenty-one years has gotten the money to pay his poll tax and register, and that 6,000 of them are now ready to vote, and that these apes are going to line up at the polls, mixed up there with white men and white women. Lord forgive me, but that is the most sickening and disgusting sight you ever saw. (Loud applause.) You've got to change that ... Keep the Negro and the other fellow

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17 *Atlanta Independent*, July 20, 1922, p. 7.
...where he belongs. They have got no part in our political or social life. If in one, he will get into the other.\textsuperscript{18}

In some states the enfranchisement issue was more political than racial. In Florida Democratic Klansmen paraded to intimidate Negroes from going to the polls because most of the blacks were registered Republicans, but in Indiana the situation was just the reverse. There, Negroes were Republicans, but so were the Klansmen vying for political power. The Indiana realm subsidized a Negro newspaper in Indianapolis which urged blacks to vote for Klan candidates. Some black clergymen in the Hoosier State, in turn, praised the order because it was identified with Protestantism and vocally opposed to sin. A Negro branch of the Klan was reportedly formed in Indiana, known as "The Ritualistic Benevolent Society for American Born Citizens of African Blood and Protestant Faith." It apparently fared with little success.\textsuperscript{19}

In the early 1920's black militance subsided to the point where it was no longer considered a danger by most Southern whites. The Negroes had retreated to their "place" for the time being, and Clarke had to diversify his approach to appeal to a national audience. Significantly, in late 1921 Clarke had the Klan's secret password changed from "White Supremacy" to "Americans All."\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{19}Emma Lou Thornbaugh, "Segregation in Indiana During the Klan Era of the 1920's," \textit{Mississippi Valley Historical Review}, 47:611 f (December 1960).

The Klan, the Immigrant and the Jew

Since the turn of the century resentment toward aliens had mounted with the increasing percentage of "new" immigrants. Although the "old" immigrants--those from England, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia--had met with some discrimination, their religious, political and social cultures did not differ radically from those of native Americans. The new immigrants from Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and other eastern European countries were less easily assimilated. Most were darker-skinned; few were Protestant. Their dress and mannerisms were seen as strange and inferior, and they were less inclined than the old immigrants to quickly adopt the language and customs of their new homeland. As a result, their loyalty was highly suspect during the war and the Red Scare, and they became closely identified with subversive politics.

During late 1920 and early 1921 Clarke's organization propagandized the Klan as a unified agency to halt the influx of undesirable aliens. The New York Herald reported in January 1921 that "one of the principal avowed purposes of the Klan" was "the spreading of propaganda in favor of drastic immigration laws which will make it impossible for the undesirable elements of Europe and the Orient to enter the country."\(^{21}\)

In Simmons' speech to the JOUAM cited above, he told the Atlanta delegation," ... Then you hear folks talk about 'we Americans' and of America as the melting-pot where the stamp and impress of all nations can come in and shape our destinies. It is no such thing. It is a garbage can! Not a melting pot."\(^{22}\)

\(^{21}\)New York Herald, Jan. 14, 1921, p. 5.

In late 1920 the propagation department issued its first printing of an anti-immigration tract entitled *Americans Take Heed!*. The polemic, which first appeared in *McClure's* magazine in April 1920 as "Scum o' the Melting Pot," was widely distributed among kleagles who sent them to prospective Klansmen. Referring to "ominous statistics," the author asserted that the nation's political system was "clogged with foreign bodies which stubbornly refuse to be absorbed, and means must be found to meet the menace." The tirade concluded, "ON TO THE MELTING-POT AND CLEAN IT O' THIS SCUM!"\(^{23}\)

Simmons and Clarke might not have released *Americans Take Heed!* so hastily had they known that the author of the discourse, Herbert Kaufman, was Jewish. Of all the immigrants, Jewish aliens offered the most concrete symbol of foreign radicalism. The doctrine was circulated that communist literature was being disseminated in America by Jewish immigrants, and that Bolshevism was a movement masterminded by Jews.\(^ {24}\)

According to historian John Higham, the Ku Klux Klan became the first anti-Semitic organization in American history. Klan propaganda took the Gentile's vague personal, social, religious, and political suspicions about the Jew and articulated them into three stereotypical portraits: the swindling Shylock storekeeper, the morally corrupt westrel, and the international conspirator.\(^ {25}\)

\(^{23}\) Herbert Kaufman, "Scum o' the Melting Pot," *Americans Take Heed!* (Atlanta, 1920), passim, Harris Papers, box 7, folder 5.

\(^{24}\) Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 279.

To combat the Jew as Shylock, Klansmen were encouraged to boycott Jewish merchants whenever possible. The slogan "Trade With Klansmen" evolved and "TWK" stickers appeared in the store windows of businessmen who belonged to the order. "The practice of klannishness," as such economic exclusivity was called, was simply a magniloquent expression for driving Jewish (and sometimes Catholic) competitors out of business. One-line fillers in Klan newspapers reminded members to eschew shopkeepers who did not belong to the Klan:

"That suit of clothes you are wearing, did you buy it from a Klansman?"

"Give the TWK merchants an even break, Klansmen. Won't you?"26

In cities where Jewish merchants had no Protestant competition, local chapters advertised in Klan publications for prospective entrepreneurs. For example, the lawton, Oklahoma, Klan sought outsiders to open clothing stores and a book shop because there were "no Protestant Gentile" stores of those types in the city. The Fredericksburg, Missouri, Klan advertised for "a hundred per cent American cleaning and pressing establishment" in that town of 3,500.27

In Birmingham, Alabama, the Klan virtually formed its own Chamber of Commerce; Klan merchants there issued their own publication, TWK Monthly, that was over 50 pages long and over half-filled with their advertisements. The TWK advertisers offered virtually every service, from obstetricians to undertakers to meat markets, so that Birmingham Klansmen

26Imperial Night-Hawk, June 20, 1923, p. 7; TWK Monthly, December, 1924, p. 19.

27Imperial Night-Hawk, Aug. 15, 1923, p. 8; Oct. 10, 1923, p. 4.
needed never patronize a Jew. 28

Some of the more sinister propaganda which Klan organizers disseminated to arouse antipathy toward the Jew originated in Henry Ford's anti-Semitic Dearborn Independent. The most alarmist anti-Semitic document to appear in Klan publications, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," had previously appeared in Ford's paper. The "Protocols," which revealed a supposed Jewish conspiracy for total world domination, were devised by a Czarist intelligence officer around the turn of the century and used against Jews in Russia. The document did not reach the United States until late 1917, however, when it was promoted by Czarist military officers as an explanation for the triumph of Bolshevism in Russia. To Klansmen the "Protocols" provided evidence that the Jews were attempting to establish an economic international super-government that would swallow the United States. 29

This position was promulgated at a news conference by E. Y. Clarke in early 1923:

... Jews for fifty years have been the most clannish people on earth. They stand solidly together; they are fast gaining control of the banking business, motion picture industry, the great newspapers of the country and other big enterprises, and it is not unreasonable to assume that they have an eye to some day acquiring control of our government itself.

Now the Christian white men are about to band themselves into one great Klan and give the Jews some of their own medicine. Understand, however, that we will make no fight on them. The Klan hasn't a grudge against anybody. 30

28 The Harris Papers contain two issues of TWK Monthly (October and December 1924), box 7, folder 2.

29 Avin, dissertation, 188 ff; Higham, Strangers in the Land, 280.

By far the Klan's most common presentation of the Jew was neither the fast-talking Shylock nor the conspiring Elder, but rather the moral profligate, the epitome of urban sin. The Jews were blamed for gambling, bootlegging and sexy movies. "The Jew knows what sort of motion picture will pay best," said a Klan leader in Ohio, "those which appeal to the worse [sic] side of human nature. What happens to the army of young girls who are lost every year? From 60,000 to 75,000 of them disappear annually and are never heard from again!... The Jews get them and sell them as white slaves." 31

The Klan and the Catholic

Wilbur Franklin Phelps' The Menace, with a circulation in 1915 of one and a half million, along with several smaller anti-Catholic journals, briefly generated an anti-Roman hysteria that was suddenly deflated by World War I. 32

Of all the nativist movements to be rekindled after the war, anti-Catholicism was the slowest to catch fire. While Negroes comprised 10 per cent of the population in 1920, and Jews, immigrants and radicals far smaller proportions, about 36 per cent of all Americans who belonged to a Christian church were Catholic. 33 In 1920 Catholics sat in Congress, presided over state houses, and at least one, Al Smith of New York, was a leading contender for the Presidential nomination. Catholics had distinguished themselves in business and philanthropic affairs and had erected fine universities and hospitals. Although they were more numerous in urban areas, by 1920 Catholics were an integral part of nearly every

32Higham, Strangers in the Land, 180

American community.

The Klan's campaign against Catholics appears to have gradually intensified during 1921. In January 1921 a Klan official explained that Catholics were excluded from membership, not because of their religious faith but because the order could not accept any applicant who owed allegiance of "any kind" to any "institution, sect, people, ruler or person" outside the United States. Later in 1921 the propagation department began distributing anti-Catholic tracts to klugles who disseminated them in communities where they were recruiting. These were patently vicious, containing lies that had originated in The Menace embroidered with exaggerated "statistics." For example, a broadside entitled "Do you Know?" purported that Roman Catholics composed three-fourths of all public offices in the United States, that two million Catholics were immigrating into the country each year, and that 116 Roman "princes" were "enthroned in our cities." The vituperation accused the Pope of controlling the daily and magazine press, of enforcing his canonical laws through the nation's judicial system, and of starting the World War. 34

The most insidious anti-Catholic propaganda distributed by the Klan was entitled "The Murderous Knights of Columbus Oath." According to this bogus pledge, an initiate of the Knights of Columbus swore, in part:

... I do further promise and declare that I will, when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants and Masons, as I am directed to do, to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth; and that I will spare neither age, sex nor condition, and that I will hang, burn, waste, boil, flay, strangle and bury alive these infamous heretics;

rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women, and crash their infants' heads against the walls in order to annihilate their execrable race. That when the same cannot be done openly, I will secretly use the poisonous cup, the strangulation cord, the steel of the poniard or the leaden bullet, . . . as I at any time may be directed so to do by any agents of the Pope or Superior of the Brotherhood of the Holy Father of our Society of Jesus. 35

The feigned Knights of Columbus oath was publicized as authentic by The Menace and other anti-Catholic publications before the war, then largely forgotten until Clarke stumbled across it in 1921. According to one of his former employes, Clarke envisioned the oath as a "shot in the arm of the organizers" and had millions of copies printed on cheap newsprint and sent to his kleagles around the country. 36 The leaflets Clarke had printed cited the Congressional Record as the source of the oath, giving it a mien of false authenticity. Actually, the pledge had originally been used in the House of Representatives in 1913 as evidence against a Protestant Congressman whose organization had allegedly employed it in a dirty tricks campaign to defeat a Catholic opponent in Pennsylvania. Far from endorsing the document, a House Elections Committee decried it as "false," "spurious," and libelous. 37

Klan lecturers who were parcellled out by the propagation department for public speaking engagements were often just as inflammatory. They described torture in convents and told of the Knights of Columbus storing


36 Fuller, Nigger in the Woodpile, 85; (See n. 26, Chapter 1 above.)

arms in the basements of Catholic churches. Pointing out that there were six Catholic churches and two Catholic universities near the Capitol, they spread the rumor that President Harding had been tricked into inviting the Pope to Washington as part of a plot to take over the city. When the pontiff entered Washington, they asserted, armed Knights of Columbus would sally forth from their nearby "forts" and (aided by Irish policemen) claim Capitol Hill for Rome. Once the Pope was established in his new Vatican at the National Cathedral in Washington, he would take over the public schools and prescribe compulsory instruction in the Catholic religion for all American children.

38 The "Little Red School House" was developed as a symbol for the Klan's fight to save the public schools from Catholic domination, and the illustration of a little brick school building was emblazoned on Klan posters and other propaganda like a coat of arms.

The more impassioned Klan lecturers warned that the United States was endangered by a monstrous Catholic-Jewish conspiracy directed by the Pope in league with the Elders of Zion. Once they had captured the country, the Jews would control the nation's economic life by possessing all its gold while the Catholics would relish in political domination. Had not Jesus Christ been executed by Rome at the behest of the Jews? the Klan agitators asked.

39 Understandably, considerable antipathy between Protestants and Catholic elements developed in communities where Klansmen spread such

38Avin, dissertation, 154 ff.

39Ibid., 191.
alarmist propaganda. Catholic businesses were boycotted along with Jewish shops. In Marion, Ohio, for example, the members of the Knights of Columbus opened a modern shopping center only to have it driven out of business by a Protestant boycott instigated by the Klan. Klansmen then purchased the market complex and allowed only white Protestants to shop there. In Indiana, the state with the largest Klan population (nearly 400,000 at its peak around 1924) Klansmen developed a One Hundred Per Cent restaurant chain, a One Hundred Per Cent American Store, and even a pair of One Hundred Per Cent shoe repair shops—all contrived to lure customers from non-Protestant business establishments.40

Eventually Roman Catholics overshadowed all others on the Klan's ever-growing enemies list. The issue ripped communities apart, creating cleavages where none would have occurred without inflammation by the Klan's rhetoric. Throughout the 1920s the Knights of Columbus remained strangely silent on the Klan, even after the distribution of the bogus oath. Apparently the Catholic fraternal order decided to combat the Klan by ignoring it. Columbia, the national publication of the Knights of Columbus, was virtually devoid of any references to the Klan during its issues for the 1920s.41 Nevertheless, organized Catholic opposition to the Klan developed in many locations. Catholics formed anti-Klan societies, such as the American Unity League in Chicago, which sometimes employed tactics that were underhanded as the Klan's. In Pennsylvania and Ohio the night-riding escapades of the "Knights of the Flaming Circle," a masked anti-


Klan organization made up mostly of Catholics, only widened the schisms in those states.

The Klan and the Fundamentalists

If many peopled joined the Klan out of fear of the fading color line, the Red menace or a papal insurrection, a good many more joined forces with the order in reaction to the revolution in morals and personal habits that seemed to be corrupting their towns and tainting their children. Upright citizens were becoming alarmed over the flagrant violation of the new prohibition law, the petting in parked cars, the escalating divorce rate, flappers, Freud, home brew, hip flasks and contraceptives. The Klan, with its mantle of virtue and Christianity, offered a means of tangible reform. Klan salesmen vocally advocated the restoration of Victorian morality, the sanctity of the home, the purity of womanhood, the courage of manhood and the principles of "pure Americanism."

In its crusade to conserve shifting values and to protect the status quo, the Klan's emphasis and growth closely paralleled that of religious fundamentalism. The fundamentalists and Klansmen both attacked ideologies and groups that were hostile to fixed beliefs, and the two movements shared members in many parts of the country.\footnote{Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven, 1954), 37 ff.}

Fundamentalism was a broad cross-denominational Protestant movement that gained strength in the late teens and early twenties as a reaction to the increasing modernism among clergy and laymen. The conflict was basically a liberal-conservative breach. The modernists struck at the orthodox creed of the Scriptures by advocating scientific interpretation and historical research to question previously accepted Christian beliefs. To
the fundamentalists these beliefs formed a pyramid, each tenet resting like a block on the one below; to remove or alter one block would send the pyramid crashing into rubble. Ultimately the showdown between the two strains of Protestant thought was the evolution controversy culminating in the Scopes trial.43

The Klan's preoccupation with that "old-time religion" took on a revivalist fervor. Fundamentalist evangelists were hired as Klan speakers; their final plea for listeners to step forward and join the ranks of the Invisible Empire resembled a preacher's call to the altar at the end of a sermon. For example, an evangelist speaking for the Klan in Oklahoma concluded his appeal with the following exhortation:

   This hour is the accepted time. Think seriously, not only of your children, but of the future of America! If you have, heretofore, been silent on this question, will you not tonight, before the hand upon the great dial of destiny strikes the midnight hour, come and pledge your influence, your services and your life for the future of our American sons and daughters? Come, come, I bid you come.44

Some popular revival hymns, such as "the Old Rugged Cross" and "Onward Christian Soldiers," naturally suited Klan symbolism. Others were given new lyrics by Klansmen to fit the occasion. As an initiate knelt before the altar of the Exalted Cyclops, a quartet of Klansmen sang a hymn of dedication written by Simmons to the tune of "Just as I am Without One Plea."45 Years later this same song (without Simmons' revision) was adopted by evangelist Billy Graham as the dedicatory hymn of his crusade.45

43Ibid., 15.

44LeRoy A. Curry, The Ku Klux Klan Under the Searchlight (Kansas City, 1924), 219.

45Simmons, Kloran, 40 f.
Fig. 3. The effort of the Klan's promoters to inject religious significance into their movement is reflected by the caption on this publicity photo released in late 1920. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James R. Venable)
Another popular gospel tune, "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," was adapted by a North Carolina grand dragon, Henry Grady, who re-named it "Let the Fiery Cross Be Burning." By associating Klan membership with commitment to Jesus, the following sample verse and chorus of Grady's lyrics illustrate the Klan's close identification with Christian evangelism:

Serried ranks in stainless armor,
Kneel before that flaming tree,
Pledging life and wealth and honor,
All for Christ and Chivalry.

Chorus:

Let the Fiery Cross be burning,
Spread its beams o' er land and sea,
Satan's wiles forever spurning,
Bringing Christ to you and me. 46

The Klan's unofficial coalescence with fundamentalism offered moral justification for the order's assumed role as keeper of the public conscience, ready to aid (or supplant) local authorities in suppressing sin and lawlessness. Enforcement of prohibition became one on the liveliest of the Klan's extracurricular activities. On the night the Volstead Act became effective, Klansmen marched through the streets of Atlanta and burned a keg of John Barleycorn in symbolic compliance with the new law. Probably more white Protestant bootleggers and moonshiners were flogged or intimidated by members of the hooded order than Catholics, Jews and

46 Henry A. Grady, "Let the Fiery Cross Be Burning," Wisconsin Kourier, Jan. 9, 1925, p. 2. Grand Dragon Grady was apparently no relation to Henry W. Grady who was successor to E. Y. Clarke, Sr. as editor of the Constitution. Editor Grady, however, was suspected of being a member of the Reconstruction Klan; see Raymond B. Nixon, Henry W. Grady, Spokesman of the New South (New York, 1943), 81-84. Henry A. Grady, a North Carolina state superior court judge, was ousted as grand dragon in 1927; afterwards, at least one local chapter banned "Let the Fiery Cross Be Burning." See Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 92-96.
immigrants combined. Suspected gamblers, philanderers, kept women and loafers were also frequent targets of the Klan lash and tar bucket. Such petty vigilantism was not uncommon in the early days of the Klan; the New York World chronologically listed 152 acts of violence attributable to the Klan by late 1921. But the terrorism increased in frequency and intensity as kleagles became less discriminating, recruiting a higher percentage of riffraff in the interest of a klecktoken.

Community vigilantism generally takes one of two basic directions. When the vigilantes deal with a real problem or disorder in the absence of an effective system of law and order, the results can benefit all members of the community. Although kleagles propagated the Klan as exemplifying this model, vigilance committees formed by local chapters more often followed a model that was socially destructive because they encountered strong opposition from some elements of the community, and civil conflict resulted. There were probably locations where Klansmen did "clean up the town." but generally the order's night riding only resulted in increased personal, family, political, and economic antagonisms. 47 Nevertheless, the Klan's crusade for law and order at whatever expense, not to mention the romantic appeal of masks in the moonlight, probably lured many otherwise respectable persons into the order.

The Fraternal Connection

In the midst of the heated political, religious, moral and economic convolutions that bewildered and frightened America in 1920, E. Y. Clarke organized a recruiting campaign that was cool and methodical. Clarke was

neither a reformer nor a crusader, but a promoter. His organizers
and recruiters were likewise not agitators, rebels or reactionaries of
deep ideological bent, but rather businessmen—salesmen working on a
commission basis. Together they tapped the juices of discontent flowing
through the nation and channelled them into a common stream with a common
direction.

Clarke had 200 kleagles in the field by 1921. The first wave of
these came from his own battery of experienced fund raisers who had worked
for him in other drives. These were men seasoned in the art of arousing
emotions and channelling them toward a cause.\footnote{New York World, Sept. 27, 1921, p. 2.} Offering them free member-
ship, he and his subordinates also signed up ministers as kleagles, because
of their public speaking experience and respectable standing in the
community. The Klan could hardly ask for a better endorsement than one
from a pulpit.

Another source of eager salesmen were deactivated military officers,
veterans of the Great War, who enjoyed a hero status of sorts in most towns.
To lure former flight officers, Clarke even organized the Klan's own air
force, the Knights of the Air. C. Anderson Wright, who edited a news-
letter for aviators, Tale Spins, had broadcast views that he and other
pilots felt some sort of fraternal order was necessary to provide facili-
ties for pilots to retain flying skills acquired during the war. Clarke
heard about the idea and invited Wright to Atlanta to organize an air
branch as an auxiliary to the Klan. Since very few American cities boast-
ed airdromes at the time, Clarke reportedly dreamed up a scheme to persuade
local Chambers of Commerce to provide the Klan with landing fields.
According to Wright, Clarke planned to make arrangements for "certain well-
known airmen" to make talks in cities where he intended to locate air-
borne klaverns. The local newspapers in these cities would then be
"bombarded" with press releases heralding the coming of a "flying wedge"
of airplanes that would swoop low over the rooftops. Such stunt flying
and publicity, according to Wright, was designed by Clarke to arouse the
enthusiasm necessary to persuade communities to donate land to the Klan
through their Chambers of Commerce. The airfields would include hangers
for the Klan's planes and serve as local airports for the cities as well.
Clarke also hoped to persuade the government to sell him at nominal prices
its surplus training planes that had been in mothballs since the end of
the war. The Knights of the Air never obtained a single airplane and
never got off the ground. Wright apparently fell into the bad graces of
the Imperial staff when he refused to take orders from Mrs. Tyler. After
the New York World Klan exposure of September 1921, Wright abdicated his
position to seek fame and fortune by writing his own "inside" exposure
for the competing New York American. The Knights of the Air was not a
total loss for Clarke. Wright wrote that his list of 72,000 subscribers
to Tale Spins was "scientifically canvassed" for membership by kleagles,
and some of these aviation enthusiasts probably joined the earthbound
Klan. 49

According to a Tennessee kleagle, Clarke only employed recruiters with
active fraternal connections, especially those who belonged to Masonic
lodges, the Knights of Pythias, and the JOUAM. 50 One Klan advertisement
for kleagles specified: "Fraternal organizers, men of ability, between

49 C. Anderson Wright, New York American, Sept. 21, 1921, p. 2; Sept. 15, 1921, p. 2.

50 Henry P. Fry, Columbus Enquirer-Sun, June 8, 1923, Harris Papers, box 9, folder 1.
ages 25 and 40. Must be 100 per cent Americans. Masons preferred.\footnote{Milwaukee Leader, Sept. 6, 1921, ACLU Archives, 190:67. The advertisement originally appeared in the classified columns of the Wisconsin State Journal (Madison).}

Clarke himself was not a Mason, and his apparent partiality for Freemasonry probably related to the size and commercial potential of the organization. According to Wright, Clarke saw to it that "all of his big men" were Masons.\footnote{C. Anderson Wright to Warren G. Harding, Sept. 22, 1921, Justice Dept. File, 198589-163, Record Group 60, National Archives, Washington. Hereafter cited as Justice File.} Many Masonic leaders were appalled by the Klan's infiltration of their ranks and bitterly denounced the Invisible Empire, but thousands of Masons, particularly those in the Scottish Rite and Orange lodges, reportedly flocked to the Klan.\footnote{David M. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism (Chicago, 1965), 34.}

In an era of American history in which a man's success in a community was often measured by the number of fraternal keys on his lapel, lodges were a convenient place for a kleagle from out of town to quickly indentify himself with local citizens. A Klan organizer entering a strange city could establish contact with a "brother" Mason, Odd Fellow or Shriner and immediately have an audience for his pitch about this grand new fraternal order known as the Ku Klux Klan.\footnote{W. P. Beazell, "The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan," The World Tomorrow, 7:72 f (March 1924).}

The Klan's ritual, like that of other fraternal lodges, resembled a form of primitive religious rite, perhaps supplying what organized Protestant worship lacked--pageantry, mystery, and color. The Protestant
Reformation had stripped church architecture of its ornament, the clergy of their splendid robes, and the divine services of their enchantment. Fraternal lodges provided the incantations, the graven images and the cabalistic prelacy that were missing in the austere Protestant sanctuary. The Klan's ceremony had all the hocus-pocus of primitive totemic worship enhanced by Christian rhetoric and patriotism.

The popularity of fraternalism was probably at its peak in the early 1920s when the 65 largest fraternal organizations (not including professional societies, college fraternities and sororities, or the Klan) reached a total membership of 18 million. This estimation may be inflated, however, since avid fraternalists belonged to more than one lodge. President Harding, for example, was member of the Elks, Odd Fellows, Shriners, Red Men, Moose and Hoo Hoos.55

Other fraternal organizations were courted by the Klan nearly as ardently as Freemasonry. When an Elk convention was held in Atlanta in 1923, the Imperial Palace was decked out in purple and white bunting, the Elks' national colors. "Evidently lots of Elks are also Klansman," a Klan periodical concluded, since "literally hundreds of the delegates to the grand lodge visited the Imperial Palace, showed their Klan cards and inspected national headquarters."56 In Chicago, Klansmen apparently had close relations with Shriners. The Klan's Chicago magazine, Dawn, contained four pro-Shriner articles in its first eight issues.

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56 Imperial Night-Hawk, July 18, 1923, p. 8.
In 1922 Clarke and two of his confederates reportedly formed the "Great American Fraternity," an ambitious scheme devised to unify the Klan and 12 other fraternal orders into one "great organization" for opposing Catholics. The Great American Fraternity was incorporated in Georgia, shared the same building, if not the same office, with the Southern Publicity Association and was promoted in the Klan organ Searchlight. However, the other societies involved, including the Masons, Odd Fellows, Eastern Star, and Jouam, apparently shunned the proposed alliance. The Great American Fraternity remained a paper lodge, becoming another of Clarke's monumental schemes that failed to materialize. 57

While not actually a fraternal lodge, the American Legion had many parallels with the Klan. The Legion was formed in 1919 on a platform that contained a plank favoring "100 per cent Americanism," a slogan which the Klan seized and denuded with overuse. Legionnaires, like Klansmen, glorified patriotism and strove to maintain law and order. Critics of the Legion compared it to the Klan in its strident nationalism and occasional terrorism. Klansmen marched in Legion parades and the two organizations probably shared many members. Clarke, in turn, capitalized on the relationship between the two orders by using as propaganda a film featuring mounted Legionnaires wearing Klan-like attire. Controversy over the Klan sharply rent the young Legion into factions for and against the Klan. Ultimately the elements compromised at the Legion's 1923 convention by passing a resolution declaring that "nothing should be done to stir up racial and religious tension within the Legion," but the Klan was not

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condemned by name. 58

**The Kleagles in Action**

Fraternal organizations provided only one of many inroads to membership exploited by kleagles. Tactics varied from location to location, but one strategy remained consistent throughout the country. The kleagles were instructed by headquarters to make their initial drive to recruit the most prominent and respected citizens in each community. If the opinion leaders could first be converted, the general populace could be expected to follow them into the Invisible Empire, according to this strategy. A few examples will illustrate the widespread use of this master plan:

The kleagles assigned to Clarksburg, West Virginia, checked into the Waldo Hotel and first recruited several bank tellers, then a member of the city council, a school principal, some leading businessmen and several doctors. In a Tennessee town, membership included the mayor, the city manager, all of the police force, the presidents of both local banks, the postmaster, the manager of the telephone company, and many other prominent business and professional men. This city's Klan kept a card index system that included a file on every person in the city, showing his business connections, habits, morals, religion, politics and all available information pertaining to his private affairs. The king kleagle of the realm of Oregon first set up shop at the Multnomah Hotel in Portland and invited the local mayor, chief of police, sheriff and district attorney to visit his headquarters. The officials had their picture taken with the king kleagle and exalted cyclops, and the photograph appeared in the Portland

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58 Davis, dissertation, 55 f; Murray, Red Scare, 88.
Telegram. In Louisiana, the king kleagle set his sights even higher, first recruiting the adjutant general of the state, L. A. Toombs, then several members of the state's legislature, followed by some district judges and lesser officials. 59

From 1922 to 1925 the Klan amassed sufficient strength to seat its own desired politicians in public office. Governors, Congressmen and hundreds of local officials were elected by openly supporting the Ku Klux Klan and accepting the endorsement of the order.

To each of these prominent citizens the kleagles offered the necessary inducements. Politicians were shown the possibilities of Klan support at the ballot box. Businessmen were attracted by the commercial advantages of TWK stickers toward eliminating Jewish and Catholic competition. Other merchants probably joined for protection, fearing similar boycotts if they did not embrace the Klan. Law officers were persuaded that the Klan could provide an instant posse to curb any sudden crime wave. Clergymen were shown the high moral codes and were induced to believe that the order would help restore their town's slumping Christianity. In general, however, the kleagles were told to find out what was troubling the community--Catholics, Jews, bootleggers, speakeasies, loose women, corruption, or graft--and offer the Klan as a solution. 60


60Robert L. Duffus, "How the Ku Klux Klan Sells Hate," World's Work, 46:181 (June 1923); Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 33.
The more virulent "hate" propaganda was more commonly directed toward the rank-and-file white Protestant element in the community. Their enlistment was greatly simplified if the town's elites had been first recruited. When an individual heard about an organization to which his employer, his minister, and his fraternal grand master all swore allegiance, he was apt to give it serious consideration, even before learning what groups it opposed. Although the Klan stressed the secrecy of its membership, kleagles were not adverse to name-dropping to impress prospective recruits. In Madison, Wisconsin, recruiters carried a "list of most prominent Klansmen" when calling upon prospects.61 In Columbus, Georgia, Clarke had his kleagles distribute mimeographed pamphlets that attempted to demonstrate official endorsement by that city's leaders. The tracts included a quote attributed to the chief of police, stating that Klansmen had helped arrest "a recent epidemic of burglaries," and that the organization was "a blessing in any community." The letter concluded with a quote by Mayor J. L. Couch, saying, "I heartily endorse the above."62

Once a Klan unit received its charter and was no longer "provisional," membership canvassing passed from the hands of kleagles and fell under the responsibility of the individual chapter. A former Klansman told the writer that he was recruited in 1922, not by a kleagle, but by the county sheriff. The man was a Georgia state senator at the time and had feared that membership would damage his political future. When the sheriff

61 List included in William T. Evjue Papers, Ku Klux Klan file, 1922-1927, MSS 244, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison. Hereafter cited as Evjue Papers. Evjue edited the Capital Times (Madison) for many years.

showed him a list of Georgia politicians who already belonged, the senator was persuaded that the Klan "couldn't be all that bad." He agreed to go through with the initiation and was greatly impressed by the solemnity of the ritual and the apparent purity of motives. After the ceremony, however, he overheard several of his fellow Klansmen, including the sheriff, conspiring to ride out and flog a local citizen who was suspected of bootlegging. The senator paid his ten dollar fee, but he never returned to the klavern.⁶³

Prospective initiates, when not contacted personally, were sent form letters emphasizing that only the very select and the very capable were being considered for membership in the "MOST DAUNTLESS organization known to man." The letterhead on the propagation department stationery used by kleagles was gaudily ornate, proclaiming the Klan as "The MOST SUBLIME LINEAGE IN ALL HISTORY," and featuring robed and mounted masked men bearing fiery crosses and galloping across the top of the page. The letters were accompanied by various Klan tracts such as "Americans Take Heed!" Simmons' ABC or some anti-Catholic diatribe. Also included were forms, such as the one reproduced below, that allowed the prospect to respond. "Non Silba Sed Anthar," incidentally, is translated, "Not for self, but for others." The words are in bastardized Latin devised by Simmons. The card could be mailed back to "Ti-Bo-Tim" (the kleagle) for more materials or could be presented personally to the recruiter at the local headquarters.

The organizers were instructed to mail these materials from the address of some prominent institution, club or office for additional

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⁶³Interview, May 22, 1974. Buckhead, Georgia. The former state senator and retired superior court judge preferred not to be identified by name as a former Klansman.
respectability. Kleagles set up offices in fraternal lodges, exclusive hotels and in New York City, the Army and Navy Club. 64

Once this initial contact had been accomplished, the interested prospect was required to fill out an application form specifying his race, religion, occupation, age and various other attributes so that he could be evaluated for acceptance. The approved "alien" was then "naturalized" into the Invisible Empire in a two-hour initiation ceremony that was often held in public.

While recruiting in smaller towns was usually a one-man operation, a larger city required teamwork. Clarke would send in a skeleton crew who would select suitable office space and recruit more kleagles from the local area. Mailing lists were compiled, using fraternal rosters, armed forces reserve lists and city directories. Sometimes the organizers signalled their presence in a city with newspaper advertisements or billboards; more often, however, a cross was burned on a prominent hillside and an explana-
Fig. 4. Ku Klux Klan questionnaire and application for membership. (Application from membership and dues records of Klan No. 14, Knoxville, Tennessee, Special Collections, Emory; questionnaire from John Vetter Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison.)
tory news release sent to the local newspaper.\textsuperscript{65}

It is difficult to determine the amount of direct participation by E. Y. Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler in propagation activities outside Atlanta. Scattered newspaper reports place Clarke at Klan events in New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas and Tulsa during his first two years with the Klan, and he probably travelled to more events that were less publicized. According to one of his employes, Clarke spent very little time in Atlanta. "He was kind of hitting the high spots," said E. J. Jones, Clarke's assistant cashier. "He did not stay in any one position."\textsuperscript{66} Tyler on the other hand apparently stayed close to home to care for her ailing daughter while Clarke was on the road. However, there is an isolated report of a "mysterious woman [sic] who was believed to be the brains of the organization work" for the Klan in the North and Midwest. She reportedly operated out of an expensive hotel in Minneapolis and bail-ed out a Montana kleagle who ran afoul of the law in Butte. However there is no proof that this was Tyler.\textsuperscript{67}

It would be erroneous to assert that the kleagles enjoyed smooth sailing wherever they set up operations. The Butte kleagle had arrived in the city and had placed an advertisement for the Klan in a local paper

\textsuperscript{65}For an example, see New York World, April 6, 1922, ACLU Archives, 204:36.

\textsuperscript{66}Testimony of E. J. Jones, Senator from Texas, 369. Jones was Clarke's assistant cashier and bookkeeper.

\textsuperscript{67}Minneapolis Leader, Aug. 13, 1921; cited in Oregon Labor Press, Aug. 19, 1921, ACLU Archives, 190:35.
stating the order's objectives. He was promptly warned by the county
sheriff that if Klansmen attempted any of their "customary tactics" in
Butte, they would be "shot down like wolves." The organizer wisely fled
the city, but sneaked back several days later only to be jailed for
vagrancy. 68

Kentucky was another state in which Klan organizers met with stiff
opposition. The mayor of Louisville had the city's head kleagle trailed
by a troupe of plainclothesmen who were ordered to arrest him if he con-
tinued plans for a scheduled meeting. The recruiter moved his organiza-
tion across the Ohio River to more hospitable Albany, Indiana, where the
mayor and chief of police gave the order their sanction. Another Kentucky
kleagle was not so fortunate. When unable to enlist any members, he wrote
the propagation department for suggestions. His letter was answered by
J. Q. Jett who told him to "tar and feather somebody, that this would give
publicity and he could then get members." According to Jett, the hapless
kleagle attempted to comply by trying to tar a local bootlegger who over-
powered and soundly clobbered him. The kleagle reportedly left the Klan
for a safer occupation. 69

Klansmen in Oklahoma faced even sterner opposition from Governor
John C. "Jack" Walton who placed the entire state under martial law after
learning that many Sooner State policemen belonged to the Klan. Walton
was subsequently impeached for this rash (and probably political) maneuver
and removed from office in 1923.

68 Milwaukee Leader, Aug. 2, 1921, ACLU Archives, 190:121.
69 Atlanta Constitution, Sept. 17, 1921, p. 3; J. Q. Jett, Columbus Enquirer-Sun, Harris Papers, box 7, folder 4.
The Lure of the Klan: A Summary

In 1923 Arthur Brisbane, chief editorial writer for the Hearst newspapers, wrote a column in which he expressed puzzlement over the continued growth of the Klan. In answer to his editorial, a Klan newspaper in Wisconsin gave their explanations for the appeal of the order:

... Surely he knows why the Klan is here, and what conditions are responsible for the Klan's existence. If Arthur Brisban [sic] believes in the Protection and Perpetration of American Institutions and liberties, if he believes in the Free American Public School System, if he believes in freedom of speech, of the press, and of assemblage; if he believes in the complete separation of church and state, if he believes that every man, woman, or child shall be allowed to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, if he believes in keeping Caucasian blood clean, if he opposes foreign entanglements and alliances, if he opposes making the U.S.A. a dumping ground for European scum, and if he is opposed to a foreign ecclesiastical hierarchy seeking to gain political ascendancy in America, then he will pray for the success of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.70

In a time of political and economic uncertainty, the public tends to look for scapegoats. The Klan offered them a herd. There were a few who entered the organization who were haters, psycopaths or bullies, people who saw the Klan as a way to act out their aggressions with organized violence. But there were a great many more sincere honest citizens with concern about what they perceived to be increasing danger to their society and their institutions; these people believed the Klan was the only means of achieving solidarity of the native white majority.

There were also businessmen who joined for economic advantages and there were promoters and opportunists who were attracted by the lucrative commissions and potential for graft. There were fraternal fanatics who joined out of love of the lodge function—the ceremony and ritual that the

70 Badger American, May 1923, p. 6.
Klan offered to an almost absurd degree. There were Bible-thumping
hardshell Protestants who were persuaded that the Klan signalled a return
to orthodox Christianity. And there were patriots and jingos to whom the
gospel of 100 per cent Americanism was holy and every day the Fourth of
July.

In short, there were no "typical" Klansmen and no single reason for
belonging to the Ku Klux Klan. E. Y. Clarke and his associates organized
a highly flexible public relations campaign with appeals and propaganda
that could easily be adapted to suit the distinctive moods, fears, and
desires of individuals and communities of the 1920s. They recognized the
vague suspicions and frustrations of white Protestant Americans and
articulated them into a concrete package of hatreds and objectives. In so
doing, Clarke and his aides mobilized public disaffection, created irre-
parable cleavages and left an indelible stain on American society.
CHAPTER III

THE KLAN MOVES OUT OF THE KLOSET

On January 27, 1921, half of the state fair grounds at Birmingham was knee-deep in water, mud and slush—the melting aftermath of a rare Alabama snow storm. A line of 500 Ku Klux Klan candidates, dressed in street clothes, marched in rows of four through the muck, not side-stepping a puddle. They were surrounded by hundreds of hooded Klansmen whose white robes flowed to the ground and were stained red by the wet Alabama clay.

Each Klansman held a red-and-white cross aloft while two great searchlights played upon them. Mounted Klansmen patrolled the outer perimeters of the gathering, keeping out all those who were not versed in the proper shibboleths and countersigns.

As the 500 prospective members marched to the base of the Imperial throne the searchlights were extinguished. Behind the throne another thousand Klansmen assembled in the shape of a giant cross. Each lit a small cross which, with the two tall blazing crosses beside the throne of the Imperial Wizard, provided the only illumination.

Even in the flickering half-light the Wizard was resplendent in purple satin robes with gold-embroidered embellishments. He was not hooded; instead, he wore a gold-and-purple crown and a skull mask. The Wizard administered the oath to the initiates, exactly 55 years after General Nathan Bedford Forrest, leader of the original Klan, received his initiation into the Invisible Empire.

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Not far away, atop a roof within the fair grounds, a group of reporters huddled in a makeshift press box that had been thoughtfully provided by the Klan hierarchy. Though they were guarded to ensure that they did not overhear any of the sacred ritual, they were close enough to observe and record the scenario. The following day the story was carried by newspapers across the country. The Invisible Empire was beginning to make itself visible.\(^1\)

**Klan Pseudo-events: Visitations, Klconvocations and "Monster Rallies"**

"The counsel on public relations," wrote public relations pioneer Edward L. Bernays in 1923, "not only knows what news value is, but knowing it, he is in a position to make news happen. He is a creator of events."\(^2\)

The historian Daniel J. Boorstin lists these characteristics of the pseudo-event: it is planned rather than spontaneous; it is planned primarily for the purpose of being reported; its success is measured by how widely it is reported; its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous; and its interest arises largely from this ambiguity. The question, "What does it mean?" writes Boorstin, has a new dimension.\(^3\)

When the Southern Publicity Association first took over on the Klan account, they kept external publicity to a minimum, concentrating mostly on an undercover campaign. As indicated in the previous chapter, their

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\(^1\) *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1921, p. 6.


kleagles propagated by infiltration, recruiting community leaders who endorsed the Klan and who helped sign up the lesser influential citizens. No "aliens" were ever allowed to gaze upon the Klan rites which were usually conducted in wooded seclusion. This all began to change in early 1921. By that time the Klan had received enough detrimental publicity to damage the respectable image the Southern Publicity Association had been trying to build. Since the Klan could not maintain total secrecy and still create the orchestrated events necessary for favorable media coverage, Clarke and his subordinates made sure news happened by exploiting the order's atmosphere of secrecy and mystery.

After the initial interviews with Simmons in January 1921, the Klan began opening up its "klonklaves" (meetings) to allow the public to catch a glimpse of klankraft in action. Mass initiations were often scheduled in connection with a national holiday or Klan anniversary. From 1921 to 1925 rarely a Flag Day or Independence Day passed without a major klonklave or "klonvocation" (state convention).

The Birmingham klonklave described above was the first of these opened to the public and the press. Since Imperial Wizard Simmons was involved, and Simmons rarely appeared in public without E. Y. Clarke nearby, it is likely that the Southern Publicity Association did have a hand in planning the ceremony and arranging for the publicity. Clarke was definitely on hand for subsequent similar initiations and rallies. When a mass initiation was held in Cincinnati on June 17, 1921, 2,000 were reportedly inducted with Clarke as guest of honor. ⁴

The pattern in all of these initiations was similar: the public was allowed to view from a distance, just close enough to arouse their

curiosity and to see the fires and ghostly figures; reporters were allowed a little closer, so that the event would be assured of space in the next day's papers. Normally reporters were invited to attend these ceremonies with the understanding that they would not publicize the names of any of the speakers or participants other than the Imperial officers. In cases where the general public was not invited to the rites, it was not uncommon for local officers to blindfold newsmen and escort them to the secret initiation site. The larger Klan gatherings were followed by press releases to news facilities nearby. These articles provided nuts-and-bolts information for background. For example, a release sent to a Chicago newspaper following a 1922 initiation ceremony informed the paper that 2,000 candidates had been "naturalized," that 6,000 automobiles had been employed to bring Klansmen from a radius of 200 miles, that pie and soft drinks had been served to the hooded multitude, and that 50,000 sandwiches had been sold at a nickel apiece.  

As the Klan grew, so did the mass gatherings. Throughout 1922 and 1923 each klonvocation was usually billed as the "largest ever," and each realm tried to top its neighbors, though there is no evidence that such competition was encouraged by the Southern Publicity Association. If Illinois had an attendance of 30,000 at one of its meetings, then Indiana had to claim 50,000, Ohio, 75,000, and Texas--200,000. The actual attendance figures are as dubious as they are impossible to authenticate. The Klan usually tried to give an inflated notion of its membership by bringing in Klansmen from long distances and, whenever possible, by carrying out the ceremonies near a clump of trees or where

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familiar stage devices could be used to make a few Klansmen look like a legion. When the rally was preceded by a parade, the Klansmen marched or rode in single file a few yards apart, so that a small number stretched a long way.  

Non-Klansmen were just as prone to exaggerate these numbers. Vigorous opponents of the organization tended to exploit large estimates to make the Klan appear as threatening as they believed it to be. In the 1920s, when journalism was still a shade yellow, bigger numbers made bigger stories, and newsmen were also likely to overestimate the size of Klan events. For example, the national press reported attendance figures of 100,000 to 200,000 for a klonklave in Kokomo, Indiana, on July 4, 1923. While the klonklave in Kokomo was probably one of the largest ever held, the Klan's own estimate in its official publication, the Imperial Night-Hawk, was a mere 50,000. Probably the largest authenticated Klan gathering was "Klan Day" at the Texas State Fair on October 24, 1923. More than 200,000 persons attended the fair that day, in comparison to an average of 30,000 on the other days of the fair. However, since few were in full regalia, and since the fair was open to the general public, it was difficult to distinguish between aliens and Klansmen.

The first public Klan ceremonies were austere and mysterious, weirdly ambiguous enough to arouse the interests of potential candidates who viewed the rituals from a distance or who might read about them in the news. As the rallies increased in size they became less supernatural in character. More and more Klansmen brought their families. A

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7 *Imperial Night-Hawk*, July 11, 1923, p. 6.

barbecue, to feed these tag-alongs, became a standard item on the agenda. By 1923 the hours of mystifying ritual at the initiations were replaced by a program resembling a high school baccalaureate. The sample below is the schedule for the "Celebration and Naturalization" sponsored in 1923 by the Pueblo Klan No. 5 of Colorado.

Song: "Star-Spangled Banner"
Invocation
Flag lowered: Fiery Cross lighted
Song: "Onward Christian Soldiers"
Naturalization Ceremony
Song: "America"
"Tableau"
Address: By the Grand Dragon, Realm of Colorado
Inspirational Address
Song: "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"
Benediction
Barbecue Supper

In the Midwest, particularly, the giant rallies took on a festival atmosphere, featuring bands, drill teams, parades, prominent speakers (Imperial officers were a big draw), and even weddings (the bride was veiled; the groom was hooded). Far from being kept secret, these meetings were advertised and the general public invited to participate. For example, red-white-and-blue posters heralded the "Spring Festival and Entertainment" to be held at the Pleasant Valley Park in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, on Flag Day, 1924. The flier promised music

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9Imperial Night-Hawk, July 11, 1923, p. 8.
"plenty of it the entire day"), lectures ("by excellent speakers") and refreshments ("plenty of eats and drinks"). Adults were charged 25 cents and children were admitted free. A similar rally in San Antonio, advertised as a "Monster Public Initiation, the Greatest Event in the Southwest," included the added attractions of a rodeo and "cowboy contest."\textsuperscript{10}

In the early 1920s, when the few radios on the market required earphones and television was still a distant dream, and when most of the silent flickers were considered too sinful for decent Christian folk, the Klan gatherings were an opportunity for camaraderie and an old-fashioned good time. The farmers could huddle between lectures and compare remedies for chinch bugs while their wives swapped biscuit recipes and their children played baseball in the nearby cow pastures.

When the time came for the sacred oaths of initiation, many who had come only to be entertained filed behind the candidates to be "naturalized" on the spot.\textsuperscript{11} Yet while the rallies continued to be an effective selling platform throughout the early twenties, their very frequency diminished their news value. By 1924, for example, the events were so numerous in Alabama that the grand dragon's office had to coordinate the dates to ensure that none of the celebrations conflicted.\textsuperscript{12}

Because these mass events were usually generated by local Klan chapters and out of the hands of the Imperial Propagation Department,


\textsuperscript{11} Weaver, dissertation, 155.

the local or regional officers had the responsibility for devising innovations to spark media interest. In Santa Monica, California, a crowd reported as 30,000 saw a fiery cross suspended from a blimp high above the site of a September 1923 rally. The local Klan had also constructed a forty-foot electrical sign bearing the letters "KKK" to attract the public to the scene. During the initiation two Civil War veterans were featured among the aliens. One wore the blue uniform of a Union colonel while the other was clad in the grey uniform of a Confederate major.13

On one occasion a Klan event included an unscheduled air show. During a mass initiation at Aurora, Illinois, 30,000 Klansmen and other spectators were startled by a lone monoplane that roared out of the dusk and bombed the crowd with leaflets that were inimical to the Imperial Wizard. Enraged Klansmen recruited two fledgling pilots from their group and borrowed two airplanes from an adjacent landing field. The Klan pilots were no match for their intruder, however. The alien outmaneuvered his pursuers on every turn, and at each opportunity during the dogfight he dumped another batch of placards onto the throng below.14

During a particularly disastrous rally at Bloomington, Illinois, an airplane equipped with a large fiery cross crashed into an alien oak tree on the site. By the time Klansmen had rescued the dazed but uninjured pilot from the debris, a sudden torrential downpour extinguished the crosses and sent the Kluxers scurrying home with dampened sheets and spirits.15

13 Imperial Night-Hawk, Nov. 14, 1923, p. 3.
15 Imperial Night-Hawk, Nov. 14, 1923, p. 3.
Most of the larger Klan celebrations began with a parade through the nearest community. Parades, or "klavalkades," were often conducted independently of any other event. One of the first public appearances of the Klan outside Atlanta, preceding any of the open initiations, occurred in a Houston parade, shortly after the initial Simmons-Clarke contract. As arranged by Z. R. Upchurch, Clarke's Atlanta deputy who was organizing the Texas realm, Simmons rode in an automobile marked "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Atlanta, Georgia" in the Confederate Veterans Reunion Parade held in Houston on October 9, 1920. While the spectators probably gave little notice to the tall smiling red-haired gent in the car, their attention was riveted to the line of white-robed and hooded marchers, some on horseback, who followed Simmons' vehicle. Some of them carried three banners proclaiming "We were here yesterday, 1866," "We are here today, 1920," and "We will be here forever." That night, in a secret ceremony in a Houston suburb, Simmons and Clarke were on hand to initiate the newly established "Sam Houston Klan No. 1."16

The three messages on the banners became a standard feature in later Klan parades and were usually promulgated on three small floats.17 Larger klavalkades included more floats, bands, Klan drum and bugle corps, and women, children, horses, cars and dogs, all adorned with adaptations of the Klan uniform.

Some cities refused to grant permits for Klan parades, but other local officials were compliant. The parades drew people out of the hinterlands and onto Main Street to cash in their old war bonds and shop at the local stores featuring Klan Day specials. The report below of a


Hattiesburg, Mississippi, parade illustrates the local enthusiasm for such events:

The city was a thrill with the prospects for hours before the Klansmen were scheduled to appear and start on their march. From Front street to the high school, Main street on both sides was lined, four to five rows deep with spectators, who waited for more than an hour, the appearance of the members of the secret order. A drum corps headed the procession, followed by a flag bearer carrying the Stars and Stripes, with an escort of two. Then came Col. [T. S.] Ward, the highest ruler [grand dragon] of the Klan in Mississippi, and on his heels trudged a little six-year-old girl in her miniature regalia, to be followed by the hooded figures of the officers of the Hattiesburg Klan.

The Women of the Ku Klux Klan were next in line, and they were immediately in front of their male Klan brothers.18

The Hattiesburg parade was typical in comparison with reports of Klan processions in other cities. Variations depended on the region. In Florida and Texas the parades were often staged prior to elections as a warning to Negroes to eschew the polls. A klavalkade in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, in which 5,000 Klansmen participated included a dozen high school bands, a Knights of Malta band, a Scotch bagpipe band, and autos that bore crosses three feet high affixed to the grills lit by miniature electric lights.19

Not all Klan rallies and parades proved to be so joyous. In regions where the Klan was not universally esteemed, the gatherings sometimes included vocal protesters. These might have been disgruntled civic groups with legitimate complaints about the Klan, but more often they were country toughs looking for a brawl. Since the hecklers were usually far outnumbered, they were normally whisked away by Klan sergeants-at-arms or by local officials anxious to prevent a major disturbance. In Dallas,

18**Imperial Night-Hawk**, Jan. 9, 1924, p. 6.

Texas, an alien tried to break up a klavalkade by racing his car through a rope balustrade, sending several Klansmen sprawling onto the pavement. Before the driver could escape he was barricaded by a mob of angry Klansmen who jerked him from his car and thrashed him before turning him over to police who hauled him away and booked him for reckless driving. On a hot summer night in 1923 in Steubenville, Ohio, a confrontation at a Klan event resulted in four persons being wounded by gunfire. A week later a mob in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, attempted to blockade a group of nearly 20,000 Klansmen who were preparing to parade through the city without a permit. The mob, brandishing clubs and firearms, overturned the automobile that was to lead the parade, then attacked the hooded marchers. The battle lasted for over an hour, covering four Carnegie city blocks, before police with riot guns arrived from nearby Pittsburgh. By the time order had been restored, the streets of Carnegie were littered with the white and blood-stained confetti of shredded Klan robes. One Klansman was killed in the riot, 12 persons were seriously wounded and scores injured.20

For the most part, however, the Klan "monster rallies," celebrations and parades were beneficial to the local Klan units from 1920 to 1925. By inviting the townsfolk and providing them with wholesome entertainment, the Klan improved its community relations and provided merchants with an economic boost. The resultant publicity was nearly always favorable, particularly when facilities were arranged for reporters. The celebrations were also a morale booster for the rank-and-file Klansmen and their families. The social occasions allowed some participation by Klan

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wives, who had probably felt a little left out when their husbands traipsed into the night in eerie raiments.

Between the large-scale celebrations and initiations Klan units could attract local media attention by a smaller pseudo-event: the visitation—the sudden unexpected appearance of hooded Klansmen, usually bearing gifts, at local institutions such as churches, hospitals or schools.

By far the most common of these events was the church visitation. In April 1922 the *Literary Digest* commented, "Scarcely a Sunday passes without the publication of a Klan visit to a church somewhere, either to signify approval, sit decorously through a sermon, or present a donation."21

Although the format varied, the scenario for church visitations usually involved the sudden appearance of hooded Klansmen during a Sunday service. They would walk silently down the aisle to the pulpit, hand the minister an envelope, and then just as silently exit, leaving the congregation whispering, gasping, or sometimes applauding. The envelopes usually contained a cash donation and a message of support for the pastor and his church. If the minister was sympathetic to the order and had been forewarned of the visitation, he might arrange for the choir to break into a chorus of "Onward Christian Soldiers" as the Klansmen filed out of the church.

Church visitations fell into common use in 1922 and helped to offset some of the hostile reports that glutted the national press. Positive coverage in the local papers was almost a certainty, and national media attention was possible, particularly when Klansmen visited a Negro church.

If the Klan had not pre-arranged the visitation with the pastor, they stood in danger of having their act backfire, since some ministers refused the donations and ordered the intruders out of their church. When a group of Klansmen entered the Bellevue Methodist Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh during an Easter offertory in 1923, they were told by the preacher that they were welcome only if they removed their regalia. Flustered, they turned to make a rapid exit only to have the aisle blocked by a burly lawyer and church trustee named Elmer Kidney who told them they were under arrest. The Klansmen fled but not before Kidney and some of his churchmen had behooded six of them.22

When a Klansman departed this earth for that great klonklave in the sky, his burial was subject to a visitation by his robed brethren. Cemeteries were a natural setting for the uniformed Klansmen who appeared right at home, wafting among the tombstones. Whenever possible the Klan party would suddenly materialize from behind a knoll, vault or mausoleum just as graveside services were concluding. Bearing a cross of fiery red roses and a large American flag, the group would encircle the grave, then raise their left hands in the Klan signal of allegiance for their departed brother. As they bowed their heads, one of the Klansmen would read a poem, a prayer, or a portion of their ritual. After each Klansman dropped a flower into the open grave, the delegation would then disappear behind the hill from whence they came. They sometimes left donations for the grieving (and possibly horrified) widow.23


Klansmen performed similar rites at the funeral of Warren G. Harding. Though Harding never fought the Klan with any degree of enthusiasm during his Presidency, he was probably not a member as some Klansmen have claimed. The Klan in Marion, Ohio, where Harding was buried, was quite active, however, and probably sponsored the delegation to his funeral.24

Although the Klan publications proclaimed proudly that the order shunned publicity for the donations associated with these pseudo-events, the evidence indicates a concerted effort to spotlight Klan charity. A press release issued by the Klan in early 1922 boasted that the organization had distributed more than $1 million in charities in 1921 and dispelled any notions of the humility they tried to radiate:

Figures just compiled by officials of the organization say that the Klan's charitable activities were carried on in every state in the union and that probably more money was passed out to needy causes by the local organizations during the year than by any other similar fraternal institution. . . . In hundreds [of cases] it was the Klansmen who supplied the American flags and bibles to schools, made needed donations to colleges and, in many instances, supplied money necessary to enable worthy students to pursue further their studies in such institutions.

An outstanding feature of the Klan's charitable activities was the method in which aid was extended. Invariably the check was sent as a gift from the organization, the names of no individual being made public in any instance. Local newspapers were used as the medium through which money was sent in not a few places, the money being sent to the editor, or slipped beneath his door during the night with an accompanying note requesting the disposition desired.

The pursuit of charity has become a paramount issue with members of the Ku Klux Klan, and wherever the organization is active, assistance will be rendered to the needy.25

24 Interview with James R. Venable, Tucker, Ga., May 21, 1924. Venable showed the writer photos which he said depict the Klan delegation at Harding's funeral; he firmly believes Harding was a fellow member. However, C. Anderson Wright, in his New York Journal exposure, wrote that Clarke personally delegated him to go to Washington to present Harding with an honorary membership. When he arrived in Washington, he wrote, racial disturbances in the city forced the Klan to postpone the presentation.

25 Manitowoc (Wis.) Times, Jan. 28, 1922, ACLU Archives, 204:8.
As the statement admits, newspapers were often the medium through which donations were tendered, virtually assuring publicity; even if the intended recipient refused the cash, a story about the Klan's good intentions might still break into print. For example, when a Madison, Wisconsin, Negro church refused a $25 gift from the local Klan, the exalted cyclops authorized the managing editor of the Capital Times to receive the money "to disburse... to any worthy CHARITY (institution or individual) that meets with his approval, regardless of race, color, or religion of said recipient..." In a tongue-in-cheek editorial, the Capital Times asked the cyclops if it would be all right to donate the money to a communist defense fund or to distribute B'nai B'rith propaganda. The cyclops promptly replied, suggesting that the donation be used to treat the paper's newsboys to a Thanksgiving dinner. He promised another $25 if the initial donation was not sufficient. The Capital Times, in turn, offered the money as a reward to anyone who could bring in the exalted cyclops "by the left ear." The silliness subsided after the Capital Times exposed the location of the Klan recruiting headquarters in Madison and printed the names of the kleagles working the area. The reward was apparently never claimed.26

The upsurge of publicity in 1922 surrounding Klan acts of charity suggests a positive public relations reaction to rebuild a respectable image that had been shattered by devastating newspaper exposes in 1921. Klan publications in 1922 and 1923 show a definite encouragement of such activities and heap praise upon the more civic-minded Klan units. However, it should not be overlooked that many individual Klansmen, regardless of their prejudices, were responsible citizens, withal.

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26 Exalted Cyclops, Provisional Klan No. 7, Realm of Wisconsin, Madison, to the managing editor, Capital Times, Nov. 22, 1922, Evjue Papers, box 65, folder 15; Capital Times, Nov. 20-24, 1922.
responding out of the same compassion or concern that might have 
motivated them toward the same actions with other fraternal or civic 
organizations. Whether Klansmen were presenting the Bluxom, Virginia, 
high school with a flag or giving $3,000 to the Orange, Texas, Red Cross 
or simply donating to the "Baby Milk Fund" of Jacksonville, Florida, these 
activities helped to justify, to Klansmen as well as to others, the 
order's eleemosynary claims.

Some of the fund-raising activities of the Klan were quite broad 
in scope and represent the strength of the order in its heyday. The 
Dallas, Texas, Klan raised over $75,000 in 1923 to build an orphanage, 
Hope Cottage, adjacent to a local Shriners Hospital. (The home later 
grew bankrupt when the Dallas Klan fell upon hard times.) Klansmen in 
Topeka, Kansas, were credited with raising $137,000 for a hospital there. 
During the klonklave in Kokomo an American flag at least 30 feet long 
was passed through the crowd and $50,000 supposedly raised, though the 
hospital was never built. The enterprising Richmond, Virginia, Klan 
took up donations of chickens in December 1921. The Klansmen then 
auctioned the birds to hotels and restaurants and used the proceeds to 
purchase Christmas seals.27

The great amount of attention given these endeavors in the Klan press 
helped to dispel doubts Klansmen might have experienced concerning the 
good intentions of their organization. For example, in 1923 the Imperial 
Night Hawk, a national Klan periodical, identified a photo with the 
following caption:

27 Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 79; Weaver, dissertation, 
158; Searchlight, Dec. 4, 1921, p. 3, Harris Papers, box 7, folder 2.
Here is an actual closeup photograph of a typical Klan 'outrage' which perhaps will create a demand for more anti-Klan legislation and persecution.

It shows nine Klansmen of Joplin, Realm of Missouri, caught red handed by the camera man, hooded, masked and shrouded, in the midst of their blood thirsty work.

They are depicted in the act of committing the heinous crime of depositing a canvass [sic]sack containing the sum of $10,086.00 in silver and greenbacks on a table in the Connor Hotel in Joplin. The cash was a gift of Joplin Klansmen toward the establishment of the Freeman Memorial Hospital....

The Imperial Klokards: The Klan Speakers' Bureau

In public relations a speakers' bureau is used as a planned means for providing speakers for service club luncheons, evening cultural group meetings, schools, and special events--such as annual Chamber of Commerce meetings, graduation exercises, dedications, anniversaries, celebrations, and fetes for visiting celebrities. Potential sources for such lecturers include public speaking specialists paid by the organization to speak on its behalf as well as competent speakers from within the organization's higher echelons. The Klan used both alternatives.

Shortly after the Southern Publicity Association assumed the propagation activities of the Klan, Clarke recruited a host of lecturers, or "klokards," not to be confused with his legion of kleagles. Both groups served in a recruiting capacity, and many of the klokards, like the kleagles, had worked for Clarke in fund-raising activities. But while the kleagles worked incognito in an assigned territory and were paid by commission, the klokards were salaried, travelled widely and were very much in the open, their engagements coordinated by Imperial headquarters. The speakers were dispatched to Klan ceremonies to fire up spirit among Klansmen and organizers, to civic and fraternal meetings

28 Imperial Night-Hawk, July 18, 1923, p. 6.
to attract potential members and sympathizers, and to political gatherings to speak against anti-Klan candidates. Although the exact size of the propagation department's speakers' bureau has yet to be established, one Georgia newspaper disclosed that 40 such lecturers were utilized during the 1922 state gubernatorial campaign. ²⁹

The speakers lectured with Chautauqua-style oratory, and though they varied the content according to the occasion, their underlying message was basic:

1. Catholics, aliens, Jews, and Negroes (or whatever pernicious influences were most feared in the area) are organized and are a threat to American institutions; it is necessary to fight these menaces to the American way of life.

2. Because these forces have so infiltrated or influenced all levels of government, the sole weapon against them is the Ku Klux Klan; therefore if you are a true American, join the Klan.

3. Morals in the United States are rapidly deteriorating; bootlegging, sexual vice, and gambling are rampant.

4. The sole weapon against such sin and degregation is a Protestant alliance through the Ku Klux Klan; therefore if you are on the side of God and the heavenly hosts, join the Klan. ³⁰

The speakers were usually successful in gauging the amount of vitriol in their lectures according to the predelictions of their audiences. Sometimes they avoided racial, ethnic or religious slurs altogether, sticking to a star-spangled theme of 100 per cent Americanism without attacking any specific group. On the other hand, a klokard

²⁹ Columbus Enquirer-Sun, ca. Sept. 15, 1922, Georgia Clippings Scrapbook, 17:24.

occasionally underestimated the tolerance of his audience. For example, on October 5, 1922, a Klan surrogate named Dr. C. Lewis Fowler of Atlanta delivered a speech at the Milwaukee Auditorium which was so viciously anti-Catholic that it enraged and shocked the local citizens who read the transcript in the next day's papers. Fowler was the former president of Lanier University in Atlanta which had been bailed out (temporarily) of financial ruin when it was purchased by the Klan in 1921. He later became editor of the anti-Catholic American Standard, the only pro-Klan newspaper published in New York City. The following excerpt from his Milwaukee address illustrates the language which caused the controversy:

Oh my friends, the time has come for a reckoning with the priesthood in America. We are ready for them and nothing can stop us now. We shall tear off the mask and show the truth. We shall go into the monasteries and the nunneries and show the death that exists there and we shall rescue the thousands of girls. . . . Every lie you see in the press is born in the brain of a Catholic priest. . . . We will censor every book that goes into the public schools so that the poisonous lies may be kept from the minds of our children. And we shall require every school teacher in America to take an oath to support the constitution and the flag or get out.31

During Fowler's speech the 25 robed Klansmen who sat behind him stood up and saluted when he waved the little flag he had brought for the occasion. Fowler was subsequently denounced by every religious and social organization in the city.32

While unsuppressed bigotry marred the effectiveness of some of the Klan orators, more damaging was the inclination of several of them to stretch the truth beyond the credibility limits of even the most ardent


32 Weaver, dissertation, 103.
supporters. By blatantly lying, an overzealous klondike named J. Q. Nolan nearly scuttled the organization in its home state of Georgia during the early months of Clarke's campaign. Nolan, a veteran politician who had lectured for Clarke's Anti-Saloon League drive, told a Hartville, Georgia, audience a wild tale about the Klan preventing a race riot in Atlanta after the governor and the Atlanta mayor and chief of police had been unable to handle the situation. A concerned minister present notified the chairman of the Atlanta Committee on Inter-racial Relationships who checked out the story with the officials allegedly involved, including Gov. Hugh M. Dorsey who called it "a fabrication out of the whole cloth." The resultant publicity revealed that Nolan had made similar false statements in other Georgia cities. 33

The crisis apparently caught Imperial Headquarters officials flat-footed. The only official response came from Imperial Klounsell (attorney) William S. Coburn who only worsened the situation by categorically denouncing the governor, the inter-racial committee, and the informant minister (whom he incorrectly identified). Coburn called the incident "a planned and concerted attack and effort to discredit the organization in its fight for white supremacy." The damaging publicity surrounding the incident on the Klan's home ground is said to have resulted in the resignations of newly recruited Klansmen who demanded a refund of their initiation fees. 34

Many of the Klan lecturers, perhaps a majority, were ministers (or at least they boasted the title "Rev." or "Dr." or D.D.) who supplemented their meager incomes by hitting the Klan lecture circuit between Sundays.

33 Atlanta Journal, Mar. 21, 1921, p. 1; Mar. 22, p. 1; Atlanta Independent, Mar. 24, 1921, p. 1.

34 Ibid.
The Klan benefited by having seasoned speakers on its side and by increasing its identification with the Protestant church. One of these klokkard ministers, Rev. Oscar W. Haywood, was so popular in New York City that he was asked to join the staff of the wealthy Calvary Baptist Church as a "General Evangelist." Haywood reportedly distributed Klan propaganda during worship services, and as a result the church earned a reputation as a "nest" for the Klan before dissident churchmen forced their pastor, Fundamentalist leader Dr. John Roach Stratton, to dismiss him.

One of the most popular Klan speakers was Imperial Kludd (Chaplain) Caleb A. Ridley. Ridley nearly always spoke to a full house, whether during a Klan engagement or in Atlanta's Central Baptist Church, where he was pastor. The outspoken Ridley nearly always bragged about his Klan affiliation, called the melting pot ideal a "bastard theory," and cursed the Catholics for allegiance to "some secluded ass on the other side of the world."36

In July 1921 Ridley lectured in Tulsa, barely a month after a savage race riot had left 30 or more blacks dead. Ridley called the riot "the best thing that ever happened to Tulsa," and that "judging from the way strange Negroes were coming to Tulsa we might have to do it all over again." An anti-Klan member of the Tulsa audience later recalled,

35 New York World, Nov. 22, 1922, ACLU Archives, 204:116; New York Times, Nov. 27, 1922, ACLU Archives, 204:131. Haywood later turned against the Klan; he moved to North Carolina where he was elected state representative and in 1927 introduced an anti-Klan bill. See Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 95.

"Ridley spoke in a very patriotic vein. Hundreds cheered him who were not in sympathy with the Klan." 37

Ridley's Imperial office subjected him to scrutiny by an anti-Klan newspaper who uncovered that he had once been impeached by his church for making unsolicited lewd advances toward a young woman. (After an impassioned plea to his congregation from the pulpit, he was exonerated.) After continued attacks by the Atlanta Baptist Ministers Conference he resigned his pastorate in 1923 to become a full-time Klan speaker. That career ended abruptly later that year when he was arrested for driving while intoxicated. A newspaperman ridiculed him afterward in an editorial entitled "The Drunken Kludd," a sobriquet that haunted the once-esteemed preacher and ended his days as a klokad. 38

By all accounts E. Y. Clarke was himself a dynamic speaker. Addressing an Erie, Pennsylvania, audience of several thousand for a chartering ceremony on December 4, 1922, Clarke revealed his visionary side:

I am inclined to think, Klansmen, as I see it now, that we are going to have to reach out and spread the roster of this organization to every white man on the face of the globe. (Applause.) And when we do that I have a vision... that some day when the heads of all the national Ku Klux Klan bodies of the world meet together in the city of Washington or in the city of Atlanta, and when they meet band together as we are bound together, representing the white men of the world, then you will have a League of Nations, the like of which the world has never seen. (Much applause.) 39

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37 U. B. Hogan to Committee Investigating Ku Klux Klan [House Rules Committee], Oct. 14, 1921, Justice File, 198589-400.

38 Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 34; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 75.

Clarke told a congressional committee in 1924 that his Erie speech was little different from all his others. "I made practically the same speech everywhere, just a few high lights different put in," he said. "Seventy-five per cent of them are the same speech."\(^{40}\)

Imperial Wizard Simmons, with Clarke's help, proved to be remarkably adaptable as a speaker, though he made few public appearances for the Klan after 1921. Editor Ralph McGill wrote that Simmons' sermons usually lacked substance, but when "they poured from the pen and mind of Clarke, they became wondrous things, filled with God and Christ, the Ten Commandments, brotherly love, purity of womanhood, morality, patriotism, the flag and one hundred per cent Americanism."\(^{41}\)

An Atlanta native who was hostile toward the Klan conceded that Simmons' oratorical gifts were "spell-binding," and said of a speech he heard the Imperial Wizard deliver: "He could have led that crowd anywhere, and I'm not sure I wouldn't have gone with the rest."\(^{42}\)

Symbolism and Mysticism in Klan Propaganda

As a tool of public relations the symbol offers a direct means of persuasive communication with a large number of persons. Symbols are a simplified way to instantaneously convey complex ideas and identify an organization with an ideology.\(^{43}\) The Klan had seven semi-official symbols which were being promulgated in pamphlets by contemporary Klans as late as 1964. Briefly, the symbols and their meanings for the Klan

\(^{40}\) Clarke testimony, Senator from Texas, 431, 436.

\(^{41}\) Ralph E. McGill, The South and the Southerner (Boston, 1953), 133.


\(^{43}\) Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations, 257.
are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>INTERPRETATION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Bible</td>
<td>the presence of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Cross</td>
<td>sacrifice and service (with fire added)---Christ is the light of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Flag</td>
<td>The Constitution and Bill of Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>red---the blood of American heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>white---the purity of womanhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blue---&quot;a patch of America's unclouded sky&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Sword</td>
<td>law and order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Water</td>
<td>purity of life; unity of purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Robe</td>
<td>the righteousness of Christ; the rewards of the hereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Mask</td>
<td>unselfishness (&quot;With our mask we hide our individuality and sink ourselves into the great sea of Klankraft.&quot;)(^44)</td>
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Probably no other symbol is more identified with the Ku Klux Klan than the fiery cross. As Simmons described its significance, "It carries the idea of illumination and sacrifice. It symbolizes a love that lights the way to the noblest service; it symbolizes a service that is impelled by a burning love. . . . The World's amelioration is proclaimed by the glowing cross."\(^45\) To millions of non-Klansmen, however, the sudden appearance of a fiery cross on a prominent hillside symbolized the presence of the Invisible Empire in their midst and, in time, became a symbol of everything they feared about the Klan.

The preponderance of symbols increased the esoteric appeal of the Klan and helped to enhance an exotic flavor that was popular in the 1920s. The prevalent style of design during the decade, Art Deco, was a weird amalgamation of elements from ancient Egypt and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

\(^44\) An Exalted Cyclops of Texas, "The Seven Symbols of the Klan." *Imperial Night-Hawk*, Dec. 26, 1923, p. 6 f.

\(^45\) Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 53.
Art Deco adorned everything from ash trays to skyscrapers and exemplified a decade straddling the mystical and the futuristic, with one foot in the Dark Ages and the other on the threshold of space. To an outsider looking in, the Klan seemed just as paradoxical as Art Deco, as enigmatic as the misty past or the far distant future.

Although most fraternal orders featured queer-sounding titles and magniloquent ritual, the Ku Klux Klan carried them to ridiculous lengths. The list of officers participating in a single chapter included the kllaliff, klokard, kludd, kligrapp, klabee, kladd, klarago, klexter, klokan, klepeer, kleagle and exalted cyclops. There were also terrors, genii, hydra, dragons and giants. Their special calendar featured the "Dismal Day of the Weeping Week of the Hideous Month of the year of the Klan," and a special language was adopted. A common "klonversation" at the local "klavern" (lodge hall) included:

"Ayak?"

"Akia."

"Kigy."

(Translated, the above reads: "Are you a Klansman?" which brings forth a response of "A Klansman I am," followed by "Klansman I greet you.")

Written correspondence among Klansmen was almost invariably closed with "Itsub" ("in the sacred unfailing bond") and sometimes included the fearful caveat "SANBOG" ("Strangers are near. Be on guard.").

The Klan intended its anagrammatical language and passwords to remain secret and promised serious reprisals to any member who compromised the sacred ritual. A Klansmen in Clarksburg, West Virginia, who

46 Simmons, Kloran, passim.
inadvertently divulged Klan secrets to aliens became so distressed over
his iniquity that he committed suicide. Not all members were so consci-
tenious, however, and the "klanguage" was eventually translated in the
press. By 1924 "Akia" and "Kigy" graffiti was plastered across hot dog
stands, garages, and men's rooms from coast to coast. 47

All this Imperial hocus-pocus and mysticism had a certain appeal to
the dirt farmers and shopkeepers whose lives had seen little travel and
less adventure. To capitalize on the psychological lure of the mysterious,
Clarke's kleagles sent prospective members anonymous post cards to let
them know they were being observed by some dark force. The cards were
normally sent in series of three:

Sir:

The eyes of 5000 men who are preparing for eventualities
are on you.
You are being weighed in the balance.
What will be the outcome?
The CALL is coming! Are you able and qualified to
respond?
Discuss this matter with no one.

Atlanta 3-1-21

TI-BO-TIM

Sir:

You have heard from us because we believe in you.
We are for you and NEED you!
The impenetrable Veil of Mystery is drawing aside.
Soon you will appear exactly as you are.
Are you a REAL MAN?
Lift your eyes to the Fiery Cross and falter not,
but go forward into the Light.
Discuss this matter with no one.

Atlanta 3-6-21

TI-BO-TIM

47 Atlanta Constitution, Apr. 13, 1923, p. 2; W. L. Linrevier
to R. P. Schuler, Aug. 14, 1924, Ku Klux Klan Material [Anaheim,
California] 1924-1925, acc. no. 10,484, Library of Congress. Rev. Schuler,
pastor of the Trinity Methodist Church, Los Angeles, edited a pro-Klan
newspaper.
Sir: You have been weighed in the balance and found NOT wanting!
Strong Men--Brave Men--R-e-a-l Men. We need such MEN. We know you are one.
The Goblins of the Invisible Empire will shortly issue their CALL. Be discreet, preserve silence and bide its coming.
Discuss this matter with no one.

Atlanta 3-11-21

TI-BO-TIM[^48]

The average male citizen of the twenties, whose daily existence had been about as exotic as cornbread and string beans, was suddenly declared an elite by these strange messages designating him as a real man. During the day he could sweep chicken drippings out of the hen house or sell gingham to finicky spinsters; but at night, clothed in a flowing gown, his face concealed, he could ride on horseback, illuminated by a flaming cross. And all of it in the name of God, America and White Supremacy.

The Newsletter Network

Newsletters can be an effective device for interorganizational communication; they can supplement the less frequent and less personal house organs by providing a speedy, inexpensive line of communication with specific groups. Newsletters can establish a direct, informal contact between the head man and his subordinates.[^49]

During the early twenties nearly every officer in the Klan's chain of command, from Imperial Kleeagle down to exalted cyclops, issued regular newsletters for his subjects. The Weekly News-Letter, published by the Imperial Propagation Department, was sent to all kleagles, with


copies forwarded to each chapter's secretary and presiding officer. According to one of Clarke's assistants, the Weekly News-Letter contained news of "either some event that had been pulled off by Klansmen in some part of the country, or a speech or some happening that we thought would be of propagating interest to the Klansmen and would assist them in propagating the Klan."  

In a form letter to all the exalted cyclops, Clarke referred to the newsletters as a "clearing house for klan activities everywhere." He requested the cyclops to send him "all items of news concerning his klan and the activities of his klansmen that would be suitable for publicity purposes." These items would be included in the Weekly News-Letter, he added, and occasionally released to the press. "Klansmen like to know what their brother klansmen are doing," he concluded, "so let's make these news letters a storehouse of the best klan news."  

The newsletters were not intended for external distribution, were occasionally laced with falsehoods, and were not always subtle in regard to the Klan's political aspirations. Some of the newsletters fell into the hands of the press and caused the Klan some embarrassment. One of these newsletters, datelined Norfolk, Virginia, June 10, 1921, but endorsed by Clarke, illustrates how the Klan tried to make itself appear successful and powerful to its members to build esprit de corps.

We have just taken in the chief of police. . . . We had a hard time getting information regarding him, but when we found he was eligible we had no trouble enlisting him in our ranks, and when he was initiated you never saw such a pleased fellow; he radiated it,

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50 Jones testimony, Senator from Texas, 366.

51 Edward Young Clarke to all exalted cyclops of the Invisible Empire, Nov. 12, 1921, Senator from Texas, 502.
and when he learned he was to have our support in upholding the law he was certainly pleased, especially with our military organization, which was offered him in case of trouble.

He then informed us that the city is insufficiently protected and that we are sitting on a volcano regarding the Negro question; that there is a great deal of unrest among them and that we might have a riot at any time, and that he was very much worried. . . . He welcomed us, and the military company is to be trained and 200 repeating rifles will be turned over to us in time of trouble. I asked how many in the 300 present at the meeting would be willing to join the organization to assist the chief, and every one of them stood up. . . .

Just received intelligence from Kligrapp [Secretary] of Shreveport, La., klan that a number of propaganda spreaders for the National Association for the Advancement [sic] of Colored People, fresh from Tulsa, Okla., were run out of Shreveport, La., by our organization, and we understand are headed for this place, where they will certainly meet with a warm reception. Natchez klan has been notified. Notify all Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama klans.52

Clarke added a personal aside to the Norfolk letter: "We call that mighty fine. The Norfolk Klan is working along the right line and deserves to be highly commended for the steps it has taken in the enforcement of law and preservation of order." After the letter was leaked to the press, the Norfolk chief of police vehemently denied that he was a Klansman or that any weapons had been given to the organization.53

The locally generated newsletters followed no uniform pattern. For the most part they consisted of mundane notices and general information of coming events. Among other things they encouraged church attendance, announced Klan bazaars, reminded members of impending dues, and passed along holiday greetings from the exalted powers. Generally, the local newsletters observed by this writer were short (one page or less),

52 Documents, Klan Hearings, 36 f.

informal and newsy, with a minimum of the nativist propaganda or Klan self-adulation that choked the more widely circulated publications. 54

Advertisements and Publicity Photos

During the summer of 1921 the Klan was receiving enough adverse comment in the press that Clarke began to experiment with full-page and half-page advertisements in the major dailies in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and other cities. The ad which appeared in the Chicago Tribune of Aug. 16, 1921, was typical of these ads which were designed to tell the Klan's side of the story. It featured a long letter from Simmons denouncing those who had been attacking the Klan, saying that they were "not pure Americans at heart" and that the Klan would soon become "the one greatest force in America to all men that this country shall forever be what its founders intended, THE LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE..." 55

The Klan's advertising contract was handled by Albert Lasker's Lord & Thomas Agency of Chicago and the Massengale Agency in New York. Those agencies were unable to persuade some newspapers, such as the New York World and the Louisville Courier-Journal, to run the ads. The World specifically refused because of a letter from Simmons in August 1921 announcing that the Klan was planning to spend $100,000 for advertising, but only in the papers that had "stood by" the Klan. The World acknowledged this ploy as a bribe for good publicity. 56

54 Evaluation based on newsletters studied in Evjue Papers, Vetter Papers, Harris Papers (in TWK Monthly), and records of Klan No. 14, Knoxville, Tennessee, Special Collections, Emory University.

55 Chicago Tribune, Aug. 16, 1921, p. 8.

56 New York World, Sept. 23, 1921, p. 2; Sept. 7, 1921, p. 2.
From June 15 to October 1, 1921, the Klan had only expended $13,431.29 for advertising. It is worth noting that that amount was taken from the organization's general fund rather than from Clarke's propagation account, which only spent $329.43 on advertising during the same period. The propagation department was expending as little of its 80 per cent commission as possible.  

Newspapers were not the only medium through which the Klan purchased advertising space. Anyone passing the corner of 28th and Ingersoll streets in Des Moines in December 1922 would have been alerted to a billboard with black and red lettering proclaiming:

Stop! When you speed you violate the law
Good citizens uphold the law
Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

A Ku Klux Klan Knight was depicted beside the warning. In 1923 the Raleigh, North Carolina, Klan posted several billboards (which they changed weekly) boosting the Klan and its principles.

E. Y. Clarke had spent enough time working with newspapers to learn the wiles of getting free advertising through news releases. Rather than flood newspapers with typewritten or mimeographed copy, Clarke would supply boiler plate--news material already in stereotype form for type casting from molten metal--so that his handout could go directly from mail room to composing room without the editor having to

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57 Balance sheets submitted by Simmons as documentary material, Klan Hearings, 105 f.
59 Imperial Night-Hawk, July 25, 1923, p. 8.
bother to alter the copy.  

After the unexpected publicity from Tracy Mathewson's photos of counterfeit Klansmen, the Propagation Department began using their own photos in press releases to increase chances of breaking into print. The prints were forwarded to the grand goblins who in turn furnished them to local newspapers. These publicity shots were taken in 1920, and most of them show garbed Klansmen stiffly posed among the pines of Stone Mountain, feigning some portion of their ritual. One picture depicts E. Y. Clarke posing as a non-robed initiate, kneeling before the sacred alter (in this case a cardboard box with a blanket draped over it) upon which rests what is probably supposed to be a Bible, but what appears to be a wallet. At Clarke's left stands a Klansman holding a makeshift "fiery cross," its flames fashioned from cardboard. On Clarke's right another Klansman bears the Stars and Stripes. (The flag is real.)  

Undoubtedly the minor flaws in these staged photographs were less apparent when reduced to blurrier newsprint. Another publicity photo presents the Imperial Wizard, wearing his sardonic skull mask and shaking hands with a klansman. The flag and cardboard fiery cross provide a backdrop. According to the caption provided, Simmons was congratulating "one of his cyclops after a noble achievement." Whatever the noble achievement, the Klansman pictured is wearing the insignia of the Georgia grand dragon, which means that either he was impersonating a

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60 Edgar I. Fuller, Nigger in the Woodpile, 86.  

61 Interview with James R. Venable, Tucker, Ga., May 21, 1974. Although the initiate in the photo is masked by a black cloth taped to his forehead, Venable maintains it is Clarke. Because of E. Y. Clarke's distinctive hairline which matches the initiate's, the writer is inclined to agree.
Fig. 5. This picture of an "initiate" (probably E. Y. Clarke) taking the oath of allegiance was by far the most commonly reproduced Klan publicity photo in the early 1920s. The writer observed it in over a dozen newspapers and periodicals. Note the cardboard flames on the "blazing" cross. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James R. Venable)
Fig. 6. Colonel Simmons wore the costume on the left for ceremonies and parades. However, there is no way to be certain that the "Wizard" in this photo is not actually Clarke or another Klansman wearing Simmons' regalia. (Photo courtesy of Mr. James R. Venable)
higher officer or that someone in the Propagation Department made an
Imperial blunder.

A later, less circulated series of prints circa 1921-22 includes a
rare photo of Simmons at his desk. He is reading the Bible and the
American flag is unfurled behind him. Pictures on his wall include a
still from Birth of A Nation (Lillian Gish), a large painting of a
mounted Klansman, and a portrait of Mrs. Simmons. In short, the photo
managed to identify the Imperial Wizard with God, country, purity of
womanhood, and the Klan, all in one scene.62

Motion Pictures

The reaction of audiences to Birth of A Nation when it was released
in 1915 has been discussed in Chapter I. Unlike most films that are
circulated for only a year or so, Birth of A Nation was shown and re-
shown in theaters from 1915 through the 1920. As late as 1924, nine
years after its initial release, local Klans were still sponsoring
engagements of the film. In Chicago of that year a Klan-patronized
showing brought in crowds that surpassed house records for the Auditorium
Theatre. In Milwaukee the local Klan reserved the Garrick Theatre for
the week beginning May 18, 1924, sold tickets for Griffith's classic,
and kept 25 per cent of the gate.63

During engagements of the film Klansmen stood on the sidewalks
outside the theaters and handed out circulars, tracts, and other

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62 Interview with James R. Venable, Decatur, Georgia, Aug. 6, 1974.

63 Simcovitch, "Impact of Birth of A Nation," 51; Exalted
Cyclops, Milwaukee Original Unit No. 1, newsletter, May 15, 1924,
Vetter Papers.
propaganda before and after the show. One Klan official ordered his kleagles to take full advantage of the emotionally charged spectators as they emerged from the theater: "When they see the picture produce a membership form to sign. If they don't sign, then they aren't the type of men we want anyway."64

In an effort to exploit the type of hysteria generated by *Birth of a Nation*, the Klan also promoted a newer film, *The Face at Your Window*. The *Weekly News-Letter* of April 22, 1921, urged Klansmen to see the movie because "it strikingly depicts the serious workings of those forces which are antagonistic to all the principles for which the Ku-Klux Klan stands and which would tear down and scatter to the four winds those principles, ideals, and institutions inseparably associated with our Government." As the letter related the climax, the Klan rode to the rescue and portrayed the triumph of order and decency by real Americans over alien influences.65

Actually the heroes of *Face at Your Window* were not even Klansmen. The "face" was intended to refer to the "face of Bolshevism at the Window of the United States;" the film depicted an attempted overthrow of the country, with terrible atrocities, prevented at the last moment by hundreds of members of the American Legion dressed in Klan-like garments.66

The newsletters admitted that the film was not prepared as propaganda by the Klan but had "the backing of higher powers" whom they were

64 Harrell, dissertation, 47.

65 Documents, Klan Hearings, 36.

not at liberty to disclose. The "higher power" was Franklin K. Lane, secretary of the interior under Wilson; Lane intended for the movie to be used as anti-Bolshevik propaganda. The film was produced by the Fox Studio in 1919. Lane was dead by the time the Klan began using the picture for its promotional purposes, but when the NAACP informed Fox that the Klan was distributing handbills signed by Simmons to promote the movie, a studio spokesman replied that the company had "no connection whatever" with Simmons or the Klan, nor did it "intend to make any affiliation with that organization or advocate or foster any propaganda or purposes" of the Klan.67 Fox never took legal action against the Klan, however, and the order continued to use the film for propagational activities, distributing it to Klan lecturers as a visual aid to their speeches and arranging special showings at neighborhood theaters.

Clarke allegedly planned a much more elaborate motion picture, to rival Birth of A Nation, at a cost of $400,000. He made an initial agreement with Wheeler Productions of New York City for the production of Yesterday, To-day, and Forever but the picture never materialized.68

Radio was too new and too primitive to serve as an effective communication medium for the Klan in the early 1920s. The Fort Worth chapter did experiment in 1923 with the radio arm of the Fort Worth

67 William Fox Studio (signature illegible) to NAACP, Sept. 23, 1921, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK September 1921.

Star-Telegram. Broadcasting "some novel stunts and some interesting information about Klan activities," the programs were reportedly heard as far away as Oregon.  

Such electronic experimentation was more an oddity than a precedent. As the next chapter will illustrate, once the order was nationally entrenched, Klansmen began relying more upon periodicals for communication and propaganda. The Klan press became extensive enough to warrant separate examination in this thesis.

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69 Imperial Night-Hawk, May 16, 1923, p. 8.
CHAPTER IV

THE KLAN PRESS

The house publication is one of the most versatile of all public relations tools. House organs can boost morale among the members of an organization by publicizing the achievements of individuals or units. They can motivate members by defining goals and explaining policy decisions in the light of those goals. They can provide a conduit for two-way communication by soliciting questions and supplying answers. House publications may also be recruiting tools if they can make the message of the institution appeal to outsiders. House organs can expedite communication within an organization; they can be used to convey the message to external publics; or they may be directed toward both internal and external audiences.¹

For the purposes of this discussion, house organs are defined as either newspapers or magazines which were published by the Klan, as distinct from the less formal newsletters. As indicated in the previous chapter, E. Y. Clarke apparently depended upon his newsletters for internal communication. In contrast to these sometimes clandestine newsletters, Searchlight,

¹Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations, 284-286.
the only Klan periodical directly sponsored by the Southern Publicity Association, was sold at newsstands, possibly to arouse interest among potential recruits.

To be effective, a house publication must be a direct channel to specific publics. As indicated previously in Chapter II, part of the Klan's success in the early 1920s stemmed from adapting its appeal from region to region, from community to community. For this possible reason, the majority of Klan newspapers and magazines were published by officials and supporters of local chapters; these Klansmen were more attuned to the particular grievances and disaffections in their area, and could best prepare material that would appeal to fellow members and prospective applicants. The quality and content of these varied greatly, according to the particular attitudes and talents of the sponsors. While some of these were endorsed, if not subsidized, by Imperial headquarters, others irked the national administration because of their excessive vitriol. This chapter will describe the major Klan periodicals, both Imperial and independent, in terms of their style and prevalent themes; it will conclude with a discussion of the effort of one of Clarke's successors to consolidate the discordant choir of Klan voices into a single mouthpiece.

The Klan press became a major tool in the order's factional struggles beginning in 1923, but this particular role of the publications will be discussed in Chapter VI.

SEARCHLIGHT: "Not a Moulder but a Chronicler of Public Opinion"

The Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM), its title not-
withstanding, was not strictly an organization of wrench jockeys and grease gunners. JOUAM was an offshoot of the old Order of United American Mechanics from which it split in 1885. Junior soon outgrew its parent order, numbering 160,000 by the 1890s when it was the largest of the anti-Catholic fraternal organizations. JOUAM's strength lay in its adaptability to latching onto whatever nativist movement predominated at the moment. After a brief decline around the turn of the century, JOUAM re-emerged with a fervent Anglo-Saxon anti-immigrant racist banner and by 1914 its membership had climbed to an estimated 224,000. Commenting on the order's xenophobic versatility, historian John Higham wrote: "Indeed, the organization echoed almost every theme in the racial polyphony."

Understandably, the Klan and JOUAM enjoyed a close kinship. Perceptive kleagles viewed the members of the latter (called "Juniors" rather than "Mechanics") as likely prospects for a klecktocken, and the two orders probably shared many mutual members. It is not surprising then, that the first newspaper to emerge as a mouthpiece for the Klan, the Searchlight, was also an organ for JOUAM.

Searchlight first appeared on June 22, 1919, under joint sponsorship of the Klan and JOUAM.

The juniors officially adopted the paper at their annual convention in Savannah on August 11, 1921, but the Klan would never admit official connections with Searchlight. However, Mrs. Tyler owned part, if not a controlling portion, of the Searchlight Publishing Company which shared

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2Higham, Strangers in the Land, 174.
the Flatiron Building office with the Southern Publicity Association.³

Searchlight bore the curious motto, "Free Speech: Free Press: White Supremacy," and sold "ANYWHERE IN THE U.S. PRICE 5¢." It was distributed at least as far west as Montana, where the Butte Bulletin described it as having "four divisions of Propaganda":

Most prominent are the anti-Negro and anti-Catholic divisions, but while it outMenaces The Menace and surpasses in race-consciousness the utterances of Jeff[sic] Davis and Calhoun, it is also an illuminating sample of the anti-Semitic rage which murdered Leo Frank, and imitates the rabid hatred of progressive thought characteristic of Mitch Palmer and E. H. Gary.⁴

Although The Menace succumbed after the temporary setback in anti-Catholicism during World War I, Searchlight and most of the other Klan newspapers revived much of its false and alarmist propaganda against Catholics and immigrants. Searchlight, for example, alleged that 90 per cent of all criminals executed were Catholic, that 62 per cent of all public officials were Catholic and, more frequently, that the Pope's uppermost concern was to "make America Catholic" and re-locate the Vatican in Washington, D. C.⁵

Searchlight perceived a loose conspiracy between Jews, Catholics and communists against Protestant Americans. It accused the Jews of trying to create a race war "... not to benefit the blacks but to destroy the government."⁶

³Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 32; Searchlight, Dec. 4, 1921, p. 2, Harris Papers, box 7, folder 4.

⁴Butte Bulletin, July 29, 1921, ACLU Archives, 190:78.

⁵New York World, Sept. 15, 1921, p. 1; Searchlight, Dec. 4, 1921, p. 2.

CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH GIVEN K. K. K.

ALIEN INVASION IS THREATENING

Fig. 7. The headlines of this early page from Searchlight indicate that aliens, Negroes, and Jews were anathematized more readily than Catholics when the paper was printed in February 1921. (Reproduced from the New York World, Sept. 17, 1921)
On the other hand, *Searchlight* was progressive by Klan standards on some other issues. It impugned the "old hallucinations" of states rights, a hallowed Southern doctrine, as belonging "properly to history and not to this generation." It scorned movie censorship as a curtailment to individual liberties, criticized railroads for raising their freight rates and supported wage increases for coal miners (but not the right to strike). Although the paper upheld prohibition, it ridiculed "Inspector Snoop of the likker [sic] squad" who "rules us with an iron rod," who was "apt to have his eye on you if even you contemplate home brew." Nevertheless, when the publisher of the rival Atlanta *Georgian* was nabbed by the "likker squad," his arrest rated a 72-point three-line banner headline in *Searchlight*. (According to J. Q. Jett, *Georgian* editor James B Nevin, who escaped prosecution, and the publisher, T. Buford Goodwin, were framed by members of the Klan.)

*Searchlight* warned prophetically in 1921 of a German resurgence if stricter arms control were not imposed on the defeated nation, but another editorial of the same issue urged the United States to give gold to Germany to stabilize her currency.7

J. O. Wood, a member of the Atlanta City Council, edited *Searchlight*. "I am the original Ku Klux Klansman." Wood reportedly boasted at campaign rallies when he ran for the Georgia Legislature in 1922, "and I am proud of it. I belong to everything anti-Catholic I know of." The *Searchlight* editor was elected, running almost a thousand votes ahead of the 12-man field.8

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7 *Searchlight*, Dec. 4, 1921, p. 2.

8 Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 39.
Searchlight's associate editor, Carl F. Hutcheson, was Wood's law partner and a member of the Atlanta Board of Education. He created a flap in 1921 when he wrote an editorial urging the Klan to take up arms against Catholics after the newspapers had assailed Tyler's reputation. Less than a week after Hutcheson's invective received scathing national publicity, Tyler sold her interest in the paper to Wood for $1,000, announcing that she wanted to defend herself against accusations by the media but would rather not do it in her own paper.9

Tyler left Searchlight declaring that she had lost financially on the paper. This might have been the case, but the publication must have received a substantial income from advertisers such as Coca Cola, Studebaker, the Elgin Watch Company, and various local used car lots, chiropractors, eateries, and even "Marcell the Mineral Man" who could cure anything from itch and bad blood to "women's trouble in general" for a mere five dollars.10

J. O. Wood continued to edit Searchlight but lost most of the Klan's support because of factionalism in the order during 1923 and 1924. The paper's sworn circulation dropped from 68,261 at the end of 1923 to 46,648 by the end of 1924. Wood kept Searchlight alive until 1926 as a supportive organ in his race for the U.S. Senate. He was soundly trounced and the Searchlight was extinguished soon afterward.11

9Atlanta Georgian, Sept. 23, 1921, p. 2.

10Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 33.

11N. W. Ayer & Sons American Newspaper Directory, 1924 and 1925; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 76.
The Imperial Night-Hawk:
"By the Klan For the Klan."

In January 1923 the Imperial Kloncilium convened and voted unanimously to establish an official publication. The Imperial Night-Hawk began publication in March 1923 with the announced intention to "carry a weekly message from the Imperial Palace to every Klansman in the country."\(^{12}\)

The Night-Hawk was the first periodical to emanate directly from the Imperial Palace, and the circumstances surrounding its creation will be described in a later chapter. Unlike Searchlight, it carried no advertising and was not sold at newsstands. Each Klan chapter was sent a regular pro rata; the Night-Hawk was not intended for outside readership, except among potential initiates. "Don't throw it away. Give it away. Put it where it will do the most good for Klankraft," the Night-Hawk urged its readers, adding, "If you don't see it regularly, ask your Exalted Cyclops about it."\(^{13}\)

In contrast to Searchlight, which was printed on cheap newsprint paper in standard (but poorly composed) newspaper layout, the Night-Hawk was slickly produced in a magazine format, eight pages long with ample photographs and artwork. A good portion--approximately one-half--of the paper's content was devoted to news of individual Klan chapters. The Night-Hawk flourished during the period of the Klan's largest rallies, celebrations, and initiations, and these provided the most colorful copy in what was otherwise a rather dull weekly. The publication dutifully recounted every reported Klan funeral, church visitation, and Bible-and-

\(^{12}\)Imperial Night-Hawk, July 25, 1923, p. 4; Mar. 28, 1923, p. 4.

\(^{13}\)Ibid. July 25, 1923, p. 4.
flag presentation, even though the scenarios rarely varied.

The Night-Hawk featured weekly essays and editorials, usually unattributed, but occasionally penned by the Imperial Wizard. These were nationalistic in character, but lacked the vitriol of Searchlight's material. As often as not, the articles attacked no particular group and simply preached better Americanism and Protestantism. The essays on the whole were less anti-Catholic than anti-immigration and anti-Semitic. Typical titles of the articles included:

- Jews Control Bolshevik Russia And Are Aiding Extension of Communism
- A Klansman's Criterion Of Character
- The Blood Of White America Must Be Kept Pure And Uncontaminated
- How The Klan Can Be Made A True Civic Asset In Every Progressive Community
- The Constitution Of The United States And How It Is Regarded By Klansmen
- Poorly Restricted Immigration Is One Of The Greatest Perils Confronting America

Actually, the one-line fillers separating stories and articles were more jingoist than the essays themselves. For example: "A sandwich bought at a hamburger stand conducted by an American should be more palatable to a Klansman than a plank steak purchased at a Greek or Dago restaurant." 14

One of the few individuals specifically stigmatized in the publication was silent film star Charlie Chaplin, whom the Night-Hawk dubbed "a vulgar Jewish comedian." The weekly particularly scored Chaplin's

The Pilgrim, in which he appeared in the role of a pastor, "on the grounds that it ridiculed the Protestant ministry."  

The Night-Hawk, however, was not without an occasional touch of vulgar levity, sometimes at the expense of the Klan's sacrosanct tenets. "The Klan Kat which sojourns in the basement of the Imperial Palace has presented our establishment with six kittens," the periodical reported. "All of them white, of course, and we believe native born." When the publication reported the founding of a Klan chapter in Juneau, Alaska, it dryly noted that the members probably had to wear fur regalia instead of sheets and had to "mush" to meetings via dog teams. Although the glow of the aurora borealis might occasionally dim the glow of the fiery cross, the Night-Hawk added, the Alaskan nightriders had the advantage of "a nice long night, sixty days in duration, to stage their ceremonials." Probably one of the more tasteless attempts at humor by the publication was in the form of a photo of a young infant in miniature Klan regalia. Captioned "KIGY" ("Klansman I greet you"), the photo's cutline read: "The above is the youngest Klansman in Georgia, in person. . . . Klansmen throughout the nation will be glad to learn that Georgia starts recruiting its Klansmen while they are young." The picture of the garbed, bewildered-looking baby popped up in several other independent Klan papers across the country.  

The Imperial Night-Hawk was first edited by Philip E. Fox, a former

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15 Ibid., June 6, 1923, p. 4; May 9, 1923, p. 3.

16 Ibid., Aug. 8, 1923, p. 5; June 20, 1923, p. 7; Jan. 30, 1924, p. 5.
Dallas newspaper editor. After Fox's ignominious exit, to be discussed in a later chapter, he was replaced by Milton Elrod, former editor of *Fiery Cross*, the only regional newspaper sponsored by Klan funds. Elrod attempted to diversify the Night-Hawk's content. He began a feature, "SideLights [sic] on Congress," that sometimes carried his by-line but usually attributed to an "Eyewitness." The column discussed the activities on Capitol Hill in light of legislation pertaining to Klan interests and ideals. Soon after Elrod joined the paper in late 1923, a weekly religious feature, "Christian Citizen, the Gospel According To The Klan," was initiated. The column concentrated on explaining the scriptures and rarely mentioned the Klan itself. In fact, there was a noticeable reduction in nativist content in the Night-Hawk after Elrod took over. Elrod, whatever his personal ideologies, might possibly have been the most sensitive public relations man to serve the Klan. Stanley Frost, a journalist who was a contemporary of Elrod, described him as the "most frank to admit faults and urge remedies" of all the Klansmen he had met. According to Frost, Elrod was distressed by the viciousness displayed by the many independent Klan newspapers springing up across the country. Because many of these papers that were sponsored or endorsed by local Klansmen were often crudely written (and probably because many of them were taking sides in the Klan's factional battles that were inimical to the Imperial Palace) Elrod set to reform them or drive them out of business.\(^\text{17}\)

Elrod established a national Klan newspaper with regional editions,

\(^{17}\)Stanley Frost, *The Challenge of the Klan* (Indianapolis, 1923), 149.
most of which emanated from the Klan's new publication headquarters in Washington, D.C. By late 1924, the Night-Hawk had reverted to a monthly with the title of the Kourier Magazine which continued to be printed at the Klan's press in Buckhead, Georgia. The last issue of the Night-Hawk, published on November 19, 1924, declared: "The Kourier will not fight against so much as it will fight for. It will continue to speak in its enlarged capacity, as the courier of the Imperial Palace to the various Klans throughout the nation."18 At its demise, the Night-Hawk claimed a circulation of 35,591.

The Kourier Magazine contained no hard news, only essays that might have been directed toward the educated "thinking Klansman," and it was probably the least antagonistic of all Klan periodicals. Most of its articles were very literate, somewhat esoteric pieces on the more abstract virtues of patriotism and religion. With titles such as "Fundamentals of Citizenship," "A Nation's Morals," and "The Klan and the Public School," the essays rarely attacked non-White or non-Protestant groups by name. Its editor once lamented that much of the mail he received indicated that some people "appear to regard the Klan as a channel through which they can vent their spite on the enemy" while others "are willing for the Klan to step in where angels fear to tread, while they are satisfied to remain in the background shouting, 'Bravo.'"19

The Independent Klan Press

Historian Kenneth T. Jackson wrote in 1967 that a complete listing

18 Imperial Night-Hawk, Nov. 19, 1924, p. 7.

19 Kourier Magazine, August 1925, p. 9, Special Collections, Emory University.
of Klan and pro-Klan newspapers and magazines would run to more than 60
titles. "Almost all of these publications had a local circulation and an
ephemeral life," he added, "only the most important ever reached a
library."20

For the record, this researcher assembled from a variety of sources
a list of titles that obviously does not constitute a complete listing,
since fewer than 60 are included. Nevertheless, it is more complete
than any other such lists the writer has found, and it is included in
an appendix for the reader's information.

The writer considers the independent Klan newspapers discussed in
varying degrees below as among the most important of periodicals that
supported the Klan as their primary raison d'être, but were not subsi-
dized by Klan monies and sometimes not endorsed by Klan headquarters.
They were selected because they emanated from key metropolitan areas and
probably enjoyed a wide readership, though circulation figures are not
available for all of them.

1. Dawn vs. Tolerance: Rumble in Chicago

Dawn: A Journal for True American Patriots began publication in
Chicago on October 21, 1922. It was printed in a magazine-type format
and sold for 10 cents at newsstands, but the cover never varied throughout
the 16-month life of the magazine. A Klansman was portrayed on horseback,
carrying a torch; underneath were the words: "Ride on and on/ thou spirit
of mystery/ For our country,/ our homes and womanhood; yesterday, to-day,
forever." The publication was 16 pages long when it began but later in-
creased to 24 after the circulation climbed to about 50,000.

20Kenneth T. Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 296.
The first issue of *Dawn* featured the "Imperial Proclamation" of E. Y. Clarke in which he declared war on all the isms. In the case of *Dawn*, the war was being declared on *Tolerance*, an anti-Klan periodical founded only a month earlier with the announced purpose of publicizing the names of every Klansman in Chicago.\(^{21}\)

*Tolerance* was the organ of the American Unity League, the strongest of the unified anti-Klan movements in the country. The League was formed in Chicago solely for the eradication of the Klan in the Windy City, and its later attempts to organize outside Illinois were unsuccessful. The AUL hired Neufeld T. Jones to organize its 25-state Eastern operations headquartered in New York City. Jones issued press releases, sent favorable reports back to AUL headquarters in Chicago, and collected about $30,000 in salary. He actually did nothing constructive for the organization, however, since he was a secret agent for the Klan, sent by Clarke to infiltrate the AUL. By the time the League's officials discovered the ruse, their Eastern movement was in shambles and beyond rejuvenation.\(^{22}\)

*Tolerance* proved to be less tolerant than most of the virulent Klan publications; the paper's editors were sued regularly by non-Klansman who had been incorrectly exposed by the magazine and the AUL's pamphlet, "Is Your Neighbor A Kluxer?" AUL agents infiltrated klaverns and regularly published Klan secrets. Inevitably the situation erupted in violence. The recently vacated offices of *Dawn* and the business establishment of one

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\(^{21}\) *Dawn*, Oct. 21, 1922, p. 6.

\(^{22}\) *Montevai*, *The Klan Inside Out*, 117.
of its advertisers were bombed, and Dawn editor Edwin Parke publicly accused the subscription editor of Tolerance of the crime. Tolerance editor Grady K. Rutledge became disenchanted with the underhanded methods of the AUL and defected to the Klan and Dawn, to which he submitted a series of articles detailing the behind-the-scenes trickery and dissension within the League. Most of the dissension concerned the exposure of William Wrigley, Jr., the chewing gum baron, as a Klansman. Wrigley sued for $50,000, and Tolerance was forced to admit that his published Klan application was a forgery by an overzealous AUL official. By mid-1924 the AUL was decimated and bankrupt and Tolerance defunct.\textsuperscript{23}

Chicago's Klan population was distributed among 20 chapters, and Dawn was their only common voice. In content it was quite similar to the Night-Hawk, though Dawn began publication nearly six months earlier. The weekly printed news about the activities of the various Chicago klaverns as well as Klan news from other states featured on its "From Far And Near" page. There was a noticeable amount of news about Klansmen participating with other fraternal orders in Chicago, particularly Shriners and Masons, an indication of the Klan's acceptance in the Windy City. The Klan was considered more respectable in Chicago than in most other urban areas, since only one incident of violence, a flogging, was attributed to the organization during its years of activity in the city.\textsuperscript{24}

In an area heavily populated by ethnic groups, Jews, and Catholics, the thrust of Dawn's propaganda, generally speaking, was directed against blacks and radicals. The anti-Negro bias was manifested by the oft-stated fear that when social barriers fell between blacks and whites, inter-

\textsuperscript{23} Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 101 ff.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 100.
marriage was inevitable. An example follows:

Dr. Dubois [W.E.B. Du Bois, president of the NAACP] and others, black or white, who in the so-called Niagara movement, and otherwise, have been propagandizing for the removal of social barriers between the whites and the blacks, are sowing the wind. Whether colored leaders like it or not ... there is and there will remain a profound instinct against race mixture. It is not a question of race-preservation, and if the Negro leaders are willing to destroy their own race identity by intermarriage, white Americans are not.25

One of the most blatantly racist articles to appear in Dawn was written by E. Y. Clarke. He insisted that the framers of the Declaration of Independence "didn't mean it literally" when they wrote that all men were created equal. In his essay entitled "Awake America!" Clarke added:

What they did mean was that Englishmen in America were as good as Englishmen in England. There is not one particle of scientific evidence to prove "that all men are created equal." It is a vicious dogma. It stifles racial pride and deadens the most vital urges known to mankind--self-preservation and self-expansion.26

Besides the usual stories about klonvokations and visitations, Dawn printed news and editorials from non-Klan sources--provided they cast the order in a favorable light. Some of these were from the Christian Science Monitor, which took an "innocent until proven guilty" stance; other items were from anti-Klan publications (such as Tolerance) that were so vituperative or out of context as to place the assailant in a worse light than the Klan.

Dawn's advertisements reflected the faith many Chicagoans appeared to have in the Klan. The publication featured conventional ads for jewelers,

25Dawn, Nov. 4, 1922, p. 4.

26Dawn, Nov. 25, 1922, p. 3.
clothing stores, insurance brokers, and the like, in addition to a
classified section. Dawn usually devoted a page to church announcements,
with the Christian Scientists the denomination most often represented.

In spite of the discord within the American Unity League, its
exposures of Chicago Klansmen did succeed in scaring away many members
and in fragmenting the order in the city. During 1923, interest in the
Klan in Chicago fell rapidly, possibly because it was hardly a secret
order any more. Dawn's efforts to raise the lagging spirits of the waning
Chicago Klan failed, and by mid-1924 it had ceased publication.

2. Fellowship Forum: Fraternal Voice in D.C.

The Fellowship Forum, published in Washington, designated itself "A
National Newspaper Devoted To The Fraternal Interpretation Of The World's
Current Events," and more specifically, the representative for "Militant
Masons" in the nation's capital. The Forum began publication in 1921 in
a tabloid-size newspaper format. The paper included Klan-like diatribes
against Catholics and it campaigned actively for stricter immigration laws,
but it contained more news of Masons than of Klansmen during its first
year of publication. Until late 1921 the Klan received about equal billing
with the Shriners, Eastern Star, DeMolay, or Odd Fellows.

By 1922 the Forum was clearly a Klan organ, in spirit if not in
financial support, but other fraternal orders received continued
publicity. Not all Masons, apparently, were "militant" enough to support
the Forum's endorsement of the Klan. The paper attempted to win these into
their camp by diverting Masonic opposition toward Catholicism, as illus-
trated by the following excerpt from an editorial entitled, "Invisible
Empire To Watch Is Not The Klan":
While Roman Catholics are glibly prating of the invisible empire of the Ku Klux Klan, their own "invisible empire" of the Jesuits steadily pursues its goal to "make America Catholic." ... And yet there are some Masons who would help persecute and prosecute the Klan and thus become the subservient tool of the "invisible empire" of Rome. In the light of daily events transpiring, showing the mysterious, powerful influence which controls the courts wherever Roman Catholicism and its subjects are concerned, it would seem the "invisible empire" of the Jesuits is the organization that requires the careful scrutiny of patriotic Americans, rather than the Klan, which stands for the same principles and the ideals espoused by Freemasons. 27

**Fellowship Forum** was edited by George F. Moore and published by drug-store impresario James S. Vance. Among the paper's major stockholders were William G. Conley, who was elected Governor of West Virginia in 1928, and R. H. Angell, later Republican Party chairman for the state of Virginia. 28 The paper was printed on the presses of the **Washington Herald**, but after that newspaper was purchased by the William Randolph Hearst chain, the **Forum** was evicted for its pro-Klan leanings. The owners found another press and, in the process, switched to standard-size newsprint. 29

The **Forum** subsidized its income through advertising such varied products as insurance, clothing, jewelry, pipes, Shrine fezes, and piles treatment. One of its six-to-eight pages was devoted weekly to letters from readers--mostly Klansmen and Masons--hence, the "Forum" in the paper's title. In spite of its announced intentions to interpret world events, the paper contained little non-fraternal news. Congressional

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29 **Fellowship Forum**, Nov. 25, 1922, p. 1.
activity was discussed as it pertained to "Americanism," i.e. legislation concerning public schools, immigration, or masked organizations. The paper did not refrain from bitterly criticizing opponents of the Klan, particularly Louisiana Governor John Parker and New York City Mayor John F. Hylan, two of the Klan's most vocal adversaries.

Fellowship Forum possibly survived longer than any of the other papers that had supported the Klan. In the late twenties it became a vigorous anti-Al Smith instrument along with a sister radio station, also owned by Vance. In 1937 the title of the publication was changed to Nation's Forum, but the paper did not last long under that name. Its last issue was published January 15, 1938.

3. The American Standard:
Paranoia in the Empire State

Possibly because only one-sixth of the city's population in the early 1920s were native-born white Protestants, the Klan did not prosper in New York City. Klansmen were labelled as vermin by Mayor Hylan, and the order was eventually condemned by every New York City newspaper except the pro-Klan American Standard. The paper was founded in 1924 by former Klan lecturer C. Lewis Fowler. As the excerpt from his Milwaukee speech in the previous chapter indicates, his lectures were irrational fusillades of falsehoods fired mostly at Catholics. For example, when Harding died in 1923, Fowler babbled that the president had been murdered by the "hypnotic telepathic thought waves generated in the brains of Jesuit adepts."

The American Standard reflected its founder's paranoid fear of Catholics. The main sermon in issue after issue

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Fellowship Forum, Aug. 11, 1923; cited in Avin, dissertation, 166.
contended that Rome was out "to take control of the United States of America for popery . . . through its henchman Alfred E. Smith." Another editorial warned: "To receive into your home Roman Catholics, to give them employment in your office, is to put your home and your office at the mercy of the Roman Catholic system."31

Another recurrent theme, heretical among historians in its day but verified some 40 years later, was that Leif Ericson, not Columbus, discovered America. Columbus, the Standard declared, was just a Catholic agent propagandized by the church to change the course of history. What Fowler apparently overlooked or ignored was that Ericson, born several hundred years before the Protestant Reformation, was also Catholic.

Fowler even sniped at the Klan's Congressman from Atlanta, "Earnest Willie" Upshaw, who had contributed articles to Searchlight and had been Simmon's most vocal defendant during the Klan hearings in 1921. When Upshaw attended the funeral of former Tammany Hall boss Charles F. Murphy at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, the Standard theorized that the Georgia representative must have been controlled by the "hypnotic mental influence" of Jesuits. Upshaw retorted that he had not been under anyone's hypnotic influence. He had been in New York City speaking at the Baptist Temple in Brooklyn and had attended the funeral at the invitation of several of his fellow Congressmen.32

Although the Standard reiterated often that it was not a Klan news-

31American Standard, July 15, 1924, p. 7; Jackson Ku Klux Klan in the City, 175 f.

32American Standard, May 1, 1924, p. 14; June 1, 1924, pp. 5 f.
paper, it endorsed the order in many of its articles. Typical titles included: "K.K.K. Ideals Win National Acceptance," "K.K.K. Is Crushing Jesuits," and "Protestants, Unite In K.K.K." Fowler left the paper in October 1925 for reasons he did not disclose. His successors repeated that the Standard was not a Klan organ but was "devoted to Klan interests," though none of its editors were Klansmen.33 The American Standard died about four months after Fowler's exit.

4. The Badger American: Sour Clabber in the Dairy State

The Klan in Wisconsin took on some peculiar characteristics. The order flourished there side-by-side with Socialists, many of whom reportedly were also Klansmen.34 The movement in the state was born aboard a Coast Guard cutter in Lake Michigan, and for months afterward the Milwaukee chapter met without regalia under the pseudonym of the Milwaukee Businessmen's Club.35

Immigrants, particularly German, Polish, Dutch, and Scandinavian, were more easily assimilated in Wisconsin than in other states. There were few Negroes, and Wisconsin's high percentage of Roman Catholics seemed to co-exist in relative harmony with the Protestant population. In short, the Dairy State hardly seemed fertile ground for a nativist organization in the 1920s.

33 Ibid., 2:485 (Nov. 1, 1925).
34 Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City, 162.
35 Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 191. The Milwaukee chapter later changed its pseudonym to "The Bow Tie Club"; see Vetter Papers.
If conditions were as benign in Wisconsin as described above, it seems ironic that the order's state newspaper, the Badger American, was one of the vilest, most noxious Klan publications to receive a widespread circulation.

In its first issue, published in April 1923, the monthly announced that it was not the official organ of the Klan, nor was the organization responsible for its content. Yet it published "Our Klan Kolumn"—news of chapters around the country—and most of the articles and essays in the paper related to the order.

Nearly every issue had an editorial cartoon, usually poorly executed, on its front cover. Most of the drawings ridiculed Catholicism, or Romanism as it was usually called by the paper. A recurring image in these cartoons was the "Buzzard of Romanism." It first appeared lurking over skulls that were labeled "Huguenots," "Spanish Inquisition," or other alleged "victims" of the Vatican. The drawing was captioned: "How I'd Love to Feast on the Klan." The periodical's attitude toward Catholics is perhaps best exemplified by the following passage:

... [Romanism] has proven itself to be a stinking abominable un-American Thing and a Curse upon America. It hates Americanism because Americanism is an exact antithesis of Romanism ... Today Rome is fighting the Klan with every diabolical weapon at its command. Rome's very opposition is assuring the Klan mighty success. Hasn't Rome the brains to see that? My God, what dumb-bells parochial schools turn out.

36 Badger American, April 1923, p. 4.

37 Ibid., May 1923, p. 1.

38 Ibid., August 1923, p. 4.
The Badger American did not oppose Catholicism as a religion, it said, but rather as a "vast political machine" with the Pope as Emperor, the cardinals as his cabinet, the Jesuits as a "secret service," the prelates and priests as administrative officers, "and with the laity of all lands submissive to the Pope's bulls and commands." With little variation, the same analogy could have been made by substituting the Klan's hierarchy.

The Wisconsin monthly alleged that the nation's press had already fallen under the control of the "guiding hand of Romanism." Publishers had submitted to the demands of Romanists, said the paper, from fear of a "Romish [sic] boycott" by Catholic-owned advertisers. Rarely an issue passed without some reference to the "Romanized Daily Press" which had "poisoned the minds of the public against the Klan."

The public school was another institution that the Badger American alleged was threatened by Romanism. The paper's fervid campaign for protection of public schools, symbolized by the "Little Red School House," was based on the fear that Catholics would set up a "rival system" of parochial schools and then manipulate school bond referendums to curtail adequate funds for public education.40

The ready assimilation of most alien groups in Wisconsin compelled the Badger American toward a modified position on immigration. Though the monthly supported immigration controls in general, it favored the

39 Ibid., May 1923, p. 5.

40 Ibid., September 1924, p. 6.
continued entry of the "clean cut men from the educated races of Norway, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland who unequivocably stand for the principles enunciated by The Badger American." However the paper advocated closing the doors of immigration to southern Europeans, Turks, Serbs, Greeks and Italians, all of whom it designated as "unassimilable." 41

The only advertiser in the Badger American for its first several issues was the Werner H. Segall insurance company. After this fact was publicized by Milwaukee's Catholic newspaper, Segall lost one of his Roman Catholic customers. The Badger American retaliated by printing the names of all the advertisers in the Catholic publication. 42 Segall was eventually joined by other advertisers in the Klan's monthly, hawking products such as fiery crosses that glowed in the dark, "inkless" fountain pens, robe bags, the "Kluxer's Knifty Knife," and "999--the 100% polish."

The Badger American was probably one of the independent Klan newspapers that Milton Elrod wanted to exterminate by founding a regional newspaper network. The editors of the paper promised the readers that they would not quit when Elrod's Wisconsin Kourier was first distributed in the state in September 1924. Within a month, however, the Badger American was resorting to giving away free telescopes for every three subscriptions sent in by readers. By the end of 1924 it was defunct and the Wisconsin Kourier had absorbed its subscription. 43

41 Ibid., May 1923, p. 4; March 1924, p. 6.

42 Ibid., November 1923, p. 2.

43 Ibid., September 1924, p. 4; October 1924, p. 8; Wisconsin Kourier, Dec. 19, 1924, p. 1.
The Consolidated Klan Press:
Speaking with One Voice

Milton Elrod first designated his national Klan newspaper the *Fiery Cross* after the Indiana paper he had edited. However, the system was soon revised and the name was changed to the *National Kourier* (not to be confused with the *Kourier Magazine*, which was published in Atlanta.) Besides the previously mentioned *Wisconsin Kourier*, separate editions of the new weekly were printed for Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia. Regional editions were published for New England, the North Atlantic states, and the South Atlantic area. Some of these were printed at the Klan's new printing plant in Washington, the Empire Publishing Company, and others in their home states. By late 1924 the *National Kourier* estimated its combined circulation at one and one-half million.44

If the *Wisconsin Kourier* is representative, the *National Kourier* resembled a mainline community newspaper more than any of the other Klan periodicals. The first page was devoted almost totally to Klan news within the state. Other sections of the eight-page paper included national Klan items, a page for wives and Klanswomen, another for Junior Klansmen, an editorial page, and a section devoted to a straightforward encapsulated account of the "Important News of the Week for Busy Readers."

The women's page included "The Hearthstone of America," a regular column on child-raising. "Polly's Pickings," another regular feature was,

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as well as this writer could determine, anti-flapper, campaigning against bobbed hair and short dresses and favoring more aristocratic behavior for young women. Recipes were occasionally included; an adventurous chef could experiment with such delicacies as "cornflake cakes" or "asparagus cheese."

The Junior Klansman could amuse himself by working the weekly "Fiery Cross Word Puzzle," or by reading corny jokes in the "Chuckles" column. If he were more studious, "Glimpses into the Constitution" would provide him with an interpretation of the nation's laws.

In spite of Elrod's vow to improve the tone of Klan propaganda, The Wisconsin Kourier was only slightly less vituperative, and no less anti-Catholic, than the Badger American. For example, the front paper of a single issue of the Kourier included the following headlines:

ROMAN GRIP ON OFFICIALS IS SHOWN IN EAU CLAIRE

ROMAN POLICE CHIEF ANGERED BY FIERY CROSS

ROMANS FAIL TO STOP MEETING AT FAIRCHILD [Wisconsin]

SEEING FIERY CROSS BRINGS ROMAN HATRED

Shower of Eggs Greets Ex-Nun

Many such headlines were far more alarmist than the content of the stories warranted. For example, "REDS AND ROMANISTS FAVORED ABOVE AMERICANISM" preceded a story about the Madison, Wisconsin, school board's refusal to allow the Klan to use a high school auditorium that had previously been rented for use by the Knights of Columbus and the "Friends of the Soviet Union." Another eight-column headline, "Truck Load of Rifles Reaches Roman Catholic Institute," was grossly misleading since the arms

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45 Wisconsin Kourier, Nov. 21, 1924, p. 1.
were to be used for drill by ROTC cadets at a Catholic college. A newsboy peddling the *Kourier* by shouting its headlines on a street corner so irritated citizens in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, that he was arrested for disturbing the peace. He was later released after the intervention of local Klans officials.\(^4\)

The editorial page of the *Wisconsin Kourier* differed little in character from the news stories. The section featured a series of anti-Catholic essays by "Wingfoot" entitled "Intolerance--Who Is Practicing It in America." Wingfoot apparently exhausted his supply of diatribes after 15 installments, and his column was replaced by an unattributed series entitled, "ROME--A System of Despotism and Expediency."

The *Wisconsin Kourier*, because it was supported by the Klan treasury, contained relatively little advertising. A few Milwaukee business enterprises—a bottling company, a cement contractor, a jewelry store, and a Ford dealership—frequently ran small ads in the paper, but the only national firm promoted was the Klan's Empire Mutual Life Insurance Company. Presided over by Samuel H. Venable, the firm boasted $100,000 in capital and used as its trademark Venable's Stone Mountain—"Our Symbol of Security, God's Greatest Thought in Granite." Klansmen could purchase a piece of the rock, so to speak, in units of $5,000.

Elrod left the *National Kourier* in May 1925 and became a farmer. The regional and state editions of the paper were consolidated into a single edition after he left.\(^4\) \(^\text{[sic]}\) The *National Kourier* was last listed in the Ayer

\(^{4}\text{Ibid., Jan. 16, 1925, p. 1; Feb. 6, 1925, p. 1; Jan. 9, 1925, p. 2.}\)

\(^{47}\text{Ellrod [sic] testimony, Senatorial Campaign Expenditures, II: 2310.}\)
directory in 1927.
CHAPTER V

THE KLAN AGAINST THE WORLD

For four months Henry Peck Fry promoted the Klan in East Tennessee. He had been an addict of fraternal orders, and he had been particularly attracted to the Klan because of the "high caliber" of the members he had met. He began kluxing part-time in Johnson City while the regular kleagle was out of town. He was moderately successful, considering that East Tennessee in 1921 had a sparse Negro population, few Catholics or immigrants, and, according to Fry, not enough Jews to fill a synagogue.

Immediately after Fry was sworn in as a full-fledged kleagle he became suspicious. "The Kleagle's Pledge of Loyalty" that he was required to sign was a promise of unwavering fidelity to a man named William Joseph Simmons. The oath seemed to Fry to somehow contradict his other obligations. He was an Army reserve officer, and this devotion to the monarch of an Invisible Empire struck Fry as being slightly seditious. He became wary. The full-page ads for the Klan he saw in the Knoxville papers did nothing to allay his apprehensions. The Masons never advertised. Neither did the Knights of Pythias.

As reports of violence by masked men increased, Fry at first refused to believe they were committed by Klan members. He doubted that there was "a finer, cleaner or better lot of men" than the Klansmen with whom he associated. The subtle changes in these men worried Fry most of all. A decent law-abiding church-going citizen breezily boasted to him that the
Klan would soon control politics in Johnson City. A young friend of Fry's who never would have approached a tar bucket with the Odd Fellows advocated that the local Klan should bust up a restaurant owned by Greeks "as an object lesson that they are not wanted in Johnson City." When the Johnson City Staff berated the Ku Klux Klan, businessmen who were members withdrew their advertising, forcing the paper to relent. Fry smelled a rat under the sheets and resigned.

The resignation of an ordinary kleagle created no ripples within the Klan at the time. At about the same time an official as high as a grand dragon had resigned and had released statements condemning the order. The national press barely acknowledged them. The Klan was not yet a big copy. It was perhaps Fry more than anyone else who rolled the snowball that started the avalanche.

In June of 1921 Henry Peck Fry, ex-kleagle, ex-Klansman, gathered up all the documents, propaganda, and correspondence he had accrued during his brief tenure as a recruiter and turned them over to Herbert Bayard Swope, executive editor of the New York World.²

The World had bulldozed its way into national prominence four decades earlier. Under the guidance of a Hungarian immigrant named Joseph Pulitzer the paper evolved through periods of splashy sensationalism and vulgar yellow journalism to achieve a reputation, after 1900, as an effective crusading "people's champion." Pulitzer died in 1911. His sons Ralph and

¹Henry P. Fry, The Modern Ku Klux Klan (Boston, 1922), passim.
²E. J. Kahn, Jr., The World of Swope (New York, 1965), 291.
Herbert assumed control of the *World* but delegated much of their authority to Swope.\(^3\) Herbert B. Swope has been variously characterized as "a remarkable brew of ego and energy," "the greatest reporter of our age," and "a snorting Caesar."\(^4\) Swope detected a blockbuster story in Fry's package, but he was reluctant to print the material at face value. He unleashed a team of reporters who spent July through August 1921 investigating the Klan under the direction of Rowland Thomas, an ex-novelist and short story writer. Thomas later estimated that, including the *World*'s local correspondents in other cities, 30 or more reporters worked on the exposure, including two who were sent to Atlanta.\(^5\)

**The Brewing Storm: Early Criticism of the Klan**

The New York *World* exposure that began on September 6, 1921, was the eye of a hurricane that had been gathering force for nearly a year. On October 10, 1920, the *World* ran its first major Klan story, devoting a full page of its Sunday "Metropolitan" section to the Ku Klux revival. The article identified Simmons as Imperial Wizard, featured photos of the ritual, and described the opposition by an inter-racial group of Atlanta clergymen. The *World* carefully avoided attributing any particular crime directly to the order, and the worst accusation it leveled at the Klan


was that of intimidation.6

Much of this story graphically described the fears aroused among blacks in areas where the Klan was strong; this is hardly surprising, since the article was based mostly on information provided by Walter F. White, assistant secretary of the NAACP. He corresponded with Simmons under the guise of a white Southerner residing in the North, and Simmons glibly answered the letters with his customary white supremacist ravings. This material was incorporated by White and the World in the early Klan articles.7

The heaviest opposition the Klan received from late 1920 to mid-1921 came from White and James Weldon Johnson of the NAACP who provided anti-Klan news releases to the press. When Simmons issued a news release denying Klan involvement in acts of terrorism, Johnson immediately dispatched a release telling newspapers to ignore the Wizard's statements. By late 1920 White had urged the postmaster general to refuse to let the Klan use the mails for its propaganda (a request which brought the American Civil Liberties Union to the Klan's defense); argued for a Justice Department investigation; alerted the governor of New York and the mayor of New York City of impending Klan organizations in the state; gained the support of the Tablet, the official Catholic paper of New York City.8

Simmons further provoked the NAACP in late 1920 when he announced that "whenever an emergency arises the Ku Klux Klan will be in New York to


take whatever steps are necessary." Barely two weeks later the NAACP held a mass meeting in New York's Palace Casino where 1,500 vowed to fight the Klan. These early efforts by the NAACP bore little fruit, however. Clarke's organization in late 1920 encompassed approximately 30 states, but it was still too skeletal and was working too secretly to create much alarm. Furthermore, late 1920 was national election time, a period of transition, when public officials were unlikely to launch into any new crusades. An exception was Governor Thomas W. Bickett of North Carolina. In a particularly scathing indictment of the Klan's propaganda department, Bickett was quoted in 1920 as saying, "The scheme is so transparently impossible, so plainly a gold brick proposition, that ordinary inmates of a school for the feebleminded could not be induced to part with their coin for a certificate of membership in such a soap bubble."10

By mid-1921 more storm clouds began to gather and more newspapers began taking up cudgels against the Klan. When the Los Angeles Express printed a three-part article attributing a "reign of terror" to the Ku Klux Klan, the order sued for $105,000. A month later Simmons announced that the Cincinnati Times-Star was being sued because of a series of anti-Klan editorials. In this announcement Simmons hinted that the Klan had had forewarning of the New York World expose that was to begin only four days later. In what an Atlanta paper called "the Klan's battle note

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9 New York World, Dec. 13, 1920, p. 3; NAACP news release, Jan. 6, 1921, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK January 1921.

10 NAACP news release, Nov. 27, 1920, NAACP Papers, box 312, subj. file--KKK 1920.
against newspapers which are printing alleged libelous and slanderous statements relative to the organization," Simmons warned that his Imperial Klounsel (then Paul S. Etheridge) was in contact with 200 leading attorneys around the country. The Wizard stated that the Klan had no objection to publications strongly opposing the order, so long as they stayed "within the bounds of the truth." 11

Another indication that the Imperial officers anticipated an onslaught by the press came in August 1921 when Clarke hired Fred Savage as his "Chief of Investigation," or head of the Klan's secret police. From a public relations standpoint this was one of Clarke's most detrimental decisions. Savage, the aging head of a New York strike-breaking detective agency, brought along some of his big-city goons to beef up Clarke's own cadre of Atlanta bodyguards. The presence of these unsavory characters, as many as a dozen at a time, around the entrances to the Imperial Palace probably gave Klan headquarters the atmosphere of a hoodlum hideout. 12

Besides screening prospective visitors for the Imperial officers, the "investigators" were utilized as dirty tricksters, to dig up evidence (or manufacture it) to frame or blackmail any unfortunates who had fallen into the Klan's disfavor. Whenever a local Klan met strong opposition in a particular locale, investigators were dispatched to the scene as arbitrators to directly represent the Imperial Palace. Clarke later admitted this troubleshooting function of his secret service during a Senate hearing in the following bit of Carrollesque dialogue:

11 Atlanta Constitution, Sept. 2, 1921, p. 11.

12 Testimony of J. Quincy Jett, Senator from Texas, 191.
MR. CLARKE. We had a great many men on the payroll of the Klan doing various types of work. They were known as investigators and adjudicators and things of that kind. For instance if any trouble broke anywhere in the country against the Klan, we would throw 6 or 8 or 10 men right in there. . . .

Senator [James E.] Watson. You had a lot of missionaries?

MR. CLARKE. Yes; emissaries and commissaries.

MR. [W. F.] ZUMBRUNN. "Commissary" means something to eat.

MR. CLARKE. Yes; something to eat; go down and furnish fuel to those who were stirring up trouble. 13

On the day before the New York World began its major exposure stories the paper received some "fuel" in the form of a postcard labeled "T.N.T. for you all." Though possibly not from one of the Klan's "commissaries," the message was nevertheless a crude attempt at intimidation, warning the editor that he would seal his "death warrant" if the articles appeared. On September 6, 1921, the World intrepidly reproduced the card on its front page—directly beneath portraits of Simmons, Clarke and Tyler. The hurricane had struck the Imperial Palace.

Crisis Part One: The World Explodes

The three-week period from September 6 to September 28, 1921, was crowded with sensational stories. An obese movie star named Roscoe C. Arbuckle, better known as "Fatty," was arrested in Hollywood for the sex-torture-murder of a pretty starlet, Virginia Rappe. Babe Ruth was slug-ging his way to a record 59 home runs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, unsuccess-ful vice-presidential candidate in the previous year's election, was stricken with infantile paralysis. While these stories were getting banner headlines in other papers, the New York World relegated them to the back

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13 Clarke testimony, Senator from Texas, 425.
pages, under one-column heads. For 21 straight days the World devoted
half of its front page and nearly all of its second to execrating the Klan
with one devastating headline after another.

The attack paid off. In New York the circulation of the World
leaped by 60,000 the day after Rowland Thomas' first installment appeared.
The increase was nearly as high among some of the other newspapers across
the country which picked up the series, including the Boston Globe, St.
Louis Post-Dispatch, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Milwaukee Journal, Seattle
Times, and New Orleans Times-Picayune. In Detroit, where no papers had
bought the articles, scalpers were receiving 50 cents a copy for single
issues of the World while the exposure was in progress.14

The World implicated the Klan in over 150 specified acts of terror-
ism, including murder, mutilation, and tarring and feathering. The
articles portrayed Klansmen as law-defying vigilantes, hate-mongerers, or
innocent dupes. The World printed some of the Klan's most viciously bi-
goted Searchlight passages, propaganda, and newsletters. The paper made
the order look even worse by printing other reports of mob violence and
deaths of Negroes adjacent to the exposure stories, thus implying guilt by
association through the technique of news makeup.

The most glaring fusillade, however, was fired at the "Big Three" who
were depicted as vicious aggrandizers, feeding upon the fears and preju-
dices of a nation to fatten their own coffers.

The exposure was perhaps overplayed and often repetitive, but basic-
ally accurate, though there remains some question as to whether Klansmen
were responsible for all the atrocities the World attributed to them.

14 Kahn, World of Swope, 242.
Fig. 8. This cartoon, published in the New York World on September 8, 1921, typifies the manner in which the newspaper ridiculed the Klan's propagators and belittled those who joined. The illustration originally appeared in the New York Call.
The most noticeable error was an example of the World swallowing false propaganda and printing it as fact. The paper estimated Klan membership at over one-half million, a figure roughly five times the correct number. Rowland Thomas later testified that estimates of 600,000 or more had come directly from Clarke. Simmons, before a House committee, would admit to a membership of "somewhere along" 90,000 at the time.\footnote{Thomas Statement, Klan Hearings, 11; Simmons Statement, Klan Hearings, 181.}

If the World suffered from a paucity of ammunition for its siege of Imperial headquarters, the Klan soon filled the paper's bandoliers with the erratic responses of the Imperial officers. Clarke's first reaction was predictable and did nothing to enhance the greedy image the press had given him. He threatened to sue the World for $10 million and said that he was engaged in notifying the 200 lawyers the Klan had contacted two days earlier.\footnote{New York World, Sept. 8, 1921, p. 1 f.} As with all the other suits and threats of suits against newspapers by the Klan, this litigation never found its way into a courtroom.

Elizabeth Tyler, the Klan's "mystery woman" who had remained very much behind the scenes until the World made her a national celebrity, took the first constructive action in the crisis. Shortly after the World series was initiated, she went to New York, rented a suite in one of the city's poshest hotels and opened it up to the press. When she arrived she told a Times reporter that she had come to New York only to shop. She had been working 70 hours a week, she said, and Klan business "was the least of her worries."\footnote{New York Times, Sept. 11, 1921, p. 22.}
Nevertheless she released statements to the press, granted interviews and generally radiated good will and glowing propaganda for the Klan. She accused the newspapers of being "most unfair" and of printing "malicious and damaging statements" but thanked them for the publicity, adding that thousands of new applications were flooding the Imperial Palace.  

Tyler gave the press a complete breakdown of how the $10 "donation" was distributed among kleagles and goblins. The $4.50 that wound up in the office of herself and Clarke went mostly for "rent, clerk hire, stenographic expenses, the cost of literature, as well as the cost of Klan supplies which [were] furnished free to each chapter." She was just a business woman, she told reporters, and the Southern Publicity Association was a legitimate business with a high overhead and low profit margin. Before she left New York she impressed even the World reporters with her apparent sincerity. She softened her stand a little, telling them that she did not believe the paper was knowingly unfair, but that it had been "badly misled" by its informants.  

Not long after Tyler's return to Atlanta her Searchlight announced a switch from weekly to daily publication to keep pace with and to counter attacks by the media.  

The Burgeoning Bandwagon:  
Other Newspapers Join the World  

On September 15, 1921, nine days after the first World exposure

18 New York World, Sept. 11, 1921, p. 3.  

19 Ibid., Sept. 12, 1921, p. 2.  

20 Thomas Statement, Klan Hearings, 11.
article, the paper's long-time rival, William Randolph Hearst's New York American (formerly the Journal), began its own Klan smear. The 20 American articles that were syndicated in 250 other dailies were written by C. Anderson Wright, former chief of staff of the ill-fated "Knights of the Air." The American billed Wright as an "ex-Grand Goblin" though he never actually rose above the rank of king kieagle. The American also called him a "war hero," though he spent his only two months overseas in England and never saw combat.\(^{21}\)

Wright's revelations were superficial and exaggerated and indicate that he was not as "inside" as he claimed to be. He called the Southern Publicity Association office the Imperial Palace and referred to the real Imperial Palace as a residence of either Clarke or Tyler, he was not sure which. The main theme of Wright's exposé was that Tyler was the "real power behind the Klan" with a Rasputin-like hold over Clarke and Simmons. Wright's subsequent testimony before a House committee indicates that he had had several clashes with Tyler during his brief stay in Atlanta and interpreted her domineering manner as absolute authority.\(^{22}\)

Wright tried to make the most of his brief moment of glory. He contracted an agent, Edward C. Huelle of New York, who promoted the "Exposer of the Ku Klux Klan" on special stationery produced with some of Wright's American articles printed on the back of the sheets. Wright also wrote a play, "Masked Men," a drama imprecating the Klan and exalting Catholics, Jews and blacks. Broadway producers refused to touch his

\(^{21}\) Wright testimony, Klan Hearings, 57.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., passim.
exercise in reverse nativism, so Wright tried to finance the play himself. He organized the "Knights of the Tigers Eye," an anti-Klan group, and charged a $10 initiation fee. Wright never saw his name in lights on Broadway. "Masked Men" bombed in Wilmington, Delaware, and the "Tiger's Eye" blinked, leaving Wright in debt and permanently out of the limelight.23

The American and the World were the only New York dailies to expose the Klan. Among the city's other newspapers, the New York Times at first applauded the World's efforts, commenting prematurely on September 10, 1920, that the Klan had "not the slightest chance" of surviving the exposure. Less than two weeks later the sedate Times expressed some reservations that the World and the American were "properly but somewhat excessively excited" about the order. The Daily News was even less concerned. Admitting that the World had handled the story "in a thorough fashion," the Daily News, in an editorial entitled "Laugh 'Em Off," urged its readers not to take the Klan seriously.24

Of newspapers in the rest of the country that did not print any exposures or campaign actively against the Klan, there were few that editorially endorsed the organization. In August 1922 the Literary Digest sent out over a hundred letters to newspaper editors in sections of the country where the Klan was strong and received hundreds of editorials in reply, not a one favorable to the order. Even E. Y. Clarke was forced to

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23. C. Anderson Wright to George B. Christian, Jr. [Secretary to the President], Oct. 21, 1921, Justice File 198589-417; New York World, Mar. 21, 1923, ACLU Archives, 232:32

admit that by that time at least 80 per cent of the daily newspapers were bitterly attacking the Klan.25

Not surprisingly, the Klan received relatively little press opposition in its home realm of Georgia. The Atlanta Constitution, which would years later under Ralph McGill vehemently fight the Klan, was the most cautious of Atlanta's three major dailies. The Clarke family ties with the newspaper stretched back nearly 50 years, and the managing editor at that time (McGill's predecessor) was Francis Clarke, E. Y.'s brother. Francis Clarke was never active in the Klan, but either sibling devotion or perhaps pressure from the powerful Atlanta chapter kept him and the Constitution's publishers from printing unfavorable stories about the order during the early 1920s.

The rival Atlanta Journal likewise stayed out of the arena, presumably because its editor, John S. Cohen, was the offspring of a mixed Jewish-Gentile marriage and he feared an anti-Semitic reaction if he fought the Klan.26

The only Atlanta daily to swipe at the Klan during the early 1920s was the Hearst-owned Georgian. Curiously, the Georgian chose to print the World series of articles rather than those by Wright syndicated by the Hearst chain.

On September 18, 1921, the Georgian printed its strongest anti-Klan editorial. Calling it "dangerous and unnecessary," the editors expressed

25 "Quaint Customs and Methods of the Ku Klux Klan," Literary Digest, Aug. 5, 1922, pp. 49 ff.

26 Julian L. Harris to Prof. Edwin Mims. Nov. 14, 1925, Harris Papers, BV6, #5 [scrapbook], 5.
the belief "that the Ku-Klux [sic], in its methods of organization and exploitation, is calculated to bring upon the South through . . . [its] propaganda, the greatest shame and discredit that has ever come to this section." For all its efforts the Georgian's circulation plunged by 8,500 before it had printed half of the World's series. The Georgian quickly retreated to recoup.

Atlanta, the "Imperial City," was not yet ready to castigate an organization that by 1923 included as members (or supporters): its mayor, Walter A. Sims; its sheriff, Thomas I. Lowry; the state's governor, Clifford Walker; its U.S. representative, William D. Upshaw; both U.S. senators, Walter F. George and James L. Harris; and dozens of other minor state and local officials. Furthermore, as former Atlanta Journal reporter Ward Greene later wrote, "There was also, to put it bluntly, the money. A new million-dollar industry within your gates is not to be hooted at—whether it be cotton, Coca-Cola, Tanlac or the Klan. Atlanta, smelling all that money, jumped aboard."

27 Atlanta Georgian, Sept. 28, 1921, p. 4.

28 Harris to Mims, 5.

29 Greene, "Notes for a History of the Klan," 243. Even editor Julian Harris, who exposed many politicians as Klansmen, did not believe Walter F. George was a member. George, who spent 35 years in the Senate, was elected to fill the seat vacated by the sudden death of Tom Watson in 1922. Though George's papers were burned by his son after his death, the writer fortuitously discovered the senator's resignation from the Klan in 1923, along with the regrets of the Imperial Wizard. George resigned because he anticipated that he might be called to testify in the case of Earle B. Mayfield, a Texas senator whose seat was being contested because his campaign had allegedly been financed by the Klan, and he did not want to reveal himself as a Klansman. Ironically, George sat on the committee which heard Mayfield's case; the senator from Texas was not removed from office. See Walter F. George to William J. Simmons, Jan. 6, 1923, and Hiram C. Evans to George, Jan. 10, 1923, George File, Ga. Dept. of Archives and History, Atlanta.
The Klan situation 110 miles southeast of Atlanta in the city of Columbus, Georgia, (pop. 31,125) was little different. When a new Columbus mayor opposed the Klan, which had infested most of the police force, he had his house bombed. But the Enquirer-Sun, with a circulation of less than 5,000 in 1920, never retreated in the face of powerful Klan opposition. Editing the paper were Thomas W. Loyless, who as editor of the Augusta Chronicle had fought to save Leo Frank from execution, and Julian Harris, son of Joel Chandler Harris, whose famous "Uncle Remus" stories first appeared in the Constitution. Loyless and Harris began writing anti-Klan editorials in early 1921. In spite of numerous anonymous threats of the "Dead Men Tell No Tales" variety, the editors persistently charged local and state officials with being Klan members. The Enquirer-Sun temporarily lost 20 per cent of its circulation, and Loyless left the paper in 1922. Harris stayed on and, with the help of his wife Julia, tenaciously fought the Klan even after a plot to bomb his home was uncovered.  

While the New York World was assembling its series, Swope heard of the Enquirer-Sun's campaign and wired Harris to forward copies of his articles and editorials. Subsequently the Enquirer-Sun was the first Georgia newspaper to print the exposé, a fact which its editors extolled in a quarter-page advertisement in the complacent Constitution. The ad billed the Enquirer-Sun as "The FIRST Georgia Daily to Attack the Sinister Ku Klux Klan in its Lair."  

30 Julian L. Harris to Jerome B. Londfield, Jan. 22, 1926, Harris Papers, BV 6, #5, p. 2.  
31 New York World to Julian L. Harris, Aug. 15, 1921 (telegram), Harris Papers, box 7, folder 1; Atlanta Constitution, Sept. 11, 1921, p. 5.
"It's great to be a Georgian" was a popular booster slogan adopted by the Peach State in the early 1920s. Using the phrase as his keynote, Harris lashed out against his fellow Georgians:

... Is it great to be the citizen of a state which is the proud parent of a cowardly hooded order founded and fostered by men who have been proved liars, drunkards, blackmailers and murderers? Is it great to be a citizen of a state whose governor is a member of and subservient to that vicious masked gang, and whose officials are either members or in sympathy with it? Is it great to be a citizen of such a state? Is it great to be a Georgian?32

When he learned that Imperial chaplain Caleb Ridley had been convicted for driving while intoxicated, Harris revealed "The Drunken Kludd" in an editorial that ended the preacher's career as a kloakard. When he heard that a "Klan Governor" had spoken before the Imperial Kloncilium (national convention) held in Kansas City in 1924, Harris was able to prove that it was Clifford Walker and put the governor in a position to make his first public admission of his Klan membership. When 500 Klansmen paraded in front of his office carrying "obnoxious placards," Harris startled the hooded pickets by dashing out onto the sidewalk to take notes.33

The Enquirer-Sun doggedly battled the Klan alone among Georgia dailies until joined by the Macon Telegraph in 1923. Harris's continual harassment eventually helped to force the Columbus Klan to disband.34 The Enquirer-Sun was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for meritorious public service in 1926.

32Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 75.
33Ibid., 74 n; Harris to Londfield, 2.
34Harris to Londfield, 2.
Crisis Part Two: Playing the Palace

By mid-September 1921 the Klan had begun to show some signs of recovery from the World's articles which were, by that time, growing redundant. Tyler had enjoyed an apparently successful "shopping spree" in New York, and Imperial headquarters was swamped with applications for membership, many of them on forms reproduced in the World and other papers. The paper had "exposed" the 200-plus kleagles in the country by printing their names and addresses, a service that proved to aid prospective initiates in contacting the recruiters. Then, on September 19, 1921, the World dropped the bomb that would eventually decimate the Southern Publicity Association.

The story revealed that on October 3, 1919, Clarke's wife May, her brother, and a policeman had discovered Clarke and Tyler sleeping together at Tyler's home. Mrs. Clarke had the pair arrested and hauled away in their pajamas to police court where they gave their names as "Jim Slaton and Mrs. Carroll." After a night in jail, Clarke and Tyler were tried under their real names and convicted for "disorderly conduct." Additional charges of possession of whiskey were dropped when J. Q. Jett stepped forward to claim the bottle found in their room and paid the fine. May Clarke filed for divorce on October 18, 1919, charging that her husband had deserted and abandoned her and their young son three years before. A settlement was reached but the divorce did not go through. Mrs. Clarke changed her mind in light of her husband's sudden prosperity in the Klan; he placated her for the time being with a new house, though the couple remained separated.35

Even the scandal this revelation created might have dissipated had not the reactions of the principals turned into a comedy of errors. On the morning the World hit the newsstands in Atlanta with the misconduct story, Clarke sent his investigators all over the city, buying all the issues at three cents more than the seven-cent price. Still, some vendors refused to deprive their regular customers and refused to sell, even after threats from Savage's thugs.\(^{36}\)

This frantic attempt at a cover-up was unsuccessful in suppressing the story, and Clarke was later forced to call a news conference. He was evasive, telling reporters only that the World was the "biggest liar in America." A correspondent for the Georgian was not content with Clarke's lack of a specific denial and stayed after the other reporters had gone to talk for more than an hour with the Imperial Kleagle. Clarke confided in the reporter that yes, he and Tyler had been living together in 1919; he was ill and his partner had taken him in. He also admitted that the arrest had occurred, but that it had been "staged" by his spouse. "Any inference from the arrest of immoral conduct is wholly unwarranted," said Clarke, according to the Georgian.\(^{37}\)

Tyler, however, had previously issued a statement to the press, calling the entire story "a malicious lie." She accused the papers of being "so incensed over their failure to discredit" the Klan that they were losing their reason. "Trying to injure an organization which stands primarily for the protection of womanhood by stooping so low as to un-

\(^{36}\) Atlanta Georgian, Sept. 20, 1921, p. 1; New York World, Sept. 21, 1921, p. 2.

\(^{37}\) Atlanta Georgian, Sept. 19, 1921, p. 1.
justly attack the character of an innocent woman will not help their side," said Tyler. "Shame on them, is all I have to say."\textsuperscript{38}

After the \textit{Georgian} appeared on the newsstands with Clarke's confessions, the Imperial Kleagle stormed into the paper's editorial office and demanded that editor James B. Nevin print a complete retraction "in as prominent form and in all editions of the \textit{Georgian} as was given the incorrect statement of yesterday." Clarke maintained that he had been misquoted and misinterpreted; he gave the editor a new statement, which said only that "at the proper time" a full answer would be given. Nevin partially complied. He printed Clarke's new statement in the same location as the previous day's story, but he refused to acknowledge any error on the part of the \textit{Georgian}.\textsuperscript{39}

Until that time the \textit{Georgian} had not actively pursued the Klan and its editors had not yet decided to print the \textit{World} articles. However Clarke's attack on a reporter whom Nevin considered as one of his "most experienced and most careful" aroused the editor's suspicions. Nevin sent a reporter to double check the court records of the incident. The reporter discovered that page 305 of the 1919 recorder's docket pertaining to October 3, 1919, had been neatly cut out; police index cards of the arrest were likewise missing. Only days before the \textit{World} had succeeded in getting certified copies of the records. After the \textit{Georgian} notified Atlanta public officials of the disappearance, Solicitor General John A. Boykin promised that he would conduct an investigation and a "vigorous prosecution" of


\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Atlanta Georgian}, Sept. 20, 1921, p. 1.
the responsible parties. Boykin added that the fact that he had been a
member of the Klan since 1915 would have no influence whatsoever on his
official duties. As the World correctly predicted, no such prosecution
ever took place. 40

The first visible indication that the smear was creating erosion
within the Klan ranks appeared on September 21. A New Jersey kleagle
named A. Donald Bate pleaded with Simmons to dismiss Clarke and Tyler, or
der the "entire house" would fall down upon his head. Bate forwarded a
copy of his telegram to the Associated Press. When Tyler found out, she
wired Bate his dismissal, apparently without consulting either Clarke or
Simmons. She declared that she had full authority to oust the "scoundrel"
whom she asserted was displeased over some organizational changes she had
made in his district. 41

Tyler further asserted her independence the following day by ap-
ppearing before a closed Klan meeting, the first to which a woman had ever
been admitted. Constantly referring to the press as "the enemy" she told
the 2,000 Klansmen present, " . . . [We] have what we consider authentic
information that the enemy intends to stop at nothing to besmirch the
names of the officials of the Ku Klux Klan. They are going to attack me
personally from every angle--they will stop at nothing to accomplish their
diabolical purposes. . . ." Tyler offered to resign and left it up to the
members present to make the decision. According to a report given to the
press by the exalted cyclops of the Atlanta Klan, the Klansmen voted
spontaneously and enthusiastically in favor of Tyler's retention. She

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40 Ibid., Sept. 22, 1921, p. 1; New York World, Sept. 21, 1921,
p. 2.

41 New York World, Sept. 21, 1921, p. 1; New York Times, Sept. 22,
1921, p. 3.
reportedly left the klavern in tears as they cheered and applauded her.  

However on September 24, at 10 P.M., Clarke sent a long letter to Simmons requesting that the Imperial Wizard accept both his and Tyler's resignations to save her from "attacks by the enemy." (Clarke obligingly forwarded a copy of his request to the "enemy.") All this was news to Tyler, who had pretty well secured her place in the Imperial Palace for the time being. She was furious. Two hours after Clarke leaked his letter to the press, she gave the papers a statement anathematizing her partner and erstwhile lover as "weak-kneed" because he would not "stand by his guns." She declared that Clarke had done her a "gross injustice" and that she would stick with the Klan even if she had to work for nothing.  

Tyler's indignation probably grew out of more than just wounded pride. As Clarke's partner she stood to lose a great deal of money if her connections with the order were severed. Whatever Clarke's reasons for trying to quit (Simmons did not accept the resignations), Tyler was probably lying when she promised to continue running the Propagation Department, even if she did not receive a dollar for her work. Two weeks before she had told reporters in New York that she was only in the business for the money.  

While Clarke and Tyler were squabbling across the front pages of the country, they apparently lost their grip on their own propaganda system.

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42 *Atlanta Georgian*, Sept. 24, 1921, p. 2.  
On September 25, an editorial in Searchlight entitled "American Patriots, Hark!" urged citizens to take up arms to defend Tyler's honor. The piece was penned by Carl F. Hutcheson, associate editor of Searchlight and J. O. Woods' law partner. Hutcheson was also a member of Atlanta's board of education, in which capacity he had successfully fought for the dismissal of a veteran school principal who happened to be Catholic.\(^{45}\) In his editorial Hutcheson beseeched Klansmen to "unleash your dogs of war and make these hounds of convict stripe pay penalty for the great injury done." Hutcheson in effect declared war on Roman Catholics whom he said controlled the press of the nation. "Patriots," he raged, "if ever red blood ran through your veins for pure American womanhood . . . let it run now with a warmth that knows no quenchment! Yea, let your blood spurt fire!"\(^{46}\)

U. S. postal authorities took a dim view of all this blood spurting in a publication carried by the mails; the department threatened action under Section 480 of the postal laws and regulations providing penalties for inciting arson, murder, or assassination. Hutcheson eventually wrote a watery retraction for his tirade, pleading excess passion of the moment. When Searchlight followed up with a statement that Hutcheson was not a Klansman, the Georgian took the occasion to heartily congratulate the Klan on such good fortune. The World pointed out that the Hutcheson incident was an indication that whoever was directing the Klan's publicity work had "slipped a cog" in permitting the editorial to be published at a time when


\(^{46}\)Atlanta Georgian, Sept. 24, 1921, p. 2.
the organization was under such close scrutiny.\textsuperscript{47}

The closing days of the \textit{World}'s exposure brought more skeletons tumbling from Clarke's closet. The paper revealed that Clarke had allegedly embezzled $1,108.59 while handling a fund drive for the Roosevelt Memorial Association. The association brought charges against the Southern Publicity Association, but Solicitor General Boykin never found the time to take them to the grand jury. An enterprising \textit{Georgian} reporter dug even farther into the Imperial Klaege's past and discovered that Clarke had been expelled by the First Congregational Methodist Church of Atlanta in 1910. Clarke, who had been treasurer and business manager of the church, was dismissed for charges listed as lying, extortion, fraudulent and unjust dealings, improper handling of funds, false and malicious slander, inordinate ambition, hypocrisy, and treachery. It seems the church elders were miffed because Clarke had sold them stock in the Congregational Methodist Publishing House which he assured them was worth over $150,000. Within three years the ersatz publishing company was bankrupt, returning only two and one-half cents for every dollar invested. According to the \textit{World}, Clarke formed a number of such puffed-up corporations from 1907 to 1910, "all of which showed the same tendency to attempt to rear big promotions on small foundations."\textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{Mr. Simmons Goes to Washington}

William Joseph Simmons remained almost silent throughout the press barrage while his chief lieutenants were catching most of the flak and

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., Sept. 26, 1921, p. 4; New York \textit{World}, Sept. 25, 1921, p. 2; Sept. 26, 1921, p. 1

wrangling between themselves. Simmons had been officially reported as ill, though rumors out of Atlanta hinted that the Wizard was on a drinking binge and Clarke was insulating him from public view. Simmons did speak out in late September in a message to President Harding, pleading for a federal investigation which he said would surely vindicate the order. The \textit{World} referred to the request as a "typical E. Y. Clarke publicity stunt" since an investigation was inevitable by then.\textsuperscript{49} Four separate resolutions calling for a Congressional investigation of the Klan were already in preparation. The House Committee on Rules, on October 11, 1921, began hearings on the resolutions.

Testifying at the hearings were Rowland Thomas and C. Anderson Wright, who repeated the substance of their newspaper articles. Other testimony included that of William J. Burns, director of the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation, who would comment only that a probe was underway. O. B. Williamson, a postal inspector, testified that Clarke and Tyler had given him full cooperation in his investigation of the Klan, and his statements were not unfavorable.

The September hullabaloo over the Klan in the press injected the hearings with a show business fanfare of publicity. Prominent Klansmen drawing attention in the galleries included Clarke, Savage, Etheridge and a Dallas dentist named Hiram W. Evans, of whom more will be written in Chapter VI. The star of the show, though, was Simmons. Dressed in a Prince Albert coat, high stiff collar, blue silk tie and a vest crisscrossed with fraternal keys, he looked more like a distinguished college

\textsuperscript{49}\textit{New York World}, Sept. 29, 1921, p. 2.
professor or senior stockbroker than any leader of a night-riding gang. Simmons bantered good-naturedly with reporters and eagerly posed for photographers. On the stand he was nearly magnificent, if a little hammy.

Simmons was introduced to the committee by Georgia Representative W. D. Upshaw who praised his "sterling character" and stood behind "his every utterance as the truth of an honest, patriotic man." 50

Simmons had obviously been well-rehearsed. He fielded question after question with the aplomb of a champion debater. He told the committee of several instances in which he had revoked Klan charters for proven offenses. He portrayed himself as a benevolent friend of the colored races, who had taught Sunday school to Negroes and had written love letters for unfortunate illiterate blacks. Simmons referred to Wright's claim that Tyler was running the organization as "an absurd untruth." I am not a figurehead," he declared. "The only head I have is a red head, and I have never been bossed by but two women in my life, my mother and my wife." 51

Simmons' coup de grace came at the end of an impassioned plea in which he compared himself to Christ and other immortals:

... Julius Caesar had his Brutus, Jesus Christ had his Judas, and our great and illustrious Washington had his Benedict Arnold. Sir, I can state to you that I can enter the fellowship of all three of those because I have suffered in my soul as a result of the treasonous and treacherous conduct of traitors.

I want to say to my persecutors and the persecutors of this organization in all honesty and sincerity, no matter to what creed or race you may belong in your persecutions, through the medium of

50 W. D. Upshaw, Klan Hearings, 67.

51 Simmons statement, Klan Hearings, 74, 130.
the press or otherwise, that you do not know what you are doing. You are ignorant of the principles as were those who were ignorant of the character and work of the Christ. I cannot better express myself than by saying to you who are persecutors of the klan and myself, "Father, forgive you, for you know not what you do," and "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Mr. Chairman, I am done. (Applause) 52

Upon leaving the stand, Simmons collapsed, a gesture that some in the press said was probably as rehearsed as his oratory. Simmons nearly destroyed his credibility later in the hearings when he alleged that an assistant attorney general had told the committee chairman Philip P. Campbell that the collapse was pre-planned. Campbell was incensed. "Mr. Simmons, let me say right here that if all the rest that you have detailed up to this time since you began this morning is as false and as utterly without foundation," Campbell said, "... you have given us something this morning that is absolutely of no use to the committee." Simmons back-pedaled and told the chairman that the allegation was only hearsay that he wanted to bring to the committee's attention; Campbell replied that it could have been done "without all this blare of trumpets." The Wizard partially redeemed himself by producing a certificate from a Washington physician attesting to the various illnesses (bronchitis, laryngitis and bilateral tonsilitis) that precipitated his collapse. 53

The ultimate decision of the Rules Committee was in the Klan's favor, and the House resolutions were scuttled. The committee members agreed that the Klan did create problems in some locales, but they put forth the opinion that those problems should be handled by local and state

52 Ibid., 136 ff.

53 Klan Hearings, 142-144.
authorities which the committee declared were not paralyzed by the power of the order. The Klan promoted the decision as a Congressional endorsement, and this was the impression gained by most Americans. Following the hearing the Klan enjoyed the period of its most rapid growth. "Congress made us," Simmons said years later.\(^{54}\)

The *World*, meanwhile, disappointed over the results of a hearing that the paper was largely responsible for eliciting, continued to combat the Klan. Swope had disagreed all along with accusations that he had overplayed the story, arguing that it would take legislation to deflate the order, and that every possible bit of pressure was necessary to compel lawmakers to act. Swope was at least successful on his home front. A *World*-framed bill outlawing organizations that operated anonymously was introduced to the New York legislature by James J. "Jimmy" Walker, the state senate majority leader who would soon be elected Mayor of New York City. The bill passed in 1923.\(^{55}\)

It is difficult to determine the amount of damage the newspapers inflicted upon the Klan. Perhaps Philip E. Fox, then editor of the *Imperial Night-Hawk*, correctly assessed the effect of the exposure in July 1923 when he addressed a grand dragons convention in Asheville, North Carolina:

> The press of the country has, more than any one agency, increased the membership of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan to what it is today. From the press the Klan has received gratis, and is still receiving daily, advertisement that is worth millions in


cold cash. . . . Never in history have shrewd newspaper writers and editors so materially misjudged the effect of scientific publicity, overshot their mark, and where they sought to destroy, merely build-up [sic] and where they tried to annihilate create a firmer foundation.

In every city and in every hamlet of America men, women and children read of this great fraternal order about which under normal circumstances they would have heard but little and to whose principles they would otherwise have given scant consideration or attention. . . .

When the smoke cleared away and the poison gas had risen sufficiently for the World and Hearst to judge the effect of their tremendous broadside, they got the surprise of their lives. They had overdone the thing. They had made the Klan appear in the light of a martyr in the eyes of an American public which in every battle or contest demands fair play. . . . They wondered what was back of all this opposition led by newspapers, notoriously controlled by Jewish and Catholic influences.56

While the exposures probably did increase membership, they likewise might have toppled the Klan's precarious prestige in some communities. The publicity probably brought in thousands who saw the onslaught by the big-city elite press as the subterfuge of dangerous alien elements; at the same time, however, the Klan found its ranks being deserted by its more influential members and filled instead with an excess of rowdies and jingoes. The attention also helped lead to an increase and mobilization of Klan opponents. As Chapter VI will illustrate, the disclosures in the press sparked the dissension and chaos within the organization that accelerated its fall from prosperity.

56 Editor Imperial Night-Hawk [Philip E. Fox], "The Klan and the Press," Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Asheville, N. C., July 1923, pp. 93 ff.
CHAPTER VI

THE FALL OF THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

At around 10 P.M. on October 11, 1921, an Atlanta Constitution reporter answered the city desk phone.

"I want to talk to a reporter," said the muffled voice on the other end.

"All right."

"I just want to tell you that we got Mrs. Tyler tonight. We'll get Simmons tomorrow."

The reporter asked who was speaking, but the mysterious caller only mumbled something, said "Good-night," and hung up.

The reporter checked with police who were investigating a shooting at Tyler's home. They had also received a strange phone call. So had Atlanta's other two newspapers, the Journal and the Georgian. Earlier that evening a gunman had fired five shots through a window into Mrs. Tyler's home on Howell Mill Road. Tyler was unharmed. Police said later that the pistol used must have been cheap, since the five .32-caliber bullets had not gone deeply into the wall. Police brought bloodhounds to the scene who traced a trail from Tyler's window to the road where an auto had apparently been waiting.

The following day the Constitution unequivocally declared the incident "a plainly evident attempt to assassinate" Tyler.¹

¹Atlanta Constitution, Oct. 12, 1921, p. 1.
The Goblin Rebellion

The shooting marked the beginning of the battleground mentality that was to smother the Klan in the months to come. Tyler's home was afterward surrounded by a cordon of Klan security agents. Simmons and Clarke were continually escorted by armed bodyguards, which added to an atmosphere of danger.

One of Clarke's former employes wrote later that the assassination attempt was completely staged. According to Edgar I. Fuller, the gunman, G. A. Poulos, threw his pistol into a nearby lake where policemen found it and traced it to a close associate of Clarke's. Fuller offered some dubious documentation to prove that Tyler authorized Searchlight editor J. O. Wood to pay Poulos, one of Savage's investigators, $145.00 for shooting her wall.2

Whether or not the shooting was faked, there does appear to have been an attempt on the part of the "Big Three" to gain support through sympathy. On the day after the incident, Clarke announced that gunmen from New York had been assigned to kill officers of the Klan. Fred Savage had so informed him. As press criticism had intensified, all three dramatized their various illnesses. When Tyler was in New York during the World exposure, she repeated several times that she was on the verge of a mental and physical breakdown from the strains of work. Clarke, in releases concerning his intended resignation, referred repeatedly to his declining health. In a release of October 18, 1921,

2Fuller, Maelstrom, 21.
Clarke called himself "a nervous and physical wreck" and said that his doctors were warning him of an imminent breakdown. That release, the Tyler shooting and Simmons' collapse at the Congressional hearing all came within a week of each other.

If the three officials faced any real danger, it was more likely to come from fellow Klansmen than from whomever they had characterized as enemies. The resentment felt by their underlings is not difficult to understand. The press had made it evident that Clarke and Tyler were becoming quite wealthy through their arrangement with the Imperial Wizard. Records that Simmons turned over to the House Committee on Rules showed that $225,568 had gone directly into Clarke's and Tyler's hands since the Southern Publicity Association had taken over the Klan's propagation. Two days later Clarke stated that he had pocketed only $16,000 of that sum. "The amount mentioned is the total available for the past seventeen months with which to carry forward a national campaign and one of the most difficult campaigns ever staged because of almost insurmountable obstacles to overcome by campaign organization," said Clarke. He enumerated some of his expenses as printing, telephone and telegraph bills, and executive and clerical salaries. He added that he did hope to receive and believed he deserved "some real money" for his services.

Clarke did not, however, mention his income from his independent Klan-related endeavors. When Simmons first organized the Klan in 1915 he contracted W. E. Floding, a charter Klansman who was a clothing manufac-

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turer, to produce the Klan regalia. After the Southern Publicity Association joined forces with the Klan, the contract was turned over to the Gate City Manufacturing Company, newly established by C. B. and Lottie Davis, who were probably Clarke and Tyler. The Gate City company manufactured the robes at $1.90 apiece and sold them to the Klan for $4.00. The Klan, through its Propagation Department, then sold them to initiates for $6.50. Klansmen were forbidden to make their own robes or purchase them elsewhere. Clarke also owned a realty company which specialized in transacting land purchases for the Klan, including Simmons' gift home, the Imperial Palace, and acreage for a proposed Klan university that never came to fruition. Tyler's Searchlight Publishing Company, in addition to the house organ, handled all printing for the Klan from stationery to pamphlets to application forms. The diversified pair also reportedly purchased the National Motor Specialty Company, through which eager kleagles could make an additional commission by selling carburetors along with Klan memberships. Within a few months after the newspaper exposures brought a tidal wave of Klan applicants and donations, the income of Clarke and Tyler had soared to an estimated $40,000 per month.


7New York World, Sept. 18, 1921, p. 2.

Clarke temporarily thwarted some of the opposition from among fellow Klansmen by arguing that an attack upon him and his partner was simply an underhanded attack upon the order, and that the press was by and large only a mouthpiece for the "enemy," i.e. Jews, Catholics, immigrants and radicals. A new recruiting card circulated at the beginning of 1922 revealed an attempt to discredit the Klan's persecutors:

Dear Brother:

In the past several months we have heard much concerning an organization which apparently does not meet the sanction or approval of the press of our nation, which is owned or controlled to the extent of 87 per cent by Jews and Catholics.

The enclosed literature is sent you upon the request of your friends that you may judge for yourself why all this opposition, the "why" of rumors as to disintegration, bankruptcy, banditry, vandalism and general lawlessness.

The resentment shown by the press and certain classes in fraternal associations is perfectly natural and only goes to prove more conclusively the need of a real 100 per cent American organization standing for liberty, conscience, quality before the law and genuine "fraternity above men."

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The card was sent to members of the Masons, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, and Elks.

The attempt to sully the Klan's critics might have brought new initiates into its folds, but some veteran Klansmen were unimpressed. Shortly after the Congressional hearing, the four grand goblins of the Northeastern domains met in Washington and agreed that the Clarke-Tyler furor was creating dissension within their districts. The two would have to go, they decided. The goblins--A. J. Padon, Jr., F. W. Atkin, H. B. Terrell, and Lloyd B. Hooper--journeyed to Atlanta and confronted Colonel Simmons with their decision. The four alleged later that Simmons

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9Milwaukee Leader, Nov. 11, 1922, ACLU Archives, 204:231.
concurred with their charges against Clarke and Tyler and promised to
fire them immediately but backed down later.\(^\text{10}\) On December 1, 1921, the
disgruntled goblins took their case to the press.

In the Propagation Department the grand goblins ranked second only
to Clarke and Tyler. Since there were only nine domains at the time,
these four goblins geographically represented almost half the Invisible
Empire, though not half of the Klan's membership, which was densest in
the South and Midwest. For the first time Clarke was being bitterly as-
sailed not by any so-called "enemy" but by his own employes.

The goblins believed the stories the *World* and C. Anderson Wright
had written about the profligate activities of Clarke and his companion
and they cited incidents of mass resignations of thousands of protesting
Klansmen in Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities. The four dissidents
expressed the feeling that as long as these slurs on the Klan remained
near its helm, the organization would suffer schisms. To strengthen
their case the goblins said they would show proof that during a Southern
Publicity Association fund drive for the Anti-Saloon League, Tyler had
signed phony payroll receipts for staff members who did not exist.\(^\text{11}\)

When the goblins made public their demands Simmons responded by
firing their spokesman; the Wizard then left for a vacation leaving
Clarke in charge. The remaining three protestors resigned their commis-
sions the following day. A week later Simmons announced that a committee
of 13 had looked into the charges against Clarke and had fully exonerated
him. Rather than deny the immorality charges, however, Simmons tried to
downplay them, saying that "persistent spying and muckraking by all sorts

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\(^{10}\text{Terrell v. Klan, 137}\)

\(^{11}\text{New York Times, Dec. 2, 1921, p. 7.}\)
of experts, trained to their criminal tasks and paid for their black-
guardism, will... occasionally turn up something unsavory out of the
past." He added that a "mountain of opposition" had "at last labored and
brought forth this mouse."  

This announcement, like many others that were to flow out of the
Imperial Palace during the next 11 months, bore Simmons' authorization at
a time when the Wizard was supposed to be "resting" out of town, giving
a good indication that they were actually written by Clarke.

By mid-December 1921 Clarke and Tyler were being impugned from with-
in their own Atlanta office. Z. R. Upchurch had worked with the Southern
Publishing Association since well before the firm assumed the Klan account.
He made public an affidavit which showed that the Klan proper was nearly
bankrupt while the Propagation Department was accumulating great riches.
Upchurch also charged that Clarke had defrauded charitable and religious
organizations of thousand of dollars during fund drives.  

Upchurch joined forces with the deposed goblins and 169 other Klans-
men who filed a petition on December 28, 1921, for receivership of all
property, funds, documents, and records of the Klan. The case reached
the Fulton County (Ga.) Superior Court on March 7, 1922, when the request
of the petitioners was denied. A subsequent appeal to the state supreme
court was unsuccessful. Clarke had won the first round--by decision, not
by knockout.  

12 Ibid., Dec. 8, 1921, p. 9; Atlanta Constitution, Dec. 10,
1921, p. 9.


14 Terrell v. Klan, 135-43.
In early 1922 Tyler announced that she was resigning because of the illness (tuberculosis) of her daughter, Mrs. Doris Jett. "My physician says I must rest or completely collapse," Tyler's resignation read. Her daughter had been ill for some time, but her resignation was probably just a ploy. She and Clarke were making an appearance of meeting their opponents halfway, and in so doing, removing the scarlet letter from the gates of the Imperial Palace. She did not leave then however; she remained active in propagation, collecting her portion of the commission.

If the resignation was planned as a diversionary tactic, it was apparently an effective one. For the first six months of 1922 there were few additional eruptions of discord from within the Klan.

In early June, Simmons announced a prolonged leave of absence and designated Clarke as "Imperial Wizard Pro Tem." Clarke, now in official control of the organization, needed help. Simmons, a dreamer, was remarkably naive at administering his Klan. Clarke, a schemer, could handle the financial end with Tyler's help, but individual chapters were gaining autonomy, and he was losing control. As long as his local Klans were provisional, Clarke could dictate orders through his Propagation Department chain of command. However, once a region or community was granted a charter, the local leaders sought independence. When he tried to suppress local autonomy by delaying the presentation of charters, Clarke only created more dissatisfaction. As acting Imperial Wizard, Clarke was spread too thin to effectively administer either the provisional or regular Klan. He began searching for someone to coordinate the order's day-


16 Klan v. Wade, passim.
to-day activities and untangle vexing administration problems. Clarke could then let Tyler handle most of the propagation activities while he could collect his percentage and travel throughout the Empire to relish in his fame. The ideal administrator would be someone with enough authority to command a national organization but without enough power to usurp Clarke. Tyler suggested Hiram W. Evans.

Evans was a cut-rate dentist from Dallas who never graduated from dental school but who still boasted the title of "Doctor." Before joining the Klan he had gained prominence in his state as a Mason; he was president of the Texas Freemason, the state's Masonic monthly.

Evans, a fleshy, deceptively amiable man, rose swiftly to the position of exalted cyclops of the Dallas Klan, one of the largest in the nation. In his early days with the Klan, Evans reportedly led a band of vigilantes who branded the letters "KKK" in acid on the forehead of a black bellhop. Mrs. Tyler brought him to Atlanta after he used his Masonic influence to successfully quell an anti-Klan movement among the Texas Masons. 17

Clarke and Tyler first installed Evans as "Imperial Dragon" to act as an intercessor between high-ranking officers in the Propagation Department (goblins and king kleagles) and their counterparts in the Klan proper (dragons, titans, and cyclops). The Imperial Dragon, however, did not legally exist under the Klan constitution and could not, therefore, sit upon the "Imperial Kloncilium" (board of national officers). If he wanted to bring Evans closer to the throne, Clarke would have to create a vacancy among the Imperial cabinet. He made the mistake of choosing to oust the

Imperial Kligrapp (secretary), Louis D. Wade. Wade, a Bell telephone executive, fell into the clutches of Abbie McGhee, a young trollop under Savage's employ. Mrs. McGhee lured Wade to an apartment where he became intoxicated (or else drugged). After several compromising photos were taken, police were called in who arrested him for possession of liquor. The evidence was presented before a board of Imperial officers who voted to fire Wade. He was replaced by Evans. 18

Wade, like Upchurch, had worked with Clarke since the Klan's salad days. He did not take his firing gracefully. He stormed to the courts and alleged what other Klansmen had suspected for some time: that Clarke had "gained complete control" over Simmons and had "either kept him drunk" or had "taken advantage of his drunken condition." Wade charged that Clarke as acting Imperial Wizard had assumed authoritarian control over the Klondilium punishing any officer who disagreed with him by dismissal. As Imperial secretary Wade had acquired addresses of all Klan chapters; this enabled him to distribute literature to the subordinate units of the order proclaiming a "rebellion inside the order" that could only be quashed by ridding the Klan of Clarke and Tyier. 19

After Wade publicized his account, other Klansmen began adding up the bits and pieces of gossip. If Clarke had some sort of Disraeli-like control over the weakened Wizard, it would explain why the head kleagle had never been discharged after Simmons promised to fire him, why Simmons had exonerated Clarke without denying the charges against him, and why Simmons had rarely been seen in public since the Congressional hearing. Editor


19 Klan v. Wade, passim.
Ralph McGill quoted a close friend of Simmons as suggesting that Clarke had "hog-tied" the Wizard with "incriminating pictures":

... Clarke was running things and Doc was on a salary. Doc [Simmons' nickname among his Atlanta cronies, originating from his brief fling at a professorship at Lanier University] was sitting around daily in a perpetual state of bourbon-beatitude, no longer consulted by Clarke. He didn't seem to care. He had money, people called him Colonel. He belonged. People sort of loved old Doc and him [sic] there mellow-drunk, with his habitual courtesy and brotherhood. A lot of them hated Clarke.20

Clarke's Control Crumbles

As Imperial Wizard Pro Tem, Clarke did not further endear himself to his fellow Klansmen with his series of radical departures from Klankraft in the latter half of 1922.

In the interest of forming an international Klan, Clarke sent J. O. Wood as his emissary to Europe. On July 28, 1922, Wood announced a tentative agreement between the Klan, the "Second Hundred Thousand" of Great Britain, and the "Caucasian League of France" to form an international fraternity "for the maintenance of white supremacy." Among the proposed names for this cosmopolitan brotherhood were the "Anglo-Saxon Union" and the "World-Wide Caucasian Union."21 No such union ever transpired, presumably because a merger with foreign elements would have clashed with the nationalistic, "100 per cent American" tenets of the Klan.

If this proposition for a League of Klans failed to rile some members of the order, Clarke's new regulation concerning Klan regalia unquestionably caused to flare a few tempers. His ban on the use of hoods and robes outside Klan lodges came in response to an urging by Georgia Governor

20 McGill, South and the Southerner, 134.

Thomas W. Hardwick to dispense with the masks. Hardwick had at one time supported, and had been supported by, the Klan but fell into the organization's disfavor when he refused to appoint certain Klansmen to lucrative state jobs. Clarke's move to appease the governor "in order to avoid even the appearance of evil" pleased Hardwick but greatly upset Klansmen who felt their very identity being stripped away. Clarke backtracked a few days later, saying that his proclamation referred only to Georgia rather than to the entire Invisible Empire, as had been previously reported, and that the measure was only temporary. Clarke's directive was openly defied less than six weeks later by members of the Atlanta Klan drum and bugle corps which marched in the city's Labor Day parade in full regalia, including masks. One of the buglers said to a reporter afterward, "We are tired of being legislated to death by a man who ought not to be in supreme control." Clarke's softening stance toward blacks further exasperated his subordinates. In an August 1922 interview Clarke revealed that he had formed an "alliance" with the Negro visionary Marcus Garvey. He added that it was not inconceivable that Negroes might someday be admitted to the lower orders of the Klan. "The Negro question has ceased to be," Clarke told the correspondent after a conference with Garvey. Clarke voiced support of the Negro leader's "back-to-Africa" movement which

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practical Southerners scorned as a potential drain of their cheapest labor.24

The collapse of Clarke's popularity was accelerated in the autumn of 1922 when he was indicted separately for violations of the Volstead Act and Section 215 of the U. S. Postal Code. The first arrest came in Muncie, Indiana, where he was to speak at a rally; authorities, on a tip, found a quart of liquor in his luggage. He maintained that he was framed, and it is a distinct possibility that his own dirty tricksters were turning on him. He was later acquitted.25

The postal code violation, using the mails in a scheme to defraud, grew out of charges by the four dissident goblins that Clarke had a "rake-off" of bonds required of all high officials of the Klan. He had allegedly notified his subordinate officers throughout the country that they had to be put under bond. He secured a blanket bond contract with a surety company, then charged a premium per officer that would leave himself a profit. After the bond contract was dropped, he remained quiet about it and continued to collect the premiums. The charges were dropped years later after Klan records which the U. S. attorney relied upon disappeared, and after the government's star witness had been arrested for bootlegging and for counterfeiting liquor revenue stamps.26

Although Clarke was never prosecuted for these two charges, the arrests prompted him to remove himself from the Klan's helm. On the day after the indictment for mail fraud he announced his intention to resign

24Valdosta (Ga.) Times, Aug. 22, 1922, Georgia Clippings Scrapbooks, 17:74.


to fight the charges against himself and to turn the Wizardship back to Simmons. A national klondvocation (convention) was slated for the following month to elect a new Wizard, or re-elect Simmons, as the case might be.²⁷

Clarke's resignation might have stemmed partially from fears of future probes by the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation. Since the Congressional hearing, official Washington had remained largely silent about the Klan, referring complaints to local law enforcement officials. However, a young Bureau official named J. Edgar Hoover was beginning to create some rumblings in the nation's capital. A New Orleans Times-Picyune reporter, Paul Wooten, visited Hoover in September 1922 with correspondence from Louisiana Governor John M. Parker. Hoover was shocked to learn that the governor had to send a messenger because the Klan had gained control of the state's communication network.²⁸

Following Hoover's suggestion Parker directed his plea to President Harding. The letter focused on Parker's confessed inability to suppress lawlessness in the Klan-infested Morehouse parish in northern Louisiana near the Arkansas border.

The most notorious incident in the Morehouse parish occurred on August 24, 1922, when a band of men in masks and black robes halted a caravan of cars returning from a picnic. Two men from the town of Mer Rouge (who were known to have offended Klansmen from the nearby rival city of Bastrop) were dragged from their families and never seen alive again. Governor Parker was alerted to the incident by the wife of one of the victims.

Parker's letter to Harding brought national attention to the Mer Rouge murders and added infamy to the Klan. Justice Department investigators, Klan investigators, and the National Guard were all sent to the parish as the two feuding towns were on the verge of civil war. In late December 1922 a mysterious explosion drew crowds to the shores of Lake La Fourche, near Mer Rouge, where two bodies floated to the surface. The mangled headless corpses bore marks of hideous torture and mutilation. They were identifiable as the bodies of the two missing men only by their clothing.29

Clarke's official response to the recovery of the bodies was one of his most ineffectual and indicated either a lack of comprehension of the seriousness of the matter or, more likely, a preoccupation with matters outside his public relations responsibilities. The incident, he stated, was "just another" crime charged to the Klan by its enemies. He said that he had it on good authority that another organization with regalia similar to the Klan's was in existence in their region. Its leader was a Civil War veteran whose name he could not recall. In reality, the exalted cyclops of the Bastrop Klan was a Civil War veteran by the name of "Captain" J. K. Skipwith. Although the robes worn by the abductors were at variance from standard Klan regalia, no one else was seriously asserting that there were any other hooded orders in the area. After pledging Klan assistance to the governor "despite his unjust attacks on the Klan," Clarke then launched into a cheery progress report on Klan

29 Duffus, "How The Ku Klux Klan Sells Hate," 174 f.
membership.\footnote{Shreveport Times, Dec. 29, 1922, ACLU Archives, 228:219.}

An investigation by two successive grand juries, both heavily loaded with Klansmen, failed to result in any indictments. Nevertheless the damage inflicted upon the Klan by all the publicity surrounding Mer Rouge extended far beyond the borders of Morehouse parish.

With outrage from outside the Klan over Mer Rouge and outrage within the Klan over his bungling administration and growing list of arrests and iniquities, E. Y. Clarke decided to retreat from the heat of the kitchen into the Klan parlor.

**The Sunday Morning Massacre**

On Saturday, November 26, 1922, thousands of prominent Klansmen from all over the Invisible Empire packed into Atlanta for the order’s first national convention. Colonel Simmons stayed up late that night, drinking and carousing with some of his old friends. At three o'clock on Sunday morning, not long after the Wizard had fallen asleep, he was rousted out of bed by Fred Savage and a kleagle from Indiana, named David C. Stephenson.

The two intruders told Simmons that unless he agreed to a plan to surrender his throne to Hiram Evans, they would see that his first national convention degenerated into a bloodbath. They persuaded Simmons to split his office, giving the title of Wizard to Evans while he remained Emperor, a title he seldom used except on official documents. Emperor would be a life-time position in which he could collect a salary, dabble in Klankraft and no longer be harried by bureaucratic headaches. Ostensibly,
Simmons was to have supreme power over the dark mysteries of Klan ritual while Evans administrated the order. Simmons reluctantly agreed to the arrangement.

Later that morning Clarke met with Stephenson and pre-arranged to have the chairman of the Indiana delegation nominate Evans who was not unknown to the delegates; he had travelled widely during his stint as Imperial Dragon and had quickly ingratiated himself among his fellow officers. But it would take Clarke's consent and his control at the podium to ensure that someone else was not spontaneously nominated and elected. Clarke is not usually listed as one of the architects of the conspiracy, and it is difficult to determine his role. He might have been blackmailed into compliance, though there is no evidence to support this. For his cooperation in the coup d'état his propagation contract was renewed. In announcing his resignation the previous month Clarke probably had no intention of retiring out of range of his commission; he would just collect his percentage from behind the scenes and let Evans do the dirty work. Clarke also bargained for, and received, responsibility for his pet project, propagating the Klan overseas.31

Soon after the convention began that Sunday morning Clarke threw the floor open for nominations for Wizard. Indiana nominated Evans, as planned, and the Texas delegation seconded the nomination. Then a cyclops from New York City nominated Clarke. As Clarke later described the reaction (with possibly a little coloring), "... a tremendous burst of applause came, and before I knew it ... in less than one minute E. Y. Clarke was by acclamation the first Imperial Wizard of the Knights of the

Ku Klux Klan under its national Klonvokation orders." His nomination was probably rehearsed; he turned it down and threw his support to Evans. Savage was promoted to Imperial Klaliff (vice-president), Evans was ultimately elected Wizard and Simmons was appointed Emperor; Clarke was given a token "Hero's Cross," along with the title of "Imperial Giant," or Imperial Wizard emeritus. Tyler received a bouquet of red roses.

Clarke found the parlor perhaps a bit too cool for his liking and leaped back into the kitchen barely a month after the klonvocation. Without consulting Evans he announced a "radical revision" of the Klan that would include:

1. the extension of the Klan's membership to all Caucasian races;
2. the repeal of the provision of Klan law prohibiting Catholics from joining the order; and
3. a massive membership drive in Europe.

"How could we afford to antagonize Catholics," Clarke asked, "when we are just about to launch our world-wide organization and spread to all the white races of the world of which so many are Catholics."

Fred Savage was not Catholic, but he was thoroughly antagonized over Clarke's "revision." He publicly accused the Giant of overlooking the rest of the Imperial officers, and of having "gone off half-cocked." Clarke replied that he knew what he was doing and called a news conference. He waved a batch of letters before the reporters and said they were invitations from leaders of the Italian Fascisti to form an alliance between the black shirts and the white sheets. Clarke also hinted that he

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32 New York World, Dec. 30, 1922, ACLU Archives, 204:191

might soon have the cooperation of Britain's Labor Party. He did, however, modify his proposed broadening of membership by excluding Jews.  

Though Clarke's new radical proposals undoubtedly vexed Savage, there is no evidence that the Klaliff turned his investigators loose to find incriminating charges against the Giant. Assuming that he did, the scandalmongers would have been hard pressed to find anything in Clarke's shady past that had not already been smeared across America's front pages. Nevertheless, someone's investigators turned over evidence to the Justice Department that led to Clarke's arrest in March 1923 for violation of the Mann (White Slave Traffic) Act. The Mann Act, passed in 1910, was aimed against the transportation of females in interstate and foreign commerce for immoral purposes. In Clarke's case, however, the crime was a simple tryst in a New Orleans hotel with a young lady from Houston. Pretty Miss Laural Martin, 22, alleged that Clarke had sent her money to come to Louisiana where she registered in a hotel on February 11, 1921, as Mrs. E. Y. Clarke. The fact that Miss Martin's brother Johnny was a convicted bank robber of some note did not enhance Clarke's case.  

Five days after Clarke's arrest, Hiram Evans cancelled his propagation contract "for the good of the order" and severed all his official connections with the Klan. Evans proclaimed that money incoming from propagation activities would "henceforth be turned back into the extension work of the order to its immeasurable benefit." It is not inconceivable that some of the incoming funds ended up in Evans' pocket. He had reportedly asked for Tyler's share of the propagation commissions when

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he became Wizard. Clarke had refused and had thus further deteriorated his relations with the Klan's new leader. 36

Clarke called his arrest "simply another effort to discredit me and, through discrediting me, damage the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan." Nevertheless he pleaded guilty a year later and was fined $5,000. 37

Whatever romantic relations Tyler might have had with Clarke apparently evaporated in the heat of publicity. She remarried in late 1923 (to Stephen Grow, an Atlanta film entrepreneur). Caleb Ridley officiated. Not long after the propagation contract was cancelled and her Klan income halted, she moved to California where she died in 1924. By one account she salvaged three-quarters of a million dollars. 38

At about the same time Clarke and Tyler were permanently ousted, Simmons began to realize that he had received what journalists later dubbed "The Order of the Double Cross." While skimming through a newly printed copy of the Klan constitution as it had been revised at the recent klavention, he was staggered to discover that the article pertaining to his duties as Emperor had been edited out. He stormed to Evans who only laughed in his face. 39

In May 1923 a board composed of prominent Klansmen selected by


38 Fuller, Maelstrom, 18.

39 Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 105.
Simmons and Evans met to settle the dispute. The members agreed to let Evans remain as Imperial Wizard and Simmons would remain Emperor and receive $1,000 a month in recognition of his copy rights of Klan ritual. Only Caleb Ridley voted to restore Simmons as Wizard.\textsuperscript{40}

The Emperor was unhappy over the board's decision and put up an admirable fight to regain control of his Klan. He staged parades as demonstrations of the zeal of his faction. One such parade, in Marietta, Georgia, featured floats bearing the messages "Real Klansmen Follow Leader Colonel William Joseph Simmons," and "The Klan Is Not Tottering, Just Housecleaning."\textsuperscript{41} The deposed Wizard went on the road, appearing at "monster rallies" of as many as 20,000 Klansmen. Before speaking at a large barbecue celebration in Beaumont, Texas (40 steers were cooked for the occasion), Simmons told a reporter that he intended to make the Klan conform to his image or "abandon it altogether." "The order of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is in a peculiar sense my child," he said. "If I cannot save my offspring from prostitution, I shall at least never contribute to its degradation."\textsuperscript{42}

When Simmons announced the formation of his long-conceived women's order, the "Knights of Kamelia," Evans ordered his Klansmen to disregard it and formed his own women's group, the "Women of the Ku Klux Klan." When the largest Atlanta chapter voiced its support of Simmons, Evans promptly suspended the entire unit. As a technical reason for the suspension he pointed out that Simmons had exempted his charter Klan from

\textsuperscript{40} Jackson, \textit{Ku Klux Klan in the City}, 16.

\textsuperscript{41} Atlanta \textit{Constitution}, Apr. 10, 1923, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{42} Shreveport \textit{Times}, June 30, 1923, ACLU Archives, 231:360.
paying dues.⁴³

**Schisms in the Hoosier State**

While Evans feuded with Simmons he faced yet another threat to his powers in the person of Indiana's David C. Stephenson. Stephenson, who was called a "human dynamo," succeeded in applying high-pressure selling techniques to promoting the Klan. He joined the order in September 1921 at the age of 30. Within a year he climbed from ordinary Klansman to exalted cyclops to king kleagle. In exchange for his part in the conspiracy to oust Simmons, Evans gave the young king kleagle a measure of independence with his Indiana program and a degree of control over all the Midwestern states. Utilizing a strong anti-Catholic pitch Stephenson quickly built the Midwest into the strongest Klan region; he vaulted Indiana's membership alone to nearly one-half million, with almost that many in Ohio and Illinois.

Stephenson was the most flamboyant of all Klan notables. He adorned his short chubby body with bright orange or silken purple robes. He kept a yacht on Lake Huron, entertained lavishly, and administered Hoosier Klan affairs from a luxurious suite of offices atop an Indianapolis skyscraper. His professed goal was no less than the Presidency of the United States, and few who encountered the flaming cannonball during his heyday doubted that he would soon reside in the White House. The ambitious magnetic Hoosier who kept a bust of Napolean on his desk inevitably clashed with the more conservative Wizard Evans. They quarrelled over numerous personal and Klan matters, but their final breach grew from Stephenson's desire to purchase Valparaiso (Ind.) University. The school, operating since 1859, was

⁴³*Imperial Night-Hawk*, June 23, 1923, p. 5; July 18, 1923, p. 4.
in deep financial trouble and welcomed Stephenson's offer to rescue it and turn it into the Klan's Harvard. Evans refused to cooperate and give Stephenson the necessary million dollars. Stephenson later grumbled that the Imperial officers had pledged $100,000 to initiate construction of the Stone Mountain Memorial to the Confederacy, "yet they refused to give a single dollar for Valparaiso University to help educate the patriots of the north who saved the Union to posterity; [sic] unsullied from the contamination of southern traitors." Stephenson was ready to fight the Civil War all over again. 44

The Indiana grand dragon resigned in September 1923, but the fiercest struggle did not ensue until 1924 when Stephenson pooled his many followers and formed an autonomous Klan in Indiana, and threatened to do the same in other states where he had a loyal following. He and Evans announced a temporary truce to unify the Klan for the 1924 elections but privately they continued to feud. 45

Stephenson's power ended abruptly in early 1925 when he was arrested for the murder-sex-torture of homely 28-year-old Madge Oberholzer. He allegedly abducted the woman, forced her to drink to the point of intoxication, raped her aboard a Pullman car between Indianapolis and Chicago, and inflicted painful wounds upon her with his teeth. He then tried to pacify his victim with an offer of marriage. Miss Oberholzer apparently considered marriage to Stephenson as a fate worse than death; she poisoned herself and died a few weeks later.

44 Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in The City, 155, Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, 168.
45 Davis, dissertation, 77.
Stephenson was convicted of second-degree murder and sent to prison, where he remained for the next 31 years.

Evans was at first elated over his antagonist's arrest and openly advocated a just prosecution. The incident only created more dissension in Indiana and throughout the Klan, however; Stephenson's supporters suspected that some of Evan's agents had cleverly framed their man, pointing out discrepancies in Miss Oberholzer's deathbed testimony. Although Stephenson had not officially been a Klan officer since 1923, the public still identified him closely with the order. His conviction was the worst slur on the organization since the Mer Rouge murders.

Klan Public Relations under Hiram Evans

The external sour publicity and internal discord created by the three-way feud between Simmons, Evans and Stephenson called for an effective public relations program that Evans was never able to muster. After he fired Clarke he drafted Philip E. Fox as his chief public relations man. Fox, former city editor of the Dallas Times-Herald, came to the Imperial Palace first as a speech writer, then was named editor of the newly established Imperial Night-Hawk.

The Night-Hawk became a factional tool to combat Searchlight, which still supported Simmons. After Searchlight ran a special edition with a streamer headline proclaiming: "There Is But One Ku Klux Klan And William Joseph Simmons Is Its Head," the Night-Hawk announced that the paper was not an official organ of the Klan and published "untruthful and misleading information." When Searchlight announced that Georgia Klan chapters were seceding in favor of Simmons, the Night-Hawk quoted Georgia's grand dragon bragging that "Our membership in the home state is greater than ever before." When it was established that the Chicago
Klan had indeed seceded, the Night-Hawk rationalized that the Illinois members had been "misled by the insidious propaganda against the national [Evans] administration" of the Klan. Ultimately the Evans faction silenced Searchlight by buying out the newspaper and converting it into a strictly regional publication. J. O. Wood was retained as the editor.46

The Night-Hawk was also used to promote Evans' Women of the Ku Klux Klan over Simmons' Kamelia. Evans' female Klan was formed by the coalition of various Protestant Klan-like women's groups which had an initial combined membership of 125,000.47

The ladies' Klan provided a means for Evans to re-farm territory already organized and exhausted under Simmons' regime; Klansmen's wives were ready customers and officer's wives were used as kleagles.

"Imperial Commander" Robbie Gill, the fiancee of Arkansas Grand Dragon James A. Comer, made apparent attempts to orient the women's Klan toward charitable activities. She challenged her charges to build Protestant hospitals rather than criticize Catholic hospitals, to improve public schools rather than condemn parochial institutions. Despite these noble goals, the Women of the Klan never amounted to much more than a gossipy auxiliary to their Klan brothers.48

Evans also saw a potential source of Klan initiates in young men coming of age. To groom them for future membership he formed the "Junior Knights of the Ku Klux Klan"--"to inculcate into the members a desire to live clean and wholesome lives, keep the laws of our land and honor the flag." Boys 12 to 18 were eligible. The Junior Klan especially

46Imperial Night-Hawk, Aug. 29, 1923, p. 4; Sept. 12, 1923, p.3; Oct. 3, 1923, p. 4; Oct. 24, 1923, pp.7 f.


48Davis, dissertation, 145 f.
flourished in the Midwest where groups were under the tutelage of local adult Klans. Senior Klansmen were assigned as sponsors to set up sporting events, summer camps, father-and-son banquets, picnics and joint meetings. Indianapolis was selected as headquarters for the Junior Klan, but since many senior chapters had already initiated their own programs for boys (and in some regions, for girls), no central organization ever evolved.49

At the height of the Simmons-Evans-Stephenson warfare Phil Fox ended his career with the Klan by murdering William S. Coburn, Simmons' attorney, former Imperial Klounsel, and ex-grand goblin. Fox's motives were murky, "God told me to do it," he reportedly said, bringing forth speculation that Hiram Evans had been deified. Rumors abounded that Evans and Savage had blackmailed Fox and had ordered him to murder Simmons, Clarke, Coburn, and Simmons' chief of staff, Fred B. Johnson.50

Evans remained silent about the arrest of his public relations director. Simmons, apparently fearing his own assassination, fled to Birmingham, surrounded by bodyguards. From there he sniped at Evans for hiding out, saying that if his publicity director had committed murder, he would have come into the open and faced the press who were "justly entitled to any information available on the subject." The Klan, Simmons lamented, was "on the rocks."51

This comment aroused Evans to reply that Simmons' statement "could only mean that [the Klan] is resting spiritually upon the Rock of Ages . . . and financially upon the rock of solidarity as solid as Stone

49 Ibid., 135 f, Avin, dissertation, 139.

50 Milwaukee Leader, Nov. 9, 1923, ACLU Archives, 228:145.

51 Columbus Enquirer-Sun, n.d., Harris Papers, BV 6, #5.
Mountain." The shooting, he added, was strictly "a personal affair between two individuals" in which the Klan as an organization was not involved.

Fox never admitted that the murder had anything to do with Klan factionalism. He pleaded temporary paranoid insanity and received a life sentence. He was pardoned about ten years later and returned to publicity work in his native Texas, participating in the successful "pass around the biscuits" campaign for Governor W. Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel.  

In all the confusion and factionalism surrounding the Imperial Palace, Klan communications were falling into chaos. The Night-Hawk continued to emanate tidings from the official administration, but other Klan periodicals, as many as 60 across the country, were variously pro-Evans, pro-Simmons, or pro-Stephenson. To replace Fox, Evans wooed Milton Elrod, editor of the Indiana Fiery Cross, from Stephenson's camp. As discussed in Chapter IV, Elrod made an effort to consolidate the content of the regional Klan publications. He and Evans established the "Bureau of Publications and Education" in Washington as a central communication office--"a medium of expression and [of] furnishing publicity." In announcing this new service to Klansmen, Elrod made no attempt to disguise an authoritarian effort to manage Klan news:

That the Washington Bureau will speak authoritatively for the Klan on matters of policy is understood. . . . Not only has the Klan found it necessary to build up its own newsgathering organization and furnish its members with uncolored news, but it hopes, through its editorial columns, to inculcate the fundamental principles of the Klan doctrine in the minds of the American people to

52 Imperial Night-Hawk, Nov. 14, 1923, p. 4.

53 Venable interview, Tucker, Ga., May 21, 1924.
the extent that all groups may become assimilated into a solidified American electorate expressing the will of the American people who will form their own curative remedies.”

Elrod also reportedly collaborated with journalist Stanley Frost on a book, *The Challenge of the Klan*, published in Indianapolis in 1924. Though the book, based mostly on Frost's magazine articles in *Outlook* and the *Nation*, was not altogether flattering toward the Klan, it was strongly pro-Evans and anti-Simmons.

Evans himself wrote competently. He authored articles about the Klan for several national magazines, including *World's Work*, *North American Review*, *Forum*, and *Current History Magazine*. He wrote a number of pamphlets stating the Klan's position on various issues and also published a book in 1923, *The Whole Truth Behind the Effort to Destroy the Ku Klux, promoting his faction over Simmons*.

E. Y. Clarke, sensing an opportunity in the factionalism that was rending the Klan, made one more power play. In late December 1923 he sent a long letter to President Coolidge denouncing the Klan as a "cheap political machine." Clarke told the president that he was speaking for "hundreds of thousands of magnificent men" in offering his assistance in either "forcing the lawless element out of the Klan" or else "stamping out . . . the menace the Ku Klux Klan has become." The White House accepted his letter with Coolidge-like equanimity. A spokesman rebuked Clarke for leaking the letter to the press before it had reached the president; he voiced the opinion that the communication was written more for publicity than for serious consideration by the Chief Executive.

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54 *Imperial Night-Hawk*, Nov. 19, 1923, pp. 2 f.

The White House spokesman may well have been close to the mark. There was some speculation afterward that Clarke's letter was part of a plea bargain to discredit the Klan in return for escaping a prison sentence for his Mann Act violation.56

Less than a week after his letter to Coolidge, Clarke called for a "national congress" of the Klan to meet in Atlanta on February 26, 1924, to consider methods of eliminating existing evils in the order. He hinted that no end was in sight for the Evans-Simmons feud, so the only solution would be for Klansmen to unite behind E. Y. Clarke.57

Evans apparently took Clarke's plans seriously and made a rash move to scuttle them. He made Simmons an offer that the ex-Wizard could not refuse: would he consent to receiving his $1,000 per month settlement in a lump sum in exchange for abandoning Kameia and his other insurgent activities? The $145,500 bundle was too much temptation for the colonel; he sold his "offspring" to Evans, lock, stock and tarbucket. This left Clarke, Evans noted with some satisfaction, "high and dry."58

Clarke held his national congress on schedule anyway. Only 150 of his "hundreds of thousands of magnificent men" showed up.59

Simmons stayed true to his new agreement with Evans and never again meddled in Klan affairs. He took his newly acquired cash and formed another fraternal order, "The Knights of the Flaming Sword," out of his remaining die-hard supporters. Most of Simmons' followers deserted him.

56 Shreveport Times, Dec. 28, 1923, ACLU Archives, 228:107; Fuller, Nigger in the Woodpile, 92.


58 Ibid., Feb. 13, 1924, p. 5.

59 Oklahoma Leader, Feb. 27, 1924, ACLU Archives.
however, for accepting his 30 pieces of silver. His former organ
Searchlight, for example, bid him good riddance, saying that other
than founding the Klan, the ex-Wizard had contributed nothing to the
order.60

The Flaming Sword was soon snuffed out, and Simmons formed another
organization, "The White Knights." After the White Knights went into
the red and depleted his fortune, Simmons forever gave up fraternalizing.
He retired to his native Alabama where he died in 1945 at the age of 65.

By 1925, with Simmons, Stephenson and Clarke all out of his path,
Evans saw the Klan reach a peak membership of an estimated four to six
million. His swan song came on August 8, 1925, when he personally led
a Klan parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. Estimates for the
number of Klansmen who marched in that parade ran from 40,000 to over
100,000. Large crowds turned out to watch the hooded (though unmasked)
Klansmen march to protest the pending legislation that the United States
join the World Court. The cavalcade lasted four hours with Klansmen
strutting 16 to 20 abreast, but official Washington took little notice.
President Coolidge, who had been invited to review the parade, found
occasion to be out of town on the day of the promenade.61

The Klan's sudden demise of power after 1925 was almost as
spectacular as the order's ascension. The membership dropped from its
apex to about two million in 1926, plummeted to 350,000 by 1927, and
sunk to a very scattered 200,000 in 1928.62

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60."Colonel Simmons and $146,000, from KKK to K.F.S.," Literary
Digest, Mar. 8, 1924, p. 40.


62 Clark R. Mollenhoff, untitled, unpublished draft, Clark R.
Mollenhoff Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, MSS 46AF, box 133,
III:21. Mollenhoff's manuscript deals mostly with the Klan of the 1950s
and 1960s.
Although the reasons for its decline are as diverse as those for its initial success, the straw that might be considered to have crushed the proverbial camel's back was the D. C. Stephenson conviction. The affair was widely publicized and became an embarrassment to Klansmen, who began taking a more critical look at the organization they had espoused. The Clarke-Tyler expose, the Mer Rouge murders, the Coburn assassination, and poor Madge Oberholzer--maybe the Klan really was as sordid as the press had asserted all along. Klansmen began dropping out in droves.

One Klansman of the period whom the researcher interviewed suggested that the Klan simply fell of its own weight. Evans, he believed, was guilty of being totally indiscriminate about the quality of Klansmen recruited. Whereas Simmons' organization centered around first recruiting community leaders, from mayors to ministers to Masons, then selectively contacting prospective members, Evans wanted only votes to elect Klan candidates. As a result his organizers signed up virtually every white Protestant with the wherewithal to pay a klecktoken (which he lowered to $2.50), and the Klan became empoisoned with rabble. Vigilantism became more the rule than the exception, with offending Caucasians (bootleggers, philanderers, prostitutes and the like) more likely the targets of terrorism than non-Protestants or non-whites. Two other old-time Klansmen interviewed concurred--they personally hung up their robes when their chapters "turned to whipping."

Hiram Evans continued to boss the Klan even after its rapid decline, though he went into the asphalt business on the side to support himself. He retired as Imperial Wizard in 1939. In the 1940s and 1950s the weakened order was fragmented into several independent Klans, becoming
what one journalist described as a "many-splintered thing," which well
describes its state at this writing.63

Clarke's Pinwheel into Oblivion

The 150 Clarke-ites who appeared in Atlanta on February 26, 1924,
formed the nucleus of his new organization, the "Knights of the Mystic
Clan." The Mystic Clan avowedly opposed the Klan and Evans, as well
as Simmons, whom it branded as a traitor. Clarke began his order with
chapters ("castles") in seven states and headquarters in Kansas City.64

By July 1924 Clarke changed the name of his order to the "Mystic
Kingdom" and developed a more positive, if overly broad, approach. The
Kingdom, he said, was "created to weld together the Protestant white
people of the world into a universal movement for the furtherance of the
Protestant faith and the preservation of racial integrity." Claiming a
strength of 5,000, Clarke announced the organization's grand intentions
to build a one million dollar maternity hospital in Atlanta and a two
million dollar narcotics sanitarium in Chicago. A conservatory of music
was also in the works, Clarke said.65

As the Mystic Kingdom began to fade, Clarke saw in the famous Scopes
trial a more specific cause around which to drape an order. In early
1926 he formed the "Supreme Kingdom" to "drive out of the schools and
colleges of the nation all proponents of evolution, atheism, or
revolution."66

63 Ibid., IV:6.
64 Oklahoma Leader, Feb. 27, 1924, ACLU Archives, 228:90; New
Clarke's new organization, an amalgamation of several anti-evolution societies, intended to remove from schools and colleges all textbooks teaching evolution and all teachers and professors who lectured on the theory. "The Kingdom has gone on record as intending to fight with the weapon of publicity every preacher and teacher who is a supporter of the theory." Clarke declared, "and also every politician antagonistic to the aims of the order."\(^{67}\)

Clarke hired Billy Sunday's former campaign manager, Fred W. Rapp, as the Kingdom's "director of organization," and the order developed a strong fundamentalist fervor. E. Y. Clarke convicted white slaver and alleged adulterer, piously advocated:

We shall seek to bring back the thrill of old-time religion to the people of America. We are a people loving "thrills," and yet we are drifting away from the thing which has given and still can give the biggest thrill of all to any human being, namely, a good dose of the old-time religion of our forefathers.\(^{68}\)

In May 1924 Clarke announced a five million dollar drive for funds for future activities of the Supreme Kingdom which included: a "Lydian Temple" music museum in the suburbs of Atlanta; at least a half dozen radio stations, the first of which would be built on Tennessee's Lookout Mountain; and a "Music Exposition" to be held in Atlanta that fall. The amount would also be necessary to help the organization accomplish certain political goals. "We are laying down our plans carefully for the Presidential election two years hence," Clarke explained. "We will have an organization in every political precinct in the United States."\(^{67,68}\)
States by that time." The New York Times editorialized that five million dollars was a rather paltry subsidy for such grandiose plans.69

Clarke opened his new order to Jews and Catholics, banned the use of hoods and masks, and charged no initiation fee. The Kingdom was well on the way to a measure of success, spreading to 16 states, before it was stymied by Clarke's old nemesis, the press. This time the David that tripped up Goliath was the little Macon (Ga.) Telegraph. When a Kingdom lecturer was scheduled to speak in Macon, the Telegraph sent reporters to check out the organization. They uncovered at least five separate financial schemes surrounding the Supreme Kingdom, all of them designed to enrich E. Y. Clarke.

It was true that an initiate, or "Pioneer" member, paid no fee. However, the Telegraph revealed, if a member wanted to attend meetings or vote or otherwise participate in the functions of the order, he had to at least become a "Crusader" member. Charge: $12.50, of which Clarke pocketed over $8.00. Other memberships followed for increasing fees, thus enabling a denizen of the Supreme Kingdom to literally buy his way up the hierarchy--to a maximum of $1,000 for a "foundation" membership. Clarke's commission ranged from 50 to 75 per cent of all fees.70

While it might also have been true that the Supreme Kingdom was, as its charter declared, "not organized for pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof," all the financial business of the order was administered by the "Organization Service Company," a separate corporation. To no

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69 Ibid., May 25, 1926, p. 6.

one's particular surprise, E. Y. Clarke was president of the Organization Service Company. His most recent female companion, Martha Marson, was a member of the company's "Board of Control" and was also the Kingdom's secretary. 71

Dynamite, the Kingdom's house organ, called the order "the religious, patriotic and benevolent organization to combat atheism and its accursed alley, evolution." The Telegraph alleged that Clarke, to alert potential members to the threat of these two enemies, had atheistic literature printed in Atlanta and distributed as though it had emanated from the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. 72

Clarke eventually changed the name of his organization to "Esskaye, Inc." but his premise was little different. He again offered "Pioneer" memberships, but this time charged $250 which would give pioneer members the privilege of selling lesser memberships. Clarke promised his investors inflated returns, and when these profits failed to materialize, several angry speculators who had dumped funds into Esskaye brought charges against him in 1930. He was later fined $2,000 by a Georgia civil court for convictions of cheating and swindling. 73

Clarke and Esskaye surfaced in Chicago in 1932 in a big way—with plans to end the Great Depression. He leased half a floor of an office building on the Loop, hired a staff of 50, and claimed a present membership of 75,000 and a projected strength of 15 million. The essence of Clarke's plan was to build Esskaye to the point where it could impose its

71 Ibid., 14.
72 Ibid.
73 Chicago Herald-Examiner, May 3, 1932, p. 3.
will on Congress to effect farm price controls in much the same way that the state commerce commissions could fix utility rates. "We'll put the farm bill over this session," he told reporters. "We have three senators and several representatives lined up as a steering committee and have enough votes pledged to put it through both houses, if a congressman's word means anything." Clarke seemed to believe that these price controls would ensure prosperity for all and he promised to establish an Esskaye "economic research bureau" in Washington as a hedge toward future financial crises.\textsuperscript{74}

Clarke issued his investors "pre-organization certificates" which were subsequently declared by the Illinois Attorney's office as violating the state's security act. He evaded prosecution by invalidating the contracts before his case was adjudicated.\textsuperscript{75}

His escape from retribution was only temporary. On May 4, 1934, E. Y. Clarke and Martha Marson Clarke were convicted by a federal court on six of seven counts charging use of the mails to defraud in connection with Esskaye. On July 19, 1934, Clarke was sentenced to five years in the Atlanta penitentiary, and his wife two years in a women's prison.\textsuperscript{76}

The last entry this researcher was able to locate on E. Y. Clarke was dated March 25, 1949. He was being escorted from New York to Atlanta

\textsuperscript{74}Chicago Tribune, May 2, 1923, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{75}Chicago Herald Examiner, May 7, 1932, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{76}New York Times, May 5, 1934, p. 11; July 20, 1934, p. 4.
for violation of parole when he escaped from his parole supervisor at a Philadelphia train station. He still had four years of a seven-year sentence on a bad check charge hanging over him. He was 73.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{77}Attempts to locate members of the Clarke family in Atlanta were unsuccessful. The writer did contact two of Francis Clarke's former secretaries, neither of whom knew of any of the family's survivors. Attempts to locate prison records on E. Y. Clarke were likewise unsuccessful. The federal penitentiary in Atlanta refused to let the writer look at their files; however, a prison spokesman doubted that their records extended back far enough to cover Clarke's tenure there. The writer also called on the files division of the FBI in Washington, only to be told that all records are destroyed on subjects who have reached the age of 85. (E. Y. Clarke would be 98 if he were alive at this writing.) The Postal Department's Mail Fraud Order Jackets, which should contain records of Clarke's conviction in 1934 are located in The National Archives in Washington. However neither anyone in the Archives nor anyone in The Postal Department knows where the index is if one exists. Attempts to search through these jackets, one at a time, proved to be impracticable. The Atlanta Constitution's reference department has records of a file on E. Y. Clarke in their index; however, the Clarke file was missing when the writer was in Atlanta.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

"What this country needs is another Ku Klux Klan!"

Or so this writer was told on several occasions, travelling in the South doing research for this thesis. At one point the writer was even offered employment by a former Georgia grand dragon who was considering rejuvenation of another Klan organization. His lament and the cries of others for a re-birth of the Klan were perhaps in response to fears that the blacks were "taking over" the metropolitan South, that crime in their cities seemed out of control or simply that the world as they wanted it seemed to be slipping from their grasp. Pale vestiges of the Ku Klux Klan exist today in the form of a few weak scattered organizations that bear the name. It seems inconceivable in this ostensibly enlightened decade that the Ku Klux Klan could be regenerated to a strength of millions. Since the 1920s the United States has seen an Irish Catholic President and a Jewish Secretary of State who immigrated from Germany. Blacks are achieving the same social and economic status as whites in many sectors of American society, though not yet in equitable proportions, and domestic communists comprise only a tiny minority of the population. In short, many of the circumstances which led to the phenomenal growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s are barely present a half century later. Yet the emotional climate that brought the Klan to fore--frustration, unrest, insecurity, disillusion, alienation and distrust--still permeate the country. Some of the specific conditions that engendered a nativist
movement in the 1920s have disappeared, but the psychological environment is very much the same, on tap for another E. Y. Clarke who can offer solutions through appeals to conformity.

In writing this thesis it has been difficult to refrain from attributing a particular portion of the Klan's public relations activities to E. Y. Clarke's organization when, in fact, there was no evidence to prove that the particular action or response was not generated locally, independent of the Southern Publicity Association. It was never the purpose of the thesis to demonstrate the public relations expertise of any one person, but rather to illustrate how the tools of public relations were effectively used to mobilize public disaffection. During the early 1920s, however, nearly all of the Klan's units were provisional, meaning they were under the leadership of Clarke and his surrogates, and it was in this period that most of the events and tactics described herein were employed to propagate the Klan. E. Y. Clarke, with the aid of Elizabeth Tyler, initiated and dictated that campaign; their personalities and combined experience greatly influenced its outcome.

Neither has it been the purpose of this writer to pass moral judgment upon the messages communicated by the Klan's public relations effort, but rather to study the changes in those basic messages as they were adapted to the moods of various audiences. The concern has been for the methods rather than the content of Klan communication. The term "public relations" has acquired some unpleasant connotations of late because of shady tactics often labelled as public relations, and possibly because in a free society individuals resent the idea of having outside forces tamper with their cherished attitudes and opinions. The process of public relations, however, is amoral. It can be a
powerful weapon for whatever pernicious or virtuous elements employ the process effectively to regiment the societal mind.

E. Y. Clarke and his subordinates were able to create the illusion of socially responsible performance by presenting the Klan as an agency for reform. Apparently realizing that support could be aroused more effectually by stirring up emotions against perceived social ills rather than for high ideals, Clarke offered the Klan as a panacea. When he saw the limited appeal of white supremacy outside the South, he broadened the racist tenets of the order to include immigrants and Jews. To an audience concerned about further police strikes and corruption in government, Clarke offered the Klan as an organization to sustain law and order. To appeal to Americans upset over the declining morality in the nation, Clarke allied the Klan with Christianity as an expedient to protect motherhood and the sanctity of the home. To unify all these ideological strains he eventually gave his charges a common enemy—the Catholic. Rather than direct the Klan's messages toward some vague "general public," Clarke had his recruiters focus on the power complex—the economic elites, the opinion leaders, the institutional hierarchies, the special-interest group leaders—and thus influenced public opinion from within communities.

Public relations practitioners who rely on manufactured "images" for their institution occasionally find themselves, because of the gossamer fragility of public opinion, collecting the bits and shards of images shattered by a single crisis. William Joseph Simmons turned himself and his Klan over to professional image-builders who packaged and sold them to the public like soap or soda-pop. Impressed with the success of his impresarios, Simmons placed in them positions of power on
his staff. When they were exposed they denounced the press as "the enemy" which was trying to destroy the Klan with an underhanded attack on its leaders. Charges were denied in the face of overwhelming evidence which crude attempts to destroy could not suppress. When voices within the organization began speaking in protest they were rebuffed, dismissed or blackmailed. When the public began to realize that the canned images they had been fed did not match reality, a credibility gap arose and widened, and Klansmen lost faith in their leaders. Clarke and Tyler became so mired in their administrative morass that they ignored important continuing public relations functions. In contrast to earlier constructive efforts to offset lesser acts of terrorism attributed to the Klan, their virtual lack of response to the disastrous Mer Rouge affair indicates a crumbling public relations operation. They were unable to prevent the dissension that split the Klan into factions, each using public relations tools against the other.

Clarke worsened his own situation when he began making statements contrary to the doctrines he had previously propagandized. By advocating a Negro "alliance," acceptance of Catholics for membership, coalition with the Italian Fascisti and internationalism, and by attempting to regulate the public wearing of the Klansman's regalia, Clarke may have been responding to some of the criticisms of the Klan. In the process, however, he alienated those who had unified under his previous tenets.

With forces within and without the Klan assailing him, Clarke was burning the cross at both ends. His ultimate banishment and his later failures possibly reflect the loss of that portion of his backbone that was Elizabeth Tyler. She showed none of the vision and grandiose flair of her partner, but her reactions during crises revealed a down-to-earth
common sense and a knack for turning unfavorable publicity into a springboard for launching favorable propaganda.

Clarke's post-Klan endeavors reveal his attempts to tailor a crusade to the drifts of public opinion. He capitalized on the emotional appeals of evolution, fundamentalism and the Great Depression to offer organizations built around rhetoric without substance. A public relations program built on foundations of sham are like foundations built on sand. Pretense is bound to tumble sooner or later in a society which has a vigorous free press. No matter how skillfully the tools of public relations are employed, the ultimate criteria for the continuing success of the process are performance and truth.
APPENDIX

LIST OF INDEPENDENT KLAN PERIODICALS
### INDEPENDENT KLAN PERIODICALS OF THE 1920s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Where Published</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Citizen</td>
<td>Fort Worth</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Forum</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Sentinel</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Sentinel</td>
<td>Fresno</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Standard</td>
<td>New York City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arizona Klankraft</td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badger American</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell Watchman</td>
<td>Caldwell, Louisiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Call of the North</td>
<td>St. Paul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizens' News</td>
<td>Anaheim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Col. Mayfield's Weekly</td>
<td>Houston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellowship Forum</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiery Cross Magazine</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firefly</td>
<td>Charleston, Illinois</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frontier Standard</td>
<td>El Paso</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Citizen</td>
<td>Zerephath, New Jersey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawkeye Independent</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interstate Press</td>
<td>Vicksburg, Mississippi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jayhawker American</td>
<td>Wichita</td>
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<tr>
<td>Klan Krusader</td>
<td>Tullahoma, Tennessee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kluxer</td>
<td>Dayton, Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lone Star American</td>
<td>Greenville, Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri Valley Independent</td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma Patriot</td>
<td>McAlester, Oklahoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper/Periodical</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patriot</td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pitchfork</td>
<td>Columbus, Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant Herald</td>
<td>Denver</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant Standard</td>
<td>Merryville, Louisiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Journal</td>
<td>Roanoke, Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sergeant Dalton's Weekly</td>
<td>Winfield, Louisiana</td>
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<td>Shuler's Magazine</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
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<td>Texas 100 Per Cent American</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
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<td>Tri-State American</td>
<td>Memphis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tyler American</td>
<td>Tyler, Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>T.W.K. Monthly</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watcher on the Tower</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly American</td>
<td>Chattanooga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western American</td>
<td>Portland</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources for the above compilation include the Imperial Night-Hawk; ACLU Archives; Jackson, Ku Klux Klan in the City; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism; and Frost, Challenge of the Klan.
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APPROVED
Prof. Scott M. Cutlip
DATE Dec. 17, 1974