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The Ku Klux Klan in Early Twentieth Century Virginia

James B. Lamb

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Master of Arts

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the past one hundred years or so, interest in the Ku Klux Klan has ebbed and flowed. The Klan was founded after the Civil War as a reaction to the imposition of Reconstruction on the former Confederate states. The target of the Klan was primarily African-Americans. The second phase of the Klan took place in the early twentieth century and was a response to immigration which following World War I. The target of the early twentieth century Klan expanded beyond just African-Americans to include Catholics, Jews and immigrants. The third phase of the Klan arose in response to the Civil Rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. Today, the Klan appears to be in a much-weakened state, the result of public awareness groups and federal prosecutions for criminal activity. However, incidents like the rallies in Charlottesville, Virginia during 2017 are a reminder that interest in the Klan and other hate groups has not completely dissipated.

This thesis will examine the rise and fall of the Klan in Virginia during the early twentieth century. This thesis will look at the reasons for the rise of interest and membership in the Klan in Virginia. The Klan established over sixty chapters (Klaverns) and had over thirty thousand members in Virginia during this time-period. This thesis will look at the activities of the Klan and the extent to which the Klan had any influence in the political, religious and social spheres in Virginia. Lastly, this thesis will look at the reasons why interest in the Klan collapsed in Virginia.

## Introduction

The Ku Klux Klan today is known as a domestic terrorist organization based on its history of violence towards certain racial groups, especially African-Americans, its hatred towards certain religious groups, Jews, Catholics, Muslims and its belief in the United States as a God ordained country for white Protestant Americans. Throughout its history, the Klan has been responsible for countless acts of violence and yet, at times during its history, the Klan exerted great influence in the political, social and religious aspects of any number of states and on a national level. Most recently, the Klan, as well as a variety of groups coming together as “Unite The Right” staged protests in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017 over the question of whether to remove the statues of Robert E. Lee and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. It is important to understand the causes associated with the revival of the Klan in the past in order to hope to prevent such a revival again today.

The Klan was originally founded in Pulaski, Tennessee immediately following the American Civil War. Interest and membership in the Klan has ebbed and flowed at various times since its beginning. For a decade or so after the Civil War membership in the Klan rose in reaction to Northern Reconstruction efforts in the former Confederate states. In the early 1900s interest and membership rose again in response to the waves of immigrants coming to the United States after World War I. In response to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the Klan was re-invigorated for a third time. Interest in the Klan would recede after a period of time but the organization would never fully dissipate nor did its activities completely cease. The Klan remains in existence today, albeit, in a much-weakened state.

The original Klan members would ride on horses as a group (night-riding) during which opponents and victims would be assaulted or even murdered (lynched). Whippings were not uncommon nor were acts of arson. During the first half of the twentieth century the Klan continued the use of lynching and whippings as a method of controlling social and economic behaviors. However, whippings were also used as punishment for individual Klan members who were perceived to have violated the rules regarding expectations to care for their wives and family.

During the second half of the twentieth century the Klan continued to use violence, in an attempt to maintain white supremacy in certain areas. Famously, the Klan would take responsibility for the murders of the three activists, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner who had traveled to Mississippi in the Freedom Summer Campaign of 1964 to help with black voter registration. In recent years, the events surrounding the murders became the subject of the movie *Mississippi Burning*. As was accurately portrayed in the movie, local law enforcement did little if anything to solve the murders. The Klan was also responsible for the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama which killed four young children. It was not until 1977 that charges were brought against three of the men, all Klansmen, who were responsible for the bombing. A fourth Klansman involved in the bombing died before criminal charges were filed. The three men charged with the bombing were convicted and sentenced to long prison terms.

However, this view of the Klan as a domestic terrorist organization has not always been the case. During the first part of the twentieth century, the Klan was recognized, by many, as a legitimate organization with many prominent public officials, religious leaders and citizens



proudly acknowledging their affiliation with the organization. Members of the Klan were active in all levels of government, federal, state and local. The Klan endorsed certain candidates running for public office and many candidates welcomed the endorsement.

Much scholarship has been conducted on the Klan nationally and in some cases on a state basis or on a local level. In his book, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*,<sup>1</sup> Thomas Pegram details the rapid rise in membership in the Klan nationally during the early twentieth century. Pegram outlines the efforts of the Klan not only to resurrect the organization nationally but the efforts to place the organization within the mainstream of American life. David Cunningham examines the era in "*Klansville, USA: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights Era KKK*"<sup>2</sup> which details the Klan's activities in North Carolina. This included the events which played out in Greensboro in 1979 during which five people were killed as a result of a clash between Klan members and members of the Communist Workers Party. Cunningham includes information obtained from his interview of Robert Shelton, the Grand Wizard of Alabama. Richard Tucker also provides an insightful study of the Klan in the 1920s in "*The Dragon and the Cross: The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middle America*"<sup>3</sup> exploring the Klan's influence in Indiana. The book details the rise and fall of David Stephenson, the Grand Dragon of Indiana. In 1923, Hiram Evens, the newly elected Imperial Wizard of the Klan, appointed Stephenson to the position of Grand Dragon. Stephenson rose to be a

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<sup>1</sup> Pegram, Thomas R., *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*, (Lanham, Maryland: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham, David. *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights Era K.K.K.*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Tucker, Richard, K. *The Dragon and The Cross: The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middle America*, (Archon Books, 1991).

powerful influence in state politics within Indiana including access to Governor Edward Jackson, an acknowledged member of the Klan. In November 1925 Stephenson, would be convicted for the rape and murder of his secretary and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

However, little scholarship has been conducted on Klan activity in Virginia, particularly in the early part of the twentieth century when membership in the Klan nationally reached into the millions. This research project will explore the activities of the Klan in Virginia during the early part of the twentieth century. This study will examine the extent to which the Klan was involved in the political, social and religious aspects within the State of Virginia. This will help one understand the extent to which the Klan had an influence on the State, the extent to which the Klan was viewed as a mainstream organization, and the reason for its decline.

## Chapter 1

The original Ku Klux Klan was founded after the Civil War ended in Southern defeat in 1865. Six former Confederate soldiers John Lester, Richard Reed, James Crowe, Frank McCord, Calvin Jones and John Kennedy, residing in their hometown of Pulaski, Tennessee, decided to form a club in response to the May 1866 race riot in Memphis and the perceived need for patrols to protect white families and property.<sup>4</sup> Racial tension and friction between black Union soldiers and local white police officers lead to a confrontation which resulted in at least one of the white officers being shot. In response, a white mob gathered and began to target blacks

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2010), 14.

and their homes as a way of seeking vengeance. For three days, the mob rioted, murdering dozens of blacks, and setting fire to black churches, schools and more than one hundred black homes. At the end of the riot, dozens of people were dead, mostly black and property damage was extensive. In response to the riots, many blacks left the City of Memphis.<sup>5</sup>

This group of former Confederate soldiers “decided to call themselves Kuklos, a Greek word that means “circle” or band.” Kuklos was changed to Ku Klux. Klan, which also meant circle, was added<sup>6</sup> and thus, the Ku Klux Klan was formed and named. In addition to their role in the formation of the Klan, the founding members were assigned titles: Frank McCord, the Grand Cyclops or President; John Kennedy, the Grand Magi or Vice-President; James Crowe, the Grand Turk, a master of ceremonies; Calvin Jones and John Lester were Night Hawks or messengers and Richard Reed was a Lictor, or sentinel who guarded the den.<sup>7</sup>

The original members of the Klan used linens<sup>8</sup> with holes cut out for their eyes and mouths to wear while riding on their horses. Folklore has it that in response to a question about the robes and hoods, one of the original Klansmen indicated they were “A spirit from another world. I was killed at Chickamauga.”<sup>9</sup> In September 1863 Union and Confederate forces fought at the Battle of Chickamauga. Over a three-day period, the two armies fought in the southeastern part of Tennessee and into the northwestern part of Georgia. While the battle was considered a Confederate victory, the cost was great. The Confederate Army suffered over

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<sup>5</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 30.

18,000 casualties, including over 2,300 men killed.<sup>10</sup> Klan members dressed in their white robes and hoods became the ghosts of the Confederate soldiers killed at the Battle of Chickamauga.

The Klan expanded over the next few years with many former Confederate soldiers joining. Former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest became the first leader of the Klan and was given the title and position of Grand Wizard. In September 1868 Forrest claimed in an article in *The Cincinnati Commercial* that membership in the Klan exceeded 550,000 men.<sup>11</sup> Forrest would later retract that number but clearly there was widespread support for the Klan throughout the South.

The original Klan was an organization which was primarily located within the former Confederate states. The Klan's purpose was to serve as a counterbalance to the Union forces occupying southern states following the Civil War in an effort to maintain both the racial superiority and white culture of the pre-Civil War South.

In November 1868, Ulysses S. Grant would be elected president of the United States defeating Horatio Seymour. The November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1868 cover of *Harpers' Weekly* had a drawing of Grant knocking Seymour off a horse labeled the K.K.K. In response to Grant's election, the Klan met and designated itself "an institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism."<sup>12</sup> In connection with the Klan's self-designation as such, it promised to protect the weak and innocent, protect the Constitution and aid in the execution of constitutional laws.<sup>13</sup> The Klan in

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<sup>10</sup> David A. Powell, *The Chickamauga Campaign- Glory or The Grave: The Breakthrough, the Union Collapse and the Defense of Horseshoe Ridge September 20, 1863* (El Dorado: Savas Beatie, LLC, 2017), 707.

<sup>11</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 72.

<sup>13</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call themselves the K.K.K.*, 28

Tennessee openly advertised their meetings in newspapers such as the *Pulaski Citizen*. Klan members were instructed to meet at “The Den” in “costume and bearing the arms of the Klan.”<sup>14</sup> Membership in the Klan grew rapidly. A county could have “several dens, each headed by a Grand Cyclops.” Each den had a command structure. Right below the Grand Cyclops was a “Grand Magi and Monk” followed by a “Grand Scribe or secretary and a Grand Exchequer or Treasurer. Ordinary Klan members were called Ghouls.”<sup>15</sup> The Klan’s Creed and Preamble appeared to recognize a supreme being and a loyalty to the United States and its Constitution. However, the Klan was anything but a Christian organization and the Klan followed the Constitution only to the extent that it supported a white supremacist government. In particular, Klan members refused to recognize the post-Civil War Amendments to the Constitution which granted full citizenship and suffrage to blacks.

The early Klan set out to counter Republican political control of the South, prevent being governed by blacks supported by the Republicans, and opposed any effort during Reconstruction to educate blacks in public schools. Individuals who were seen as helpful to blacks would receive “coffin letters” from the Klan as a warning. Coffin letters were a less than subtle warning to the recipient to cease whatever help was being provided to freedmen. An article published in *The Daily Memphis Avalanche* indicated a letter had been posted in various locations throughout Knoxville, Tennessee which contained the following warning:

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<sup>14</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 47.

K! K! K!  
 Fort Saunders Circle, Ku Klux –Klan.  
 Brethren: The hour of revenge has arrived.  
 Our beloved companions of the tomb of the  
 West have long since arisen, organized and  
 Prepared themselves for the sacred duty.  
 Can we be recreant? Another passage of the sun will  
 Seal the fate of all our enemies.  
 Revenge! Revenge! Revenge!  
 By Order of The Klan<sup>16</sup>

Violence continued against blacks and those who supported any effort to help blacks during Reconstruction. In response to the violence, Congress, passed the Civil Rights Act of 1871 which made it illegal to interfere with anyone’s right to vote or to obstruct state officials from protecting citizen’s rights.<sup>17</sup> President Grant used the Act to send federal marshals and soldiers to enforce black rights. Over 3,000 Klan members were prosecuted because of the Act, however, few received any significant punishment.<sup>18</sup> In 1876, the Supreme Court struck down the Civil Rights Act of 1871 as unconstitutional and Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President. In his campaign for the presidency, Hayes had promised to take a less active role in managing the South and subsequently withdrew federal troops from the South and ended most Federal Reconstruction efforts. As Republican control receded in the South so did white southerners need for the Klan. White Southern Democrats regained political and policing power and many of the gains made by blacks during Reconstruction were swept away. The return to power by Democrats in the South ended the need for the Klan and thus it faded away in the 1870s.

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<sup>16</sup> *ProQuest: The Daily Memphis Avalanche*, March 20, 1868.

<sup>17</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 129.

<sup>18</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 142.

In 1915 the Klan re-emerged under the leadership of William J. Simmons.



*William J. Simmons*  
*National Photo Company Collection*  
*Library of Congress*

Simmons claimed to be the descendant of one of the members of the original Klan.<sup>19</sup> A resident of Atlanta, Simmons was a former minister and had studied medicine at Johns Hopkins University but did not complete the program. On Thanksgiving night, Simmons along with fifteen Klansmen drove from Atlanta to Stone Mountain, Georgia. Using Stone Mountain as a launchpad, Simmons put forth his vision of the new Klan. According to Simmons, the Klan was [re-created] for the “preservation of the white men of the world.” Simmons, in his self-appointed role as Imperial Wizard, affirmed “the assault on white men and advocated that the fiery cross was their beacon of hope in a dangerous world.”<sup>20</sup> The next day a small article appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution* announcing that the “KLAN IS ESTABLISHED WITH

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*, (Lanham, Maryland: The Rowan and Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2011), 7.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The Klan’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 164.

IMPRESSIVENESS.”<sup>21</sup> The article indicated the event at Stone Mountain “marked the foundation of the invisible empire” and that the “new secret organization is founded with a view of taking an active part in the betterment of mankind.”<sup>22</sup> The article said nothing about the goal of white supremacy or the reason for the revival. The beginning of the new Klan should have been described as unimpressive. Beyond the small article in the *Atlanta Constitution*, there was little fanfare or publicity. The event was later described by Simmons as follows:

“It was pitch dark, and we had to use flashlights. I sent each man out to get a boulder. No one knew what I was going to do. I told the men they built an altar at the foot of the cross. While the men were gathering the boulders, I had secretly soaked the cross with a mixture of kerosene and gasoline. My father had once given me an old American flag which had been carried in the Mexican War, I had brought With me. I laid it across the alter explaining my reason for doing [so]... Suddenly, I struck a match and lighted the cross. And while it burned I administered the oath and talked.”<sup>23</sup>

Eventually this second Klan would receive a great deal of notice and publicity across the United States, its start however, was hardly noteworthy.

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<sup>21</sup> “KLAN IS ESTABLISHED WITH IMPRESSIVENESS,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 28, 1915.

<sup>22</sup> “KLAN IS ESTABLISHED WITH IMPRESSIVENESS,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 28, 1915.

<sup>23</sup> Erik Sass, “The New KKK,” [www.WWICentennial:TheNewKKKMentalFloss.org](http://www.WWICentennial:TheNewKKKMentalFloss.org)., November 26, 2015.





*Atlanta Constitution*  
*November 28, 1915*

Of note, Stone Mountain did not have the images of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson carved into the mountain as they do today. The carvings of the Confederate leaders would begin in 1916 on the north face of the mountain, which was deeded to the United Daughters of the Confederacy by the group who owned the mountain. After a series of starts and stops, the carvings were finally completed in 1972.

Simmons and his fifteen Klansmen lit a cross on fire at the top of Stone Mountain which could be seen for a great distance given that the peak of the mountain stands at over 1600 feet. The idea of a burning cross came from the movie *The Birth of a Nation*. In the movie, a small cross is burned in connection with the death of a woman being romantically pursued by a black Union officer during Reconstruction. Contrary to the movie, the post-Civil War Klan did not burn crosses.

The concept of a burning cross comes from Scotland where it was used in connection with the feuds among the Scotch Highlander Clans. To the Scottish Christians, many of whom were ironically Roman Catholics, the cross was a holy symbol of the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for sinners. The “Crann Tara” or “Fiery Cross” as it was known, was also used as a method of rallying members of the Clans during times of attacks by other Clans. As explained by Dr. Edward May Magruder, Chieftan of the American clan Gregor, “the cross was small enough to carry in one hand. Two men, each with a Fiery Cross in their hand, were dispatched by the Chief in different directions, who ran shouting the war cry and naming the place and time of rendezvous.”<sup>24</sup> All able members of the Clan were expected to respond.

A poem written about the need to respond to the Fiery Cross:

“Fast as the fatal symbol flies,  
 In the arms the huts and hamlets rise,  
 The fisherman forsook the strand,  
 With changes cheer, the mover blithe,  
 Left in the half-cut swath his scythe,  
 The herds without a keeper strayed,  
 The falc’ner tossed his hawk away,  
 The hunter left the stag at bay,  
 Prompt at the signal of alarms,  
 Each son of Alpine rushes to arms.”<sup>25</sup>

Appalachian areas of North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, and Tennessee were destination for many of the Scotch-Irish who immigrated to the United States in both the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

In August 1915, a few months before Simmons launched the rebirth of the Klan, Leo Frank, a Jewish man who owned a factory in Atlanta and who was being held on charges of

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<sup>24</sup> <http://thecapitalscot.com> “The Fiery Cross,” Dr. Edward May Magruder, 1911.

<sup>25</sup> “The Fiery Cross,” Magruder, 1911.

rape, was taken from the jail and lynched. Frank had been arrested after being accused of having raped and murdered a young white woman by the name of Mary Phagan. The group which seized Frank from the jail and lynched him would take the name the “Knights of Mary Phagan.” Members of the group joined Simmons in his travel to Stone Mountain for the rebirth of the Klan.<sup>26</sup> The trial of Frank and the publicity which followed would stir anti-Semitic feelings in the area.

In an interview with the *Columbus Enquirer Sun*, Simmons spelled out the objectives of the newly formed Klan saying it’s “purpose is to inculcate the sacred principles of chivalry, the development of character, the protection of home and the chastity of womanhood, the exemplification of a pure patriotism to ward our glorious country, the preservation of American ideals and the maintenance of white supremacy.”<sup>27</sup> On December 4, 1915 a Charter for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was issued by the State of Georgia and the second phase of the Klan was legally born.<sup>28</sup>

Simmons wrote several items in which he attempted to explain the new Klan. In 1916 Simmons published a pamphlet title *The Ku Klux Klan, Yesterday, Today and Forever*. Simmons spoke of himself in the pamphlet saying “For fourteen years Colonel Simmons thought, studied and worked to prepare himself for launching the great movement. He dedicated his life to this purpose and during those years, he kept his own counsel and in the recesses of his soul worked

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<sup>26</sup> Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 20.

<sup>27</sup> “Col. Simmons discusses the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” *The Columbus Enquirer Sun*, July 1920.

<sup>28</sup> [www.Atlantahistorycenter.tumber.com/post/68970705460/December-4-1915](http://www.Atlantahistorycenter.tumber.com/post/68970705460/December-4-1915).

out the great purpose and plan.”<sup>29</sup> On the last page of the pamphlet Simmons quoted from a book written by Walter Henry Cook, a Professor at Western Reserve University titled “Northern Man Lauds Work of the Old Klan.” The page starts with

“the KKK accomplished much from a political viewpoint, it secured home rule for several of the Southern States. It ended the disgraceful rule of the carpetbaggers therein and it helped re-establish honest and efficient governmental institutions.”<sup>30</sup>

Simmons was referring to the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War. While the original phase of the Klan may have supported many of the state officials, once Union troops were withdrawn and white Southerner Democrats returned to power, the Klan was disposed of. From the very beginning, Simmons put forth a revisionist version of history regarding the influence of the original Klan during reconstruction.

For several years, the reborn Klan floundered, with minimal interest and relatively few members. Simmons would serve as the Imperial Wizard of the Klan from 1915 through 1922. In 1920 Simmons hired the marketing firm of Southern Publicity Associates. The firm had two principal members, Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Young Clarke.<sup>31</sup> Tyler and Clarke devised a marketing strategy in which they divided the country into sections. Over 1000 recruiters were sent out to attract new members to the Klan. Recruiters received a portion of the \$10.00 initiation fee which was paid by the new members.<sup>32</sup> This provided a financial incentive for the recruiters to enlist as many new members as they could find. Tyler and Clarke or their

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<sup>29</sup> William Simmons, *The Ku Klux Klan, Yesterday, Today and Forever*, 1916.

<sup>30</sup> Simmons, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 1916.

<sup>31</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> [www.Atlantic.com/political/archives](http://www.Atlantic.com/political/archives), Josh Rothman, “The Rise and Fall of the Second Ku Klux Klan,” December 4, 2016.

advertising agency received a portion of the initiation fee as well.<sup>33</sup> While Simmons claimed to be creating a “High-class order for men of Intelligence and Character,”<sup>34</sup> there does not appear to be any filter to restricting membership of white males into the Klan beyond the ability to pay the initiation fee.

In addition to the Klan, Tyler and Clarke provided consulting services to the Anti-Saloon League and the Red Cross. Tyler believed the Klan needed to expand membership beyond the former Confederate states in order to attract sufficient recruits. It was Tyler’s belief that “racism didn’t sell in the North”<sup>35</sup> and the Klan needed a wider audience. The expansion of enemies to include Catholics, Jews and particularly immigrants would be emphasized in the North and mid-west. The result of the marketing campaign would be the expansion of the Klan well beyond the former Confederate states of the first phase of the Klan into the mid-west and to a lesser extent, to the western states. The marketing concept of an extended list of enemies succeeded in the mid-west where distrust and dislike of immigrants had taken hold in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Advertising as an industry would come of age in the early 1900s and become a part of successful marketing campaigns of various products including the Klan. The ability to market the Klan as both a fraternal organization and a protector of white Protestants against an influx of immigrants representing change to the American culture helped fuel interest in the Klan. The

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<sup>33</sup> <https://coolidgefoundation.org>., Jerry L. Wallace, “The Ku Klux Klan in Calvin Coolidge’s America,” July 14, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> [www.Atlantic.com/political/archives](http://www.Atlantic.com/political/archives), Josh Rothman, “The Rise and Fall of the Second Ku Klux Klan,” December 4, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> <https://Timeline.com>., Laura Smith, “The KKK Might have died in Obscurity,” December 11, 2017.

use of an advertising agency to market the Klan was distinctly different from the original Klan which appealed mostly to former Confederate soldiers residing in Southern states. The second Klan had a different message and an expanded targeted audience but at its core, the first and second phases of the Klan were based upon a desire to maintain white supremacy.

In 1922, Tyler would end her relationship with the Klan “to avert a nervous collapse”<sup>36</sup> but her contribution in terms of marketing and advertising would continue. A short time later Clarke would end his relationship with the Klan and that of the advertising firm. Subsequently, Clarke would resign from the Klan amid allegations he misused funds received from members.<sup>37</sup> In 1924 Clarke plead guilty in Federal District Court to charges of violating the Mann Act relating to the taking of his mistress across state lines for the purposes of having sex.<sup>38</sup> While their association with the Klan ended, their influence on the new Klan continued for many years.

Several factors came together in a perfect storm of sorts which would dramatically increase interest and membership in the Klan. In addition to the hiring of the marketing firm, the release of several films during this period, including *The Birth of a Nation*, and the influx of immigrants from many parts of Europe, including those of the Catholic faith, helped fuel the rapid increase in membership. It is estimated that as a result of the above factors, official membership in the Klan reached upwards of 5 million members by the mid 1920s.

Simmons “prepared the Kloran<sup>39</sup>, the constitution of the Klan as well as The Klansman’s Creed.”<sup>40</sup> The Creed outlined the beliefs and core values of this second Klan as shown below:

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<sup>36</sup> “Up With the Times,” *ProQuest: Richmond Times Dispatch*, January 6, 1922.

<sup>37</sup> “Imperial Wizard Resigns,” *ProQuest: Richmond Times Dispatch*, October 5, 1922.

<sup>38</sup> [www.fbi.gov/stories/2004March/kkk](http://www.fbi.gov/stories/2004March/kkk). “FBI-Byte out of FBI History.” March 3, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> [www.images.library.wisc.edu/WI/EFacs./WICKSKKK](http://www.images.library.wisc.edu/WI/EFacs./WICKSKKK). The Kloran is the handbook for the KKK.

<sup>40</sup> Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan*, 165.

I believe in God and in the tenets of Christian religion and that a Godless nation cannot long prosper.  
 I believe that a church that is not grounded on the principles of morality and justice is a mockery to God and to man.  
 I believe that a Church that does not have the welfare of the common people at heart, is unworthy.  
 I believe in the eternal separation of Church and State.  
 I hold no allegiances to any foreign government, Emperor, King, Pope or any other foreign, political or religious power.  
 I hold my allegiance to the Stars and Stripes next to my allegiance of God alone  
 I believe in law and order.  
 I believe in the protection of pure womanhood.  
 I do not believe in mob violence but I do believe that laws should be enacted to prevent the causes of mob violence.  
 I believe in the limitations of foreign immigration.  
 I am a native born American citizen and I believe my rights in this country are superior to those of foreigners.<sup>41</sup>

Many of the above listed principles could be found in the beliefs of any number of legitimate organizations. Many organizations espoused a belief in God and an allegiance to the United States and continues to this day. Many of the Protestant religions and their followers disavowed any connection to the Pope or to a foreign leader. The belief in law and order and disapproval of mob violence was a commonly held belief for many and was commonly professed by leaders of the Klan, particularly in the early twentieth century. Many states would pass laws which sought to prevent lynchings (including Virginia) or mob violence and severely punished those who committed such acts. There have been any number of churches and/or ministers throughout the history of the United States who have failed to live up to the standards required of them, thus in the eyes of the Klan, unworthy. In overarching terms the Creed of the second Klan epitomized was a mix of common twentieth century conservative beliefs: nativism, Protestant religion, womanhood and strong belief in America. It is easy to see

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<sup>41</sup> Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan*, 165.

the enemies of the second phase of the Klan in its Creed: Catholics, Jews and immigrants. In short, many of the ideas put forth in the Klansmen's Creed were not new ideas but beliefs that had been practiced openly during the late 1800s when the first large influx of immigrants from Europe came to the United States. Many of the principles espoused by the second Klan were similar to those of the Know-Nothings, a political group which emerged in the mid-1800s. Also known as the American Party, the Know-nothings were Anti-Catholic, anti-immigrants and nativists. The Party nominated candidates for President in 1852 and again in 1856, neither of whom carried any states in the elections. The Know-nothings had some success on the state and local level, but the Party faded in the late 1850s.

The early twentieth century Klan claimed to represent the true American defined as a native-born white Protestant. There were at least four groups which the Klan viewed as both a threat to the "forces of Christianity" and "enemies of Americanism"<sup>42</sup>, Blacks, Catholics, foreigners and Jews. Part of the reason for the resurgence of the Klan was related to the perceived changes occurring within the United States and the fear that those changes would lead to a loss of power by those who supported the idea of white supremacy.

Despite all that Simmons professed about the Klan through his speeches and writings, his testimony before Congress under oath in 1921 attempted to portray a different picture of the Klan. Simmons testified "I want to state emphatically, and in fear of God that the Klan is not an Anti-Catholic order; We are not anti-Jewish; We are not anti-Negro; We are not anti-foreign

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<sup>42</sup> Kelly Baker, "Birth of the Klan Nation" Sacred Matters Magazine, April 12, 2016, <https://SacredMatters.com>.



born; We merely require members must be native born Americans.”<sup>43</sup> Simmons would collapse during his testimony before the House Committee and his testimony would not be resumed.

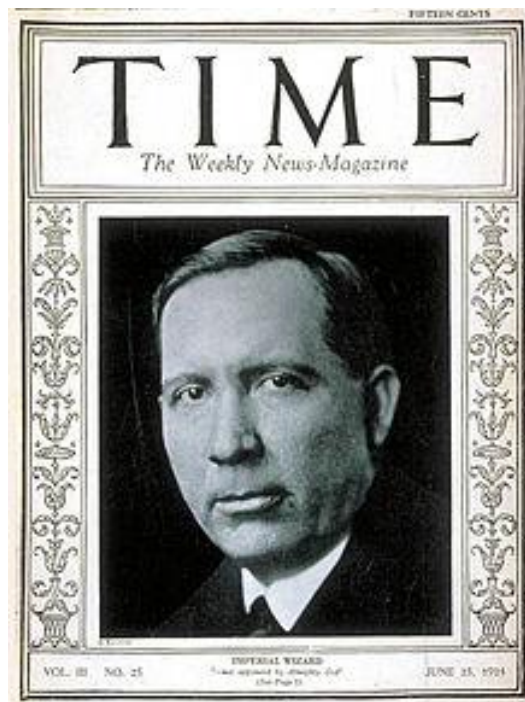
Problems with alcohol and allegations of misappropriating Klan funds led to the replacement of Simmons by Hiram Wesley Evans as the imperial Wizard. Despite his being replaced by Evans, Simmons would retain the title of Emperor for Life. Simmons died on May 18, 1945 in Atlanta. Evans would serve as the new Imperial Wizard of the Klan from 1923 until 1939. Evans continued to expand the Klan, including the establishment of women’s chapters, Women’s Ku Klux Klan.<sup>44</sup> Evans soon became a national figure, with his picture displayed on the cover of the June 1924 issue of *Time* magazine. The June issue of *Time* magazine had an article which described Evans as playing a major part in the Republican National Convention and his role in ensuring that the Klan remained as a part of the convention. Interestingly, the Klan also had a presence at the Democratic Convention a few weeks later.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> “Imperial Wizard Collapses While Giving Testimony,” *Richmond-Times Dispatch*, October 14, 1921.

<sup>44</sup> McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 27.



*Hiram W. Evans*

*Time Magazine*

*June 23, 1924*

More importantly, the early twentieth century Klan, in contrast to the original Klan, had expanded beyond the former Confederate states. In 1924, forty percent of the Klan's membership resided in the Midwestern states and another twenty-five percent resided in Southwestern states including Texas.<sup>46</sup> Only sixteen percent of Klan members resided in Southern states east of the Mississippi by 1924. Surprisingly, states such as Colorado, Washington and Oregon had a significant Klan presence in the second phase that was completely absent in the first phase of the Klan. Many of the former Confederate states had significant numbers of members but the marketing goal of Clarke and Tyler to expand the Klan

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<sup>46</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The KKK in the City* (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 15.

beyond those states clearly succeeded. The ability to identify and to create false perceptions about certain groups clearly helped expand the membership of the Klan.

In contrast to Simmons' professed rejection of Anti-Semitism, Evans spoke of the Jews as being "incapable of true patriotism because they were not white."<sup>47</sup> Evans went on to say that the Jews "jealously guarded separatism unfits them for co-operation."<sup>48</sup> In *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, Evans indicated the Jew was "alien and inassimilable" listing faults such as "careers in banking and finance and materialism."<sup>49</sup> (Of note, this is similar to some of the propaganda used by the Nazis in the 1930s.)

To members of the Klan, blacks remained an inferior race to whites. At the Texas State Fair, Evans cited "biology and anthropology" as reasons blacks would always be inferior to whites. To Evans, the fear of interracial mixing "threatened to dilute the characteristics of the American race."<sup>50</sup> Thus Evans and the Klan pushed for laws prohibiting interracial relationships. Many states, including Virginia, had laws prohibiting interracial marriage. Further, individuals who engaged in interracial relationships risked being directly attacked by members of the Klan.

During the early twentieth century, Klan members held elected positions at all levels of government. Theodore Bilbo served as Governor of Mississippi for two terms, the first term from 1915 through 1920 and the second term from 1928 through 1932. Bilbo later served in the United States Senate<sup>51</sup> representing the State of Mississippi. In an interview on the radio

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<sup>47</sup> Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan*, 175.

<sup>48</sup> Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan*, 175.

<sup>49</sup> Hiram W, Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, 1923.

<sup>50</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 50.

<sup>51</sup> Bilbo would be investigated by the U.S. Senate related to civil rights allegations and as a result would be denied his seat in the 80<sup>th</sup> Congress which began on January 3, 1947. Bilbo would die on August 21, 1947.

program called "Meet The Press," Bilbo stated "No man can leave the Klan. He takes an oath to do that. Once a Ku Klux, always a Ku Klux."<sup>52</sup> While not a confirmed member of the Klan, Georgia Governor Clifford Walker spoke before the national Klan convention in Kansas City in 1924 during his term. Walker served as Governor from 1923 through 1927. During the campaign for Governor in 1922, Walker promised that if elected he would "meet with Klan members on policy matters."<sup>53</sup> True to his word, Walker did provide the Klan access to the Governor's office following his election. Earle B. Mayfield, who was known as the Ku Klux Klan candidate in Texas, won election to the U.S. Senate in 1923. Mayfield served only one term as a Senator. Hugo Black was a member of the Klan for a short period. Black joined the Klan in 1923 and resigned as a member in 1925.<sup>54</sup> Black was elected to the United States Senate from Alabama in 1927 and served two terms. In 1930, Black would publicly renounce his membership in the Klan. Black was nominated and confirmed to be an Associate Justice on the United States Supreme Court in 1937.

The Klan was also very active on the local level. The revitalized Klan and its leader, Evans, believed the public school system was a critical element in maintaining the principle that the United States was founded and should continue as a white Protestant country. In the South where the Klan originated and areas outside the South such as Pennsylvania, Oregon and Indiana, Klan members endorsed candidates for school boards, raised money for schools and pushed for the adoption of a curriculum that was as Evans described it a "democratic

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<sup>52</sup> Robert L. Fleagler, "Theodore G. Bilbo and the Decline of Public Racism: 1938-1947", *Journal of Mississippi History*, 21.

<sup>53</sup> [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org),

<sup>54</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Seeks Catholic Members" *ProQuest: New York Times*, April 24, 1957.

education.”<sup>55</sup> Catholics in general, with their allegiance to the Pope, and Catholic schools specifically, were perceived as a threat by the Klan to the public-school system and to true American culture. Evans stated “the Roman Catholic hierarchy is the one influence that is successfully obstructing adequate public school education in America.”<sup>56</sup> An emphasis on schools and academic curriculum were another area which differentiated the second phase of the Klan from the first.

During the first half of the 1920s interest and membership in the Klan increased greatly. The mid-1920s marked the high-water mark for the Klan with membership reaching approximately 5 million and a march on August 8, 1925 by over 50,000 members of the Klan dressed in robes down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. The Klan was part of the push behind Prohibition, another principle which distinguished them from the original Klan. Members of the Klan augmented local police agencies and sheriff’s departments in the enforcement of the Volstead Act. During the second phase, the Klan supported the passage of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution which prohibited the production and sale of alcohol. Too often, overaggressive and undisciplined Klan members gave the organization a bad reputation with their unfair enforcement of liquor laws.

The indictment and conviction of Indiana Grand Dragon David Stephenson in 1925 for the rape and murder of his secretary significantly tarnished the image of the Klan in the eyes of main street America as well as the rank and file members of the Klan. Stephenson had helped organize and supported Edwin Jackson’s successful campaign for Governor of Indiana. To

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<sup>55</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 90.

<sup>56</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 91.

Jackson's horror, Stephenson had been convicted of indecent exposure and had been the subject of another rape investigation prior to his conviction for murder. Stephenson also had a reputation as a heavy drinker. Stephenson's drinking habits were a contradiction to the moral stance the Klan attempted to put forth. Stephenson, while effective at organizing and expanding the influence of the Klan in Indiana, was expelled from the Klan following a trial for his conduct which was viewed as contrary to beliefs of the Klan.

In other states, leaders of the Klan also faced problems. In Pennsylvania, the Klan sued John Strayer and four other individuals in United States District Court for "falsely, fraudulently, and maliciously represent[ing] to [be] the membership of this plaintiff, (Klan) and the public in general in Pennsylvania, that they are members in good standing of the plaintiff organization."<sup>57</sup> The judge in the denied the Klan's law suit, finding instead the Klan had been involved in several violent activities in the state of Pennsylvania. In addition, the judge found the Klan to be anything but the "patriotic and benevolent society"<sup>58</sup> it claimed to be when the charter was issued. Rather than a successful suit, the legal challenge by the Klan resulted in negative publicity for the Klan. In Colorado, Dr. John Galen Locke, the Grand Dragon and principle organizer for the State, would be jailed in 1925 for contempt of court related to an income tax matter.<sup>59</sup> The Klan's presence in Colorado faded quickly after Locke was sent to jail.

In 1921 *The New York World* ran a 21-day expose' of the Klan, detailing the organization, their beliefs and activities all in a negative manner. The articles described the marketing

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<sup>57</sup> Grace DiAgostino, "Evidence Exposed a Crumbling Klan: Klan v. John F. Strayer, et al." <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov>.

<sup>58</sup> DiAgostino, "Evidence Exposed a Crumbling Klan."

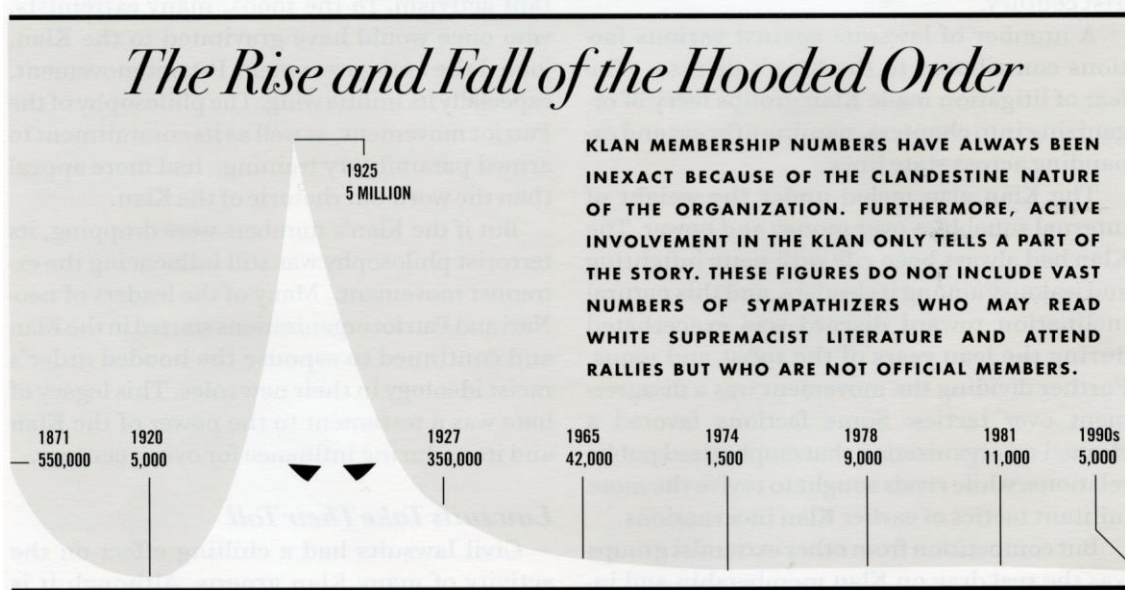
<sup>59</sup> [www.Buckfifty.org](http://www.Buckfifty.org). "The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado," March 11, 2009.

campaign used to increase membership and highlighted the position of the Kleagle or salesmen who earned \$4.00 of the \$10.00 initiation fee for every member they enlisted. The articles further provided information about the Klan's contempt for Catholics, Jews and Negroes. One of the articles indicated the Klan claimed that there were any number of public officials, congressmen, judges, etc. who were members. Another article detailed the violent acts committed by members of the Klan in furtherance of their goal of maintaining white supremacy. The expose' was highly critical of the Klan, providing details of violent acts committed by and on behalf of its members. Most of the stories involving violence centered around events in Texas. In response to the expose, Evans publically welcomed what he termed "fifty million dollars' of free advertising."<sup>60</sup> The expose' had little effect on recruitment of Klan members.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Adam Hockschild, review of *Ku Klux Culture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* and *The Second Coming of the Ku Klux Klan; The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition*, The New York Review of Books, December 7, 2017, [www.nybooks.com/articles](http://www.nybooks.com/articles).

<sup>61</sup> *The New York World Expose' of the Ku Klux Klan*, September 6-26, 1921.



*Southern Poverty Law Center  
 Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism  
 February 28, 2011*

These events plus a lack of leadership and a clear path forward resulted in the rapid decline of the Klan by the early 1930s. In the early 1920s the United States was still suffering from the effects of a global recession following World War I. By 1925, the economy was expanding again and the issue of immigrants taking jobs from Americans had dissipated. It is estimated there were fewer than 40,000 Klan members by the mid-1930s. Ironically, in 1936 the Klan sold its headquarters located in Atlanta to the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church demolished the building which the Klan had used as its headquarters and used the land to construct the Cathedral of Christ the King on the property.<sup>62</sup> The Cathedral remains in place to this day.

<sup>62</sup> <https://archatl.com/places>, Cathedral of Christ the King.



The emergence of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s led to the third phase of the Klan. Most of the members who joined the third phase of the Klan resided within the southern states which had seceded from the Union in 1861, with 52% of its members residing in North Carolina.<sup>63</sup> Unlike the second phase of the Klan where first Simmons and then Evans led a national revival of the Klan, the civil-rights era or third phase of the Klan was more fractionalized. However, the civil-rights era Klan was still an organization to be reckoned with. The Klan endorsed political candidates on both the national and state level. The Klan associated the spread of Communism within the United States with the Civil Rights Movement and was recognized by state leaders such as Governor George Wallace of Alabama and Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi as a key ally. Both governors, with the endorsement and backing of the Klan, fought any effort on the part of the federal government to integrate either southern society or southern schools.

As late as 1964 the Klan endorsed candidates for the president of the United States. Initially, both Republican National Committee Chairman Dean Burch and Vice-Presidential candidate William Miller indicated they would not reject support of members of the Klan. It was not until August 1964 that the Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, rejected the support of the Klan and its members.<sup>64</sup> The rejection was a clear indication the Klan had failed in its bid to regain any semblance of national political power and was once again on the decline.

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<sup>63</sup> David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A., The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Mohrs. "Goldwater Bars Klan Aid; Confers with Eisenhower." *ProQuest: New York Times*, August 7, 1964.

The civil rights era Klan continued to use violence in order to achieve their goals. Lynchings were not uncommon nor were assaults or threats of violence. While its hatred of the Catholic church had lessened, its hatred of African-Americans and foreigners did not. At one point, there was some consideration within the Klan to invite Catholics to join the organization<sup>65</sup> despite the fact the fact the Klan had supported Richard Nixon for President in large part because John F. Kennedy was a Catholic. During the 1960s there were several Congressional investigations into the activities of the Klan with little results.<sup>66</sup>

The Klan remained in the Upper South, but without the formal acknowledgement found in the deep South. Thomas L. Hamilton, the Imperial Wizard for the Carolina Klan spoke of a "Confederate Army which will not wear robes or hoods but will have ceremonial regalia, Confederate caps and ties which will invade Virginia and do battle with the Communists."<sup>67</sup> No such "army" was ever located in the Old Dominion. In 1966 Marshall B. Kornsay was named Grand Dragon for the state. Klan activity within Virginia continued through the 1960s including marches, rallies and cross burnings. In 1966, there were 32 Klan chapters located with Virginia representing approximately 9 per cent of the total Klan membership.<sup>68</sup> In addition, there were rallies held in Richmond, Fredericksburg and Williamsburg during 1966 in an effort to increase membership in the Klan.<sup>69</sup> While not insignificant by any means in terms of the number of

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<sup>65</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Seeks Catholic Members" *ProQuest; New York Times*, April 24, 1957.

<sup>66</sup> "The Washington Merry-Go-Round House Unit Long Ignored KKK." *ProQuest: Washington Post*, October 10, 1965.

<sup>67</sup> "Klan Setback Halts Plan for Virginia." *ProQuest: Washington Post*, August 11, 1952.

<sup>68</sup> Cunningham, *Klanville, U.S.A.*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> "Save America!! Join the Klan UKA: Klan Rally: Come to Hear the Truth, Good Preaching, Country Music, Aug. 5: Williamsburg; Aug. 28: Fredericksburg; Sun., Oct 2- 4P.M.: Richmond, VA.:" University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 1966.

members, the third phase of the Klan in Virginia found few recruits and held little political power.

## Chapter 2

During the 1920s members of the various Norfolk Klaverns would hold an annual picnic and Fourth of July celebration that was open to anyone interested in attending. The 1925 celebration had an estimated crowd of 35,000.<sup>70</sup> There were bike races, boxing matches and wrestling events in addition to the picnic. The event was similar to celebrations which took place all over the United States on Independence Day that year. One month later in August, over fifty thousand Klansmen marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. Shortly thereafter, members of the Northern Virginia Klaverns held a parade in Arlington which drew approximately 30,000 participants and spectators. The day after the parade, the Klaverns in Northern Virginia Klan held a ceremony at which new members were initiated. The ceremony which took place in public at the Arlington horse show grounds. As part of the initiation ceremony a cross was burned.<sup>71</sup> Parades, initiations and cross burnings were regular events for the Klaverns throughout Virginia in the 1920s. Ceremonies like these in 1925 represented the high point of the Klan in Virginia. Much like the national Klan, the Virginia Klan peaked in terms of membership during the mid 1920s and then quickly eroded in the later years of the decade.

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<sup>70</sup> Nancy Bergman Cuthbert, "A Social Movement: The Norfolk Klan in the Twenties," *Virginia Social Science Journal*, 107.

<sup>71</sup> Janet Wamsley, "The K.K.K. in Arlington in the 1920's," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, October 1993, 55.

The increase in interest and membership in the Klan nationally during the early twentieth century was mirrored in Virginia. The Klan throughout Virginia attempted to establish itself as a legitimate mainstream organization and by 1925 had an estimated membership statewide of approximately 30,000 men and women. While this number represented a significant increase in just five years, it represented a small percentage of the national membership of the Klan at that time. The estimated 30,000 members in Virginia represented less than one percent of the total national membership of the 1925 Klan (estimated to be five million). In 1920 the State of Virginia had a total population of 2.3 million people. At its height, members of the Virginia Klan represented approximately 1.3% of the total population of Virginia. The Klan certainly received plenty of notice, in particular because of its beliefs and the regalia members worn, but its impact on Virginia was relatively small.

Beginning with Richmond Klan No. 1, which was founded on October 9, 1920 and continuing to Klaverns in Arlington No. 17, Spotswood No. 54 (Elkton, Virginia) and Fredericksburg No. 97, all of which were founded in later years, the Klan chartered over sixty (60) local chapters or Klaverns throughout Virginia during the second phase.<sup>72</sup> Some areas of Virginia, such as Richmond, Northern Virginia, Norfolk and Roanoke had several Klaverns in their respective geographic areas. These four areas would represent many members, in terms of the actual numbers, of the Virginia Klan. The total number of Klaverns within Virginia is somewhat misleading as many of the Klaverns established in Virginia were in small rural communities such as Warsaw, Covington and Crew inhabited by very small populations.

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<sup>72</sup> Karin Kapridelis, "VCU history professor maps spread of second Klan," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 14, 2015.

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was, for legal purposes, a State of Georgia corporation. While the recruitment and establishment of Klaverns in Virginia began in 1920, the Klan had failed to obtain the necessary authority from the State of Virginia to operate within the State. In October of 1922, the Klan Corporation headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia was charged by the State of Virginia Securities Commission (SCC) with operating in the State without obtaining the necessary certificates required to transact business. At issue was whether a social club/organization needed to be licensed to operate within Virginia. The SCC determined social clubs such as the Klan, did in fact, need to be authorized to conduct activities within Virginia. In April 1923, the charges against the Klan were settled with the Klan agreeing to pay a \$50.00 fine and the court costs. A short time later, "the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, a Georgia Corporation, secured a Certificate of Authority to Conduct business in the State of Virginia."<sup>73</sup> In 1925 the leadership of the national Klan in Atlanta selected Joel L. Baskin to be the Grand Dragon for the entire state of Virginia.<sup>74</sup>

Several of the Klaverns established within Virginia used the name of notable individuals to represent their respective chapters. The Roanoke Klavern, as well as the Graham, Virginia Klavern used Robert E. Lee as their namesake. Lee, a Virginian by birth, was the most famous Confederate general who commanded the Army of Northern Virginia during the American Civil War. The Albert Pike Klavern was established in Norfolk. Pike was a Confederate Brigadier General and cavalry officer who led a group of American Indians during the War. Following the War, Pike moved to Memphis and became a member of the original Klan. The John W. Daniel

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<sup>73</sup> Cuthbert. "A Social Movement: The Norfolk Klan in the Twenties," 106.

<sup>74</sup> [www.ecyclopediavirginia.org/Ku\\_Klux\\_Klan\\_in\\_Virginia](http://www.ecyclopediavirginia.org/Ku_Klux_Klan_in_Virginia).

Klavern was established in Lynchburg in 1921. Daniel was a Major in the Confederate Army and was injured at the Battle of the Wilderness. Daniel would later serve as a member of the United States House of Representatives for one term and the United States Senate during the period of 1887 through 1910. The William Byrd Klavern, No. 99 in Richmond, was established in 1925. Byrd, a wealthy slaveholder, is credited as being the individual who founded the City of Richmond in 1733.

The Richmond area was home to at least five Klaverns: Richmond No. 1, Petersburg No. 3 (known as the Krater Klan), Hopewell No. 14 (established in 1923), the William Byrd No. 99 (established in 1925) and South Richmond No. 128.<sup>75</sup> F.E Maxey was the primary organizer of the Richmond area Klan.<sup>76</sup> Maxey was employed as a business agent for the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America, Local 1018.

The Klaverns in the Richmond area grew quickly, both in membership and interest. In September 1920, an article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* indicated “membership in the order has grown to 350 with 1,000 seeking entrance.”<sup>77</sup> The article went on to say that the Klan was planning a meeting tonight “somewhere in Richmond, exactly where the order will meet was not divulged.”<sup>78</sup> The article went on to say that the Klan was also planning a large public demonstration. On November 11, Armistice Day, an estimated 500 members dressed in full Klan regalia marched on Broad Street in downtown Richmond.

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<sup>75</sup> <https://labs.library.vcu.edu/Klan/learn>, Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan 1915-1940.

<sup>76</sup> Jackson, *The KKK in the City*, 81.

<sup>77</sup> “Knights of the Ku Klux Klan will meet Tonight” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 29, 1920.

<sup>78</sup> “Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 29, 1920.

In 1921 a crowd of approximately eight to ten thousand people watched as six hundred Klansmen marched through downtown Richmond in a parade. "Toddling children accompanied their parents"<sup>79</sup> during the parade and no efforts were undertaken to shield children from the event. There was no law preventing the children from marching "so long as everyone was orderly and law abiding."<sup>80</sup> The Chief of Police Charles A. Sherry indicated in an interview after the parade he "did not deem it necessary to take extra precautions."<sup>81</sup> This statement and the fact that children marched with their parents was perhaps an indication that the Klan was not viewed as a threat, at least to law enforcement. Three years later, approximately 7,000 Klansmen marched through downtown Richmond while thirty thousand people watched the parade. A Negro band was hired"<sup>82</sup> to play and marched in the parade. The "Negro band" was one of two bands available for the event. The other band, however, was associated with the Knights of Columbus, a fraternal organization involved in charity work affiliated with the Catholic Church<sup>83</sup>, and therefore unacceptable. No explanation was given as to why the "Negro band" was acceptable and not the Knights of Columbus band since both blacks and Catholics were listed as enemies of the Klan. C.L. Hoy, a Klan lecturer from the Atlanta Headquarters spoke to the crowd gathered around Bryan Park and 200 new members were initiated. A picnic which include barbeque to eat took place after the parade.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 24, 1921.

<sup>80</sup> *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 24, 1921.

<sup>81</sup> "Silence as Ku Klux Klan Passes Thousands in Richmond Watch 600 Masked Men in Parade" ProQuest: *Washington Post*, September 18, 1921.

<sup>82</sup> "30,000 Watch 7,000 Klansmen on torch Parade in Richmond," ProQuest: *Washington Post*, July 5, 1924.

<sup>83</sup> [www.kofc.org](http://www.kofc.org).

<sup>84</sup> "30,000 Watch 7,000 Klansmen," ProQuest: *Washington Post*, July 5, 1924.

In less than three years there was more than a ten-fold increase in the number of Klan members marching and a three-fold increase in the number of spectators. There were no reports, at least in local newspapers, of any incidents of violence or disturbance associated with either parade. However, the increase in both those Klan members who participated and those who watched the parade served as evidence of the growth in interest in the Richmond-area Klan.

In the early years of the 1920s, the five Richmond Klaverns together had an estimated membership of approximately 2000 Klansmen. In an effort to present themselves as a mainstream organization, the members of the Richmond Klaverns became involved in various community activities and philanthropic ventures. These activities included distributing food baskets during the Christmas season, donating funds to a local Afro-American old folks home and proposing a planned recreational resort on the Chickahominy River with 320 home sites and a centrally located Klavern.<sup>85</sup> The Chickahominy River is significant in Civil War history as the site of much fighting during the attempted siege of Richmond by Union troops in 1862. It was during this battle that Robert E. Lee took command of Confederate forces following the wounding of General Joseph Johnston. As a result of his leadership in the defense of Richmond, Confederate President Jefferson Davis named Lee Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia.

In an interesting editorial in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* written in 1921, the paper provided the census data for the City of Richmond and a critical assessment of race relations. According to the census figures there were approximately 117,000 whites and 54,000 blacks

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<sup>85</sup> Jackson, *The KKK in the City*, 81.



living in the City. The paper estimated there were 9,000 black families with an average of six members per family. The article goes on to identify sanitation and adequate housing as the greatest problems facing blacks in Richmond. Further, the article indicated the two races lived in “complete accord” and that members of “the KKK are resented by both races.”<sup>86</sup> While it is hard to ascribe any certainty with one newspaper article, the article does correctly point to issues (lack of adequate housing and sanitation) which clearly were affecting blacks at this time not only in Richmond but throughout Virginia. It is somewhat hard to believe “the two races lived in complete accord” given the disparity in the standard of living, the segregated communities, and segregated and unequal schools. However, the editorial does point to a sense that the rebirth of the Klan in Richmond was not welcomed by all. Throughout the early 1920s there were numerous articles printed in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* which both cast the Klan in a favorable light and were also critical of the organization.

There were at least five Klaverns in the Virginia Beach area: Norfolk No. 3, Newport News No. 8, Portsmouth No. 16, Suffolk No. 33 and Virginia Beach #100. The Norfolk Klavern known as Providence No. 3, was located in West Norfolk and was established in 1921.<sup>87</sup> The Klan claimed that membership in the Norfolk area Klaverns reached as high as ten thousand Klansmen.

On June 24, 1921, an article published in *The Virginia Pilot* which indicated flyers containing a warning from the Klan had been tacked to telephone poles around Norfolk. The warning was as follows: “The eye of the unknown has been and is constantly observing.

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<sup>86</sup> “Press Opinion, Richmond’s Colored Citizens” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 12, 1921.

<sup>87</sup> <https://labs.library.vcu.edu/Klan/learn>, Mapping the Second Ku Klux Klan 1915-1940.

Gamblers, bootleggers, high speeders, thieves, crooks, grafters, houses of ill-fame and proprietors-this is their last warning, Beware.”<sup>88</sup> Nothing in the flyer mentions immigration, Catholics, Jews and/or blacks, the very issues which supposedly were important to the Klan. The focus of the flyer is those individuals within the greater Norfolk community who are viewed as engaged in illegal or immoral acts. The flyer showed the Klan’s desire to part of a force which would regulate or enforce moral issues and serve as a protection agency against criminals.

A second flyer posted in the Newport News area served as advertisements to recruit new members. The flyer read as follows: “If you are a man, we respect you. If you are 100 percent American, we want you.”<sup>89</sup> The flyer went on to ask: “Do you believe in the tenets of the Christian religion, free schools, free speech, free press, law enforcement, liberty and white supremacy? Can you take a man’s oath?”<sup>90</sup> This flyer gets at the heart of what the Klan attempted to portray as the reason for the re-emergence of the organization. Much like the Klan Creed (shown on page 17), the flyer emphasizes religion, respect of country and the institutions that make this country great (constitutional rights, law enforcement) and white supremacy. Unsaid in the flyer was how the Klan viewed religion, respect of country and constitutional rights. However, there is no mistaking the Klan’s stated goal of white supremacy.

In 1921 Colonel J.Q Nolan spoke to members of the Norfolk Klaverns. Nolan was from the Atlanta-area and traveled on behalf of the Klan giving speeches at rallies. Nolan did address the issue of immigration. In his speech, Nolan denied the Klan was a lawless organization and

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<sup>88</sup> Alexander S. Leidholdt, *Editor for Justice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 137.

<sup>89</sup> Leidholdt, *Editor for Justice*, 138.

<sup>90</sup> Leidholdt, *Editor for Justice*, 138.

pointed to immigration as the real problem. Apparently, Nolan was well received by those who heard him speak. In a letter to the national office of the Klan, the members of the Newport News Number 8 Klavern requested Nolan return to Newport News at a future date. "Colonel Nolan spoke at the Imperial Theater which has a seating capacity of 800 with standing room only and people turned away."<sup>91</sup> According to a report Nolan spoke about the Klan being a secret society with a responsibility "to preserve racial integrity with white supremacy, assuring for unborn generations its pristine purity heritage bequeathed by the founders of the nation."<sup>92</sup> Again, Nolan conveys the central theme of the phase two Klan: white supremacy and native-born primacy.

Within the Klan there was "Propagation Department" which was responsible for producing and distributing weekly "News Letters" which reported events involving the Klan. The News Letters were to be read at Klan meetings as a means of disseminating information. In the May 20, 1921 News Letter, it was reported that several members of the Newport News City government were alleged to be members of the Klan. The Commonwealth Attorney for the City, the Postmaster, the Police Chief, a judge and several members of the City Council were all rumored to have either a membership in or an association with the Klan.<sup>93</sup> In addition, the June 10, 1921 News Letter indicated "We have just taken the Chief of Police (of Norfolk). He is a fine upstanding fellow-a Major in World War I."<sup>94</sup> The Norfolk Chief of Police, Charles "Barney"

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<sup>91</sup> Henry Pack Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1922), 59

<sup>92</sup> Leidholdt, *Editor for Justice*, 138

<sup>93</sup> Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, 59.

<sup>94</sup> Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan*, 58.

Borland, publicly denied that he was a member of the Klan.<sup>95</sup> It is unclear whether the Chief of Police was an actual member of the Klan or perhaps just sympathetic to the cause.

In the Norfolk area, economic issues provided an opening for Klan leaders to condemn the potential effects of immigration on the job market. The Norfolk Navy yard, one of the largest employers in the area in 1919 with 12,000 jobs had been reduced to just 2,400 jobs by 1923. The reduction in jobs at the naval yard reflected the downturn in the economy after World War I. The downturn was a result of a reduction in the military overall following the war and a weak global economy in general and initially fed into the message of an organization looking to protect the interest of native-born Americans against the influx of immigrants.

In the same fashion as other Klaverns throughout Virginia, the members of the Norfolk area Klaverns attempted to present themselves as a community minded organization. Just prior to Christmas in 1921, Klan members cooked and served dinner for “foreign jobless local men”<sup>96</sup> while dressed in full Klan regalia.

Earlier that year, “several 100 members”<sup>97</sup> of the Klan helped law enforcement in the search for Carlos Meekins, who had been charged with the murder of Robert De Korte, a Newport News, VA policeman. The Klan offered a reward of \$250.00 for information leading to the arrest of Meekins. The Klan promised to delivery Meekins safely to authorities upon capture. Meekins was eventually captured in Norge, VA, a town approximately forty miles from Newport News. Meekins was tried, convicted and sentenced to life in prison.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Cuthbert, “A Social Movement,” 104.

<sup>96</sup> *Richmond Times Dispatch*, December 17, 1921.

<sup>97</sup> “Members of the Ku Klux Klan Aid in Search for Murderer,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 29, 1921.

<sup>98</sup> <https://books.google.com> “The Police Journal,” Volumes 9-10, page 39.

The Klan's involvement with the search for Meekins fits with the message presented on the flyer attached to the telephone pole which expressed the Klan's interest in protecting the citizens of Norfolk from criminals as well as supporting law enforcement. It also fits with the message presented by Colonel Nolan in which he denied the Klan was a lawless organization. Despite the expressed intentions of the Klan to aid law enforcement, members of the local police department later requested Klan members cease in their search for Meekins.

The Northern Virginia area was home to at least six Klaverns: Fairfax County No. 2 (established in 1926), Ballston No. 6 (established in 1927), Arlington No. 17 and No. 21, Alexandria No. 47 and the Robert E. Lee No. 48 (established in 1924) in Graham.<sup>99</sup> Howard E. Bettings was named the Grand Cyclops of the Ballston No. 6 Klavern in Arlington, VA.

The Ballston Klan had "their field on Carlin Springs Road" at which they would have ceremonies, social events and initiations. Much like the Scottish Clans, the Carlin Springs Road field served as the designated site at which the Ballston Klavern would meet and burn crosses.<sup>100</sup> Having a designated site at which to meet indicated the Klan made no attempt to be a secretive organization but rather a very public organization that was comfortable with itself, fearing neither law enforcement nor being ostracized from the local community.

According to records compiled for *Fairfax County, A History 1992*, there was only "one count of physical violence" recorded connected to the Klan but "verbal and visible threats" made by Klan members against blacks "were not uncommon."<sup>101</sup> While there are few recorded

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<sup>99</sup> <https://labs.library.vcu.edu/Klan/learn>.

<sup>100</sup> "Local Klan Parades Against Communism," *The Sun*, August 12, 1938.

<sup>101</sup> Nan Netherton and Donald Sweig, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History* (Pittsburg: Caliban Books, 1978).

instances of violence or assaults, the act of burning a cross and conducting ceremonies in full Klan regalia would have been viewed as a threat or an act of intimidation to anyone either in opposition to the Klan or members of specific groups targeted by the Klan to include blacks, Catholics and Jews. While actual acts of violence related specifically to the Klan were not common, members of the Klan were tied to other criminal acts such as the report of Klan members turning over gravestones at a Catholic cemetery.<sup>102</sup>

One of the acts of violence for which the Northern Virginia Klan did take responsibility was the “tarring and feathering” of a white man for “deserting his wife and running around.” A cross was burned by Klan members in connection with the incident to serve as a warning “to others of his ilk.”<sup>103</sup> One of the significant issues for which the Klan purportedly stood was morality. The Herndon Klan’s activities “were directed towards maintenance of morals.”<sup>104</sup> While most of the vitriolic language spoken by leaders of the Klan dealt with blacks, Catholics, Jews and foreigners, the Klan made a claim on the moral high ground related to family and fidelity to spouse. Whippings, assaults and threats made against whites who failed to live up to the moral standards expected of Klan members was not uncommon throughout the United States. This is a significant factor in the rapid decrease in interest and membership of the Klan nationally. The practice of holding members to a high moral standard following the conviction of the leader of the Indiana Klan, Stephenson for the rape and murder of his secretary created a sense of contradiction among members who were not part of the Klan leadership.

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<sup>102</sup> Netherton and Sweig, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History*, 536.

<sup>103</sup> Netherton and Sweig, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History*, 535.

<sup>104</sup> Netherton and Sweig, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History*, 535.

The Arlington County Sheriff's office was organized in 1869. Since that date there have been over twenty men and women who have served as the Sheriff. In 1916, Howard B. Fields was first elected as the Sheriff of Arlington County. Fields served a four-year term until 1920 but lost in his re-election bid. Field was re-elected as Sheriff in 1924 and served in that position until 1944. Fields is the longest serving Sheriff in the history of Arlington County. In 1924 when Fields was re-elected, the *Washington Post* reported that "seventy-five autos toured the County and Alexandria with two of the cars bearing electrically illuminated crosses about eight feet high" in celebration of Fields' election. The group celebrating included "400 masked Klansman."<sup>105</sup> There is no evidence Fields was a member of the Klan but he certainly received their support.

In approximately 1924 a black man by the name of Sandy James disappeared. James had been involved in a racial dispute with white man. A witness claimed he heard Fields state he (Fields) hit James with a blackjack<sup>106</sup> numerous times. While the body of James has never been recovered and the exact details of incident remain unknown, the Klan's support for Fields was unquestioned. It is hard to know if Fields and/or the local Klan had any connection to or was responsible for the disappearance of James (or potentially his murder). What is known is that racial tension was a factor in the Northern Virginia area and specifically in both Arlington and Fairfax Counties. Contact with the Arlington County Sheriff's Office revealed the records going back to the 1920s, including the reports related to James, likely have been destroyed.

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<sup>105</sup> "Ku Klux Celebrates Arlington Election: 400 in 70 Autos Tour County and Alexandria," *ProQuest: Washington Post*, November 8, 1923.

<sup>106</sup> Netherton and Sweig, *Fairfax County: A History*, 538.

Just as the members of the other Virginia Klaverns attempted to portray themselves as a mainstream organization through community activities, so did the members of the Northern Virginia Klaverns. Members of the Ballston Klan visited more than twenty-five families in Arlington County during the Christmas season and left baskets of food and toys for Christian families in need. Woman of the KKK of Arlington organized and held lawn parties at the Klan field in Ballston.<sup>107</sup> The Ballston Klan Band played for those in attendance.<sup>108</sup> The Ballston Klavern had a thirty plus piece band that would not only play at local functions but would on occasion travel and participate in Klan functions outside Virginia. There are numerous articles in newspapers describing the band, whether marching in a parade or performing at an event. Members of the Herndon Klavern had an annual Herndon Day on which the members of the Klavern marched, set off fireworks and burned a cross. Family members attended and many participated in the parade.<sup>109</sup> The parades and other events were all open to the public to view.

In May 1926, the members of the Arlington County Klaverns celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Klan. At that ceremony, fifty new members were initiated into the Klan.<sup>110</sup> The rally would include a speech by E.F. Randolph, the Grand Titan of the Harrisonburg Klavern in which he provided a history of the Klan. Randolph indicated the original Klan was “founded by six Confederate soldiers in Tennessee in 1866.” Randolph went on to say “within one year had a membership of over five thousand with General Bedford N. Forrest as the leader.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *ProQuest: Washington Post*, December 24, 1932.

<sup>108</sup> *ProQuest: Washington Post*, June 6, 1933.

<sup>109</sup> Netherton and Sweig, *Fairfax County: A History*, 535.

<sup>110</sup> “Arlington County Klan Celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Founding of Original Organization, Topic of Address: 50 Members Admitted,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, May 7, 1926.

<sup>111</sup> “Arlington County Klan Celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, May 7, 1926.



Randolph praised William Simmons saying “seeing the dangers of the foreign policies during the year 1915, the organization was re-organized and in 1918 had a membership of 3000. It has grown until today and we number our membership in the millions.”<sup>112</sup> Randolph indicated the United States was “at the crossroads” with a decision to follow the ways of Europe or to “follow the footsteps of our forefathers.” Randolph closed with a threat of sorts indicting there “were still plenty of ships moving on the seas, and those that don’t want to stand for 100 percent American principles, had better go home.”<sup>113</sup> During the ceremony, which was open to the public, the Ballston Klavern band played for the crowd.

During the 1920s, members of the various Klaverns throughout Virginia were involved in many social activities that would be viewed as mainstream. For several years, members of the Northern Virginia Klaverns had a baseball team called the “Klan Nine” which participated in a league that played its games throughout the greater Washington D.C. area. The results of the baseball games were regularly published in *The Washington Post*. On some occasions the box score showing the names of the players, the details of the game including at bats and hits as well as the results of the game were published. An article written in 1927 talks about the upcoming game between the Klan Nine and a team called the Shamrocks. The article indicates “these two teams can boast of producing good baseball today.”<sup>114</sup> The article listed the pitchers for the Klan: Dick Hughes, “Lefty Wormsley and Tang Raines. In addition, the article indicated

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<sup>112</sup> “Arlington County Klan Celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, May 7, 1926.

<sup>113</sup> “Arlington County Klan Celebrates 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, May 7, 1926.

<sup>114</sup> “Klan to Play Shamrocks Today: Contest is Scheduled for Arlington Show Grounds,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 17, 1927.

“The Ku Klux Klan has trounced some of the best teams in and around Washington.”<sup>115</sup> It appears that being identified as a member of the Klan baseball team had little, if any, negative consequences.

There were several articles printed in which a representative of the Klan Nine solicited opponents with which to schedule games on open days. The article identified the representative by name and phone number. On April 24, 1927, an article published in *The Washington Post* indicated L.C. Risler, telephone number Lincoln 4624-R could be contacted at that telephone between six and seven o’clock or by letter at his address, 240 Tenth Street SE, to discuss scheduling a game.<sup>116</sup> Risler’s contact information was thus available to anyone in the greater Washington D.C. area. It does not appear Risler had any concerns with being associated with the Klan or at least its baseball team.

Baseball was the biggest spectator sport in the United States during the 1920s. The 1927 World Series winning New York Yankees are arguably the greatest team ever to play the game. The fact that the Klan had a baseball team at a time when baseball was one of the largest sources of entertainment in terms of viewers shows the extent the Klan went to present itself as a mainstream organization. The existence and acceptance of the Klan Nine points to the extent to which members of the Klan assimilated and were accepted within their communities.

Numerous articles printed throughout 1927 and 1928 recorded the outcome of games in which the Klan Nine participated. For example, on May 2, 1927, *The Washington Post* reported that the Klan Nine defeated the Firemen 7-2.<sup>117</sup> On July 18, 1927, it was reported the

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<sup>115</sup> “Klan to Play Shamrocks Today,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 17, 1927.

<sup>116</sup> “KKK wants games,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, April 24, 1927.

<sup>117</sup> “The KKK Team Defeats Fireman,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, May 2, 1927.

Klan Nine, "aided by errors" in the field of play by their opponent, defeated the Busman 8-7.<sup>118</sup> On September 4, 1929, *The Washington Post* published an article in which it reported that the Klan Nine center fielder, Eddie Cleary, was injured and would be hard to replace.<sup>119</sup> The articles about the games and in particular the naming of players on the Klan Nine gave the impression to the readership of *The Washington Post* that the team was just another groups of baseball players in a league with no attachment to the professed beliefs of the Klan.

The Klan Nine played games at fields throughout the Washington D.C. area. Presumably, the team would play before public crowds which would include African-American citizens. There do not appear to be articles published in *The Washington Post* which indicate there were any fights or problems because of the games but also no games against "Negro" teams. While the articles reporting the results of various games were small, they were printed without any editorial judgement about the views of the Klan towards minority groups. The fact that the center fielder was listed by name and importance to the team in the article, provides some indication that the existence of the Klan's baseball team and the fact that it participated in a local athletic league was socially acceptable.

Each year, beginning as early as 1924, the members of the Northern Virginia Klaverns participated in the Fairfax County Fair. From 1924 until at least 1929 there was a specific Klan Day observed at the Fair. In the article published about the 1927 Klan Day at the Fair, it was reported the Klan was authorized to take half of the proceeds earned that day at the Fair and deposited the proceeds into the Klan treasury.<sup>120</sup> *The Washington Post* ran an article about the

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<sup>118</sup> "Errors Aid Klan Nine to Defeat Busman 8-7," *ProQuest: Washington Post*, July 18, 1927.

<sup>119</sup> "Klan Nine Hard Hit by Loss of Cleary" *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 14, 1930.

<sup>120</sup> "Official Klan Day Scheduled at Fair," *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 10, 1927.

1929 Klan Day observed at the Fair which indicated more than 5,000 people attending the event.<sup>121</sup> The first day of the 1929 fair was designated as Children's Day. The second day of the fair was designated as Boy Scouts Day. The third day of the fair was designated the Chamber of Commerce Day. The last day of the fair was designated as Klan Day. On Klan Day, there were sports activities, a hunt of \$100.00 in gold, an address to the crowd and fireworks after dark. In addition, the Klan band played for the crowd.<sup>122</sup> The Klan Day event and the Fair itself received regular coverage from *The Washington Post* each year. As with the newspaper articles about the Klan Nine baseball team, articles describing Klan Day at the Fair or even the involvement of the Klan in the Fair were printed without questions or discussions about the principles on which the Klan was founded. Overall media coverage of the Klan's participation at the Fair was positive. In short, the Klan was participating in activities which were designed to put forth the appearance of legitimacy, social acceptance and assimilation.

The Ballston Klan was listed as an organization on page 530 in the R. L. Polk's & Company *Washington Suburban Directory* in the 1927 edition. Polk's was a telephone directory which included in the listing the fact that the Klan met on Thursday nights at Junior Order Hall and lists W.E. Boxley as the organization's Secretary.<sup>123</sup> The act of listing the organization as well as the individual who served as the organization's secretary in a public source was an indication that the Ballston Klan was not a secretive society but rather a public organization.

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<sup>121</sup> "Klan Day Observed at Fair in Virginia," *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 15, 1929.

<sup>122</sup> "Klan Day Observed at Fair in Virginia," *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 15, 1929.

<sup>123</sup> Wamsley, "The KKK in Arlington," 56.

The Roanoke area was home to at least three Klaverns: Robert E. Lee No. 4 (established in 1921), the John W. Daniel No. 11 and the Christiansburg No. 13. In addition, there was an active Klavern in Lynchburg, less than an hour away.<sup>124</sup>

On November 21, 1921, the by-laws of the Robert E. Lee Klan No. 4 Realm of Virginia Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were adopted. With the adoption of the by-laws, The Klan established another chapter in Virginia with a geographical area starting at the “midway point between the City of Roanoke and the nearest Klan thereto.”<sup>125</sup> This chapter was granted “under the authority of the Imperial Wizard and in accordance with the Constitution of the Klan.” The Roanoke Klavern “met in a white – portico mansion on Day Street,”<sup>126</sup> an indication the chapter was a publically known. The by-laws of the No. 4 Realm were written in a way similar to any organization which required by-laws and rules. The by-laws had nine Articles, detailing everything from selecting officers to setting dues to the procedure for screening and accepting new applicants.

When looking at the By-laws of the Robert E. Lee Number 4 Klavern, with the exception of Article IV, which details the requirement of being a white, male, citizen of the United States with no foreign allegiance, the remainder of the articles resemble those of any other organization such as the Shriners, Masons or the Moose Lodge. Many social organizations in the early twentieth century had membership requirements that provided for a leadership structure, required the payment of dues and were part of a larger national organization. Despite unusual

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<sup>124</sup> <https://labs.library.vcu.edu/Klan/learn>.

<sup>125</sup> “By-Laws, Robert E. Lee Klan No. 4, Realm of Virginia, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” November 21, 1921, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

<sup>126</sup> Jackson, *KKK in the City*, 81.

names, the Klan positions were similar in structure to organizations having a President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and Sargent at Arms. In addition, like many other organizations, those individuals responsible for the handling of money were required to be covered by a surety bond.<sup>127</sup>

Article I established the Klan's authority as a local and subordinate organization under the Order of the Ku Klux Klan and with the Title of the Klonklave, Robert E. Lee No. 4, Realm of Virginia, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>128</sup>

Article II of the by-laws mandated that the new chapter would have both regular and special Klonklaves (meetings). The regular Klonklaves were held at the Klavern (meeting place) during the months of October through March at 7:30 PM. During the months of April through September the Klonklaves were to begin at 8:00. Special Klonklaves could be "held at any time at the direction of the Exalted Cyclops."<sup>129</sup> Naturalization ceremonies, the admittance of new members to the chapter, were to take place at Special Klonklaves.

Article III detailed the officers of the Klavern and their respective duties. There were at least eleven (11) positions established by the by-laws: Exalted Cyclops, Klaliff, Klokard, Kludd, Kiligrapp, Klabee, Kladd, Klarogo, Klexter, Klokann (3 members) and Night Hawk. The Exalted Cyclops was responsible for "presid[ing] over all Klonklaves" and to ensure "all by-laws Imperial Decrees, Edicts, etc." were followed.<sup>130</sup> The Klaliff was similar to a Vice-president in that he was responsible for all duties of the Exalted Cyclops in his absence. The Kludd was responsible for

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<sup>127</sup> "By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>128</sup> "By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>129</sup> "By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>130</sup> "By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

“invoking the blessing of the Deity” and any other duty as directed by the Exalted Cyclops. The Kiligrapp was responsible for recording the minutes of the meetings and to receive any money, including dues, related to the chapter. Any money received was to be turned over to the Klabee. According to the by-laws, the Kiligrapp was required to have a personal bond from a reputable Surety Company of not less than \$500.00. In addition, the Kiligrapp was one of the few positions within the Chapter which could receive monetary compensation for the work he performed for the Chapter.<sup>131</sup>

A “Certificate of Donation” was given to the individual once the initiation dues were paid. The Certificate of Donation indicated the individual from whom the dues were received was “entitled to be received, on the acceptance of his petition”<sup>132</sup> meaning when he was officially accepted as a member of that particular Klavern. The Certificate was signed “Kiligrapp” rather than by the name of the individual who received the funds.

The Klabee was responsible for depositing any funds received and paying any bills incurred in the operation of the Chapter after receiving approval from the Exalted Cyclops. The Klabee was also required to be bonded by a Surety Company. Both the Klarogo and the Klexter served as guards or Sargent at Arms, one for the inner area and one for the outer area of the Klavern. The Klokann was a committee consisting of three members of the local Klavern whose responsibilities included conducting background investigations on proposed members, auditing the books and records of the Klavern and insuring all the Klavern “equipment was in good working order.” The Night Hawk was responsible for entertaining the new members prior to

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<sup>131</sup> “By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan,” November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>132</sup> “Certificate of Donation, Farmville, VA,” June 7, 1922, University of Virginia Special Collection Library.

being initiated. In addition, the Night Hawk had the “honor” of carrying the Cross in all the parades in which the members marched.<sup>133</sup>

Article IV listed the requirements for applicants to gain “citizenship” in the Klan, including the membership requirements for individuals who were transferring from another Klavern. The by-laws specifically indicated all applicants needed “to be white, male, Gentile, native born citizens of the U.S.A. which owe no allegiance to any foreign government, national ruler and a believer in the tenets of the Christian religion and allegiance to the U.S. Government to the exclusion of all other Kings, Powers and Influence whatsoever.”<sup>134</sup>

Article VI set the fees associated with being a member of the Klan. All new members admitted to the Robert E. Lee Klan Number 4 were required to pay a \$10.00 fee upon initiation into the Chapter. In addition, each member was required to pay an annual fee of \$5.00. The by-laws allowed for the annual fee to be paid in quarterly installments of \$1.50. Klan members were also subject to an Imperial Wizard tax, presumably to be determined by the Imperial Wizard of the national Klan as authorized by the national Klan Constitution.<sup>135</sup>

Article VII provided a method of dealing with perceived offences committed by members. These offences were defined “as any act which contravened the Constitution of the Order, Laws or Imperial Decrees.”<sup>136</sup> According to the by-laws, evidence of any such offences were to be submitted to the Imperial Wizard for adjudication. The evidence submitted was

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<sup>133</sup> “By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan,” November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>134</sup> “By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan,” November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>135</sup> “By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan,” November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>136</sup> “By-laws, Robert E. Lee Klan,” November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.



required to be in the form of an affidavit and signed by the Exalted Cyclops, the Klaliff, and the Kilgripp. As soon as there was a sufficient amount of evidence, action could be taken.<sup>137</sup>

Article VIII provided for a method of changing or amending the by-laws of the Klavern. According to the original by-laws, amendments or changes could be undertaken at any Klonklave. All that was required was for the amendment or change to be submitted in writing signed by at least three Klansmen and the amendment read at two consecutive meetings.<sup>138</sup>

Lastly, Article IX provided that Roberts Rules of Order, Revised, shall be the proscribed method of conducting business for the Robert E. Lee Klavern.<sup>139</sup>

The recruitment of 30,000 members by 1925, each paying a \$10.00 initiation fee, would have resulted in the payment of approximately \$300,000 into the coffers of the Virginia Klan. With an annual fee of \$5.00 the amount of money collected from members of the Virginia Klan could have reached one million dollars over the ten-year span in which the Klan was active in Virginia. Even considering the agreement that the recruiters received a commission from each member's initiation fee, by 1920s standards one million dollars was a great deal of money. When considering the national membership rose to five million by 1925, the Klan received more than twenty-five million dollars from initiation fees over a relatively short period of time, not counting the annual fee collected from each member or the money collected related to the purchase of Klan regalia.

Throughout the 1920s, articles about Klan events which took place throughout Virginia were published in local newspapers along with other social events involving many other

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<sup>137</sup> "By-laws of Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>138</sup> "By-laws of Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

<sup>139</sup> "By-laws of Robert E. Lee Klan," November 21, 1921, UVA Special Collections Library.

organizations which took place at the same time. To the average reader, the articles written about the Klan would have given the impression of the Klan as just another fraternal organization. When placed in the context of the state of race relations throughout Virginia during this period, the favorable media coverage is not surprising.

As stated in both the Creed and the by-laws, the Klan claimed to have an affiliation with the Protestant religion. On numerous occasions members of the Klan made public displays in order to further the image of an organization connected to the Church. In 1923 the Reverend J. C. Thrasher of the Methodist Episcopal Church was delivering his farewell sermon to the congregation when ten (10) members of the Klan, dressed in robes and hoods entered the church and presented the pastor with a purse containing \$50.00 worth of gold. The purse and gold were a parting gift from the Klan for his support and ministry at the church. Klan members indicated the "Reverend Thrasher was much beloved by the people of the community."<sup>140</sup> The article went on to say that two months later the Klan staged a "spectacular initiation of over 100 persons in a field at Five Oaks."<sup>141</sup> The newspaper article was one of many in which there appears to be a connection between the Klan and at least segments of the Protestant church. Each year the Klan held a Kloroe of Sorrow for those members of the Klan who had died the previous year.

At a meeting at the Arlington Methodist Episcopal Church in Arlington, E.F Randolph, the Grand Titan of the Northern Virginia Klaverns, gave a speech on "The Relationship of the Klan to the Church." Randolph described the Klan as the "right arm of the Protestant Church"

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<sup>140</sup> *Fairfax County: A History*, 534.

<sup>141</sup> *Fairfax County: A History*, 534.

and indicated “having your name on the church roles will not save you. You must be active in the service of the church.” During the speech Randolph stated “the Klan takes as its motto: service to God, to country and to man.”<sup>142</sup> The newspaper article reporting about Randolph’s speech was mixed in-between the announcement that M.C. Swicegood had been elected President of the Arlington County Sunday School Association and the notice that the Aurora Heights Civic Association was having a flower, fruit and vegetable show. Once again, reporting about Klan activities had achieved the group’s goal of appearing to be a mainstream and accepted organization.

On September 19, 1927, approximately 500 men, women and children, all of whom were dressed in the Klan Regalia, attended the wedding of Laura Gordon and H.G. Herman which took place in Arlington. An electronic burning cross was “lit” in celebration of the event.<sup>143</sup> The details of the event were described in a newspaper article. There were no incidents reported related to the wedding.

In addition to the connection between the Klan and the Church, members of the Klan also made connections to public entities including the state’s premier educational institutions. The 1921 members of the Klan made a \$1,000 donation to the University of Virginia (UVA) Gymnasium Fund. The President of UVA, Edwin Alderman, received the check and a note on behalf of the Klan from a local pastor in Charlottesville.<sup>144</sup> The note indicated the Klan made the contribution “so believing in highest principles of liberty, justice, truth and fraternity among

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<sup>142</sup> “Arlington County elects President at Sunday Schedule: Great Titan of the Klan Speaks at Ballston,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 13, 1926.

<sup>143</sup> Wamsley, “The K.K.K. in Arlington,” 56.

<sup>144</sup> Clara Turnage, “KKK Once Gave UVA \$1,000.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 15, 2017.

mankind. The note went further indicating the Klan was “fill[ed] with the deepest devotion for the University as an institution which inculcates virtue and fosters American patriotism.”<sup>145</sup> In response, the President of UVA sent a thank you note which acknowledged receipt of the check and offered a “hearty thanks for the Klan’s gift” and closing the note with “Faithfully yours”.<sup>146</sup>

The ability to stand as an equal with an institution such as UVA enhanced the image of the Klan much more than it helped the image of UVA. There is no record of any complaints from faculty members or members of the Board of Visitors requesting the check be returned at that time. The donation was accepted and in 1924 the Gymnasium was completed. Of note, in 2017 UVA made a time adjusted donation in the amount of \$12,500 to the Charlottesville Patient Support Fund as a way of returning the money and thus, ending any affiliation with the Klan.<sup>147</sup> The Fund had been set up to help those injured during the “Unite the Right” Rally in August 2017.<sup>148</sup>

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1926, the Imperial Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Hiram W. Evans, presented an American flag and constructed a flagpole on behalf of the Klan at the College of William & Mary. A program detailing the ceremony was printed and both Evans and Dr. J. A. Chandler, President of the College, addressed the crowd. Members of the Klan took part in a parade and the Klan band performed for those gathered at the event. Included in the program was a time for “Devotional Exercises.”<sup>149</sup> In speaking to the crowd, Evans indicated “All

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<sup>145</sup> Turnage, KKK Once Gave UVA.

<sup>146</sup> Turnage, KKK Once Gave UVA.

<sup>147</sup> Turnage, KKK Once Gave UVA.

<sup>148</sup> Ruth Serven, UVA to Repay KKK’s Donation by helping cover Rally’s injured” *The Daily Progress*, September 14, 2017.

<sup>149</sup> “Flag Presentation to the College of William & Mary by the Klansmen of Providence No. 2 Realm of Virginia” September 26, 1926.

people of the United States have the right to life liberty and happiness.” Evans went further by stating “The subservient race (African-Americans) shall not be looked upon with hatred. Even though they are not as capable as you are, you should not deny them the opportunities to do that which they are capable of performing.” “Let make the conditions of the other race as happy as possible without crossing the founding line of social equality.”<sup>150</sup> In his speech, Evans attempted to present the Klan as a well-intended civic-minded organization, trying to do what was best for all. As stated in his speech, Evans still viewed African-Americans as an inferior race incapable of accomplishing goals at the same level as whites but more importantly who had no interest in seeing the two groups interact in any manner especially on a social basis.

Dr. Chandler would use the event to argue for acceptance of all individuals regardless of race. In accepting the flag, Dr. Chandler stated: “It is incumbent upon us as law abiding citizens to permit every man to have liberty and to proceed in his own way towards the pursuit of happiness.”<sup>151</sup> Unfortunately, he did not directly assert that the Klan contradicted the liberty he praised. The fact that the members of the Klan and their national leader were able to command a day at one of the oldest and most well-respected universities provided the Klan with exactly what it wanted, a platform on which to claim legitimacy. The presentation of the flag and the construction of the flagpole for the University was much more important to the Klan’s standing than the flag was to the College’s standing. The flagpole was later moved from its original location to the Marshall-Wythe parking lot and the American flag was replaced with the flag of Virginia.

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<sup>150</sup> “Klan Revealed: Imperial Wizard Evans Presents American Flag to William & Mary College” *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, October 2, 1926.

<sup>151</sup> “Klan Revealed,” *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, October 2, 1926.

The College of William & Mary and the University of Virginia are two of the flagship universities for the State of Virginia and were then as they are today, respected nationally. However, their history as it relates to equity of all is less than stellar. The College of William & Mary first admitted an African-American student, Hulon Willis, in the fall of 1951. Willis entered a graduate program at the College. Oscar House Blayton was the first African-American admitted to an undergraduate program at the College in 1963.<sup>152</sup> The University of Virginia received its first African-American student in 1955 when Gregory Swanson was admitted to the UVA law school.<sup>153</sup>

In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan attempted to recast itself as an organization like many benevolent societies of the period. The Klan in Virginia aided those who were in need and in some cases the assistance was provided regardless of race. This effort to provide help to others by the members of the Klan was done in order to present an image different and more favorable than the image associated with the original Klan or that of the true belief of the Klan: that being white supremacy. Events such as parades, appearances at churches and the existence of Klan band all point to an attempt by the Klan to market an image and assimilate into local communities. There appears to be an acceptance, at least on some level, of the Klan in their respective communities, both from a media standpoint and from the interest shown by the crowds that gathered to watch the public events. For the most part, the attempt by the members of the Virginia Klan to present a positive image through the media was successful.

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<sup>152</sup> [www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject](http://www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject). "African-Americans and the College."

<sup>153</sup> [www.virginia.edu/woodsonprojects/kenan/swanson](http://www.virginia.edu/woodsonprojects/kenan/swanson).

### Chapter 3

On Christmas Eve in 1926, over 500 members from the Northern Virginia Klaverns, both men and women dressed in robes and hoods, met at a field in Arlington County and sang Christmas hymns while they watched a burning cross. One of the hymns which was sung was The Old Rugged Cross, a Klan favorite.<sup>154</sup> The words to The Old Rugged Cross are printed, along with several other songs in the *K.K.K. Katechum and Song Book*.<sup>155</sup> The group which gathered on Christmas Eve to sing claimed crosses were being burnt by members of other Klaverns at numerous locations across the state that evening.

The words to The Old Rugged Cross were written in 1915 (the same year as the Klan was re-established) by George Bennard. The refrain from the song is as follows:

So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross  
Till my trophies as last I lay down  
I will cling to the old rugged Cross  
And exchange it some day for a crown<sup>156</sup>

The verses of the hymn speak of the blood shed by Christ as He sacrificed His life on the cross "For a world of lost sinners." Bennard wrote the hymn as he thought about the words in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life."<sup>157</sup> The hymn was a tribute to the sacrifice made by Christ so that "**everyone who believes**" will be saved. Unlike the Klan, Bennard wrote

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<sup>154</sup> "Arlington County A glare with Fiery Crosses of Klan: Robed Men and Women Sign Hymns at More Than 50 Demonstrations" *ProQuest: Washington Post*, December 25, 1926.

<sup>155</sup> *K.K.K. Katechecism and Song Book*, (Columbus, OH: Patriot Publishing Company, 2014), 20.

<sup>156</sup> [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com). "The History Behind The Old Rugged Cross," Eric Wyse.

<sup>157</sup> *The New American Bible*. Benziger Publishing Company, 1968.

the hymn to be inclusive and not exclusive. For the Klan, the hymn fits well with the belief that the burning cross, or the Fiery Cross as it was known, symbolized the burning away of evil and their newly purified faith in Christ.

The original Klan certainly professed a belief in God as indicated in its Creed which stated: "We reverently acknowledge the majesty and supremacy of the Divine Being, and recognize the goodness and providence of the same."<sup>158</sup> However, the original Klan had nothing in the way of a tolerance towards different religions, as the United States following the Civil War remained a predominately Protestant country. The original Klan believed the United States had been founded by white men and that it was God's intention that the white race rule over other races.<sup>159</sup> While Evans and the Klan put forth a public image of being a tolerant organization, the reality is that the second Klan had no tolerance for religious groups other than those affiliated with the Protestant denominations. Included in Evans' statement on the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy, is a belief that "the distinction between the races of mankind has been decreed by the Creator and shall ever be true in faith maintained of White Supremacy."<sup>160</sup> Much like many of the slaveholders prior to the Civil War, Evans uses religion as a justification for his belief in white supremacy.

In 1923, Evans wrote a pamphlet titled "Attitude of the Ku Klux Klan Towards the Catholic Hierarchy."<sup>161</sup> In the pamphlet, Evans put forth the Klan's position of "one of entire tolerance of all religious faiths and the complete independence of religion from State

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<sup>158</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 44.

<sup>159</sup> Bartoletti, *They Call Themselves the K.K.K.*, 45.

<sup>160</sup> "The Attitudes of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Towards the Catholic Hierarchy," Dr. Hiram W. Evans, 1923.

<sup>161</sup> "Attitudes of the K.K.K.," Evans, 1923, 4.



control.”<sup>162</sup> This statement of tolerance is in direct conflict with an article Evans wrote for the November 1923 issue of a magazine published by the Ku Klux Klan of Indiana called *The One Hundred Percent Magazine*. In the article Evans writes “A large number among the vast horde of immigrants who have reached our shores in the past thirty years have been Catholics. Another large percentage of this horde have been Jews. In Protestant America, we [must] have time to teach these alien people the fundamental principles of human liberty before we permit further masses of ignorant, superstitious, religious devotees to come within our borders.”<sup>163</sup> Evans went on to say “the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan do not believe that persons of the Roman Catholic faith necessarily are unpatriotic or in any way inferior to people with other beliefs, but hold that a system of Church government is dangerous to the State.”<sup>164</sup> On the one hand Evans indicates he, speaking for the Klan, has nothing against Catholics (or Jews) while in the same speech indicates there is a need to teach those very same people “the fundamental principles of human liberty.”

Evans based his opposition to the Roman Catholic hierarchy on several points. Evans indicates the “doctrine of the Catholic Church is that the pope is God’s divinely appointed representative on earth and has the right of control over states.”<sup>165</sup> Evans continues stating he is “opposed to political interference of the Roman Catholic Church in governmental affairs and in political matters in America.”<sup>166</sup> While Catholic doctrine states the Pope is Christ’s representative on earth, there is nothing that indicates he is divinely appointed. While some

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<sup>162</sup> “Attitudes of the K.K.K.,” Evans, 1923, 6.

<sup>163</sup> *One Hundred Percent Magazine*, Hiram W. Evans, November 1923.

<sup>164</sup> *One Hundred Percent Magazine*, November 1923.

<sup>165</sup> *One Hundred Percent Magazine*, November 1923.

<sup>166</sup> “Attitudes of the K.K.K.,” Evans, 1923, 3.

Popes in the past have exerted great power and influence in the political realm, it has never been the Catholic Church's position that the Pope has the right of control over states. The Klan condemned the Catholic Church for its interference in state matters, but the early twentieth century Klan used its influence to help certain political candidates get elected and to enact certain laws. In Indiana, Stephenson used his position as the leader of the Klan in that state to help elect Edwin Jackson as Governor. Likewise, in Georgia Klan support was critical to the 1922 election of Clifford Walker. Clearly the Klan held itself to a different standard than the Pope.

In 1924 the Patriot Publishing Company in Columbus, Ohio published the *Ku Klux Klan Katechism and Song Book*. The book had the words "Pertinent Questions, Pointed Answers" and the phrase "Information is Ammunition" printed on the first page. A picture of Evans is included along with the words "This booklet contains a whole encyclopedia of Information."<sup>167</sup> The book was dedicated to Hiram W. Evans, the Imperial Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Throughout the book there are the words of certain songs printed including America, The Old Rugged Cross, The Bright Fiery Cross, Sunshine of My Soul, Onward Christian Soldiers, The Battle Hymn of the Republic and The Star-Spangled Banner. More than anything, the Katechism was an Anti-Catholic booklet, detailing the belief that the goal of the Catholic Church was "to make the United States dominantly Catholic."<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the Klan asserted that the Catholic Church in the United States would be "the ultimate union of church and state, [with] the Pope supreme."<sup>169</sup> No information was provided to explain exactly how this was going to happen or why the Catholic Church would attempt such a union.

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<sup>167</sup> KKK Katechism, coverpage.

<sup>168</sup> KKK Katechism, 17.

<sup>169</sup> KKK Katechism, 19.

The Katechism teaches that “God’s working law in the affairs of nature and men is The Law of Construction.”<sup>170</sup> The Katechism does not explain what the Law of Construction is except to say that there are “those whose effect is aimed to destroy the foundation of liberty on which all construction effort is based.”<sup>171</sup> The Katechism acknowledges the Klan is a secret organization but no different from the “secret organizations of Jews, Catholics and Negroes.” The document further stated “Why should not white, Gentile men have an organization for themselves.”<sup>172</sup> The beliefs professed in the Katechism are in direct conflict with the ideas espoused by the Virginia Klaverns. As noted throughout, most of the Klaverns had a very public presence in their respective communities.

One of the questions listed in the Katechism following the acknowledgement of being a secret organization was:

“Q: Is the Ku Klux Klan making a fight against the rights of Jews, Catholics and Negroes?”

“A: It is not. On the other hand, its purpose to the last man is to see that the civil and religious liberties of all men of every race and creed are held inviolate.”<sup>173</sup>

Once again there is the attempt on the part of the Klan to portray itself as a tolerant organization. Questions within the Katechism also addressed parochial schools:

“Q: Are Catholics forced (by the Church) to send their children to parochial schools?”

“A: They are, and some where English is not taught.”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> KKK Katechism, 11.

<sup>171</sup> KKK Katechism, 11.

<sup>172</sup> KKK Katechism, 12.

<sup>173</sup> KKK Katechism, 12.

<sup>174</sup> KKK Katechism, 20.

In his pamphlet titled, "The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan towards the Roman Catholic Hierarchy," Evans specifically points to the "free public school of America [as] the singular God-given instrument with which the forces of superstition, ignorance and fanaticism have been beaten to their knees."<sup>175</sup> The Katechism went on to identify the Free Masons as an organization which "stands for the fullest measure of human liberty and its motto: "Let there be light".<sup>176</sup> In addition, the pamphlet noted that the Free Masons were "staunch supporters of public schools," much like the Klan. For reasons that remain unclear, the Klan was fearful of the parochial school system which was being set up and expanded by the Catholic Church. As written in the Katechesm, the goal of the Catholic Church, as directed by the Pope, was "to refuse to pay the school tax[es] and [they were] will[ing] to send bullets into the hearts of the officials sent to collect them."<sup>177</sup> With his statement, Evans falsely presents an image of an institution under attack by the Catholic Church and its members.

In reality, not all students who were of the Catholic faith were sent to parochial schools and Catholics, as well as everyone else, paid taxes which funded public schools. The concern of the Klan about Catholic schools and the impact those schools would have on the public school system in Virginia was greatly overstated. There were very few Catholic schools, either elementary or secondary, in Virginia prior to 1930 and those that did exist were very small. There were three small Catholic High Schools operating in the 1920s in Virginia, one in Roanoke, known today as Roanoke Catholic High School, Peninsula Catholic in Newport News

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<sup>175</sup> "The Attitudes of the Knights of the KKK," Evans, 1923, 5.

<sup>176</sup> KKK Katechism, 13.

<sup>177</sup> "The Attitudes of the KKK," Evans, 1923.

and Benedictine Academy in Richmond. Neither the few Catholic elementary schools nor the three Catholic High Schools were a threat in any way to the public school system in Virginia.

The Katechism has little in the way of discussions blacks. In one of the few areas within the Katechism where the Klan's concern about blacks and sexuality appears, albeit in the context of Catholic priests, the following question appears:

“Q: If the Negro priest hood of the Roman Catholic Church is growing in the United States, what is the effect upon civilization and social status when Negro priests sit in the confessional while white woman must answer the most intimate and suggestive sex questions?”

“A: The answer to this must be made by red-blooded, patriotic American manhood.”<sup>178</sup>

Nowhere within the Katechism is there any discussion about the Catholic belief about the sanctity of the confessional. Catholic priests are forbidden to discuss any part of the conversations which occur under the Sacrament of Confession. The law throughout the United States provides protection for priests and clergy, similar to the attorney-client privilege, from being forced to divulge any information learned. In addition, not only was the Catholic presence in Virginia very small, but the numbers of Catholic priests overall and black priests specifically, were small. Lastly, no one was forced, let alone non-Catholics, to partake in the Sacrament of Penance.

The Katechism identified John Cabot as the individual who discovered America on June 6, 1497. According to the Katechism, Cabot was sent by Protestant England and sailed under

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<sup>178</sup> KKK Katechism, 34.

the authority of King Henry VII. However, it is Christopher Columbus who receives credit for having discovered America. (Of note, England did not become a Protestant nation until the 1530s.) The Katechism asked the question:

“Q: Did Columbus ever set foot on North American soil?”

“A: No, Columbus never knew continent existed.”<sup>179</sup>

The Katechism went on to say “as a result of Columbus, 40,000 red-skinned inhabitants of the Bahamas perished under the lash of the slave driver or being sold and the race blotted out.”<sup>180</sup> This is an ironic statement from an organization which was founded upon the idea of white supremacy.

Cabot, whose real name was Giovanni Caboto, was a Venetian by birth, hardly an English Protestant. Cabot was commissioned by King Henry VII and did make several trips from England in an attempt to find a shorter route to Asia. Cabot sailed west from England and did land on the North American continent which he claimed for England. However, his exact landing location is still in dispute. Most historians point to Leif Eriksson as the first European to discover North America. Eriksson is believed to have landed on what is present-day Canada, somewhere on Newfoundland.

The Katechism claimed the Catholic Church, mostly through the Knights of Columbus, was responsible for the murders of many individuals who opposed the Church. The Knights of Columbus were described in the Katechism as “an oath bound military organization with allegiance to the Pope.”<sup>181</sup> The Katechism identified Francisco Ferrer, a Spanish educator and

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<sup>179</sup> KKK Katechism, 41.

<sup>180</sup> KKK Katechism, 41.

<sup>181</sup> KKK Katechism, 41.

“Grand Master of the Free Masons in Barcelona” as having been murdered, “shot to death by firing squad”, for trying to “establish free school in densely ignorant Catholic Spain.”<sup>182</sup> As with much of the information presented in the Katechism, there are threads of truth. Ferrer was executed by Spanish officials who, in fact, did have a strong connection to the Catholic Church. However, Ferrer was also known as Catalan anarchist and was executed following accusations of having organized the “Tragic Week” uprisings in 1908. During what has been called “Tragic Week, anarchists “burned churches and convents”<sup>183</sup> in protest of the Spanish war in Morocco. The relationship between the Spanish government and the Catalonians has been contentious for decades. The Katechism did not provide any information regarding the on-going tension between the Spanish government and the Catalonians or their desire to be independent of Spain.

As part of the supposed evidence of the Knights of Columbus being the enforcement arm of the Pope, the Katechism had a section within the booklet titled “The Murder of Abraham Lincoln.”<sup>184</sup> The Katechism went on to place blame for the murder of Abraham Lincoln with the Fourth-Degree members of the Knights of Columbus known as the Knights of the Golden Circle.<sup>185</sup> According to the Katechism, all members of the conspiracy to murder Lincoln were Roman Catholic. One of the members of the conspiracy, Louis J. Weishman, was supposedly an individual who at one time studied to be a priest. Weishman was one of two critical witnesses in the trial of Mary Surratt. John Wilkes Booth, Mary Surratt and her son,

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<sup>182</sup> KKK Katechism, 52.

<sup>183</sup> [www.historypin.org/en/explore/pin](http://www.historypin.org/en/explore/pin).

<sup>184</sup> KKK Katechism, 52.

<sup>185</sup> KKK Katechism, 52.

John, were all supposedly Roman Catholics. In addition, the boarding house located in Washington D.C. where the conspiracy was made and which Mary Surratt operated was frequented by Roman Catholic priests. Most harmful to the narrative as stated in the Katechism about the Lincoln assassination is the fact that the Knights of Columbus organization was founded in 1882, approximately seventeen years after Lincoln's death.

John Wilkes Booth was eventually captured in a barn at Garrett's farm by Union soldiers. Booth refused orders to come out from the barn and in response the Union soldiers set the barn on fire. Booth was shot by one of the soldiers and died a short time later. While there is evidence Booth converted to Catholicism late in his life, he initially attended a Quaker-school and later an Episcopalian Military School. In 1854 Booth was a delegate for Henry Winter Davis, the Know-Nothing candidate.<sup>186</sup> The Know-Nothings were an extremely anti-immigrant and Anti-Catholic party established before the Civil War. Many of the ideas the Know-Nothings embraced in the mid-nineteenth Century were similar to the beliefs of the early twentieth century Klan.

Mary Surratt was tried in a military court tribunal, convicted and hung. John Surratt fled the country initially to Canada then to Egypt. John Surratt was extradited back to the United States to stand trial. The Katechism falsely states John Surratt was "discovered in the Papal Guard of the Roman Pontiff."<sup>187</sup> Due to a United States Supreme Court ruling prior to his return, John Surratt was tried in a civilian court rather than a military court like his mother. John Surratt acknowledged he had conspired to kidnap Lincoln in hopes of exchanging the President for

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<sup>186</sup> [www.legendsofamerica.com/ah.johnwilkesbooth](http://www.legendsofamerica.com/ah.johnwilkesbooth).

<sup>187</sup> KKK Katechism, 53.



Confederate prisoners of war but denied ever plotting to kill Lincoln. The trial ended in a hung jury. The statute of limitations had expired on all the charges lodged against Surratt except the murder charge. John Surratt was released after the hung jury and was never retried. John Surratt was a practicing Catholic. While there is some truth in the statements made in the Katechism, there needs to be context added to show fuller meaning. Booth, the Surratts and Weishman were all affiliated with the Catholic Church to some extent, but the link to a larger Roman Catholic Church conspiracy to kill Lincoln is without merit.

Both the KKK Katechism and the pamphlet were written to create a false narrative under the guise of protecting religious freedom and liberty when in fact, the goal of the Klan was white, Protestant supremacy. The Katechism specifically states the information in the booklet was prepared by Evans. The Katechism and the pamphlet were an extension of the marketing program conducted by the Klan to attract members which began with the advertising agency run by Tyler and Clarke.

A review of the demographics of the State of Virginia in the early twentieth century finds that there was a very small Catholic presence in Virginia and an even smaller Jewish presence. The Catholic Diocese of Arlington had established just four parishes in the combined area of Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church and McLean by 1930.<sup>188</sup> There was also a Catholic presence in both the Richmond area and the Norfolk area, neither of which were very significant. Members of the Jewish faith also had a very small presence in Virginia in the 1920s. Richmond, Norfolk and Northern Virginia all had small congregations. Even today the Jewish

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<sup>188</sup> *The Arlington Catholic Herald*, January 1, 1999.

presence in Virginia is less than one percent of the total population. Virginia in the 1920s was overwhelmingly white and Protestant.

In 1925 the Reverend C. M Long left his role as pastor of the Bank Street Baptist Church in Norfolk. The church was established in 1802 and continued to operate today. Rev. Long left Bank Street Baptist Church to take a position as Pastor at a church in New Jersey. Rev. Long indicated he was leaving “because of factors affecting the colored people of Norfolk.”<sup>189</sup> Long did not cite any particular activities or violent incidents related to the Klan but rather pointed to the willingness of the City of Norfolk to allow the Klan to advertisement on the public street cars. Long stated “the growing spirit of the KKK, manifested by their advertising, on street cars, which are supported by Negroes as well as whites, and which the city allows, coupled with great demonstrations and initiations in public parks, a thing designed to intimidate and terrify the Negro, who is also taxed for the upkeep of these places of public amusement.”<sup>190</sup> Long’s concern and reasons for leaving the Norfolk area, centered more on the inequality blacks endured rather than violent actions undertaken by members of the Klan. Long certainly acknowledges the “growing spirit of the KKK,” but he does not point to any specific action or incident for which the Klan is responsible. While it is impossible to see into the future, had Long waited just another year or two, he would have seen the beginning of the decline of the Klan in the both the Norfolk area and in Virginia. This is not to say that Long would have seen a significant increase in equality towards blacks in the area, but clearly, the days of the Klan were numbered.

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<sup>189</sup> “Rev. Long Raps City in Giving Up Pastorate Here,” *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, September 12, 1925.

<sup>190</sup> “Rev. Long Raps City in Giving up Pastorate Here,” September 12, 1925.

The national Klan had a well-deserved reputation of being violent, particularly against African-Americans. However, a search of newspaper articles in *The Washington Post*, *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* (an African-American newspaper) for this period provided little in the way of reporting acts of violence or criminal behavior on the part of members of the Klan within Virginia. Undoubtedly, there were acts of violence against African-Americans by individuals within Virginia who were not associated with the Klan and acts of violence by members of the Klan in Virginia that were not reported by newspapers. In both the *Washington Post* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* there are numerous reports of violence and criminal behavior perpetrated by Klan members or those associated with the Klan throughout the United States, particularly in Georgia, North Carolina and Mississippi. With such reporting of violent acts outside the of the state, it would seem likely that at least some of such instances of violence would have been reported in Virginia.

There were however, a few notable instances of violence committed by Klan members in Virginia. In 1926 members of the Klan were involved in the kidnapping of a Catholic priest. Father Vincent Warren was taken from his car at gunpoint one evening by “a band of hooded men”<sup>191</sup> and held for approximately two hours. Father Warren ran a school founded in 1893 “to promote the spiritual and social liberation of the Negro American.”<sup>192</sup> Father Warren was released unharmed after a short period. When asked about the incident, Sheriff L.C. Litchfield replied, “What is there to investigate?”<sup>193</sup> A grand jury was empaneled but no charges were

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<sup>191</sup> “Hooded Virginia Whites Hold priest in Woods for Two Hours,” *ProQuest: The New York Amsterdam*, September 8, 1926.

<sup>192</sup> Cuthbert, “A Social Movement: The Norfolk Klan in the Twenties,” 107.

<sup>193</sup> “Hooded Virginia Whites,” September 8, 1926.

ever filed. It is unknown whether Father Warren was attacked because of his role as a Catholic priest or the fact that he ran a school whose goal was to educate black children or both.

Attacks against blacks and those who were associated with blacks were not uncommon both before and after the re-emergence of the Klan.

A second incident in 1926 involved Raymond Byrd, a black man, who was physically removed from the Wythe County Jail and lynched. Byrd was charged with rape after it was learned that he had had sex with a white woman. The woman, Minnie Grub, would give birth to a child fathered by Byrd. Byrd was held in the Wythe County jail pending trial when one evening "25 to 50 masked men"<sup>194</sup> took him from the jail and lynched him. Only one man, Floyd Willard, was prosecuted for the lynching but was acquitted of all charges after a very short deliberation by the jury. The argument of this article is not to downplay the seriousness of lynching or diminish the victim in any way. Regrettably, lynchings were common in Virginia, particularly in the late nineteenth century, but the clear majority of lynchings in Virginia took place before the Klan's resurgence. In response to Byrd's death, the Governor of Virginia, Harry F. Byrd, requested the legislature to enact Anti-Lynching laws. While arguing for passage of the law Governor Byrd would state "mob law is anarchy."<sup>195</sup> The legislation would become law a short time later.

The law made "lynching a specific offence against the State, prosecutable by the Attorney General or his designee."<sup>196</sup> In his support for the law, Byrd indicated that "there have

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<sup>194</sup> Paul Beers, "The Wythe County Lynching of Raymond Byrd," *Appalachian Journal*, Volume 1, (Fall 1994), 34-56.

<sup>195</sup> "Governor Byrd Asks for State Lynching Law," *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, January 21, 1928.

<sup>196</sup> "Governor Asks For Lynching Law," *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, January 21, 1928.

been four lynchings in Virginia in recent years but it is intolerable that there should be any.”<sup>197</sup>

Byrd explained his support for the Anti-lynching law as a means to combat mob law which Byrd viewed as anarchy. Any vigilante violence including lynchings would have been viewed as a threat to Byrd’s control over the State. Any vigilante groups, including the Klan, would have also been viewed as a threat to Byrd’s control.

During the period in which the Klan had success in expanding and operating in Virginia, three men, Elbert Lee Trinkle (1922-24), Harry Flood Byrd (1926-1930) and John Garland Pollard (1930-34) served as Governor for the State. The Governor of Virginia is now and was during the early twentieth century limited to one term. While there were three different men to serve in that position, Governor Harry Byrd had a tight-fisted control of Virginia’s political realm. This control would extend for decades to come.

During his term as governor, Trinkle would sign into law the Racial Integrity Act. This Act was designed to protect “whiteness” in part by prohibiting inter-racial marriage. The law required every individual born in the State of Virginia to be designated as either white or colored. With the passage of the Act, the ‘one drop rule’ was instituted. The “rule” defined an individual as being colored if there was even any black lineage in the heredity. The law defined white as having “no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian.”<sup>198</sup> The law was relaxed a bit in designating those individuals who had no more than 1/16<sup>th</sup> Indian heritage. Also passed into law during Trinkle’s term as Governor was a bill which allowed for the forced sterilization of those kept in state institutions who suffered from “idiocy, imbecility,

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<sup>197</sup> “Governor Asks For Lynching Law,” *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, January 21, 1928.

<sup>198</sup> “Racial Integrity,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 18, 1924.

feeble-mindedness or epilepsy.”<sup>199</sup> The law was challenged and upheld in 1927 in the case *Buck v. Bell*.<sup>200</sup>

As indicated above, Byrd was elected Governor in 1926. Byrd began his career in politics as a member of the Virginia Senate, a position he held from 1916 through 1926. In 1933 Byrd was appointed to be a United States Senator for the State of Virginia, a position he would hold until 1965. Byrd, was the leader of what would become known as “The Byrd Organization” which was the major force in Virginia politics from the early 1910s through 1960. While Byrd is credited for many achievements during his administration, he was opposed to racial integration and a believer in white separatism. Byrd had a reputation as a racist, who believed in limiting the ability of both poor blacks and whites to be engaged in the representation process by supporting a poll tax and a literacy test. The poll tax law required any person registering to vote after 1904 to pay \$1.50 every three years for the privilege to vote. Byrd would successfully oppose an effort in 1938 to reduce the poll tax from the current amount of \$1.50 to \$1.00. The effect of the poll tax and the literacy test was to limit the number of eligible voters in Virginia. The tax and test disenfranchised blacks and poor whites from having a voice in the State. Byrd would publically affirm the “Southern Manifesto” and provide “massive resistance” to any effort to enforce the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>201</sup>

Byrd also had another side to him, at least a political or public side. The hallmark of Byrd’s political career, particularly when he was Governor, was education reform and law and order. In 1925, in an effort to revamp the educational system in Virginia, Byrd provided the

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<sup>199</sup> [www.encyclopedia.virginia](http://www.encyclopedia.virginia)

<sup>200</sup> *Buck v. Bell*, 274 U.S. 200 (1927).

<sup>201</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

following assessment of the system: “The Democratic Party, which has governed Virginia for the past fifty years, has failed to provide adequate educational opportunities for the white citizens of the State.”<sup>202</sup> In 1934 Byrd was named to the Board of Trustees for the Miss Anna T. Jeannes Foundation. The Foundation was founded in 1907 by Anna T. Jeannes of Philadelphia with the goal of promoting education. The Foundation donated one million dollars to Booker T. Washington and Hollis Burke Frissell. The million dollars provided the capital for the Negro Rural School Fund in Southern States.

Byrd and members of his “Organization” controlled Virginia. The “base of the Byrd organization was a ‘courthouse clique’ in each county, with support from the five constitutional officers (Sherriff, Commonwealth’s Attorney, Clerk of the Court, Treasurer, and Commissioner of the Revenue).”<sup>203</sup> The “courthouse clique” together with restrictions on the number of eligible voters allowed Byrd to rule the state with the support of a very small percentage of the Virginia population. Pollard followed Byrd as Governor. Pollard was a Byrd Organization ally, who not only enjoyed the support of Byrd during the Governor’s race in 1930 but also used Byrd as an advisor and confidant during his term as Governor.

While Byrd and the Klan shared many ideological views such as the inferiority of blacks, Byrd had no desire to share power with the group. Unlike Jackson of Indiana and Walker of Georgia, Byrd did not need the support of the Klan. To the contrary. In 1928 Byrd’s plan for a short ballot passed and was signed into law. The result was that additional state offices within Virginia became the province of the Governor to appoint. In response, the “Klan burned a cross

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<sup>202</sup> “Democratic Politics in Virginia,” *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, October 31, 1925.

<sup>203</sup> [www.virginiaplaces.org/government/byrdorg](http://www.virginiaplaces.org/government/byrdorg).

in protest when the Governor gave a speech in Covington (Virginia), and actually threatened him with flogging.”<sup>204</sup> Beyond Byrd, “the Democratic Party in Virginia never demonstrated any connection with the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>205</sup> All three Governors were members of the Protestant faith. The majority of elected officials throughout Virginia and on all levels were primarily of the Protestant faith.

In 1925 John Purcell, a known Roman Catholic, ran for the position of State treasurer as a Democrat in a heavily Democratic state. Purcell was also a member of the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic organization. Purcell was opposed by John David Bassett, who ran as the Republican candidate and as the “100% candidate”. While religion was a campaign issue, Byrd supported Purcell as a Democrat. Purcell would go on to win the election and serve as the State Treasurer. Purcell was one of very few Catholics involved in Virginia politics.

In 1925, Klan members in the Virginia State House of Delegates put forth a bill which would require all candidates for public office to specify their religious affiliation.<sup>206</sup> While the bill never passed, or became law, it’s object was clear. The lack of support beyond the Klan members was a clear indication that religious affiliation was not a significant issue in Virginia, at least on a state level.

Contrary to what has been written in the past, the Klan did not always have the support of local politicians within the state and if they did, that support waned over time. In 1926, the Norfolk City Council would take a definitive step against the Klan when it adopted an anti-mask

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<sup>204</sup> David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 233.

<sup>205</sup> Wamsley, “The KKK in Arlington,” October 1993.

<sup>206</sup> Mark Pattison, “Klan’s Anti-Catholicism noteworthy; Church targeted since 1920s,” *The Catholic Virginian*, September 11, 2017.



ordinance. The ordinance outlawed the use of any clothing to cover one's face while marching. Newport News also passed city ordinances banning the use of a hood during a parade and would become one of only a handful of Southern cities which outlawed masked parades.<sup>207</sup>

On a national level, the Presidential election of 1928, was a contest between the Republican candidate Herbert Hoover, a Protestant and the Democratic candidate New York Governor Al Smith, a Catholic. In 1928 Virginia was very much a Democratic controlled state. Byrd would support Smith despite his Catholic faith, although the State would ultimately vote for Hoover.

In May 1927 members of the Arlington Fairfax Klaverns traveled to Lynchburg to protest nomination of Smith for president.<sup>208</sup> Smith was the Governor of New York and in 1927 secured the nomination to run for President representing the Democratic Party. Smith would include as part of his platform an anti-Prohibition plank which was contrary to the supposed beliefs of the Klan. Virginia would vote for Hoover in a large way. Interesting enough, Smith would win eight states in the election, six of which, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana, were part of the former Confederacy. Smith also won Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Smith would lose Virginia by a substantial margin despite the backing of most Democratic leaders in the State including Governor Byrd.

In addition to Catholics and Jews, Evans and the 1920s Klan identified immigrants as a target of their disdain and used perceptions about the state of the country to increase membership. In his writing on immigration in the United States, Evans described the United

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<sup>207</sup> *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 17, 1926.

<sup>208</sup> "Arlington-Fairfax Klan to Conduct Protest," *ProQuest: Washington Post*, May 30, 1927.

States as “melting pot of the world, a problem and a responsibility face by no other people.”<sup>209</sup>

Evans went on to analysis the makeup of the United States as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation white foreigners:	36.8 million
The Negro race has grown to:	<u>10.4 million</u>
Total	47.2 million
Whites:	<u>58.5 million</u>
Total Population:	105.7 Million
Illiteracy:	4.7 million
Mental & Physical	5.0 million
Paupers & dependents	.1 million
Criminals	<u>163,000</u>
Total:	10.0 Million <sup>210</sup>

According to Evans, “one in ten Americans was socially inadequate.” And “the flood of inferior people sweeps across the Atlantic” but “we see the South is reasonably free of alien influence but that section has the bulk of the black race.”<sup>211</sup> African-Americans made up approximately twenty-nine percent of the Virginia population in 1920 and approximately 26 percent in 1930.<sup>212</sup> Racism was alive and well in Virginia and the resurgence of the Klan in the 1920s did not change that fact.

The first wave of immigrants that came to the United States in the second half of the ninetieth century, which included Catholics and Jews, settled primarily in either the Northeast

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<sup>209</sup> Hiram W. Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, 1923, 4.

<sup>210</sup> Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, 1923, 6.

<sup>211</sup> Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration*, 1923, 6.

<sup>212</sup> “Demographics of Virginia,” accessed on January 25, 2018, [http://en.wikipedia.org/Demographics\\_of\\_Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/Demographics_of_Virginia).

or moved further West. Very few of the immigrants settled in the South. The influx of immigrants who came to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century had virtually no impact on Virginia. Few of the immigrants found their way to the state. There are several reasons for the lack of migration to Southern states: lower wages than other parts of the country, more opportunities in the other regions of the country and a higher level of poverty in the South.<sup>213</sup> While immigrants were not necessarily welcomed in the mid-west, there were employment opportunities.

Much those in the first wave, the immigrants coming to the United States after World War I also settled primarily in the Northeast or traveled further west. This helps explain why the majority of members in the early twentieth century Klan were located in the mid-western portion of the country in states such as Indiana. The success of the Klan in the mid-west is evidence that the marketing campaign of creating additional groups beyond blacks worked in that area of the country. The lack of an immigrant population in Virginia helps explain the lack of success on the part of the Klan in Virginia.

The growth of the population in Virginia during the 1920s was .5%,<sup>214</sup> very small in comparison to other states. A survey in 1924 by the University of Virginia “found Fairfax County’s foreign-born population so negligible as scarcely to be worth mentioning.”<sup>215</sup> Those groups on which the Klan focused their disdain: immigrants, Catholics and Jews, made up a small part of Virginia and as such posed no real threat to the power or social structure of the

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<sup>213</sup> Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 418.

<sup>214</sup> “Stat Chat UVA” Accessed January 26, 2018, <http://statchatuva.org>.

<sup>215</sup> *Fairfax County: A History*, 538.

State. The Klan's failure in Virginia was certainly, in part, a reflection of the failure of the Klan on a nationally. However, and more importantly, the failure in terms of interest and membership of the Klan in Virginia was, in large part, a realization that the problems and perceptions put forth by the leaders and advertisers for the Klan, did not exist in the state.

By 1930, Klan membership in Virginia was estimated to be approximately 1,600 Klansmen, down from the peak in 1925 when membership eclipsed 30,000 members.<sup>216</sup> The 1600 members would represent less than one-tenth of one percent of the total population of Virginia in 1930. The precipitous drop in membership and interest in the Virginia Klan reflected a national trend downward to the point where in the early 1930s total membership in the Klan was estimated to be less than forty thousand. Contributing to the drop nationally was a 1928 United States Supreme Court decision titled *New York v. Zimmerman*,<sup>217</sup>. In the decision, the Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision in New York "which required the Ku Klux Klan to provide sworn copies of their rosters to the Secretary of State."<sup>218</sup> The court in its opinion indicated there "was a difference in character between the K.K.K. and other secret societies justifying the difference in treatment."<sup>219</sup> Klan gatherings and cross burnings by members of the Virginia Klaverns would continue into the 1930s. However, the number of Klan members participating and the crowd sizes were greatly diminished.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that membership in the Virginia Klan, as well as the Klan nationally, had dropped precipitously, some members still held on. A 1928 gathering of the

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<sup>216</sup> *ProQuest: Washington Post*, November 2, 1930.

<sup>217</sup> *New York v. Zimmerman*, 278 U.S. 184 (1928).

<sup>218</sup> *New York v. Zimmerman*, 278 U.S. 184 (1928).

<sup>219</sup> *New York v. Zimmerman*, 278 U.S. 184 (1928).

Klan in the Norfolk area was attended by approximately eight hundred members. In 1931, 200 members associated with the Providence Number 3 Klavern of West Norfolk staged their annual rally. At the rally, three new members were initiated into the local Klavern. Of significance is the fact that only three years earlier there were 800 associates of the local Klavern who attended the annual rally.<sup>220</sup> While there were no acts of violence reported by any of the newspapers associated with any of the above-mentioned parades, the parades themselves, particularly when associated with a cross burning would have been viewed as very intimidating to those outside the Klan. This would have been especially true for those individuals who were black, Catholic, Jewish and/or an immigrant. The difference in interest between the two gatherings in Norfolk reflected the precipitous drop in membership and interest in the Klan throughout Virginia.

Other organizations, such as the Knights of American Protestantism (KAP), appeared as the Klan was in decline. The KAP claimed to be the equivalent of the Catholic Knight of Columbus, offering an alternative to the Klan whose stated purpose was “to perpetuate Americanism and foster respect for the law.”<sup>221</sup> The existence of the KAP as an organization was short-lived and had little impact.

In 1930 the Reverend Emmette Spencer held a service at the Trinity Methodist Church in honor of the Klan to prove the organization was not dead. A total of 188 members of the various Klaverns in Northern Virginia attended the service and Howard Beatty, the Grand

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<sup>220</sup> “200 Attend Ku Klux Klan Conclave As Fiery Crosses Burn,” *ProQuest: Norfolk Journal and Guide*, June 17, 1933.

<sup>221</sup> “Ku Klux Klan Rival formed at Norfolk: Knights Offers membership to the “Banished Knights” at Cut Rates,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, April 2, 1927.

Dragon, presented a sum of money to the church as a gift<sup>222</sup> and spoke to the congregation. The invitation to attend the service was in response to an article written in *The Washington Post* in which the paper stated membership in the national Klan had dropped from over eight million members in 1925 to just over thirty-four thousand by 1930. In his address to the congregation, Beatty indicted he “was always glad when an opportunity is offered for Klansmen to meet in the House of God, to sing His praises and study His word.”<sup>223</sup> Beatty went on to say “The Klan shall never pass out of existence until America has been made a clean and fit country for all to live in.” A flaming cross, consisting of red electric light bulbs, was illuminated during the service and the Ballston Klan Band was on hand at the service. While the Klan’s connection to the Protestant religion continued, its appeal beyond a small group of followers did not.

In 1932 the *Washington Post* reported Howard E. Bettings, the Grand Cyclops of the Ballston Klan, lead a parade and addressed approximately 400 Klansmen. The story reported the Klan band played and a “80 Foot cross was burned” at the gathering.<sup>224</sup> In 1936, Bettings would again address approximately 300 Klansman of the Ballston Klan. In his speech, Bettings would claim “the New Deal has honeycombed Washington with Communist.” Bettings warned the Klan members that there was a need “to combat the Red Menace” and that the United States was at “a crisis point.”<sup>225</sup> The address in 1936 by Bettings showed the both the decline in membership in the local Klaverns of Northern Virginia, as well as the shifting priorities of the Klan. There was no mention of immigration, blacks, Catholics and Jews during the speech, at

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<sup>222</sup> “Alexandria Church Host to Klansmen: 188 Attend Service to Prove Organization Not Dead as Reported,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, November 10, 1930.

<sup>223</sup> “Alexandria Church Host to Klansmen,” *ProQuest: Washington Post*, November 10, 1930.

<sup>224</sup> *ProQuest: Washington Post*, December 3, 1932.

<sup>225</sup> *ProQuest: Washington Post*, September 27, 1936.

least in the newspaper article. In the speech, Bettings identifies a new problem, communism. However, reporting about the activities of the Klan would continue by *The Washington Post* in a manner similar to many organizations operating in the Washington D.C. area.

Members, both men and women, of the various Klaverns in Virginia held a convention in Roanoke on May 30-31, 1933.<sup>226</sup> Represented at the convention were members of the Ballston, Portsmouth, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Alexandria, and Roanoke Klaverns. Each Klavern had a banner which was used to show their presence at the convention. The picture shows approximately one hundred or so members, both men and women, gathered in Roanoke, a far cry from the thousands who marched in parades during the early 1920s.

In the February 1934 magazine, *The Courier*, there was a section in which Klaverns from various states provided insight into what was going on. In the section providing information about the State of Virginia it was noted that “eighteen automobiles filled with Klansmen in full regalia rode to the church to hear a Roanoke minister, who is red-headed, hard fisted, plain talking and a straight forward Klansman, give a real sermon, one that stirs the soul.”<sup>227</sup> Despite the hope portrayed in the article about the viability of the Klan, it was clear by 1934 that interest in the Klan in Virginia had waned. The Great Depression had set in across America and jobs were hard to come by as was the money needed to pay the annual fee required to maintain membership. Despite the attempt by the Klan to put force an image of a vibrant organization through the article about the church service, by 1930 interest in the Klan throughout Virginia had eroded. Membership and interest in the Klan throughout Virginia

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<sup>226</sup> Picture of the Robert E. Lee Klavern Convention, 1933, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

<sup>227</sup> “The Klan Rides Again in the City of Roanoke” *The Courier* February 1934, 40.

would remain minimal until the re-emergence of the Klan in the 1950s in response to the Civil-rights era.

### Conclusion

Beginning in approximately 1920, with the addition of an advertising company in Atlanta, Georgia to aid the Klan with recruitment, national membership in the Klan rapidly increased to over five million members nation-wide by 1925. Much of the increased membership took place outside the former Confederate states, particularly in the Midwest. In Virginia, recruiting efforts led to a total membership of approximately 30,000 men and women. A marketing message designed to create fear or play on existing prejudices beyond those of race as well as the opportunity to be part of a legitimate mainstream fraternal organization was directed at white, middle-class working men. However, internal issues of fraud, the conviction of Indiana leader Stephenson for the rape and murder of his secretary and a lack of leadership overall contributed to the decline of the early twentieth Century Klan nationally. In addition, a strengthening of the economy starting in the mid 1920s helped to alleviate concerns over immigrants taking jobs from native born Americans. The decline in membership in the Klan nationally was as rapid as was the rise. Some of these factors influenced the decline of the membership and interest in Virginia Klan.

Virginia, however, was different from other states in that the violence directly related to or perpetrated by Klan members was not a significant issue in Virginia. Nor were the perceived problems which revived the Klan, Catholics, Jews and immigrants, significant issues in Virginia.



Very few, relatively speaking, of the immigrants that came to the United States both in the late 1800s and after World War I settled in Virginia. With both waves, most immigrants settled in the Northeast or the Midwest. The 1920s Klan in Virginia failed because the objects of the national Klan's hatred: Catholics, Jews and immigrants, had a very small presence in Virginia. In other words, the issues which brought about a rapid increase in interest and in membership in the Klan were not significant issues in Virginia. All the fear and perceptions generated by the Klan nationally had little basis in fact or reality in Virginia.

This is not to say that racism somehow retreated or disappeared in Virginia during the 1920s. Not even close. Racism towards blacks was alive and well during the 1920s and continued with little abatement through at least the 1970s. Incidents of violence against blacks were not uncommon. However, incidents of violence directly related to or as a result of Klan activity were limited. The Byrd organization was firmly entrenched in control of the state politics, ensuring law and order to prevent any vigilante groups, including the Klan, from diminishing that control. Crucially, this control extended to law enforcement. Not only was the governor in control of the State Police but also had tremendous influence with the sheriffs throughout the state. In Virginia, the position of sheriff is an elected position and as such, most sheriffs throughout the state would have had some connection to the Byrd Organization. There was little, if anything, the Klan could offer to the Byrd Organization. Thus, the Klan became more of a fraternal organization for its members than a true political power.

The Virginia Klan of the early 1920s attempted to portray themselves as a well-meaning organization looking out for the rights of white Protestants who represented the founders of the country. However, Catholics and Jews had a very small presence in Virginia during the

1920s in both overall population and in political positions held at either the state or local levels. The clear majority of state officials, from the governor on down, were of the Protestant faith. There was no reason or opportunity for change nor was there any evidence of a challenge to the existing power structure within Virginia from Catholics, Jews, immigrants or for that matter blacks during the 1920s. At the end of the day, Virginia's population and the state's power structure in the 1920s was overwhelmingly white and Protestant, the very cause for which the Klan claimed to be defending when it began its re-emergence in 1915.

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