

FIGHTING FRATERNITIES:  
THE KU KLUX KLAN AND FREEMASONRY IN  
1920S AMERICA

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Submitted by Miguel Hernandez, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, September 2014.

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Signed .....

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## ABSTRACT

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Throughout the 1920s, America was marked by a series of fundamental political, social and economic shifts that defined the decade. The rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan was just one of the many results of the underlying tensions produced by the radical changes of the period. This fervently patriotic and nativist organization has captivated onlookers and academics because of its peculiar customs and its mysterious resurgence following the First World War. Historians have thoroughly analysed this group's ideology, and have presented detailed case studies of the growth and decline of individual chapters of this vast organization. The 1920s Klan has been studied from practically every possible angle. However, researchers have neglected to study the order's fraternal traditions and their relationship with other fraternities.

This thesis hopes to address this oversight by offering a critical evaluation of the Ku Klux Klan's role as a fraternity. This thesis will analyse how this order functioned as a fraternity, and how these traditions helped recruit followers to the movement. This study will also discuss how the Klan interacted with other fraternities, particularly the Freemasons. These two fraternities shared a complex relationship with elements of both cooperation and conflict, and their interactions will help us comprehend how the Ku Klux Klan managed to become the foremost fraternal movement of the 1920s.

This thesis will analyse a number of different aspects about the Ku Klux Klan, from their ideology and rituals to their sales methods and public relations campaign. This study hopes to re-evaluate a number of key assumptions about this group by critically assessing the Klan from a different perspective. By investigating the response of fraternities like the Freemasons to an intrusive and aggressive order like the Klan, we can gain a better understanding of how the nation as a whole perceived and reacted to this peculiar organization.

## CONTENTS

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<u>Acknowledgements</u> .....	2
<u>Abstract</u> .....	4
<u>List of Tables and Images</u> .....	5
<u>Terms and Abbreviations</u> .....	7
<u>Introduction</u> .....	10
<u>Chapter 1: Klannishness: Brotherhood in the Invisible Empire</u> .....	47
<u>Chapter 2: Freemasonry’s ‘Fighting Brother’: Militancy, Nationalism and the Ku Klux Klan</u> .....	82
<u>Chapter 3: Kluxing America: The Use and Abuse of the Masonic Reputation</u>	123
<u>Chapter 4: Salesmen of Hate: Selling the Invisible Empire</u> .....	161
<u>Chapter 5: Hooded Freemasons: Dual Membership and Conflict in Local Lodges</u> .....	195
<u>Chapter 6: Dallas Klan No.66 and Anaheim Lodge No.207: A Case Study of Two Communities</u> .....	223
<u>Chapter 7: Friend or Foe?: Grand Masters’ Responses to the Ku Klux Klan</u>	263
<u>Epilogue</u> .....	303
<u>Conclusion: an “Invisible” Empire?</u> .....	315
<u>Bibliography and References</u> .....	326

## LIST OF TABLES AND IMAGES

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Image 1 – Outline of a Klavern	81
Image 2 – Masons and Klansmen Attend a Funeral	159
Image 3 – Duties Confront the Modern Paul Revere	159
Image 4 – 100% Americans	160
Image 5 – Advertisement for Kleagles in the Wisconsin State Journal	164
Image 6- Nelson Burroughs after his “kidnapping”	295
Chart 1 – Estimates for National Masonic Membership, 1914 -1930	55
Chart 2 – Dual Membership Among Klansmen from Colorado, Montana, Kansas, Michigan and Texas	210
Chart 3 – Membership in the Freemasons Among Klansmen, the DCCL and Dallas Residents	242
Chart 4 – Dual Membership in Anaheim Lodge No. 207	256
Chart 5 – La Grande Klavern Attendance	308

## TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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### **Ku Klux Klan Terminology**

The Ku Klux Klan had an exceedingly complex nomenclature, for further information, see Ku Klux Klan, *Klansman's Manual* (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan Press, 1924).

Domain – A collection of Realms within the Invisible Empire

Emperor – Spiritual and fraternal head of the Ku Klux Klan

Exalted Cyclops – Head of a local Klan chapter

Extension Department – New name of the Propagation Department following 1923

Grand Dragon – Executive leader of a Realm

Grand Goblin – Head salesman and promoter of the Klan within a Domain

Great Titan – Head of Province

Imperial Klonscilium – National council of Imperial officers.

Imperial Klonsvokation – Biennial national gathering of Klansmen

Imperial Palace – National headquarters of the Klan

Imperial Wizard – National executive head of the Ku Klux Klan

Invisible Empire – Alternative name for the Ku Klux Klan, mostly used in rituals

King Kleagle – Chief salesman and promoter of the Klan within a Realm

Kladd – The conductor of the ritual within a klavern

Klaliff – Vice-president of the klavern.

Klankraft – A collective term for the Klan's ritual and fraternal traditions

Klannishness – Term for the Klan's brand of fraternalism

Klanton – Jurisdiction of an individual klavern

Klarogo – Inner guard of the klavern

Klavern – An individual chapter of the Ku Klux Klan and a term for their meeting rooms

Kleagle – The Klan's sales and marketing officers.

Klectoken – Klan initiation fee, usually \$10

Klexter – Outer guard of the klavern

Kligrapp – Secretary of the klavern (Imperial Kligrapp refers to the national secretary)

Klokard – lecturer of the order (Imperial Klokard refers to the national lecturer)

Kloran – Ritualistic manual of the Ku Klux Klan

Kludd – Chaplain of the klavern (Imperial Kludd refers to the national chaplain)

Kluxing – Term for the promotion and recruitment of the Ku Klux Klan

Konklave – A gathering of Klansmen

Propagation Department – National Klan department charged with promoting and selling the order.

Province – A subdivision of Realms, composed of a group of counties.

Realm – A term referring to individual states within the Ku Klux Klan (i.e. the Realm of Arkansas)

### **Freemasonry Terminology**

Blue Lodge – Refers to the first three degrees of Freemasonry; an alternative name for Freemasonry

The Craft – An alternative name for Freemasonry

Grand Lodge – Refers both to the official organization of Freemasons within a state, and to the annual gathering of Freemasons within a state.

Grand Master – Head of the Grand Lodge, and chief spokesperson and authority among Freemasons within a state.

Grand Orator – Head researcher within the Grand Lodge

Junior Warden – Third principal officer within an individual Masonic lodge

Lodge – An individual chapter of Freemasons

Master – Head of individual Masonic lodge

Past Master – Freemason who has previously held the office of Master of the lodge.

Senior Warden – Second principal officer within an individual Masonic lodge.

### **Acronyms**

GAF – Great American Fraternity

KKK – Ku Klux Klan

LOOK – Loyal Order of Klansmen

MSA – Masonic Service Association

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NPC – National Patriotic Council

SPA – Southern Publicity Association

SRSJ – Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction

## INTRODUCTION

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Thomas Dixon was born at the end of the Civil War in the North Carolina Piedmont, and was raised during the turbulent years of Reconstruction on his family's farm. While Dixon was not old enough to take an active role in the post-war strife that afflicted the South, his young life was profoundly shaped by the events of this period. His family was deeply involved in the social and political struggle to re-establish the racial mores and status quo ante that had been upset by the emancipation and enfranchisement of the formerly enslaved African-American population. He described his upbringing in this disconcerting era saying "The dawn of my conscious life begins in this strange world of poisoned air. My first memories still vibrate with its tense excitement."<sup>1</sup> Dixon, like so many of his countrymen, would never forget the sense of injustice his people felt during Reconstruction. He would always remember the North's coercive and tyrannical federal dictates and cherish the inspirational tales of redemption where Southerners rallied to defend and eventually reclaim their sovereignty.

Dixon would go on to have an illustrious career as a popular Baptist minister in Boston and New York, and was warmly received by huge crowds when he later toured the country as a circuit rider. But it is his writing as an author that has earned him a place in the pages of history. In 1902 he penned *The Leopard's Spots*, a fictionalized account of the tragedy of Reconstruction set in South Carolina. This epic romance was not especially creative, but was nonetheless a success, selling a million copies and netting Dixon a small fortune. Historians estimate that one copy of *The Leopard's Spots* was published for every eight Americans, making both the novel and its author a national sensation.<sup>2</sup> This book was quickly followed by its similarly popular sequels, *The Clansman* (1905) and *The Traitor* (1907).

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Allen Cook, *Fire from the Flint: The Amazing Careers of Thomas Dixon* (Winston-Salem: J. F. Blair, 1968), p.10; For more biographical information on Thomas Dixon, see Raymond Allen Cook, *Thomas Dixon*, Twayne's United States Authors Series, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974) and Anthony Slide, *American Racist : The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Leiter, "Thomas Dixon Jr.: Conflicts in History and Literature," University of North Carolina, [http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/dixon\\_intro.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/dixon_intro.html).

In many ways Dixon's trilogy simply restated prevailing Southern narratives or "myths" about the events of the Reconstruction period. His novels featured unambiguous villains: licentious and uncontrollable freedmen who terrorized the region, as well as ambitious Northerners who ransacked state treasuries and instituted absurd "social equality" policies. By contrast the protagonists were invariably chivalrous Southern men and innocent Southern belles who fought valiantly and honourably to overcome these bestial blacks and their short-sighted Northern allies. The story was familiar to many. Yet, Dixon's work was the first best-seller to incorporate the legends of the notorious Ku Klux Klan into this narrative and the first to truly celebrate their contribution in this strife. His trilogy depicted this order as the guardians of the virtue of white women and the true saviours of the South. In *The Clansman*, he wrote fervently:

Under their clan-leadership the Southern people had suddenly developed the courage of the lion, the cunning of the fox, and the deathless faith of religious enthusiasts...With magnificent audacity, infinite patience, and remorseless zeal, a conquered people were struggling to turn his own weapon against their conqueror, and beat his brains out with the bludgeon he had placed in the hands of their former slaves.<sup>3</sup>

In his other novels, one of Dixon's characters referred to the Ku Klux Klan as "the sole guardians of today" while another stated "The Klan was the only way to save our civilization."<sup>4</sup>

Dixon's romanticized tragedy of Reconstruction retold the myths of the Lost Cause, a cultural construct in the American public psyche in which white Southerners retold the history of the war and its aftermath to reconcile themselves to their own crushing defeat. The myths of the Lost Cause quickly gained traction following the war, and somehow managed to become the dominant account. Perhaps this occurred because Northerners grew tired of trying to combat Southern intransigence, or maybe they were simply less

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1905), pp.341-344.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden - 1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1902), pp.160-161; Thomas Dixon, *The Traitor: A Story of the Fall of the Invisible Empire* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1907), p.58.

concerned about how the period was remembered. What is clear is that by the turn of the century, Southern writers and remembrance organizations had dictated and established how the Civil War had been won and how Reconstruction had played out. Senator E.W. Carmack of Tennessee encapsulated the South's dedication to the preservation of the Lost Cause in a 1903 speech to Congress:

The Confederate Soldiers were our kinfolk, and our heroes. We testify to the country our enduring fidelity to their memory. We commemorate their valor and devotion. There were some things that were not surrendered at Appomattox. We did not surrender our rights and history, nor was it one of the conditions of surrender that unfriendly lips should be suffered to tell the story of that war or that unfriendly hands should write the epitaphs of the Confederate dead. We have a right to teach our children the true history of that war, the causes that led up to it and the principles involved.<sup>5</sup>

The American Civil War might be one of the few examples that contradicts the oft-repeated saying that history is written by the victors. The North may have won the war and dictated the terms of re-incorporation into the Union, but the South decided how these events would be remembered for close to a century.

While the rest of America had bought into what now appears to be a distorted Southern account of the history of Reconstruction, the terrorist Ku Klux Klan had remained a contentious part of the narrative. Southerners themselves preferred to avoid the topic. Dixon rehabilitated the organization, presenting them as the trailblazing leaders of the South's rebellion against radical Northern abuses. Historian James Vincent Lowery maintains that before Dixon, commentators had always preferred to ignore, or gloss over and justify the Klan's transgressions as the actions of a desperate people. In contrast, Dixon celebrated and idealized this vigilante organization and initiated what could be

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<sup>5</sup> Seth Weitz, "Defending the Old South: The Myth of the Lost Cause and Political Immorality in Florida, 1865-1968," *The Historian* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2009), pp.80-81; Another useful account of the power of the Lost Cause is Fred Arthur Bailey, "Free Speech and the Lost Cause in the Old Dominion," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 103, no. 2 (April 1995).

described as a national obsession with the order.<sup>6</sup> The popularity of his trilogy ensured that his reinterpretation of the Klan movement was incorporated into the public memory of the period, and this retelling received both popular approval and academic validation in the following years.<sup>7</sup>

The original Ku Klux Klan was in fact quite different to the organization from Dixon's works. In 1872, after having tried a number of South Carolina Klansmen himself, federal judge Hugh Lennox Bond delivered his own verdict on Dixon's beloved *Invisible Empire*, observing that:

There is abundant proof of the nature and character of the conspiracy. Evidence of nightly raids by bands of disguised men, who broke into the houses of negroes and dragged them from their beds – parents and children – and, tying them to trees, unmercifully beat them, is exhibited in every case. Murder and rape are not [infrequent] accompaniments, the story of which is too indecent for public mention. The persons upon whom these atrocities are committed are almost always colored people. Whatever excuse is given for a raid, its conclusion was almost always accompanied by a rebuke for the former exercise of suffrage, and a warning as to the future exercise of the right to vote. But what is quite as appalling to the court as to the horrible nature of these offenses is the utter absence on your part, and on the part of others who have made confession here, of any sense or feeling that you have done anything wrong in your confessed participation in outrages, which are unexampled outside of the Indian territory.”<sup>8</sup>

This evaluation, as well as the reports offered by many others, cannot be reconciled with the organization presented in Dixon's best-selling literature. The

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<sup>6</sup> James Vincent Lowery, "Reconstructing the Reign of Terror: Popular Memories of the Ku Klux Klan, 1877-1921" (University of Mississippi, 2008), pp.14.

<sup>7</sup> See S.E.F. Rose, *The Ku Klux Klan or Invisible Empire* (New Orleans, La.: L.Graham Co., Ltd., 1914) and D.L. Wilson and John C. Lester, *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment* (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1905); Michael W. Fitzgerald, "The Steel Frame of Walter Lynwood Fleming," in *The Dunning School: Historians, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction*, ed. John David Smith and James Vincent Lowery (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 2013) presents an analysis of Walter L. Fleming's efforts to rehabilitate the Ku Klux Klan.

<sup>8</sup> *Testimony Taken By The Joint Select Committee To Inquire Into The Condition of Affairs In the Late Insurrectionary States : South Carolina Volume 3*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), p.1983.

majority of white Americans, through the power of Dixon's writings and Southern mythology, had come to have a very different view of the true nature of the Invisible Empire.

The real Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan was first founded in 1866 in Pulaski, Tennessee, by six former Confederate officers who were bored with small country life. The organization was originally intended to be a fraternity, but quickly devolved into a vigilante force for maintaining antebellum social practices. The former Confederate states had been forced to undergo a number of political and social reforms to re-join the Union, and many Southerners refused to accept the rule of the North. The name Ku Klux Klan quickly became a byword for a number of almost interchangeable white line organizations that sought to control the newly freed slaves and overturn the Northern institutions that enabled them to exercise their rights. Although warnings and whippings were the most often employed methods by Reconstruction Klansmen, cases of rape, assault, arson, murder and even genital mutilation were known to have occurred. Klansmen attacked people for a variety of reasons. They frequently targeted Northern schoolteachers who had come to the region to educate the newly emancipated slaves. Klansmen also visited African-Americans who voted Republican, owned firearms or acted above their proscribed station. For nearly six years, the first Invisible Empire fought to overturn the North's efforts to incorporate the freed slaves into society. This vigilante group was composed of men of all classes, and bonded Southerners of many backgrounds together in the fight for white supremacy and regional autonomy.<sup>9</sup>

The organization eventually faded in the 1870s after federal prosecutions scared many members, but by then the Ku Klux Klan had practically achieved its mission and had subdued their opponents using violence and intimidation.<sup>10</sup> The Southern white population had regained its position and reinstated the

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<sup>9</sup> The most complete study of the Reconstruction Klan is still Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). See also Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> See Lou Falkner Williams, *The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871-1872* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004) and J. Michael Martinez, *Carpetbaggers, Cavalry and the Ku Klux Klan: Exposing the Invisible Empire during Reconstruction* (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield 2007), for details on the federal prosecution of the South Carolina Ku Klux Klan.

region's strict racial norms with the help of the Ku Klux Klan and other political groups.

There is a distinct discrepancy between the Ku Klux Klan described by historians and that described by Thomas Dixon and Southern mythology. The first Invisible Empire had been reviled during its active years, and had been publicly indicted for some truly heinous acts of violence. Although the Klan's crimes were widely-reported throughout Reconstruction, the public perception of those transgressions was heavily contested by politicians and the media at the time and in the following decades. Historian Elaine Frantz Parsons has shown that rumours and reports about the Klan's activities – even their mere existence – were openly called into question by the Southern and Democrat political class and newspapers, who argued vociferously that it was a Republican or Northern conspiracy to validate their heavy-handed approach to Reconstruction. For instance, the Washington correspondent of the *New York Tribune* reported in 1868 that:

The correspondents of a certain New York journal amuse themselves by writing threatening letters in the name of the Ku-Klux Klan to members of Congress and others here, and then telegraphing glowing accounts of the affair to that paper. This is one of the ways in which news is made up for that journal.<sup>11</sup>

This cynical attitude, coupled with the order's own bizarre costumes and ridiculous traditions, allowed scepticism surrounding the Invisible Empire and its alleged wrongdoings to flourish. Describing this uncertainty, Frantz Parsons states that "The Klan occupied a distinctly ghostly space in American political culture. Either it was unnaturally fierce and terrifying or it was nothing at all... The Klan was, by design, a looming but always obscured presence in American political discourse."<sup>12</sup> The theatrical and ridiculous nature of the Klan allowed many less concerned Americans to simply dismiss the organization and the

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<sup>11</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Fabrications," *Baltimore Sun*, April 15 1868.

<sup>12</sup> Elaine Frantz Parsons, "Klan Skepticism and Denial in Reconstruction-Era Public Discourse," *The Journal of Southern History* 77, no. 1 (2011), pp.80-81.

rumours of its crimes as an exaggeration, or at worst, a fabrication.<sup>13</sup> This uncertainty offered Southerners like Dixon the chance to ignore the real Invisible Empire, and to promote their own distorted accounts of this organization.

Thomas Dixon's epic saga not only promoted the Southern myths regarding the events of Reconstruction, it also intrinsically transformed how a large proportion of the population regarded the Ku Klux Klan. While Dixon's literary work undoubtedly boosted the organization's popularity, the Invisible Empire would receive its ultimate redemption on the silver screen. D.W. Griffith's 1915 classic *Birth of a Nation* transformed Dixon's novel *The Clansman* into an awe-inspiring visual experience that established the imagery and character of the noble Klansman in American culture. Cinematically, this silent film was outstanding for its time, lasting three hours and employing impressive and complex action shots of battlefields and charging Klansmen. The plot of the film was an amalgamation of Dixon's novels and retold the story of the war and Reconstruction using the same stock protagonists and villains from the books. The vivid power of the film reinvigorated the audience's passion for the mythology of the Lost Cause and Reconstruction. One Baltimore review of the film said that "It reveals truth with no attempt to distort or exaggerate conditions that actually existed, mirrors incidents that actually happened..." and described the KKK as a "stately guard of honor of the Southern States, vivid as King Arthur's knights of England's song and story."<sup>14</sup> Reporting on the presentation of the film at the local Tulane Theatre in 1917, *The New Orleans-Times Picayune* lauded the realism of the film saying:

The Birth of a Nation' is remarkable for its power of appeal to men and women of varying processes of thought. Its sentimental side is powerful in its appeal to the heart interest, and in its representation of the more

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<sup>13</sup> Elaine Frantz Parsons, "Midnight Rangers: Costume and Performance in the Reconstruction-Era Ku Klux Klan," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 3 (2005), pp.813-814.

<sup>14</sup> "At the Baltimore Theatres This Week: Ford's - "Birth of a Nation"," *Baltimore Sun*, February 6 1917.

gripping historic side of the theme the production is sufficiently correct in detail as to form a strong historic interest.<sup>15</sup>

It was also reported in this journal that over this venue's seven week run of *Birth of a Nation*, 200,000 spectators had watched the film, with some members of the audience arriving from as far as Mississippi and Alabama.<sup>16</sup>

It would be a mistake to assume that this motion picture was universally praised. There was considerable opposition to its display from groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who attempted to have the film censored in various cities for misrepresenting historical events. The organization's director, Walter White, wrote in a letter to the censor's board of Columbus, Ohio that "By idealizing the Ku Klux Klan which is the spirit of lynching organized, and by painting the Negro as a vicious, lustful brute, the 'Birth of a Nation' had done irreparable harm."<sup>17</sup> The film sparked a national debate concerning the real character of the Ku Klux Klan, and allowed Americans to analyse the virtues and misgivings of the Reconstruction order. Though some continued to argue that the Reconstruction Klan was a vigilante force that terrorized the South, the majority of the nation came to see the organization as Griffiths and others had intended. The compelling power of the myths of the Lost Cause, as well the success of the film, had practically cemented the Ku Klux Klan's upright character. As one 1925 writer concluded "D.W. Griffith has made the Ku Klux as noble as Lee."<sup>18</sup> This transformation would lead to a resurgence of the order in the 1920s, wherein millions of Americans would become initiated as Klansmen of the Second Invisible Empire.

The symbolism and imagery of the Ku Klux Klan had become pervasive during this period. Aided by their ridiculous traditions and the construction of a Southern mythology, the Klansmen of Reconstruction had been transformed from night-riding vigilantes who meted out harsh retribution on those who broke

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<sup>15</sup> ""Birth of a Nation" in Second Week of Record Run at Tulane," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, March 20 1917.

<sup>16</sup> ""Birth of a Nation" Ends Tulane Season," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 29 1917.

<sup>17</sup> "Letter from Walter White to Evelyn P. Snow", July 12 1921, "NAACP Papers," Library of Congress, Box C-312, Folder 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ward Greene, "Notes For a History of the Klan," *American Mercury*, February 1925, p.241-242.

Southern traditions into an order of honour-bound knights whose valiant and noble actions defended the weak and rescued their homelands. A number of organizations appeared during this period that allowed Americans to re-enact the misrepresented Invisible Empire from the tales, novels and films of the times. The Loyal Order of Klansmen (LOOK), an organization formed around 1919 in North Carolina, is one such group. The LOOK billed itself as a "Southern order for Southern men," which "Protects our Country from Lawless Invasion" and "Protects the Women of the Southland."<sup>19</sup> Governor Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi welcomed the order to his state, and declared he would be the first to join when they established a branch. The group claimed 11,000 members in North Carolina and was actively soliciting members in Texas to join their Klan.<sup>20</sup> The Columbian Union of the Soveren [sic.] Klan of the World was another such organization, and it was chartered in 1917 in Tennessee by Jonathan Frost. The ideals and purposes of the Columbian Union were detailed in one pamphlet that was mailed to citizens of Richmond, Virginia, and which said:

In all history there is no record of a braver race of men than that who valiantly aided in the reconstruction of our own beloved Southland, nor could there be a race more truly loyal and more truly law-abiding and worthy of the utmost trust than those who cradled and upheld the Ku Klux Klan, even though it involved a seeming disregard of the then established law.

Their devotion to the interests of their fellowmen and their forgetfulness of self will forever enshrine them in the hearts of all true patriots.

The Columbian Union wishes to perpetuate not only the memory of the loving service of these worthy sires but to renew the spirit of helpfulness which made their valiant deeds possible.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "The Revival of the Ku Klux Klan," *The Southwestern Christian Advocate*, June 26 1919;

"Advertisement: Loyal Order of Klansman, Inc.," *Charlotte Observer*, June 22 1919.

<sup>20</sup> "Loyal Order of Klansmen," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 3 1919; "Klansmen to Conduct Membership Drive Here," *Charlotte Observer*, May 30 1919; "Texas Ritchie Says Order Here to Stay," *Charlotte Observer*, July 24 1919.

<sup>21</sup> "Ku Klux Gets Set Back in Attempt To Invade Richmond, Va.," *New York Commoner*, August 7 1919; See also *Soveren Klan of the World: Columbian Union*, (Nashville: Cullom & Gheatner Co., 1918).

Both the LOOK and the Columbian Union seem to have wanted to preserve the values and traditions of the mythical Reconstruction Klan through a new order, but failed to gain widespread popularity.<sup>22</sup>

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc. was undoubtedly the most successful manifestation of this nationwide obsession with the order. Like the others, this organization paid homage and looked back to the legendary Southern order, promoting a romanticized and inaccurate portrayal of that vigilante unit and allowing members to fulfil their fantasies of belonging to the noble Invisible Empire. It was founded in 1915 by William Joseph Simmons, an Alabama-born preacher and a keen follower of the melodramatic and fabricated tales of the Reconstruction organization. Much like Thomas Dixon himself, Simmons had become steeped in the folklore of the Klan movement from a young age. His own father had been active in the movement, and Simmons claims to have learnt of the stories of the ghostly Ku Klux Klan from his family's African-American servants. Like many Southerners of the time, he grew up believing in a severely distorted representation of the movement his relatives had adored. Simmons later claimed he found a book recounting various exploits of the Reconstruction knights when he was 20, and that he saw a vision on his wall. He would later recount this experience saying "On horseback in their white robes they rode across the wall in front of me, and as the picture faded out I got down on my knees and swore that I would found a fraternal organization which would be a memorial to the Ku-klux Klan."<sup>23</sup> It would be fifteen more years before Simmons carried out his vision of re-founding the beloved organization and setting himself up as the Imperial Wizard, or president, of the order.

Simmons' account of his inspiring vision has been called into question. One former aide who worked closely with the probable alcoholic first Imperial Wizard during the 1920s remarked "All [of] the story told by Simmons of a vision in his youth... is a myth. There is nothing in Simmons from which a great

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<sup>22</sup> There is some evidence of their activities before 1920 in Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia, "Soveren Klan of the World to Organize Here," *Charlotte Observer*, December 15 1918; "Klans of Columbian Union be Organized," *Columbus Ledger*, October 22 1917.

<sup>23</sup> "An "Imperial Wizard" and His "Klan"," *The Literary Digest*, February 5 1921, p.44; William Joseph Simmons, *The Ku Klux Klan: Yesterday, Today and Forever*, ed. Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan Press, 1921), p.3; William G. Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Collier's National Weekly*, July 14 1928, p.35.

patriotic fraternal order could come. If he dreamed at all, it was the fitful stirring of delirium in a diseased mind."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, much of what we know about the Second Ku Klux Klan has been contradicted by other evidence. Like the Reconstruction Klan, the second re-incarnation of this organization was also shrouded in secrecy and mystery, allowing confusion and misinformation about the group to thrive among curious observers at the time. The position has not become much clearer since. Historians have struggled to get an accurate picture of the true nature of this organization. In some cases, they have depicted the Second Klan as a movement that barely resembles the actual group. In order to truly understand this infamous organization we will now outline its formation, growth, activities and eventual decline. This introduction will also analyse how historians have depicted the order, as this study will focus on researching some of the most overlooked aspects of this organization.

William Joseph Simmons had been an eager member of various fraternities for most of his life, collecting degrees from a number of different organizations like the Freemasons. He had moved to Atlanta before the First World War to take up work as a salesman for the Woodmen of the World, a mutual insurance fraternity where members could enjoy the benefits of both brotherhood and cheap life insurance. The job appears to have been rather lucrative for Simmons, and he earned the honorary title of 'Colonel' while working for this organization.<sup>25</sup> Simmons' fascination with the alluring power of fraternalism and the myths of the first Ku Klux Klan eventually led him to found his own Invisible Empire as a fraternity in 1915. It could also be argued that it was actually this Alabama preacher's desire to make himself the head of a mighty new organization or to profit from the nation's new obsession with the Reconstruction order that truly motivated him to restart the Klan. In either case, he organized a ceremony on Stone Mountain in Atlanta on Thanksgiving night in 1915 to celebrate the emergence of his new order. He was careful to invite three veterans of the first Invisible Empire to attend and join his brotherhood, and to borrow extensively from the Reconstruction Klan's original ghostly jargon

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<sup>24</sup> Marion Monteal, *The Klan Inside Out* (Chicago,: N/A, 1924), p.7.

<sup>25</sup> For biographical details of Simmons' life, see Charles O. Jackson, "William J. Simmons: A Career In Ku Kluxism," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 1966).

in order to award his own group a mantle of legitimacy.<sup>26</sup> One of the organization's earliest pamphlets even declared all other Klans to be fraudulent and that theirs was "the only legitimate successor of the 'original, genuine' Ku Klux Klan... of the Reconstruction Period."<sup>27</sup> Simmons was clearly trying to ensure that his organization was perceived as the only authentic revival of the movement, and that people would flock to his organization as they had to go and see the exploits of the Klan in the cinema.

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was not the resounding success that Imperial Wizard Simmons had expected it would be, and chapters or "klaverns" were only established in a handful of cities in Alabama and Georgia. The organization had been weakened by the betrayal of one of its chief officers, Jonathan Frost, who had absconded with \$5,000 from the treasury and founded a rival order, the previously referred to Columbian Union. The lack of growth was also due to Simmons' own reluctance to market his order to the masses. He had wanted to keep his brotherhood as a mysterious and exclusive organization, and added "I was afraid somebody else would take my idea and prostitute it; make it commercial."<sup>28</sup>

The advent of the First World War started America along a course which would fundamentally transform this new fraternity. It was during these years that Simmons proposed a number of changes to his order that would revamp the organization from an ordinary fraternity into a politically active brotherhood that could police its neighbours and assist the nation with the war effort. Unlike the Woodmen of the World or any other fraternal order, Simmons' new fraternity now had secret membership rolls, and initiates were discouraged from readily advertising their affiliation. This new secretive Klan was designed to resemble and to work alongside other groups like the American Protective League, a government-sanctioned vigilance committee composed of private citizens that assisted federal agents with identifying slackers, anti-war activists and German sympathizers. Simmons explained that he had wanted to set up a system of

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<sup>26</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, ed. *Intolerance: Answers to the Attacks on the Ku Klux Klan* (Columbus: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1922), pp.49-50.

<sup>27</sup> William Joseph Simmons, *The Practice of Klanishness*, ed. Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan Press, 1917), p.2.

<sup>28</sup> "Why the Ku Klux Klan Has Been Revived," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 8 1921.

“Klan agents” that would “make their reports secretly concerning law violators, immorality, law evasion, non-Americanism, etc...”<sup>29</sup> In the heated jingoistic atmosphere of American wartime society, this sort of activity had not only become acceptable, but had even become a vital part of loyal citizenship. Anti-Klan crusader Aldrich Blake would eventually blame the tense hyper-patriotism of the home front during the war for the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, explaining that during those years “We suspected our best friends. Spying and snooping became popular vocations.... and now and then we grew so patriotic that someone was taken out and whipped and given a coat of tar and feathers. It was the day of the busybodies.”<sup>30</sup>

The young Klan relished the conformity of the war years, and became engrossed in the “100% Americanism” movement that was sweeping the country. For example, 150 Alabama Klansmen marched through Birmingham in robes, carrying a fiery cross and an American flag and handing out cards that warned onlookers to “Be respectful to the flag of our country and loyal to the government. Aid by every means at your command the suppression of disloyalty by either speech or action.”<sup>31</sup> Simmons’ Invisible Empire was slowly evolving, and expanding the scope of their obligations to the world beyond the klavern. It was also distinguishing itself from traditional fraternalism by becoming more militant and politically aggressive. The membership of the order, however, still remained at a paltry two thousand members by the time of Germany’s surrendered.

In 1925, one commentator would later describe the growth of the movement after the war, noting that:

Never in the annals of this country has any organization become so widespread nationally, and in having acquired such astonishing volume of membership in the communities of the nation in such a brief interval of time as has the order of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

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<sup>29</sup> William G. Shepherd, “Ku Klux Koin,” *Collier’s National Weekly*, July 21 1928, p.9.

<sup>30</sup> Aldrich Blake, *The Ku Klux Kraze* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1924), pp.4-5; Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You : World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) is a fantastic examination of the American home front that analyses how the notions of loyalty and citizenship changed during the war.

<sup>31</sup> “Ku Klux Klan Warns Birmingham Loafers,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 8 1918.

This phenomenal expansion of the order and its wonderful membership growth constitute an event in our National life certain to be chronicled by the future historian.<sup>32</sup>

Historians still struggle to explain how such a minor organization became the dominant fraternity of the early 1920s. The growth of the movement following the start of the “Roaring Twenties” is truly astounding. The Second Klan itself claimed it had around 6 million members, whereas historians place the figure at anywhere from 2 to 4 million.<sup>33</sup> Sociologist Rory McVeigh has suggested that a number of structural social changes, especially the post-war economic slump, threatened the dominant political and economic position of America’s white Protestant class, motivating them to join a reactionary movement like the KKK.<sup>34</sup> Alternatively, historian Wyn Craig Wade has proposed that “available evidence suggests that most of these people were led into the Invisible Empire primarily by spiritual needs.”<sup>35</sup> The historiography of the subject does not have a single clear response to the cause of the rise of the Invisible Empire.

What is certain is that these were uncertain times for many native, white, Protestant citizens. The rise of Bolshevism in Europe coupled with signs of radical agitation within their own country troubled many Americans. The prospect of renewed immigration from the war-torn and impoverished nations of Europe was another concern. White Protestant Americans had grown increasingly worried about the non-integration of European minorities into mainstream society, and feared the growing power of this un-American “immigrant bloc” in national life. The internal migration of African-Americans from the farms and cities in the South to the factories in the North had also made many who were not used to their presence quite anxious. Some Americans were also concerned with the perceived wave of lawlessness and immorality that afflicted the country, as well as the emergence of the “new

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<sup>32</sup> *Many are the Virtues of the Ku Klux Klan*, (Flint: Flint Weekly Review, 1925), p.5.

<sup>33</sup> Different Klan sources made varying claims about the number of members, see Ku Klux Klan (?), *K.K.K. Katechism and Song Book* (Columbus: Patriot Publishing Co., 1924), p.18 for just one figure; Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, p.183; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967), p.237.

<sup>34</sup> Rory McVeigh, "Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925," *Social Forces* 77, no. 4 (1999).

<sup>35</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, p.183.

woman.” The dawn of the Jazz Age was proving to be a radical departure from the relative security of the preceding decade.<sup>36</sup>

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan managed to rise to power on a wave of patriotism and nativism that the white Protestant population experienced as a reaction to these changes. It was not Simmons who realized this goal of creating a new and robust Invisible Empire, but the Southern Publicity Association (SPA), a marketing firm set up by two promoters, Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler. On June 7<sup>th</sup> 1920, as his organization struggled to keep its head above water, Simmons signed a contract that appointed Clarke as Imperial Kleagle, or head salesman of the order. This placed Clarke, and by extension his business partner Tyler, in charge of the duty of promoting the order and selling membership. It also entitled the pair to a hefty commission for their services, eight dollars out of each ten dollar “klectoken,” the Klan’s joining fee.<sup>37</sup> Rather than simply try to sell the membership themselves and keeping the entirety of the profits, Clarke and Tyler devised an inventive pyramid scheme where they would hire various salesmen who would take a share of this new Propagation Department’s fee for their work. They divided the nation into sales districts and appointed hundreds of salesmen known as kleagles to sell membership for them for a tempting four dollar commission.

The system proved to be productive. Enthusiastic and ambitious salesmen quickly realized how easy it was to make a fortune selling membership in the order. America’s renewed affection for the Reconstruction Klan, along with the various social shifts taking place in the post-war twenties, had laid the groundwork for the impressive rise of the new Invisible Empire. The effective management of the Klan’s marketing and recruitment was also vital for the success of the movement. Even Clarke was surprised at their success a year into the contract. Writing to Simmons on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1921 he said:

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<sup>36</sup> A few studies that illustrate these changes include David J. Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Nathan Miller, *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003); Niall A. Palmer, *The Twenties in America: Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> A copy of this contract was published in *The Committee on Rules: House of Representatives, First Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office, 1921), p.32.

In the last three or four months we have added to our membership a little more than 48,000 members. In all my years of experience in organization work I have never seen anything to equal the clamor throughout the [nation] for the Klan. The headquarters of the domain chiefs are located in New York, Washington, Indianapolis, Denver, Dallas, Houston and Los Angeles. In all these cities our [kleagles] are working eighteen hours a day, and in most instances are three and four months behind their list of applicants.<sup>38</sup>

The order enticed Americans by deploying a diverse ideology that could appeal to a wide range of citizens. Although the Invisible Empire's core tenets of unquestionable white supremacy, zealous Protestantism and absolute 100% Americanism were cornerstones of the movement, they campaigned on a number of issues. The Catholic threat was probably the organization's primary concern nationwide, as this religion was regarded with suspicion as a foreign movement that seemed determined to undermine American culture and society and take over the country. In Utah though, the order focused on the church of the Latter-Day Saints, which many Protestants from that state felt held an undemocratic control of local politics. Many found the Invisible Empire's promises to fight for law enforcement and public morality very appealing. Others joined the order because the Klan supported a strict reform of the country's immigration laws and advocated the introduction of Americanization measures, such as mandatory public school attendance and a more patriotic national curriculum. The Invisible Empire's commitment to halting the promotion of racial equality or their pledge to protect the nation from Jewish interests also proved to be popular selling points. In essence, the Invisible Empire rose to prominence with a varied programme that was rooted in popular religion and established conservative American culture and politics.

The appearance of klaverns and Klansmen all across the country did not go unnoticed. Journalists increasingly broadcast the appearance of this new hooded brotherhood in towns across America. The pieces that garnered the most attention however, were the alarming reports of vigilante attacks and race-

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<sup>38</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Brewing Racial and Religious Hate," *Evening Public Ledger*, September 12 1921.

baiting by Klansmen, as well as the news of corruption within the organization's leadership. For example, several newspapers released articles detailing the shocking case of Reverend Phillip S. Irwin, a white British minister from south Florida who worked primarily at the local African-American Episcopalian church. Irwin was abducted in July 1921 by a gang of suspected Klansmen near Miami for "preaching social equality to the negroes." They advised Irwin that "this was the south, this doctrine was not tolerated and any person who preached it is threatened with death." He was whipped, tarred-and-feathered and warned to leave the city immediately.<sup>39</sup> Unsettling news such as this made many Americans feel nervous, and nearly every other day politicians, editors and religious leaders were making their firm opposition to the Invisible Empire public and demanding that action be taken to curb its growth.

In September 1921 the *New York World* published a month-long indictment of the Ku Klux Klan in their popular newspaper, using information from former members and victims from around the country.<sup>40</sup> The exposé included damning revelations such as the shocking amount of graft taking place within the organization, the high-pressure sales tactics used by the organization's kleagles, and an appalling list of violent crimes carried out by Klansmen. The articles were syndicated in a number of influential newspapers from across America, and the topic of the Klan and the dangers it posed quickly became everyday conversation. Pressure from the public forced Congress to hold an inquiry into the affairs of the order in November 1921, to ascertain whether the severe allegations made by the *World* and others were true. The Congressional hearing practically absolved the Invisible Empire of the accusations made by the press when the committee was unable to find sufficient evidence of wholesale corruption by the organization's leaders or of any widespread violence. Simmons managed to present his Knights of the Ku Klux Klan simply as "a fraternal, patriotic, secret order for the purpose of

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<sup>39</sup> "The Ku Klux Klan," *Cleveland Gazette*, July 23 1921; "Tar and Feather English Arch-Deacon Who Favors Inter-Racial Marriages," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, July 18 1921; "Wholesale Outrages Attributed to Texas and Other Klux Klans," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, September 19 1921; "Men and Women are Beaten and Tarred And Feathered by Ku Klux Klan 'Knights' Garbed in White Robes and Wearing Masks," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, September 19 1921.

<sup>40</sup> There is a more thorough discussion of the content and significance of the New York World's anti-Klan revelations in Chapter 7.

memorializing the great heroes of our national history.”<sup>41</sup> The Imperial Wizard gave an exemplary performance before the committee, masterfully countering the evidence and denying the accusations made against his order. He successfully managed to clean his order’s name and provide it with nationwide publicity, all in one fell swoop. The Ku Klux Klan was already demonstrating that they knew how to manage their own image professionally and that they could successfully deal with their opponents.

Years later Imperial Wizard Simmons would recall how:

I had those congressmen jumping in every direction because if they reported on the Klan they would have had to investigate and report every other lodge in America....

Things began to happen as soon as I got back to my little office in Atlanta. Calls began pouring in from lodge organizers and others all over America for the right to organize Klan.<sup>42</sup>

The result was that the Ku Klux Klan emerged from the political and media offensive in late 1921 strengthened and reinvigorated. The order had been particularly strong in Southwestern states like Texas and Oklahoma, but after 1921 it became a truly national order, proving to be especially popular in Midwestern states like Indiana and Ohio. The Invisible Empire seemed to be growing by leaps and bounds.

This success naturally bred a lot of envy and unease. The Klan’s militaristic structure had ensured that Simmons and his inner circle remained firmly in power, and that the majority of the profits ended up in the hands of the officials of the organization’s headquarters – the Imperial Palace – in Atlanta. There were several attempts amongst the membership to oust the fraternity’s leaders or to share power across different cities; a number of Klansmen even tried to break away and form a more democratic and less avaricious Invisible Empire.<sup>43</sup> The bulk of the uproar was directed at Edward Young Clarke, who

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<sup>41</sup> Representatives, *Hearings on the Ku*, p.69.

<sup>42</sup> Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," p.38.

<sup>43</sup> This would a constant problem for the Ku Klux Klan throughout its history, but two examples of attempts to break away because of Clarke’s inept and greedy leadership are “The Invisible American” and “The

had temporarily been placed in charge of the order while Simmons was on holiday May 1921, and who it was believed was having an extramarital affair with his business partner Elizabeth Tyler. Disgruntled Klansmen also charged that Clarke was defrauding the Klan, taking in vast profits with elaborate schemes and forcing members to buy overpriced regalia and paraphernalia.<sup>44</sup>

By the time of the first Imperial Klonvokation, the Ku Klux Klan's annual convention, in late November 1922 this bubbling ferment finally reached a climax when Simmons was deposed as leader. A democratic coup was arranged by several high-ranking officials from different states within the brotherhood who were tired with the inept and greedy Atlanta officials. They were led by the Invisible Empire's national secretary, Imperial Kligrapp Hiram Wesley Evans, who convinced Simmons to dedicate himself exclusively to the spiritual and fraternal leadership of the organization as its "Emperor" and to relinquish the executive office of Imperial Wizard to him.<sup>45</sup> The peaceful transition was short-lived, as Clarke and Simmons soon realized that the Second Imperial Wizard was trying to institute fundamental changes to their organization and they no longer held the authority to question him. Simmons began a national campaign to re-claim his position, asserting his rights as the founder. The matter was eventually settled out of court in 1923 with a generous compensation for the first Imperial Wizard, but not before the order had been irrevocably damaged by a very public internecine squabble that delighted their opponents.<sup>46</sup>

The Second Imperial Wizard, Hiram Wesley Evans, was an Alabama born dentist who had moved to Texas with his father when he was young. In Dallas he built up a lucrative practice and became a prominent local citizen.

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National Associated Clans", see "New Invisible Empire Organizes," *Gulfport Daily Herald*, October 14 1922 and "Shattering Blow is Dealt Ku Klux Klan When Rebels Form Nation-Wide Society," *Denver Post*, October 7 1922.

<sup>44</sup> "Klan Dying By Own Hand," *Kansas City Star*, January 15 1922; "Klan Friction Denied," *The Oregonian*, July 2 1922; "Deposed Goblins Say Klan is Broken," *New York Times*, December 3 1921; "Calls Ku Klux Klan Practically Bankrupt," *New York Times*, December 15 1921. For further information on corruption and graft within the Klan's leadership, see Charles C. Alexander, "Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915-1930," *The Business History Review* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1965).

<sup>45</sup> James A. Hollomon, "Higher Orders in Klan Ritual Being Prepared," *Atlanta Constitution*, December 10 1922.

<sup>46</sup> For details of the compensation, see Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Minutes of the Imperial Kloncilium: Meeting of May 1 and 2 1923 Which Ratified William J. Simmons' Agreement With the Knights of the Klux Klan* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923).

One journalist praised him in a magazine article saying he was a “stimulating talker and a most pleasant companion” and adding that he was “extremely religious... Intensely patriotic...”<sup>47</sup> Like Simmons, the second Imperial Wizard had been a devoted member of the Freemasons. In fact it was his good-standing among the members of this well-known fraternity that had precipitated his ascension to the office of Imperial Kligrapp. Evans was one of the earliest members and the Exalted Cyclops, or head, of the soon-to-be notorious Dallas klavern. He managed to quell an anti-Klan faction within the Masonic lodges of the city, a deed which the Atlanta leadership rewarded with a promotion and an impressive \$2,500.<sup>48</sup> Evans was different to the established officials of the Imperial Palace. He represented those fervent Klansmen who had narrowly missed out on being part of Simmons’ clique because they did not join before the SPA takeover. Klan expert Stanley Frost described Evans in 1925 as “a man of strong common sense... a practical idealist... very largely a personification of the common people.”<sup>49</sup> He was far more in touch with the needs of the new Ku Klux Klan’s membership, and was intent on reforming the organization for their benefit, as well as his own and that of his closest friends.

The new Imperial Wizard was very aware of the negative public perception of his order’s ill-famed Propagation Department, and his first step in reorganizing the sales force was to clean house. “The first thing I did was to cancel E.Y. Clarke’s contract as organizer” Evans would later recall about the start of his mandate as Imperial Wizard, justifying his dismissal with allegations of corruption. Evans explained that some weeks the Imperial Kleagle “took in as much as \$30,000. He made a gold mine...”<sup>50</sup> He also fired Clarke’s closest associates – the regional sales officers known as Grand Goblins – and placed some of the department’s kleagles on a salary instead of on their profitable \$4 commissions.<sup>51</sup> Some of the other reforms included banning masked public

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<sup>47</sup> "Toasts: Hiram Wesley Evans," *Forum*, July 1925.

<sup>48</sup> Monteval, *Klan Inside*, p.21-27, 43. Monteval was an aide of Clarke’s and was not Evans’ biggest admirer, but this information is corroborated by other evidence, see Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," p.39 and Jackson, "William J. Simmons," p.360.

<sup>49</sup> Stanley Frost and Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Klan Defender of Americanism," *Forum*, December 1925, p.802.

<sup>50</sup> William G. Shepherd, "The Fiery Double Cross," *Collier's National Weekly*, July 28 1928, p.48.

<sup>51</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation* (Kansas City: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc., 1924), p.62.

parades and opening up membership to women and foreigners by founding the Women's Ku Klux Klan and the American Crusaders respectively.

These reforms introduced much-needed adjustments to the Ku Klux Klan's overall structure, but they were primarily a facelift, intended to make the organization more media-friendly and accessible to the public. Evans' true intention was actually to move away from the fraternal origins of the organization and create a modern and aggressive political juggernaut. Simmons' Invisible Empire had played a part in elections, but they had always been un-coordinated efforts to elect individual candidates without a real national policy. Under Evans, the Klan began to push for a national strategy that involved lobbying and pressuring politicians to support the interests of their members and the order's leadership. One of the second Imperial Wizard's pet projects was immigration reform, and in 1924 he rallied Klansmen to support the Johnson-Reed Act. This reform would dramatically reduce the number of southern and eastern Europeans who were allowed into the country.<sup>52</sup> One journalist explained that the Invisible Empire's emergence into politics was a "new phase in the life of the Klan" and that their new national political platform "puts the Klan frankly into the political field."<sup>53</sup> The new Ku Klux Klan that appeared under Evans' control seemed ready to take the country by storm in late 1924 with its platform of unabashed white supremacy, strict 100% Americanism and aggressive Protestantism.

But just as suddenly as the Ku Klux Klan appeared, by 1925 it seemed to have disappeared. Historians are still debating why the order seems to have collapsed so abruptly. Stanley Coben argues that this decline was due to three factors, the "inability of the order to achieve its promises, the demoralization of its members because of scandals.... and counterattacks by ethnic and religious groups...and business elites which held political control of the nation's major cities."<sup>54</sup> Craig Fox has suggested that America simply grew tired of the Klan,

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<sup>52</sup> Hiram Wesley Evans initiated this campaign at a huge rally in Dallas in 1923, the largest gathering in history, wherein he detailed the organization's stance on immigration and immigration reform, see Hiram Wesley Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., 1924).

<sup>53</sup> Stanley Frost, "The Klan Restates Its Case," *Outlook*, October 15 1924, p.244.

<sup>54</sup> Stanley Coben, *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.150-151.

explaining that “At the most basic and superficial levels, the popular klan was a marketable fad, the gimmicky merchandizing that surrounded it carrying novelty value that was inevitably destined to wear thin once it reached saturation point.”<sup>55</sup> Still others argue that there is no general answer to this matter, and that we must focus on individual klaverns to understand why members stopped attending.<sup>56</sup>

The fact of the matter is that although the timeline and evolution of the organization and its leadership is relatively clear, the Ku Klux Klan has long been intrinsically misunderstood as a movement. The historiography of the subject has been unable to agree on why Klansmen left the organization, because they cannot agree on why Americans were joining in the first place. For close to a century historians, sociologists, political theorists and others have been debating the most basic characteristics of the movement, trying to comprehend who was joining the Invisible Empire and what was motivating them.

The first wave of historians to investigate the Ku Klux Klan characterized the movement as an expression of small-town irrationalism, a violent and reactionary manifestation of conservative America’s inability to cope with the radical changes of the modern 1920s. These accounts were mostly informed by partisan newspaper reports and impressionistic assessments from contemporary observers, and routinely neglected to engage with the wealth of evidence from the Klan or the experiences and opinions of its members. Sociologist John Moffatt Mecklin was one of the leading exponents of this school of thought, and his 1924 study came to encapsulate academic attitudes towards the Second Invisible Empire during this period.<sup>57</sup> He categorized the Klan as an essentially Southern and rural organization that initiated a campaign

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<sup>55</sup> Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2011), p.203

<sup>56</sup> Felix Harcourt makes a very convincing case for this point in his thesis on the decline of the Klan in Maryland, see Felix Alexander Richard Harcourt, "Kleagles, Kash and the Klan: Maryland and the Decline of the Klan, 1922-1928" (The George Washington University, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the only academic study to appear during this period that went against this opinion was Emerson Loucks’ study of the Pennsylvania Klan, where Loucks employed many of the techniques and deployed many of the arguments many later historians would use to critique the first wave of Klan historiography, see Emerson Hunsberger Loucks, *The Ku Klux Klan in Pennsylvania: A Study in Nativism* (Harrisburg: The Telegraph Press, 1936).

of violence and intimidation against African-Americans, Jews, Catholics and European immigrant groups. He believed that these fanatical Klansmen were driven by hysterical suspicions about these “un-American” minorities, and even described members saying “A child whipping its contumacious dolly is hardly more irrational.”<sup>58</sup> This interpretation was very influential, and was echoed by respected historians of the 1950s and 1960s such as John Higham, Richard Hofstadter and William Leuchtenburg.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time there were a number of more specialized studies that also appeared in the 50s and 60s which overturned many of these perhaps rather superficial assumptions. Charles Alexander’s and Norman Weaver’s regional studies of the Invisible Empire began to emphasize the local nature of the movement; Kenneth Jackson’s insightful analysis of the Klan in the city disputed the characterization of the Invisible Empire as a fundamentally rural movement.<sup>60</sup> These revisionist historians were challenging established interpretations of the Klan, arguing that the movement was also Northern, urban and even mainstream. Alexander’s research in the Southwest was especially innovative. His study argued that in Texas the Klan was not focusing primarily on African-American or Mexican minorities, as many had assumed this “irrational” and “racist” organization would. Instead he maintained that in the Southwest, the Second Klan targeted white bootleggers, gamblers, corrupt politicians and others who broke the region’s strict moral codes. This revisionist school of thought began to question many accepted theories about the movement, and increasingly engaged with Klansmen as rational people who were part of a popular and even mainstream movement.

This trend was taken even further in the following decades by a group of historians who would become known as the ‘post-revisionists.’ This school of thought based its work on documents preserved from individual klaverns,

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<sup>58</sup> John Moffat Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), p.112.

<sup>59</sup> See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp.286-299; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (London: Cape, 1962), pp.291-294; William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp.209-211.

<sup>60</sup> Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Norman Frederic Weaver, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan" (University of Wisconsin, 1954); Jackson, *Klan in the City*.

arguing that local history would allow for a more accurate picture of the Invisible Empire to emerge. The work of Robert Goldberg, Leonard Moore, Shawn Lay and recently Craig Fox have fundamentally challenged the dominant narrative, arguing that the Invisible Empire was not an aberration at all, that violence was rare in most regions, and that the Klan ultimately responded to the needs of individual communities.<sup>61</sup> Rather than simply trying to define the Klan based on their ideology and literature, the post-revisionists carried out exhaustive demographic surveys of groups of Klansmen and the communities they inhabited, and have demonstrated that the order recruited from all classes in society. Their work showed that the composition of the Second Ku Klux Klan was practically a mirror of the communities they were built on. These post-revisionists have also argued that each individual klavern adapted to suit the needs of its community, which finally explained the colourful array of different causes the Klan stood for across the country. Whereas the citizens of Macon, Georgia appear to have joined the Invisible Empire primarily to defend the community's moral integrity and violently attacked those who were unfaithful to their spouses, the Klansmen in Oakland, California were busy lowering taxes and paving their streets.<sup>62</sup> This influential approach to the study of the Klan has defined the field for the past thirty years, establishing the organization as a localized movement of reactionary reformers.

The post-revisionist interpretation has become the standard narrative of the Ku Klux Klan, and while it may have drastically improved our understanding of the movement, it still has certain issues that need to be resolved. The focus on local history has made the historiography overly concerned with the role of the KKK in a handful of communities. This artificial restriction of the scope of historical inquiry limits our analysis of the Invisible Empire. The Klansmen of the 1920s interacted with each other in this national movement, so historians should take the opportunity to re-examine this fraternity not as a collection of

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Leonard J. Moore, "Historical Interpretations of the 1920's Klan: The Traditional Review and the Populist Revision," *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 2 (1990); Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*.

<sup>62</sup> Roger K. Hux, "The Ku Klux Klan in Macon, 1919-1925," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (1978); Chris Rhomberg, "White Nativism and Urban Politics: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Oakland, California," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 2 (1998).

isolated pockets of followers, but as a great mass-movement of shared interests. Furthermore, the role of the Klan's national network of officers needs to be emphasized. This group of Klan officials and leaders played a substantial role in marketing and selling the order, and were influential in the success of the overall movement. The historiography of the field has also become preoccupied with the Klan itself and its members, without properly realizing that the rise of this political fraternity had a considerable effect on those who did not join. This study hopes to address these problems by offering a different interpretation of the Second Ku Klux Klan.

The interest in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan has surged since the 1980s, and the historiography of the subject has remained vibrant and energetic. This is because although historians and analysts have gained a clearer understanding of this organization, there are still facets of this mass movement that remain unexplored. The presence of the Invisible Empire affected practically everything in the communities it established itself, from church attendance to shop sales, making it a vital subject for anyone trying to understand the social and political history of the "Roaring Twenties." The Klan has been studied as a political and nativist organization, as an anti-Catholic movement, as a Prohibition lobbying group and as a vigilante unit. But even the less obvious features of the Invisible Empire have been covered by researchers. The Second Klan has been studied as a business venture, as an electoral movement, as a retail combination to fight competitors, as a religious revival and even as a Progressive and socialist organization.<sup>63</sup>

Yet there is one feature of this fascinating organization that has mostly been overlooked, its fraternal side. This is undoubtedly a crucial area of research since, at its core, the Ku Klux Klan was founded and developed as a fraternity. The Second Klan was defined as a "high class secret, social, patriotic, fraternal, benevolent association, having a perfected lodge system,

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<sup>63</sup> See Alexander, "Kleagles and Cash,"; Kenneth D. Wald, "The Visible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan as an Electoral Movement," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1980); Larry R. Gerlach, *Blazing Crosses in Zion: The Ku Klux Klan in Utah* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1982); Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011); John Zerzan, "Rank-and-File Radicalism within the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s," *Anarchy: A Journal of Armed Desire* 37(1993).

with an exalted ritualistic form of work” according to one of Simmons’ first pamphlets.<sup>64</sup> Some of the order’s most iconic customs, such as the lighting of the fiery cross or the organization’s white robes and masks, are derived from their fraternal traditions. Many contemporary commentators noted the appealing nature of the Klan’s ceremonies and fraternal atmosphere. The culture of brotherhood and devotion to the nation instilled in the rituals of this movement was essential for the rise of the Invisible Empire. One journalist commented on the lure of the fraternal klavern saying:

It is [a Klansman’s] way of enjoying himself. He has, in fact, a bully good time, and he goes home feeling that he and his fellows are the prop of the nation. He has gratified both the patriotic and religious yearnings of his soul and has gained the feelings of being a stern and courageous defender of his country – all without having incurred the least risk and at the small cost of \$1.50 a month. It is the safest and cheapest sort of thrill – and 98 per cent of time is entirely harmless.<sup>65</sup>

Historians have also noted the centrality of the Invisible Empire’s function as a fraternity. Lynn Dumenil declared that:

The Klan’s fraternalism was another component behind the organization’s drawing power. The early 1920s witnessed a general expansion of fraternal orders, and the growth of the Klan may be seen in part as a result of the general enthusiasm for joining... It was fun to be a Klansman. And like other lodges, the Klan offered a sense of brotherhood with men of shared values.<sup>66</sup>

Others researchers have made similar arguments.<sup>67</sup> Shawn Lay has even called for a new study of the Ku Klux Klan centred entirely on this very topic, remarking that “Beyond its political and social activism, other aspects of the

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<sup>64</sup> William Joseph Simmons, *Imperial Proclamation of the Imperial Wizard*, ed. Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Atlanta: Alvin Printing, 1917).

<sup>65</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Klan's Growth and Strength Due to Attacks," *Baltimore Sun*, December 12 1922.

<sup>66</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), p.237.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), p.9.

second Klan merit extensive examination. The Klan's role as a fraternal group needs additional investigation, particularly in light of the new and provocative scholarship on secret men's societies."<sup>68</sup>

Nonetheless, while the topic is definitely not undervalued, the Ku Klux Klan's fraternal traditions remain a woefully overlooked subject in the historiography of the Invisible Empire. Most treatises on the order include only a brief reference to the organization's fraternal role, and do not adequately analyse its significance. So far, there have only been two published works dedicated solely to the Klan's development as a fraternity.<sup>69</sup> The first is Jeffrey Fine's 1978 article on the Klan's fraternalism, published in the obscure *Doshisha American Studies* journal. This research went practically unnoticed by most Klan historians, probably because it was published in an American Studies journal from Japan and is now quite outdated, but also because Fine's work is mostly descriptive and adds little to our overall knowledge the movement.<sup>70</sup> The second is Kathleen Blee and Amy McDonald's recent work on the inconsistencies of the Klan's fraternalism. This article analyses the Klan's ceremonies and argues that the Invisible Empire's performances violated the three defining features of fraternities: exclusion, secrecy and boundaries.<sup>71</sup> Although this study certainly does make an interesting and valuable contribution to the literature, the subject of the Klan's fraternal function deserves a far more substantial and in-depth analysis.

Investigations into this topic have simply proven impractical due to the sheer difficulty of trying to peer behind the Invisible Empire's veil of secrecy.<sup>72</sup> The clandestine nature of the Second Klan's activities, as well as the unsavoury

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<sup>68</sup> Shawn Lay, ed. *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, Paperback ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p.219.

<sup>69</sup> There have been other unpublished studies that merit attention, such as Glenn Michael Zuber, "'Onward Christian Klansmen!: War, Religious Conflict, and the rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1912-1928" (Indiana University, 2004) and Adam G. Kendall, "Writing History With Lightning: The Ku Klux Klan and The Fraternal Press of the 1920s" (paper presented at the 4th International Conference on the History of Freemasonry, Edinburgh, UK, 24-26 May 2013).

<sup>70</sup> The article itself is primarily a narrative description of the Klan's rise and decline and its fraternal traditions, see Jeffrey E. Fine, "Masked Brotherhood: A Study of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1930," *Doshisha American Studies* 14(March 1978).

<sup>71</sup> Kathleen Blee and Amy McDowell, "The Duality of Spectacle and Secrecy: A Case Study of the Fraternalism in the 1920s US Ku Klux Klan," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 2 (2012).

<sup>72</sup> Norman McKenzie has discussed the inherent complications that arise when studying secret societies like the KKK, see Norman MacKenzie, ed. *Secret Societies* (London: Aldus Books, 1967), p.12.

reputation it earned in subsequent years have made finding material relating to the order rather complicated. The Klan was not only a secretive organization during its active years; members also frequently destroyed any written materials left when the hundreds of klaverns across the country were closed.<sup>73</sup> The official documents from the Imperial Palace, the most valuable source for many historians, were lost at an unknown time. Maybe less than 10 per cent of the total material produced by the Second Invisible Empire has survived, giving us only a minute proportion from which to draw our conclusions. Furthermore, although oral interviews have previously been deployed effectively by researchers to try and recover some information, the historical window where such techniques could be used has unfortunately closed.<sup>74</sup> Because of these obstacles, it is close to impossible to make certain conclusions when it comes to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, much of what we know about the order has been dictated not by what we as historians would like to know, but by what the limited evidence will show us.

This inherent complication has not deterred researchers. Actually, the organization's secrecy has aroused curiosity and many determined historians have offered their own perspective on the mysterious Invisible Empire. This thesis hopes to continue this trend and contribute to the historiography by carrying out a comprehensive analysis of the Ku Klux Klan's role as a fraternity. This study will question the significance of this brotherhood's fraternal traditions and evaluate how the Klan managed to become both an aggressive political movement and a spiritual fraternity. But more importantly, this research will study the Ku Klux Klan in the context of the period, placing it alongside the other fraternities and secret societies of the time and exploring the relationship between the orders. It is not enough to investigate the Invisible Empire in isolation, because as one Klan critic explained in 1924:

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<sup>73</sup> Allen Safianow wrote a compelling account of an Indiana's town struggle to come to terms with its past when they discovered a trove of Klan documents in the community. Noblesville residents were at odds about whether to preserve the material or destroy it and bury the past. See Allen Safianow, "'You Can't Burn History': Getting Right with the Klan in Noblesville, Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 100, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>74</sup> See Kathleen M. Blee, "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 2 (1993). A review of the oral interviews for any references to the Klan's fraternalism or its relation to Freemasonry would be discarded as these audio recordings are held in various disparate archives. There were also no guarantees that these interviews would have referred to these topics since they have mostly been overlooked by researchers.

One factor in [the Klan's] growth, however, is often overlooked, and that is the saturation of the United States with innumerable organizations, associations, societies, sects, fraternities and whatnots, which, in their use of ritual, their artificial loyalties, their exclusive and arbitrary homogeneity, are not so alien as might at first thought to be supposed.<sup>75</sup>

William Joseph Simmons founded his order based on the various different fraternities he belonged to and his own brotherhood was shaped by these experiences. Throughout the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan developed in step with the major fraternities in America. These influences would prove fundamental to its success. The Invisible Empire managed to selectively incorporate the most popular features of America's most beloved fraternities and soon became one of the nation's largest fraternal orders. It led one Klansman to proudly declare "I think more of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan than any other secret fraternity in which I have any membership. I am a Shriner, a thirty-second degree Scottish Rite Mason, an Elk, Odd Fellow, and a Knight of Pythias, but I love the klan better than any of them."<sup>76</sup> Because of this it is entirely necessary to discuss the Klan's fraternalism in the general context of American secret societies.

The Ku Klux Klan attempted to associate and recruit members from almost all of the country's most prominent fraternities, but seemed particularly obsessed with the Freemasons. The Invisible Empire's dogged determination to enlist and relate to Freemasonry has repeatedly been noted by historians of both fraternities ever since the 1920s.<sup>77</sup> Although the Odd Fellows were the largest fraternity in terms of numbers during the 1920s, the Freemasons remained the most exclusive and desirable brotherhood in America. The Freemasons were everything the Ku Klux Klan aspired to be, and Klan salesman actively pursued members of this fraternity for recruitment into their

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<sup>75</sup> Devere Allen, "Substitutes for Brotherhood," in *KKK: The Creed of Klansmen*, ed. E. Haldeman-Julius (Girard: Haldeman-Julius Company, 1924?), p.14

<sup>76</sup> "Klan Lecture at Palace Sunday Drew Capacity Audience," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, May 1 1922.

<sup>77</sup> See Lynn Dumenuil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.122-23; Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building American Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp.171-173; Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, pp.155-156; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981), p.34; Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, p.8; Lay, *The Invisible Empire*, p.7. This close connection with the Freemasons is noted by most works on the Ku Klux Klan.

own organization. Bearing this in mind, we can see that the Klan took great pains to make it appear as if their own organization was exactly like this prominent fraternity. It could be argued that understanding the Invisible Empire's interactions with Freemasonry is key to understanding the Klan itself. The Invisible Empire shared a relationship with the Freemasons that cannot be compared to that which they had with other organizations.

Freemasonry, also known as the "Craft" or the "Blue Lodge," is one the world's most well-known fraternities. The fraternity's origins lie in the medieval masonry guilds of Britain and France, wherein members would be taught the secret geometrical and architectural techniques of this trade within the lodge. At some point after the English Civil War, some lodges began to allow non-professional stonemasons to join them, and the club became quite fashionable among gentlemen and freethinkers of the time. The three degrees of the masonic lodge taught lessons of virtue based on the symbols of that trade, and many men came to admire the ideas of self-improvement, equality and enlightenment that the ceremony advocated. The first modern lodges were officially founded in Scotland at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when William Schaw reorded the organization and laid more formal rules and various new chapters were formed. This was followed by the union of 4 London lodges in 1717 that would form the Grand Lodge of England. This Grand Lodge established the rituals and regulations that many continue to follow in contemporary lodges.<sup>78</sup> The order spread throughout Europe and soon found its way to Colonial America, where it also proved popular among the British settlers. Although their contribution has been exaggerated in the past, Freemasonry played an influential role during the American Revolutionary War. Revered figures of this period such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Paul Revere were all initiates of the lodge. Not only were a notable proportion of the intellectual and military leaders of the nascent American nation

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<sup>78</sup> There is still some debate about the formal origin of the fraternity, although the Scotland thesis is considered more viable by most academics. See David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988); Margaret C. Jacobs, *The Origins of Freemasonry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). For a review of the debate, see Steven C. Bullock, "Initiating the Enlightenment?: Recent Scholarship on European Freemasonry" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 20, no.1 (1996).

members of the “Craft,” the fraternity helped shape the future of the nation by promoting ideas of democracy, liberalism and individualism.<sup>79</sup>

As the country grew and Americans settled new territories following independence, they took Freemasonry with them. Bodies known as Grand Lodges were set up in each state, each working independently in their respective jurisdictions, and headed by a Grand Master who was usually elected annually at the state convention. The fraternity also expanded with the creation of appendant bodies such as the York and Scottish Rites. These popular orders offered additional degrees to those who had already completed the initial three, and awarded impressive titles such as “Master of the Royal Secret” or “Knight Templar.” Freemasonry also suffered some setbacks during this period. In 1826 in western New York, a man named William Morgan disappeared after threatening to publish the secrets of the Masonic ritual. It was believed by many that he had been murdered by over-zealous Freemasons. The public outcry that followed the events of the “Morgan Affair” created an anti-Masonic sentiment that enveloped the young country during the 1830s and nearly destroyed the fraternity.<sup>80</sup> Although often presented as a hysterical outburst, the anti-Masonic movement of the 1830s was based on very real objections to the disproportionate number of Freemasons in positions of power and their nepotistic habits.<sup>81</sup> The Craft only managed to weather the storm by updating some of its customs and avoiding controversy.

In the years following their persecution, the Masonic fraternity managed to reclaim its position as an American institution, and membership in the order soon became an exclusive and desirable commodity. Historian Mark Tabbert has highlighted the order’s growth in numbers and estimation, explaining that by 1900 at least 5% of the adult male population of the country were Freemasons

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<sup>79</sup> Steven C. Bullock has written an exhaustive examination of the topic, see Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) or Steven C. Bullock, “The Revolutionary Transformation of American Freemasonry, 1752-1792” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (1990).

<sup>80</sup> For a few interesting anti-Masonic opinions from this period, see John Quincy Adams, *Letters on the Masonic Institution* (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1847) for the opinions of the former President.

<sup>81</sup> See Ronald P. Formisano and Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, “Antimasonry and Masonry: The Genesis of Protest, 1826-1827” *American Quarterly* 29, no.2 (1977) and Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, “Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic: The Case for Antimasonic Anxieties” *American Quarterly* 34, no.5 (1982).

and that “After the church and the school, the Masonic lodge was often the most important institution established in a new town.”<sup>82</sup> Following the Civil War, membership in this fraternity became almost indispensable for the aspiring middle classes because of the recognition that being accepted by the Craft awarded. Sociologist Max Weber famously commented that membership in exclusive brotherhoods functioned as a way of demonstrating social standing, observing that “the badge in the buttonhole meant ‘I am a gentleman patented after investigation and probation and guaranteed by my membership.’”<sup>83</sup> Because Freemasonry had such stringent entry requirements and elevated fees, membership in the order became a valuable demonstration of worthiness when meeting strangers. Belonging to the Craft almost became a prerequisite for politicians and businessmen in the period 1890-1930. The Masonic ring or lapel pin proved that the wearer was a dependable and upstanding man.

It was precisely this desirability and the order’s historical reputation as an honourable and progressive organization that fuelled the Ku Klux Klan’s drive to appear as a Masonic affiliate. By tying themselves with the Freemasons, they were imbuing their own organization with the Craft’s respectability as well as their prestigious heritage as the shapers and defenders of American liberalism and democracy. Nevertheless, the historiography of the subject has not given this relationship sufficient attention or credit. The matter has gone mostly unresearched, save for two impressive studies in Kansas and California, produced by Kristofer Allfeldt and Adam Kendall respectively.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, the bulk of the material written on the relationship between the two fraternities has originated from the minds of conspiracy theorists. One website accused Freemasonry and the Klan of being linked with the mysterious New World Order movement, and stated “Whether it be the Mormon church, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Wicca Witchcraft, Scientology or the Ku Klux Klan – we find

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<sup>82</sup> Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, p.89.

<sup>83</sup> Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p.308.

<sup>84</sup> Kristofer Allfeldt, "Jayhawker Fraternities: Masons, Klansmen and Kansas in the 1920s," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012); Adam G. Kendall, "Freemasonry and the Second Ku Klux Klan in California, 1921-1925," *Journal of Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism* 2, no. 1 (2011). Both of these articles will be covered in far more detail later on.

demonic Freemasonry as the common denominator.”<sup>85</sup> Other more professional treatises have presented different though equally outlandish theories about the connection between the Klan and the Craft.<sup>86</sup> Freemasonry has been the object of many suspected international conspiracies, so it is no surprise that many opponents of the order are keen to emphasize its close ties with the notorious Ku Klux Klan. The truth of the matter is that the two fraternities shared a much more complex relationship of both occasional cooperation and conflict.

Though this subject is vital to understanding the growth of the Ku Klux Klan, it has proven complicated for historians to adequately investigate the fraternity’s association with Freemasonry. This is partly due to the reticence of many Grand Lodges to allow researchers access to their material. As historian David Stevenson noted in 1988:

Some Masons regard their history as virtually the property of their members... and are unhappy at outsiders working in the field – a response obviously conditioned by the periodic publication of lurid attacks on the Craft, for such ‘exposures’ lead to fear that any outsider taking an interest in Freemasonry might really be seeking material for a scandalous instant best-seller.<sup>87</sup>

In recent years historians have started to recognize the valuable contributions made by the Craft to various political, social, intellectual and artistic movements, and the field has become far more accepted by mainstream academics. Furthermore, Freemasonry has become an increasingly public order that does not shy away from the outside world and even welcomes historians.<sup>88</sup> Although some members are still cautious with curious inquiries, this general shift has

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<sup>85</sup> "Freemasonry and the Ku Klux Klan," [http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Freemasonry/ku\\_klux\\_klan.htm](http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Freemasonry/ku_klux_klan.htm)

<sup>86</sup> Paul Fisher, *Their God is the Devil: Papal Encyclicals and Freemasonry* (Baltimore: American Research Foundation, 1991), p.47,72; Paul A. Fisher, *Behind the Lodge Door: Church, State and Freemasonry*, 2nd ed. (Rockford: TAN Books, 1994), pp. 87-102.

<sup>87</sup> David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), p.xii.

<sup>88</sup> Joshua Gunn, "Death by Publicity: U.S. Freemasonry and the Public Drama of Secrecy," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2008).

made the task of analysing the exact nature of the links between the Invisible Empire and the Freemasons finally possible.<sup>89</sup>

For decades historians have been debating why Americans joined the Second Ku Klux Klan, offering different explanations for the meteoric rise of William Joseph Simmons' little Southern brotherhood. This thesis will offer an entirely new perspective on an almost exhausted subject by focusing on a neglected feature of this organization: its fraternalism. In the past, fraternalism has been a theme of various academic studies regarding the KKK, but has never been the focus. This oversight is astonishing, considering how central many 1920s observers thought it was to the group's success. One New York judge related his own opinion on the matter:

I cannot believe that the Klan numbers anything like the figures given. On the other hand, the largest sect in this country is that of the 'Joiners.' They will join anything that is mystic, secret and somewhat occult, especially if it gives them the right to wear badges and decorate themselves with insignia equal to a Major General's. When to all this is added a uniform, masks and visions on taking terrible oaths in sub-cellar and having something on the outside fellow of advantage to them or a chance to vent their malice or prejudice, you can see them standing in line a hundred deep with their money in their hands, anxious to join.<sup>90</sup>

This piece of work aims to assess claims such as these, and evaluate just how vital the Invisible Empire's fraternal functions were. To do so, it is essential to see how the Ku Klux Klan interacted and recruited members from fraternities like the Freemasons, and how Masonic members and leaders reacted to this invasion.

The Ku Klux Klan may have tried to erase much of its primary material upon its demise, but there is still a wealth of evidence that remains of this mass-

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<sup>89</sup> As recently as 2013, the International Conference on the History of Freemasonry had a panel that brought together Freemasons and historians to discuss the issues of allowing non-members to investigate the institution. See Andrew Hammer and James Daniel, "Freemasonry and Academia: A Symbiotic Relationship," in *International Conference on the History of Freemasonry* (Edinburgh2013)

<sup>90</sup> "U.S. Must Get Rid of Ku Klux, Leaders in Nation's Life Insist," *New York World*, September 9 1921.

movement. The documents that have survived from individual klaverns will be evaluated. Additionally, this study will rely on the Invisible Empire's pamphlets, its many newspapers and various other printed materials released by the order. The memoirs of many former Klansmen will also be employed, as will the books and articles of the many writers who scrutinized the Klan throughout the 1920s. The private papers of ex-Klansmen, their opponents, and various other archival materials have also proved to be invaluable. As with most historical studies, mainstream newspaper articles and editorials will be evaluated to get a clearer understanding of how the nation responded to the Ku Klux Klan. To get an idea of how Freemasonry itself answered to the rise of the Klan, this thesis has used documents from Masonic archives, Masonic newspapers, and most importantly, the proceedings of various Grand Lodges. These Grand Lodges were annual gatherings of Masonic leaders in each state, and contain useful discussions between Freemasons about the nature and activities of the Invisible Empire, and how the Craft proposed to deal with this menace.

This study will begin by evaluating the Ku Klux Klan's role as a fraternity, debating whether it qualifies as one and asking what significance this function played in the movement's rise. This section will assess the Invisible Empire by comparing it with various other fraternities, and teasing out the subtle differences that makes this hooded brotherhood unique. The second chapter will focus on Freemasonry itself, and will try and answer why it was that members of this fraternity were joining the new Ku Klux Klan. It will discuss a number of Masonic organizations that tried to fulfil the same role as the Klan, before concluding that the Invisible Empire simply offered a more flexible and innovative form of fraternalism that addressed the needs of its members. This thesis will then move on and explore the Ku Klux Klan's remarkable marketing strategies, and will investigate how the order's determined efforts to appear as both a sensible fraternity and an order closely related to the Craft helped to boost this organization's reputation in the eyes of the public. The fourth chapter will concentrate on the Invisible Empire's kleagles, and how they employed the latest modern sales techniques to infiltrate Masonic lodges and sell the Klan to America and the Craft. The following section will try to tackle the complex task of estimating just how successful the Ku Klux Klan was at recruiting

Freemasons. By investigating the relationship between the two organizations in various individual locales, this chapter hopes to make an informed estimate for the proportion of Freemasons who became Klansmen. The sixth chapter will turn its attention to two cities in particular, Dallas and Anaheim, which will offer an in-depth view of the Klan's effect in local communities. Finally, the last chapter will contrast the responses of differing Masonic Grand Masters to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, and will examine why individuals Freemasons' reactions to the order varied so much.

The title of this piece of work – *Fighting Fraternities* – indicates how Klansmen viewed their order, but also how they related to the Freemasons. The Invisible Empire saw itself as a militant and politically aggressive brotherhood, a fraternity that fought not just inside the lodge for what it believed in but in the outside world as well. The term “fighting fraternity” may seem like an oxymoron, but this revolutionary approach is precisely what made the Klan unique and so attractive to many. This radical departure shook the fraternal world, and dragged other organizations into the fray. The Freemasons soon found themselves fighting as well; fighting against Klansmen and their order and sometimes fighting alongside Invisible Empire against their common enemies. The members of the Craft even fought amongst themselves over the matter of how to deal with the KKK. This case illustrates some of the basic tensions of the early 1920s. As America began to change ever more dramatically – modern technology, radical new social fashions, demographic shifts, political and economic upheavals – the underlying tensions of these developments began to express themselves in conflicts across the country. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan, this new fighting fraternity, is just one illustration of the wave of unease that swept the country as Americans tried to adjust to their new environment.

This study proposes to do far more than simply describe the Klan's role as a fraternity or to narrate their interactions with other brotherhoods. This work aims to provide a critical analysis of the Ku Klux Klan itself that re-evaluates some of the major theories about this organization's development. By observing how Freemasons and other fraternalists reacted to the Klan, this thesis hopes to offer an insightful and unique understanding about how the nation as a whole

responded to the Invisible Empire. This study will argue that most of the nation reacted to the Ku Klux Klan based not on their personal experience of the order, but on the conflicting information that was provided by supporters and opponents of the group. Klansmen worked tirelessly to present their order as a peaceful and defensive fraternity while their adversaries attempted to portray their movement as a dangerous and violent political organization. The Ku Klux Klan that existed on the ground would become very different to the Invisible Empire that Klansmen or their enemies constructed in their minds.

## CHAPTER 1: KLANNISHNESS: BROTHERHOOD IN THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

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Throughout the 1920s, millions of Americans from across the country would have shared in the bizarre experience that was the Ku Klux Klan's initiation ceremony. The inductees' evening would have begun in the first antechamber of their local klavern where they would meet a group of Klan officers who were to accompany and instruct them throughout the evening. Barring their entrance was the klavern's outer guard, the klexter, to whom the initiates would have to prove themselves as worthy before they could enter the sanctity of the lodge. The klavern's klokard, or lecturer, then proceeded to ask the initiates various questions to establish their credentials as upstanding applicants. They were asked questions such as whether they were native-born and Protestant citizens or whether they believed in the eternal maintenance of white supremacy. Upon being allowed entrance into the second antechamber, they were again confronted by another guard, the klarogo, who warned them of the dangers of betraying the Klan and confirmed their commitment, before allowing them through into the klavern.

Much like other fraternal lodges, a klavern resembled an ornate meeting room. The room was dutifully arranged according to the ritual, and was decorated with symbols such as the Stars and Stripes and a cross (see Image 1 for an outline of the room). What went on within the klavern that evening was a sombre and well-orchestrated ceremony, with various Klan officers reciting catechisms on brotherhood and selfishness. For example, half way through their walk around the room, the klavern's vice-president, or klaliff, would stop the new recruits and proclaim:

The unsatiated thirst for gain is dethroning reason and judgement in the citadel of the human soul, and men maddened thereby forget their patriotic, domestic, and social obligations and duties and fiendishly fight

for a place in the favor of the goddess of glittering gold: they starve their own souls and make sport of spiritual development.

After the speeches were done, the initiates kneeled at the altar in the centre of the room for a prayer. They then swore their oath, before arising as full Klansmen and being awarded the klavern's countersigns and passwords.<sup>1</sup>

The whole event seems a bit absurd to modern observers, and it may have even seemed somewhat silly to some of the participants at the time. The klavern's Exalted Cyclops, or president, as part of the ritual, was forced to remind initiates that this was "a serious undertaking; we are not here to make sport of you nor indulge in the silly frivolity of circus clowns."<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite its apparent ridiculousness, the Klan's prayers, dedications, ceremonies and fraternal admonitions were a vital part of daily life in the Invisible Empire. They created an artificial sense of camaraderie and devotion amongst Klansmen, helping to bond a klavern together and provide a sense of familial union. This was also case with the earlier Klan of Reconstruction and with those that followed after the 1920s. The Invisible Empire's traditions and regalia are the glue that ties these disparate Klans together, and what separates them from other organizations with similar aims.

Many of those undertaking the Klan's initiation degree during the 1920s would have experienced practically identical forms of public participatory theatre if they belonged to any of the host of other popular fraternities of the day. From the Knights of Pythias to the Knights of Columbus, dozens of different brotherhoods met in lodges throughout the nation, reproducing similar initiation degrees and performing them every week. The initiates of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were not alone in regards to their peculiar fascination with the esoteric mysteries of the lodge. Membership in a fraternity during the 1920s

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<sup>1</sup> See Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan - K-Uno* (Atlanta, GA: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1916). A copy of the Klan's *Kloran* is available in Appendix B of Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp.419-434.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

was not only common, but even expected among certain sectors of the American population.

Klansmen spent a considerable amount of their time in the klavern acting out these degrees and practicing the “benevolence” and “brotherly love” they had sworn to uphold. The centrality of the Klan’s rituals and its role as a fraternity cannot be understated. Even the order’s infamous fiery crosses and hooded costumes, easily the most recognizable features of this notorious organization, originated as a part of their theatrical performances and their cherished ritual. Nonetheless, historians have neglected to devote the attention to the Klan’s ritualism and fraternalism that Klansmen themselves devoted to it. Most studies of the Invisible Empire have referred to the ritual and fraternal origin of the brotherhood, but have failed to properly analyse the organization in the context of fraternalism and ritualism.<sup>3</sup> This thesis aims to address this dearth and argue for the importance of understanding the Klan’s ceremonies and brotherhood.

To do this, this chapter will analyse the rise of fraternalism in post-Civil War America. This will allow us to understand the burgeoning craze for ritualism and brotherhood that influenced the Klan’s founder, William Joseph Simmons, and the success of the organization itself. This will be followed by an assessment of the Klan’s role as a fraternity, where we will discuss what sort of brotherhood the Invisible Empire was. We will then evaluate how this organization managed to become so successful in an age when fraternalism was starting to show signs of decline. Ultimately, this chapter will help us understand two overarching questions: Was the Ku Klux Klan a fraternity? And how important was this status to its success?

### **1) The Golden Age of Fraternity and the Roaring Twenties**

Although Americans had been fascinated with fraternities and their mysteries since the Colonial Era, it was only really after the Civil War that they

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<sup>3</sup> The two studies that do are discussed in the introduction of this thesis, on page 35.

became a phenomenon that concerned all classes. The emergence of this craze requires careful analysis, since the Ku Klux Klan and its popularity were a seemingly natural result of the nation's growing interest in fraternities. Writing in 1896 in the prestigious *North American Review*, W.S. Harwood estimated that at the time, the membership in secret fraternal orders was roughly around 5,400,000. Because of multiple memberships in different fraternities, he estimated that, broadly speaking, every fifth or eighth man in America was a fraternalist. Harwood even declared that "so numerous, so powerful, have these orders become, that these closing years of the century might well be called the Golden Age of fraternity."<sup>4</sup> Harwood's label, the Golden Age of Fraternity, is now used by historians not only to describe the state of fraternalism at the turn of the century, but during the whole period of fraternal expansion, roughly from the end of the Civil War and into the post-World War One era.<sup>5</sup> The whole period saw the appearance, growth, and decline of an incalculable number of distinctive fraternities, from well-known brotherhoods like the Freemasons, Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias that have survived into our own times, to the less familiar Knights of the Maccabees or the Independent Order of Rechabites.

This Golden Age of Fraternity was by no means a peaceful time for fraternities, but an era of intense competition where brotherhoods fought each other for members and resources. The true extent of the fraternal craze remains a troubling question for historians. This is due to the fact that an untold number of fraternities cropped up without lasting long enough to make an enduring impact on the historical record. As the sociologist Jason Kaufman explains, this intensely competitive fraternal market means the era was not one of peaceful or "golden" stability or growth, but one where the overwhelming public interest in

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<sup>4</sup> W.S. Harwood, "Secret Societies in America," *The North American Review* 164, no. 486 (May 1897), p.619, 623. See also B.H. Meyer, "Fraternal Beneficiary Societies in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 5 (1901) and Albert C. Stevens, *Cyclopaedia of Fraternities* (New York, NY: Hamilton Printing and Publishing Company, 1899) for more information regarding fraternalism at the turn of the century.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the exact duration of the "Golden Age" varied greatly; In some areas it started earlier and in others it lasted longer.

fraternities caused a chaotic and often aggressive competition between different brotherhoods.<sup>6</sup>

This growth and competition generated two processes in the fraternal market that sociologist Noel P. Gist has termed the “fraternal constellation” and the development of schismatic differentiation. The term fraternal constellation refers to the various ancillary organizations that formed around a powerful nuclear fraternity and fed on their success.<sup>7</sup> This concerns the various appendant bodies like the Scottish Rite that revolved around Freemasonry, or the American Crusaders that were associated with the Klan. The second concept presented by Gist, known as schismatic differentiation, illustrates the competitive nature of the era. It refers to the schisms that formed within different factions of a single brotherhood and which sometimes triggered the formation of a rival or offshoot fraternity.<sup>8</sup> For instance, the Independent Order of Red Men was formed by German-American defectors of the original Improved Order of Red Men who wished to practice the ritual in their native tongue. Another example would be the Minute Men of America, which was formed by Colorado Klansmen who were fed up with the tyrannical rule of the organization’s central leadership.<sup>9</sup> Although rivalry and competition were fierce, overall, this age was still “Golden” for most fraternities, as it was during this time that they reached the zenith of their power and influence in American history, before their precipitous decline in the 1930s.

Historians and sociologists are still at odds about what caused so many Americans to spend their evenings in their local lodge during this Golden Age, and there are several views on the matter. Historian Mark C. Carnes, through his analysis of the rituals of various orders, has proposed that the substantial time and money devoted to acting out complex initiations and ceremonies within the lodges suggests that ritualism was the key factor in the success of these

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<sup>6</sup> Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good? : American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Noel P. Gist, "Structure and Process in Secret Societies," *Social Forces* 16, no. 3 (March 1938), p.350.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.352.

<sup>9</sup> See Dale T. Knobel, "To be an American: Ethnicity, Fraternity, and the Improved Order of Red Men," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 4, no. 1 (1984) and Robert A. Goldberg, "The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58, no. 1 (1974)

orders. Carnes identified several recurring themes in these rituals and has argued that fraternities attracted members because the rituals fulfilled a psychosocial male need, by which men came to understand their masculinity in an increasingly feminized Victorian American society.<sup>10</sup> William D. Moore agrees with Carnes, and adds that the rituals must also be understood as a kind of public participatory theatre and as a form of entertainment in an age before mass-media.<sup>11</sup> Sociologist David T. Beito however, dismisses these ideas and emphasizes the functional role that fraternities played in American communities as a form of social security. Having emerged in a time when the government did not offer health insurance and where other security nets were unavailable, Beito believes that the mutual benefit insurance and welfare provided by most fraternities was the primary appeal of these brotherhoods.<sup>12</sup> Though ritualism and insurance were undeniably decisive components of the fraternal boom, it could be argued that the essential feature of this phenomenon was the sheer number and variety of fraternities. If Americans primarily joined fraternities to enjoy the insurance benefits or to partake in the spectacle of ritualism, why did they feel the need to form such a colourful array of brotherhoods? Why did they all not join a single fraternity that fulfilled these roles?

The fact is that Americans formed a countless number of fraternities that suited every single class at the time. No matter who you were or what your occupation was, there was either already a brotherhood that fit your specifications or you could easily form one. The daughters of Freemasons could join the Order of Rainbow for Girls or Job's Daughters, while Irish Catholic men could become members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Fraternalism concerned all classes, as former Klansmen Henry P. Fry explained to his readers in 1922:

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<sup>10</sup> Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)

<sup>11</sup> William D. Moore, "The Masonic Lodge Room, 1870-1930: A Sacred Space of Masculine Spiritual Hierarchy," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 5(1995).

<sup>12</sup> David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State : Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000)

If the psychologist, looking over the diversified and conflicting interests and classes of American people, attempted to find a common state of mind, he would probably discover one thing that applies to all American men, without regard to 'race, color, or previous condition of servitude.' He would learn that there is common American trait possessed by the white man and the negro, the Jew and the Gentile, the Catholic and the Protestant, the native and the foreign-born – in fact by every conceivable group of the males of the United States.

They are all 'joiners'!

One has to search far and wide for an American who does not 'belong' to some sort of an organization, and who would not, under proper circumstances, join another.<sup>13</sup>

Although this obsession with fraternalism transcended class, race and gender, the parameters of most organizations were intrinsically defined by these classifications.

Contrary to their message of universal brotherhood, most fraternities of the "Golden Age" had a strict code of requirements that ensured the homogeneity of the membership. In the case of the Ku Klux Klan these membership requirements were unequivocal, but other organizations like Freemasonry had an unofficial list of criteria that excluded blacks, Catholics, and other undesirables from applying for membership. This exclusivity within the Freemasons and other organizations derived not from any explicitly exclusionary policy, but from the selection process at the local lodge level, where applicants who did not fit in with the rest of the members could be blackballed, ensuring the general homogeneity of the brotherhood. These policies resulted in a highly stratified fraternal ecosystem, where each citizen could only belong to a particular niche of brotherhoods. Jason Kaufman argues that it is this self-segregation between different races and social classes, as well as the two sexes, that is the true motive for the rise of fraternalism in American

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<sup>13</sup> Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1922), p.1.

society.<sup>14</sup> The lodge was meant to be a place of camaraderie and harmony, and many members simply preferred to avoid political issues of racial, religious and class conflict by excluding people who belonged to radically different worlds. Homogeneity within the fraternal lodge helped guarantee the stability of the organization and to develop friendship among like-minded members from similar backgrounds.

Ultimately, the esoteric ritualism, the mutual benefits insurance, and particularly the ethnic and class camaraderie that was provided by various fraternities, all contributed to the immense popularity and power gained by these brotherhoods that ensured their success in the period 1865-1917. The Golden Age established the local lodge as an essential feature of most American communities and membership in such brotherhoods, especially the most exclusive ones, became a valuable commodity and a marker of social stature.

It could be argued that the Golden Age of Fraternity extended well beyond the Progressive Era and into the 1920s. After all, fraternalism's continued growth indicates that it benefited from the Roaring Twenties. Estimates from the Grand Lodges of Texas and New York seem to indicate a relatively stable and healthy growth for the Masonic fraternity throughout the period, with a sharp surge during the first half of the 1920s (see Chart 1).<sup>15</sup> Figures also show that among some of the major fraternities – the Odd Fellows, Elks, and the Knights of Columbus – all experienced growth throughout the 1920s, with only the Knights of Pythias and Loyal Order of Moose showing signs of slight decline.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the explosion of interest in another fraternity, the Ku Klux Klan, could point to the sustained popularity of fraternalism as a trend during the 1920s. Even President Warren G. Harding partook in the “joiner” craze that had re-emerged after the Great War, becoming a member of several fraternities like the Hoo Hoos, Elks, Red Men, Odd Fellows, the

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<sup>14</sup> Kaufman, *Common Good?*, p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Figures taken from the Committees on Foreign Correspondence for the Grand Lodge of Texas and the Grand Lodge of New York for the period 1914-1930.

<sup>16</sup> Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building American Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p.175.

Freemasons and their various ancillary orders. One commentator even joked in 1924 about the prevalence and popularity of fraternities saying:

We are a nation of joiners. If you are not a Moose, a Stag, an Elk, an Eagle, an Owl, an Oriole, or some specimen in the great national menagerie; a Yeoman, a Good Templar, a Mason, a Workman, a Forester, a Woodman, a Gleaner, a Mechanic, a Druid, a K. of C., an A.O.H., a B'nai B'rith, a Red Man, or a Veiled Prophet of the Enchanted Realm – you are, if one may say so, an Odd Fellow.<sup>17</sup>

If we consider the 1920s as an extension of the Golden Age of Fraternity, where fraternities continued to enjoy unparalleled growth, then we can confidently assert that the Klan's ritualism and fraternalism were indeed major contributing assets to the success of the Invisible Empire. It could be suggested that the KKK was merely riding the wave of the fraternal craze that had gripped America during the 1920s and that this was a source of its popularity.

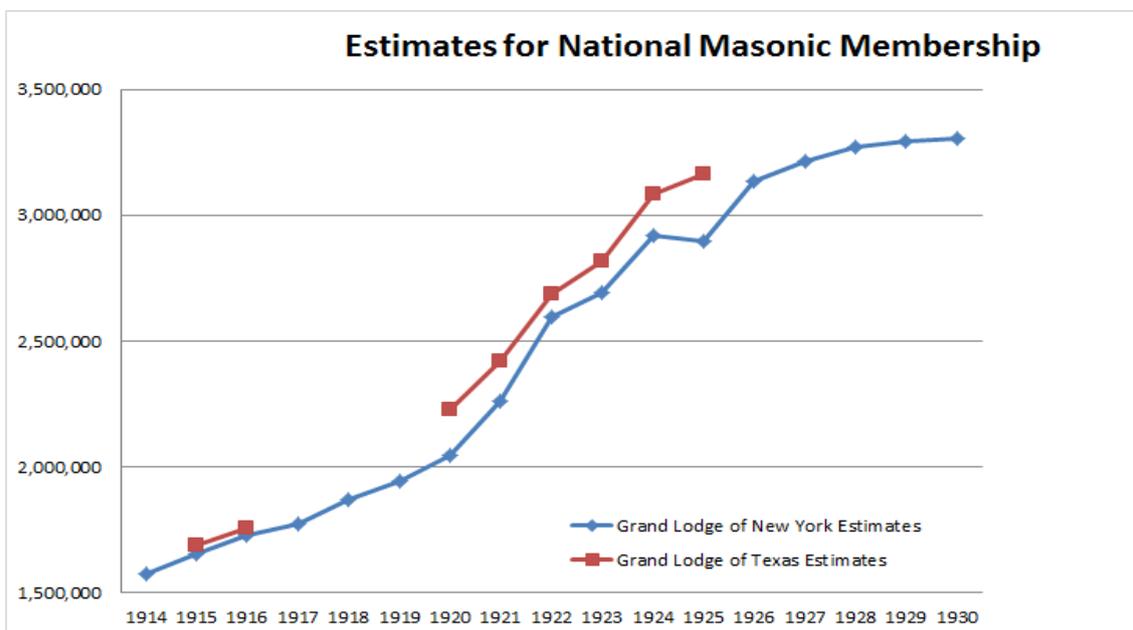


Chart 1 - Estimates for National Masonic Membership 1914-1930<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Devere Allen, "Substitutes for Brotherhood," in *KKK: The Creed of Klansmen*, ed. E. Haldeman-Julius (Girard: Haldeman-Julius Company, 1924?), p.17.

<sup>18</sup> Figures compiled from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas, 1914-1930 and the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York, 1914-1930. The estimates were included in the respective reports of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence of both Grand Lodges.

But there was an undercurrent of concern within many lodges during the 1920s that reveals the real nature of fraternal expansion in the Jazz Age. Many fraternalists were worried that even though fraternities continued to attract applicants, that these new members no longer cared for brotherhood, and that the institution was rotting from within. For many fraternities then, the 1920s were not “Golden” at all, but a time of disruption and alteration. Arkansas Governor Thomas Chipman McRae, in his capacity as an officer of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Arkansas, alluded to this problem in 1922:

One of the most gratifying observations which we have been able to make in recent years has disclosed a great revival of Masonry. This is measured by the great intake of new members of the Blue Lodges, and the wonderful increase in numbers of those taking the higher degrees in Masonry. This brings me to an important thought: Is this rapid increase in numbers bringing with it a corresponding zeal for true Masonry? There is some evidence that this new membership is concerned rather too much with the superficial. At least, this is being asserted by many observers.<sup>19</sup>

Governor McRae’s concerns reflected a general feeling among Masons, as well as other orders, that the institution was becoming less fraternal in this uncertain post-war era. Unprecedented membership intake was disguising worrying trends in American orders. One of the major fears among Freemasons was that members were simply racing through the initial three degrees of the Craft, known as the Blue Lodge, to be eligible to join one of the prestigious “higher degrees” like the Scottish and York Rites. Past Grand Master Ralph C. McAllaster described this national problem at the 1921 Washington Grand Lodge saying:

With their wealth of pomp and circumstance, their sonorous titles, and their public exhibitions, they [the higher degrees] draw the attention and allegiance of many from the Blue Lodge, and the strength which they

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<sup>19</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1922), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.4-5.

have to give to things Masonic is frittered away upon these [higher degrees].... The candidate... comes to the conclusion that the Blue Lodge degrees are important only as a 'method of transportation' to these desirable ends...<sup>20</sup>

Masons were troubled about the fact that most new members were not taking the fraternity seriously, and were simply "collecting" degrees to enjoy the admiration that came with being able to call yourself a "32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason." Many other fraternalists also seemed concerned with this issue within their own brotherhoods. "This hurry of buttons does not make men real Masons" decried Kentucky Grand Master Fred W. Hardwick.<sup>21</sup> The lack of true commitment to the esoteric mysteries of the ritual and the finer points of fraternalism would continue to be a problem throughout the 1920s, and it was not necessarily restricted to the Craft either.

The problem was so serious that several Grand Lodges passed laws to prevent this rapid ascension and the desertion of the Blue Lodge. In 1921, the Nebraska Grand Lodge forbade all members from applying to the higher degrees until a year had passed after their completion of the Blue Lodge degrees. The same year the Idaho Grand Lodge followed suit and further ruled that a period of four weeks had to elapse between the awarding of the three Masonic degrees.<sup>22</sup> Freemasons had come to realize that many members were now simply "degree-collecting" and cared little for the subtleties of Masonry or the practice of fraternalism. This would be enduring problem for many fraternities, including the Ku Klux Klan, which had trouble holding onto members and forming a cohesive and effective brotherhood.

This rapid influx of members caused another serious problem within the ranks of Freemasonry: the overcrowding of lodges. By the 1920s, this problem had become so acute that there were some lodges with over 1,000 members,

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<sup>20</sup>Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1922), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.50-51.

<sup>21</sup>1922 Kentucky GL Proceedings, p.15-16

<sup>22</sup> 1922 New York GL Proceedings, p.19, 31.

and several Grand Masters felt the need to discuss the matter and address the issue. Past Grand Master of Texas Stephen M. Bradley lamented that “In lodges with such large and cumbersome membership the members are not brethren in the truly Masonic sense; they are only casual acquaintances, and the bond of fraternity and brotherhood is lacking.”<sup>23</sup> The next year he commented on the problem once more, again decrying the severe case of “elephantiasis” that afflicted some lodges, and accusing them of being simply degree mills where brothers could not even recognize one another.<sup>24</sup>

Although the membership of fraternities was steadily increasing in the early 1920s, this growth masked what seems to be a steady decline in America’s commitment to fraternalism and ritualism. Then, instead of being an extension of the Golden Age of Fraternity, perhaps we can more adequately describe the 1920s as the “Gilded Age of Fraternity.” In other words, the apparently healthy growth of membership disguised conflict within lodges and among members. America’s shallow commitment to fraternalism during this “Gilded Age” would become apparent in the 1930s, when most could no longer afford to belong to a fraternity simply to keep up appearances, and the membership in these groups dropped precipitously. Throughout the 1920s, American men and women seemed to be joining multiple organizations simply for the sake of belonging. Americans were joining for different reasons than previous generations, and increasingly memberships in clubs and fraternities was used as a symbolic assessment of their social standing; the lodge button soon became a way of establishing themselves within the social hierarchy of 1920s America. One writer explained this phenomenon, describing these new “joiners” as:

men and sometimes women who simply have to join at least three societies, lodges, luncheon clubs or the like in order to feel supremely happy. What the associations in question aim at is, generally speaking,

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<sup>23</sup>Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1920), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.10.

<sup>24</sup>Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1921), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.13-16.

not the prime factor which induces those people to 'join up' with the Elks, Lions, golf clubs, Odd Fellows and so forth. They nurse the rather fatuous belief that the mere fact of joining elevates them above the common herd, that it puts the hallmark of distinction upon them.<sup>25</sup>

It is difficult to assess why America changed its attitudes towards fraternities during the 1920s, possibly because historians and sociologists still have not agreed on what caused the rise of fraternalism in the first place. One of the factors suggested by historians was the change in priorities and tastes of the American public, which came to prefer less rigid organizations like luncheon clubs over fraternities.

Luncheon clubs like the Rotary, Lions or Kiwanis, became popular immediately following the end of World War I. They served as gatherings for men, providing the comradeship, social networking, business contacts, and prestige offered by fraternities, but without the strict formalities and the expensive and complex rituals.<sup>26</sup> The success of the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions even prompted Freemasons to form their own luncheon clubs like the High Twelve Club. The ascent of the luncheon clubs and the decline of fraternalism possibly derive from the new priorities of men in the Jazz Age. As Masonic historian Mark Tabbert has argued, the success of the luncheon clubs stemmed from their ability to accommodate this "new America" by providing jokes and songs instead of sombre rituals, and by dressing in professional businessmen's suits instead of bizarre costumes.<sup>27</sup> This new American man was characterized best by Sinclair Lewis' character George F. Babbitt from his eponymous 1922 novel. The "Babbitts" of the 20s were ambitious, good-natured, back-slapping businessmen, with little time to spend on nonsense like mysterious rituals. It could even be argued that the rapid influx of members into the prestigious Freemasons, and the phenomenon of rushing through the higher degrees, was simply a reflection of the priorities of the Babbitts of the age. These men were

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<sup>25</sup> Carl Suesser, "Whence the Joiner?," *The American Monthly*, April 21 1929, p.23.

<sup>26</sup> For a more detailed assessment of the growth of service clubs in America after 1918, see Jeffrey A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society* (Chicago, Il.: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, pp.162-164.

eager only to collect and display their lodge pins and content to leave the finer points of ritualism and brotherhood to others.

*Middletown*, the ground-breaking 1929 sociological survey of Muncie, Indiana, by Robert and Helen Lynd came to a similar conclusion. The Lynds realized that even in Middletown, “despite the heavy building programs of leading lodges, business men are 'too busy' to find the time for lodge meetings that they did formerly; the man who goes weekly to Rotary will confess that he gets around to the Masons 'only twice or three times a year.'”<sup>28</sup> The success of these luncheon clubs derived from their break with the ritualism and formality of the fraternities, while still providing the camaraderie and social atmosphere that American men desired. The luncheon clubs also provided the same business networking opportunities in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere.

And yet, there was another voluntary organization aside from the luncheon clubs that was also prospering in the Roaring Twenties. The Ku Klux Klan achieved a powerful following during the era, even though America’s love affair with fraternities was seemingly over. Why, during this Gilded Age of Fraternity, when so many of America’s voluntary organizations were disposing of their ritual and updating themselves to modern tastes, did the Invisible Empire emerge and succeed as a fraternity? Was there something special about the Klan’s fraternalism that set it aside from other organizations? To understand where the KKK’s growth fits into the patterns of decline of other major groups, it is first necessary to analyse the Klan’s role as a fraternity, their emphasis on ritualism and brotherhood, and how these factors changed throughout the Klan’s turbulent existence. Was there perhaps something special about the Klan’s ritual and fraternalism that set it aside from other brotherhoods?

## **2) The Ku Klux Klan’s Role as a Fraternity**

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<sup>28</sup> Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929), p.306.

During its first years of existence the second Invisible Empire had no functional role comparable to its Reconstruction Era counterpart, and appears to have been just another ritualistic brotherhood. As the second Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans declared, "The chief idea of the founders seems to have been merely to start a new fraternal society, based on rather vague sentiments of brotherhood among white Americans, and loyalty to the nation and Protestantism."<sup>29</sup> Although it may appear to have been threatening, in many senses, William Joseph Simmons' Klan was just like any other fraternity of its day. This is an observation that seems clear if we compare the early Klan to standard definitions of what constitutes a fraternity, and if we contrast it with other brotherhoods of the time.

Most historians and sociologists who study the phenomenon of fraternalism are reluctant to suggest a definition of what constitutes a "fraternity" due to the difficulties and constraints presented by such a classification. A broad definition would erroneously include organizations like trade unions or veteran's organizations, which, although not fraternities, display fraternal characteristics like mutual aid. On the other hand, a restrictive definition might exclude some fraternities that might not have common features like regalia or secrecy. Because of these difficulties in describing a "fraternity," an analysis of the Invisible Empire's role as a brotherhood cannot hinge entirely on theoretical definitions. Any evaluation of the Klan should also be based on what Klansmen themselves believed their organization to be, and how the Invisible Empire compared to other well-known fraternities of the day.

Jeffrey Tyssens and Bob James are two of the historians who have ventured to define what constitutes a "fraternity," and their definitions are similar in several respects.<sup>30</sup> Both historians list a number of criteria that qualify an organization as a fraternity, but, generally speaking, both seem to agree that a fraternity is an organization that performs rituals, promotes fraternalism and

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<sup>29</sup> Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," *The North American Review* 830(March-May 1926), p.35.

<sup>30</sup> Bob James' analysis of fraternalism and fraternities is available at Bob James, "Fraternal Secrets " [fraternalsecrets.org](http://fraternalsecrets.org). Jeffrey Tyssens' definition was provided by the author himself through correspondence.

practices secrecy and exclusivity in their affairs. To correctly ascertain whether the Klan really was a fraternity like any other, this section will analyse the criteria presented by James and Tyssens, and will examine how other fraternities of the time satisfied these requirements. This study will then evaluate whether or not the Invisible Empire fulfils each of the requirements presented by these historians, before determining whether the KKK was a true fraternity or was merely masquerading as one.

Ritualism is the first characteristic of a fraternity, and is perhaps its most distinctive feature. Ritualism refers not only to the actual ceremonies and oaths performed by members, but to the fundamental concept of progression within the fraternity. Rituals in fraternities represent a theatrical reproduction of the initiates' journey from a lowly applicant to a fully-realized brother. They symbolize the outsider's advancement, their symbolic death and rebirth as a selfless member of the fraternity. According to Bob James, each new degree invests the initiates with increased responsibility and reveals more of the esoteric secrets and knowledge of the fraternity. Of course, to execute such complex rituals, Jeffrey Tyssens believes a fraternity needs a highly formalized structure, composed of an elaborate hierarchy and progressive levels of authority.

If we observe the ceremonies and structure that William Joseph Simmons envisioned for his Invisible Empire, what we see is a ritual that fits the requirements presented by both Tyssens and James, and which very much resembles the ceremonies of other organizations of the time. This is not surprising since it is likely that Simmons drew his inspiration for the Klan's ceremonies from his experiences in the Woodmen of the World and the various other orders he belonged to before he founded the Klan. Simmons was an avid "joiner" and a dedicated lodge-man, and famously declared to his audience at the 1921 Congressional Hearings on the Klan:

I am a member of a number of fraternal orders – the Masons, Royal Arch Masons, the Great Order of Templars and then I have these affiliations

that I have gone into, 12 or 15 in number, in my lifetime, [in which I] seemingly have passed the committees and have been active in the work. In fact, I have been a fraternalist ever since I was in the academy school way back yonder and I believe in fraternal orders and fraternal relationship among men...<sup>31</sup>

Simmons life-long involvement in various brotherhoods and his commitment to fraternalism inevitably influenced the foundations of the Klan. In essence, Simmons is a produce of the Golden Age of Fraternity, and his own Invisible Empire and its ritual are strongly reminiscent of the organizations and ceremonies created in this era.

Simmons did, however, try to emphasize how different his own organization was to these other fraternities. In an effort to seem superior and more enigmatic than other brotherhoods, he declared in an early Klan pamphlet that their ritual was:

vastly different from anything in the whole universe of fraternal ritualism. It is altogether original, weird, mystical and of a high class, leading up through four degrees. Dignity and decency are its marked features. It unfolds a spiritual philosophy that has to do with the very fundamentals of life and living, here and hereafter. He who explores the dismal depths of the mystic cave and from thence attains the lofty heights of superior knighthood may sit among the gods in the Empire Invisible.<sup>32</sup>

To accompany his weird and mystical ceremonies, Simmons also created a hierarchy and structure based on the alliteration "KL." For instance, the order's ritualistic work was referred to as "klankraft," while a gathering of Klansmen was called a "klonklave." The Klan's ritual and titles certainly appear extraordinary, but they are probably not the root of the organization's success. Other fraternities had comparably mysterious degrees and names, such as the

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<sup>31</sup> The Committee on Rules: House of Representatives, First *Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office, 1921), p.67-68.

<sup>32</sup> William Joseph Simmons, *The A.B.C. of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, ed. Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan Press, 1917)

Concatenated Order of Hoo Hoo, which based their unconventional brotherhood's nomenclature and ritual on Lewis Carroll's 1874 nonsense poem, *The Hunting of the Snark*. In this peculiar brotherhood, an initiate could encounter a Jabberwock, an Arcanover, a Custocatian and a Bojum, all in an evening at the lodge.<sup>33</sup>

Simmons originally envisioned his ritual as a series of four separate degrees that were designated by the Imperial Wizard as follows:

The Order of Citizenship or K-Uno (probationary); Knights Kamellia or K-Duo (primary Order of Knighthood); Knights of the Great Forrest or K-Trio (The Order of American Chivalry); and Knights of the Midnight Mystery or K-Quad (Superior Order of Knighthood and Spiritual Philosophies).<sup>34</sup>

The first order was initiatory, and was the only one that Simmons himself wrote. As described earlier, the Klan's initiation ceremony was supposed to be a theatrical representation of the initiate's journey of enlightenment and fraternal recognition. In the ceremony, initiates would traverse from the "alien" world outside the lodge, facing trials and tests, before becoming recognized brothers in the fraternity. Initiates in the Ku Klux Klan, according to the ritual, would "forsake the world of selfishness and fraternal alienation and emigrate to the delectable bounds of the Invisible Empire..."<sup>35</sup> As part of their ritual they would abandon their former lives and be reborn as noble Klansmen.

In this sense, the Klan's ritual is very similar to that of other fraternities, and performed a comparable function within the order. If we examine the Knights of Pythias initiation ceremony, the Rank of Page, we see an almost identical ceremony unfolding.<sup>36</sup> In the Rank of Page, the initiates were tested and questioned as to their commitment to the order, lectured on the themes of

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<sup>33</sup> Stichting Argus, "Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo Initiation Ritual," [http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/hoo\\_hoo\\_r.html](http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/hoo_hoo_r.html)

<sup>34</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, ed. William Joseph Simmons (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan, 1921) p.89.

<sup>35</sup> Klan, *Kloran*, p.36.

<sup>36</sup> "The Knights of Pythias," The Phoenixmasonry Masonic Museum and Library, [http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/knights\\_of\\_pythias.htm](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/knights_of_pythias.htm)

fraternalism demonstrated by the Knights, before facing a skeleton lying in an open coffin and swearing an inviolable oath that bound them until death. The Pythian ceremony, as well as the Klan's, ensured that the initiates were ready and willing to join the fraternity, and started them on their journey to full recognition and enlightenment.

Imperial Wizard Simmons never managed to complete the rest of his ritual, but each degree was meant to be a mark of "Klannish achievement and Kloranic advancement." The ritual of the Klan was supposed to "unfold[]...its philosophies and... [reveal]...its spiritual mysteries" with each step leading the initiate closer to the goal of becoming the perfect "Klansman"<sup>37</sup> Simmons himself wrote that his order imparted several degrees and that "each of the orders marks an advance in devotion to our common country and in those fraternal relations and responsibilities which bind us to our fellow men."<sup>38</sup> Historian Bob James describes this progression as a "structure of internal advancement," and it is considered one of the hallmarks of fraternal ritualism. Through this process, a novice would be taught a number of moral lessons that would develop his personality and assist him in becoming an accomplished member of that organization.

In terms of structure and function the Klan's ritualism and hierarchy resembles the kind described by Tyssens and James, and is very similar to that of other fraternities. We must, however, consider the meaning of the ritual itself. Was the Klan perhaps more popular because of the content of their ritual?

Most American fraternities of the time based their rituals and the entire organization on what Jeffrey Tyssens calls "the wisdom narrative." It is also sometimes referred to as the brotherhood's foundation myth. This was usually a story or allegory that exemplified the values the fraternity was trying to inculcate. This wisdom narrative was usually one of historical or cultural importance that would award the organization a sense of gravitas, while still

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<sup>37</sup> Klan, *Constitution and Laws*, pp.88-89

<sup>38</sup> William Joseph Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked* (Atlanta: Wm. E. Thompson Publishing Co., 1923), pp.44-45.

instilling lessons about the importance of brotherhood and honour. For example, in 1894, David W. Gerard founded the Supreme Tribe of Ben Hur, a fraternity based on the exceedingly popular 1880 novel, *Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ*. The Supreme Tribe of Ben Hur imparted parables illustrated through the life and trials of the titular character, culminating in his redemption from a life of revenge as a follower of Christ. The ritual of the Court Degree even re-enacted Ben Hur's enslavement aboard a Roman galley ship, wherein initiates played the part of slaves and witnessed Ben-Hur's suffering.<sup>39</sup> Other fraternities had different wisdom narratives; the Freemasons illustrated their system of morality through characters such as Hiram Abiff, the chief architect of Solomon's Temple, while the Knights of Pythias used the legendary friendship of Damon and Pythias.

In much the same way, Simmons based his organization and its rituals on the myths that abounded around the Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan. Simmons' fraternity was not intended to be a vigilante organization like its predecessor, but a fraternity that espoused the spirit of chivalry and nobility of the legendary Reconstruction Klan. Simmons claims it was his father, a former Alabama Klansman during the 1860s, who first told him the tales of the heroic Klan as a child. He also related how his "Negro mammy," Aunt Viney, would tell him stories about being scared by Klansmen.<sup>40</sup> These tales would have presented a severely distorted picture of the Old South and the first KKK to the young Simmons. Instead of viewing the Reconstruction Klan as a terrorist unit that was violently enforcing antebellum social norms, Simmons, and most Southerners, grew up hearing about gallant Klansmen who defended the honour of Confederate widows and orphans when the unconstitutional decrees of the North imposed "Negro rule" upon a prostrate and defeated South. These myths about the Old South and the Civil War easily made their way into America's popular memory, and this new "white-washed" Reconstruction Klan became an

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<sup>39</sup> For a copy of the Supreme Tribe of Ben Hur's Court Degree Ritual, see Stichting Argus, "Ben Hur Life Association Court Degree Initiation Ritual," [http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/benhur\\_r.html](http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/benhur_r.html). Also see National Heritage Museum, "The Supreme Tribe of Ben-Hur," [http://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com/library\\_and\\_archives/supreme-tribe-of-ben-hur/](http://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com/library_and_archives/supreme-tribe-of-ben-hur/)

<sup>40</sup> William G. Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Collier's National Weekly*, July 14 1928, p. 7

icon. This is attested by the success of the 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* or the popularity of the Second Klan itself.

Simmons adopted these myths of noble Klansmen as the wisdom narrative and theme of his order. The purpose of this organization was not to revive the first Klan, but to pay tribute to it and use it to inspire members to be valiant, honourable and chivalric, like the Klansmen of legend. The entire lecture of the K-Uno degree was dedicated to paying tribute to the heroism of the original Klan, and recited the following poem to its members:

When the baleful blast of Reconstruction's storm was o'er,  
The valiant, chivalric Ku Klux rode no more.  
But ride on and on, thou spirit of that mystic klan,  
In your noble mission for humanity's good;  
Until the clannish tie of Klancraft binds man to man  
For our country, our homes and womanhood.<sup>41</sup>

In Simmons' Invisible Empire, members could fulfil their aspirations of becoming the Klansmen of legend. Through the succession of degrees, Simmons' Klansmen were supposed to learn about the deeds of the Reconstruction Klan, and were meant to use these lessons as a criterion for their own behaviour. Jeffrey Tyssens believes that reference to a wisdom narrative is one of the key features of a fraternity, and in this respect, the Klan conforms to his definition.

The wisdom narrative of a fraternity was revered because of the honourable deeds of the characters. There is a common theme running through the wisdom narratives of most fraternities, and that is the selfless and fraternal behaviour of the characters. Fraternities repeatedly encouraged their members to emulate the unselfishness and brotherly love exemplified by these characters. For instance, the Woodmen of the World was founded 1890 by Joseph Cullen Root, who based his organization on romantic folk tales about the noble pioneers who conquered the American West, and who cleared the

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<sup>41</sup> Klan, *Kloran*, p.48-51.

woods away to shelter and provide for their families and dependents. In much the same way, Root hoped that his organization, through a system of mutual beneficiary insurance, would inspire members to work to shelter and provide for each other. The first degree of the Woodmen of the World lectured its newcomers as they sat in a prop forest clearing, saying:

Woodcraft is symbolized by a forest where great trees with mighty boughs interlock, forming a swinging couch wherein bleep the chirping birds and their trusting young. The storm may roar, the earth may rock, but the limbs above and the roots below are united and thus combine a strength that one single tree could not possess. When a strong man fails to protect the unfortunate, he exposes a most serious defect in his character, through which he will finally be vanquished. This lesson you must learn as you proceed.<sup>42</sup>

Fraternalities may have come in many different guises, but the message of brotherhood and benevolence was common to them all. This is the second main characteristic of a fraternity: the practice of fraternalism. The message imparted by the Woodmen of the World may have been presented in a distinct arboreal theme, but it contains messages of mutual aid and fraternal interdependence that would have been familiar to members of other orders. Simmons himself also incorporated this message of altruism as one of the cornerstones of his own fraternity.

Historian Bob James believes that this fraternal “wider message” is a necessary component of any fraternity. According to James, this fraternal theme “necessarily binds each member to the whole, as both contributor and recipient.” He argues that the organization must also refer to itself and its members in positive and familial terms. The Second Ku Klux Klan is no exception, as it expounded this common fraternal theme, or “Klannishness,” as it was referred to, throughout its ritual and teachings.

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<sup>42</sup> "Woodmen Group," The Phoenixmasonry Masonic Museum and Library, <http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/woodmen.htm>

The Klan's commitment to fraternalism seems evident if we observe their mission statement, or Ku Klux Creed. This decree makes various grandiose statements regarding the Invisible Empire, such as their devotion to their country and its Constitution or their avowal of the distinction between races and their support towards white supremacy. The Creed rounds off with one final statement that reads:

We appreciate the value of practical, fraternal relationship among men of kindred thought, purpose and ideals and the infinite benefits accruing therefrom; we shall faithfully devote ourselves to the practice of an honorable clannishness that the life of each may be constant blessing to others.<sup>43</sup>

There is no doubt that Simmons intended to create a sense of brotherhood within his Klan, akin to that he had experienced in other fraternities, and he instilled this fraternalism into the organization's ritual, symbolism, and dogma. Even the Klan's motto, "Non Silba Sed Anthar," meaning "Not for Self But Others," belies their fraternal origin.

In its earliest days, Simmons' Klan seems to have had no other purpose than promoting a sense of brotherly camaraderie and benevolence that was typified by the myths of the First Invisible Empire. The back cover of one of the Klan's earliest pamphlets "The Practice of Klanishness" points to this notion and reads:

The Spirit of the Ku Klux Klan still lives and should live [as] a priceless heritage to be sacredly treasured by all those who love their country, regardless of section, and are proud of its sacred traditions. That this spirit may live always to warm the hearts of manly men, unify them by the spirit of holy klanishness, to assuage the billowing tide of fraternal alienation that surges in human breasts and inspire them to achieve the highest and noblest in the defense of our country, or homes, each other

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<sup>43</sup> Klan, *Constitution and Laws*, p.8

and humanity, is the paramount ideal of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>44</sup>

Simmons designed his organization not only to pay homage to the original Klan, but also to keep alive their spirit of fraternalism and benevolence. This practice would have resonated with any seasoned fraternalist, and was a pervasive theme in most orders.

These were not empty words either, Klanishness was meant to be lived every day. Like many other fraternities, the Klan developed a system of mutual beneficiary insurance to solidify the familial bond among members and to ensure that no member was ever in need. Both Bob James and Jeffrey Tyssens agree that, while not essential, that these forms of mutual insurance were a common feature of fraternities. Although the scheme did not last long, in the Invisible Empire's first weeks of existence, forty-two new recruits signed up for \$53,000 worth of Klan life insurance whereby members became financially responsible for each other's welfare.<sup>45</sup> In early 1924, Zeke E. Marvin, a high-ranking Texas Klansman and associate of Hiram Wesley Evans, attempted to revive the Klan's insurance scheme. Marvin explained that after reading *The International Jew*, Henry Ford's infamous anti-Semitic thesis, he felt the need to create a life insurance company that could compete with the "Jewish controlled companies" that dominated the market. To this end, the Imperial leadership founded the Empire Mutual Life Insurance Company in Kansas City, Missouri, with a capital stock of \$100,000 and a surplus of \$25,000. The company began advertising insurance policies in Texas and Missouri and claimed that in four months had sold close to \$3,000,000 worth of stock. The scheme struggled to maintain itself due to the eventual decline of the Invisible Empire after 1925.<sup>46</sup>

There was also an informal form of mutual assistance, whereby Klansmen were expected to give charity to members in need. During every

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<sup>44</sup>William Joseph Simmons, *The Practice of Klanishness*, ed. Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Atlanta: Ku Klux Klan Press, 1917) back cover.

<sup>45</sup> Shepherd, "Put Over the Klan," p.35.

<sup>46</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation* (Kansas City: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc., 1924), pp.130-134.

meeting, the Exalted Cyclops was supposed to ask “Does any Klansman know of a Klansman or a Klansman’s family who is in need of financial or fraternal assistance?”<sup>47</sup> Simmons concept of “Klanishness” was not based exclusively on aiding those brothers who were sick or unemployed, but in assisting fellow Klansmen in all aspects of life. For instance, brothers were expected to exemplify “Vocational Klanishness” whereby they were supposed to be:

Trading, dealing with and patronizing klansmen in preference to all others. Employing klansmen in preference to others whenever possible. Boosting each other’s business interest or professional ability; honourably doing any and all things that will assist a klansman to earn an honest dollar.<sup>48</sup>

Klanishness served to cement the bonds of fraternity by asking members not only to promise to be selfless, but to actually commit themselves financially to each other. This was intended to create a cohesive unit of Klansmen, a true brotherhood wherein each member could depend on the other.

The third broad characteristic of any fraternity is secrecy and exclusivity, a requirement presented by both Jeffrey Tyssens and Bob James in their studies of fraternalism. Although in our own time the rituals and secrets of fraternities like the Freemasons or the Odd Fellows are easily accessible through the internet, during the 1920s these were closely guarded secrets. This was not simply because it might ruin the fun of the rituals, but also because the members themselves felt they were the appointed guardians of an esoteric knowledge that could only be imparted to a chosen few. Outsiders needed to prove themselves as worthy before learning the secrets of their fraternity. Secrecy and exclusivity were intimately intertwined concepts within these orders. There were also practical implications; secrecy ensured that no one could steal your rituals or replicate your fraternity. This secrecy was practically universal to all fraternities. For example, the Improved Order of Red Men, a

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<sup>47</sup> Klan, *Kloran*, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Simmons, *The Practice of Klanishness* p.2.

fraternity based on a distorted amalgamation of various Native American tribes, included a pledge to secrecy in their oath. The initiates of the Red Men were instructed that:

no paleface [non-member] may approach the presence of our Sachem [president], until he shall have pledged himself to lock in the inmost recess of his bosom, all he may hear and see in the council chamber; which is to be kept secret from all persons not members of the Improved Order of Red Men.<sup>49</sup>

In this sense, the KKK was identical to the Red Men, and practically all other fraternities in America. The proceedings within the klavern were meant to be kept secret, and before each meeting started, an officer of the Klan, the kladd, was supposed to go around the lodge checking every member had the correct password and was a member in good standing. The klavern, like many other fraternities, had two officers, the klexter and klarogo, whose sole duty it was to guard the klavern from intruders and spies. Only after swearing their oath, would the initiates of the Invisible Empire be given the passwords that would allow them to get past the klexter, klarogo, and the kladd at the next meeting. The Exalted Cyclops of the klavern dutifully warned them before giving them the password:

The insignia or mark of a clansman is Honor. All secrets and secret information of the Invisible Empire is committed to you on your honor. A clansman values honor more than life itself. Be true to Honor, then to all the world you will be true.<sup>50</sup>

Fraternal secrecy was not merely a preventive measure against intellectual theft; it was also another way of clearly demarcating membership. Though most fraternities expounded a doctrine of universal brotherhood, they all still had some sort of criteria as to who could join their organization.

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<sup>49</sup> Stichting Argus, "Improved Order of Red Men Adoption Degree " [http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/iorm\\_r1.html](http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/iorm_r1.html)

<sup>50</sup> Klan, *Kloran*, p.46

Fraternities made clear distinctions as to who could join their organization, and who could learn the secrets of the lodge. Jeffrey Tyssens proposes that membership criteria is a crucial requirement for an organization to be considered a fraternity. Tyssens points to the fact that members were usually only admitted on the basis of a large majority or even a consensus as an indication of this exclusivity. Gender is perhaps the most important criteria for acceptance into fraternity, but being the right race was certainly just as crucial to enter most fraternities during the 1920s.

To join the Freemasons, for instance, you were required to be an adult male who believed in some sort of deity. This, in essence, only officially excluded women, children and atheists. However, due to the prevailing notions on race and religion, certain other classes of people were understood to be undesirable. Freemasonry, as well as other fraternities, had a policy of only accepting members that had been approved by the rest of the lodge, effectively excluding entire sectors of the population that they deemed “undesirable.” Black Freemasons had been forced to develop an entirely separate and unsanctioned fraternity known as Prince Hall Freemasonry because of their inability to gain membership in the regular group. Simmons’ KKK was more direct and made its membership requirements crystal clear. To become a member of the Klan, each initiate had to answer a set of questions positively. Among them were:

2<sup>nd</sup>. Are you a native-born white, Gentile American citizen?

3<sup>rd</sup>. Are you absolutely opposed to and free of any allegiance of any nature to any cause, government, people, sect or ruler that is foreign to the United States of America?

4<sup>th</sup>. Do you believe in the tenets of the Christian religion?

5<sup>th</sup> Do you esteem the United States of America and its institutions above any other government, civil, political or ecclesiastical, in the whole world?<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.25-26.

The exclusivity and secrecy that was prevalent in fraternities like the KKK served to strengthen the ties of brotherhood by clearly demarcating who was a member and who was not, and who was allowed to possess the secrets of the lodge and who was deemed unworthy. It also provided an important sense of excitement to the matter, a factor that was crucial for the Klan's success in small-town and rural America. Secrecy and exclusivity were two intertwined features of fraternalism, and played a vital function in providing cohesion for these organizations.

So as we can see, the Klan that Simmons initially envisioned had all the principal characteristics of a fraternity. The KKK's ritual, its message, values and costumes, were all shaped by Simmons' experiences in other established fraternities early in his life. His Klan can be regarded as just another product of the Golden Age of Fraternity. Accordingly, Simmons, when answering the question "What is [the Klan]?" in a 1917 pamphlet, responded saying "It is a *standard fraternal order* enforcing fraternal conduct..."<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the KKK's original charter, registered in Fulton County, Georgia in 1916, asked for the rights awarded to other standard fraternities, saying:

The petitioners desire that the [Klan] shall have the power to confer an initiative degree ritualism, fraternal and secret obligations, words, grip, signs and ceremonies under which there shall be united only white male persons of sound health, good morals and high character; and further desire such rights powers and privileges as are now extended to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Free and Accepted Order of Masons, Knights of Pythias, et al, under and by virtue of the laws of the state of Georgia.<sup>53</sup>

Simmons' order, by its own definition, and by the definitions proffered by historians, was a standard fraternity.

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<sup>52</sup> Simmons, *The ABC*.

<sup>53</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Original Charter," July 1 1916 , "Ku Klux Klan Records, 1921-1961," Indiana Historical Society.

However, this also meant that Simmons and his Invisible Empire offered nothing essentially different than the hundreds of other brotherhoods in existence at the time. In fact, when it came to attracting members, the KKK was at a severe disadvantage, since they did not have the prestige and heritage that other established fraternities boasted of. This early Klan was so ordinary and unfashionable that Simmons would later declare: "There were times, during those five early years, before the public knew of the Klan when I walked the streets with my shoes worn through because I had no money."<sup>54</sup> By 1919, the Invisible Empire was composed of only a few thousand Klansmen, and had only formed klaverns in Alabama and Georgia. Even in Atlanta, the city where the movement had started, the Klan had less members than the B'nai B'rith.<sup>55</sup> Simmons' pre-1920 Klan was never particularly successful, and would have probably never achieved the massive following that it did had it remained an innocuous brotherhood.

### **3) The Ku Klux Klan, Fraternalism and Militancy**

Its success as a fraternity derives perhaps from the changes it underwent that transformed it into an entirely different organization. The Invisible Empire succeeded as a fraternity because it offered something new. America's entry into World War I in 1917 and the accompanying atmosphere of hyper-patriotism inspired Simmons and his Klansmen to become more militant and active in daily affairs. Forgoing its fraternal origins, the Klan became entirely covert. The order discarded its lodge pins, the staple public symbols of all fraternities of the time, and became a secret organization involved in politics and law enforcement.<sup>56</sup> The Klan went from a minor fraternity, to become another of the vigilante groups that sprouted in wartime America and that snoopied around looking for signs of disloyalty or slacking. In late September 1918, for instance, the Klan paraded in full regalia through Montgomery, Alabama warning all wartime slackers to

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<sup>54</sup> Shepherd, "Put Over the Klan," p.35.

<sup>55</sup> Charles O. Jackson, "William J. Simmons: A Career In Ku Kluxism," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 1966), p.357.

<sup>56</sup> Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), p.5-6.

“Work, fight, or get out.”<sup>57</sup> Even the Klan’s enigmatic catchphrase of “100% Americanism” was originally a wartime slogan. This wartime Klan was moving away from its fraternal origins, and was starting to resemble its Reconstruction predecessor.

The Klan’s transformation continued after the war, as the organization’s leadership came to be shared with publicists Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler. The organization they marketed was more of revival of the Klan than a fraternity that simply honoured or paid tribute to it. The post-1920 Klan was sold as a “cure-all” organization that promised to solve the problems that afflicted white Protestant Americans. This meant that the fraternity evolved into a multi-faceted organization which manifested itself differently in each locale. The shape a Klan took was now not only decided by Simmons and the fraternity’s leadership, the Klansmen themselves played an equal part. In some areas this meant that the fraternity had become a vigilante organization, guarding the community from perceived wrongdoings, or perhaps it had become a primarily political organization that was dedicated to forcing social change. But in some other areas, the Klan remained a fraternal organization that simply promoted ethnic and religious solidarity among members. The fact is that the post-1920 Klan was so multi-faceted that it is a challenge to say precisely what it was. The Invisible Empire was simultaneously a fraternity, a church, a political party, an unsanctioned police force, a business, a social club, a criminal empire, and a commercial co-operative.

The Klan’s management, particularly after the palace coup of November 1922 that ousted Imperial Wizard Simmons and installed Hiram Wesley Evans as the head of the brotherhood, increasingly encouraged individual Klans to move away from their fraternal origins. In a 1924 pamphlet, entitled *Klan Building: An Outline of Proven Methods for Applying the Art of Klankraft in Building and Operating Local Klans*, the Invisible Empire’s leadership instructed its devotees that:

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<sup>57</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Alive in Alabama: Slackers Warned ", *New Castle News* 1918.

Our organization is not what is commonly termed a lodge, nor a speculative organization, but an intensively operated mass movement, nationwide in its scope. It is the national force for good – a crusade, the purpose of which is to underwrite America, present and future, the success of American, Anglo-Saxon ideals and institutions.<sup>58</sup>

The Invisible Empire's new leadership made a similar statement in another pamphlet published the same year, which said "The Knights of the KKK is not a lodge. It is not so much a fraternal organization as it a movement devised and ordained for the purpose of meeting present needs in a larger way."<sup>59</sup> And yet, even though the Imperial Wizard Evans and his cronies hoped to create a political powerhouse that would change America and were eagerly encouraging their brotherhood to move beyond the limitations of a fraternity, Klansmen kept acting out the rituals, dressing in the regalia, using the exotic nomenclature, and practicing the tenets of Klannishness they had promised to uphold. The Klan was trying to become something more than another esoteric brotherhood, disconnected from the outside world, but it remained an organization that still kept its feet firmly planted in the traditions and customs of fraternalism.

Perhaps this is the origin of the Klan's success. The Invisible Empire's militantly active fraternalism, that promised to solve America's problem while expounding the familiar themes of brotherhood and selflessness, certainly set it aside from other fraternities of the day. The KKK was a fraternity that not only tried to make its own members better people, but looked beyond the confines of the lodge room and tried to change society. Writing in the Klan's official magazine, *The Courier*, one loyal Klansman wrote that his organization was a "nation builder," and that the movement was a "rededication of citizenship upon broad lines of intelligence, democracy and progress" that was "fighting the battle of every man, woman and child of the land regardless of race, color or creed." What is particularly interesting, is that this writer declared that the KKK was

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<sup>58</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Klan Building: An Outline of Proven Methods for Applying the Art of Klankraft in Building and Operating Local Klans* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1924), p.4.

<sup>59</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *The Whole Truth About the Effort to Destroy the Klan* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1924), p.16.

“operative Masonry, Odd Fellowship and K.P-ism, operative education, Protestantism and Americanism.”<sup>60</sup> The Klan, in essence, felt they were implementing the vision of American fraternities like the Freemasons, the Odd Fellows, or the Knights of Pythias, by aggressively fighting in defence of the nation and its democracy from supposed “alien” threats.

There is evidence to suggest that the Klan’s success among the varying different American fraternities stems directly from this “operative” or “militant” fraternalism. Discontent with the non-partisan attitude of their fraternity, Freemasons turned to the Invisible Empire to address their concerns. Sam S. Sargent, a Freemason from Charleston, Illinois was very worried about the menace of Catholicism and the threat it posed to Protestant America, and wrote to a fraternal newspaper to express his fear. He wrote demanding to know who would defend 100% Americanism and asked:

Why depend on others to do it? We believe there is one such organization [the KKK] in the field and it is hustling to be the first to go under the wire; and if there are those who would hold Masonry in check as a thing to be used in our back yard, then I say may the 100 per cent Americans flock into the ranks and fight the battle out in the name of the Ku Klux Klan, where Jesuit intrigue cannot reach and whose ranks are filled by as brave spirits as ever looked an enemy in the face.<sup>61</sup>

Sargent, like many other Freemasons, was tired with the non-interventionist attitude of his fraternity. Historian Lynn Dumenil, in her own study of American Freemasonry, observed that in the aftermath of World War I “a vocal segment of Masons demanded that Masonry ease its restrictions against involvement in the external world and lend its institutional power to combat the foes of Americanism.”<sup>62</sup> This discontent with the state of American fraternalism found a

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<sup>60</sup> “The Klan A Nation Builder,” *The Courier*, March 1925.

<sup>61</sup> “Demand National Masonic Battle Line to Protect U.S.,” *The Fellowship Forum*, May 19 1923 p.5.

<sup>62</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.116.

natural expression in the aggressive and interventionist fraternalism of the Ku Klux Klan.

It is difficult to say whether this post-1920 Klan can be considered a fraternity, since most of its impulses were now directed outside the established boundaries of fraternalism. Although other fraternities of the 1920s had been involved in political campaigns, this was never done with official approval, and was still a controversial topic since politics and religion were taboo topics within most fraternities. The Klan was certainly pushing the limits of what could be considered a fraternity, and this is perhaps why historians have neglected to label the Klan as such or investigate the organization from this angle. But we must not forget that although after the 1920s the Invisible Empire had changed, and barely resembled the small brotherhood Simmons had founded, that ultimately, the fraternity's structure and framework remained the same. Each Klansman had to go through his initiation ritual, all klaverns had to be arranged according to the instructions outlined in the Klan's ritual book, the Kloran. The whole organization was still based on the model established by Simmons. Fraternal rituals provided a unifying experience for Klansman, allowing disparate klaverns to feel part of a much bigger organization. Klan rituals and fraternalism added a vital sense of cohesion that integrated outsiders into the wider membership of the Invisible Empire.

Consequently, the KKK is surely a fraternity, but perhaps it represents an evolution in fraternalism. As American tastes changed during the "Gilded Age of Fraternalism," the Klan's popularity demonstrates that the public were starting to turn their back on traditional fraternities like the Freemasons, and were looking for organizations that were more involved in the outside world. Clifford Walker, Governor of Georgia from 1923 to 1927, agreed with this view. During his opening speech at the 1924 national convention, or Klönvokation, of the Ku Klux Klan, Governor Walker remarked that:

My contribution to this evening's exercises will be a reminder than in the years of the recent past a new aristocracy has been born – the

aristocracy of service, service of our fellow men. In the days of our boyhood, we were told of an aristocracy of class, an aristocracy of wealth, an aristocracy of society. In these later years, this new aristocracy has been born. It has found expression in a series of new luncheon clubs, the Rotary, the Kiwanis, the Civitan and others, whose motto, in different language, yet the same in substance, is 'We serve, we build.'

I suggest that the old orders, secret societies – the Masons, the Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, and others – must take into account, if they would prosper and be perpetuated, this new aristocracy that was written in the very mud sills of the foundation of the Universe itself...<sup>63</sup>

Governor Walker believed the KKK needed to become the standard-bearer of this new aristocracy of service, and warned the old fraternities that their time had come. America's fraternal market was changing. Organizations like the Freemasons or the Odd Fellows continued to attract members, but most of these new recruits were neither committed to fraternalism nor dedicated entirely to its principles. On the other hand, the KKK became America's most popular brotherhood by both replicating the values and customs of established fraternities while encouraging Klansmen to defend these values in the outside world. The Klan must be considered a fraternity, but its success derives from its ability to adapt to the taste of the American public and the modern world of the 1920s. Its particular blend of aggressive 100% Americanism and traditional fraternalism would become quite popular amongst the nation's Freemasons, particularly among this organization's militant wing.

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<sup>63</sup> Klan, *Second Klonvokation*p.20.



IMAGE 1 – OUTLINE OF A KLAVERN <sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Klan, *Kloran*, p.7.

## CHAPTER 2: FREEMASONRY'S 'FIGHTING BROTHER': MILITANCY, NATIONALISM AND THE KU KLUX KLAN

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In April 1923, V.E. Clark, a Freemason from North Liberty, Indiana wrote a letter to *The Fellowship Forum* to praise their editorial policy towards the Ku Klux Klan and urging cooperation with that organization. The *Forum* was a weekly publication dedicated to reporting news of interest to America's Protestant fraternities, and was one of the few "Masonic" newspapers that openly approved of the Invisible Empire. Clark wrote to the editor saying:

Keep the good work up and it may be those 'let well [enough] alone Masons' will realize it's up to them to keep the 'little red schoolhouse' safe for Protestant American children. We have plenty of spaghetti-backs in this country now, let alone the 'Dago' over in Italy telling us 'how and when.' We will have no trouble if the two great organizations – Masons and Ku Klux Klan – have the support of the Protestant people in keeping America American.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving aside the inflammatory language, this letter is very revelatory. Clark expresses his hope that his more complacent Masonic brethren will realize the danger that their children's education and future are in, and that they will be spurred into action. He complains about the disproportionate control exercised by immigrants and the power wielded by an alien institution, the Roman Catholic Church, over their lives. He also seems optimistic about a bright future for the nation, so long as the public supports the fraternities defending America's interests. The *Forum* received many such letters from concerned Freemasons. Clark's letter illustrates some of the anxieties held by Freemasons during the turbulent 1920s, and it points to some of the elements that made the Ku Klux Klan so popular during this era.

This letter and others like it pose a number of intriguing questions. Why was it that Freemasons in particular admired the Invisible Empire? And why were they tempted to join? Studies of this infamous hooded brotherhood have

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<sup>1</sup> "Letter: Hopes Masons will Work with Klan," *Fellowship Forum*, April 14 1923.

suggested several factors that attracted Americans as a whole to the organization, but have neglected to discuss why it is that Freemasons especially joined the Ku Klux Klan. Freemasons constituted a salient and crucial segment of the Invisible Empire's membership, particularly as the fraternity itself actively targeted them for recruitment, and since they composed a noticeable portion of their leadership. It is because of this that it is both interesting and historiographically valuable to ascertain why it was that Freemasons joined the Ku Klux Klan.

Freemasons were subject to the same forces and developments that influenced other Americans to join the Invisible Empire, but there are certain reasons that were exclusive to members of the Craft. Many lost faith in their own fraternity and saw the Ku Klux Klan as the only organization that was willing to stand for their ideals. This chapter aims to discuss this issue, starting by looking broadly at the discontent many Freemasons felt with the structure and purpose of their own fraternity. It will also examine the various attempts by Freemasons to address these issues, and the ensuing conflict this caused. We will begin by observing the endeavours of the Masonic mainstream to alleviate these concerns, before moving on to the attempts of the militant and politically-assertive fringe of the organization. This chapter will then argue that the Ku Klux Klan's appeal among Freemasons derived from their ability to fulfil the ambitions of those dissatisfied members, and will assess how the Invisible Empire managed to stand out from the other organizations that offered to do the same. Ultimately, this chapter will try to discern why it was that V.E. Clark of North Liberty, and the other militant Freemasons like him, praised the Ku Klux Klan and referred to it in such affectionate terms.

### **1) The Origins of the Militant Masonic Movement**

As discussed in the previously in this thesis, Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that advocates tolerance, that crosses racial and religious lines, and which preaches harmony, progress and enlightenment through its ritual. However, in different localities, Freemasons have interpreted the teachings and spirit of the fraternity in contrasting ways. Though united by a single ritual and message, this fraternity has manifested itself in a wide array of forms. In the

period directly preceding the Spanish Civil War, Masonic lodges in Spain were bastions of liberal and left wing thought; alternatively, in the United States, Freemasonry has almost always been a steadfastly conservative organization. Consequently, Freemasonry cannot be evaluated simply from its ritual and teaching. To understand Freemasonry, we need to observe the activities and beliefs of the rank and file in each individual country. In 1920s America, Freemasonry was not the universal fraternity its idealism conveyed. Relatively expensive fees kept many from the lower classes out of the lodges, while racial notions segregated the orders. The organization was overwhelmingly Protestant, due primarily to the demographic makeup of the nation, but also owing to the fraternity's turbulent relationship with the Catholic Church. Its members frequently shared similar backgrounds and concerns. This meant that although unofficial, American Freemasonry was *de facto* Protestant, middle class, white, and politically quite conservative.

Another of Freemasonry's hallmarks was its commitment to create a space where men of different opinions could come together as brothers and celebrate fraternalism and harmony. To ensure this function, Freemasons were discouraged from allowing political or religious differences to keep them apart and were instructed to avoid divisive topics. Such matters could alienate brothers and destroy the tranquillity of the lodge so members refrained engaging in overtly political or religious discussions. Individual lodges or Freemasons were forbidden from supporting a particular party or faith explicitly as members of the Craft. This prohibition also protected the organization from the repeated accusations of being a cabalistic clandestine society that secretly controlled politicians. This neutrality was sacrosanct and was carefully guarded by Freemasonry's authorities and membership. But this did not mean that political matters were never considered. Because patriotism and duty were an intrinsic part of Freemasonry's teachings, many American members believed it was their Masonic responsibility to preserve the nation and its traditional democratic institutions from anyone who jeopardized them. Historians like Glenn Zuber and Adam Kendall have argued that the Manichean or dualistic struggle – between light and darkness, enlightenment and ignorance – presented in Masonic ritual and teachings, moved members to stand strongly

against any “dark” forces or institutions that threatened the nation and its “enlightened” ways.<sup>2</sup> Certain members believed that this responsibility extended beyond the lodge. During the 1920s, these more militant Freemasons argued that it was up to them to fight against national threats such as the Bolshevik menace, corrupt politicians or even the power of the Roman Catholic Church who aimed to sabotage America’s enlightened and democratic system of government.

The contending pillars of neutrality and duty to one’s nation gave rise to an inherent and unresolved conflict within fraternities like the Freemasons, between those who sought to use the power of the fraternity for “good” and those who believed that such actions would tear brothers apart. Freemasons were torn by these contradictory duties, and wondered which responsibility took precedence. Were Freemasons obliged to defend their nation, even if such actions could come between brothers? Numerous Freemasons during the 1920s began to push for a radical transformation of their fraternity into a more militant and united brotherhood, arguing that on such vital matters such as the protection of the public school or immigration reform, the Craft was obliged to take action. Militant Freemasons claimed that the brethren of the lodge were united in their desire to lend support to crucial legislation that would preserve national values, and insisted that the fraternity do so. When these needs were not addressed, a noticeable number searched for alternatives, among which we can count the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>3</sup>

This push for militancy reached its climax at the conclusion of the First World War and during the period that followed, when eager Freemasons demanded changes to their fraternity.<sup>4</sup> The 1920s were a difficult time for fraternities. Most major brotherhoods maintained a heady expansion until close

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<sup>2</sup> Glenn Michael Zuber, "Onward Christian Klansmen!: War, Religious Conflict, and the rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1912-1928" (Indiana University, 2004) pp.48-49; Adam G. Kendall, "Writing History With Lightning: The Ku Klux Klan and The Fraternal Press of the 1920s" (paper presented at the 4th International Conference on the History of Freemasonry, Edinburgh, UK, 24-26 May 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Alan Axelrod estimates that by 1923 there were half a million Klansmen who were also Masons, while about two million chose not to join. The proportion of Masons with Klan affiliations was in no way a majority, but it still reflects a fair degree of dissatisfaction within the organization. See Alan Axelrod, *The International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders* (New York: Facts on File, 1997), p.159. The number of Freemasons in the Klan will be examined in Chapter 5.

<sup>4</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.116.

to the end of the decade, but recruitment figures disguised problems hiding under the surface. As discussed in the previous chapter, major fraternities had to deal with the declining commitment both to the lodge and to its teachings.<sup>5</sup> But this was not the only challenge these organizations had to contend with in this “Gilded Age of Fraternalism.” During this period, fraternities were faced with increasing internal demands to evolve into less detached organizations that would employ their immense power and resources outside of the lodge, become active in politics, and do their part to contribute to society’s preservation and progress. Grand Master Guinn Williams for instance, lamented this development, announcing before the 1925 Grand Lodge of Texas that:

I am convinced that there are thousands of members of Masonic lodges who have a wrong conception of Freemasonry and little knowledge of its objects and purposes. I have been forced to defend the purposes of this Grand Lodge on many occasions when I would be confronted with the question, ‘Do you not believe that it is time for the Masonic Fraternity to actively engage in politics?’ I regret to say that, in my opinion, there is a growing tendency on the part of some members of our Fraternity to have Masonic lodges participate actively in politics...<sup>6</sup>

The influence of the First World War in this development is crucial; as the entire nation mobilized for war, the Craft responded to the clarion call and did their best to demonstrate their patriotism and commitment to the war effort. Many prominent Freemasons stated their steadfast loyalty to the nation and its war effort, and encouraged the fraternity to become more involved. A few months after America’s entry to the war, Grand Master Cyrus S. Stockwell gave one such typical speech before Grand Lodge of Wisconsin where he asked members to leave their political and partisan differences aside in favour of defending national interests. He declared:

Into this seething, boiling maelstrom our own country has been forced, and we are now a part of that titanic struggle. It is now too late for

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<sup>5</sup> Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building American Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp. 158-161.

<sup>6</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1925), p.21.

discussing the causes which drew us into the war. The time has come for action, not criticism. Our country needs the support of every citizen, and we, as members of this great Fraternity, should not fail to come to its assistance with all our resources, moral, financial and physical. Let us forget that we are partisans of any party. In fact, forget that we have a political creed, and remember only this, that the allegiance which we owe to our country is second only to that which we owe to our God, and that the eyes of the world are upon us.

Brethren, this is not taking Masonry into politics nor bring politics into Masonry; but we, as Americans, whether our ancestors came over in the Mayflower or whether we came through Castle Garden yesterday, should have this thought ever uppermost in our minds; WE ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS.<sup>7</sup>

Grand Master Stockwell was not merely stating the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin's unwavering support for the war, he was also trying to allay fears that their support for the war was in fact a partisan decision and that it might provoke members who had opposed America's entry into the war. He asked for conformity in this time of adversity. The peril of war energized Freemasonry to take on a more direct role in national affairs, and while assisting the military effort was not an overtly political act, it was certainly a break from the norm and an encouragement for those who were pressing for a less detached fraternity. During the war Freemasons from all 49 separate jurisdictions were united by their determination to fulfil Masonic teachings of patriotism and to assist their country in the battle against the reportedly barbaric and imperialist German enemy. For one of the first times in the organization's history in America, Grand Lodges from across the country were united in their determination to engage with the world beyond the lodge, with a clear goal and an unyielding desire to accomplish their mission.

Freemasonry's attempts to contribute to the war effort directly on the ground were abruptly halted by the U.S. government, who were reluctant to deal

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<sup>7</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office 1917), Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp.80-81.

with the complications that would inevitably arise from working and coordinating with 49 separate Grand Lodges. Other national organizations, like the Salvation Army or the Young Men's Christian Association, had been granted permission to deliver assistance directly and provided valuable relief to soldiers on the frontlines in Europe.<sup>8</sup> The Knights of Columbus, who had been allowed to form such a voluntary mission, boasted in one 1918 pamphlet that their relief workers had been affectionately dubbed the "Knights of Cooperation." They also proudly touted that

With more than two hundred buildings constructed in this country, ten in England and about sixty in France, and with over a thousand workers in the field, the Knights of Columbus can be credited with contributing to the morale of the forces to a very considerable extent.<sup>9</sup>

Individual Freemasons both participated in the war and contributed to the war effort through charities like the Young Men's Christian Association, but all hopes of an exclusively Masonic overseas charity were dashed. This inability to contribute to the war effort as a single institution, as other fraternities like the Knights of Columbus had done, infuriated Freemasons. Many simply could not comprehend why their brotherhood had been forbidden from acting in Europe when permission had been granted to others.<sup>10</sup>

Suspensions arose among Freemasons as to the origins of this prohibition, and some pointed the finger at what they considered to be the organization's natural enemy: the Roman Catholic Church, and its fraternal branch the Knights of Columbus. Freemason Thomas F. Pennman related before the 1919 Pennsylvania Grand Lodge how initially approval had been granted by the government for a Masonic mission to join the American Expeditionary Force, but that that permission had been subsequently withdrawn. Pennman and others thought this occurred precisely because this was a Masonic project and that other brothers believed that "certain insidious but potent influences at Washington, inimical to the Masonic institution, plotted to balk the efforts of the

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<sup>8</sup> Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, pp.153-155.

<sup>9</sup> "Service: All Serve Who Give - All Give Who Serve," ed. Knights of Columbus (New Haven, Cn.: John J. Corbett Press, 1918).

<sup>10</sup> Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, pp.119.

Overseas Commission, and by reason of their official positions and authority, succeeded in doing so.”<sup>11</sup> Grand Master E.A. Montgomery of Minnesota commented on this matter in 1919, declaring that:

The war challenged our efficiency as Masons in many ways. Disunion within our ranks was the reason for the poor showing made in the welfare activities of the war, for which other organizations claim so much credit. It was purely our own fault that another organization, hostile to us, thwarted our desire to serve...<sup>12</sup>

The formal language used by Freemasons during Grand Lodges, as well as the traditional non-partisanship of the fraternity, prevented members from explicitly stating who this “enemy” of Freemasonry was. *The Fellowship Forum*, the intensely pro-militant Masonic paper, was less discrete. They openly accused the Knights of Columbus and individual Catholics, such as President Woodrow Wilson’s secretary Joseph Patrick Tumulty, of blocking Masonic aid, a belief that was shared by other Freemasons and Klansmen as well.<sup>13</sup> The Knights of Columbus in particular were regarded with mistrust. This fraternity was considered by many almost as the Pope’s personal agents in America, working closely with priests and the Catholic hierarchy to undermine Protestant America and Freemasonry. The fact that the Knights of Columbus had been allowed to assist the American Expeditionary Force while the Craft had not was enough evidence of foul play and conspiracy for many Freemasons.

During the period following the war, Freemasons continued to try to demonstrate their loyalty to the nation and pushed the boundaries of their customary non-interventionism. This was especially the case during the period 1918-1920, as the weight of post-war reconstruction, military demobilisation,

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<sup>11</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1920), Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp.46-47.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp.29-30.

<sup>13</sup> “Vets Form American Legion From Masonic Ranks,” *The Fellowship Forum*, March 3 1922; “Shall 48 Jurisdictions Unite in One Grand Lodge,” *The Fellowship Forum*, January 20 1923; “Oklahoma Reader Commends Stand of Texas American,” *The Texas 100 Per Cent American*, December 1 1922; Past Grand Master George W. Baird of the District of Columbia actually believed that the Knights of Columbus had “hoodwinked” Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War, see Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1918), Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, p.20.

and the added threat of communism loomed over the American public's mind.<sup>14</sup> In 1919, Grand Master William Carson Black of Kentucky spoke before a group of Freemasons in Lexington, advising them of Freemasonry's new responsibilities to the nation:

Today we are living in an era of unrest that is afire with the spirit of conquest at the sacrifice of human submission and human blood, while wheels of greed and graft travel through clouds of thunderous Bolshevism in tongues of destructive lightning, tearing into darkness of an apparently helpless people in many kingdoms of the earth. The sunshine of a new day, however, is fast dawning upon an anxious and waiting people, and a new hallelujah will peel forth from the breast of settled, prosperous and Christian nations.

Masonry will be given a chance for an acid test of its strength, durability and equilibrium in the affairs of men, community uplift and an aid to Christian fellowship. Its high ideals were the guarantors of our Republic at its inception, and no less today are we consecrated to keep this nation (and every nation where Masonry is established) off the rocks of disaster, insofar as our authority to speak and act will go. This new obligation is thrown right at the door of our being."<sup>15</sup>

Freemasonry as a whole seemed to be espousing a more militant position during the post-war period, as the nation's security and stability took precedence over the brotherhood's cherished neutrality in the minds of the membership. Grand Orator Wallace McCarmant of Oregon even argued in 1920 that due to the threat of radicalism that "Partisan politics has no place in a Masonic Lodge. But the seductive iconoclastic propaganda of class prejudice raises not a question of partisan politics, but a question of right and wrong, of patriotism and treason. There are times when neutrality is disgraceful, when indifference is a mark of turpitude."<sup>16</sup> For those more militant Freemasons, the organization's strict non-partisanship was an antiquated defensive measure that

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<sup>14</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), p.220.

<sup>15</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1919), p.55.

<sup>16</sup> Grand Lodge of Oregon, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (N/A: N/A, 1920), pp.155-62.

unnecessarily shackled members and prevented them from adequately fulfilling their duties as good citizens and Freemasons.

Furthermore, there was a growing feeling among the leadership and membership of the brotherhood that the division of the fraternity's membership into 49 entirely separate Grand Lodges was weakening the influence their brotherhood could have at a national stage. The failure of the efforts to found a Masonic charity during the First World War was not only blamed on nefarious Catholic influences in Washington, but also on the lack of some sort of a national Masonic organ that could speak on behalf of all members in times of crisis. As the aforementioned Grand Master E.A. Montgomery bluntly affirmed about the failure to assist during the First World War, "We had the numbers, we had the power... but we did not have the unity in which there is strength."<sup>17</sup> Many Freemasons were also hoping that the fraternity as a whole would lend its support to the Towner-Stirling Bill that would create a federal education department. This reform was considered essential by many, as it would ensure that the next generation was inculcated with the necessary American values to guide the nation. Others felt it would help fight the power of America's enemies, by forcing private and parochial schools to follow a national curriculum that would emphasize patriotism and democratic principles.

By the turn of the decade, a clear and surging demand for radical change within the brotherhood was evident among the organization's membership, spurred both by the excitement of the war and the disheartening disappointments it brought, as well as the uncertain and turbulent years of 1918-1920. Freemasons wanted their organization to become more united at a national level, as well as more engaged with political and social affairs, particularly those that posed a serious threat to the nation and its institutions. The following years would be defined by dissension within the fraternity between factions who disagreed over the Craft's direction and their new responsibilities.

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<sup>17</sup> 1920 Kentucky GL Proceedings, Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp.29-30.

## 2) The Masonic Service Association

We can see this demand for political action and national coordination expressed clearly in the formation the Masonic Service Association (MSA). The MSA was formed in November 1918 and was designed as a sort of a Masonic confederation, a national body that could represent the mutual interests of all the separate Grand Lodges.<sup>18</sup> To allay the fears of some members who thought it might supersede the authority of their state lodges, the MSA asserted that the organization “must be the servant of all, and the master of none.”<sup>19</sup> The MSA’s founding conference was set up by Iowa Grand Master George L. Schoonover and was attended by delegates from 22 separate Grand Lodges. This national body was set up to remedy the failures and frustrations of the First World War, which had highlighted disunity in the brotherhood. Its expressed goal was “first, the relief of need in time of crisis or calamity; second, education, or the quest and spread of Truth, in the spirit of Brotherly Love.”<sup>20</sup> The body was formed too late to actually assist with the war effort, and chose instead to pursue a programme of Masonic education with a heavy focus on Americanization and patriotism. Historian Lynn Dumenil has proposed that while the MSA directed its energies towards combatting the potentially devastating influence of Bolshevism and other radical ideologies, the confederation’s Americanization programme was also aimed at challenging the power of Catholicism and other non-conformist minorities in society.<sup>21</sup>

The clashes that ensued surrounding the extent and nature of the MSA’s authority and objectives would neatly reflect the struggle between the new politically-minded and militant Freemasons and their more traditional and guarded opponents within the fraternity. The response of America’s Freemasons as a whole to this new national body was mixed. Some saw in the MSA an opportunity to overcome the fraternity’s lethargy and to move beyond the old-fashioned recitations of ritual by implementing Freemasonry’s teachings

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<sup>18</sup> Allen E. Roberts, *Freemasonry's Servant: The Masonic Service Association of the United States - The First Fifty Years* (Washington, D.C.: Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1969)p.8.

<sup>19</sup> "A Summary of the Proceedings of the First Meeting of the Masonic Service Association of the United States," *The Texas Freemason*, January 1920, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Fort Newton, "The Masonic Service Association of the United States: Its Purpose," *The Master Mason*, January 1923, pp.1-3.

<sup>21</sup> Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, pp.134-137.

outside the lodge. Those politically-minded Freemasons who hoped to change the entire fraternity went further; they saw the MSA as the militant and national body they had dreamed of, one that could stand openly and explicitly for their values in national politics. Other more traditional Freemasons seemed to have suspected the MSA could in fact degenerate into such a national and politically active body, either intentionally or unintentionally, and refused to join the organization altogether.

It is easy to see why militant Freemasons saw the MSA as the answer to their calls for a more politically aggressive and national brand of fraternalism. Andrew L. Randell, a Past Grand Master of Texas and an active member of the executive board of the MSA, wrote a booklet on the MSA's Americanization programme and its duties to the nation that would have appealed greatly to these militant Freemasons. Writing of the dangers of radicalism, Randell said:

There never was a time in the history of the world when it was so important for Masonry to go to work as right now. We are living in a period of great unrest, so great that many wonder whether our modern civilization is about to disintegrate... Men are dissatisfied, - dissatisfied with their pay, with their jobs, with their living conditions, with their prospects. And this dissatisfaction has become so great as to cause discontent with our government. Many people have lost confidence in it.... They listen to the alluring voice of the foreign agitator, with his promise of Utopian conditions that have long proven visionary and impossible of realization. These foreigners know little of our history and nothing of our ideals.<sup>22</sup>

Randell outlined the duties of the MSA, and of good Freemasons in general, to educate and combat these nefarious influences, saying "It is time for Masonry to awake..." and declaring that "What Masonry teaches in the lodge room she advocates in the world at large."<sup>23</sup> The MSA's Americanization programme, its lectures, speeches, films and general push for a more cohesive national society

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew L. Randell, *Masonry and Americanism* (Washington D.C.: The Masonic Service Association of the United States, c.1924), p.3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13, 81; Also see "Lecturers and Films to Cover United States," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 17 1923.

based on established American values and systems fit the agenda of militant Freemasons quite well.

At first, interest in the MSA was quite enthusiastic, and by January 1923, 34 out of the 49 American Grand Lodges had joined. The more eager Grand Lodges expressed genuine faith in the objectives of the new body. For example, Grand Master Arthur D. Prince gave a speech before the 1921 Grand Lodge of Massachusetts where he stated that he believed the MSA “has done more to stimulate Masonic life and enthusiasm than anything that has happened within my remembrance.”<sup>24</sup> Others however, sensed the potential for a complete transformation and reinvigoration of the fraternity. Grand Master William S. Farmer sent out a circular letter to all the subordinate lodges of the Grand Lodge of New York in 1920 outlining the benefits the MSA could offer for the Craft as a whole. Farmer’s argument was particularly urgent as he feared that if Freemasonry did not welcome this change, they would be replaced by another more modern institution that was better suited to these times. He wrote:

if Freemasonry offers no more useful or attractive purpose in life to its members, new or old; if all, or the major part, of the Lodge’s life and time is to be devoted to the incessant grind of the degree mill, it is beyond doubt only a question of time when the institution will perish from sheer inanition, and some other livelier and more useful agency for human welfare will replace it.<sup>25</sup>

Farmer also encouraged members to support the MSA by explaining that this body had indicated that part of their national programme included such points as the protection of the free public schools, the speedy enactment of legislation forbidding elementary education in any language other than English, as well as a “strong and aggressive program of Americanization.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Grand Lodge of Ohio, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio* (Columbus: Grand Lodge of Ohio, 1922), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.252.

<sup>25</sup> Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1920), pp.232-243; Farmer’s concern for the demise of Freemasonry and the rise of other more “useful” organizations seems well founded considering the eventual ascendance of rival clubs like the Rotary or even the Ku Klux Klan.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.232-243.

These policies implemented the nationalistic ideology of those militant Freemasons who wished for a more cohesive American society, and who felt threatened by the creeping power of foreign and alien groups. Radicals, Catholics, immigrants and others who refused to conform, integrate, and accept American practices and the democratic process were all targets for these militant Freemasons, and many believed that a national and politically aggressive body like the MSA could remedy this multi-cultural nightmare. A sub-committee of the 1921 Grand Lodge of Missouri, dedicated to reporting on the progress of the MSA, expressed this almost apocalyptic vision clearly, announcing that:

we owe it to these strong young men who are seeking Light to make Freemasonry more than a degree-mill and to help them understand that only if we carry the principles of our Order into all the activities of life, governmental, commercial, social and religious, can we save the civilization which our fathers bequeathed to us.

Between the ecclesiastical despotism on the one hand which seek to enslave, and the Bolshevik tendencies which try to undermine and destroy all sense of moral responsibility, the English-speaking Freemasonry of [today] is the chief hope of civilization.<sup>27</sup>

The crusading mentality of this particular group of Freemasons in regards to the MSA is fairly representative of the attitude of the militant wing of the Craft. A Freemason of the District of Columbia wrote in a similar vein in December 1921 of the value of the MSA, saying “If it does nothing more than effect a Masonic solidarity against a most malignant influence [the Catholic Church], seeking the overthrow of our *free institutions*, and the subordination even of its law-making powers to its baleful influence, it will have amply justified its existence.”<sup>28</sup>

Support for the MSA was by no means unanimous, and much of the debate between Freemasons about its suitability related not to the organization’s current and stated structure and objectives, but to the direction

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<sup>27</sup> 1922 Ohio GL Proceedings, Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp.260-262.

<sup>28</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1922), Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp.9-10.

the organization could take. Several Freemasons questioned whether the organization went against the established Masonic tradition of non-intervention. Supporters of the MSA, such as Grand Master Robert Robinson of New York, retorted that they were merely applying Masonic principles to civic life in the same way the revered Founding Fathers had.<sup>29</sup> Other Freemasons distrusted the MSA as they believed it could degenerate into a national Grand Lodge and infringe upon the rights of the established Masonic state jurisdictions. One Masonic writer described this reluctance of some Grand Lodges to join the MSA saying “A few have refused to approve it, and deny both its necessity and its efficiency, affecting to believe that it is a ‘smoke screen’ concealing the lurking hideous form of a General Grand Lodge.”<sup>30</sup> Grand Master Charles E. Shane of Wisconsin went further and declined the MSA’s invitation to join, judging that it would be unwise to join an organization that for \$2,000 a year could become a “menace to their sovereignty” and which was in way “accountable to this Grand Lodge.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps some Freemasons felt that such a body would be un-American because it lacked a separation of powers, and resembled an almost “imperial” sense of government.

Support of the MSA began to wane by the mid-1920s, when several Grand Lodges withdrew from the organization due to costs and lack of enthusiasm. One Grand Master wrote in 1925 that after 6 years, the MSA was “floundering” and “struggling to find a reason for its existence.”<sup>32</sup> It could be argued that the decline in enthusiasm for the MSA was due to the internal contest to define the purpose of the organization, as well as the extent of its authority. On the one hand, many militant Freemasons saw it as an opportunity for the Craft to have its interests represented beyond the lodge at a national level, but on the other, more moderate Freemasons feared such a development would divide and damage their order. This struggle highlights the existence of these two opposing factions. Because of this unresolved strife, the MSA was prevented from becoming truly politically active or from representing Masonic

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<sup>29</sup> Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1921), pp.37-40, 53-55.

<sup>30</sup> 1920 Kentucky GL Proceedings, Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, p.71.

<sup>31</sup> Grand Lodge of Oregon, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (N/A: N/A, 1921), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp.203-204.

<sup>32</sup> Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1925), p.55.

interests at the national stage in an aggressive manner. Militant Freemasons eventually abandoned hope in this venture and looked elsewhere.

### **3) The Fellowship Forum and Militant Protestant Fraternalism**

The growth and influence of what can be termed the militant wing of Freemasonry cannot be denied, even if their list of defeats is longer than that of their victories. Maine's 1920 Grand Master, Silas Bradley Adam, even mentioned that the unprecedented membership gains in the post-war period were partially due to "the conviction that membership in our Order constitutes a perpetual protest against the pernicious activities of other institutions in relation to our political, civic and educational affairs."<sup>33</sup> Adam noted the growth of the militant Masonic movement, and was essentially implying that Freemasonry had come to be seen as a bulwark against other dangerous influences menacing the nation. The Masonic Service Association constituted one effort to address the concerns of these post-war Freemasons, but it failed to do so as it was ultimately a mainstream undertaking that was prevented from becoming a truly aggressive national Masonic agency. This section will analyse some of the ambitions of the militant fringe of the Craft and the projects they founded to address their needs beyond the mainstream.

Grand Master Adam's suspicions of the growth of the militant Masonic movement are difficult to appraise since there are no quantitative sources that would allow an assessment of such an increase. But there are qualitative sources that can help. The rise of *The Fellowship Forum*, America's foremost militant Protestant fraternalist publication, permits an analysis of the makeup of this Masonic fringe movement, as its pages conveyed the thought and desires of these more politically aggressive Freemasons. The paper was founded in June 1921, and at first resembled a standard fraternal newspaper, reporting on the activities of various brotherhoods and reprinting advice and musings from fraternal thinkers and leaders. The *Forum* very quickly developed into a virulently militant fraternal weekly that championed anti-Catholic Americanization measures, strict laws against Bolsheviks, and immigration

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<sup>33</sup> 1921 Oregon GL Proceedings, Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.81.

reform. Referring to this irregular format of fraternal journalism, editor George Fleming Moore wrote that they would:

always endeavor to print this news while it is fresh and not history, because the directors of this newspaper believe that the active, aggressive, militant fraternalists of the present day are more interested in the current happenings of today than they are about the number of knobs or windows old King Solomon had in his celebrated temple.<sup>34</sup>

Their aggressive political policies upset many within the traditional Masonic establishment; Charles Albert Adams, a Past Grand Master of California and Vice-President of the Masonic Periodical Corporation, apparently said “The Fellowship Forum makes me sick.” A Massachusetts Freemason declared that the paper was “as welcome among Masons as a skunk at a garden party.”<sup>35</sup> It was perhaps Lowell Richey, a Masonic supporter from Albany, Indiana, who described the *Forum* best, declaring that “It is a real paper for Protestants, Americans, Masons, and Klansmen, but a poor paper for the Pope, Bolsheviks, reds, and such people as are against our great America.”<sup>36</sup>

Controversies aside, the *Forum's* popularity and influence among Freemasons is manifested by its spectacular rise and national circulation in America. After its first year in publication, the *Forum* proudly announced that “over 100,000 readers scan its columns each week” and that its readership was varied among America’s many Protestant fraternities.<sup>37</sup> Nine months after this anniversary they announced the expansion of their publication to ten pages, and boasted of “half a million readers,” and that “before the end of two more years we expect to be the only fraternal publication in the world with 1,000,000 subscribers.” They repeated this claim in late 1923, reporting that their paper carried “250 to 300 separate and distinct items of general fraternal interest and

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<sup>34</sup> "Editorial: The Fellowship Forum is a National Fraternal Newspaper - Yesterday, Today and Forever," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 3 1923.

<sup>35</sup> "Editorial: The 'Catholic Mason' on Pacific Coast," *The Fellowship Forum*, January 6 1923; At an important Masonic meeting in Boston, publications of the controversial *Fellowship Forum* were banned, see "The Masons and the Klan," *The Hartford Courant*, June 13 1923.

<sup>36</sup> "Letter: Protestants Should Read The Forum," *The Fellowship Forum*, February 16 1924.

<sup>37</sup> "Editorial: The Fellowship Forum - A Newspaper," June 23 1922.

is read each week by nearly a half million aggressive, militant Americans."<sup>38</sup> The *Forum* was sold across the nation, and early in its existence it set up a Western office in San Francisco and announced the creation of a California edition of their paper.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the best indication of the widespread circulation of the *Forum* is their correspondence column, which received letters from all over the country, including one from the remote settlement of Nome, deep in the Alaskan west.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, it is important that we remain sceptical regarding these claims, as these self-interested assertions proceed from the very pages of the *Forum*. Nonetheless, their figures of half a million subscribers are not entirely out of the question, seeing as the newspaper was quite unique and was edited by one of the most prominent Freemasons in the country and a well-known Masonic journalist. Furthermore, the widespread popularity of the *Forum* is starkly demonstrated by its impressive run. While other anti-Catholic, patriotic, or Klan publications faded into obscurity after the heyday of the early 20s, the *Forum* remained in publication until 1938. It is because of this popularity within the militant fraternal movement that studying both its contents and the projects stemming from its pages qualifies as a valuable analysis of the political Masonic fringe of the 1920s.

*The Fellowship Forum's* correspondence column frequently contained letters from Freemasons who appealed for this more militant brand of fraternalism. The very first issue of the *Forum* from June 1921 included a letter from an August B. Finkel, who wrote that "Next to our educational system the fraternal organizations of the country form the greatest bulwark against the dangers threatening to undermine our social and economic structure" and another from a W.H. MacMaster, who said "I have often wondered why the great fraternal orders were not marshalled aggressively for justice and peace, those two great foundation stones in Americanism." One letter from a Horace

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<sup>38</sup> "Editorial: The Fellowship Forum is a National Fraternal Newspaper - Yesterday, Today and Forever," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 3 1923.

<sup>39</sup> "Fellowship Forum to Open Pacific Coast Office," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 23 1921; "California Edition to be Issued June 2," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 24 1922.

<sup>40</sup> "Letter: Alaska Mason Must Have The Forum," *The Fellowship Forum*, August 16 1924.

Parker MacIntosh of Washington D.C. asked Freemasons to organize into a more militant and united body, and outlined how:

Without a certain amount of organized effort nothing worthwhile can be accomplished in this world, therefore it is necessary to organize. The Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus are probably the most thoroughly organized institutions on earth, and look, if you please, at the trouble they give us.<sup>41</sup>

Such letters were included weekly in issues of the *Forum*, and reveal a considerable demand for a new type of Freemasonry. This newspaper was edited and run by George Fleming Moore and James S. Vance, two high-ranking and influential Freemasons who can be considered to have been the unofficial leaders of the militant Masonic movement. Moore himself repeatedly wrote articles and editorials arguing against the undue restraints set upon the fraternity and challenging his readers and followers to become politically active as Freemasons. One such editorial urged Freemasons and other Protestant fraternalists to support the 1924 Johnson immigration bill, saying “Every Mick, Dago, Pole, and Slav that would Europeanize America instead of becoming Americanized themselves [is] fighting the 1890 census provision.” Moore rounded off his argument writing:

These same un-Americans who would make Latin and Polish the official language in the United States are fighting Masonry, Pythianism, the Odd Fellows, the Klan, and every other Protestant fraternity ideal. They are backing the Catholic church in its attempt to kill the 1890 clause of the Johnson bill.<sup>42</sup>

*The Fellowship Forum* was the principal organ of the militant Masonic movement, but these positions and feelings were expressed by more other Freemasons in more mainstream media. *The Illinois Freemason*, in a 1923 article entitled “What is the Duty of Freemasonry” lamented:

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<sup>41</sup> "Letters to the Editor," *The Fellowship Forum*, June 21 1921.

<sup>42</sup> George Fleming Moore, "Editorial: Fate of Johnson Immigration Bill Rests With You! Do Your Duty!," *ibid.*, March 29 1924

It is disappointing to observe the passive resistance offered by Masonry to the political aggression of Catholicism in our governmental affairs. Many of us timidly stand aside through fear and for business reasons, refuse to be identified with any movement which may have for its object the suppression of Catholic influence.

Not until Masonry acts and moves together in a solid phalanx, somewhat in the order of the Knights of Columbus, will politicians of all parties understand their duty when asked to use their influence to elevate to places of power, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>43</sup>

A comparable article appeared in a 1922 issue of *The Crescent*, the official organ of the Shriners, condemning the meddling of the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Church in national affairs, and launching into a tirade against this loathed Catholic fraternity.<sup>44</sup> Although practically impossible to accurately quantify in certain terms, the militant Masonic movement appears to have been quite active and influential across the nation during these years.

Militant Masonry was certainly appealing to many members of the fraternity during the 1920s, but its demands flew in the face of tradition and required a substantial shift in attitudes and a transformation in the structure of the organization. Accordingly, there were several unofficial attempts to address these demands beyond the constraints of established Masonic traditions and institutions like the MSA. One of the central ambitions of militant Freemasons was to create a single Supreme Grand Lodge that would unite and represent the fraternity at the national level. Contrary to the MSA, a confederation that was formed by a loose union of interested parties and which tried to balance between tradition and militancy, this national Grand Lodge would be founded with an expressly aggressive Masonic agenda.

The most vocal advocates of this new national Grand Lodge were the writers and followers of *The Fellowship Forum*, where the matter was a frequent topic of debate. John H. Harvey, a Freemason from Minneapolis, Minnesota,

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<sup>43</sup> "What is the Duty of Freemasonry," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 24 1923, reproduced from *The Illinois Freemason*.

<sup>44</sup> "Shrine Editorial On Immigration," *Dawn*, December 12 1922, reproduced from *The Crescent*, July 1922.

initiated one such discussion in the *Forum* issue of September 15, 1922. Harvey acknowledged the extreme prejudice against this concept that existed among some of his Masonic brethren, but pointed to the severe difficulties presented by the absence of a national Grand Lodge and complaining that "Lack of organization and centralized authority is one of the chief defects of Masonry today."<sup>45</sup> Harvey's suggestion was referred to positively in letters to the *Forum* the following week.<sup>46</sup> The letter sent by W.C. Benson, of Washington, D.C., was particularly eloquent and passionate in its case for a Grand Lodge, reading:

There is no more need of argument because today we are face to face with the organization [of a national Grand Lodge] or the forty-eight sovereign grand lodges will sink into a lethargy which will be hard to overcome. The age of militant Masonry has arrived. We young men want action. Not foolish, petite jealousy, but broad-minded consideration of national, State and local steps forward. We want to be creative.

Benson urged the *Fellowship Forum* and its readers to take up the banner of the national Grand Lodge, and finished his letter acknowledging the radical nature of his plan, while still pressing for modernization and change:

I trust that you will not think me too pertinent or look upon me as a tradition-breaker. Let's sweep away some cobwebs and repolish the magnificently-wrought inheritance which has withstood onslaughts of the enemies down through the ages. Let's fortify America through a cemented fraternalism of Freemasonry. There is a reason, in union there is strength.<sup>47</sup>

Benson's apology stands as a testament of the controversy his proposal would have had among more traditional Freemasons.

Editor George Fleming Moore was also an adamant supporter of the formation of a militant national Grand Lodge, and asked his readers to start a

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<sup>45</sup> "Letter: General Grand Lodge Issue," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 15 1922.

<sup>46</sup> "Letter: Favors a General Grand Lodge," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 22 1922; "Letter: Militant Masonry Wants Grand Lodge of United States," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 22 1922.

<sup>47</sup> "Letter: Militant Masonry Wants Grand Lodge of United States," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 22 1922

campaign among their own brethren to implement this measure. He repeatedly made calls for more united efforts on behalf of the many Grand Lodges to stand together in matters of national interest such as education or immigration. For instance, in a February 1923 article entitled "What can 49 Jurisdictions Do?" Moore asked his readers how it was possible that the Towner-Stirling education bill had not yet passed when Freemasons everywhere supported the measure. Moore asked his brethren:

Can 2,700,000 Masons do anything to break the [Catholic] hierarchy's hold on political affairs at the Nation's Capital? The solid front of the 49 Masonic jurisdictions of the country, working together as one united body, would, we believe, make every Masonic member in Congress sit up and take notice. Such a unification would even put fear into the hearts of papal members and their sympathizers, now so brazenly and successfully doing the [bidding] of Rome to the detriment of the Towner-Stirling bill and the country.<sup>48</sup>

To further this goal, Moore hoped Freemasons at the lodge level would start a grass-roots campaign to create such a supra-organization. In one editorial Moore wrote "The fraternity is a democracy, and it is for the rank and file of the craft to express their wishes for a grand lodge of the United States."<sup>49</sup> The following week Moore reiterated his plea for a referendum on the matter, and mentioned that another Masonic newspaper, *The National Observer*, had said "a supreme lodge will probably be worked out, although the final steps may not be taken for some sometime to come."<sup>50</sup> Although the subject continued to be discussed in the paper, no such referendum ever came. In 1925 Moore wrote another editorial on the issue, this one being rather more urgent. Moore wrote that "In our own country a struggle is going on... in which Romanism stands to defeat Masonry and to control the affairs of the United States just because it has a solid organization and Masonry has not." He pleaded to his readers:

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<sup>48</sup> "Editorial: What Can 49 Jurisdictions Do?," *The Fellowship Forum*, February 17 1923.

<sup>49</sup> "Editorial: Rank and File for a Grand Lodge," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 10 1923.

<sup>50</sup> "Editorial: Referendum Vote on Grand Lodge of U.S.," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 17 1923

There are a thousand reasons why a General Grand Lodge...ought to be established. Masonic ritualists and doctrinaires may argue for the esoteric advantages to be gained... But the fraternity has a duty far beyond that –the duty to country, to civilization, to the human race.<sup>51</sup>

Moore and his followers were seemingly desperate to found a movement to represent their interests as Freemasons. Their ambitions were so compelling that some advocated looking beyond their own fraternity and seeking a union of all willing Protestant fraternities that could be marshalled to defend Protestant Americanism. "It is time for militant Masons to become more militant" argued Moore in one editorial, "It is not only timely, but imperative that these Masons get together with the determination to stand firmly for the cause of Americanism."<sup>52</sup> Militant Freemasons called on all aggressively Protestant fraternalists to stand alongside them in defence of the nation and its values.

Similar to the matter of the national Grand Lodge, the issue of a union of militant Protestant fraternities was repeatedly present in the pages of the *Forum* and in the letters it received. Writing to Moore in 1923, R.L. Berkebile, a Freemason of Somerset, Pennsylvania, echoed the appeals made by several others to form a "grand council" of Protestant fraternities and organizations. Berkebile added that "Bringing together the millions of men and women, millions of wealth and influence, operating under one grand council, would result in a short time in free press, free speech, separation of church and state.... and so forth." Berkebile believed this union was necessary because

It makes me too sick to know that Protestant Americans are threatened by every conceivable means in private and public life, kicked out of positions here and there, intimidated, cowed and brought by this un-American foreign potentate who seeks to rule America and American institutions.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "Editorial A Necessity - A General Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons," *The Fellowship Forum*, April 4 1925.

<sup>52</sup> "Militant Masonry and the November Election," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1922.

<sup>53</sup> "Letter: Urges Big Union of Protestants," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 17 1923.

A number of other pieces of correspondence backing this idea were printed in the following weeks. One letter declared "It is about time that 100 percent Masons and 100 percent Protestants get together," while another advised that "in union there is strength."<sup>54</sup> Such conversations appeared sporadically in the correspondence section of the *Forum* and demonstrate a sincere backing for the formation of a union of Protestant fraternities among militant Freemasons.

Responding to this widespread sentiment among their readers, George Fleming Moore, James Vance and others promoted and set up numerous organizations that invited Protestant fraternities and patriotic societies to join and act decisively on matters such as the Towner-Stirling bill or immigration reform. Regarding the many calls for the formation of such a union, Moore wrote that "Every communication breathes the same thought of a 'getting together' spirit. With this unanimity of opinion it would seem that an organization for the purpose of co-operation... is not only desirable, but is of vital importance..." He concluded, observing that "United action is the word... 'Let us get together.'"<sup>55</sup>

A meeting of fraternal leaders and the heads of various patriotic societies was organized for July 15 1922 in the offices of the *Forum* in Washington D.C. by Moore for the purpose of forming such an organization. This body, it was announced, would enable various associations to work together in favour of common goals such as "education... Americanization... better patriotism"<sup>56</sup> *The Fellowship Forum* termed the formation of the so-called National Patriotic Council (NPC) a "huge success" and reported that the group would serve to stress "the importance of defending the Constitution of the United States... and the rights and liberties and free institutions secured"; to urge "by all lawful means the appropriation of public funds to sectarian or denominational institutions to be utterly abolished" and to "arouse the attention of the public to the necessity of individual and combined action in defence of our American institutions and to offset the insidious propaganda now being put forth by the

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<sup>54</sup> "Letter: Urges One Union of Protestants," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 24 1923; "Letter: Urges League of Protestants," *The Fellowship Forum*, April 7 1923.

<sup>55</sup> "Editorial: Let us Get Together," *The Fellowship Forum*, June 9 1922.

<sup>56</sup> "Editorial: Object of Proposed Meeting," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 7 1922.

hierarchy." The NPC was a blatantly anti-Catholic order and openly announced that they would "oppose...the assumption by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, or its agents, of governmental powers over this country," while also eagerly printing the "great storm of protest" that their formation had caused among the Knights of Columbus and Catholic individuals.<sup>57</sup> Appointed as officers of the NPC were George Fleming Moore and James S. Vance, as well as other leading lights of the burgeoning anti-Catholic movement. William J. Mahoney, the Klan's head speaker, or Imperial Klokard, became the first vice-president, while William Parker, the editor of the rabidly anti-Catholic newspaper *The Menace*, was picked as the second vice-president.<sup>58</sup> The *Baltimore Sun* reported that among the orders that took part in the formation of the NPC were the "Order of Truemen [an anti-Catholic order], numerous branches of the Masonic Order, the loyal Orange Institute..., Knights of Malta, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics and Sons and Daughters of Liberty."<sup>59</sup> The *Forum* alleged that the Council had been organized by men representing 10,000,000 members of various fraternal orders and patriotic societies. This assertion is most certainly a wild exaggeration, as they unjustly claimed to truly represent the interests of unaware members.<sup>60</sup>

Joining the National Patriotic Council cost \$3 for basic membership, and was advertised as "a powerful organization at the Nation's Capital to supply members of 100 per cent American Societies and Fraternities with facts and information." It functioned as both a lobbying group and as a "clearing-house" of information relating to politicians and legislation at Washington D.C.<sup>61</sup> The organization seems to have followed the path of preceding ventures of the militant Masonic movement and failed to find active support. The NPC continued to be advertised throughout the rest of the year, and it was still suggested as an effective counter-measure to the growing power of the Catholic lobby in 1923 in Klan newspapers like *The Dawn*, but seems to have quickly

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<sup>57</sup>"Get-Together Meeting Proves Huge Success," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922; "Editorial: Will Get Together," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922; The news was also reported in *The Searchlight* and in *The Protestant*, an anti-Catholic newspaper that was friendly to the *Forum*, see "Patriotic Conference June 24," *The Protestant*, June 1922; "Editorial: Will Get Together," *The Searchlight*, July 29 1922.

<sup>58</sup>"Patriotic Council To Begin Service," *Evening Star*, July 16 1922.

<sup>59</sup>"Catholics Score Patriotic Council," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 19 1922.

<sup>60</sup>"Get-Together Meeting Proves Huge Success," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922

<sup>61</sup>"Advertisement: The National Council of Patriotic and Fraternal Societies Has a Great Service for You," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 3 1922

lost steam. In fact, less than a year after the formation of the National Patriotic Council, a seemingly identical body known as the National Council of Patriotic Americans was being advertised and headed by Imperial Klokard William J. Mahoney.<sup>62</sup> This rapid substitution and the complete failure of both ventures would indicate an intense lack of faith in the National Patriotic Council and the National Council of Patriotic Americans as intra-organizational Protestant bodies.

Perhaps the most interesting of these intra-fraternal Protestant groups is the Great American Fraternity (GAF). The organization was formed in 1922 in Atlanta, Georgia, by law partners and militant fraternalists Carl F. Hutcheson and J.O. Wood. Hutcheson, a long-term Atlanta resident, was a lawyer and a former school commissioner who once wrote to the *Atlanta Constitution* because they had understated his virulent determination to keep the schools segregated in his city. He wrote that he was “right in the midst of a fight at present in this ‘nigger’ business” and would rather “it cost the city \$100,000 rather than allow negroes to attend a local school.”<sup>63</sup> His personal views regarding Catholicism also spilled over into his career as school commissioner, and in 1921 there was outcry as one of his motions managed to get a local Catholic teacher fired without an explanation or trial.<sup>64</sup> Hutcheson was also a well-known and active local fraternalist, having founded around eight secret orders, which were described as “open only to persons espousing the ‘100 per cent American’ principles of the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>65</sup> His law partner, J.O. Wood, was best known for editing *The Searchlight*, an anti-Catholic newspaper that catered to the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, and which would eventually become the first official paper of the Ku Klux Klan. Wood himself

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<sup>62</sup> "Why the National Council of Patriotic Americans?," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 14 1923.

<sup>63</sup> "Hutcheson Explains Position on Negro," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 23 1921.

<sup>64</sup> "Atlanta Public School Teacher Fired Because She is Catholic," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, July 9 1921; "Teacher Arraignes Atlanta Educators," *Augusta Chronicle*, July 11 1921; "Fight in School Will Be Probed," *Macon Daily Telegraph*, May 28 1922.

<sup>65</sup> "Orangemen Burst Bubble of Ku Klux 'Bigot Fraternity'," *New York World*, June 20 1922; See also "History of Mercer's Law Class of 1904," *Macon Daily Telegraph*, May 15 1904, "Kappa Alphas To Meet Today," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 29 1907 "Local Juniors Give Bible and Flag to School," *Cobb County Times*, April 27 1920 for more details of his background in fraternities.

would go on to become an active member of the Invisible Empire's base in Atlanta during the rule of Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons.<sup>66</sup>

The GAF was granted a charter in Georgia in April 1922, with provisions that enabled the order to offer insurance benefits to members.<sup>67</sup> The order was designed to bring together members from 13 different Protestant orders, which included the Freemasons, the KKK, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, the Odd Fellows, the Guardians of Liberty, Sons and Daughters of Washington, the Order of the Eastern Star, Daughters of America, the Rebekkahs, the Orangemen, the Knights of Luther, National Legion of Pathfinders and the Order of De Molay. The order first advertised in the *Searchlight* on June 10 1922, following the Klan's victory in the primary elections in Oregon. The article declared:

The enemies of American institutions, boasting of unification and commanded by a potentate situated in a foreign land, have been overthrown... What will the hostile hosts think when they find themselves opposed by the Great American Fraternity throughout the land?...Americans, get to your lodges regularly now if you never did before, and keep in touch with what is going on! The crisis has arrived. We must win and save our land from the blight that threatens it. We will win!

The order also described itself as "INTENSELY 100 per cent American" and seems to have espoused a plan of action that would have interested those Freemasons unsatisfied with the political neutrality of the Craft.<sup>68</sup>

We should not ignore the significance of the fraternities and organizations that were included as eligible for membership in the Great American Fraternity. Nor should we trivialize the significance of the fact that the

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<sup>66</sup> J.O. Wood even wrote a pamphlet for the Klan, see J.O. Wood, "Are You a Citizen? The Klansman's Guide," ed. William Joseph Simmons (Atlanta: Searchlight Publishing Co., 1923).

<sup>67</sup> "Great American Fraternity Asks Georgia Chapter," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 23 1922; "Great American Fraternity Given Georgia Charter," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 7 1922; "Gigantic Union Between Certain Fraternal Orders," *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, March 21 1922; "Fraternal Order Combine in Georgia Planned by Hutcheson," *Macon Daily Telegraph* 1922.

<sup>68</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Fight Center in Texas Primary," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 16 1922; "Masons War on Ku Klux", *Kansas City Star*, July 2 1922.

GAF was composed of 13 organizations, which was most likely an attempt to associate with the 13 colonies of the Revolutionary War. Included among these organizations were some of America's most prominent fraternities, such as the Freemasons and the Odd Fellows, as well as the respective auxiliaries of these orders: the Masonic Order of the Eastern Star and the Order of De Molay, and the Odd Fellow's Rebbekahs. The GAF also permitted members of America's popular patriotic societies to join, such as the Ku Klux Klan, the JOUAM, and the Daughters of America, the JOUAM's female auxiliary. Included there as well were several very similar anti-Catholic and nationalist orders such as the Knights of Luther or the Sons and Daughters of Washington.<sup>69</sup> The GAF, in essence, compromised a formal union of members from various established fraternities to act in defence of the nation from the Catholic hierarchy and various associated foreign groups. One journalist described the Hutcheson and Wood's enterprise saying "They are out to unite in a single group of haters all haters in the country..."<sup>70</sup> This intra-fraternal body closely resembles the proposals described by George Fleming Moore and various Freemasons within the pages of the *Forum*, and probably would have been quite successful had it not been attacked by various fraternal leaders.

The GAF claimed to have enrolled 800 members by June 1922, and they announced that soon "the order will branch out and attempt organization work in every state." George Washington House No. 1, the first local lodge of the GAF, was set up in Atlanta in September 1922.<sup>71</sup> Very little additional information has survived regarding the GAF, so we can surmise the order died out quite quickly. This was probably due to the declarations against them from several fraternal leaders. George Weir, head of the Orangemen in New York, published a statement in the *New York World* that said "The Loyal Orange Institution has no sympathy whatever with the Ku Klux Klan... The assumption of right to include the Orange Institution in the list of orders whose members shall be eligible into

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<sup>69</sup> There is little information available about these other minor patriotic societies, but they all seem to follow the standard approach of the JOAUM or the KKK. For more information on the activities of the Sons and Daughters of Washington see "Fights in Secret to Keep Catholics Out of Any Office," *New York World*, April 18 1920; "Anti-Papists Want Masonic President," *New York World*, July 21 1920; "Religious Issues Raised in Effort to Beat Gov. Smith," *New York World*, October 8 1920; "The Sons and Daughters of Washington," *American Standard*, February 23 1924.

<sup>70</sup> Charles P. Sweeney, "The Great Bigotry Merger," *The Nation*, July 5 1922.

<sup>71</sup> "Great American Fraternity House Opens in Atlanta," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 26 1922.

this 'Great American Fraternity' is audacious and wholly unwarranted."<sup>72</sup> Lottie A. McClure, State Secretary of the Sons and Daughters of Washington, declared "I have not heard of the Great American Fraternity" while Franklin S. Ferry, Secretary of the New York JOUAM, made similar comments.<sup>73</sup> Masonic leaders were also quite displeased with having the name of their institution associated with the GAF and publicly indicted the order. Joe P. Bowdoin, Grand Master of Georgia, protested loudly and sought legal advice concerning the matter of the GAF. He declared before his Grand Lodge that "Masonry has nothing to do with any other clan, any society, any organization, denomination or what not. Masonry stands alone, fearless and unafraid, not courting any affiliation and denouncing no other organization."<sup>74</sup> The uproar caused by the GAF controversy even forced Edward Young Clarke, temporarily Imperial Wizard at the time, to explain that the Klan was in no way connected to the order.<sup>75</sup>

Many of these fraternal leaders objected to the GAF because, regardless of what Imperial Wizard Clarke decried, the organization was quite transparently a Klan venture. A few days following this very public outcry, the *New York World* reports of a conference between Klan and GAF leaders, wherein J.O. Wood complained of Carl Hutcheson's aggressive promotion that had caused public outcry. Wood reportedly said "You are carrying this thing too far and making an ass of yourself." A scuffle ensued, and Wood punched Hutcheson. Wood later declared to the *World* "Hutcheson is too much of a fanatic for me to deal with."<sup>76</sup> Suffice to say that this rift that formed in the GAF over their aggressive and upsetting marketing was most probably what doomed the organization. Although the GAF was ultimately unsuccessful at uniting America's Protestant fraternities and patriotic societies, the creation of such an order points to the lack of satisfaction with the current state of affairs.

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<sup>72</sup> "Orangemen Burst Bubble of Ku Klux 'Bigot Fraternity'," *New York World*, June 20 1922

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Grand Lodge of Oregon, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (N/A: N/A, 1923), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp.15-17. There were additional denunciations by Grand Masters printed in newspapers, see "No Ties Between Klan and Masonry," *Dallas Morning News*, October 16 1921; "Masons War on Ku Klux ", *Kansas City Star*, July 2 1922

<sup>75</sup> "Connection With New Fraternity Is Denied by Official of Klan," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 20 1922.

<sup>76</sup> "Klan's Hate Corps Disrupted by Fist Fight Over Policy," *New York World*, June 23 1922.

The *Forum* carried out a poll during the autumn of 1923 to gauge the sentiment of various Protestant fraternities concerning the public school question, immigration laws, and other matters considered of national importance.<sup>77</sup> Questionnaires were sent to representatives of fraternities such as the Freemasons, the Knights of Pythias, the Odd Fellows, the Woodmen of the World, the JOUAM, the Knights of Malta and other Protestant brotherhoods. The questionnaire included such loaded questions such as “Does your organization prefer the public schools of this country or the parochial schools fostered by the priesthood?” or “Have you any suggestions to make regarding the cooperation of fraternal, patriotic and Protestant bodies which have the same end in view?” The questionnaire was entirely anonymous, but the *Forum* reported that leading fraternalists had been among those polled. This included a Masonic Grand Master who had replied “We are hostile to the political ambitions of the hierarchy and are growing more so as our members learn of the Romanist campaign for political supremacy.” The *Forum’s* editorial staff concluded from one poll that their respondents believed “that the situation demands something more than mere talk of speculation” and that the “answers received indicate there is a decidedly growing tendency on the part of all fraternities to arrive at some common understanding in all matters concerning state affairs.”

We should be sceptic of the validity of this poll in terms of judging the attitude of the fraternities they belonged to as a whole. However, the questionnaire showed that a desire for a more decisive and politically active brand of fraternalism did exist among a portion of the membership of America’s most popular Protestant fraternities. The failure of the formation of a politically-decisive national Masonic Grand Lodge or an intra-fraternal organization like the NPC or the GAF merely reflects the relatively weak position of the overtly militant fraternal fringe and their discontent with existing Masonic structures. In an organization of around 3 million members, those Freemasons who sought a more aggressive stance from their brotherhood on social and political issues did constitute a minority, and one that could not hope to overcome the opposition of the traditionalists and those who were simply apathetic to their cause. But this

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<sup>77</sup> "Protestant Spirit Unites Fraternalists," *The Fellowship Forum*, December 22 1923.

does not mean that they were not a quantifiably numerous group, if we are to believe the *Forum's* circulation figures and the reports of Masonic membership in patriotic societies. Organizations outside of the Craft - among them the Ku Klux Klan - certainly did not consider this discontent insignificant and actively targeted Freemasons on these very grounds. Many of these militant Freemasons were quite susceptible to joining the Klan because of their inability to affect change within the rigid structure of their own brotherhood and the perceived freedom to do so within the explicitly Protestant and nationalist Invisible Empire.

#### 4) **'Whoring after the false gods' of Ku Kluxism**

Speaking before the Grand Lodge of New York in 1924, Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins was trying to gather support for Masonic education and the new Bureau of Social and Educational Service, that would provide "instruction and entertainment" for members. The Bureau resembled the Masonic Service Association in its desire to educate Freemasons through lectures and films, but Tompkins' subsequent remarks are truly of interest. He emphasised the importance of Masonic education, saying it was:

essential if we are to indoctrinate the vast throng of initiates we have taken into our lodges during and since the World War and bring them.... from 'whoring after the false gods' of Ku Kluxism and like, to say nothing of excessive feasting, self-indulgence and self-gratulation.

Leaving aside his anxieties of gluttony and revelry among new members, Tompkins expressed unease at the apparent popularity of the Ku Klux Klan among Freemasons in the early 1920s. Members who were dissatisfied with the rigid structures of the Craft and their inability to express and act politically sought to fulfil these ambitions elsewhere. The failure of the many aforementioned militant Masonic ventures or the attempts to reform the Craft itself makes the frustration of these discontented Freemasons quite palpable. C.M. Wood, a Shriner and Knights Templar expressed this frustration at the absence of a national grand lodge in 1922, saying:

With such an organization [a national grand lodge] we would not need such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan to fight for the things we hold most sacred, but until we as Masons can bring our organization to a concrete unit, we may expect our more aggressive brother to take up the fight in another body.<sup>78</sup>

There was a sense among many militant Freemasons that there was simply no hope to transform their own fraternity. The Craft's political neutrality, as well as some of their attempts to interact with non-Protestant fraternities, were viewed as aberrations by some members. Some Freemasons even believed that their own leadership had been infiltrated by Catholic sympathizers and other un-American elements.<sup>79</sup> They pointed to the friendliness of some Masonic leaders to the Knights of Columbus and the public opposition to the Klan from some Grand Lodges, as evidence of this trickery. *The Fellowship Forum* made frequent condemnations of any attempts to host friendly meetings between the usually antagonistic Freemasons and Knights of Columbus.<sup>80</sup> One poignant example is a report of a joint session of the two orders in Syracuse, New York, which was denounced and which said:

Masons of this city need not look far for the Jesuit 'nigger in the woodpile,' which was the occasion for the recent joint meeting of Masons and Knights of Columbus held here. Aside from the little band of soft-shelled, weak-kneed, office-seeking, buttonhole Masons, who, with the assistance of the Irish Catholic politicians, engineered the session, there is utmost indignation within the ranks of Syracuse Masonry over the

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<sup>78</sup> "Letter: A National Grand Lodge," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 6 1922.

<sup>79</sup> One good example is Grand Master Samuel Burke of California, who was repeatedly accused of being influenced by Catholics for being too friendly with them, see "Grand Master Burke Charged With Taking 'Throne of Authority'," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922; Adam G. Kendall, "Freemasonry and the Second Ku Klux Klan in California, 1921-1925," *Journal of Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism* 2, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>80</sup> Such articles abounded in the pages of the *Forum*, for a few examples see "Masons and Knights of Columbus Form Political Association," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 18 1924; "Masonic-Casey Love Feasting Reaps Harvest," *The Fellowship Forum*, February 23 1924; "Among Ourselves: Fifty-Fifty Masons," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 29 1924; "Masons Slight Klan, But Bow to Catholics," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 1 1924; "Romanists Get Upper Hand in 50-50 Society", *The Fellowship Forum*, January 3 1925.

manner in which the fraternity has been made the cat's-paw to further political Masons and Caseys [a nickname for the Knights of Columbus].<sup>81</sup>

Catholic infiltration was a genuine fear, and there were certain Freemasons who believed that the failure of the militant Masonic movement was due in part to their activities. One lodge in Cushing, Oklahoma, even set up a questionnaire for admission to the fraternity "with the object of protecting Masonry from the 'boring-in' methods of its enemies." Questions in the test included "What religious belief did your father and mother adhere to, Protestant or Catholic? Of what faith is your wife? Are you educating your children in the free public schools."<sup>82</sup> Such open anti-Catholicism was rare, though not unheard of among America's Freemasons.

The suspicions of secret Catholic allegiances were also directed towards Masons who were public officials. Henry Justin Allen, the vociferously anti-Klan Governor of Kansas, received several letters questioning his credentials as an honest Protestant and Mason because of his attitude against the Invisible Empire. One B.J. Haak, from neighbouring Independence, Missouri, wrote to Allen in 1922 saying "After reading several of your speeches published in the *Kansas City Star*, it appears to me if you are the Masons you claim to be you must be misinformed as to the attitude and intent of our Catholic friends, also the tenets and principles of the Klan." Haak also described how several other Freemasons in Kansas City had similarly allowed themselves to be manipulated by the Catholic Church and decried that:

Kansas City's experience politically for the past few years demands drastic remedies, some Masons being so weak as to allow themselves to be used as shields for the Catholics and others so bound by political

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<sup>81</sup> "Masons of U.S. Indignant Over Casey Meeting", *The Fellowship Forum*, January 12 1924. Another very similar session was reported and decried in *The American Standard*, a New York Klan paper in March. See "Knights of Columbus Guests of Masons," *American Standard*, March 1 1924.

<sup>82</sup> "Oklahoma Masonic Bodies Open Fight to Guard Order from Catholic Spies," *The Fellowship Forum*, April 5 1924.

entanglements as to be worthless protectors of American principals, dear to the hearts of all true Masons.<sup>83</sup>

Another letter asked Allen “Are you a good Mason and do not know what [the] Papacy stands for, not as a religion, but as a system? If we defend ourselves against that system are we to be blamed?”<sup>84</sup> Guy A. Johnson, a Freemason of Dunlap, Tennessee, wrote Governor Allen a particularly threatening letter that read:

I notice in print where you claim to be a Methodist and a 32 degree Mason [and] a Knights Templar.

If you would drop these [and] join the Catholics [and] Knights of Columbus I feel that you would feel more at home.

Your little speech will only help to strengthen the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK is here to stay.<sup>85</sup>

Some Freemasons felt little confidence in their own fraternity because of these Catholic influences and intrusions, and found little hope in Masonic ventures like the National Grand Lodge or the Great American Fraternity to address their concerns for the nation and its wellbeing. M.J. Beck, a Freemason from Asheville, North Carolina, even believed that none of the fraternities he belonged to could stand up the challenges of the day. He wrote to the *Forum* to say:

I am a Mason, a [Knight of Pythias], [I] also belong to the [Junior Order of United American Mechanics] and several other fraternal orders, but must say I think more of the Klan than [of] any of them. The Freemasons and Juniors, in fact many of the fraternal orders stand for the right, but

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<sup>83</sup> "Letter from B.J. Haak to Henry Justin Allen", October 31 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 48 Folder 2, Library of Congress.

<sup>84</sup> "Letter from Alice Butte to Henry Justin Allen", November 2 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 48 Folder 8; For similar letters questioning Governor Allen's credentials, see "Letter from N.L. Broughton to Henry Justin Allen", October 31 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 48 Folder 1; "Letter from Mrs. John Tracy to Henry Justin Allen", October 31 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 48 Folder 2; "Letter from John Castillo Jr. to Henry Justin Allen", October 31 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 48 Folder 7; "Letter from J.M. Axley to Henry Justin Allen", November 23 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 48 Folder 9.

<sup>85</sup> "Letter from Guy A. Johnson to Henry Justin Allen", November 11 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 49 Folder 1.

the Ku Klux Klan are doing more for the good of our people than all the other orders."<sup>86</sup>

Speaking more forcefully, A.J. Ramsey, a Louisiana Freemason remarked in his letter to the *Forum* that:

The spineless attitude of the Masonic order on the supreme menace of Catholicism in this good old U.S.A. is the sole reason for the existence of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan seems to be free from the control of this treacherous bunch so far but it will have to fight to guard its portals every day of its existence or the enemy will be on the job directing the affairs of the Klan.<sup>87</sup>

Klansmen were acutely aware of the deficiencies of the Craft, and actively marketed their own fraternity as a militant and unrestricted alternative to Freemasonry. One Klan writer, W.C. Wright argued that:

the Protestant element in Masonry, Odd Fellowship, Pythianism, Woodcraft, etc., find common interest in Klan" but explained that "none of these orders actually exclude Catholics, Jews or foreigners; but the Protestant, Christian, native-born element in each, finds in the Klan a real Clearing House for the exchange and promotion of common thoughts.

Wright claimed that the Klan could be considered the superior fraternity because of this and "there is a closer feeling of brotherhood and kinship in the Klan than is found in organizations composed of different races and conflicting religions."<sup>88</sup> Additionally, Elmer E. Rogers, a journalist for the Chicago Klan newspaper *Dawn* had very harsh words for the other Protestant fraternities of the day and claimed that the growth of the Klan was stimulating militancy in them. He wrote:

The Free Masons, the Odd Fellows, etc. are scarcely constructive. Too many Roman Catholics are members, and as with Protestantism, these

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<sup>86</sup> "Letter: Kind Word from Tar Heel Reader," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 29 1924.

<sup>87</sup> "Letter: Warns Masons to Unite Force," *The Fellowship Forum*, June 30 1923.

<sup>88</sup> W.C. Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan* (Waco, Tx.: unknown, 1926)p.17.

with their 'propaganda,' mostly indirectly, cause discord in these orders, preventing effort in constructive work for world betterment. The constructive work of the Ku Klux Klan is arousing the Masons, Odd Fellows, etc... out of their Pickwickian sleep to their peril; will purge them of the evil, and start them on constructive work. (More than a million Masons and Odd Fellows already are members of the Ku Klux, which has as many as both.)<sup>89</sup>

The Klan was being sold to disgruntled Freemasons as the organization they had dreamed of, as Freemasonry's "fighting brother." The Invisible Empire was a decisive fraternity that did not bite its tongue or hold back its members. The Klan's explicit stance in favour of pet projects of the militant Masonic movement, such as the Towner-Stirling bill or the Johnson Immigration Act, would have been enough to encourage many to join. As part of the Ku Klux Klan, these Freemasons finally found a militant and national organization through which to enact the changes they sought in America.

W.D. Rodgers, a Freemason of Oklahoma City, certainly seemed to feel this way. Writing to the editor of the Texas Klan's newspaper, the *Texas 100% American*, he explained that Freemasonry had done "so much to promote the growth and development of human progress and education" but that they could not "secure and perpetuate the great cardinal principals of truth and justice." Rodgers blamed this on the fact that the Craft had "too many Catholic Masons", men whom he declared were "unworthy of appreciating and understanding the sublime and ineffable truths and purposes" of their great order. His solution was radical. He proposed that:

It is, therefore, necessary that Masonry join hands with any and all fraternities and organizations which are at one with it in defending and championing religious and political freedom... The Klan is certainly one of these. It is, in my humble opinion, THE organization which will ultimately deal the death blow to Catholic superstition and usurpation.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Elmer E. Rogers, "Awakening Protestants," *Dawn*, November 10 1923.

<sup>90</sup> "Masons Should Join Hands with Klan Says Oklahoman," *Texas 100% American*, September 1 1922.

Rodgers, like many others, had become frustrated with his own fraternity and began to search for alternative organizations that would support his dream of eradicating the dangerous influence of the Catholic Church.

The ambition of militant Freemasons like Rodgers, that their fraternity “join hands” with other patriotic and nativist orders like the Klan, was partially achieved in Oregon. In this state, both fraternities campaigned relentlessly for the passage of a compulsory public school education bill in Oregon.<sup>91</sup> The measure would have outlawed private and parochial schools, and was especially popular amongst Scottish Rite Masons in this state. P.S. Malcolm, head of Oregon’s Scottish Rite Masons called the legislation “a measure for the promotion for Americanism.” Malcolm also justified their support for the bill saying:

The issue presented is not an issue of religious reed or factionalism or intolerance. It is an issue of true American progress.

The Scottish Rite Masonic bodies are promoting this measure because their members believe that the hope of America is in its public schools; that if American institutions are to endure, American children of grammar school age must be taught common ideals – AMERICAN; that they must be taught in a common language – ENGLISH; that they must be taught to uphold and foster one set of principles – those of our American forefathers. They believe that the future of our race, our nation and our institutions will be perpetuated if all our children of grammar school are so taught and not otherwise.<sup>92</sup>

The measure had distinctly nativist and anti-Catholic overtones, and gained widespread support in the state. The bill was passed by Oregon’s legislators in 1922, but was eventually overturned as unconstitutional.

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<sup>91</sup> Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Race, Radicalism, Religion, and Restriction : Immigration in the Pacific Northwest, 1890-1924* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), pp.61-69. See Lawrence J. Saalfeld, *Forces of Prejudice in Oregon 1920-1925* (Portland: University of Portland Press, 1984) pp.66-75. For a detailed analysis of the Second Klan’s attitude towards education, with particular references to the Oregon case, see Adam Laats, “Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Educational Reform,” *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no.3 (August 2012).

<sup>92</sup> “Oregon Masons for Americanism,” *The Fellowship Forum*, September 29 1922

Historians still debate the extent of cooperation between the Invisible Empire and the Craft during the Oregon campaign, but it was widely perceived at the time that they were in fact working together.<sup>93</sup> James A. Flaherty, head of the Knights of Columbus, categorized the “Oregon calamity” as a “national attack” and outlined how he believed it was part of a “bitter campaign” on behalf of the Klan and Freemasonry. Archbishop of Baltimore Michael J. Curley agreed and, referring to the Oregon public school bill, added that:

America, I think, has one of the most stupid populations in this world because it allows such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan to exist. The Masonic body is directly opposed to Catholicity and has at last thrown off its mask.<sup>94</sup>

In Oregon, militant Freemasons found an ally in the Invisible Empire that would help them defend America. The Ku Klux Klan’s flexible programme of patriotic nativism and aggressive Protestantism was proving to be quite attractive for many disenchanted Oregonians.

Marshall H. Van Fleet, Grand Master of Colorado in 1922 emphasized that Masonry was indeed a patriotic fraternity and therefore “we have no need of Ku Klux Klan or any such organizations...”<sup>95</sup> Evidence seems to suggest that this was not the case, and that a substantial minority of Freemasons were joining the Invisible Empire. It is as puzzling for historians now as it was for Freemasons during the 1920s to understand why some of these men joined the KKK. Why would they forego the power and influence of the Craft in favour of a new and controversial organization like the Klan? This chapter has shown that they indeed attempted to transform their own brotherhood first, but that these militant Freemasons constituted only a relatively small proportion of the overall fraternity, and therefore could not force such radical changes. The Klan became an unusual refuge for these Freemasons. As Klan speaker W.C. Wright explained, their organization’s “supreme desire is to defend and uphold the

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<sup>93</sup> Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture*, p.144.

<sup>94</sup> “Tells K. of C. to Defend Catholic Schools,” *New York Times*, January 2 1923; “Archbishop Attacks Oregon’s School Bill,” *Washington Post*, November 13 1922.

<sup>95</sup> Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1923), Report on Foreign Correspondence, pp.10-11.

right, and to oppose and suppress the wrong by all honorable means and methods. It is a strictly militant order, which makes it unique in the fraternal world.”<sup>96</sup> Although other orders like the Klan existed at the time – the JOUAM or the Sons and Daughters of Washington – none had the legacy and media attention that the Invisible Empire had. It was truly “unique in the fraternal world.”

*Life* magazine offered its readers a hefty prize of \$50 to answer a rather difficult question: “Why is the Ku Klux Klan?” The winning entry, from an R.S. Kellogg, of Yonkers, N.Y., related a simplistic and psychoanalytical answer that would have been all the rage during the 1920s and said “it furnishes an apparently safe opportunity for the manifestation of an inferiority complex in an attempt to regulate the other fellow’s conduct.” However, the range of answers submitted to this competition is a firm testament to the complexity of the attraction and success of the Ku Klux Klan. Respondents found different reasons for the popularity of the Klan because people joined for different reasons. Some Freemasons, as this chapter has shown, felt genuinely unsatisfied with the limitations of the Craft and saw in the Klan an opportunity to remedy this situation. Leon Fram, of Chicago, Illinois, also answered *Life* magazine’s competition. His answer is comical but is still perhaps more enlightening for understanding why fraternalists in particular joined the Klan. He wrote:

Why is the Ku Klux Klan? Because all other fraternal organizations in this land are by comparison tame and sissified. All this talk you hear in the old lodges about *harmony* and *love* – that stuff is not for a he-man. Sheets, masks, raids in the night, tar-and-feather parties, kidnappings, whippings, shooting – here are the things to stir a red-blooded man. The Klan is here because it is an organization *with kick in it*.<sup>97</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan offered a sense of excitement that fraternities like the Odd Fellows or the Concatenated Order of Hoo Hoo simply could not. Other

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<sup>96</sup> Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals*, p.12

<sup>97</sup> “Announcing the Winning Answer to Question Number Two: “Why is the Ku Klux Klan?,” *Life*, March 5 1925.

fraternities only allowed members the opportunity to pretend to be heroes; the Invisible Empire allowed recruits to be real knights. Klansmen stood as defenders of the nation's Protestant heritage. Members were part of a fraternity that guarded America's future and protected its people from the enemies that planned to undermine the country. This sense of excitement, of real tangible action, is what set the Ku Klux Klan apart from other fraternal orders.

Of course, we should not set too much store in the allegiance of these Klansmen to the cause of Americanism. Despite their repeated claims of "unwavering loyalty" to the cause, most members did not dedicate the time nor the effort to carry out their vision of the new America. The intermittent commitment of their membership, as well as the forced and delicate nature of the artificial bonds between Klansmen, created an extremely fragile fraternity. Anti-Klan speaker Aldrich Blake famously said "Reason cannot explain the Ku Klux Klan, there is no reason in it... The Ku Klux Klan is a craze – as much so as the one-piece bathing suit, Ma Jongg, and bobbed hair."<sup>98</sup> As the rest of this thesis will argue, the intermittent commitment of its membership would prove to be a major factor in the spectacular collapse of the Ku Klux Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan was not the only organization that preached a doctrine of vitriolic 100% Americanism, or that promised to uphold white supremacy and tackle the growing influence of the Catholic Church. In fact the Klan was just one of many. The Junior Order of United American Mechanics, an anti-Catholic and nativist fraternity, listed some of its aims as "to use such means, when able, as will prevent the present system of immigration of foreign paupers to our land" and "to oppose union of church and state, and the appropriating of monies for sectarian purposes."<sup>99</sup> The Sons and Daughters of Washington, a nativist fraternity, also espoused a doctrine that resembled the Klan's in several respects. One of their brochures demanded that "America's gate be closed against the inrush of foreigners – to the end that democracy may remain safe here..." and added "This is America, and if there be any in our midst who are not satisfied with our institutions – Then let them go back where they came

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<sup>98</sup> Aldrich Blake, *The Ku Klux Kraze* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1924)p.17.

<sup>99</sup> M.D. Lichliter, *History of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Comany, 1909), pp.47-48.

from. The quicker the better for all concerned.”<sup>100</sup> During the 1920s, Invisible Empire was just one of many organizations that was trying to address political and social concerns about alien powers and domestic stability. Yet, it was the Klan that became the foremost militant fraternity of its time. As chapter 3 and 4 will demonstrate, the Ku Klux Klan was able to establish its order as the most popular patriotic brotherhood by marketing and selling itself. The order’s capable salesmen fixed the organization’s pedigree in the minds of the American public through their on-going public relations campaign, and convinced the nation that they were the only organization capable of delivering on their promise. Their aggressive sales team also helped to push the boundaries of the Invisible Empire and establish their organization as one of the most defining of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>100</sup> "The Sons and Daughters of Washington," *American Standard*, February 23 1924.

## CHAPTER 3: KLUXING AMERICA: THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE MASONIC REPUTATION

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The Invisible Empire's extraordinary growth after 1921 was accompanied by a proliferation of media produced by Klansmen. As the movement established itself, its leaders and members created newspapers and gave speeches that conveyed how ordinary recruits and officers characterized their new fraternity. These speeches and newspapers also offer us the opportunity to grasp how the Ku Klux Klan hoped to present its own movement to the public. This presentation was crucial to the success of the fraternity. These media outlets allowed the Klan to defy their negative portrayal in hostile publications and to win the hearts of undecided Americans. Klan newspapers were filled with positive articles that reinforced the notion that this was a moral organization and an upright fraternity. Most issues carried several columns with lengthy defences of the movement and its ideals, or news of charitable donations and other good deeds carried out by local klaverns. They allowed the Invisible Empire to market their order to the masses and to partially control how their organization was viewed by the public.

A letter from a New York Freemason known only as "W.F.C." published in 1924 by a pro-Klan newspaper offers a glimpse into the order's public relations strategy. This anonymous New Yorker claimed to be a member of the Mecca Jewish Shrine of the Shriners and the Manhattan Commandery of the Knights Templar. He had some very stern words for any Freemason who criticized the Ku Klux Klan, and wrote:

These mole-eyed, skunk-bellied, [reptilian]-headed, yellow-feathered buzzards who claim membership in the honoured fraternity and a few canine faced Grand Masters of the Pope, give me [aches] in the gluteus maximus, when one reads how they berate an organization and its pure American principles, of which they are so grossly ignorant.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Conglomeration of Race and Color," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 8 1924.

The author supported the Invisible Empire, and called any opponent of the order among the Craft a “yellow-blooded American.” This letter served to support part of the order’s elaborate public image. The Ku Klux Klan not only tried to show itself as an upstanding organization through its media, but also as one that was composed and backed by Freemasons. The Propagation Department and its officers hoped to use and even abuse the Craft’s reputation to defend their young fraternity and to advance their mission. “W.F.C.’s” message of support served to strengthen the impression of close ties between the two fraternities. This impression was vital for the success of the fledgling Invisible Empire.

Masonic historian Mark Tabbert argues that the Klan was “limited in its national political goals, because it lacked affluence and respectability. To acquire these qualities, Klansmen attempted to infiltrate Freemasonry.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Tabbert is right, but there is a much more complex story behind the Klan’s attempts to acquire Masonry’s respectability. This chapter will detail not only why the Klan felt it needed to appear Masonic, but also how it did so through a sustained media campaign. By tying together the members, the goals, and the enemies of the KKK and Freemasonry together, the Propagation Department hoped to blur the lines between these two fraternities, making them seem like natural allies. This chapter will begin by discussing how the public perception of secret societies had evolved throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and how Americans in the 1920s generally reacted to the Ku Klux Klan. It will then argue that in order to counter accusations of corruption and violence, this organization’s marketers represented their movement as an ordinary fraternity, and one that was supported by respectable institutions like the Craft. The illusion of Masonic approval was a cornerstone of their public relations campaign. The Invisible Empire presented a façade to the American public, one which hid their unappealing qualities and enhanced their positive features, and this marketing would prove to be vital to the movement’s growth.

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<sup>2</sup> Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building American Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), pp.171-173.

## 1) Opposition to the Ku Klux Klan and Secret Societies in America

The dominant theories of the 1920s Klan present the order not as an aberration, but as a popular social movement that rarely indulged in vigilantism and held conventional political views. Historian Shawn Lay even describes Klansmen saying “beneath the threatening white robes and hoods walked millions of otherwise respectable Americans, many of them earnestly striving to forge a better life for themselves and their families.”<sup>3</sup> Although this characterization is by no means inaccurate, it does not truly reflect how many Americans viewed the Invisible Empire. The Klan’s opponents felt very differently. Lay himself laments that his work and that of other historians “may fail to provide readers with a full appreciation of how inherently mean-spirited the Klan movement was and thus why it was so ardently opposed.”<sup>4</sup> The opposition to the Invisible Empire should not be ignored as this contentious fraternity grew in step with the demands and objections of the American people. The opposition to the Klan partially shaped what the Invisible Empire eventually became, and it affected how they interacted with organizations like the Freemasons.

Hundreds of communities across America felt the unsettling influence of the Klan creeping into their institutions, sowing discord and suspicion among neighbours. The masked parades, the alarming burning crosses, the inflammatory rhetoric, and the Klan’s nefarious presence all stimulated opposition against the organization. It is because of this that the order’s emergence and success in the 1920s, in the face of anti-Klan opposition and of strong competition from other fraternities and militant organizations, is in fact a surprising phenomenon. For the Klan to have emerged and succeeded in this competitive fraternal market, overcoming opposition from anti-Klan groups and outgrowing America’s most established orders, is truly astonishing. To appreciate this success, we have to first understand how the Klan countered this opposition and presented its movement to the public. It did so, in part, by masking itself as a fraternity and making itself appear connected to the Craft.

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<sup>3</sup> Shawn Lay, "Introduction: The Second Invisible Empire," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, ed. Shawn Lay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2004), p.12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xi.

Opposition to the Klan was as varied as its objectives and practices, and it is critical to grasp just what it was that America disapproved of about the Invisible Empire to comprehend how this organization adjusted to seem respectable. There were a number of Americans who challenged their aggressive ideology. Nonetheless, since white supremacy, Prohibition enforcement and anti-Catholicism were entirely mainstream ideas, this criticism was not particularly effective in stemming the expansion of the Invisible Empire. On the other hand, the Klan's customs and its methods did not meet with the approval of most Americans. Their strict secrecy, the masks, the vigilantism, and their tenacious hold on politics were seen as signs of the inherently undemocratic and sinister nature of the group. The Invisible Empire was an extremely media conscious organization that worried incessantly about its image and that tried to counter opposition at every turn. They often carried out smear campaigns against their most vocal critics, and stressed their contributions to charity and social stability. The heads of the order, especially the Propagation Department, realized that to sell their fraternity they needed to ensure that at least most white Protestant Americans approved of their organization. The Klan even changed certain aspects of its organization to conform to the expectations of the public.

There were several practices associated with the KKK – and with secret societies more generally – that were the real focus of attacks, namely the Klan's secrecy, its oath, its vigilantism, and most importantly its supposed political power. For instance, LeRoy Percy, former Senator for Mississippi, railed against the Klan's oath to secrecy, explaining how there was no crime that was committed by a Klansman and which was "revealed to a fellow Klansman, which he will not keep sacred, except rape and malicious murder. He pledges himself to be willing to be an accessory, before or after the fact, for every crime that can be committed by a Klansman..."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, former Klansmen Lem Dever wrote that:

No man can serve this spider web combination of self-seeking interest and the American people at the same time. The two don't mix; they are

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<sup>5</sup> LeRoy Percy, "The Modern Ku Klux Klan," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1922, p.4-5.

not co-related, nor in any sense identical. No man should be trusted with public office who subserviently seeks the favour of a secret organization.<sup>6</sup>

These and other similar denunciations depicted the Klan as a sinister and subversive power, which controlled both local and national politics through fear and political manipulation, where members hid each other's crimes from the authorities and obeyed their officials blindly. For many Americans, the Ku Klux Klan was a threatening secret society. "It is a state within a state, or rather a state above the state" explained Catholic editor James M. Gillis, "Indeed, it claims to be that most dangerous of all institutions, an Invisible Empire."<sup>7</sup> The Klan was very aware of all these defects in their organization, and they were even more aware of the negative effect that this opposition was having on public perceptions of their movement.

The depiction of the Klan as an "invisible empire" is in fact strikingly similar to the way Freemasonry came to be seen during the Anti-Masonic hysteria of the late 1820s and 1830s. This similarity did not escape Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons, who compared the cases saying:

New organizations and movements usually draw the fire of the uninformed. People are inclined to be suspicious of that which they do not understand. When Masonry first assumed its larger importance in America, it was the object of attacks so bitter that some of the members were placed in danger of their lives.<sup>8</sup>

The immediate cause of the start of the Anti-Masonic movement was the disappearance in 1826 of William Morgan, a resident of Batavia in western New York who had been preparing a booklet that revealed the inner workings and sworn secrets of the Craft. It is not known what happened to Morgan, but it was

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<sup>6</sup> Lem A. Dever, *Masks Off! : Confessions of an Imperial Klansman*, 2d ed. (Vancouver: Dever, 1925), p.57.

<sup>7</sup> James M. Gillis, *The Ku-Klux Klan* (New York: The Paulist Press, 1922), p.13.

<sup>8</sup> William Joseph Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked* (Atlanta: Wm. E. Thompson Publishing Co., 1923), p.10. Simmons made a similar declaration during the Klan's Congressional Hearings, see *The Committee on Rules: House of Representatives, First Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office, 1921), p.75.

widely believed at the time that he had been abducted and drowned in the Niagara River by overzealous Freemasons who were guarding the secrets of their fraternity. The publication of the rumoured murder of Morgan, along with several other exposés and speeches that revealed the inherent treachery of this order, led to a wave of hysteria against the Freemasons that was so powerful it created the Anti-Masonic party, the first significant challenge to America's two-party system.<sup>9</sup> This persecution almost destroyed the young American fraternity.

The Morgan Affair was no small incident; in churches and squares Americans gathered to hear fiery speeches by politicians and ministers against this new threat to democratic government. In 1832 alone, New York had 45 weekly anti-Masonic newspapers and one daily, while Pennsylvania had 55 weekly newspapers that churned out denunciations against Freemasonry.<sup>10</sup> The most damning words probably came from former President and noted anti-Mason, John Quincy Adams, who referred to the Craft as:

a body of at least two hundred thousand men, scattered over the whole Union – all active and voting men, linked together by secret ties, for purposes of indefinite extent; bound together by oaths and penalties operating with terrific energy upon the imagination of the human heart, and upon its fears; embracing within the penalty of its laws the President of the United States [refers to Andrew Jackson, the current President and a prominent Freemason] and his leading competitors; and winding itself round every great political party for support, like poisonous ivy around a sturdy oak, and round every object of its aversion, like the boa-constrictor round its victim... Commanding despotically a large portion of the public presses – intimidating by its terrors multitudes of others...<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, p.59-60; Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p.24-25.

<sup>10</sup> Charles McCarthy, *The Antimasonic Party: A Study of Political Anti-Masonry in the United States, 1827-1840*, ed. American Historical Association, vol. 1, Annual Report for the Year 1902 (Washington, Gov't print. off., 1903), p.549

<sup>11</sup> John Quincy Adams, *Letters on the Masonic Institution* (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1847), p.26-27; For a full description of the various complaints that the Anti-Masonic Party and its supporters had against Freemasonry, see Anti-Masonic Convention, "The Proceedings of the United States Anti-Masonic Convention" (Philadelphia, 1830).

The Morgan Affair was merely a catalyst for the aggressive expression of anti-Masonic hysteria and suspicions that had been held by the American public for some time. Anti-Masonry in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to historian David Brion Davis, closely resembled anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism, and the arguments made against those institutions were very similar. Davis argued that although each group was quite distinct, that American society came to suspect these three bodies because it seemed that they were each “an inverted image of Jacksonian democracy and the cult of the common man...”<sup>12</sup> Each group was perceived as foreign and antithetical to American ideals of openness and democracy. Masons, Mormons and Catholics were grouped together and seen as outsiders, sworn to obey an alien power and working outside the agreed boundaries of political convention. These were the same arguments that would be deployed nearly a century later against the Second Ku Klux Klan. Anti-Masonry, anti-Mormonism and anti-Catholicism derived from an innate American fear of subversion, a suspicion that would re-emerge several at times in subsequent periods.

Yet somehow, by the time the KKK reappeared following the First World War, Freemasonry had not only dispelled fears about their power, influence and intentions, but they had become an American institution and an established cornerstone of most towns and cities. Picking up speed after the end of the Civil War and reaching a peak at the turn of the century, fraternalism enjoyed a period of ascendance that placed Freemasonry almost on a pedestal of propriety in the eyes of the American public. Freemasonry enjoyed America’s renewed affection for fraternalism and secret societies during this so-called “Golden Age of Fraternities” and experienced remarkable growth. Of course, there were still some who actively opposed fraternities in America after the Civil War, such as the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, who published titles such as *The Case Against the Lodge*, and who continued to criticize Freemasonry for their deism and secrecy. One booklet published by the Synod in 1927 denounced Freemasonry and similar fraternities, commenting that:

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<sup>12</sup> David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47, no. 2 (1960), p.208

we should not permit the more sinister aspects of the lodge system to escape us, its significance as a secret empire, binding its members to an alliance which has no precedent or justification in human history, which is not only a constant potential menace to the fundamental safeguards of citizenship and is the very antithesis of the American ideal of the square deal, but which has left its trail on the administration of our courts, sparing neither the bench nor the jury-box.<sup>13</sup>

This account recycled many of the original allegations made against the order during the 1830s. However, groups that actively opposed the spread of fraternalism in this period were undoubtedly a minority in American society. Freemasonry in the Roaring Twenties was no longer persecuted but admired by the general public.

The popularity of fraternities is an indication of the renewed and improved status of Freemasonry, but the question then arises, how did this once feared fraternity overcome its reputation as a subversive organization and become a paragon of decency? Historians have suggested that the Craft underwent a series of changes that made them more acceptable to the eyes of the American public. These included the banning of liquor in the lodge or the establishment of more rigorous membership scrutiny. Mark Tabbert has argued that Freemasonry underwent a profound rehabilitation to conform to social pressures through a series of changes that involved avoiding the philosophical and spiritual discussions that had opened them up to criticism of being un-Christian, but also by emphasizing their connections to American heroes like George Washington or Paul Revere.<sup>14</sup> Overall the fraternity managed to become more acceptable by changing itself, by becoming more conservative and less contentious, and by avoiding controversy.

In many ways, the 1920s Klan tried to follow suit and adapted to become less controversial; for instance, in the face of charges that he was running an "Invisible Empire," Imperial Wizard Evans retorted, "We are dropping the

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<sup>13</sup> Theodore Graebner, *The Secret Empire: A Handbook of Lodges* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927) p.viii-ix.

<sup>14</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual*, p.25; Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, p.64-65

expression, using it less and less. It is a ritualistic phrase referring to the geographical jurisdiction of the Order. It has no reference to any political government.”<sup>15</sup> Evans’ coup was in fact accompanied by a series of reforms that tried to improve the Klan’s image, such as the dismissal of the controversial Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke and his Propagation Department, as well as an Imperial decree that ruled that all robes had to stay in the klavern unless duly authorized by the Exalted Cyclops, in an effort to stop the night-riding activities of certain brothers. The Klan was desperately seeking the public’s approval, as it was understood that without widespread support their movement would die.

While the Craft made sincere and fundamental changes to assuage the unfounded and hysterical fears of the American public, the Klan simply could not change certain vital aspects of their order. The Klan, unlike Freemasonry, truly was an “Invisible Empire,” whose avowed objective was to return America to a romanticized and idyllic past. The Klan’s increasingly active role in politics and the election of dozens of local and national politicians was evident to the public. By definition, it was not something they could hide. Because of this, to keep the public on their side, the Klan sought to downplay these features about their organization and depict itself as just another fraternal order. Klansmen emphasized the fact that they were not a sinister cabal, but a noble and uplifting fraternity. They also tried to portray their crusade as one of pure motives, one that had active support from respectable figures of the community like local law enforcement officers, ministers, and the respected Freemasons. The Invisible Empire chose marketing as its most effective defence.

Hiram Wesley Evans demonstrated his order’s ability to refute negative portrayals of their organization and its ideals in one debate with a leading Jewish rabbi. Evans managed to defend his order by arguing the logic of their stance. When asked about his organization’s attitude towards Asians and other non-white races, he explained:

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<sup>15</sup> Stanley Frost, *The Challenge of the Klan* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924), p.73.

Our attitude to every race, as I have tried to show, is one of sympathy, not of antipathy. My heart is not only devoid of racial hate but full of compassion for my fellow man of every creed or color... When we shut out the Chinese and the Japanese from our shores we seemed to them harsh. We were not. They would have ruined us and by ruining us ruined our power to be of assistance to them in the passing years. I suspect all enlightened Chinese and Japanese see this now. <sup>16</sup>

Evans managed to make his organization seem compassionate by arguing that the restriction of Asian immigration was in the interest of both the nation and the Chinese and Japanese. He presented an argument that most American readers would have favoured, casting doubt the negative depiction of their order.

Throughout the 1920s, the officers and members of the Ku Klux Klan passionately defended their group, disputing their characterization as a hateful or violent organization. Part of this public relations campaign involved constantly reminding the nation that they were not a cabal, but that they were simply an ordinary fraternity. The distinction was important, as fraternities were an accepted feature of American life. Labelling themselves as a fraternity allowed them to justify their odd regalia, their strict entry standards, or their secret membership rolls. This normalization of their peculiar displays and behaviour helped to deflect the growing criticism by placing them amongst familiar and esteemed names like the Odd Fellows or the Knights of Pythias. Fraternalism was employed as a convenient cover to shield the organization from its critics.

The first notable occasion where the Klan deployed this defence occurred in November 1921, when the group's notoriety caught the attention of politicians in Washington. Practically all of the Klan's questionable practices were raised in this Congressional hearing, including their mysterious costumes and their exclusivity. Throughout the proceedings, Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons countered almost every charge brought against his organization by pointing out that similar practices were the norm amongst fraternities and that there was nothing out of the ordinary or malicious about his

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<sup>16</sup> *Is the Ku Klux Klan Constructive or Destructive? A Debate Between Imperial Wizard Evans, Israel Zangwill and Others.* (Chicago: Chicago Daily News Company, 1924), p.15.

brotherhood. When the Klan was accused of being racially and religiously exclusive, Simmons replied with outrage that his organization was in no way different to several other fraternities with stringent entry requirements, pointing to the Knights of Columbus who required members to be Catholic and to various Jewish fraternities.<sup>17</sup> He also added that there were “scores of fraternal orders that will not admit a Negro to membership. We are not the only one.” Simmons also defended his order’s use of the hood and robes before the committee, explaining that:

Some question has been raised in regard to the robes and parades. Our costume has been adopted, and that is one of the rights of this corporation. Every fraternal order has the right to adopt its paraphernalia. Our costume complete is simply a memorial to the greatest heroes in the world’s history.<sup>18</sup>

Simmons’ defence of the Klan was so effective that once the hearing had concluded, the Congressmen could find no reason to take legislative action against the Invisible Empire, which boosted Klan growth considerably. Taking advantage of the esteem of which most Americans held fraternities, the Invisible Empire was able to deflect much criticism and make itself seem like an everyday establishment by labelling themselves as a fraternity. This tactic would become a quite popular defence among Klansmen in later years.<sup>19</sup> The Propagation Department appreciated the value of a positive image, and tried to ensure that Americans recognized their order as a fraternity, and not as a cabal or a threat to democracy, as their opponents intended.

## **2) Claiming Links Between the Klan and the Craft.**

The officers of the Ku Klux Klan wanted the public to view their organization as a fraternity, but understood that in order to promote themselves they needed to portray themselves as a leading fraternity. Emerging in a

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<sup>17</sup> Representatives, *Hearings on the Ku*, pp.90-91.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.130-131.

<sup>19</sup> One particularly good example of the use of this defense appears in "Thoughts of a Thinker on the Outside," *The Fellowship Forum*, January 20 1923, p.8. It should be noted that once Evans took power, he increasingly depicted the Klan as a political movement and not as a fraternity. He only referred to his organization as a fraternity when it suited his needs.

competitive fraternal market with plenty of opposition, the Invisible Empire had neither the prestige, respectability, nor the heritage that some of the other almost aristocratic fraternities enjoyed. Furthermore, in order to succeed they needed to counter the onslaught of charges of subversion and wrongdoing. Fortunately, Freemasonry had all the attributes that the KKK so desperately sought to strengthen their own position. The Invisible Empire's promoters campaigned to create an artificial relation between these two fraternities in the collective mind of the nation. This all served to create positive associations with the Invisible Empire; to transfer the Craft's respectability, prestige, success and heritage onto the Klan. Everything the Klan wanted to be – respected, admired, powerful, and exclusive – was everything Freemasonry already was. In a sense, the Klan was like the younger sibling, trying to imitate and associate with its successful older brother.

The Ku Klux Klan, as will be discussed in the following chapter, eagerly pursued Freemasons as prime candidates for recruitment. The Propagation Department furthered their campaign to connect the two fraternities by broadcasting the large number of Freemasons within their order. The Invisible Empire's officers also attempted to convince the nation that not only were Freemasons joining their order, but that most Freemasons approved of their organization and that the two organizations were in fact allies. Masonic sponsorship, or indeed, the appearance of Masonic sponsorship, validated the Ku Klux Klan and their vision for a new America.

It is in the Klan's newspapers that this portrayal of the Invisible Empire, as an order intertwined with Freemasonry, is most evident. The Klan published several papers across the country, and they are an especially useful source because they contain information about what officials wanted their members – and the wider public – to think about their organization and the issues that concerned them. In a meeting of the Klan's administrators in 1923, the head of the Alabama Klan, the Grand Dragon, delivered a paper on how to run a "Model Realm." He recommended that each state should have its own newspaper. He maintained that this was necessary because:

The official publication is a means whereby the Grand Dragon can speak to all Klansmen of his Realm, but in addition thereto, it helps to mold the minds and sentiments of the public at large, as you will find there are thousands who are not Klansmen but are eagerly waiting for the paper to come off the press.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, the Klan's newspapers were as much a public relations tool as they were a journalistic and propagandistic device, helping to inform Klansmen and the public at large of a particular set of ideas. Through their newspapers, the Invisible Empire was able to control their image, and we as historians can observe what they were hoping to present to the public.

This analysis will focus on five major Klan newspapers: *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, *The Kourier*, *The Fiery Cross*, *Dawn*, and *The Fellowship Forum*. Other minor publications will also be referred to. The first two were official and national organs of the Klan; *The Imperial Night-Hawk* was a weekly newspaper that was replaced in December 1924 with *The Kourier*, a monthly magazine that ran until 1936. This analysis will also look at *The Fiery Cross*, a semi-official Klan weekly that ran from 1922 to 1925 in Indiana, where it was extremely influential and widely read, and which sprouted editions in surrounding states like Michigan, Kentucky, or Illinois. The fourth Klan paper we will analyse is *Dawn*, a weekly from Chicago that was quite popular in Illinois and ran from 1922 to 1924, claiming a circulation of 50,000 readers in April 1923.<sup>21</sup>

The last newspaper this chapter will discuss is *The Fellowship Forum*, referred to in the last chapter. The *Forum* did not label itself as a Klan publication, but as a so-called "fraternal newspaper." It was set up in 1921 by Alabaman George Fleming Moore, who founded and edited *The New Age*, the official newspaper of the Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction (SRSJ). He left *The New Age* to take the office of Sovereign Grand Commander or President of the SRSJ in 1914, a position he held until 1921. The list of Moore's past

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<sup>20</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan at Their First Annual Meeting Held at Asheville, North Carolina, July 1923; Together with Other Articles of Interest to Klansmen* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923; repr., 2000), pp.100-101.

<sup>21</sup> "Dawn Circulation Climbs to 50,000 as Fight for Americanism Stirs Nation," *Dawn*, April 7 1923.

positions in various ancillary Masonic orders is extensive, suffice to say that he was respected in Masonic circles and very high up in the hierarchy.<sup>22</sup>

The purpose of this particular newspaper was nothing unusual for a Masonic paper; it merely proposed to report on the goings-on of Masons and other fraternities from across America. It cannot be said that in its early days *The Fellowship Forum* was anymore anti-Catholic than almost any other Masonic paper of their time, and certainly not pro-Klan. It barely even mentioned the Invisible Empire.<sup>23</sup> In fact in its early mainstream days, *The Fellowship Forum* received several letters of support from prominent Masons and politicians, including Alabama's Senator Oscar Underwood. President Harding wrote to them to say "I have found it interesting and it seems to me to have possibilities of great usefulness both to the Fraternity and the Nation."<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, starting in mid-1922, *The Fellowship Forum* started reporting more regularly on Klan activities in an openly supportive way, as well increasing their anti-Catholic rhetoric to a more aggressive tone. This open and partisan reporting was entirely out of the ordinary for conventional Masonic journalism, which made them the subject of criticism among more traditional Freemasons. In the face of accusations that they were a "Klan" newspaper, Moore replied in an editorial that this was "undeniably false", declaring that every newspaper in the country carried news about the Klan and that it was ridiculous to think that Klan news equated to propaganda for that order.<sup>25</sup>

Although it certainly carried more than its fair share of pro-Klan news, and openly defended and urged support for the Invisible Empire – much like any Klan periodical – the *Forum's* exact relationship with the Klan is unclear. It is

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<sup>22</sup> "Founder of Fellowship Forum States Purposes of this National Weekly," *The Fellowship Forum*, June 21 1921; "The Fellowship Forum Observes Third Anniversary in Own Plant," *The Fellowship Forum*, June 28 1924; "Past Grand Comdr. Geo. F. Moore, of Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, in Editorial Control of Fellowship Forum," *The Fellowship Forum*, January 6 1922; For more biographical information about George Fleming Moore, see J.H. Cowles, *The Supreme Council 33rd Degree V1 Or Mother Council of the World of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, Uni*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Kessinger Publishing, 2010), p.543-544.

<sup>23</sup> There was even an article in the *Forum's* early days that told readers how Catholics have been loyal and patriotic over the years, see "All May Have Fellowship in Americanism," *The Fellowship Forum*, August 8 1921.

<sup>24</sup> "President Harding Sees Usefulness To Nation in Fellowship Forum," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 15 1921; "U.S. Senate Leader of the Minority Praises the Fellowship Forum's Work," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 15 1921.

<sup>25</sup> "The Fellowship Forum at Boston," *The Fellowship Forum*, June 23 1923.

unknown whether George Fleming Moore and James S. Vance, the two editors running the *Forum*, were in fact Klansmen. A former Klansmen, Edgar I. Fuller, claimed that Moore was in the Klan's employment with a monthly salary of \$1,000. Fuller pointed to the minutes of the Imperial Klonscilium of January 1923 to back his claim. Since these minutes have not survived it is impossible to say for sure if Fuller's accusation is true.<sup>26</sup> What can be verified is that Klansmen openly supported and read the *Forum*. Many donated to a fund Moore started in 1924 to build a printing press for the *Forum*. A personal donation even came in from Imperial Wizard Evans, who sent \$500 along with his own official endorsement of the paper.<sup>27</sup>

The Klan's enemies were particularly concerned about its notable influence in Masonic circles. One anti-Klan newspaper declared that:

This weekly paper is the most dangerous for two reasons. First, because it pretends to speak for Masonry of high degree, as well as for Kluxism, and thus endeavours to lend to the disreputable organization the prestige and good repute of the honorable Masonic Fraternity. Second, because while it is in every sense as mendacious as other Ku Klux organs, it is far more scurrilous, because it is edited with a certain degree of plausible intelligence and low cleverness. Likewise this paper, the *Fellowship Forum*, is able to gain currency for its lies amongst the unthinking, because of its false pretense to represent Masonry.<sup>28</sup>

Judging from its contents and their relationship with the Klan, *The Fellowship Forum* was by no means a Klan newspaper in the sense that *The Imperial Night-Hawk* was, but it was definitely a militant Masonic and aggressively pro-Klan fraternal weekly.

The Klan reinforced their association with Freemasonry wherever possible, a strategy which was evident in the pages of their newspapers. To

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<sup>26</sup> Marion Monteval, *The Klan Inside Out* (Chicago,: N/A, 1924), p.49.

<sup>27</sup> "Klansmen Rally to Support of Fellowship Forum in Drive for Own Printing Plant to Fight for 100 Per Cent Americanism," *The Fellowship Forum*, August 18 1923; "Ku Klux Klan Chief Helps Plant Fund," *The Fellowship Forum*, April 19 1924.

<sup>28</sup> *Tolerance*, September 22 1923.

further cement this connection, journalists of this order tried to advertise the stories of individual Freemasons who had enlisted in their organization. The Ku Klux Klan was not above exploiting the death of one of their members to emphasize the close ties between the Craft and their own organization. For instance, when Charles P. Metcalfe died in July 1924, *The Fiery Cross* made sure to pay a fitting tribute to this Indianapolis policeman, all the while stressing his dual membership in both the Klan and the Craft. They even proclaimed to readers that Charles:

loved the Klansmen, because, as he often said, 'These men are men of power, men of character. They believe in a living God and the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of God, the brotherhood of man, free public schools and the flag of our country.'<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, the death of Robert H. Skaggs in February 1923 made the news in his local newspaper *The Fiery Cross*, but was also reported in *Dawn* and *The Fellowship Forum*.<sup>30</sup> The article in *The Fiery Cross* reproduced a photograph taken during Skaggs' funeral, with his brother Masons and Klansmen posing together (see image 2), and informed readers that "Under the impressive funeral ceremonies of the two greatest secret organizations in the world, the Masonic Order and the Ku Klux Klan, the body of Rob[ert] H. Skaggs was given the last funeral rites by these two organizations." *The Fiery Cross* boasted that "These ceremonies, with these two organizations united, is a tribute not only to Rob[ert] H. Skaggs, but indicates the co-ordination and sameness of purpose of the two organizations." *The Fiery Cross*, as well as *Dawn* and *The Fellowship Forum*, took advantage of Skaggs' death to show that Freemasons and Klansmen could work together and that the two orders were connected.<sup>31</sup> These articles served to not only inform others of the death

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<sup>29</sup> "A Mason's Tribute to Liet. Metcalfe," *The Fiery Cross*, August 29 1924.

<sup>30</sup> "Masons and Klansmen Attend Funeral," *The Fiery Cross*, March 9 1923; "Masons and Klan Conduct Funeral," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 29 1923; "Masons and Klan Conduct Funeral," *Dawn*, April 14 1923.

<sup>31</sup> Craig Fox has also noted the Klan's habit of reporting Klan/Mason funerals in Michigan, see Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2011), p.172. For more examples of reports on funerals of Klansmen with Masonic membership, see "Klansman Dies," *The Fiery Cross*, April 6 1923 or "Klan at Funeral at Newark," *The Fiery Cross*, February 1923.

of a fellow Klansman, but also to reinforce the public's perception of the Invisible Empire's close association with Masonry.

The Ku Klux Klan also regularly boasted of the large number of its own members with Masonic affiliations. They hoped that this would help deflect some of the criticism directed at them by showing that the honest and respected institution of Freemasonry stood by them. One Texan klockard, Reverend W.C. Wright, illustrated this argument clearly when he defended the Klan saying:

Honestly, do you know of any other Order that has a better endorsement than that? Isn't the recommendation of 750,000 Masons... sufficient to commend [the Klan] to your confidence? Do you think that such men as these would endorse, defend, support and belong to an organization that was corrupt, immoral, lawless or dangerous?<sup>32</sup>

Klan lecturers Dr. Lannin, F.G. Conant and Reverend A.E. Leigh also made exaggerated and unsubstantiated claims in their speeches during their 1923 recruitment campaign in Maine. These officers of the Propagation Department declared that 500,000 Freemasons had joined the Klan, and both *The Fiery Cross* and *The Fellowship Forum* printed these claims without question.<sup>33</sup> *The Imperial Night-Hawk* followed suit, eagerly showing how many Freemasons were also initiates of the fraternity. They pointed out that during a 1923 Shriners convention in Atlanta that "Hundreds of them were Klansmen and a large number visited the Imperial Palace during the day... Members of the Houston, Texas, delegation said that of the 150 Houston Shriners making the pilgrimage over ninety per cent were members of the Ku Klux Klan."<sup>34</sup> These claims served as an almost indirect Masonic endorsement and were an excellent selling point that was used by kleagles to convince Americans to enlist in their organization.

The Klan did not only tie their members to Freemasonry, they also tied the two institutions together ideologically, by trying to demonstrate that they

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<sup>32</sup> W.C. Wright, "The Ku Klux Klan Unmasked," ed. Ku Klux Klan (Dallas: Dallas Press, 1924).

<sup>33</sup> "Build Klan Temple at Portland is Plan," *The Fiery Cross*, September 14 1923; "500,000 Masons are Klansmen," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 8 1923.

<sup>34</sup> "Many Shriners Pay Visit to Palace," *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, June 13 1923 *The Imperial Night-Hawk*, June 13 1923.

shared the same objectives and the same enemies. Klan publications eagerly printed letters that urged cooperation between the two groups. One Oklahoma Freemason wrote to a Texas Klan journal in September 1922 to express his opinion on their organization, which the editors were delighted to publish. He said:

I am not a member of the Klan, but I am a Mason and I am for the Klan one hundred per cent. Every Mason should, and these who are not for the Klan are undoubtedly inspired in their opposition by either ignorance or indifference. The Klan is fighting the things which threaten and endanger the continuance of the principles for which Masonry has always stood, and every Mason should rally in support of the Klan on every occasion, no matter what the issues at stake.<sup>35</sup>

*The Fellowship Forum* repeatedly carried news that showed readers how intertwined the two organizations' ideals were. Editor George Fleming Moore urged his fellow Masons to realize this fact and to unite with the Klan, and declared "it would seem the 'invisible empire' of the Jesuits is the organization that requires the careful scrutiny of patriotic Americans, rather than the Klan, which stands for the same principles and ideals as espoused by Freemasons."<sup>36</sup> Another article by the *Forum* asked readers "Masons and Klansmen, how long are we going to live under the despotic [rule] of Rome? Is this 1923, or have we suddenly reverted back to the days of Papal Inquisition?"<sup>37</sup> Freemasonry was officially non-partisan, but chauvinistic patriotism and anti-Catholicism was rife within the fraternity, as it was across the entire country during the 1920s. The Ku Klux Klan appealed to these elements within Freemasonry, and used these dispositions to make their order appear friendly with the Craft.

*The Fellowship Forum* carried out a relentless drive to inform the public of the mutual enemies and complimenting ideologies of the two orders. Other Klan papers also carried plenty of reports of how Masons and Klansmen were

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<sup>35</sup> "Masons Should Join Hands with Klan Says Oklahoman," *Texas 100% American*, September 1 1922.

<sup>36</sup> "Invisible Empire' to Watch is not the Klan," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 29 1923.

<sup>37</sup> "Masons and Klansmen, Duty Calls You to Troy, Kansas," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 11 1923.

both being victimized by the power of Rome and other un-American elements. *Dawn* reported, for instance, that anti-Klan Mayor William “Big Bill” Thompson of Chicago had been booed off the stage at a meeting of 4,000 Shriners. In a similar manner, *The Fiery Cross* reported that both Klansmen and Masons had been attacked by “foreigners” during a riot in Perth Amboy, and that this mob had deliberately been beating up men with Protestant lodge pins. Milton Elrod, editor of this newspaper, informed readers that Perth Amboy was “A place where today Masons [cannot] wear their lodge pins for fear of assault of death at the hands of foreigners.” Both these examples showed Freemasons and Klansmen sharing a common enemy – Catholics and foreigners – and gave the appearance that they were fighting for the same cause. Klansmen were fond of demonizing the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope, the great bugbear of native Protestant Americans, whom the Klan’s journalists were quick to remind readers opposed not only the Invisible Empire but who had also persecuted Freemasonry. “Rome hates with an undying hate, Free-Masonry, the Protestant Church and the Ku Klux Klan” stressed *The Fiery Cross*.<sup>38</sup>

To further emphasize the ideological similarities between the two organizations, Klan newspapers regularly reprinted articles from Masonic newspapers that either supported the Invisible Empire or promoted its ideals. As the immigration quota debate raged, *Dawn* reproduced an article from the *Masonic Observer* called “Restricted Immigration” which said:

Some selfish foreign governments have emptied on the United States a lot of illiterate, ignorant and depraved criminals and vagabonds, and this has lowered our mental, moral and political standards. Immigration agents with the idiocy, avarice, complicity or duplicity of government agents have heaped on our shores a pile of foreign filth. Too long have we permitted it, either through laziness and ignorance, or with the desire to show how big, hospitable, rich and strong we are.<sup>39</sup>

The harsh tone of this *Masonic Observer* article sat comfortably alongside the Klan’s own militant rhetoric in the pages of *Dawn*. Comparable articles

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<sup>38</sup> “The Shell of Splendor,” *The Fiery Cross*, August 8 1924.

<sup>39</sup> “Restricted Immigration,” *Dawn*, June 30 1923.

reproduced from Masonic newspapers also appeared in *The Fellowship Forum* and in *The Fiery Cross*. The *Forum* reproduced an article from *The Crescent*, the Shriners national newspaper, that complained about the Knights of Columbus, who had the "impudence" to constantly interfere in public affairs and who had been lobbying so that October 12 could be made a national holiday in honour of Christopher Columbus. *The Fiery Cross* reprinted an article from *The National Trestle Board* that condemned Oklahoma's anti-Klan governor Jack Walton and his unconstitutional persecution of the Invisible Empire.<sup>40</sup> Militant Freemasons shared similar concerns with Klansmen, whether it was immigration reform or the Catholic menace. The Propagation Department did their utmost to employ the printed appeals of this aggressive fringe of the Craft to endow their organization with an aura of official Masonic approval.<sup>41</sup>

Yet the majority of articles reproduced by Klan periodicals from Masonic newspapers all came from a single source, *The New Age*. This was the official organ of the SRSJ, founded and formerly headed by George Fleming Moore himself. The first issue of *The New Age* appeared in June 1904, and featured a variety of articles on Masonic material and science, as well as short stories, poetry, and sketches. By the issue of December 1904 the magazine had 20,000 subscribers, largely Scottish Rite Masons from the Southern Jurisdiction, with virtually no readership among the general public.<sup>42</sup> However the magazine slowly started becoming more aggressive, and by 1914, the magazine's avowed purpose changed "Freemasonry and its relation to present day problems." This mission statement that was practically identical to that of one of Moore's later projects, *The Fellowship Forum*. Like other Masons who had advocated openly discussing politics, *The New Age* defended itself from the charge of breaking Masonic customs by explaining that this was acceptable since they were discussing matters that were vital to the foundations of their nation, such as the public school or the relationship between church and state, and not partisan politics that might cause strife in the lodge. They argued that they were entitled

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<sup>40</sup> "Shrine Editorial On Immigration," *The Fellowship Forum*, December 12 1922; "Klan is Defended by Masonic Paper," *The Fiery Cross*, November 30 1923.

<sup>41</sup> For more examples of Masonic article being reprinted in Klan newspapers, see "Care For Your Own Home First," *The Fellowship Forum*, February 10 1923; "Essentials of Americanism," *Dawn*, August 8 1923; "Klan is Defended by Masonic Paper," *The Fiery Cross*, November 30 1923

<sup>42</sup> William L. Fox, *Lodge of the Double-Headed Eagle : two centuries of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in America's Southern Jurisdiction* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), p.149-150

and even obliged to discuss these matters.<sup>43</sup> Widely read among Scottish Rite Masons, *The New Age* became a mouthpiece that broadcasted anti-Catholic and nativist literature, and it is not surprising that the Klan pored through issues of *The New Age* find articles that backed their point of view.<sup>44</sup>

*The Courier* reprinted many *New Age* articles, such as one called "Register Immigrants," calling for tighter scrutiny of the activities of immigrants, which said "Aliens in a nation are there only on sufferance, and when they become a social nuisance and a public expense, the reasonable thing is to withdraw the privileges of residence and send them away." They reproduced another article explaining how a church in Iowa was split over whether to continue using German to teach, or switch to English, and commented that:

The culture fostered in public schools necessarily is in thorough harmony with those democratic ideals that have been articulated most clearly and comprehensively in the English language, whereas the culture inculcated in too many private and religious schools is as alien as the language they affect. It is of more passing interest that the communities opposed to the use of the English language are the ones that gave the government most trouble by traitorous activities during the World War.<sup>45</sup>

*Dawn* republished articles from this newspaper, and praised *The New Age*, calling it the "magazine of the largest circulation of its class in the world, which is one of the best edited, spirited and aggressive of the world's Masonic publications."<sup>46</sup> *The Fiery Cross* also habitually reprinted *New Age* articles, in fact they so approved of one article on Catholicism's control of the press that they reprinted it twice in less than a year.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Glenn Michael Zuber, "Onward Christian Klansmen!: War, Religious Conflict, and the rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan, 1912-1928" (Indiana University, 2004), p.74-75; Fox, *Lodge of the* , p.178.

<sup>44</sup> The matter of the Scottish Rite, its separate jurisdictions, and its relation to militant patriotism and fraternalism requires a much more extensive treatment than can be afforded here. A full-length study, based perhaps on the controversial *New Age*, could provide the basis of a separate PhD thesis. The matter has been covered in part by Glenn Zuber. See the second chapter of Zuber, "Onward Christian Klansmen," for more details.

<sup>45</sup>"Register Immigrants," *The Courier*, April 1925; "Listening In," *The Courier*, December 1924.

<sup>46</sup> "Extracts From The Allocution Of The Late James D. Richardson, 33°," *Dawn*, October 6 1923.

<sup>47</sup> "Catholicism and the Press," *The Fiery Cross*, July 6 1923; "Catholicism and the Press," *The Fiery Cross*, July 4 1924.

In January 1924 *The New Age* made their position on the Klan clear, saying:

The attempt to link up the Masonic fraternity with the Klan is another befogging of the issue. The *New Age Magazine* holds no brief for or against any organization, outside the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite of the Southern Jurisdiction. The Klan must stand or fall upon its own merits.

The article went on to say, "Freemasonry, if it follows the traditions of the centuries, cannot dictate to any Mason what shall or shall not be his affiliations outside the lodge. This is wholly a matter for his reason and his conscience."<sup>48</sup> The attitude of *The New Age* was perfectly in line with Masonic doctrine. It dictated that Masons should not interfere with their members' business outside the lodge. However this should not be construed as a neutral or default response to wrong doing. *The New Age's* position on a variety of issues agreed with the Klan's and it is likely that behind closed doors, they praised and admired the Klan. In turn, the Invisible Empire showed their support and admiration of *The New Age* by reproducing their essays; a habit that endowed their ideology with an association and concurrence with one of America's most widely read Masonic papers.

The Klan eagerly printed features that linked both the Masons' members and their ideology to the Invisible Empire, in an effort to acquire Freemasonry's respectability, success, and affluence. Yet there was something else the Klan hoped to acquire from the Craft: their heritage. Myths and stories about the antiquity of fraternities were all part of the mystery and fun of the brotherhoods of this period. The Knights Templar traced their origins to the medieval Crusaders while the Shriners claimed their order originated in the deserts of Arabia. And yet it was more than just fun, it also imbued your organization with a sense of historical legitimacy and awarded a direct link to respected historical figures. Freemasonry's heritage however, was more than mythical. The Craft's well-known association with some of the leading lights of the Revolutionary War

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<sup>48</sup> "Attitude of the New Age," *The New Age*, January 1924.

were a priceless heritage. This was a coveted ancestry, something which the Klan sought to prey on and emulate. To be able to draw a direct connection to the founders of the nation would make the Klan the inheritors of the nation's destiny and would make them the "100% American" organization they claimed to be. After all, who else would the "100% American" Klan look to if not the great figures of America's past? Having been founded as a result of the turmoil of a civil war, the Klan could claim no direct connection to the nation's founders, but the apparent association they held with the Freemasons afforded one such connection.

The Craft openly emphasized their patriotic ancestry in the Revolutionary War and in subsequent events to the wider public, and made their heritage widely known. One non-Masonic paper, printing an article called "What Every Mason Should Know," outlined the contribution of the Craft to America's foundation. This newspaper reported that:

anyone, within or without the fraternity, taking the trouble to search for facts, will very likely be surprised to find how generally the leading men concerned in established the United States as a Nation were Masons...It is a matter of fairly common knowledge that Masonic names were numerous amongst the signers of the Declaration of Independence. As a matter of fact, there were fifty-six signers, and all but six were members of the fraternity.<sup>49</sup>

The truth is that only nine Freemasons were signers, but this mistake indicates how the public were encouraged to perceive Freemasonry and their role in the nation's history. Freemasonry was duly proud of its heritage, it awarded the fraternity a crucial role in the founding of the nation, bestowing both legitimacy and respectability on their order and its ideals, but others sought to exploit this ancestry.

The Ku Klux Klan saw itself as the new generation of true Americans, lighting the way in the darkness of modernity and fighting for their nation, much

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<sup>49</sup> Originally published as "What Every Mason Should Know," *Christian Science-Monitor*, November 17 1919 reprinted in , *Dawn*, November 3 1923 p.27; Tabbert, *American Freemason*sp. 40

like the rebels of '76 or the pioneers that settled the West. *Dawn* for instance, carried a series of insightful cartoons that reveal the fraternity's desire to appear like America's founding generation (see images 3 and 4). One cartoon, called "Duties Confront the Modern Paul Revere," featured a Klansman emulating Paul Revere's infamous ride, but instead of warning the American militia of the British threat, the Klansman warned "sleepy" Americans about the various "isms" that threatened the nation. Another of their illustrations presented various scenes from America's history, such as the landing of the Pilgrims or the battle of Valley Forge, with a Klansman featured right in the middle, entitled "100% Americans".<sup>50</sup> Although they were fighting off tyrannical Catholics or radical Bolsheviks instead of the British, the Klan saw itself as the true inheritors of America's patriotic heroes and the champions of their historical traditions.

The Klan declared it had the character and morality of past American leaders and founders – and therefore the right to decide the nation's destiny – but they could claim no direct link. Their fraternity had been born during the sectional strife of Reconstruction, an uncomfortable and compromising birth for a "100% American" organization. But in the Klan's newspapers the scheme to "claim" important American heroes as allies is evident in articles that prompted readers to recall the important role Freemasons had in American history. In September 1924 *The Fiery Cross* carried a feature that reminded readers of important Masonic anniversaries of this month, such as the initiation of revolutionary hero Joseph Warren, or the murders in September of two Masonic presidents, James Garfield and William McKinley. *The Fiery Cross* carried many other similar columns in various issues, reminding readers that "Masonic names are conspicuous on the pages of American history."<sup>51</sup> Similarly, *The Imperial Night-Hawk* carried a biography of the celebrated founder of the US Supreme Court and Mason, John Marshall. *Dawn* went even further, claiming that because most American history books used in schools were written by "non-

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<sup>50</sup> "Duties Confront the Modern Paul Revere," *Dawn*, January 26 1924; "100% Americans," *Dawn*, February 10 1923; For a similar example, see "A Problem The Klan Would Solve," *Dawn*, December 1 1923; For more information on the Klan's attempts to link themselves to the nation's past, see Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), p.83-84

<sup>51</sup> "September Dates in Masonry," *The Fiery Cross*, September 5 1924; *The Fiery Cross* placed little snippets of information throughout their issues reminding readers of the role of Masons in America's history, for specific examples see "Many July Dates of Interest to Masons," *The Fiery Cross*, July 4 1924 and "Masons Have Conspicuous Part in World Events," *The Fiery Cross*, June 20 1924.

Protestants," that they felt the need to inform readers of the important role Freemasons had played in American history.<sup>52</sup> The article even explained how prominent American traitors from the American Revolutionary War were not Freemasons:

The infamous quartet of major generals whose treachery, ingratitude, and selfishness jeopardized the cause of the colonies were not Masons – Lee, the traitor of Monmouth; the contemptible Gates, continually plotting Washington's downfall; the arrogant adventurer Conway; the conspirator Mifflin

This discussion conveniently ignored the fact that the notorious Benedict Arnold, whose very name became a byword for treason, was a Freemason.

These short biographies and histories may appear innocent, but we must not forget that the Klan's newspapers were not merely a journalistic tool, but a public relations weapon. The Invisible Empire had already established that their organization was interconnected with Freemasonry, these articles only served to inform the public of the weight of that connection. In the sharply delineated world that the Klan presented to America, the biographies of important Freemasons and the reminders of celebrated Masonic anniversaries served to empower the Klan's position with the endorsement of important historical Freemasons.

### **3) Countering Grand Master's Statements**

Of course, the Klan's complex scheme to appear Masonic would have all been for nothing if prominent Freemasons openly declared themselves contrary to the Klan and their objectives. To maintain the illusion of solidarity, the Klan waged what might be considered as a media war against antagonistic newspapers, in an attempt to negate Masonic condemnations of the Klan. In the summer of 1922, the order's most vocal opponent, the *New York World*, continued its crusade against the Invisible Empire with a new attack. This series of articles revealed that they had collected the opinions of 25 Grand Masters

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<sup>52</sup> "Historical Facts for Protestants," *The Imperial Nighthawk*, July 14 1923.

regarding the Ku Klux Klan, and that 24 of the respondents objected to the order. The Invisible Empire was forced to begin its own campaign to dispel the idea that the Craft as a whole was opposed to the Klan, and to remind people that many Freemasons supported their order.<sup>53</sup>

The *New York World* investigation was reprinted and echoed in several other newspapers, such as the *Galveston Daily News*, which carried several of the denunciations. "I am relentlessly opposed to any form or connection of Ku Kluxism with Masonry" wrote Maine Grand Master Albert M. Spear in his statement to the *World*, "and, as I understand it, I deprecate it in any form as a menace to law and order."<sup>54</sup>

This public indictment by many of the Craft's respected leaders could prove to be quite detrimental to the development of the Invisible Empire. The Propagation Department treasured the public image they had constructed, and Klan newspapers did their best to contain or dismiss these publicized attacks. The officials of the order seemed determined to make it seem as if their order was allied with the Freemasons.

*The Fellowship Forum*, being a pro-Klan Masonic newspaper, had a natural interest in ensuring that the Klan be looked upon with favour by Freemasons. They responded to the *New York World* articles saying that this was an attempt by Catholics and others to control Masonic policies, that the *New York World* was using Freemasonry for their own benefit, and that it was designed to create dissension within the Craft. The *Forum* had stern words for four leading anti-Klan Grand Masters – Arthur D. Prince of Massachusetts, Samuel E. Burke of California, Frank L. Wilder of Connecticut, and Arthur S. Tompkins – and declared it was not their right to dictate what Freemasons could do outside the lodge. Their attempts to dismiss these anti-Klan statements by *The New York World* continued, saying:

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<sup>53</sup> "K.K.K. Stirred Up Peril to Itself in Fake on Masonry," *New York World*, June 25 1922; "Masonic Officials in 25 States Call Ku Klux a Menace," *New York World*, June 26 1922.

<sup>54</sup> "Grand Masters of Masons on Klan," *The Galveston Daily News*, July 2 1922; "More Statements of Grand Masters," *The Galveston Daily News*, July 3 1922.

Conservative Masons are aghast at Masonry taking a positive stand on anything, while other Masons not so conservative are resenting the autocratic position assumed by these grand masters who are presuming to do the thinking for Freemasonry. Still other looking with kindly eyes on the Klan principles have joined that order with no thought in their minds of disloyalty to Freemasonry.<sup>55</sup>

*The Fellowship Forum* continued their quarrel with Grand Master Burke and Grand Master Tompkins, both of whom continued to denounce the Klan publicly.<sup>56</sup> One issue of the *Forum* charged Burke with taking a "Throne of Authority," declaring his tyrannical persecution of the Klan in California, and the condemnation of the Invisible Empire by other Grand Masters, to be "the result of the Catholic influence to create an internal dissension through their 'invisible attacks' on Masonry."<sup>57</sup> On the subject, George Fleming Moore declared that:

The overweening anxiety of a few grand masters scattered throughout the country to denounce the Klan is most mysterious to the common-sense thinking of the average Mason. Masonry has some job of its own to perform if it is to protect itself from the vicious onslaughts of organizations [refers to the Knights of Columbus and other Catholic organizations] which Grand Master Tompkins and a few others are taking under their protective wings in the name of Masonry.<sup>58</sup>

Moore's persistent attacks on the character of these Grand Masters demonstrate how valuable the Invisible Empire's façade was. The officials of the order did not want their own members or their opponents to realize that most Masonic leaders did in fact object to their organization.

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<sup>55</sup> "New York World Wants to Control Masonic Policies," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 14 1922.

<sup>56</sup> For a concise study of Grand Master Samuel Burke's fight with the Klan, see Adam G. Kendall, "Freemasonry and the Second Ku Klux Klan in California, 1921-1925," *Journal of Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism* 2, no. 1 (2011). Tompkins' crusade against the Invisible Empire is discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>57</sup> "Grand Master Burke Charged With Taking 'Throne of Authority'," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922 p.1,3; "Freemasonry On Guard," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922p. 6; "Masters and Wardens Ass'n Seeks Vindication for Grand Master Burke," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 6 1922.

<sup>58</sup> "The Friends of Freemasonry," *The Fellowship Forum*, August 4 1922.

The *Forum* repeatedly blamed the insidious reach of the Catholic Church for these denunciations of the Klan, and called for fellow Masons to dismiss the remarks made by clearly misled Grand Masters. To further drive the point home, in July 1922 the *Forum* allowed the Klan's Imperial Klokard and 32° Mason, William J. Mahoney, to make a statement regarding this controversy. The *Forum* published a letter Mahoney had sent to Grand Masters across America responding to the *New York World* article and anti-Klan persecution. In his letter, Mahoney urged Masonic leaders to be fair and dispassionate when judging the Invisible Empire, to ignore the unproven charges brought against them, and to realize that the Klan and the Craft stood for the same ideals. In fact, the *Forum* ensured their readers had seen the letter by running it again in early October and reprinting it in other pro-Klan newspapers.<sup>59</sup> Accompanying the reprinted letter was an article that mirrored and counteracted the *New York World's* exposé of Grand Masters who condemned the Klan. This article contained a list of several Masonic authorities who, contrary to Tompkins or Burke, recommend that no action should be taken on the Klan. Arkansas Grand Master Leonidas Kirby, for example, explained that "Arkansas Masonry officially neither approves nor disapproves of the Ku Klux Klan. Many Arkansas Masons are members of the Klan. Other members are opposed to the Klan."<sup>60</sup> Other Grand Masters agreed, explaining that it was not their business to get involved in affairs outside the lodge, while a number stated that they knew very little about the order and were therefore reluctant to denounce or comment on the subject.

*The Fellowship Forum* was not the only newspaper that was trying to quash anti-Klan remarks made by prominent Masons. *The Fiery Cross* carried out a similar public relations squabble after Iowa's Grand Master, Frank W. Glaze, started a campaign in June 1923 to eradicate the Klan from the state's lodges. His anti-Klan campaign was by no means passive. Glaze made stern denunciations of the Klan, accusing them of being a vigilante organization and

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<sup>59</sup> "Rank and File of Masons Throughout United States Approves Forum's Fair Play Policy on Ku Klux Klan," *The Fellowship Forum*, July 28 1922 p. 1,10-11; "Famous Mahoney Letter to Grand Masters of Country," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1922 p.15-16; "Master Mason Scores Misguided Leaders Who Oppose the Klan," *The Texas 100 Per Cent American*, August 18 1922.

<sup>60</sup> "Grand Masters See Through Meddling Outsiders Attempts To Create Discord," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1922.

saying that "I can see no reason why a good Mason would want to join an organization which is in disrepute and a disgrace to the community." Glaze went further and dismissed Reverend Thomas L. Roberts, the Junior Warden of the local lodge of Sheffield, Iowa, because he was a known Klan organizer, and even asked that all members in official positions resign if they were Klansmen or were planning to join.<sup>61</sup> His attempts to eradicate the Klan from Iowa's lodges also included banning all Klan speakers from the lodge.

*The Fiery Cross* reported the news in July, calling Glaze "narrow-minded"; next month they reported that the Klan was growing in Iowa even "in spite of the propaganda of the enemy, and the smokescreen tactics of propagandists in Masonic and Protestant circles" and happily declared that "Men prominent in the fraternal, religious and political life of the state are carrying the message of loyalty to Klan principles to scores of audiences every week."<sup>62</sup> Much like *The Fellowship Forum*, the journalists of *The Fiery Cross* had pointed to the pernicious influence of the Pope to explain and dismiss the attitude of anti-Klan Masonic leaders, and had successfully defended the illusion that Freemasonry was intertwined with the Klan.

The *Texas 100% American* similarly took issue with New York Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins. One especially explicit columnist declared that Tompkins had an "insane desire, on his part to make a monkey of himself" and that he and others who had condemned the Invisible Empire had "shame[d] the office of grand master." He also added:

Masons therefore, being men and upstanding men, are not going to permit Tompkins to tell them and get away with it, why they **can't or they can belong to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.**

A Mason's private business belongs to a Mason, and not to Masonry – and certainly not to some narrow-minded, bigoted Mason such as Tompkins.

Tompkins and all his herd can play to the Catholic grandstand when and

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<sup>61</sup> "Grand Master Glaze Speaks to Grand Lodge," *Oelwien Daily Register*, June 12 1923; "High Mason Flays Klan as Disgrace and Disreputable," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, June 12 1923

<sup>62</sup> "Condemns Ku Klux Klan," *The Fiery Cross*, July 6 1923 p.9; "Iowa Hears Call and is Harkening," *The Fiery Cross*, August 10 1923.

wherever they please, but Masons will gently but firmly do as they are doing – **tell busy-bodies of the Tompkins type** to close up the tent and go home, as nobody came here to see a Mason make an ass of himself[emphasis in original].<sup>63</sup>

This writer, a self-declared Freemason, attempted to ridicule Tompkins to dismiss his allegations. By insulting Tompkins and attacking him personally, the *Texas 100% American* hoped that readers would question whether Tompkins's stance was valid.

The evidence from the columns and pages of the Invisible Empire's most popular newspapers seems to reveal that there was a systematic attempt to blur the lines between the two fraternities. It is not merely a coincidence either; the patterns drawn from various distinct Klan newspapers indicate what appears to be a national strategy. This may all appear very circumstantial, as there are few documents that have survived that indicate that all Klan newspapers were following some sort of coordinated plan. However there is very little that can be successfully proven with complete certainty about the Klan. With the Klan deliberately burning and hiding its official documents, it is doubtful that historians will be able to finish the puzzle of the Invisible Empire without all the pieces.

But fortunately, one Klan apostate, Edgar I. Fuller, managed to save some of the pieces of this puzzle before they were destroyed, publishing them in his exposé *The Klan Inside-Out*. This insightful book contains several intimate details about the Invisible Empire, including an entire chapter entitled "Conquest of Masonic Fraternity by the Klan" where Fuller reveals details about William J. Mahoney, the Klan's Imperial Klokard, and his attempts to convince Masons not to oppose the Klan.<sup>64</sup> Mahoney's position involved heading the KKK's lecture department as well as writing pamphlets for the fraternity.<sup>65</sup> Mahoney was a loyal Klansman, but he was also high ranking Scottish Rite Mason. He achieved the rank of Knight Commander of the Court of Honour, a degree that was only

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<sup>63</sup> "Only Fools Rush In," *Texas 100% American*, July 13 1923.

<sup>64</sup> Monteval, *Klan Inside*, p.45-47

<sup>65</sup> William J. Mahoney "Some Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan", reproduced in Julia E. Johnson, ed. *The Ku Klux Klan*, The Reference Shelf (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1923), p.51-57.

awarded to a select number of Scottish Rite Masons for their extraordinary contribution to the fraternity. Fuller claims that not only were Mahoney and Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans close, but that Mahoney confided to many that Evans was trying to get him to use his connections in the Scottish Rite to award him the exclusive thirty-third degree. Some of his known associates were George Fleming Moore, who had headed the SRSJ for 7 years, and James S. Vance. Both of Vance and Moore ran *The Fellowship Forum* and called Mahoney a “friend”, and had printed several of his musings and declarations, including his aforementioned letter to the Grand Masters of all 49 Grand Lodges.<sup>66</sup>

Fuller publishes an interesting circular from Mahoney to klaverns in North Carolina, and which presumably was also sent to Klansmen in other states. The letter informed these Klansmen that his friend James S. Vance, General Manager of *The Fellowship Forum*, had asked that Mahoney find out the official position of any Grand Masters and other Masonic officials he could contact on the issue of the Klan, asking him to furnish the names of 50 or a 100 prominent Masons whom they could write to. Mahoney wrote in his letter to his Klannish subjects “Since this is his purpose it will be well for us to be sure that these letters reach men who will express themselves favourably” and asked Klansmen to furnish him with “the names of addresses of at least two prominent Masons in your state who, if they write at all, will write favourably to our cause.”<sup>67</sup> Mahoney was selectively picking Freemasons for their opinion regarding his order to give the appearance of popular approval. This recollection of Masonic statements referring to the Klan, that has been discussed previously, appeared two weeks later in the *Forum*, and contained statements that mostly claimed it would be un-Masonic to declare themselves either for or against the Klan.

What we see here then is official Klan orders to ensure the illusion of widespread Masonic support for the Klan and its cause. Fuller goes further and also prints telegrams that contain correspondence between Imperial Kleagle

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<sup>66</sup> “Mahoney Sees New Party Due,” *The Fellowship Forum*, February 24 1923.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from William J. Mahoney to an undisclosed klavern, September 21 1922, reproduced in Monteval, *Klan Inside*, p.47.

Edward Young Clarke and other Klan officers. These telegrams, from September 1921, inform Clarke that the vocally anti-Klan Masonic newspaper, the *Missouri Freemason* was being sold to someone called Littlefield, who had been lent money by a “Fourth Degree K[night of] C[olumbus].” Clarke then had his men inquire as to possibly purchasing the paper, saying that “vital quick action necessary as *Freemason* making vigorous fight on us and influencing Missouri Grand Lodge with hazard of spreading.” What we see here is more direct proof that Klan officials deliberately sought to silence anti-Klan Masonic media, by both bolstering *The Fellowship Forum* with pro-Klan statements and by buying up anti-Klan Masonic papers like *The Missouri Freemason*. The Propagation Department understood the importance of establishing their reputation in the minds of the American public. This evidence, alongside that from various Klan newspapers suggests that there was in fact a national strategy, and that klaverns and officials cooperated to present their version of the Ku Klux Klan to the public.

#### **4) Better than Freemasonry**

The Invisible Empire’s deliberate and sustained campaign to appear Masonic, both in membership and in ideology, makes the KKK seem like a fraternity insecure with its position in American society, a fraternity that depended on others to seem acceptable. But although the Klan hid behind the label of “fraternity” and looked to their Masonic connections to defend them from opposition, there is a strong sense that the Klan saw itself as more than just a fraternity, and that they considered themselves an improvement on Freemasonry. At the 1923 convention of Grand Dragons, one Exalted Cyclops declared, to the approval of the high-ranking Klansmen present, that:

The Klan is more than a fraternal Order. It has something more to justify its existence than a ritual and ceremonies that are no more fantastic than are to be found in other organizations. In all fraternal order rituals are found something of the weird, and all fraternal order ceremonies are marked by the fantastic. In the genius of the Klan is to be found something more than ritual, and ceremonial and symbolism. In the Klan

is to be found a movement in which is crystalized devotion to principle and eagerness to make those principles effective in American life.<sup>68</sup>

Imperial Wizard Evans himself declared how superior the Klan was as a fraternity declaring:

The average fraternal organization is, to a considerable extent, shorn of its power for good by its inactivity. The Klan is so constructed that inactivity would mean its decease, in any community. It *must* keep going, and in its routine of living it takes the principles of the better class of lodges out of the abstract and puts them into the concrete – it is operative, and it is not presumption to forecast increasing service all along the fraternal line within the near future.<sup>69</sup>

This does not mean that the Klan did not respect Masonry; they certainly did and looked up to it. They merely felt that they were an improvement, an enhanced version of Masonry. One article appearing in *The Western American*, a Klan periodical from Portland, Oregon, outlined the Klan's attitude towards the Craft best, saying "The Masonic order is the great exemplar and umpire among the fraternal societies, ancient in lineage and honorable in achievement beyond comparison with any other, but the standard of the Klan is equally as lofty, its ritual as impressive and beautiful, its ideals and methods as attractive..." They also pointed out that while Masonry had been infiltrated by pro-Papists and agents of Rome, the Klan remained pure and militantly Protestant.<sup>70</sup> It is ironic then, that the Klan spent so much time and effort trying to convince the American public and their membership that they were a respectable fraternity, so similar to Masonry that they were practically brothers, and yet they considered themselves more than a fraternity and even superior version of Freemasonry. In order to market itself to Freemasons, the Ku Klux Klan needed to demonstrate that they their order was an upgraded version of their own, an organization that would fulfil their needs as militant Protestants. To sell their

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<sup>68</sup> Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons*, p.131

<sup>69</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation* (Kansas City: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc., 1924), p.158

<sup>70</sup> Article reproduced in "Klan Paper Sees Masonry in Role of Great Umpire," *The Fellowship Forum* 1923.

order to the Craft they had to distinguish themselves as a new form of militant fraternalism.

The Ku Klux Klan had a fluid and ever-changing conceptualization of itself. Part of this resulted from the fact that the order was composed of so many different factions who had distinct ideas about what the Invisible Empire was and could be. The marketers and editors that controlled the group's public image would employ whatever definition suited them at the time. When the Ku Klux Klan was under attack, the order justified itself as a fraternity and compared their own pursuits as those of just another brotherhood. The Klan also regularly highlighted its close association with the Craft, in an effort to imbue their own organization with this fraternity's respectability and heritage. They also deliberately downplayed their more aggressive features before their enemies.

Though the Ku Klux Klan was made to appear docile and respectable to outsiders, to those who had already accepted its doctrine of white supremacy and 100% Americanism it was sold as a fraternity that reached beyond the bounds of traditional fraternalism. To its supporters, the Invisible Empire was sold as an aggressive and politically-active brotherhood. The Propagation Department's image management was so effective they were able to present the Klan as both harmless and forceful depending on the audience. The *New York World* described this second characterization of the Ku Klux Klan saying "it is known by *The World* to be a fact that every official of the Klan who can do so plays his Masonic affiliation for all it is worth twenty-four hours a day. Indeed the appeal for members is made on the ground that the Klan is a militant body picking up where Masonry leave[s] off."<sup>71</sup> Although the Ku Klux Klan had frequently alluded to their ties with Freemasonry, they distinguished themselves by emphasizing their active involvement in political and social affairs. They claimed they were like the Freemasons, but with teeth. They were not trying to be like the Freemasons, they were trying to improve their formula with an innovative and flexible model that responded to the needs of its members and of the times.

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<sup>71</sup> "Bay State Masons Warned of Klan's False Propaganda," *New York World*, June 17 1922.

Charles J. Orbison, a Past Grand Master of Indiana's Freemasons and a national officer of the KKK, testified to this approach at a 1924 speech in Wilmington, North Carolina, where he praised the contributions made by traditional fraternities like the Freemasons, Elks or the Red Men. However, he also pointed out that:

These fraternities have sought merely to inculcate religious principles in the hearts of men, leaving men in their individual initiative to carry them out. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan seek to mobilize these forces and make them a militant, aggressive power in building up American citizenship, in safeguarding these shores from the pollution of Europe and eliminating the undesirable from American soil.<sup>72</sup>

The genius of the Propagation Department lay in this two-pronged marketing strategy. They defended their organization from external attacks by shielding behind the mantle of fraternalism, painting themselves as a harmless brotherhood, and by emphasizing the support their movement had from the prestigious Freemasons. At the same time though, they grasped the sense of frustration that so many Freemasons felt with the antiquated restrictions guarding that organization, and marketed the Ku Klux Klan as the solution to this intransigence. "They wanted action. Thousands upon thousands of Masons were tired of seeing Rome's gradual encroachment on all American privileges... all glory to the Klan in getting the secret societies awakened to the Catholic menace" proclaimed one Klan publication.<sup>73</sup> The Klan targeted these anxieties, and convinced Americans it was both a harmless brotherhood and an aggressive militant order. The Propagation Department's intelligent and effective strategy is perhaps one of the most undervalued factors of the Klan's success. It helped to distinguish the Invisible Empire from the many other patriotic societies it was competing with at the time, and made the task of selling the order much easier.

This convincing façade helped the Invisible Empire expand to practically every state in the country, and establish itself as an influential force in American

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<sup>72</sup> "Past Grand Master of Indiana Masons Lauds the Ku Klux Klan," *The Fellowship Forum*, March 15 1924.

<sup>73</sup> "Catholics Fearful of the Enormous Growth of Klan," *Texas 100% American* April 27 1923.

society. But much of this supposed power was illusory, a result of the order's secrecy and effective image management. The Ku Klux Klan succeeded in attracting recruits by presenting itself as a resolute mass-movement, by making themselves seem as if most of the neighbourhood, town or state were supporters of this new drive for 100% Americanism. "Basically, the psychology of these sales was the lure of being an 'insider'" explained one journalist, "The weird Klan ritual helped create an illusion that the Klan was an invisible power dominating the community."<sup>74</sup>

The Klan did not only use the institution of Freemasonry in its newspapers to make their fraternity and ideology seem respectable, they also used other institutions that they admired to defend themselves. So for example, *The Courier* printed a section called "Said President Coolidge So Says the Klan" where they reprinted statements by President Coolidge that they approved of, while *The Fiery Cross* reprinted articles from *The Dearborn Independent* that was directed by the popular auto magnate and fierce anti-Semite Henry Ford.<sup>75</sup> These examples show figures the Klan hoped to have on their side, and it is no secret that the Invisible Empire was trying to create an organization composed of select groups of people. But what is interesting is that despite having a membership composed of Klansmen with allegiances in dozens of fraternities, the Klan focused practically all of its attention on appearing like an organization patronized by Masons. The Klan did not display itself as either a Republican or a Democrat organization, neither did they attempt to portray themselves as belonging to one particular Protestant denomination, yet they desperately wanted to appear Masonic. Not an organization of Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, or Woodmen of the World, and not an organization of Red Men, but a powerful and respectable fraternity composed of and supported by Freemasons.

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<sup>74</sup> Samuel Taylor Moore, "How the Kleagles Collected the Cash: The Story of the Hoosier Sales Campaign - and Its Director," *The Independent*, December 13 1924

<sup>75</sup> "Said President Coolidge So Says the Klan," *The Courier*, April 1923; "The Chicago Disclosures," *The Fiery Cross*, February 23 1923.



IMAGE 2 - MASONS AND KLANSMEN ATTEND A FUNERAL<sup>76</sup>

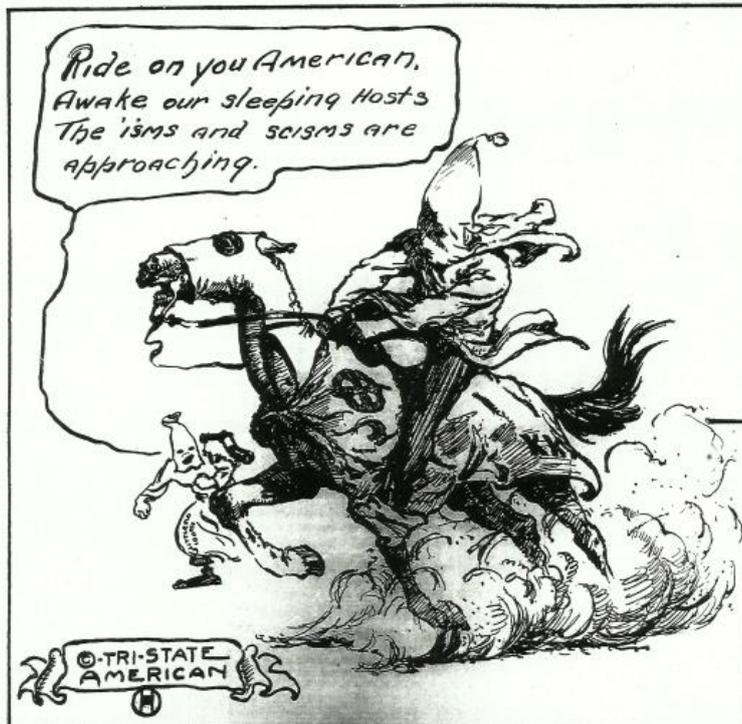


IMAGE 3 – DUTIES CONFRONT THE MODERN PAUL REVERE<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> "Masons and Klansmen Attend Funeral," *The Fiery Cross*, March 9 1923

<sup>77</sup> "Duties Confront the Modern Paul Revere," *Dawn*, January 26 1924



## CHAPTER 4: SALESMEN OF HATE: SELLING THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE

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In his 1922 novel *Babbitt*, Sinclair Lewis introduces his readers to a curious protagonist, George F. Babbitt, a middle-aged realtor from the booming fictional town of Zenith. Babbitt is an entirely ordinary American, in many respects he is *the* average middle-class American of the 1920s. Lewis presents a scathing satyr of American culture in this book, with the character of Babbitt expounding the beliefs and mannerisms of his milieu. In the novel, George discusses with his neighbours the importance of having a sound Republican business administration; he admires and loves the technological wonders in his possession, such as his car or his shaving razor; he commends the enacting of Prohibition to protect those with weaker minds, although he regularly breaks the Volstead Act to indulge himself and his dinner party guests with some of the forbidden liquor. George F. Babbitt was, all in all, the quintessential 1920s middle-class American.<sup>1</sup>

Literary critics have recognized that stylistically, *Babbitt* leaves much to desire.<sup>2</sup> The development of George's character is confusing and unrefined, while the plot seems disjointed, with a sudden and unexplained conclusion. But it is not in the realm of story-telling that Sinclair Lewis excels, it is in the documentary depiction of his writing. Lewis was a savvy and comprehensive writer, carrying out vast amounts of research on his subjects, all in an effort to accurately mock them. His papers show that he spent most of the spring of 1921 travelling around the Midwest, which was just then starting to hear whispers of a revived Ku Klux Klan, and how he pored over salesmen's and realtors advertisements to be up to speed with the jargon and techniques of the day.<sup>3</sup> During the 1920s, Lewis' caricature of the American middle-class was commended for its amusing accuracy; one review of the novel in *Nation* declared that *Babbitt* "represents a deed of high cultural significance," and that

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap Publishers, 1922).

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough and acerbic criticism of Lewis' works, see Joel Fisher, "Sinclair Lewis and the Diagnostic Novel: 'Main Street' and 'Babbitt'," *Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 3 (December 1986), p.432.

<sup>3</sup> James M. Hutchisson, "'All of Us Americans at 46': The Making of Sinclair Lewis' 'Babbitt,'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1992), pp.98-106.

the “future historian of American civilization will turn to it with infinite profit...”<sup>4</sup> Lewis’ diagnostic and documentary style means that historians have been able to use *Babbitt* to gain a deeper understanding of the world of business and 1920s America as a whole.

The character that Lewis described in this documentary novel – this enthusiastic and modern 100% American businessman, with a passion for sales and fraternalism – is the precise sort of man that the Ku Klux Klan was looking for to sell their organization to 1920s America. This chapter hopes to outline and describe the often forgotten task and purpose of these Klan recruiters, known as ‘kleagles,’ an indispensable force of foot soldiers who delivered the Invisible Empire to countless communities and helped recruit millions of Americans. More than that, this chapter intends to show how the impressive task of selling the Klan was delivered in a uniform manner by a core of efficient salesmen using the latest techniques of the new “science” of salesmanship. The central argument of this chapter however, will be to show that there is reason to believe that the often-referred-to claim that many, if not most, kleagles were also Freemasons, and that they abused their membership to co-opt their brothers into joining the Invisible Empire. This chapter will dissect what historians have already said about kleagles, and try and understand the Propagation Department in detail from a perspective that outlines not just their methods, but their overall purpose and composition. This will hopefully shed more light on the successes and failures of the Klan’s recruiting wing.

### **1) The Propagation Department and its Kleagles**

The Second Invisible Empire emerged at a distinct point in American history. The Roaring Twenties were defined by a sense of modernity that impacted politics, society, and culture. The nation was breaking conventions and turning their backs on the formalities and traditions of the past, which was increasingly seen as outdated. The world of business was also afflicted by the dawn of modernity. As Lynn Dumenil has argued “the 1920s was marked by a sense of prosperity and get-rich quick mentality, evident not only in the stock

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas S. Hines, "Echoes from 'Zenith:' Reactions of American Businessmen to *Babbitt*," *The Business History Review* 41, no. 2 (Summer 1967), p.125.

market but also in the giddy land booms in Florida and Los Angeles that reflected Americans' sense of a new era of unlimited material progress."<sup>5</sup> This new America, captured so faithfully in the pages of *Babbitt*, required a new approach. Businessmen were already adapting their sales techniques to improve their business. The Propagation Department in charge of selling the Klan would also have to create an efficient recruitment machine that understood the needs of the public, and the best way of delivering the Invisible Empire's unique product.

This Second Klan was a bit of an oddity when it came to its propagation. Its Reconstruction predecessor had spread orally throughout the ex-Confederate states as a rumour among Southerners, organizing chapters wherever it was felt that the racial hierarchy was threatened. Membership in this new Klan, on the other hand, was marketed like any other commercial product of the 1920s. The determined efforts of the Invisible Empire's salesmen would become an indispensable factor in the rise of the movement. Reporter Stanley Frost recognized the significance of the Klan's Propagation Department, explaining how they had "brought recruiting to a point of efficiency which is almost scientifically perfect and far beyond any similar system. No matter how much credit is given to the appeal made by its ideals and purposes, these could not propagate themselves."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately the kleagles are an overlooked chapter in the history of the Klan, one that is of fundamental importance for us to understand the success of this fraternity.

The approach and methods employed by individual kleagles, as well as their own charisma and skill, played a vital role in the establishment of the Invisible Empire in a new town. The development of the Klan in Madison, Wisconsin is a perfect example of the bearing of this factor. A kleagle arrived at some point in late August 1921, placing an ad in the *Wisconsin State Journal* that read "Wanted: Fraternal Organizers, men of ability between the ages of 25 and 40. Must be 100% Americans. Masons Preferred."<sup>7</sup> This kleagle was trying

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<sup>5</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Frost, *The Challenge of the Klan* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924), p.116

<sup>7</sup> "Wanted: Fraternal Organizers," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 26 1921

to find local men to become kleagles themselves, but he did in a very visible and alarming way. The community's response was mostly negative. In early September the same kleagle gave a public speech about the Klan's ideals, and after distributing some literature and unsuccessfully soliciting some locals, he gave up and left Madison. The loud and conspicuous approach to selling the Klan used by this particular kleagle upset many people in town. The campaign's public nature allowed Klan opponents, including Madison's Freemasons who were infuriated by this intrusive newspaper ad, to rally against the Invisible Empire before it gained a foothold in their town. Madison was visited by a more discrete kleagle a year later, selling the exact same fraternity. This second kleagle implemented a secret drive for members that would avoid hostilities, and managed to find a base of support from which a strong Klan developed.<sup>8</sup> This second campaign also benefitted from the national publicity awarded by the 1921 *World* exposé and from the experience of previous attempts.

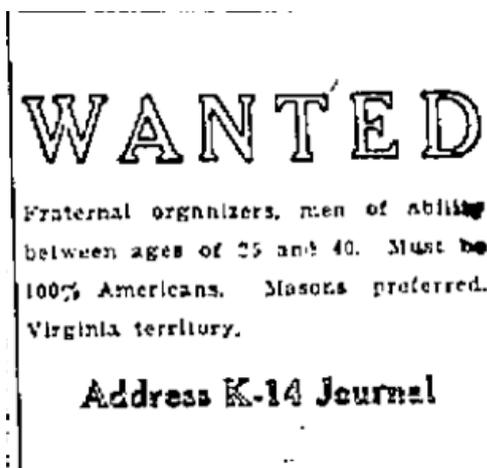


IMAGE 5 - ADVERTISEMENT FOR KLEAGLES IN THE WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

How the Klan was sold was of critical importance to its success in Madison and other locations. For example, one California Freemason argued that the main reason that the Invisible Empire had been unsuccessful in recruiting in his community was because of the "short-comings of their organizer" which had appeared "to put a damper on things."<sup>9</sup> However, previous accounts of the Klan have neglected this fact, primarily because there is such little

accurate information about the kleagles and the Propagation Department. Although Klan records are already quite rare, the solitary travelling kleagles existed as an almost semi-independent wing of the organization, and there are

<sup>8</sup> Robert A. Goldberg, "The Ku Klux Klan in Madison, 1922-1927," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58, no. 1 (1974), pp.32-33

<sup>9</sup> "Inspector's Report from Rufus B. Carlton to Arthur S. Crites," undated, "Ku Klux Klan Collection," Henry W. Coit Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

no surviving records that outline their tactics or the men that made up the Propagation Department in sufficient detail.

What have certainly survived are the impressions that kleagles made on Americans inside and outside the Klan. During the 1920s, the kleagles and their promotion activities were regarded quite negatively by many in the American public, and this characterization has greatly coloured subsequent perceptions of these elusive salesmen. Kleagles received \$4 for every member they recruited, and many Americans came to see them as charlatans motivated by avarice. As former Mississippi Senator LeRoy Percy proclaimed in 1922:

What reason could there be at this time to drag from its grave this old Southern bogey, with its secrecy, disguises, mask, Kleagles, Wizards, and fee-fi-fo-fum clap-trap? Why was this new Klan formed? The easy and half-true answer is: 'For profit.' The initiation fee is ten dollars for each Klansman. Without that high incentive, certainly no clannish brotherhood would have been attempted.<sup>10</sup>

Kleagles remained one of the most criticized aspects of the Invisible Empire throughout its burst in popularity. Their reception was so negative that even Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans went on to disapprove of them, remarking that they sold "hate at \$10 a package."<sup>11</sup>

Historians have also managed to uncover plenty about the success of kleagles and their director, or Imperial Kleagle, Edward Young Clarke. The Klan only really started to pick up speed when Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, two local promoters who ran the Southern Publicity Agency (SPA), joined the Invisible Empire. Before this, Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons had only managed to sell membership to a small number of men in Alabama and Georgia and the organization was languishing. Tyler and Clarke had been successful promoters for some time now, working for organizations such as the Red Cross or the Young Men's Christian Association. Clarke was referred to by

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<sup>10</sup> LeRoy Percy, "The Modern Ku Klux Klan," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1922, p.130

<sup>11</sup> Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," *The North American Review* 830(March-May 1926), p.35

those who knew him as “a disciple of P.T. Barnum,” or “a super-salesman”; when he worked for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce as a booster he was referred to as “The Doctor of Sick Towns.”<sup>12</sup> The SPA was a prosperous promoting firm, and very in tune with latest techniques in the new “science” of salesmanship and recruitment. While working for the Anti-Saloon League, Tyler and Clarke were possibly one of the very first people to drop pamphlets out of plane as part of a publicity drive.<sup>13</sup>

It was under Clarke and Tyler that the nation was sliced up into pieces, and using their system of incentivised selling, the Klan really started to grow. Kleagles first spread the Klan from its heartland in Georgia and Alabama to surrounding Southern states, but it soon found real popularity in the Southwest, especially in the states of Texas and Oklahoma. Kleagles leapfrogged west across the country to California and Oregon, while others spread northward towards the Midwest and the North. Many people of the time commented that all this success seemed to be all Clarke’s doing, that he was running the organization. One US Senator appraised his role during those early years as being “pretty near the whole shooting match.”<sup>14</sup> Edward Young Clarke played a much more public role, as he was the Imperial Kleagle and *de facto* head of the Invisible Empire for a period, but his business partner and lover Elizabeth Tyler was equally influential in the development of the SPA. Together, they established the pyramid selling scheme and instituted the techniques that would help spread the Invisible Empire to every state in the continental United States.

Historians have also been able to uncover plenty about the approaches and methods used by kleagles to convince Americans to join, but overall the accounts on this matter are disappointingly brief. Most of the general histories of the Invisible Empire focus on the message the order was selling, not on how it was sold, and only briefly mention the techniques used by kleagles.<sup>15</sup> Although

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<sup>12</sup> John Mack Shotwell, "Crystallizing Public Hatred: Ku Klux Klan Public Relation in the Early 1920s" (University of Wisconsin, 1974), p.16

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19

<sup>14</sup> Charles O. Jackson, "William J. Simmons: A Career In Ku Kluxism," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 1966), p.359.

<sup>15</sup> For various accounts of the Propagation Department and their role in the Klan, see Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 155-156; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981), pp.33-35; Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and*

since then other historians, like Craig Fox, have been able to elaborate on the techniques and approaches of these salesmen, this is still a subject that requires a lot more attention.<sup>16</sup> As Stanley Frost commented “[Anyone] who has ever tried to enlist people, at a price, in any general movement will testify that it is no mean achievement to induce four million men to pay anything at all.”<sup>17</sup> It is essential to analyse the role of the Propagation Department to truly appreciate how the Ku Klux Klan became a national phenomenon.

To understand how the kleagles recruited members we need to contextualise their approaches and techniques by analysing the history of salesmen in America, and compare the differences between selling ordinary products and selling membership in fraternities like the Ku Klux Klan. All this will serve to show that the Invisible Empire was not sold by a mass of avaricious or alarmist fanatics who gave inflammatory speeches and intimidated men into joining, but by an organized core of salesmen who recruited Americans in a specific and uniform manner. The Propagation Department was a driven, modern, coordinated, and intelligent sales force, and it was these characteristics that made this group such effective recruiters.

Much like with other companies, the Klan’s salesmen carved up the nation into territories and established an organized, almost bureaucratic, pyramid system whereby the different levels of authority controlled the progress of recruitment and shared in the profits. The country was divided into Domains, essentially a group of states, which were headed by a Grand Goblin. The states within these Domains were referred to as Realms, headed by a King Kleagle. The Realms were subdivided further into Provinces, and again into Klantons, which composed the territory of an individual klavern. Of the klectoken, the kleagle who initially recruited the prospect received \$4, the King Kleagle took \$1, the Grand Goblin kept \$0.50, while Clarke and Tyler took out a further \$2.50, leaving just \$2 for the Klan’s Treasury. Each kleagle was assigned a territory, and that it was up to him to set up as many klaverns as possible,

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*Decline of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), pp.21-25; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967), p.10.

<sup>16</sup> Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2011), pp.1-15.

<sup>17</sup> Frost, *The Challenge of the Klan*, p.156.

travelling around his territory to different locations periodically to find new recruits and hold rallies and other events. It was not unlike the system used by dozens of national companies to sell their products. The travelling salesman had been a staple of American business life for decades, except these were selling membership in the Klan instead of books or insurance.

The hundreds of kleagles who arrived in cities probably believed and supported the ideology of white supremacy, conservative Protestantism and 100% Americanism that they were promoting through the Ku Klux Klan. But their work was driven by the immense profits that could be made from the order. "As far as its chief protagonists are concerned" declared one critic of the order, "the Ku Klux is a huge money-making hoax – a gold mine."<sup>18</sup> The alluring profitability of the Propagation Department's commission system spurred kleagles to energetically solicit any possible recruit. Another observer remarked that experienced salesmen were flocking to the Klan purely because of the financial opportunities that this order afforded. Using the term "Babbitt" as an allegory for the gullible middle-classes, this writer explained that "Babbitt is a Klansman because he hopes to make more money being one. Every other Klansman is a Klansman for just this same simple reason."<sup>19</sup>

Precise figures for the exact amounts a kleagle made are rare. Those that exist are tainted by the fact that many of them would have probably lied about their sales figures and pocketed the klectoken. There is one account that does offer an accurate enumeration of the lucrative trade of "kluxing." Ernst and Ernst, an accounting firm from Ohio and the precursor to the multinational firm Ernst & Young, carried out an extensive audit of the sales figures for membership in Indiana submitted by Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson. Their evaluation revealed that between June 25 1922 and July 21 1923, Indiana's kleagles had enlisted 117,969 men in that state alone. Only 117,245 of these initiates paid the \$10 klectoken, as the remaining 724 joined free of charge as honorary members. Following the dismissal of Edward Young Clarke in 1922,

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<sup>18</sup> Ezra A. Cook, *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed: attitudes Toward Jews, Catholics, Foreigners, and Masons: Fraudulent Methods Used, Atrocities Committed in Name Order* (Chicago: Ezra A. Cook, 1922), p.24.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Corning White, "An American Fascismo," *Forum*, November 1924, p.638.

half of each new member's klectoken went directly to Atlanta, the kleagle kept \$4 and the king kleagle was given one dollar. Therefore, in a little over a year, the Imperial Treasury made \$586,225 from selling membership in Indiana. Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans was understandably ecstatic, and even offered to reward Stephenson with \$5,000 for his outstanding performance. Stephenson politely declined the reward, a justifiable modesty when we consider that he personally made an astonishing \$117,245 as king kleagle from the commission on Hoosier memberships alone.<sup>20</sup> In today's economy, that would probably be well over a million dollars, depending on what measure of worth is applied.<sup>21</sup> Stephenson probably amassed the largest fortune by a single officer of the Invisible Empire, but his wealth demonstrates the astounding financial opportunities that working for the Propagation Department offered.

The officers of the Propagation Department were driven by the immense profits that could be made from the order. The \$4 commission encouraged kleagles to work tirelessly and to try and enlist as many people as possible. To achieve such impressive recruitment figures the Ku Klux Klan's kleagles implemented the latest "scientific" salesmanship techniques, and carried out a national sales campaign that rival patriotic fraternities such as the JOUAM simply could not compete with. Much of their success derives from the lure of the commission system, but the field of "kluxing" was not a free for all. Kleagles were not simply trying to scam the public; they soon realized that if they established a strong klavern that membership would grow steadily, as would the profits. The Propagation Department instituted a modern, coordinated and intelligent sales campaign throughout the nation that introduced standardized sales approaches and established clear guidelines about how to set up a klavern. Much like their public relations campaign, the Invisible Empire's sales strategy was carefully planned. They employed the latest sales techniques to ensure that the flow of cash and klectokens would not dry up.

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<sup>20</sup> "Ernst & Ernst Report," "David Curtis Stephenson Collection, 1922-1978", Box 1 Folder 8, Indiana Historical Society; "Letter from Hiram Wesley Evans to D.C. Stephenson," August 2 1923 "David Curtis Stephenson Collection," Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>21</sup> See Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Measuring Worth," <http://www.measuringworth.com/>

The Second Klan emerged at an exciting time for commercialism, the 1920s, a time in which many Americans could finally afford modern commodities like cars or electric washing machines. Although it had been a progressive phenomenon, the consumer culture became quite prominent during this particular era, and America became swamped with advertising and publicity. Ever since the turn of the century, the art of selling had been slowly being transforming from an “art” into what 1920s Americans believed was a “science.” In other words, selling was no longer based on the innate skills or charm of the salesman. It was now a science, whereby the salesman and his trade were analysed, and his repertoire of tricks could be distilled and practised by anyone who learnt its methods. Since the early twentieth century salesmanship had become a “formal discipline and a practicable theory”; the number of books catalogued in the Library of Congress reflects this growing interest in salesmanship, with only ten books relating to the subject from before 1900 and over two hundred catalogued in between 1910 and 1920; stories of salesmen and their tricks flourished in the press and in the American imagination.<sup>22</sup>

As part of his own research for *Babbitt*, Sinclair Lewis delved deeply into the world of salesmen. No account of the 1920s would have been complete without some discussion of the revolutionary new trends in retail and sales. His novel describes the culture and camaraderie amongst sales agents in one passage, wherein the different characters conversed about their field and how:

They went profoundly into the science of business, and indicated that the purpose of manufacturing a plow or a brick was so that it might be sold. To them, the Romantic Hero was no longer the knights, the wandering poet, the cowpuncher, the aviator, not the brave young district attorney, but the great sales manager, who had an *Analysis of Merchandizing Problems* on his glass-topped desk, whose title of nobility was ‘Go-getter,’ and who devoted himself and all his young samurai to the cosmic

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<sup>22</sup> Timothy B. Spears, “All Things to All Men”: The Commercial Traveler and the Rise of Modern Salesmanship,” *American Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (December 1993), pp.528-529

purpose of Selling – not of selling anything in particular, for or to anybody in particular, but pure Selling.<sup>23</sup>

Through his classic satyr and dry humour, Lewis encapsulated the new attitude of the nation towards salesmen. Selling and salesmanship had become a vital subject of interest not only for businessmen but also for psychologists, economists, politicians and everyday Americans, and had become a crucial feature of any successful company of the 1920s.<sup>24</sup>

One such successful company was “The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Incorporated,” the official name of the KKK, an organization that utilized conventional and modern selling techniques, inherited from previous generations of salesmen. As Craig Fox has argued “At least part of the reason for the Klan’s great success can be found in the very systematic and business-minded methods by which the organization recruited members. Exported nationwide from Atlanta, the hooded order arrived locally as a ready-made ‘product’...” As Fox posits, the Klan was sold as a commodity, an established brand, and was sold almost like any other product of the time. Tennessee kleagle Henry Fry commented in 1922 that other kleagles he knew were “selling memberships [in the Klan] as they would sell insurance or stock” and behaved very much like travelling salesmen of the time.<sup>25</sup> Journalist Frank R. Kent made a similar yet piercing remark when he wrote that:

The men who run the Klan in Atlanta are an exceedingly ‘hard-boiled’ set of fellows who have placed it on a well-camouflaged but wholly commercial basis and are making a great deal of money of it. They operate a non-sentimental selling organization and sell the Klan to ‘prospects’ just as they would sell safety razors, insurance policies, garters or any other article.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Lewis, *Babbitt*, p.126.

<sup>24</sup> The best account about the development of salesmanship is undoubtedly Walter A. Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman: The Transformation of Selling in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004)

<sup>25</sup> Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1922), p.21

<sup>26</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Ku Klux Klan in America," *Spectator*, February 17 1923.

Fry and Kent both agreed that the Invisible Empire was being packaged and delivered like a commodity, as just another product of the era. The leadership of the order realized that they could sell their organization to ordinary Americans just as others sold life insurance or a new car.

It may seem odd that a fraternity like the 1920s Klan needed to be actively marketed, instead of spreading naturally like its previous incarnation, but this new Invisible Empire was emerging in an extremely competitive fraternal world. Historian Mary Anne Clawson describes this curious change in the fraternal market during the early twentieth century, explaining how as the number and popularity of fraternities was growing rapidly, lodges were forced to change their recruitment model.<sup>27</sup> Fraternities could no longer afford to rely exclusively on members themselves to bring in acquaintances to the lodge. This approach was far too gentle. Many fraternities started to employ fraternal agents whose sole purpose it was to recruit prospects and organize new lodges across the nation, selling the fraternity like a travelling salesman. Imperial Wizard Simmons commented on this recent adjustment in fraternal recruitment practices saying:

All of the fraternal orders of which I have any knowledge, with the exception of one or two, have used and resorted to the same methods. If you will go back and study the records of the fraternal orders, especially in recent years, you will find that they have propagation forces and workers.<sup>28</sup>

The Woodmen of the World was one of these fraternities that adopted the agent system to extend its growth, and Simmons became one of their organizers in the years before he founded the Klan. It was here that Simmons would learn all he needed about recruiting members, and where he met some of the men who would form the early core of his own order. When defending the recruitment system of the Propagation Department, Simmons argued that “it was virtually the same plan that I worked out when I was in the organization

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<sup>27</sup> Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.217.

<sup>28</sup> The Committee on Rules: House of Representatives, *First Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office, 1921)p.130.

work of the Woodmen of the World, having organizers, district organizers, and State managers, and so on.”<sup>29</sup> Fraternal agents had become a necessity during this time, and Simmons naturally drew on his experiences during his successful years with the Woodmen of the World to help his own fraternity grow.

The Propagation Department that arose from Simmons’ Klan was composed of competent salesmen; they were not, even though they were often accused of being so, an organization of shysters or tricksters that fooled Americans into joining the fraternity. The idea that kleagles went around lying about the true nature of the Klan was quite common in the American media throughout the 1920s. Pundits believed this was the only way a detestable organization like the KKK could have gained such popularity. One typical headline expressing this idea appeared in Philadelphia’s *Evening Public Ledger*, where one of the headlines read “‘Catch-Penny’ Tricks of Mystic Mummery Draw Gullible into Ku Klux Klan Fold”, and explained how “Klan Kleagles Fool Recruits by Spurious Masonic Indorsement [sic].”<sup>30</sup> These sorts of comments paint a picture of kleagles as dishonest salesmen, when this characterization is not entirely accurate. Kleagles neither forced nor tricked prospective members into joining, they convinced them. This concept was popular among psychologists studying the world of selling at the time. The Propagation Department did not go out into America to try and convert its people unwillingly to the doctrines of white supremacy or Prohibition enforcement. They sold a product that Americans wanted. They traded on the imagery of the movement, on the desire of the American public to feel like a good patriotic citizen to enlist followers.

It would be very difficult to “trick” any American to part with ten dollars, which in the 1920s was a pittance to very few. To put things into perspective, the price of the Klan’s initiation fee and the purchase of robes, which would have been about \$16 in the 1920s, would nowadays be, in real value terms,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.136

<sup>30</sup> “‘Catch-Penny’ Tricks of Mystic Mummery Draw Gullible into Ku Klux Klan Fold,” *Evening Public Ledger*, September 22 1921.

about \$391.<sup>31</sup> Although this may seem like an exorbitant amount for membership in a brotherhood, this was not an inordinately expensive fee for a fraternity at the time. For instance, one Klan supporter remarked that the \$10 klectoken was very little compared to the \$165 he had paid for the last fourteen degrees of the Scottish Rite.<sup>32</sup> Americans were more than willing to pay the price for belonging to a fashionable or exclusive fraternity.

Where the Ku Klux Klan's sales force excelled was in the field of exaggeration and flattery. In speeches, newspaper articles and pamphlets, the promoters of the Southern Publicity Association formed an almost illusory front around the Ku Klux Klan. They exaggerated its size, the scope and nature of its activities, and the fraternity's influence in politics and society. They presented the order as a grass-roots mass movement for white Protestant Americans, a fraternity that would listen to them and could defend their interests. The powerful imagery of the order was especially alluring. Kleagles organized parades and posted notices with the intention of creating mystery and impressing the public. The image of a silent mass of Klansmen in their snow-white robes, walking in tandem down the streets, wrapped in the symbols of the people – the flag, the cross, the bible – all served to help create the illusion of the Klan. For many Americans, whether from the city or the country, these public displays had a profound effect, an effect that was powerful enough to convince them to pay ten dollars to join the movement. As one contemporary sociologist commented "One does not take the price of sixteen bushels of wheat [essentially the price of a klectoken] away from a Missouri farmer without having produced a state of considerable excitement in the ordinarily placid mind of that citizen."<sup>33</sup> Kleagles roused the spirit and emotions of the public, presenting their order as the solution to all their ills.

The Ku Klux Klan's sales agents used careful and intelligent techniques to recruit members. The case of Jesse M. Whited, a San Francisco Freemason, is telling. Whited received a letter in March 1921 from a John Dicks Howe, a

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<sup>31</sup> It should be noted however that the value of money has changed radically since the 1920s, and therefore this is just an estimate. The calculations were carried out at Williamson, "Measuring Worth", a website which also has plenty of information on the relative value of money.

<sup>32</sup> "Letter Argues for Klan," *Dallas Morning News*, September 30 1921.

<sup>33</sup> Frank Bohn, "The Ku Klux Klan Interpreted," *The American Journal of Sociology* 30, no. 4 (1925), p.385

visiting kleagle who was chartering the local klavern. This kleagle made sure to flash his own Masonic credentials – a “member of Paul Revere Lodge No. 462, Past Master of Nebraska Lodge No.1” – and asked if Whited would like to meet and discuss the Invisible Empire.<sup>34</sup> As a fellow Freemason, Howe hoped to earn Whited’s confidence as a member of the Craft, as well as prove that he was a trustworthy man. Whited wrote back asking for more information, and Howe replied furnishing a pamphlet about the order and a membership questionnaire to sign up. Howe also wrote that:

I have many requests for these questionnaires – so many in fact that I have been obliged to wire for an additional supply. Among those already returned, signed, are a number of Masters and Past Masts of Masonic Lodges in this city, in the Bay cities, and scattered throughout the state. No questionnaires are sent to men who are not Masons, and only to those who it is thought can measure up to stand the acid test.<sup>35</sup>

The approach is vaguely reminiscent of modern email scam. The kleagle’s slick letter made it seem as if Whited had been specifically selected for solicitation, and hinted that plenty of his brethren had already joined. The letter has an urgent tone, and was probably meant to make Whited feel as if he needed to join before it was too late. It also appealed to his vanity by implying that he was one of the few who had been chosen to join this rapidly growing movement because they were sure he could “measure up” as a man. Though Whited does not seem to have joined the order, this kleagle was clearly quite experienced. He employed a personalized approach, providing information and emphasizing the necessity and appeal of joining the Invisible Empire.

Using letters such as these and other modern sales techniques, kleagles across the country approached influential citizens and convinced them of the importance of becoming a member of the new and exciting Ku Klux Klan. This sort of method was very popular during this period, and was even referenced by Sinclair Lewis in *Babbitt*. As a real-estate salesman, George F. Babbitt would write a fortnightly form letter that was mimeographed and sent to thousands of

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<sup>34</sup> Letter from John Dicks Howe to Jesse M. Whited,” March 13 1921, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

prospects. Lewis describes this letter in Babbitt's own upbeat tone, saying "It was diligently imitative of the best literary models of the day; of heart-to-heart talk advertisements, 'sales-pulling' letters, discourses on the 'development of Will-Power,' and hand-shaking house organs, as richly poured forth by the new school of Poets of Business"<sup>36</sup> Whited seems to have followed a similar approach in his own line of work, crafting an enticing advertisement using modern techniques designed to attract customers.

The Propagation Department's modern approach to recruitment required national co-ordination and consistency. One of the demands that this new science of salesmanship imposed was uniformity in results, because as it was now a science, its practitioners believed that the results could be replicated. Businessmen P.W Searles, writing in 1904, described the changes he had seen in the world of selling during his career, explaining how salesmen had been transformed from independent sellers who travelled and sold according to their instincts into almost robotic agents for a company, who sold products precisely as they had been instructed how to. Companies even taught salesmen on how to talk to prospective customers, and on such minutia as how to hand over a pen.<sup>37</sup> Companies demanded that salesman practice an effective, predictable and uniform method of selling, one that could be replicated throughout the country and taught to new salesmen. In this aspect, the Klan's Propagation Department and its kleagles was no different from the sales divisions of companies like Coca Cola or General Motors. Kleagles sold their product in a tried and tested way, following certain steps and carrying out the same tactics to gain recruits.

Some bigger companies, like the National Cash Register Corporation, had special schools where new salesmen learnt not only about the products they were selling, but also about how to sell them and what steps they had to follow to achieve that sale.<sup>38</sup> Now the Klan did not have anything as established as a school to train its kleagles, but they certainly taught them certain steps and techniques. There is very little information that survives about this particular

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<sup>36</sup> Lewis, *Babbitt*, p.33.

<sup>37</sup> Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman*, p.5

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139

matter, but former kleagle Henry Fry has discussed his training to some extent. He explains in his book how in east Tennessee, in January 1921, he joined the KKK and was soon after offered a position as the local kleagle in that territory by J.M. McArthur, future King Kleagle of the state. Upon accepting he recounts how McArthur then instructed him on how to solicit people for membership. For instance, McArthur was emphatic that Fry should definitely attempt to try and get people in leadership positions to join.<sup>39</sup>

The Invisible Empire managed to keep an efficient and uniform cadre of salesmen through its strict military business model, where high-ranking officers would instruct and direct their subordinated. However, they also managed to do this through newsletters and newspapers. In the Klan's earliest days, Clarke maintained contact with kleagles and Klansmen nationwide through a newsletter, called the *Weekly News-Letter*, which was published exclusively by the Propagation Department. In many ways, this newsletter was just like newsletters sent out by other companies to their salesmen, and had a similar purpose. Heinz salesmen, for instance, received the company newsletter *Pickles*, which advised them on how to sell properly and which encouraged certain methods, all in an attempt to standardize their salesmen's' approach and improve results.<sup>40</sup> According to one of Clarke's assistants, their newsletter was similar and often contained news of "either some event that had been pulled off by Klansmen in some part of the country, or a speech or some happening that we thought would be of propagating interest to the Klansmen and would assist them in propagating the Klan."<sup>41</sup> A systematic survey of these newsletters is impossible because no collection has survived, but excerpts have appeared occasionally, and usually contain information about kleagles who were carrying out events, like speeches or hosting film nights, events that were bringing in many recruits.<sup>42</sup> One newsletter read:

Colonel Nolan [a lecturer] won the hearts of all who heard him and the request for his return comes not only from Klansmen but from men and

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<sup>39</sup> Fry, *Modern Ku Klux*, pp. 13-15

<sup>40</sup> Friedman, *Birth of a Salesman*, p.102

<sup>41</sup> Shotwell, "Crystallizing Public Hatred," pp.99-100;

<sup>42</sup> For more information on the newsletters, see Representatives, *Hearings on the Ku*, pp.36-37 and Shotwell, "Crystallizing Public Hatred," pp.99-102

women from all walks of life. At the meeting following Colonel Nolan's address, ninety-one applications were presented and interest has been aroused to fever heat here...<sup>43</sup>

Information like this would have encouraged kleagles to use certain methods and techniques, standardizing their techniques and producing a uniform system of selling the Klan.

The uniformity of the Klan's selling techniques is most apparent if we simply observe the ways different kleagles across America sold the fraternity, and note the glaring similarities. All across the country, kleagles were using the same sorts of techniques to infiltrate communities. Usually arriving quietly, announcing their presence to only a few, kleagles found an initial base of recruits from which to grow from, usually garnered at the local fraternal lodge or veteran's organization. The Propagation Department's agents then tried to recruit locals in leadership positions, men such as mayors or policemen, before moving on to important community figures such as local ministers. After a solid group of loyal Klansmen had formed in the community, what followed was typically a series of escalating publicity stunts and public displays, such as the burning of a fiery cross, or a public donation to a local church during mass. As the Klan became a more and more powerful, their recruitment efforts became more and more visible. Huge parades would follow, as well as public initiations and Klan rallies and barbecues. This pattern was replicated in hundreds of communities across America, and became a familiar sequence to many observers of the order.

If we examine the public initiation ceremonies we see that kleagles purposefully organized them in an effort to attract attention to their fraternity, and hopefully gain some new recruits. The Klan broke any semblance of secrecy or exclusivity by holding public initiation rites, an act which contravened the practices of every other major fraternity of the time.<sup>44</sup> In the Klan's first semi-public rally in Birmingham, Alabama in January 1921, journalists were even

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<sup>43</sup> Fry, *Modern Ku Klux*, p.58-59

<sup>44</sup> There is an excellent discussion of this issue in Kathleen Blee and Amy McDowell, "The Duality of Spectacle and Secrecy: A Case Study of the Fraternalism in the 1920s US Ku Klux Klan," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 2 (2012).

given a special enclosure within the grounds so they could closely observe the ceremony and spread the word.<sup>45</sup> The Birmingham Klan was intent on controlling what these journalists could see and on controlling information relating to their order. The Invisible Empire seemed more interested in attracting members than in keeping the secrets of their ritual hidden from the public.

Kleagles followed a simple set of steps, that were repeatedly used throughout the nation, to slowly build up support for the Klan and which worked remarkably well. This is not to say that kleagles' approach was immutable; although they followed a rigid system to sell the Klan, they were extremely adaptable to the local circumstances. A kleagle would adjust to the wishes, reactions, and replies of the community. If the local minister was vehemently hostile to the Klan, the kleagle would most probably skip the Klan's church visit in that particular town. However, in towns without substantial opposition, kleagles followed a simple set of steps, one that had been taught to them by superiors in the Propagation Department, and one that had been designed for them.

## **2) Recruiting in Masonic Lodges**

One of these steps that seems to have formed a part of the Propagation Department's overall plan to sell the Klan to America was that the first stop on a kleagle's agenda in a new town was the local fraternal lodge, preferably that of the Masons. Using their Masonic affiliation, kleagles would enter local lodges in new territories and could expect a warm greeting. Some kleagles were known to join the Freemasons just so they could enlist fellow members. Taking advantage of this fraternal welcome that visiting Masons were accorded, these kleagles would recommend this new fraternity to them. Most general and local studies of the Klan, from Buffalo, New York all the way to Eugene, Oregon, make the claim that kleagles were using their Masonic affiliations to plunder lodges for recruits to join the KKK.<sup>46</sup> The matter has never been fully

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<sup>45</sup> "Ku Klux Initiate 500 Klansmen: Searchlights and Torches Light First Semi-Public Ceremonial at Birmingham," *The New York Times*, January 28 1921

<sup>46</sup> It would be pointless to include every study of the Klan that makes this claim, since it is most of them, but here are a few: William Toll, "Progress and Piety: The Ku Klux and Social Change in Tillamook, Oregon," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (April 1978), pp.62-63; Shawn Lay, "Introduction: The Second Invisible Empire," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku*

investigated, due to the inherent difficulty of researching this elusive group of salesmen.

Salesmen have had a long tradition of joining fraternal lodges such as the Freemasons. Ever since the 1700s and 1800s, salesmen and peddlers had frequently held membership in the Masonic lodge, as it provided a friendly and welcoming haven to make contacts in an unfamiliar territory. Not only that, membership in a lodge as exclusive and respected as the Masons was a sign of respectability and honesty, a useful attribute when trying to sell goods to wary strangers.<sup>47</sup> During the 1920s, many businessmen and salesmen maintained this custom, as it was an ideal place for networking and finding new customers. As the fraternal world expanded, so did the number of lodges that many businessmen would have considered joining, and many held multiple memberships. As Sinclair Lewis explained when describing George Babbitt's interest in fraternities, "It was the thing to do. It was good for business, since lodge-brothers frequently became customers." He also added "Of a decent man in Zenith it was required he should belong to one, preferably two or three, of the innumerable 'lodges' and prosperity-boosting clubs..."<sup>48</sup> In much the same way, the Invisible Empire's recruiters would probably have been experienced salesmen and would already hold membership in a number of clubs and fraternities like the Freemasons.

There is also plenty of evidence that the Propagation Department preferred to hire kleagles with Masonic affiliation from the constant trickle of statements and inklings from Klansmen and contemporary observers who made this allegation. This revelation gained prominence in the 1921 Klan exposé by the *New York World*, who employed ex-kleagle and active Freemason Henry P. Fry as their source.<sup>49</sup> The popularity of the *World's* exposé meant that their

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*Klux Klan of the 1920s*, ed. Shawn Lay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2004)p.7; Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.110; Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, p.8; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, p.34; Christine K. Erickson, "'Kluxer Blues': The Klan Confronts Catholics in Butte, Montana, 1923-1929," *The Montana Magazine of History* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2003), p.48; Michael E. Brooks, *The Ku Klux Klan in Wood County Ohio* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014), p.67.

<sup>47</sup> Mark A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building American Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p.165

<sup>48</sup> Lewis, *Babbitt*, pp.393-395

<sup>49</sup> Fry, *Modern Ku Klux*, p.13

claim was reprinted by several other newspapers, and the idea that many kleagles were using their Masonic membership to recruit new members became quite widespread.<sup>50</sup>

Journalists later elaborated on this claim, and explained how in early 1921, in a meeting of the Propagation Department that included both Grand Goblines and kleagles, Clarke realized that the recruitment figures of kleagles who happened to be Freemasons were higher. This was because “upon entering a strange town or city their Masonic affiliation served as a welcome into desirable circles.” The article elaborates explaining how “Clarke, with a sharp eye to the main chance, immediately issued orders that all non-Masonic kleagles and king kleagles be dismissed and that none but Masons should thereafter be employed in these capacities.”<sup>51</sup> Although the claim that Clarke fired all non-Masonic kleagles seems unlikely, since no disgruntled former employees came forward to denounce the Propagation Department, it does seem possible, and even likely, that Clarke issued some sort of order to his underlings that Masonic membership was advisable. Clarke’s Propagation Department, with its tightly controlled and uniform system of selling would have been amiss without some position regarding the Craft. Clarke’s own personal assistant, Edgar I. Fuller, would later claim that this was in fact the case. He noted how:

Propagation of the Klan was directed from the beginning to a conquest of the Masonic fraternity. Nearly all of the organizers sent into the field and commissioned as Kleagles were members of the Masonic fraternity. These men wore Masonic emblems and symbols as passports to the leaders in Masonry in every community in America. Some of them wore as many as three Masonic emblems conspicuously displayed and of such size and design as to attract attention and be easily recognized at a long distance. These Kleagles were instructed in founding the Klan in a

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<sup>50</sup> In fact, the claim was so widely circulated that Imperial Kleagle Clarke felt the need to make a public statement to the press and to a crowd at Evansville, Indiana, that the two organizations had nothing in common. See Edward Young Clarke, "Intolerance: Answers to the Attacks of the Ku Klux Klan: Address by Edward Young Clarke At Evansville, Indiana September 8, 1922," ed. Ku Klux Klan ( N/A, N/A: 1922), p.39; "Klansmen in Masons' Lodges, Clarke's Boast," *San Antonio Express*, July 6 1922.

<sup>51</sup> "Masons Begin War Against Ku Klux Klan," *The South Bend Tribune*, July 9 1923.

new community to first of all enlist all Masons in good standing and through them find ready access to the lodges and use them as a nucleus to organize a Klan.<sup>52</sup>

More significantly, some Masonic Grand Masters who came out and denounced the Klan made this exact assertion. One Texas Grand Master stated “that he found Masonic temples had been invaded by the organizers of the Klan, who claimed to be Masons,” while Washington Masons made a similar statement.<sup>53</sup> During their sales pitch, many of these Masonic kleagles would try to make it seem as if the Craft and the Klan were closely related. William N. Vaile, Colorado’s Grand Master during 1925, recalled how Klan salesmen had arrived in Masonic lodges and that:

In its solicitation of members the Klan relies largely upon the idea that it is similar and allied to Freemasonry. ‘The same thing as Masonry,’ is a frequent expression of its organizers. One of them, soliciting my own membership, said ‘it is Masonry in action,’ and I have heard members of the Klan who are also Masons use the same phrase in describing it... There is no doubt whatsoever that [the Klan] has made special efforts to get into its membership the officers of Masonic lodge and get its members elected to office in Masonic lodges.<sup>54</sup>

Across the country, Masonic authorities had grown increasingly alarmed at the number of kleagles with membership in the order, who were deliberately abusing their affiliation to convince their brethren to join.

Edward Young Clarke once defended his order in Chicago from concerned Freemasons who were troubled by the presence of kleagles within their lodges. “We do not solicit Masons as Masons,” he explained, “we solicit them as men with certain qualifications.”<sup>55</sup> There is more to this remark than it

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<sup>52</sup> Marion Monteval, *The Klan Inside Out* (Chicago,: N/A, 1924), p.43.

<sup>53</sup> Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma* (Guthrie: N/A, 1922), pp.321-322; Grand Lodge of Washington, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Washington* (Seattle: 1922), p.19

<sup>54</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1925), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp.24-25.

<sup>55</sup> “Purposes and Methods of the Ku Klux Klan Discussed for Chicagoans,” *The Oklahoma Herald*, June 13 1922.

seems. Clarke was obviously trying to deflect some of the tension between the two fraternities, but he also revealed some insight into the workings of the organization. The Ku Klux Klan had always realized that there were advantages to recruiting prominent citizens. They awarded the order a shield of respectability, and were a valuable asset for an organization as detested as the Invisible Empire. It was difficult to criticise a fraternity like the Ku Klux Klan, when it seemed as if America's best citizens were joining the order. Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons frequently made this case when arguing against critics of his brotherhood. He maintained that:

If the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan has been a lawless organization, as has been charged, it would not have shown the remarkable growth it has, for, in the [Klan] is as fine a body of representative citizens as there is in the United States. In each community where there is a [Klan] will be found members from the leading citizens, men who stand at the forefront in their cities. These men would not stand for lawlessness.<sup>56</sup>

The Propagation Department hoped to pack their klaverns with local dignitaries, leaders, men of authority and other influential citizens to help these chapters survive their first days.

During the 1920s, visiting the local Masonic lodge was simply the best way to become acquainted with the town's elite. The members of the Masonic lodge already had all the qualifications that kleagles were looking for in their recruits. Clarke alluded to this fact in his Chicago speech. Kleagles were looking for respectable, white, Protestant American men, and the Masonic lodge was the most convenient way to approach these men.

The idea of exclusivity was vital to the growth of the Invisible Empire. Enlisting civic leaders, successful businessmen, religious figures and Freemasons allowed kleagles to advertise their order as a select organization where only the best men would be allowed access. As one Klan writer noted:

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<sup>56</sup> Representatives, *Hearings on the Ku*, p.69.

The majority of reputable citizens are going into [the Ku Klux Klan] and the bad ones are kept out by the simple process of not asking such persons to join. You see **the Klan is a select crowd. You can't join in unless some one asks you to join** [emphasis in original]. Such invitations are not pressed. None but good men are asked to join and in that way bad men are kept out. You can't wire-work your way into the Ku Klux Klan. But if you are asked to join or you find a chance to get in, my advice is that you come in, for the water is fine.<sup>57</sup>

The Invisible Empire was not as select as this Klansman described it but kleagles went to great lengths to make it seem this way. They tempted middle-class Americans with the opportunity to become a member of an organization that the community's elite had joined. These Americans may have not been able to join the Freemasons; perhaps they did not have all the qualifications or money to be considered. But as brothers of the Invisible Empire, they could finally be amongst the ranks of the respectable class. This partly explains why the Propagation Department was so eager to recruit Freemasons and other respectable citizens into the fraternity.

Recruiting Freemasons was also a shrewd move because they could be employed to enlist their friends and family. Historians of the Ku Klux Klan have noticed that kleagles frequently encouraged new members of the order to bring suitable candidates from among their friends and family. Kleagles were usually not local residents, so they depended on the experience and social contacts of the first members of the Klan who were more familiar with the residents of the community. Records from a number different klaverns have indicated how membership in the Invisible Empire spread amongst families, work colleagues and even lodge brothers.<sup>58</sup>

The practice of having Klansmen carry out informal recruitment among their social circle was an essential part of the Propagation Department's

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<sup>57</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Exposed", October 31 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box 49 Folder 11, Library of Congress.

<sup>58</sup> See Calvin Enders, "White Sheets in Mecosta: The Anatomy of a Michigan Klan," *Michigan Historical Review* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1988), p.75; Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, pp.113-127; Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), pp.27-28; Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009), p.21.

recruitment policy, and one that the national officers of the Klan endorsed. One of Clarke's assistant's described this approach saying "A Klansman was ordered to bring in two friends he could trust and vouch for. When the friends were initiated ('naturalized') they in turn were instructed in the same manner. The plan worked so well there were not enough officials to take of the rush."<sup>59</sup> This approach took on a variety of forms. One of the Propagation Department's *Weekly Newsletter* describes how Klansmen from Lynchburg, Virginia, organized a contest among themselves to see who could recruit the most men, with prizes ranging from a barrel of flour to a box of cigars. This type of contest was even discussed and recommended by the Klan's national officers.<sup>60</sup> Kleagles in Chicago were slightly more devious. They bribed Protestant children to give them the names and addresses of their classmates, and then sent a circular to their parents asking that if they sympathised with the Klan that they send them "a list of a few Protestant gentlemen who you think would be interested to hear about the organization."<sup>61</sup> It was in the interest of the average Klansman to help his kleagle with his extension efforts, since it meant more prestige and power for his fraternity.

The career of one New Jersey Klansman illustrates how individual Freemasons and national officers assisted the growth of the Invisible Empire. Edwin P. Banta was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1872. He was descended from Dutch settlers, and was very proud of his native and Protestant heritage. The young Banta became a sailor and toured the world aboard a steamship, before finding work in the railroads business when he was 25. He travelled from coast to coast, working for the New York, New Haven & Hartford, Erie, Santa Fe, and the Chicago & North-Western railway companies. It was during his service on the rails that Banta joined the Switchmen's Union, an anti-radical trade union for railway workers. Banta was prolific joiner, and seemed to be particularly obsessed with joining patriotic and Protestant fraternities. He was a 32<sup>nd</sup> Degree Freemason, as well as a member of the Salaam Temple of

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<sup>59</sup> Edgar I Fuller, *Nigger in the Woodpile* (Felton: Big Trees Press, 1967), p.83

<sup>60</sup> "Catch-Penny' Tricks of Mystic Mummery Draw Gullible into Ku Klux Klan Fold," *Evening Public Ledger*, September 22 1921; Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan at Their First Annual Meeting Held at Asheville, North Carolina, July 1923; Together with Other Articles of Interest to Klansmen* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923; repr., 2000), p.104

<sup>61</sup> Jackson, *Klan in the City*

Shriners in Newark. He joined a number of nativist and explicitly anti-Catholic organizations, such as the JOAUM, and was also affiliated with the Loyal Orange Institution. He seemed very interested in the Patriotic Order of Sons of America and the Sons and Daughters of America, but there is no evidence that he formally enlisted. As a proud Dutchman, he had also become a member of the prestigious Holland Society of New York, which counted Theodore Roosevelt among its adherents.<sup>62</sup>

Banta was a dedicated and active nativist, and held very radical views regarding the Catholic presence in America. He wrote a letter to the *Hudson Observer* in 1919 to condemn the Irish and their role as “a treacherous pro-German” fifth-column within the British Army that had caused so many losses and forced America to join the First World War. He signed this letter saying “Respectfully yours, a 100 per cent American in views and allegiance, first, last and all the time, without allegiance to any foreign power and autocrat.”<sup>63</sup> His political views were also evident when he ran as a political candidate for councilman of West New York City in 1920. The *New Menace*, one of the foremost anti-Catholic papers of the era, endorsed his campaign and described it saying:

The candidacy of Mr. Banta is understood to be strictly on the anti-Roman Catholic platform. Whether he wins or loses, he proposes to make the race boldly on the issue of American patriotism and to let all voters know where he stands. He does not ask nor desire support of any papal subject and if elected he will not favor the appointment one such person to any office in the city... Those who favor the Constitution, the flag and the public school should support Mr. Banta with the vigor and enthusiasm which spell victory.<sup>64</sup>

Edwin P. Banta joined the Ku Klux Klan in New York in January 10 1923. He served as an organizer for the New Jersey Klan, and worked closely with

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<sup>62</sup> See the “Edwin P. Banta Collection,” New York Public Library. Biographical details are scattered throughout various letters and scraps.

<sup>63</sup> “Blames Irish For England's Defeats,” *Hudson Observer*, December 27 1919, “Edwin P. Banta Collection.”

<sup>64</sup> “West New York Patriot for Councilman,” *New Menace*, September 25 1920.

their King Kleagle and Grand Dragon, Arthur Bell. Banta was asked to arrange the press coverage at a public initiation in New Brunswick on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1923, with strict instructions from the Grand Dragon. Bell wrote to Banta, explaining that he was “exceedingly anxious that no hitch occur in this work” as they wanted “our publicity on the highest plane possible.” Banta was asked to only allow journalists from the *New York Evening World*, *The Good Citizen*, the *New York Herald*, and the *Hudson Observer* to attend. He was also told to choose a number of other trusted newspapers from New Jersey, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. to cover the event. Bell’s detailed instructions indicate how tightly controlled the Klan’s public displays really were.<sup>65</sup> These events served a purpose, and the Propagation Department understood that they could employ open-air initiations and parades to boost their numbers.

Banta received further letters from Bell that give some insight into the workings of the Propagation Department. Grand Dragon Bell understood the importance of recruiting selectively, bolstering their numbers and finding high-ranking allies. When Banta pressured him to make their movement’s presence public, and to start acting aggressively against Catholics and other un-American influences, Bell replied saying:

The fact is that what you suggest in your letter is exactly what we must do at the proper time, but we are not strong enough yet to even begin to consider such a move. For us to do so now would be an invitation for defeat. Our one supreme thought now must be organization. When we can boast of not fewer than 10,000 men in the county and from 3,000 to 5,000 women, then we can line up the Masons, the [JOUAM], the Tall Cedars, the [Patriotic Order of Sons of America}, and other patriotic bodies and can present such a solid front as will INSURE VICTORY. This is where all of our patriotic movements of the past have failed. They have

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<sup>65</sup> “Letter from New Jersey Grand Dragon to Edwin P. Banta,” April 27 1923, “Edwin P. Banta Collection,” Box 1, Folder F; “Letter from New Jersey Grand Dragon to Edwin P. Banta,” May 15 1924, “Edwin P. Banta Collection,” Box 1, Folder F.

started something before they were ready. Let us get ready and by the grace of God we are getting ready for this movement.<sup>66</sup>

The officers of the New Jersey Klan understood the importance of patience, preparation and coordination. Their approach was carefully planned, and reveal that Bell's strategy involved presenting a united front of patriotic fraternities. New Jersey would eventually become one of the few Klan strongholds in the region because of Bell's leadership and his calculating and efficient kleagles.

Banta himself was a fervent recruiter and publicist for the Invisible Empire. Bizarrely, during the 1920s he worked as Travel Advertising representative for the anti-Klan *New York World*. His experience in the world of journalism made him a valuable asset for the Ku Klux Klan and the other patriotic orders he belonged to. He subscribed to most of the widely-read anti-Catholic and nativist newspapers of the day, such as *The Fellowship Forum*, the *Dearborn Independent* and the *New Menace*, and read Klan publications like *The Searchlight* and *The Courier*. He regularly sent clippings to editors of these nativist papers and various Klan leaders on matters related to the Catholic Church and radicals. He served as a useful informant in this network of anti-Catholic patriotic bodies, and did his best to keep his colleagues informed of different incidents in New York and New Jersey.

Banta was an exemplary Klansman. His correspondence indicates that he worked tirelessly to recruit other Americans and educate them about the threat of Catholicism. One letter to Milton Elrod, the editor of *The Fiery Cross*, shows how he campaigned for the Ku Klux Klan among his associates and people he believed might be interested in the fraternity. Banta explained in his correspondence that he was "submitting confidentially the names of a few people I have continuously drawn on the K.K.K. question" and asked Elrod to send them some free copies of their newspaper to stimulate interest in the fraternity. Banta submitted a list of potential recruits, most of whom were Freemasons. Among them were William Neal Reynolds, president of the successful R.J. Tobacco Company of North Carolina, whom Banta believed

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<sup>66</sup> Letter from New Jersey Grand Dragon to Edwin P. Banta," June 13 1923, "Edwin P. Banta Collection," Box 1, Folder F;

would be open to joining since he employed “14,000 people and only two Roman Catholics” and had “600 Klansmen in his service.” Banta also stated that while Reynolds was not a Mason, he was a Presbyterian. In fact, Banta had been investigating Reynolds for some time. He had consulted with James S. Vance, one of the editors of *The Fellowship Forum*, as to Reynolds’ political leanings, and whether his company discriminated against employees with Masonic affiliations.<sup>67</sup>

Included in the Banta’s list of prospective targets for recruitment were a number of Shriners that he presumably had met at his own Shriner temple. Amongst these were J.T. Davis, a Pennsylvania Prohibition agent, Claudius H. Huston, a 33° Freemason and an influential Republican, and Robert A. Alberts, vice-president of a New York paper manufacturer and Shriner from Banta’s own town.<sup>68</sup> Banta described all of the men on his list as “prominent men” and recommended that they be contacted immediately for potential enlistment. The fact that most of these men were also Freemasons was not coincidence.

Banta’s service to the Klan was probably not out of the ordinary for those more dedicated and passionate members. Klansmen understood the importance of creating a robust organization and realized that their service would be valued. In Banta’s case, he probed a number of well-known or prominent citizens and Freemasons and tried to convince them to join. The evidence from New Jersey indicates that the leadership in that state understood the importance of selling the Klan effectively and of employing ordinary members for this end. This included controlling their public image, building their strength slowly, and recruiting select allies that could help advance their mission. These kleagles barely resemble the avaricious conmen that they were frequently portrayed as. The Propagation Department may have been driven by the dollar, but they worked effectively, employing modern sales techniques a national strategy. The evidence from New Jersey also indicates that in this

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<sup>67</sup> “Letter from James S. Vance to Edwin P. Banta,” August 14 1923, “Edwin P. Banta Collection,” Box 2, Folder V.

<sup>68</sup> “Letter from Edwin P. Banta to the Editor in Chief of *The Fiery Cross*,” September 1 1923, “Edwin P. Banta Collection,” Box 1, Folder B.

state, the Klan leadership actively targeted Freemasons for recruitment, and that they employed other Freemasons to reach these men.

### **3) Hiram Wesley Evans and the Extension Department**

All throughout the early 1920s, Masonic jurisdictions complained about the invasion of their lodges by recruiters from the Invisible Empire. Kleagles were gaining access to their lodges by way of their own Masonic affiliations and convincing members to join their new militant fraternity. The Ku Klux Klan spread through the work of the Propagation Department, but it also proliferated through social channels. The recommendation of a friend, family members, work colleague or lodge brother was vital for the establishment of the Invisible Empire. Clarke created an efficient core of salesmen who delivered a popular and identifiable product in a systematic and uniform way, which included hijacking the local fraternal lodge to use as a pulpit for the Klan's message. The Propagation Department's honeymoon quickly ended in early 1923 with the rise of Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans and his sweep of "reforms" that promised to change everything that was wrong with the Klan, starting with the kleagles and the Propagation Department. But how much did Evans and his reforms really affect the Klan's kluxing system?

The entire Propagation Department depended on its simple commission system, whereby the initiate's \$10 were shared across the various levels of management. This system was highly praised by many studying the Klan in the 1920s, including Stanley Frost who commended it saying:

The commission system is, naturally, immensely effective, far more than any straight salaries scheme. It keeps each Field Kleagle on his toes every minute, stimulates his salesmanship and ingenuity to the utmost, eliminates unsuccessful men promptly and leaves no room for discord. It has resulted in what seems the best selling organization in America.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Frost, *The Challenge of the Klan*, p.122

Nonetheless, the system did have some serious faults, least of which was the terrible reputation of greed that tainted the entire Propagation Department. Frost outlined how:

the pressure which this system puts on Kleagles to take in every member they can get and to use every kind of argument or appeal that they think may work. Apparently they do. I have not learned of a single case where a Kleagle refused a member – who had \$10.00 – no matter how vicious or dangerous he might be.<sup>70</sup>

But it is very difficult to say whether all kleagles were as ruthless as Frost describes them. The only records relating to the matter, the minutes of the Klans in Newaygo County, Michigan and the Klan in La Grande, Oregon, reflect two opposing admission standards. While the Newaygo County Klan seems to have been fairly open, allowing almost anyone to join, the La Grande Klan had stringent requirements. In May 1923 alone, this Klan rejected six applications for reason ranging from “selfish motives” to “immoral cohabitation and drinking.”<sup>71</sup> Entry requirements varied among klaverns, but the overall impression from members of the public was that the Klan would initiate anyone willing to pay them.

Imperial Wizard Evans changed a variety of things upon his arrival to power, all in effort to distance himself from the Simmons-Clarke regime. He took a special interest in “reforming” the Propagation Department to dissipate the criticisms that kleagles were recruiting anyone who could afford the \$10 klectoken. Using Edward Young Clarke’s recent arrest for breaking the Mann Act, Evans cancelled the Propagation Department’s lucrative contract in March 1923 and reorganized the recruitment efforts of the Klan under his own terms.<sup>72</sup> Evans touted this reorganization from the rooftops, and made sure everyone knew that the days where kleagles aggressively sold the Klan and allowed

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.124

<sup>71</sup> Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, p.81; David A. Horowitz, "The Normality of Extremism: The Ku Klux Klan Revisited," *Society* 35, no. 6 (September-October 1998), p.75; David A. Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), p.99

<sup>72</sup> Shotwell, "Crystallizing Public Hatred," p. 186; "Ku Klux Leader is Indicted, Charged With Immorality," *The Bridgeport Telegram*, March 2 1923

anyone into the fraternity were over.<sup>73</sup> At the Second Imperial Klonvokation in September 1924, the peak of Klan's power, Imperial Wizard ensured his subjects knew the new kleagles were different from Clarke's, saying:

The reforms made in the personnel of the Kleagleship and in the type of education put out, together with other reforms, freed the Klan of the stigmas that have attached to it and opened the door to millions of men who had been sympathetic toward the movement but had objected to the distasteful methods. The cancellation of the Clarke contract had much to do with this.<sup>74</sup>

N.N. Furney, one of Evans' cronies who was awarded Clarke's former position, added:

The whole plane of propagation has been elevated, better organized and more closely related to the spread of Klan truth. With the increase of membership under the new system has come a better informed and more consecrated membership. New Kleagles have been selected with the Klan objectives in mind. Our aim and theirs is, not to gain recruits at so much a head, but to enlist real men on the enduring basis of loyalty and understanding. The propagation process is no longer 'salesmanship;' it is now a sound, constructive building of Klan principles and ideals.<sup>75</sup>

Evans tried to portray his kleagles as apostles, spreading the gospel of Klan truth, the very reverse of Clarke's salesmen kleagles. The truth is that Evans changed very little about the Propagation Department. The commission system worked effectively, and was still closely regimented by the Imperial officials. The only problem was that the public and even some members believed it was a corrupt scheme. Because of this Evans only gave the Propagation Department a facelift; his changes amounted to firing Clarke, renaming the department the Extension Department, and getting rid of the

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<sup>73</sup> Evans was still boasting about this great reforms as late as 1926, long after the Klan had started to decline, see Evans, "The Klan's Fight," p.37

<sup>74</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvokation* (Kansas City: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc., 1924), p.62

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219

Grand Goblins whom he thought were unnecessary.<sup>76</sup> Evans saw no need to change anything with the Klan's recruitment policies, he only detested the fact that the money was going to Clarke and his underlings instead of towards the Treasury, which is why it is doubtful that he gave instructions to change the tactics and approaches of kleagles. The new Extension Department differed in very few ways from its predecessor.

Historians studying the Ku Klux Klan have considerable trouble ascertaining anything conclusive about the appropriately named Invisible Empire. The deliberate destruction of Klan documents has made it difficult to make irrefutable statements about this ephemeral fraternity, especially if it is anything to do with the Propagation Department. The constant barrage of criticism that the Klan's recruitment wing was subjected to in the American press made them pariahs in the eyes of many. However, as has been demonstrated, the Klan's kleagles were not the tricksters or charlatans they have been labelled, but skilled modern salesmen who effectively sold a product that Americans wanted. Part of their repertoire of tactics seems to have involved using their Masonic membership to solicit their brothers in the friendly and fraternal atmosphere of the Craft. The substantial presence of Freemasons and the turmoil the Klan caused in several Masonic lodges across America all originate from this tactic, a deliberate policy implemented by the Klan's recruitment officials, and a tactic that was key in the spread of the Invisible Empire.

Many observers have argued that it was either William Joseph Simmons or Hiram Wesley Evans who shaped the Ku Klux Klan, but it was probably Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler who helped to develop the organization from an insignificant brotherhood into a mighty Invisible Empire. The Propagation Department created a remarkable marketing and recruitment campaign, one that elevated their fraternity above similar organizations' like the JOUAM or the Sons and Daughters of Washington. The Ku Klux Klan simply sold itself better. The profits of "kluxing" helped to drive an army of kleagles employing intelligent sales techniques to spread the message of the Ku Klux

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.76-77

Klan. Masonic lodges became frequent targets for these kleagles, seeing as they contained many respected citizens who could help from the basis of a powerful klavern. Under the guidance of the national leadership of the Propagation Department, and then the Extension Department, the Invisible Empire's recruiters were able to enlist millions of eager Americans into the order.

## CHAPTER 5: HOODED FREEMASONS: DUAL MEMBERSHIP AND CONFLICT IN LOCAL LODGES

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Frank R. Kent, a prominent journalist of the influential and acerbic *Baltimore Sun*, published a series of articles in December 1922 in this newspaper on the recent resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. Travelling throughout the country and visiting the national officers at the Imperial Palace in Atlanta, Kent interviewed Klansmen and their opponents to try to understand this intriguing movement. Reporting that the KKK had managed to recruit a million Americans to its ranks and had become a crucial factor in local and national elections, Kent remarked that “Clearly, it is rather an important thing for the rest of us to know the truth about this association of men.”<sup>1</sup> Despite the many well-publicized examinations of the Invisible Empire over the years, this columnist felt that they had been far too denunciative. While not implicitly criticizing their work, he described the popular *New York World* 1921 articles as “a vigorous assault” and a “very thorough and red-blooded crusade.” Kent proposed to re-assess the movement, “not with the idea of assailing the klan, but of ‘sizing it up’ without bias.”<sup>2</sup>

His review of the movement includes several insightful observations regarding then nature of the organization and its members. On the makeup of the Invisible Empire, Kent wrote:

By other klansmen in New Orleans, Atlanta and Washington I have been told that far more than a majority of the klan throughout the country are Masons. Klansmen who are Masons have described the klan to me as ‘militant Masonry.’ One member in Washington, who is himself a thirty-second degree Mason, estimated the proportion of klansmen who are Masons at 70 per cent of the whole.

I do not want to be understood as intimating that... the Masons are in any way connected with the klan or that they support it on its principles or give countenance to its appeals or restrictions. I know that they are not. I

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<sup>1</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Klan's Growth and Strength Due to Attacks," *Baltimore Sun*, December 12 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

also know there are a great many klansmen...who are not Masons... But it undoubtedly is true that a considerable proportion of them are..."<sup>3</sup>

In a quite matter-of-fact tone, the *Baltimore Sun's* article lent further credence to the recurring reports of significant dual membership between the two fraternities. This thesis earlier detailed how many Freemasons did in fact express frustration with the political limitations of their fraternity in post-war America, and sought other organizations to pursue a more active role. It has also argued that the Klan deliberately tried to portray itself as an order that was patronized by Freemasons, and that the Invisible Empire deliberately instructed its kleagles to recruit from Masonic lodges. But these discussions all raise the same question: Precisely how successful was the Klan at recruiting Freemasons into their fraternity?

This chapter aims to analyse and understand the available evidence regarding dual membership in both orders, and the effect that this crossover had on individual lodges in different Masonic jurisdictions. By contrasting the varying claims from supporters and opponents of the Invisible Empire for the proportion of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations, we can attempt to get a clearer picture of the level of shared membership. Additionally, this chapter will analyse the effect that this shared membership had on different Masonic lodges by exploring a number of incidents. Essentially, this chapter will try to establish the veracity and significance of Frank Kent's claims that a "considerable proportion" of the Invisible Empire were really Freemasons.

### **1) Reports of the Shared Membership of the Two Fraternities**

It is unlikely that a precise figure for the shared membership of the two fraternities can be worked out. Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke himself could only give a rough estimate. He stated in 1922 that "Masonry numbers among its membership hundreds of thousands of the highest type of Klansmen," but probably could not have given a more accurate answer than that.<sup>4</sup> Other Klan officials such as W.C. Wright, a high-ranking lecturer from

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<sup>3</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Klan Recruits Influenced by Three Causes," *Baltimore Sun* December 14 1922

<sup>4</sup> "Klansmen Swarm in Masons' Lodges' Is Clarke's Boast," *New York World*, June 26 1922.

Texas, claimed that the entire order had 5 million members in 1926, 750,000 of whom were Freemasons.<sup>5</sup> This is also an unlikely figure since the organization reached its highpoint two years earlier and the total membership seems vastly inflated. Several minor kleagles made a variety of boasts as to the number of Freemasons joining the Invisible Empire. One Klan official from Lexington, Kentucky, declared to the local paper "It has been stated that the klan is linked with Masonry, but nothing could be more false. But it is true that practically 75 per cent of our members are also members of the Masonic lodge"<sup>6</sup> A Baltimore kleagle placed the figure even higher, at 90 per cent, and explained that this was due to the fact that "the klan seeks the most prominent citizens who are not Catholics."<sup>7</sup> Two Klan officials from Portland, Oregon, declared in 1923 that the Invisible Empire counted over 4,250,000 initiates, 500,000 of whom were Masons.<sup>8</sup> Klan newspapers also made these boasts. One 1923 article in *Dawn* insisted that over a million Masons and Odd Fellows were already members of the Klan, while a writer to the *Fellowship Forum* asserted that 75 per cent of all Klansmen were members of the Craft.<sup>9</sup>

These widely shifting figures make any sort of overall national figure for shared membership difficult to establish. Even observers during the period realized that these claims were unverifiable. One 1922 study of the movement remarked that "Promoters of the Ku Klux Klan brag that most of its members are Masons. Whether this is true or not no one on the outside can tell."<sup>10</sup> However, it seems as if not even the Invisible Empire's leadership really knew exactly how many of its members across the country were also Freemasons.

The claims for the exact proportion of shared membership in individual states and towns are also dubious. The *Fellowship Forum* declared in 1923 that not only were allegations that all Freemasons from Oregon had withdrawn from the KKK were untrue, but that "Sixty percent of the Master Masons of Oregon

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<sup>5</sup> W.C. Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals of the Ku Klux Klan* (Waco, Tx.: unknown, 1926), pp.12-13.

<sup>6</sup> "Ku Klux Will Organize Here," *Lexington Herald*, July 7 1922.

<sup>7</sup> "Klan is in Politics, City Kleagle Says," *Baltimore Sun*, June 20 1922.

<sup>8</sup> "500,000 Masons are Klansmen," *The Fellowship Forum*, September 8 1923.

<sup>9</sup> Elmer E. Rogers, "Awakening Protestants," *Dawn*, November 10 1923; "IS it an Attack on Masonry ", *The Fellowship Forum*, July 21 1922.

<sup>10</sup> Ezra A. Cook, *Ku Klux Klan Secrets Exposed: attitudes Toward Jews, Catholics, Foreigners, and Masons: Fraudulent Methods Used, Atrocities Committed in Name Order* (Chicago: Ezra A. Cook, 1922), p.55.

are Klansmen, and many of the Oregon officers of the Klan are prominent Masons.”<sup>11</sup> These sort of broad statements were typical of many Klan newspapers, but there are other, more seemingly accurate claims about shared membership in individual communities. A Freemason and Klansmen from New Iberia, Louisiana, commented in 1924 that “Our membership here, in either order, is composed of fully 80 per cent of members from the other. This is also true [all] over Louisiana.”<sup>12</sup> This Klansman’s first estimate may have been true, since he had intimate knowledge of the makeup of both his lodge and klavern, but his second claim seems far more unlikely. Leslie Zaerr, a resident of Billings, Montana, offered his own judgement of the level of crossover between the two fraternities in his community. In 1923 Zaerr, both a Scottish Rite Mason and a Klansman, specified that in his city of 15,000 people there were approximately 1,000 members in his klavern. He further stated that of these 1,000 members around 60 per cent were Freemasons and 50 percent were Scottish Rite members. Zaerr also believed that “Perhaps 75% of the petitioners to the [Scottish Rite] are Klansmen.”<sup>13</sup> One further claim comes from Morganton, North Carolina, where a local resident declared that “I would like to state for your information that exactly 47% of the Klansmen here are members of the Masonic order. In fact the man who had been elected as exalted Cyclops of Burke Kounty Klan is a past master.”<sup>14</sup> These figures appear more trustworthy since they refer to individual communities, but again, their claims are almost entirely unverifiable.

Although these figures could be considered to be more trustworthy than the broad claims made by kleagles and high-ranking KKK officials, they were still published in pro-Klan newspapers and there is no way to assess their accuracy. However, some Masonic sources put forward similar levels of shared membership. An issue of *The Square and Compass* from late 1923 reluctantly published an anonymous letter from a Freemason of Clyde, Mississippi, who was discontent with the newspaper’s attitude towards the Klan. He also added “As for the Klan being a part of Masonry, it is not, but I can say this truthfully,

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<sup>11</sup> "Patriotic Protestants Rally as Klan Sweeps Country," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 24 1923.

<sup>12</sup> "Masonry and Klan by Member of Both," *Fellowship Forum*, April 12 1924.

<sup>13</sup> "Mason Who Belongs to Klan Resents Bostonian's Insult," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 17 1923.

<sup>14</sup> "Masonry and the Kluckers," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 21 1921.

that 60 per cent of its members are Masons.”<sup>15</sup> The editors published this letter only because they considered his letter to be “dignified,” compared to the other “hot-headed” subscribers had written threatening retaliation against their newspaper for their anti-Klan views.<sup>16</sup> A comparable figure was given in 1922 by Thomas G. Knight, of Fort Worth, in a letter to California Grand Master Samuel E. Burke. Knight was both a Scottish Rite Mason and a member of the Knights Templar, and he objected to Burke’s denunciation of the Klan, stating that “The Ku Klux Klan stands for all the Flag of our Country stands for, the Constitution, Christ and the Cross and to be one you have to be 100% American, absolutely.” Knight then went on to write “Furthermore, at least 75% of the Klansmen are Masons; true, tried and tested...”<sup>17</sup> Another Texan Mason wrote to the Grand Lodge of California in 1922, but in this case it was to seek advice on how to oust the Klan from his lodge. Writing from Beeville, Texas, H.L. Atkinson recounted how he had opposed the Invisible Empire and the membership of his brethren in that order. He also said “It seems that the Klan is trying to get hold of the lodges in this state, and in the local lodges here, I would guess about 80% of the membership to be members of the Klan.”<sup>18</sup>

These wide-ranging statistics indicate the complexity of uncovering the exact proportion of dual membership between the two orders. The numbers range from slightly below 50% to as high as 90%. Although the latter figure can be viewed as a clear exaggeration, the rest of the statistics all agree that a noticeable proportion of Freemasons were inclined to joining the KKK. This would seem to confirm that Frank Kent’s observations were not entirely inaccurate, and that Freemasons were indeed dissatisfied with their fraternity, and seeking fulfilment in less restrictive orders like the Ku Klux Klan. It would also help to show just how successful the Klan was at targeting Freemasons for recruitment, and the effectiveness of their marketing among fraternalists.

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<sup>15</sup> "Letter - G.A.L.," *The Square and Compass*, December 1923, "Ku Klux Klan File," Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

<sup>16</sup> "Editorial - Ku Klux Klan," *The Square and Compass*, December 1923, "Ku Klux Klan File."

<sup>17</sup> "Letter from Thomas G. Knight to Samuel E. Burke," May 11 1922, "Ku Klux Klan Collection," Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

<sup>18</sup> "Letter from H.L. Atkinson to John Whicher," May 9 1922, "Ku Klux Klan Collection."

## 2) Contesting the Klan's Claims

However, many of these figures were also widely contested. J.W. Scott Sanders, the King Kleagle of Connecticut and New Hampshire, gave an interview to a local publication where he stated that "Klan organizers have truthfully stated that the bulk of our members were Masons."<sup>19</sup> His comments proved quite contentious in that state, and were later categorically rejected by Connecticut's Grand Master, Frank L. Wilder.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Reverend Oscar Haywood, a minister at the Calvary Baptist Church in New York and a local officer of the KKK, disclosed to newspapers in late 1922 that 75% of all Klansmen were Masons. Haywood explained that:

About two months ago I gave my first lecture in New York City. There were about 500 present, 75 per cent of whom were Masons. About 75 per cent of all Klansmen are Masons. I can't tell you just what proportion of the 500 men present at this meeting joined the Klan, but it was a large number.<sup>21</sup>

His statements were subsequently refuted by prominent Masons such as New York Grand Master Arthur Tompkins, who characterized them as "absolutely false."<sup>22</sup> New Jersey Governor-elect George S. Silzer also contradicted Haywood's assertions before a meeting of 500 of his fellow Freemasons in New Brunswick, arguing that they were simply not the type of people to join such a controversial order.<sup>23</sup> Haywood maintained he was not exaggerating, and asserted that "all national officers of the Klan, including himself, were Masons, and that every head of a local Klan in the United States he had met was a Mason."<sup>24</sup> This provocative campaign and his membership in the Klan eventually cost Haywood his position at the Calvary Baptist Church.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "The Ways of a Kleagle," *The Hartford Courant*, June 28 1922.

<sup>20</sup> "Klan is Disowned by Conn. Masons," *The Hartford Courant*, August 3 1922.

<sup>21</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Denounced By Masonic Leader; Police Fight Starts," *New York Times*, November 25 1922.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "Denies Masons Join Klan," *New York Times*, December 17 1922.

<sup>24</sup> "Ku Klux Evangelist Opens Fight to Stay With Baptist Church," *New York Times*, November 26 1922.

<sup>25</sup> "Cavalry Church Expels Ku Klux Lecturer, Who Boasted Dr. Straton Was Afraid to Act," *New York Times*, December 29 1922.

These examples illustrate the epistemological difficulties of ascertaining the exact proportion of crossover between these two fraternities. The Ku Klux Klan repeatedly highlighted the large numbers of Freemasons within the Klan to enhance their own organization's standing. As the editor of the *Hartford Courant* commented on these claims:

[It] infers that Masons are flocking to the blazing cross and desire above all things to become subjects of the invisible empire. It creates a good impression, and what is by no means unimportant, there is no way of refuting it. We can see many reasons why the members of the Klan should be unwilling to have their membership known to all men and this one is more to their credit than are some of the others.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, as a journalist from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* stated, many of these claims were "pretty broad statements and certainly not to be taken at their face value, especially against positive denials from brother Masons."<sup>27</sup>

Investigating the second Ku Klux Klan has always been a tricky affair for historians, but establishing a precise figure for dual membership seems like an insurmountable task. Edward Young Clarke himself denied many of the figures presented by other officers in his order when he declared that:

Masons do not predominate. We have a great many of them in this organization because Masons are Protestants, but we have attempted to prevent the Klan from becoming over-loaded with any one or other secret order membership because we want the Klan to stand on [its] own bottom and not be an adjunct to some other organization.<sup>28</sup>

In this case, Clarke was probably trying to minimize the anti-Klan sentiment among Freemasons that had flared up in the summer of 1922, but these comments highlight the contradictory nature of the Klan. Always careful of its public relations, the Invisible Empire changed its tune according to its audience, making it difficult for historians to analyse.

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<sup>26</sup> "The Ways of a Kleagle," *The Hartford Courant*, June 28 1922

<sup>27</sup> "Ku Klux Claims," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 4 1922.

<sup>28</sup> "Purposes and Methods of the Ku Klux Klan Discussed for Chicagoans," *The Oklahoma Herald*, June 13 1922, "Henry Justin Allen Papers," Box B49, Folder 8.

The difficulties surrounding the calculation of estimates for the crossover between the two orders mirrors the problems encountered by historians trying to discover the actual total membership of the Ku Klux Klan. This pressing question remains unanswered due to the abundance of alternating and dubious figures and the lack of any official evidence. For example, the previously referred to Klan lecturer W.C. Wright placed the figure at anywhere from five to seven million.<sup>29</sup> Another Klan speaker from California claimed the order had “6,000,000 members including the governors of two-thirds of the states, and 46 senators and congressmen.” This speaker also declared that the recently deceased President Warren Harding was an initiate of their order.<sup>30</sup> Journalist Stanley Frost was the first to suggest the total of 4 million in his 1924 study of the order, and since then that number has become the standard answer.<sup>31</sup> Historian Kenneth Jackson attempted to tackle this question, and by taking into account the figures given by a wide range of sources and historians, believed the total to be 2,030,000 members between 1915 and 1944.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, this calculation still remains something of a personal estimate. The Klan was always rather secretive about official numbers, and always tried to exaggerate their total membership and true strength in the eyes of the public. They presented their movement as a popular and vigorous organization, but we know very little about their true strength. There is no conclusive evidence that contains official membership figures for the Invisible Empire. We encounter similar complications when trying to calculate the levels of shared membership between the Ku Klux Klan and the Freemasons. Only vague estimates can be made using the limited and often contradictory evidence available.

Furthermore, we need to take into account the highly-localized nature of the Klan’s success. Historians have long recognized the importance of locality and a particular kleagle’s approach to the establishment of the organization in any community. This theory has helped to explain why the Klan managed to get more members in the city of Indianapolis alone than it did in the entire state of

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<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Religious and Patriotic Ideals*, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> "Ku Klux Orator Talks at City Park," *Anaheim Gazette*, June 12 1924.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley Frost, *The Challenge of the Klan* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1924), p.1.

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967), pp.235-237.

Mississippi. The issue is outlined by the historian Shawn Lay, who remarked that:

the Invisible Empire's interaction with leading civic elements was exceedingly complex and varied from community to community. Depending on the local set of circumstances, the Klan might support, oppose, or ignore a particular group. Essentially the Klan was a chameleon during the early organizational stage, adjusting its sales pitch in light of the local context and dictates of opportunism.<sup>33</sup>

This observation is very much applicable in terms of the relationship between the Ku Klux Klan and the Freemasons. The varying response of the Craft in various parts of the country to this new militant fraternity may help explain the conflicting estimates given by different sources. Many Klansmen and Freemasons may have based their own estimates for the national proportion of dual membership on their own klaverns or lodges, which were not always representative.

For example, a Freemason from Kansas City, Missouri wrote to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in late 1922, expressing his support for the newspaper's fervent opposition to the Klan and their disapproval of that organization's attempts to portray itself as a Masonic organization. He wrote to the publication saying:

Ku Kluxery and Masonry are considerably farther apart than Venus and Neptune; and when a preacher or anybody else seeks to create the impression that the ancient fraternal order stands for the K.K.K. claptrap, it is high time for Masons to stand forth and toss the dirty insult back into the teeth of the cowardly pillow-slipped anonymities who utter it.

The writer also intimated that in his local lodge, Ivanhoe Lodge no.446 of Kansas City, Missouri, there were nearly 4000 members and "so far as I am

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<sup>33</sup> Shawn Lay, "Introduction: The Second Invisible Empire," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, ed. Shawn Lay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2004), p.7.

aware not one of them is a Ku Kluxer."<sup>34</sup> This is peculiar when we consider that historical studies have found that the Klan was actually quite popular with the members in the nearby Roger E. Sherman Lodge no.239, located just over the state border in Kansas City, Kansas.<sup>35</sup> Any national estimate for the level of crossover between the Invisible Empire and Freemasonry needs to take into account the highly regional nature of the Klan's popularity.

Freemasons reacted very differently to the Ku Klux Klan, an observation that seems apparent in the case of California. In September 1924, California Grand Master Arthur S. Crites was preparing to make a statement for the Grand Lodge regarding the Ku Klux Klan, and he asked District Inspectors from across the state to describe the extent and influence of this organization on the affairs of their local lodges. These officials were asked to report on a wide range of matters. These included whether or not the Klan had been soliciting Freemasons in their lodge, or whether Klansmen were attempting to dictate policy. These Inspector's reports are by no means a complete assessment of the condition of the relationship between the two fraternities in this state, but they do serve to illustrate the variety of responses to this meddlesome Invisible Empire. One Freemason from northern California, when asked if there was any evidence of Klan activities in his area, replied simply "No visible evidence. Branch of Klan recently formed in Yreka. Do not think it was well attended. Interest in Klan here is dying out." When asked if the Klan had attempted to solicit members, he merely stated "At one time this effort was made but with very little success."<sup>36</sup> C.K. Tuttle, an official from Pacific Grove, answered to Crites inquiries as to the Klan's movements in the area, commenting that "Nothing to speak of. Monterey has had a little friction." Tuttle also attached a letter to his report from a member of Salinas Lodge No. 204, who declared:

Regarding the K.K.K., never hear anything about them, it maybe that it is because those who are in favour of them (I do not know one) do not approach me on the matter... I have asked others and have never heard

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<sup>34</sup> "Letter: Masonry and the Klan," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 12 1922

<sup>35</sup> Kristofer Allerfeldt, "Jayhawker Fraternities: Masons, Klansmen and Kansas in the 1920s," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012), pp.1044-1045.

<sup>36</sup> "Inspector's Report from Stanley Butler to Arthur S. Crites," undated, "Ku Klux Klan Collection."

anyone being asked to join, do not think they cut much figure around here.<sup>37</sup>

Some of this feedback indicated that in some areas of California, contrary to common consensus, the Klan had proved quite unpopular with the Freemasons. C.B. Greeley described the state of affairs in Oakland saying there had been no attempts to recruit members, but that “they are getting recruits somewhere, and the world at large is inclined to put the KKK in the same basket with the Masonic order – which is all wrong.”<sup>38</sup> Other California Freemasons recounted how the Klan had tried to recruit initiates into their order from local lodges, but had found no success. One C.G. Lambert of Palo Alto explained that at his local lodge “every member [was] solicited by letter, but no results obtained as far as I have been able to discern.” Lambert also mentioned that the local kleagle had attempted to join their lodge, but his application was refused.<sup>39</sup>

Still, quite a few other replies indicated that the Klan had actually found many recruits within some of California’s Masonic lodges. One Henry Eissler wrote to Crites on the issue of shared membership in his town saying “This has been a problem here for some time, [I] have had personal encounters with members of said organization... this does not meet my approval and I believe others think as I do.” He also added that it was “no secret, for years past they have been recruiting their ranks from the Craft.”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, John Speier reported that “I find that some of our Masters have ideas that several of their members are also Klan members and while it might bring discord directly into the lodge, it surely does not create harmony and good fellowship.” When asked if there was evidence of Klansmen soliciting members, Speier answered “Yes. The Master of Olivet reports it his belief at least 10 of his members are Klan members. Molino Lodge reports to likeness.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “Inspector’s Report from C.K. Tuttle to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.” “Letter from J.E. Steinbeck to C.K. Tuttle,” August 25 1924, Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>38</sup> “Inspector’s Report from C.B. Greeley to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>39</sup> “Inspector’s Report from C.G. Lambert to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>40</sup> “Inspector’s Report from Henry Eissler to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>41</sup> “Inspector’s Report from John Speier to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

Although most of the responses indicated that the Klan had not really found much success in their respective jurisdictions, there were several responses that indicated that Freemasons were joining. Some replies even seemed worried about the level of disruption this crossover was causing. What these reports demonstrate is a wide spectrum of different reactions on behalf of Freemasons. Some California lodges welcomed soliciting, while others seemed to have ignored the Invisible Empire's advances. This range of different responses reflects the situation of the country as a whole. Because America's lodges reacted so inconsistently, any estimate for the level of Freemasons in the Klan needs to take into account this regional variety.

### **3) Estimating the levels of Dual Membership**

Because of the unverifiable and contested character of many of the claims made by both Klansmen and non-Klansmen, the figures offered by the sources mentioned at the beginning of this chapter simply cannot form the basis of any believable estimates. Both members and opponents of the Invisible Empire had an interest in exaggerating the exact levels of dual membership. Furthermore, it is crucial that we take into account the highly-localized and exceptionally complex nature of the Klan's popularity across America's lodges. The Klan was neither universally popular nor unpopular within Masonic circles, and this circumstance needs to be factored into any calculations of the levels of crossover among the two groups.

There have been a limited number of studies carried out by historians as to the number of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations, and they constitute the most reliable evidence on the exact levels of dual membership. This research has been carried out in five locations: Colorado, Montana, Kansas, Michigan and Texas. Because of the difficulty of obtaining both a valid list of Klansmen as well as access to Masonic records from the same location, each of these studies has used entirely different approaches to obtain its results. In order to adequately assess them and to understand the conclusions each study offers, it is necessary to properly analyse each of the results in turn.

The first case, historian Robert Goldberg's analysis of the Klan's membership in Denver, Colorado, was the first and perhaps the most extensive study of its type.<sup>42</sup> Denver was certainly one of the jewels in the Invisible Empire's crown, and it can be said that Colorado itself was one of the strongest Klan realms. Although the KKK never recruited the impressive numbers it did in states to the east, the electoral victories and public support for the movement made Colorado a promising rising star in Klandom.<sup>43</sup> Goldberg's analysis was based on two comprehensive membership records donated in 1946 by an anonymous Denver Klansmen to a local reporter: the Klan's Roster of Members and Membership Applications book. The Denver Klan roster alone numbered 16,727 members, making this an invaluable source for an evaluation of the organization's makeup.

Goldberg decided to divide the membership into those who had joined earlier and those who had joined later, to test a long-standing hypothesis about the inherent socioeconomic differences between the first people who joined the movement and those who enlisted later. The study selected a sample of 375 men from those who had joined the Denver Klan before January 1923, a period in which the Klan was still in its formative stages and was still rather discrete in terms of recruitment. A second sample of 583 knights was selected from those who joined after May 1924, as this was when the Denver Klan started to pursue a widespread membership campaign. Goldberg's research revealed that from the so called "early joiner" sample, 166 of the members held membership in the Freemasons, about 45.5%. Of the "late joiner" group, only 107 members were also initiates of the Craft, or 18.35%.<sup>44</sup> The total proportion of dual membership between both the samples of the late and early joiners is 28.5%. Goldberg warns that the list of Denver Masons was incomplete, and that even though

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<sup>42</sup> See Robert Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Alternatively, consult Robert A. Goldberg, "Denver: Queen City of the Colorado Realm," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Towards a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s.*, ed. Shawn Lay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004) or Robert A. Goldberg, "Beneath the Hood and Robe: A Socioeconomic Analysis of Ku Klux Klan Membership in Denver, Colorado, 1921-1925," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1980).

<sup>43</sup> David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981), p.126.

<sup>44</sup> Goldberg, "Beneath the Hood," pp.187-191.

other miscellaneous sources were used to try and supplement the data, that this figure can only be judged as the minimum figure for dual affiliation.<sup>45</sup>

Christine Erickson's work on Kontinental Klan no.30 from Butte, Montana reveals very different statistics.<sup>46</sup> A sparsely populated state with no major cities during the 1920s, Montana was never the real focus of the Klan's klaverns, but it did manage to establish several important and quite resilient klaverns that lasted long after the organization's collapse in other parts of the country. Led by Grand Dragon Lew Terwilliger, the Montana Klan established important enclaves in Helena, Billings, Missoula and Butte.<sup>47</sup> Erickson has argued that in Butte, even though "the Masons never officially sanctioned the relationship, the Masonic lodge no doubt served as a pipeline for the Kontinental Klan."<sup>48</sup> She backs up this statement by pointing out that from the obituaries of 68 Butte Klansmen that died between 1933 and 1980, 58 were also Masons. She also states "The percentage who belonged to both groups may have been higher since it is quite probable that many of the Klansmen who left Butte after the late 1920s also enjoyed dual membership."<sup>49</sup> Although by no means an ideal or representative sample, especially when we compare it to the more robust evidence from other studies, Erickson's work nonetheless demonstrated that an incredible 85.29% of Butte's Klansmen were Freemasons.

A detailed analysis of the levels of crossover between the Klan and the Freemasons has also been carried out in Kansas by Kristofer Allerfeldt.<sup>50</sup> Again, the influence and size of the Klan in this state is not comparable with strongholds like Indiana or Texas, but the history of this organization in Kansas is nonetheless interesting. Although very alike in terms of demographics and economics to some of the Midwestern states where the Klan proved so popular, the growth of the Invisible Empire in the fertile Jayhawker state was stifled from the very beginning by virulent opposition from established leaders, such as Governor Henry Justin Allen. Allerfeldt's analysis is based on the efforts of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., footnote 17, pp.187-188.

<sup>46</sup> Christine K. Erickson, "Kluxer Blues': The Klan Confronts Catholics in Butte, Montana, 1923-1929," *The Montana Magazine of History* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2003)

<sup>47</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp.219-221.

<sup>48</sup> Erickson, "Kluxer Blues'," p.48.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.48.

<sup>50</sup> Allerfeldt, "Jayhawker Fraternities,"

anti-Klan editor of the *Emporia Gazette*, the renowned Progressive icon William Allen White. In the pages of his newspaper, White published a list of attendants and their addresses to the Kansas Klan's state convention. This list was obtained from the Broadview Hotel of Emporia, where the only other guests aside from the Klansmen were a barbershop choir from Italy. Discerning the Klansmen from the Italians was simple; the Klansmen were obviously those whose addresses were American. Allerfeldt cross-referenced the names with Masonic records, and found that from a sample of 95 Klansmen at least 42 were Klansmen, a proportion of 44.2%.<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the most dependable statistics for the number of Klansmen who held additional membership in the Freemasons comes from Newaygo County, Michigan. The Klan Realm of Michigan was overshadowed by some of its other powerful Midwestern neighbours, but it took the state by storm with its message of 100% Americanism. Detroit in particular proved to be a fruitful hunting ground for kleagles, as they fed off of the latent post-war patriotism and the racial tension arising from the migration of African-Americans to the city. Craig Fox has demonstrated that the Klan also became a pervasive feature of life in rural Michigan.<sup>52</sup> While work by other historians into this matter has depended on sometimes patchy Masonic records, the Newaygo County Klan records specifically included the fraternal memberships each initiate had on their Klan membership card. This means that we know precisely how many Klansmen belonged to other fraternal orders, and what is even rarer, which fraternal orders. Fox's research reveals that 183 of Newaygo County's 776 Klansmen belonged to the Freemasons, a proportion of 23.5%. It also reveals that an almost equal number belonged to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and that a minority were also members of popular fraternities such as the Woodmen of the World, the Loyal Order of the Moose, the Knights of Pythias or the Elks.<sup>53</sup>

The final study took place in Dallas, Texas, arguably the second most significant Klan state in the country. From the very beginning of the Southern

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp.1043-1045.

<sup>52</sup> Craig Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk: White Protestant Life and the KKK in 1920s Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp.121-123.

Publicity Association's takeover of the recruitment of the order, the Klan proved to be a popular organization in Dallas. Spawning an unprecedented wave of violence in this town and infiltrating practically all levels of local and state government, there were few towns that felt the pernicious influence of the KKK as Dallas did. Although further information will be detailed in the following chapter, a list of Klansmen from Dallas Klan No.66 was obtained by a local reporter of the anti-Klan newspaper, the *Dallas Dispatch*. This publication printed the names of the owners of the cars parked outside a Klan meeting, and using a register of all the Freemasons from Dallas, this study ascertained that from a sample of 83 Klansmen, a total of 44 were also members of Masonic lodges. This would indicate that 53% of the sample held dual membership in both orders.<sup>54</sup>

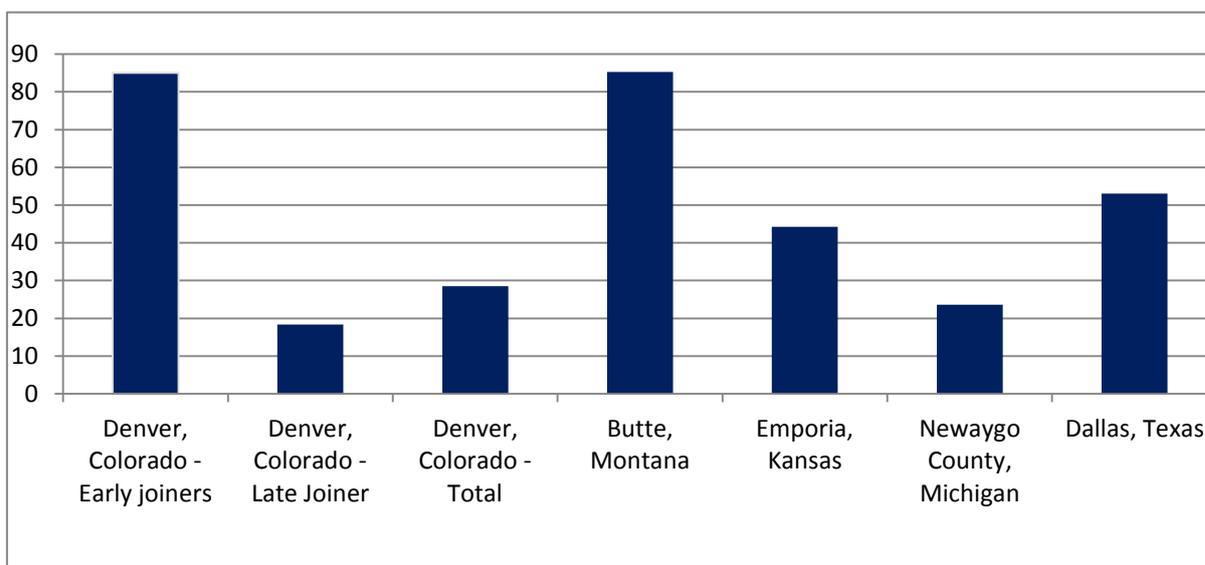


CHART 2 – DUAL MEMBERSHIP AMONG KLANSMEN FROM COLORADO, MONTANA, KANSAS, MICHIGAN AND TEXAS<sup>55</sup>

As Chart 2 indicates, there is a wide spread of different proportions for dual membership, but some of the irregular statistics can be explained. The first bar indicates the level of dual membership among those Klansmen who joined earliest in Denver, Colorado and indicates that this group had significantly higher levels of dual membership. Historians of Klan have long held that those

<sup>54</sup> A list of Klansmen from "Get List of Cars Parked at Fair Pk. Ku Klux Meeting," *Dallas Dispatch*, May 12 1922, was crosschecked with local Masonic lodges.

<sup>55</sup> Goldberg, "Beneath the Hood," pp.187-191; Erickson, "'Kluxer Blues'," p.48; Allerfeldt, "Jayhawker Fraternities," p.1043-1045; Fox, *Everyday Klansfolk*, pp.121-123; "Get List of Cars Parked at Fair Pk. Ku Klux Meeting," *Dallas Dispatch*, May 12 1922

joining the fraternity early on and those who formed the klavern's leadership were of a higher socioeconomic standing than those who joined later. This theory has been supported by a number of studies in local communities.<sup>56</sup> Goldberg's research was the first to also detect that the leadership and those joining klaverns early on had disproportionately higher levels of dual membership. With regard to the Klan's national leadership, this was also the case. This elevated proportion of dual membership among the Klan's national and local leaders might help explain why so many Klan officials believed the number of Freemasons in the Klan was so high. These Klan officials were making an exaggerated estimate based on the leadership, which held disproportionately high membership in the Craft. Because of this, the "early joiners" figure must be discounted as it does not accurately reflect the socioeconomic background and regular fraternal membership of most of the Klan. In the case of Denver, we must use the aggregate proportion of both the early and later joiners to get a more precise idea of how many Freemasons the klaverns in this city had.

The table then seems to suggest that the level of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations was anywhere between 25 to 50%. A reasonable estimate for the national figure would be that about a third of the Invisible Empire shared membership. Of course there are several caveats to this estimate. The example of Butte demonstrates that some klaverns were rife with Freemasons, and that some of the claims for lodges where nearly everyone held dual membership could indeed be true. Furthermore, the noteworthy variety of figures these studies would offer seems to indicate that the exact proportion of Klansmen with Masonic affiliations fluctuated significantly according to location. This estimate also reveals that some of the claims made by Klansmen and Freemasons as to the levels of crossover in individual locations were not all inaccurate. One previously mentioned figure of 47% given by a Klansman for Morganton, North Carolina seems entirely possible. However, the figures presented by national

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<sup>56</sup> Calvin Enders, "White Sheets in Mecosta: The Anatomy of a Michigan Klan," *Michigan Historical Review* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1988), p.81; Allen Safianow, "The Klan Comes to Tipton," *Indiana Magazine of History* 95, no. 30 (1999), pp.211-212; Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p.65, 70, 116-118, 142; Donald Holley, "A Look Behind the Masks: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Monticello, Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2001), p.140.

Klan leaders do seem vastly exaggerated. The quoted figures stated that anywhere from 75 to 90% of all Klansmen were Freemasons, a statistic that is heavily contradicted by this study. Frank R. Kent's observation, that a "considerable proportion" of Klansmen also belonged to the Freemasons, seems to have been quite accurate when we consider that around a third of them held dual membership.

#### **4) Effects of Dual Membership in Individual Lodges**

H.L. Atkinson wrote to the California Grand Lodge in 1922 to discuss the situation at his local lodge in Beeville, Texas. As mentioned earlier, he believed that 80% of the klavern in his town were Freemasons, and he found this quite disconcerting. He mentioned that "I was opposed to the members of this lodge joining the Klan for the simple reason as stated in the charges to Masons... The news conveyed back to me that I would be expelled if I did not hush and say no more about it."<sup>57</sup> Atkinson described a very tense atmosphere within his local branch, an example that was echoed in several other Masonic chapters across America. In fact, judging by the response of several Grand Masters and the media's coverage, the Klan was having an overwhelmingly negative effect on lodges all over the country. We now know that around a third of all Klansmen were Freemasons, but what effect did this dual membership have on Masonic lodges in America? Were all lodges afflicted with the same spirit of mistrust as was reported by Atkinson in Beeville Lodge no.261?

Analysing the controversy caused by dual membership has proven quite problematic for historians. Not only are minutes of individual lodges difficult to find or access, but these sorts of matters would probably be discussed outside of the lodge itself, in private conversation. However, we can get a sense of the hostility between individual Masons on the subject of membership in the Klan from the pages of the *Fellowship Forum*. In the correspondence section of this publication, supporters and detractors of the KKK had heated disputes over this order's intrusion into the lodge room. For instance, in late 1922 N.W. Schlossberg, a Jewish Freemason from Roanoke, Virginia, wrote to the *Forum*

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<sup>57</sup> "Letter from Atkinson to Whicher," May 9<sup>th</sup> 1922.

to cancel his subscription to this publication due to their obvious pro-Klan stance. In his letter Schlossberg condemned the Invisible Empire for trying to usurp the authority of the state, and accused the editors of the *Forum* of being either members of the KKK or on their payroll.<sup>58</sup> Schlossberg's correspondence unleashed a firestorm of condemnation from other readers that gives us an indication of the level of vitriol between supporters and opponents of the Klan within the Craft.

One reply to Schlossberg's accusations came from a militant Freemason from Cincinnati, Ohio, who referred to himself as "Cincinnatus." This writer questioned Schlossberg's understanding of the Klan, and believed it to be influenced by certain Catholic newspapers. "Cincinnatus" also questioned Schlossberg's Masonic credentials, and reminded him that it was his duty as a Master Mason to "teach those of your race who are less enlightened... to not hold themselves as a race apart, with strange customs, strange laws, and a strange language." He then launched into an anti-Semitic tirade where he condemned the un-American nature of the Jewish communities in New York and Cincinnati.<sup>59</sup> A writer from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was similarly incensed with Schlossberg's letter, and tried to alert him to the dangers posed by the Catholic Church, saying:

[The Klan] have seen the grasping hand of Rome in public offices and have dared to stand for America first, last, and all the time. You Jews have listened to the siren's song that [the Klan] is fighting the Jew and have joined hands with the Church of Rome to down this order. If you help them succeed, then your children will pay the price with their blood and the Jew will become a wanderer on the face of the earth again.<sup>60</sup>

Hyman J. Rosenstock, a Jewish Freemason from Ellicott City, Maryland, took offense to these letters, and rushed to defend Schlossberg and other Jewish-Americans. He asked "Cincinnatus" why Jews were barred from the

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<sup>58</sup> "Jewish Side of Klan Question," *The Fellowship Forum*, December 16 1922.

<sup>59</sup> "Several Correspondents Submit Their Opinions on Position Taken by N.S. Schlossberg in a Communication to Forum," *The Fellowship Forum*, January 6 1923.

<sup>60</sup> "Says Jews are Training with Wrong Crowd," *The Fellowship Forum*, January 6 1923.

Klan if in fact they were only fighting the Roman Catholic church. Rosenstock declared:

The reason the Jews are barred is because they don't believe in mob rule. [The Klan] object to the Jews for the reason that the Jews will not follow hooded howling hooligan leaders. For you have never heard of a Jew being a member of a lynching party or a whipping carnival like the K.K.K. often indulge in.<sup>61</sup>

He concluded saying simply: "My idea is that a man cannot wear a [Masonic] apron and a [Klan] nightgown at the same time." Rosenstock's comment's received quite a few replies, including one from an R.M. Stephenson, a Freemason and Klansman from Lexington, Mississippi. Stephenson accused Rosenstock of having formed his opinions on the Klan based wholly on the "mouthpieces of the Pope" without adequately investigating the matter for himself. He concluded that "if the Jews voluntarily ally themselves with the enemies of the Ku Klux Klan, they are frankly admitting to the world that they are un-American."<sup>62</sup>

This sort of arguing was frequent within the pages of the *Forum*. A slew of disparaging letters were sent in after one writer, Ed Vandersluis, criticized this newspaper's attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church and the KKK. One writer said he felt sorry for Vandersluis and declared "I for one have no patience with a Protestant, be he Mason or otherwise, that will pay allegiance to political Rome. Some Protestants do not know the meaning of the word Protestant, and if they do they give it no thought."<sup>63</sup> Another reader was equally critical of Vandersluis' stance and said "It's a good thing that there is not many Protestants of that stripe in the old U.S.A. or the Pope of Rome should find this country an easy mark."<sup>64</sup> The next issue had an even more biting reply. While the others had questioned Vandersluis' credentials as a Protestant and a Mason, one writer stated that if he was:

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<sup>61</sup> "Jew Resents Charge they 'Train With Catholics'," *The Fellowship Forum*, January 20 1923.

<sup>62</sup> "Writer Sets Jew Scribe Right," *The Fellowship Forum*, February 17 1923.

<sup>63</sup> "32d Degree Mason Sorry for Vandersluis," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 6 1923.

<sup>64</sup> "Undesirable Masons and Protestants," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 6 1923.

a Mason and a Protestant, an American and that he says he is, he surely has been imbibing some of the rottenest corn juice that he could find when he wrote that piece... Just such men crucified Jesus Christ and are helping to throw this government of ours into the hands of the Dago Pope of Rome.<sup>65</sup>

Other Klan newspapers also carried offensive comments made by Freemasons against other members of the Craft who disagreed with the Invisible Empire and its methods. The *Texas 100% American* published the outburst from one contributor who said:

It gets on my eternal [goat] when I hear a Mason getting up, and following the lines of mouthy denunciation usually followed by Romanists, denouncing the Klan.

I feel like taking that bird (and if he were not a brother Mason, I would do so,) by the seat of his pants and giving him one swift pitch right into the Vatican at Rome, where he could kiss the Pope's toe, if that happened to be the exposed part of the Pope at the time.

Such silly rot as some of my brother Masons have shot off from their 2x4 mouths from time to time.<sup>66</sup>

This bickering in the correspondence columns of pro-Klan newspapers reflects the sort of conflict that was developing in America's Masonic lodges as this alien fraternity slowly infiltrated their membership. Obviously, it was probably less rude and overt, but the same basic insinuations were probably whispered to other brothers of the lodge. Freemasons with Klan affiliations mostly questioned the integrity of their anti-Klan brethren, criticizing their allegiance to the fraternity, the Protestant religion and even the nation itself. They accused their anti-Klan opponents of having misunderstood the movement, and of having been misled by publications and individuals friendly to the Catholic Church and other supposedly un-American influences. They also

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<sup>65</sup> "Calls Vandersluis Article, 'Hot Air'," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1923; There were a number of other similar letters printed in this issue criticizing Vandersluis, see "Terms Vandersluis a 'Zero American'," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1923; "Vandersluis Dupe of Rome, Says Minister," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1923; "Tells Him Where He Can 'Unload Chest'," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1923.

<sup>66</sup> "War on Masonry," *Texas 100% American*, June 22 1924.

probably defended the Klan by explaining its objectives were sympathetic to those of the Craft. On the other hand, those Freemasons who opposed the Klan would have pointed to the daily reports of vigilantism that appeared to the press, and to the multiple denunciations of this order by leading Freemasons, politicians and civic leaders. They also would have argued that the Klan's discriminatory practices towards certain racial and religious groups made the organization inimical to Freemasonry. As one Masonic editor argued:

The conflict between the Klan and the Masonic instructions can never be reconciled in one human heart. Thus it is that genuine Masons – Masons who are such in their hearts – cannot be Klansmen and cannot welcome [Klansmen] with true brotherly love into their lodges.<sup>67</sup>

These disputes seem to have even extended beyond mere squabbles, and rumours reached higher officials that Klansmen were infiltrating Masonic lodges and trying to govern affairs by rigging votes and electing their own officials. All in all, it seems as if the Klan and its agents were having a serious effect on the daily activities of the Masonic fraternity. The impression given by the media, particularly anti-Klan publications like the *New York World*, was that the Invisible Empire was purposefully trying to take over America's lodges and was disrupting the fraternal bonds among Freemasonry's members.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to say how extensive or common this conflict really was, as newspapers and observers frequently overstated the negative influence of the Klan among Masonic lodges. Many Masonic leaders and newspaper editors made generalized statements about the divisive effect of the order, when the reality on the ground was not as clear cut. The example of California helps to illustrate this point. Grand Master Arthur S. Crites announced at the 1924 California Grand Lodge that:

There is indisputable evidence that certain Klan members are endeavoring to mix the affairs of Masonry with those of the Klan, thereby causing discord and confusion in the Craft and also by fostering the

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<sup>67</sup> "Masons and the Ku Klux," *New York Times*, September 2 1923.

wrong impression as to the actual standing of Masonry in this regard. It must be understood that such action is very objectionable.<sup>68</sup>

Crites made this declaration out of concern of the rumours of disturbances within California's lodges. He referred to the Klan as a "hydra-headed" monster, which despite the Grand Lodge's efforts, continued to cause problems in their jurisdiction.<sup>69</sup> Grand Master Crites had decided to take a stand against the Invisible Empire because of various incidents that had been recounted to him, and of rumours of disturbances in certain lodges. However, his investigations reveal that the majority of California's lodges had remained unperturbed by the Invisible Empire. Crites' general remarks suggest that this order was greatly afflicted by the presence of the Ku Klux Klan, but his inquiry into the matter reveals that this issue was usually localized and far from widespread in California. Historians should be careful of taking statements such as Crites' at face value, as they did not always reflect the true nature of the situation in individual lodges.

For instance, in August 1924 Crites contacted Irving Magnes, a Freemason from Oakland, to try and ascertain just how powerful the Klan was in that city. He wrote "I have word from Oakland that the Klan is very strong there and are openly claiming that they can throw the Masonic fraternity. I am very anxious to get definite information as to just how strong they are... and whether they are planning on securing control of our order."<sup>70</sup> Concerned about these possible conditions, Crites asked Magnes to carry out an extensive investigation of the Klan's affairs, and even proposed that he hire a detective agency to acquire evidence. Magnes wrote back later that month, saying he had some limited information but that it was "not an easy task." His letter to Crites said:

By general reputation here the order [the KKK] has a better than fifty per cent membership made up of our members. They are in all our Lodges.

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<sup>68</sup> "Masons Deny Any Klan Link," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 12 1924; For more information, see Adam G. Kendall, "Freemasonry and the Second Ku Klux Klan in California, 1921-1925," *Journal of Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism* 2, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>69</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1925), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp.22-23.

<sup>70</sup> "Letter from Arthur S. Crites to Irving Magnes," August 14, 1924, "Ku Klux Klan Collection."

The actual influence they exercise is not ascertainable; by which I mean I cannot find that the course of conduct of our meetings is much different than in past years.<sup>71</sup>

Magnes included one example where a Jewish applicant had been rejected, but mentioned that Jews had been denied membership in this city's lodges long before the Klan's existence. Magnes had also conferred with a "good friend" who held dual membership about the activities of the Invisible Empire, and whom he believed to be "sincere." Magnes recounted how this Oakland Klansman said "he has never heard of any mention being made along the lines of influencing our Order [the Craft] here and he insists that when they are in our Lodge they act as Masons and without other influence." If there was any disruption from Klansmen within Masonic lodges, it was the work of individual "pinheads."<sup>72</sup>

Magnes investigation raises some interesting points. Although Oakland's lodges had plenty of Klansmen, he concluded that they were having little effect on everyday Masonic affairs. The rumours of disruption had mostly been untrue. Other letters to Grand Master Crites indicate that this was also the case in other parts of the state. That same month, Crites wrote to a J.B. McLees and asked him to investigate a number of newspaper articles that alleged that Klan speakers had given speeches at Masonic lodges in San Diego, saying he was "quite surprised as well as disturbed over this information."<sup>73</sup> McLees wrote back to confirm that yes, a Freemason name Ezra Metz did give a speech at a Masonic luncheon called "Why I am a Klansman." However, he also mentioned that two weeks previously a local rabbi gave a speech before the same meeting on why he was not a Klansman, and "so both sides have been aired before Masons of San Diego who attend the weekly luncheons."<sup>74</sup> McLees also declared frankly "[Now] as to the seriousness of the situation in San Diego I do not agree with the person who has written to you..." and explained that he had

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<sup>71</sup> "Letter from Irving Magnes to Arthur S. Crites," August 26, 1924, "Ku Klux Klan Collection."

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> "Letter from Arthur S. Crites to J.B. McLees," August 19, 1924, "Ku Klux Klan Collection."

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

consulted several “close friends” on the matter of dual membership and its effects on San Diego’s lodges. He concluded that:

I am not a member of the Klan and can only rely on information that I receive from members of the Klan whose integrity is unquestionable, the Klan is accused of doing many things they are not guilty of, and enemies of the Klan whether Masons or not are ready to condemn the Klan and by every effort fair or unfair to bring that organization under the finger of scorn.<sup>75</sup>

The Klan in San Diego, as in Oakland, seems to have been present and active among Freemasons, but contrary to the rumours, seems to have avoided any sort of confrontation. The Ku Klux Klan valued Masonic patronage, and worked hard to combat any anti-Klan opposition amongst the members of this fraternity. It is because of this that the lack of overt confrontations between opponents and supporters of the order in San Diego or Oakland is not unexpected. The Invisible Empire only defied Freemasons who could damage the order on a national level, and avoided upsetting ordinary members of the Craft. It could be argued that the illusion of cooperation between the two fraternities was too precious for the Klan to squander on petty squabbles.

Much of what Crites was concerned about appears to have been mere gossip, according to some of his officers. Conflict amongst Californian Freemasons was less widespread than others had imagined. One last letter serves to illustrate this point. In separate lodges, members reacted entirely differently to the membership of some of their brethren in the Invisible Empire. Crites wrote to a W.W. Abbott of Livingston, asking him to investigate the situation in Yosemite Lodge No. 99. Abbott reported that:

Those Brethren who do not sanction the K.K.s are very outspoken in their attitude towards those who do, or who belong to that order, on the other hand there are some eight or ten Brethren who belong to the Klan and naturally resent the attitude of those who do not belong. I do not

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

wish however to convey the thought these Clansmen [sic.] resent all those who do not belong to the Clan [sic.], simply those whose attitude towards the Clan is resentful.<sup>76</sup>

Although this lodge did display some tension, Abbott seems to portray them as mere personal differences. He even interviewed one Freemason affiliated with the Klan who said that the members of Yosemite Lodge no.99 disliked him before he even joined the Klan and that this was merely “something more to bring against him.”

The Inspector’s reports mentioned earlier in this chapter also suggest that there was a range of different responses to the Klan from Californian’s Freemasons. One Byron F. Hilhouse wrote to Crites saying simply that in his community “Some members of the Lodges are I think members of the Klan but no discord has been brought into the fraternity.”<sup>77</sup> C.G. Lambert reported that even though he suspected that Freemasons belonging to the Klan had denied the applications of two foreign-born applicants, that “The lodges in the 50<sup>th</sup> district are most harmonious and getting along splendidly.”<sup>78</sup> Writing from Santa Monica, Edward Massey denied that Klansmen were causing trouble and added “Can say nothing regarding the K.K.K.’s except that quite a few number of our best members admit membership in organization. Some of these men are my personal friends and are thought of very highly in neighborhood.”<sup>79</sup> These reports again demonstrate the importance of using a microhistorical approach to the Ku Klux Klan. Generalizations tend to overlook the subtle local distinctions in the conflict between these two orders. To truly understand how the Craft and the Klan interacted, we need to focus on case studies of individual communities.

Of course, some of these District Inspector’s may have simply been unable to detect any form of tension within their lodges as to the matter of dual membership. Many of the replies to Crites’ investigation admitted as much, saying they believed there was no disruption as far as they were aware. One officer stated that in regards to Klansmen dictating the affairs of the fraternity

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<sup>76</sup> “Letter from W.W. Abbott to Arthur S. Crites,” June 4 1924, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>77</sup> “Inspector’s Report from Bryon F. Hilhouse to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>78</sup> “Inspector’s Report from C.G. Lambert to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>79</sup> “Inspector’s Report from Edward Massey to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

“There has been a rumour of it in one lodge, but it could not be traced to any conclusion.”<sup>80</sup> A few of the lodges, however, did describe more troubling conditions. R.H. Reinhert replied to Crites’ inquiry and said that there had been some disturbances in his lodge after one former Master had given a speech at a luncheon as to why he was a Klansman, and while another member later replied to this speech. Reinhert elaborated and said “An announcement was made at this luncheon that this meeting would forever terminate discussion relative to this subject.”<sup>81</sup> William W. Abbott, referred to earlier, stated that he had been forced to appear before lodges in Merced, Modest, and Turlock because members had charged Klansmen of trying to take control of these posts, and that he felt it necessary “to reprimand them for their conduct and warn against any infraction of Masonic law.”<sup>82</sup>

This collection of reports cannot be considered representative, but they do illustrate the flexible character of the Klan as a movement. Although there are some individual replies that indicate that Klansmen were in fact breaking down brotherly relations, most of these reports announced that either they were unaware of any Klansmen in the ranks of their lodges, or these Klansmen were simply not causing any disturbances among the Freemasons. Interactions between the California Klan and the Craft were quite complex and varied from location to location.

Similar to the issue of calculating the crossover levels among the two orders, there is conflicting evidence regarding the influence of the Invisible Empire in individual lodges. As has been argued, the Klan was a flexible organization, and its members could act both aggressively or passively within other fraternal lodges. Furthermore, Freemasons themselves reacted to the Klan in a variety of ways. One lodge or community is simply not representative of the situation nationwide. Consequently, the Invisible Empire’s relationship with the Craft in America can only be described as complex and variable. Freemasons from across the country joined the Ku Klux Klan, but the only way

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<sup>80</sup> “Inspector’s Report from C.B. Greeley to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>81</sup> “Inspector’s Report from R.H. Reinhert to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

<sup>82</sup> “Inspector’s Report from William W. Abbott to Arthur S. Crites,” undated, “Ku Klux Klan Collection.”

to know how their brethren would react is by carrying out case studies and analysing this issue from a microhistorical perspective.

Focusing exclusively on individual communities can help us isolate some of the factors influencing the success and decline of a Klan among a group of Freemasons in an individual community, as well as provide us with interesting examples of the effect that this order had on different lodges. To this end, this thesis will now turn to two very different communities – Dallas, Texas and Anaheim, California – to further understand the complex relationship between these two giants of the fraternal world. Following this microhistorical analysis, this study will try to take a broader view by discussing how Masonic authorities from across the country reacted to the Ku Klux Klan. It is crucial to observe how these two fraternities interacted from a number of different perspectives, as this will allow us to gain a better understanding of the matter. This more national examination, coupled with the examples from the case studies, will hopefully provide more general conclusions about the complex nature of the connection between the Craft and the Klan.

CHAPTER 6: DALLAS KLAN NO.66  
AND ANAHEIM LODGE NO.207:  
A CASE STUDY OF TWO COMMUNITIES

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In several ways, the cities of Anaheim and Dallas were two entirely different communities following the end of the First World War. Dallas, the significantly larger of the two, had grown from an agricultural economy based around cotton around the turn of the century to become the banking, transport and retail centre of the Southwest. Anaheim, on the other hand, was still largely a rural California town that relied heavily on citrus groves, ranches and a budding oil industry. However, these two cities share a common heritage, an uncomfortable association with the Second Ku Klux Klan. Both towns felt the divisive effects of this fraternity. “Whippings, tar and feathers and running people of out of town seem to be the order of the day,” declared one former Texas Governor in 1922, “Dallas has been made a spotlight spectacle to its detriment in the eyes of the Nation by the lawless occurrences within her limits.”<sup>1</sup> A month later, a journalist from Anaheim described the order as the “self-constituted guardians of the morals of the city,” and recounted how “Threatening letters have been mailed to victims, ordering them to put their houses in order and depart in a given time, insinuating dire consequences if they fail to comply.”<sup>2</sup> In both cities, the Invisible Empire also managed to infiltrate the local Masonic lodge, which played a critical role in the evolution of the order in the community.

This chapter aims to explore the relationship between the Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in these two cities. This discussion will demonstrate some of the points made in earlier sections, as well as highlight some aspects of the conflict between the two orders that might be particular to their locales. By examining Dallas and Anaheim, this analysis hopes to illustrate why it was that individual Freemasons joined the Ku Klux Klan, what the proportion of dual membership was, and the effect that this crossover had on both fraternities and the cities themselves. While it is possible to theorise from these discoveries, the

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<sup>1</sup> "Something More Rotten in Dallas than in Denmark," *Dallas Morning News*, March 25 1922

<sup>2</sup> "Ku Klux Operating in Anaheim," *Anaheim Gazette*, April 20 1922, "KKK Newspaper Clippings 1920's", Anaheim Public Library.

conditions in both Anaheim and Dallas are in no way representative of the situation in other parts of the country. Nonetheless, they constitute two useful examples that illustrate the range of possible forms that the Ku Klux Klan could take, and the distinct effect they could have on the local Masonic lodge. This analysis will be mostly comparative, focusing on Dallas first and then Anaheim, in an effort to show the similarities and differences between the two cases.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, there are a limited amount of verifiable Klan membership rolls, and finding Masonic archives with well-preserved material from this period that grant access for such controversial research necessarily narrows the number of studies possible. Inquiries were made as to the possibility of carrying out research in Buffalo, New York, as well as in various locations in Indiana, but both proved to be impractical. The Ku Klux Klan is still a delicate subject in both Anaheim and Dallas, and locals can be resistant to such questions. Some fifty years after the Klan marched in Anaheim's streets, a journalist phoned an elderly resident of the area to ask what he knew about the city's sordid relation to this fraternity. The man replied "Don't you go around asking about the Klan. Don't do it. You'll be sorry."<sup>3</sup> That said, research in Anaheim was carried out with the extensive assistance of the Grand Lodge of California and individual Freemasons, while the work in Dallas was completed using documents that were published in widely available volumes.<sup>4</sup> In essence, these two locations were chosen to analyse the interactions between the two brotherhoods simply because they were the only ones where there was sufficient material to carry out this research. Hopefully, further investigations can be carried out in different locations to supplement the work carried out in this thesis, but this would probably require the discovery of new material or the opening up of previously restricted archives. This is precisely why this investigation into these two cities is so valuable. They are two of the very few locations where research has been carried out into the delicate relationship between the two fraternities, making this study almost unique in the field.

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<sup>3</sup> "Fears, Powers of KKK Rules Anaheim in '20s," *Orange County Register*, November 30 1975, "Ku Klux Klan No Dates", Anaheim Public Library.

<sup>4</sup> I would like to express my gratitude especially to Laurence Collister, Secretary of Anaheim Lodge no.207, for allowing me permission to access this organization's historical materials, as well as to Adam Kendall of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry for arranging this visit and for his support.

## 1) The Ku Klux Klan in Dallas

Members boasted that Dallas Klan No.66 was “the largest Klan in the realm of Klandom,” a justifiable claim considering this klavern’s size and sway within the Invisible Empire.<sup>5</sup> Historian Charles Alexander believed that Dallas probably had the highest number of Klansmen per capita among the major urban centres, numbering nearly 13,000 in 1924.<sup>6</sup> Texas was one of the first states to be targeted by kleagles following the Southern Publicity Association’s takeover of the organization’s propagation. The first salesmen arrived in the late summer of 1920, organizing Houston Klan No.1, the state’s first klavern.<sup>7</sup> From there, the Invisible Empire spread to other big cities, establishing itself in Dallas in late 1920, although the exact date of the organization’s appearance in the city is debated. The Klan in Dallas set itself up quietly, recruiting members and building its strength covertly before launching a more widespread publicity campaign. Although still in its formative stage, Dallas Klan No.66’s appetite for violence was felt even then. In April 1921, Klansmen kidnapped an African-American bellhop, branded him with acid and gave him twenty-five lashes for making advances on white female patrons of the hotel where he worked. Reporters had been invited to attend the horrific punishment, and witnessed what is thought to have been the Dallas Klan’s first act of vigilantism. One newspaper article reported that “the alleged Klan ha[s] a strong organization here, but no one appears to know who they are.”<sup>8</sup> The attack even received the approval of local authorities, including a local judge who said “Maybe it will be a lesson. It is time something was done in cases of this kind.”<sup>9</sup>

Dallas residents would soon become very familiar with the Ku Klux Klan and reports of vigilante attacks would become quite frequent over the course of the coming year. Once it had gathered enough members, Dallas Klan No.66

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<sup>5</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Official Souvenir of Klan Day At the State Fair of Texas* (Dallas: Standard American Publishing House, 1923), p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Charles C. Alexander, "Invisible Empire in the Southwest: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, 1920-1930" (University of Texas, 1962), p.27.

<sup>7</sup> Max Bentley, "The Ku Klux Klan in Texas," *McClure's Magazine*, May 1924, p.12.

<sup>8</sup> "Dallas Negro Lashed, Branded K.K.K.," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 2 1921; "Brand Negro With Acid After Flogging Him," *New York Times*, April 3 1921.

<sup>9</sup> "No Investigation to Follow Raid of Ku Klux Klan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 3 1921.

announced its presence in the typical manner: by organizing a large parade. On May 21 1921, at precisely 9 o'clock, 789 Klansmen marched silently and in full uniform through the centre of Dallas, carrying flags, crosses and banners. This attracted a large audience, many of whom cheered and applauded as Klansmen walked by holding signs saying "White Supremacy," "Pure Womanhood," "Dallas Must Be Clean" and "Our Little Girls Must Be Protected." Dallas Klan 66 also sent an advertisement to the local papers to promote their order. The notice was a standard enunciation of the Ku Klux Klan's beliefs, and said in part "this organization is composed of native-born Americans and none others", and that "it proposes to uphold the dignity and authority of the law... no innocent person of any color, creed or lineage has just cause to fear or condemn this body of men." They also declared "our creed is opposed to violence, lynchings, etc. but that we are even more strongly opposed to the things that cause lynchings and mob rule."<sup>10</sup> Overnight, Klansmen also posted red warnings all over the city that read simply "Lawbreakers to reform or leave."<sup>11</sup> With this bold entrance into the public sphere, the KKK made its objectives and priorities quite clear to Dallas, and announced that they would pursue a program of moral reform and 100% Americanism by practically any means necessary.

The media and the public's response to the order's provocative displays testify to the Propagation Department's careful marketing and sales strategy. The Invisible Empire's kleagles hoped to cause controversy and to focus attention on their fraternity wherever they went, and Dallas and Anaheim were no different. Almost immediately, the Dallas Klan's detractors published condemnations of the parade and the order in general. An editorial in the *Dallas Morning News* declared that the city had been "slandered" by the Klan's unnecessary existence, stating "White supremacy is not imperilled. Vice is not rampant... There is no occasion for the revival of it now."<sup>12</sup> Residents of the city wrote to this publication to endorse their position. One reader stated that:

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<sup>10</sup> "Klan Marches in Awesome Parade," *Dallas Morning News*, May 22 1921; "Ku Klux Paraders in Dallas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 22 1921.

<sup>11</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Post Dallas With Warning," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 23 1921.

<sup>12</sup> "Dallas Slandered," *Dallas Morning News*, May 24 1922.

This institution seems to be a return to barbarism by self-righteous persons who are filled with ignorance, bigotry and intolerance. This Ku Klux Klan will, if it continues, make the South ridiculous and a stench in the nostrils of the entire civilized world.<sup>13</sup>

Other readers relayed similar sentiments.<sup>14</sup> Yet not all Texans felt the Klan was a blight on their state. The Invisible Empire and its officials had hoped to stimulate debate with their sensational appearance, and they realized that campaigns against the order often resulted in increased applications to their organization. The Dallas Klan had deliberately organized a dramatic parade to encourage their quiet supporters to rally against those who dared to condemn their message of 100% Americanism and clean living.

The response from Dallas was as expected. One reader wrote to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* to defend the Klan, saying “a law breaker or a moral or social degenerate usually gets what he deserves on short notice in the hands of the K.K.K.” and explained that this system was cheaper and more effective because it did not include “a bunch of lawyers whose business it is to construct testimony to free criminals.”<sup>15</sup> T.O. Perrin, pastor of the city’s Westminster Baptist Church, sensed divine intervention and declared “It may be, however, that the hand of God is working in this organization to bring about a solution of the various problems.”<sup>16</sup>

These “problems” Reverend Perrin mentioned referred to a number of social ills that afflicted Dallas and which the Ku Klux Klan had promised to rectify, much to the relief of some of the city’s residents. Prostitution, gambling, bootlegging and general lawlessness seem to have been the major focus of the Invisible Empire in Dallas. Historian Mark N. Morris ascribes the growth of the Dallas Klan to general post-war social conditions. These centred on fears of renewed European migration, moral decay, disrespect for the rule of law, and demands for racial equality that worried citizens from this city and all over the

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<sup>13</sup> "Make South Ridiculous," *Dallas Morning News*, May 28 1921.

<sup>14</sup> "Organization Not Needed," *Dallas Morning News*, May 28 1921; "Stick to Law," *Dallas Morning News*, May 28 1921; "Respect for the Law," *Dallas Morning News*, May 28 1921; "The Ku Klux ", *Dallas Morning News*, June 6 1921; "The Ku Klux Klan," *Dallas Morning News*, June 12 1921.

<sup>15</sup> "Approves of Ku Klux," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 1 1921.

<sup>16</sup> "Pastor Upholds Ku Klux Klan Program," *Dallas Mornings News*, May 23 1921.

country. However, he also argues that even though there was “little to suggest that society was in any immediate danger of disintegration, many in Dallas were convinced the threat was real.”<sup>17</sup> While there were no major demographic shifts, and no extraordinary spikes in criminal or radical activity, the Klan in Dallas was feeding off of the imagined concerns of the city’s population. The Klan promised to address the worries of the majority of the city’s white and Protestant residents, and many seemed to approve of both their message and methods.

The vehemently anti-Klan *Dallas Dispatch* published an insightful examination of the Second Klan, listing the reasons they supposed Dallas men were joining the order.<sup>18</sup> The editor believed religious prejudice played a major part in the order’s popularity, writing that “notwithstanding the Protestant majority in American politics, ‘Get the Jew’ and ‘Swat the Pope’ slogans are always popular.” He also observed that love of power as well as greed were other motivating factors, as graft and business opportunities abounded within the fraternity. The editor noted that the post-war jingoism was another seemingly important aspect of the Klan’s success, declaring that “It’s easy to pervert patriotism these days... The ‘holier-than-thou’ element is attracted by the Klan’s promise to clean-up the town and banish all criminals except bootleggers and Klansmen.” This list mirrors in many aspects the reasons given by current studies as to the growth of the Invisible Empire in Texas. The *Dallas Dispatch*, however, also emphasized that the “lodge instinct” was boosting the Klan’s numbers in the city, explaining that “Many men are professional [joiners]. They want to be a member of anything the least bit exclusive... A secret lodge is powerfully attractive to these folks.” The article further remarked that the “sheep instinct” was another critical aspect of the fraternity’s popularity, explaining that:

Organizers whisper that Dr. So and So, the big dentist, is a member.

That Rev. This and This and That of the East Dallas church is the grand

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<sup>17</sup> Mark N. Morris, "Saving Society Through Politics: The Ku Klux Klan in Dallas, Texas, in the 1920s" (PhD, University of North Texas, 1997), pp.56-57.

<sup>18</sup> "Why They Join," *Dallas Dispatch*, July 27 1921, Volume 1, "E. Paul Jones Collection," Dallas Historical Society. E. Paul Jones compiled various unmarked volumes of newspaper clippings regarding the Ku Klux Klan in Dallas. The *Dallas Dispatch* was never properly preserved, so these volumes are one of the only ways of accessing this newspaper.

chaplain. That Mr. So Forth, who occupies a prominent downtown corner is foreman of the Klan jury. If all the big men are in, the prospect concludes, he might as well be, too. One sheep, all sheep.<sup>19</sup>

Before many other commentators had noticed, the *Dallas Dispatch* had detected some of the key elements of the Klan's recruitment tactics. As mentioned in chapter 4, the Propagation Department purposefully exploited the so-called lodge and sheep instincts, targeting fraternalists and gullible joiners, and attempting to recruit respected citizens to boost the organization's standing. It was these tactics that inevitably led the Klan to try and recruit from the Freemasons in both Anaheim and Dallas.

Historians have claimed that Dallas' kleagles commenced their recruitment efforts within the city's Masonic lodges, attempting to find distinguished Protestants to swell the ranks of their budding organization.<sup>20</sup> In September 1921, the *New York World* described how kleagles lured Dallas Freemasons into their order, proclaiming that:

Since the advent into the South, and more especially in Texas, of the Ku Klux Klan, there have been efforts made to tie the proposition onto the coattails of leading members of the Masonic fraternity, leaving the impression, both with the public and the younger Masons, that Freemasonry was sponsoring the Klan.... Good men have been induced to join the Dallas Klan on the claim that within its ranks must be found certain men of local Masonic prominence, only to find that they have been have been misled.<sup>21</sup>

It is difficult to establish whether Freemasons had in fact been among the first to join the order, but we do know that many of the charter members of Dallas Klan No.66 were initiates of the Craft. As part of their celebration of the massive gathering of Klansmen at the Texas State Fair in 1923, Dallas Klan

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander, "Invisible Empire in the Southwest," pp.108-110; Morris, "Saving Society," p.187.

<sup>21</sup> "Lure of Catch-Penny Mystery Played Up in Klan Advertisting," *New York World*, September 22 1921; Reprinted in "'Catch-Penny' Tricks of Mystic Mummery Draw Gullible into Ku Klux Klan Fold," *Evening Public Ledger*, September 22 1921.

No.66 released a souvenir booklet that included the biographies of the event's organizers. These organizers were all leading Dallas Klansmen, who had joined the fraternity early on. The list included Zeke E. Marvin, former exalted cyclops of Dallas Klan 66 and Great Titan of Province No.2; J.D. Van Winkle, then current exalted cyclops in Dallas; Edward M. Nelson, office manager of the klavern; Earle H. Silven, klaliff of the Dallas Klan who joined as early as February 1921; M.M. Hinton, head of the Dallas Klan Band; J.W. Hutt, the editor of the *Texas 100% American*, the local Klan publication; and W.L. Thornton, Chairman of the Klan's Legal Committee. Of these seven, Marvin, Van Winkle, Silven and Hinton were confirmed Freemasons. Nelson was apparently "a member of several other fraternal orders, and is very active in the [Elks], being a member of Dallas Lodge No.71." Hutt was also "a member of several fraternal organizations, and is a Past Grand of the [Independent Order of Odd Fellows]." Hiram Wesley Evans himself, the first exalted cyclops of the Dallas Klan and one of its charter members, was a respected 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Freemason. The high rate of fraternal membership among these early members of Dallas Klan 66 indicates that it was quite likely that kleagles began their recruitment efforts within lodges like that of the Freemasons. The *Dallas Dispatch* and the *New York World* both argued that this played an important role in boosting the Klan's popularity and establishing it as a respectable order.

During the summer of 1921, a wave of attacks perpetrated by Klansmen throughout Texas shocked residents of Dallas, and seemed to confirm the terrifying predictions of those who opposed the order. Benny Pinto, a petty criminal of nearby Fort Worth, was kidnapped in July 1921 by hooded Klansmen, right in the middle of the city. He was ordered to leave the area, was given a coat of tar-and-feathers and dropped off before a gawking crowd. Pinto refused to leave the city, and the following month he was again forced into a car and driven to a secluded area where he was warned to leave and given sixty lashes. This time, he promptly departed.<sup>22</sup> The Klan wrote an official communication to the local paper to give their version of the events, and explained that "Pinto had been charged in the courts with having committed

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<sup>22</sup> "Tarred Man is Ordered from County," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 6 1921; "Pinto Given 60 Lashes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 7 1921; "Pinto, Heeding K.K.K.'s Orders, Has Left Texas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 10 1921.

felonies. He was never convicted... He had bragged that the 'law could not touch me.' But the hand of the Klansmen can and did!"<sup>23</sup> Beulah Johnson was also attacked by Klansmen that summer in Tenaha. She had been arrested and charged with bigamy, and had been released on bail when she was kidnapped. In another appalling abduction, Johnson was stripped and given a coat and feathers, a dire warning that she rectify her behaviour.<sup>24</sup> The *Dallas Dispatch* was incensed – as were many of the city's inhabitants – and asked "Is THIS Chivalry?" The article thundered:

See what the revival of whitecapping by the Modern Knights has brought on the name of Texas now? A woman has been taken out, STRIPPED, and tarred and feathered... The Ku Klux Klan, in spite of its protestations for the honor of women... has opened the way to an anarchy of mob rule that apparently is capable of outrages worse than the crimes of Lenin and Trotsky in Russia.<sup>25</sup>

There were also a number of vigilante incidents within the city of Dallas itself during the summer of 1921, and although many suspected it was the work of the Ku Klux Klan, there was no way of ascertaining who the perpetrators were.<sup>26</sup>

The fraternity's leadership, always sensitive to their portrayal in the media and their image in the minds of the American public, launched a publicity campaign in Texas to deflect this negative attention. Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons announced to the press that thirty men had been assigned to Texas and Oklahoma to investigate the allegations of vigilantism made against the order in those states. Simmons made it clear that he trusted that these Klansmen were innocent of all accusations and that "I rather believe that there is some force at work in Texas and Oklahoma attempting to shield their crime under the cloak of the Ku Klux Klan."<sup>27</sup> Simmons released several similar statements in the coming weeks and published advertisements defending the

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<sup>23</sup> "Pinto Given 60 Lashes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 7 1921

<sup>24</sup> "Athens Man Unconscious from Lash," *Dallas Journal*, July 19 1921, Volume 1, "E. Paul Jones Collection"; "Lash and Tar Attacks Are Being," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 18 1921.

<sup>25</sup> "Is THIS Chivalry," *Dallas Dispatch*, July 19 1921, Volume 1, "E. Paul Jones Collection."

<sup>26</sup> The Sunday magazine of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* compiled a list of all the Klan related incidents in the state throughout that summer, see "The Ku Klux Klan in Texas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28 1921.

<sup>27</sup> "Ku Klux Will Probe Texas Attacks ", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 22 1921.

Klan in popular newspapers in an effort to combat the negative portrayal of his brotherhood.<sup>28</sup> The national leadership even sued the *Los Angeles Express* for printing headlines such as “Ku Klux Terrorizes South” and “Ku Klux Reign of Terror.”<sup>29</sup> Imperial Kludd Caleb A. Ridley, the national chaplain of the Klan and a lecturer, was sent on a speaking tour throughout Texas and Oklahoma to try and minimize the effects of the opposition to the order.<sup>30</sup> He gave a speech in Dallas at the Fair State Park before 2,200 people where he said “The Ku Klux Klan of the West has been accused of everything during the last two months, from kicking a crutch from under a cripple to stealing butter from a blind negro’s bread.” Ridley also pointed out the blatant duplicity of the press when he discussed a murder in Georgia:

Some time ago, there was a fellow killed in Atlanta. Five men were with him at the time. Two were Klansmen, three were Masons and two were Odd Fellows. The press said the Klan was responsible. It didn’t say Masons or Odd Fellows were responsible.<sup>31</sup>

Ridley tried to shield the Ku Klux Klan under the mantle of fraternalism, a defence that had become standard practice among the order’s national officers. His speeches also seem to have been well-received by the audiences. The public relations wing of the Invisible Empire was aware of the importance of managing the order’s image, and campaigned across the country in cities like Dallas and Anaheim to ensure that the Klan was looked upon with favour by white Protestant Americans.

Analysing the influence of the Ku Klux Klan on the daily life of a Dallas citizen is a problematic task. In this city, as in other parts of the country, the loudest voices in the debate over the Klan’s role in society often came from the fraternity’s most vociferous supporters and its opponents. Newspapers like the

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<sup>28</sup> "Simmons Assures Members of Klan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 4 1921; "Denial by Ku Klux Klan," *New York Times*, August 8 1921; "Ku Klux Klan Publishes Ads To Give Views," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 15 1921.

<sup>29</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Sues Paper," *New York Times*, August 4 1921.

<sup>30</sup> "Ridley Explains Ku Klux," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 11 1921; "65 Robed Knights Sit on Platforms as Ridley Speaks," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 14 1921; "Dr. Ridley Discusses Ku Klux at Temple," *Dallas Morning News*, August 16 1921; "Dr. Ridley speaks of Ku Klux at Sherman," *Dallas Morning News*, August 26 1921.

<sup>31</sup> "Imperial Officer Defends Clansmen," *Dallas News*, August 12 1921, Volume 1, "E. Paul Jones Collection"; "Klan Speaker," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 12 1921.

*Dallas Morning News* or the *Dallas Dispatch*, as well as various anti-Klan factions organized within the city deliver a very limited account of the city's response to the Invisible Empire. Similarly, the narrative presented by the KKK and its supporters, that the order had received widespread support among all sections of the public, is not entirely adequate either. Looking at the vast range of sources from vociferously pro or anti-Klan publications, one would come to the conclusion that this was a fiercely divided city, torn asunder and almost paralysed by the intrusion of the Ku Klux Klan. However, we should not ignore the actions and opinions of the "silent majority" of the city, men and women who although probably not entirely indifferent to the group, were not totally preoccupied with its existence. Historians have too frequently focused on the actions of the most vocal supporters and opponents of this movement, neglecting to acknowledge the unrepresentative nature of these extremes, and ignoring those citizens who simply carried on with their lives, unaffected and mostly untroubled by the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in their community. Although the press might give the impression that Dallas was in state of constant turmoil over the matter of the Invisible Empire, the city continued to function almost as normal.

By 1922, persecution and mischaracterization of the Invisible Empire in the media, coupled with this organization's extremely effective image management and sales, had led to a burst of membership intake. The Klan's increased membership and influence in both Dallas and Texas as a whole would indicate that the efforts of the national leadership had managed to convince citizens that the accusations of night-riding and vigilante justice made against their order were unfounded. But it also seems that some believed these attacks were warranted, and welcomed the Klan's extra-legal brand of justice. Dallas Klan No.66 continued to grow at a steady pace; in January 1922 Imperial Kleagle Edward Young Clarke visited the city and declared "Our greatest growth is in Texas and Chicago. It is not strange for both these places are made up of real men." Although probably an exaggeration, Clarke announced that the city had 9,000 Klansmen.<sup>32</sup> Despite attempts to curb violent attacks, Dallas Klansmen continued carrying out their own form of justice. For example, in

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<sup>32</sup> "Squaks from the Nest of the Kleagle," *Dallas Morning News*, January 24 1922.

March 1922, a group of men presumed to be Klansmen kidnapped a Dallas lumberman named F.H. Etheredge, and drove him to the Trinity River bottoms. Here they tied him to a tree and whipped him severely. Journalists reported that members of the nearby New Zion Colored Baptist Church had frequently heard screams coming from the grove where Etheredge was whipped, and referred one of the trees as the "torture tree."<sup>33</sup>

What this case emphasizes is not only the persistently violent nature of the Dallas Klan, but also how firmly entrenched the group had become in both the government of the city and its police force. Journalists from the *Dallas Morning News* predicted that the Etheredge flogging would join the pile of unsolved vigilante attacks, and demanded that the police force sever any connections with the KKK. "Not until the community shall be assured in a way to satisfy it that its police forces are not under the thrall of that masked organization will it be able to believe that they have done all they are capable of doing in the effort to get the men who committed these crimes" read one press editorial.<sup>34</sup> Dallas Chief of Police Henry Tanner admitted soon after the Etheredge case that he in fact had been a member of the KKK, believing the order would assist law officers with their duties, but left when he found that they did more than just aid the police. He also recounted that he suspected that members of the police force were deliberately hindering the investigation of the floggings at the "river bottom courts."<sup>35</sup> The papers of Earle Cabell, a future mayor of Dallas, includes an unmarked list compiled by an unknown author of Dallas policemen who were Klansmen, demonstrating the influence of the Invisible Empire among Dallas County law officers.<sup>36</sup>

Historical studies have also shown that not only were several police officers members of the KKK, but that a number of important civic and business leaders of the city were also associated with the fraternity, including judges,

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<sup>33</sup> "Lumberman is Whipped After Abducted from Northeast Dallas Home," *Dallas Morning News*, March 21 1922; "Officers Promise Floggers Will Be Arrested at Once," *Dallas Morning News*, March 22 1922; "Officials Aroused by Whipping," *Dallas Journal*, March 21 1922 1922, Volume 2, E. Paul Jones Collection; "Possibly Many Floggings South of Dallas in Last Few Months," unmarked newspaper clipping, Volume 2, "E. Paul Jones Collection."

<sup>34</sup> "Police Forces on Trial," *Dallas Morning News*, March 29 1922.

<sup>35</sup> "Acting Chief of Police Raps Klan," *Dallas Morning News*, April 13 1922; "A Frank Statement," *Dallas Morning News*, April 14 1922; "Two Men of Courage," *Dallas Morning News*, July 19 1922.

<sup>36</sup> "List of Dallas Police Klansmen," "Earle Cabell Papers," DeGolyer Library, Box 1.

state and county officials.<sup>37</sup> "The authorities of the courthouse are now the undivided power of the Ku Klux Klan" lamented on Dallas reporter after a number of Klan candidates were elected to judicial positions.<sup>38</sup> Political victories at the local, county, state and even national level allowed the Dallas Klan to become firmly rooted in the city's power structure, and demonstrate a fair level of popular support among residents for this order and its objectives. Of course, support does not always equate to enthusiasm or commitment, and it is difficult to establish just how Klannish these Klansmen were.

Considering how well assimilated the Klan had become in practically all facets of Dallas society, perhaps it is not surprising to note then that it was also a popular organization among the Freemasons. Dallas County had a total of 8,881 Freemasons at the end of 1922, spread amongst 24 different lodges.<sup>39</sup> According the 1920 census, the county itself had a total adult white male population of 90,872, meaning that around 9.77% of all adult white Dallas males were Freemasons.<sup>40</sup> The official membership registers for Dallas Klan No.66 remain lost, but fortunately, a dependable list of Klansmen has survived. In May 1922, a reporter from the *Dallas Dispatch* managed to jot down the license plates of a group of Klansmen who had driven to a meeting at the city's Fair Park, by then a regular spot for the order's rallies.<sup>41</sup> The newspaper investigated and contacted the cars' owners to allow them to explain what their vehicles were doing at this parking lot, and printed the names of those who did not deny being Klansmen. Some of the owners did reply to the *Dispatch*, claiming they were not Klansmen or that they had sold that car. For instance, one H.B. Criswell denied that he was a Klansman and stated that "I was not at the meeting. I was in Austin that night... It is a mystery to me how the number of my

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<sup>37</sup> Morris, "Saving Society," pp.64-68.

<sup>38</sup> "The Message of the Ballot Box," *Dallas Morning News*, August 29 1922.

<sup>39</sup> The names and statistics the membership of every Texas lodge is printed in the Grand Lodge Proceedings. For details about Dallas County lodges, see Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1923) p.418.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, vol. 3: Population (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), p.995. African-American adult males were excluded from this calculation, because although they could join the Freemasons, they would not have been tabulated into the official statistics of the Grand Lodge of Texas, seeing as they belonged to the unrecognized Prince Hall Freemasons.

<sup>41</sup> "Get List of Cars Parked at Fair Pk. Ku Klux Meeting," *Dallas Dispatch*, May 12 1922, Volume 2, "E. Paul Jones Collection."

car came to be recorded. There must be some mistake.”<sup>42</sup> This list allows us to compare a sample of Klansmen with Masonic membership lists to figure out the proportion of dual membership. Such comparisons are usually impossible due to the unavailability of material, making this study of Dallas a truly exceptional exploration of the relationship between the two orders.

Klansmen were infuriated at the publication of their member’s names in the press. An article in the Dallas Klan’s newspaper, the *Texas 100% American*, expressed the outrage of the membership, but did not once deny that the men listed were members of the organization. Referring to the *Dispatch* disparagingly as the “Dis(grace),” the article said:

In the name of all that is good and bad, what business is it [to] the Dis(grace) who goes and comes from Fair Park?  
Has any crime been committed at a Klan meeting? If the Klan did meet at Fair Park, as the Dis(grace) states, didn’t they have a God-given right to meet? Didn’t these 100 per cent American citizens PAY FOR the privilege of holding a meeting at Fair Park? Who, then, has any kick coming?<sup>43</sup>

The article accused the *Dispatch* of publishing this list of Klansman in an effort to ridicule them and damage their businesses. They referred to the journalist who had attended the meeting as a “snooping coyote” and maintained that the detective agency that had tracked down the car owners were members of the Knights of Columbus. They even challenged those Klansmen among the exposed who were “weak-kneed” or ashamed of their beliefs, to “kiss the pope’s toe” and offer explanations to the press. The *Texas 100% American* proudly affirmed that those attending did not need to justify their allegiances and declared:

Mr Editor of the nigger daily, you forget yourself. This is not the day of the inquisition and this is not the Rome of 1865 where one must confess and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “Dallas Dispatch Exposes Klansmen,” *Texas 100% American*, May 19 1922.

ask absolution, but this is the Grand Old United States, the citadel of the world's civilization and its tower of freedom.<sup>44</sup>

The *Texas 100% American* boldly asserted their right to assemble, and the brazen tone of this piece suggests that the Dallas Klan and its members were not ashamed of having been revealed. Neither this article nor any other subsequent communications from Dallas Klan No.66 tried to refute the list, meaning that it can be positively used as a membership list of the Invisible Empire.<sup>45</sup>

A sample of 83 attendants at the Fair Park Klan meeting was taken from the *Dispatch* article, selected only on the basis of their residence in Dallas County. This was confirmed by checking the names and addresses with the 1920 census.<sup>46</sup> These 83 names were then cross-checked with the rosters of the county's Masonic lodges.<sup>47</sup> The results of this analysis revealed that out of sample of 83 Klansmen attending the Fair Park meeting, 44 of them were also Freemasons, a proportion of around 53%. If this sample can be treated as representative of the membership of Dallas Klan as a whole, then Freemasons were notably overrepresented in the Invisible Empire, since less than 10 per cent of the total white adult male population of the county was an initiate of the Craft (See Chart 3).<sup>48</sup> Although perhaps not an ideal sample, this source confidently confirms a long-standing assumption made by historians, that Dallas Klan No.66 was exceptionally popular among the city's Freemasons. It also helps bolster the claims that kleagles began their recruiting in the Masonic lodges of Dallas. With over half of the sample sharing membership in both fraternities, the data from Dallas suggests that dual membership was higher in this city than it was in other locations like Denver or Michigan, where similar analyses have been carried out.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> This list was first used for historical purposes by Mark N. Morris, in his study of the Dallas Klan. See Morris, "Saving Society," pp.71-73.

<sup>46</sup> For this study, the online census database [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) was used.

<sup>47</sup> The names of Dallas County's 24 lodges are available at 1923 Texas GL Proceedings, p.418. Consult the volume for the individual names of Freemasons from each lodge.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

The *New York World* claimed in 1921 that Dallas Freemasons had been “lured” into joining the Klan with deceitful claims of Masonic patronage. One article stated:

As a result of the tactics used by the Klan organizers in Dallas, many of its members have withdrawn from the membership rolls, and the movement that way is increasing. Official edicts have gone forth from the leaders of the Masonic order to the effect that Ku Kluxism is tinged and marked as a practice unbecoming a Freemason.<sup>49</sup>

The evidence from the Fair Park meeting contravenes this report from the *World*, as many Freemasons appear to have maintained their membership in the movement by 1922. 54% is a considerably high proportion, yet there is no indication as to how active these Freemasons were in the order or their motivations for joining. Admittedly, the core and leadership of the Dallas Klan were also Freemasons, but it is a complex task to prove that the majority of the klavern’s Freemasons were more than simply passive supporters.

Dallas Klan No. 66 had a considerable number of Freemasons amongst its ranks, but we must remember that membership in the order was actually rather commonplace. Perhaps the most curious aspect of the Second Invisible Empire was how mundane and ordinary the organization really was. Behind the fanfare and theatrics, the Ku Klux Klan was an ordinary patriotic fraternity and only a small minority of its members were ever involved in violent attacks. In fact, were it not for its association with the Reconstruction order, the Klan of the 1920s would have probably gone unnoticed by most Americans, like the dozens of other organizations fighting for immigration reform or against Catholicism. In this sense, the Propagation Department succeeded in its mission. It had hoped to arouse curiosity, offend certain people, stir up emotions, and set itself as a different and unique organization.

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<sup>49</sup> "Lure of Catch-Penny Mystery Played Up in Klan Advertising," *New York World*, September 22 1921; "Catch-Penny' Tricks of Mystic Mummery Draw Gullible into Ku Klux Klan Fold," *Evening Public Ledger*, September 22 1921

Historians are naturally drawn to change; it is the nature of the subject. Conflict and discord simply make a graver impression in the historical record than routine and convention. The Second Invisible Empire has inevitably become the focus of many historical treatises. Most accounts of the Klan consist of a history of flashpoints, incidents that heated up a cold war between opposing factions. The truth is that life in klaverns like Dallas Klan No.66 consisted mostly of meetings and lectures, with an occasional parade or public initiation. When Freemasons joined patriotic orders like the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, this was not a remarkable act. Joining the Ku Klux Klan however, was considered quite noteworthy by contemporary commentators and subsequently by historians simply because of the controversy this order caused. History has exaggerated the significance of being a Klansmen due to the wealth of material condemning the order or recording acts of violence by its members, but the reality is that membership in the Invisible Empire in Dallas was rather trivial for most citizens. The dual membership of 54% of Klansmen in the Craft is only remarkable because of the significance that society has subsequently awarded to former associates of the Invisible Empire. The overrepresentation of Freemasons in this city's klaverns was most likely just the result of deliberate targeting by the salesmen and officers of the Propagation Department. The Invisible Empire made itself historically significant and memorable by disrupting American society, and has become a focal point of research because of this agitation.

Some Freemasons joined the Ku Klux Klan, but still others joined organizations and societies whose main objective it was to stamp out this secret order. The sudden rise of the Invisible Empire in Dallas, as well as the repeated vigilante attacks and the organization's following among city officials, had prompted the Klan's detractors to organize. 5,000 citizens gathered at City Hall to form an anti-Klan lobby named the Dallas County Citizen's League (DCCL) in April 1922. The organization was led by various civic leaders of the city, such as local prosecuting attorney Martin M. Crane or former Texas governor O.B.

Colquitt.<sup>50</sup> One newspaper account welcomed the formation of the DCCL and described the gathering saying:

One who gazed on it saw a true cross-section of Dallas. It brought together the proudest and the humblest, the most distinguished and the obscurest [sic.]; men of all creeds and of none; men of all races, and it made comrades of men who have been inveterate foes in all political contests. For, in essence, it is a political work that has to be done, if public authority is to be rescued from the closing grip of an organization made irresponsible by the concealment of its countenance and by the imposition of an oath which compromises the loyalty of public officials who put themselves under its duresses.<sup>51</sup>

The DCCL was determined to stamp out the Invisible Empire's control of the city's police and politics, and proposed to send a questionnaire to all public officials to ask their opinion of the Klan and ascertain whether they were members.<sup>52</sup> The organization claimed to have 10,000 subscribers in the city who had endorsed their stance and their questionnaire initiative less than two months later.<sup>53</sup>

The Invisible Empire's supporters portrayed the DCCL in completely different terms. They described the initial meeting of his anti-Klan movement as a "big fizzle" and rejected the notion that the meeting was representative of the city as a whole.<sup>54</sup> The *Texas 100% American* described one meeting of the group saying:

The crowd is variously estimated at from 1,200 to 1,800.

In reality there were near 900 people present.

Of these at least half were Klansmen or Klan sympathizers.

A few Jews, Greeks and Dagos were present.

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<sup>50</sup> "5,000 Attend Anti-Klan Mass Meeting," *Dallas Morning News*, April 5 1922; "Dallas Forms Alliance for Waging Fight on Klansmen," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 5 1922.

<sup>51</sup> "A Noble Work Well Begun," *Dallas Morning News*, April 6 1922.

<sup>52</sup> "Questionnaire on Klan Being Drawn ", *Dallas Morning News*, April 9 1922; "Dallas Officials To Get Quiz on Klan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 11 1922; "Anti-Klan Body to Extend Work," *Dallas Morning News*, April 12 1922.

<sup>53</sup> "Citizen Leaguers Hunt No Offices and Are Not Masked," *Dallas Morning News*, May 23 1922.

<sup>54</sup> "Anti-Klan Meeting Proves a Big Fizzle," *Texas 100% American*, April 7 1922

At least one-fourth of the crowd were women.

The tenor of the speeches indicated that the D.C.C.L. leaders were taking a lot of unnecessary alarm.<sup>55</sup>

The Dallas Klan also decried the allegations made against their order, saying “There was never a greater aggregation of slander, innuendo, actual false charging and blackmail ever issued.”<sup>56</sup> The two organizations were diametrically opposed in their views, and each characterized the other as a nuisance and unrepresentative of the wider views of the public. There is some truth to this argument; employing a thorough socioeconomic analysis of the membership and leadership of both the Dallas Klan and the DCCL, historian Mark N. Morris has determined that the former group was composed mostly of “business-orientated citizens who were unhappy with their political influence and concerned with social changes” while the latter group was “led by established civic and urban leadership.”<sup>57</sup> In this sense, neither organization’s membership was representative of the city as a whole, and appear to have reflected the aggressive interests of the groups they served. The struggle between these two groups could even be described as a form of status conflict between established and upcoming citizens.

Unsurprisingly, included within the “civic and urban leadership” that formed the DCCL were a number of Freemasons. The publication of one Dallas County Citizen’s League pamphlet allows us to review the number of Dallas Masons amongst the opposition to the Klan. In June 1922, this organization mailed a petition to residents of the city with a brief outline of their objectives, and asking them to express their sympathy with the DCCL and its aims. The pamphlet also printed the names of the executive and advisory committee of the organization, a total of 87 people. To analyse the Masonic affiliations of the leadership of this organization, a sample of 71 men was taken from this group, selected on the basis of their residence in Dallas County. Their names were cross-checked in the census and in the Texas Masonic rosters, which revealed that 24 of the 71 of the leaders of the Dallas County Citizens League were

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<sup>55</sup> “Cits’ League ‘Expose’ Proves a Frost,” *Texas 100% American*, June 23 1922

<sup>56</sup> “Cits Tell Many Lies On the Klan,” *Texas 100% American*, June 23 1922

<sup>57</sup> Morris, “Saving Society,” pp.96-98, 320-321.

Freemasons, a proportion of around 33.8%. The *Dallas Morning News* may have portrayed the organization as a cross-section of society, but among the leadership at least, membership in the Freemasons was proportionately higher than average. There were Freemasons on both sides of the city's debate on the Invisible Empire, as there were across the country.

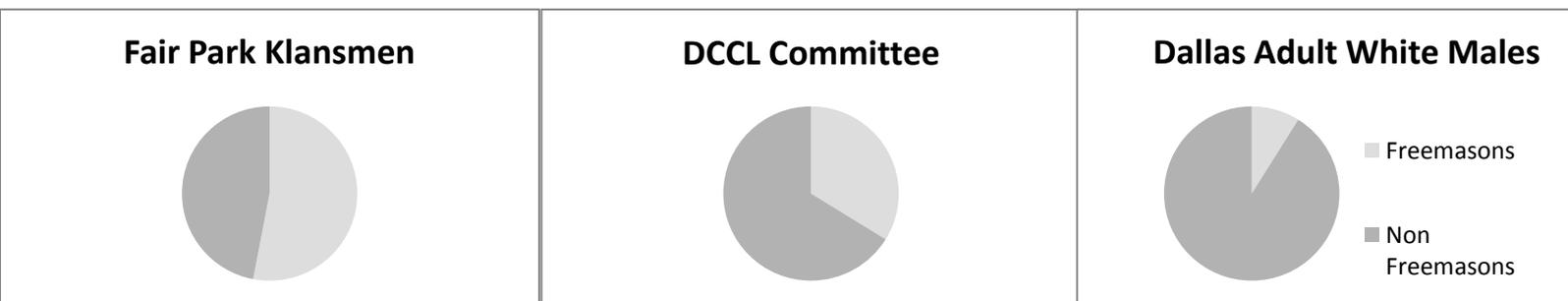


CHART 3 - MEMBERSHIP IN THE FREEMASONS AMONG KLANSMEN, THE DCCL AND DALLAS RESIDENTS

Included among the founders of the DCCL was Sam P. Cochran, a prominent businessman in the city and a distinguished Masonic leader. The list of Masonic offices held by Cochran is extensive, making him one of the most prominent Freemasons in Texas and the country as a whole. He was elected as the Grand Commander of the Texas' Knights Templar, was a member of the ruling body or Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction and held various other positions in a number of other Masonic ancillary groups.<sup>58</sup> His stance on the Ku Klux Klan was unequivocal. At a gathering of Scottish Rite Masons in Houston in 1922 he advised the Invisible Empire to "make good on its repeated proclamation as an institution devoted to the maintenance of law and order, and in proof of its sincerity in this declaration, disband." He further encouraged Texas to "again become a united citizenship, determined to enforce the laws, and give peace and protection to those who believe in legally constituted government."<sup>59</sup> Cochran gave a damning speech at the DCCL's founding meeting, and became a part of the group's advisory committee. Dallas Klan No.66 decried his allegiance to the DCCL and questioned whether this

<sup>58</sup> Sam P. Cochran Lodge No.1335, "Biography of Sam P. Cochran," <http://www.sampcochran1335.org/biography.php>.

<sup>59</sup> "Cochran Says It's Time for Ku Klux to Disband," *Dallas Morning News*, April 15 1922.

respected Masonic authority had been “hoodwinked.” One Klan journalist asked Cochran:

Is it politics or a realization of loss of hero worship from the men to whom he has so long taught Masonry and what it stands for, that prompted him to allow his name and the principles he has been known to stand for, now to turn coat and align himself with a crowd of men – 75 per cent Catholics – whose paramount ambition is to tear down the very things he is supposed to have stood for all his years of activity.<sup>60</sup>

Cochran was a member and past head of Hella Temple, the city’s local Shriner’s lodge. Zeke E. Marvin and George K. Butcher, Dallas Klan No.66’s exalted cyclops and kligrapp respectively, were also members of Hella Shrine. Similarly, Hiram Wesley Evans and George B. Dealey, the editor of the vocally anti-Klan *Dallas Morning News*, were both members of Pentagon Lodge No.1080. Indeed, if we compare the samples of Klansmen from the Fair Park list and the committee of the DCCL, we can see that a fair number of these usually fierce opponents would have seen each other at their local lodge. 12 Klansmen from the sample sat alongside 3 members of the DCCL sample of in Oak Cliff Lodge no. 705. 7 Klansmen from the Fair Park meeting attended Pentagon Lodge no.1080, as did 5 members of the DCCL committee. In Dallas County’s twenty-four Masonic lodges, proponents and opponents of the Ku Klux Klan sat together as brothers to perform their ritual and promote fraternalism and charity. It is a peculiar thought, to say the least.

Grand Master Andrew Randell observed in 1921 that this was the case in several lodges in Texas, but that in many, the Klan had caused severe disruptions. He affirmed that:

Already from all over this Jurisdiction [Texas] have the rumblings of disharmony and discontent reached the ears of Masonic leaders. Brethren are no longer dwelling together in unity in many lodges in this state. Applicants have been blackballed, brethren have been protested

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<sup>60</sup> "Has One of Our Prominent Masons Been Hoodwinked?," *Texas 100% American*, April 7 1922.

for advancement, the installation of officers has been objected to, arguments have arisen and factions have been formed, all because of the suspected activity... of the Klan.... Members are remaining away from their lodges because they cannot meet their brethren upon the level or part from them upon the square.<sup>61</sup>

However, notwithstanding this troubling news, Randell reported that an overwhelming majority of Texas' lodges approved of his position against the Invisible Empire. He announced that only 20 of the 912 lodges in the state explicitly disapproved of his condemnation of the Klan. Those few lodges where troubling conditions existed were probably rare and isolated affairs. There were no reports of disruption among Dallas lodges in the city's press. This maybe was because Dallas Freemasons avoided entangling with the outside world as far as possible, and this included discussing the delicate issue of the membership of their brethren in the Ku Klux Klan with the uninitiated. However most Freemasons were probably not troubled by the presence of the Invisible Empire, or did not feel it was their place to scold others, and were content to simply disassociate the two orders. The lodge was not the place to discuss such matters, and brothers of Dallas Freemasonry chose not to spend their time arguing over such issues.

This was a sentiment that was probably shared by many Dallas residents; many were more concerned by other issues and preferred not to raise the topic. The Ku Klux Klan had become such a frequent subject of discussion that many eventually grew weary of debating the merits or faults of the order. One Dallas lawyer relayed this feeling to the *Dallas Morning News*, accusing its editor and the DCCL of stirring up trouble where there was none. Regarding the discord caused by the topic of the Invisible Empire, he said in part:

Why all of this hysteria? Why not advocate peace and good will among our citizens instead of trying to tear them asunder? And why not advertise Dallas as being a good place in which to live instead of creating

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<sup>61</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1921), pp.39-48.

the false impressions abroad that Dallas County citizens are lawless.... According this morning's *News*, the citizens of Garland, both klan and anti-klan have petitioned the [Dallas County] Citizen's League to cancel its speaking engagement in that city, for the very good reason that they do not want strife brought into their community.<sup>62</sup>

This attitude was typical of the booster mentality of the age, which aimed to present their towns as ideal locations for business and tourism. It is not altogether ludicrous to suggest that what bothered most residents of Dallas about the Ku Klux Klan – as well as the nation at large – was the fuss it caused. Americans were slowly growing tired of the divisiveness the organization caused in society, and the way it seemed to arouse emotions and passions. While not indifferent to the threat of the Klan or the problems it proposed to remedy, most of the city's residents seem to have been largely disinterested in either faction.

Dallas Klan No.66 had managed to entrench itself in practically all levels of the city's government and its churches, political parties and fraternities. This powerful influence, coupled with a long tradition of white-capping and vigilantism in the state, had probably encouraged some of the Dallas Klan to engage in acts of violence against their fellow citizens without fear of prosecution. These actions troubled certain sectors of the public and especially the media, and hastily-formed anti-Klan groups began to agitate for action against the takeover of the government. Freemasons did in fact join both sides of the argument; but it is probable that the majority of the membership of the Craft held their opinions in private. Historical studies have neglected to take this silent majority into account, many of whom would have supported or opposed their Klan privately, but did not act on their beliefs publicly. Perhaps this is why the Klan faded so suddenly both in Texas and across the nation. Even if people supported or even joined the Invisible Empire or other groups fighting them, most did not appear committed enough to the cause to suffer for their allegiance, and Dallas' Masonic lodges remained quiet for this very reason. Despite the elevated rhetoric of both the Klan and anti-Klan groups, and aside

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<sup>62</sup> "Censures League and News; But Outrages Have Ceased," *Dallas Morning News*, May 17 1922.

from a few notable exceptions, direct confrontation between factions was quite rare.

This example illustrates the Klan's careful approach to recruitment in this city. Kleagles exploited the power of the "lodge-instinct" and eagerly encouraged Freemasons to join. They also protected their public image and created their own media to defend their interests and control public perceptions of their order. In this sense, the Dallas Klan was very much like Anaheim's own klavern, or like the hundreds of other chapters of the Invisible Empire. However, the main difference between these two cities was probably the reception they received. Whereas Dallas had a prominent anti-Klan pressure group, the city and its residents were mostly unconcerned about the order. Not even the frequent incidents of violence were enough to spur the community into forcefully expelling the Invisible Empire. The Dallas Klan had managed to grow and entrench itself in government and society, through a supportive base of members and a largely indifferent public. Anaheim, on the other hand, was a much less receptive community. In this California city, residents were drawn into a tense standoff between supporters and detractors of the order that helped to quickly disperse the local klavern.

## **2) The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim**

The Klan's intrusion into community affairs and Masonic lodges in the city of Anaheim presents separate conclusions about the effect of this organization on civic life. Because this city was far smaller than Dallas, and because both sides of the Klan issue escalated the conflict markedly, many residents were inevitably dragged into the struggle for control of local government. Much like in Dallas, the debate continued to be dominated by the loudest voices, forcing average citizens to pick sides to avoid boycotts and political exclusion. One journalist from the vehemently anti-Klan *Anaheim Gazette* described the fraternity as an "insidious influence which has long been secretly at work in the city, seeking to array class against class, [which] has become a menace to the growth and prosperity of the community and... a determined effort must be

made to stamp it out.”<sup>63</sup> In this small community of merely 5,000 Californians, the Klan’s divisive effects were magnified by an excitable opposition and had very real consequences for the town and its inhabitants.

Historian Christopher N. Cocoltochos has summarized the roots of the Klan’s popularity in the city as a “contest between an entrenched commercial-civic elite and a rising group of politically orientated citizens who strongly disagreed with the elite’s notion of how communities should be ordered.”<sup>64</sup> This commercial-civic elite referred to a group of prominent Orange County families, many of them of German descent, who held the political balance in the area. Many of the city’s residents felt powerless and ignored by this elite, and were discontent with a number of matters within their community. Key among them was the wasteful government administration, which was determined to construct a new city hall without consulting the public. Other issues included a lax attitude towards Prohibition enforcement that had disconcerted many voters. Ultimately, a substantial section of Anaheim’s citizens came to regard the administration of their city as corrupt, undemocratic and self-serving.

Other organizations had attempted to wrest control from this elite, including the American Civic League of Anaheim, a group which challenged the establishment in the 1922 elections and among whose ranks were many who would subsequently become Klansmen.<sup>65</sup> This group ultimately failed to address the concerns of the community’s disaffected public, opening up a social niche for an opportunistic organization like the Klan to find supporters. The Invisible Empire set up its first klavern in the city in March 1922, but this branch was quickly dissolved in the aftermath of the Inglewood Raid. This raid refers to an attack by a group of Klansmen on some local bootleggers, the Elduayen Brothers, in the town of Inglewood. The raid turned sour when a local marshal confronted them and a Klansmen was killed during a shootout. In the resulting

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<sup>63</sup> "K.K. Denounced by Three Civic Societies," *Anaheim Gazette*, September 25 1924.

<sup>64</sup> Christopher N. Cocoltochos, "The Invisible Empire and the Search for the Orderly Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Towards a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, ed. Shawn Lay (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p.97; For a complete of analysis of the Ku Klux Klan’s effect on Orange County see Christopher N. Cocoltochos, "The Invisible Government and the Viable Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Orange County, California During the 1920s" (University of California Los Angeles, 1979)

<sup>65</sup> Cocoltochos, "The Invisible Empire," p.102.

disarray and public outcry, Los Angeles District Attorney Thomas Lee Woolwine seized and threatened to publicize the California Klan's membership roster; this revelation virtually destroyed the budding Anaheim klavern. The branch was eventually re-founded in the autumn by the future Exalted Cyclops Reverend Leon Myers, an Oregon minister who had recently arrived in town to lead the congregation of the First Christian Church, Anaheim's largest religious body.<sup>66</sup>

The Anaheim Klan grew using familiar recruitment strategies that had been previously implemented in Dallas and other parts of the country. Visiting churches in regalia to make donations, burning crosses on hills, infiltrating local civic groups and fraternities and arranging speeches by lecturers, the Klan in this small town managed to attract initiates into the order.<sup>67</sup> The city's klavern focused on a combination of typical national Klan concerns mixed with local issues. The content of two speeches given by Exalted Cyclops Myers detail the principal matters that the Anaheim Klan felt apprehensive about. The first talk promised to answer such questions as:

Have certain Merchants Joined Hands with Roman Catholics to Rule or Ruin Anaheim?...

Will a Rome Controlled Administration Enforce Law?...

What Patriotic Citizen of Protestant Faith Will Take a Romanized Newspaper?<sup>68</sup>

A second lecture by Myers revealed the discontent with local government felt by Klansmen, and asked:

Shall Criminals Rule Anaheim?...

Shall City Council knowingly employ ex-convicts?

Taxpayers! Shall \$35,000 be paid for about one acre [of] land?

Shall \$7500 be paid for extra police force while rum runs riot?

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Melching, "The Activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California 1923-1925," *Southern California Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1974), p.176.

<sup>67</sup> "Fiery Crosses Cause Many to Speculate," *Anaheim Gazette*, January 8 1923.

<sup>68</sup> "Extra! Extra! Catholic Church After Rev. Myers", Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Records, 1921-1925, Library of Congress.

Shall Christian work stop in Anaheim?

Shouldn't such a City Council be forced to resign?<sup>69</sup>

The Anaheim Klan localized the national programme of the order by portraying community disputes as part of an overarching struggle between the Klan and its un-American enemies.

The Klan's first bid for power in Anaheim took place in April 1924, when the group put up a slate of four candidates for a decisive city council election. The platform was composed of Elmer H. Metcalf, Dean W. Hassom, Arthur A. Slaback and Emory E. Knipe, all respected local citizens and Klansmen. The candidates did not advertise their affiliation or their Klan backing, and their opponents had no way of proving they were members, so this was not a central issue in the election. With the support of the local pro-Klan paper, the *Orange County Plain Dealer*, the Klan candidates campaigned on a popular program of efficiency and accountability, and attacked the current elite council's poor administration of the city. The Klan slate won the election, but their membership in the Invisible Empire was not a factor in their victory. These candidates won a vital election by appealing to community values and promising sought after reforms.<sup>70</sup>

The new Klan-dominated council, led by its new mayor, Elmer H. Metcalf, did not have long to enjoy their positions. The city council received a letter three days after the election from S.I. Scott, Anaheim's local kleagle. The letter congratulated Metcalf and his associates on their appointment, and reminded them "It is no secret that the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were a considerable factor in your election to the position of responsibility which you now occupy by reason of our suffrage with which we have helped elevate you to office."<sup>71</sup> Scott also added:

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<sup>69</sup> "Extra! Extra! Christian Citizens Attention!", Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Records, 1921-1925, Library of Congress.

<sup>70</sup> Melching, "Klan in Anaheim," p.179.

<sup>71</sup> "Letter from S.I. Scott to Anaheim City Council," April 1924, "Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection," Anaheim Public Library.

We confidently expect that you will enforce the laws in our fair city. Enforce them strictly and with favor to none. If our members are caught breaking the laws of our country[,] the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan stands ready to back to the limit in administering them deserved punishment. We want a clean city for our selves and our children. We expect you to do your best to make it such.

Having confidence in your integrity and manhood we desire that no strings of any kind between yourselves and ours or any other organization. We advise you that our citizens stand ready any time day or night to render any assistance in their power to aid you in the enforcement of the law or in any other way which may be in our power and to this we stand pledged with our lives. Nearly a thousand men are ready at a moment's notice to serve and sacrifice for the right.<sup>72</sup>

The letter was supposed indicate the order's approval of the regime change, and their willingness to assist with law enforcement. Scott had also hoped to dispel any rumours of Klan influence by indicating that the fraternity expected no favours from the city government. To highlight this point Scott specified that:

We want and expect no [grants] for our service has been rendered in what we believe to be the cause of right and the election to office of those who though not members of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, yet nevertheless are men, real men. Men of conviction and courage.<sup>73</sup>

This letter did not achieve its desired effect, and served to confirm the doubts of the overthrown city elite regarding the KKK's role in the ballot box coup. The new council inaugurated its mandate by clearing house, replacing a number of non-Klan city employees with members of the order. Metcalf and his fellow Klansmen also delivered on their campaign promise of improving law enforcement by instituting harsher punishments for bootleggers and expanding the police force from just four members to fifteen. Ten of the eleven appointees just happened to be Klansmen.<sup>74</sup> The conflict between Klansmen and their

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Cocoltchos, "The Invisible Empire," p.112.

critics in Anaheim worsened from then on, and many of the brotherhood's opponents began to regard the group as a serious threat. The Anaheim Klan's monumental parade of 29 July 1924 seemed to confirm some of these suspicions. In this show of strength, anywhere from ten to twenty thousand curious spectators watched thousands of Klansmen march from the train depot to the city park for a mass open-air initiation of around 800 new members of the fraternity. The parade attracted Klansmen and spectators from all over southern California, and included hymns, fireworks and even an airplane displaying a fiery cross in lights.<sup>75</sup> As in Dallas, the Anaheim Klan's parade was intended to demonstrate the power and numbers of the Invisible Empire in that community, and to inspire others to join the organization. In Anaheim, however, this public display unsettled many and unintentionally strengthened the anti-Klan movement.

Historian Richard Melching has observed that the enmity between the city's factions really came to a head following that summer of 1924, and has noted that "Increasingly, citizens in the community who had previously tried to remain neutral now found themselves forced to choose sides. The Klan issue was rapidly splitting the community into two hostile camps."<sup>76</sup> Organized boycotts of businesses and establishments quickly led to a breakdown in social relationships between the two groups, and many residents recalled much of the tension. Charles Tuma remembered how his father had resisted the Klan, and said:

I remember the burning crosses. There was one in front of St. Boniface Catholic Church, not too far from the school.

They tried to get my father to join, but he was definitely against it. He was against anyone who would show preference to any group or color.

I saw the literature they gave my dad. I remember the heated discussions

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<sup>75</sup> Galal Kernahan, "The Travail of Klanheim," *The Orange County Illustrated*, July 1965, Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection. Melching, "Klan in Anaheim," p.181-182.

<sup>76</sup> Melching, "Klan in Anaheim," p.183.

when Klan members ran into non-Klan members on the street. The Klan members would start throwing rocks right there in downtown.<sup>77</sup>

The Anaheim Klan's opponents campaigned tirelessly against the order and quickly managed to gather enough signatures to initiate a recall election in November 1924 to oust the city council, with the vote scheduled for the following February.<sup>78</sup> The *Anaheim Gazette* welcomed the recall announcement and declared that there was "ample grounds for complaint" since Metcalf, Hasson, Slaback and Knipe:

are now known to be members of the Ku Klux Klan, and so long as they hold the balance in the city it will be governed by a hidden Cyclops, who was not elected to office by the citizens, or by the Imperial Wizard of the Invisible Empire, who lives two thousand miles away.<sup>79</sup>

A number of other leading citizens and civic institutions also made declarations against the Anaheim Klan, including Reverend James A. Geissenger, who remarked "The whole movement, root and branch, and from center to circumference is 'teetotally' un-American." Geissinger was actually forced to hire a bodyguard to protect his home after he received a number of threatening letters that promised to "get him if the four klan councilmen were recalled."<sup>80</sup>

During September 1924, many of Anaheim's fraternities and civic clubs also took a clear stand regarding the KKK in response to the heightened tension within the city and the surrounding political rhetoric. The Kiwanis passed a unanimous vote and declared to the press that the "Anaheim Kiwanis club does unequivocally and unreservedly condemn and denounce the Ku Klux Klan and activities in the community both individually and collectively" and hoped that the community would "use all honorable means to eliminate from our community the blighting and destructive influence of the Ku Klux Klan and its injurious and unlawful activities." Another resolution was passed by the Kiwanis asking all

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<sup>77</sup> "Adolph Tuma Resisted the Klan," *The Orange County Register*, July 31 1999, "Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection."

<sup>78</sup> "Recall Near in Anaheim Ku Klux War" *Orange Daily News*, undated, "Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection."

<sup>79</sup> "Majority Votes Favoring Recall," *Anaheim Gazette*, November 6 1924.

<sup>80</sup> "Guard Pastor at Anaheim as Threat Made," *The Orange Daily News*, January 26 1925; "Klan is Flayed By Methodist Minister," *Anaheim Gazette*, September 18 1924, "Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection."

members to choose between their allegiance between the two groups, as they had learned that some of their own were Klansmen.<sup>81</sup>

The city's Rotary Club took similar actions, saying the KKK had "set neighbor against neighbor, causing suspicion, distrust to fill the hearts of many" and declaring that they were "anxious to do all in [their] power to restore conditions to normal."<sup>82</sup> Anaheim Lodge No.1345 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks had denounced the order and forbidden members from joining the KKK in 1922, but decided to restate their firm position publicly in September 1924.<sup>83</sup> The city's Chamber of Commerce also released a statement detailing their opposition to the Klan in the same month. The *Anaheim Gazette* celebrated this collective response and observed that "Civic societies and clubs, organized for the purpose of the upbuilding of the city, are discovering that their efforts are in vain so long as factional rights are engendered and distrust, suspicion and boycotts exist."<sup>84</sup>

Anaheim Post No. 72 of the American Legion has been identified by historians as a civic organization that was particularly rife with Klansmen.<sup>85</sup> Contrary to most of the other clubs in town, the Legion did not release an anti-Klan proclamation to the press in September. Instead the members passed a resolution asking Anaheim residents to allay the disharmony that afflicted their community, and that

all words and actions that may cause others unhappiness be restrained and ask the people of Anaheim to join with us in this effort to forever quiet the spirit of unrest and turmoil, and that attitude which paralyses the friendly handclasp and still the cheery... 'good morning.'<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> "Kiwans Condemns Ku Klux," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 16 1924; "Kiwans Denounce the Ku Klux Klan," *Anaheim Gazette*, September 18 1924; "Kiwans Bans Members of Klan," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 24 1924; "Kiwans at Anaheim Hit Klan Members," *Santa Ana Register*, September 24 1924.

<sup>82</sup> "Rotary Club Condemns Klanism," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 22 1924.

<sup>83</sup> "Elks Lodge Bars Klan Members," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 25 1924; "Elks Re-Affirm Opposition to Klan," *Anaheim Gazette*, October 2 1924; "Kiwans at Anaheim Hit Klan Members," *Santa Ana Register*, September 24 1924.

<sup>84</sup> "K.K. Denounced by Three Civic Societies," *Anaheim Gazette*, September 25 1924; "K.K. Denounced by Directors of C. of C.," *Anaheim Gazette*, January 25 1925.

<sup>85</sup> Melching, "Klan in Anaheim," p.187; Cocoltchos, "Invisible Government," p.500.

<sup>86</sup> "Legions Pleads For Civic Peace; Would Muzzle Anti-Klan Talk," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 17 1924.

While the Klan was never mentioned in the Legion's declaration, newspaper accounts interpreted it to mean they were asking others to "Muzzle Anti-Klan Talk" and that the fraternity had influenced the Legion to take this action. They pointed to A.A. Slaback, the Klan city councillor, who even though he was not a Legion member nor had the necessary qualifications to join, attended the meeting and presented this as proof of wrongdoing. When asked about the statement and the relationship between the two orders J.W. Hebson, an officer of Anaheim Post No. 72, responded saying "There may be members of the klan in the American Legion, but I am not aware of their identity. The resolution last night was adopted with only two negative votes, while about 75 or 100 voted in favor of it."<sup>87</sup> Hebson was in fact a Klansman, and would have known perfectly well how many of the organization's members were also enlisted in the klavern.

The Anaheim American Legion's plea had been sent to the city's other civic clubs, including the Lions, who responded to the calls for peace saying "we should be doing less than our duty if we aided and abetted by our silence a movement which we feel is mistaken." The Lions club welcomed the Legion's calls for peace and harmony, but they affirmed their conviction

that the trouble which is to be avoided was not present in our community until the organizing of the Ku Klux Klan in our mist, but that since this coming of the [Klan], distrust, fear, suspicion, injury and religious prejudice have become general among former friends and neighbors.<sup>88</sup>

Like other residents of the city, the members of the Lions had understood the American Legion's calls for peace as an attempt to muffle the anti-Klan rhetoric among the community. In this small town, the issue of the Klan had become so contentious that anything less than a clear denunciation was interpreted as a sign of tacit approval. Acting in response to this tension, clubs and residents were almost forcibly dragged into the fray, stating their allegiances for or against the Ku Klux Klan.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> "Klan Condemned by Lions," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 19 1924

Like the American Legion, historians have also pointed to the local Masonic lodge as a hub of Klan activities in Anaheim, although much of this seems to have been based on hearsay. One journalist, investigating the origin of the movement in the area even wrote “No one can say exactly when the first Orange County man joined the Invisible Empire, but one account tells of an encyclopaedia salesman visiting all the Masonic Lodge members during the early Twenties, sounding them out for the Klan.”<sup>89</sup> While there may not be any corroborating evidence for this rumour, it certainly fits into the *modus operandi* of the Klan’s kleagle core. Christopher N. Cocoltchos and others have also alluded to the Klan’s significant presence in Anaheim Lodge No. 207.<sup>90</sup> When trying to ascertain the fraternal memberships of the city’s Klansmen and their opponents, Cocoltchos was only able to investigate the local Elks lodge because “Very little information was available on membership in other such groups like the Odd Fellows, Masons, and Moose, because of the reluctance of the organization[s] to let non-members inspect their records.”<sup>91</sup> However, Anaheim Lodge No.207 has recently allowed access to some of the material that has survived from that period. Included among these documents is the Tyler’s register, wherein each member would sign their name when attending a meeting. A comprehensive list of Orange County’s Klansmen was discovered by historian Stanley Coben in the Library of Congress, and its veracity was subsequently confirmed by other researchers. This list and the Anaheim Tyler’s register allow us to confirm the rumours of large shared membership between the city’s klavern and lodge.<sup>92</sup>

A random sample of names was taken from the Tyler’s register of every meeting of Anaheim Lodge No. 217 during 1924, and was compared to the 1920 census and other sources to ascertain whether these members were residents in Orange County. Any Freemasons who were ineligible to join the Klan were excluded from the sample, as were any whose surnames started with an O or a P. This is because the roster of Orange County Klansmen was missing a page where these initiates would have been recorded. The resulting

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<sup>89</sup> Marjorie Scott, "Out of the Past: Ku Klux Klan," *Orange Coast Magazine*, February 1990.

<sup>90</sup> Melching, "Klan in Anaheim," p.187; Cocoltchos, "Invisible Government," p.502.

<sup>91</sup> Cocoltchos, "Invisible Government," p.388.

<sup>92</sup> Anaheim Lodge No. 207, "Tyler’s Register – 1924", Anaheim Lodge No. 207; "List of Orange County Klansmen," Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection, Anaheim Public Library.

sample was composed of 91 members of Anaheim Lodge No. 207, including most of the officers of that body. By consulting the list of Orange County Klansmen it was determined that 41 of these Freemasons were also Klansmen, a proportion of 45%. Among these Klannish Masons were the majority of the officers of the fraternity, including the Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden, the three most senior positions in a lodge. Also counted among these initiates of the Craft and the Invisible Empire were Mayor E.H. Metcalf, A.A. Slaback, Dean W. Hassom and Emory E. Knipe, the Klan city councilmen elected in April. It seems that the rumour that the Anaheim Klan had infiltrated the local Masonic lodge is true, and that historians were right to suggest that this was one of the hubs of Klan recruitment.

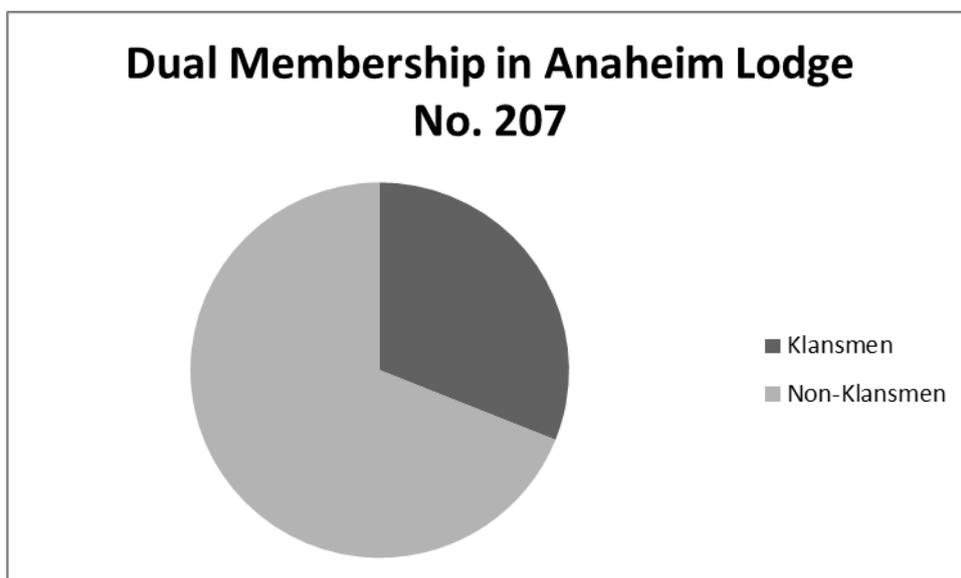


CHART 4 - DUAL MEMBERSHIP IN ANAHEIM LODGE NO.207<sup>93</sup>

However, it would inaccurate to portray the lodge as a hotbed of Klan activity. While the Tyler's register has survived, the minutes of the meetings have not and there is no way of determining whether the Klan was frequently discussed in Anaheim Lodge No. 207. Indeed, this lodge actually released a statement similar that put out by the Kiwanis or the Elks, condemning the

<sup>93</sup> Anaheim Lodge No. 207, "Tyler's Register – 1924", Anaheim Lodge No. 207; "List of Orange County Klansmen," Anaheim Ku Klux Klan Collection, Anaheim Public Library.

Invisible Empire and their divisive effect on the city's neighbourly atmosphere.<sup>94</sup> The Tyler's register of the lodge shows that the meeting at which this statement was approved was heavily attended, suggesting the importance of this matter for many of the members of Anaheim Lodge No. 207.

Anaheim Lodge No.207's denunciation of the Invisible Empire seems to stand at odds with the membership of some of the chapter's brethren in that order. Without the minutes of the meetings we can only speculate as to whether there was any conflict within the lodge, but there is no evidence of any clashes in the press or in the archives of the Grand Lodge of California. With such a high proportion of its members having additional involvement in the KKK, and the likelihood that others may have tacitly supported the movement, the pro-Klan forces within the lodge could have easily controlled affairs. This seems particularly true when we consider the fact that the lodge's officers were also Klansmen. It seems almost contradictory that these men would allow their lodge to even consider passing such a resolution.

However, we need to consider the fact that these Anaheimers with dual membership may have wanted to keep their affiliations separate, and valued the harmony of the Masonic lodge. As explained in Chapter 2, militant Freemasons joined the Invisible Empire out of their desire to be a part of an aggressively Protestant and active movement. Many had abandoned attempts to reform Freemasonry into such an organization, preferring to join the more flexible Klan brotherhood that could address their concerns. However they did not choose one over the other, and many continued their membership in both orders despite the objections of some of their brethren. For these Freemasons, the essence of the two fraternities did not conflict, and seem to have preferred not to agitate their brethren. For instance, the Grand Master of Maryland, Warren S. Seipp, declared in 1922 that:

As everyone knows, Masonry stands primarily for law and order as set down in the Constitution. I can definitely state that there is absolutely no

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<sup>94</sup> Cocoltchos, "Invisible Government," p.502.

connection whatever between the Ku Klux Klan and Masonry, in fact, I do not want to get mixed up in any controversy with them.<sup>95</sup>

He further added that "I can also say definitely that the klan has not been interfering with the prerogatives of Masonry in this State." In the case of Maryland it seems that Masons with dual membership were not bringing their affiliations from outside the lodge into the fraternity. Similarly, one Montana Klansman referred to earlier in this thesis claimed his Masonic lodge was composed mostly of members of the KKK, but has he related:

During the Klan's existence here have never noticed a particle of evidence of its activity, directly or indirectly, in Masonic circles. Not a single discordant note has ever been sounded within our halls which emanated from the Klan. It has never been mentioned in our lodge room or business deliberations.<sup>96</sup>

In the specific case of Anaheim Lodge No. 207, the pro-Klan members seem to have preferred to allow their lodge to pass an anti-Klan resolution than to disrupt the fraternal atmosphere of the organization.

The anti-Klan faction within Anaheim Lodge No.207 seems to have been motivated by the rising opposition within the city against this order. It is no coincidence that all of the town's civic clubs and fraternities all made their position regarding the Klan available in such a short space of time. In fact, the Elks explained that they had released their anti-Klan statement due to the "fact that a determined move to redeem the city from the domination of this un-American organization."<sup>97</sup> These clubs felt obligated to make their position clear.

One article from the *Anaheim Bulletin* encapsulated this heightened tension surrounding the Klan, declaring the community was at "crossroads" and would have to choose between "Klanheim" or Anaheim.<sup>98</sup> As in Dallas and other

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<sup>95</sup> "Denies Ku Klux Klan Is Allied With Masons," *Baltimore Sun*, July 4 1922.

<sup>96</sup> "Mason Who Belongs to Klan Resents Bostonian's Insult," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 17 1923.

<sup>97</sup> "Elks Lodge Bars Klan Members," *Anaheim Bulletin*, September 25 1924; "Elks Re-Affirm Opposition to Klan," *Anaheim Gazette*, October 2 1924; "Kiwanians at Anaheim Hit Klan Members," *Santa Ana Register*, September 24 1924.

<sup>98</sup> Melching, "Klan in Anaheim," p.187.

locations across America, the Anaheim Klan's had tried to appear more powerful than their actual strength with ominous displays and secretive campaigns. However, in this city such displays had inspired fear and rallied opposition against the movement. The Klan had boasted in their local paper, the *Plain Dealer*, that in Anaheim alone they had 1,400 members. When the roster of Orange County Klansmen was released, it was revealed that they only had closer to 400. The vocally anti-Klan *Anaheim Gazette* even felt the need to try and tone down the hysteria that had taken hold in the city and discredit some of the rumours being spread in the community. One article entitled "City Employees Are Not All Klansmen" said "The general idea that all or most of the employees of the city government belong to the Ku Klux Klan is erroneous" noting that they "have it on good authority, that only four of the twenty-five men employed in the municipal light and water departments are members of the Klan."<sup>99</sup>

The recall vote of February 1925 was ultimately won by Anaheim's anti-Klan faction, and a new city council was elected. "The corpse of the Ku Klux Klan is now lying at the feet of the indignant people of Anaheim, who rose in their righteous wrath and smote it hip and thigh" announced the *Gazette*. This article celebrated the defeat of the Invisible Empire and proclaimed:

Anaheim, during the past eight months, has been a joke among its sister cities in the Southland. The cloud that has obscured the sun for the past eight months has passed away; the shadow that covered us with a blanket of disgrace has been dissipated, and we can look our neighbour in the eye now and dare them to insult us. The Anaheimer abroad can proudly tell where he lives, and [conscientiously] punch the nose of any man who dares to laugh.<sup>100</sup>

The Klan's brief yet intense campaign in Anaheim quickly subsided after the election. Having risen to power on a platform of effective municipal management and law enforcement, the Klan attracted supporters from many sections of town, including local Freemasons. Despite a relatively insignificant

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<sup>99</sup> "City Employees Are Not All Klansmen," *Anaheim Gazette*, January 8 1925.

<sup>100</sup> "Requiem Æternam Dona, eis Donime," *Anaheim Gazette*, February 5 1925.

number of violent incidents or questionable measures, the very presence of the Invisible Empire and the change they represented was enough to upset and antagonize the more established community leaders. The city's reaction to the Klan was very different from the situation in Dallas. Civic clubs and fraternities were almost forcibly dragged into the scuffle, and surprisingly enough Anaheim Lodge No. 207 remained firmly in the anti-Klan camp, regardless of the private beliefs and affiliations of some of its own members.

### 3) **Conclusion – Anaheim and Dallas**

The Second Ku Klux Klan's ability to sell itself is perhaps one of the most underrated facets of the historiography of this peculiar organization. The cadre of kleagles that visited both Dallas and Anaheim implemented a very similar recruitment strategy that garnered them a notable following. One of the paramount objectives of a budding klavern was to ensure the support of local leaders and anyone with any sort of influence in the city. This inevitably led many kleagles to attempt to recruit from the local Masonic lodges, and judging by the results of this research, they found a relative amount of success in both Anaheim and Dallas respectively.

In the case of Dallas, in spite of the *New York World's* claims that the city's Freemasons had abandoned the order once they had realized its true purposes, the local klavern still contained a significant number of Klansmen with dual membership well after its initial arrival. In Anaheim, residents had long suggested that the local Masonic lodge was overrun with Klansmen, a point that historians subsequently lent credence to. Anaheim Lodge No. 207 certainly did contain many prominent Klansmen, but they were not a majority and they did not direct the affairs in the lodge. The anti-Klan statement released by this chapter of the Masonic brotherhood establishes that this was not by any means an outpost of the Invisible Empire that was dominated by Klansmen. Likewise, the lodges in Dallas cannot be considered to have been overrun with Klansmen, and in reality contained many fervent foes of that order who belonged to the Dallas County Citizens League.

Dallas and Anaheim are two rare examples of communities where historians have gained access to documents from both fraternities. Researchers would have expected to find instances of conflict within lodges and out on the streets of these two communities between Masonic brethren who supported and opposed the Invisible Empire. This chapter has argued that any conflict amongst members was less aggressive and far more cordial than many would have imagined. The theme of conflict has always been prevalent in the historiography of this infamous organization. This narrative exaggerates the hostility between members and critics of the fraternity, and disregards those who were unconcerned by the organization and the uneventful stretches of time when antagonism did not flare up. Life in the Invisible Empire was much less controversial or exciting than its officers hoped to portray.

These two communities, although entirely different, demonstrate a crucial point that forms the principal argument of this thesis: the Invisible Empire was mostly an elaborate façade. The Propagation Department and this fraternity's leadership campaigned across the country to recruit initiates into their order, building an impressive front to make their order seem appealing. In Anaheim and Dallas, people joined the order because they saw a new and energetic movement that could deliver change to their societies. The Klan's façade had the opposite effect on others. The Klan's secrecy, their confrontational and divisive approach, and their displays of strength made many feel unsettled. This uncertainty made many observers in both Anaheim and Dallas apprehensive about the Ku Klux Klan, while others rallied together to combat what they perceived to be an imminent danger. In Anaheim, however, opponents were far more vehement and energized. They regarded the order as an authoritarian threat to their community, and were determined to stamp it out. In this community, even the social clubs and the fraternities felt obliged to come out firmly against the order. The Invisible Empire in both Anaheim and Dallas, as well as the rest of the country, was primarily a political movement, but one whose bizarre ceremonies and customs and controversial appearance made it remarkable to both contemporary observers and to modern historians. The relationship between the Klan and the Craft was dictated by this aspect of the order.

Perhaps one of the most striking observations that can be made about the Klan's history in Dallas and Anaheim is how differently these two communities reacted to the order. Residents of Anaheim initiated a vehement drive against the order that engulfed this small community and dictated political affairs. Citizens were not allowed to stay on the side-lines and were compelled to make their loyalty clear. Klansmen and their critics clashed in this small Californian town, though the Invisible Empire was relatively benign in this state. The Klan's record of violence in Dallas, on the other hand, was appalling. The city's klavern was responsible for a number of brutal attacks over the years, and yet the opposition to this order was not as fervent as in Anaheim. This is because a community's reaction to this aggressive fraternity was also dictated by people's perception of the organization, and not simply by their experience of the movement or its record of violence. This issue deserves further exploration, and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

There is no proof that lodges in either Dallas or Anaheim experienced any severe disruption due to the presence of the Klan. Quite the opposite in fact, sources show that members and opponents of the KKK sat together in the lodge and followed the Masonic doctrine of fraternal harmony. The issue of the Klan seems to have been put aside among Dallas and Anaheim Freemasons, and was only occasionally discussed. Any disputes or conflict were kept private and discussed within the confines of the lodge. On a national scale, the situation is radically different. Grand Masters from California, Texas and other Masonic jurisdictions made their struggle with the Ku Klux Klan a very public affair. The next chapter will try and offer a theory as to why it was that Freemasons reacted so differently to the Ku Klux Klan, and why this response did not seem entirely influenced by local factors by observing the individual reactions of various Masonic Grand Masters. In essence, the rest of this thesis will discuss why Anaheim responded so differently than Dallas to the presence of the Ku Klux Klan.

## CHAPTER 7: FRIEND OR FOE?: GRAND MASTERS' RESPONSES TO THE KU KLUX KLAN

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On December 12th 1922, Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins of the Grand Lodge of New York gave a speech before the members of Hoffman Lodge #412, in Middletown, New York. As part of his address, Grand Master Tompkins stated:

I am going to speak now on a subject that I hate to talk about, I hate to think about it, I hate to read about it. I hate it and its boasted invisible empire, the Ku Klux Klan...I hate this Klan, which works under the cover of darkness, conceals its membership from the public and dares not go out in any of its missions unless it is hidden behind a mask. I say it is un-Masonic and un-American.<sup>1</sup>

Tompkins, a Justice of the Supreme Court of New York and a former U.S. Congressman, was a vocal opponent of the KKK and its repeated intrusions into the lodges and the affairs of the Freemasons during his tenure as Grand Master from May 1922 to May 1924.<sup>2</sup> The Invisible Empire's eclectic mix of unwavering 100% Americanism, virulent anti-Catholicism, unabashed white supremacy and conservative moralism had found both supporters and detractors within Masonic lodges. This aggressive disruption was a cause for concern for Masonic leaders like Tompkins, whose duty it was to protect the harmony and fraternal atmosphere of his jurisdiction's lodges.

Tompkins made frequent and public denunciations of the Klan. His most prominent declarations appeared in the *New York World* in June 1922, where he announced that "The movement of the Ku Klux Klan is vicious, dangerous and repugnant to the ideals and traditions of the American people, and the existence of the Ku Klux Klan is wholly unjustifiable in this Nation..." He also openly questioned the good standing of any Freemason who chose to join this

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<sup>1</sup> "State's Master Mason Denounces Ku Klux," *New York Herald*, December 13 1922; "Masons Hear Klan Hits as Un-Masonic," *New York World*, December 13 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Tompkins was also Grand Master of the independent Order of Odd Fellows in 1904-05, as well as First Sachem of the Improved Order of Red Men, and Exalted Ruler of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. He was also a member of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics and the Knights of Pythias. See "Biographical File – Arthur S. Tompkins," Chancellor Robert R. Livingstone Masonic Library of the Grand Lodge of New York.

“anti-American organization.”<sup>3</sup> One of his duties as Grand Master was to safeguard his jurisdiction against possible interference from external organizations such as the Invisible Empire. Like many other civic leaders, Tompkins had read the many disturbing reports of extra-legal violence committed by Klansmen and their nefarious influence on local politics and had felt compelled to warn his brethren of the dangers posed by this organization. By doing so, he joined the clamour of ministers, politicians and fraternal authorities from New York and across the country who stood against the Second Klan.

The Grand Lodge of New York’s firm stance against the Klan was echoed by several other Masonic jurisdictions, but this was by no means a unanimous or even a united response. Grand Master Julian F. Spearman declared before the 1921 Grand Lodge of Alabama that it would be inappropriate for him to declare himself against the Invisible Empire. Spearman explained how he:

had neither commendation nor condemnation for this Order and thought it would be overstepping the bounds of propriety to give an expression as Grand Master; that so far as Alabama was concerned, Masonry has no connection with this order, and that I refused to permit the Grand Lodge of Alabama to become involved.<sup>4</sup>

Other Grand Masters also chose not to get implicated and stayed silent on the matter. But why would a number of Masonic leaders choose not to stand firmly against such a clear threat as the Ku Klux Klan? Did some simply believe the order was not as menacing as it had been portrayed, or did they honestly think the subject was none of their business? Masonic leaders were at odds about how to respond to this secretive and perplexing new fraternity. This curious divergence in opinion is not simply a matter of Masonic jurisprudence, but a puzzling and complex historical question, and one that invites further investigation.

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<sup>3</sup> "Masons Inveigled by Klan Endanger Fraternal Rights," *New York World*, June 19 1922; "Good Standing of Masons Who Join Klan Questioned," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 19 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1923), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.11.

To truly understand why Tompkins and other Masonic leaders like him felt the need to go beyond their traditional fraternal remit and engage with the world beyond the lodge we need to employ a comparative methodology. By analysing the contrasting positions of several Masonic leaders in different jurisdictions, some of whom agreed with Tompkins and other who did not, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the factors that pushed civic leaders and individuals in 1920s America to express their support for or against the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will build on some of the arguments made in the previous discussion of Dallas and Anaheim by analysing this issue from a more general perspective. To this end, this chapter will focus on the administration of Masonic leaders in the states of New York, Texas, Indiana, Florida, and other jurisdictions who approached the issue of the KKK inconsistently.

This analysis will not depend exclusively on the material contained within official Masonic rulings, such as Grand Lodge Proceedings or circular letters, as it is sometimes difficult to decipher the intent behind the highly formalized – though purposeful – language used by Grand Masters. To ascertain the true attitude of how each of the Grand Masters ruled on the issue of the KKK and why they came to that decision, we will evaluate official Masonic sources, newspaper articles, Klan documents and other assorted material.

### **1) Different Responses to the Ku Klux Klan**

Grand Masters generally expressed their disfavour with the Invisible Empire for two broad reasons. First, due to the Klan's repeated attempts to claim Masonic patronage and incorporate the prestige and heritage of this fraternity, as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4. The use and abuse of their brotherhood's name alone was sufficient grounds for most Grand Masters to declare themselves as opposed to the Klan, and many of them expressed their uneasiness with this ploy. For example, in September 1921, Grand Master William F. Johnson gave a speech before the Grand Lodge of Missouri, saying:

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<sup>5</sup> It would be quite difficult to accurately quantify the exact number of Grand Lodges who declared themselves for or against the Klan as there were 49 separate Grand Lodges and not all of them were vocal about their opposition to the Klan. This, coupled with the fact that some Grand Masters held different views in private than those they expressed in public, means that a precise quantification would be impractical and would not offer any significant new information. A cursory examination has indicated that a large majority of Grand Lodges expressed themselves as contrary to the Invisible Empire, and a handful passed formal legislation banning members from joining that fraternity.

As the impression seems to prevail in some sections, that the Masonic fraternity is directly or indirectly associated with or furthering the purpose of a secret organization [the KKK], and as I have been asked on numerous occasions what relations, if any, our Fraternity bears to such secret society or order, it is well that the seal of disapproval be positively placed by this Grand Lodge upon this secret organization...<sup>6</sup>

Johnson was the first Grand Master to take on the Klan publically for pretending to be "Masonry in action" but he was not the last. Tradition stipulated that Freemasons were not supposed to use the fraternity's name for any non-sanctioned matters outside of the lodge, be it for business, charity or other fraternal bodies. This measure was simply a way to avoid becoming entangled in matters outside of the lodge. In 1922, Grand Master Frank Johnson of Texas even refused to grant dispensation to a group of Freemasons from Houston to simply form a "Masonic Baseball Club" and commented that "there was plenty of opportunity of having a social baseball club among the members of different lodges without so christening it, and that Masonry itself was not primarily organized for that purpose."<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, several Grand Masters also reprimanded the Invisible Empire and advised Freemasons to avoid them since they considered this fraternity to be an illegally constituted vigilante force that incited racial and religious hatred. The original constitution of the fraternity, first printed in 1723, stated that "A *Mason* is a peaceable Subject to the Civil Powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concern'd [sic.] in Plots and Conspiracies against the Peace and Welfare of the Nation."<sup>8</sup> Many Grand Masters interpreted this to mean that organizations like the Klan were entirely un-Masonic, and that they had a duty to warn their brothers against the order. Grand Master Arthur D. Prince, for example, wrote a letter to Massachusetts' Freemasons in 1922 announcing that the Klan's:

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<sup>6</sup> Grand Lodge of Missouri, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Missouri* (Columbia: N/A, 1921)pp.11-12; "Missouri Masonic Chief Denounces Ku Klux Klan," *Washington Post*, September 21 1921.

<sup>7</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco, TX: Gayle Printing Company, 1922)p.49.

<sup>8</sup> James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* (Philadelphia: N/A, 1734), p.48. Available online at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=libraryscience>

avowed principles violate Masonic law at every point and it would be impossible for me to conceive of a Mason who could so far forget his teachings as to affiliate with an organization which advocates taking the law into its own hands, condemning men and women in secret trials, and imposing the punishment of the whip, the tar bucket, or unlawful banishment.<sup>9</sup>

Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins objected to the Ku Klux Klan on both grounds, and his campaign against this organization did not abate during his two years in office. After his declarations in the *New York World*, Tompkins took further action and sent out a circular letter that was to be read in all lodges in the state. The letter explained the Grand Lodge's position in regards to the Invisible Empire, and said in part:

Assault; tar-and-feather applications; removal demands; death threats and the destruction of property are among the recognized weapons of the 'Invisible Empire' in its warfare against constituted authorities as reported daily in the press of the country... [This is] proof to my mind of the [un-American], [un-Masonic] and dangerous character of this organization.<sup>10</sup>

Tompkins would repeatedly condemn the Klan when visiting Masonic lodges throughout the state, and continued to speak his mind on the matter after he had stepped down as Grand Master.<sup>11</sup>

Tompkins was not alone in his firm stance against the Ku Klux Klan. Several institutions and individuals from within his own state had led the charge against the Invisible Empire nationwide. The *New York World's* 1921 exposé framed and informed the national debate regarding the Klan, and prompted the

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<sup>9</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Has No Masonic Support," *Boston Daily Globe*, June 17 1922; "Masons Warned to Avoid Ku Klux," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 16 1922; "Mason Condemns Ku Klux," *New York Times*, June 17 1922; "Masons Denounce Ku Klux Klan," *Hartford Courant*, June 18 1922.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur S. Tompkins, "Message of the Grand Master," *Bulletin of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the State of New York*, December 1923, pp.8-9; Edgar I. Fuller, *The Maelstrom: The Visible of the Invisible Empire*, George La Dura ed. (Denver: Maelstrom Publishing Co., 1925)pp.109-111.

<sup>11</sup> "Klan is Denounced as Foe of Liberty," *New York Times*, July 5 1924; "Says Masons Oppose Klan," *New York Times*, December 31 1922; "White Masons Urge to Fight Ku Klux Order," *Chicago Defender*, March 3 1923; "Linking Masonry and Klan Opposed," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 12 1924; "Supreme Court Justice Tompkins in 'Constitution Day' Address at Lions' Meeting Flays Radical Elements," *The Yonkers Herald*, September 16 1925, found in "Judge Arthur S. Tompkins Collection," Rockland Historical Society.

Congressional Hearings into their affairs. It was also in New York that politicians implemented the Walker Law, a radical piece of legislation that forced secret organizations like the Klan to register their membership lists with the state and which specifically exempted trade unions and established fraternities like the Freemasons. The Ku Klux Klan had not been welcomed in the Empire State as it had been in other parts of the United States. Historian Kenneth Jackson estimates Klan strength in New York to have been a relatively weak 80,000, a figure that pales in comparison with strongholds like Indiana or Texas. Nor was the Klan entrenched in social and political life as it was in other parts of the country. Studies of the Klan in New York have revealed that it only gained notable strength in specific portions of the state like Western New York or on Long Island, and that even these regions their power was certainly not pervasive.<sup>12</sup> Like most others in his state, Tompkins was decidedly opposed to the spread of the Invisible Empire. The support from the state's authorities and ordinary citizens for this stance must have had an effect on Tompkins and encouraged him to be more vocal with his condemnation.

Furthermore, Tompkins decision to stand against the Invisible Empire must have been heavily influenced by his long-standing and public friendship with several Catholic institutions. Having attended a Catholic university and due to his substantial works towards bringing the historically antagonistic Freemasons and the Knight of Columbus together, his opposition to the KKK seems only natural.<sup>13</sup> Tompkins embraced an inter-fraternal conceptualization of brotherhood, and one that crossed racial and religious lines. Praising the joint efforts by New York's Freemasons and Knights of Columbus to fraternize with each other, he once declared that he hoped such events would "allay the bitterness and heal the wounds and close the breaches made by unfortunate and unnecessary prejudice and antagonisms in the past."<sup>14</sup> Tompkins was always proud of these efforts. At his 61<sup>st</sup> birthday celebrations he proclaimed "I have striven... to promote a better understanding, a more friendly feeling, more kindly and brotherly relations among all classes and races and creeds. I have

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1967)pp.237-239; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981) pp.254-265; Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> "Klan is Denounced as Foe of Liberty," *New York Times*, July 5 1924; "Justice Tompkins Boomed For Senate," *New York Times*, July 15 1928.

<sup>14</sup> Tompkins, "Message of the," pp.109-111.

preached at every opportunity the gospel of tolerance and goodwill.”<sup>15</sup> His desire to maintain close relationships with Catholics and other minorities made him ideologically antagonistic to the KKK, and several Klan editors heavily chastised him for such friendships.<sup>16</sup>

Tompkins’ campaign against the Invisible Empire aroused a clamorous opposition towards his interventionist policies, and he even received threats against his life. Policemen from Goshen, New York, received an anonymous letter in July 1923 after Tompkins gave a speech there before a congregation of Jews and Knights of Columbus. The letter read:

Beware the K.K.K. When we go to Goshen we will go with some force of men and arms...Beware! Take Notice! X Injury Death!... Judge Tompkins thought he was - smart to speak to the Micks and Jews in Goshen. Well we have him marked. We’re going to get him.<sup>17</sup>

Although Tompkins was never physically harmed, that very year a fiery cross was burned near his home in Unionville, New York. The perpetrators of these intimidating attacks were never found, but it seems safe to assume that it was probably Klansmen who were discontent with Tompkins clear position on their hooded brotherhood and his attitude towards Catholicism and Judaism. The Klan’s leadership did openly reply to Tompkins and to other Grand Masters who had voiced their hostility towards their fraternity. Edward Young Clarke, temporarily Imperial Wizard during 1922, replied to their statements, saying that “any Grand Master of Masonry who is a real American in the fullest sense of the word, who has complete and accurate information regarding the real facts about the Ku Klux Klan would be in absolute sympathy with the organization.”<sup>18</sup> The Invisible Empire believed these Freemasons had simply been misled about the true intentions of their fraternity.

Despite these threats, and the extended campaign by the Ku Klux Klan to allay his opposition, Tompkins was dogged in his determination to eliminate the

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur S. Tompkins, “61<sup>st</sup> Birthday Speech,” “Judge Arthur S. Tompkins Collection.”

<sup>16</sup> “Head of N.Y. Masons Favors K.C.,” *The Protestant*, September 1923; George Fleming Moore, “Dr. Lippincott Bids for Roman Votes,” *Fellowship Forum*, March 15 1924.

<sup>17</sup> “Letter Threatens Life of Justice Tompkins,” *New York Times*, July 28 1923; “The Cross Blazed Away on Armond Hill,” *The Times Herald Record*, July 26 1923.

<sup>18</sup> “Klansmen Swarm in Masons’ Lodges’ Is Clarke’s Boast,” *New York World*, June 26 1922.

order. His personal beliefs clashed sharply with the Invisible Empire's vision for a new America, as it did with that of many other New Yorkers. The Ku Klux Klan was relatively weak in this state, and was unable to find much support among its citizens to fend off the denunciations of civic leaders like Tompkins. Even within the state's lodges, the Klan had trouble recruiting Freemasons and could not rally enough members to undermine the Grand Master's authority. Tompkins happily observed that "We know of only a few Masons who are of the Klan... The Grand Lodge of the State of New York, its officers and the great body of Masons through the New York State are absolutely opposed to the Klan and its activities."<sup>19</sup> With such widespread support, it was relatively easy for men like Tompkins to express their disapproval of the Invisible Empire in New York. The situation was not as simple or straightforward in other states where this new fraternity was more popular.

In December 1921, Grand Master Andrew L. Randell delivered his outgoing speech at the Grand Lodge of Texas, wherein he made a lengthy statement regarding the Ku Klux Klan. He expressed his astonishment at the Klan's growth among Freemasons, whom he believed had been misled into joining with unsubstantiated claims of Masonic patronage. In his address, he also read out the circular letter he had written to Texas' lodges, which said in part:

Any organization which, even from misguided patriotism, would inaugurate a system and inculcate ideas tending to ennoble and enthrone the masked methods of the mob, cannot live and thrive under the American Constitution and the American flag. Nor can they live and thrive under the laws and landmarks of Freemasonry.<sup>20</sup>

Randell additionally disavowed any connection between the two fraternities stating that:

The public in this and other states are holding Masonry responsible for the Klan. They have been given to understand that Masons compose the

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<sup>19</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Denounced By Masonic Leader; Police Fight Starts," *New York Times*, November 25 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1921), pp.39-48; "No Ties Between Klan and Masonry," *Dallas Morning News*, October 16 1921.

membership of the Klan to a very large degree, and that the Klan is really a militant branch of Masonry... Organizers, speakers and members of the Klan are responsible for this belief among the people at large, which even extends to the school children in some of our cities and towns... It is because of this deplorable situation that my sense of duty compels me to remind you that neither the Ku Klux Klan nor any other organization is Masonic unless recognized as such by Grand Lodge authority. **Nor will the tying of the Ku Klux Klan to Masonry by claims of Masonic membership be permitted or tolerated for one moment** [emphasis in the original].<sup>21</sup>

Randell may have had similar motives for standing against the Klan as Tompkins, but the circumstances within his state were entirely different to those in New York. His comments were warmly received by the editor of the local Masonic periodical, the *Texas Freemason*, but this was by no means a united response on behalf of the state's membership.<sup>22</sup>

If New York was the heartland of the anti-Klan movement in the early years of the KKK's expansion, then Texas was the exact opposite. The Lone Star State proved to be one of the most fertile hunting grounds for kleagles during the early 1920s, and it became the very first chartered Realm of the Invisible Empire. Estimates place the Klan's considerable strength in Texas somewhere in the region of 200,000 members, and the organization became embedded in the social and political life of the state. They even managed to elect one of their own, Earl B. Mayfield, as a U.S. Senator in 1922, as well as achieving major victories in various local elections.<sup>23</sup> In cities like Dallas, as outlined Chapter 6, the Invisible Empire became entrenched in local government and law enforcement. But perhaps what is most striking about the case of Texas was the exceptionally violent behaviour of the KKK in this and surrounding states in the Southwest. Historian Charles Alexander wrote that "Episodes of Klan violence transpiring in [Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas] are too numerous and too repetitious in character for all to be

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<sup>21</sup> 1921 Texas GL Proceedings, p.44.

<sup>22</sup> "Editorial: The Ku Klux Klan," *The Texas Freemason*, November 1921, p.14-15.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, *Klan in the City*, pp.237-239; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp.39-49.

mentioned.”<sup>24</sup> Though these attacks were usually carried out by a small number of Klansmen from this state and condemned by most mainstream members of the organization, the Invisible Empire was tainted by the actions of this minority. The vicious nature and considerable extent of some of the Klan’s violence in Texas during the 1920s are even comparable to that of its Reconstruction predecessor.

The KKK’s terrorist attacks are noteworthy in the case of Texas because such crimes were committed publicly and were widely reported.<sup>25</sup> One case in particular stands out for its severity and audacity. Beaumont Klan No. 7’s night-riding vigilantism became known across the country when they openly claimed responsibility for a number of incidents in the area. The klavern admitted to whipping and tarring-and-feathering a local veteran, R.F. Scott, for taking a woman to get an illegal abortion in May 1921. They did the same to the doctor, J.S. Paul, who had performed the operation, and whom they also accused of selling whiskey and narcotics out of his practice. Both were ordered to leave town after their ordeal. Beaumont’s Klansmen sent a sealed letter to the local newspaper in June claiming responsibility for the attack. The letter described the mock trial of Paul and Scott, as well as the details of their punishment, before stating that “The eyes of the unknown had seen and had observed the wrong to be redressed. Dr Paul stood convicted before God and man... The law of the Klan is JUSTICE.”<sup>26</sup>

The news caused a commotion when it first occurred, but was given further publicity when the events were reported across the country in the *New York World’s* serialized exposé of the KKK some months later. The *World’s* headlines on September 18<sup>th</sup> screamed “Klux Admits and Takes Glory in Lashing, Tarring and Feathering Texas Suspects; Affixes Official Seal to Detailed Story.”<sup>27</sup> The news triggered a national outrage. Imperial Wizard

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<sup>24</sup> Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995)p.63.

<sup>25</sup> See examples in Charles C. Alexander, "Invisible Empire in the Southwest: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, 1920-1930" (University of Texas, 1962), pp.41-42.

<sup>26</sup> "Ku-Klux Knights Admit Whippings," *Tulsa World*, July 23 1921; "Spread of 'K.K.K.' Alarms," *Kansas City Star*, July 27 1921; "Beaumont Doctor Warned to Leave or Suffer Death," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 21 1921; "Texas Newspapers Get Klan Command to Publish Letter," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, September 18 1921.

<sup>27</sup> "Klux Admits and Takes Glory in Lashing, Tarring and Feathering Texas Suspects; Affixes Official Seal to Detailed Story," *New York World*, September 18 1921. The article was republished in a number of other national and local newspapers.

Joseph Simmons was forced to revoke Beaumont Klan No. 7's charter and was questioned about the matter before his hearing at Congress in November 1921. The Klan itself had an ambivalent and flexible attitude towards violence and vigilantism, and seems to have encouraged it before audiences that approved of it, but it was also careful about denying any such activities before hostile inquiries like the Congressional hearings. Simmons tried to excuse the actions in Beaumont by explaining that Klansmen had not been a part of the party, and that the seal of the klavern had in fact been stolen and misused in the letter. He said that he believed the matter had been "possibly amplified and enlarged to make good, sensational reading" and that "The klan did not do it."<sup>28</sup> Beaumont Klan No. 7 was an exceptional case, and its conduct was not condoned by either the leadership of the order or Texas' Klansmen, but this episode and others like it established the fraternity's reputation in that state as a violent order.

The activities of Beaumont Klan No.7 are but one example of the behaviour that Texan Grand Master Andrew L. Randell was compelled to stand against in late 1921. Perhaps it was precisely because of the extraordinarily flagrant nature the vigilantism of some Klansmen in Texas that Randell felt it was his Masonic duty to warn his brethren against them. It would also be short-sighted to ignore the significance of the timing of his declarations; the *New York World's* exposé, the Congressional Hearings, and a wave of anti-Klan statements from politicians and civic leaders across the country, all occurred in the last three months of 1921.

Randell's comments on the Klan made him a target for sympathizers of the Invisible Empire. Randell records that he "began to receive an increasing number of reports of rumoured threats, some personal against me, and some aimed at the control of this Grand Lodge..."<sup>29</sup> Randell also reported that:

For some strange reason and from some strange source, the idea has gone abroad throughout the Craft that this Grand Lodge will find itself in

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<sup>28</sup> The Committee on Rules: House of Representatives, *First Hearings on the Ku Klux Klan Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington D.C.: Washington Government Printing Office, 1921), pp. 71-72; Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1922) pp.203-210.

<sup>29</sup> Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco, TX: Gayle Printing Company, 1921), pp.40-41.

the throes of a desperate fight between the Ku Klux Klan and Masonry for the control of this Grand Lodge, and the belief has become current that an effort would be made to oppose and defeat my recommendations to this Grand Lodge...<sup>30</sup>

Randell may have tried to minimize or dismiss the significance of these attacks, but there is evidence that suggests that such a conflict existed, and that it was in fact the second Imperial Wizard, Hiram Wesley Evans, who led this dissension. Evans was a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Freemason who seems to have achieved some prominence among Texas' Masonic circles. He was active in both the York and Scottish Rites in his hometown of Dallas, and was president of the *Texas Freemason*, the official periodical of the Grand Lodge of Texas.<sup>31</sup> Upon his ascension to the office of Imperial Wizard, one article from the *Atlanta Constitution* described him as "one of the most active Masons in America. He has been a fraternalist of the highest calibre for many years."<sup>32</sup>

Very little information is in fact available about his time in Texas or his participation in the Freemasons. However, Edgar I. Fuller, the former secretary of Edward Young Clarke, reveals that the reason Evans was invited by Elizabeth Tyler to come to Atlanta to be appointed as the order's national secretary, or Imperial Kligrapp, was because of Evans' efforts towards preventing anti-Klan sentiment among Texas' Freemasons. At the time, Evans was the head of Dallas Klan No. 66, the single largest klavern in the country. Apparently, Evans was approached by the Klan's head lecturer, Imperial Klokard William J. Mahoney, sometime in 1921 and was paid \$2,000 or \$2,500 dollars to relieve opposition to the Klan among Texan Freemasons.<sup>33</sup> Fuller claims that while Evans was a Freemason in Dallas, that "he inaugurated methods of alienating friends, of destroying confidence between men, of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp.47-48.

<sup>31</sup> John Mack Shotwell, "Crystallizing Public Hatred: Ku Klux Klan Public Relation in the Early 1920s" (University of Wisconsin, 1974), p.176; "Editorial and Managerial Staff," *Texas Freemason*, December 1920, p.30; "Spring Knights Templar Conclave in Dallas," *Texas Freemason*, February 1921, p.12.

<sup>32</sup> James A. Hollomon, "Higher Orders in Klan Ritual Being Prepared," *Atlanta Constitution*, December 10 1922.

<sup>33</sup> Marion Monteal, *The Klan Inside Out* (Chicago,: N/A, 1924)p.45; The details of this matter have since been referred to by several historians of the Ku Klux Klan, see Shotwell, "Crystallizing Public Hatred," p.176, Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, p.101 and Charles O. Jackson, "William J. Simmons: A Career In Ku Kluxism," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 1966), p.360.

disrupting cordiality and of arraying brother against brother.”<sup>34</sup> Former Imperial Kludd, Caleb A. Ridley similarly wrote that:

[Evans’] political methods in the Masonic fraternity were the same as methods which have characterized him in the Ku Klux Klan. It was distribution of what he always terms ‘poison meat.’ This phrase of his means that he undertakes to exploit further and to gain his own ends by the alienation of friendships among men who have always trusted each other.<sup>35</sup>

This evidence suggests that Evans was indeed a savvy and disruptive factor in Texas Freemasonry, and it is quite likely that he did try and defend his precious Klan from Randell’s statements.

Grand Master Randell was certainly faced with a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, the Klan in his home state was significantly powerful and popular, and it seemed as if it was wreaking havoc on a par with its Reconstruction counterpart. Additionally, the Klan was continuing its attempts to gain support within Texan lodges. On the other hand, he faced considerable opposition from Klan sympathizers within his own fraternity. Men like Hiram Wesley Evans were trying to prevent him coming out too strongly against this outside invader, and it seems they were willing to use intimidation to ensure this. Randell’s leadership as well as his person both had threats made against them. Despite this intimidation, he came out bravely against the Invisible Empire, influenced no doubt by the anti-Klan rhetoric that dominated the press and politics in the country during latter quarter of 1921. It was not easy being an opponent of the Ku Klux Klan in Texas in the early 1920s. The circumstances in Texas were entirely different to New York. But, to further assess the significance of both location, and more importantly, timing in coming out against the Klan, it is crucial to focus on a different state and a different Grand Master.

Indiana is almost unanimously recognized as the bastion of Klan strength in 1920s America, overshadowing even Texas or Georgia. “In no other state would the Klan have the impact it had on Indiana,” declared historian Wyn Craig

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<sup>34</sup> Monteval, *Klan Inside*, pp.21-23

<sup>35</sup> "Imperial Kludd of Klan Attacks Imperial Wizard," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 9 1923.

Wade.<sup>36</sup> Using several surviving Klan membership lists from different areas in Indiana, sociologist Leonard Moore has calculated that around a quarter to a third of all eligible Hoosier men joined the Klan in Indiana during the 1920s, and in some communities membership was close to 50%.<sup>37</sup> The Invisible Empire's overwhelming strength in Indiana was not merely due to sheer numbers; under the calculating leadership of their King Kleagle and Grand Dragon, David Curtis Stephenson, the Klan also managed to become the dominant political and social civic movement of the period. Contrary to Texas, the order's approach in Indiana was subtle. Never an overtly violent organization, the Indiana KKK preferred to gain power through the ballot box, and overcame its opponents through a combination of pressure, intimidation, tactical boycotts and insinuation. Politicians, newspapers and businesses all jumped on the Indiana Klan bandwagon as the organization steamrolled its way to success and authority. In these circumstances, it is difficult to find an organization that was not tinged with the influence of the Klan. The Grand Lodge of Indiana is no exception, though this institution is understandably reluctant to have the matter of their relationship investigated.<sup>38</sup>

Opposing the Klan in Indiana was bold statement; to do so could mean economic ruin or career suicide. One poignant example is the case of Reverend Clay Trusty Jr., of the Seventh Christian Church of Indianapolis.<sup>39</sup> Trusty was forced to resign his position as minister when he snubbed an invitation to join the brotherhood and had refused to allow Klansmen to gather in his church. All but four or five families of his congregation were affiliated with the Klan, and after they burnt a fiery cross in his backyard to pressure him into joining, he quit. Trusty was soon replaced by a minister who was more amenable to the KKK, Gerald L.K. Smith, a fiery anti-Semitic preacher who would gain prominence in the 1930s as an associate of Huey Long. Trusty's case was not rare; an almost

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<sup>36</sup> Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p.215.

<sup>37</sup> Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p.7.

<sup>38</sup> Miguel Hernandez, "Animosity and Brotherhood: The Ku Klux Klan and the Freemasons in 1920s Indiana" (University of Exeter, 2011), pp.13-22; There is a brief discussion of the matter in Dwight L. Smith, *Goodly Heritage: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Craft Freemasonry in Indiana* (Indianapolis, In.: Grand Lodge of Indiana, 1968), pp.224-225.

<sup>39</sup> There is some information available about Reverend Trusty in the biography of his son, a famous journalist. See Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame, "Clay Trusty Jr.," <http://indianajournalismhof.org/2011/02/trusty-clay/>

identical incident ensued at the nearby Englewood Christian Church.<sup>40</sup> Both instances illustrate the dominance of the Indiana Klan and the consequences of opposition.

The Grand Lodge of Indiana had declined to become involved with subject of the KKK when the matter first caused controversy in 1921-22, as Grand Masters like Arthur Tompkins and Andrew Randell had stated their opinions clearly. The first Hoosier Grand Master to mention the Ku Klux Klan in an official capacity was Dr Charles A. Lippincott, who felt obliged to speak on the matter at the 1924 Grand Lodge. Lippincott brought up the topic since James A. Vance had written to him, in his capacity as an editor of the Masonic and quasi-Klan newspaper *The Fellowship Forum*. Vance had written to discern the Grand Lodge of Indiana's attitude towards Catholics, parochial schools and papal bulls, and to determine whether they had "any definite ideas regarding the consolidation of forces for the protection of Protestant Americanism in the 1924 National Election..." Lippincott responded to the letter, declining to answer these inquiries, and boldly questioning the *Fellowship Forum's* self-titled authority as "Freemasonry's Representative in the Capitol." Before the 1924 Grand Lodge of Indiana, Lippincott declared the *Forum* was a Ku Klux Klan paper, and said that their claims to represent Freemasons were "preposterous, impudent, audacious... utterly without foundation in fact."<sup>41</sup>

Lippincott also expressed concern at the news he had received from various lodges in Indiana, describing rifts forming between brothers over membership in the Invisible Empire. Lippincott remarked that he had received letters explaining that:

Masons in good standing had been boycotted and dubbed 'thirty per cent Americans' by brother Masons, because they would not join the Klan.

Others declare that their lodges have not been able to do any work, and

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<sup>40</sup> James H. Madison, *Indiana Through Tradition and Change: A History of the Hoosier State and Its People* (Indianapolis, In.: Indiana Historical Society, 1982)p.53; Deborah Ballee Markisohn, "Ministers of the Klan: Indianapolis Clergy Involvement with the 1920s Ku Klux Klan" (MA Thesis, Indiana University, 1992), p.63.

<sup>41</sup> Grand Lodge of Indiana, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Indiana* (Indianapolis: N/A, 1924)pp.13-15; Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1925), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.53; Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1925)Report on Foreign Correspondence, p.23;Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma* (Tulsa: Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, 1925), Report on Foreign Correspondence, pp.400-401.

that they have been almost completely disrupted.

These letters indicate that this movement has caused serious dissensions among many of our Brethren, penetrated some of our lodges to so great a degree that Masonic ties have been broken, the principles and teachings of Masonry set at naught, and the moral and fraternal influence of lodges destroyed.<sup>42</sup>

Lippincott described a state of affairs within the fraternity that was alarming to say the least.

Oddly enough, Grand Master Lippincott only declared that the Grand Lodge had “not made any pronouncements either for or against the Ku Klux Klan, therefore, joining the Klan or declining to join the Klan does not constitute a Masonic offence.” Lippincott then affirmed his official opinion, saying “I do not question the right of any Mason to join the Klan or to refuse to join the Klan. That is a question which every man must settle before God and his own conscience...”<sup>43</sup> Unlike Tompkins or Randell, Lippincott declined to condemn the Invisible Empire that had proven so popular in his state, and chose merely to disassociate his own fraternity from it.

This official attitude is most bizarre when we take into account Lippincott’s own personal beliefs and opinions regarding the Ku Klux Klan. In private, Lippincott was fiercely opposed to the Klan. In December 1922, in his role as Deputy Grand Master, Lippincott delivered a speech at the close of an installation ceremony for new Masonic officers in lodges in his hometown of South Bend. Lippincott declared that:

Klanism, is positively and utterly opposed both to the fundamental principles and ruling spirit of Masonry. The whole object of Masonry is to promote the worship of God and the brotherhood of man. In its high purpose it knows no creed, no sect, no race, no nationality and no color. Its object is peace, harmony and good will.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> "Masonic Head Says Order is Klan's Enemy," *South Bend Tribune*, December 30 1922; "Klanism Opposes Masonry, Indiana Lodge is Warned," *Washington Post*, December 31 1922.

Charles Lippincott reminded attendees that it was their Masonic duty to support the government and to stand against vigilantism. He also stated that “Members of the ‘invisible empire’ tear down and destroy, rather than erect or promote success,” a statement fraught with meaning for the architecturally themed Freemasons.

Lippincott’s sentiments did not change upon becoming Grand Master either. In fact, much like Arthur Tompkins, he was friendly with Catholics and attempted to extend links with the detested Knights of Columbus. At one such event, again in South Bend, Lippincott attacked the Invisible Empire and other similar groups. He declared that “The most dangerous man in our country today, is the man who tries to stir up class and religious hatred. We should resist him, and we should try to overcome the evil he is spreading with our own good.”<sup>45</sup> The Klan assailed him for these meetings, calling him a “Catholic loving, weak-kneed Mason” and declaring that “The puny, misguided efforts of the Lippincotts, Tompkinses, and a few other so-called leaders of Masonry striving to carry water on both shoulders serves no practical purpose.”<sup>46</sup> It is clear that Lippincott was no friend of the Klan’s, and yet he was unwilling to declare his abhorrence in an official capacity.

It is difficult to say precisely why Charles Lippincott declined to condemn the Klan publicly as a Grand Master. Perhaps he genuinely felt it was beyond his mandate, but this seems unlikely due to the alarm he expressed at the distress the KKK was causing in Indiana. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Lippincott was unable to denounce the Invisible Empire, because he felt that such a standpoint would not be supported by Indiana’s Freemasons. It is also probable that Lippincott feared a backlash from the dominant political force of the age in that state. In Charles Lippincott’s case, timing and local circumstances were crucial, as the Klan in Indiana was reaching the peak of its power in 1924 right around the time of his declarations on the matter, preventing him from expressing his true beliefs on the subject.

Thomas Chauncey Humphrey, a Past Grand Master from Oklahoma, had his own thoughts on this question. Reviewing the actions of Masonic bodies

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<sup>45</sup> “Catholics Use Lippincott to Bait Masons,” *Fellowship Forum*, March 08 1924.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*; George Fleming Moore, “Dr. Lippincott Bids for Roman Votes,” *ibid.*, March 15.

from other states before the 1924 Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, he observed that “Several [Grand Lodges] condemn the K.K.K.’s in strong terms. Others say let them alone. It is significant, however, that many of the lodges through the country are officered and run by the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>47</sup> What Humphrey was basically suggesting was that several Grand Lodges had problems condemning the Klan because its own members belonged to the Invisible Empire, and they feared upsetting their membership base. Maybe the idea that Indiana’s Masonic leadership felt unable to declare themselves honestly on this topic because of pressure from Klansmen within their brotherhood is not entirely preposterous.

In the case of Florida we can confirm Humphrey’s suspicions. The Klan was not able to achieve the levels of popularity it had in Indiana or Texas, but it was heavily entrenched in certain portions of the state. The Florida Klan only managed to enlist around 60,000 members in this conservative Southern state, but proportionately this made it quite strong. Just like Texas, the Klan in Florida is comparable to its Reconstruction counterpart, as both actively used violence and terror to intimidate black voters and to guard the status quo.<sup>48</sup>

Charles H. Ketchum held the office of Grand Master for two consecutive terms during the period 1921-1923. Ketchum typified the typical post-war militant Freemason. He was eager to use the influence of this powerful fraternity to affect change within his community and to fight ignorance and oppression beyond the confines of the lodge. In January 1923, as the Klan worked its way into the state, Ketchum gave a speech in Jacksonville where he pushed for a more aggressive stance from Freemasons on political matters, such as the establishment of a federal education department. He said:

Masonry has always stood behind all measures looking to the good of the country as a whole. Masonry has always kept itself as an organization, entirely out of politics.

But the time is here when we can no longer sleep. We must realize as never before that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. While we are not interested in politics, and as an Order can not and do not wish to enter

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<sup>47</sup> Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: N/A, 1924), Report of Committee on Correspondence, pp.326-327.

<sup>48</sup> Jackson, *Klan in the City*, pp.237-239. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp.225-229; Michael Newton, *The Invisible Empire : The Ku Klux Klan in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

politics, the time is here, Brethren, when we must exert ourselves and taken an active interest in the good government.<sup>49</sup>

Ketchum's speech the previous year was in a similar vein. In 1922 he declared that it was a Freemasons' highest duty to ensure the education of America's children, and that they be inculcated to preserve the nation and its institutions "first and above all other powers, forces or hierarchies on the face of the earth."<sup>50</sup> This aggressive brand of interventionist fraternalism and patriotism was the exact sort of ideology that was being sold by the Klan, and that was attracting militant Freemasons who were tired of the meek attitude of their own fraternity.

Grand Master Ketchum also refused to condemn the Klan. He stated to newspapers in 1922 that:

As grand master I can take no official attitude concerning this [Ku Klux Klan], any more than I could take of the Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias. Each individual Mason has the right to his connections and certainly as grand master I would be violating the principles of the high office which I hold, were I to try and dictate the daily life, habits and conduct of the individual members of the particular lodges of our jurisdiction.<sup>51</sup>

At the following Grand Lodge, in 1923, he made similar statements before Florida's Freemasons, placing his seal of approval on dual membership in both fraternities.<sup>52</sup> While Charles A. Lippincott may have delivered a similar pronouncement, we know he felt a genuine revulsion for the Invisible Empire and its methods. Contrarily, Grand Master Ketchum not only identified with the Klan, he was a lively member of the order. The same year he left the office of Grand Master, he was appointed as Grand Dragon, heading the KKK in the

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<sup>49</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1923)pp.627-629.

<sup>50</sup> Grand Lodge of Kentucky, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* (Louisville: Masonic Home Printing Office, 1922)Report of Committee on Proceedings of Grand Lodges, pp.10-11.

<sup>51</sup> "Grand Masters See Through Meddling Outsiders Attempts To Create Discord," *The Fellowship Forum*, October 13 1922.

<sup>52</sup> Grand Lodge of Ohio, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio* (Springfield: Grand Lodge of Ohio, 1923)pp.249-252.

whole state of Florida.<sup>53</sup> Thomas Chauncey Humphrey's theories on the divergence of opinions on the Klan seem to have applied to the Sunshine State.

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s was a fluid and complex movement, focusing on a diverse range of assorted issues depending on locality, and behaving in very different ways according to the makeup of its membership and the surrounding community. So while the Klan manifested itself as a violent enforcer of the state's moral code in Texas, this brotherhood would have been an almost separate organization in Maine or Colorado, where the needs and wishes of its members would have been distinct. Likewise, the KKK evolved over time. As the organization grew, the leadership was replaced, and the years went by, the order changed. The wide spectrum of responses to the Ku Klux Klan – not only from Masonic authorities but from American society as a whole – is a reflection of the complexity of the movement. Each Grand Master faced his own Klan, and each chose to deal with it in their own way.

However, the regional and temporal representations of the Klan do not suffice to explain the diametrically opposed views of Grand Masters Arthur Tompkins and Charles Ketchum; one of whom stated that he "hated" the Invisible Empire while the other was an energetic leader of that organization. How could Ketchum's personal views on the Klan differ so radically from those of Tompkins, Lippincott, and other members of his own fraternity? And why did Dallas and Anaheim citizens respond so differently to the order's intrusion into their community? The reaction of these two cities was certainly not proportionate to the danger the Klan posed in these two locations. This disparity in approaches among Grand Masters and ordinary citizens towards the Klan stems directly from the portrayal of this fraternity in the media, which exaggerated both the essential character and daily activities of the KKK. To comprehend the confusing and conflicting portrayals of the Invisible Empire in the American media, it is necessary to analyse this development from the very beginning of the growth of the movement.

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<sup>53</sup> "Thirty-Third Degree Mason Named Head of Florida," *The Fellowship Forum*, November 24 1923; "Klan Meeting Marked by Impressive Scenes," *Miami Herald*, January 28 1925.

## 2) Conflicting Portrayals of the Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan may have been founded as early as 1915, but it was only five years later, when the organization's extension came under the management of Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler, that the fraternity began to pick up steam. The expansionist schemes put in place by the Southern Publicity Association brought the Klan into contact with Americans unaware of its existence, and, as the organization garnered members, journalists started to write on the appearance of this curiosity. As Klansmen became more brazen, and atrocities such as those committed by members in Texas became known, many newspapers began to change their tune and wrote more condemnatory pieces. Through the summer of 1921, reporters from the *New York World* began preparing a series of revelatory articles that would disclose intimate details about the Invisible Empire and expose the order as a corrupt and violent movement. The immense popularity of this exposé encouraged other journals to follow the *World's* lead and publicize this organization's inherent immorality. The shocking revelations divulged by the press triggered a public outcry against the order and a national discussion regarding the merits and faults of the Ku Klux Klan. The information and arguments broadcasted by the supporters and opponents of the Invisible Empire during this period would help disseminate and popularize the two opposing depictions of the movement that Ketchum and Tompkins would each abide by.

The *World's* 1921 exposé was a systematic campaign to warn the American public of the danger posed by the Invisible Empire. While previous journalistic efforts had broadcasted information about particular events relating to the KKK or specific crimes attributed to the vigilantes, this exposé was an organized and thoroughly researched effort to publicize Klan secrets and outrages. Ranging from the rumours of the graft and profits made by Klan leaders to descriptions of the terrifying consequences of the initiation oath, the series covered all aspects of the controversial organization and included large photos and official documents. The exposé ran from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, and was based primarily on the findings of Henry P. Fry, a former kleagle from Tennessee who had gathered documentation from within the

organization before his resignation. The exposé was syndicated to 26 prominent newspapers, including the *Boston Globe*, the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the *Seattle Times*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, reaching a readership believed to be in excess of 1,785,000 Americans.<sup>54</sup> The *World* proudly trumpeted the success of their articles, and announced that:

In New York, crowds of people actually awaited at the publication offices of *The World* (until after midnight) in order that they might get the first copies of the papers as they came from the presses. In other cities, where local newspapers were not printing the series, record prices were paid for copies of *The World* – some places reported *Worlds* bringing in 50 cents a copy.<sup>55</sup>

The series included articles on number of topics, all revelatory and shocking to the American public. The issue of September 19 was especially scandalous as it published a categorical list of 152 recorded Klan atrocities committed since 1920, which included murders, floggings, tar-and-feather parties and mutilations. This particular issue also gave salacious details on the 1919 arrest of Klan bosses Elizabeth Tyler and Edward Young Clarke, who were apprehended by the police in their sleeping garments in an Atlanta hotel. The news was particularly damning since they were not married and they were caught with a bottle of illegal whiskey.<sup>56</sup> By exposing the violence and corruption inherent in the fraternity, the *World* hoped to destroy the movement in its infancy with its journalistic campaign.

The success of the series encouraged others to follow suit; the *World's* journalistic nemesis, the *New York American*, even started its own exposé on the Klan that same month. The *World's* exposé received the approval of the public, and numerous newspapers emulated and praised their efforts. The *Baltimore Sun* affirmed that “in the scorching light of *The World's* exposures the Klan will rapidly die” while the *New York Times* remarked that “There is not the

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<sup>54</sup> "Millions to Read Exposé of Ku Klux Klan in 18 Cities," *New York World*, September 6 1921.

<sup>55</sup> The *New York World*, *The Facts About the Ku Klux Klan as The World Told Them* (New York: The *World*, 1921)p.3.

<sup>56</sup> "Ku Klux's Record of Atrocities Grows; Recent Beating and Tarring of Men and Women; E.Y. Clarke and Mrs. Tyler Once Convicted," *New York World*, September 19 1921; "Clarke and Mrs. Tyler Arrested While in House of Ill Repute," *New York World*, September 19 1921.

slightest chance that the Klan can survive *The World's* attack, aided as that attack will be by the encouragement of the entire American press."<sup>57</sup>

The *World's* articles served as a rallying cry against the order. Having informed American society about the "true" nature of the KKK, prominent citizens began to demand that action be taken. Marcus Garvey, of the United Negro Improvement Association, asked that the state eliminate this group, describing the Klan as "no friends of this great country... they only seek to foment civil strife that may ultimately do harm to the peace and good will that now exists."<sup>58</sup> The allegations of organized civil disorder presented by the exposé eventually forced Congress to organize an official hearing on the matter. Many of the issues investigated by this Congressional investigation stemmed directly from accusations made in the *World's* pages. Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri, who was one of the politicians pushing for this investigation, openly acknowledged this fact and stated "I want to express to the *New York World* my great appreciation of the work it has done in bringing the facts to the attention of the public."<sup>59</sup>

Standard texts on the history of the 1920s Klan have all pointed out that this Congressional investigation had the unintended consequence of boosting Klan membership. The hearings allowed Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons to use his oratorical skills and to masterfully defend each and every charge put forward by the committee.<sup>60</sup> When Simmons was confronted with accusations that his organization was responsible for countless outrages all over the country, he brushed these charges aside and sneered, saying "those attacking us have charged us with everything from high prices to the spread of the boll weevil."<sup>61</sup> The committee ultimately failed to produce any evidence of substantial wrongdoing on behalf of the Klan, and did not pass any recommendations back to Congress to approve legislation against the KKK. Yet the hysteria did not end there, newspapers and magazines continued to print ominous and foreboding stories about the dangers the Klan posed, and

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<sup>57</sup> World, *The Facts*, pp.4-5.

<sup>58</sup> "New Yorkers Hail Exposure of Klan," *New York World*, September 7 1921; Garvey's declarations are quite ironic since he later cooperated with the Ku Klux Klan.

<sup>59</sup> Representatives, *Hearings on the Ku*, pp.6-7.

<sup>60</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, pp.161-165; Jackson, *Klan in the City*, pp.11-12; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp.36-38.

<sup>61</sup> Representatives, *Hearings on the Ku*, p.73.

politicians and community leaders maintained their campaign against the brotherhood. The American public was still quite alarmed at the continued growth of this new fraternity.

The historiography of the Second Ku Klux Klan has highlighted the boosts to membership that both the *World's* campaign and the Congressional hearings provided; the former disseminated information about the organization while the latter absolved them of many of the accusations made against them. As one Klan supporter would later write

[I] have never considered and thought upon this mysterious and miraculous subject [the Klan] until the seventeen papers of the United States, including the New York World, began to lambast and tell every kind of yarn that be thought about these white-robed people...<sup>62</sup>

However, as this account demonstrates, further emphasis needs to be placed on the benefits that the origins of these attacks had on public perceptions of the KKK. Many Americans were distrustful of what a New York newspaper had to say on this matter, particularly after Congress had essentially acquitted the organization. One Texas reader wrote in to the *Dallas Morning News*, who had re-published the *World's* series, and commented:

I am sorry that [*The Dallas News*] – ‘the Texas Bible’ – always fair and always my favorite paper, has in this ‘exposure’ so easily allowed itself to be a catspaw to rake Jesuit chestnuts out of the fire. For that the old spirit of Rome breathes through it all is manifest even to a novice.<sup>63</sup>

This letter hints at a belief held by many Americans who would go on to either join or support the KKK. Many readers suspected that Catholic, Jewish or African-American influences were controlling the editorial policy of the *World* and others, and that many of their accusations against the Klan were unfounded. The Invisible Empire certainly tried to play up this fact, and one of their newspaper editors observed that the press:

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<sup>62</sup> George Washington Burrows, *The Big 3 in One* (Houston: Unknown, 1923)pp. 7-8.

<sup>63</sup> "Letter Argues for Klan," *Dallas Morning News*, September 30 1921.

had made the Klan appear in the light of a martyr in the eyes of an American public... Protestant Gentile Americans smelt a rat. They wondered what was back of all this opposition led by newspapers notoriously controlled by Jewish and Catholic influences. They started to investigate and concluded when all was said and done that the Klan was an American institution after all...<sup>64</sup>

Catholic, Jewish and African-American civic leaders had come out strongly against the Invisible Empire, and were some of the prominent voices in the debate on the Klan during the last quarter of 1921. Many white Protestant Americans perceived this united front to be a cause to question the entire portrayal of the Klan in the media. Henry P. Fry went as far as explaining that

The *World's* expose would have completely killed the Klan had it not been for the intrusion of outside influences... These influences consisted of Catholics, Jews and negroes... The Klan salesmen took these articles and used them as sales talks in showing their prospects how 'the Catholic, Jews and negroes are trying to run this country.'<sup>65</sup>

The crusade against the Klan was dismissed by many white Protestant Americans as libel, cooked up by the dreaded Catholic, Jewish, and African American minorities. This allowed Americans who supported the Klan's ideals to continue backing the organization in the face of copious evidence of vigilantism and graft within the fraternity.

These beliefs about the false and exaggerated portrayal of the Klan in the media were given further credence by the fraternity's exhaustive attempts to present itself as both a friendly and patriotic brotherhood. The Klan never sold itself on the basis of violence, nor on explicit racial or religious prejudice. Rather, the organization was built on a positive program of patriotism, reform, and religious conservatism that would appeal to the American mainstream. The Propagation Department presented their order as a constructive fraternity, an influential brotherhood that was endorsed by Masonic bodies. The depiction of

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<sup>64</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan at Their First Annual Meeting Held at Asheville, North Carolina, July 1923; Together with Other Articles of Interest to Klansmen* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1923; repr., 2000), p.95.

<sup>65</sup> Henry P. Fry, "Former Member Says Intemperate Attacks Have Aided It," *New York Times*, June 4 1925.

the 1920s Klan as a violent enforcer of the status quo and a guardian of white supremacy and Protestant dominance was certainly true in some sections of the country, but they were undoubtedly a minority, and one that was vigorously reviled by most Klansmen and the organization's leadership. As one *Baltimore Sun* journalist explained:

The astute Atlanta gentlemen at the helm are far [too] clever not to have the article they market bright and beautiful... Most of it is based on perfectly sound religious and patriotic principles. All of it has a strong moral flavor, a deep religious tone. It is a further fact that at the klan meetings, there is practically nothing said or done that could not be said or done in the open without real criticism. There is nothing like as much bigotry preached in the klan konklaves [meetings]... as is frankly preached from certain pulpits of various denominations.<sup>66</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan had realized the importance of proper marketing. One of the order's own pamphlets, entitled *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine*, argued that the order had been purposefully misrepresented, and that their fraternity would never have survived by selling itself on hate. The author then explained "the mission of the Klan is harmony, and the message of the Klan is love. The Klan is seeking an opportunity to co-operate in the harmonizing of all the congenial elements that are truly American."<sup>67</sup> Klansmen repeatedly and resolutely stressed this position in their newspapers and in their speeches, and actively fought to portray themselves not as predatory bigots, but as guardians of liberty, as a fraternity that was purposefully misrepresented and persecuted by un-American forces. In fact, in response to the denunciations of his order by many of America's Grand Masters, Imperial Wizard pro tem Edward Young Clarke declared that these comments were "predicated on the false statement that the Ku Klux Klan is a lawless institution..."<sup>68</sup>

The Invisible Empire presented in the *New York World* and the rhetoric of anti-Klan Americans, and the Invisible Empire presented by Klansmen and their supporters, were diametrically opposed depictions of the same movement. To

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<sup>66</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Klan Recruits Influenced by Three Causes," *Baltimore Sun* December 14 1922

<sup>67</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *A Fundamental Klan Doctrine* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1924), p.3.

<sup>68</sup> "Clark Denies Klan Claims Connection With Masonic Order," *Columbus Ledger*, June 28 1922.

some Americans, the KKK was a criminal conspiracy that incited racial and religious hate and general mayhem, while others saw it merely as a charitable brotherhood dedicated to preserving the traditional values and norms of the nation. There is some truth to both portrayals, but both conveniently gloss over certain aspects of the Klan in favour of defending their interests. This obviously created a lot of confusion for those Americans who were unsure of what the Invisible Empire really was. In 1924 one New York minister felt compelled to try and clarify the matter for his congregation, saying:

Many persons are bewildered by the Ku Klux Klan. They do not know what to make of it...They are still more bewildered when they seek for information. The friends of the Klan say one thing and the enemies of the Klan say another thing. The two things do not agree. Men equally intelligent and equally reliable are for and against it.<sup>69</sup>

Much of this confusion stemmed from the Klan's own secrecy and their elaborate façade that prevented outsiders from getting a clear idea of the nature of this organization.

These dual narratives permitted for the divergence of opinion among America's Freemasons. Many Freemasons simply believed that the charges of lawlessness or graft were complete fabrications. Writing to the *Fellowship Forum* in 1922 one Freemason argued that: "There are yet many Masons who hate the Klan because they do not know anything about it but believe the poisonous propaganda the Roman Catholic Church have put forth in an effort to exterminate the Klan."<sup>70</sup> Another reader, from New Iberia, Louisiana, wrote to the newspaper in 1924 recounting that:

I went into the Klan and the 'Blue Lodge' at about the same time and was at once struck with the similarity in fundamentals underlying both... There are still a few Masons here who hold that a Mason cannot assume the Klan oath and remain a Mason at heart. They are, of course, men who know the Klan from the outside. We who are in both know how

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<sup>69</sup> Charles E. Jefferson, *Roman Catholicism and the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924) foreword.

<sup>70</sup> "Truth About the Klan," *Fellowship Forum*, July 28 1922.

unwarranted this idea is, we know how beautifully the Klan obligation dovetails in with the obligation of a Freemason.<sup>71</sup>

These Freemasons and others like them simply could not reconcile their experiences within the Invisible Empire with the organization that Grand Masters like Tompkins or Randell described as “un-Masonic” or “un-American.” Many of them believed that these leaders had been misguided and were simply uniformed of the true nature of “their” Klan.

Masonic authorities refuted this dispute explicitly, claiming that the violence and corruption inherent within the fraternity was evident to any outsider. “I know the claim is made that the Klan is not opposed to any class, race or creed, and that it is free from hate,” declared Arthur Tompkins in 1923, “but its printed documents, and the declarations of its leaders and its methods and activities prove the contrary.” Tompkins added “The true purpose of the Klan are not to be learned from its ritual or its oath, but from its underlying motives, as they have been expressed and made manifest by its leaders and by the acts and conduct of its members in many parts of our country.”<sup>72</sup>

### **The Ku Klux Klan as a “Moral Panic”**

The perception of the Klan’s pernicious influence was ultimately the crucial factor in whether or not a Grand Lodge declared itself as contrary to the Invisible Empire. This decision was not simply based on the Grand Master’s impressions of the Ku Klux Klan, but on the impressions of the rank and file who would demand such a declaration from their leadership. The role of the media in shaping these impressions was essential. During the first half of the 1920s, America went through what could be described as a moral panic on the issue of the Ku Klux Klan, reminiscent of the white slavery panic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the case of the Invisible Empire, a vastly exaggerated picture of this organization emerged in both the media and rhetoric of the age that described a pervasive mass-movement that threatened the social order with extra-legal violence.

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<sup>71</sup> “Masonry and Klan by Member of Both,” *Fellowship Forum*, April 12 1924.

<sup>72</sup> Tompkins, “Message of the,”

Terrifying accounts of imminent coups and vigilante committees became common in both national and local newspapers. In a 1922 article from *The American Monthly*, one writer argued that the nation was run by two sovereign powers, and said “One is the Federal Government. The other is the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, to whose unlimitedly autocratic emperor, an ever-increasing number of supposedly American citizens yields implicit obedience.” The author presented several cases of gruesome Klan vigilantism from California, Texas and Oklahoma, before warning readers that “the Ku Klux Klan is a matter for the United States Government to deal with. The Invisible Empire is far more of a danger to America right now than the German Empire ever was.”<sup>73</sup> Such alarmist articles reminded Americans daily of the threat the Klan posed, and elevated national anxiety about the creeping power of the KKK. The influence of the moral panic was evident in the formation of anti-Klan opposition in communities like Dallas, and especially Anaheim.

The concept of the moral panic itself deserves due attention. The theory was first presented by sociologist Stanley Cohen in his classic study *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Cohen’s theory developed from his own experience of British society’s disproportionate reaction to the Mods and Rockers, two youth groups that occasionally clashed in seaside resorts during the mid 1960s. The moral panic theory outlined how the media, the state, and society at large characterized and responded to the perceived deviance of these youths. Summarizing his theory in an often-quoted paragraph, Cohen wrote:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or groups or persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite

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<sup>73</sup> Capit Ole, "The Uncurbed Ku Klux Klan," *The American Monthly*, May 1 1922.

novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence for a long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself.<sup>74</sup>

Since then, the theory has been applied to various historical cases to analyse phenomenon ranging from the abduction of Germans into the French Foreign Legion in the 1950s to the hysteria caused by witches, Catholics or Jacobins in early modern England.<sup>75</sup> The Second Invisible Empire itself, with its controversial displays and mischaracterization in the media and society, seems to also be an appropriate case of a moral panic. In this case, the “moral barricades” were not only manned by bishops, politicians and editors, but also by fraternal leaders like Grand Master Tompkins. In particular, The *New York World* exposé and the subsequent attempts by other newspapers and civic leaders to eradicate the order fit into Cohen’s moral panic theory

The theory has proven so popular amongst researchers that the concept has escaped the confines of academia and entered into mainstream usage. Some historians have even complained that the concept has become so diffuse that many are misinterpreting the theory and employing it without properly referencing some of its core tenets.<sup>76</sup> Although this may be the case, American society’s reaction to the Ku Klux Klan fits in quite closely to Cohen’s original concept and the theories developed by others.

Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda in particular have elaborated on Cohen’s thesis, providing a more succinct list of crucial elements needed to qualify a phenomenon as a moral panic. Cohen himself has welcomed this

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<sup>74</sup> Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and the Rockers*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011)

<sup>75</sup> Frank Biess, “Moral Panic in Postwar Germany: The Abduction of Young Germans into the Foreign Legion and French Colonialism in the 1950s,” *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no.4 (December 2012); David Lemmings and Claire Walker (eds.), *Moral Panics, the Media and the Law in Early Modern England*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> David Rowe, “The Concept of the Moral Panic: An Historico-Sociological Positioning” in David Lemmings and Claire Walker, *Moral Panics*, p.22-23; Arnold Hunt, “‘Moral Panic’ and Moral Language in the Media,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 48, no.4 (December 1997).

development and even refers to it in later editions of his work.<sup>77</sup> These five crucial elements include:

(1) concern or fear; (2) hostility toward the folk devil (3) a certain level of consensus about the nature of threat; (4) a disproportion between the concern and the threat; (5) a certain degree of volatility of the concern, an evanescent or coming-and-going quality that does not characterize more ongoing threats.<sup>78</sup>

As has been outlined in this chapter, the Invisible Empire came to be regarded with both concern and hostility by the American media and members of the general public. Their concern was also quite volatile and had practically dissipated only five years after the emergence of the phenomenon. It is the third and fourth elements – consensus and disproportionality – that warrant a more careful consideration before we can truly consider America’s reaction to the Second Invisible Empire a true moral panic.

Both Cohen and Goode and Ben-Yehuda agree that consensus regarding the supposed danger of the object is a necessary component of any moral panic. However, they also claim that this consensus need not be total or even ample. Goode and Ben-Yehuda describe this consensus saying:

This sentiment must be fairly widespread, although the proportion of the population who feels this way need not be universal, or indeed, even make up a literal majority... Consensus that a problem exists and should be dealt with can grip the residents of a given group or community, but may be lacking in the society as a whole; this does not mean that a moral panic does not exist, only that there is group or regional variation in the eruption of moral panic.<sup>79</sup>

Even Cohen believed that the response of the public to these “folk devils” would not be “homogenous” and would vary according to a number of different factors. Age, gender, social class, region or political beliefs could affect this reaction; as

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<sup>77</sup> Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, p.xxvi-xxvii; Chas Critcher, *Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006), p.27.

<sup>78</sup> Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), p.47. See pages 37-43 for further analysis of these criteria.

<sup>79</sup> Goode and Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics*, pp.38-39.

he explained “The already processed image of deviance was further coded and absorbed in terms of plurality of interests, positions and values.”<sup>80</sup>

In much the same way, individual responses to the misrepresentations of the Klan in the media were distorted by attitudes towards issues such as vigilante justice, Catholics and the Reconstruction Klan itself. Many of those who contested the depiction of the Klan as a violent order intrinsically disagreed with the notion that the order’s defense of white supremacy or Prohibition enforcement made Klansmen deviant or un-American. Regionality, as we have seen, also played a significant role in dictating attitudes towards the order. There was no overwhelming consensus across the nation over whether the Invisible did truly pose a threat to democracy or law and order. However there was substantial agreement amongst political groups, religious denominations and other organizations that made up the American landscape that the Klan posed a significant danger.

Disproportionality is perhaps a more difficult criteria to measure, particularly in regards to the secretive Ku Klux Klan. How can we objectively state that the fears of many Americans were unfounded? Although we are still not entirely sure of the true extent of the Klan’s violence, the current historiographical thinking agrees that the order’s violence has been vastly over-exaggerated and was confined to a minute proportion of the fraternity. If even 5% of the order’s supposed 2 million members – a conservative estimate of the KKK’s total strength – had engaged in vigilante attacks the 1920s would have recorded a significant rise in lynchings and racially motivated attacks.<sup>81</sup> In fact, the 1920s saw a notable decline in lynchings compared to previous decades, and most attacks against minorities had taken place during the postwar race riots early in the decade and were unrelated to the Ku Klux Klan. There were some parts of the country, such as Indiana or Texas, where the concern for the Klan’s power was perhaps more proportionate to its actual effect on society. Yet, in the rest of the country, many of the concerns about the Invisible Empire were founded on unsubstantiated rumours and inflamed by lascivious press accounts and editorials.

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<sup>80</sup> Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, p.66

<sup>81</sup> Stanley Cohen makes a similar comparison about violence and deviance amongst the Mods and Rockers, see Cohen, *Folks Devils and Moral Panics*, pp.30-32.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda argue that there are several indicators of disproportion. Amongst these are the exaggeration and fabrication of figures, something that was prevalent in the media regarding the number of Klan attacks or the fraternity's total strength.<sup>82</sup> A good example would be *The Washington Post*, who claimed that in 1925 the order had precisely 8,904,871 without including absolutely any reference to the origins of this very precise figure.<sup>83</sup> The *New York World's* account printed the Klan's own dubious claim that the order already had 650,000 members in 1921. Another indicator of disproportion according to Goode and Ben-Yehuda is the circulation of "rumours of harm,



IMAGE 6 – NELSON BURROUGHS AFTER HIS "KIDNAPPING"

invented and believed." The case of Nelson Burroughs is interesting in this regard. In early July 1924, several national newspapers recounted the story of the Klan's attack on this New Hampshire man, a recent convert to Catholicism who had organized the Knights of Columbus in his local town of Rochester. Burroughs claimed to have found the initials "K.K.K." scrawled into

his office door, and that he received a threatening letter from the order before being kidnapped on a business trip. According to his account, he was taken to a remote shack, and before a council of hooded Klansmen he was accused of promoting Catholicism. He was then branded with the initials K. K.K. with a hot iron (see image 6).<sup>84</sup> The authorities eventually revealed that Burroughs "had made up the story and had it peddled out to the newspapers." He had actually branded himself and hidden for several days to make it seem as if he had been abducted.<sup>85</sup> Burroughs never revealed why he had faked his attack, but perhaps he wishes to make a name for himself or he hoped to profit from the anti-Klan sentiment that pervaded America. In either case, the Burroughs case indicates

<sup>82</sup> Goode and Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics*, pp.44-46.

<sup>83</sup> "Ku Klux Membership Falls from 8,904,871 in 1925 to 34,694 Now," *The Washington Post*, November 2 1930.

<sup>84</sup> "Catholic Seared With Klan Brand After Abduction," *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, July 1 1924; "Catholic Convert Missing 19 Days Turns Up With 'KKK' Brand on Chest," *Trenton Evening Times*, July 1 1924; "N.H. Begins Inquiry in Branding Case," *The Boston Herald*, July 2 1924.

<sup>85</sup> "Brands Self with Hot Iron, Fakes Kidnapping to Discredit Ku Klux," *The Boston Herald*, July 12 1924; "Burroughs Story Fake, Opinion of Officials," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 12 1924.

the heightened level of anxiety and moral panic surrounding the controversial Invisible Empire.

It has always been controversial for historians to portray the Second Klan as anything other than a violent vigilante group. A recent collection of studies on the controversial order by a number of respected historians included a remark explaining that their “objective and dispassionate” approach was an attempt to counter some of the unrealistic assessments offered by others in the past; Shawn Lay and his colleagues were attempting to challenge the “unthinking predispositions, stale formulations, and unwarranted stereotypes” that have mired most discussions of the topic.<sup>86</sup> The Ku Klux Klan moral panic seems to have extended into our own time, and most people are surprised to learn of the relative benignness of the order. The Second Invisible Empire was certainly a divisive force in American society and politics that often used questionable methods to achieve its goals. Yet, the stereotypes of bloodthirsty vigilantes that abounded throughout the 1920s and today are not a true reflection of the majority of everyday Americans that joined the movement.

The moral panic surrounding the Second Klan throughout the early years of the Jazz Age was punctuated by various regional incidents, key among which was the Mer Rouge murders. It is worth exploring this case in detail here because it encapsulates how the moral panic was continually reignited by an agitated press and an excitable political class. The Ku Klux Klan had become especially popular in the northern Louisiana county of Morehouse Parish, establishing itself in 1921 as a powerful influence in the town of Bastrop and the surrounding areas. Yet the village of Mer Rouge remained steadfastly anti-Klan, and a bitter enmity ensued among the residents of the two communities. Klansmen from Morehouse Parish, with the support of the local sheriff, initiated a moral reform campaign that included raids on bootleggers and other lawless elements across the county. The inhabitants of Mer Rouge continued to defiantly challenge the Invisible Empire, and loudly criticized the extra-legal actions of its “whipping committee.” The situation escalated, and after a couple of incidents, in late August 1922 a gang of men dressed and masked in black publicly detained five of the ringleaders of Mer Rouge’s anti-Klan faction at

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<sup>86</sup> Shawn Lay (ed.), *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004) , pp.x-xi.

gunpoint and forced them from their cars and into a vehicle. One stumbled into Mer Rouge that night unharmed, while another two were found after having been whipped with leather straps. The last two, Watt Daniel and Tom Richards, were probably murdered by these suspected Klansmen, and their bodies were disposed of in the local lake.<sup>87</sup> The grand jury was unable to determine the perpetrators of the attack, which many attributed to the Klan's powerful influence over the courts in the county.

The Mer Rouge Murders were a horrifying example of the Ku Klux Klan's potential for violence and collusion. The Bastrop Klan's rash daylight kidnappings, as well as their obvious role in the rigged grand jury, terrified many. Lynchings and extra-judicial violence had been an uncomfortable reality of life in many communities in the South and other parts of the country. But this local incident soon became a national headline. Newspapers and politicians seized on the opportunity to make a case against the new militant fraternity. One *Baltimore Sun* article recounted how:

It must be something of a surprise to members of the Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana to find how suddenly they have become a State-wide political issue:

Three months ago no one in politics down there was [especially] interested in the klan and the public was distinctly unexcited about it. There was little or nothing the local newspapers concerning the order and until Thanksgiving night there had never been either a parade or public initiation in New Orleans. The klan was there and it had a lot of members, but there was no particular difference between the situation in Maryland and in Louisiana except that in the latter state the klan numerically somewhat stronger. It was not, however, politically active and it had not been taken seriously as a political factor by the press, public or politicians...Now the situation has completely changed. The name of the klan is on every tongue. Wild stories of its activities are widely circulated.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The exact events of the Mer Rouge murders vary, but Charles Alexander provides a well-researched account of the incident, see Alexander, "Invisible Empire in the Southwest," pp.75-84.

<sup>88</sup> "Klan Becomes Leading Issue in Louisiana," *Baltimore Sun*, December 17 1922.

The Louisiana Klan was dragged into the spotlight when Governor John M. Parker became interested in the Mer Rouge murders and initiated a state investigation. He demanded federal assistance from President Warren G. Harding to help the case, but the federal government refused to send federal troops to northern Louisiana, deeming the matter an affair of the state.<sup>89</sup> Parker responded disproportionately by declaring martial law in Morehouse Parish and sending a regiment of National Guards to deter Klansmen from interfering with the state's investigation. His actions and rhetoric raised tensions surrounding the affair. One speech given by Governor Parker in New Orleans captures the melodramatic nature of his attitude towards the Klan. He declared:

Your great issue is klan and anti-klan; whether we desire to work as a law-abiding, God-fearing people under our laws, or whether we are willing permit an organization to supersede our laws – an invisible Government to take control of the State and then, if possible, of the nation – and if we of Louisiana are spineless enough to permit a condition of this kind, then we need no lawyers, no District Attorneys[,] no courts and no temples of justice.<sup>90</sup>

The sensational details of the Mer Rouge murders were broadcast across the nation, accompanied by editorials vilifying the Invisible Empire. Many Americans who had been unconcerned about the movement were suddenly spurred into action, demanding their politicians fight this impending menace. One national magazine contended that:

Nothing in American history quite equals the audacity and the sustained [cold blooded] lawlessness of the Ku Klux Klan...The religious persecutions in the New England colonies in the early period of our history at least were conducted in open daylight, but here we learn that in Mer Rouge and Bastrop, a group of men secretly organized, with no check on their lust for power and no limit to their ignorance, arrogance and bigotry, were able to terrorize the entire community, torture human

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<sup>89</sup> "Harding Holds Klan Not Serious Menace," *New York Herald*, November 21 1922.

<sup>90</sup> John Rogers, *The Murders of Mer Rouge* (St. Louis: Security Publishing Co., 1923), p.62.

beings with Torquemada-like horrors and practically commit murder without a single individual in the community daring to raise his voice.<sup>91</sup>

Headlines and editorials such as this shocked American audiences, arousing passions and stimulating support for action against the order. Governor Parker and the press did not treat this as a local affair, but as a contagious disease that could infect the entire country. Concern about the Ku Klux Klan had died down since the *World's* revelations, but occurrences such as Mer Rouge incited many to take a clearer and tougher stance against the Invisible Empire.

Klansmen maintained their innocence, and decried the Mer Rouge murders as a "frame-up."<sup>92</sup> One Klan publication even compared the situation to the Morgan Affair of 1826, and suggested that Roman Catholics were behind both conspiracies.<sup>93</sup> Referring to Mer Rouge and the Inglewood raid, a comparable case from California, the pro-Klan minister Reverend 'Fighting Bob' Shuler remarked "Following the Inglewood raid you saw big, black headlines, glaring at you, followed by statements that made you shiver with horror... The further away from Inglewood the papers were published, the more horrible were the stories."<sup>94</sup> There were even those outside the Ku Klux Klan who decried Parker's heavy handed approach and the press' obsession with the case. Congressman James B. Aswell, who represented Morehouse Parish's district, denounced Parker's charges as "scurrilous, false and infamous" and decried how "to the humiliation and regret of our people the Governor of Louisiana, with his insatiable thirst for publicity, is responsible for the grave injury done our State." Other Louisiana Congressmen similarly denounced Parker's defamatory attacks on their state.<sup>95</sup>

The Mer Rouge murders were simply one example of the murders committed by Klansmen of the 1920s, but they were probably one of the most well-known. Both Parker and the press heightened the nation's fears about the

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<sup>91</sup> "Around the Editorial Table," *Forum*, February 1923, p.1280.

<sup>92</sup> "Is Mer Rouge a 'Frameup'," *Texas 100% American*, January 19 1923; "Imperial Wizard Evans Scores Mer Rouge Charges," *Texas 100% American*, January 26 1923; "Catholics in Control At Mer Rouge," *Dawn*, February 3 1923; "The Parker-Coco Judicial Burlesque," *The Fiery Cross*, February 2 1923.

<sup>93</sup> "Roman Plot to Destroy Masonry Seen in New 'Morgan Affair' at Mer Rouge," *Fellowship Forum*, January 27 1923.

<sup>94</sup> "Dr. Bob Shuler says Much ABout Inglewood and Mer Rouge," *Texas 100% American*, February 16 1923; L.L. Bryson, *The Inglewood Raiders: Story of the Celebrated Ku Klux Case at Los Angeles and Speeches to the Jury* (Los Angeles ?1923), pp.6-7.

<sup>95</sup> "Klan Domination in Louisiana is Denied," *Texas 100% American*, November 24 1922.

Invisible Empire. The Klan moral panic of the 1920s created a tense atmosphere where fearful readers began to demand action, and politicians felt obliged to act. The Klan's power was almost fabricated in the pages of the press and in the minds of its opponents. As journalist Frank R. Kent explained,

the point I would like to make plain is that it is publicity plus the politicians that is making the Klux a political factor in the Southern States today and they make it a factor in other States tomorrow... it is literally being forced as an issue in Louisiana. Six months ago in that state nobody thought or talked about the Klux. Now its name is on every tongue.<sup>96</sup>

Sociologists and researchers struggle to define this sociological phenomenon known as the moral panic, and have conflicting theories about how these episodes are formed and what elements are needed to identify one as such.<sup>97</sup> Yet, the history of the Invisible Empire in Louisiana and the country at large contains many of the classical features described in Stanley Cohen's original work. This Second Klan came to be regarded first with fear and then concern; their organization was stereotyped as a violent threat to the established order in both the media and rhetoric of the age; the nation's politicians, religious and civic leaders denounced the peculiar group and many tried to have the organization outlawed or halt their growth; eventually the anxiety about the Klan subsided when many realized their reaction had been disproportionate.

The Ku Klux Klan moral panic, like all such episodes, was rooted in some fact, but it had been exaggerated to the point where the idea of an "Invisible Empire" overturning democratic and legally constituted government seemed not only possible, but likely. In certain areas of the country the Klan was definitely a night-riding menace, but many Americans came to believe that this was the fraternity's nature throughout the country, a belief that was simply untrue. Politicians and newspapers in some sections of the country found success by feeding into this impression. Civic leaders, like those that headed the nation's Masonic Grand Lodges, were understandably agitated and were forced to respond to the concerns of their members. In contrast to other such moral

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<sup>96</sup> Frank R. Kent, "Klan's Growth and Strength Due to Attacks," *Baltimore Sun*, December 12 1922.

<sup>97</sup> Critcher, *Moral Panics*, pp.1-3.

crusades though, the Ku Klux Klan was strengthened by this persecution. Kent elaborated on this point, saying:

Unquestionably the thing the klan thrives on is general and indiscriminate denunciation. The reason for this is that most of the things alleged about the klan are so far from the klansman's conception of what it stands for and so foreign to the kind of thing that transpires in klan meetings, that the average klansman, who is not a complex person at all, is filled with a sense of injustice, solidified in the support of his 'principles' and inspired to go after recruits.<sup>98</sup>

Grand Master Arthur S. Tompkins' campaign against the Invisible Empire was commendable, as were the efforts of several other Freemasons who stood up against this organization. Their efforts helped prevent the further expansion of this organization. Nonetheless, their attitude was heavily influenced by an exaggerated depiction of the Ku Klux Klan; one that foretold an apocalyptic future if this fraternity was allowed to flourish unopposed. To supporters like Grand Master – or Grand Dragon – Charles Ketchum, the organization was simply a militant fraternity, a brotherhood that was not shackled by political or religious neutrality. Ultimately, America's Freemasons disagreed on how to deal with the Ku Klux Klan because they disagreed on the intrinsic nature of the organization.

Freemasonry was far from the only brotherhood that was racked by these disagreements. Other popular fraternities like the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias or the Elks were all confronted with similar problems.<sup>99</sup> Neither was this issue limited to fraternities; churches, political parties, charities, veteran's organizations and other civic groups were racked by conflict on how to deal with this thorny issue. In fact, the discord among the Grand Masters of America's many Masonic jurisdictions reflects the divisions within American society at large, between supporters and detractors of the KKK, its methods, and its objectives. The success and fate of the Klan depended on the public's perception of their organization. This argument is best illustrated by the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel Taylor Moore, "Consequences of the Klan: Results of the Hoosier Experiment in Invisible Monarchical Government," *The Independent*, December 20 1924, p.535-536.

examples from Anaheim and Dallas. Whereas in Dallas, the Klan had been mostly perceived as a mostly innocuous order whose extra-legal justice was actually helping clean up the community, Anaheim viewed the Invisible Empire as a menace. The Ku Klux Klan's façade was perhaps its strongest selling point, and its reception could dictate the success or failure of the movement in a new territory. Perhaps this is why they expended so much money and time in deploying an effective public relations campaign.

## EPILOGUE

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America came to know the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s primarily through the medium of the newspaper. Many found little reason to question how the press had portrayed this new fraternity, and they formed their opinions and opposition to the Invisible Empire based on these mostly negative reports. Freemasons, like all Americans, were subject to this same process. Albert M. Spear, Grand Master of Maine, explained to his brethren that:

I know nothing of the constitution, by-laws, or outward profession of the institution. I feel confident, however, that I am justified in saying that I do know what the institution stands for, as manifested by the acts and conduct of its members and its agents. I could not submit proof that the French are now occupying the region of the Ruhr, in Germany; I could not submit proof at this moment that the United States Senate is in session at Washington; I could not submit proof that explorers are opening the tomb of Tutankhamen; but from evidence presented through the press, I have no reasonable doubt that every one of the instances to which I have referred actually exists. Now, notwithstanding what any representative of the Ku Klux Klan may say, I have no reasonable doubt, from the utterances of the press, in different parts of the country, all coinciding with reference to what the Ku Klux Klan is doing, that its representatives are guilty of premeditated, intentional and express violations of law in the commission of nearly every kind of violence or threats, is a menace to society, and destructive of organized government.<sup>1</sup>

Spear described a predicament that must have confronted other Freemasons and Americans: What exactly was the nature of the Ku Klux Kan? Should they believe what the press or the order itself said? Spear and many other Freemasons chose to believe the portrayal of the Klan in the media and decided to confront this menace.

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<sup>1</sup> Grand Lodge of Ohio, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (N/A: Grand Lodge of Oregon, 1924), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, pp.66-67.

Freemasonry became embroiled in this affair because many Masonic leaders, influenced by this moral panic, felt the need to address what seemed like a potential danger that threatened to escalate. These Grand Masters did not treat the Invisible Empire as just a competing fraternity that was trying to pilfer their membership, like the Grotto or the Shrine. The Craft's leadership often condemned the Klan as a menace to a nation, an impending threat that needed to be eradicated, and one which Masons should resist for the sake of the country. Pennsylvania Grand Master Abraham M. Beitler, for instance, said "No American can contemplate without dread the results which may follow the spread of the Klan, and no Mason believing in fair play and fundamental principles can ally himself with the Klan or fail to actively oppose it."<sup>2</sup> In December 1922 the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania expressly forbade all members within the state from joining the Ku Klux Klan. However, Beitler admitted that this organization had not actually made much progress in the area and there were no signs that the Klan was attempting to infiltrate Pennsylvanian lodges. During his farewell address, Grand Master Beitler noted that "I have been unable to ascertain that Masonry has been anywhere in this grand jurisdiction linked up with the klan."<sup>3</sup> It is precisely this sort of disproportionate and volatile response that sociologist Stanley Cohen characterized as a "moral panic."

In states such as Texas, Oklahoma or Indiana, Masonic leaders had genuine reasons for fearing the power of the Ku Klux Klan. While certainly not an everyday occurrence, the occasional cases of vigilantism allegedly perpetrated by Klansmen, as well as the troubling popularity of the movement within those regions, made the Invisible Empire a natural concern for the Craft. The situation in Pennsylvania and the majority of the country was simply not comparable. The Ku Klux Klan was never a true force within this state nor had it achieved much success in the lodges, a fact that Grand Master Beitler himself confirmed. In Beitler's case, as well as in the case of many other Grand Masters, his anxiety was motivated less by the conditions in his surroundings

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<sup>2</sup> Grand Lodge of Oregon, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Oregon* (N/A: N/A, 1923), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.126.

<sup>3</sup> "Masons Outlaw Ku Klux Klan," *New York Times*, December 28 1922; "Mason's Views on K.K. Klan," *The Reading Eagle*, January 20 1924.

and more from the disconcerting news he had heard from other states and from the overzealous editorials of the nation's journals. There was also pressure within Freemasonry, from members and officers of the fraternity, for Grand Masters to express their disapproval of the order.<sup>4</sup> The Klan's mischaracterization in the press made a powerful impression on the Masonic leadership as well as the general membership, and many felt compelled to stand against this apparently looming crisis.

Some Masonic jurisdictions later realized that they had perhaps overreacted to the supposed menace of the Klan. At the 1922 Grand Lodge of North Dakota, Grand Master Henry E. Byorum seconded the position of other Masonic leaders, and roundly deplored the Ku Klux Klan. He called the Invisible Empire "dangerous in the extreme" and "entirely foreign to Masonry's conception of law and order and contrary to well established American principles." North Dakota's Grand Lodge took drastic action, and passed formal legislation forbidding dual membership in both orders, giving members 6 months to choose their allegiance.<sup>5</sup> The idea proved popular, and in neighbouring Montana, Grand Master Henry C. Smith praised the strong stance of North Dakota's Freemasons and asked his own Grand Lodge to pass similar measures.<sup>6</sup> The measure was only enforced once in North Dakota, and two years later Grand Master Ralph L. Miller rescinded the ban as many within the fraternity simply felt it was out of place for the Grand Lodge to dictate such matters.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to point out that the preamble to the North Dakota edict forbidding the dual membership contained a sizeable portion of the detailed and descriptive circular letter on the Texas Klan by Grand Master Andrew L. Randell, who happened to be present at North Dakota's Grand Lodge. Randell's

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<sup>4</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, newspapers like the *New York World* telegraphed various Grand Masters, and pressured them to take a public stance. Grand Masters like Frank Lester of New Mexico regularly received letters from colleagues and brethren who asked him to denounce the Klan. See "Letter from Lucius Dills to Francis Lester," October 13 1921, Archives of the Grand Lodge of New Mexico or "Letter from Richard H. Hanna to Francis Lester," October 13 1921, Archives of the Grand Lodge of New Mexico.

<sup>5</sup> Grand Lodge of Minnesota, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota* (St. Paul: St. Paul Times Printing Co. , 1923)Report on Foreign Correspondence, pp.94-97; "Editorial: The Spirit of Tolerance," *Grand Forks Herald*, August 30 1922.

<sup>6</sup>Grand Lodge of Texas, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas* (Waco: Gayle Printing Company, 1923), Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence, p.68.

<sup>7</sup> Grand Lodge of Minnesota, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota* (St. Paul: St. Paul Times Printing Co. , 1925)Report on Foreign Correspondence, pp.115-117; "Masons Rescind Ban on Klan," *Fellowship Forum*, June 28 1924.

letter related exclusively to the Klan in Texas, which as we have seen, was exceptionally violent. North Dakota's Freemasons seem to have been shocked by the news of the Klan's behaviour in Texas, and may have hurriedly passed legislation based on that evidence to prevent the advance of the Invisible Empire in their own state. Of course, the Grand Lodge of North Dakota misunderstood the nature and complexity of the Klan; not only did the Invisible Empire never gain a substantial following in their state, but it was not especially violent. North Dakota's Grand Lodge soon realized that they had over-reacted, influenced by exaggerated impressions of the Klan's heterogeneous character, and rectified their mistake once anti-Klan hysteria had died down by 1924.

North Dakota was not only the jurisdiction that realized they had acted prematurely after warnings of the danger the Klan posed failed to occur. By 1924 most Grand Lodges still maintained their antipathy, but no longer felt the need to campaign so vociferously against the Invisible Empire. Past Grand Master John A. Erhardt gave his own assessment on the matter before the Grand Lodge of Nebraska in 1924, noting that:

The careful perusal of the proceedings of the several Grand Lodges during the past Masonic year will demonstrate that on the question of the Ku Klux Klan, they are using the 'soft pedal' instead of the forcible language employed in former proceedings . To my mind this is a grievous mistake. The spirit of the Ku Klux Klan is so unmistakably foreign to the spirit of tolerance and charity that believers in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man cannot afford to retreat from our former condemnation of the 'Invisible Empire.'<sup>8</sup>

Freemasonry had not retreated from its condemnation of the Klan, but it had re-assessed its course of action. Most of the initial comments made by Masonic authorities on the issue mostly took place in the period 1921-22, when the Klan was first emerging and the American public was still unsure about what this peculiar organization was. As the Klan settled into the mainstream and more people joined, much of the initial hysteria about their power, numbers, and

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<sup>8</sup> Grand Lodge of New York, *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New York* (New York: Lent & Graff Co. Press, 1925), Report on Foreign Correspondence, p.45.

activities died down. The moral panic subsided as Americans began to have a clearer understanding of the true nature of the Invisible Empire.

Much of the concern about the order faded as the order itself began to lose members and the apocalyptic prophecies of government takeovers failed to materialize. The decline of William Joseph Simmons' beloved fraternity allows us to peer behind the façade of the Invisible Empire, behind the marketing gimmicks of the Southern Publicity Association and through the brotherhood's strict secrecy. The sudden collapse of the KKK around 1925 is perhaps one of the most curious and debated aspects of this peculiar fraternity. Observers have attributed this decline to a number of factors, such as the various internal scandals that rocked the organization or the subsiding post-war hysteria. However, it could be argued that the Klan appeared to disappear because America had pictured an organization that was never there in the first place. By observing what caused the downfall of the Invisible Empire, we can analyse the order's basic structure and weaknesses, and better comprehend how the Klan managed to sustain itself. This brief analysis will allow us to understand how the Klan employed smoke-and-mirrors and a voracious appetite for new members to keep their "Invisible Empire" going.

The unexpected decline of the Ku Klux Klan exemplifies the central argument of this study: the Invisible Empire that existed in the minds of the order's supporters and detractors barely resembled the actual fraternity. The Klan's opponents depicted a dangerous and powerful horde of fervent racists, while its members defended the organization and explained it was a defensive mass-movement committed to American values. Both narratives emphasized that this was an influential organization with millions of members, but neither one truly understood that most Klansmen's allegiance to the order was rather relaxed and that the Invisible Empire was not as formidable or as terrifying as many had believed. The eventual collapse of the Klan finally allowed Americans to realize that order's true strength and nature had been exaggerated.

The Invisible Empire in this sense was truly invisible because it was hiding its most basic flaw. The Ku Klux Klan was not a mass movement of

fanatics intent on setting their own rule of law. In fact, most evidence seems to suggest that members were quite liberal about attending the klavern and participating in the movement. Like the Freemasons and other fraternities of the age, Klansmen had problems maintaining commitment to the order once recruits had joined and the initial excitement of 'belonging' had worn off. The ledgers of Klan No.108 of Monticello, Arkansas indicate that from September 1922 to November 1925 this klavern managed to grow from just about 50 members to about 450. However, weekly attendance at the lodge was usually never higher than 10%.<sup>9</sup> The minutes of La Grande's klavern in Oregon demonstrate a similar problem with sporadic attendance and commitment to the fraternity. Chart 5 reflects the number of Klansmen present over sixty meetings of this chapter from early October 1922 to late December 1923. Even though the Klan was a popular fraternity and had plenty of applicants in La Grande, the klavern only managed to gather most of the members for special occasions. For instance, over 200 members showed up for the klavern's chartering in March 17 1923. The largest gathering of La Grande's klavern was their 1923 Thanksgiving meal, when most members showed up for a celebratory turkey dinner. If these two separate klaverns are representative, then we can conclude that most membership appeared to be simply nominal. It seems as if the majority of Klansmen did not actively participate in the fraternity, they merely belonged.

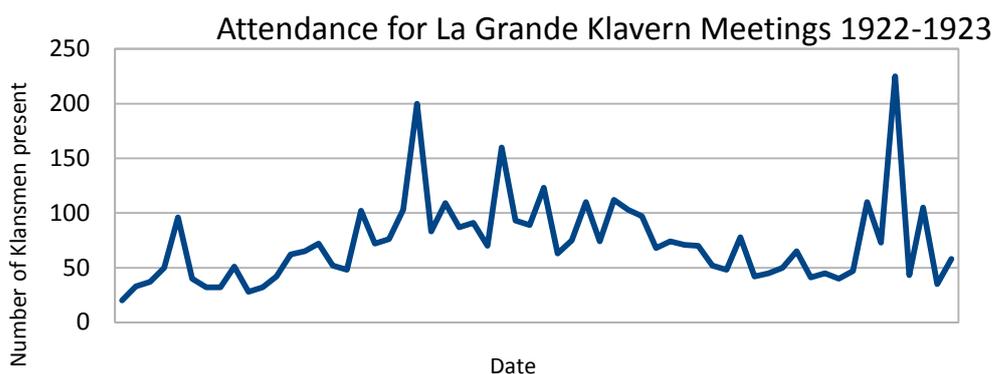


CHART 5 - LA GRANDE KLAVERN ATTENDANCE<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Donald Holley, "A Look Behind the Masks: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Monticello, Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2001), p.148.

<sup>10</sup> Figures compiled from Minutes of the La Grande Klan, see David A. Horowitz, *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999).

This intermittent commitment to the order was not apparent to outsiders. Most of the Klan's public displays were organized to make the fraternity seem popular and that membership was widespread. The Propagation Department employed a number of cheap ploys to exaggerate the power of individual klaverns during public displays, including bringing in Klansmen from surrounding communities or asking members to march an arm's length away from each other to make it seem as if there more of them. Onlookers naturally believed the rumours of a potent local Klan when they saw these exciting public parades and mass-initiations, and rarely assumed that members might not be all be as dedicated to the order as it appeared. The KKK did not readily advertise this lack of devotion, but it played a decisive role in the organization's downfall. After all, how could the Invisible Empire establish itself as vital factor in national life when most of their members only held a half-hearted commitment to the organization?

This disillusionment had a vital effect on the collapse of the movement, as the fraternity constantly lost members who stopped attending the klavern altogether after some time. The organization may have recruited millions of Americans to its ranks, but there was a constant stream of Klansmen who were abandoning the movement. While it may seem that membership growth collapsed in 1925, it had been faltering for some time. The Klan had always been far weaker than most outsiders realized and plenty of klaverns collapsed before 1925. This decline had only been hidden by the constant flow of new recruits. Sociologist Jason Kaufman has observed that fraternities as a whole are quite susceptible to defections from initially enthusiastic recruits, and the Invisible Empire was not an exception.<sup>11</sup> Many Klan apostates expressed disappointment with what they found once they joined, while others grew bored of the organization after the initiation and abandoned the organization.

When asked about this high rate of withdrawals, Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans deflected the question and explained that "No recruit to the cause has ever really been lost. Though men and women drop from the ranks

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<sup>11</sup> Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good? : American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.103.

they remain with us in purpose, and can be depended on fully in any crisis."<sup>12</sup> This remark completely avoided the issue. Many Klansmen were unhappy with the organization, whether it was because they found the organization's goals to be too disparate or because they were simply bored with the everyday proceedings of the fraternity. The Klan never advertised these losses, so while it may appear as if the fraternity enjoyed sustained growth and reached a powerful position in 1924, a number of their members had already abandoned the movement soon after joining. The order was only able to disguise these losses with a constant flow of new members which would eventually dry up.

The internal scandals that rocked the organization also affected the morale and commitment of its supporters. The conflict between William Joseph Simmons and Hiram Wesley Evans and their respective factions was particularly damaging for the order's national image, as was the shocking 1925 rape and murder of schoolteacher Madge Oberholtzer by former Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson.<sup>13</sup> The mismanagement of the order's revenues by Edward Young Clarke and general profiteering amongst the Propagation Department's officers also tarnished the Klan's reputation. The organization's uninspiring leadership and the squabbles amongst various senior officials made many Klansmen question the viability of the movement and their own membership in the fraternity.

At a local level, financial irregularities and dictatorial officers seemed to be a quite frequent occurrence in the decline of individual klaverns, and consequently, the overall movement. One Maine klavern illustrated this problem. A member of Portland's Witham klavern detailed the disruptive role of their state's King Kleagle, F. Eugene Farnsworth, in a letter to a New Jersey Klansman. Farnsworth had set the state's goal for chartering at the deliberately high figure of 10% of Maine's population, in an effort to make more money for himself and the Propagation Department. The writer also complained that:

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<sup>12</sup> Hiram Wesley Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," *The North American Review* 830(March-May 1926), p.34.

<sup>13</sup> See M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D.C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1991), pp.183-187 for more details on the Oberholtzer rape.

All information as to what is going [on] is kept from the members as much as possible, for a long period no records were kept or allowed to be read in the meetings.

[Farnsworth] appointed all officers and has run matters with their aid as he pleased.

Men have been taken into the Klavern that were born in Canada, men with Catholic wives also, as well as some men with but a poor standing as to reputation etc.

A large number of members no longer attend the meetings for reason above given.

Men have been suspended, not allowed in the Klavern and members have been warned not talk to them, and this stood this way for about a about a month, with no trial in sight so far as known.”<sup>14</sup>

The writer explained that not only had members stopped attending and even withdrawn from the Maine Klan because of Farnsworth’s authoritarian leadership and his irregular and questionable recruitment practices, he also noted that 400 members wanted to abandon the fraternity and form their own patriotic body. “There is a devil of a mess here in Maine, and the cause of it is the poor way things have been managed” lamented the writer.<sup>15</sup> These sorts of issues were prevalent across the Invisible Empire, and yet few observers really realized it was occurring. Practically every klavern had its own issues, and the dissatisfaction of their members accelerated the collapse of the overall movement. The Invisible Empire may have appeared as a powerful menace to many outsiders, but its strict secrecy ensured that the constant bickering and defections amongst the rank-and-file stayed hidden from the public eye.

The Ku Klux Klan’s decline and the trouble it experienced keeping members interested in the movement was not only caused by the leadership, but also by the poor quality of its membership. One magazine argued simply:

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<sup>14</sup> “Letter from B.H. Farnsworth to Edwin P. Banta,” December 3 1923, “Edwin P. Banta Collection,” Box 2, Folder V, New York Public Library.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The rapid rise of the organization would indicate to anyone acquainted with such phenomena that it will not live long. In its fundamental errors it has much in common with the old Know Nothing Party that flourished for a season. As a general rule there are two ways to kill any organization. One is for no one to join, and the other is for too many to join. The Ku Klux Klan belongs in the latter classification... The Ku Klux Klan will doubtless fade in time, and may properly be regarded as a part of the after-war hysteria.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, like an invading army advancing beyond its capacity to supply itself, the Klan was simply allowing too many members to join without properly solidifying their gains. Evans himself admitted that this had been the case, and that the organization had been too eager to allow such large numbers in. In 1926 He described the heady days of "kluxing" saying there had been "a tendency to emphasize numbers rather than the quality of the recruits."<sup>17</sup>

The Klan's recruitment model rewarded growth above all else. Kleagles were paid to enlist Klansmen, not to ensure that the organization itself realized its goals. The Invisible Empire seems like a shallow movement when observed from this point of view and was probably much weaker than historians had previously believed. Americans may have joined the movement, just as they joined the Freemasons or the Rotary Club, but not all of them became Klansmen because of their complete devotion to the organization and its ideals. Perhaps this is why the Ku Klux Klan failed to achieve major legislative success. Although the movement easily whipped up support for decisive political elections, even in states like Indiana or Texas the Klan's candidates rarely passed favourable legislation. One reporter analysed the situation and concluded:

With the king kleagle pushing the kleagles for results, with the grand goblin pushing the king kleagle, and with the Imperial office even in the pioneer days manifesting a lively and precise appreciation of the value of

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<sup>16</sup> Chester T. Crowell, "The Collapse of Constitutional Government: II - Bigotry and the Klansmen," *The Independent*, January 6 1923, p.9.

<sup>17</sup> Evans, "The Klan's Fight," p.37.

a dollar, things fairly hummed. Instead of expanding slowly and inexorably, as early klansmen no doubt hoped it would expand, the klan tripled itself in a day. Instead of growing it just swelled and whatever useful niche it might have filled was lost in the early overwhelming rush of mere numbers.<sup>18</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan was never as strong a force in politics or society as it purported to be. The movement was sustained by a rapacious recruitment strategy and a constant rush of new initiates that masked the fraternity's structural weaknesses and the discontent of its members. However, after a few years most klaverns had run out of targets to recruit, and so the initial enthusiasm and momentum of the Invisible Empire faded. The Klan "bubble" burst in 1925 when America realized the movement was not as threatening or as exciting as it appeared.

Freemasonry was one of the first institutions to recognize that underneath their hoods, the Ku Klux Klan were mostly hot air. By 1924, most Grand Masters had stopped making public campaigns against the order, as they done during 1921 and 1922. They realized that the Ku Klux Klan thrived in conflict and in the spotlight of the press. The Invisible Empire had managed to make itself seem like the victim whenever it had been subject to criticism. Even during the case of Mer Rouge, where it was painfully clear that the local Klansmen had murdered two of their opponents, they still made it seem as if they were the targets of a persecution. Freemasonry simply allowed the Invisible Empire to run its course, and avoided confronting the dying fraternity.

Even members of the press began to realize that the Klan was not the violent and dangerous fraternity that many had imagined. Many still condemned the order's divisive and conservative political stance, but recognized that this was not the deviant order they had described. Describing the Klan gathering in Washington D.C. in 1925 the *American Israelite*, surely no friend of this organization ,wrote

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<sup>18</sup> Max Bentley, "The Ku Klux Klan in Texas," *McClure's Magazine*, May 1924, p.16.

The faces of the people above the white shrouds were the faces of the people that one meets with in his everyday intercourse with his fellow Americans. The rowdy element was not in evidence, but, on the contrary, the faces of the average business man, the professional man, the mechanic and the clerk. The rowdy element was not in evidence, but on the contrary, the faces of the average business man, the professional man, the mechanic and the clerk. The anticipated riots and disturbances, which both the Police and Army authorities had expected and amply provided for, did not take place.<sup>19</sup>

America's anxiety about the order had filled the nation's klaverns as well as the coffers of the Imperial Treasury. Yet, once this attention and passion subsided, the Ku Klux Klan lost one of its primary attractions. Thousands of Americans would go on to regret or forget their brief membership in the Klan craze of the early 20s.

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<sup>19</sup> "The Comedy has Become a Tragedy!," *The American Israelite*, August 20 1925.

## CONCLUSION: AN “INVISIBLE” EMPIRE?

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The concept of the “Invisible Empire” had a variety of meanings for different people during the first years of the Roaring Twenties. The term was a product of William Joseph Simmons’ colourful imagination, re-appropriated from the original 1860s order to add a touch of authenticity to his own revival and its ritual. Simmons’ organization used the title during its ceremonies and meetings as a symbol of their fraternal bond. Members of the KKK would forever be able to depend on the selfless mass of unseen brothers throughout the country that formed this Invisible Empire. Simmons claimed that “The phrase ‘Invisible Empire’ means that the Ku Klux Klan undertakes to establish and maintain a nation-wide organization in the thought of our people. It plans a conquest only in the realm of the invisible where men do their thinking.”<sup>20</sup> Simmons was hoping to awaken the nation’s patriotism and its people. For the Imperial Wizard and the initiates of his order, the Invisible Empire symbolized their constructive fraternity, a chivalrous organization eager to protect America and its citizens through education and coordinated action. Nonetheless, the idea of the “Invisible Empire” had entirely different implications to others.

The *New Republic* commented on the ingenious terminology used by the Second Ku Klux Klan, and how unexpectedly effective jargon such as the “Invisible Empire” was proving to be. They recognized that the concept of the “Invisible Empire” and all of the order’s nomenclature were attracting many to the Klan, and wrote:

For many years the fraternal societies of this country have been in the hands of men who thought they had imagination. The best they could do, however, was to call themselves or one another by such paltry titles as Supreme Chancellor, Great Record Keeper, Supreme Ranger, Grand Exalted Ruler or Imperial Potentate. At a bound, ‘Col.’ Simmons of Atlanta has surpassed every one of his timid forerunners. As the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan he has gone into the business of ‘invisible

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<sup>20</sup> William Joseph Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked* (Atlanta: Wm. E. Thompson Publishing Co., 1923), pp.84-86.

empire' with a terminology that no modern kingdom can emulate. What is a Knight Commander of the Bath or Knight of the Garter, compared to a Grand Goblin or an Exalted Cyclops? <sup>21</sup>

For others then, the term "Invisible Empire" encapsulated the mystery, the appeal and the thrill of being a Klansman, of belonging to the latest and most talked about secret fraternity in the nation. Some Americans believed that the mysterious Ku Klux Klan and its hooded initiates was simply another bizarre fad or pastime of the 1920s that would quickly subside.

Some officers within the order had their own understanding of the term. To the kleagles of the Propagation Department the Invisible Empire of course stood for profit, as it allowed them to generate a huge income selling this exotic membership, acting unseen and under the guise of fraternalism. To ambitious politicians like Hiram Wesley Evans, the "Invisible Empire" was a united bloc of hidden voters who could enact change for a better America. The Ku Klux Klan was a means to an end for many idealist reformers like the Second Imperial Wizard.

To its opponents, the very name "Invisible Empire" symbolized everything that was wrong with the Ku Klux Klan. The reviled KKK was an undemocratic organization directing the votes of its membership and swaying politics and social norms, a self-appointed vigilante force acting out of sight but in the name of the law. In October 1921, a chapter of Texas Royal Arch Masons maintained that an "invisible empire which behind masks, shrouds and secrecy assumes to perform all the functions of the State has no place in the open, free democratic institutions of the American people."<sup>22</sup> Those on the outside saw it is an imperialist threat intent on conquering and commanding the nation, with no regard for the due process of the law or the ballot box. Its opponents regarded the name "Invisible Empire" as an accurate description and as a fitting insult.

Henry Fry, a former kleagle and the main source of information for the *World's* expose, decried this "Invisible Empire' of hate and venom." He

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<sup>21</sup> Article reprinted in ""This Cesspool of a Ku Klux Klan"," *New York World*, September 20 1921.

<sup>22</sup> "K.K.K.," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 7 1921.

advocated a complete investigation of the movement, arguing that “The ‘Invisible Empire’ should be made visible. It should be held up to the light so that honest men can see its ugly structure and analyse its nefarious potentialities.”<sup>23</sup> However, this proved to be a much more complicated task than Fry had initially envisioned. Americans simply could not agree on what the Invisible Empire really was. Outsiders struggled to get an accurate idea of what lay underneath the Klansman’s mask, and the order’s secrecy ensured that information regarding their mysterious fraternity was relatively limited and tightly controlled. Many contemporary observers were forced to make assumptions about the Klan based on preconceptions, rumours and little evidence. Needless to say, the Invisible Empire was not what it seemed.

Historians have since attempted to follow Fry’s advice, and make the Klan “visible.” The first historical accounts that were published merely recycled impressionistic assessments from newspaper accounts, and failed to truly pull the mask off the Ku Klux Klan. These accounts only awarded an academic sheen to the mischaracterization of the order. Sociologist John Moffat Mecklin’s 1924 study was typical of the first generation of research on the Ku Klux Klan. His work described the organization as a primarily Southern rural movement, motivated by provincial hysteria and xenophobia. He defined the Invisible Empire as a violent expression of American irrationalism, and said “If there is one outstanding fact to be noted of the majority of the Klan members it is their intellectual mediocrity.”<sup>24</sup> Predictably, this crude description outraged Klansmen, who answered saying “The work shows how little a professor of sociology may know about the operations of the Klan.”<sup>25</sup> This simplistic analysis indicates just how inherently misunderstood the order was by outsiders during the 1920s. Even those academics like Mecklin, who were charged with being critical and objective, had trouble deciphering the Invisible Empire. The themes and impressions formulated during the Ku Klux Klan moral panic of the 1920s continued to dominate both academia and mainstream understandings of the

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<sup>23</sup> Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1922), p.2.

<sup>24</sup> John Moffat Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), p.155.

<sup>25</sup> “Comment from the Coast,” *The Fiery Cross*, June 20 1924.

order for decades. Even now, academics have to be careful about how they describe this troubling organization without arousing passions.

Since the 1920s however, historians have used a more sober brand of reasoning. Kenneth Jackson dispelled the notion that this was a primarily rural movement, while Charles Alexander argued that race was not the primary motivation of the Ku Klux Klan. Other historians demonstrated that this was neither a Southern nor a consistently violent fraternity. Historians have been able to get a significantly more accurate picture of the order than was presented by journalists and commentators of the 1920s.

Historians have generally been quite keen to emphasize the vital role that this organization played in the 1920s in an effort to attract attention to the subject. To a certain extent, newspaper accounts and sources seem to confirm that many Americans were genuinely interested in the movement. However, the moral panic that dominated and defined most discussions of this brotherhood fundamentally exaggerated and distorted the mainstream understanding of the movement. One passionate speaker even declared before an audience in Texas that the order was an “Incubator of Hate” and affirmed that:

If I were some of those preachers who today permit those masked hooded figures to come down the aisles of their churches and lay a few paltry dollars on the altar, as Satan did in the Garden of Eden, and say to them, ‘Oh you white angels,’ I’d feel like Judas Iscariot did when he betrayed his Lord and I’d go out and do as Judas did; I’d hang myself.<sup>26</sup>

Sordid tales of government takeovers and midnight murders shaped conversations about the Ku Klux Klan throughout the 1920s, and have clouded the historiography ever since. While the order has a deservedly grim reputation, it does not reflect the reality of the daily activities of the millions of ordinary Americans who joined the organization. This moral panic embellished many aspects regarding the order, and overstated just how powerful the organization truly was. Because of its secret membership, journalists and politicians never

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<sup>26</sup> "K.K.K. Called Incubator of Hate," *Dallas Morning News*, June 29 1922

really knew how many had joined the order, and many imagined the worst. The vastly inflated figures offered by Klansmen and their opponents are mostly inaccurate, and do not reflect the actual extent of their influence on American society.

The Ku Klux Klan rose to power by appealing to very real sentiments that pervaded the American social psyche at the end of the First World War. Working-class men from Detroit were worried about the African-American family moving into the empty lot a few blocks down the street from their own homes. People in Oregon whispered hushed rumours about how the Knights of Columbus donated a rifle for every Catholic born in America to the local church and argued over how best to deal with the Papist menace. New York residents shuffled nervously past the different European immigrant quarters in the city, wondering why these aliens insisted on living apart from the rest of society and imagining what they could be saying in their alien tongues. Mothers from Indiana were shocked at the latest films coming out of Hollywood, and blamed Jewish directors for corrupting their sons and daughters with sexualized and subversive plots. Texans were outraged at the flagrant disregard for the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment whenever they saw someone heading to the local speakeasy and vowed to support anyone who would shut down these dens of sin. The Ku Klux Klan tapped into all of these different concerns that arose in the early 1920s.

The Ku Klux Klan had successfully convinced Americans that it was rallying the nation's patriotic citizens and the various Protestant denominations to fight the rising tide of immorality and the creeping power of various un-American influences. The 1920s Invisible Empire sold itself as a new and superior form of fraternalism; a militant brotherhood that would apply the lessons imparted in the klavern in daily life and in defence of their country and its people. The klavern became a refuge for many citizens, a chamber where an individual's ardent patriotism and reactionary opinions about the future of the nation were echoed and reinforced. The order's fraternal traditions helped to create a familial sense of union among different Klansmen. By combining ritualism, fraternalism and secrecy, Klansmen bettered themselves as individuals, bonded together as brothers, and segregated themselves as a

fraternity from the “alien” world outside of the klavern. The Invisible Empire, with its ritual and regalia, provided coherence and unity for all white Protestant Americans. The Klan’s new brotherhood recycled all the old tropes and ceremonies from America’s most well-known fraternities, but added a real sense of excitement and duty to the whole affair by committing itself to being aggressively political and tacitly allowing members to act in their community.

This new form of fraternalism made a powerful impression upon the American public. Many welcomed the Ku Klux Klan as a modern and refreshing alternative to the antiquated fraternities of the age. Seasoned fraternalists found that this order offered them a more flexible scope of activities than other brotherhoods. Militant Freemasons were amongst those who first joined the order, eager to try a new organization that could fulfil their political ambitions and help them achieve their dream of a more united and enlightened America.

Other fraternities sold a similar formula to the Invisible Empire, but none achieved such a level of success. The Ku Klux Klan managed to become such a well-known organization by trading on its image and marketing itself effectively to the public. Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler were able to take an obscure Southern fraternity and turned it into an American social phenomenon. The Klan’s instantly recognizable imagery made them a familiar organization to the public, and they managed to avoid public scrutiny by repeatedly portraying themselves as a legitimate fraternity. The order’s marketing strategy was essential for its success, as was its army of kleagles who sold membership in the fraternity. The Southern Publicity Association’s agents set up klaverns discretely, and spread the order through word of mouth and imposing public displays. They also carefully selected prominent citizens – ministers, politicians, law enforcement officers and others – to boost the order’s reputation in local communities. Freemasons were also a regular target of recruitment efforts, as kleagles quickly discovered that they were an easy access to a pool of respectable local residents who would ensure the success of their klaverns. Spurred on by their lucrative \$4 commission, the Ku Klux Klan’s salesmen enlisted eager initiates and helped spread the order into every corner of the country.

Their iconic displays and powerful imagery – the blazing fiery crosses, the untainted white regalia, the dramatic parades – were all intended to impress onlookers and attract them to the order. But this secretive and theatrical approach also cultivated suspicion and alarm amongst outsiders. The organization's potential for violence was confirmed in lurid detail in the pages of America's leading journals when the Klan's extra-legal violence and kangaroo courts became the focus of attention. Crusading editors and politicians made the Invisible Empire a national issue, dividing most of the country into loosely pro and anti-Klan camps. Most of the nation seemed unaware and unconcerned by the Invisible Empire, until the urgent tone of the press and various national leaders forced many to pick a side in this false dichotomy. The Ku Klux Klan moral panic at once strengthened both its opponents and its supporters, both of whom were aroused into action by social tension and the fierce political atmosphere of the early 1920s.

This thesis set out to address one of the most glaring features of the Ku Klux Klan to have been overlooked by historians: its role as a fraternity. This thesis has made several points about the nature of the Ku Klux Klan and its relationship with the Freemasons. Through a detailed analysis, it has ascertained that this organization was in fact a fraternity and has assessed the value of this status to the movement's popularity. This study has also examined the reasons why Freemasons themselves felt attracted to this new militant order. It has emphasized the important contribution that the Klan's image management and public relations made to the organization's success. This thesis has also confirmed a long standing theory, that kleagles deliberately sought to recruit Freemasons into their order, and succeeded in doing so. Contrary to previous evaluations, this study has discovered that the Ku Klux Klan and the Craft did not always get along as comfortably as many had believed. Freemasonry was wracked by deep divisions over whether to confront the Invisible Empire, and the best way to do so. There were even occasions where the two orders cooperated, but for the most part Freemasonry tried to ignore the advances of the persistent Klan.

Much has changed since the early days of this study's development. At first, this investigation had expected to find more local case studies that detailed how Klansmen and Freemasons interacted in communities in America. It was also initially proposed that this research would offer an exhaustive report of the organization's fraternal ceremonies and rituals. This research would have provided a comprehensive account of various instances where Freemasons and Klansmen worked together or against each other. Instead of this overly-narrative account, this study has produced a historical work that is primarily analytical in scope.

By critically observing the Ku Klux Klan's growth and development all over America, and evaluating vital trends, this thesis has come to several conclusions. The Ku Klux Klan was indeed a fraternity, but it was its ability to adapt to suit the needs of its members and the changing tastes of modern America that cemented its success. The Propagation Department managed to defend the young fraternity from general criticism by playing the victim, and asking what was wrong with a 100% American fraternity for white, Protestant Americans. Their kleagles helped to enlist members, spreading naturally through American towns and cities through friends and families and even lodge brethren. But this study's most valuable input to the historiography of this hooded brotherhood revolves around how the Freemasons, and America more generally, reacted to this peculiarly costumed fraternity.

Instead of reacting in a uniform manner, Freemasons interpreted the Invisible Empire and its intrusions into Craft in radically different ways. Some members of the Craft joined, some initiated campaigns to eradicate the order, while most were only slightly disturbed by these Klansmen but preferred to avoid the issue altogether. This in many ways reflects how America responded to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Inc.

The Second Ku Klux Klan was a malleable organization and people interpreted the group in different ways. Some saw it as a solution to America's ills, a group that could defend the white Protestant values that had shaped the nation's foundation and development. Others saw it as an exotic new

brotherhood, an exciting fraternity that allowed members to re-enact the adventures of the mysterious Ku Klux Klan. But for many others, the Klan was nothing more than a menace, an extremist organization that threatened social stability. Klansmen deliberately distorted the perception of their own organization to suit their needs. At times the order was presented as an active and even violent force against subversive elements in American society. Before more critical audiences, the Invisible Empire claimed it was merely a non-political fraternity. Americans were unsure of what to make of this new order, and many were confused by the conflicting depictions that the Klan itself presented.

America's reaction to the order was very much defined by the limited information that was available to an average citizen, most of which originated from the pens and speeches of zealous Klansmen or their ardent opponents. What we see emerging in the national press and literature were two overarching and opposing narratives that dominated discussions of the order. Klansmen presented their order as a chivalrous fraternity, and rejected any accusations of wrongdoing as concoctions designed to slander and bring the order down. The order's critics, on the other hand, presented the fraternity as a vigilante unit and ignored the fact that the vast majority of its members were ordinary Americans who had not and would not intentionally harm their neighbours. Neither side engaged in a meaningful discussion with the other. A constant cycle of arguing emerged, where the same points were debated repeatedly. Most Americans eventually grew bored with reading about the order, and seemed more content to just stop paying attention to it.

In a 1922 letter to the *New York World*, Adolphus Ragan, a resident of the city, congratulated this publication for its campaign against the dreaded order. Like Henry Fry, this writer advocated an exposure of the Invisible Empire, asserting that "The Ku Klux Klan is really a delicate fungus growth which thrives only in darkness. It will, as you suggest, quickly wither away and die if exposed to sunlight." America eventually realized that the opposite was the case. The Second Klan's recruitment strategy depended on the spotlight of the public press. Klan applications grew whenever some Catholic or African-American

civic leader made a statement against the order. Adolphus Ragan agreed. He observed that such declarations “will doubtless do far more harm than good. They will be circulated far and wide among members of the Klan for the purpose of inflaming their passions – and they will succeed.” It would be a few years before most commentators and reporters grasped the true nature of the Ku Klux Klan and understood that the order thrived in the spotlight. “Why should not the Catholics and Jews, as such, simply let the Ku Klux fight its windmills?” asked Ragan in his letter to the *World*, “To defend themselves is merely to imply that they need defense.”<sup>27</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan was quite aware of their dependence on the spotlight of the media and how such conflict would inevitably attract many to their ranks. The editor of the *Imperial Night-Hawk* even outlined how:

There were two ways open to attack the Klan from a newspaper standpoint, really three of them. The first was open and vehement attack, the second, ridicule, and the third, utter disregard.

The first was the best way to get subscribers from among Klansmen and anti-Klansmen alike.... The second course, ridicule, would perhaps have proved the more deadly [for the movement]. The third course would have been more harmful [to the Klan] still, but dignified silence gets a newspaper nowhere.”<sup>28</sup>

The Ku Klux Klan was provocative, it was a movement designed to attract attention to its underlying conservative ideals. Its controversial displays were intended to captivate audiences and provide excitement for members.

Unfortunately, in our own times, Klansmen desperately try to attract attention to the plight of white America by committing terrorist attacks. The recent rampage of former North Carolina Grand Dragon Frazier Glenn Miller in April 2014, resulted in the murder of three innocent bystanders whom this Klansman had thought were Jews. Miller hoped to spark a prophetic “race war”

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<sup>27</sup> "A Remedy for the K.K.K.," *New York World* November 20 1922.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Taylor Moore, "A Klan Kingdom Collapses: Behind the Scenes in the City that Once was Known as Klanopolis," *The Independent*, December 6 1924

where white Americans would finally realize that their race was being undermined and would join the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>29</sup> The result of this apocalyptic vision would be the re-establishment of complete white supremacy and the foundation of an all-white enclave in America. The national media flocked to investigate Miller and his organization, trying to understand his motivations and the ideology of his Klan. This response practically mirrors that of the national press of the 1920s. The country's media during the Jazz Age was determined to expose and understand the Second Invisible Empire, but many people actually found this new order appealing. Thankfully, America has changed radically and contrary to Miller's plans, the nation no longer responds to the Klan like it used to, and his actions have received overwhelming condemnation. In the 1920s though, the reports in newspaper articles of the Ku Klux Klan helped to build the organization's façade as an almost omnipotent order.

The Second Klan was truly an "Invisible Empire," secretive and wary of outsiders, hiding its weaknesses and its actual strength from the alien world. Its power derived more from fear and smoke and mirrors than from their electoral successes or the whip. The Klan faded away when America finally grew tired of the organization and stopped talking about it. The Ku Klux Klan was not an Invisible Empire of omnipotent leaders directing an army of robed members; the Ku Klux Klan was a fraternity of concerned Americans who quickly grew tired of the movement when they discovered it was going nowhere.

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<sup>29</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center maintains updated profiles of all the major hate groups and their leaders, see Southern Poverty Law Center, "Intelligence Files - Frazier Glenn Miller," <http://www.splcenter.org/get%20informed/intelligence%20files/profiles/Glenn%20Miller>

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