

Liberty University

**The Red Schoolhouse, the Military Machine and “TWK”: The Growth and Decay of the  
Indiana Klan in the 1920s**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in History

Department of History

by

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May 2021

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## **Acknowledgements**

It takes a village to support an endeavor such as this. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude those who have contributed to the development of this thesis. First, I wish to thank the professors of Liberty University's History department who have aided my academic knowledge and development. Secondly, Dr. Luci Vaden has provided immense support throughout this process as a director, advisor, editor, and mentor. Dr. Vaden's unwavering encouragement and support is greatly appreciated. Next, I would like to thank Reveal Digital's "Documenting White Supremacy and Its Opponents in the 1920s" for providing me access to their robust digital collection. Finally, I would like to thank my spouse, Tony, and brother Dustin for their support. My husband has remained a steadfast supporter throughout my educational career. Dustin's writing expertise has been invaluable through the editing process and was always available when called upon.

## Introduction

### The Klan Returns

“It is called the true story of the Northern side of the Civil War... *The Birth of a Nation* had forever wiped out the Mason and Dixon.”<sup>1</sup> The film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) captured the minds and imaginations of people across America. The phenomenally successful and popular film was based on the book *The Clansman, A Historic Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905), written by Thomas Dixon Jr. The film romanticized the Civil War and skewed the view of the Southern Reconstruction. It portrayed the Ku Klux Klan as the figure who restored the South. *The Birth of a Nation* grossed almost eighteen million dollars by the time the film was retired.

The images of heroic men in white robes on horses revived images of Southern exceptionalism with many Americans. Before the film's release, William J. Simmons gathered a few dozen men who belonged to fraternal orders and some original Klansmen. The week before opening night of *The Birth of a Nation*, Simmons relaunched the “foundation of the invisible empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>2</sup> An Atlanta newspaper stated, “The new secret organization founded to take an active part in the betterment of mankind.”<sup>3</sup> The turnout for the new Klan was noted by many. Within days of the film’s release, Georgia granted Simmons’ a charter for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The new organization claimed to be “a fraternal

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<sup>1</sup> “*The Birth of a Nation* A Great Spectacle,” *The Sun* (Baltimore), February 27, 1916, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/542583256/D6ED0A2B501347CEPQ/16?accountid=12085>.

<sup>2</sup> “Klan is Established with Impressiveness,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 28, 1915, <https://ajc.newspapers.com/clip/65865411/the-atlanta-constitution/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Klan is Established with Impressiveness.”

order with insurance features.”<sup>4</sup> Simmons had successfully revived the old Ku Klux Klan and rode the wave of success and romanticism that *The Birth of a Nation* had inspired.

Simmons’ new Klan advertised itself as a “high-class order for men of intelligence and character.”<sup>5</sup> The reality was it roped in middle-class viewers who were drawn into the fraternal organization that “stressed 100% Americanism and the supremacy of the Caucasian race.”<sup>6</sup> The new Klan was also a protestant organization. These ideals outlined a significant difference between the Klan and other fraternal organizations.

As the United States entered World War I, the mission and message of the Klan began to change. “The nation had to be defended against alien enemies, slackers, idlers, strike leaders, and immoral women, lest victory is endangered. The Klan accepted the challenge.”<sup>7</sup> During the war years, Simmons offered his Klansmen up to the American Protective League. The American Protective League was “a self-appointed band of amateur sleuths and loyalty enforcers who, by extralegal surveillance and occasional use of roughhouse methods, intimidated slackers, stickers, and suspected subversives.”<sup>8</sup> The Klan’s wartime escapades established the tradition that many Klansmen would embody as intimidators and vigilantes. The volume of participation for the wartime adventures was minimal. Only members in a few states took part with the American Protective League. The revival of the Ku Klux Klan was still relatively unknown.

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<sup>4</sup>“New Ku Klux Klan Gets Charter from the State,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 7, 1915, <https://ajc.newspapers.com/clip/65865658/the-atlanta-constitution/>.

<sup>5</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 45.

<sup>6</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 45.

<sup>7</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American, The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*, (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 2011) 25.

Following the end of the World War I, Simmons was not satisfied with the status of the Klan. He aspired to grow and expand the influence of the Invisible Empire. Simmons hired two promoters from the Southern Publicity Association, Elizabeth Tyler, and Edward Young Clarke. They believed that the Klan “could greatly broaden its appeal by exploiting the fears and prejudices of uncritical minds against the Catholic, the Jew, the Negro, the Oriental, and the recent immigrant.”<sup>9</sup> Tyler and Clarke saw an opportunity by targeting men’s lodges and protestant churches as prime areas for recruits. “The Southern Publicity Association used modern marketing and mass mobilization techniques to build a movement committed to the defense of tradition but rooted in the social context of the 1920s.”<sup>10</sup> The Klan had organized showings of *The Birth of a Nation* and would continue this recruiting strategy later by developing and showing their films such as *The Toll of Justice* and *The Traitor Within*.<sup>11</sup>

Clarke enhanced the new Klan’s protestant image by offering Protestant ministers a free membership. “The Klan became influential in the pulpits and congregations of many Methodist, Baptist, United Brethren and Disciples of Christ churches.”<sup>12</sup> Again, the recruiting efforts were successful. The Invisible Empire’s return would soon become a significant force in every state across the US. Clarke’s “new appeal to fear and prejudice proved remarkably successful; within eighteen months, there were over one hundred thousand new members, and the Invisible Empire had established strong chapters in the Southwest, Midwest and the West Coast.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915 – 1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 45 – 46.

<sup>10</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Rice, “The True Story of the Ku Klux Klan; Defining the Klan Through Film,” *Journal of American Studies* 42, no. 3 (December 2008): 471.

<sup>12</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 30.

The main distinction between the old and new Klan rested in infrastructure. The new Klan had its headquarters in Georgia. The organization was established like many fraternal orders of the day. Local chapters were chartered, and a state-level headquarters oversaw the local chapters. The state headquarters reported to the national headquarters. This hierarchy made the new Klan of the 1920s extremely organized and detailed. “Klan members shared nationally based values and objectives, but significant differences existed from place to place, especially between northern and southern Klans.”<sup>14</sup> These differences drove different states to flourish with the Klan’s message and become less popular in others. The new Klan also used mass media as a form of communication and recruiting. Printed materials were readily available for publication and distribution. This allowed local members to keep up with happenings at the National level or within other state chapters.

The Klan began its Hoosier journey in Evansville. National agents began promoting the organization in the fall of 1920. It was promoted among church groups, social clubs, and civic organizations.<sup>15</sup> For the first eighteen months, Evansville’s Klan chapter was a small group of “steadily growing brotherhood of super patriots distinguished by its unusual costume and the occasional cross burning.”<sup>16</sup>

The Christmas of 1922 introduced the Klan into many new communities for the first time. Several cities reported a burning cross appearing in Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Bedford on Christmas Eve. Some rumors had circulated that a burning cross had appeared in every county

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<sup>14</sup> James H. Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921 – 1928*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*.

across Indiana that winter. Between Christmas and Early January 1923, Irvington, Shelbyville, French Lick, Noblesville, Bloomington, Vevay, and Mooresville saw cross burnings.<sup>17</sup>

The Christmas Season of 1922 also saw appearances of robed men supplying gifts to those in need. The Indianapolis *Fiery Cross*, the Indiana Klan's weekly newspaper, reported that the Klan spent Christmas Eve giving out twelve truckloads filled with baskets and goods to families in need. The *Fiery Cross* reported, "A number of families having several children received two baskets – no religious or racial discrimination is made."<sup>18</sup>

In addition to their acts of charity, some Indiana Klansmen spent time playing Santa Claus in Kirklin and visited a church in Marion. While in Marion, robed men visited a church during their Christmas program, and a "procession of robed and hooded figures" filled into the church. The leader gave the minister two envelopes, one a gift for the church and one for himself. The minister read a letter that was included with the envelopes, and then the robed men dropped to their knees and recited the Lord's Prayer. "The procession then departed as silently and mysteriously as it had come."<sup>19</sup> Similar Christmas Eve appearances by robed men presenting gifts to ministers during church services were reported statewide.

The story of the Indiana Klan could not be told without mentioning David Curtis (D.C.) Stephenson. He got his start in Houston, served in World War I, then traveled to Oklahoma and Ohio before connecting with the organization to bring him national fame. Stephenson made his way to Evansville and saw an opportunity to sell memberships of the Ku Klux Klan. He helped

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<sup>17</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> "Indianapolis Klan Brings Christmas Cheer," *Fiery Cross*, December 29, 1929.  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19221229.1.1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

<sup>19</sup> "White Robed Klan Visits Church at Marion on Sunday," *Fiery Cross*, January 5, 1923.  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230105.1.1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.



sign the new charter for the Invisible Empire in May 1922. By summer, Stephenson made his way to Indianapolis, where he was a Klan recruiter and helped launch the *Fiery Cross*. He was a rising star in the state Klan's leadership. By July 1923, he was formally inducted as Indiana's Grand Dragon, the top state Klan official.<sup>20</sup>

Stephenson was a key figure in Indiana's prominence in the Invisible Empire. The *Fiery Cross* was vastly influential in spreading the message and mission of the Klan across the state and beyond. Stephenson's political ties made the Klan's presence extremely powerful by electing several pro-Klan politicians, including the mayor of Indianapolis and Indiana governor. In addition, Stephenson became quite wealthy and noteworthy as Grand Dragon. In Indiana, the Klan machine saw an estimated 165,000 members, averaging 20.8 percent membership among native-born white men across the state in 1925. The following counties had membership rates exceeding 30 percent: Benton, Boone, Carrol, Fayette, Hamilton, Hendricks, Howard, Madison, Pulaski, Rush, Shelby, Starke, Tipton, Vigo, Warren and its highest at 37.7 percent in White county.<sup>21</sup>

Studying the Klan's activities had a problematic set of challenges for historians. The first challenge was access to documents. Many Klan documents are scarce. Historians rely on publications and public events to essentially write the narrative of the Klan. In addition, the Klan was designed as a secret organization. Few membership lists were published, and many members remained anonymous under their hoods. Another challenge was that the Klan hysteria was over by 1930. By the end of the 1920s, the Klan seemingly disappeared from mainstream

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<sup>20</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 113.

<sup>21</sup> Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*.

consciousness. With it went many of the records and stories from the heyday. After scandal and controversy, many members disassociated with the Klan and never spoke of their involvement.

Historians began recording the events and activities of the Klan in Indiana and other states in the 1950s and 1960s. This generation of historians had learned about the atrocities of the nationalism and fascism movements of the World War II era. Additionally, this generation of historians was influenced by the Civil Rights movement that was unfolding before them. Unfortunately, the Ku Klux Klan had reemerged once again during this time in response to the Civil Rights movement.<sup>22</sup>

The traditional interpretation of the Klan's resurgence explained that the Klan answered the call of broad white nationalism and supremacy sentiments across the country. The sentiments existed in response to the Bolsheviks Revolution and the Red Scare, in addition to the US' return to isolationism. Historians explained that white Americans identified "others" that existed within their communities and were motivated to rid their communities of them.

Historians, like Kathleen Blee, highlighted the often-forgotten role the Women Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) played in carrying out the Klan's agenda. Additionally, the WKKK often does not appear in the analysis of the Klan's history. Like the KKK, the WKKK carried out campaigns and fundraising drives and often appeared side-by-side with their male counterparts at Klan events. In addition, the WKKK influenced Klanswomen and sympathizers to shop at Klan-backed businesses and boycott businesses owned by their targets.

Indiana hosted the highest Klan membership and ran as the Klan's success story at the height of their power. This makes Indiana the prime subject to test Klan effectiveness during the 1920s. Indiana experienced the power of the Klan in education, politics, and business. National

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<sup>22</sup> Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*.

goals and local issues competed for implementation as DC Stephenson grew in influence, steering Indiana's Klan towards his agenda over the national Klan agenda.

Centralized on the Klan in Indiana, this study emphasizes a sweeping movement that affected every state. Filled in that movement were bigotry, hatred, discrimination, and racism in many ways. Many Americans would not boast the memories of the 1920s Klan, as it was a national movement. The revived Klan's story was not isolated to the Reconstruction South over 150 years ago. Nor was the second Klan formed of backwoods, uneducated fundamentalists as previously believed. The Klansmen of the 1920s were predominantly middle class and educated. The self-proclaimed patriots and men of God believed they were protecting American ideals by joining the Klan. Although many wish to believe the Klan was always a frowned upon organization, many fail to recall the normalized appearance the Klan had and how widely accepted it was. Recalling and remembering the heyday of the second Klan is imperative to preserve the lessons learned following its decline.

Chapter one follows the Klan's peculiar interest in education reform. Adopting popular movements of the time. Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans set the Klan's national attention to the issue of education reform. His tactics seeming noble in print, the Klan's genuine interest in public education rested in ridding Catholics out of public schools while promoting Protestantism and American ideals.

The Indiana Klan thrived across the state from 1922 to 1925. White men and women alike joined to prove their loyalty to the cause. The Klan advertised themselves as another fraternal order mimicking the structures in other orders like the Elks or the American Legion. Many Hoosiers naturalized into the Klan for several reasons. Indiana appeared a weak national player in politics before the Klan's revival. However, the strength of Indiana's Klan membership

and the influence of DC Stephenson brought Indiana to the forefront of the white supremacy movement that swept the nation in the 1920s. Hoosiers embraced and received the Klan's agenda as it was implemented in education reform, politics and business. Indiana served as an example of how under the leadership of a charismatic leader, with rhetoric of mass appeal, a heinous movement responsible for the terror and discrimination of many people could flourish in a humble Midwestern state.

Chapter two explains the Indiana Klan's prominence under DC Stephenson's leadership. With Stephenson at the helm, the Klan organized a political machine that secured elections across the state with pro-Klan politicians. In addition, the Klan believed it stacked the Indiana legislature, ushering a believed guarantee "Klan Legislature" securing the Klan's agenda.

Chapter three accounts for the Klan's dealing with businesses. The Klan encouraged business owners to support the Klan in exchange for promotion in Klan newspapers, directories, and exclusive access to the commerce of Klansmen and Klanswomen across the state. As a result, Klan members and sympathizers boycotted the businesses owned by Klan targets. Those targeted fired back at the Klan by organizing boycotts against them, often led by the American Unity League.

## **Chapter One**

### **The Red Schoolhouse and the Klan's Education Reform Agenda**

Established in the mid-nineteenth century, the evolution of public education became a national issue as Americans developed public schools as an institution of democratic values. Many education reform advocates placed heavy emphasis on schools to mold and prepared students for life as an American. In the mid-1910s, public schools evolved to become institutions preparing youth to fight future American wars. Public schools were pushed to instill democratic values, morals, literacy, physical fitness, and fluency in English to embody American core principles. The Ku Klux Klan adopted the education reform platform and supported many popular education reform measures as their own. The Klan absorbed the education reform rhetoric into their platform because many of the values and goals of contemporary education reform revolved around creating and bolstering American ideals. These traits of the post-World War I education reform directly coincided with the Klan's core values. As a result, the Klan launched their education reform agenda at the national, state, and local levels to affect public schools.

As the United States grew, the need for structured education became apparent. In the first half of the nineteenth century, voices supported Thomas Jefferson's ideals of a state-sponsored free public school. One of the reform movements to come out of the reform era was the common school movement. Reformers like Horace Mann called for a state-coordinated system of

education spanning from elementary school to college, with control of the institutions managed at the local level. The reform also called for the professionalization of teaching.<sup>23</sup>

Horace Mann advocated for common schools or elementary schools. Mann, a lawyer, senator from Massachusetts, and the first Secretary of Massachusetts State Board of Education, saw the need for public education supported by a public tax to educate the nation's youth. He saw education as a tool for patriotism by instilling nationalistic values in children. He pushed for a standard curriculum for common schools.

Catholic leaders challenged Mann's motives for educating all children. "They feared Catholic children would be 'Protestantized' in school and turned away from their faith and family."<sup>24</sup> Catholic congregations established their parochial school with local churches and tuition support. Other denominations like Lutherans, Mennonites, and Quakers established similar schools.<sup>25</sup> Many Catholics opposed the implementation of pan-Protestantism practices of the common schools. Some of the practices included reading the King James Version of the Bible and textbooks that included offensive passages and depictions of Catholics. Catholic schools struggled to reach against the common schools.<sup>26</sup>

In New York City, Archbishop John Hughes challenged the Protestant bias of common schools by lobbying for Catholic schools to receive public funding. Hughes believed that the New York Public School Society could not favor one religion due to the separation of church and

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<sup>23</sup> Sylvia L. Mendez, Monica S. Yoo, & John L. Rury, "A Brief History of Public Education in the United States," in *The Wiley Handbook of School Choice*, ed. Robert A. Fox & Nina K. Buchanan (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 15.

<sup>24</sup> Mendez, "History of Public Education," 16.

<sup>25</sup> Mendez, "History of Public Education," 16.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas C. Hunt, "Catholic Schools: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 163.

state. By solely funding public schools that instructed Protestantism, Hughes argued that the government endorsed one religion over others. As a result, he said that Catholic schools should also be entitled to taxpayer funding. Hughes ultimately did not change the New York Public School Society's position, but his leadership and impact changed the structure and significance of Catholic parochial schools in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Some people challenged the common school reform as it resulted in placing children in schools instead of in jobs or factories. Many families relied on their children to help earn income. Another element of the common school reform was the popularization of high schools. The first high school was founded in Boston in 1821. Mann, along with other reformers, believed that a critical part of public education was teacher preparation. They believed classroom instruction required pedagogical theory and practice. Common schools grew in popularity across the Northeast and the Midwest. The common school reform set up the foundation of the United States public education system.<sup>28</sup>

The American education system was designed to resemble Germany's education model. In 1840, Horace Mann, along with two other Americans, traveled around Europe and saw different school systems. While in Germany, Mann was especially interested in the elementary school structure within Germany. Pleased with the German model, the American observers favored the idea of a national education system, meaning public schools over private schools. In addition, they liked the state-sponsored education model more than the traditional reliance on religious institutions educating youth. The German education model included "compulsory

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<sup>27</sup> Martin L. Meenagh, "Archbishop John Hughes and the New York Schools Controversy of 1840 – 43," *American Nineteenth Century History* 5, no.1 (2004): 62.

<sup>28</sup> Mendez, "History of Public Education," 16.

school attendance, the establishment of elementary schools throughout the country, sufficiently broad availability of secondary school education, permitted the private schools to exist, public funding of education...nationally regulated, systematic teacher training and a national supervisory school authority.”<sup>29</sup>

American public education receded as a top political issue around the Civil War. It reemerged as a central issue in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Republicans and Catholic leaders argued over managing, funding, and religious teaching in public schools. “Leading Protestant ministers and Republican politicians waved the threat of a rising anti-democratic ‘Catholic menace’ as the new bloody shirt and championed their own education ideal as a remedy – religiously neutral, ethnically and racially inclusive common schools.”<sup>30</sup> During this time, common schools looked much as they had under Horace Mann. Much like the Catholics' urge for education reform, many Radical Republicans prioritized education as a critical topic in the Reconstruction Era.

Following the Civil War, Reconstruction looked to expand education to the South as formerly enslaved people were granted full rights under the Constitution. Education advocates called for compulsory school attendance and universal education for African Americans. Reformers called for “public schools which shall be open to all without distinction of race or color, to the end that where suffrage is universal,” in the South for the former Confederate States to be readmitted into the Union.<sup>31</sup> Black schools were created across the South modeled after

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<sup>29</sup> Karl-Ernst Jeismann, “American Observations Concerning the Prussian Educational System in the Nineteenth Century,” in *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917*, ed. Henry Geitz, Jürgen Heideking, Jürgen Herbst (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995),26.

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Justice, “Thomas Nast and the Public School of the 1870s,” *History of Education Quarterly* 45, no.2 (Summer 2005): 171.

<sup>31</sup> David Tyack and Robert Lowe, “The Constitutional Moment: Reconstruction and Black Education in the South,” *American Journal of Education* 94, no. 2 (February 1986): 237.



Northern schools. Before the Civil War, many northern state constitutions and statutes had laws about public education, along with its governance and finance. The Northern schools emphasized civic and moral values in their instruction.<sup>32</sup>

Reconstruction brought the widespread establishment of state-run public schools, which advanced literacy for Black and White students.<sup>33</sup> Along with setting up state-run schools, states adopted their own teaching standards, curriculum, and textbooks. Many of the textbook publishers were in northern states. However, as the demand for state textbooks grew, publishers catered the textbook contents to the state buying the books. This allowed each state to change its curriculum to its desires. Depictions of slavery, the Confederacy, and the Civil War were cast in more favorable terms in Southern textbooks than Northern ones. Confederate veteran groups lobbied publishers to portray the role of the South in the Civil War in a more positive manner. “Publishers were willing to drastically alter complete manuscripts to please (Confederate) veteran groups, showing that a process ‘nominally controlled by educational experts was in practice remarkably responsive to well-organized lobbyists.’”<sup>34</sup> Schools in the South saw a new focus throughout the 1870s. The establishment of new schools across the South helped both Black and White students. Following the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment, educating former slaves became the top priority of the Freedman’s Bureau.

Federalizing public education prioritized expanded education to African Americans in the South but prevented Catholic influence on public education in the North. Northern Republicans

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<sup>32</sup> Tyack and Lowe, “The Constitutional Moment,” 239.

<sup>33</sup> Charlotte Mostertz, “Teach Your Children Well: Historical Memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction, Public Education and Equal Protection,” *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law*, 22, no.2 (February 2020): 594.

<sup>34</sup> Mostertz, “Teach Your Children Well,” 596.

looked to push Catholic immigrant children into public schools, exposing students to Protestant practices. Republicans hoped to reduce the cultural power of the Catholic Church among the growing Irish immigrant population. “Republicans trumpeted virtues of a homogenous Union, harmonious with traditional American Protestant mores.”<sup>35</sup> Catholics were often seen as “foreigners” because the Pope, who leads the Catholic church, was in Rome. An increase in Catholic “sectarian” parochial schools concerned many Protestants that immigrant children who attended the Catholic schools would not become Americanized.

Catholics claimed that public schools were government-sponsored Protestant schools. Catholics pushed back against Protestant bible readings in public schools. Meanwhile, Republicans fueled a Catholic conspiracy that Catholics sought taxpayer funding for their schools, as Archbishop John Hughes did decades earlier.<sup>36</sup> These fears gave way to the introduction of the Blaine Amendment in 1875. The proposed constitutional amendment tried to deny any “sectarian” institutions public funds.<sup>37</sup> The amendment failed; however, many states began implementing elements of the Blaine Amendment into state statutes. By 1890, twenty-nine state constitutions had elements of the Blaine Amendment preventing public funds from supporting “sectarian” institutions.<sup>38</sup> This led many Catholic churches to push for the development of parochial schools. Parishes strived for each church to have a school with all the congregants’ children enrolled in the school.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ward M. McAfee, “Reconstruction Revisited: The Republican Public Education Crusade of the 1870s,” *Civil War History* 42, no. 2 (June 1996): 134.

<sup>36</sup> McAfee, “Reconstruction Revisited,” 135.

<sup>37</sup> Hunt, “Catholic Schools,” 164.

<sup>38</sup> Steven K. Green, “The Blaine Amendment Reconsidered,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 36, no. 1 (January 1992): 38.

<sup>39</sup> Hunt, “Catholic Schools,” 164.

Fears of Catholic Majorities in the North resulted in some Protestants believing that the North could become divided, and that the Union could be threatened with an American Catholic national majority. Republicans pushed for a federal public education system. The movement was motivated by fears of increased Catholic influence and illiteracy in the Southern states. Many believed that a national public school system would advance education in the South while resisting Catholic influence.<sup>40</sup> A free public-school movement was launched, including provisions promoting the integration of schools. The thought of school integration was viewed as radical by many, and the influence of the Republicans began to wane in the mid-1870s. The attempt to integrating public schools was opposed by many Democrats and did not pass. Republicans tried to use Anti-Catholic rhetoric to restore Reconstruction momentum. Reconstruction's efforts began failing, and the desire to end Reconstruction grew.<sup>41</sup>

Congress began readmitting Southern states back into the Union. In 1870, Virginia was conditionally readmitted into the Union with the stipulation that it could never destroy the public education system nor prevent illiterate African Americans from voting. Congress used similar measures when readmitting Mississippi and Texas. When they threatened the readmitted states, Congress asserted further national power that any backsliding would end with congressional discipline.<sup>42</sup> Reconstruction ended officially with the Compromise of 1877. Many of the efforts by the Radical Republicans did not remain intact after federal troops and the Freedman's Bureau vacated the South. The emphasis on education influenced many Southern states to invest and prioritize education. The Southern states took the opportunity to instruct and influence their

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<sup>40</sup> McAfee, "Reconstruction Revisited," 138.

<sup>41</sup> McAfee, "Reconstruction Revisited," 140.

<sup>42</sup> McAfee, "Reconstruction Revisited," 135.

curriculum to depict the story of the South in their textbooks in a more favorable way than Northern textbooks did. Although Reconstruction failed, the federal government implemented and expanded education across the country and merged public schools as a national priority.

By the 1890s, industrialization and urbanization began to change the landscape of the workforce. Cities presented an economic opportunity. As a result, many people flooded cities for work in factories. During this time, many immigrants arrived in the United States, establishing a dynamic of social change and reform in cities as urban populations grew.

Education reform took two forms during the Progressive Era. The first change was pedagogical reforms led by John Dewey, Francis Parker, and William Heard Kilpatrick. The pedagogical reforms focused on improving instruction and finding ways that children learned best. The second reform approach during this time was administrative reforms. The role of executives grew within school systems. School districts and corporations flourished, leading to the increased role of school administrators.<sup>43</sup>

During this era, the high school became established as an institution. Teenage enrollment drastically increased between 1890 and 1930. Half of the teenage population attended high school by 1930. Expanding secondary education led to increased college enrollments as well. “Public education was drawn closer to practical goal of advancing in status and wealth as schooling became associated with higher earnings and prestige.”<sup>44</sup>

Many educators and reformers supported a central belief: schools' importance in educating the nation's youth and instilling morals and democratic values. Civics and character education played essential roles in the classroom. Schools read and studied the Bible in classes

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<sup>43</sup> Mendez, “History of Public Education,” 18.

<sup>44</sup> Mendez, “History of Public Education,” 19.

with a general Protestant tone to appeal to most students. Christian values were an extension of solid morals and acted as an everyday basis for character education principles.

American schools used history, geography, and civics as tools to shape national citizenship. Authors of school textbooks portrayed the United States and Europe as crucial for civilization due to the mild climate. This contrasted against people from other climates claiming “geographical determination did not apply to Anglo-Saxon settlers in the world’s tropical and semitropical regions. To this end, they presented, imagined reversed, open, and abundant landscapes where Europeans and Americans carried out the business of civilization at the expense of ‘barbarous tribes’ according to one author.”<sup>45</sup> Textbooks celebrated white exceptionalism and America as a unique nation against others in the world. <sup>46</sup> The subjects used accepted science of the day, such as Social Darwinism and Eugenics, to promote white supremacy against other minorities.

Geography and history exposed students to a world lens that celebrated the United States and Anglo-Saxon civilization against other nations. Civics taught students how to act and think like a patriotic citizen “of an exceptional nation and ascendant global power.” Southern and Eastern European immigrants challenged the teachings of American Geographers. Degrees of whiteness determined the desirability of European nationalities, preferencing Anglo-Saxons over all other groups. Darker complected people were associated with other races and ethnicities and more undesirable. <sup>47</sup> Public schools looked to intuitionism the values and ambitions of the United States during their imperialism expansion.

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<sup>45</sup> Cliff Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, Race, and the Paths to Good Citizenship*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 30.

<sup>46</sup> Stratton, *Education for Empire*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> Stratton, *Education for Empire*, 36

World War I fundamentally changed the United States' relationship with countries around the world. When war broke out, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey became national enemies of the United States and its Allies. By going to war against Germany, America wanted to cleanse the country of German influence. As a result, many people of German descent tried to hide their German heritage by expanding their use of English in churches and communities. Many German Americans also changed their surnames to become more "Americanized." This also extended into the educational system. The American public school system was designed to resemble Germany's model. As a result, many people wanted to "Americanize" schools and distinctly differentiate American schools from Germany.

In 1918, the National Education Association of the United States (NEA) gathered for their annual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to discuss several education issues. One of the first keynote speakers, Josephine Corliss Preston, the State Superintendent of Instruction for the State of Washington, added to the annual meeting's opening by prioritizing the NEA's set of issues to address in the meeting. The NEA list of outstanding problems was "(1)the preparation and supply of competent teachers for all types of public schools; (2) rural education; (3) health education, physical education and wholesome education; (4) the reduction and early elimination of adult illiteracy; (5) the Americanization of the immigrant; and (6) education for national service."<sup>48</sup> In addition, educators saw the need for changes in the American education system to reflect wartime sentiment.

Educators believed that well-trained and competent teachers would better educate students resulting in a higher quality of education. NEA was concerned with rural education

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<sup>48</sup> Josephine Corliss Preston, "Response to Address of Welcome," in *Addresses and Proceedings – National Education Association of the United States 1918*, (Washington DC, National Education Association Secretary Office, 1918), 49.

because some of the schools were underfunded, underdeveloped, and had elevated levels of illiteracy in adult populations. Rural schools were more likely to have young people working on farms or not enrolled in public schools than city schools. NEA viewed health and physical education as the key to supporting the war effort because conscripted young men would need to be healthy and fit to fight if needed. Educators were concerned with illiteracy and desired to rid the United States of it. Illiteracy represented limitations and often was associated with a lack of intellect at the time. Americanizing immigrants was a high priority of the NEA. Many Americans believed immigrants needed to commit allegiance to the United States and sever ties with their home country. As new Americans, people believed that immigrants should exemplify patriotism, democratic values, and English exclusively.

Additionally, education was a tool of national service for the war effort. The military relied on public schools to produce fit, well-educated young men to fight in the nation's wars. Many of these priorities stemmed from changing views in wartime America.

Later at the annual meeting, George D. Strayer, chairperson of the NEA Commission on the Emergency in Education, addressed members on the outcomes the commission concluded as top priorities. Strayer identified education as a critical contributing factor to the preservation of democracy. He believed that "the war emergency brought us the realization of our failure to provide a system of education which guarantees an enduring democracy." He showed that some of the mistakes came from the failure to Americanize immigrants and the inadequate training and paying of teachers. Strayer argued that the American school system did not prepare soldiers properly for war needed to defend democracy.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>George D. Strayer, "The National Emergency in Education," in *Addresses and Proceedings – National Education Association of the United States 1918*, (Washington DC, National Education Association Secretary Office, 1918), 129.

Strayer offered several steps to implement at once to aid the national emergency in education. First, Strayer said that the United States needed to recognize a common language and common democratic ideals. He argued, despite ancestry or background, that all children should be taught to read and write in English and understand the foundations of democratic government. He emphasized the importance of schools to function as a center of democracy. Secondly, Strayer defended the need for compulsory education for students, ending the practice of stopping education at fourteen. Next, Strayer advocated for the proper training of teachers and increased salaries to encourage quality teachers to enter schools. Finally, Strayer stressed that Americans should strive for an elevated level of physical efficiency rather than settling for mediocrity.

Strayer saw these principles as key to protecting and preparing students for potential military service. He ended his speech by saying,

Never before in our history have, we been so critical as we are now of our system of public education. Never before have we been so willing to sacrifice for the sake of maintaining the principles of democracy in the world. So, may we realize now that democracy's greatest safeguard is the public school.<sup>50</sup>

Strayer's main priority was ensuring the public school system supported American ideals and democracy. The primary way schools could support the war effort was to ensure graduates were ready for war if called upon.

In the annual meeting, the NEA called for drastic changes to public education. They wanted to fundamentally redefine American education as "American" rather than an institution based on a German example. Schools looked to define all students as American and American alone. Leaders did not want immigrants or children of immigrants to speak any other language other than English, especially in schools. By redefining the public school as a haven of

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<sup>50</sup> Strayer, "The National Emergency in Education," 130 – 131.



democracy, educators believed that the nation's youth would be better prepared for war and conflict if called upon.

Following his appearance at the Kokomo Klonklave, imperial wizard, Dr. Hiram Evans began his Klan campaign of public education reform. The "little red schoolhouse" became the Klan's image for the campaign featured in parades and Klan publications.<sup>51</sup> In Indianapolis's address on February 13, 1924, Evans outlined his comprehensive plan to reform public schools. He began his speech by depicting the American people as "lost in the wilderness." Evans believed that the United States had lost its way and needed correction to preserve the republic. "The elements contributing to every advancement have always been law and order, enlightenment, unity, freedom, and justice." Evans orated that civilization advancement rested on these principles. The "antithesis of these fundamentals" was "lawlessness, illiteracy, inheritable tendencies toward mental and physical degeneracy, disrupting strife and controversy, propoganda instead of truth and the economic inequalities that increasingly threaten the very stability of society."<sup>52</sup>

Evans pointed to the ills of society as the reason that the U.S. had lost its way. His offered solution was education reform. The reform allowed for moral instruction to be a part of the curriculum. Evans wanted to advance free public education. He pointed to illiteracy as a significant issue in American schools and suggested, "Let immigration of every undesirable type be stopped... until our illiteracy and internal strife can be superseded."<sup>53</sup> Evans wanted the

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<sup>51</sup> Adams Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Education Reform," *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no.3 (August 2012): 324.

<sup>52</sup> "First Public Appearance in Indianapolis," *Fiery Cross*, February 15, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19240215.1.3&e=-----en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22kokomo+konklave%22----->.

<sup>53</sup> "First Public Appearance in Indianapolis."

United States to halt immigration from "undesirable" countries while America worked to fix our domestic problems like low literacy rates.

He said, "The public school is the most essential of all-American institutions." As a result, part of Evans' campaign was to support a cabinet-level department of education with a secretary and national aid and given to public schools.<sup>54</sup> He believed a cabinet-level department of education would supply public schools the oversight they needed. "It will mark the beginning of the rising tide of common intelligence, health, and virtue among both the native and adopted sons and daughters of America." Evans showed that ten percent of students ages between seven and thirteen were not attending school in addition to the low literacy rate. Another side of Evans' campaign was compulsory school attendance from age seven to seventeen. He said that many teachers themselves lacked an education after eighth grade.

Evans' education reform campaign had many statements that many people could agree with. However, Evans' primary motives for education reform rested in his opposition to the Roman Catholic church. "The Roman Catholic hierarchy is the only influence that is successfully obstructing adequate public-school education in America." He blamed the Catholic church for the low quality of education that American students were receiving. Evans saw Catholic schools as a direct violation of the separation of church and state. "There is something far beyond ethical and moral in the Catholic attitude. Just as the hierarchy seeks political influence in the order that more recognition and greater benefits may accrue to the church, so does it have an identical motive in demanding church-controlled education."<sup>55</sup> Evans' belief fueled his education reform plan. The plan's core ideals were expanding public school access, legitimizing public education,

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<sup>54</sup> "First Public Appearance in Indianapolis."

<sup>55</sup> "First Public Appearance in Indianapolis."

securing funding with a department secretary, and progressing public schools to combat Catholic influence in the church-run schools. Evans wanted to bolster public schools to rid the Catholic hierarchy and their impact on education.

Evans saw the failures of public education as the root of America's problems. He believed that reforming the public school system would correct America's literacy, improve schools, and push Catholics to influence education. Evans' ideas appeared forward and innovative. However, Evans adopted opinions from mainstream educational leaders. George Strayer, president of the NEA, shared his NEA goals in 1918. His plans included the establishment of a federal Department of Education secretary with a cabinet-level position. Strayer recommended that \$100 million would be needed to reinvent schools across the country. Strayer hoped that investing in public education would reduce or end illiteracy, and with his plan. His wartime sentiment also called for schools to be taught in English exclusively. The NEA called for increased professionalization of teachers and compulsory school attendance for students until eighteen. Evans reiterated these same sentiments as he launched the Klan's platform for education reform. Since Evans' absorbed education reform ideas already existed in popular groups, his outline of the Klan's education platform was well received and became a unifying factor that Klansmen and others endorsed.<sup>56</sup>

The Klan adopted the ideas and goals of the NEA as their education reform plan. Many of the NEA's reforms emphasized schools as an institution to promote democracy. The Klan interpreted this as an extension of their principles and supported the NEA's suggested measures. On the August 15, 1924 edition of the *Fiery Cross*, the newspaper published excerpts from a speech at the NEA's most recent annual meeting. The *Fiery Cross* stressed the speech's

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<sup>56</sup> Laats, "Red Schoolhouse," 330.

democratic rhetoric. "The American public school now as always is under express responsibility to deliver to the republic citizens who understand and are prepared to meet obligations that citizenship of a republic implies."<sup>57</sup> The Klan continued to look at the NEA as an authority on education and supported their agenda by including their ideas and platform within the Klan's education goals.

Evans' education reform platform trickled down to the state and local level for implementation. Indiana took Evan's plan and began implementing and advocating for reforms across the state. In 1925, the Klan challenged the textbooks that school children read. They claimed that the Catholic influence had infiltrated the textbooks that Protestant children in public schools were reading. When questioning Christopher Columbus, the *Fiery Cross* stated, "They endeavor to show that it was only through the efforts of the Roman church that America was discovered, thereby entitling the Vatican to the United States."<sup>58</sup> Another article boasted that "Romanism has crept stealthily into the public schools of America. As a direct result, public school boards and school commissions are either staffed principally by Roman Catholics or are under the influence of those favorable to the papal cause."<sup>59</sup> The *Fiery Cross* charged the ability for nuns teach Protestant children in "the garb of their church" and textbooks "whose main reason for existence is the justification and glorification of the Roman corporation."<sup>60</sup> Klansmen

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<sup>57</sup> "American Public School Came into Existence on the Mayflower," *Fiery Cross*, August 15, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19240815.1.2&srpos=13&e=-----192-en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22Grand+dragon%22+%22education%22----->.

<sup>58</sup> "Marks of the Beast," *Fiery Cross*, January 23, 1925, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19250123.1.8&srpos=3&e=-----en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22textbooks%22----->.

<sup>59</sup> "Romanism in Public Schools: Textbooks Poisoning Young Minds," *Fiery Cross*, January 9, 1925, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19250109.1.1&srpos=4&e=-----en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22textbooks%22----->.

<sup>60</sup> "Romanism in Public Schools: Textbooks Poisoning Young Minds."

feared that the textbooks in schools advanced the Catholic message and influenced Protestant children in public schools. Anti-Catholicism was central to the Klan's education reform platform.

To combat the perceived Catholic influence on schools, the Klan began lobbying school boards to implement curriculum changes. In Randolph County, a petition with 1,000 signatures was sent to the school board to enact reading one chapter or part of a chapter each day, using St. James' revised version, without comment by the teacher.<sup>61</sup> The school board did not respond to the petition. "One School, One Language, One Bible" was the Klan's slogan to support their education reform plan. It was often featured on floats by a "Little Red Schoolhouse." "One School, One Language, One Bible" summarized the Klan's rejection of Catholic influence and parochial schools on education. Instead, the Klan wanted one public school, taught in one language, English, and one Bible, a Protestant Bible, used to educate children.<sup>62</sup>

Across the state, the Klan endorsed candidates for local school boards. Many voters knew the candidates that the Klan backed. As a result, the Klan-backed members were relied upon to protect and represent the Klan's educational interests. In Indianapolis, the Republican party backed a "Klan school board slate." The Klan publicly endorsed the school board candidates. At a meeting, the Klan-backed candidates were "exhorted to place the flag in the schoolhouse and follow other Klan doctrines." The school board candidates were expected to advocate and advance the Klan's agenda during their campaigns and once in office<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "Petition to School Board by 1,000 Best Citizens of Randolph County, Was Promptly Pigeon-Holed," *Fiery Cross*, April 27, 1923, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230427&e=-----en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22school+board%22+----->.

<sup>62</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 82.

<sup>63</sup> "G.O.P. Backs Klan School Board Slate," *Fiery Cross*, November 2, 1925, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=IPT19251102.1.1&srpos=5&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22KLAN+SCHOOL+BOARD%22----->.

At the local level, the Klan implemented Evans' plan in their communities. In Logansport, the Klan pushed for mandatory Bible reading in classrooms. The Klan looked for "a plan whereby systematic religious instruction could be given in the public schools." The plan included a one-hour minimum of instruction per week if requested by parents. The plan also included high school students receiving course credit for religious instruction. Local preachers offered to provide students with instruction. The Klan and religious leaders in the community were "opposed to everything Catholic" and felt public school students needed religious training in response to parochial school religious education. The Klan agreed with Catholic parochial schools by acknowledging that "religious training is the only means of keeping children on the straight and narrow path." However, the Klan looked to secure Protestant religious education within Logansport schools to undermine the parochial schools' religious education.<sup>64</sup>

The Women's Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) adopted the public-school reform movement as a significant mission in their organization. The WKKK "called for a separation of church from the state when crusading against Roman Catholic political influence, for free public schools when seeking to destroy parochial schools."<sup>65</sup> As women during this era, the WKKK was interested in protecting children and the family unit. Undermining Catholic influence in schools was of top concern for many WKKK members. One campaign of WKKK klaverns across Indiana was donating flags and bibles to local schools. In Coal City, four hooded women appeared between

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<sup>64</sup> "Will Teach Bible in Logansport Public Schools," *The Muncie Post Democrat*, October 10, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=BALLMPD19241010-01.1.2&e=-----en-20-BALLMPD-1--txt-txIN-%22klan%22+%22School+board%22----->.

<sup>65</sup> Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 147.

the second and third acts of a school play and offered six Bibles and three flags to the school. An audience and students were in attendance when the Klan presented the donation.<sup>66</sup>

The Klan promoted their ideals of Americanism and Protestantism in their frequent gifts of flags and Bibles. The Klan specifically donated Protestant bibles and pushed for mandatory scripture reading in public schools. The flags reinforced patriotism, and the Klan wanted flags displayed in each classroom at each school. In a campaign to donate flags and bibles in Decatur County, the goal was to “place a Bible in every classroom and a flag on every school building in the county.”<sup>67</sup> Donations and reform platforms were some of the Klan’s tactics to reduce Catholic influence. However, the most effective tactic that deeply hurt the Catholic community was the heinous acts of intimidation and Catholics' threats across the state.

Klanswomen were known for their efforts to rid public schools of non-Protestant influence. The Klan worked to have Catholic teachers, principals, and other Catholic school employees fired from public schools. A former Klansmen clergyman quoted hearing a Klan speaker state, “We must put forth every effort to eliminate all Catholic school teachers, either men or women, from our public schools.”<sup>68</sup> This was a common sentiment among Klansmen and Klanswomen. In Anderson, the WKKK tried to get two Catholic teachers fired. The WKKK bombarded the women with letters demanding their resignation. One left town, and the other resigned. An incident in Muncie was unsuccessful when the WKKK tried to have a thirty-seven-

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<sup>66</sup> “Bibles and Flags Given,” *Fiery Cross*, March 28, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19240328.1.3&srpos=2&e=-----en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22Coal+city%22----->.

<sup>67</sup> “Klan is Placing Bibles in Schools,” *Fiery Cross*, January 4, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19240104.1.1&srpos=1&e=-----en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22donate%22+%22bibles%22+%22School%22----->.

<sup>68</sup> “Protestant Pastor Tells Why He Quit Ku Klux Klan,” *The South Bend Tribune*, July 27, 1924, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/514166522/?terms=%22Catholic%2Bteacher%22%2BKlan>.

year Catholic school teacher removed.<sup>69</sup> The harassment and intimidation strategy were not limited to the WKKK but was a common tactic used by Klansmen and Klanswomen across the United States.

A mothers' club in Indianapolis ignited a campaign to remove a principal after accusations of "Roman rule." The front page of the *Fiery Cross* recounted the accusations of "No Lincoln or Washington birthday programs, but St. Patrick was prominently honored, and Protestant pupils were told they must wear shamrocks." According to a janitor, the flag was ordered, not hosted, saying the order came from the principal. The salacious accusations came when several parents claimed and demanded removing the "Roman Catholic principal," Mary McGee. The article stated, "A great number of Roman Catholic teachers are employed at this school to instruct the children of Protestant parents. The conditions under which the children are attending school have become unbearable, the Protestant parents assert."<sup>70</sup> Smear campaigns by parents against catholic teachers and school administrators exposed many Anti-Catholic views within many Indiana communities. The accusations made front-page news in newspapers across the state.

The growth of public schools transformed over the nineteenth century, which became an institution to promote American ideals by the early twentieth century. The common school movement began with Horace Mann modeling American public schools from a German school model. The Reconstruction saw an opportunity for expanded public education to new regions and

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<sup>69</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 149.

<sup>70</sup> "Mothers' Club Aroused Over Roman Rule," *Fiery Cross*, April 25, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19240425&e=-----192-en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22+catholic+teachers%22+%22klan%22----->



new people. Southern whites and formerly enslaved people received increased access to education during Reconstruction.

Catholics struggled to challenge Protestantism in public schools by reading the King James Bible, unfavorable depictions of Catholic figures in textbooks, and the inability to receive public funds for schools. The Blaine Amendment tried to amend the Constitution to prevent “sectarian” institutions from receiving public funding. The Reconstruction Era saw centralization and modernization of public education organized at the state level, and many called for federal management of public education. However, Reconstruction did not secure public education at the national level, and it was left to the states to manage. At the end of Reconstruction, states ran their schools, wrote their own standards and curriculum. Many Southern states used textbooks and curriculum to change the narrative of the Civil War in classroom instruction.

Towards the nineteenth century, education reform infused modern schools of thought like social Darwinism and Eugenics and American imperialism to influence classrooms across the country to educate students on American exceptionalism. Students were instructed using history, geography, and civics about the ideal features of Americans compared to other groups of people furthering white, native-born, American supremacy. World War I saw new efforts to rebrand schools as purely American. Schools were vehicles for the Americanization of immigrants by enforcing “one flag, one school, one language.” This idea stripped immigrants of their native culture and language and pushed them to integrate and assimilate as Americans. The NEA education reform plan supported the Klan’s agenda promoting Americanism and nationalism. These motives reduced Catholic influenced and championed Protestant ideals and democratic beliefs. The changes in education during the Progressive Era were a reaction to imperialism and World War I America. The distrust of Catholics echoed throughout the establishment of the

American public education system since its start. The Klan absorbed the practices and rhetoric of the time. It implemented its own version of education reform at the national, state, and local level that furthered the agenda against Catholics thoroughly in the 1920s.

## Chapter Two

### Stephenson's "Military Machine" and the "Klan Legislature" of 1925

The legendary Klan spectacle of the decade occurred in Kokomo on July 4, 1923. A Klan statewide klonklave, a Klan meeting, assembled to install D.C. Stephenson as the grand dragon, or head of the Indiana Klan. Klansmen from several states appeared for the event. Finally, after his grinding of growing the Indiana Klan, Stephenson's aspirations came to fruition. The event estimated two hundred thousand Klansmen were in attendance. The keynote speaker featured the Ku Klux Klan's new national leader, Dr. Hiram Evans, the imperial wizard.<sup>71</sup> He had recently claimed the power of the Invisible Empire from the man credited with reviving the Klan, Colonel Simmons. The *Fiery Cross* summarized the day with "Kokomo had had an awakening, a spiritual awakening. It had needed the spectacle of 200,000 men and women, filled with patriotism and love of country, why by their attendance signified their beliefs in a living Christ and an open Bible, a journey from points afar to be present at a vast meeting. Then it was that Kokomo awoke. It could be nothing but a great spiritual movement, a sentiment seeking recognition and crying for better things freedom from foreign perpetuity of our American institutions."<sup>72</sup>

Klansmen and Klanswomen saw the gathering in Kokomo as a spiritual event. Affirmed, but the emotion of the event, attendees, felt revived in the Klan's cause. The appointment of DC Stephenson marked a zenith for the Indiana Klan. Indiana appeared as the center of the Klan world, and the reason was more popular than ever. After the Klonklave in Kokomo, interest in

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<sup>71</sup> Allen Safianow, "Klonklave in Kokomo' Revisited," *The Historian* 50, no. 3 (May 1988): 330.

<sup>72</sup> "Hoosiers and Buckeyes in Celebration," *Fiery Cross*, July 13, 1923, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230713.1.1&e=-----en-20--1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22kokomo+konklave%22----->.

the Klan drastically increased. The Klan vamped up efforts for parades, speeches, church appearances, and Klan meetings.<sup>73</sup>

On September 7, 1923, the Indiana State Fair appointed a "Klan Day." The *Fiery Cross* stated, "September 7 is also Klan Day in Indianapolis; it is the magic date which all the Doubting Thomases, who, in the face of associated press reports out of Kokomo on July 4, doubted that there were 200,000 Klansmen in the city on that day, will be shown that the crowd of 200,000 Klansman... was just a whisper in advance of the crowd that was to gather in Indianapolis on September 7!"<sup>74</sup> The Klan wanted the example of Kokomo to be just the start of the representation that would appear on Klan Day. However, when September 7 rolled around, the turnout was not as near the expectation. In addition, the weather was raining all week leading up to Klan Day.

Nevertheless, 65,000 Klansmen took part in the event. "America" was sung at the beginning of the day, followed by the Lord's Prayer repeated in unison. The day ended with a firework display by the Klan "that included a little red schoolhouse and a large American flag."<sup>75</sup>

Kluxers won over the public by holding special events across the state. On June 2, 1924, the *Brazil Daily Times'* front cover recapped the excitement from the prior weekend. In Brazil, the Klan held a massive community Memorial Day picnic. Festivities lasted two days. "The Ku Klux Klan picnic Friday evening and Saturday was a great success... People came from all parts of the state. Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, and even California were represented. There

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<sup>73</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 17.

<sup>74</sup> "Imperial Offers to Speak in Indianapolis," *Fiery Cross*, August 31, 1923, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230831&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22Klan+Day%22+----->.

<sup>75</sup> "Klansmen Turn Out in Spite of All Obstacles," *Fiery Cross*, September 8, 1923, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230908.1.1&srpos=14&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22Klan+Day%22+----->.

were a great many in attendance Friday night. The program Saturday Morning started with a concert by the Harmony band" several performances later, "the Harmony band gave another concert followed by an excellent address on the purposes, ideals, and progress of the Klan by local ministers and a state speaker." Of the events that day, it ended with a "gigantic parade." "People who saw the parade assert that it was the largest ever staged in Brazil and almost a thousand Klansmen, Klanswomen and Junior Klansmen took part." After the massive parade with horses and a band, public naturalization occurred and with "three fiery crosses illuminating the sky."<sup>76</sup>

The *Fiery Cross* boasted "crowd estimated biggest ever assembled in that city" and "town is practically turned over to Klansmen." The *Fiery Cross* estimated sixty thousand people attended the festivities throughout the weekend. <sup>77</sup> The Klan's celebration in Brazil exemplified the ability in the Klan to draw large crowds. Large events with music, food, fanfare while spreading their message was the winning formula for the Klan to reach the masses. The *Brazil Daily Times* spoke positively about the event and the Klan for throwing the event. The *Fiery Cross* exaggerated the number in attendance and interpreted its success as Brazil handing over the city to the Klan. This campaign of community engagement won the Klan many advocates and fans within Indiana communities.

The examples of the Klonklave, Klan Day, and the Memorial Day picnic in Brazil proved the usage of large gatherings and parades as essential for the Klan cause. The strategy worked in putting the Klan on display, and people took part in events and became acquainted with the Klan.

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<sup>76</sup> "Klan Picnic and Parade Saturday Was a Big Event," *The Brazil Daily Times*, June 2, 1924, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/112922520/>.

<sup>77</sup> "Brazil Holds Two-Day Klan Celebration," *Fiery Cross*, June 6, 1924, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19240606.1.1&srpos=2&e=-----en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22parade%22+and+%22celebration%22----->.

In exchange, the Klan spread its message of one hundred percent native, protestant Americanism. The Klan displayed their strength in numbers, which also served as a warning for their adversaries.

The sheer presence of the Indiana Klan was enough to intimidate many of their adversaries. The Klan's turnout, when called upon, showed the strength, and supported the organization had across the state. Indiana commonly was a battleground state in presidential elections, which garnered national attention and importance to political campaigns. Indiana's place as a battleground state-led Hoosier politician to ambitious goals in high offices in Washington DC. Indiana leaned Republican; however, the Democratic Party had an active presence across the state.<sup>78</sup>

With Stephenson's newfound power, he saw a chance to elevate Indiana's Klan to new heights. When Valparaiso University hit financial troubles, Stephenson saw an opportunity for the Klan to enter higher education. Colonel Simmons,' the founder of the Second Klan movement, dream of opening a Klan University. Stephenson's ambition led him to vie for the purchase of the university. The Klan pledged to raise the money to pay the university's debt and run it as a "one-hundred-percent-American Institution, the Klan Harvard."<sup>79</sup>

Under Simmons' leadership, the Klan tried a "Ku Klux Kollege." Lanier University was a struggling university in Atlanta. Simmons spent \$150,000 and teamed up with Nathan Bedford Forrest III, grandson of the original Ku Klux Klan founder, buying the broke university in 1921. The proposed curriculum of Lanier emphasized "the inculcation and practice of the tenets of the Christian religion through an introduction to Biblical literature and the reaching and application

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<sup>78</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 184.

<sup>79</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 189.

of the principles of purest American citizenship, based on a required study of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence.”<sup>80</sup>

Many hoped that the ascension of the Klan in popularity would be reflected in its enrollment. The promises of Lanier believed it would attract “all real Americans who desire that their children shall receive instruction on the true history of their country in an institution where Americanism and the teaching of patriotism and loyalty to home and country are predominate features.”<sup>81</sup> By 1922, the optimism of Lanier University popped as the university failed to enroll enough students to be profitable and sustainable. Under Evans’ command, he steered the Klan towards a platform of public-school reform and left higher education aspirations under his predecessor’s failures.

When Valparaiso University became available, Stephenson jumped at the chance to secure a Klan university. Indiana was a Klan powerhouse, and Stephenson believed that a Valparaiso would be more successful than Lanier. Unfortunately, Stephenson viewed Evans as a rival than a superior. By Summer 1923, the Indiana Klan began negotiations with Valparaiso University to determine the plan to transfer possession of the university. Both parties agreed to terms, and the deal seemed promising.<sup>82</sup> However, Evans and the national Klan leadership withdrew their support and resources to the project, leaving Stephenson empty-handed.

Stephenson and Evans drifted further apart. Stephenson saw Evans and an obstacle in his vision for the Indiana Klan. By late 1923, Stephenson began condemning the national Klan leadership in Atlanta. He rumored organizing a new northern Klan seceding from the Invisible

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<sup>80</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 126.

<sup>81</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 127.

<sup>82</sup> “Ku Klux Officials Meet,” *Indianapolis Times*, July 31, 1923, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=IPT19230731.1.6&srpos=22&e=-----192-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-%22valparaiso+university%22----1923-->.

Empire.<sup>83</sup> By 1924, Stephenson resigned from his Dragonship. Evans replaced him with Walter F. Bossert. He remained a Klansman and was appointed to take on the Indiana Klan's political affairs.

Stephenson postured himself to take on Atlanta. His followers elected him Grand Dragon of a new Sovereign Indiana Klan.<sup>84</sup> In May 1924, Stephenson gathered delegates at a convention in Indianapolis. The four hundred delegates in attendance were a fraction of the Klan population in the Hoosier state. However, the convention elected Stephenson as their Grand Dragon, the first chosen by the membership rather than appointed. Headquarters refused to recognize the rebel leadership. Atlanta acknowledged Bossert as the rightful Indiana Grand Dragon.<sup>85</sup>

While managing the political affairs of the Invisible Empire within the Hoosier state, Stephenson assembled a Klan organization that he called his "military machine," which he used to advance his political agenda.<sup>86</sup> Stephenson used his vast military machine to gather information on candidates running for office. Stephenson insisted that each Klavern establish a political committee to vet candidates. Committee Klansmen investigated candidates' party affiliation, ethnic background, religion, fraternal association, and family members.<sup>87</sup> Klansmen passed the information along to the highest level. From there, the Klan decided which candidates to support. Once decided, klaverns were informed that the Klan-endorsed candidates and Klansmen were expected to vote for the backed candidates. Candidate lists or "information

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<sup>83</sup> Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*.

<sup>84</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 190.

<sup>85</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 176.

<sup>86</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 184.

<sup>87</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 207.



bulletins” were distributed across the state. “If a candidate were ‘favorable,’ ‘neutral, or ‘unfavorable,’ it was so marked. If nothing appeared next to his name, the faithful knew he was a member of the Klan,”<sup>88</sup>

While running the Indiana Klan, Stephenson proved apathetic to the Klan’s moral agenda. He earned a reputation for promiscuity and alcohol consumption while many Klansmen embraced prohibition enforcement and sexual restraint.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, his charismatic nature and manipulative personality effectively advanced the Klan and his political agenda.

During the 1922 election season, the Klan attempted to organize a rally in Indianapolis. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) local chapter prevented the gathering.<sup>90</sup> The Klan lacked the presence and strength to challenge political opponents at that time.

However, in the same election cycle, the Klan defeated incumbent Jewish congresspeople and Catholic candidates running for county and state offices.<sup>91</sup> The major Klan victory of that year was getting Samuel M. Ralston elected to the US Senate. Ralston gained Klan support when the Republican candidate, Albert J. Beveridge, brought Kansas Governor Henry Allen on the campaign trail. Allen publicly disparaged the Klan. While giving a speech at St. Mary’s of the Woods College in Terre Haute, a women’s Catholic college, Ralston emphasized the importance of religious freedom and the separation of Church and State. “Here

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<sup>88</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 188.

<sup>89</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 207.

<sup>90</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 102.

<sup>91</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 188.

was a man who was not afraid to tell the papists off to their very faces.”<sup>92</sup> His remarks mirrored Klan priorities, and he won the support of the organization.

With the Klan’s support, Ralston’s campaign could flip traditional Republican counties, like Putnam, Wayne, and Marion. The political arm of the Klan grew its reach across the state, securing Ralston’s victory. The 1922 election cycle displayed some successes and losses for the Indiana Klan. By 1924, with his political machine and Stephenson in power, the political strength and influence of the Indiana Klan grew tenfold and was an unchallenged force in the 1924 election cycle.

By the 1924 spring primaries, Stephenson’s military machine ran at full force. The Klan gained political enemies like the mayor of Indianapolis, Samuel Lewis Shank. Entering office before the Klan’s ascension, Shank often frustrated Klansmen by prohibiting masked parades, prevented Klanswomen usage of Tomlinson Hall for meetings, and ordered the arrest of *Fiery Cross* paper carriers on claimed of inciting a riot. Shank also pushed to enforce the Board of Public Safety’s ruling against burning crosses in the city.<sup>93</sup> In several incidents, the Klan challenged the city’s enforcement of the ruling against burning crosses. The animosity between Mayor Shank and the Klan led to Shank demanding that his entire staff and cabinet pledge to continue the ban on cross burnings despite their potential Klan membership.<sup>94</sup>

The Klan received an opportunity for revenge when Mayor Shank entered the gubernatorial Republican primary in 1924. Shank ran on an anti-Klan platform against an Indianapolis Klansmen, Edward Jackson. The Republican primary between Shank and Jackson

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<sup>92</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 188.

<sup>93</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 172.

<sup>94</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 174.

confronted voters deciding if they stood with the KKK. Stephenson zealously supported Jackson's campaign. He corresponded with his field workers describing the campaign as a fight. With the military machine at full force, the Klan campaigned aggressively against Shank, throwing their full support and resources behind Jackson. During his campaign, Jackson vowed, "the fiery cross is going to burn at every crossroads in Indiana, as long as there is a white man left in the state!"<sup>95</sup> Ultimately, Jackson defeated Shank in a landslide, winning all but three of the ninety-two counties.

In the 1924 gubernatorial general election, the Democratic party avoided a radical anti-Klan agenda and remained moderate in their stance. The Democratic candidate was Carleton B. McCulloch. The party avoided calling out the Klan by not naming them directly in their speeches. Instead, the Democratic party tried to appeal to Catholic and African American voters. Democrats argued that the Republican party was handed to "an organization with no place in politics."<sup>96</sup> By the fall of 1924, both parties avoided mentioning the Klan. Both parties hoped to keep their regular supporters and well win the Klan vote.

On the campaign trail, both candidates refrained from mentioning the Klan. Jackson traveled across the state on a touring campaign in a car lent to him by Stephenson. The "Old Man" had also donated to his campaign. Jackson was identified as a "Klux-Republican," but while campaigning, he promised "full liberties to Catholics, Jews, and African Americans." However, the Klan ardently campaigned for Jackson and encouraged their members to vote Republican. Klansmen claimed that Jackson embodied Klan values of "white American supremacy, exclusion of Foreign immigrants and the necessity that only native-born white

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<sup>95</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 106.

<sup>96</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 107.

American citizens be eligible to elective office.”<sup>97</sup> Klansmen feared that Catholic, Jewish, immigrant, and African American voters would solely back McCulloch.

During the election, many Jewish and Catholic voters remained loyal to the Democratic party and supported McCulloch. Traditionally, Republicans questioned how African Americans would vote with a Republican Klansman running for governor. The Kokomo Klan organized a barbecue for Black voters. On election day, Black voters abandoned Lincoln's party and supported McCulloch in large numbers. In the end, the military machine's might prevailed, securing Jackson's victory in sixty of the ninety-two counties. In addition, winning the governor's office, Republicans won 116 seats in the Indiana General Assembly with only 34 Democrats. The Klan celebrated their major statewide victories. The power of the Indiana Klan broadly touched local and state elections. The Klan was elated with their proven influence. Stephenson looked forward to 1925, where he believed the favor would be returned in the legislative influence of his Klan-didates.<sup>98</sup>

Spirits were high at Jackson's inauguration. At the reception, Stephenson glided around the room shaking hands and congratulating those in attendance to a well-fought victory. With an aggressive agenda in hand and influence in two branches of government, the Klan was ready to get to work reforming Indiana. Stephenson swaggered, "I am the law." His power and influence were confirmed through the election of many Klan-backed candidates. In addition, scores of Indiana General Assembly members and officeholders across the state owed their position to the

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<sup>97</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 107.

<sup>98</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 108.

Klan. People knew that if you wanted anything done in Indianapolis, it went through Stephenson. Although Stephenson was no longer Grand Dragon, his power was at an all-time high.<sup>99</sup>

The Invisible Empire promised Hoosier Klansman to advance their “Americanization and Education” agenda through the Indiana General Assembly. The expected “Klan Legislature” believed that the Klan’s platform quickly is enacted. “The ‘Americanization and Education’ program, composed of a series of proposals to strengthen public schools and eradicate Catholic influence over public education.”<sup>100</sup> The “Americanization and Education” program was a two-prong approach to slash Catholic influence in education and reinforce the Klan’s patriotic principles in classrooms.

With Stephenson and Bossert/Evans pulling strings behind the scenes in the Indiana General Assembly, Klansmen eagerly awaited legislative success that they believed was imminent. The package of bills under the “Americanization and Education” platform started with the “Religious Garb Bill.” This bill proposed the prohibition of teachers wearing any distinctive religious garb or insignia in public schools.<sup>101</sup> The bill was killed in the Senate with a 40-6 vote.<sup>102</sup> The *Fiery Cross* reported that the only objection to the bill its original form in the Senate was the stipulation prohibiting religious insignias.<sup>103</sup> The bill aimed to prevent or keep nuns out of public-school classrooms. Several nuns were rumored to be teaching in several southern Indiana

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<sup>99</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 110.

<sup>100</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 220.

<sup>102</sup> “Senate Kills ‘Klan’ Teacher Garb Bill,” *Indianapolis Times*, January 21, 1925, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=IPT19250121.1.1&srpos=5&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22garb+bill%22----->.

<sup>103</sup> “Alien Registration Called for in Senate Bill,” *Fiery Cross*, February 20, 1925, <https://dwso.revealdigital.org/?a=d&d=BBGDGEJE19250220-01.2.2&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-----1>.

counties, such as Spencer, Perry, Crawford, Floyd, and Dubois. The revised bill was passed in the House, but on its return to the Senate, the bill was defeated with a vote of 19-17.<sup>104</sup>

The second bill in the Klan's legislative package was the "Uniform Textbook Bill." This bill would have required parochial schools to use the same textbooks as public schools. The "Uniform Textbook Bill" quickly passed in the House but not in the Senate. Another similar bill was proposed called the "Textbook Commission Bill." Like the other, this bill would have required teachers to select one of four approved texts for their course that had been considered acceptable by a commission. Again, this bill passed in the House but failed in the Senate.<sup>105</sup>

One of the more radical bills to receive the Klan's support was an alien registry bill. The bill would have required all "unnaturalized foreigners in Indiana to register with the county clerk and carry a registration card at all times." Those who did not register would be fined, and the revenue from the fines would be used to "promote the education and Americanization of foreigners." The bill was not enacted.<sup>106</sup>

After addressing several attempts to control the materials introduced in the classroom, the Klan's agenda faced its most brutal battle with the "Bible Reading Bill." "Its chief provision would have required that portions of the Bible be read each day in the public schools of Indiana without comment."<sup>107</sup> The "Bible Reading Bill" goal was to mandate reading the King James Bible in public schools. This version of the Bible was in most expansive use among Protestant denominations. Catholics did not use the King James Version Bible. Therefore, the bill would

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<sup>104</sup> Frank Marquis Cates, "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana Politics: 1920 – 1925" (PhD diss., Indiana University, Bloomington, 1970), 167, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>105</sup> Cates, "Klan in Indiana Politics," 167.

<sup>106</sup> "Alien Registration Called for in Senate Bill."

<sup>107</sup> Cates, "Klan in Indiana Politics," 167.

have exposed all students to the King James Bible rather than a Catholic version. The bill was defeated in the Senate “after a bitter fight waged against it by Roman Catholic influence.”<sup>108</sup>

Many rumored that Stephenson’s work marionetting senators behind the scenes resulted in the defeat of many Klan bills. His influence over the Senate allowed for Stephenson’s impact on the success and failure of many bills. For example, Stephenson persuaded senators to vote against Hiram Evans and Walter Bossert's highest legislative priorities.

Not all the Klan’s bills failed to pass during the general assembly. Two bills passed and reached the governor’s office but did not become law. The first bill was a bill that would have allowed students to receive religious instruction for up to two hours during the school week at a church of their choice if forty percent of the parents requested at a given school. The bill was not passed into law because the Attorney General opined that the bill violated the separation of church and state, making the bill unconstitutional. Governor Jackson used his pocket veto resulting in the bill dying after staying unsigned for ten days.<sup>109</sup>

The second Klan bill to reach the governor’s desk was a bill that would allow for the indebted Valparaiso University to become a state school once its debt was paid. Again, Stephenson’s interest in Valparaiso University made this bill significant to him. The bill said the university be transferred to state control once Porter County paid the outstanding debt. Again, Jackson's bill was pocket vetoed, regardless of Stephenson’s influence over the governorship and interest in the issue.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> “Alien Registration Called for in Senate Bill.”

<sup>109</sup> Cates, “Klan in Indiana Politics,” 168.

<sup>110</sup> Cates, “Klan in Indiana Politics,” 168.

After the massive failure of the “Klan Legislature,” the Invisible Empire emerged with two legislative victories in their “Americanization and Education” agenda. The primary victory of the session was the “Flag Bill.” The bill required the flying of an American flag at schools during school hours.<sup>111</sup> Another Klan bill enacted required students in Indiana to study the federal constitution.<sup>112</sup> The optimism of the “Klan Legislature” failed to deliver its platform of massive reform in “Americanization and Education.” Additionally, the 1925 legislative session did little to reduce the role or place of Catholics in public schools.

By April 1925, the ascent of Klan power in Indiana abruptly halted as controversy placed the Invisible Empire under the scrutiny of public opinion. In the Hoosier state, the Ku Klux Klan made national headlines as the organization's face was arrested and charged with murder. In addition, the lack of uniformity within the Indiana Klan's leadership led to the failure of the “Klan Legislature.” Stephenson's intention to sabotage Bossert and Evans and lack of governor support caused the Klan agenda to fail. The deck for the Klan's agenda was set at the beginning of 1925, but internal conflict and Stephenson's arrest began unraveling the Indiana Klan.

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<sup>111</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 110.

<sup>112</sup> Cates, “Klan in Indiana Politics,” 168



## Chapter Three

### Klan Kommerce and Boycotts

The Ku Klux Klan wielded significant power within the Hoosier state. The grandiose spectacle of the Invisible Empire was displayed constantly. Intimidation, threats, and occasional violence were standard tools used by the Klan to inflict their power. However, the Klan's most potent weapon in their arsenal was their influence on commerce. The Klan unleashed its impact on business by supporting Klan's sympathetic business and boycotting those owned by Klan opponents and adversaries. The highly effective tactic of boycotts and rumor spreading impacted men and women alike about spending their money. Many business owners went bankrupt because of the Klan's economic tactics.

The Klan announced a national policy of “vocational Klannishness” where Klansmen “pledged to conduct trading, dealing with and patronizing Klansmen in preference to all others.” In addition, a National Service directory was planned for all businesses who paid the \$35 membership fee to be included in a nationwide listing of business owners owned by Klansmen. The national directory was never published, but local Klans and the Indiana Klan issued their Klan-friendly business directories.<sup>113</sup> Business owners also used the “TWK” (trade with a Klansman) placards to display Klan connection in their business storefronts.<sup>114</sup>

Some businesses advertised themselves as “100 Percent American” to announce their Klan alliance or sympathies. Business owners and merchants from restaurants, barbershops, insurance salespeople, jewelers, and more advertised as “100 Percent American” businesses.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 155.

<sup>114</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 187.

<sup>115</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 156.

The “One Hundred Percent American” businesses did not stop at advertising. Employers carried into their employment practices. Shop owners publicized only hiring “One Hundred Percent Americans” and refused to hire Catholics, Jews, African Americans, Jews or people of flawed character.”<sup>116</sup>

Vocational klannishness affected employees who were suddenly fired from their jobs for being Catholic, Jewish, or appearing to be Anti-Klan. The Klan networking occasionally benefited business owners and Klan members. The *Fiery Cross* often published job openings, and employees wanted ads in their issues. Additionally, “the state headquarters sent directives to all field officers of the KKK and WKKK in Indiana, indicating employment situations for 100 percent women and men.”<sup>117</sup>

The Indiana Klan answered to the national organization in Atlanta. “There were elaborate rules and pronouncements from the Imperial Wizard and constant demands for money.” The local Klaverns sold memberships to Klansmen and Klanswomen, and through membership fees, initiation fees, and dues, money flowed through the Invisible Empire. The fees were the basis of the Klan’s operating budget and lined high-level officials’ pockets. Membership fees were \$10. With constant demands for money from Atlanta, Klaverns in Indiana did not always heed headquarters calls. Indiana often decided to keep fee revenue within the state to focus on local issues. The Klan eventually felt rivalry and corruption existed in Atlanta. “In the beginning, however, many felt the power of belonging to a nationwide movement.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 156.

<sup>117</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 156.

<sup>118</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 19.

The Klan portrayed itself as like other fraternal orders. This marketing strategy a critical recruiting tool that aided the Klan's growth. However, the Klan distinguished itself from other fraternal organizations by appealing to a broad audience. The Klan was accessible to most citizens and offered membership to all but a few in the community and adhered to ideals that most white Protestants supported. The Klan offered fellowship, business relations, political activism, networking, and socialization. Membership in the organization was solidified with a Christian affiliation with conservative values that met the sentiment of many White Americans. This widely accepted doctrine solidified the Klan's success in large urban cities, manufacturing towns, and rural areas. <sup>119</sup>

The sense of belonging and the broad appeal of the Klan attracted three to six million people nationwide. Indiana had the most significant state enrollment in the country, an estimated 300,000 Klansmen and Klanswomen.<sup>120</sup> With strength in numbers and plenty of money flowing in, the Indianan Klan had power and purse. The Klan used their name recognition to enter several markets and open Klan businesses.

The Ku Klux Klan immersed itself in businesses to offer "100 percent Americans" Klansmen and Klanswomen more opportunities to interact with the Klan. However, by boosting Klan's business, the stores ran by Catholics, Jews, immigrants, or African Americans received less business. In addition, the Women Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) supported funding a new hospital for Howard county that promoted a philanthropic image of the WKKK while diminishing the role of Catholic-owned hospitals.

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<sup>119</sup> Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*.

<sup>120</sup> Moore, *Citizen Klansmen*.

The hospital fundraising campaign lasted two years and was spearheaded by the WKKK with KKK support. A massive rally in Kokomo, organized by the Klan, aided in raising fifty thousand dollars for the campaign.<sup>121</sup> In a public announcement after the rally, “two women from the WKKK admitted that no definite arrangements had been made for raising of the sum but expressed confidence that the cash would be turned over to the hospital in a short time.” In reality, enough money to cover the beginning construction of the hospital was raised by the WKKK. As a result, the county was forced to take on the project.<sup>122</sup>

The “Klan-backed bank” where the money for the hospital campaign was held in Kokomo found itself in controversy as well. The American Trust Company of Kokomo housed the Klan’s treasuries and donations for the hospital campaign. The bank collapsed in 1927 by “financial misdeeds by its officers.” With the bank failing, depositors lost 60% of their money, and the Klansman president was indicted for financial misappropriation. The hospital was eventually finished in late 1926.<sup>123</sup> The vision of these Klan business ventures was to adversarial and severely restrict “on the basis of race, religion, and ethnicity.” Thus, the hospital became known as the “Klan Hospital.” The hospital closed during the Great Depression and was purchased in 1935 by the Sisters of St. Joseph.<sup>124</sup> The inevitable failure of a public Klan institution showed that the Klan struggled in business even in their most substantial region.

Klan businesses opened in several commercial markets like restaurants, department stores, and repair shops. The One Hundred Per Cent American department store opened in

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<sup>121</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 58.

<sup>122</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 141.

<sup>123</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 59.

<sup>124</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 59.

Indianapolis. The department store looked to capitalize on the Klan's purchasing power. The store's sign displayed an electric burning cross. The store failed within six months of opening. Stephenson supporters claimed the store failed due to its location, a few blocks away from the shopping district. Bossert supporters claimed the owner marketed his store to Klansmen and relied on the reputation of the Klan to bring in business where his goods were overpriced and not unique.<sup>125</sup>

In Indiana, the Klan continued to place its stamp on various industries. "Klan publications shrilly denounced Jewish and Catholic influence in the commercial film industry, and local Klans carried out scattered boycotts of particular movies."<sup>126</sup> In 1923, when Charlie Chaplin's *The Pilgrim* was released, the Klan claimed that the movie "ridiculed the Protestant ministry" and was a "systematic attack on Protestantism."<sup>127</sup> The Klan also protested the release of *Bella Donna* (1923) for sexual provocation and implied romance between a white woman and an Egyptian man. *Bella Donna* upset many in the hooded order that the Indiana Klan contemplated requesting the resignation of Will Hays, a Hoosier motion picture monitor in the film industry.<sup>128</sup>

The Klan detested several of the movies produced by Hollywood during this time. As a reaction to their dissatisfaction with the film industry. The Klan put forth creating their films as an alternative to Hollywood films. Two Klan production companies appeared in the Midwest and

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<sup>125</sup> Samuel Taylor Moore," Consequences of the Klan: Results of the Hoosier Experiment in Invisible Monarchial Government," *Independent* 113, no. 3890 (December 20, 1924).

<sup>126</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*," 47.

<sup>127</sup> Rice, "Defining the Klan Through Film," 471.

<sup>128</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*," 48.

released two films.<sup>129</sup> Moving Picture World worked in tandem with the Columbus, Ohio Klan to produce *The Toll of Justice* in 1923. An Indiana film company, Cavalier Moving Picture Company, released *The Traitor Within*.<sup>130</sup>

*The Toll of Justice* was “designed to counteract the poisonous propaganda circulated by alien enemies who have declared their determination to wipe out the Klan.”<sup>131</sup> *The Toll of Justice* cast the Klan positively that had action footage and a love story. The film was promoted as “daring that thrills, action that’s tense, deeds that inspire, love that throbs, suspense that grips.”<sup>132</sup> DC Stephenson was a significant contributor to *The Traitor Within*. *The Traitor Within* was “a well-sustained love romance as well as a stirring demonstration of Klan power as depicted in scenes with robed marchers.”<sup>133</sup>

Through these films, the Klan tried to recast their image on a national stage. The stereotypes and misrepresentation of the Klan were intended to be corrected through the films.<sup>134</sup> The films were branded as “100% American.”<sup>135</sup> The films appeared in local theaters but were more commonly shown in schools, churches, and community venues. The Klan offered free views of the films to draw crowds in for recruiting.

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<sup>129</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*,” 48.

<sup>130</sup> Rice, “Defining the Klan Through Film,” 472.

<sup>131</sup> “‘Toll of Justice’ to be Shown Soon,” *Fiery Cross*, December 14, 1923, <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19231214.1.1&srpos=1&e=-----192-en-20-FC-1--txt-txIN-%22wipe+out+the+Klan%22----->.

<sup>132</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 48.

<sup>133</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 98.

<sup>134</sup> Rice, “Defining the Klan Through Film,” 479.

<sup>135</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 98.

With the Klan adverting several businesses as “100% American” and Protestant, the organization offered Klan consumers many business listings to spend their money. By promoting Klan businesses, the Invisible Empire tried to draw businesses away from Catholic, Jewish, immigrant, and African American-owned businesses. In addition, the Klan encouraged their members to only shop at stores that supported the Klan and boycott businesses that did not. The *Fiery Cross* featured a business directory and advertisements in each issue. The business directory section stated, “The firms listed under (the business directory) are chosen with greatest of care, and we can personally vouch for their honesty and integrity. We believe that they should be patronized.”<sup>136</sup> Businesses from across the state paid to be listed in the *Fiery Cross*.

As manager of the family’s finances, women became pivotal in the success of Klan boycotts. “A boycott brought even the act of shopping into the fight for racial and religious supremacy. Controlling family consumption allowed women to exercise political actions while completing ordinary tasks. While functioning as individuals, Klanswomen could shop at businesses that supported the Klan and cause financial ruin or bankruptcy on Jewish, Catholic, Black, or immigrant-owned businesses.”<sup>137</sup>

The leader of the Indiana WKKK, Daisy Barr, conducted weekly addresses for Indianapolis Klanswomen outlining where to shop and where not to shop. Each meeting drew up to fifteen hundred women. “Barr read the roll of Indianapolis WKKK and KKK members who were engaged in local retail or trade.” The WKKK endorsed these products, and the Klan-owned stores were the only stores the Klanswomen were to shop at. Stores owned by Catholics, African

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<sup>136</sup> “Business Directory,” *Fiery Cross*, April 6, 1923.  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230406.1.4&srpos=8&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22boycott%22----->.

<sup>137</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 151.

Americans, Jews, and “Aliens” should be rejected. Barr claimed that Jews controlled 75% of the money in the US. Barr strove to end all Jewish businesses in Indianapolis. She said, “There will be no Jewish business left in Indianapolis.”<sup>138</sup>

Once the Klan was sent into motion, the consumption campaign were met with enormous success. Large department stores to small shops and services with Jewish owners lost revenue leading to bankruptcy. Many in the Jewish professional class left their homes and towns that they lived in for decades.

The WKKK consumption campaign proved the strength of female klaverns. Choosing where to shop “allowed women to exercise considerable political clout without overstepping even the most conventional definitions of their roles as mothers and wives.”<sup>139</sup>

Most of the general Klanswomen members held affiliations with political, civil, or fraternal orders and their Klan membership.<sup>140</sup> Many of the Klanswomen considered themselves active churchgoers belonging primarily to Methodist, Baptist, Christian, and Methodist Episcopal churches. For many people, Klan membership and civic involvement coincided. Meetings posed an opportunity for women to become active in the community.

City and rural county newspapers at the time were full of notices for meetings of women to discuss immigration restrictions, the virtues of Protestantism, Prohibition, national pride, declining public morality, the “godlessness” of public school teaching, the impending threat posed by immigration radicals, and how to exercise newly granted voting rights in a patriotic, God-fearing direction. In some sense, the women’s Klan posed few-if any-new political ideas. Rather, the WKKK consolidated and made exciting a political philosophy that had long penetrated movements for women’s suffrage, temperance, and civic improvement.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 151.

<sup>139</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 152.

<sup>140</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 125.

<sup>141</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 126.



The message of the consumption campaigns spread across communities through women by rumors or gossip. Bands of Klanswomen throughout the state spread the ideas, stories, or false information to groups of women in public spaces, social gatherings, or church groups. The “poison squad of whispering women” could spread stories throughout the state in less than a day. By speaking with friends and acquaintances, women could discuss information about “who owned what and who sympathized with what,” effectively influencing women about where to shop, whom to trust, and who to be suspicious of.<sup>142</sup> Not only did the Klan empower women by the consumption campaigns, but the *Fiery Cross* also published a list of Catholic businesspeople, with names and addresses of the businesses. The “Who’s Who” section of the *Fiery Cross* pinpointed Catholic business owners for Klansmen and Klanswomen to boycott, harass or intimidate.<sup>143</sup>

Officially, the Klan promoted individual businesses; however, they did not publicly admit to organizing boycotts. An article from January 19, 1923, quoted Reverend Brightmire, a Klan member, saying, “We don’t boycott...remember that the Ku Klux Klan never boycotts anybody. Sometimes there is a person whom we treat to a little spell of letting alone.”<sup>144</sup> A letter from the *Fiery Cross* editor said, “Most certainly boycott s a sneaking un-American principle, and I defy you to prove that Klansmen practice or preach boycott.” He continued, “I can prove to

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<sup>142</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 153.

<sup>143</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 155.

<sup>144</sup> “1500 Klan’s Guest in Meeting in H.S.; Show Regalia Cross,” *Fiery Cross*, January 19, 1923. <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230119.1.1&srpos=4&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22boycott%22----->.

you positively that long before the Klan was regenerated and even now, Catholics practiced and are practicing a systemized and organized boycott.”<sup>145</sup>

In some areas, the Klan boycotts and consumption campaigns deeply affected their targets but primarily remained ineffective. The Klan successfully pushed out some Jew and Catholic families of their communities while also leading them to bankruptcy. The Klan boycotts not only hurt their targets financially but destroyed and undermined their reputations in communities. Many Catholics and Jews were ostracized from their communities, leading to loss of employment, loans, opportunities, and social status. <sup>146</sup>

Angry Catholics retaliated against the Klan boycotts and, in some cases, sought alliances with other Klan targets in solidarity. As the primary target of Klan’s hatred and attacks, Catholics saw significant immigration in the US with roots from Northern Europe and Ireland. Their notorious outsider status made them the Indiana Klan’s primary enemy. As a result, Catholics resisted Klan events and appearances. The Tipton County Fair of 1923 was “Klan Day,” and Ed Jackson was a keynote speaker. The Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal order, organized a protest outside Indianapolis with 800 Catholic men. <sup>147</sup>

The American Unity League (AUL) led the charge against the Indiana Klan. Based in Chicago, the AUL had chapters throughout Indiana. AUL president, Catholic attorney Patrick Henry O’Donnell was known for his aggressive attacks against the Klan. The AUL called prohibition of mask-wearing during marches. The AUL was mainly made of Catholics but

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<sup>145</sup> “A Personal Letter to the Rev. Francis, Frankfort, Ind. From the Editor of the Fiery Cross,” *Fiery Cross*, January 5, 1923. <https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230105.1.5&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22boycott%22+----->.

<sup>146</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 98.

<sup>147</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 122.

included African Americans, Jews, and white Protestants in their ranks. The organization moved away from its sole Catholic identity towards a more multicultural representation. Historian James Madison accounted that O'Donnell addressed a large gathering in Fort Wayne, saying, "fight against the Klan was not a Jewish fight or a negro's flight or a Catholic's fight, but an American fight."<sup>148</sup>

AUL's leading source of giving information was its newspaper *Tolerance*. The pages of *Tolerance* had insults and satire against the Klan. The Klan was mocked, presented as fools, and called "Koo Koos."<sup>149</sup> The *Tolerance* paramount tactic was the publication of Klan rosters. The "Who's Who in Nightgowns" was where the *Tolerance* published the names of stolen Klan memberships organizing members by city. The *Tolerance* printed names of Klansmen across the Midwest, but this tactic was most impactful in Indiana. In addition to publishing membership lists, the *Tolerance* exposed business connections with the Klan. The outing of Klan business connections and members placed heavy attention on the Klan. By identifying members and businesses connected to the Klan, readers had the leverage of targets to boycott themselves." Several businesses, including financial institutions, were forced to close because of *Tolerance*-inspired boycotts.<sup>150</sup> Not only did the Klan reject accusations that they organized boycotts, but they accused Catholics of organizing boycotts against them. This enraged Klansmen and the *Fiery Cross*.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 123.

<sup>149</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 123.

<sup>150</sup> Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 99.

<sup>151</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 123.

The *Fiery Cross* accused and claimed they had proof that the American Unity League Executive Committee “conducts and encourages a boycott against supposed Klansmen, an illegal method of persecution.”<sup>152</sup> Another edition of the *Fiery Cross* blamed *Tolerance* for boycotts against the Klan, stating, “*Tolerance* undertakes to publish a list of members of the Ku Klux Klan, in order that Roman Catholics, Jews, negroes and weak-kneed sympathizers with all three who pose as Protestants, can boycott members of the Klan.”<sup>153</sup>

Not only did the Klan accuse the American Unity League of organizing boycotts of Klansmen, but Jewish and Catholic were accused of boycotting Klan sympathetic media. *The Muncie Post-Democrat* angrily denounced Jew, Catholic, and Black-owned businesses for not advertising in their newspaper. *The Muncie Post -Democrat*, said, “There is little wonder that the Klan has become so powerful here,” and “the Post -Democrat, long ago gave up any hope of getting business out of the Jew or Catholic merchants.” It continued with, “We have more respect for Kluxers who openly advertise in the *Fiery Cross* and take chances on an anti-Klan boycott than merchants who virtually boycott the only newspaper in Muncie that has the courage to look the whole damned Klan in the eye and tell it to go to hell.” The *Post Democrat* claimed that Catholics and black folks avoided stores and businesses associated with the Klan. The article stated, “If there are any Kluxer’s merchants who have the nerve to advertise in the Post Democrat, we will advise our readers to patronize them exclusively.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “Just What is the American Unity League,” *Fiery Cross*, April 6, 1923.  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230406.1.4&srpos=8&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22boycott%22----->.

<sup>153</sup> “Spying on the Klan” *Fiery Cross*, January 5, 1923.  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=FC19230105.1.2&srpos=2&e=-----en-20-FC-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22boycott%22----->.

<sup>154</sup> “Jew and Catholic Merchants Boycott the Post-Democrat,” *Muncie Post-Democrat*, July 13, 1923,  
<https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=BALLMPD19230713-01.1.1&srpos=3&e=-1920---1926--en-20--1--txt-txIN-%22+boycott%22+%22klan%22%22catholic%22----->.

The feud grew when Klansmen believed Catholics were boycotting a Protestant merchant, Milton Elrod, a Klansman. The *Fiery Cross* published names of local Catholic businesspeople on April 27 and May 11, 1923.<sup>155</sup> The Klan did not publicly claim to organize boycotts, but Klansmen boasted of putting Jewish and Catholic merchants out of business. The Klan harassed and intimidated their opponents on some occasions to the point they left town.

The Klan's dealing with business offered women and Klan sympathizers a chance to show support for the Invisible Empire's mission privately. The Klan's targets faced financial hardships due to the Klan's boycotts and, in some cases leading to business closures. The boycotts funneled commerce to Klan-supported businesses rather than businesses of Klan targets. Communities fired back at the Klan for their boycotts through *Tolerance* organizing boycotts of their own. The Klan claimed victimhood when their business began to fail. The Klan attacked their targets and tried to rid them from communities. However, under the leadership of President O'Donnell, the American Unity League expanded its influence, strengthening the Anti-Klan movement with the support of many Catholics, immigrants, Jews, and African Americans. The Klan's targets united under the AUL and used satire, mockery, and embarrassment to undermine the Klan's attacks and portrayed the organization as idiotic. The Klan tried to dispel their targets via boycotts and rumors, but AUL fought back at the Klan's oppression efforts.

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<sup>155</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 170.

## Conclusion

### The Fiery Cross is Still Burning

DC Stephenson had led the Indiana Klan to national prestige, proving the revived Klan's shellability. The undoing of this movement within the Hoosier state came at Stephenson's hand. Stephenson gained substantial wealth through his dealings with the Klan. His power and influence made him a significant figure in Indiana's political realm. Unfortunately, most Klansmen did not realize that behind the Grand Dragon's hood was a heavy drinking, short fused, philanderer.<sup>156</sup> As the organization's face, Stephenson violated many of the Klan's modesty principles in his free time. His womanizing ways and days of partying came screeching to a halt in April 1925.

Stephenson met Madge Oberholtzer at Ed Jackson's inaugural dinner in January 1925. Oberholtzer worked at The Indiana Department of Instruction. During the 1925 legislative session, Oberholtzer aided Stephenson with sending messages to his contacts within the statehouse. Stephenson continued to see Oberholtzer by extending invitations to her to attend dinners and parties with him.<sup>157</sup>

On March 15, 1925, Oberholtzer was invited to Stephenson's house. At his home, Stephenson had been drinking when Oberholtzer arrived. He "forced" her to drink and later, Stephenson and his bodyguards forced her on a train to Chicago where she was fed drinks, attacked pulling her clothes off her and biting her all over her body. They left the train and stayed in a hotel as Stephenson's car was driven up from Indianapolis. Oberholtzer got money

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<sup>156</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 114.

<sup>157</sup> Madison, *Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 115.

from Stephenson to purchase poison which she took. Stephenson offered to take Oberholtzer to a hospital-based on the condition that she marry him. She refused. The group drove back to Indianapolis, where they kept Oberholtzer for another night in an apartment. After Oberholtzer adamantly refused to marry him, Stephenson eventually took Oberholtzer home.<sup>158</sup>

One of Stephenson's bodyguards carried Oberholtzer to her bedroom claiming she was injured in a car accident. Oberholtzer's health deteriorated over the next few weeks. She signed an affidavit depicting the events that occurred when in Stephenson's company. She accounted for the details of her train ride, sexual assault and forced consumption of drinks. Oberholtzer claimed she convinced a bodyguard that she needed to make up and walked to a drug store. There she bought mercury bichloride tablets which she took in a suicide attempt.<sup>159</sup>

Oberholtzer's parents contacted a lawyer that spoke with Madge and a doctor that examined her. The lawyer got statements from Oberholtzer and took her affidavit. The lawyer then turned over the evidence to the Marion County Prosecutor's office on April 2. The investigation into Stephenson began with obtaining warrants and by April 15, Oberholtzer died. Stephenson was charged with second-degree murder and arrested.<sup>160</sup>

News of Stephenson's arrest swept across the country making national news. On November 14, 1925, Stephenson was found guilty of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. Stephenson expected a full pardon from Governor Jackson, whom he nearly secured his election the year prior. The pardon never came. The fuming former Grand Dragon reached out to his friends to unearth his "little black box." Stephenson's sash of blackmail included "ten

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<sup>158</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 193.

<sup>159</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 116.

<sup>160</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 116.

thousand letters, receipts, canceled checks, signed photographs of notables (including Governor Jackson). Among those incriminated were Indianapolis mayor John Duvall, six members of the city council, and Jackson – all Republican and all affiliated with the Klan. Indiana had never sunk so low, some said.”<sup>161</sup>

When news broke about Stephenson’s trial, Hoosier Klan members were mortified. Klansmen and women quickly dropped their affiliations with the Invisible Empire and avoided conversation or mentioning their involvement. The embarrassment Stephenson caused forced many in the hooded order to hang up their robes. Many Hoosiers yearned to put their involvement with the Klan behind them, resulting in a forgotten past of the former hub of the second Invisible Empire.

A third wave of the Klan awoke after the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The Third Klan’s activity and emphasis resembled the goals of the original Klan. The main motives of the third Klan consisted of the oppression of African Americans and protesting segregation in the South. The Klan remained present throughout the United States but reverted to its hidden, secret practices. The Klan continued its rhetoric of white supremacy in the shadows of right-wing extremism.

By examining the Klan as an institution and examining its involvement with societal institutions like education, politics, and commerce, the Klan attempted to impose a narrow view of Americanism. Through the lens of white Anglo-American Protestantism, the Klan entered Indiana and influenced social institutions of public life to control the definition Hoosiers used to characterize an “American.”

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<sup>161</sup> Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, 118.



In the institution of education, the Klan adopted contemporary education policies under the guise of joining the broader education reform movement. However, Evans simply cherry-picked ideas prevalent in education reform since the mid-1910s and catered them to objectives on the Klan's agenda. For example, Evans conveyed to Klan members that the Klan sought to improve public education for Protestant children. In reality, the Klan sought to expel Catholics from the education system.

In the political sphere, the military machine enlisted the participation of each Klavern within the state. Stephenson required each Klavern to create a political committee to support his political ideology. Both Klansmen and Klanswomen aided in the campaign efforts of the 1924 elections. Klanswomen joined men in the military machine's mission. Klanswomen registered voters, transported voters to the polls, influenced voters to support the Klan's desires, and some secured childcare for mothers so they could go vote.<sup>162</sup> Women participated in the Klan and took an active role in politics to exercise their new suffrage rights.

The military machine secured the "Klan Legislature" of 1925 through the statewide victories of Klan-backed candidates. With boundless influence in the Indiana General Assembly, the Klan's agenda was assumed to cruise through the legislature. The Invisible Empire's platform of "Americanization and Education" attempted to convert rhetoric into enacted action. The Klan stacked their agenda with bills that impacted public education by Protestanizing public schools and banning Catholic influence. However, the military machine imploded, failing only to secure minor legislation that required studying the American constitution and the presence of an American flag in each school. The flop of the Klan's agenda manifested by Stephenson

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<sup>162</sup> Blee, *Women of the Klan*, 150.

intentionally sabotaging Bossert and Evans' initiatives. In his rivalry, Stephenson influenced legislators to kill Klan bills aligned with headquarters' interests over his own.

Finally, in commerce, the Klan attempted to influence businesses and shoppers to contribute to Klan-backed businesses. The Invisible Empire encouraged businesses to market themselves to Klan members promising advertisement, endorsement, and exclusive access to their pocketbooks. The Indiana Klan offered businesses opportunities for inclusion in Klan business directories, advertisement in the *Fiery Cross*, "TWK" placards, and top-down direction from Klan leadership telling members where to shop. In addition, the Klan carried out boycotts on businesses owned by their targets. Daisy Barr directed the Indianapolis WKKK to boycott specific businesses to bankrupt Catholic and Jewish business owners, causing them to leave town. The consumption campaigns allowed WKKK members and sympathizers to participate in the Klan's agenda without outwardly displaying their affiliation or support of the Invisible Empire. Women spread the orders of the Klan through gossip and rumors at social gatherings ensuring the Klan's message of boycotts reached every county.

The Klan aggressively attempted to influence commerce by directing members to shop exclusively at Klan-backed businesses. However, the oppressed targets united under the AUL and fired back at the Klan by organizing boycotts of their own and pursued to dismantle the Klan through *Tolerance*. Using tactics of mockery, satire and ousting of members, the AUL incensed the Klan causing them to cry wolf as victims of AUL boycotts on Klan businesses. As a result, the Klan's oppressed targets regained agency over the Klan by uniting boomeranging boycotts back on the Klan.

The case of Indiana in the revival of the Klan demonstrated how ideas with a broad appeal under a charismatic leader could be embraced by a population and take a foothold. The

Klan's appearance of "just another fraternal order" allowed the mission of the Klan to enter the lives of thousands of Hoosiers affected by many facets of public life. Indiana's experience with the Klan demonstrated the dangers that surround white nationalist movements.

The threat of white nationalism and white supremacy continues to exist a century later. Within the last decade, the white nationalist movement has reentered political discussion as a significant force. White supremacy sentiments once again reared their ugly faces in recent years. The "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017, brought Klan members, Neo-Nazis, and other white nationalist groups out of the shadows resulting in violence leading to one death.<sup>163</sup>

Additionally, on January 6, 2021, thousands united at President Donald Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally where a large group of Trump supporters marched on the Capitol. Many then proceeded to breach the Capitol building while a joint session of Congress was underway. A measurable population identified in attendance participating in the breach of the Capitol have connections to white supremacy organizations.<sup>164</sup>

The historical study of the Ku Klux Klan's return in the 1920s has remained a relevant topic of study. Historians continue to study and interpret how the Ku Klux Klan has managed to reemerge several times throughout American history. The role, influence, and impact of the Klan throughout its existence warrants further research.

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<sup>163</sup> Michael A. Peters & Tina Besley, "White Supremacism: The Tragedy of Charlottesville," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 14 (2017): 1309.

<sup>164</sup> Inderjeet Parmar, "Trump's Coup and Insurrection," *Insight Turkey* 23, no.1 (Winter 2021):41.

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