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A HISTORY OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

IN OKLAHOMA FROM 1920 TO THE PRESENT

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A HISTORY OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN

IN OKLAHOMA FROM 1920 TO THE PRESENT

by

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PREFACE

Oklahoma, one of the baby states of the United States, reached its maturity by admission into the Union in 1907. Before its admission it had undergone many serious afflictions associated with the conglomerate mass of issues that confronted a public domain territory. While these issues were serious they were in some respects negligible in comparison with those associated with the secret order known as Knights of the Ku Klux Klan that infected not only the minds of its citizens but its officials of all varieties.

While the Klan in Oklahoma, as an organization, was not so far dissimilar from similar organizations that functioned in other states, nevertheless the issues involved, and the procedures followed are so unusual that they command interest and should receive the attention of someone to record them in a monographic form.

The information that is disclosed in this thesis represents in a very small way some of the more flagrant cases that can be associated with the nefarious activities of this extra-legal organization that ran rampant throughout the length and breadth of our state for some five years after the termination of the First World War. Since the characters involved are frequently those associated with positions of prominence and dignity, and since the evidence available regarding many cases is somewhat negligible the writer has attempted to be discreet in every way in presenting as clearly and concisely as possible a brief story of the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma.

Inez Lillian Clubb

May 19, 1941

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Chapter I

The National Klan

About the close of the World War in 1918 an organization, known as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, began to attract nation wide attention. The name was similar to that of a former society formed in the South during the Reconstruction Period to maintain white supremacy and to protect the Southern people from Northern injustices.

Many people thought that this new order was simply a renewal of the older one. The organization, itself, claimed this. The constitution of the order, adopted in September, 1916, specifically states:

We solemnly declare to all mankind that the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, incorporated, is the original, genuine Ku Klux Klan organized in the year 1866, and active during the reconstruction period of American history; and by and under its new corporate name is revived, reconstructed, remodeled, refined, and expanded into a fraternal, patriotic, ritualistic society of national scope, duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Georgia,¹

A comparison of the two organizations, their purposes, their methods of work, and their origins reveals a number of differences as well as a number of similarities.

Both were secret societies organized in the South. The members of both groups had to take an "iron clad" oath of secrecy. There were only four things for which a Klansman could expose a fellow Klansman; violation of the Klansman's oath, treason against the United States, rape, and malicious murder.²

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1. "Constitution", in The Reference Shelf No. 10, I, Julia E. Johnsen, compiler, pp. 46-47.
 2. "Section IV of the Klan Oath", in The Modern Ku Klux Klan, Henry P. Fry, p. 70.

The formal organization of the two groups was similar, but many new names were given to officers, and many minor changes were made in the organization of the society. The regalias of both were alike in the respect that they were designed to conceal the identity of the wearer. The Klan of the Reconstruction Period, however, used robes of different designs. They were usually made by the wife or some friend of the member. The new order had a particular style of white robe that Simmons, Imperial Wizard and originator of the Klan, had designed and for which he held the copyright.

The methods used to obtain the desired ends of the two groups were very much alike. The Klan set itself up as an extra law enforcement agency declaring that it would handle cases that the law enforcement agencies either would not or could not adequately settle. Often the Klan was kind enough to offer evidence as well as its services to the local officers. The persons accused and condemned by the Klan after they had not been dealt with satisfactorily by the legal authorities were usually given a warning and if that was not sufficient a masked band appeared, which, as a rule, either whipped or tarred and feathered the victim. Often these violators of the rules of society, as interpreted by the Klan, were ordered to leave town.

The very fact that its membership was not known enabled it to obtain information that would otherwise not have been available.

Its spectacular parades, also, were used to act as warnings to the general public. In practically every community, where there was a local Klan, parades were held at one time or another. These consisted of a large number of masked members, many from other communities, riding or walking through the streets of the city. Large banners with captions

against crime or certain groups of individuals were carried, and hand-bills were often scattered. The typical parade was usually led by men carrying the United States' Flag and the fiery cross, the latter being the symbol of the society. In Jacksonville, Florida, a placard, typical of others, was used. It read: "Warning--Undesirables, Both White and Black, We Know You. This Loafing, Thieving and Prowling Around Must Stop, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan"³

The dissimilarity between the two Klan was the difference in purpose. The object of the Klan of Reconstruction days was to maintain the supremacy of the whites, and to protect them against disorders and oppression from reactionary laws and scalawag officers. With such an object in view the organization appealed only to those people in the South, and after it was accomplished the society disbanded.

Promotion of Americanism was apparently the basic principle of the new order as proclaimed by the ideals which it set up. The new Klan was accused of being more like the early Know Nothing Party in its aims than like its name sake. The Klan leaders, however, denied this. Edward Clarke, a Klan officer, stated:

The modern Klan is not, as our enemies charge, a revival of Know-nothingism. It is not a political party, it will take no part in political controversies, and it has nothing to do with partisan issues.⁴

Persons writing to Atlanta for information on this new American

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3. Frank Parker Stockbridge, "Ku Klux Klan Revival", Current History, XIV, 25 (April, 1921).
 4. Edward Young Clarke, "View of the Klan from the Inside", Literary Digest, LXXIV, 52 (August 5, 1922).

organization were sent a list of twenty questions which had to be answered to the satisfaction of the Klan officials before material would be sent. Nine of the questions show that certain classes were definitely excluded:

1. Were your parents born in the United States of America?
2. Are you a Gentile or a Jew?
3. Are you of the white race or a colored race?
4. Do you believe in the principles of a pure Americanism?
5. Do you believe in white supremacy?
6. What is your politics?
7. What is your religious faith?
8. Of what religious faith are your parents?
9. Do you owe any kind of allegiance to any foreign nation, government, institution, sect, people, ruler, or person?⁵

The answers desired from the postulants are to be found in one of the pamphlets.

Only native-born white American citizens who believe in the tenets of the Christian religion and who owe no allegiance of any degree or nature to any foreign government or institution, religious or political, or to any sect, people or persons, are eligible for membership.⁶

Judging from these quotations it is readily seen that the new organization had purposes that would appeal to a much broader cross section of the American public than the single appeal of white supremacy.

According to the official literature five classes of people were barred from the Klan. These were the Negroes, Japanese and other Orientals, Roman Catholics, Jews, and all foreign-born persons.⁷

The new Klan was started by Colonel William Joseph Simmons, whose

5. Stockbridge, "Ku Klux Klan Revival", p. 22.

6. Ibid.

7. LeRoy Percy, "Modern Ku Klux Klan", Atlantic Monthly, CXXX, 122 (July, 1922).

father was an officer in the old Klan.⁸ The title "colonel" was an honorary one given to him, partly because he was a private in Company B of the first Regiment of Alabama Volunteers in the Spanish American War, and partly because he was an officer of the twenty-ninth regiment, uniform rank, in the Woodman of the World.⁹

For a number of years he served as a Methodist minister, but he was finally suspended for failure to take a pastorate. The report of his suspension elicited from him the statement that the church had discriminated against him. In return the church maintained that his failure to receive better positions was due to inefficiency.¹⁰

In 1928 Simmons was described as being about forty-eight years of age, with a large nose, grayish eyes, gray hair that had once been red, good teeth, a square chin, and a spacious forehead. He was regarded as a rather impractical dresser.¹¹ Colonel Simmons had doubtless heard about the Klan from his father and it is possible that he had made a thorough study of its constitution, because so many of the ideas for the new Klan resembled those of the old organization. He stated that the plan for the society had been in his mind for years before he tried to perfect it into a workable form.¹²

After his dismissal from the church he obtained work as a district

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8. W. G. Shephard, "How I Put Over the Klan", p. 6.
 9. Robert L. Duffus, "Salesmen of Hate, The Ku Klux Klan", World's Work, XLVI, 31 (May, '23).
 10. W. G. Shephard, "How I Put Over the Klan", based on personal interview with Simmons, Colliers, LXXXII, 6 (July 14, 1928).
 11. W. G. Shephard, "Fiery Double Cross", based on personal interview with Simmons, Colliers, LXXXII, 8 (July 29, 1928).
 12. Ibid., p. 6.

manager for a fraternal order. This new position quite likely was very agreeable to him for he professed membership in seven fraternal orders other than the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and claimed to hold twenty-three degrees in them.¹³ It would appear that he supplemented his fraternal duties with other positions at various times, for in 1915 he was an organizer of Woodmen of the World; in 1918 he was state manager of the Heralds of Liberty, in 1920 a lecturer, and in 1921 he was listed as Imperial Wizard, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁴

While spending three months in bed recuperating from an accident he designed the robes, outlined the ceremonies, compiled the ritual, and perfected the plan for the society.¹⁵

Colonel Simmons in his testimony before Congress in 1921 made the following statement as to the type of organization he had planned.

Twenty years ago I received the inspiration to establish a fraternal, patriotic secret order for the purpose of memorializing the great heroes of our national history, inculcating and teaching practical fraternity among men, to teach and encourage a fervent practical patriotism toward our country, and to destroy from the hearts of men the Mason and Dixon line, and build thereupon a great American solidarity and distinctive national conscience which our country sorely stands in need of.¹⁶

Some six years before the Colonel gave this testimony he outlined his plan for a patriotic fraternal order to certain friends, and as a result of the interest they displayed a meeting was held in the office

13. Ibid., p. 32.

14. "Atlanta City Directory", cited in Modern Ku Klux Klan, Henry P. Fry, p. 26.

15. Shephard, "How I Put Over the Klan", p. 32.

16. Colonel Simmons, "Testimony Before Congress", cited by Robert L. Duffus, World's Work, XLVI, 32 (May, 1922).

of E. R. Clarkson, a lawyer of Atlanta, Georgia. At this meeting held in October 1915 thirty-four men were in attendance. This was to be the first meeting of the new society. Three of the men assembled were members of the Old Ku Klux Klan. These three along with their confederates showed their interest in the proposed order by signing an application for a charter for a fraternal organization to be known as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan instead of the old title, Ku Klux Klan.¹⁷

This new organization with a ritual and a secret oath was to be national in scope, and as a means of making it popular and effective a regular hierarchy of officers was provided-most of whom were private. The petition for the charter was granted December 4, 1915. Later, on July 1, 1916, a special charter was issued by the Superior Court, Fulton County, Georgia.¹⁸

Before the charter was granted the first formal meeting, which was an initiation, was held. The site of the meeting was Stony Mountain, just outside Atlanta. Here fifteen men went through a very impressive ceremony in which a blazing cross played an important part. As means of impressing the patriotic motif an old American flag was on an improvised altar. A Bible, together with a sword which had been used by both sides in the Civil War, added to the uniqueness and solemnity of the ceremony. The news of this rite spread and gave the new organization publicity.¹⁹

17. Shephard, "How I Put Over the Klan", p. 32

18. "Ku Klux Klan--Who--Why--What!" from A.B.C. of Ku Klux Klan, Ku Klux Klan Press, in The Reference Shelf No. 10, I, 38.

19. Shephard, "How I Put Over the Klan". p. 34.

The name Invisible Empire--indeed a most appropriate term--was frequently applied to the society, but more often the name Knights of the Ku Klux Klan or simply the letters K. K. K. were used.²⁰

The Klan as planned and organized had much in common with other fraternal orders. Mummery and mystery of weird varieties permeated the rites of the society. The Klan ritual was known as the Kloran, and was sometimes called "The White Book". Members were known as citizens, and candidates were called aliens. The candidates were never initiated, but in the language of the Kloran they became "naturalized citizens" of the order.²¹

To become a member a person had to be a native white male citizen of the United States. He had to be sponsored by some person already in the Klan. A local committee was to investigate and decide whether the character of the candidate was above reproach. The idea of Simmons was to make the order very selective and to keep out all undesirables. Through this method selection the Klan was to act as a watchguard of Americanism and to supervise the morals of the community. After Hiram Wesley Evans, who succeeded Simmons as Imperial Wizard, came into power in 1923 the regulations were much less restrictive. According to the new Wizard's interpretation of the constitution a person in order to become a member had to be endorsed by only one member of the Klan, and there was no investigation.²²

20. "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan", in Dictionary of Secret and other Societies, Arthur Preuss, compiler, B. Herder Book Co, 1924, p. 233.

21. Ibid., p. 234.

22. Shephard, "Fiery Double Cross", p. 8.

The United States was divided into domains which consisted of several states. The constitution called for eight domains, but in 1921 for some unknown reason there were ten. Each states was called a realm and it in turn was divided into districts. The domain was in command of a Grand Goblin; the realm was under a King Kleagle, who was sometimes known as a Grand Dragon. The field organizers were known as Kleagles. The organization in many respects had a military set up; all communications had to go through the King Kleagle before they could be sent to the headquarters of the Klan at Atlanta.²³

The officers of the Klan were also given unusual titles which apparently added to the mystery and impressiveness of the organization. The repeated use of the letter "K" aided in inciting and holding public interest and was of especial value in advertising the Klan.

At the head of the Klan was the Imperial Wizard or Emperor who according to the constitution could not be removed from office except by unanimous vote of the Imperial Klonselium, whose members were appointed by him. Simmons, the founder of the organization and the father of the constitution, was supposed to hold this office permanently.²⁴

The Exalted Cyclops corresponded to the president of other groups; Kaliff to vice-president; Klakard to lecturer; Kludd to chaplain; Kladd to conductor; Klargo to inner guard; and Klaxter to outer guard. The investigating committee for new members was known as a Klocann, and the Night Hawks had charge of candidates. The meeting room of the Klan was

23. "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan", in Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies, p. 234.

24. Fry, Modern Ku Klux Klan, p. 167.

a Klavern, and the chief of staff was called the Imperial Kleagle.²⁵

The motto of the Klan was "Non Silba Sed Anthar". Simmons explained that it was part Latin and part Saxon. Silba meant self and Anthar meant others; the motto, therefore, meant "Not for self, but for others".²⁶

In the South there were two lines of approach to the public. One of these avenues was through the fact that the old Ku Klux Klan was almost a thing of reverence to the people, some of whom still remembered Reconstruction days. The Klan to the Southerner typified all that was best in the South. By judicious use of propoganda it was not difficult to rally the people of that district to the old standard.

The other approach was through the cry that white supremacy was threatened--an ever pervading fear of the Southern white. The World War was partially responsible for upsetting the equilibrium that had been reached between the two races. The Negro was being offered positions in the North because the rush of war orders called for more employees. Economic independence was causing the Negro to demand more and more equality with the white race, and this the Southern mind could not accept. Negroes returning from the North had lost the air of humility expected of them in Southern regions.²⁷ The people of the South were ready for any plan that offered a solution to the problem of their fear of the loss of white domination.

25. Ibid., p. 234.

26. Shephard, "How I Put Over the Klan", p. 32.

27. Stockbridge, "Ku Klux Klan Revival", p. 23.

As the Klan originated in the South the Negro would of course be the first group discriminated against. As long as he kept his place, as the white man saw it, he was not disturbed; but an Imperial Proclamation clearly states the attitude of the Klan toward the race problem. All men eligible were invited to join the Klan "to maintain forever white supremacy in all things...." The Ku Klux Klan Creed contained the following paragraph outlining the Klan belief.

We avow the distinction between the races of mankind as same has been decreed by the Creator, and shall ever be true in the faithful maintenance of white Supremacy and will strenuously oppose any compromise thereof in any and all things.²⁹

In common with all sections of the United States the people of the South became interested in the Klan because of its secrecy, and its air of the unknown. Appeals to religious intolerance were very successful, too, because the South has always seemed to have an aversion, that was almost fear, to the Roman Catholic Church.

In spite of these appeals to the people of the South, the Klan did not at first spread very rapidly outside of Atlanta. Several reasons could be offered for its stationary condition but perhaps the real cause came from the trouble that Simmons had with some of his early organizers. For example one Jonathan B. Frost appointed by Simmons to go to Birmingham in 1916 to organize a Klan, absconded with the money in his charge. He was later apprehended, but lawyers got most of the money.³⁰ Also, by June, 1920 the society was in financial difficulties,

28. William Joseph Simmons, "Imperial Proclamation", in The Reference Shelf No. 10, I, 46.

29. "Ku Klux Klan Creed", in The Reference Shelf No. 10, I, 47.

30. Duffus, "Salesman of Hate", p. 35.

having at this time only four or five thousand members altogether.³¹

About this time Simmons came in contact with one Edward Young Clarke, a former reporter on the Atlanta Constitution, who was associated with Mrs. Elizabeth Tyler in a company known as the Southern Publicity Association. Clarke joined the Klan and was soon rewarded by being appointed Imperial Kleagle, or general superintendent.

He was to conduct the publicity campaign for the organization. A contract was made between him and Simmons by which Clarke was to receive for the first six months the full initiation fee of ten dollars. Thereafter two dollars of the fee were to go to the national organization.³²

By this time the World War was over and the cry of Americanism was rampant throughout the United States. Moral conditions were generally bad as a result of the social upheaval the war had occasioned. Clarke, who was a good publicity man, made use of the existing conditions to arouse the people of the United States to the need of the Klan. The appeal of the Klan soon became nation wide instead of local. The organization as a means of fostering its merits also maintained that it was on the side of the law, and when the officers were corrupt the Klan was to help purify and uplift the morals of the community. It was this phase of the Klan that appealed to ministers and others who were seriously alarmed about the prevailing conditions of vice and crime. People had to a great extent lost faith in the law and many

31. John Moffatt Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind, p. 7.

32. Robert L. Duffus, "How the Ku Klux Klan Sells Hate", World's Work, XLVI, 183 (June 1923).

individuals were ready to turn to any plan that seemed to offer a solution.

One author³⁴ declared that there were six or maybe seven classes of Klansmen--organizers and promoters, business men, politicians, the preachers, the horse play crew, and sixth, the bootleggers. Some selfish interest prompted most of them to join. The organizers and promoters were usually interested in the amount of money they could collect for themselves, the business men joined to get trade, and the politicians, as usual, wanted votes. The preachers were interested in improving the morals in the community and increasing the influence of the church. Along with them were associated the honest fanatics who did not realize the extent to which the Klan would go to enforce its decrees. The horse play crew took in persons always looking for some new excitement and willing to join any group that promised something unusual. The bootleggers were interested in protection from the Klan itself and thought that if they were in the inside they would not be molested. The group of quitters who joined and, after realizing the type of organization withdrew, might be called the seventh class.

Great parades and public initiations gave the society the needed publicity. These were often held out of doors near a group of trees, and by clever parading of candidates behind the trees, it was easy to confuse the audience on the number of klansmen present. It was the custom of the organization on these occasions to have klansmen from neighboring towns and communities attend in uniform; so that the

34. Duffus, "Salesman of Hate", p. 35.

general public was often mistaken as to the real strength of the local group.

Through this means of publicity and the use of clever propaganda, which appealed to the prejudices of the people in every section of the United States, the Klan gained rapidly in membership. During the first fifteen months after Clarke took charge approximately 85,000 new members were enrolled.³⁵

With this stupendous growth the Klan had become, instead of the simple fraternal organization planned by Simmons a financial gold mine for Clarke. In order to keep the money pouring into the hands of the leaders, Clarke realized that the local organizers must also benefit. Through his ingenuity a new system was worked out whereby the local men profited handsomely for their cooperation. Of the \$10 fee, \$1.00 went to state organizers, fifty cents to the Grand Goblin or head of the Domain, and \$4 to the Kleagle or solicitor. Two dollars and a half went to Clarke and Tyler, and the rest went into the Klan treasury. From the sale of uniforms and the fees paid, around \$860,000 was collected during the first fifteen months of Clarke's tenure. Of this amount Simmons received around \$170,000 in commissions. It was estimated that Clarke and Tyler received about \$590,000 during this same period.³⁶ Out of this Clarke had to pay his office help and any other expenses that he and his agents incurred. By this scheme every solicitor, whether national, state, or local, enriched himself every time a new member was added. Due to the fact that they thus profited

35. Ibid.

36. Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan; A Study of the American Mind, p. 8.

personally, many solicitors were not over-scrupulous as to the character of the proposed member.

Not only was money taken from the fees of new members, but the sale of robes brought in large sums. These robes of white cotton material were made by the Gate City Manufacturing Company which had a monopoly on their manufacture and were sold to members for \$6.50. At this price the founder of the organization reaped an additional profit of \$2.50, for the contract price to the Klan was \$4.00 though the actual estimated cost of producing the robe was less than \$2.00.³⁷ When Simmons was removed from office in 1923, he sued Evans and got a settlement of \$1,000 a year for his robe copyright. Later on he sold his complete interest in the copyright for \$90,000 cash.

By 1923 the Klan had \$1,000,000 in the treasury and was collecting fees at the rate of \$37,000 a day. In addition to this income, gifts of money from individual members of the society who had been benefited spiritually or financially were used to purchase a home in Atlanta for Simmons.³⁸

At about the same time a portion of the Klan funds was used to purchase a large building on Peachtree Road in Atlanta to be used as headquarters for the Klan. It was known as the Imperial Palace. Lanier University, a former Baptist University, was also purchased and turned into an undenominational school under the presidency of Simmons.³⁹ The curriculum of this university was to stress the ideals of Americanism.

37. Fry, The Modern Ku Klux Klan, p. 41.

38. "Ku Klux Klan--Who-Why-What", from A.B.C. of the Ku Klux Klan Press, in The Reference Shelf No. 10, I, 43.

39. Ibid., p. 44.

In order to accelerate the growth of the order, other promoters were hired. Hiram Wesley Evans, a former dentist from Dallas, Texas, was paid \$8,000 a year to assist in advertising the Klan.⁴⁰ Why this individual was chosen for such important position is not really known. He had been charged by some of his fellow townsmen of unethical conduct in the practicing of dentistry while in Dallas, and his clients were usually Negroes. His personal habits, likewise, were not above reproach. He was accused of manufacturing and selling intoxicating liquors and was known to engage in drunken orgies.⁴¹

Nathan Bedford Forrest, grandson of the founder of the Civil War Klan, was also given a promoters position for which he was paid \$5,000 a year.⁴²

In September, 1921, the New York World began publishing a series of articles designed to expose the Klan to the public. It published the ritual and "held up to ridicule its bombastic rhetoric, its outlandish nomenclature and its childish musseries".⁴³ Considering the great secrecy of the Klan a large number of facts regarding its operation were exposed, but its real strength was highly overestimated.⁴⁴

In October of the same year a Federal Congressional Committee was appointed to investigate the Klan. In the investigation Colonel Simmons declared that the membership was about 100,000;⁴⁵ that his organization

40. W. G. Shephard, "Ku Klux Klan Koin", Colliers, LXXII, 39 (July 21, 1928).

41. Marion Monteval, The Klan Inside Out, pp. 30-31.

42. Shephard, "Ku Klux Klan Koin", p. 39.

43. Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind, p. 11.

44. Ibid.

45. W. F. White, "Reviving the Ku Klux Klan", Forum, LXV, 429.

was simply a fraternal order, and that there was nothing in it that was detrimental to the welfare of the American public. On the whole his testimony made a good impression on the people of the United States.

Either because of the fact that Congress was unable to discover anything vicious about the Klan, or owing to its strength in Congress the inquiry was soon dropped. A number of papers, however, hinted that pressure had been brought to bear on Congress to stop the investigation.

"Wee Willie" Upshaw, Congressman from Georgia elected by the Klan, had prepared a bill demanding investigation of every secret society in the United States. Members of other secret societies not wanting to have their organizations undergo this scrutiny may have been partly responsible for the dropping of the Congressional inquiry.⁴⁶

The World's articles and the Congressional investigation seemed to advertise the society, and in the next few years the Klan spread rapidly and into practically every state in the union. In the year following the Congressional investigation it gained over 1,000,000 new members.⁴⁷

The society first spread from the South into California where the Japanese problem was very acute.⁴⁸ From there it spread into Oregon where it reached such strength that it dominated the state for a time. Many states of low illiteracy rank became strong holds of the Klan. Oklahoma, Texas, and Indiana were three examples of this.⁴⁹

46. Shephard, "Ku Klux Klan Koin", p. 38.

47. Shephard, "Fiery Double Cross", p. 9.

48. Robert L. Duffus, "Ku Klux Klan in the Middle West", World's Work, XLVI, 364 (August 1925).

49. Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan; A Study of the American Mind, p. 51.

In the Central states an especial appeal was made to citizens to join the Klan in order to destroy vice, crime, and bootlegging. The Klan was very strong in many rural sections, and Tannenbaum, newspaper correspondent and penologist, attributes this to the boredom of rural life. He further states that, "the K.K.K. is hysterically sincere, and hysteria is always dangerous because it is next door to insanity."⁵⁰

In the meantime trouble had been developing within the organization itself. Clarke and Mrs. Tyler, part owner of Southern Publicity Association, had been accused of moral misconduct, and Clarke had been indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for violation of the Mann Act.⁵¹ In October, 1922 he resigned his office in the Klan, but his contract was still in effect and was not cancelled until after Evans gained control.⁵²

Hiram Wesley Evans meantime had been gaining strength as a Klan leader. Colonel Simmons at last "somewhat penitent" declared that the Klan was being turned into a money making machine. According to him the high ideals and purposes that had been his aim in creating the society were being cast aside.⁵³

The Imperial Klanvocation was held at Peachtree Creek Battlefield in November, 1922. This was a secret meeting attended by Klan representatives from over the United States.⁵⁴ At this meeting Simmons resigned his office as Imperial Wizard, and Evans was elected to take

50. Frank Tannenbaum, "Ku Klux Klan, its Social Origin in the South", Century, CV, 880 (April 23, 1923).

51. Duffus, "Salesman of Hate", p. 38.

52. Ibid.

53. Shephard, "Fiery Double Cross", p. 9.

54. Ibid.

his place. Afterwards Simmons declared that he had been induced to resign through fear of blood shed, but Evans denied this and said that Simmons was an impractical dreamer.⁵⁵ The new office of Emperor was created especially for Simmons, but his power as a leader was taken away. Headquarters of the Klan were now moved from Atlanta to Washington, D. C.⁵⁶

It was under the leadership of Evans that the Klan reached its height and had local organizations in all sections of the United States. Although it is not known exactly how many members the Klan had, one reporter estimated that the number was probably around 2,500,000.⁵⁷ Many other authors seem to think that this estimate was not far wrong.

Women could not become members of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, but a woman's organization corresponding to the Klan was organized and known as the "Kamelia". Such women's societies were known to exist as early as 1921, but the official announcement of their existence did not appear until 1923 when Simmons made an official proclamation concerning the Kamelias to the public.

Always in my dream of a great renewal of Americanism.... there was the contemplation of a great woman's organization, adhering to the same principles, committed to the same purposes and impelled by the same motives as to organization as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. For a considerable period the demand upon me for an organization of women has increased until the demand has become a clamor from well nigh every section of the United States.

A response to the appeal of the earnest, devoted, patriotic women of America cannot be longer deferred. They must take their

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Robert L. Duffus, "Ku Klux Klan in the Middle West", World's Work, XLVI, 364 (August, 1923).

place alongside the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan....

It is my peculiar privilege and honor and one of the proudest moments of my life, now and here to proclaim the creation and the foundation of the woman's organization to be known as Kamelia....⁵⁸

58. "Proclamation" in New York Journal (New York City), March 23, 1923, in The Reference Shelf No. 10, I, 46.

Chapter II

Growth of the Klan in Oklahoma

The Klan movement, which entered Oklahoma from Texas where the Klan was especially strong, was merely a part of the great National Klan movement. The Klans were organized through the office of the Emperor of the Klan at Atlanta and at first owed allegiance to Simmons and later on to Evans. This allegiance was only nominal, however, although a few Klans did have their charters taken away from them for violation of regulations.¹ This was so seldom done, however, that it might be said that the National Klan had practically no control over local branches. The local Klan officials in reality directed the policy of their own organization. Thus the society became whatever type of organization the people of the community, at least those joining, made it. If the better class of citizens joined and were able to dominate, the Klan in many cases, by giving information to local officers, did aid in improving local conditions. If radical, though sincere fanatics, gained control and sought to reform the community, acts of violence often occurred under the guise of maintaining moral purity in the neighborhood. Occasionally persons joined the Klan merely to satisfy some personal grudge or to actually secure protection from Klan scrutiny. Quite often business men joined because they hoped thereby to gain the Klan trade.

Conditions in Oklahoma were favorable to the growth of such an organization and within a short time after its formal introduction it began to exert both political and social pressure. On at least one

1. Henry P. Fry, Modern Ku Klux Klan, p. 197.

occasion it seemed that a "Civil War" might break out in the state.

While the Klan appealed to religious intolerance, especially against the Catholics, and to racial discrimination against the Negro, the real drawing card of the Klan in Oklahoma was its contention that lawlessness, vice, and crime would be ended by the society.

A study of the newspapers of the period following the war shows that much unpunished crime was taking place. Public morals were rather lax, and the law officers were frequently not performing their duties. Mob violence had been increasing by leaps and bounds in different sections of the state. Night riding had been going on before the Klan ever made its appearance.² Here and there over the state ministers were calling attention to the corruption in the lives of both public and private citizens.

Oklahoma was in many respects still a frontier. The state was very young and was composed of a heterogeneous population. The numerous oil fields had brought in large numbers of irresponsible individuals. Towns had grown so rapidly that the law enforcement agencies had not kept pace. In these new areas drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, and drug selling flourished.³ At the same time these areas were surrounded by a rural people whose minds were still dominated by Puritan ideals of morality. A large Indian population and in some sections a large Negro group added still further variety of opinions and actions.

The day was not long past when the citizen had had to provide

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2. Stanley Frost, "Night Riding Reformers", Outlook, CXXXV, 439 (November 14, 1923).
 3. Bruce Bliven, "From the Oklahoma Front", New Republic, XXXVI, 203 (October 17, 1923).

his own law, and many felt that the K. K. K. provided a way for him to do it again. The vigilante groups had cleaned up the state in earlier days and to the mind of many an Oklahoman the idea occurred that some similar organization was needed in the early 1920's.

White Supremacy did not play a particularly important part in the plans of the Oklahoma Klan. A few of the victims of the mobs were Negroes, but in most cases this was not true. Bootlegging, drug selling, and moral charges seem to have been the excuse given for most of the whippings and tarring and featherings. In Oklahoma the organization was above reproach in at least one respect. The better class of citizens belonged to the Klan for the most part and probably dictated to a great extent its actions.⁴ As a rule it was the better people, if not the broadest minded, in a community that were worried about moral conditions, and as this was the big rallying cry of the Klan the lower class citizen was not admitted in many communities until rather late in the life of the organization.

Simmons, who had formerly been a minister, knew how to have his Kleagles appeal to his former colleagues. Especial efforts were made to enroll them in the organization. Church members were also approached. The Klan was frequently linked with the narrower, less liberal churches, and since Oklahoma had a large number of them an extremely prolific field for political gardening was uncovered.⁵ The ministers joined the organization in great numbers, and it was estimated in 1923 that

4. Stanley Frost, "Behind the White Hoods", Outlook, CXXXV, 492 (November 21, 1923).

5. Stanley Frost, "When the Klan Rules", Outlook, CXXXVI, 186 (January 30, 1924).

from 60 to 95 per cent of the Protestant clergy were or had at some time been members.⁶

One method of obtaining favorable publicity in a church group was to have the Klan appear at some church during services, make a spectacular entrance, possibly have a short talk by one of the masked klansmen, and then leave a donation for the church. One of the first of these appearances reported in the state was on November 22, 1921. A delegation of about one hundred and fifty klansmen in full regalia entered the Christian Church at Crescent. The leader outlined a few of their policies, declared that there were 1,500 members in the county and assured the church that the Klan was backing it.⁷

At Eufaula the pastor of the Baptist Church was given twenty-five dollars one Sunday night by six Klansmen in regulation uniform. In a letter handed to the pastor they stated that the Klan was composed of one hundred per cent Americans who believed in law and order. This same night some klansmen appeared in the Negro Church in the same city and gave a short address reassuring the Negroes that if they behaved themselves they would not be disturbed.⁸

Appearances of this type occurred from time to time throughout the period the Klan was influential. They served not only as a means of advertising the Klan, and gaining the support of the church group, but as a warning to those in the locality not conforming to the established mores of the community.

6. Stanley Frost, "Behind the White Hoods", p. 492.

7. Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), November 23, 1921.

8. Indian Journal (Eufaula), July 12, 1923.

Oklahoma was in the Western Domain of the Klan. During the time the Klan was at its strongest in Oklahoma George B. Kimbro, Jr. of Houston, Texas, was Grand Goblin.⁹ The head of the Klan in Oklahoma was known as the Grand Dragon. Dr. Edwin DeBarr, vice-president of the state university at Norman, was an important Klan member and in 1922 was said to be at the head of the Klan.¹⁰ N. C. Jewett, sometimes known as Clay Jewett, held this office during the Walton administration. He was appointed by Dr. H. W. Evans, then Imperial Wizard, about April 23, 1923.¹¹ The Grand Dragon acted as general superintendent of all the organizations in the state, but received no salary. Each local Klan handled its own dues; but the state officials might call on a local Klan, and if the members desired, money could be sent to the Grand Dragon.¹²

It would be difficult to say at just what time the Klan organized its first den in Oklahoma unless one had access to Klan records. There is little or no evidence of any Klan activities prior to 1921. Doubtless it could be truthfully said that by the first of 1922 the Klan was well organized and had organizations in many counties of Oklahoma. In 1923 the allegation was made that practically every county, if not every county, in the state had a local Klan.¹³

9. Henry P. Fry, Modern Ku Klux Klan, p. 45.

10. "About Politics and Politicians", Harlow's Weekly, XXI, 1 (July 28, 1922).

11. "Testimony of Jewett Before the Joint House and Senate Committee", in Daily Oklahoman, December 3, 1923.

12. Ibid., December 6, 1923.

13. Transcript of Proceedings of the Senate of the Ninth Legislature, Extraordinary Session, State of Oklahoma, Sitting as a Court of Impeachment, p. 79.

Henry P. Fry, a former Kleagle, stated that a large force of field workers were in Oklahoma prior to the race riot in Tulsa which took place in the early summer of 1921. From this fact he drew the conclusion that there was a Klan organization in Tulsa at that time.¹⁴

In August Dr. Cable A. Ridley, reputedly a Klan organizer and a minister of Atlanta, appeared in Tulsa and lectured on the three fold purpose of the Klan. According to Ridley's remarks, the real aims of the Klan were to protect the weak, innocent, and defenseless, to protect and defend the constitution of the United States, and to aid in the execution of constitutional law. He averred that the society was made up of law abiding citizens, but admitted that occasionally acts were committed by other groups and the Klan received the blame.¹⁵

The first official appearance of the Klan at Tulsa was at the funeral of Harry Arrandt, policy secretary who had been slain by hijackers. The Klansmen in full regalia marched by the grave and dropped red roses, which might have been a sign of vengeance.¹⁶

Sometime in the spring of 1921 an Oklahoma City newspaper office received a telephone call asking that a reporter be sent to meet a person in a local hotel lobby. The party concerned was contacted, and the reporter was given a card on which appeared the motto and rules of the Klan. An application blank for Klan membership was also included. While the reporter was occupied reading the material handed to him the unknown person walked away.¹⁷

14. Henry P. Fry, Modern Ku Klux Klan, p. 100.

15. Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City), August 11, 1921.

16. Ibid., December 23, 1921.

17. Ibid., July 24, 1921.

In April of this same year the county attorney of Oklahoma County received an anonymous letter declaring that a local group of men stood ready to protect white supremacy and womanhood.¹⁸

Other evidences showing the existence of a Klan kept arising. These became so numerous that Mayor Walton about this time ordered that any police officer found to be a member of the Klan would be discharged.¹⁹ A few days later the county attorney issued the statement that there would be no interference with the Klan as long as it did not violate the law.²⁰

Federal officials, who came to Oklahoma City in July, asserted that there was undoubtedly an organization of the Klan in the city.²¹ This was probably true for it was reported that a Klan meeting was held northeast of the city in the same month. A number of prominent business and professional men were members.²²

Numerous sporadic incidents were occurring that called public attention to the fact that the Klan was becoming entrenched in much of the life of Oklahoma and it was to be expected that many a venireman was a Klan member. This of course elicited the question as to whether this would influence him as a juror. During the trial of Leo B. Shanahan for the murder of A. E. Payne, a Harrah farmer, J. M. Michaels was asked whether he was a Klan member. Protest was made as to the question, but

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., July 23, 1921.

the judge overruled the protest, and Michaels admitted membership in the organization.²³ This event occurred early in December, 1921, but as to whether this decision of the judge was of great value in other cases is to be doubted. The Klan members had been officially told to deny their membership in the Klan if they desired, and as there was little chance of punishment it is likely that in many cases the Klan members answered in the negative. Jewett, the Grand Dragon, confessed that in the early days of the Klan members were automatically suspended from membership when called for jury service. The suspension, however, terminated with the completion of their civil duty and reinstatement was automatically made. He did assert that the Klan by 1923 had abandoned this practice.²⁴

During the latter part of 1921 and early in 1922 the increase in the number of parades, public initiations, and other public appearances of the Klan testified to the growing membership of the society. On one occasion a group of two hundred appeared at Loco (December, 1921) and posted a notice to all bootleggers to go to work or to leave town. One man who was apparently one of the worst offenders was specifically named in the warning.²⁵ A few days after this event a parade of three hundred members of the Ku Klux Klan was carried through the streets of Dewey in motor cars.²⁶ In Ada an announcement was made in the newspaper for the

23. Ibid., December 6, 1921.

24. "Testimony of Jewett", in Daily Oklahoman, December 4, 1923.

25. Daily Oklahoman, December 4, 1921.

26. Ibid., December 4, 1921.

public to be watching for the Klan appearance. Around forty carloads of masked klansmen appeared at the appointed time and gave the gullible citizen a taste of ornate display.²⁷

Probably one of the most spectacular parades was that held at Tulsa in April, 1922. Between three and four thousand masked and robed klansmen paraded. Thirty horsemen and seven trumpeters led the group. A small truck containing a huge red cross illuminated by electric lights followed. Behind these came the Klansmen bearing banners containing such slogans as "We are 70,000 strong in Oklahoma"; "We are Pledged to Law and Order"; "You can't fool us", etc. Chief Police George Blair who watched the parade corroborated their might when he said that it took a little over an hour for the parade to pass a given point. As usual a huge crowd lined the streets to observe the march.²⁸

Another large parade of Klansmen was held in Oklahoma City about the middle of February of this same year. About two thousand men clad in the ghastly regalia of the Klan marched through the down town section one Saturday night. The Klan legions were preceded by the flag of the Klan and the United States flag. A horseman carrying a lighted cross followed. Then came the Klansmen with their banners which blazoned to the public such slogans as "America for Americans"; "White Supremacy"; "Law Abiding Negroes Need Not Fear Us"; "We Hear and See Everything"; and "3000 of Us In This County". Most of the marchers were either on horseback or in cars. The car tags were covered.²⁹ Much to their great delight about 25,000 witnessed the event. In October, 1922 a

27. Ibid., December 14, 1921.

28. Ibid., April 2, 1922.

29. Ibid., February 12, 1922.

public initiation of 400 members into the Klan was watched by a crowd of 20,000 at the fair grounds in Oklahoma City.³⁰

Women's organizations corresponding to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan were formed in Oklahoma as in other states. In October, a group of eight masked women appeared in a Southside mission in Muskogee. One woman was clad in the full regalia of the Klan while the other seven were dressed in black uniforms. The work of the mission was endorsed and twenty-five dollars was left to help carry on the work. The spokesman said that the group was affiliated with the K. K. K.; that they represented 300 women; and that they were adding new members every day. They called themselves Ladies of the Invisible Empire.³¹

In Oklahoma City the Ladies of the Ku Klux Klan was organized about this time. One "F. C. Barefield" of Duncan was Imperial Warden. Native born white protestant women of unquestionable character, who believed in religion, separation of church and state and chastity of the home were eligible.³² Their costumes consisted of blue gowns with white caps and masks,³³ and they freely admitted that they were not directly affiliated with the Klan.

It is a question as to how closely any of these early women's organizations were affiliated with the Klan. It was not until 1923 that the Kamelias were officially organized by Simmons,³⁴ and by this

30. Ibid., October 5, 1922.

31. "Ladies of the Invisible Empire Appear", Harlow's Weekly, XXI, 15 (October 21, 1922).

32. Daily Oklahoman, November 27, 1922.

33. Ibid., January 16, 1923.

34. Ibid., June 3, 1923.

time he was no longer head of the Klan. Evans (Simmon's successor) refused to recognize the Kamelias. He did, however, agree to lend support to some women's organizations such as Ladies of the Invisible Empire, and Puritan Daughters of America.³⁵

The Kamelias, nevertheless, did have a strong organization in Oklahoma, and in some places worked rather closely with the Klan. The first Kamelia Convention was held in Tulsa April 21, 1923. At that time the Klan marched with the Kamelias in a parade.³⁶ There was some dissention over this fraternizing and the Tulsa Klan split over the question of recognizing the Kamelia group.³⁷

Early in 1922 Governor ^{Watson} Robinson received a letter from No. 1 Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan in which the organization claimed a county membership of 2,000 and a state membership of 75,000. The letter went on to say that the local officers in Oklahoma City and Oklahoma County were especially lax in enforcing the laws, and urged the governor to make an investigation and to remove those who were not performing their duties.³⁸

In August of 1923 the Klan planned a statewide demonstration to serve as a memorial to the late President Harding and to institute a state wide drive against lawlessness. On the occasion of the display two hundred and sixty fiery crosses blazed simultaneously on high places throughout Oklahoma. The cross of the Eufaula Klan, which was located

35. Ibid., June 3, 1923.

36. Ibid., April 21, 1923.

37. Ibid., July 11, 1923.

38. Ibid., January 27, 1923.

on Foley Mountain, was lighted between nine and ten p.m.³⁹ The one in Oklahoma City was on the Palace Garage opposite the Braniff Building.⁴⁰

These public exhibitions, parades, etc., while advertising the Klan, did not necessarily influence the evil doers in a community to the extent that they changed their ways; so other methods periodically had to be used. While all Klan officials, whether local, state or national, asserted that they always used lawful methods, it was a well established fact that violence in the form of mob activity was frequently employed. As early as July, 1921, reports from El Reno, Enid, and Muskogee told of victims being tarred and feathered after a trial before an "Emperor".⁴¹

From Carter County came the story of a group of men gathering near Wilson, Oklahoma, under the leadership of C. G. Sims to punish Joe Carrol for bootlegging. In the melee both Sims and Carrol were killed.⁴² Carrol, it appears had received a warning from the Ku Klux Klan No. 18.⁴³ One witness, a member of the group later tried for the murder, declared that it was the work of the Klan. While this point was not definitely established it was shown that a Klan did exist in the neighborhood, and on one occasion a room in the Odd Fellow's Lodge Building had been rented in the name of the organization.⁴⁴

39. Indian Journal (Eufaula), August 23, 1923.

40. Daily Oklahoman, August 19, 1923.

41. Ibid., July 24, 1921.

42. Ibid., December 24, 1921.

43. Ibid., February 27, 1923.

44. Ibid., December 24, 1921.

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From here and there over Oklahoma came news of mob action. 1923 frequency of such reports grew less and less until few cases were being published. It was not until the military courts started functioning and Governor Walton's private detectives started investigating that many obscure cases were made known to the public. The victims of these mob activities were often, yes, usually, afraid to report to the law officers such malicious misdemeanors. Their reason could be determined from the fact that they considered such a report as useless or an invitation for further Klan punishment.

According to those claiming to know the workings of the organization, when a lawless character or an infringer on the morals of the community was accused a trial was carried out in a particular manner. In the procedure all members of the group were masked and no one knew his neighbor. After the victim was seized not a word was spoken on the way to the scene of the trial which usually occurred some distance from the city in which the organization was operating. Sometimes members outside of the community conducted the trial and administered the punishment. This procedure was encouraged because it made it more difficult for the victim to identify his persecutors. At the trial only witnesses were allowed to speak, and in most cases these were Klan members. Occasionally some outsider vouched for by a Klan member was called on to give testimony. After the verdict was reached, a verdict that invariably condemned the accused, the punishment was meted out to the culprit. The punishment varied according to the temper of the crowd, but it usually consisted of whipping, tarring and feathering, or in some cases the prisoner was ordered to leave the community. Sometimes both the punishment and the order to leave was given.⁴⁵

45. Ibid., July 23, 1921.

A mile and a quarter southwest of Alsamae was a pasture often used for trials and whippings. The following description of one whipping was quoted by Aldrich Blake, secretary to Governor Walton, as the sworn testimony of a citizen of Tulsa.⁴⁶

I was notified by a man who I think was....that there would be a party in the pasture that night. I didn't get around until rather late and as well as I can remember went out with....We didn't get there until about 11 o'clock and there was a great crowd of men there and a large number of cars. The men were all disguised with old hats and old coats and with handkerchiefs tied around their faces over their eyes. I think that there were about 150 men there--I think not less--maybe more.

They had two prisoners there standing near a telephone pole. The one that was whipped first was told to leave the country. The lights from the cars shown directly upon the prisoners. A man from some other town talked to the prisoners. I didn't know him--you see they usually have a man from some other klan--a stranger in the community to take charge. It is well arranged.⁴⁷

In case a Klan member violated his oath or did something contrary to the will of the Klan he had to be tried before he could be expelled. Charges were brought by an individual, then a committee investigated and decided whether there was sufficient evidence to warrant a trial. Written notice was then given to the defendant. He was allowed a counsel, but the jury was masked. If the defendant was declared guilty he could appeal to the Grand Tribunal of the state and from there to the Imperial Klonecilium which served as the highest court.⁴⁸

Mob law was not the only method used by the Oklahoma Klans to gain their ends. The members early turned to politics as a means of exterminating their avowed enemies. One of these in particular, the Catholic

46. "Aldrich Blake's Story", in Daily Oklahoman, September 7, 1923.

47. Ibid.

48. "Testimony of Jewett", in Daily Oklahoman, December 5, 1923.

group, was fought vigorously. Their parochial schools were severely criticized and many Catholics became afraid that efforts would be made to abolish them. Certain Protestant leaders had always harbored a phobia for the Catholic Church. This feeling invariably had a tendency to spread during periods when strong national sentiment prevailed, such as at the close of wars. The period of readjustment and reorganization that came soon after the armistic of November, 1918 provided one of those rare opportunities in our history for moralists and public crusaders to experiment with many novel ideas in the field of human nature.

Early in 1922, the election year, a rumor arose that the Klan intended to support R. H. Wilson as their candidate for governor. This was at first denied by Klan officials, but the American Searchlight, the Klan's official paper, made the following statement: "We are for R. H. Wilson to lead the Democratic Party to victory in the November election."⁴⁹

There was a divergence of opinion as to what part the Klan played in the primary election. Jewett admitted that a list of candidates who were Klan members was made available to local Klans.⁵⁰ The Oklahoma News maintained that next to the Reconstruction League, which was supporting Walton, the most important influence in the election was the Ku Klux Klan.⁵¹ The Oklahoma Herald, which often acted as a spokesman for the Klan, denied that it had a slate,⁵² while the Daily Oklahoman

49. "Editorial", Harlow's Weekly, XXI, 7 (July 28, 1922).

50. "Testimony of Jewett", in Daily Oklahoman, December 5, 1923.

51. "About Politics and Politicians", Harlow's Weekly, 2-4 (April 7, 1922).

52. Ibid., Harlow's Weekly, XXI, 3 (August 4, 1922).

said the election was primarily a contest between the Catholics and the Klan.⁵³ This assertion was only partially true for J. F. McGuire, the Chancellor of the Oklahoma Diocese, denied that the Catholics were to vote as a body.⁵⁴ On the other hand there is evidence to indicate that there was a difference of opinion among Klan members as to whether as a group they should endorse candidates.

The candidates for governor in the Democratic primary were R. H. Wilson, recognized by most commentators as being backed by the Klan; Judge Owen, who had Catholic support at first; and Jack Walton, who was being aided by the Reconstruction League. At the last minute the Catholics, fearing a Klan victory, deserted Owen and shifted their votes to Walton whose wife was a Catholic.⁵⁵ This shift undoubtedly helped give Walton the nomination, and in a way his election as Governor of Oklahoma in November was assured. By this realignment of factions the Klan lost the governorship of Oklahoma, but won a large number of legislative members.

Up until the time Walton took office in January, 1923, he had neither fought the Klan nor had he made any special effort, at least openly, to obtain its support. While Mayor of Oklahoma City he had allowed their parades, but he had threatened to remove any police officers who were found to be members. This apparent open-minded attitude is evinced when he became governor for Dr. A. E. Davenport,

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

55. Ibid., pp. 1-5.

a Klan member, was appointed health commissioner. Reports regarding his feelings, however, were conflicting and confusing. In November the Tulsa World reported that he intended to fight the Klan. Likewise was he reported to have said that all sheriffs who were Klan members were known and that they would be removed. Walton, through Aldrich Blake denied this charge and said that he was making no fight on the Klan or its members.⁵⁶

The Klan in subsequent months continued to grow in power and numbers until some communities were completely dominated by it. Not only were the law enforcement agencies filled with members in some areas, but as Oklahoma judges were elected, the court system was gradually innovated, if not dominated by the Klan in some localities./

The situation in Tulsa was an example of what happened when some unofficial group attempted to dominate the local government. Here the Klan was able to dictate to many officials. The sheriff and his deputies, together with the judge and county attorney were charged with being Klan members.⁵⁷ Because of the support that was given to Klansmen the by Tulsa Tribune ere long the charge was made that it was the mouthpiece of the society.⁵⁸ Whether or not the charge was true makes little difference, but we do know that the Klan's work was condoned by many residents. Evidence on this point is found in the two hundred acts of violence which occurred in Tulsa County alone over a two year

56. "Walton Denies Klan Fight", Harlow's Weekly, XXI, 15 (November 25, 1922).

57. Transcript of Proceedings, Senate Court of Impeachment, p. 159.

58. Ibid.

period⁵⁹ with little or no effort on the part of the officials to solve the issues involved or to bring the perpetrators to justice. Most of these punishments were apparently over cases involving bootlegging, narcotics, and immorality, but it would seem that some innocent citizens were maltreated.⁶⁰

Occasionally, if opposed by the Klan, it became impossible to have persons arrested. A group of men in Tulsa obtained information concerning the immoral conduct of Richard Lloyd Jones, owner of the Tulsa Tribune. One of the group, John R. Woodward, took this information to the officers.⁶¹ The evidence was gone over by the assistant city attorney. Woodward left the attorney's office with the idea that Jones would be arrested. Jones, however, was never arrested, and Woodward then took the matter up with the commissioners. The assistant attorney when pressed for a statement, stated that he thought it best for the community that Jones not be arrested. The assistant was dismissed by the commissioners. Woodward, shortly afterwards, was called on by Minor Merriweather, one of the Klan officials, and asked to meet him in the Mideo Building. Woodward said that among others present in the Mideo Building were Merriweather and DeBarr, high ranking state Klan officials. They told Woodward in this conference that Jones was a friend of the Klan and would be protected from malicious slander and questionable charges. They also stated that the Klan had prevented

59. H. J. Haskell, "Martial Law in Oklahoma", Outlook, CXXXV, 133 (September 26, 1923).

60. Testimony Taken Before the Committee on Impeachment of Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Officers, Special Session, Ninth Legislature, State of Oklahoma, 1923, V, 2197.

61. John R. Woodward, In Re Tulsa, privately printed, 1925, p. 87.

and would continue to prevent warrants against Jones from being issued through either the county attorney's office or the police court.⁶²

In at least one instance evidence was uncovered where Tulsa officers went near a scene of Ku Klux Klan violence and turned back after being accosted by someone who was evidently posted as a guard.⁶³ It was also reported that a band of whippers existed in Tulsa. A whip, it was said, was kept in the custody of one person and released for use as needed. If this band was not a Klan at least a number of its members were Klansmen.⁶⁴ Even the respectable people of Tulsa who were not members of the Klan were afraid of it.

Later, when asked to state their reasons for not reporting certain acts of violence, they either admitted that they were afraid or said that it would have done no good because the Klan dictated the activities of local officers.⁶⁵

These appalling charges brought a violent refutation from Grand Dragon, Jewett. He maintained that after he came into office the Klan worked to uphold the law through the regular civil officers and that not even so much as a threatening letter was ever sent. He declared that he had the power to revoke the charter of any local Klan violating these orders, but admitted that he had never exercised his prerogative.⁶⁶

The number of klansmen in Oklahoma can be only estimated. Jewett said that there were no records of membership lists, but he thought

62. Ibid., pp. 87-89.

63. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, V, 2212.

64. Daily Oklahoman, August 21, 1923.

65. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, V, 2212.

66. "Testimony of Jewett", in Daily Oklahoman, December 5, 1923.

that there were about 148,000.⁶⁷ Walton, on the other hand, estimated the number at about 100,000.⁶⁸

At any rate the members were numerous enough to present a real problem in Oklahoma. The Klan probably had as much influence in Oklahoma as any other state. Success in many fields of activity had been signally achieved. The least of such achievement of course was not the fact that it had been successful in placing Klan members in many local offices. In 1923 when the Klan was probably at its height, from 65 to 70 per cent of the lower house of the legislature were members.⁶⁹ Just how many other state officials were Klan members was never known, but many of them admitted affiliation.

The governor (Walton) himself was accused by many of being a Klan member at one time. Others said he tried to become a member but was turned down. Jewett stated that Minor Merriweather, former Muskogee Kleagle, and another klansman "obligated" (whatever that implies) Walton into the Klan but his application was turned down.⁷⁰ Walton vehemently denied that he ever made an application to the Klan. Much conflicting evidence came out about this particular point. Copies of application blanks to the Klan with Walton's name filled in and signed by Dr. W. T. Tilley, of Muskogee, and Dr. A. E. Davenport, State Health Commissioner, as sponsors were produced, but it was never proved that

67. Ibid.

68. Transcript of Proceedings, Senate Court of Impeachment, p. 79.

69. Ibid.

70. Daily Oklahoman, September 8, 1923.

the blanks were authentic.⁷¹ In fact, it was admitted by Davenport (could such an admission have come by persuasion?) that the blanks were filled out in Walton's absence.⁷² Tilley was supposed to have administered the oath, but when pressed for confirmation he denied it.⁷³ For some unknown reason Tilley shortly after this testimony resigned from the Klan. Such action on his part, probably his testimony, tended to aggravate certain Klan officials who refused to accept his resignation but in turn had him expelled.⁷⁴

Oscar Ameringer, leader of a socialist group that supported Walton in the election, was firmly convinced that Walton did become a member. To him at least if not to many others the following letter was sufficient proof.

1640 Peachtree Road
Atlanta, Georgia
September
Tenth

Nineteen-Twenty-three

Hon. J. C. (Jack) Walton,
Oklahoma City, Okla.

My Faithful Klansman:--

In just recognition of your constant loyalty, unwavering devotion and splendid service to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,

I, by authority possessed by me as Emperor of the Invisible Empire, have conferred upon you the lofty honor of Life Membership in K-UNO, and same dates from August 1st, 1923.

Your certificate will be duly engrossed and forwarded to you at an early date. This letter will be your authority in claiming and proclaiming the fact of your Life Membership.

71. Ibid.

72. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, IV, pp. 1562-63.

73. Daily Oklahoman, September 15, 1923.

74. Ibid.

"Let him who serves best be honored most."

Faithfully yours in the Sacred
Unfailing Bond,

(Signed) William Joseph Simmons
Emperor
Invisible Empire⁷⁵

75. Oscar Ameringer, If You Don't Weaken, the Autobiography Of Oscar Ameringer, p. 387.

Chapter III

The Fight Against the Klan

The Klan did not grow without opposition from some of the clearer thinking citizens. A number of newspapers in the state issued warnings as to what might be the result if it gained too much power. The methods that were used by the Klan and the possibilities for their abuse called forth most of the criticism.

In different parts of the country organizations of one kind or another were formed to combat any or all subversive activities of the Klan or kindred organizations. Locally the National Liberty League, organized in April, 1922 at Muskogee was the most important. In one of their formative gatherings a group of 500 persons heard former Supreme Court Justice, George Ramsey, criticize the organization. From his speech and other disclosures it became apparent that the purpose of this organization was to carry on a systematic educational program against the intolerance, injustice, and hypocrisy of the Klan.¹

In April a local investigation of the Klan started in Oklahoma City. Immediately following this, Governor Robertson issued "General Order No. 11" which excluded from the Oklahoma National Guards anyone who belonged to a secret organization. It read in part:

For sometime past rumors have been filtering into this department, and what purports to be proof has been furnished the governor of the state that a number of highly respected and high ranking officers of the guard have become affiliated in the secret organization popularly known as the Ku Klux Klan.

I am in the hope that this is not true, and that it is only a rumor for no national guardsman can serve his state or his country in the spirit of loyalty and singleness of purpose

1. "Editorial", Harlow's Weekly, XXI, 14 (April 28, 1922).

contemplated by his oath, if he is bound by an allegiance to any secret organization that has for its primary purpose the application of force to compel the individual citizen to conform to the moral, political, or business ideas of that organization....

The national guard has no quarrel with the Ku Klux Klan or any other secret organization, but the only excuse for a national guard in time of peace is that a trained force of loyal and disciplined men may be always at hand to enforce the law and preserve orderliness when the civil authorities have proven unable or unwilling to carry out their proper functions.

That being true, no member of the national guard can afford to stultify himself or bring the service under suspicion by swearing allegiance to any organization that may at any time come under the ban of the law and require the service of the guards to suppress. In such a case, the guardsman would be crucified between two allegiances, for he cannot be true to both the state and those who for the time being are its enemies.²

The order went on to say that any member of the Klan or any organization whose aims might conflict with those of the state or national laws should either resign from the organization or from the guard. No specific records were made of just how many resignations followed. It is indeed questionable whether those who did find it necessary to give up their service in the weeks following this publication would attribute the motive to Klan affiliation.

The Klan issue, however, kept coming more and more into the foreground. The State Board of Regents met on April 20, 1922 and passed the following resolution:

Owing to the controversy that exists throughout the state in connection with the Ku Klux Klan and the Anti-Ku Klux Klan, and the dependency of the university upon retaining the good will of all factions and parties, we believe it unwise for members of the faculty or employees of the University of Oklahoma to place themselves in a position where they will need to take active part in such controversy.³

2. "General Order No. 11", Harper's Weekly, XXI, 14 (April 28, 1922).

3. "Resolution of State Board of Regents", School and Society, XVI, 413 (October 7, 1922).

This effort at restriction was followed by a purely political gesture in January, 1923, when Representative Brydia of Ada, introduced "House Bill 132" which was intended to seriously hamper the Klan. This bill was known as "An Act Defining Secret Societies and Organizations, and the places of meeting and prescribing a penalty for failure to register said officers and members and places of meeting, and declaring an emergency".⁴ It made it a penalty of from one to five years for an officer or a member of any secret organization to attend a meeting to which the public was not invited unless he had his name filed with the county clerk of the county in which the organization existed. (The representatives for many and varied reasons seemed to see little need for such a bill at this time, and on the final roll call the votes stood, ayes 3, nays 92, and absent 12.)⁵

While the mumblings that came out of the legislature during the course of the debate on this proposal were caustic and to some extent personal the governor on the whole emerged little disheveled. Ere long, however, an incident did occur which released a deluge of criticism against Walton and was probably the opening of the preliminary bout of a big fight directed against the Klan. The incident was the placing of Okmulgee under martial law, June 26, 1923. Three men from Okmulgee County, James Stormont, chief of police of Henryetta, J. C. Curry, a minister, and a car dealer called on Governor Walton, and according to Blake, declared that unless lawlessness was put down, riots would

4. Journal of House of Representatives, Regular Session, Ninth Legislature, State of Oklahoma, p. 255.

5. Ibid., p. 442.

ensue.⁶ Officers and men were promptly sent to Okmulgee to investigate the charges. So valid were the allegations that the governor heeded the plea and when the military court was convened it was found that a few deputies had exceeded their authority, but no evidence was disclosed of Klan domination. The stigma of martial law was, therefore, removed (July 12, 1923) only to be reconsidered shortly thereafter when O. White, a Negro teamster was beaten.⁷

A state newspaper on this occasion came out with the assertion:

Let the Klan abolish the mask, let it demonstrate quite conclusively that its operations in regard to punishing alleged offenders go no further than legal co-operation with the duly-constituted-law-enforcing authorities, let it convince the public that it stands back of the constitutional guarantee for freedom of religious worship and all other constitutional guarantees, and there will be no reason why any decent citizen should oppose the Klan's activities.⁸

Another city, Henryetta, of the same county barely escaped the same fate when one of its ministers, Reverend Cornelias Bowles, announced his intention of delivering two sermons on the occupation of Okmulgee by troops.⁹ No particular Klan investigation was made at this time, but many citizens associated all mob activities with Klan atrocities whether the mob action was directly traced to the Klan or not. Many people felt that masked parties could be more easily apprehended if the Klan did not exist.

By the middle of 1923 the Klan was becoming the object of attack throughout the United States. A number of National Klan officials had

6. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, V, 182.

7. Daily Oklahoman, August 31, 1923.

8. Ibid., July 20, 1923.

9. Ibid., July 1, 1923.

been discredited, and in the meantime the public in many places was becoming thoroughly aroused. The expose' of the Mer Rouge murders in Louisiana as being directed by Klan officials gave the Klan much unwanted publicity while in Pennsylvania an attempt to break up a Klan parade resulted in the loss of life. In the latter case some of the Klan members were arrested because they were carrying arms.¹⁰ A few days later at Perth Amboy, New Jersey, a Klan meeting was broken up by a crowd of 5,000. So vengeful were some of the Anti-klan group that firemen and police had to disperse them.¹¹ Instances of these kinds were becoming common and some states were trying to pass anti-mask and anti-secret society laws. It was but natural that the people of Oklahoma should begin to question the position of the Klan in their own state.

The governor, whether it was because he thought the state needed it or because it gave him a good political issue matters not, started mob investigations which rocked the state. Governor Walton in addressing a crowd at Dewey some time after declaring martial law at Okmulgee said:

My office was receiving reports of from three to four whippings a day two or three days a week. Something had to be done. We tried grand juries and courts of inquiry, but they were unable to secure convictions. Okmulgee was but one county in which such a condition existed, but I had to make an example of one county, so I sent troops there. The moral effects of those troops going in there has been felt throughout the state and I feel more than justified by the results obtained.¹²

10. Ibid., August 27, 1923.

11. Ibid., August 31, 1923.

12. Daily Oklahoman, July 7, 1923.

About the last of June, he declared that local officials were too often allied with secret mobs. He further declared that four other counties were on the verge of martial law and stated, "I am going to stamp out mob rule and mob violence in Oklahoma if I have to put every county under military law and leave them there as long as I am governor."¹³

A Grand Jury started investigations around Durant the latter part of July. Two men, J. D. Stephenson and E. M. Blanton, alleged officers of the Klan were sentenced to thirty days in jail and ordered to pay a \$50.00 fine on the charge of contempt of court for refusal to produce Klan records.¹⁴

Prior to this, Walton ordered a Grand Jury to investigate the reports of masked violence in Caddo County. The opponents of the Klan had organized a society known as "Loyal Blues". Fear of difficulties between the two groups caused Chief of Police, Hefley, to threaten to call for state troops.¹⁵ McKenzie, assistant state attorney, who had been sent to investigate the whipping of Claude Nathan, had failed to find any evidence. Walton threatened to place the area under martial law if another whipping or act of violence occurred.¹⁶

In August (1923) an event occurred in Tulsa that proved to be the final break between the governor and the Klan, although at first no specific mention was made of the Klan. Nate Hantaman, a police

13. Ibid., June 28, 1923.

14. Ibid., July 24, 1923.

15. Ibid., July 10, 1923.

16. Ibid.

character, who had been previously arrested on dope charges, was taken to police headquarters for questioning. After satisfying the magistrates of his innocence he was released, only to be seized by a band of unmasked men as he left the station. He was then taken out of town and whipped with a blacksnake whip.¹⁷⁾

Lee Kinsman, who claimed authority from the governor to investigate, brought Hantaman to Oklahoma City to the governor's office. The governor at the time was at Sulphur. Blake talked to him by phone and, in reply to a question of Walton's, told him that Nate Hantaman was in the office.¹⁸

Upon learning that Hantaman had been brutally beaten the governor immediately ordered martial law in the following proclamation:

By virtue of the authority conferred upon me by the constitution and laws of Oklahoma as chief executive of the state and commander-in-chief of its military forces, I, J. C. Walton, and being fully appraised that a state of lawlessness and disorder amounting to a state of insurrection against the Civil law now prevails in the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and local officers will not suppress the breaches of the peace;

I hereby declare martial law throughout the area of the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma and have called upon the military forces of the state to enforce the same in order to end, at once, the condition of lawlessness and terror which now exists, to protect human life and keep the public peace until such time as the local civil authorities can again insure the enforcement of the law and the protection of every race, class and condition in the employment of Civil rights and liberties guaranteed them by the constitution of the state and nation.¹⁹

17. Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1923.

18. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, I, 8; Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1923.

19. Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1923.

The Tulsa World supported the governor at this time. The editor declared that:

One of the finest things that could happen at this time would be for the Ku Klux Klan to openly throw its influence in opposition to these whippings, castigations and other forms of summary mob law punishment which have been occurring all too frequently and which is the sole justification for the governor's action.²⁰

And furthermore, he stated that Tulsa needed a new police head, a new mayor, and maintained that Tulsa needed citizens that would resist mob law. "The victims of masked violence," he further declared, "ought not to be the only ones to cry out against this sort of thing."²¹

Anti-klan factions in Tulsa and Oklahoma City supported the martial law decree. Some state editors, however, felt that the governor's action had been too drastic and that the constitutional rights of the citizens were impaired.

After the troops took charge, Tulsa citizens were required to have a military permit to be on the streets between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.²² A military court of inquiry was immediately set up, and investigation was made to determine the connection of local officers with the Klan.

As the probe continued, more and more cases of mob violence were uncovered. About sixty acts of violence were discovered to have occurred in 1922, and between forty and forty-five in 1923.²³ In practically all of these cases the civil authorities had done nothing to discover the guilty parties.

20. "Editorial from Tulsa World" in Daily Oklahoman, August 16, 1923.

21. Ibid.

22. Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1923.

23. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, V, 2186-87.

One case was soon cleared up. Ben Sikes, Earl Sack, Grover Sikes, and J. W. Finley, confessed Klan membership and were sentenced to two years in the penitentiary for the whipping on October, 1922, of Ben Wagner, a German farmer. This was reported to be the first instance in which a Klan member was convicted.²⁴

Other whippings were traced indirectly to the Klan. A Bixby boy was whipped after a complaint had been given to Merriweather, Great Titan of Old Province No. 2.²⁵

The military court trial was halted temporarily by a writ of habaes corpus. But as the court continued its investigation it was found that many of the cases were in other areas than the one under martial law. On August 17, the area was extended to include all parts of Tulsa County south of the Frisco Railroad running from east to west.²⁶ This included all of the town of Red Fork. This was also found to be too restrictive and on September 1, all of Tulsa County was placed under the dictum.²⁷

This order for the extension of martial law suspended not only the unit of habaes corpus but all other courts or agencies of civil government unless the consent of the commander of the military forces was obtained.²⁸

The proclamation also stated that one of the reasons for the extension of military law was the attitude taken by the civil authorities. They had refused to make any constructive effort to stop lawlessness and had repeatedly refused to co-operate with military authorities. In

24. Daily Oklahoman, August 24, 1923.

25. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, V, 2206.

26. Senate Transcript of Proceedings, First Extraordinary Session, Ninth Legislature, State of Oklahoma, p. 1643-45.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

addition, some factions in Tulsa had actually worked to hinder the military investigation.²⁹

Meanwhile, in other parts of Oklahoma opposition was growing against the Klan. The Klan had obtained permission of the officials of the city of Bartlesville to have a parade, and the date had been announced. A group of persons hostile to the Klan had the following quarter-page advertisement placed in the daily paper:

Notice, Citizens of the Visible Empire. The American flag will not be carried down the streets of Bartlesville tonight. A mass meeting is called at the ball park for 7:30-7:50 p.m. to organize and prepare to uphold the law and the constitution and to assist the state peace officers.

Arthur Fitzpatrick
Chairman of Committee³⁰

Nothing came of this, but it showed that some people were about ready to come into the open with the fight against the Klan.

From about this time, Walton openly declared that his fight was now against the Klan. Not only was the military court on duty, but Walton had a number of private investigators in the field. These private agencies secured much information not obtained by the military tribunal.³¹ Aldrich Blake, counsellor to Walton, early in September declared that much material had been gathered and that fifty victims had testified. He further added, "In every case thus far examined except two which have not proceeded very far, the evidence has led straight to the doorstep of the invisible empire known as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan."³²

29. Ibid.

30. Daily Oklahoman, August 28, 1923.

31. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, V, 2194.

32. Daily Oklahoman, September 7, 1923.

In a speech at the free fair at Madill Walton declared, "I am going to the limit to put it down. If one of these masked men comes to your home after you turn loose both barrels of your shot gun and I will pardon you."³³

N. C. Jewett, Grand Dragon, then entered the fight against the governor. He asserted that Walton was not interested in the persons whipped, but was interested solely in destroying the Klan. The basis of Walton's antagonism against the Klan, according to Jewett, was the fact that he had been refused admission. Jewett maintained that Walton had no authority over the Klan and declared that the Klan was a law abiding organization which was growing by leaps and bounds. He went on to say, "Jack Walton and all his cohorts will never be able to break the power of the Klan in Oklahoma".³⁴ To this remark Walton retaliated by declaring that martial law would be declared in any place in the state where the Klan, or any similar masked group, appeared.

Grand Dragon Jewett, having received word from Emperor Evans that the national organization would let him handle affairs in Oklahoma, decided to cancel the parades scheduled to be held at Bristow, Comanche, Duncan, Checotah, and Billings.³⁵ Eufaula Klan No. 89 and Checotah Klan No. 203 had made plans to have a joint ceremonial meeting which was to be open to the public. But when Walton's threat became known the Klan officials declared that they did not intend the parades as a

33. Ibid., September 9, 1923.

34. Ibid., September 8, 1923.

35. Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1923.

defiance of the governor, so the displays were cancelled.³⁶

During the period while Tulsa was under martial law, trouble arose over some articles published by the Tulsa Tribune of which Barnett was managing editor.³⁷ On September 19, the Tribune published "The Story of Tulsa" by Aldrich Blake, and a story about Walton giving the other side of the case. An address of Ellis Robertson about martial law was also published. Markham, commander of the militia, talked to the editor and told him that difficulty might arise if he were not more careful as to the type of stories published. To cap the issue on September 13, an uncomplimentary advertisement was received from the K. K. which was printed on the first page. Walton asserted that he thought that it was a rallying call to the Klan and ordered a censorship. Major Roak, a linotype operator from Oklahoma City, was put in charge of the censorship which lasted about two and one half days.³⁸

The suppression of free press aroused more and more opposition to Walton. Even many of those who were opposed to the Klan criticized the dictatorial methods used. In response Walton declared that he would not lift martial law in Tulsa until the civil authorities were changed and more responsible men were in office. He requested that Sheriff Sanford, Police Commissioner, Harry W. Kiskaddon, and Jury Commissioners, C. L. Holland of Tulsa, Jim Owen of Collinsville, and Dr. O. E. Robinson of Skiatook, resign. September 14, a conference was held between the Ku Klux Klan officials and business men in Tulsa to see if the "mal-administrators" would resign so that martial law could be lifted.³⁹

36. Indian Journal, September 13, 1923.

37. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee II, 877.

38. Ibid., 877-79.

39. Daily Oklahoman, September 14, 1923.

Upon the refusal of the opprobrious officials to resign, martial law was extended.⁴⁰

On the following day (September 15) the entire state of Oklahoma was placed under martial law. Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Sapulpa were under direct troop supervision,⁴¹ but many other sections were only theoretically under military surveillance.

Walton gave his side of the case to the press in the following:

There exists in this state a self-styled invisible empire which assumes the functions of a political government and whose ambition is to make the political power of this state subservient to its domination.

Two governments cannot exist in this state at the same time. This so-called invisible empire has gained control of prosecuting officers, sheriffs, the police power, and jury commission in many counties. Testimony has been taken before the military court which shows that hundreds--some women--have been whipt, beaten, and mutilated--remember the word mutilated--in an inhuman, horrible, and unprintable manner....

For the public safety, for the right of life and liberty and right of trial by jury, to save the sovereignty of this great State, I place it under martial law. I know of no other method to conquer the invisible empire.⁴²

After the investigations started, the Klan was sued in at least one case for civil damages arising from a previous act of violence. S. K. Lesky of Ellsworth, Kansas, filed a civil damage suit in a Federal Court against the Klan and the Tulsa Benevolent Association, a holding corporation for Tulsa No. 3 realm. Lesky maintained that he was injured in a tarring and feathering in July, 1922. Charles B. Peters,

40. Howard A. Tucker, History of Governor Walton's War on the Ku Klux Klan, The Invisible Empire, p. 16.

41. "Oklahoma's Uncivil Civil War", Literary Digest, LXXVIII, 10 (September 29, 1923).

42. Ibid., p. 11.

a Tulsa oil operator; Richard Lloyd Jones, publisher of the Tulsa Tribune; N. C. Jewett, Oklahoma Grand Dragon; Minor Merriweather, Grand Titian of the realm of Oklahoma, who had fled from the state; D. C. Rose, secretary of the Tulsa Klan; C. W. Reynolds, assistant secretary; Bob Adkins, E. H. Consolvo, C. L. Holland, C. R. Philbrick, and I. W. Montgomery were named as defendants. J. M. Springer, Muskogee attorney, signed the petition as counsel for Lesky.⁴³

The fight between Walton and the Klan, the use of martial law, and conditions in general in Oklahoma were attracting national attention. A majority of the press of the country seemed to be supporting Walton in the fight on the Klan, but a majority of the state papers were against him.⁴⁴

One Oklahoma newspaper declared that Oklahoma was suffering from two menaces and each threatened the liberty of the people. One menace was the Ku Klux Klan, while the other was the usurpation of unconstitutional power by J. C. Walton.⁴⁵

An out-of-state newspaper commenting on conditions in Oklahoma stated:

Because the law failed to punish those whom they believed ought to be punished, the Ku Klux Klammers took the law in their own hands. Because the Klansmen punished those whom they had no right to punish, the Governor took the law in his hands.⁴⁶

Oklahoma was declared to be in a state of Civil War by the press of the country. A correspondent sent to Oklahoma wrote that: "the

43. Daily Oklahoman, September 30, 1923.

44. Oklahoma's Uncivil Civil War, p. 11.

45. Literary Digest, LXVII, p. 10.

46. Norfolk Virginia Pilot, quoted in Literary Digest, LXXVIII, 10 (September 29, 1923).

invisible government of the Ku Klux Klan is matched by the visible government of the Oklahoma National Guard" and he went on further to say that, "the state today presents a social and political situation that has no parallel since the Reconstruction period of the Civil War."⁴⁷

To combat this deleterious publicity eventually Walton decided to raise a fund to present anti-klan material to the people of the state. Aldrich Blake went East to gain aid from anti-klan plutocrats while public appeals were made at home for funds.⁴⁸ Mrs. Aldrich Blake according to the plan was to receive the contributions. She testified that some people sent in money and asked that their names be withheld because they had suffered at the hands of the Klan and were afraid of further mistreatment. The fund thus gathered was used to publish The Record. Only a few copies of this most unusual journal were published because there was not sufficient money to carry on the plan.⁴⁹

After the general declaration of martial law, a court of inquiry was set up in Oklahoma City. Many acts of violence were uncovered, but little evidence was directly traceable to the Klan. The general opinion of most of the public seemed to be that the existence of the Klan made these acts possible. Many leading citizens in Oklahoma admitted that at one time they had belonged to the Klan, but that they had "long since" withdrawn. Judge George Clark, like many other prominent individuals, admitted that he had been accepted into the Klan but said

47. "Oklahoma's Uncivil Civil War", Literary Digest, LXXVIII, 10 (September 29, 1923).

48. Testimony Before Impeachment Committee, III, 1150-51.

49. Ibid.

that he had never attended any meetings or paid any dues.⁵⁰

About the twenty-first of September, N. C. Jewett was arrested on the general charge of rioting and specifically for the flogging of E. R. Merriman on March 7, 1922. He was released on \$1,000 bond.⁵¹ At his trial before the justice of peace court the judge declared that the evidence was insufficient,⁵² so he was freed.

E. S. Hurt, upon seeing that the governor was hampered by lack of a direct law against the Klan, filed an initiative petition for the state to vote on a proposition to make it unlawful for secret organizations to do many things including the wearing of masks.⁵³ While this effort was commendable it was stymied by the ever present political hurdles presented by the "joiners".

In September the legislators and politicians in the state were planning for the calling of a special session to restore civil law in the state. Walton insisted that the legislature was dominated by the Klan and that the special session would be nothing short of a Klan meeting.

On September 20, a proclamation, signed by 65 members of the House of Representatives, was issued by W. D. McBee, Speaker of the House. This called for a special meeting of the House of Representatives September 26, 1923.⁵⁴ Walton in denouncing this irregular procedure accused McBee of being a Klan official and predicted dire consequences.)

50. Daily Oklahoman, September 1, 1923.

51. Ibid., September 22, 1923.

52. Ibid., October 11, 1923.

53. Ibid.

54. Journal of the House of Representatives, First Extraordinary Session, Ninth Legislature, State of Oklahoma, p. 23.

(Sixty-eight members met at the capitol at the appointed time but were barred from the Hall of Representatives by the State militia. / Un- daunted by the governor's display they retired to the rotunda, where Colonel W. S. Key interrupted their meeting and read the military order commanding him (Key) as officer in charge to prevent the meeting and to bring about its dispersion.⁵⁵

The order declared that the meeting was unlawful, was dominated by the Klan, and that its explicit purpose was to aid it cause. The Invisible Empire was declared to be an enemy of the state of Oklahoma and the legislators were forbidden to meet. They dispersed, after some meditation, but a few of them, less than a quorum, met daily in the Skirvin Hotel until October, 10.⁵⁶

(Walton did not carry on his Klan fight entirely unsupported for a convention of the Confederation of Labor meeting at Henryetta the latter part of September adopted a resolution praising the governor for his fight on the Ku Klux Klan.⁵⁷

(The people of Oklahoma may not have favored the Klan, but neither were they in favor of the high handed methods used by Walton in sup- pressing it. / Other actions of the Walton Administration were causing considerable criticism. / One legislator in particular, after the dis- persion of this group, remarked, "that it was a choice of being shot at by Walton's troops or staying at home and being shot at by the

55. Ibid., p. 65.

56. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

57. Daily Oklahoman, September 19, 1923.

Ku Klux Klan."⁵⁸ The people of Oklahoma, according to another witness wanted neither a "king (n) or a klan".⁵⁹

Petition 79, a constitutional amendment giving the legislature permission to convene itself, was started by initiative methods. The Klan backed this measure. It, along with five other measures, was to be voted on at the special election in October.⁹ Walton tried to prevent this special election but was unsuccessful. The petition carried by a big majority.

Since the legislature could now lawfully convene without the governor's consent W. B. McBee issued a call for the House of Representatives and the Senate to meet October 17, 1923 at Oklahoma City.⁶⁰ Walton in order to circumvent the legislature coup, and to command the procedure called a special session to convene six days earlier than the one ordered by McBee.⁷ The reasons he gave for issuing the call for a special session were specifically stated in the proclamation which reads in part:

WHEREAS, a condition of lawlessness has heretofore for some-time prevailed in several counties of the State of Oklahoma, under which numerous masked mobs have kidnapped, beaten, mutilated and in some instances raped and murdered citizens of Oklahoma, and,

.....

WHEREAS, the sworn evidence as to the existence of this system of lawlessness and the identity of the organization responsible for this system of operation, the membership of which is secret, has been secured by duly authorized military commissions and is now available for the use of the proper

58. Bruce Bliven, "From the Oklahoma Front", New Republic, XXXVI, 204-5 (October 17, 1923).

59. Ibid.

60. House Journal, First Extraordinary Session, p. 64.

authorities, both legislative and judicial, and,

WHEREAS, it is imperative that legislation be immediately enacted which will unmask the organization responsible for the perpetration of these crimes of violence and prevent their recurrence,

NOW, THEREFORE, I, J. C. Walton, Governor of the State of Oklahoma,....do hereby convoke the legislature of the said state in extraordinary session....at the State Capitol at Oklahoma City at nine o'clock Thursday, October 11, A.D. 1923 for the purpose of the enactment of a law to protect the people from masked and lawless mauraders and mobs and secret organizations. 61

Two days before the legislature convened, Walton, as a means of clearing his own hands and gaining popular acclaim, announced in the newspapers that he was willing to resign, if the legislature would pass an anti-klan law. To this remark the representatives replied that they would first investigate the governor and then pass the law. 62

The governor's message, which was read to the assembled Senators and Representatives in joint session, reiterated the need for anti-klan legislation. He gave a summary of what was allegedly disclosed by the military courts. The following passage from his message, if true, shows that in some sections Oklahoma was dominated by the Klan as Walton had been maintaining.

My investigation discloses from sworn testimony in one case where six reputable citizens testified that they heard the Grand Titan of Tulsa, make a statement to the effect, that there had been six different "Mer Rouge's" similar to the Louisiana affair committed in his jurisdiction, consisting of 19 counties. The sworn testimony further discloses that about one hundred thirty cases were actually investigated by the military court wherein violence and other outrages have been disclosed in Tulsa County alone, and other cases regarding which information was received bringing the total number in that one county to over two hundred

61. House Journal, First Extraordinary Session, p. 23.

62. Tucker, Governor Walton's War on the Ku Klux Klan, p. 66.

fifty cases, and not a single case has had the serious investigation or an effort to bring to justice the guilty parties by the civil authorities.

Some of these cases present outrages and heart-rending cruelty in the extreme, in the form of mutilation such as cutting off the ear of one man and an attempt made forcing him to eat it; burning a woman with acid and outraging her; burning houses, striking women with six shooters, and one woman with a small baby in her arms, was knocked down and another almost ready to give birth to a child was made to faint and her baby was prematurely born, and died within a few hours. The investigation disclosed other brutal acts of mutilation and outrages too awful to disclose in print, all of which lead straight to the doorstep of the "Invisible Empire".

Information has reached me that since the adjournment of the Military Court of Inquiry, that practically all of the important witnesses in several cases have been run off or induced by intimidation to leave the country.⁶³

He went on to ask that the transcript of the testimony taken by the military courts be published. Then he asked the legislature to pass as quickly as possible a law un-masking the Klan thus making it impossible for it to operate as it has been.⁶⁴

On October 15, House Resolution No. 4, which was introduced by White and Eastridge, provided for an investigation of members of the legislature that were supposedly members of the Klan and for their removal from office if membership could be proved. The resolution was laid on the table⁶⁵ where it apparently died for want of support.

One of the first things the House did was to make arrangements to impeach Walton. A committee was appointed with the title "the committee on impeachment and investigation of executive, legislative, and judicial

63. House Journal, First Extraordinary Session, p. 37-40.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

officers". This group was given power to compel witnesses to appear and give testimony. The committee, after taking a great deal of testimony, reported to the House that enough evidence existed to impeach Walton. The Senate was then turned into a court to try him.

Every effort was made by the legislature to keep the Klan issue from the procedure. A number of legislators were Klan members and Walton maintained that threats and intimidations were being used by the members.⁶⁶ Motion to quash the articles of impeachment was over-ruled. The legislature insistently maintained that impeachment was not in any way a Klan issue.

Of the twenty-two charges presented against the governor, Articles II, VII, VIII, IX, X, and XV were concerned with the declaration of martial law to which Walton insisted that Klan activities had made his action necessary. Later, Walton, apparently despondent over the rapid change of events, withdrew from the trial, and it was conducted without his presence. Whether he saw the hand writing on the wall or whether he knew his numerous enemies were colluding for his downfall makes little difference, but it was apparent to many that some means, "fair or foul" would be found to bring about his deposition. This very thing happened on November 19, 1923 when he was convicted and removed from office.⁶⁷

Anti-klan sentiment in the state was strong enough that when nothing was done by the legislature to put down the Klan, organizations against it started to increase their activities. Some people felt that the legislature was more interested in impeaching Walton than in the welfare

66. Transcript of Proceedings, Senate Court of Impeachment, p. 1889.

67. Ibid., p. 1889.

of the state. One group of two hundred anti-klan delegates representing the Southern Oklahoma State Convention of Anti-Ku Klux Klan met at Durant November 30, 1923. In attendance at this convention were representatives from the Royal Blues, the Brotherhood of Men, and the state Anti-Ku Klux Klan association. O. T. Allisen, chairman of the Anti-Ku Klux Klan association was in charge. Walton, now ex-governor, delivered an address against the Klan.⁶⁸ Out of his exhortations and the recommendations of others it was suggested that certain restraining methods be employed to break its ascendancy.

A few days later units of the Anti-Ku Klux Klan of five counties, Atoka, Bryan, Marshall, Johnston, and Choctaw amalgamated. The farm labor union was asked to join, but it refused. Judge Porter Newman of Durant was elected president, Ben Ellison, Atoka, vice-president, and E. G. Wallace, Wapanacka, secretary-treasure.⁶⁹

About the middle of December, the Anti-Klan Association met in Oklahoma City. Aldrich Blake was among the speakers. A spokesman of the group declared that 26,000 had signed petitions for real anti-klan legislation.⁷⁰

The House, meantime, had gone about investigating the Klan after the impeachment proceedings had started. House Concurrent Resolution No. 1 by Otjen and Vernon provided for the appointment of a joint committee of six, three from the house and three from the Senate with a recommendation of legislation needed.⁷¹ The committee was to go over

68. Daily Oklahoman, December 1, 1923.

69. Ibid., December 2, 1923.

70. Ibid., December 18, 1923.

71. House Journal, First Extraordinary Session, p. 229.

the evidence in the military court records and investigate any other charges against the Klan. This resolution passed both houses and Monk, Reed, and Wells were appointed from the Senate and Saltman, Harper, and Vernon from the House.⁷²

After a lengthy investigation the committee recommended the passage of an anti-mask law. A number of bills were prepared but the bill that finally went through and was presented to the governor on January 14, 1924 was known as Senate Bill No. 5. As the bill was passed it carried the following "title":

An Act providing for the prohibiting of the wearing of any mask or hood, except as set forth therein, and defining penalty for violation thereof; prohibiting trespass upon the premises of another while hooded or in disguise, and providing the punishment therefor; making it the duty of the County Attorney and Sheriff and of the peace officers to enforce the law, and providing for the removal of such officers for neglect of duty, and disqualifying them from holding any office of trust or profit within the State after conviction; providing that no society, association or corporation shall be permitted to exist within the State of Oklahoma requires its members to take an oath or obligation in conflict with the Constitution of this State or the United States, or who by the Constitution of this State or the United States, or who by oath or otherwise owes allegiance to any kind, power or potentate in any foreign country, and providing a penalty therefor.⁷³

The Klan by the passage of the anti-mask law had lost much of its appeal to the public and most assuredly its means of operation had been vitally curtailed. The pageantry and picturesqueness were destroyed, but as an organization it still existed. If it could only hold its members and influence them to vote in a body as instructed it would

72. Ibid., p. 205.

73. Senate Journal, First Extraordinary Session, Ninth Legislature, State of Oklahoma, 1923, p. 239.

still exercise a great deal of influence in the state.

The Klan issue again came to the fore on January 25, when the legislature met in regular session and the election for Speaker of the House was pending. The public looked upon his election as a contest between the Klan and anti-klan factions even though the two leading candidates both declared that the Klan was not an issue. Miller was the so-called Klan candidate; Harper, the anti-klan; and Stovall, the third candidate, declared that he should be elected so that the Klan question would not be reopened.⁷⁴

Upon the election of Harper the Oklahoma City Times carried the headlines "Klan Makes Its Last Stand To Name House Floor Leader".⁷⁵ This was probably not a whole truth for little if any Klan influence had prevailed in the selection.

Nevertheless like a cat with nine lives the Klan continued to play an important part in Oklahoma politics for the next few years. In the primary of 1926 the Klan issue arose in both the Democrat and Republican parties. At a meeting of Klan representatives in Oklahoma City it was decided not to endorse a senatorial candidate.⁷⁶ Later, however, a group known as the "Central Committee" after sending questionnaires to the home town of various candidates, gave some recommendations on candidates for other offices.⁷⁷

The conflicting actions of different Klan officials on this occasion gave rise to the rumor that discord was prevalent in the society. Some

74. "The Forth Coming Legislature", Harlow's Weekly, XXVI, 10 (January 3, 1925).

75. "About Politics and Politicians", Harlow's Weekly, XXVI, 6 (January 10, 1925).

76. "About Politics and Politicians", Harlow's Weekly, XIV, 6 (July 26, 1924)

77. *Ibid.*, Harlow's Weekly, XIV, 7 (August 2, 1924).

members seemed to be more devoted to party politics than to ritualistic dogma.⁷⁸ Jewett had urged klansmen to support Howard of the Democratic Party. He sent a telegram to the Klan Klaverns over Oklahoma.

Have every reason to believe that Walton is now in third place. The race is between Howard and Wrightsman. Howard will win if you get behind him. Verify this message if you do not believe it authentic.⁷⁹

On the other hand, J. W. Womack, kilgraph (some kind of Klan official) of Oklahoma City, sent the local Klans a letter asking them to vote for Wrightsman.⁸⁰ This conflict probably enabled Walton, the anti-klan Democrat candidate to win the nomination.

In the same primary election it was conceded that the Klan was successful in three of the six Supreme Court nominating districts and in the Criminal Court of Appeals. Very few of the legislative races were won by Klan adherents.⁸¹

Until the general election, the strife between the Klan and anti-klan forces raged. Charges were repeatedly made that a fair election could not be held in a state where the anti-klan and pro-klan groups were so rabid. In order to prevent possible election frauds Art L. Walker, Chairman of the State Election Board, sent the following letter to each board.

For several weeks we have been beseiged by delegation after delegation representing either the klan or the anti-klan complaining to this office that efforts are being made to so organize the precinct election boards within the counties that election frauds may be perpetrated in this election. Each side

78. Ibid.

79. "About Politics and Politicians", Harlow's Weekly, XXIII, 6 (August 9, 1924).

80. Ibid., pp. 6-9.

81. Ibid., p. 8.

has at all times, insisted that only an honest election was desired. Our attention has also been frequently called to press reports of a like nature. It appears that this election has developed in some state and county races into a bitter contest between the klan and anti-klan forces, each side being suspicious and distrustful of the other, and that party lines, in such instances have been obliterated in a large measure. In order to close the doors of opportunity against the perpetration for frauds and to delay even the suspicion of such frauds, you are hereby directed and instructed to reconvene your county election board immediately and to reorganize your precinct election boards in each and every precinct in such a way that each opposing faction shall have at least one representative on each precinct board of its own choosing, and that the four counters in each precinct be divided equally between the factions--two to be recommended by the klan and two to be recommended by the anti-klan forces, bearing in mind also the requirements of the law with regard to existing political parties.⁸²

Walton's defeat in the general election was not and could not be interpreted to mean a Klan victory because Pine, the Republican Party candidate with Klan support, carried many counties where the anti-klan sentiment was the strongest.⁸³ The results seemed to indicate that candidates themselves were making the Klan an issue in lieu of a constructive platform. Also certain Klan leaders were trying to put the Klan in a position so it could gain by political means what it had lost otherwise. The big difficulties seemed to be that the Klan leaders could not agree, and that the members on the whole did not follow any set of instructions, but voted as they pleased.

Cooperative efforts were still being made to get the Klan to disband. The Anti-Klan All-American Association, known as the Triple A,

82. Ibid., Harlow's Weekly, XXVI, 14 (November 8, 1924).

83. Ibid., p. 9.

proposed that it would disband if its rival would.⁸⁴ A group composed of a former Klan member, a Klan member, a Catholic, a Jew, and a Protestant anti-klansman selected forty-five citizens to act as a commission to see what could be done to prevent further strife.⁸⁵ Organized as it was in good faith the hurdles that confronted it in every way were sufficiently great to reduce its activities to a minimum, a minimum so negligible that its efforts were apparently unrecorded.

Little was heard about the Klan during the next two years or until the preliminaries of the election in 1926. By this time the Klan was dying for want of financial support in many states, but it was still strong in Oklahoma, as well as Indiana, Colorado, Oregon, Texas, and Ohio.⁸⁶

In the impending election rumors of Klan endorsements again appeared, but on this occasion it did not become the major issue.⁸⁷ When the Republicans framed their platform they went to the extent of including an anti-klan plank.⁸⁸ This action, however, immediately elicited from many state papers a ridicule and a charge that they had deliberately revived the Klan issue. The Democrats in clarification of their own position evidently felt that they must be specific, so

84. "Moves for Cessation of Klan Activities Started", Harlow's Weekly, XXV, 12 (November 29, 1924).

85. Ibid.

86. R. B. Smith, "Klan Spooks Congress", Independent, CXVI, 718 (July 9, 1926).

87. "The Primary Views of the State Press", Harlow's Weekly, 7 (August 7, 1926).

88. "Democratic Editors Ridicule Republicans for Dragging in the Klan", Harlow's Weekly, 8 (September 4, 1926).

when their platform was written it contained the following:

We are unalterably opposed to any attempted domination or control of the administration of any branch of the county, state or national government by the Ku Klux Klan or any other secret order, class, society, or combination. Viewing this question as we do, we hereby pledge the democratic party as an organization; and each of the respective nominees thereof, to a strict and faithful adherence to this principle in appointments, and administration of all of its affairs.⁸⁹

In spite of these precepts the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, Henry S. Johnston, was non-committal of his own private attitude. His managers were equally non-committal for they never mentioned the Klan and apparently deliberately ignored the question. Nevertheless it was commonly bantered that he had Klan support.⁹⁰

This election, however, was the last one in which the Klan issue played a conspicuous part. From this time on the organization dwindled and was ere long supposed to be dead. A few chapters, however, may have continued to survive for in 1937 a report was circulated of an initiation near Edmond at which thirty-two men joined the Klan.⁹¹

There seems to have been a slight renewal of the group about 1940. One person⁹² well known in the state declared late in that year that had heard mention of the Klan within the past year and that he was of the opinion that at least three or more chapters existed in the state. To confirm this remark, at a recent hearing (Spring of 1941) of a senate committee investigating communism, J. W. Reed of Oklahoma City attended

89. "Platform of Democrat Party", Harlow's Weekly, XXIX, 11 (September 11, 1926).

90. "About Politics and Politicians", Harlow's Weekly, XXIX, 5 (July 10, 1926).

91. Daily Oklahoman, November 4, 1927.

92. Henry S. Johnston, Personal Interview.

and identified himself as the present Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan.⁹³

In the pamphlet entitled "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Carries On", which he distributed, was found a warning against alien influences. It states that the same influences that had fought the Klan on previous occasions was now fighting the Dies Committee. Nothing was said about the Klan strength, and judging from external evidences, the Klan is not functioning to any great extent at present.⁹⁴

Time alone will tell whether the Klan, which in many respects represented high ideals, but which because of its encouragement of intolerance and its vicious methods of enforcement, and taking the law into its own hands could not be said to represent true Americanism, will be able to renew its grip on Oklahoma. It would seem that citizens recalling how destructively this society formerly operated would not be willing to tolerate it. Human nature, however, changes little and conditions, such as arose during the First World War, might arise out of which a new Klan or a similar organization could gain incubation.)

93. Tulsa Tribune, February 14, 1941.

94. Anonymous, The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Comes to Put None But Americans on Guard, Oklahoma Realm Office of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

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