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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

A HISTORY OF THE KU KLUX KLAN IN OKLAHOMA

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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BY

CARTER BLUE CLARK

Norman, Oklahoma

1976

A HISTORY OF THE KU KLUX KLAN IN OKLAHOMA

APPROVED BY

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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PREFACE

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is a frustrating topic to study because of the paucity of information. Hours of digging through archives or newspaper files may reveal but one pertinent reference. Enter a room filled with people and inquire about the Klan and the result is similar to turning on a light at night in a kitchen and watching cockroaches scatter. Memories of residents of the state old enough to remember the Klan period are clouded with time. Often they are sensitive about their involvement and reluctant to discuss it. Klan records no longer exist for the use of interested researchers, and for good reason. Today the order is stigmatized. Events in Oklahoma in the Twenties when the order was at its height provided some of the taint which left the Klan with the label of a terroristic organization despite the best efforts of its leaders and membership to dull the image of violence in the popular mind.

What information is available on membership, activities, and goals of the Knights is often fragmentary and speculative as a result of years of neglect or out-

right attempts to destroy existing evidence. In Oklahoma only one set of membership records exist for a town in the 1920s and they concern a women's order in the northern fringes of the state. Even those records are heavily damaged and fragmentary. In the end analysis, the choice becomes one of accepting at face value the statements of proponents or opponents of the hooded order for figures on numerical strength, dates of beginning for klaverns, and involvement in night-riding actions. Even after much research and investigation into the Klan following its first appearance after the Civil War in the South, mystery and silence shroud modern knowledge of the order. The mystic quality of the brotherhood and its spectral costumes lent an aura of impenetrability that still exists.

Only rarely do documents surface that are of primary value to the researcher interested in the Klan. This study utilizes sources for the first time that link the Klan to violence under official orders. The material consists of the military court hearings in the Tulsa area in 1923 while that city was under martial law. Never before have members of the Knights of the Ku Klux suffered the exposure those documents release to the eye of the investigator. Only a few members of the order were continually involved in acts of night-riding, but their actions provided the proof that linked the Klan to terrorism in the Oklahoma countryside in the 1920s.

The Klan is known for personal immorality by officials in the state of Indiana, for longevity and renascence in the state of Georgia, and for violence in the state of Oklahoma. The level of violence in the Sooner State far exceeds that admitted in previous accounts by historians and overshadows the one sensational murder in the state of Louisiana in 1922 which is pointed to as the basic incident leading to the Klan image of terrorism and murder. The first convictions of Klansmen for night-riding in the nation during the 1920s were in Oklahoma. The first military court of inquiry into alleged Klan acts outside the Deep South since Reconstruction took place in this state.

Violence was not the only "first" involving the order in Oklahoma. The group made its first public appearance outside the Deep South after World War I in Oklahoma. Sooners were anxious to join their neighbors under the fiery cross and banner and soon the membership soared to the point that the Knights of the Klan were the most powerful influence in the state next to business. Klan leaders claimed important and lasting influence in Oklahoma. They proclaimed that the order first successfully cleaned up the oil capital, first ousted a governor of a state, and from their power base in Oklahoma first successfully turned back the tide of alien influence that threatened the state and the nation.

From modest beginnings in the leading cities of the state, the Klan achieved vast membership with its appeal to local grievances and fears. Its appeal to white Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the mining districts where aliens competed with them for work spurred the membership drive. Whites feared that they were being inundated with an un-American element that consisted of radicals. For the average Oklahoman who joined the hooded order it served as a protection against the things that he did not understand and as a wall against unforeseen dangers that lurked in the shadows of the decade of the 1920s. A large part of that apprehension among Kluxers resulted from the wartime tensions between conservatives and radicals. The conservatives looked upon nonconformists as Socialists or anarchists who wanted to tear down the fabric of the nation. Through the hoods the Klansmen believed they could withstand the threats they perceived in the 1920s. The Klan's meteoric rise grew out of the peculiar tensions within the state and prospered and increased during the period of readjustment following World War I. The tensions of anti-German feeling and the emotionalism generated in the battles overseas and at home in the war period exploded time and again into outbursts in the period 1921 to 1923. Klan numbers and influence rose in spite of the revelations of lawlessness by its members during the 1924 election campaign in the state. Residents then

tired of the masked and sheeted hatred in their communities and turned their attention to religious revivals and to business affairs.

The order was strong in oil and mining camps where vice and crime thrived. It was weaker in rural and agricultural areas like the Panhandle. In urban centers klaverns of the Knights were often businessmen who pressured the rural residents of their counties to support them and they attempted to quell the tide of radicalism which they perceived from the countryside. Reform even under the threat of the lash was the rule where the Klan flourished.

Violence in Oklahoma under the Klan reign was much more widespread than previously reported in historical literature. Klan violence was an outgrowth of former strains of lawlessness showing the undercurrent of continual violent acts long after statehood had been achieved. Klan-initiated outbursts were carried out by the same individuals who precipitated violence earlier in non-Klan guises as wartime members of councils of defense or as law officers. The result of Oklahoma violence under the reign of the order in the 1920s is to oppose the current historiographical trend to play down the violent character of the frontier. Oklahomans' experience, even years after the frontier ended officially, was the opposite of tranquil development and orderly progression. Oklahoma

violence is the antithesis of the writers of current Western monographs who say that the image of the frontier as a region of violence is myth. The Klan's actions in the Sooner State at its peak of power gave that order an image of terror and nighttime intimidation that it had not had since the days of Reconstruction. The Knights would never recover from its actions in the state. The Klan faded away into a few scattered nocturnal meetings with an infrequent cross burning on a hilltop but not before the order left an enduring mark upon the state's history.

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A HISTORY OF THE KU KLUX KLAN IN OKLAHOMA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Oklahoma at the beginning of the decade of the 1920s provided opportunities for recruiters for an organization promoted as beneficial for local communities. To the observer surveying the state in 1920, residents enjoyed all the benefits of a new state--one of the youngest in the nation. Only thirteen years a commonwealth, Oklahoma appeared to offer unlimited possibilities for growth and prosperity. The new state straddled commercial routes connecting the South with the Pacific Coast and the Texas Gulf with the Northern Plains states. Clubs in many communities promoted good roads to boost the development of transportation for the benefit of Oklahoma's economy. Although temporarily in an agricultural depression, Oklahoma possessed many profitable acres making farmers confident that boom times were near. Petroleum was rapidly replacing coal and other minerals as the state's leading export. Oil exploration provided a boom atmosphere for the region.

Despite the appearance of surface prosperity, Oklahomans suffered many problems which provided a fertile field for Klan recruiters. Economic prosperity touched residents unequally. Discontent led to tension between agricultural laborers and tenants and landlords, between town merchants and rural customers, between native whites and immigrants, oil field workers and oil company managers, and between miners and mine owners. In the political arena conservatives looked with alarm on people they perceived to be radical and anti-American. Wartime emotions continued to spill over into outbursts against perceived threats. Socially, the state faced changes in transportation, dress, and morals that alarmed Fundamentalists who saw increased immorality and a decline in church attendance as portents of disaster.

In 1920, Oklahoma was just one generation away from a raw frontier of individuals struggling in a wilderness environment. Oklahoma contained a wide diversity of peoples. The mixture of population ranged from the sixty-seven different Indian tribes in the state to European miners in the old Choctaw Nation to Anglo-American cowboys on ranches in the western parts of the state. Almost any European language could be heard--German among settlers of the prairie, Italian and Russian in the mines of the eastern part of the state, and Scandinavian among farmers in the north. A scattering of Jewish merchants and Mexi-

can-Americans and blacks joined Indians in adding to racial and ethnic diversity. Oklahoma had been quickly settled by whites in a series of land runs. Movement of population continued after statehood and increased as people entered the mineral boom areas hoping for quick wealth. The rapid changes in population created strains on local communities that caused problems for the citizens who were concerned about the development of their communities.

From 1900 to 1920, the population of Oklahoma rose 123 percent. The concentration of people shifted from eight percent urban to thirty percent urban. America entered the urban age in the Twenties and Oklahomans participated in the transition at a pace faster than the nation as a whole experienced. Cities in the state rose as a result of the quest for mineral wealth. The rapid growth of cities and towns threatened the small town and rural dweller. The city produced crime, violence, brutality, and alienation. Most Oklahomans looked upon the rural small town as a refuge in a world of change. In the 1920s, the small town father found his sons and daughters seeking greater opportunities in larger towns and cities. Embattled defenders of the status quo clung to their older values even more tightly. They closed their eyes to change. Some even sought to impose social stability upon others through force.[1]

People raised in the environment of Victorian

morality were alarmed at the changes they saw around them in dress styles, morals, and habits. Only two generations spanned the time from Andrew Jackson through the 1920s. A man born in 1879 heard tales from his father that extended backward to the time of Jackson, drawn from his father's own experiences. The father participated in the expansion across the American continent, had joined the gold rush fever to California in 1850, and raised his son amid the old, primitive Fundamentalism that had served the pioneers for so many years.[2] Jacksonian values suddenly came into contact with the automobile, the radio, vast wealth from oil wells, and changes in speech and manners that were alien to the Fundamentalist feelings of the 1920s.

Individual enterprise in the state led to rapid exploitation of resources. The tradition of frontier individualism created tension when organized labor struck out against mine owners in an attempt to correct the wide fluctuations in wealth which occurred in the bonanza atmosphere. Exploitation left a scarred landscape and a residue of resentment. Bonanza mineral and oil strikes created booms which brought more population eager for quick profit with little regard for the consequences. Too often the boom ended in a rapid decline of operations and employment which left more resentment in its wake.

Labor strife marred the new state's economy.

Strikes plagued the railway and mining operations and labor disputes repeatedly brought out the state militia to end hostilities. Packingtown workers in Oklahoma City struck for higher wages and improved benefits and in the ensuing violence one man was hanged for his opposition to the walkout. State leaders frequently resorted to martial law and the National Guard saw service from a month to month basis.

Urban factory workers were not the only discontented labor elements. Rural agricultural workers were agitating for higher wages and benefits in the wheat and cotton fields. Cotton prices in 1921 plummeted to new lows and caused widespread discontent in southern parts of the state. The lows surpassed even the depths reached in 1914 for cotton prices. That year the Socialists offered a full slate of candidates in Oklahoma. In 1914 the Socialists won over 52,000 votes in the governor's race and a Socialist almost won election as mayor of the state's capital city. Agitators gained recruits among the rural poor and tenants and even among the oil field workers. The Socialists convinced many Oklahoma residents that either the Agricultural Workers of the World, the Working Class Union, or the Industrial Workers of the World were the keys to any economic success they would enjoy in the future. The Socialists' success only alarmed the conservatives in the state further about a communistic

society abolishing all of their gains in a bloodbath of violence and retribution. Capitalists and businessmen in the towns and the cities were alarmed at the rising tide of radicalism.

High mortgage rates, high interest rates, and loan shark practices in the county seats contributed to the animosity. After the allotments in severalty just before the turn of the century, Oklahoma had the highest rate of tenancy in the nation on a year-to-year basis. As late as 1945 nearly half of Oklahoma's farmers were tenants. In 1910 the state had 104,000 tenant farmers and share-croppers--a rate of 55 percent tenancy.

Tenant and Renters' Unions were one refuge for the farmer. About the same time that the Kleagles came to the state to propagate for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, a North Dakota organizer for the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League, named L. N. Sheldon, entered the state. He interested John Simpson of the Farmers' Union in his cause and they made great headway among Oklahoma's poor whether on the farm or in the factory. The postwar dip in farm prices only aided the radicals in their recruiting and further alarmed conservatives. Economic troubles and radicalism rose hand in hand in the state. Potential for violence between radical and conservative elements existed and grew with each year.[3]

The make-up of the population in Oklahoma favored

orderly development without the threat of violent change which outside agitators and radicalism brought. A large section of the state's population was Southern, especially in the southern and northeastern parts of the state. Others with Southern values about race and government lived along the northern border of Oklahoma and Kansas. The Southern element in Oklahoma was Democratic and Southern Baptist, Methodist, or Fundamentalist in faith. They supported the old values that their parents had instilled in them from birth and opposed many of the changes of the Twenties intruding around them. Midwesterners or Northerners occupied the northwest and northern parts of the state. They tended to vote Republican and to be northern Methodist. The bastion of the Democratic Party in the state was in the southern parts with scattered support in northeastern regions. Tulsa was a Republican stronghold.[4]

People who lived on the borders of the state tended to come from immediate neighboring states. Arkansas, Missouri, and Texas contributed most of the white immigrants into Indian Territory. Southerners tended to dominate the area of Oklahoma south of the Cimmaron River while Northerners predominated north of it. Oklahoma was the last trans-Mississippi territory occupied by representatives of the Midwest and South. The pioneers brought with them their support of gradual change and strict morality.[5]

The political divisions between the culture areas

in Oklahoma also reflected socio-economic divisions in the state. Southern elements of the population along the southern tier of counties supported strict moral codes and clean living in their communities. Northern counties were less strict but no less determined to enforce their own version of moral living upon their neighbors. While each section would disagree over points of liturgy in their services, they each agreed that the changes in manners and morals with the advent of the widening use of the automobile must be stopped for the betterment of their communities. Conflicts with their neighbors who transgressed the local moral codes were inevitable.

New dress styles, the hip flask, the freedom produced by the automobile, and the image of the "new woman" in the 1920s alarmed parents. Ministers attacked the "seating capacity of a Ford coupe" as an influence for evil in their communities. Stimulants and intoxicants were favorite subjects of Oklahomans who belonged to the Temperance Union or the Anti-Opium Publicity Board in a local community. Members of fraternal organizations joined in the battle against stimulants and the attendant vice. Women's clubs led campaigns under the direction or supervision of local ministers to ban the sale and use of cigarettes and other forms of tobacco, to close pool halls and bowling alleys, and to restrict motion pictures and even baseball games. Oklahomans were as unprepared for

the changes of the Twenties as were other Americans and they tried to maintain the status quo.[6]

With the exception of the Panhandle of the state, all sections underwent the effects of the mineral booms which came and disappeared suddenly leaving their marks on the land and the people. The Panhandle was thinly populated and isolated geographically from the mainstream of Oklahoma life. Bonanza wealth did not touch that region to the extent it touched the rest of the state. The Panhandle remained an agricultural center throughout the 1920s, never receiving a great influx of population seeking quick wealth.

Mining was one of the state's oldest industries. Lead and zinc in the Oklahoma section of the famous Tri-State District helped make that region the world's leading producer of those minerals. Coal mining had been a leading source of income for Oklahomans since the 1870s. In the postwar depression miners in the pits and shafts demanded higher wages and shorter hours. The militia restored order time after time in the coal fields, most notably in 1919 in Okmulgee. The mining camps and towns contributed to the bonanza atmosphere in Oklahoma and lent truth to the charges of ministers and women's club members concerning the vice and corruption which existed in the camps.

From 1907 through 1927, Oklahoma was a world

leader in petroleum production. The bonanza atmosphere led to rapid settlement and urbanization, booms, depressions, and changes in wealth and laws. One-half of the state's towns were affected, and one-half of the state's lands was leased or under production before the boom ended. A poverty-stricken farm family living in a house with a leaky roof might suddenly receive $1,500 a week from oil production royalties. They were also surrounded with the noise and business of an oil camp. The conditions of the oil camps encouraged vice as well as crime because quickly gained wealth could just as easily be spent. The workers in the camp demanded and paid for gross entertainment, including prostitutes and bootleg whisky. To serve the bustling camps and the surrounding communities businesses remained open all night. Road houses and hotels provided narcotics on demand and pimps solicited openly in oil towns without fear of police interference. Often policemen ran the road houses or accepted payoffs from the pimps and bootleggers. Easy money in the fields attracted many underworld types. One prostitute summed up the conditions of vice with the comment that she "came in with the first load of pipe and went out with the laws" as she set up her trade on the row of flop houses appropriately called Chancre Alley.[7]

To use one community as an example of the oil field conditions, residents of Tulsa could drive to the

outskirts of town to Joe Baker's road house. It was a converted farm house just off the road with a wire fence around it and a guard at the gate. Baker's place was only one of thirty in the vicinity to choose from. Thirty-five cents bought a pint of black beer. More money could be spent on slot machines or on the women who sat around the bar. There were always fifteen to twenty cars there day or night, usually carrying oil field roustabouts or laborers from the city.

The road houses were the scenes of nightly shootings and drunken brawls which alarmed the quieter residents of the area. If they desired, the revelers could drive into Tulsa to one of the fourteen bordellos in the district reserved for them in 1921. They could also drive to one of the fifty gambling spots in the town. If they wanted something stronger than alcohol they could visit one of the thirty narcotic dens.[8]

A crime wave accompanied the increase in population and wealth in the years immediately following the First World War, particularly in the regions around the oil camps and the oil towns. An epidemic of roadway hijackings and robberies of streetcar passengers and filling station attendants aroused public opinion in the period 1919 through 1921. Many people feared to go out at night because of the spawn of crime from the road houses. "A person could not drive on the roads outside of Tulsa

without being hijacked," the leader of the state's Klan organization testified in 1920.[9] Citizens who could not rely upon their elected officials to enforce the local ordinances, whether through connivance with lawbreakers or through lack of manpower, began to organize. Throughout the Sooner State residents formed local committees after 1918. Bristow and Tulsa businessmen formed the Committees of One Hundred for civic improvement. Ardmore residents formed the Law and Order League, the Layman's Clan, the Business Men's League, and the local Citizens' Committee.[10] Finally in 1921 there were numerous references to a new "committee" in towns throughout the state. It would "be willing and anxious to strike at the liquor business and other moral misdoings" which the authorities either could not or would not put out of business.[11]

The 1920s were "a watershed in the history of American morals"[12] when youth and intellectuals questioned religious and social customs, new styles in clothing with high hemlines appeared, and increased use of intoxicants took place. Disillusionment, cynicism, Freudian sexual theories, increased attendance at motion pictures, and the advent of joy riding in automobiles aroused parents who had been raised in the atmosphere of Victorian morality and stringent behavior. Many parents believed that respect for established methods and rules vanished in a mad age of dance crazes, slit skirts, and other deviations from strict

behavior--neighbors smoking, using the hip flask, and engaging in promiscuous behavior. Intellectuals, alienated by American excesses, condemned the laxity in business morals and the exploitation of capitalism. In the post-war disillusionment many writers and younger people questioned the American dream of progress and boosterism, forcing their peers and parents into the position of defending the embattled status quo.[13]

Fundamentalist religious adherents believed they were under assault from scientific thought in the decade of the 1920s. They felt that the literal truth of the Bible ought not to be questioned in evolutionary theories such as that built around Charles Darwin's investigations into natural selection and the origin of species. The evolutionary controversy climaxed in the Dayton, Tennessee, trial of biology teacher John T. Scopes and the courtroom antics of Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan in 1925. Oklahomans reflected the same fears of evolutionary teaching in public schools and Fundamentalists succeeded in obtaining passage of state laws banning evolutionary instruction.[14] An anti-evolution statute was adopted by the Oklahoma legislature. The struggle between Americans who opposed change and those Americans who advocated change inflamed feelings throughout the decade.

Some Oklahomans proposed laws to pressure their fellow citizens into acceptable behavior. These residents

cheered the passage and implementation of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution banning the sale and purchase of liquor. Rural and religious elements hailed that amendment as a landmark in the struggle against crime and suffering in the United States. They sought other bans on behavior in the hopes that such prohibitions would put an end to the moral decay they saw about them. A visiting minister called upon his audience of women in Tulsa to lead the anti-tobacco crusade for an amendment to the Constitution to ban tobacco in America.[15] The Hollis Pastors' Conference went on record opposing dancing because it defiled the youth of the state.[16] Ministers led the successful attempt to ban a motion picture from Lawton theaters because they objected to its alleged immoral influence upon their community.[17] A Miami judge complained that motion pictures of Western outlaws led Oklahoma youths astray and into a life of crime. He denounced "sex" movies shown to girls which depicted women smoking and drinking champagne as "doing much to destroy the modesty and eliminate virtue from many of our girls."[18] Local civic and women's clubs put pressure on sheriffs and mayors to eliminate pool halls and domino parlors from small towns to prevent the debauching of fathers and their sons. The School Board Members' Association in one county demanded the Bible be read every morning in classrooms in every school in the county.[19]

Minorities in Oklahoma took blame for many of the problems in the period. Blacks, Indians, and non-Anglo-Americans were blamed for radicalism and anti-Americanism. Despite the fact that few had sided with the enemies of the United States in the recent World War, many white native Oklahomans looked suspiciously on minorities within the state. Feelings against minority ethnic groups affected Oklahomans' attitudes toward their fellow residents of the region.

Clashes marred interracial relations. Each year after statehood, a racial clash occurred that usually required the militia to quell.[20] Oklahoma's record on racial relations reflected the nation's. During and after World War I, the quality of race relations descended to its lowest point in the nation's history.[21] During the summer of 1919 alone, racial outbreaks convulsed twenty-five American cities.

White stereotypes of blacks received constant reinforcement from the printed word in the state. The motion pictures of the day depicted the black as lazy, untrustworthy, and possessing qualities necessitating a plantation life to keep his appetites in check. In August, 1915, Oklahomans viewed William Farnum's cinematic triumph called The New Governor, in which the leading actor had resigned when it was revealed that he possessed Negro blood. The Eastern title of the film was The Nigger.

Four months later Oklahomans saw the sensational David W. Griffith film, The Birth of a Nation. The classic novel of Thomas Dixon on the Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan and the ravaged South presented an electrifying image of the Negro as a beast with no restraints. These portrayals left little room in the minds of white Oklahomans for anything but a warped image of black residents and led to many outbursts against Negro citizens.

Lynching was a swift and often used extra-legal punishment in America. Since 1880 over 4,700 Americans had been lynched at the hands of mobs, some 3,400 of whom were blacks. At their peak, lynchings in the United States occurred every two days. Oklahoma ranked eleventh among all states in total hangings with 141, three of whom were women.[22] The guilty party was considered beyond the pale of normal justice because interracial rape was the key word that unleashed whites raving with hatred. Even though only one-sixth of lynching victims were even charged with rape and most Oklahomans lynched were white, local mobs responded viciously at the mention of a black raping a white woman. Lynching served as a community catharsis. Illustrative of the behavior of white Oklahoma mobs was a lynching at Purcell in 1911. A Negro named Pete Carter was accused of attacking a white woman. A mob seized him and dragged him into the street as an excited crowd of 3,000 watched. Mob members tied Carter to a telephone

pole and burned him in an attempt to make him confess. He confessed when the pain became unbearable and was then burned to death.[23]

Blacks resented the attitudes and actions of white mobs. Blacks recently returned from fighting for America in the Great War chafed at heightened segregation and Jim Crow laws passed in communities across the state. Unemployment in the postwar depression added to resentments. Negro newspapers, such as the Tulsa Star, called for equality with whites, while militant spokesmen like William E. B. DuBois, who spoke in the state in early 1921, inflamed both whites and blacks with his outspoken views. Ex-servicemen in both races armed themselves in the years after the First World War because they were anxious about the interracial tension in the state. A group of armed blacks had prevented the lynching of one of their number in Muskogee in 1916 and a similar group gathered in May, 1921, in front of the Tulsa Courthouse following the arrest of a Negro for alleged rape.

The peak of the racial outbursts across America in 1921 occurred in Tulsa as a result of the alleged rape, the gathering mobs, and the threat of a lynching. The Tulsa race riot was the worst one of that year in the United States. The night of May 31-June 1 saw enraged whites use automobiles and even airplanes to wipe out Tulsa's black ghetto. Intentional fires gutted an area

two miles long and twelve blocks wide. Seven companies of National Guardsmen and two companies of regular troops from Ft. Sill arrived to enforce martial law over the city. The Adjutant General in charge of the Guardsmen in Tulsa described a wild scene of 25,000 whites ranging the streets in automobiles shooting wildly.[24]

The presence of the Guardsmen and the soldiers had a calming effect upon the citizenry of northeastern Oklahoma and no more violent outbursts occurred in the years following the Tulsa outrage, but white attitudes toward blacks remained hardened and Negro resentment continued. Segregation and Jim Crow laws remained in effect to hamper the freedom of movement of minorities in Oklahoma. The tradition of white supremacy remained strong in the state and lay readily available for any organization to exploit for its own benefit.

Feelings among whites ran high against other minorities. The old, native whites who felt under assault from many sides in the 1920s pointed to immigrants as one of the primary causes of criminal activity and vice in America's cities. Conservatives in Oklahoma attacked minorities they considered inferior to themselves. During the First World War American miners assaulted five Assyrian miners near Henryetta for alleged disloyalty.[25] In 1923 Spavinaw residents forced sixty Mexicans to leave that town because they were considered unfit to be neigh-



PLATE 1--Tulsa Race Riot Viewed Down the Railroad Tracks from Greenwood Avenue, 1921



PLATE 2--Destruction in the Aftermath of the Riot



PLATE 3--Blacks Marched to Detention During the Riot

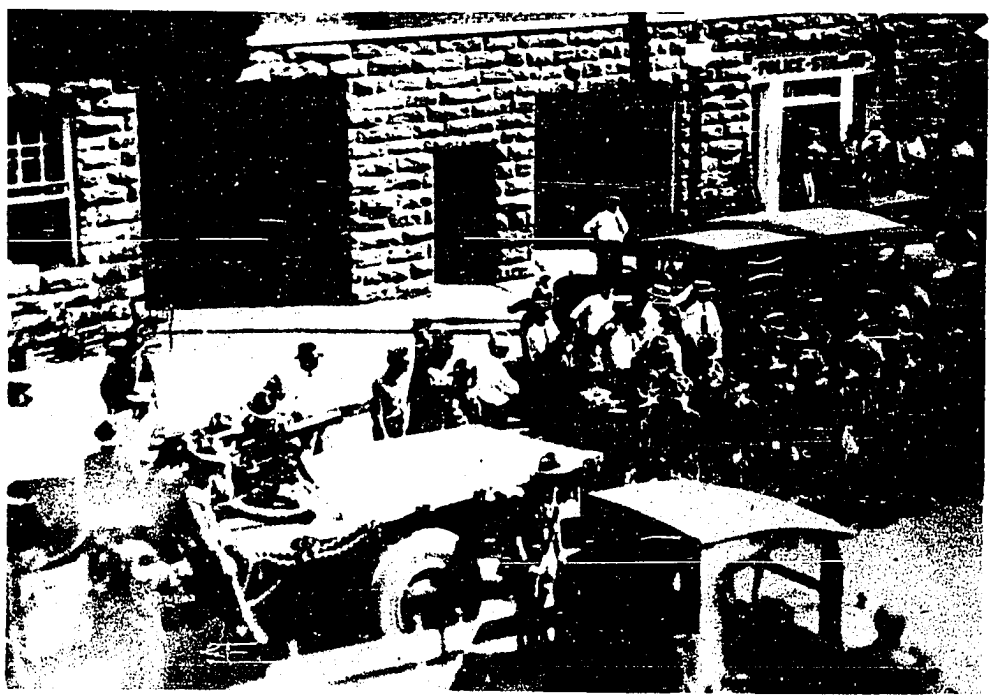


PLATE 4--Guardsmen and Machine Guns Outside the Tulsa Police Station During the Riot

bors.[26]

Immigration into the United States steadily rose at the beginning of the 1920s. From 110,000 in 1919, the stream of new arrivals climbed sharply to 430,000 in 1920, and soared to 805,000 the following year. Those already in the nation foresaw the numbers entering America steadily rising until they would inundate the native born. Traditionally suspicious of large cities, Americans dwelling in small towns blamed aliens in the city ghettos for bloc voting, machine politics, corruption, crime, and vice. Unknown languages confused Americans when they met immigrants.

The diverse mixture of peoples in Oklahoma made Protestants sensitive to the immigration question. Employment opportunities in the extractive industries attracted many European minorities to the state. Eastern and Southern Europeans were found in the mining regions of what had been formerly the lands of the Five Civilized Tribes. Farming areas throughout the state drew Northern and Central Europeans as well as migrant Mexicans. Protestants aware of the immigration issue feared that aliens could not be successfully assimilated into "good Americans," especially if their numbers continued to swell.

Some Oklahomans supported restrictions upon the number of immigrants entering the nation. They agitated for a country in which the people conserved "America for

Americans."[27] War veterans spoke to townsmen about the need for a halt to the influx of foreigners and their harmful effects upon the nation as a whole. Editorials carried the message to more Oklahomans, while speakers informed women's clubs of the need for restriction. The American Legion sponsored letter-writing campaigns to congressmen for that purpose.

Immigrants took the blame of Protestant conservatives for the Old World importations of anarchism, Socialism, and war-bred Bolshevism. The wartime vote in Oklahoma for the Socialist Party was one of the highest in the nation. It grew out of discontent of farmers angered over prices and exploitation. Immigrants entered the state in the influx of population after the turn of the century to fill the new jobs opened in oil fields and the mines. The Socialist Party and International Workers of the World organizers followed the miners and workers, and spilled into the agricultural sector to explain that the drop in commodity prices was the direct result of capitalist exploitation centered in the cities and in banks.

Socialists had opposed the war effort in Oklahoma and were the special targets of vigilance committees of the local councils of defense. Radicals actively opposed the entrance of the United States into the war and counseled soldiers to desert and leave the fighting to the financial exploiters. Some of the radicals told their

followers that the time to rebel was in August, 1917. Several hundred Oklahomans took up arms to resist the draft. They were concentrated along the Canadian River in south central Oklahoma. Three died in the so-called Green Corn Rebellion, which collapsed after the rebels realized they were surrounded; the expected uprising of the fifth column of German-Americans never materialized. Rumors circulated that the revolt was the local manifestation of a national rebellion that would "lay waste, if necessary, to every city and town of importance west of the Mississippi River" at a predetermined time.[28]

Oklahomans used the tar bucket, whip, club, pistol, and ax to enforce local standards during the war, often with a placard left behind that said, "There is no room in town for a Hun like you."[29] The head of the "strong-arm" committee of the Oklahoma City Council of Defense, John R. Boardman, noted that his group used many methods to ensure the outward loyalty among residents of the state's capital city. The methods closely paralleled those employed across the state. Boardman's methods ranged from the pressure of public opinion and personal chats to yellow paint on the doors of the disloyal, Chamber of Commerce hearings, and force in quieting the disloyal and the slacker. Boardman admitted that his group touched those elements of society that the law could not legally reach. Troublesome residents generally became

bond-buying citizens after the Council of Defense members visited them.[30]

Oklahomans turned to force when persuasion failed to turn the disloyal into devoted bond-buyers. Following a Council of Defense investigation into the loyalty of Tulsan Harry Rheimer, fifty members of the Council seized him. He had been told to display an American flag in his home window, but shortly thereafter it vanished. The councilmen took Rheimer to the Home Guard Armory on the second floor of the city hall, stood him on a chair, and attached an electrical cord around his neck, tying the other end to a basketball goal. The crowd spat in his face and hurled insults at him. They forced him to kiss every star on the flag and to pledge his loyalty to America. Rheimer thought he had done everything required of him and that the mob would turn him loose. Then one of the vigilantes yanked the chair from under him and he hung suspended. As he gasped for air the sheriff forced his way through the excited mob, cut Rheimer down, and saved his life.[31]

Throughout the state violence served the communities as an enforcement method against the suspected disloyal. Editorials advocated the continuance of strongarm methods in the face of open rebellion against the war effort. "Along with tar and feathers, there are trees and poles in this state and rope in plenty and the will to

use them" one journalist announced with a pointed threat to citizens of the Sooner State who questioned the involvement of Americans in the Allied struggle.[32] Police assisted members of the Council of Defense in meting out punishment to suspected anti-war agitators in the Tulsa area. Detectives reported that over two hundred organizers for the International Workers of the World and their agricultural affiliate, the Working Class Union, migrated from Texas into the oil fields to organize the workers into an open rebellion planned for the first of November, 1917.[33] Hooded Tulsans, members of the Knights of Liberty, struck first. Police raided the local IWW hall and arrested several men who were released into the waiting arms of the Knights of Liberty who applied the horsewhip, as well as tar and feathers. Vagrants and suspected IWW sympathizers were beaten.[34] National attention focused on the affair. Editors in Oklahoma lauded the hooded Knights who drove the IWW from Tulsa and called for similar actions in other communities in the state.[35]

The strikes against radicalism in Oklahoma were similar to the postwar Red Scare raids on Bolsheviks in New York City under the direction of United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1919. The raids spread as did the hysteria about Communists in America into 1920. Strikes in Seattle, Boston, and other major cities precipitated this phenomenon. Oklahomans in 1919 experienced

the same sort of hysteria but on a smaller scale than that experienced on the national level. Coal strikes spreading from Okmulgee led the Governor to call out the state militia to quell threatened violence and to restore service. Governor James B. A. Robertson wired the United States Attorney General that forty percent of the miners out on strike were aliens and they should be deported through the federal government's assistance if they continued to slow work.[36] The Governor's request mirrored the similar demands of his constituents who denounced the "little bunch of Bolsheviki" who led the strikers and warned that the alien miners should find other countries in which to foment discontent because only One Hundred Percent Americans would be allowed to continue their residence in the United States.[37]

Wartime sentiment against the foreigner as a potential saboteur shifted to peacetime fears of the foreigner as a terrorist and bomb-thrower. Immigrants made up the largest number of the disorganized radicals and anarchists at this time of hysteria, and a nativist reaction against the immigrant arose with an accompanying cry for the restriction of immigration that culminated in the 1921 and 1924 Exclusion Statutes. It was charged that the Communist threatened the foundation of the American private property system and the basic religious beliefs of the pious citizens while the influx of aliens threatened

to inundate those native white Protestant Americans already here.

Speakers and editors pointed out that the same people who were draft evaders and disloyal during the war were members of postwar Socialist groups and that members of these groups, like the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League, raised the spectre of anarchy and "bloody revolution" in the state.[38] Others connected wartime disloyalty and radicalism with comments that the traitors in America in the 1920s should be machine-gunned: "Traitorous I.W.W.'s, bolsheviks and other swine . . . are worse enemies of America today than were the Huns of Wilhelm."[39] Immigration restrictions and the alleged threat of foreigners within the nation were compelling problems in the minds of Oklahomans well into the 1920s.

World War I gave renewed emphasis to fraternalism. Membership in patriotic organizations and fraternal orders rose in the postwar period as part of the carry-over from the hostilities and the surge of emotionalism. Across the state groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution, Masons, Elks, Rotarians, and Eastern Star grew substantially. Still others flourished in the 1920s, such as the American Independence League, the civilian arm of the American Legion, the Civil Legion, the reactionary National Security League, the American Defense Society, and the National Civic Federation. Secret organizations grew

with such rapidity in the 1920s that the last years of the decade saw over 800 separate groups in America with over thirty million members. The Oklahoma humorist Will Rogers joked that two Americans could not meet on the street without one banging a gavel and calling the other to order. Oklahomans were a people who joined groups with patriotic beliefs.[40]

Part of the conservatives' alarm over radicals in Oklahoma was political. Some legislators believed that the Socialists of their counties were responsible for disrespect for the law, coddling criminals, and hung juries. Horrified at the large Socialist vote in the Sooner State, legislators attempted to pass legislation to restrict the selection of jurors and board members to qualified voters of a county not affiliated with radicalism. The political process, the conservatives believed, was undermined through the efforts of radical elements in the counties. One member of the state legislature in a debate on such a bill announced that Socialists on the jury selection rolls of his county led to violators of the law going free: ". . . every time one of them gets on a jury to try a murderer or a horsethief you'll have a hung jury."[41] It was a necessity for loyal, conservative Oklahomans to band together in the face of the threat posed from the political left.

With the end of World War I and the return to

peacetime pursuits, Oklahomans believed prosperity and tranquility would dominate the new decade that began one and one-half years after the Armistice. The possibilities for growth seemed limitless with the state's abundance of mineral wealth and physical resources. Oklahoma as one of the youngest states held great promise, but many of its citizens believed that certain problems threatened this prospect. Protestants saw around them a moral decline and a corresponding rise in criminality. The demand for local reform found a willing partner in the men who came to the state in 1920 from Texas promoting a patriotic and fraternal organization based in Atlanta, Georgia, called the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

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[3]Sherry Warrick, "The Working Class Union," Chronicles of Oklahoma, LII (Summer, 1974), pp. 180-95; Harlow's Weekly, X (December 13, 1917), p. 4; Gilbert C. Fite, "Oklahoma's Reconstruction League," Journal of Southern History, XIII (November, 1947), pp. 535-55.

[4]James Tarner, "The Regional Background of Oklahoma's Peoples," Proceedings of the Oklahoma Academy of Sciences, XXXVII (November-December, 1956), pp. 95-99.

[5]Michael Doran, "The Origin of Culture Areas in Oklahoma, 1830-1900" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1974).

[6]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, January 15, 1923, p. 1;

October 19, 1922, p. 1; December 27, 1922, p. 1; January 1, 1923, p. 1; February 23, 1923, p. 1; Tulsa World, October 5, 1923, p. 10; September 1, 1923, p. 9; Anadarko American-Democrat, December 5, 1923, p. 1; April 1, 1925, p. 1; May 13, 1925, p. 1; Lawton News, February 14, 1922, p. 1; December 31, 1923, p. 1; Daily Oklahoman, December 31, 1923, p. 3.

[7]Discussed in W. D. Grisso to James Jackson, November 20, 1963, Grisso Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, box 18. The quote is in an interview in W.P.A. Writers' Project Collection, Oil in Oklahoma, box 43.

[8]Oklahoma Geological Survey, Bulletin 22, part III, Mineral Resources of Oklahoma and Statistics of Production from 1901 to 1914 (Norman: N. p., 1914), p. 63; Tulsa World, May 29, 1921, p. 11A; American-Democrat, July 22, 1925, p. 1; W.P.A. Writers' Project interviews, University of Oklahoma Library; Muskogee Times-Democrat, September 21, 1923, p. 1; Okmulgee Daily Democrat, February 2, 1923, p. 1; February 7, 1923, p. 1; Francis Kane, "Drugs and Crime," Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, VIII (1917-18), pp. 502-18; V. V. Anderson, "Immoral Woman as Seen in Court," ibid., pp. 902-10; testimony of state health inspector, A. E. Davenport, a Klansman, on November 15, 1923, in Oklahoma, House of Representatives, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment and Investigation of Executive, Legislative,

and Judicial Officers, Special Session, Ninth Legislature (New York: Novak and Walker, 1923), I, pp. 464-66; Federal Report on Vice Conditions in Tulsa by agent TFG, testimony of E. S. McQueen, testimony of J. J. Morrison, vice report of H. H. Townsend of May 18, 1921, and testimony of Chief of Tulsa Police John Gustafson in State vs. Gustafson, Tulsa District Court, Attorney General Cases, Tulsa Investigation--Race Riot, case 1062, State Archives, Oklahoma City.

[9]Clay Jewett, Tulsa World, September 8, 1923, p. 8.

[10]Rev. Barton to Att. Gen. Freeling, June 8, 1917, Att. Gen. Cases, State Archives; testimony of Charles Mcloud, November 15, 1923, in Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, pp. 2218-27; Tulsa Tribune, June 6, 1921, p. 6; Daily Oklahoman, September 27, 1921, p. 4.

[11]John Reece to Assistant Att. Gen. Kathryn Van Leuven, July 23, 1921, Att. Gen. Cases, Tulsa Investigation--Race Riot, 1062.

[12]Gilman Ostrander, "The Revolution in Morals" in John Braeman et al., eds., Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America: The 1920s (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1968), p. 349.

[13]"How Art Has Gone to the Dogs," Literary Digest, LXXVII (June 3, 1922), pp. 34-35; Gertrude Atherton, "Is

There a Moral Decline?," Forum, LXV (March, 1921), pp. 312-16.

[14]"Baptists Denounce Evolution," Anadarko American-Democrat, July 15, 1925, p. 8.

[15]Tulsa World, October 5, 1923, p. 10.

[16]Hollis Post-Herald, December 7, 1922, p. 1.

[17]Lawton News, February 14, 1922, p. 1.

[18]Tulsa World, September 1, 1923, p. 9.

[19]Pittsburg County Guardian (McAlester), July 19, 1924, p. 1.

[20]Eufaula Indian Journal, March 29, 1907, p. 4; Okmulgee Daily Democrat, January 2, 1923, p. 1.

[21]Sig Synnestvedt, White Response to Black Emancipation: Second-Class Citizenship in the United States Since Reconstruction (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 121.

[22]Numbers from ibid., pp. 56, 68-69. Oklahoma's ranking from R. Halliburton, Jr., The Tulsa Race War of 1921 (San Francisco: R. & E. Research Associates, 1975), p. 1.

[23]Vinita Weekly Chieftain, September 1, 1911, p. 6.

[24]Charles F. Barrett, Oklahoma After Fifty Years (Oklahoma City: The Historical Record Association, 1941), p. 215.

[25]Daily Oklahoman, April 24, 1918, p. 9.

[26]Muskogee Times-Democrat, June 16, 1923, p. 1.

[27]Daily Oklahoman, September 2, 1923, p. 8C.

[28]U. S. Att. John Fain to Att. Gen. of the U. S., October 18, 1918, JAF/BV: 1744-Cr., 1917-19 Letter Book, Redmond S. Cole Papers, University of Oklahoma Library.

[29]Enid Daily-News, April 2, 1918, p. 1.

[30]Daily Oklahoman, April 11, 1918, p. 1.

[31]Ibid., April 20, 1918, p. 1.

[32]Ibid., quoted in Harlow's Weekly, XIII (November 14, 1917), p. 4.

[33]Kansas City Operative Number 27 report from Henryetta, October 30, 1917, Att. Gen. Cases, IWW File, State Archives.

[34]The "Knights of Liberty" Mob and the IWW Prisoners at Tulsa, Oklahoma pamphlet (N. p.: National Civil Liberties Bureau, 1918), in the Horace Peterson Papers, University of Oklahoma Library.

[35]Harlow's Weekly, XIII (November 28, 1917), p. 4; "Citizens Take Law Into Own Hands," ibid. (November 14, 1917), pp. 3-4; national reaction is in "Mob Violence in the U. S.," Survey, XL (April 27, 1918), p. 102.

[36]Telegram, Robertson to Palmer, October 30, 1919, Robertson Collection, General Correspondence, box 11, State Archives.

For the Red Scare see Robert Murray, The Red Scare (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1955); Stanley Coben, A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician (New York: Colum-

bia University, 1963).

[37]Letters are in the Robertson Collection, General Correspondence, State Archives. The quote is from Joe Patterson to Governor Robertson, October 31, 1919, Robertson Collection.

[38]Atoka Indian Citizen-Democrat, May 18, 1922, p. 4.

[39]Anadarko American-Democrat, September 5, 1922, p. 1.

[40]Figures are from Kenneth Harrell, "The K.K.K. in Louisiana" (Ph. D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1966), p. 101. The quip of Rogers's is from Robert Miller, "The K.K.K.," in John Braeman, ed., Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America: The 1920s (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1968), p. 243.

[41]Representative R. K. Warren of Choctaw County in the Tulsa World, February 17, 1917, p. 4.

CHAPTER II

KLEAGLES IN OKLAHOMA

The Kleagles, organizers for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, who reached the state in 1920 found Oklahomans receptive to their message. Many Oklahoma men, like prominent Tulsa attorney Wash Hudson, admitted that their fathers had been members of the original organization during Reconstruction in the Deep South following the Civil War. They wanted to be a part of the revival of the organization. Like many whites, they believed that the original Knights had saved white womanhood from fate worse than death at the hands of carpetbaggers and blacks under Reconstruction governments in the states of the former Confederacy. Former members of the post-Civil War Knights resided in the state as part of the territorial influx of settlers and they brought with them a deep pride in the order and in its accomplishments.

The motion picture The Birth of a Nation did much to rekindle the romantic image of the mission of hooded men in the night. Oklahomans went enthusiastically to view the movie when it showed initially in 1915 through

1916, and they attended its reshowings in 1924. Kleagles adroitly used the movie and the novel from which the movie was made as a kind of recruitment device. The impact of the new cinematic techniques of director D. W. Griffith highlighted the electrifying novel of Thomas Dixon, The Clansman. It left the viewing audience with a sensitive impression of the alleged depravities of newly emancipated blacks and carpetbag governments yielding to no power except the force of the begowned Knights. The efforts of the Radical Republican Austin Stoneman (Thaddeus Stevens) to Africanize the South all but succeeded on the screen before the Klan stepped in to save white civilization from bestial barbarity to the strains of The Ride of the Valkyries from the orchestra pit. Actress Lilian Gish at the last minute was rescued from the evil clutches of Stoneman and of Reconstruction and returned to the tranquility of brocade and verandas under the watchful eye of the ghostly legions of the Klan.[1]

The novel and the movie borrowed from historical fact in their portrayal of the emergence of the order in the Deep South. They then mixed much fiction with the facts and came up with the sensational product that sold so well to the American people. Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest and six to ten fellow officers formed the first group in 1866 in Pulaski, a town just south of Nashville, Tennessee. At the beginning the group was a social

club that delighted in dressing up in sheets with odd names and riding through the countryside at night. One of their number suggested the Greek kuklos, meaning circle, for their organizational name, drawing upon their classical educations. Someone else suggested some Scottish words and ceremonies to add effect and the word clan became a part of the organization's name and the flaming torch served both as a rallying symbol and a ghostly addition. The Ku Klux Klan spread rapidly until it had a membership of some 550,000, largely centered in the Piedmont and rural areas of nine states of the Deep South. They sought to strike at the Negro as a citizen in the years 1867-1868 and not as a lawbreaker as the revived group did in the 1920s. In 1869 Forrest disbanded the Knights saying undesirables had joined the fraternity, perverted its ideals, and were driving out the better members. Congress passed legislation banning the group and the use of the secret disguise for intimidation. But the memory of the romantic ideal of the Klan lived on in the minds of Southern whites who believed the order was perfection frozen in time. To them the membership had preserved the best of the South and had restored satin and settee to their proper places.[2]

Ten days before The Birth of a Nation opened its run in Atlanta, Georgia, theaters in 1915, thirty-four men gathered in an attorney's office in the business dis-

trict to discuss the idea of a reorganized Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Three of those present had been members of the Reconstruction organization. On Thanksgiving night 1915 they inducted fifteen men into the new order atop Stone Mountain, a Confederate shrine, with a burning cross providing the light. The founder of the revived Knights of 1915 was William Joseph Simmons. He was a red-haired, clean-shaven, plump man who was a professional joiner of fraternal orders in Georgia and an idealist and romanticist about the order's mission. In the first World War, Simmons joined the Citizens Bureau of Investigation and formed his own secret police with an ex-detective named Fred Savage. After the war Simmons tried to sell his idea to others about a new Klan and to increase the membership. He was an impressive orator on patriotic topics and possessed a powerful voice, but he could make little headway in selling admissions to his order. He confined his promotional activities to the Atlanta area and an occasional Confederate Veterans conference.

In 1920 Simmons entered into a partnership with the Southern Publicity Association of Atlanta to propagandize his group throughout the South. Mrs. Bessie Tyler, a plump blonde, and Edward Young Clarke, a slender bachelor, ran the Association which put on the Harvest Home Festival and the Better Babies Parade for Atlantans and managed publicity for the local Young Men's Christian As-

sociation. Clarke joined the Klan in June, 1920, or before, and found that there were only ten to fifteen Klan organizations and only about 3,000 members. They were confined to the Deep South and largely to Georgia. For a sizeable share of the membership dues, Tyler and Clarke devised a scheme of organizational activity throughout the nation that led to a soaring membership. In the summer of 1921 they placed over two hundred recruiters in the field, calling them Kleagles, and within eighteen months they had added over 100,000 members to the Klan.

The fee to join the order, called the klectokon, was ten dollars, part of which went to the Kleagle in the field and part to Simmons and to the Southern Publicity Association. The exposé carried in the New York World in late 1921, followed still later in the year with a congressional investigation into the robed fraternity, added enormously to the publicity of the order. Four months of free publicity enabled the Knights to charter over two hundred new local chapters, and within one year membership rose from 100,000 to over 1,000,000 nationally. In 1922 Imperial Headquarters in Atlanta accepted 3,500 memberships into the domain every working day--some $35,000 flowing into the Imperial treasury daily--with Tyler and Clarke sharing eighty percent of the profits in the early period.[3]

The Klan had caught the imagination of over a

million Americans who joined it. Many more wished to do so. The number of membership applications flowing into Atlanta after the free congressional publicity along with that of the journalistic exposé swamped the Imperial Headquarter's staff. The Kleagles discovered that they could not obtain official entry forms fast enough to meet the demand for them in the towns across the Southern half of the nation. "The Klan is as absolutely American as chewing-gum, crooked district attorneys, or chautauquas,"[4] H. L. Mencken, the acidic critic, summed up the order's appeal.

Original Klansmen had lived in Oklahoma since the 1870s. The organization was not unknown. In fact, its reputation preceded its mass appeal in the area. Some of the old Klansmen from the Reconstruction era retained or passed on their regalia for use on very special occasions or among friends for the purpose of reminiscence. A few Oklahoma Kluxers made the first public appearance in the nation after the First World War, aside from the initial appearances in Atlanta. The first public appearance following the order's beginning on Stone Mountain was on October 10, 1919, in a parade.[5] Seven months before their appearance in the founding city, Oklahoma Klansmen publicly paraded. While a Liberty Loan drive was on for the war effort in the town of Skiatook, sixteen Kluxers on horseback rode over the hill at the edge of town and

silently joined the procession. Banners carried by them warned three men that ropes were waiting for them if they continued to refuse to buy bonds.[6]

The men in their hoods and gowns made their point about bond-buying and disappeared over the same hill at the end of the procession. Oklahomans continued their daily tasks without the presence of Kleagles in the state until 1920. Some Oklahomans might have attended the Confederate Veterans conferences or visited Atlanta for business reasons and chanced upon the Knights and joined, but there was no concerted national Klan effort to recruit Oklahomans until 1920. After the promotional drive of the Southern Publicity Association, the hooded order spread from the Deep South into the lower Mississippi Valley on the heels of the Red Scare and postwar tensions. Klan recruiters entered Texas, organized there and established a firm financial base for propagating the Southwest, then entered Oklahoma.

During the summer of 1920, George Kimbro, Jr., and George C. McCarron stepped from their Ford coupe in Oklahoma City and met with several members of local fraternal orders. They carried with them letters of introduction from fraternal officials in Texas. Kimbro introduced himself as the Klan's Grand Goblin, the overseer of a vast Imperial realm of the order that encompassed sixteen states, including Oklahoma. He made his headquarters in

Houston, Texas, where he had been in the ice cream business before accepting the Klan's mission into the alien world for more members. Accompanying him was George McCarron from Houston, the King Kleagle for Oklahoma, who set up his headquarters in room 503 of the Baltimore Building in downtown Oklahoma City. He shortly had twelve Kleagles working out of his office selling memberships throughout the city, and very soon throughout the state.[7]

The price for admission into the fraternity of hoods was a ten dollar klectokon. Under the Tyler-Clarke promotional agreement with William Simmons, the Kleagle at first kept $4.00 as his commission. One dollar went to the state organizers to boost their early efforts. Fifty cents went to the Grand Goblin, George Kimbro. Of the initial ten dollar fee, Clarke and Tyler accepted $2.50, while the remainder ($2.50) went to the national headquarters in Atlanta and to Simmons. Amounts varied over time depending upon the status of a local organized unit. If the state organization was in its infancy, then more money flowed into the national headquarters because there were fewer state officers to demand their share of the proceeds. After the state organizations were firmly established, the Grand Goblin stepped out of the picture except for ceremonies and left more of the funding to the local officials.[8]

Kleagles in Oklahoma City sought members of patri-

otic and fraternal orders such as the Masons from which the Kleagles carried either personal or official letters of introduction. Masons in many communities were the primary focus of the Knight's recruitment. In many small towns the masonic hall was the largest structure for local gatherings. The Masonic Temple in Oklahoma City at the time was the largest building for fraternal meetings in the state. Often in smaller towns the Masons and the Knights were interchangeable organizations. Although their official, national governing body opposed the Klan, many Masons joined anyway, feeling they knew better what they wanted than their leadership on the East Coast.

Another early target of the promoters for the Klan were the prominent members of the wartime councils of defense in Oklahoma County. The strongarm committee of the Oklahoma City Council of Defense, under the direction of John Boardman, repeatedly proved its loyalty by pressuring recalcitrants and slackers to change into bond-buying supporters of the war effort. Some of the members of the Council's strongarm committee met in Sifer's Candy factory one night in 1920. They included former members like John Boardman, as well as others like Sheriff Tom Cavnar, School Board President Grant Gordon, George McCarron, and one of the Kleagles from Texas. These Oklahomans had held power during the war and wanted to control local events and share in establishing the postwar order.

They were anxious to join a body that continued their wartime efforts to cleanse their community of evil elements and troublemakers.[9]

Early meetings in Oklahoma City were held in the Congregational Church, in the old Epworth University building, in the Huckins Hotel, and in the chambers of Judge George W. Clark, an early initiate into the Oklahoma City Klavern. Through mutual friends and acquaintances the word about the new organization in the city spread. Membership did not rise rapidly at first because the tightly knit group investigated new prospects carefully before admitting them to ensure they allowed only the "best" elements of their community into the Knights. After a few months of kluxing locally in the capital city, the Klan had a membership of slightly over 1,000.[10] The order's leadership claimed a numerical strength in Oklahoma City in September, 1921, of over 2,500.[11]

In the Tulsa region, Kleagles were active before the June, 1921, race riot, but that catastrophe greatly assisted their organizational efforts among fearful and angry whites. The Klan could not be credited with precipitating the riot, but some of its members had an intimate relationship with the events. Some policemen were Klansmen while other officers were sympathetic. The Tulsa police encouraged the white rioters and even assisted them in assaulting the blacks in Little Africa. The savagery

unleashed in white rage led to the reenactment of the First World War with ex-servicemen in the front ranks fighting through the avenues of Tulsa which left a charred black ghetto.[12]

The Klan's philosophy on race and violence permeated the postwar attitude which fed the crazed outburst among the whites. Klansmen and sympathizers formed a self-appointed posse to provide secure segregation in 1921 in Tulsa. Letters and notices appeared in that year in the city warning lawbreakers and blacks that dire consequences would befall those who did not conform to approved conduct. The law and order campaign focused directly upon the vice which was concentrated in the black ghetto of the oil capital. Klansmen greeted the aftermath of the hostilities with no regrets. They were pleased with the outcome. One month after the clash a prominent Tulsa lawyer sat on the platform in Tulsa's Convention Hall--the detention center for Negro refugees in the riot--to hear an Atlanta Klansman who was a Baptist minister laud his hooded fraternity and its service to the community. The man said the race riot "was the best thing ever happened to Tulsa and that judging from the way strange Negroes were coming to Tulsa we might have to do it all over again."[13] The prominent attorney then spoke on the Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan and its activities in the 1860s with an undertone of potential violence and night-

riding throughout his remarks.[14]

Kleagles capitalized upon the emotions in the wake of the race riot to propagandize the white community of Tulsa. The result was astounding. Soon the Tulsa Klan Number Two boasted of 2,000 members. The Klavern, the smallest local unit of the organizational structure wherein the ritual ceremonies were held, grew so rapidly that in six months the Klan paid an estimated $60,000 for the Centenary Methodist Church building in Tulsa and built one of the largest meeting halls in the Southwest on the spot. Civic leaders formed the Tulsa Benevolent Association in January, 1922. It served as the holding company for the Tulsa Klan under the leadership of the Exalted Cyclops, who was William Shelley Rogers, and included many of the prominent business, professional, and local government leaders of the region. Tulsa gossips passed along the common rumor that all district judges, the court clerk, the county sheriff, and all jury commissioners were members of the Klan.[15]

From Oklahoma City and Tulsa the Kleagles branched out into the small communities in the state. The Kleagle came into a community equipped with a letter or note from a banker or civic leader in the previous town he had organized as a way of introducing himself. The undertaker, the banker, the prominent business and civic leadership, the auto dealer, and law enforcement personnel were the early

targets of the Klan. Sometimes as a recruiting device the Kleagle conferred a membership upon a leading townsman because his opinion carried added weight with new applicants or nonmembers. The introduction got the organizer a hearing, over lunch or in the private office, and sometimes over dinner after the local lodge meeting. Whatever was the listener's private grievance concerning his local situation, the Kleagle assured him that the Klan's program had just the solution he sought. Whether it was the problem of minorities, white supremacy, vice and crime, the liquor problem, or a general demand for local reform, the Klan offered salvation and hope. In El Reno, the Klan Cyclops was the head of Thompkins Motor Company, while the secretary was the local reporter for the Daily Oklahoman newspaper. The mayor was a member as well.[16]

The police and sheriffs' departments of the state's towns also received a visit from the representative of the sheeted order. In areas of criminal activity or vice, and those areas were many in the oil boom atmosphere of the postwar era in Oklahoma, the appeal of the Klan as a law and order group which upheld the constituted authority of the community had telling effect upon prospects. Entire police and sheriffs' offices joined the Knights, as in El Reno,[17] and often under the coercion of their superiors who were Klansmen from the very first of the promotional

campaign in the community.

One of the most important persons in a community for the Kleagle to attempt to enlist was the leading Protestant minister. Fundamentalism played a strong part in the expansion of the Knights across the state. Early Kleagles, like Caleb Ridley in Tulsa, were ministers, and all were closely connected with a church. One of the early requirements for membership was regular attendance with a Protestant congregation.

The religious imagery of the Klan ritual and phraseology appealed to the Puritan ethic in a frontier state. The words in the Kleagle's approach, the pamphlets that the preacher received anonymously in the mail before the recruiter's arrival in the town, and the romantic image of the Reconstruction era Klan proved a great allure. The phraseology of the solicitation and the ensuing ritual lent itself to a religious audience. There was constant talk of "salvation," of "crusades," of "mission," of "sacrifice" in the face of iniquity, of "heavenly duty," and of similar word-images. The appeal entoned religious responsibilities.

The preacher had only to look about him in the mining or oil-rich bonanza areas to perceive the truth of the Kleagle's appeal that the Klan's work and God's work were undone. The Imperial Wizard addressed recruits with the powerful reverential tones of utmost sacrifice:

"Keeping step with the Master and daily striving to emulate His example--this is the sacrifice, if sacrifice it may be called, which Klansmen offer that America and the world may be saved."[18] Yes, the minister would answer to the inquiry of the representative, it was time for Oklahomans to take a stand in the face of danger because ". . . the anti-Christ are at work in this country endeavoring to destroy the pillars of our civilization."[19]

Klan members timed their church appearances to coincide with the local service for maximum effect. While the Reverend Harney McGeree sermonized on the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ to the congregation of the Woodward Christian Church, and emphasized how suddenly Christ would appear, one hundred and fifty kluxers in full regalia quietly entered the church building. The leader said the Knights were 1,500 strong in the county and announced they backed the minister and those present in the building for their devotion to the Bible.[20] In Eufaula the pastor of the Baptist Church accepted a donation of $25 one Sunday from six Klansmen with an accompanying letter on the ideals of the order.[21]

The group gave compelling reasons for Protestant ministers to support the efforts of the brotherhood in their communities. William Simmons, the founder of the new association, was a Methodist minister and much of the terminology and ritual centered around religion. It was

only natural for the preachers of Oklahoma to bend a willing ear to the lecture of the Klan representative in the town or in the church. The results gratified the leadership of the Klan, who claimed that ninety to ninety-five percent of the Protestant ministers in the state were either members or strong sympathizers of the order.[22] One prominent Klansman of the state boasted that: "Were all the Klan ministers assembled, it would make the greatest ministerial alliance ever assembled in Oklahoma. If with these were gathered the elders and deacons, there is no building in Oklahoma that would contain them."[23]

Public appearances other than church visitations advertised the presence of the spectral legions and spread their influence. Parades afforded the order an opportunity to publicly proclaim its adherence to patriotic and religious principles. The mystery and darkness surrounding the procession of Klansmen added to the appeal and the awe of the onlookers. Despite the comments of several residents of Woodward that the Klan would not appear, a white-draped car came into sight slightly before eleven at night on July 4, 1922. A man sat in the auto holding a fiery cross which helped light the path for the procession. Behind the lead automobile walked white-robed figures bearing signs saying, "One Hundred Percent Americanism," "Lawbreakers, We Know Who You Are," and "America for Americans." The size of the crowd witnessing the

parade numbered between 20,000 and 40,000--the largest assemblage ever seen in Woodward.[24]

Initiations were even more moving experiences that advertised the Klan in the state. A Bible, a fiery cross on a hilltop, and the emotion of a spectral order on a holy mission all combined to give the initiate a memorable experience. Onlookers, too, were awed by the ceremony. Sometimes the public inductions drew large crowds. One of these was in June, 1922, south of Tulsa. An estimated 10,000 automobiles led to a massive traffic jam nine miles south of that city on the road to Broken Arrow. Klan estimates placed the size of the throng at 60,000. Police officers directed traffic so the 1,020 novices could be initiated. The traffic jam was so extensive that five hundred and eighty prospective members who were candidates for initiation failed to reach the spot and their induction was postponed.[25] Four months later some of these same Tulsa Klansmen traveled to Oklahoma City for a mass initiation in that city. Over 20,000 Oklahomans watched the "naturalization" of four hundred candidates at the Fairgrounds while airplanes flew overhead in and out of the searchlights lighting the night sky with banners boosting the Klan.[26]

The Klan employed other forms of public appearances to spread its message. Quietly and without warning, the Klan would appear at the funeral of a local man and lay

a wreath of flowers on the coffin during the service and just as silently depart without a word spoken.[27] Frequently the order's membership would make a small procession through a community to dispense small amounts of cash to the needy or to visit people with messages, usually in the company of a local reporter who was picked up along the route to inform the readers of the newspaper the next morning that the Klan did indeed exist locally. Okmulgee Kluxers toured their community one night in January, 1923. They gave a $15 grocery order to one destitute white family, $25 to a white woman in a neighboring town, and returned to Okmulgee by way of a black's residence outside of town where they assured him the letters he had received were not from the official Klan organization of the region.[28]

Public speakers advertised the ideals and presence of the Klan to Oklahomans. An Imperial Headquarter's speaker with advance advertising in the local newspapers, through handbills and word of mouth, and through the local lodges created curiosity and enthusiasm that led to large audiences. A national Klansman and minister stood before a fiery cross on the courthouse lawn in Okmulgee in July, 1923, and addressed 3,000 to 6,000 people eager to hear his message. He assailed blacks and Japanese for their alleged racial inferiority, the Roman Catholics for perfidy, and Jews for despoiling movies and sports in par-

ticular and business in general. The lecturer supported Japanese exclusion legislation and Henry Ford for the Presidency.[29] In Muskogee a Klan speaker told 2,500 listeners in the Orpheum Theater that "the salvation of the country today relies on the native born, white Protestant Americans . . . we shall not succumb to the throes of the Red and the radical," he announced to his audience.[30]

Public appearances and speech-making to audiences were no substitute for the personal contact of the Kleagle with the prospective member. The recruiter could quickly learn what the prospect's major grievances were and play upon those fears and desires. If religious decline was the favored topic, the Kleagle passed out a card with the admonition that the Roman Catholics in the nation were a direct threat. The Klansman charged that the Pope also started the war, controlled the national press and big city graft, Roman Catholics made up the largest number of inmates in the nation's prisons, and the presidents who had been victims of assassination or death had in actuality been the hapless victims of Jesuit conspiracies. The spurious Knights of Columbus oath then came from the Kleagle's pocket to show that the Roman Catholic pledged his first allegiance to the Pope and not to any secular government. Sometimes an escaped nun was available for a local meeting with interested Oklahomans to tell them

of the debaucheries that allegedly occurred within the walls of nunneries and testimonials of Jesuit hypnotism.[31] Jews were also targets of the Klansman who lectured against Americans who did not worship in Protestant churches.[32]

The Klan representative played on suspicions concerning immigrants and aliens. A wartime legacy was the antagonism toward foreigners who spoke different languages and had different customs. Oklahomans often identified aliens with slackers, Socialists, and deserters of the war period, and with the Socialist, Red, and striker of the period of peace that followed. Oklahomans asked for restrictions on immigration, for laws that would assure assimilation of immigrants, and for controls on the rights of foreigners. The Kleagle claimed that the Klan stood in the forefront of the restrictionist movement.[33]

Still another appeal of the Klan to Sooners was the call for all of those men at a rally who favored Americanism to stand. Once standing the men heard a description of the Knights as the one true defender of the purity of Americanism in the face of alien assaults. Americanism to the Klansman meant Protestantism, Puritanism, Capitalism, and Nationalism. It was crucial for Oklahomans to "stand shoulder to shoulder and combat the movement to trail the American flag in the dust."[34]

Fundamental to the reason for the popularity of

the Kleagle's message was the patriotism the order embodied in its ritual and its message. Constant references to "One Hundred Percent Americanism," "America for Americans," and other patriotic slogans aroused the support of former servicemen and members of other patriotic organizations in each community of the state.

Promotional efforts also appealed to men's desire for excitement and a higher calling. Old-timers often remarked to later interviewers the thing they recalled the most about their early life in the territory and state was the awful boredom that was their constant companion before towns grew up on the prairie. Even with the coming of cities the evenings were never filled with activities that could satisfy the soul or the craving for excitement.[35] The ennui of rural and small town life found outlet in the Knights. Nowhere else could a man get the same amount of escapism that he could achieve in the mysterious finery of the Klan. Man's craving for the dramatic and the exhilarating was satisfied.

In an era when revivals were popular, the Klan was a continuing revival of patriotic and religious sentiment with its ritual and intonations for sacrifice in the face of eternal evils. The Knights provided a cause, a purpose, a higher calling, mysticism, ritual, and a symbolism that called from man his highest emotions and virtues.

Membership in the Invisible Empire also answered

other demands for Oklahomans. One of the most important was the demand for an end to the intoxicant traffic in and around the oil camps and cities. Nearly every home in the state had some form of liquor on the premises if only for medicinal purposes. The Volstead Act established the enforcement of the Prohibition Amendment which banned the sale and purchase of liquor. State enforcement rather than federal action was to dominate the ban, leaving loopholes for the bootleg industry to capitalize upon and make huge profits.

Prohibition dominated many state communities because people opposed to the consumption of alcohol blamed that substance for local criminal activity and moral corruption. In Okmulgee the Baptist congregation responded enthusiastically to the minister's call for a social and business boycott against "wets" in the town.[36] Other residents voiced their concern over other stimulants within Oklahoma. The Superintendent of the Darlington State Home for drug addicts said that one out of every one hundred Oklahomans was an addict and that they contributed greatly to the level of crime in the Sooner State.[37] Okmulgee Elks joined the national Elks in the fight on the national narcotics traffic when a state campaign formed on dope peddlers and users.[38]

The presence of the Knights in Oklahoma had a chilling effect upon crime and liquor traffic in many com-

munities. Before the Invisible Empire arrived, leaders of the order proclaimed, criminal activity was rife. In 1920, Grand Dragon Jewett said, "a person could not drive on the roads outside of Tulsa without being hijacked."[39] Basic institutions like the police failed to provide citizens with needed protection. Ministers flayed law officials for allowing vice and crime to openly defile the youth of their towns.

One editorialist noted that the appearance of the Klan to punish lawlessness "is the inevitable result of the failure of the law to function in too many cases which have outraged public sentiment."[40] Citizens turned to other methods for satisfaction of their grievances. Following the death of five leading Tulsans in a vicious outburst of criminal activity, the ministerial alliance and other groups united in 1921, armed their members, patrolled the streets, and attempted to clean out hijackers and bootleggers.[41] But their best efforts failed to obtain the desired result because of rampant political corruption and the alliance of law enforcement personnel with the bootleggers. An organization with wide, yet secret, membership would help to instill fear in the hearts of the criminal element and would succeed in forming a political base from which to oust the old regime in the city.

A call for local reform from the leaders of com-

munities in the state provided a perfect foundation for the Knights to perform a service for their communities. A Muskogee Klan member wrote his congressman that the surrounding oil towns were filled with "no counts" who accosted girls and horrified parents. The membership of the local Klavern paid the undesirables "one 'visit' and the town is almost a 'Sunday-school class.'" The finest elements of the communities applauded the efforts of the Knights to clean up Oklahoma. The threat of the gowned fraternity "moves out the gangster, bootlegger, and the man who abuses and neglects his wife and children. It certainly was born of great necessity in this oil country," he concluded.[42]

Some town officials asked for Klaverns to assist in their areas to clean up their regions. School board officials in LeFlore County called upon the Klan to end the influence of bootleggers in the county. Board spokesmen claimed that the liquor traffic had all but killed the Sunday schools of Poteau. They said that educational institutions could not expand when the moral environment of their community was of such bad character as to counteract the impact of the schools.[43]

The Klan's membership was truly dedicated to the idea of local reform. The least common denominator of their program for betterment was their demand for reform.[44] Here was the key to their rapid rise in memberships and

their widespread influence in the state. They wrapped demands for reform in the local concentration of political power, law enforcement, and virtue in the terms of a moral crusade. Imperial Wizard Pro Tem Edward Clarke spoke to Tulsa Kluxers in 1922 in a closed meeting. He summed up the body's mission in terms of a moral crusade when he stated "that in everything we have done it has been to try and remove sores or cesspools of iniquity from the community."[45]

Parading Klansmen time and again carried placards proclaiming their intention to enforce local moral codes: "Girls, do your joyriding in the city limits," or, "Husbands, do your joyriding with your own wife."[46] The organization dictated local morality, putting into practice what church leaders could only preach about, women's clubs could only speak on, and about which concerned members of the Chambers of Commerce could only advertise, as for instance in their Anti-Opium Publicity campaigns.

To highlight the moral force of the Klan necessarily weakens its fraternal and its religious appeals. It also discounts the order's successful use of prejudice. Nevertheless, the single most important reason for the success of the body in Oklahoma was its strong claim that it was the most successful force in the community for the control of individual behavior.

The Knights strove for the proper order within a

community. They sought to prevent the erosion of small-town America in the face of the changes the postwar period brought to the nation. Stalwart conservatives resented the presence in Oklahoma of divergent religious groups, advocates of collectivist ideas of government, and different economic and social standards. People joined the Klan desiring a defense mechanism against the people they feared and resented or whom they identified as threats to the status quo. The order in the member's eyes was defensive rather than aggressive.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

[1]The film was ultimately viewed by 50 million Americans and continues to be popular among college film and history classes.

Everett Carter, "Cultural History Written with Lightning: The Significance of The Birth of a Nation," American Quarterly, XII (Fall, 1960), pp. 347-57; "The Civil War on Film," Literary Digest, L (March 20, 1915), pp. 608-609; Raymond Cook, "The Man Behind the 'Birth of a Nation,'" North Carolina Historical Review, XXXIX (Autumn, 1962), pp. 519-40.

[2]Presentations of the Klan as the saviors are in Knights of the K.K.K., The ABC of the Knights of the K.K.K. (Atlanta: The Knights, 1917), in the Library of Congress; the Constitution of the Women of the K.K.K., booklet, University of Oklahoma Library, p. 67; as well as secondary sources on the Reconstruction era Klan in the bibliography of this dissertation.

The membership figure is from Lois Torrance, "The K.K.K. in Dallas, 1915-28" (M. A. thesis, Southern Metho-

dist University, 1948), p. 4.

[3]New York World exposé in September, 1921; "Causes for Rise and Growth of the K.K.K.," The Kourier, III (February, 1927), pp. 16-17; Mary Herring, "Why of the K.K.K.," New Republic, XXXIII (February 7, 1923), p. 289; William Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," Collier's, LXXXII (July 14, 1928), pp. 5-7; Shepherd, "Ku Klux Koin," ibid. (July 21, 1928), p. 38; "An Imperial Wizard and His Klan," Literary Digest, LXVIII (February 5, 1921), pp. 42-46; Kenneth Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City (New York: Oxford University, 1967); David Chalmers, Hooded Americanism (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965). Clarke's comment about the paucity of members when he joined is in U. S., Senate, Committee on Privileges and Elections, Senator from Texas, Hearings, 68th Congress, 1st Session, 1924, p. 422.

Simmons invented the Klan practice of beginning Klan terms with the prefix "Kl" for mystic effect.

[4]"A Defense of the Klan," Literary Digest, LXXVI (January 20, 1923), p. 19.

[5]Jackson, K.K.K. in the City, p. 31.

[6]Tulsa World, April 11, 1918, p. 12.

[7]Daily Oklahoman, September 9, 1921, p. 1; testimony of A. A. Maupin, ibid., September 21, 1923, p. 2; Tulsa World, September 22, 1923, p. 5; Howard Tucker, Governor Walton's War on the Klan (Oklahoma City: N. p.,

1923), p. 19

[8]An example of the Kleagle's recruitment card is in the Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library. The breakdown of the commissions is in Daily Oklahoman, September 25, 1921, p. 5.

[9]Daily Oklahoman, April 14, 1918, p. 8; notes of Charles Etheridge, July 7, 1947, K.K.K. File, Oklahoma Publishing Company, Oklahoma City, p. 1.

There is much disagreement on the dates of the Sifer factory gathering. Etheridge from interviews with former Klansmen of the era of the 1920s places the year in 1919, but the FBI placed the date in 1918. Daily Oklahoman, March 31, 1965, p. 12.

The war period is crucial to the rise of the Oklahoma Klan, yet few historical treatments mention it. The best study of the Southwestern Klan does not emphasize it: Charles Alexander, The K.K.K. in the Southwest (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1965). Norman Weaver, "The Knights of the K.K.K. in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1954), and Kenneth Harrell, "The K.K.K. in Louisiana," do not emphasize the war period or the conflict's effects on their topics. Inez Clubb, "A History of the Knights of the K.K.K. in Oklahoma" (M. A. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1941), does not cover the war period.

[10]A. A. Maupin testimony to the military tribunal

in Tulsa World, September 22, 1923, p. 5; Tucker, Governor Walton's War, p. 19.

[11]Oklahoma City Klan to editor, Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1921, p. 5B; July 23, 1921, p. 3.

[12]Fry, The Modern K.K.K., p. 100, for the early recruitment drive. See transcript of John Oliphant, State vs. Gustafson, 1062, State Archives, and editorial, "Martial Law," Tulsa World, June 3, 1921, p. 4, for police involvement.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Blacks referred to the Beno Hall as "Be No Hall": "Be No Nigger, Be No Jew, Be No Catholic." Interview with W. D. Williams, Impact, I (June-July, 1972), p. 33. Leaders are discussed in Tulsa World, August 28, 1923, p. 1; August 30, 1923, p. 15. An example of a promotional letter is D. C. Rose to Redmond Cole, n. d., Letter Book, General Correspondence, 1922, Cole Papers, University of Oklahoma Library. The rumor comes from Charles Daley to George Short, January 26, 1923, General Correspondence, Short File, State Archives.

[15]Tulsa World, August 28, 1923, p. 1.

[16]Testimony of Ray Montgomery before the military court in Shawnee in Tucker, Governor Walton's War, p. 48.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Hiram Evans in the Proceedings of the Second Imperial Klonvocation, Kansas City, Missouri, 1924, pamphlet

(Atlanta: The Knights, 1924), p. 15, in the Library of Congress.

[19]Former Oklahoma City evangelist Leroy Curry, The K.K.K. Under the Searchlight (Kansas City, Mo.: Western Baptist Publishing Co., 1924), p. 96.

[20]Woodward News-Bulletin, December 2, 1921, p. 4.

[21]Inez Clubb, "A History of the Knights of the K.K.K. in Oklahoma," p. 24.

[22]The Fiery Cross quoted in Tulsa World, October 11, 1924, p. 1.

[23]Campbell Russell quoted in Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 13.

[24]Woodward News-Bulletin, July 7, 1922, p. 1.

[25]Tulsa Tribune, June 25, 1922, p. 1.

[26]Daily Oklahoman, October 5, 1922, p. 1.

[27]Anadarko American-Democrat, August 8, 1923, p. 1.

[28]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, January 25, 1923, p. 1.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Muskogee Times-Democrat, May 31, 1923, p. 1.

[31]Grand Dragon Clay Jewett talks about Catholics in Daily Oklahoman, December 6, 1923, p. 11, as does the Imperial Wizard Evans in Attitude of the Knights of the K.K.K. Toward the Roman Catholic Hierarchy (Atlanta: The Knights, 1923), 12 pp.

[32]Jewett's remarks are in Daily Oklahoman, December 6, 1923, p. 11; Evans, The Attitude of the Knights of the

K.K.K. Toward the Jew (Atlanta: The Knights, 1923), 12 pp.; Imperial Klokard Sam Campbell delivered his speech, "The Jewish Problem," many times in 1923 in Oklahoma and it is in Imperial Night-Hawk, I (June 27, 1923), pp. 6-7.

[33]Editorial in Lawton News, March 12, 1922, p. 4; Anadarko American-Democrat, March 19, 1924, p. 1.

[34]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (August, 1923), p. 3.

[35]Eugene Hollon, Frontier Violence: A Second Look (New York: Oxford University, 1975), p. 196.

The sentiments of the paragraph are stated in The Kloran and in Guy Johnson, "A Sociological Interpretation of the New K.K.K. Movement," Social Forces, I (May, 1923), pp. 440-45.

[36]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, January 15, 1923, p. 1.

[37]Dr. J. W. Henry in the Daily Oklahoman, December 31, 1923, p. 3.

[38]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, December 27, 1922, p. 1.

[39]Tulsa World, September 8, 1923, p. 8. Similar sentiments about Caddo County are in the Anadarko American-Democrat, September 5, 1923, p. 1.

[40]Tulsa World, May 27, 1921, p. 14.

[41]Testimony of Baird Markham, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2194; Charles McCloud, ibid., pp. 2216-21.

[42]U. S., House of Representatives, Committee on Rules, The K.K.K., Hearings, 67th Congress, 1st Session,

1921, p. 6.

[43]Woodward News-Bulletin, March 24, 1922, p. 8.

[44]Emerson Loucks, The K.K.K. in Pennsylvania: A Study in Nativism (New York: Telegraph Press, 1936), p. 69.

Inez Clubb felt that "the real drawing card of the klan in Oklahoma was its contention that lawlessness, vice, and crime would be ended by the society." "A History of the Knights of the K.K.K. in Oklahoma," p. 22. Charles Alexander ably treats the Klan's dictation of local morality in his discussion of that group's "moral authoritarianism." The K.K.K. in the Southwest, pp. iv, 16. David Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 33, simplistically gives bootlegging as the major cause of the rise of the Tulsa Klavern.

[45]Speech of July 26 quoted in Marion Monteval, The Klan Inside Out (Claremore: Monarch Publishing Company, 1924), p. 69.

[46]Woodward News-Bulletin, July 7, 1922, p. 1, for merely one example.

CHAPTER III

EARLY ORGANIZATION

Imperial Headquarters in early 1923 mailed eight charters for new klaverns every working day--a rate of nearly 3,000 additional members per day.[1] Even more phenomenal than the national growth of the order was its meteoric rise in numerical strength in Oklahoma. Membership soared in the Sooner State after the initial efforts of George McCarron. By the end of 1921 there were as many Klansmen in Oklahoma as in the whole Invisible Empire just six months before.[2] Such growth was without parallel in the history of fraternal societies in the nation.[3]

After the first year of recruitment in the state Klan leaders reported that there were 20,000 members statewide and that solicitations were coming so fast that it was no longer necessary to have Kleagles in the field.[4] Estimates of the peak number of Klansmen in Oklahoma varied widely because the order was secret, but informed sources claim that there were about 150,000 Klansmen in the state in the early Twenties. Other sources gave membership figures as low as 40,000 and as high as 207,000.[5] One out

of every ten eligible Oklahoma males belonged to the order,[6] making the Oklahoma Realm one of the strongest in the nation. Two to three hundred local klaverns existed in the state at various times. The number varied as new chapters were formed and chartered.

Klan members were more numerous than organized labor and they were second only to business as an organized force in Oklahoma communities. The power of the Invisible Empire touched all aspects of the life of Oklahomans. Boycotts against Roman Catholic merchants destroyed businesses, threatening letters to individuals who had brought the suspicions of the Knights upon them produced fear and anxiety, and local political affairs were determined through klavern balloting before the general election. The power of local law enforcement fell under the control of the Exalted Cyclops who ensured that any reports of white capping that involved members of the local klavern went unanswered from the sheriff's office or police department.

Loyal Oklahoma Klansmen bought Camel cigarettes, Maxwell House coffee, Big Ben alarm clocks, Libby brand meats, and Carnation milk because the national headquarters passed them for patronization after assuring that no Roman Catholic or Jewish influence tainted their products.[7] Klan members in the Tri-State area of Oklahoma, Missouri, and Arkansas subscribed to the Empire Mutual Life Insurance

Company, which in 1924 proclaimed it had over three billion dollars worth of insurance in force.[8]

Klansmen were expected to turn out for local drives for the support of their klavern. Tulsa Klan Number Two held a benefit bazaar, termed a "Beno Bazaar," in the spring of 1923 and in addition to netting $24,000 from ticket sales the sponsors gave away thirteen Ford automobiles.[9] Similar activities in other towns across the state raised sums for the support of kluxing in Oklahoma and the Southwest.

To show their newly won financial success to their community, the Tulsa Benevolent Association, which was the official name for the klavern, built a $200,000 building which they called Beno Hall. With a three thousand seating capacity it was the largest structure in the state and one of the largest in the entire Southwest. From its position at the corner of Main and Easton streets, it nearly dominated the whole of downtown Tulsa.[10] Its three stories and large frontal area on the streets served as notice to residents of the oil capital that the Knights were a powerful force in their community.

The klavern was the smallest officially recognized unit of the Klan. Usually it corresponded to a town or to a city, and its first members were often the officers throughout the klavern's existence. Local officers of the klavern had jurisdiction over the district, called a Klan-

ton. The terminology of the Knights, modeled after the guidelines of founder William Simmons which specified that words would begin with a "Kl" where possible for mystic effect, lent an aura of mystery and foreboding to their ceremonies that impressed new initiates. The president of the klavern was called the Exalted Cyclops and he presided over ceremonies in the meeting room of the hall where the Klan headquartered. The Klaliff served as vice president. He was assisted through the office of the secretary, who was called the Kligrapp. The Klokard was the official lecturer, who read from prepared Imperial speeches, talks, and the like. A minister usually served as the chaplain, who was the Kludd. The treasurer was the Klabee. Ceremonial officers included the Kladd, who was the conductor, the Inner Guard known as the Klarogo, the Outer Guard called the Klexter, and a collection of investigators, auditors, and advisers known as the Klokan.

Klavern officers were responsible to the Province level within the state, who were denoted by the prefix "Great" before the klavern names for their members. Provincial officials were in their turn responsible to the state or Realm officers who were addressed with the prefix "Grand." State members in turn answered to the authority of national officers who carried the title "Imperial" before their office. National officers headed the Invisible Empire, a term denoting for the Klan member a

re-birth upon initiation into the order that made him one of the select and all non-members "aliens." The Invisible Empire had an ambassador to the United States, former Texas Grand Dragon Hershel McCall. He was, however, not officially recognized in the nation's capital.[11]

The Realm received a portion of the initial Klectokon from prospective members and a Realm tax which was sometimes as much as one-half of the Imperial tax as a rebate. Of each Klectokon of ten dollars, the state took in one dollar, and, additionally, the Realm got a fifty-cent rebate as a commission on each robe sold. The Realm obtained money from the petitions for the higher degrees in the order, called the K-Duo and the Knights of the Great Forest. In addition, members paid regular levies for emergencies and gratuities to officers.

Local Klans generally gained no national or Realm financing. They taxed themselves to pay for their meeting hall and other needs, including the maintenance of equipment, ritual costs, traveling expenses of the Exalted Cyclops or other officials, gratuities, and more. Individuals also had to pay their own travel expenses, the Klan donations for the needy, contributions to charity, and annual subscriptions to the publications like the Imperial Night-Hawk, The Kourier, the Fellowship Forum, or the Fiery Cross. The latter was the Klan's state newspaper published in Oklahoma City and served as the house organ

for the Grand Dragon. Individuals were required to purchase their own regalia and ritual equipment, as well as jewelry or stock in Klan business ventures. They additionally paid assessments for special events and trips. The Klansman had to commit both his soul and his billfold to the cause.

The klavern was the scene of the ritual and the meetings. As he entered the sanctum, the Night Hawk or guard asked each member, "AYAK," an acronym for "Are You a Klansman?" He responded with, "AKIA," meaning "A Klansman I Am." If satisfied, the Night Hawk responded in turn with "KIGY," for "Klansman, I Greet You." Seated at the head of the meeting room near the altar, the cross, the Bible opened to the Twelfth Chapter of Romans, and the flag were the Exalted Cyclops and the lesser officers. Each of the objects about them had a unique symbolism reminiscent of many fraternal orders, especially that of the Masons.[12] A Klode which was sung opened the meeting. Prayer also opened and closed meetings. After those present transacted routine business, the lesson from the national leaders would be read or a stirring presentation made. It might consist of the reading from the official organ of the Imperial Headquarters on the role of the Klansman:

> When I invade the fetid dens of Infamy there is a sudden scampering and squeaking as of rats foresaking a doomed ship.

> I am the haunting dread of the depraved and the hated Nemesis of the vicious.
>
> . . . the swift avenger of Innocence despoiled.
>
> . . . I am a bulwark and a bell-tower to Democracy.[13]

Always the subject was the preservation of American civilization, white supremacy, and Protestant ideals. The imagery employed in speech and in writing was on religious sacrifice for a higher good.

In the meeting hall the Klansmen clothed in their spectral regalia listened to many references in the ritual book to "the law of Christ," "the tenets of the Christian religion," "God being my helper," and the closing remarks of the Kludd who would intone the words that "the living Christ is a Klansman's criterion of character." Members then closed their meeting with a religious song, the Kloxology. Other favorites sung in the hall included "Rock of Ages," "The Old Rugged Cross," and the "Jubilee Song," while the choice was usually "Onward Christian Soldiers" which became an unofficial anthem. At the end of the klonklave, the Exalted Cyclops might call his Klokann, the executive committee, to order to discuss chapter business, an upcoming Jubilee, the coming Imperial Klonvocation, or perhaps a nocturnal visitation.[14]

The Klansmen left the klavern at the end of the ceremonies confident that each Knight received more for

his ten dollar Klectokon than any other fraternal or patriotic group he could join. Its mystery was more awesome, patriotism more pure, and its duty more clearly defined and imperative than those of any other body. The Knights offered something for everyone in the order's anti-radical sentiment which capitalized on the Red Scare fears of 1920, the anti-Catholic viewpoint of the American Protective Association of the 1890s, and the anti-immigrant stand which echoed the position of the Know Nothing Party of the 1850s. Accompanying these strains of thought were the group's advocacy of white supremacy playing on racial prejudices, moral living along the lines of the Puritan ethic, and the religiosity that appealed to the Bible Belt.

The klavern sponsored events outside the meeting hall to entertain their members and to attract others. The Klaliff brought Klansmen and their families together for pie eating contests, picnics, apple bobbing, sack races, and other social gatherings. On occasion the Klan Khoral Klub would serenade the assemblage. Regional meetings, called Jubilees, attracted members from other states who came on specially chartered trains for the festivities.[15]

The Klan constitution established a judicial body called the Kloncilium. Its membership consisted of the Imperial Wizard and fifteen appointees called the Genii.

The Kloncilium was also the advisory council and the executive staff of the national Klan. It was to meet each July, or when called into session by the national leader. The judicial organization of the local Klan was the Tribunal which operated like the Kloncilium of the Empire. It consisted of sixteen Klansmen chosen by lot from twenty-four names nominated by the Exalted Cyclops, Klaliff, Klokard, and Kludd of the klavern. A permanent board of appeal of twelve members appointed under the auspices of the Grand Dragon from his Hydras and Giants was called the Grand Tribunal for the state. A three-fourths majority vote of the Tribunal determined the verdict.

The government of the Invisible Empire followed military organization, which placed all power in a strong executive. The founders of the original Reconstruction Klan were former Confederate officers so the members who launched the Simmons' Klan in 1915 were men intimately acquainted with the romance of the original Klan. They were themselves familiar with military affairs because several of them had organized a paramilitary group during World War I to report on treasonable behavior. The veterans who joined the Knights understood the military organization as well as the emphasis on responsibility and duty.

Power centered within the office of the Imperial Wizard and any struggle over control of the organization also focused on that position. The huge sums of money

the Atlanta headquarters acquired through the growing membership inaugurated the first internal conflict which rocked the Invisible Empire. Oklahomans felt its impact.

Imperial Wizard Simmons relied upon many helpers in his Atlanta offices. None was more important than the Imperial secretary, Hiram Wesley Evans. The post of national secretary became the stepping stone into the leadership of the national Klan. Evans grew up in the same central Alabama region that Simmons came from and the two got along well. Dr. Evans had been a dentist in Dallas, Texas, when he joined the Knights in 1920. He gave up his dental practice and his ambition took him rapidly into the post as secretary.

Simmons was an idealist, the dreamer of the hooded order, and did not like the day-to-day drudgery of the Klan's routine business. Simmons tired of the seemingly endless round of official klonversations needed to administer the Empire's affairs. He stepped down as Wizard for six months in June, 1922, allegedly to recover from alcoholism. He turned the reigns over to Imperial Kleagle Edward Clarke, who then became Imperial Wizard Pro Tempore.

Ambitious territorial magnates in the Klan recognized their opportunity to seize control of financial matters over their own domains from Simmons, who remained Emperor over the operations. Late one night at the November, 1922, Imperial Kloncilium, after Simmons was

tired and groggy from the day's festivities, Evans and others suggested that Simmons not accept another term as leader. After assurances from Evans that later Simmons would be able to return to his exalted position, the founder bowed out. Evans accepted the suggestion from one of his cohorts that he "temporarily" fill the vacuum as Emperor.

Three months later Evans ousted Clarke and took over the position of Wizard and ruler of the mystic minions of the Invisible Empire. A court battle over ownership of the order resulted with the relinquishment of Simmons' status as Emperor in return for a settlement of $146,000. Clarke futilely attempted to form an order he called the Knights of the Mystic Clan. Evans pledged reforms of alleged abuses, a closer accounting of the funds, reform of the governmental structure of the organization, and he reduced the living expenses of the Imperial Wizard and led a more modest existence than his predecessor Simmons who had lavished Imperial funds on his mansion, Klan Krest.[16]

Oklahoma officials fell from power if they had mistakenly supported the Simmons faction in the national power struggle. The Evans bid had wide support as well as opposition among Oklahoma Klansmen so those who advanced the founder's claim to leadership were not easily outmaneuvered. Oklahoma reflected the events at the na-

tional level.

Oklahoma Realm members descended upon Tulsa for the Tri-State men's and women's Klan convention (a Klorero).[17] The Exalted Cyclops, Klabees, Kligrapps, Kludds, Commanders, and portions of the Klokann from each of the two hundred klaverns which had elected delegates arrived in Tulsa in April, 1923. They were eager to determine the outcome of the internal power struggle.

It was no accident that Tulsa was the site chosen for the Klorero. Tulsa Klan Number Two boasted a new building, Beno Hall, which its builders were anxious to show to others across the state. They also had many strong backers of the Evans' regime in Atlanta. Believing the original state leadership to be unprogressive, some Tulsa Klansmen planned to select a new state leader more attuned to their needs.

Edwin DeBarr, long-time Vice-President of the University of Oklahoma, was Grand Dragon of the Oklahoma Realm and one of the Klan's early initiates. He was under fire from the State Board of Regents for his alleged membership in the sheeted fraternity. They had already censured him.[18] There were many Klansmen who believed that DeBarr was unresponsive to the largest klaverns in the state. They wanted a Grand Dragon from one of the largest cities in the Oklahoma Realm.

Other leaders in the Domain bitterly opposed Evans

because they rightly believed that he was financially dishonest, "professionally unethical," and "socially intolerable." The former Great Titan of Province One charged that Atlanta exploited the Oklahoma leadership for commercial profit.[19] The former Titan threw his power behind the move to banish DeBarr from Oklahoma Klan headquarters and succeeded. To satisfy the Grand Dragon's pride as he was ousted from headquarters, Atlanta shortly thereafter appointed Edwin DeBarr to a higher position. He became a member of the advisory body known as the Imperial Kloncilium in October, 1923, and spent much time traveling to Atlanta on the Empire's business.

The choice of a new Grand Dragon led to great conflict behind the scenes of the Klorero. The man had to be acceptable to the conflicting factions within the state and still be strong enough to provide leadership to the state organization.

The ex-Great Titan refused the position because Imperial headquarters attached strings to the post. The Grand Dragon's decisions were subject constantly to the nullification of the Imperial Wizard. Appointive offices were expanded under Evans to increase his hold over the organization.[20]

After heated talk about the possible choices for Grand Dragon, the leadership achieved a compromise. He was an Oklahoma City pharmaceutical salesman named Newton

Clay Jewett. The thirty-fourth initiate in the Oklahoma Realm, he had long been active in Realm affairs. Shrewdly he adapted to his new duties and supported the Evans regime. Jewett accepted the Imperial reorganization of the Oklahoma Realm which tightened the Wizard's control over his Empire. The Grand Kligrapp reorganized the Oklahoma Realm and cut down the number of provinces from four to three in order to solidify the Imperial hold.[21]

The dispute did not subside with the selection of a new Grand Dragon, however. The state continued to be involved in the Simmons-Evans controversy. Oklahoma became the starting point for a new power struggle at the national level in late 1922.

The confrontation began in 1922 when Simmons established the Kamelia order for women. He tried to circumvent the Evans regime with an entirely new order to exploit untapped resources across the nation. He used as his base the Women's American Protestant Study Club of Claremore, Oklahoma. Simmons called the new group the Kamelia and named himself its leader, El Magus.[22] The founder of the men's organization now began one for women planning on a repeat of his earlier financial success with the Knights. In an attempt to harm the Evans power base in Atlanta, Simmons used the name of the men's second degree of Klankraft, the K-DUO or Kamelia, for his women's organization.

Just as xenophobia and patriotism affected men after the First World War, they affected women as well. Women did not escape the emotional outburst of the war period. Women's groups proliferated in a flurry of fraternalism after the end of hostilities. America was a nation of joiners and many women shared the desire to participate in rather than merely observe the trend.

Women's patriotic organizations increased rapidly in the emotional atmosphere following the Armistice. Females joined groups such as the Women's Christian Patriotic League, the Order of American Women, Puritan Daughters of America, Ladies of the Golden Mask, and the League of Protestant Women. The Ladies of the Invisible Empire and Ladies of the Cu Clux Clan openly emulated the men's order.[23]

The Knights' Imperial Klonvokation in Washington, D. C., in 1922 decided to investigate the possibility of forming a women's klan. To their surprise, the committee members found over twenty women's nativistic societies, including the Kamelia of Simmons, in existence.[24] Here lay an untapped source of additional funds from the sale of memberships, regalia, and life insurance. The leaders of the Knights moved quickly to unite the women's groups and to gain their control.

The furor centered around the WAP Study Clubs in the northeastern part of Oklahoma. Blanche and H. Tom

Kight with Rowena and C. W. Beeson organized the clubs which spread to Tulsa, Okmulgee, Guthrie, and to other towns in the state. They wore white regalia similar to the Knights of the Ku Klux and followed a ritual very much like that of the Klan's ceremony.[25]

William Joseph Simmons realized that he was being pushed out of the Imperial headquarters of the Knights so he determined that a women's Klan would be an excellent future for his organizational talents. Using the WAP Study Clubs as his foundation, he formed the Kamelia. Its constitution and ritual were nearly identical to that of the Knights.

Hiram Evans countered with an edict forbidding Klansmen from associating with their wives in the new order. Grand Dragon Jewett duly followed instructions and promptly ordered all Oklahoma Klansmen to avoid women's groups. That upset some state members of the Knights, one of whom wired Jewett denouncing the decree: "All say first allegiance is to wives, mothers, sweethearts, and sisters, as they were intimate friends before they heard of either Evans or you."[26] The protest had little effect on the outcome of the power struggle.

Imperial Wizard Evans started his own women's organization to counter that of Simmons. Evans as the official head of the Knights gave official recognition and status to his group. The six months' investigation begun

at the Imperial Klonvokation in 1922 resulted in a recommendation that the mantle of leadership of America's women kluxers should fall on the Little Rock, Arkansas, organization. Evans made Mrs. Lula A. Markwell Imperial Commander and Miss Robbie Gill Imperial Kligrapp of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan in 1923 and the women's group was officially formed.[27]

As in the men's organization, the post of national secretary for the women's group was the seat of ambition. Miss Gill, a long-time resident of Little Rock and friend of the Imperial Commander, served as national secretary, much like the role of Hiram Evans as secretary to the founder of the Knights. In late 1923 the Commander stepped aside for the national secretary to become leader of the women's Klan. In the following year Miss Gill formed a strong alliance with the men's group when she married Judge James Comer, who was Imperial Klonsel to the Knights and a powerful voice on the executive committee of that body.

The Women of the Ku Klux Klan claimed that in the first month of their official existence they enrolled over 150,000 new members in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Indiana, Ohio, Texas, and other hot-beds of pro-Klan sentiment.[28] The figure is wildly exaggerated, but the membership did rise rapidly and soon the Women of the Klan rivaled the men's group in size if not in political power. Like the men's

order, the women's organization reached its peak membership in the Southwest in early 1924, with Oklahoma--the mother state for the concept--having more Klanswomen than any other southwestern state and one of the highest numerical strengths of any state in the nation.[29]

Oklahoma possessed women's Klantons in most of the same towns that contained men's orders. The wives could attend their meetings at the same time that their husbands were in their klaverns. Sixty Women's Klans dominated the membership roster in 1925 under Oklahoma's column, surpassed by only the state of Indiana with one hundred.[30] All sections of the Sooner State boasted at least one Klanton for the local ladies, but the most represented areas of the state were the center and northeastern parts. The Panhandle had too few people to support thriving Klans, but Guymon proudly presented its Klan Number Sixty-Eight called the Knoble Krusaders. Tulsa possessed Klan Number Sixty-Seven, but Oklahoma City's Klanton had faded by 1925.

Organization and terminology for the Women's Klan paralleled the Knights' closely and in most instances was identical. Realms and Provinces dominated the organizational structure and the words Exalted, Grand, Great, and Imperial denoted the tier of officials up the organizational ladder of the group. A minor difference between the men's and women's structures was the designation of

the leaders of the women's groups as Commanders rather than the various names for male leaders. The Women's Klan also provided for a slightly less arbitrary use of executive power because the Imperial Klonvocation could pass laws for the Women's Empire over the veto of the Imperial Commander.[31]

The program of the women's order paralleled that of the men's with the exception that the program was more home-oriented. The Women's Klan pushed charity work, morality, and purity in their communities. Members belonged to other organizations in their towns, such as the Legion Auxiliary, the Order of the Eastern Star, the Delphian Study Club, the Rebekahs, Royal Neighbors, or others. One Klanswoman in Cherokee listed her professional occupation as "doing charity."[32]

Inside the Klanton the women opened their meeting with singing of the Star Spangled Banner and then listened to a Bible lesson. A member then presented a talk on the Mayflower and the Puritans and finished with a poem on the Liberty Bell. A short talk on Betsy Ross preceded a quartet singing God Bless America. Reports from committees then followed an inspiring presentation on George Washington. As part of the program in the meeting hall, one speaker reminded the assemblage that "divorces and domestic looseness should be frowned upon and condemned. . . ." She continued that the women should be ever alert. "Wher-

ever we find ugly and anti-American interests rearing their ugly heads, we must work fast and unitedly to offset their evil courses." Finally, she concluded with the admonition, "False propaganda in our school books--subtle doctrines that will take away the first love of Americans for America must be refuted."[33]

Committees of the women's order at the local level demonstrated their concerns and the areas of fear for the leadership. Americanization, Public School, Public Amusement, Citizenship, Civic Affairs, Politics, and Law Enforcement oversaw the local community's day-to-day business. As part of the Twenties' desire for international tranquility the women maintained one committee on Peace to help in preventing international conflict. Child Welfare and Juvenile Delinquency combined with Legislation to provide committees for areas of the local life that directly touched the home.

The Military Committee of the Women's Ku Klux Klan included a General, a Major, Captains, Lieutenants, and Sergeants. The Captain kept close scrutiny on her Klanton's political ward, while the Lieutenants oversaw their precincts. Each block was to have a Sergeant, but often none could be found to serve.[34]

The Committee was charged with making a survey of Roman Catholics and foreign families in their town, the number of children attending parochial schools in the area,

to report crime, and to examine candidates for local political office and report on them to the assembled membership. Unlike the men's military committees, those of the women never ventured out of their Klanton for whitecapping. Women's processions frequently went outside their halls in full regalia, but not for the purpose of punishing transgressors. They left that to their husbands.

Women's Klan members went in processions for visitations just as their husbands did in the Knights, but not always for the same purpose. Female kluxers visited the infirm in their communities, hospitals, funerals of members, and participated in charity drives in their regalia. They would suddenly appear at the graveside service of one of their number and one member of the procession would speak a few short phrases of condolence. Then, they would just as silently depart.

Oklahoma Klansmen and women in 1924 responded to the proclamation of the Imperial Kloncilium and formed Junior Klans for boys fourteen through eighteen. The requirement was later lowered to twelve to enable younger boys to participate. Few Oklahoma communities possessed a Junior Klan except in name only because of the lack of enthusiasm among both parents and children. Tulsa, however, pointed to its active Junior Klan with pride.[35]

The Klan organizations in Oklahoma touched almost all aspects of residents' lives. Hardly any sector of the

Sooner State went untouched in some way under the scrutiny of the Invisible Empire. The Klan-instigated boycott of the Jewish merchant or the Catholic businessman harmed the local economy and drove citizens out of business under the slogan of TWAK, an acronym for Trade With A Klansman. The military committees of the men's and women's orders dutifully watched their wards and precincts for any treasonous actions on the part of their neighbors. Some of the Klansmen left their klavern at dusk for far more serious activities under the cover of the darkness with whip in hand.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

[1]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (March 28, 1923), p. 8.

[2]Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 50.

[3]Oklahoma City Klan to editor, Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1921, p. 5B.

[4]Ibid.

[5]First number is from Grand Dragon Jewett, ibid., December 5, 1923, p. 4. The second is from Lawton News, August 1, 1922, p. 2. The highest is from a placard in a Klan parade in the Cherokee Messenger, June 20, 1922, p. 1. John Montgomery, "The Invisible Empire in Oklahoma" (Senior thesis, Princeton University, 1962), p. 49, supports the 200,000 figure.

[6]Ibid. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 50, says one out of twenty Oklahomans belonged. The numbers are arbitrary because many members were not active and were more honorary than participatory.

There is great variation on the total national membership of the order. Charles Alexander, The K.K.K. in the Southwest, pp. vi, 159, said there were five mil-

lion; Kenneth Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, p. xii, said there were 2.03 million; David Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 291, said three million; Benjamin Avin, "The K.K.K., 1915-25: A Study in Religious Intolerance" (Ph. D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1952), p. 104, said there were 8.9 million members.

[7]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (June 20, 1923), p. 4.

[8]Kenneth Harrell, "The K.K.K. in Louisiana," p. 301.

[9]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (May 16, 1923), p. 3.

[10]Ibid., p. 4.

[11]Constitution of the Knights of the K.K.K.; The Kloran; William Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," Collier's, LXXXII (July 14, 1928), p. 32.

[12]W. C. Wright, "The Seven Symbols of the Klan," Anadarko American-Democrat, May 7, 1924, p. 2.

Henryetta Klansmen interviewed by Linda Rodriguez considered the Klan no different than the Masons. "The K.K.K. Versus Unionism in the 1920s" (Senior thesis, Oral Roberts University, 1973), p. 11.

[13]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (August 22, 1923), p. 7.

[14]From the Klansman's Manual (Buckhead, Ga.: The Knights, 1918), in the Library of Congress and from The Kloran.

[15]See the program in Anadarko American-Democrat, July 20, 1924, p. 1.

[16]The powers of the Wizard are discussed by Evans in the Imperial Night-Hawk, I (April 4, 1923), p. 7.

The account of the Imperial troubles comes from Simmons, The Klan Unmasked (Atlanta: William Thompson, 1923); E. D. Rittenhouse receivership case in Tulsa World, October 31, 1923, p. 3; Monteval, The Klan Inside Out, p. 72; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, pp. 78, 317; Imperial Night-Hawk, I (April 18, 1923), pp. 2-7; (May 2, 1923), pp. 2-3; (February 21, 1924), pp. 2-3.

[17]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, April 20, 1923, p. 1.

[18]Guymon Herald, August 17, 1922, p. 1.

[19]Open Letter of Minor Merriwether to Evans, April 23, 1923, Att. Gen. Correspondence, George Short file, State Archives, p. 2.

[20]Telegram, Minor Merriwether to William Joseph Simmons, April 5, 1923, Att. Gen. Correspondence, George Short file.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, p. 14.

[23]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, November 1, 1922, p. 1; Harlow's Weekly, XXI (October 21, 1922), p. 15.

[24]"The Clash in the Klan," Literary Digest, LXXVII (April 21, 1923), p. 13; Imperial Night-Hawk, I (June 13, 1923), p. 5.

[25]Evans, The Whole Truth About the Effort to Destroy the Klan (Atlanta: The Knights, 1923), p. 9; Okmul-

gee Daily Democrat, February 12, 1923, p. 1.

[26]Open Letter, Merriwether to Evans, State Archives.

[27]Women of America! (N. p.: N. p., n. d.) pamphlet and The Truth About the Women of the K.K.K. (N. p.: N. p., n. d.) pamphlet, Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library.

[28]Ibid., p. 4.

[29]Alexander, The K.K.K. in the Southwest, p. 104.

[30]Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, box 1.

[31]Constitution and Laws of the Women of the K.K.K. (Little Rock: Women of the K.K.K., n. d.) booklet in ibid.

[32]Membership and Dues Record of the Cherokee Klan Number 43, ibid., box 6.

[33]Eight C's for Klanswomen (Little Rock: Women of the K.K.K., 1924), ibid., pp. 21, 24.

[34]Pamphlets on the Military Committee, ibid., box 1.

[35]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (April 23, 1924), p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

"HUSBANDS, DO YOUR JOYRIDING WITH YOUR OWN WIFE."[1]

The Knights used force as part of a movement to clean up the oil boom towns and to halt the rising tide of crime and vice. Violence against his neighbor marked the frontier period of the state's history, often as the sole means for survival in a wilderness. Violence continued in Oklahoma long after the territory became a settled state. Mob action flourished in the region into the 1920s, and the Klan was a part of that tradition. Post-statehood outbursts followed frontier violence. Individuals who had used force against alleged lawbreakers in territorial times found it easy to use force against threats to established order in the 1920s.

Men caught up in the hysteria of human destructiveness in World War I were unable to change after the fighting in Europe ended. In 1921 Oklahomans committed violent acts with more frequency than ever before. Mob violence in the Sooner State in 1921 involved the use of disguises. Because the Knights insisted on using the mask and the hood in their rituals, and because secrecy made them vul-

nerable, the Klansmen took the brunt of the attack from advocates of ending mob lawlessness. The fury in 1921 through the streets of Tulsa in that city's racial warfare coincided with the arrival of the Klan in the state, building upon the emotions of wartime, and the suspension of violence across the state accompanied the hasty efforts of the Grand Dragon to reinstate the image of the organization as orderly in the minds of Americans. In the interim, the state verged on civil war, and skirmishes actually broke out between Klan and anti-Klan factions.

The structure of the Klan lent a military atmosphere to the deliberations of the group. Each klavern had a Military Committee with an appropriate chain of command upward to the Imperial level. Members of the committee kept track of the morality of their communities, gathered political information on candidates for office, and reported on the actions of evil-doers in their vicinity. It was natural that the unit would be used for the enforcement of local moral codes if the occasion arose.

For a select few of the members of the special squads within the military committees, called Intelligence Squads or strongarm units, there was instruction from Atlanta headquarters in the methods of punishing local wrongdoers. For these members of the inner sanctum of the klavern, the black robe and the black mask were available. Emblazoned on them for effect were crossed bones and a

dagger. They could use a special whipping strap on victims to persuade them to change their habits. It was three feet long, leather, and four inches wide, with the handle wrapped with heavy-duty automotive tape, and it had seven to ten slits about six inches long in the end to cut the back of the victim. Often a whipping squad would be imported from another county to minimize the possibility that the victims would recognize a fellow resident of their own town. The Klan squads were loaned from one jurisdiction to another.

El Reno, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Broken Arrow, Shawnee, and several other towns were singled out in the military court proceedings as containing intelligence squads for the purpose of laying the lash upon the backs of the wayward. Because the police or the sheriff's departments were often Klan-connected, the victims were first arrested, disarmed, jailed briefly to give the mob time to gather and make plans for the abduction, and then the victim was released into the waiting arms of the masked mob members, who took him to the outskirts of town for punishment. Once at the predetermined location, the victim was tied or chained to a nearby tree, questioned, whipped, questioned again, then tarred and released. He usually was told to leave the town or the county and to never utter a word about the night's activities to anyone on pain of an even worse fate.[2]

Oklahomans were familiar with the tar bucket and the feather pillow as tools to enforce local moral codes. Prospective members of squads had ample opportunity to hear accounts of Klan activities in other states in 1921 as examples of what to do. The newspaper exposé of Klan activities in Texas in 1920 and 1921 provided information for eager readers.[3] Members of wartime councils of defense recalled the effects of their coercion upon neighbors and they believed that, if needed, similar methods would work again. They found that their experience easily carried into the Klan organization as the emotionalism of the World War spilled over into the 1920s.

When Grand Goblin George Kimbro stepped from his coupe in the summer of 1920 in Oklahoma City to recruit for the Klan with Kleagle George McCarron, both of them carried stories of Klan night riding to widen the eyes of their listeners. That February, Kimbro had launched a campaign of Klan punishment of moral offenders in Texas that lasted two and one-half years. With his tales of tarring, feathering, and lashing, Kimbro related the screams and pleadings of an alleged promiscuous black dentist in Galveston when Klansmen castrated him. The stories fell on ready ears among men who had performed their duty in the war period and were ready to straighten out the disreputable. The tales attracted more members and were a good recruitment advertisement.[4]

Oklahoma and Louisiana experiences for Klansmen left the order in the Twenties reeling from the image of lawlessness. Sometimes the violence of the Klan embarrassed the name of the order. One of the most shameful uses of the black mask occurred in Louisiana in late 1922. The reputation of the Knights in Louisiana was one of relative quiet and little violence, but the murders in August, 1922, in Morehouse Parish became synonymous with the Klan violence in the 1920s. The Morehouse murders ranked with the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, the Leopold and Loeb murder case, and the Scopes trial as signal events of the decade for which history and the popular imagination would note as violent.

The members of the Morehouse Klavern used the black robe and mask of the Imperial goon squad. Acting without the knowledge of Captain J. K. Skipwith, the Exalted Cyclops, the members of the draped squad set out to teach local bootleggers a lesson. Watt Daniels and Thomas Richard, two outspoken critics of the Klan and themselves bootleggers, returned from a picnic boosting a good roads bond drive when they were stopped in the road. People wearing black robes and masks seized Daniels, Richard, and their fathers. They took them into the woods and flogged them for their alleged immoral lifestyle. One of the young men recognized one of their assailants when his mask slipped. The men took Daniels and Richard deeper into the

woods, but released their fathers.

The Klansmen whipped the two young men further, tortured them, and tied them spread-eagle to the cleated wheels of a lugging cart or a farm implement that was nearby. They rolled them down a hill, pulping their bodies. They buried the remains in Lake Lafourche outside the town of Mer Rouge. Eventually the Governor of the state launched a massive search for the bodies, and the torsos and shreds of clothing identified as those of Daniels and Richard surfaced four months later after a mysterious explosion underwater, probably planted to bring the bodies to the surface.

Oklahoma papers carried the grisly story and the subsequent details of the repeated investigations including those by Klan Headquarters in Atlanta. Louisiana Governor John Parker sounded the public outcry when he lamented that the deaths of the two men, "denied even a dog's right of defense, will cause a shudder" in Americans.[5] No convictions were ever achieved in the Mer Rouge killings, although Captain Skipwith was indicted along with other Klansmen, and the results of the Imperial investigation into the tragedy were never revealed, but the Klan in Morehouse Parish and in many other parts of the nation evoked nods of shame and horror.

Oklahoma Klansmen received national Klan attention early in their campaign to clean bootleggers from the re-

gion. Illegal whiskey was the object of most mob violence in Oklahoma and the Carroll case was an example of the attempt of the Klan to rid the community of the illegal liquor salesman.

Klansmen sought an alleged bootlegger named Joe Carroll on a December night in 1922. Over one hundred Klansmen gathered from towns in Carter County in a pasture on the outskirts of Wilson, a town a short distance from Ardmore. They waited with tar, feathers, and whips for a raid on the Carroll house. In nearby Healdton as Jeff Smith walked down a street, two Ford coupes pulled alongside him. Masked men forced Smith to accompany them. One of the men was his brother John and they joined the others in the pasture. It was an impressive sight. Many autos were parked helter skelter throughout the pasture and men milled about in the cold. Some of them were putting on the white robes of the Klan, while others examined their rifles or loaded their pistols. The headlights of the coupes and sedans cast an eerie twilight over the cold ground, heightened with the ghostly figures moving in the shadows in their robes.

An Ardmore police detective appeared to be the leader of the band and told Jeff Smith that he would go to the door of the Carroll house and call the bootlegger to the door because Carroll knew Smith. The detective, named C. G. Sims, and six to eight others, would then

seize Carroll and take him to the pasture for punishment. One automobile went to the house while another passed down the dirt road from the house to discharge its passengers. They crept to the house and stood on either side of the door. The heavily-armed men motioned to Smith to call Carroll to the outside. Carroll's voice responded from inside that he was coming. He opened the door and started to step onto the porch, but sensed something was wrong and drew a pistol from his belt.

Smith scuffled with Carroll, the gun discharged, and Smith fell over with a wound in his leg. Carroll had received threatening letters warning him of dire consequences if he continued to make whiskey. He had been tipped off by a friend about this raid because the friend had seen the procession leave Ardmore.

The masked men at the sides of the house fired, as others scuffled with Carroll on the porch. Wild shooting commenced. Women and children inside the house screamed in fright and men yelled for more guns and ammunition. One of the masked men stood astride the prostrate body of Carroll on the porch and fired bullets into his body. Mrs. Carroll stepped to the doorway and fired into the melee with her husband's rifle. The masked intruders fled in haste in their two autos, just as Carroll's brother stepped from his neighboring house with his guns.

The Klansmen returned to the pasture with several

wounded and two dying members of their party. They abandoned the body of one of their number, and took the other (John Smith) to the hospital in Ardmore. He, too, died shortly of gunshot wounds. The following day, police officers "discovered" Sims' body in the pasture, clothed in a business suit over which he wore khaki overalls. Nearby him was a blood-stained handkerchief, a khaki cap, and a black mask. His pistol scabbard was empty, and a heavily blood-stained robe lay near the corpse.[6]

The deaths caused an uproar. Anti-Klan residents of the county demanded that the Governor declare martial law and bring the perpetrators to justice. Residents of the county favorable to the Klan demanded that the chief executive declare martial law and prosecute the Sheriff for bootlegging.[7] The Governor dispatched the state's Attorney General to investigate the affair and shortly thereafter sixteen men in Ardmore, including some of the most prominent citizens, were arrested. Eleven of them were charged with killing Carroll. A year later one of them, Jeff Smith, went to trial. Prominent attorney O. A. Cargill came from Oklahoma City to defend Smith. The Grand Goblin dispatched his brother, J. S. Kimbro, and Dan Curtis to investigate the killings. They reported that the Ardmore Cyclops and his officers had ordered a Klan "party" that intended to flog and tar the bootlegger. The Oklahoma City Klan Number One, under the pressure of

Grant Landon the Exalted Cyclops, donated $500 to the defense of the Ardmore Klansmen.

Prosecutors asked prospective jurors if they were Klansmen, or were members of the "Citizens' Committee," which frequently used the pasture where Sims' body was located, or the "Layman's Club," or the local "Business Men's League." A hung jury in two successive trials of Jeff Smith led to the dismissal of charges against the men arrested.[8] As Grand Goblin, Kimbro admitted the Carroll whipping band originated in the Ardmore Klavern. The result caused three deaths, the expenditure of large sums of money for prosecution and defense, and embarrassed leaders of the Knights.

In their raid on the house of George Cole outside of Tulsa, local Klansmen were more successful in their quest for a bootlegger. They coaxed Cole out of the house in May, 1923, with a request for whiskey and once outside they seized him. Others quickly went into the house and seized his wife. Both were handcuffed and blindfolded. They were driven outside of town to a pasture near the schoolhouse of Alsuma township. The pasture was called "the whipping pasture" after its regular use for punishment under the guidelines of the Broken Arrow Klavern. The auto caravan stopped in the pasture, and the men hustled their prisoners into the night. The blindfolds were removed and the man and woman were tied to a nearby tree.

They saw men both in and out of Klan costumes. Shortly more arrived and another prisoner was tied to the tree with them. Cole was untied and the Klan attempted to force him to whip his wife for selling whiskey. He refused and was tied again to the tree. The fourth to arrive for punishment, a woman, was untied and forced to whip Mrs. Cole. After that the victim traded places with her whipper. The Klansmen finally laid the lash onto the back of George Cole for making bootleg whiskey and beer. They told him never to mention the incident to anyone, and to leave the county immediately.[9]

The Alsuma pasture during the daytime was within sight of the consolidated school building. The issue of public schools was an explosive one and the Klan did not hesitate to enforce its own code on anyone interfering with it. J. S. Lawhorn, a reputable citizen at Jenks, had circulated a petition to investigate the school board, holding up payment of teachers' salaries and causing turmoil in the school district. On the night of June 4 he emerged from church with his wife and children. As they walked to their automobile in the pasture near the church, armed men drove up and approached Lawhorn. They scuffled and in the melee knocked his wife to the ground. Finally his assailants got the upper hand when one of them shoved a revolver in his stomach and yelled, "Be quiet damn you and walk or I'll blow your guts out."

His abductors forced him into a waiting auto and placed a sack over his head. The man who had pointed him out to the mob walked into the crowd outside the church to let everyone see he was not involved in the fight and the kidnaping. He then walked to his Ford coupe and caught up with the captors who waited at the side of the lonely highway to the Alsuma Consolidated School. The men feared pursuit and stopped twice in their trip to assure that they were not followed.

The leader of the Broken Arrow whipping squad, dairyman Marshall T. Moore, earlier in the day told B. E. McLendon, the former School Superintendent of the Alsuma School, to be at Anderson's farm pasture gate at nine o'clock that night to open the gate for a whipping detail that had formed at Moore's house in Broken Arrow at four that afternoon. Moore told McLendon that he would have an opportunity to even the score in his grudge with Lawhorn over school disputes. The gate opened, the procession stopped in the pasture. The men took Lawhorn from the car and replaced the sack over his head with a blindfold. In the brief instant he was unhooded Lawhorn noticed the men hearest him had no masks, so he determined that they came from some nearby town and not from Jenks.

Two men handcuffed Lawhorn to a tree. His heart sank as they unbuckled his belt, pulled his trousers down, and tore his underwear. One man administered thirty

lashes, calling Lawhorn "not fit to be called an American citizen" and telling him "he didn't deserve the right to send his children to a school paid for by public taxes." Much profanity spiced the whippers' questions and comments. The inquisitors asked Lawhorn if he did not make a mistake in passing around the petition that inflamed public opinion in the town of Jenks. When Lawhorn adamantly replied, "No," the whipper cursed him and gave him fifteen more lashes. He leaned into the swings of the whip to give them added sting and they succeeded in their effect. Asked again, Lawhorn responded, "If you say I did, I did." He promised to remove his name from the petition and to oppose it in the future. The men behind him told him never to meddle in school affairs again, especially in the upcoming election, or he would die. They told him not to mention his punishment to anyone.

Lawhorn had at one time joined the Knights, but he had left the order over internal squabbles. After his lashing, he telephoned Minor Merriwether, the Great Titan of the local Province, in his Beno Hall headquarters. Lawhorn told him that he had every right to stay involved in the coming Jenks school election. Merriwether replied that he ought to stay out of it or there would be "hell poppin' there." Later, eight men including Moore and the Superintendent of the Alsuma Consolidated School were arrested for the flogging. The Tulsa Klan attorney Wash

Hudson defended them, and the case was dismissed for lack of substantiating evidence.[10]

Another focus of the Klan was the issue of law violators and the presence of alleged criminal elements in the communities. An example of the anti-crime drive of the local hooded vigilantes was the case of Homer Grissom in September, 1923. As he stepped from the entrance of Anadarko's undertaking parlor on the night of the eighteenth, masked men seized Grissom. They tied him as others drove northward out of town to a point near the Riverside School. There the masked men tied Grissom's hands to a tree, stripped him, and lashed his bare back. They asked him about the burning of goods in the warehouse of Elmer Gish, a local merchant. Grissom denied knowledge of the act.

They whipped him again. The masked men inquired once more, after a third lashing, and someone in the mob behind Grissom eagerly suggested, "let's cut him." After more unanswered questions, one of the mob members grabbed Grissom's testicles, and said he was going to castrate the captive unless he confessed. Grissom yelled that he had burned the warehouse. Another man asked if Elmer Gish had helped, and the prisoner agreed. The band ordered him to confess in a courtroom and take the court's punishment, and never mention that night in the pasture to anyone. They would fix him for good if he doublecrossed

them. A man took off his blindfold and Grissom strained his neck to look over his shoulder at the assemblage. He saw fifteen to twenty figures robed in white in a silent procession leaving the pasture.[11]

Residents of Tulsa resented the fact that S. K. Lesky, a real estate dealer, made bonds for criminals and bootleggers in their city. In July, 1922, some of the citizens of that city decided they should do their part for law enforcement. Masked men seized Lesky from his home and tarred and feathered him on the outskirts of town. They placed him in an automobile and drove him back into the town where they dumped him at the intersection of Third and Main streets as a warning to others who might think favorably about posting bond for hijackers and whiskey makers.[12] Members of the masked mob wanted it well known that Tulsa was an unhealthy climate for the criminal element.

It was easy for a Klansman to use his hood for a vendetta if the local Cyclops did not examine his reason for his request for a whipping squad. A Captain Graves of one of the Shawnee Intelligence Squads told Captain Ray Montgomery to accompany him to beat an alleged bootlegger and pimp. Montgomery went with Graves and they severely beat the victim for his alleged misdeeds, despite the fact that he accused Graves of harassing him for personal reasons until Grave's blows silenced him. The Exalted Cyclops

of the Shawnee Klan appointed Montgomery to investigate the suspicions he had concerning the matter. Captain Montgomery discovered that the victim owed Graves $20 and had received threatening Klan letters from Graves prior to the whipping. The Exalted Cyclops did nothing when Montgomery informed him about the vendetta. He merely shrugged and commented that the victim probably deserved it anyway.

On another occasion the Klan made a mistake, but whipped their captor despite his plea that they had the wrong man. Following a Klan meeting in Beggs, Klansmen filed out of their meeting hall. Some of them went to a nearby church to donate a small amount of money to the pastor, and others prepared the automobile procession which led out of town. The last carload of Klansmen, robed in black, turned around suddenly. They stopped alongside Norman Chesher. A man leaped from the car and struck Chesher on the head. The dazed man was thrown into the auto and it rejoined the caravan. They went to Mounds. Once there, fifteen to twenty fully robed Klansmen in white stood silently while those in black regalia whipped Chesher twenty-five times with a harness tug. They told Chesher he was flogged for gambling, for not supporting his widowed mother, for shiftlessness, for carrying a gun, and for selling whiskey. Chesher protested that his mother had died when he was three years old, that he never carried a gun,

and he never bought nor sold whiskey. One of the mob replied, "Well, we'll whip you on general principles," and applied the lash again.[13]

The reputation of the Tulsa Klan for violence left the organization open to charges that it performed acts against Tulsans which Klansmen had a hard time denying. Others found it increasingly easy to borrow Klan methods to commit personal acts of crime and cause the blame to fall upon the hooded Knights. One case will illustrate this. A black named John H. Smitherman walked down a Tulsa street in March, 1922. A white band approached Smitherman. One said they were law officers and he handcuffed the Negro. They then threw him into the back seat of a waiting automobile. Others in the car were masked. During the ride out of town, the whites kicked and beat Smitherman. Once in the cow pasture, the driver stopped the vehicle and the men pulled Smitherman from the auto and handcuffed him to a nearby tree. They lashed him forty times for allegedly insulting a white woman. He repeatedly denied the accusation. Then, his floggers accused him of registering blacks as Democrats to oppose the current municipal regime. The man holding the whip, Edgar Canby, spit into Smitherman's face and the latter kicked out at him. Angered, Canby held a pistol to his victim's head and threatened to kill him on the spot for his "disrespect." An elderly member of the mob persuaded

Canby not to kill the captive. In a rage Canby took out of a pocket his pocket knife and cut off the top of the black's ear and tried to force him to eat it, yelling, "You'll be a marked mother ----er the balance of your life." The masked men told Smitherman to leave Tulsa County forever or his fate was assured. The white mob then returned to their autos and left the pasture while one of their number released Smitherman from the tree. They left him in the pasture marked, bleeding, and swollen. Smitherman returned to Tulsa and blacks in the city assumed that the Klan had done the mutilation.

Whites in the area spoke against the deed and the leaders of the Tulsa Klan made hasty inquiries about the incident among klavern members to determine if there was any truth to the rumors. Finding no Klan involvement as an organized group, the Klan leaders telephoned a local printer and told him to print up handbills for posting about Tulsa. They announced that the Tulsa Klan had nothing to do with the mutilation of Smitherman and was earnestly assisting law enforcement personnel to apprehend the masked men who abducted the Negro and mutilated him. That was the last heard of the case.[14]

Despite the official denials there remained a lingering doubt in the minds of many about the involvement of the Klan in the incident. The use of the white hood too easily concealed anyone under it, and Tulsans

hid behind the handkerchief mask and assaulted their neighbors knowing the blame would fall on the Klan. The disguise of the klavern became the mask in the pasture because the secrecy involved in both was too great a temptation for those who plotted misdeeds.[15] The stigma of secrecy attached to the Klan haunted the organization throughout the years of violence in Oklahoma and the denials of leaders of the Invisible Empire could not abolish the doubts that persisted concerning violence by the Knights. Shortly after the outbreak of violence in Oklahoma in 1921, some Oklahomans referred to the Klansmen not as Knights of the Ku Klux, but as Knights of the Knout.

Frequently the Klan whipping squad worked in conjunction with local law officers who would arrest a victim and ensure that he was disarmed and vulnerable before the mob abducted him for punishment. The object of the Klan's ire was held in jail for a short time and then released after darkness to a waiting mob. Officers went to the house of Myrtle and Leslie Goolsby, seven miles outside of Broken Arrow, arrested the pair, and transported them to the Broken Arrow jail on July 29, 1922. Around eight o'clock that night the officers placed them in a car, ostensibly to travel to a Tulsa jail. About half-way along their route the officers stopped their automobile on the highway and signaled with their headlights. A mob

appeared and seized the Goolsbys. The stopping point was a Klan rendezvous.

The pair symbolized another of the concerns of the Klan. The hooded organization enforced local morality and was especially enraged when members discovered pairs breaking the moral code out of wedlock. The "fast and loose female" was another target in the Klan campaign to clean up the oil towns. The leaders of the Klan took their Biblical admonitions against immorality seriously and impressed upon their communities the necessity for moral behavior, through the lash if necessary.

The Goolsbys were Indians, living together but not married at the time as they later would be. She was Mrs. Myrtle Smith and her husband had left her sometime before. The Klansmen accused the two of immoral living. They denied the charge saying they were in love and would be married as soon as they could arrange for a divorce for the woman. The men took them to the Alsuma pasture and lashed her ten times until she fainted. The man received nineteen lashes and the mob told him to leave the county for good. The men transported the pair back to the vicinity of their home and released them.

The Broken Arrow constable who first arrested them suffered an aching conscience about the incident. Before the military court authorities in Tulsa the next year under martial law he confessed to the arrest, the whipping,

and to membership in the Klan. He pleaded guilty to a charge of riot and received a two-year sentence in the state penitentiary. He named seven other men as members of the whipping party, some of them Klansmen. Marshall Moore was among the men singled out in the man's description of the night's flogging. An investigation into the affair revealed to Klan leaders that the organization was not officially involved in it, although Klansmen had participated but only as individuals.[16]

In enforcing the moral code in the community Shawnee Klansmen were less restrained in their application of punishment of immorality. The more shocking the crime the more shocking the punishment. After a Shawnee court acquitted a local man of incest with his daughter in a Klan-instigated action, the Shawnee Klan Number Eight took matters into its own hands. They seized the father, took him outside of town, and, despite his begging for mercy, castrated him. The daughter was informed that she was vindicated.[17]

The Klan also opposed the agitation of Socialists and union organizers in Oklahoma. Any opposition to propertied interests or suggestion of animosity toward capitalism brought the Klan's interest to a peak. Violence against the International Workers of the World and radical farm and labor groups was rare, but it did take place in the state. It was one of the legacies of the war years

and the heightened emotionalism of that period. One Grand Goblin summed up the Klan's attitude toward socialistic elements in society when he answered to a question about the Knights' response to the Bolshevik menace, saying the Klan "forms a ring of steel to throttle a red volcano's edge and protect our homes, our lives, our people and our nation's future from a wave of hell."[18]

The Klan in the Oklahoma Realm stood ready to "combat the movement to trail the American flag in the dust" under the guise of radical labor agitation.[19] Klansmen believed that the hated slacker and war resister during the war was the radical agitator after the war. Klansmen wanted to insure that there was no room in America "for the wavers of the red flag" who wanted to tear down the government.[20] In Atoka and Bald Knob in early 1923, the Klan beat a Farm Labor Union organizer. Delegates to the Industrial Workers' Union convention held in Bald Knob in mid-year were harassed. Klansmen searched them, threatened them, and drove them from the town. In other counties the Klan organized partly to counter the success of the farm labor unions in the rural counties, but the members of the Klan did not attempt violence for retribution or persuasion. The end result was the creation of two opposing camps in counties in which businessmen and townspeople joined the Klan, while farmers joined the farm labor union. The contest continued through the Twenties as depressed

farm prices persisted, although the struggle never degenerated into violence.[21] The presence of agrarian radicals merely served as a stimulus to keep awake the feeling among Klan members that they must fulfill their patriotic duty as bulwarks against the Red Tide.

The wartime emotionalism carried into other areas of the Klan's program. Anti-German sentiment continued well into the 1920s and needed only a small spark to evoke a violent Klan reaction. Members of a crusade against what they termed anti-American elements in society needed little goading to react forcefully to any lingering vestiges of hate for the Hun in the state. Evidence of paternal neglect or abuse of family members was all that was needed to bring forth a violent reaction when coupled with Germanism.

In October, 1922, the secretary of the Broken Arrow Klavern announced in a meeting that some members of the lodge ought to take Ben Wagner, a German-American farmer, out and teach him some manners because he had a German-language Bible in his home and had refused to use the scriptures in English version. A Broken Arrow Deputy Sheriff and dairyman named Marshall Moore referred to the fact that he had a whipping strap and would lend it for the purpose at hand. The Cyclops agreed that the farmer would have to be the subject of a "party," and plans were made for the punishment.

Several men called Wagner from his home on the night of October 28 on the pretext of discussing farming business. Once outside the house the men seized him and took him to a remote portion of his farm. Twenty men in full Klan regalia awaited the prisoner's arrival. They threw a white sack over his head, tied him to a tree, and beat him, telling Wagner that he should not have torn up the English-language Bible he once owned and that he would stop mistreating his wife and eight children. The white robed figures then untied Wagner's hands and in a ghostly procession disappeared into the night.[22]

Hearing of the incident, the Great Titan of District Number Three of the Oklahoma Realm, R. L. Jerden, investigated and revoked the charter of the Broken Arrow Klan lodge for the whipping.[23] It was the first time that such action occurred in the state Klan organization and it caused widespread interest among Klan circles. Jerden pointed out to Klansmen that the use of regalia outside the lodge hall gave the order a bad name and was forbidden. Officially the organization stood for the strictest enforcement of the law as was possible and that included the punishment of masked outrages.

Later the next year under the pressure of martial law in Tulsa County, three Klansmen confessed to the incident, implicating Marshall Moore and seven others who were indicted. Ten days after the first imposition of martial

law on Tulsa, Grover Sikes, a lease foreman for Atlantic Petroleum Company near Broken Arrow, Ben Sikes, a stationery engineer, and Earl Sack, a farmer near the same town, confessed to the whipping and to Klan membership. Their forty-minute trial set a local record for swiftness in courtroom proceedings. The defending attorneys for the three were local leaders in the anti-Klan movement, and one of them was the law partner of an attorney who aided the defense of the Governor later that same year when he faced impeachment by Klan legislators.[24] The three repentant Klansmen received two-year sentences each in the state penitentiary in McAlester for the flogging. These were the first Klan confessions to whippings in the state and the first Klan convictions in the nation.[25] These convictions were to be one of the few instances of legal due process in Oklahoma in the attempt by government officials to purge the Klan menace.

Narcotics was another concern for vigilantes in the state. The newspapers gave coverage to campaigns of women's groups to clean narcotics from communities and it was natural that violence would be the method to try and drive out the drug problem. One mob effort to punish a dope peddler in Tulsa resulted in the imposition of martial law on that city, its subsequent spread to the rest of the state, and the impeachment of the Governor in his war on the Klan. The publicity over the incident embar-

rassed the Knights and opened the organization to investigation and to charges of responsibility for all of the masked outrages in the state. Because of the secrecy surrounding the organization, the Klan was the victim of growing recrimination.

Nathan Hantaman acquired his drug addiction like so many others in a government rehabilitation hospital during and after World War I. He left the hospital with his habit and turned to dope peddling for a livelihood. Once in Oklahoma, he established a dope smuggling ring between Mexico and the state, setting up his headquarters in Tulsa in his wife's rooming house, called the Colorado Rooms, and in Oklahoma City in a small rooming house near the Lee Huckins Hotel. One evening several men came to the Tulsa rooms seeking Hantaman. Hantaman's wife had heard rumors that someone was out "to get" her husband because of his dope dealing. The men that night seemed threatening so she ran them off with a pistol.[26]

Tulsa Police Captain Ned Gritts arrested Hantaman on the evening of August 10, 1923, on a charge of vagrancy. Owasso and Tulsa Klansmen were involved in planning the arrest.[27] Around eight o'clock in the evening the police released Hantaman near the station house. A car pulled alongside him, a man leapt out, hit Hantaman over the head, and several others shoved the dazed man into the automobile. Hantaman's head was quickly covered with a

sack. His abductors manacled and beat him. The auto halted, the men jerked Hantaman from it and dragged him to a waiting tree. He begged for mercy and protested his innocence of any wrongdoing. The men placed his manacled hands over the limb of the tree and tied them. They tore off his pants and underwear. The men used a blacksnake whip for the first lashing. They questioned him about dope peddling, bootleg operations in Tulsa, and about his wife's boarding house and the residents in it. They whipped him fifty lashes during the first series of questions. For the second series of floggings the men used a Klan-like whipping strap. The lashings went on. He passed out and was revived for more torture. Finally the men untied him and he slumped to the ground. The wire attached to the end of the strap used on him had split his penis and he bled profusely from the waist down. The men delivered him to a Tulsa hospital in serious condition.

After treatment in the emergency room, friends drove Hantaman to the state capital where his interview with state officials and the grisly sight of his wounds led to the declaration of martial law over the city of Tulsa. During the following six weeks in August and September, 1923, four admitted Klansmen confessed to flogging and they received the first lashing sentences in the nation in the postwar period. The Great Titan and the

Grand Dragon of the Klan were briefly arrested and charged with rioting, thirty-one admitted Klansmen in all in the Tulsa vicinity were charged with rioting and night riding assaults, and the Grand Dragon announced that all masked parades and meetings were temporarily banned until the problems of the martial law era could be solved.[28] The Klan withdrew from the public limelight for a short time to rally for the decisive struggle within the state legislature over the impending impeachment of the chief executive of the state.

Klan members and leaders were embarrassed at the revelations about vigilante violence in the Sooner State and smarted under attacks upon the organization that called their members "dead rebels come back from Hell" and worse.[29] Even the Imperial headquarters felt compelled to enter the contest in Oklahoma to restore the law-abiding name of the hooded fraternity. One hundred and thirty-eight state Klan leaders gathered in Oklahoma City and agreed on a definite program for law observance, and the Grand Dragon pledged to revoke the charter of any local Klan found guilty of night riding. "There is to be no direct action whatever," he announced to the assemblage.[30] Still later, the state leader of the Klan said that, in answer to the charges of outlawry and violence against the order, it would build a hospital to cost one million dollars for the benefit of Oklahomans.[31]

In spite of their best efforts to mend the public image Klansmen were saddled with the appearance of a white-capping order in the Sooner State--an image they could never rid themselves of in the years to come. Because of the order's insistence upon the retention of their masks even in the aftermath of the impeachment that called for unmasking, many people concluded that the organization hid behind the hood and the mask for evil and not for good purposes. The temptation for evil behind the security of the mask proved too strong for many of their fellow residents in the state and the Klan took the brunt of the criticism. Klan membership rolls increased but the image of the organization continued to decline. Older members who had helped establish the order in the state shook their heads in dismay at the wholesale recruiting drive and attended meetings of the Klan less and less. They believed that newer and less desirable members managed the affairs of the group and shoved the older members to the sidelines. Less desirable members brought more potential for night riding into the organization. Klan connections to violent outbursts in Oklahoma continued despite the efforts of the leadership to prevent them. The admonitions against violence could not overcome the history of vigilantism in the state and the desire for swift retribution of wrongs.

Most of the violence in Oklahoma in the years

after statehood did not involve the Knights at all. Most convulsions within the state continued to involve neighbors attacking neighbors. The tradition of violence lingered long after statehood and the end of the frontier. The sting of the lash was just as painful without regard to the attire of the whippers. More violence involved residents of the state who were not members of the Knights than people in that order. Although the period of greatest numbers of acts of violence coincided with the rise and fall of the Klan in the state, Oklahomans continued their long history of violent outbursts which took place before the arrival of the Klan and would continue long after the disappearance of that organization.

Many of the people who beat their fellow residents belonged to the Klan but acted as individuals and not as members. Men in the Tulsa police force and sheriff's department in the 1920s were Klan members, and Klansmen participated in the violence of the Tulsa region. They usually acted as individuals and not as members of a Klan-sponsored whipping party.

Police officials did not look into cases of floggings in the county because they knew when a fellow officer from their station was involved or heard about a klavern-sponsored "party" and did not wish to embarrass the force or the Klansmen with an investigation. Many of those implicated in mob violence spent much time at the

station house as so-called special deputies with no visible duties.[32] In cases of Klan violence or their fellow officers' implication in an assault, the law enforcement agents could pressure potential witnesses against their fellow officers in the few cases that came to court involving masked mobs.

Sometimes the police merely observed vigilante action without directly participating. One of these incidents took place on the night of May 26, 1922, when some county residents attacked several houses allegedly used for bootlegging purposes. R. G. Cook awoke suddenly to the sound of automatic rifle fire ripping through his house. It was about two in the morning. Seven to eight men surrounded the house, Cook observed from the corner bedroom window. One of the men fired into the windows and doors of his house, shattering windows and shooting out the bulbs of lamps inside the structure. When Cook stepped from the front door he saw that the figures moving in the shadows outside wore old soldiers' fatigues. Two of the men held him prisoner at gunpoint in the yard. Others joined the shooting into the house as a man yelled for others to come outside. A lone woman's voice cried that she was concerned for her children and the man opened fire again on the house. After a short pause in the gunfire, Jake Morrow and his wife emerged from the house. The men allowed the children to remain indoors. One of

the men came up to Jake Morrow in the yard and cursed him, then started to strike him with the butt of his gun. His wife screamed and the man grabbed her saying, "Shut up or I'll stomp you."

The men with the weapons began to shoot into the neighboring house that belonged to Floyd (F. C.) Cook. They entered a third house and marched the occupants outside. The figures then searched Cook's house, taking money and guns. Then they piled the mattresses and other flammables in the center of the structure and set fire to the house. From the blaze they then systematically beat all of the men in the yard and one of the men struck Mrs. Morrow, who was eight months' pregnant. The pistol whipping led to the premature stillbirth of her baby a few hours later. The men in the fatigues left as suddenly as they arrived, departing quickly from the compound which they left looking like a battlefield. One glanced back to view their night's work and saw the forms lying in the dirt in front of the smoldering ruins of the Cook house. The last burning timbers cast an evil aura over the night's action.

Phones rang in the Tulsa police station and the caller informed the authorities that there was gunfire near Bruner Station out the Sand Springs road. Two motorcycle officers left the station to investigate. J. H. Damron, a Tulsa World reporter, tagged along thinking he

might get a human interest story. They drove toward Chelsea. A man with a flashlight stopped them about one and one-half blocks from the residences, one of which was almost in ashes. The officers conferred for a time, then they turned around and returned to Tulsa. Three or four autos were parked around the area where the officers had talked with two of the men guarding the road. One of them was Jake Hyde, whom the motorcycle officers immediately recognized because he was one of the night hangers-on at the Tulsa police station as one of Sheriff Robert Sanford's special deputies. The Cooks' pleas for an investigation into the affair were ignored although the Tulsa police the next morning found a license plate at the scene and returned it to its owner.[33]

Residents of Beggs had a similar punishment for the operator of a local hotel that the law officers could never close because the owner managed to hide the gambling and the prostitutes when the authorities arrived for a raid. In August, 1922, after repeated attempts to close the Beggs Hotel and to curb the immorality in it, townspeople took direct action. Twenty-five armed men wearing union coveralls, black stocking masks, and white rags over their shoes descended on the building. Sheriff's deputies directed the curious around the town square to stand aside while the men did their civic duty. The sheriff and his deputies watched the proceedings. The occupants of the hotel were

herded into the frontyard of the hotel and several were questioned. The masked men flogged several others. They gave fifteen lashes to the hotel owner whom they accused of being a pimp. Another man in the hotel was an innocent lodger, a transient, who asked to be allowed to leave quickly. A third man got seventeen lashes, while a fourth received twenty-seven lashes. The masked men told the hotel owner he had only ten hours to get out of town for good. The mob looted the hotel of valuables and formed a procession like stevedores on a wharf to pass along the furniture from the structure and to stack it in the town square. They then set fire to it in the knowledge that they had immolated the one den of iniquity in the community and that life in the town would then settle into a church-going piety that the town fathers preferred. The only regret among the masked men was that they had not found out who had tipped the hotel owner of the raids prior to the arrival of the authorities over the past three years. The mob members had something special planned for that individual.[34]

Wartime emotionalism easily reappeared in the 1920s. During World War I the slacker or Socialist agitator who opposed the war effort was the target for local bullies as entertainment on a Saturday night. One of the wartime dissenters remained in his town after the end of the war and he regretted that decision. He complained, "I wasn't

anything but a punchin'-bag for a couple of years [after the war]. Ever' time the Ku Kluxers had a meetin' or when the town boys got drunk and didn't have anything else to do they'd come out and beat up on me."[35]

Even women participated in the Oklahoma vigilantism. On one occasion women of the Klan from Oklahoma City left their klavern and donned flowing blue robes. They captured a still four miles from the city under the watchful eye of their male counterparts.[36]

A final source of friction and violence during the early 1920s was the clash between Klan and anti-Klan forces. Sections of the Sooner State verged on civil war as both camps armed themselves for outbreaks of violence.[37] Oklahomans who opposed the Knights of the Ku Klux and feared its hooded power could join several organizations that sprouted in the reaction to vigilante force beginning in 1922.

Tension between the two camps divided towns and counties in the Sooner State and threatened the region with civil violence among the contending forces. Boycotts of opposing businesses embittered relations between the factions and in some counties, anti-Klan farmers through their anti-Klan organizations threatened to burn farmers out of their homes if they did not get off the farms owned by Klansmen and stop paying rent to them. Klansmen pledged retaliation in kind. Five hundred Klansmen in the Shawnee

lodge listened to Exalted Cyclops J. A. Walker as he proposed a remedy for local anti-Kluxers: "Gentlemen there are four men of this city that we have got to spank and we have got to spank hard . . . because they are members of what is known as the Anti-Ku Klux Klan. . . ."[38]

The clash presented a tinderbox situation in the counties in the southeastern regions where large numbers of foreigners lived. They prepared to strike forcefully at the nativist nemesis if it raised the possibility of violence. A spark was not long in coming, but the authorities quickly calmed the situation before widespread fighting occurred and contained the outbreak to one murder. An ex-deputy named Tom Boggus stepped from the theater in Spelter City, a mining suburb of Henryetta into a mob of masked men who fired on him. He returned the fire, wounding one of his assailants, but was cut down in the gunfire. The day before Boggus had delivered a fiery speech to fifty people in the county seat of Okmulgee at an anti-Klan rally as head of the True Blue Americans. Two men implicated in an earlier Klan whipping party were briefly detained but were freed shortly thereafter from the murder charges.[39] The leader of the Prague anti-Klan organization, Frank Miles, received several threatening letters before his death from an unknown assailant on the night of August 31, 1923. The Governor dispatched two private detectives to Lincoln County to investigate but they found nothing

to connect the Klan to the killing. They found very little at all because the death took place at night and the clues left behind were few.[40] The tumult over the impeachment of the Governor and the ban on masked parades across the state kept the situation from exploding into open conflict between the Klan and the anti-Klan factions. The struggle was confined to the less visible arenas of the boycott, the threatening letter, and the ballot box.

CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES

[1]Title for chapter comes from one of the signs carried in a Klan parade through the streets of Woodward. Woodward News-Bulletin, July 7, 1922, p. 1.

[2]The military committees are discussed in Norman Weaver, "The Knights of the K.K.K. in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1954), and in pamphlets in Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library. Montgomery, Captain of Intelligence Squad Number Three of Shawnee Klan Number Eight, testified about the black mask and the goon squads, reprinted in Walter Witcher, The Reign of Terror in Oklahoma (Ft. Worth: The Author, 1923), pp. 48-50. The whipping strap description is in Lawhorn's testimony of his flogging, Daily Oklahoman, September 22, 1923, p. 4. Descriptions of the use of the black mask and the loan of a squad to another district are in Charles McCloud, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2208; testimony of Ned Gritts, Tulsa Police Investigation, September 7, 1923, State Archives, 4051, p. 19. El

Reno's squad is in Montgomery's testimony reprinted in Witcher, The Reign of Terror, p. 26. Atlanta's instruction in violence is in Marion Monteval, The Klan Inside Out.

[3]Daily Oklahoman, throughout September, 1921, carried it.

[4]Tulsa World, September 22, 1923, p. 5. Alexander, "The Invisible Empire in the Southwest" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1962), p. 41, tells of Texas violence, and Kimbro himself describes the Houston castration in his testimony in Knights of the K.K.K. v. George Kimbro, Jr., 61st District Court, Harris County, Texas, case 105180, reprinted in Monteval, Klan Inside Out, p. 87.

[5]Quotation from Tulsa World, October 31, 1923, p. 3. Much of the tale is speculative because so little is known. See Alexander, The K.K.K. in the Southwest, pp. 68-74; Monteval, Klan Inside Out, pp. 185-90; Imperial Night-Hawk, I (March 28, 1923), pp. 4, 8; Harrell, "The K.K.K. in Louisiana," pp. 183-214. The Rittenhouse court case testimony on it is in Tulsa World, October 26-31, 1923.

[6]Daily Oklahoman, December 18-23, 1921; Daily Ardmoreite, January 29, 1923, p. 1; Tucker, Governor Walton's War, p. 48; Witcher, Reign of Terror, p. 27.

[7]Daily Oklahoman, December 21, 1921, p. 2.

[8]Ibid., December 24, 1921, p. 1; Daily Ardmoreite,

February 4, 1923; Tulsa Tribune, January-March, 1923; Atoka Indian Citizen-Democrat, December 22, 1921. A. A. Maupin told of the Oklahoma City Klavern donation in Tulsa World, September 22, 1923, p. 5. Jurors' questions are in Tulsa Tribune, June 30, 1923, p. 1. Kimbro investigation results are in Monteval, Klan Inside Out, p. 89.

[9]Testimony before martial law court, Tulsa, Attorney General files, Civil Cases, State Archives, folder 4051. Much of the information for this chapter comes from this file. My thanks to the State Archivist Mr. John Stewart for finding and arranging them for my use. The whipping pasture is described in Tulsa World, September 15, 1923, pp. 1, 11.

[10]Testimony, State Archives, 4051; Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 4; Tulsa World, August 19, 1923, p. 1; September 15, p. 11; September 20, p. 16.

[11]Grissom, Fuller, and Gish v. State, Ag-B130, State Archives, folder 4045.

[12]Testimony, State Archives, 4051; Tulsa World, September 5, 1923, p. 1; Tulsa County, Court of Common Pleas, Criminal Misdemeanors, docket 1452, State Archives, box 1, reel 3.

[13]Witcher, Reign of Terror, pp. 20-49; Daily Oklahoman, September 14, 1923, p. 1; testimony, State Archives, 4051; Tulsa World, September 23, 1923, p. 1.

[14]Newspaper clipping, George Short's Scrapbook,

Att. Gen. files, State Archives, n. d.; testimony, State Archives, 4051; Tucker, Governor Walton's War, pp. 28-32; Witcher, Reign of Terror, pp. 17-18; Tulsa World, September 24, 1923, pp. 1, 6; Markham, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2199; a sample handbill is in the Redmond Cole Papers, University of Oklahoma Library.

[15]W. C. Wright, "The Seven Symbols of the Klan," Anadarko American-Democrat, May 7, 1924, p. 2.

[16]Quote in Muskogee Klansman to a Congressman, October, 1921, in U. S., House of Representatives, Committee on Rules, The K.K.K., Hearings, 67th Congress, 1st Session, 1921, p. 6. Goolsby case is covered in testimony, State Archives, 4051; Tulsa Court of Common Pleas, State Archives, docket 1288; Okmulgee Daily Democrat, August 27, 1923, p. 1; Tulsa World, August 28, 1923, p. 1; September 12, p. 8; September 20, p. 16; September 24, p. 1.

[17]Testimony of Ray Montgomery, no date, in Witcher, Reign of Terror, pp. 48-59.

[18]Daily Oklahoman, September 15, 1921, p. 1.

[19]Oklahoma Klansman's letter against the IWW in the Imperial Night-Hawk, I (August 8, 1923), p. 3.

[20]Oklahoma City Klan Number One to editor, Daily Oklahoman, September 11, 1921, p. 5B.

[21]Editorial, Nation, CXVII (September 26, 1923),

p. 311; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 51.

[22]Charles McCloud, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, pp. 2207-2209; Tulsa World, August 24, 1923, p. 1; testimony, State Archives, 4051.

[23]Testimony of Markham, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2188; Okmulgee Daily Democrat, August 30, 1923, p. 1. Markham said the Wagner case was the only known case of lashing in which Klan costumes were used or in which the case was traced back to the klavern.

[24]Enid Eagle, August 24, 1923, p. 1; Representative Simpson, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2218.

[25]Tulsa World, August 24, 1923, p. 1; Tucker, Governor Walton's War, p. 13.

[26]Tulsa World, August 12, 1921, p. 4; Major Louis Ledbetter, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, II, p. 862.

[27]Ned Gritts, testimony, State Archives, 4051.

[28]Aldrich Blake, "Oklahoma's Klan-Fighting Governor," Nation, CXVII (October 3, 1923), p. 353.

Walton boasted: "I have sent four to the penitentiary from Tulsa and there are one hundred more on the way." Okmulgee Daily Democrat, September 17, 1923, p. 1.

Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, p. 85, gives the figure 31. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 45, gives the

figure as 25.

[29]Quote from State Senator Jack Barber of El Reno in Tulsa World, November 24, 1923, p. 2.

[30]Depositions in the Rittenhouse case in ibid., October 31, 1923, p. 13; Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 13.

[31]Imperial Night-Hawk, I (November 28, 1923), p. 7.

[32]Testimony of private investigator Charles McCloud, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2213; Tulsa World, September 14, 1923, p. 1.

[33]Ibid., September 10, 1923, p. 12; September 14, p. 7; September 29, p. 1; Witcher, Reign of Terror, pp. 19-20; Preliminary Information, number 13784, Tulsa County, September 15, 1923, folder 4051; Tulsa County, Court of Common Pleas, docket 1470, State Archives, reel 3; Markham, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, pp. 2195-96; Ralph Cook's testimony, Tulsa Riot Cases, Military Court folder, Att. Gen. Cases, State Archives, 4029-60; J. H. Damron and Floyd Cook's testimonies, ibid.

[34]Testimony, State Archives, 4051; Okmulgee Daily Democrat, September 17, 1922, p. 1.

[35]Testimony of a Socialist in Ned DeWitt interview, What's the Latest from Europe, W.P.A. Writers' Project Papers, Oil in Oklahoma Collection, University of

Oklahoma Library, box 43, p. 5.

[36]Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, p. 85.

[37]Speech of Senator Fry of Sallisaw in Tulsa World, November 23, 1923, p. 2, comments on civil war pending.

[38]Quote in ibid., September 15, 1923, p. 15.

[39]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, October 30, 1922, p. 1; October 31, p. 5; December 13, p. 1. Affidavit of Henry Prestridge, October 16, 1922, 8/11, 8-D-1-3, State Archives, identified one of the accused as a Klansman.

[40]Daily Oklahoman, September 6, 1923, p. 7; McAlester Pittsburg County Guardian, September 13, 1923, p. 7.

CHAPTER V

VIOLENCE EXAMINED

Knights of the Ku Klux Klan did not invent violence. Lawlessness took place in the same areas, and often involved the same people, who had perpetrated it before the formation of the Klan. The Knights formalized force, made it respectable and part of a holy crusade, and made it easier behind the robe and the mask with the assistance of a network of organized individuals to assist in night riding. In a new state possessing many attributes of the frontier, violence remained part of the daily experience of many Oklahomans. Violence against one's fellow man was sometimes essential to survival. Many Oklahomans who joined the Klan's lawlessness in 1921-23 had participated in the violence of the war period against slackers and Socialists, in lynchings, or in racial confrontations in the early postwar period. Some of the Klansmen belonged to the strongarm squads of the wartime councils of defense. The unprecedented outbreak of violence in Oklahoma in 1921 and the train of events after it left the image of the Klan smeared with the blood of

violence in the minds of many Americans.

Investigators disagreed on the number of whippings and mob acts in the state in the period from 1921 through 1923. The Governor's private secretary and a leader in the anti-Klan fight in Oklahoma said that there were 2,500 separate outrages in 1922 alone, according to the letters, telegrams, and phone calls the Governor's office received during the martial law probes.[1] Aldrich Blake said that Tulsa County averaged one flogging every night, and Oklahoma County averaged one per week through 1922.[2] Military authorities under the Governor's orders investigated eighty-six whipping incidents and mob attacks. General Baird Markham, in charge of the Tulsa inquiry, found sixty acts of violence in 1922 and forty to forty-five in 1923 in that county. The military officials did not investigate twenty additional cases in 1923 because they lacked the time to examine them.[3] They looked into over one hundred kidnapings in the county, of which eighty-six involved corporal punishment.[4] Other investigators of Tulsa County violence speculated that only the tip of the iceberg was discovered in the martial law hearings, and placed the number of mob actions of outrage higher, perhaps three hundred for a two-year period in that county alone.[5]

A private investigator who examined Tulsa acts admitted that the exact number could never be known because

of the veil of secrecy that covered the actions and the reluctance of victims to come forward. He told the legislative investigating committee that it was difficult to remember the details of towns, klaverns, and violence "because there was so much of that stuff" going on in Oklahoma.[6]

Despite the drawn out investigations into violence across the state, many Oklahomans denied that the mob action ever took place and laughed at the notion that the Klan could be involved. Some of the skeptics were Klansmen and refused to believe that their organization sanctioned brute force. W. R. Sampson, a Muskogee Klansman, told legislators that, "There is no history or record of the Klan starting any trouble anywhere."[7] Others were too busy impeaching the Governor whom they considered a far worse threat than men who dressed in shrouds and cavorted in cow pastures. Because the military court proceedings were conducted in secret and the Governor almost immediately faced ouster, the records of the violence around the state remained locked in lawyers' safes or in dusty file drawers. Oklahomans could easily deny that 1,500 whippings occurred in their state because of the fact that information on them could not be found.[8] Still others would admit that "five or six" floggings took place but that the outcome was of benefit to the community where the vigilantes took law enforcement into their own hands.[9]

Charles Dawes, the Vice Presidential running mate of Calvin Coolidge in 1924, defended the Klan's work in Oklahoma and Illinois.[10] So did a Tulsa judge when pressed for a response to the question about the vigilantes in his county. "I don't defend it, of course, but from what I've seen I should say that the night-raiders averaged nearer justice than the courts do."[11] The night riders claimed that they cleaned the evil elements from the oil boom towns and turned the lawbreaker into a quiet church-going citizen in the same way that the wartime slacker became a quiet bond-buying resident of his community after the strongarm squad of the council of defense visited him. A touch of the lash proved an excellent cure for moral laxity or irresponsibility in the opinion of the members of the mobs.[12]

The outbreak of violence on a singular scale in the years of 1921 through 1923, coinciding with the arrival and organization of the Knights, alarmed many in the nation to the threat of the order. Explosions of disorder allegedly involving the Klan scarred six states in the same period and aroused federal interest for measures to curb lynchings and outrages.[13] Oklahoma was a central part of the debate over the Klan in those years.

The Klan surpassed the scandals of the Harding administration, the Bull Market, Babbitt, the youth rebellion, or the sexual revolution in the 1920s as a topic of

conversation. Stalwart conservatives in the state resented the region's divergent religious groups, the advocates of collectivist ideas of government, different economic and social standards, and the rapid changes in the oil and mining centers which challenged the "old ways." Individuals used group violence to change behavior as part of the vigilante tradition in the 1920s until other people demanded a halt to disguises and violence. The emotionalism of World War I and the use of force to insure local moral codes continued into the postwar decade. The Klan appealed to the individual who desired halcyon days. He feared people whom he identified with un-American activity of the war period. Klansmen believed that they were not aggressive because they defended the status quo. They felt they held the high ground of lofty ideals against the common enemy. Klansmen only made counterattacks, never frontal assaults, they pointed out when confronted with evidence of misdoings. They regarded alcohol as one of the persistent threats facing any community and the bootlegger was the primary target of the vigilante in Oklahoma. The Klan believed that one of its greatest achievements was the constitutionalizing of morality in the Prohibition amendment taking demon rum from their neighbors. The Klansmen lashed out against what they considered the parasite and the disloyal who were undermining the foundations of the

community through crime, sedition, or liquor and immorality. A strong organization like the Knights could assist civic leaders and law officers in bettering their community and driving evil from the county. If the members of the leading bodies in a town were all Klansmen, then the lines of communication were even more open for the business at hand. The order could serve as a patriotic and fraternal body for a town, as a political machine for the reform of local political morals, and as a night riding group for the enforcement of the local moral code. In some areas of Oklahoma the order served all three functions simultaneously. The Klan offered something for most and in greater quantity and with more mystery than other patriotic and fraternal organizations. The Klan's membership in Oklahoma rose rapidly and it quickly became a force to be reckoned with in the northeastern part of the state with its ready use of the lash.

The majority of incidents of nocturnal violence in the state did not involve Klansmen as representatives of their organization. Few of the incidents of 1921-23 involved men wearing masks and costumes of white or black. Most violence did, however, invoive the use of a mask to conceal the identity of the attackers. Night riders through the Sooner State dictated community morals to their neighbors without resorting to any one type or method to inflict punishment. Of the known instances of violence

across the state (220) nearly one-fourth (53) involved no force at all, merely the report of the Klan in the area or a visitation to a church with a direct action threatened within the hearing of the morally wayward. Only three known deaths resulted from night riding, although the Governor announced that there were six Mer Rouge-type murders in the Oklahoma Realm. They were never proven or substantiated. Two of the three known deaths involved two Klansmen, in the raid on the Joe Carroll home near Wilson in late 1921 for liquor. Twenty-four victims were beaten in mob action, but the most frequently used method of corporal punishment was the lash. One hundred and two captives were flogged in nocturnal action. Three reports on vigilantism pointed to the use of the black hood and robe in the violence and eight reported the use of Klan regalia. Tar, feathers, the torch, the lynching post, and mutilations were rare in the Oklahoma Realm of the Knights. After floggings and beatings, threats were the third most frequently used method of coercion. Because those are reported threats in the forms of letters and notes in official reports and because threats were often not reported that category should be the prime one for use. It was easiest to issue a threat rather than risk the whipping party with the chance of detection and conviction for it.

Control of bootlegging was the usual excuse for night riding because the authors of the state's constitu-

tion made the state dry from its inception. Sixteen of the recorded night riding incidents involved bootlegging or whiskey activities (see Table 1). Promiscuity followed closely as a reason for violence with twelve incidents. Criminal activity with eight occurrences of force ranks a close third. Nine Oklahomans fell victim to mob action as part of vendettas, or for reasons of economics, such as an unpaid debt, an order to sell property at a loss, an unpaid mortgage, or personal greed for land. These outbursts overlapped so that a kidnap victim might face a lashing on a variety of charges including bootlegging, promiscuity, crime, gambling, vagrancy, and vocal opposition to the Klan (see Table 2). Tulsa County saw much of the night riding activity with seventy-four incidents. It experienced the largest number of white-capping acts, not including the racial warfare of 1921.

Except for sketchy bits, information is unavailable for firm conclusions about the frequency of violence in other parts of the state. Of the known incidents, Collinsville ranked second with thirteen acts and Broken Arrow ranked third with ten (see Table 3). Other centers of known mob violence disguised behind the mask include Shawnee, Okmulgee, Beggs, Skiatook, Enid, Dewar, Owasso, Keifer, and Sand Springs. Many of the towns contained active klaverns which held Military Committees that easily lent themselves to violence behind the hood and mask.

TABLE 1

REASONS FOR VIOLENCE

Types of Offenses	Number of Outrages
Whiskey/bootlegging	16
Immorality with the opposte sex	12
Economics	5
Abuse/non-support of a family	4
Crime	8
Personal grudge	4
Opposition to school officials	3
Racism	3
Immoral living/wife-beating	2
Opposition to Klan	2
Being German	2
Unionization/Radicalism	2
Narcotics traffic	2
Gambling	1
Discourtesy to a teacher	1
Registering blacks	1

Note: The tables covering violence here only cover the years 1921-24. The incidents are taken from newspapers; Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, Ninth Legislature; and the State Archives holdings on Tulsa Police Investigation and Riot, folder 4051, and "Tulsa Riot Cases, Martial Law," file 4029-60, both of which are in the Attorney General Cases papers.

TABLE 1--Continued

Types of Offenses	Number of Outrages
To extract information	1
For talking too much	1
Pimps/prostitution	0

TABLE 2

TYPES OF INCIDENTS

Types of Incident	Number
Floggings	102
Reports of masked action or threats	21
Reports of the Klan	42
Reports of Regalia	8
Reports of black hoods	3
Killings	2
Burnings of buildings	4
Burnings of people	1
Mutilation	2
Beatings	24
Threats	7
Tarrings/featherings	3
Castrations	1

TABLE 3

TOWNS AND VIOLENCE

Town	Number
Tulsa	37
Collinsville	13
Broken Arrow	10
Shawnee	8
Okmulgee-Spelter City	7
Beggs	6
Sand Springs	4
Owasso	4
Enid	4
Dewar	4
Skiatook	4
Keifer	3
Henryetta	2
Atoka	2
Sapulpa	2
Picher	1
Jenks	2
Pryor	1
Hollis	1

Note: From point of abduction of the victim. Some are listed more than once because of dual floggings or incidents in a town.

TABLE 3--Continued

Town	Number
Quay	1
Turley	1
Hominy	1
Anadarko	1
Bartlesville	1
Lawton	1
Limestone Gap	1
Barnsdall	1
Coweta	1
Bald Knob	1
Checotah	1
Oklahoma City	1
Sulphur	1
Ardmore	1
Cushing	1

Several of the communities were neighboring towns allowing Klansmen and other night riders to travel to them for misdeeds and then return to their own communities after their mission was accomplished. Other urban centers in the state contained residents who did not hesitate to enforce the local moral code with the lash and the tar bucket without the assistance of the Klan. Outraged citizens frequently took legal retribution into their own hands. The other communities around the state did not undergo the intense investigation that Tulsa County experienced in 1923 that probed incidents there (see Table 4). The fewer instances of reported violence in the remainder of the state only signify the tip of the iceberg of lawlessness in Oklahoma, most of which was never reported for reasons of humiliation or intimidation.

Vigilantes struck out at their fellow white Protestants for the most part. Blacks, Indians, Roman Catholics, Jews, and aliens were only rarely the victims of direct action, and then only for the additional reason that they represented something else to their attackers like a bootlegger or a criminal. These categories received the largest number of threatening letters and notes. Some of them were the objects of commercial boycotts that were harmful. Women were only rarely the victims of mob assaults, as were children. Despite the prevalence of prostitutes in the oil and mining camps, vigilantes held

TABLE 4

COUNTIES WITH INCIDENTS

County	Number
Tulsa	74
Okmulgee	20
Pottawatomie	8
Creek	5
Garfield	4
Atoka	3
Murray	2
Oklahoma	1
Blaine	1
Carter	1
Washington	1
Comanche	1
Caddo	1
Mayes	1
Harmon	1
Pawnee	1
McIntosh	1
Osage	1
Wagoner	1
Payne	1

back and merely prodded authorities to deport them to other states. The whippers focused on white Protestants because they believed that in their crusade to save America their fellow citizens who were traitors to their holy cause had to be redeemed.

Urban Klansmen led the violence.[14] Klaverns centered in towns because towns contained the largest number of potential recruits, the largest buildings for gatherings, the leading capitalists of the county, and the leading citizens resided there. Town Klansmen, like those from Ardmore in the attack on the bootlegger near Wilson in late 1921, journeyed into rural areas to flog those who transgressed their nineteenth century moral code. As part of the tension of the 1920s the urban Klansman left his city to strike at the rural farmer-Socialist as part of the Knights' errantry. Urban Klansmen also led the order's affairs in the Realm using their wider contacts and the more rapid communications systems of the cities to keep in contact with the klaverns. It was no accident that the first Kleagle stopped in the capital to begin his campaign in the state. It was also no accident that the Grand Dragon lived in the state's capital closest to the legislative and business heart of the state.

City and town Klansmen drew on the leading citizens of a community and combined their membership with the middle-class in an effort to clean up the oil boom

camps. According to the available evidence on outrages, middle-class members, among them the deputies and marshals, often led the violence. Under the leadership of urban officials of the klavern, as in the Shawnee lodge, Knights ventured forth for their nocturnal vigilance. The conflict between the city Klansman and the country farmer-Socialist or between the city Klansman and the rural bootlegger on the outskirts of the city resembles the constant collisions of the rotifer and the paramecium in a drop of pond water. In constant motion, they continually collide without actually devouring the other so that they can go on colliding in the future. It was a symbiotic relationship in which each needed the other for existence. One gave meaning to the existence of the other and each nourished his beliefs in the necessity of his existence to combat the continuing menace of his opponent. The Klansman and his opponent, whether it was a criminal or a morally wayward individual, were in constant struggle and contributed to the tension of the 1920s in the state. In the process they contributed to the continuation of frontier-type violence in American society.[15]

Violence persisted in Oklahoma long after the territory achieved statehood, a status that normally implied settled life and less violence than a frontier situation. For many reasons Oklahomans maintained a frontier mentality toward violence long after the physical frontier vanished

under statehood, urbanization, and modernization. Every Western state went through a period of lawlessness, and a corresponding period of mobocracy and vigilante movements for law and order, the leading historical example of that trend, the San Francisco Committee on Vigilance.[16] Oklahoma's experience with the Klan violence fits easily into that vigilante tradition. Oklahomans did not hesitate to white-cap for local reform or to force their neighbors to change their behavior.

World War I left Oklahomans in a high emotional state. War was the most important cause for the continual outbreak of violence in the state. The fighting in the Tulsa streets in the race war of 1921 re-enacted the fighting in European villages during the Allied offensives of 1918. The war taught many Oklahomans how to use weapons with great accuracy and to organize to kill more efficiently. Organizations and their members who enforced wartime conduct were reluctant to turn the reins of power over to aliens, immigrants, corrupt politicians, criminals, or radicals in the postwar period. Economic problems in the wake of the struggle overseas aggravated the tensions. Many members of the councils of defense in 1919 carried their fervor into the Klan when it came to the state in 1920 and 1921.

Radicalism persisted in the depressed agricultural regions of the state and among the oil field and mining

workers which caused alarm for capitalists and businessmen in the towns and cities. The tension between rural Socialist and urban Klansman needed little provocation for violence, whether from the Klan or from an anti-Klan group. Usually the rivalry was confined to the ballot box. High mortgage rates, high interest charges, and loan shark practices in the county seats of the region contributed to the animosity. The high tenancy rate in the state and depressed prices for farm products drove many farmers into tenant and renters' unions. About the same time that Kleagles entered the state for propagation of the Klan, L. N. Sheldon, a North Dakota organizer of the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League, came to Oklahoma. He interested John Simpson of the Farmers' Union in his cause and they in turn made great headway among Oklahoma's poor on the farm and in the factory. The postwar decline in farm prices only aided the radicals in their recruiting and further alarmed conservatives who ridiculed Socialists in the postwar period for their opposition to the war. The potential for violence between the two factions grew each year. Economic troubles and radicalism rose hand in hand.[17]

The persistence of anti-minority feeling among the old stock residents of the region contributed to the ill-will in Oklahoma that evolved into violence. Oklahomans of German extraction were suspects from the war

period. Aliens in the coal mines or the oil fields were mistreated and contributed to the persistent demand from Oklahomans for immigration restriction. The minorities in their turn resented the animosity, and that increased the tension in the state. The Protestant believed that his religion was under assault from alien importations from Europe in the form of Roman Catholics and Jews, or from anyone who did not practice the old-time Protestant religion. The Klansman was on his guard against the alien influence in his community and actively protected the purity of One Hundred Percent Americanism in the face of the threats he perceived.

The bonanza climate in the mine and oil regions of Oklahoma contributed to lawlessness in the state after the war. Quick wealth and loose money drew disreputable characters to the camps and the towns. The church-going Klansman was horrified at the spectacle before him of licentiousness in his area. He believed that it was unsafe for his wife and children to travel the roads without insult. Knights struck out against vice and crime in an effort to reform the moral climate. Promiscuity and the liquor traffic were the targets, as well as the corrupt sheriff and politician who allowed the immorality to continue. The Klansman wanted to reform his local community to clean up the crime and moral laxity, and to purify his county. He did that through enforcement of

his own moral code on his town. The dictation of morality in his region was his most important mission. Persuasion by warning was often all that was needed to correct wayward behavior, but some members of the Military Committee of the klavern were willing to use the lash if necessary to enforce the local moral code. The robe proved a tempting disguise for vigilantes.

Other reasons for the tenacity of violence in Oklahoma include the fact that Oklahoma inherited a frontier heritage of individualism which easily turned into a vendetta for redress of a wrong. Individual Klansmen, as in the Shawnee Klavern, sometimes fell under the lure of the hood and the robe for retribution of a personal grudge. Guns were common personal property in the state as a legacy of the frontier tradition in which the settler, whether he was Indian or white, had to protect his home from marauding tribesmen and outlaws, and provide food for his family. America's gun culture is without parallel among industrialized nations of the world.[18] Oklahomans reaped repeated tragedy from the widespread ownership of guns. The territory in the period 1866-1907 provided a haven beyond the pale for the lawless who could escape into it and that legacy provided the opportunity for violence in later years. The Southwest was a region in turmoil from its earlier years of white occupation because of the conflict between Indians and whites for pos-

session of the land, and because of the presence of horse thieves, cattle rustlers, and other parasites upon frontier life. Klansmen often referred to their victims in 1922 and 1923 as parasites upon the community who were told to leave and never return to the county or the state.

Finally, violence in the state was related to anxiety, frustration, prejudice, and social tension. The man who flogged found it easier to do so the second and the third times. The Klan stood in stark contrast to the usual monotony and boredom of rural existence.[19] The disguise easily concealed the man who enjoyed violent acts or at least did not shrink from them. Members of whipping squads, like Marshall Moore, performed their duties many times so they were no strangers to the violent act. Often they were law enforcement personnel, as in the case of Moore, familiar with the use of force. Imperial Wizard Clarke in Tulsa admitted that the early Klan solicited men "looking for a little rough stuff."[20] Clothed in the purest white, the Kluxer could feel cleansed of guilt-feelings about attacking his neighbor as part of a holy crusade. Men who wanted to attack their fellow citizens needed little excuse particularly when the Knights provided a mission and their costumes the cover.

Authors disagree about the involvement of the revived Knights of the Ku Klux in violence, especially in the face of vehement denials of the Klansmen and their

leadership that the body sanctioned force. Some writers contend that the historian devotes too much attention to the violent side of the order and that in actuality the Klan perpetrated little violence if any at all. Examinations of the Louisiana Klan as well as the Knights in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan disclose violence is a false image of the Klan of the 1920s.[21] Others maintain the Klan is responsible for almost all of the white-capping in the Southwest, and particularly in Oklahoma.[22] Still others lay blame for much violence throughout recent American history, centering on the South, on Klan organizations which insisted on night riding and assassination as retribution for the changes around them.[23]

The amount of Klan violence in Oklahoma exceeded that of any other state in the 1920s.[24] Oklahoma and Louisiana klaverns in the early 1920s gave the image of violent authoritarianism to the Klan, especially in Oklahoma's Realm. What was at first glance an outbreak of Klan terror and vigilantism was in reality only the visible appearance of what had occurred for many years in the form of white-capping along the frontier and into early statehood. The revelations in the martial law hearings across the state revealed that many non-Klansmen in Oklahoma perpetrated the mob violence of the postwar years. Knights accompanied the vigilantes on their white-capping ventures and on occasion Klansmen led them and the klavern

turned out for corporal punishment of a captive as a stern lesson to others in the area. Klansmen continually denied the existence of whipping squads, and the authorities never prosecuted squads in courts, but individual Knights were sentenced to the state penitentiary for night riding. The Klan and violence were never far from each other and the stigma of the connection from the Oklahoma Realm remained with the hooded order.

The Klan's image suffered and its strength declined the year following the revelations about violence in the state. The old social wounds that gave rise to the order's violent outbursts, such as anti-German feeling left over from wartime, healed slowly. Just as the tensions of the postwar era that gave rise to the Klan gradually diminished or took different forms lessening violent attacks, the bitterness of the whipping party faded. Whipping victim Ben Wagner stood in the Tulsa County courtroom in August, 1923, still showing the deep scars on his back from the whipping strap he received a year before following his abduction from his rural home. His captors laid the knout across his back for his German ancestry and his alleged cruelty to his family. He was slight in build and sixty years of age. As he waited in the courtroom, four of his attackers confessed to the assault and each was sentenced to a two-year term in the penitentiary. They openly stated their regret for membership in the Klan and desired for-

giveness from the community. They said they had been victims of a cruel hoax in joining the Knights and for following their precepts. Wagner approached them and held out his hand, saying, "I'm sorry it happened this way," through a thick German accent and broken English. "And so are we," replied one of the convicted members of the Klan whipping party. "Some of these days we'll come back again--and we'll understand each other better." As the years passed Oklahomans in a similar fashion came to a better understanding of their divergent backgrounds and to a calmer appreciation for those differences. After the orgy of violence and retribution, accompanied by the sound of accusations and counter-charges about the responsibility for violent acts, Oklahomans after 1923 were tired of disorder and returned to revivals, whispering campaigns, and to the ballot box for outlets.[25]

CHAPTER V

FOOTNOTES

[1]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, July 1, 1923, p. 7; Oklahoma Leader, July 3, 1923, p. 1; Muskogee Times-Democrat, June 30, 1923, p. 1.

[2]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, July 1, 1923, p. 7.

[3]Markham, November 15, 1923, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, pp. 2186-88; Charles McCloud, ibid., p. 2207; Markham, ibid., p. 2201; Tulsa World, September 12, 1923, pp. 1, 8; Att. Gen. files, Civil Cases, State Archives, 4051; Tulsa Riot and Martial Law Cases, State Archives, 4029-60. This chapter draws heavily upon these sources.

[4]Markham, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2188. The Okmulgee Daily Democrat, September 21, 1923, p. 1, gives the total as 114. The Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 4, found a total of 121. Witcher, Reign of Terror, p. 24, says 126.

The Tulsa military court of inquiry heard testimony from over 400 witnesses on over 100 cases of violence, indicted 30 men for white-capping, and sent over 3,000

pages of testimony to the state's Attorney General. Only a very few pages survive for scholarly examination. Daily Oklahoman, September 19, 1923, p. 3.

[5]Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, p. 85, says that in six months Tulsa vigilantes whipped twelve people.

The Tulsa World, September 7, 1923, p. 1, threw out figures varying from 50 to 200. The Pittsburg County Guardian, September 13, 1923, p. 7, tallied up 200. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 298, totaled upwards of 1,000 in two states, one of which was Oklahoma. General Charles McPherren of the inquiry tribunal mentioned 300 whippings over a two-year period. Tulsa Police Investigation, September 7, 1923, State Archives, 4051, p. 147.

[6]Charles McCloud, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, V, p. 2211.

[7]Ibid., IV, p. 1923. At the same time that he denied Klan violence, he admitted that there were some Klansmen who broke the law and their oaths against outrages, and that the order was purging them (p. 1922).

The pro-Klan Anadarko American-Democrat, August 1, 1923, announced it found no violence after an investigation into Oklahoma City, Okmulgee, and Anadarko conditions.

[8]Assistant Att. Gen. Edwin Dabney denied that he had ever heard of 1,500 floggings in Oklahoma in 1924 and agreed with his correspondent that there was but one in

reality. Robert Algee to Att. Gen., July 29, 1924, and Dabney to Algee, August 7, 1924, State Archives, Att. Gen. Correspondence, George Short, 1922-23.

[9]William McBee, The Oklahoma Revolution (Oklahoma City: Modern Publishers, 1956), pp. 69-70.

[10]Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 214.

[11]Quotation in Stanley Frost, "Night Riding Reformers," Outlook, CXXXV (November 14, 1923), p. 439.

[12]Most of "the Tulsans whipped were parasites who were living off the public without work." Campbell Russell in Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 13.

[13]Over one hundred assault cases each in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, over a score in North Carolina, and dozens in California, Arizona, and Oregon, and as many as 1,000 in Texas and Oklahoma. Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 298.

[14]John Montgomery, "Oklahoma's Invisible Empire," p. 67, and Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, pp. viii, 235, 241, focus on the urban aspects.

[15]The thesis of Eugene Hollon is that "frontier lawlessness was primarily the result, rather than the cause, of our violent society" and not the cause itself, and that violent behavior on the frontiers was more myth than reality. The Oklahoma experience runs counter to the last part of his thesis. Violence was much more widespread than reported. Frontier Violence: A Second Look

(New York: Oxford Press, 1975).

[16]Hollon, ibid., p. 36, details the process.

[17]Works Progress Administration, A Labor History of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: WPA, 1939), p. 44; Gilbert Fite, "John Simpson: The Southwest's Militant Farm Leader," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXV (March, 1949), pp. 563-84; Fite, "Oklahoma's Reconstruction League," Journal of Southern History, XIII (November, 1947), pp. 535-55; Angie Debo, Prairie City (New York: Knopf, 1944); Garin Burbank, "Agrarian Radicals and Their Opponents," Journal of American History, LVIII (June, 1971), pp. 5-23; affidavit of Oklahoma Bar Association Grievance Committee report on Judge J. W. Bolen, State v. Bolen, Att. Gen. files, Civil Cases, AG-B130, State Archives, in which the judge denounced the loan companies in Okmulgee County.

[18]Hollon, Frontier Violence, p. 106; Gilbert Geis "Violence in American Society," Current History, LII (June, 1967), pp. 354-58, 366.

[19]Frank Tannenbaum, "The K.K.K.: Its Social Origins in the South," Century, CV (April, 1923), pp. 873-82.

[20]Speech, July 26, 1922, quoted in Marion Monteval, The Klan Inside Out, p. 69.

[21]Kenneth Harrell says the view of the Klan as lawless "was inaccurate for Louisiana and probably for most

of the nation." He feels historians dwell on the violent aspect too much. "The K.K.K. in Louisiana," pp. 267, 145-46, 151. Norman Weaver agrees that the image of terror is a false one for the Klan. "The Knights of the K.K.K. in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan," pp. 296-98.

[22]Alexander, "The Invisible Empire in the Southwest," p. 63. Alexander is unclear on the connection of the Klan and violence.

[23]Richard Maxwell Brown, "Historical Patterns of Violence in America" in National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, Violence in America, edited by H. D. Graham and T. R. Gurr (New York: Signet Books, 1969), p. 55.

[24]"Even the Klan Has Rights," Nation, CXV (December 13, 1922), p. 654; Alexander, ibid., p. 64.

[25]The episode is from the Tulsa World, August 26, 1923, p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICAL REALM

During the early 1920s under the leadership of Imperial Wizard Hiram Evans and Grand Dragon Clay Jewett, the Klan was the most powerful political force in the state. Local politicians quickly learned that they had to come to terms with the organization if they wanted to be maintained in office. Already well entrenched in local politics by 1922, the order became powerful statewide after the new Grand Dragon took his office in early 1923. The influence of the Klan spread and grew until the political role of the Knights in Oklahoma was second in the nation only to the Indiana Realm. As its political influence expanded throughout the state so did the potential for internal dissension over the value of a political role for the order. Political discord eventually left the Klan in Oklahoma a mere shadow of its former strength.

Political influence was the key to local Klan success in molding their communities into the social order models. Despite the resort to violence on unprecedented levels in Oklahoma, politics was the most frequently used

weapon in the Klan's attempt to reform their communities and protect the status quo. Political action with the ballot was more prosaic than direct action with the knout, but it was safer. Those who opposed the Klan into the mid-1920s found that they lost contest after contest. The Knights exploited the prejudices and fears of Oklahomans and gained wide control over the state's affairs. Even the state's chief executive learned the harsh lesson of Klan power.

The Ku Klux Klan was a protest movement of the 1920s which sought to provide a haven from the changes swirling around Oklahomans. Klansmen feared the potential of aliens in large cities on the Atlantic Coast who voted in blocs under the rule of corrupt political machines. Klansmen regarded Roman Catholic influence as pernicious and it had to be stopped. Crooked district attorneys in league with liquor interests undermined community morality. Dishonest policemen accepted bribes from criminals who grew wealthy preying upon Oklahomans. Vice flourished where municipal corruption thrived. The Knights pledged to negate the influence of these threats to order through the control of the ballot box.

The Klan intended to return power to the One Hundred Percent American voter who had witnessed the deterioration of his influence at the hands of immigrants, radicals, and grafters. There existed no more thoroughly Amer-

ican weapon for control of change than the ballot. The Klan believed it could make politicians respond to the demands of white, Protestant, law-abiding voters in each Klanton. Through their votes, they would elect men who would enforce the law. Because only the best citizens belonged to the order, Klansmen pointed out that automatically the Klan-sponsored slate of candidates would prove best for their community. The member's ethnocentrism made him suspect a candidate for public office who did not run with the endorsement of the klavern. Opponents of the Klan on a political ticket were suspected of the worst motives. The Klansman listened attentively to rumors that his political opponent was a Catholic under the spell of the Vatican.

Despite public denials to the contrary, the structure of the klavern encompassed a political function.[1] Kluxers and Kluxettes served on the Military Committees which kept close surveillance on local Catholics, parochial schools, and ward politics. Established by 1922, the Committee reached downward from Imperial headquarters through Domains, to the Realms, and into the klavern, where members carried its presence into political wards, election precincts, and into every city block.[2] The Lieutenant who supervised the precinct was called the Kat.[3] The leaders of the klavern utilized the Military Committee to investigate the church affiliation of local politicians running

for office, their moral behavior, their past performance on votes on Americanism issues, and their stand on parochial schools and new marriage laws. After the Committee report, some klaverns held a primary election in the lodge hall to determine which candidates or slate the order would support. Sometimes one member passed out a list or handbill carrying a Klan acronym telling the membership how to vote.

There was no more sure way for the Kluxers to secure the best candidates in elections than to enter members of the order in the contests for office. Once elected, the Klansman would bring about the reforms best designed to ensure the acceptable development of their regions. Klan sheriffs in Oklahoma City and Tulsa signified the strict enforcement of Prohibition laws and anti-vice statutes. The justice of the peace who was also a Klan member meant that local petty offenders would suffer swift arraignment. The Klan district court judge would deal with larger offenders so they would not be parasites upon the local town. Jury commissioners from the klavern selected fellow Klansmen who rendered sentences to felons that made their towns inhospitable for criminals. The Klux district attorney prosecuted vice and crime with the knowledge that his conviction rate would be higher than under the previous graft-ridden regime. Town and city councilmen would see that ordinances against prostitution,

dancing, joyriding, and use of tobacco were strictly enforced. The Klan election board secretary approved election results in critical contests.

Politics was the most important tool of the Klan against labor and agrarian radicalism in Oklahoma. The political success of the Socialists and the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League among farmers led to the redoubled efforts from Kleagles to recruit additional members to cement the domination of the Knights and conservatives over the center of local political power, the county seat. The ballot was also the main instrument in the Klan's struggle with union organizers among factory and oil field workers. Political success was more long lasting than anti-union violence.[4]

Anti-Catholic rumors against candidates circulated with new vengeance after the end of World War I making political contests uniquely bitter. Late in 1919 whispering campaigns attacked candidates for being part of a Papal conspiracy in many counties of the state. In the schools, teachers inquiring about the 1920 election received anti-Catholic outbursts which said President Woodrow Wilson and his son-in-law were secretly Catholics and the only safe choice was Warren Harding and the Republican Party.[5]

By 1922, the Klan built upon the prejudices within the WASP community and dominated contests for political

office. The Klan nearly controlled Tulsa's municipal election in 1922. Later, the anti-Klan slate was prosecuted for election frauds and graft. The Klan slate carried into office the mayor and many other municipal officials. Similar results marked elections in Okmulgee and other Oklahoma communities.[6] One candidate for governor assailed the Klan in Okmulgee, when a lone man rose from the audience, walked silently to the platform, placed a small KKK statue at the speaker's feet, and one hundred and fifty men rose and left the meeting.[7]

The most alarming example of the political power of the Knights within the state was the impeachment of Governor John Callaway Walton in 1923. It gained national headlines immediately after the controversy surrounding the election of the first Klan Senator, Earle Mayfield, from Texas. Americans were shocked that the Klan could end a political career in a state far removed from the headquarters of the Knights in Washington, D. C. The Governor was in office ten months before his impeachment on charges of malfeasance, graft, and general incompetence. His administration was marred with repeated scandals and arguments over spoils among his appointees. He was closely identified with the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League and its Socialist members, which alarmed conservatives who expressed fear that Oklahoma would become another "Red Spot" on the nation's map.[8] The primary campaign and the

election were uncommonly bitter even for Oklahoma's normally sordid campaigns. Many voters believed that the Socialist platform marked "a fight between Civilization and Christianity on the one hand and socialism and atheism on the other. . . ."[9]

In the primary battle, Walton defeated a conservative Judge, Thomas Owen, and the Klan-backed candidate, R. H. Wilson. Wilson was the State Superintendent for Public Instruction and could draw upon the state jobs under his supervision as well as other state employees for support. The Knights favored Wilson because he controlled textbook selection in Oklahoma and was friendly with the hooded order. A week before the primary election the Klan circulated petitions calling for a referendum measure to require all children to attend public schools up through the eighth grade--a measure clearly aimed at Catholics, who numbered 41,000 in the state. The so-called Americanization Society, headed by a McAlester banker named Frank Craig, proposed the initiative measure. Seeing the blatant assault on the parochial school of the Catholics, they voted against Wilson, who received the open Klan endorsement just two days before the primary. Walton's wife had at one time been a Catholic and that fact conveniently leaked to the press just before the primary. Walton won the primary decisively, taking the black vote, that of Little Dixie in the south-

east, and the Socialist vote across the state, but he lacked support in the northeast where the Klan was strong.[10] In the general election, Wilson threw his support to "Jack" Walton. The Klan officially refrained from taking a strong stand, but most members of the order in the state were Democrats who gave their tacit support to him despite his affiliation with the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League. The general election campaign was bitter enough without the Klan as an issue, and both candidates avoided it. Walton hammered away at the needs of the farmers and the poor workers and his own close association with organized labor. "Jazz Band Jack" with his usual flamboyance contrasted his poor background as a railroad worker in Mexico with that of his wealthy Republican opponent who paid no taxes.[11] Walton's election plurality of nearly 50,000 votes over John Field was the largest plurality and most decisive victory in the history of Oklahoma up to that time.[12]

Once in office, Walton eased his allegiance to the Socialists' platform and alienated many radicals who believed they had been sold out to the oil and business interests of the new state. Walton did not appoint a single Farmer-Labor Leaguer to high office in state government. The coalition which had nominated him and catapulted him into the governor's chair was ignored when patronage and the plums of political office were passed out to the de-

serving. He appointed many to local and minor posts, but the impression among the rank and file was that they were ignored. Furthermore, they sank ever deeper into debt in spite of the fact that their savior occupied the capital.[13]

From the first the new Governor was in trouble with legislative conservatives over finances. Walton conceived of government in old-line political terms of rewarding friends and punishing enemies. He requested four times the past appropriations for his office expenses.[14] The Chairman of the Revenue and Taxation Committee of the state House of Representatives, William McBee, daily witnessed the Governor's fiscal extravagance. One month after the inauguration he broke with Walton's floor leader in the House and joined the opposition. Alarming stories continued to appear in the daily press about blatant patronage which shocked even patronage-conscious Oklahomans. Two black barbers were placed on the payroll as faculty at the Taft school even though they never left their Oklahoma City barbershop.[15]

In an attempt to mend his political fences with legislators, the Governor put on a banquet in July, 1923, to honor the solons. To his surprise and chagrin eighteen Democratic senators handed him a resolution assailing him for his close ties to Farmer-Labor radicalism, his appointment of alleged radicals to office, hints of mishandling

of state funds, padding the state payroll, and for his loose pardon and parole policy.[16] That was the first of the movement legislators made toward impeachment of the chief executive. By mid-July newspapers and legislators murmured impeachment in columns and corridors. Campbell Russell, long-time political opponent of the Governor, former Corporation Commissioner and leading conservative, began circulating an initiative petition for an amendment to Article Eight of the state constitution that allowed the legislature to convene for the purpose of impeaching any official. Normally, the Governor had to call the legislature into session for irregular meetings not during the normal legislative session.

Russell headed the movement for the petition drive with the support of the Klan. He was a Klansman and he received the active support of the Oklahoma Constitutionalists, a body of conservatives formed in April, 1923, to thwart what they termed the spread of Communism under Walton. At a July state-wide meeting they decided that a law allowing the legislature to convene itself to investigate the Governor was a necessity. The Constitutionalists organized and financed the Russell petition drive. The head of the group, Fred Miller, repeatedly denied that the Klan controlled the membership and just as often in the same breath said that those who opposed them were Communist anti-Kluxers.[17]

Fiscal irresponsibility and radical connections were not the only reasons the Klan opposed the Governor. In response to the cries of residents of many communities that masked outrages were defying constituted order, the Governor began a series of declarations of martial law throughout the state beginning in June. Walton showed the impetuosity that was to end his tenure prematurely and that led him to take precipitate action that lost him support at every turn. Three Okmulgee County residents drove to the capitol to see the Governor in June. A minister, the Henryetta Police Chief, and an auto dealer brought the Governor tales of official brutality and abuse from Henryetta Sheriff's deputies. Walton listened for five minutes to their pleas for the use of state troops, then phoned Adjutant General Baird Markham, declared that he would settle the matter of harassment of citizens, and promptly ordered full martial law for the county.[18] Walton turned to the men and commented that their tales were "merely the climax" to over six months' of charges of lawlessness there, and he reached into a drawer and pulled out a sheaf of letters from county residents complaining of the actions and naming two Klansmen as part of the trouble-makers. The men agreed that the situation was dangerous, one of them saying that "one or two more such incidents would have precipitated a small insurrection and several people would have been killed, including depu-

ties. . . ."[19]

State troops camped in the Okmulgee Council House yard, played baseball in the streets with the citizens of the town, and were inducted into the local promotion of a festival called the King Koal Karnival in the mining town. It was hardly the scene of a military occupation, and the Governor lifted martial law in the county on June 29, leaving a ten-mile radius around Henryetta under guard while he awaited the reports on the alleged whipping of a Picher miner after he had been acquitted on a statutory rape charge. It ended July 12 after the Sheriff fired three deputies for alleged misconduct.

State newspapers almost universally condemned the Governor for imposing martial law in Okmulgee County. Many believed that he should have exhausted civil remedies in the county including use of the county attorney's office before proceeding with drastic military rule.[20] The chief executive, however, ignored criticism and reminded Oklahomans that he would use martial law anywhere in the state if needed. On July 8 a grand jury convened in Anadarko at the Governor's request to investigate alleged whippings, but nothing came of it. He threatened martial law in Kingfisher after reports of whippings reached him in early August. When students at the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater protested the appointment of the Governor's friend as president,

which included flying the flag at half staff on campus, Walton retorted that they ought to "look up the law on mob rule." He said he had heard threats of tarring and feathering his appointee. If that occurred, he said that he would go to Stillwater himself and "tell you when to go to bed and when to get up" under the most stringent military occupation.[21] Walton turned his attention toward the other parts of the state where mob rule lurked. He pledged "to stamp mob rule and mob violence out of Oklahoma if I have to put every county under military law and leave them there as long as I am governor."[22] It was believed that the Governor directed his remarks to residents of Tulsa, Caddo, Osage, and Pontotoc counties.[23]

In the following months he did make good his threat to restrict the freedom of Oklahomans to assault their neighbors. In mid-August a badly beaten man, Nate Hantaman, emerged from an automobile at the steps to the capitol and sought help from men standing nearby. The men carried him into the capitol building to the Blue Room where he waited a short time before seeing the executive councilor Aldrich Blake, who also called several other officials, including General Baird Markham of the state militia. They examined Hantaman's condition and listened to his report. The victim's lower body was a mass of torn, bloody flesh and his penis had been split

from the force of his mutilating flogging. He was in excruciating pain despite the medication he had received in Tulsa. Blake telephoned the Governor in Sulphur and told him of the assault.[24] Walton replied that he had seen "a dozen or so who had been mobbed,"[25] and he was going to do something to end mob violence. He declared that he wanted the Hantaman case solved quickly.

The Hantaman mutilation case was never officially solved despite pressure from the Governor on Tulsa authorities, but executive demands for action did result in local police action on the case. Hantaman's was the only case of a lashing in the memory of the Tulsa police officers that they were told to investigate in all their years on the force. His was the only flogging case the police ever looked into.[26] The officers were reluctant to investigate incidents of vigilantism in their city because many policemen were Klansmen themselves and they did not wish to expose their fellow officers. Besides, some of the deputies had participated in mob violence and already knew about the incidents, making investigations into their activities superfluous.

For the second time in as many years troops occupied Tulsa. The first was in the aftermath of the race riot. General Markham established headquarters on the mezzanine of the Hotel Tulsa August 15. He extended the area of martial rule to include the surrounding towns with-

PLATE 5--Martial Law at Work in Tulsa: Members of the Military Commission--the first established by a state since Reconstruction.

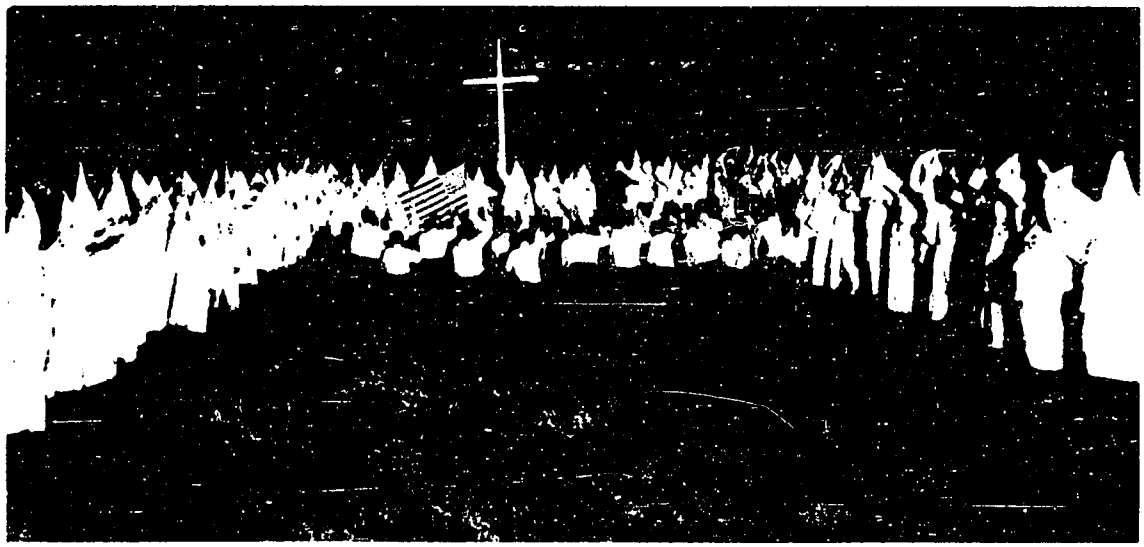
Members seated from left to right: Captain E. A. Wallis of Anadarko; Major L. A. Ledbetter of Oklahoma City; General Charles E. McPherren, President of the Tulsa Court, from Durant; Colonel William Hutchinson, Ardmore; Captain John A. McDonald, Durant; Captain Joseph A. Looney, Acting Judge Advocate, from Wewoka; Captain W. P. Pratt, Roff; General Baird Markham of Oklahoma City, Adjutant General; and George McKinney, Court Reporter, Tulsa.

PLATE 6--A Klan Naturalization Ceremony Conducted by the Twin Elk Klan Number 146 of Hobart. Candidates kneel before the flag, the cross, and the altar as they take the oath. Five thousand spectators looked on as Klansmen gave their straight-arm salute.

"Who can look upon a multitude of white-robed Klansmen without thinking of the equality and unselfishness of that throng of white robed saints in the Glory Land? . . . the title 'Klansman' will be the MOST HONORABLE AMONG MEN."

Quotation from W. C. Wright, "The Seven Symbols of the Klan," Imperial Night-Hawk, I (December 26, 1923), p. 6.





in the county so he could move more freely in apprehending suspects. The Governor pledged that the soldiers would remain in Tulsa "until the Hantaman flogging is cleared up."[27] National Guard trucks moved through the streets of Tulsa and neighboring towns, stopped before residences or businesses and troops inquired after a suspect. Soon they would emerge with the person in custody and put him onto the truck, and the small caravan would disappear down the road.

General Markham complained that he was not getting cooperation from witnesses and that as fast as he apprehended them Klan attorneys obtained their release from detention. The Klan lawyers even told potential witnesses before the military tribunal that they did not have to say one word and many did not cooperate with the authorities. Markham asked for stronger authority and powers and the Governor suspended the right of habeas corpus in the county, in clear violation of the state constitution.[28] Walton again pledged that martial law would remain over the county "until that hell hole in Tulsa county is cleaned up."[29]

The methods the military authorities used to gain confessions from the suspects they apprehended aroused the ire of local attorneys and civic leaders. The almost inpenetrable wall of silence each witness presented to the inquisitors was slowly eroded but the methods angered

Tulsans. Local attorneys protested against alleged violations of the state's constitutional guarantees against prolonged detention and incommunicado status of the detainees. An acting county judge admitted that the martial law authorities could not suspend habeas corpus, but to forestall possible bloodshed, the judge cooperated with the military occupation. The judge chose what he viewed as the lesser of the two evils, mob outrages or military rule. Klan-backed attorneys were thwarted although they did file suit on behalf of the Tulsa County Sheriff against General Markham, but it was dropped after the occupation ceased.

The spectacle of National Guardsmen carting off fifteen to twenty townsmen shocked residents. Guard trucks rumbled through the town of Skiatook on September 3 and swept up fifteen citizens, nine of whom were detained without the right of habeas corpus in the Tulsa Armory. The suspects under detention had little hope of returning to their homes if the Governor's promises were to be believed that the Guard would remain in the area until all of the men responsible for the violence were jailed. General Markham personally led the caravan of trucks through the town of Jenks to arrest eight residents who were held in Tulsa. Many of those arrested carried deputies' commissions, but the law could not assist them. The soldiers placed them in the Tulsa Armory until they

were questioned before the military court in the Hotel Tulsa. The suspects were surrounded with the appearance of a military occupation and were cut off from the outside world. The nights were sleepless for many of them as the accommodations were uncomfortable. Some of the detainees slept in the Hotel St. Louis with informers placed in their rooms. None of the suspects complained about physical violence, but many of them later commented on verbal abuse, epithets, and veiled threats from authorities. The prospect of an indefinite stay in the Armory surrounded with the appearance of a modern army headquarters and no contact with home unnerved many of the suspects. They found small comfort in the comforting Kludd who met them upon their release from confinement. The Chaplain of the klavern pointed out that the Apostle Paul was at one time a confessed flogger, and then reformed his life to contribute to the founding of the Christian faith. The second chapter of Revelations, the Klansman's favorite book in the Bible, contained the passages used in attempting to counteract the effects of the detention on the Klansmen and other Tulsans.[30]

In early September Walton declared openly that the white fraternity was responsible for the violence across the state and he declared war on it, a war that cost him his political life, yet bloodied the reputation of the Klan across the nation. He decreed that, "There

cannot be two governments in Oklahoma while I am governor."[31] Walton announced that he would end the imperium in imperio within the Sooner State. His reason for declaring martial law, he told Tulsa listeners, was clear: "When the sheriff, the county attorney, the district judge and the jury commission are all in the hands of an organization responsible for mob activities, what can be done? You have no law, and you have no courts worthy of the name."[32]

Various reasons exist for explaining why Walton turned against the powerful Klan organization in an open confrontation. The odds were against his success in disbanding the Klan in the state, and the final result was the ouster of the Governor. Walton was an obligated member of the Knights but never attended meetings in a lodge. It was claimed that he was angered that no klavern would admit him as a Klansman and that the Grand Dragon of the Oklahoma Realm had rejected Walton's initiation into the begowned brotherhood on the grounds of personal and financial impropriety.[33] The man who had obligated him in the fraternity was banished from the Knights--one of only two so banished officially.[34] Walton's wife had at one time been a Catholic and they retained Catholic friends who opposed the bigotry and animosity Klan propaganda generated. Walton genuinely opposed the use of the lash in the state and the denial of basic rights in a cow pas-

ture to victims. He wished to do something for the common people who appealed to him for assistance in the face of what seemed an ever-rising number of white-capping incidents. The information that reached the Governor from letters, telegrams, and phone messages placed the number of whippings so high that one whipping had occurred every day in Oklahoma since the Governor's inauguration--an alarming number even for a tumultuous frontier area.[35] The Governor's councilor, Aldrich Blake, and his advisor, Pat Nagle, one of the original founders of the Farmer-Labor League in Shawnee, were bitter opponents of the Klan and all its violence, especially against rural organizers and radicals, with whom both had worked in the past.[36]

Some critics of the Governor saw crass political ambition as the reason for Walton's championing the anti-Klan cause. Eastern newspapers applauded his attempts to come to grips with the sheeted order. His was called the greatest issue since John Altgeld of Illinois defied the Cleveland Administration following the Haymarket riot and released the convicted men from their death sentences. Oklahoma presented a situation unique in the nation's history since the days of Reconstruction after the Civil War.[37] For the first time since that period a military tribunal sat in judgment over a state. Walton accepted the accolades and believed that national publicity could not hurt his senatorial chances against the incumbent Robert Owen

the following year. The Governor was aware that any national exposure would tend to take the focus off his own increasing woes with the legislature, whose members turned more impeachment-minded every day. Anti-Klan feeling in many parts of the state approached fever pitch, and the letters to the chief executive reflected those sentiments. He may have decided that the climate of opinion had matured enough that a champion of the anti-Klan cause could succeed. For a variety of reasons, some personal, most of them political and emotional, Walton on September 6 mentioned the Klan by name as the cause of the Tulsa troubles and the violence across the state. The Grand Dragon of the Oklahoma Realm of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan responded that the Governor would "never be able to break the power of the Klan in Oklahoma."[38]

Authorities listened to other requests for martial law after the counties of Okmulgee and Tulsa suffered occupation. Interested residents flooded the Governor's office and the military authorities with letters and personal requests for protection from mobs. Residents in Wagoner, McCurtain, and Washington counties requested state investigations of mob outrages in their areas, and Governor Walton thought about martial law for Caddo, Bryan, and Kingfisher counties after mob outbursts there, as well as a whipping investigation in Comanche County. Collinsville businessmen asked General Markham to declare martial

law in their town following ill will between whites and foreigners in that town.[39] In September the Governor threatened Muskogee County--whose Klan was headed by a Cyclops Walton personally disliked--with martial law.[40]

While the martial law furor proceeded, the Governor had to face the impeachment movement that was rapidly gaining momentum. The organizers behind the Russell petition drive succeeded in getting sufficient signatures to place the question of amending the constitution so the legislature could convene to impeach the Governor on the ballot for October 2. The Governor tried to organize a counter-movement against the petition and he used state employees and funds in questionable ways to oppose the initiative petition. A district judge in Oklahoma City ordered a grand jury in his county to investigate the Governor's opposition to the petition. Achieving little success in his campaign to silence vigilante actions and to end what he termed mob rule, Walton declared martial law throughout the state on September 15, coincidentally just before the Oklahoma County grand jury convened to investigate his actions in office. He contemptuously referred to the jury as being totally "Klan." He openly ridiculed the coming October initiative petition election. Legislators who favored the investigation of the Governor's alleged malfeasance before the martial law but were lukewarm to his immediate impeachment, now scrambled to the capitol

to take their seats for an immediate impeachment proceeding amid loud protests that the chief executive was a despot.

Walton defended his imposition of martial law upon the entire state in terms designed to appeal to the common laborer and farmer. He told his audiences that it was legal for Attorney General Daugherty to use the injunction against striking shopmen, and it was legal for militia to drive members of his listening audience out of their homes into the snow during the Hartshorne mine strike. "But now, because I am using the militia, it is called illegal." He added with telling effect: "Why, it's getting so bad that if a man has a competitor in business he will send him a note to quit town or be whipped."[41]

Almost to a newspaper, the state's journalists condemned the Governor for his action in placing the entire state under military rule. Even the Oklahoma Leader, which had been the organ for Walton's pre-election pronouncements, condemned his moves as crass politics of the basest type. His actions "would shame even a Klan whipping squad," it concluded in a stinging rebuke.[42] Ministerial Associations requested national intervention, veterans' organizations sought the re-establishment of the tenets of the Founding Fathers, and private individuals contacted the White House asking for the imposition of federal troops to end a despotic regime.[43] National news-

papers criticized the usurpation of legislative and judicial authority in the state, and the leader of the Oklahoma Klan said that charges of Klan violence were "too absurd to be noticed."[44]

Amid mass meetings across the state calling for the impeachment of Walton, sixty-five legislators meeting on September 20 in the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City issued a proclamation calling the legislature into session at noon, September 26, and sent copies by registered mail to all of the legislators. Most of the legislators were Klansmen. The proclamation, modeled after the Declaration of Independence, accused the Governor of gross abuse of his powers, violation of the state constitution in suspending the writ of habeas corpus, and bringing the state to the brink of civil war. Pledging that any convening of the legislature was an "unlawful Klan assembly" the Governor said the state constitution forbade the legislature from gathering without the express request of the chief executive when not in regular session. His critics replied that the clause applied only to bodies intent on passing laws, so their gathering for the purpose of impeachment was lawful and they would meet. In a rage, the Governor exclaimed that "the troops will be ordered to shoot to kill if that is necessary to prevent the assembly."[45] The Governor's executive councilor warned that the use of troops to halt the session of the legislature

would "mean a thousand people killed."[46]

On September 26th the representatives walked into the rotunda of the capitol and milled about awaiting the appointed noon hour. Colonel W. S. Key, commander of the Oklahoma City contingent of the state's Guardsmen, walked into the capitol with fifty soldiers and ordered the assembled men to disperse, and they quietly did so.[47] Never before in American history had a Governor and the military power of the state prevented a legislature from meeting.[48]

The legislators turned their hopes to the Russell petition. The Governor moved to block it and succeeded in getting a county district court to strike it from the October 2 ballot. The Russell forced obtained a reversal of the restraining order and on the following day the judges dismissed the two cases. Walton canceled the election, originally called for a vote on a veterans' bonus. Oklahoma City Representative Allen Street, a Klansman, announced that "the governor has pulled his last bluff."[49] He and William McBee drove to the Lakeside Country Club to speak with the Attorney General George Short. He signed McBee's authorization to the secretary of the State Election Board to proceed with the October 2 election. Walton for a second time called off the election, and underscored his determination that "there may be bloodshed in Oklahoma" but "there will be no election."[50] Walton issued several

special deputies' commissions and the men were ordered to prevent the opening of the polling places and to walk about in the open with their weapons. Supporters of the election heeded the edict of the Attorney General and prepared to force the opening of the polling booths. Klan sheriffs swore in up to five hundred special deputies of their own to insure that the vote went against the Governor. Segments of the Sooner State verged on open warfare. Rumors flew that Chicago thugs were in the state capital to assassinate the leaders of the legislature if the election succeeded.[51]

Judges issued restraining orders the day before the election to prevent state deputies or others from tampering with the election in Oklahoma and Tulsa counties. In Oklahoma City, Sheriff Tom Cavnar and his deputies drove Walton's armed volunteers from the county courthouse where they attempted to seize the ballot boxes. Similar scenes took place across the state. Despite the tension, Oklahomans voted in their official polling places. They accepted the Russell petition 210,000 to 65,000. McBee pointed with satisfaction to the facts that Walton's home precinct in Oklahoma City rebuked him in the election 243 to 16, and the precinct where he lived before becoming Governor rejected him 177 to 17.[52] The petition passed overwhelmingly in every county in the state.

Walton desperately countered on the day troops

left Tulsa (October 6) with a call for the legislature to convene on October 11 for the purpose of investigating the mob outrages and to pass anti-Klan legislation. Walton called the legislators' bluff that they planned to consider such legislation. The special session began in October, 1923, with the outcome a foregone conclusion. The only real question remained what would be the outcome of anti-Klan legislation that had been pledged. In exasperation, the Governor called the assembled representatives "that aggregation of dragons." He contemptuously added: "The only thing that surprises me is that they have not convened their legislature at night in the whipping pastures, where, in full regalia of mask and robes, in the presence of dragons, cyclops, goblins, and wizards, impeached me in the sanctity of nature's temple that had so often resounded with the cries and agonies of tortured victims."[53]

The Klan dominated every stage of resistance to the Governor. Sixty-eight of the one hundred and twenty-five legislators convened in the capitol were affiliated with the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.[54] He faced formidable opposition from the hooded fraternity throughout the state. Klansmen were prominent at every major step of the course of events that led to the special session of the legislature in October. Much of the funding and many of the personnel for the drive for Initiative Petition 79 under the name of the Oklahoma Constitutionalists

came from the ranks of the Klan. The man who initiated the petition drive, Campbell Russell, was an active Klan member.[55] It was natural that an organization opposed to radicalism and irresponsibility like the Klan would gravitate into the forefront of the movement to remove radicalism from the executive mansion of the state. The state Klan already had the organization and the leadership to serve its political goals. Members easily addressed letters to Kligrapps because the secretaries of the Klan had the membership rolls and could pass the plea for assistance quickly in the hour of crisis to other Klansmen.

Another central figure in the impeachment drive was William McBee, who had pressed for impeachment as early as the previous July and who had pioneered in the legal research required in starting the unprecedented official ouster movement. McBee led the early organizational efforts of the legislature while that body organized for the impeachment hearings and investigations. As a Klansman he was in the forefront of the activity to rid the state of the order's chief antagonist. An organizer of the special session he controlled appointments of men who would cause the fewest difficulties in the impeachment process with embarrassing questions or delays.[56] Klan strength in the legislature enabled him to choose Knights to serve on committees in the session. McBee appointed

W. S. Vernon, a Klansman, as the chairman of the House committee charged with looking into anti-Klan legislation for the state and into Klan actions.[57] F. M. Boyer, a Tulsa County Klansman, became the chairman of the legislative probe into the Governor's efforts to prevent the special election.[58] Some of the officers and many of the members of the National Guard that the Governor called on to police the centers of mob violence in the state were members of the Klan. One Klansman claimed that ninety percent of the Guardsmen belonged to the brotherhood. Despite their membership in the order, Guardsmen followed their orders and prevented the grand jury and later legislature from meeting for short periods of time. Walton requested that the chairman of the State Election Board refuse to verify the results of the October 2 special election, but the official was a Klansman and he refused to accept the Governor's demand.[59] The Attorney General who rescinded the Governor's order not to hold the special election was a member of the Klan. The district judge who dismissed the Governor's case against the election process was also a Klansman.[60] The Oklahoma County Sheriff and his deputies who secured the ballot boxes in the October election also were members.[61]

The national headquarters of the Knights launched a concerted effort to rid the Sooner State of this menace to their image as a lawful order. In direct response to

the bad press the Klan suffered in the state investigation into alleged outrages, the Imperial Wizard launched a "law enforcement campaign" for Oklahoma using national Klan lecturers to tour the state and to speak on the beneficial effects of the order upon communities. The Grand Dragon and members of the Klan in the legislature worked on the floor of the chambers to convince their representatives of the necessity of impeachment and made open solicitations for membership in the Klan on the floor. The Grand Dragon worked not only to impeach the chief executive but to prevent anti-Klan legislation in the aftermath of impeachment. National headquarters spent a "good deal" of money in the state to assist the Grand Dragon's efforts.[62] The Imperial Wizard years later counted as one of the greatest accomplishments of the Klan "the unseating of Governor Walton for his role in encouraging corruption and lawlessness in Oklahoma."[63]

The legislative committee scrutinizing the executive in the state heard testimony for nine days, and returned a report of twenty-two counts against the Governor on October 22. House members gathered October 23 to vote on the articles. Two counts were voted against the Governor that day, and immediately filed with the Senate, which would sit as the court of impeachment. The filing of the articles with the Senate meant that the Governor was suspended from office.

For three days the lower house members debated the remaining twenty articles of impeachment. Tempers flared. Latimer County Representative J. W. Callahan attacked the Klan on the floor, charging that it ran the House and that Grand Dragon Jewett called all the shots on the floor. Jess Pullen of Sulphur and Frank Boyer of Tulsa, both Klansmen, assaulted Callahan, threw him to the floor and choked him, then with twenty others ejected him from the chamber.[64] The remaining twenty articles of impeachment charges, except for the count covering censorship of the Tulsa Tribune during martial law, passed with huge margins in the voting. The vote on the censorship count passed with the closest vote, 51 to 42.[65]

Just before his trial opened in the Senate, Walton announced he was resigned to becoming a martyr for Oklahomans. He felt that "if by sacrificing myself and humiliating and disgracing my family, I can be the means of saving the state from mob rule which has been operating in the dark, trying their victims by chaining them to trees and administering brutal punishment and other mutilations, then I am ready to be sacrificed."[66] He pleaded not guilty to all charges when his trial opened on November 6, 1923. Wesley Disney, Majority Leader of the House and not a member of the Klan, became the chief prosecutor from the House. On November 16 he crippled the defense when he asked and obtained a dismissal of the counts concern-

ing martial law, freedom of the press, and the denial of the assembling of the legislature. Walton had based his defense against impeachment on the grounds that martial law was absolutely necessary to restore order in Oklahoma, and he planned to call as many as one thousand witnesses to defend his contention. This shift of focus would turn attention onto the Klan and would tie up the impeachment court with time-consuming prosecution testimony. His defense evaporated. He walked out of the proceedings the next day.

For two more days the Senate heard testimony. Late on the nineteenth, the body voted on the remaining sixteen articles lodged against the Governor. The vote was unanimous on the charge of graft and the charge of abuse of the pardon and parole powers. The senators voted conviction on eleven of the sixteen charges, and acquittal on five. The Governor was impeached almost exactly ten months after his inaugural barbeque.

Four years after his impeachment, the state Supreme Court held invalid the Russell petition calling the legislature into session. Walton did not have to call a special election, nor a special session, nor be impeached. The court held that the petition was unconstitutional because it had not been included in Walton's first proclamation, the December election as originally called had not taken place, and the petition had not been

legally submitted to the voters.[67]

The hand of the Invisible Empire controlled the impeachment process and in the subsequent passage of a weak anti-Klan bill. Despite the preponderance of Klansmen in the House and in the movement for impeachment of the executive, the influence of the Klan did not cancel out the desire for popular government in the state. Many of the officials charged in the entire process from petition drive through the election and into the trial did their jobs well and thoroughly. Many voted their consciences in the matter of impeachment and of the anti-mask laws, sometimes opposing the wishes of the Invisible Empire. Many of the members of the legislature, like McBee, and of the judiciary, like Judge George Clarke, were lukewarm toward the Klan or were inactive members. Some of the leaders of the impeachment process, like Wesley Disney of Tulsa, were not Klansmen. They wanted to end the administration of the Governor for fiscal, conservative, and personal reasons that did not involve the hooded order. A genuine demand existed across the state to end Walton's political corruption and fiscal irresponsibility.[68]

The popular demand for improvement in the executive office spilled over into the desire for some form of anti-Klan legislation to protect the public from the possibility of masked outrages and to end the suspicion of the Klan's involvement in the vigilante actions in the state. The

day following the Senate's vote for conviction in the impeachment proceedings that ended Walton's governorship, the joint committee investigating the Klan reported House bill number eight to severely restrict the Klan and to prohibit masked outrages in the state. It was one of the first anti-Klan laws proposed in the post-World War I period. After committee maneuverings in both houses of the state legislature the bill emerged emasculated of all but the anti-mask provision, and that had been reduced to where the wearing of a mask was prohibited only in public in parades or gatherings and was prohibited in the performance of an illegal act such as a whipping. The solons were trapped in their pledge to do something about both the Governor and vigilantes in Oklahoma, so they had to carry through on the anti-mask bill despite the Grand Dragon's demand that they "deliver the goods" when voting time came.[69]

Even the leaders of the Oklahoma Realm, reflecting the view of Imperial headquarters, called for curbs on masked violence. The Klan as a public champion of the strict enforcement of law was caught in its own rhetoric. The leaders of the Knights could hardly oppose stops to violence in the public eye without marring its law enforcement image. Klan leaders called for legislation that would cut short the clamor for stiffer legislation that would unmask or emasculate the hooded order. The

revelations of masked violence in Oklahoma led to the campaign by speakers favoring law and order in the state. They supported an anti-flogging bill, but vehemently upheld the right of the hood as a sacred part of the Klan regalia, without which the Klan would cease to exist.[70] Oklahoma's Adjutant General Baird Markham felt that an anti-mask law would eliminate the threat of mob violence from the state. William McBee strongly pledged himself to the passage of an anti-mask law and legislation requiring the registration of Klansmen with the state. Klan legislators believed the mask allowed non-Klansmen to perpetrate violence and blame it on the Klan. They opposed the unmasking law. Socialists in the legislature favored stringent restrictions. Editors in state newspapers condemned the despotism of Walton at the same time that they condemned masked outrages. The furor over impeachment brought the realization to all Oklahomans of the need for law and order and a civic conscience. Good government was open, popular government. The Klan's secrecy mocked openness. People across the state attacked the order in derisive terms. Critics of the order called its members "bed sheet sheriffs," members of the "Koo Klutz," men in nighties, and referred to pillow case manhood and to cow pasture justice. The demand for some form of restriction upon masked gatherings could not be stemmed. The leadership of the Oklahoma Realm settled for a weakened anti-

mask law that passed in December.[71]

The Knights emerged from the impeachment struggle all-powerful. They had demonstrated that not even the Governor was safe from their grasp. The leaders of the state's Klan were at the peak of their power. Membership in klaverns and klantons across the state continued to rise through 1924 and reached its highest number in 1925.[72] Male and female Klan members dominated Sooner politics, but not without bitter opposition from anti-Klan forces.

For two years after the impeachment battle in 1923, local political contests revolved around the one question of whether a candidate was Klan or anti-Klan.[73] Candidates pledged to take their orders from constituents and not from men in Atlanta or a local cow pasture. Advertisements in newspapers proclaimed that a candidate had never covered his face with a hood or convened a meeting in the middle of the night for the purpose of attacking a neighbor.[74] The issue of Klan versus opponents produced two seemingly irreconcilable political camps.

The Klan anticipated fierce competition in 1924 contests. In the previous year the order had re-doubled its efforts to recruit new members. As the period of campaign activity approached, the Klan in many counties temporarily suspended the requirement for payment of initiation fees to induce farmers to join. Klan leaders believed it was imperative for their order to dominate the political

life of counties in order to secure "one Hundred Percenters" for offices.

The Klan question dominated national politics as well as the state's. The issue of the Klan destroyed Democratic Party unity. The party convention in New York City's Madison Square Garden, the first convention Americans listened to on their radios, was a scene of bitter debate over the order. Oklahoma Senator Robert Owen was among those supporting the organization before the assembled delegates.[75] All harmony vanished as delegates narrowly defeated a plank specifically condemning the Klan. The Oklahoma delegation voted for the anti-Klan plank, but were disappointed with a victory that the literary critic H. L. Mencken called one for the "hosts of the Invisible Empire . . . of the Hookworm Belt. . . ."[76] It included the blocking of the nomination of the wet, Roman Catholic Easterner Alfred E. Smith for the presidency on the Democratic ticket. The assembled delegates chose John W. Davis as their presidential nominee to oppose Republican Calvin Coolidge.

The 1924 campaign in the state became even more unusual when recently impeached Jack Walton won the Democratic United States Senate nomination after Robert Owen relinquished his seat. Walton retained popularity among rural Socialists and urban labor for his past political actions and his comeback from the finality of impeachment

was a direct result of his identification with the anti-Klan cause in the state. He was the only candidate to publicly condemn the Invisible Empire and he did it often with his usual flamboyance. His Democratic opponents in the primary refused to condemn the Klan and attempted either to remain neutral or solicited Klan support. Grand Dragon Jewett split Klan support in the primary between endorsements for C. J. Wrightsman and E. B. Howard which provided the margin of victory for Walton, knowing Oklahomans would never send an impeached official to represent them in the nation's capitol.[77] In the general election Walton suffered an overwhelming defeat at the hands of his Republican opponent, W. B. Pine. The Okmulgee millionaire oilman had the endorsement of the state's Klan leadership and they helped elect Oklahoma's second Republican United State's Senator.

Democrats dominated the other contests as they won six of eight congressional seats and majorities in both houses of the state legislature. Oklahoma voters went against the national tide and provided Democrat Davis with a 30,000 vote margin over Republican Coolidge. As in the Senate race, the Klan dominated others across the state. In earlier municipal elections, such as in Tulsa, Okmulgee, and El Reno, Klan-backed slates swept into office or returned incumbents to their seats.[78] Areas of Socialism and rural discontent demonstrated the greatest reluctance

to support Klan candidates in the general election, and those same areas showed the greatest willingness to follow Farmer-Labor Union advice to support anti-Klan candidates. Walton asked rural voters to vote solely on the question of their opposition to the Klan. Agrarian radical constituencies in regions of high tenancy supported Walton and rejected town Klan elites.[79]

The Knights celebrated their victories over the forces in the nation that they termed Irish Catholic, Eastern, and Tammany Hall-dominated, as well as thoroughly un-American.[80] The order continued to dominate political offices in the state into 1925, but the Grand Dragon's attempt to push the Oklahoma Realm into the Republican political camp ran counter to the desires of normally Democratic voters and the Realm underwent a drastic decline in power and membership. By 1926 the Klan was a dead issue in Oklahoma politics, except for isolated pockets, and once proud strongholds of Klanism, like Muskogee and Okmulgee, placed anti-Klan officials in office in April municipal elections. Good roads and highways to serve the expanding economy were more volatile issues than that of the Knights.[81] In 1928 the Klan's nemesis, a pro-liquor Roman Catholic, ran for President as a Democrat giving the Klan an excellent opportunity for propagation. Imperial Wizard Evans visited Oklahoma City in late 1927 to denounce Al Smith but he spoke to small crowds.[82]

Oklahomans were uninterested in the Emperor's message. Candidate Smith drew larger crowds in the state.

The Klan held pockets of power in Oklahoma. It continued to elect county Democratic committee members in Muskogee,[83] and the Governor conferred with Grand Dragon Zack Harris about Democratic state appointments and the party chairmanship after the Klan's choice was rejected.[84] Women of the Klan put on a membership drive in their communities two months before the national political conventions to secure WASP delegates. Klanswomen believed Oklahomans "should be on fire" over the Papal question, but they could gain no headway.[85] Oklahomans could not be interested in the order. Membership dwindled until a dedicated three or four women in their community served as the local Klanton.

In the election of 1928 the questions of Democratic candidate Smith's Eastern power base, advocacy of the repeal of Prohibition, and religion aroused not only the Knights, but Protestant ministers and temperance supporters. For only the second time since statehood, Oklahoma voters supported the Republican presidential hopeful Herbert Hoover, and administered a decisive defeat to Al Smith. Oklahoma Republicans made wide gains in public office. They swept into the State Supreme Court, into three United States House seats, and formed a majority in the state's lower house. The devastated Democrats

turned on Governor Henry S. Johnston and joined his long-time vocal opposition to remove him from office in early 1929 on a charge of general incompetency. For the second time the Klan shared in the impeachment process. Once again a chief executive tumbled as a result of Klan opposition, but the demise of the order was certain; its power waned steadily.

CHAPTER VI

FOOTNOTES

[1]Edward Clarke vehemently denied any political involvement by the Klan "with partisan issues." "Quaint Customs and Methods of the K.K.K.," Nation, LXXIV (August 5, 1922), p. 52.

[2]Weaver, "The Knights of the K.K.K. in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan," pp. 212-21.

[3]Tulsa Police Investigation, State Archives, 4051, pp. 63-64.

[4]Linda Rodriguez, "The K.K.K. Versus Unionism in the 1920s," p. 19.

[5]D. S. MacDonald to George Short, December 3, 1919, Att. Gen. Correspondence, Short file, State Archives; Angie Debo, Prairie City, p. 164.

[6]Tulsa World, October 12, 1923, p. 8; Tulsa Election Fraud Cases, Att. Gen. Correspondence, Short file, State Archives; "Is this the K.K.K. Ticket?," Lawton News, July 30, 1922, p. 1; Okmulgee Daily Democrat, September 6, 1922, p. 1.

[7]Ibid., October 17, 1922, p. 1.

[8]Pittsburg County Guardian, November 2, 1922, p. 8.

[9]Ibid., p. 10.

[10]Tulsa Tribune, July 21, 1922, p. 1; Harlow's Weekly, XXI (August 4, 1922), pp. 2-4; William McBee, The Oklahoma Revolution, p. 29.

[11]Harlow's Weekly, XXI (November 4, 1922), pp. 4-5.

[12]Indian Citizen Democrat, November 9, 1922, p. 8; "Jack, the Klan Fighter," Literary Digest, LXXIX (October 20, 1923), p. 38.

[13]Oscar Ameringer, If You Don't Weaken (New York: Henry Holt, 1940), p. 382.

[14]McBee, Oklahoma Revolution, p. 38.

[15]Ernest Bynum, Personal Recollections of Ex-Governor Walton (Oklahoma City: N. p., 1924), p. 62.

[16]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, July 8, 1923, p. 1.

[17]Russell in Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 13; December 25, 1923, pp. 1-2.

[18]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, June 27, 1923, p. 1; Aldrich Blake, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, I, p. 8.

[19]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, June 27, 1923, p. 8.

[20]Harlow's Weekly, XXII (June 28, 1923), pp. 7-9.

[21]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, May 24, 1923, p. 1.

[22]Ibid., June 27, 1923, p. 1.

[23]Okmulgee Daily Times, June 28, 1923, p. 2.

[24]Bynum, Personal Recollections, p. 97; Tulsa World, August 12, 1923, p. 4; interview with Leon Hirsh, Tahlequah, April 25, 1974.

[25]Blake, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, I, p. 8; Tulsa Tribune, August 16, 1923, p. 1.

[26]N. J. Moore testimony, Tulsa Police Investigation, September 7, Att. Gen. files, State Archives, 4051; Ned Gritts, ibid.; Tulsa World, October 18, 1923, p. 1.

[27]Ibid., August 19, 1923, p. 1.

[28]Article 2, Section 10. Proclamation Declaring Absolute Martial Law in Tulsa County and Suspending Writ of Habeas Corpus Therein, September 14, 1923, Number 1154, State Archives.

[29]Tulsa World, September 26, 1923, p. 1.

[30]Skiatook from ibid., September 4, 1923, p. 1; Jenks from ibid., August 19, 1923, p. 1; descriptions of detention in Jewett, ibid., September 8, 1923, p. 8; Victor Barnett, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, II, p. 883; Wilbur Wilcox, ibid., III, p. 1134.

[31]Telegram, Walton to President of Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, Tulsa World, September 11, 1923, p. 1.

[32]Ibid., September 5, 1923, p. 3.

[33]A. E. Davenport, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, IV, pp. 1562-78; V, pp. 2077-89;

Evans, Tulsa World, October 31, 1923, p. 13.

[34]Jewett, Daily Oklahoman, December 6, 1923, p. 4.

[35]Blake paraphrased in Alister Coleman, "When the Troops Took Tulsa," Nation, CXVII (September 5, 1923), p. 240.

[36]Bynum, Personal Recollections, pp. 97-98.

[37]"Oklahoma's Uncivil Civil War," Literary Digest, LXXVIII (September 29, 1923), pp. 10-11.

[38]Jewett, Daily Oklahoman, September 8, 1923, p. 1; "Rejected as Klan Applicant, Walton is Waging Fight for Political Purposes," Imperial Night-Hawk, I (September 12, 1923), p. 5.

[39]Tulsa World, August 25, August 31, October 1, 1923, p. 1.

[40]Muskogee Times-Democrat, September 13, 1923, p. 1.

[41]Tulsa World, September 5, 1923, p. 3.

[42]McBee, Oklahoma Revolution, p. 82.

[43]Department of Justice File 198589, box 2941-A, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

[44]Daily Oklahoman, September 8, 1923, p. 1; clippings in McBee, "The Impeachment of J. C. Walton," two reels of microfilm, State Archives.

[45]Tulsa Tribune, September 25, 1923, p. 1.

[46]Blake, Testimony taken before the Committee on

Impeachment, I, p. 10.

[47]W. S. Key, ibid., I, p. 191.

[48]Santa Fe New Mexican in McBee, Oklahoma Revolution, p. 107.

[49]Clipping, Short Scrapbook, Att. Gen. files, State Archives.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Walton v. Mitchell, D-30, Att. Gen. Miscellaneous, State Archives, p. 27; McBee, Oklahoma Revolution, pp. 112-13.

[52]Tulsa World, October 4, 1923, p. 12.

[53]Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 14.

[54]Sapulpa Herald, October 12, 1923, p. 2, in McBee Scrapbook, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

[55]"Russell Tells Some Inside Klan History," Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1923, p. 13.

[56]Tulsa World, September 23, 1923, p. 9. McBee stated that he had taken the oath and been initiated but never attended meetings.

[57]Ibid., October 28, 1923, p. 3; Journal of the House, First Extraordinary Session of the Ninth Legislature of the State of Oklahoma, October 11, 1923 to January 14, 1924, pp. 53, 93, 161, 202, 231.

[58]Tulsa World, October 15, 1923, p. 1.

[59]Walton v. McAlester, Att. Gen. Cases, 4029-60, State Archives.

[60]He had been suspended for non-payment of his dues.

[61]Judges Clarke, William Zwick, O. L. Price, Sheriff Tom Cavnar, and County Attorney J. K. Wright, all declared that there was no Klan domination of their offices. Daily Oklahoman, September 17, 1923, p. 13.

[62]Jewett to All Exalted Cyclops, Kligrapps and All Klansmen, Realm of Oklahoma, October 8, 1923, Tulsa World, October 14, 1923, p. 2, section 2; Wesley Disney, ibid., October 28, 1923, p. 8; Evans, ibid., October 31, p. 13. Jewett said that Washington Klan headquarters spent about $15,000 in Oklahoma. Daily Oklahoman, December 3, 1923, pp. 1-2.

[63]Evans, "Ballots Behind the K.K.K.," World's Work, LV (January, 1928), p. 247.

[64]Tulsa World, October 25, 1923, pp. 1, 14.

[65]McBee, Oklahoma Revolution, pp. 159-60.

[66]Sheldon Neuringer, "Governor Walton's War on the K.K.K.," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XLV (Spring, 1967), p. 173.

[67]Leon Hirsh interview; Simpson v. Hill, 128 Oklahoma 90; 236 Pacific 384.

[68]An example is from a once strongly pro-Walton newspaper; "Walton Should Resign," Tulsa World, October 4, 1923, p. 4.

[69]Jewett to All Exalted Cyclops, ibid., October

14, p. 2.

[70]Jewett, Daily Oklahoman, December 3, 1923, p. 2. For the course of Senate President Tom Anglin's bill that eventually became law see Journal of the House, pp. 295, 352-55, and the general discussion in Jack Swerfeger, Jr., "Anti-Mask and Anti-Klan Laws," Journal of Public Law, I (Spring, 1952), pp. 182-97.

[71]Neuringer, "Governor Walton's War on the K.K.K.," p. 176.

[72]Alexander, The K.K.K. in the Southwest, p. 104, said the order peaked in 1924. The year 1925 is based on records in the Cherokee Women's K.K.K. Organization, Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, box 6.

[73]Marshall County Enterprise, October 17, 1924, p. 1.

[74]Anadarko American-Democrat, July 30, 1924, pp. 6-7.

[75]Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 208.

[76]"The Nomination of F.D.R." in Alistair Cooke, comp., Vintage Mencken (New York: Vintage, 1955), p. 212.

[77]Wash Hudson, Tulsa World, September 19, 1924, p. 1.

[78]Anadarko American-Democrat, April 2, 1924, p. 1; Debo, Prairie City, p. 171; Imperial Night-Hawk, II (April 30, 1924), p. 5.

[79]Garin Burbank, "Agrarian Radicals and Their Op-

ponents," Journal of American History, LVIII (June, 1971), pp. 21-22.

[80]"Why John W. Davis Failed--An Editorial," Oklahoma City Fiery Cross, November 12, 1924, p. 1, Campbell Russell Papers, University of Oklahoma Library.

[81]Daily Oklahoman, September 1, 1926, p. 1; Redmond S. Cole to Mother, April 22, 1926, Cole Papers, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1926, University of Oklahoma Library.

[82]Daily Oklahoman, September 28, 1927, p. 5. "Governor Smith Knelt to the Papal Legate," The Kourier Magazine, II (August, 1926), pp. 21-23; "Can a Romanist Be President?," ibid., IV (March, 1928), pp. 23-26; and Evans, "Ballots Behind the K.K.K.," World's Work, LV (January, 1928), pp. 243-52, treat "Al-cohol" Smith.

[83]Oklahoma City Times, February 3, 1928, p. 1.

[84]Ibid., January 2, 1928, p. 1.

[85]Realm Commander Anna Wilson to All Klanswomen, March 27, 1928, box 6, and Oklahoma Kligraph Ruth Brown to Excellent Commander and Kligraph, May 8, 1928, box 7, Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library.

CHAPTER VII

THE FINAL REALM

The Knights and the Women's Klan organizations in the state faced serious problems even at the height of their power and membership. The problems grew worse as membership declined. External forces bore heavily on the orders, especially the men's group because of allegations of violence from the klavern in the years 1922 and 1923. Publicity about the allegations and the reaction of individual Oklahomans created rival organizations that directly opposed the Klan. Governor Jack Walton claimed that in his attempt to end his impeachment and to halt the hooded order's power in the Sooner State, he solicited funds and support from 22,000 Americans and received 35,000 responses in the forms of letters, telegrams, and telephone messages to his appeal for volunteers to fight both the Klan and the legislature. He received about $10,000 as a result of the efforts of his executive councilor who headed the anti-Klan agitation within the governor's mansion.[1]

The reservoir of Oklahomans disenchanted with the

begowned order grew daily as the revelations of masked outrages continued to appear in the press. Those residents who opposed the Knights and feared its power could join several organizations that sprouted in the reaction to vigilante force beginning as early as 1922. Following the death of Joe Carroll near Wilson in a Klan raid late in 1921 three Healdton men formed the Knights of the Visible Empire to oppose the Klan in Carter County. Others in that county could join the Brotherhood of Men. A judge in Cordell formed the Sons and Daughters of Liberty to stand against the Klan in his area. Muskogee briefly had a chapter of the national League of Liberty, while other Oklahomans in opposition to the Klan joined the local branch of the national Law and Order League, the local Citizens' Club, the American Patriots, the United Workers, the farmer-labor unions, the Loyal Americans, the Sons of Valley Forge, the Silent Watchmen, the Flaming Circle, the Royal Blues, or the Anti-Ku Klux Klan All-American Association (the Triple A's). Foreign miners and anti-Klan miners formed the True Blue Americans, called the True Blues for short, in the region around Henryetta. The Anti-Ku Klux Klan League formed in 1923 became the True Americans in late October of that year, then the Visible Government League under Aldrich Blake, Pat Nagle, and several other Socialists, in November. Finally, in December, following the revelations military tribunals

formed under martial law around the state, the anti-Klan organizations merged in an Oklahoma City convention into the Anti-Ku Klux Klan Association, a name used before for one early anti-Klan group in the state. The larger group pledged to fight in the legislature for a strong anti-Klan bill and to oppose the activities of the hooded fraternity throughout the state. The delegates claimed to represent over 25,000 Oklahomans and twenty different anti-Klan organizations from various parts of the state.[2]

Usually the conflict between Klan and anti-Klan in Oklahoma was confined to the exchange of epithets. Anti-Klan speakers denounced the threat of "white terror" at the same time that Klan speakers warned their listeners that anti-Klan forces were part of a Communist "Red Tide" sweeping over the world.[3] Anti-Klan speakers appeared with such intensity that mayors found it necessary to ban them from giving anti-Klan speeches.[4] Labor newspapers and speakers pointed out the obvious contradictions in the Klan: "It's a fraternal order for the promotion of strife; an empire for the promotion of democracy; a criminal conspiracy for the upholding of the law; a peace crusade by violence; and a new sort of Christianity that would flog Christ for being a Jew and a foreigner."[5]

Growing anti-Klan strength made Klan membership increasingly difficult. A small town businessman and merchant suffered at the hands of Klan and anti-Klan boy-

cotts as each side retaliated for presumed wrongs. The local politician who had joined the Klan in the northern part of his county said the industrial and commercial center of power found his re-election jeopardized when he traveled to the southern, agricultural area of his county where Socialism had been strong before the First World War and anti-Klan sentiment was rife. The public revelations of alleged Klan violence made membership a liability as voter tastes changed in subsequent elections. As public outrage at Klan misconduct spread and intensified, Klansmen themselves became the objects of personal violence and threats of violence. Boys in Ramona tore down a fiery cross of the Klan and threatened further violence if the Klan continued to appear in public. The following year members of the United Mine Workers Union surrounded a Klan meeting in Henryetta. Klansmen quietly slipped away in the darkness.[6] Members of labor unions who had received threats from the Klan turned the tables and sent threats of their own to suspected Klan members in their communities. Anti-Klan organizations remained active in several parts of the state into 1926. Increasingly, the hooded order was not held in the aura of awe it formerly commanded and its members received more and more taunts and jeers in public gatherings to their great discomfort.

Governmental officials applied external pressure

on the Knights. The Oklahoma anti-mask law passed in late 1923 made it an offense to attack anyone under the cover of a disguise. Governor Walton's ban on public meetings and parades halted those appearances for a short time in that same year until he was removed through impeachment. Sheriffs, policemen, deputies, and judges were under pressure to prove that they were not dominated from the Grand Dragon's headquarters in Oklahoma City. The local officials had to be responsive to local constituents' demands that the justice they dispensed was fair and impartial. Elected officials faced growing opposition from voters who demanded to know how they stood on the question of the Klan. Klan influence diminished and the politician was left on his own to explain his past record. A spokesman at the 1926 Democratic State Central Committee meeting said only ten of the seventy-seven counties in Oklahoma reported organized Klan activity.[7]

The Oklahoma Realm perished from internal disputes rather than from outside pressures. The most important problem the order faced in Oklahoma was its steady internal deterioration after 1923. Factionalism and charges of corruption of the order's goals led to a crumbling structure. Factional strife upset the organization's inner harmony beginning in 1922. In that year founder William Joseph Simmons attempted to stay the effort to oust him as Imperial Wizard at the November Imperial Klonvocation.

Klansmen in the Southwest who supported Simmons' claim to leadership threatened to secede from the national organization. Grand Goblin George Kimbro renounced his affiliation with the Knights and formed a short-lived rival order which he called the National Associated Klans of America.[8] He denounced the crass materialism of the new Atlanta regime of Hiram Evans and called for a less autocratic organizational structure. Simmons established his Kamelia order for women separate and apart from the Atlanta Klan organization.

These constituted serious threats to Imperial leadership. Oklahoma Klansmen threatened to secede, and withheld $100,000 in funds that Imperial headquarters wanted.[9] Imperial Klokard William J. Mahoney of Atlanta arrived in Oklahoma during March, 1923, to attempt to pacify the Oklahoma membership. He headed off the insurgency among the rank and file members with the pledge that the Atlanta office was interested in their well-being and with references to the necessity for unity in the face of the imminent dangers posed to patriots from aliens and the disloyal.

The Oklahoma Realm served as the leader in challenging the legitimacy of the Evans regime. Oklahoma Kluxers took their order seriously and opposed usurpers in the Atlanta headquarters. Great Titan Minor Merriwether of Tulsa supported the Simmons faction in the power struggle

and he accused Imperial Wizard Evans of a power grab and of despotism. He demanded that Evans fire Imperial Klaliff Fred Savage, whom he charged was secretly a Catholic and a former member of the Knights of Columbus in New York City. Merriwether also demanded that all other Imperial officials be fired, that the proposed costly memorial to Evans in his hometown of Dallas be halted, a stop to solicitations for the Confederate Memorial atop Stone Mountain, and an immediate end to Evans' attempt to convert the brotherhood into a political machine. Gross extravagance and graft were also part of the accusations.[10] The prestige of Merriwether, a Titan, and his co-complainant, Dr. William E. Thompson, a former member of the Imperial Kloncilium, lent credence to their charges. Suit followed countersuit until on June 19 the Imperial Kloncilium heard the charges. The highest body in the legislative hierarchy of the order sat as a tribunal to hear the charges against their leader. That group exonerated Evans completely, partly because he had approved the members' appointments and largely because defendants Merriwether and Thompson did not appear, as a sign of their contempt for the proceedings.[11]

In an out-of-court settlement, Evans and Simmons reached agreement in late April, 1923, which left Simmons wealthy and Evans in effective control of the national Klan. Many disillusioned Klansmen left the order, includ-

ing George Kimbro, William Simmons, and many Oklahomans. Evans personally suspended Merriwether as a result of the latter's charges against Imperial headquarters.[12] Former Imperial Wizard Pro Tempore Edward Clarke wrote President Calvin Coolidge later that year and denounced the Klan as "a cheap political machine" that also indulged in lawlessness and asked for its suppression.[13]

The controversy over the political involvement of the Knights led to its greatest loss in numerical strength. Revolt from within the organization ended its influence. Internal rebellion finished its effectiveness as a viable body in state affairs. Charges of blatant greed and graft among the leadership had already harmed the Knights. The attempt of the Oklahoma Grand Dragon to force the Klan into the fold of the Republican Party when most members of the fraternity were Democrats led to wholesale revolt. Loyal Democrats would not abandon their political allegiance at the command of their Realm leader. Loyalty to political party was stronger than loyalty to the mystic and exalted realm of the Knights. For a short time the Klan supported the Republicans in Oklahoma, Texas, Georgia, the North, and the Northwest in 1924.[14] That ran directly counter to the desires of many Oklahoma Klansmen who reluctantly abandoned the Democratic Party in 1924 over the Walton for Senate issue only to realize subsequently that they had been duped. The Grand Dragon had split the Klan endorse-

ment to assist Walton's primary victory in order to secure a Republican victory in the general election. The Dragon's claim that his group was entirely neutral in the primary proved hollow in the endorsement during the general election. Despite the vociferous denunciations of the Democratic presidential candidate John Davis in 1924 in the columns of The Fiery Cross, many Oklahoma Klansmen strongly supported his bid.[15] They resented the smear campaign that the state Klan leaders ran against Davis.

Many Klansmen in the state resigned in protest to the politicking the leaders of the Oklahoma Realm engaged in during the 1924 campaign. In resigning in November, Carleton Weaver, the Exalted Cyclops of Wilburton Klan Number Eighty-Seven, lambasted Grand Dragon Jewett for trying to enroll Oklahoma Klansmen in the Republican Party against the memberships' wishes and for prostituting the fraternity's purposes, as well as for turning the order into a "political machine." Moreover, Weaver would not forgive Jewett in his Fiery Cross editorial for calling Davis a "traitor" during the campaign. His heated attacks on the Oklahoma Democratic Party, the party Weaver pointed out that gave birth to the doctrine of white supremacy, were intolerable to the Klansman.[16]

Washington E. Hudson earlier rejected Jewett's leadership in partisan political matters, but Hudson's criticisms went farther than merely politics although the

political reasons were the most important. The prominent Tulsa attorney and state Senator formed what he called the Klan Kleanup Kommittee and sent Jewett eight demands for the improvement of Oklahoma Klannishness. The demands centered around the dual problems of political manipulation and dictatorial leadership. Hudson insisted that Jewett halt all political activity and cease spending Klan money on politics. He wanted the order to return to benevolence and service and end terror and arbitrary leadership. The Senator wanted home rule for klaverns, freedom of speech, open election of officials through majority vote for positions like dragon and wizard rather than appointments, and an end to arbitrary suspensions of members without trial by a Klan jury, as in the case of the banishment of Minor Merriwether.[17] Hudson was further angered with the wholesale admissions of new Klansmen anticipating the 1924 election campaign, which let undesirables into the order and made it unwieldy. Older members, who increasingly did not recognize the new faces in the lodge and felt frustrated and powerless, dropped out of the Knights.[18]

Wholesale initiations began in the special legislative session for the impeachment of Walton and continued into the next year's political contests.[19] Older members like Hudson left the organization in disgust. They saw much hypocrisy in the political manipulations of the membership. Conceding that the Klan had done much good, es-

pecially in Tulsa and Ardmore, the Klansmen who left the klavern for good denounced it as a gathering place for dupes who were financially exploited through constant assessments for charitable structures never erected, memorials never built, and for worthy causes never consummated.[20] The glaring attempt on the part of the Klan leadership to pressure Klansmen to change their political affiliation from the party of their grandfathers was too much to endure. Members allowed their dues to run out and did not renew them. Others paid dues reluctantly but never returned to the lodge for a meeting. Still others resigned in disgust and complained that they "were taken in as many others were, not fully realizing all it meant."[21]

Expectations did not live up to reality for Klan leaders who believed they would survive the internal crisis over political involvement. Numerical strength dwindled until it only matched that of the first six months' membership when the order began. Organizers expected 100,000 loyal Oklahoma Klansmen to attend the state Klan meeting in Sulphur in mid-1924. A disappointing 2,500 showed up,[22] which embarrassed leaders and demonstrated the waning enthusiasm for the sheeted order. Worse was in store. By the year 1925, the Tulsa Benevolent Association was no longer in official existence. The exodus of influential klavern members like Wash Hudson and Minor Merriwether devastated Tulsa Klan Number Two; others joined the de-

parture. Groups sprang up in Oklahoma as rivals to the Knights and vied for the potential profit of recruits. One of them formed near Shidler in late 1924, and Atlanta Klan headquarters sued the founders for launching a spurious organization.[23] Zack Harris moved from Blackwell to Oklahoma City to begin his duties as the new Grand Dragon in 1927, but he presided over only a fraction of the former strength in numbers. He occupied a small and unassuming office in the Shops Building downtown.

The Women's Klan fared no better than its male counterpart. The women's order began chronologically later than the men's, but its numerical strength peaked almost the same time as the Knights', in 1925. Cherokee Women's Klan Number Forty-Three had sixty-nine members in September, 1925, at its highest point, but rapidly declined thereafter for the same reasons as the men's order. Law suits over disposition of monies, the connection between the order's highly paid Imperial Klonsel James Comer and his wife, the Imperial Commander Robbie Gill Comer, and challenges over control of the organization left the membership factionalized, alienated, unfulfilled, or indifferent.[24] Membership losses staggered and bewildered the officers.[25] In a short time the Women's Klantons dwindled to a skeleton membership. Cherokee Klan Number Forty-Three had only three active members in mid-1928. To worsen the crisis, the Women's Klan officially

unmasked that year, exposing the members to public gaze.[26] The Knights also unmasked officially in 1928, conferring the K-TRIO or Third Degree upon all the remaining members.[27]

The Knights made infrequent stirrings in the state in the late 1920s, but for all observers the organization was dead. The Invisible Empire was really invisible. The Grand Dragon claimed 7,200 members[28] but few ever saw any evidence of them. On occasion an Oklahoman received a letter threatening dire consequences from the Klan; one recipient's home was burned two months after he had received a letter that such would happen.[29] Rumors of night riding and terrorism persisted in the state into 1928 with attendant threats to minorities, but little evidence surfaced of white-capping activities.

Politics, violence, and factionalism combined to destroy the Oklahoma Klans. Political involvement precipitated rebellion within the ranks which tore the order apart. Other factors contributed to the dwindling numbers of Klansmen in the state. Many of the most pressing fears of the leadership waned. The 1921 and 1924 immigration restriction acts dulled the issue of alien emigration to the United States. The question of Roman Catholics continued to upset some Oklahomans--Oklahomans voted for Republicans in 1928 and 1960 and against Catholic Democrats--but still others in the state were not alarmed at their neighbors who preferred to attend Mass. Sober second

thoughts revealed to devout Protestants that their Scriptures were still intact and not under the danger once assumed. The excessive claims of Klokards, who in lectures on courthouse lawns told of the worst conditions materializing unless Klansmen moved quickly, never in actuality materialized. The scare-tactics eventually had little effect. Listeners became inured to the predictions of doom. Members wearied of the constant pressure of assessments for new crises and projects, the results of which the rank and file membership only rarely saw. The relative isolationism of the decade of the 1920s in the nation's foreign policy cooled much of the Klan's superpatriotism. There were many other patriotic and benevolent organizations that were far less controversial to which a Klansman or woman could belong. The Klan member found that his or her Klectokon did not in fact buy more patriotism in the Klan than in other orders. In many areas of the state membership reached the saturation point. In preparation for the 1924 political contest the rolls for initiates were thrown open. It often appeared that the only places Kleagles did not solicit for new members were the jails and the asylums. Local regions of potential members were exploited until there were no more available. Finally, the materialism that marked the 1920s overtook many of the orders' members. Good roads replaced Klan affiliation in the fascination of many members who wanted

to share in the prosperity of an expanding economy.

The violence legacy of 1922 and 1923 haunted the Klan for the remainder of its existence. The revelations about mob violence and mutilations across the state left a shadow of doubt in the minds of people who looked closely at the widening gap between the order's professed ideals and the reality of its acts. Despite the success of the Knights over the executive of the state in 1923, the spectre of doubt about the order's involvement in violence weakened claims of law and order the Klan leadership made. The order never recovered the image Oklahoma activities gave it in the two years of 1922 and 1923. Oklahoma gave the postwar Knights its image of terrorism as well as the first convictions in the nation during the 1920s for night riding under the white hood. Violence in Oklahoma was much more widespread than previously imagined and its existence in such unprecedented amounts in the two-year period goes far toward disproving the idea that the frontier or newly settled state was not as violent as myth has painted it. The lawlessness in the name of law and order in 1922 and 1923 was but an outgrowth of former strains of violence under the leadership of wartime councils of defense, many members of which shifted their allegiance to the Klan as soon as the Kleagles made their recruitment approach to their communities.

From time to time after the decade of the 1920s,

the Klan has appeared for short periods of time in Oklahoma but without the widespread appeal and awesome political power it exercised in the earlier era. As the Great Depression took hold of the nation and Okies began their migration to the West Coast, the Klan was confined to its birthplace state and a few neighboring states in the Deep South. It had only about 100,000 members, less than the numerical strength of the Oklahoma Realm at its highest point. Pat Henry, once a candidate for the Oklahoma County Democratic Party chairmanship in 1928, looked after the Klan's affairs during the lowest point of its influence when an organized Klan structure did not exist in the state between 1928 and 1933. J. W. Reed, a former Grand Dragon of Nebraska and Colorado Klans, returned to Oklahoma after an eight years' absence. He became Grand Dragon of the Oklahoma Realm in February, 1933, and quickly set about revitalizing the Realm. His efforts led to a peak revival of one hundred and ten klaverns in the state,[30] but membership was disappointingly low. Many lodges could not find enough members to fill their roster of officers. Oklahoma City boasted of two klaverns, but they, too, suffered from indifference and low membership. Reed built upon holdovers from the earlier era of Klan power in the state. Remnants lingered in Oklahoma that served as building blocks for the group's renaissance. In 1931, as one example, a Klan jury in Carter County acquitted deputies

for allegedly murdering a Mexican-American student,[31] so klaverns struggled to survive in isolation until a new drive took place.

Grand Dragon Reed recruited new members with speeches against the New Deal and its programs in the state.[32] He attacked the National Recovery Administration for its radicalism which he said was leading America toward Communism, sovietism, and presidential dictatorship. He made allusions to Jewish causes for the 1929 Crash of the securities market that inaugurated the depression, and he warned of the danger of coming Socialism and totalitarianism from the White House. He also spoke against lawlessness and union organizers. The Dragon announced that the Klan's purpose was to secretly investigate Communism and radicalism among oil field workers and teachers. In 1937 Reed proclaimed his order's opposition to the alleged Communism of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the state. He suspected all of organized labor of disloyalty and union with alien importations.[33]

The state's leader also answered requests from the residents of the state for assistance. Easter pageant officials in the state requested the use of Klan robes for the angels in their sunrise ceremony. Reed rejected their request.[34] The 1930s closed with an item in their local newspaper that told Klansmen that their one-time nemesis, the Roman Catholic Church, had purchased the old Simmons'

mansion, Klan Krest. The church used it for the residence of the Archbishop of Atlanta.[35] The event passed virtually unnoticed in state klaverns.

Federal authorities renewed their interest in the Knights as American involvement in the 1939 European and Asian wars began to appear to be likely. Some national Klan leaders flirted closely with the German-American Bund which was intimately connected with the American Nazi Party. Some Klan members even claimed that the Nazis had copied their anti-Semitism and salute and had plagiarized them for the Nazis' own.[36] Federal officials feared that connections between the two organizations would jeopardize American security in the event of warfare between America and Germany. At nearly the same time, ugly rumors about rural Georgia Klan whippings proved true in 1940 in grand jury probes. Governmental interest in the order increased at the same time that conservative Southern congressmen grew increasingly agitated over the possibility of Communism in the nation's federal bureaucracy. Oklahoma Grand Dragon Reed joined the new Imperial Wizard, William Colescott, the national secretary who stepped into the leadership on Evans' retirement in 1939, in appearances in 1941 before the House Committee on Un-American Activities which investigated Communism in the United States.[37] Reed spoke on the growing menace of organized labor and the imminent threat the nation faced from the "Red borers."

The advent of American intervention in the fighting of World War II drained much of the membership from the Klan as the armed forces drafted Oklahomans to contest the Axis Powers. Attention focused on the war effort and not on Klan-related topics of sovietism and subversion. For a time, the once feared and attacked Russians were allies of the United States. That dampened criticism of their threat to America. The federal government had not lost interest in the Knights. In 1944, the Internal Revenue Service filed a lien of $685,000[38] against the Klan for profits allegedly made during the 1920s that were never reported as income. In 1947 the Attorney General placed the Klan on the subversive and terrorist organizations' list, where it remains today. The close of the 1940s capped the departure of the Klan from Oklahoma with the announcement of the purchase of Beno Hall, the Tulsa Klan headquarters, by the First Pentecostal Church for its Evangelistic Temple.[39]

In the years following the demise of the hooded order under federal tax assessment, murmurings of the Klan stir Oklahomans' memories. An occasional fiery cross[40] or note with a threat claiming Klan retribution for misconduct[41] appears in the state reviving the memory of the power the order maintained over the lives and affairs of Oklahomans including even the Governor of the Sooner State.

The latest interest in the order followed the

furor over meeting places within the state for a new organizational drive in late 1971. Oklahoma Grand Dragon Lloyd Dalton French of Tulsa utilized the legal efforts of a George Wallace coordinator to attempt to gain a McAlester meeting place without success.[42] He obtained other accommodations early the next year. About one hundred Oklahomans attended a Klan organizational meeting in Picher in northern Ottawa County and an equal number gathered in a Tulsa motel to listen to French introduce Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton who represented his own United Klans of America,[43] one of the fifteen off-shoots under the sponsorship of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan that appeared after the 1954 desegregation decision of the United States Supreme Court. In April, 1972, a United Klans' meeting in Tulsa hosted an organizational rally for the National Christian Party. A salesman for trade school education for veterans organized the rally.[44]

The Fiery Cross advocated "White Power" to Oklahomans as a response to the 1960s' Black Power movement among black militants. It vehemently opposed Jews, blacks, the Kennedys, Lyndon Johnson's civil rights acts, Martin Luther King's legacy, the United Nations, and fluoridation of drinking water. It just as strongly supported Governor George Wallace, the instant killing by police of anyone damaging property, the restoration of prayer to public schools, and an African foreign policy for the United

States that consisted solely of deporting the nation's blacks to Africa. Articles mentioned the National Socialist White People's Party and mirrored the sentiment of the following poem from The Nationalist Magazine:

> Give me your tired,
> Your syphlitic masses,
> Yearning for a free ride.
> The wretched refuse of
> Your teeming shore.
> The sick, the lame, the lazy,
> The frizzy-haired Hotentot,
> The scum, the bum, the whore.
> Anything that can crawl, swim,
> Walk or make it by U. N. flight.
> Anything, that is, except
> An intelligent, healthy Whiteman.[45]

Today, the Klan attracts white males who are high school graduates or dropouts whose jobs range from lower middle class, such as truck drivers or owners of service stations, to upper working class, such as electricians, night club bouncers, or auto mechanics. Former servicemen, they retain a strong attachment to the cadence and discipline of military service. Many, in fact, serve in law enforcement professions. They are strongly religious, usually Fundamentalists. Caught between rapidly rising blacks and a rigid white power structure, the modern Klansman seeks by his membership to attain a feeling of superiority over non-members. His feeling of frustration is partially satisfied in the scapegoats the order points out to him. Racism is the mainstay of the Klan, but the order has changed from a movement as it was in the 1920s

and after to a mentality today.[46] In an attempt to expand its contacts the Klan for the first time in its history ran a presidential candidate in the 1976 presidential election campaign. However, he was not on Oklahoma's ballot, so Oklahomans did not have an opportunity to express their support for the Klan slate.

Oklahomans share some of the fears and prejudices expressed in the appeals of the Klan for new recruits. Yet, few join the order. It is prevented from expanding because of popular indifference toward it or an attitude on the part of Oklahomans that views the organization as a quaint anachronism, an oddity that makes dinner table conversation more lively. Part of the lack of success of Klan drives lies in a more sophisticated attitude among residents toward the problems they face. Rigid segregation is no longer a reality in the state. Blatant white supremacy is no longer a rallying cry, or at least other outlets exist for its expression. The right-wing organizations in the state, like the Liberty League, the John Birch Society, and the American Party siphon off some of the animosity. Anti-Semitism also is leaked and capped in less violent groups than the Klan. Conservative elements within the two major political parties provide outlets for anti-Communist outbursts. Organizations for patriotic and benevolent causes provide outlets for patriotic fervor, and they are not on the Attorney General's list of actively

subversive groups like the Klan is. Reserve groups of military personnel are outlets for those who desire to continue their military service without donning the costume of the Klan.

The single most important reason most Americans shun the Klan is its record of violence against civil rights workers and leaders since the end of World War II. The list of Americans slain at the hands of Klansmen in the South is a long one. During 1965, thirteen Klansmen were linked with the deaths of five people. Klansmen murdered three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi, then others killed Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, the Rev. James Reeb, Medgar Evers, and plotted to assassinate President John Kennedy. A man on the fringe of the Klan, and a member of the closely linked National Socialist White People's Party, named James Earl Ray, was convicted of the killing of Martin Luther King, Jr.[47]

One of the major causes for the Klan's violent image in the Twentieth Century was that organization's experience in Oklahoma in the early years of the 1920s. The Imperial Wizard proclaimed that "the life and death of the Klan should stand on the 1922 record of criminality in" Oklahoma or any other state where the Knights had a strong organization.[48] Subsequent examination of that record revealed rampant night riding through the Sooner

State which tarnished the image of the Knights as a law and order body. The situation became so serious that the national leadership felt compelled to intervene in the state--the only time Imperial headquarters specifically interfered in a state.[49]

Kleagles stepped into the ferment of a new state in 1920 and quickly capitalized on the conditions they found. Postwar readjustments in manners and morals, a crime wave, oil boom conditions, and urban and rural conflicts combined to provide a fertile field for the Klan recruiter. The Knights pledged to regenerate morality and preserve Protestant religion in the local community. The methods Klansmen employed, in violence and in politics, brought Oklahomans to the edge of civil war on more than one occasion. As a part of the Klan's positive impact upon the state, the order slowed the rise in the rate of crime, forced many local bootleggers temporarily into other businesses, replaced several corrupt municipal officials with their own candidates, and blocked most of the Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League platform in the Ninth Legislature. Most of the Knights' efforts within Oklahoma had a negative impact. Klan assistance impeached two governors. Residents of counties divided between Klan and anti-Klan factions, church congregations split along similar lines, the state's Democratic Party factionalized bitterly in 1924, and the confrontation between the two

camps in the state led to bloodshed and deaths. The Klan failed to win its political objectives. Parochial schools were never banned, anti-evolution statutes did not survive, radicalism did not vanish from state politics, immigration did not completely cease, and local immorality, vice, and crime continued. Financially, the cost of the Klan member was high. Charitable projects such as Klanhaven never reached completion, despite the regular assessments imposed on members to finance its construction. Disputes over disposition of monies undermined the unity of the organization. The overall effects of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan upon the state were harmful. The internecine strife engendered in the period of its greatest influence added to the turmoil of a new state and provided more problems for residents to overcome. The Klan left a bitter legacy.

CHAPTER VII

FOOTNOTES

[1]Blake, Testimony taken before the Committee on Impeachment, I, pp. 15-18; George Simpson, ibid., III, pp. 1525-28; Parker Moore, ibid., II, p. 992.

[2]Daily Oklahoman, December 1, 1923, p. 1; December 9, 1923, pp. 1-2; December 23, 1923, pp. 1, 13; Oklahoma City Times, March 21, 1922, p. 2; Pittsburg County Guardian, December 6, 1923, p. 1.

[3]Fred Miller, ibid., December 27, 1923, p. 1; Blake, Daily Oklahoman, December 24, 1923, p. 1.

[4]Anadarko American Democrat, September 26, 1923, p. 1, on the mayor of Hobart and W. C. Witcher.

[5]The Oklahoma Leader quoted in Aldrich Blake, The Ku Klux Kraze (Oklahoma City: The author, 1924), p. 21.

[6]Daily Oklahoman, December 27, 1923, p. 14; Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 54.

[7]Ibid., p. 55.

[8]Circular, September 9, 1922, in Short/Dabney Letters file, Att. Gen. Correspondence, George Short,

State Archives.

[9]Tulsa World, October 31, 1923, p. 3; also covers Mahoney later on.

[10]Merriwether's Open Letter to Evans, April 23, 1923, Att. Gen. Correspondence, George Short files, State Archives, pp. 3-4; Imperial Night-Hawk, I (June 27, 1923), pp. 2-3, 8.

[11]Evans, The Whole Truth about the Effort to Destroy the Klan (Atlanta: The Knights, 1923), 28 pp., Library of Congress.

[12]Okmulgee Daily Democrat, April 29, 1923, p. 1.

[13]"Is the Klan Kleaning House," Independent, CXII (January 5, 1924), p. 13.

[14]Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 281.

[15]Editorial, Anadarko American-Democrat, October 22, 1924, p. 6.

[16]Carleton Weaver to Newton Clay Jewett, n. d., Carleton Weaver Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, p. 3.

[17]Tulsa World, September 25, 1924, p. 2; Harlow's Weekly, XXIII (November 29, 1924), pp. 9-11.

[18]Interview in Montgomery, "Oklahoma's Invisible Empire," p. 119.

[19]W. E. Disney, Tulsa World, October 28, 1923, p. 8.

[20]Eufaula Indian Journal, September 18, 1924, p.

2.

[21]W. I. Cunningham, Daily Oklahoman, September 22, 1923, p. 5.

[22]Sulphur Democrat, June 19, 1924, p. 1.

[23]Daily Oklahoman, July 14, 1925, p. 5.

[24]The Truth about the Charges Made Against the Imperial Commander (Little Rock: Women's K.K.K., 1926), 16 pp., Women's K.K.K. Papers, University of Oklahoma Library, box 1.

[25]Acting Realm Kligrapp Mrs. A. S. Tidwell to Excellent Commander Mrs. Hattie Lovell, June 22, 1928, ibid., box 6.

[26]Imperial Commander Robbie Gill Comer to All Excellent Commanders and Kligrapps, May 28, 1928, ibid., box 1.

[27]Daily Oklahoman, January 26, 1928, p. 1.

[28]Ibid., May 21, 1927, p. 1.

[29]James Sprouse to Att. Gen., February 26, 1927, Department of Justice file 198589, box 2841-A, National Archives.

[30]Oklahoma City Times, October 12, 1933, p. 19.

[31]Abraham Hoffman, "The Ardmore Tragedy," Chronicles of Oklahoma, LI (Summer, 1973), p. 189.

[32]Daily Oklahoman, June 23, 1934, p. 2.

[33]Ibid., March 31, 1965, p. 12; Oklahoma City Times, September 19, 1937, p. 1.

[34]Daily Oklahoman, March 12, 1936, p. 1.

[35]Jackson, The K.K.K. in the City, p. 44.

[36]Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 322.

[37]Tulsa World, February 14, 1941, p. 5.

[38]Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, pp. 323-24.

[39]Tulsa Tribune, April 14, 1949, p. 18.

[40]Tulsa World, November 14, 1948, p. 1.

[41]Tulsa Tribune, February 21, 1952, p. 1, section 2; Oklahoma Daily (University of Oklahoma), March 29, 1972, p. 1.

[42]Oklahoma City Times, August 28, 1971, p. 1; "Once Strong Klan Aims for Comeback in State," Tulsa World, August 26, 1971, p. 17.

[43]Ibid., January 31, 1972, p. 11; January 17, 1972, p. 4.

[44]Tulsa Tribune, April 12, 1972, p. 4.

[45]The Nationalist Magazine, II (April, 1972), p. 13.

[46]"Composition of Present-Day Klan Membership" in Richard Shaefer, "The K.K.K.: Continuity and Change," Phylon, XXXII (Summer, 1971), pp. 153-55; James Vander Zanden, "The Klan Revival," American Journal of Sociology, LXV (March, 1960), pp. 456-62.

[47]"The K.K.K.: Trapped Between White and Black" in William Turner, Power on the Right (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1971), pp. 53-57.

[48]New Orleans Times-Picayune, December 20, 1922, quoted in Harrell, "The K.K.K. in Louisiana," p. 240.

[49]Evans' deposition, October 24, 1923, in Rittenhouse case, Tulsa World, October 31, 1923, p. 13.

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