

The Ku Klux Klan, Freemasonry, and the American Fraternal Press

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N 13 MARCH 1921 JESSE M. WHITED, A HIGH-RANKING CALIFORNIA Mason,¹ received a letter addressed from San Francisco's Hotel Savoy and signed by John Dicks Howe, a member of Paul Revere Lodge No. 462 in that same city and a Past Master of a lodge in Nebraska. Howe addressed Whited as 'sir and brother' and without any other introductions he relayed news that a representative from the resurrected 'original Ku Klux Klan' would be travelling to San Francisco to shore up its anaemic membership numbers. He then offered Whited a meeting with the representative with the assurance that should he wish to investigate the organization. Further, should Whited express an interest, Howe would personally furnish literature obtained directly from the group's headquarters. He stated with confidence that with those who had joined

¹ Jesse M. Whited served California and Freemasonry nation-wide in a variety of roles, including Chairman of the Grand Lodge Committee on Correspondence, associate editor for the Masonic magazine, *The Builder*, and as a high-ranking official in the Masonic youth group, Order of Demolay.

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the Ku Klux Klan (also known as the 'Klan', 'KKK', and 'Invisible Empire'), 'none were eligible to membership but one hundred per cent Americans.'²

Whited politely replied that he was preoccupied with other business and would not have the opportunity to meet the representative, but had previously investigated the Klan's pros and cons. His response was followed by another letter from Howe, who pushed further with a Klan pamphlet and questionnaire. In what most certainly was an appeal to Whited's location and Masonic reputation Howe bragged that his Klan literature had not especially been sent to Masons, but only to those who were believed to possess enough fortitude to 'measure up and stand the acid test.' Attempting to impress Whited with the Klan's rapid national growth, he also included a message from the Grand Goblin,³ who announced an upcoming 'naturalization' ceremony in Atlanta that would initiate eighteen hundred candidates, followed by a parade of over fifteen thousand.⁴

Alarmed at this news and other similar reports by US Masonic jurisdictions, California's Grand Master, Samuel Edgerton Burke, was urged by his Grand Secretary, John Whicher, to draft a letter to the state's Masons warning about the Klan's membership and marketing campaigns. Indeed, the Klan had targeted Whited based upon his Masonic membership with the hopes of enticing him to join a 'new' fraternity, described by its founder, William J. Simmons, as a 'High-Class Order for Men of Intelligence and Character.'⁵ This new organization revelled in popular romantic memory of a post-Civil War predecessor,⁶ while modernizing its white supremacy programme and 100% Americanism to appeal to enthusiastic members of fraternal orders across the United States (and even making some headway into parts of Canada). The marketing strategy's narrative was relatively simple, as it portrayed the Klan as a beleaguered army of reformers nobly battling corrupt foreign, anti-American elements. It also purposely aligned itself with popular fraternal societies and emphasized a mythological patriotism drawing from the same inspirational wellspring as the American Republic. From this vantage point, the Klan used the negative responses from Masonic Grand Masters – especially those of California's – as a rallying cry for their campaign. They characterized their opponents as traitors to the US, which incited a potential membership base dubbed 'militant Masons' by the popular fraternal periodical, *The Fellowship Forum*.

² Letter from John Dicks Howe to Jesse Whited, 13 March 1921. Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry (Herein after credited as 'HWC').

³ The office of 'Grand Goblin' is an administrative position on a local provincial or district level. See Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., *The Kloran. K-UNO: Karacter, Honor, Duty*, 5th ed. (Imperial Palace, Atlanta, 1916).

⁴ Letter from John Dicks Howe to Jesse Whited, 9 April 1921. HWC. The Klan of the twentieth century made use of their predecessor's penchant for titles originating in ancient Greek mythology. See also page 7 of this essay.

⁵ D. J. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press: 1987), 30.

⁶ The Reconstruction (1865–1877) was a postbellum initiative by the US government to address serious social and economic issues as the eleven secessionist states were readmitted to the Union. Reconstruction policies championed constitutional amendments that conferred rights upon freed slaves. The resistance to Northern occupation would lead to the creation of the original Ku Klux Klan and other militias.

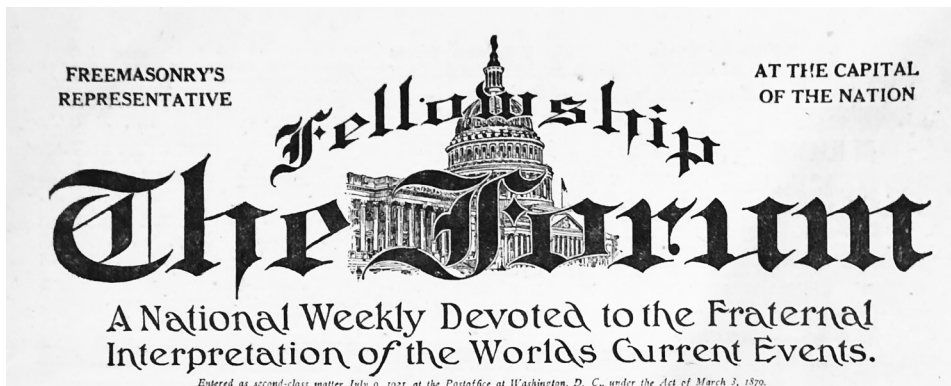


Fig. 1. *The Fellowship Forum* Masthead
Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

How did the early twentieth-century Klan attempt to promote 100% Americanism in Masonic lodges across the country, and what was the response? Given that the promotion and response were exhibited with fraternal periodicals and correspondence, it will examine newspapers and letters published by Klansmen, Freemasons, and the Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM).⁷ As an integral sample of opinion and local perspectives, these publications can provide additional context to earlier studies of fraternalism, nativism, and the Ku Klux Klan.

Fraternal periodicals typically reported on an organization's events or other general matters of interest. The vast majority of these newspapers and magazines were specific to one fraternity. At the same time some were associated with societies related to, or having something in common with, Freemasonry and Odd Fellowship. During the early twentieth century, when fraternalism was a well-established American pastime, *The Fellowship Forum* and other weekly papers reported on a variety of fraternal activity across the nation. Because many of these organizations enjoyed crossover memberships, reading about Klan activities and ideology alongside the activities of other fraternities contributed to an impression that there were similarities between them, if not an outright relationship.

By referencing newsworthy events such as immigration or post-World War I politics, editorials promoted a militant social awareness, employing fraternal archetypes such as knighthood and apocalyptic language to promote a war against the scourge of immorality and anti-American behaviour. Similar to religious publications, the fraternal press tended to report world events through their unique perspective. The result was that the Klan and fellow nativist fraternities carefully constructed propaganda designed to enhance a sense of fear and to provoke action (or reaction), as well as to generate money, selling member-

⁷ *Searchlight* (Atlanta), 1922; *The Fellowship Forum* (Washington, DC), 1921–1925. HWC.

ship for a romantic identity based upon patriotism and chivalry. The readership, pleased to have a source of news that conformed to their perspectives, happily responded with letters of praise and solidarity.⁸

These publications revealed that the Klan was an association that attracted membership by combining traditional fraternal structures with a well-developed and modern programme of social reform, mass marketing, and snappy hyperbolic prose. One can observe how they passionately promoted their dual capacity as the inheritor and influencer of fraternal and American moral values. Moreover, the Klan's self-assumed role as both a complementary and superior organization seems to blur the borders of what separated them from Freemasonry. This unique position confused their detractors and encouraged potential allies.

This study provides a brief overview of how the Ku Klux Klan of the early twentieth century marketed itself in fraternal newspapers as the penultimate American fraternal society, particularly Freemasonry, and its promotion of a militant form of fraternalism, dubbed 'One Hundred Percent Americanism' (and also by the abbreviation, '100% Americanism'). This cause heralded white supremacy and was intended to cleanse America of immoral influences from American and foreign-born Catholics, and unscrupulous 'backsliders' such as alcohol bootleggers and gamblers. It will also address the reaction by Masons, particularly in California, as they sought to distance themselves from a campaign characterized by many as being more vigilante than patriotic. As a counterpoint, many Masons refuted the Klan's claims on American history and emphasized their legitimate lineage of tolerance and respect for law and order.

Following its 1915 resurrection, the organization's growth remained relatively small and isolated within the southern states.⁹ By the early 1920s it had employed a marketing team, developed a focused campaign articulating a doctrine of One Hundred Percent Americanism, devotion to Protestant values, and moral purity. In 1921 the Klan's membership was estimated at half a million.¹⁰ Operating as a fraternity guaranteed the Ku Klux Klan some degree of success, attracting hopeful members of other orders looking for a new fraternal experience, new levels of secrecy, and a more profound commitment to moral values. By investigating the second Klan's ties to fraternal orders and how each perceived each other, mainly by comparing and contrasting their goals and motives, there is an opportunity for scholars to understand one of the motivations behind their existence and their popularity during the early twentieth century.

⁸ Thomas Pegram noted that newspapers and magazines aided the Klan's popularity, and contributed to its downfall. See T. R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Lanham: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

⁹ K. T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1992), 7–8.

¹⁰ Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 11.

The Importance of Fraternity for Understanding the Second Ku Klux Klan

In order to understand the early twentieth century Klan and the diverse elements that contributed to its popularity, a familiarity with the character and structure of American fraternalism is advantageous.¹¹ With an increased understanding of fraternalism's cultural impact, one may determine how the Klan developed the ability to capitalize on the popularity of fraternities, how it drew a sizeable population of membership to its roles, all the while sharing with the others similar concerns toward social responsibility. It was, however, its marketed militant approach to patriotism and citizenship that distinguished the Klan from the others.

Although presently diminished in reputation, fraternal orders once provided an integral role in society. The period between the American Civil War and World War II saw the creation of hundreds of fraternal and benefit associations, with contemporaries inaugurating the era with the titles: 'The Golden age of Fraternalism' and 'The Great Fraternal Movement'.¹² Fraternal historian W. S. Harwood reported that as of December 1896 the fraternal population was estimated at 6,400,000.¹³ These organizations created a social intimacy that, by their precepts and secrecy, guarded (at least temporarily) their members against social change, immersing them in a world of tradition, ritual drama, historical romanticism, and an emphasis on the precept of universal brotherhood. Several orders, especially those oriented toward chivalry, broadened the scope to require some type of defence against the opposing forces of injustice, avarice, and greed.¹⁴ William J. Simmons's 1915 creation, the Knights of the Invisible Empire, Incorporated, would also fashion themselves in this mould.

Many fraternal societies were created for the enjoyment of social classes, with some devoted to workers' rights (Knights of Labor); for ethnic protection and preservation (Sons of Italy); or to emphasize temperance (Order of Good Templars). Each was intended to promote fellowship, morality, and gentlemanly conduct – often in a non-sectarian environment, and with overlapping memberships. From college campuses to the workplace popular fraternities spread across the nation, and established themselves in nearly every city and town. A defining feature many borrowed from Freemasonry was a symbolic jour-

¹¹ The difficulty with non-Masonic historians obtaining access to reliable sources or incorrectly interpreting data has long been a subject of concern. John Moffat Mecklin's work, while useful for understanding early scholarship on the KKK, tends to belittle American fraternal life as a quaint small-town simplicity and is a prescient example of how these organizations have been minimized or disregarded as unimportant. Masons and other fraternalists have also fallen prey to the same pitfalls irrespective of their 'inside' access to records, rituals, and local customs. See J. M. Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1924).

¹² H. W. McBride, 'The Golden Age of Fraternalism: 1870-1910', *Heredom* 13 (2005), 2.

¹³ W. S. Harwood, 'Secret Societies in America', (1897) *Secret Societies in America: Foundational Studies of Fraternalism*, ed. W. D. Moore and M. A. Tabbert (New Orleans: Cornerstone Book Publishers, 2011), 1.

¹⁴ Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 108–109.

ney, often representing a quest for wisdom, a transition from the darkness of ignorance to the light of enlightenment or knowledge. These factors attracted enthusiastic candidates, excited to experience camaraderie and an elevated purpose that did not exist in their private lives, providing an escape from the rigours of daily life, or to offering guidance for young men as they cultivated gentlemanly behaviours.¹⁵

The real world of the gentleman enhanced the dramatic ceremonials featuring knights and squires, heroic labourers, and biblical characters. Not only did these imagined identities provide social succour, but they created an insular economy with the sales of memberships, regalia, ritual books, artworks, insurance policies, and any other product that could be imagined as being in service of an organization.¹⁶ Combined with commerce, the lure of romantic perennial wisdom was an attractive and profitable venture, which certainly was on William J. Simmons's mind when he resurrected the Ku Klux Klan. By the early 1920s the group, reflecting the influence of Simmons's years as a seasoned member of several fraternal orders, used its appealing mythologized history to gain popularity by advancing against prevailing social fears of foreigners, Catholics, bootleggers, and other immoral and un-American elements. Furthermore, it would gain support by addressing these in terms of local concern.¹⁷

Rebuilding the Invisible Empire

'Colonel' William J. Simmons did not have to look far when he was looking for inspiration to build his new Invisible Empire; the majority of his adulthood had been dedicated to forming congregations, both as a preacher and as a recruiter for the United Woodmen of the World.¹⁸ Born on 6 May 1880 in rural Harpersville, Alabama, he was raised on the family farm surrounded by Southern tradition and lore. Despite the supposition that D. W. Griffith's blockbuster film *Birth of a Nation* was the Klan's primary inspiration, Simmons maintained that the fraternity had been planned for more than twenty years and was primarily influenced by his upbringing.¹⁹ He recounted stories about the Reconstruction-era Klan told by his 'old Negro mammy', as well as by his father who purport-

¹⁵ Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 109; M. C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14.

¹⁶ Harwood, 'Secret Societies', 2–3; Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 5.

¹⁷ P. D. Brister, 'Ku Klux Rising: Toward an Understanding of American Right-Wing Terrorist Campaigns' (PhD Dissertation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, 2011).

¹⁸ Although Simmons was a veteran of the Spanish-American War (21 April–10 December 1898), the rank of 'colonel' was actually conferred on him by the Woodmen. When asked of his profession, he would proudly proclaim, 'I am a fraternalist' (See Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 29). At the Klan's Congressional inquiry, he revealed that he was a member of some fifteen fraternal organizations and, as a result of their influence, he is likely to have borrowed for the Klan a familiar slogan: 'The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.' See House of Representatives: Sixty-Seventh Congress, First Session, *The Ku Klux Klan Hearings Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1921), 67–8.

¹⁹ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 28.

edly held membership.²⁰ The romance of the rebellious Confederate States of America (commonly referred to as the Confederacy) had a profound influence on Simmons. For many Southerners (and even for those sympathizers in the North) their cause was an appealing metaphor for rebellion against a tyrannical government. As Simmons convalesced following an automobile accident, he set to planning his new fraternity.

The revived Ku Klux Klan was in some respects similar to its notorious Reconstruction-era predecessor – which was not by accident. Well versed in Klan lore, Simmons probably understood it as a fraternal order created in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866 for the enjoyment of bored decommissioned Confederate soldiers. This popular narrative has since been re-examined as an oversimplification of the founders' (aka the Jolly Six)²¹ intentions, which were more in line with the activities of the notorious slave patrols and rangers of the era than actual fraternities.²² However, its inception was characteristically fraternal. Even its name, 'Klan', was evocative of Sir Walter Scott's popular romantic traditionalism, with the 'Klux' derived from the Greek *Kyklos* (κύκλος) – a nod toward the Hellenistic names applied to societies and fraternities.²³ The honorifics *Cyclops*, *Goblin*, *Ghoul*, *Titan*, *et al.*, reflected the influence of fraternal offices and were a send-up of Classical mythology taught in school. The outlandish costumes and masks reflected a passing knowledge of local Native American lore and slave superstitions. Even their ritual was copied from other sources: Klan historian Elaine Parsons noted that it was probably cribbed from the Sons of Malta. This now-defunct fraternity indulged more in childish pranks than the pretences of perennial wisdom.²⁴

For all of its imitation of other fraternities and the emphasis on relieving boredom by playing costumed pranks, the Reconstruction Klan quickly became associated with nocturnal raids during which they committed unspeakable atrocities against Southern Blacks and northerners suspected of warprofiteering and other disloyalties. It also became associated with well-known Masonic personalities, as one of the founders, James Crowe, went on to become the Grand Master of Tennessee. Confederate General Nathan Bedford

²⁰ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 28; N. MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

²¹ 'Jolly Six' was the name given to the originators of the Reconstruction-era Ku Klux: John Lester, Calvin Jones, Richard Reed, Frank McCord, John Booker Kennedy, and James Crowe. See E. F. Parsons, *The Roots of the Ku Klux Klan: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 30.

²² M. Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2010), 4.

²³ Parsons, *The Roots of the Ku Klux Klan*, 34; 41; 43. An example of the word *Kuklos* used in a typical fraternal context is *Kuklos Adelphon* (aka 'old Kappa Alpha'), an American fraternity founded in 1812 at the University of North Carolina. See L. S. Boyd, 'The Original Kappa Alpha', Reprinted from Banta's Greek Exchange Vol. VII, No. 4. September 1919 (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Company, Inc., 1919).

²⁴ K. Alerfeldt, 'Murderous Mumbo Jumbo: The Significance of Fraternity to Three Criminal Organizations in Late Nineteenth Century America', *Journal of American Studies* 50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1086.

Forrest, who allegedly became the Klan's first Imperial Wizard,²⁵ was also known as a Mason, although he never progressed beyond the order's first degree.²⁶ Lastly, a persistent rumour placed the influential Albert Pike, Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, as an early supporter of the organization and the author of its ritual and *Prescript*.²⁷ Although Pike was indeed a Confederate general and a well-known Masonic leader, Sarah Lawrence Davis's identification of Pike as a Klansman in her *Authentic History of the Ku Klux Klan* lacks definitive proof and, as such, has been discredited by scholars as lacking proof. Lawrence's work is believed to include Pike solely on the basis of his Masonic résumé, in addition to defending the Confederacy.²⁸

During Simmons's recovery, he penned his own *Prescript* for the new Klan. Fashioning himself as a fraternal mystic, he claimed that he had witnessed hooded horsemen galloping about his room, inspiring him to resurrect the legendary first Klan, but reorganized to meet modern needs.²⁹ It is from this document that Simmons would compose the *Kloran*, the Invisible Empire's guide to government, ritual, and philosophy. With overwrought prose he recounted the trials America had endured during the Civil War, relating a well-worn narrative of the noble South that would again rise against tyranny. Simmons compared his fellow Southerners – 'a people pauperised, bleeding, prostrated, and defenceless' – with suffering the vexations of the biblical plagues. He described their defeated livelihoods bereft of the care of the US government, the rape of their women, and the loss of their property by carpetbaggers.³⁰ But their saviours, the Ku Klux Klan, had arrived to defeat their oppressors:

²⁵ *Imperial Wizard* was penultimate position; he was the leader of the entire organization, which was known as the 'Empire'. For a description of the governmental structure, titles, and duties of the Reconstruction-era Klan, see J. C. Lester, D. L. Wilson, *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth, and Disbandment*, W. L. Fleming edition (New York and Washington: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 136–150.

²⁶ Historians have disagreed that Forrest was an influential leader of the organization, or even an official member. Some have pointed out that when he was elected Grand Wizard of the KKK in Nashville, Tennessee, he was, in fact, not in the city. In contrast, Jack Hurst's biography of Forrest asserts that evidence of his involvement exists from those who claimed to be present at his swearing in. Whatever his precise involvement, Forrest's reputation as a Confederate folk hero arguably elevated the Klan's reputation. He is, however, less known for disbanding the Klan in 1869 due to its continued acts of terror. Despite its dissolution, the organization continued to operate in some locales. As a result, Forrest was summoned to appear before a Congressional inquiry in 1871 where he continued to deny any association with the group. See J. Hurst, *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 284–289; 'Forrest, Nathan Bedford', Mississippi Civil Rights Project, accessed 08 October 2020, <https://mscivilrightsproject.org/forrest/person-forrest/nathan-bedford-forrest/>; see also 'Albert Pike Did Not Found the Ku Klux Klan', Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, accessed 14 October 2020, <https://freemasonry.bcy.ca/anti-masonry/kkk.html>.

²⁷ Alerfeldt, 'Murderous Mumbo Jumbo', 1085–1086.

²⁸ Alerfeldt, 'Murderous Mumbo Jumbo', 1085.

²⁹ M. Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2007), 13.

³⁰ Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., *Kloran. K-UNO: Karacter, Honor, Duty*, 5th ed. (Imperial Palace, Atlanta, 1916), 38–39, accessed 21 November 2018, https://archive.org/details/Kloran_201312.

That anguish-laden cry of that defenseless people of the Southland, was heard and answered by the gallant knights of the Invisible Empire . . . From over the mysterious borderland from the Empire of the Soul the Ku Klux came . . . They dissipated the cruel storm of the American reconstruction and won the plaudits of an intelligent, unprejudiced world . . . They re-established racial rights and the sovereignty of constitutional law . . . and made possible the birth of the greatest nation of all time-the Re-United States of America.³¹

Simmons expanded the revived Klan's empire from the (former) Confederate states to all US states and territories. Northern aggressors of the Civil War era were substituted with un-American elements such as Catholics and Jews, in addition to African Americans. Also, added to the list were perceived moral transgressions such as the consumption of alcohol, or any other offences. Lastly, the US Constitution, interpreted by the first Klan as a codified defence of white Protestant society, would essentially have the same purpose for Simmons's Klan. The country would reflect the culture and sacrifice of the Anglo-Saxon, and all others would be forced to recognize this.³² Additionally, it would do so just in time to counteract the growing influence of the Catholic fraternity, the Knights of Columbus, which was perceived by fearful Protestants to be a papal army preparing for a new revolution. In short, Simmons was providing a modern iteration of the goals of like-minded predecessors such as the Know Nothings and the American Protective Association (APA).

These organizations were the modern vanguards against a centuries' old antipathy toward Catholicism brought to the Americas from Europe. The St Bartholomew's Massacre, the Inquisition, the material excesses of the Papacy, political intrigue, and a roster of long-standing grievances against the Church were exported to the American colonies. They took on new dimensions as the US expanded with virulent conspiracies stoking fears of a Catholic invasion, and that the dominant Protestant status quo was in grave danger unless it rose from its complacency. As Klan supporter and leader of the Pillar of Fire Ministries Bishop Alma White warned:

... Political Romanism has become so accustomed to the stupidity and apparent indifference of Protestants...and it was evident that they were not anticipating a great white-robed army to appear on the field of action and thwart their plans. But history will show that down the centuries surprises have been sprung by an all-wise God upon those who have tried to usurp the throne of power and rule with a rod of iron.³³

³¹ Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc., *Kloran*, 50.

³² G. W. Gordon, *Revised and Amended Prescript of the Order of the * * * [KKK]* (1868), Article VII: Eligibility for Membership. Alabama Department of Archives and History, accessed 21 November 2018, <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov>; William Simmons telegram to William Harding, 28 September 1921, House of Representatives: Sixty-Seventh Congress, First Session, *The Ku Klux Klan Hearings Before the Committee on Rules* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1921), 127.

³³ A. B. White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy* (Zerephath, NJ: Pillar of Fire International, 1925), 97.

Merging the past with the present, on Thanksgiving evening in 1915 Simmons gathered two elderly members of the first Klan and those of the second atop Stone Mountain near Atlanta, Georgia. There they burned a cross and inaugurated the new order, adopting the motto *Non Silba Sed Anthar* (Not for Self, but Others). Simmons would later recount this epic event for his Congressional testimony:

And thus on the mountain top that night at the midnight hour while men braved the surging blasts of wild wintry mountain winds and endured a temperature far below freezing, bathed in the sacred glow of the fiery cross, the Invisible Empire was called from its slumber of half a century to take up a new task and *fulfil a new mission for humanity's good and to call back to mortal habitation the good angel of practical fraternity among men*. (emphasis mine)³⁴

Although the Klan relished in its heritage of secrecy, its obsessive campaign to align itself with the fraternal community was a very public show. Every printed word was an opportunity for promotion; the 1921 *New York World* exposé of its rituals and its sordid violence would spark a Congressional investigation, which presented Simmons with a nationwide, if not international, stage to evangelize his fraternity. Simmons played his part perfectly as the misunderstood devout patriot who was physically weak and sickly but possessed a powerful character.³⁵ He defended his organization, charging that it would not enjoy such a large and loyal membership had it exhibited the violence claimed by the *New York World* or the Congressional reports. '[A]nd although all papers printing the World stories have openly violated the copyright laws . . . the documents . . . show on their face that there is nothing in them except a love of country and a pure Americanism,' Simmons proclaimed.³⁶

One Hundred Percent Americanism and Anti-Catholicism

Following World War I *Americanism* was a popular philosophy that found a new foothold, and was based upon the popular ideology of a sense of national pride intended to reflect a commonality of American identity. The Klan's expanded version, *One Hundred Percent Americanism*, however, articulated a militant stance amidst a new wave of xenophobia and anti-Catholic rhetoric, directing it toward anyone perceived as being un-American or anti-American.³⁷ In fact, an adherence to Roman Catholicism became synonymous with both. Originating with the European antipathies toward the Church, American objec-

³⁴ Simmons Testimony, House of Representatives: Sixty-Seventh Congress, First Session, 122.

³⁵ The Ku Klux Klan Hearings, 67. Simmons described how he overcame his illness and difficult travel to address the congress, joking that 'My sickness is not expressed in looks. I am of the Irish race, and I believe if I was dead, I would be a handsome corpse.'

³⁶ Simmons Testimony, House of Representatives: Sixty-Seventh Congress, First Session, 74.

³⁷ J. Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 3; MacLean, 12.

tion to Catholicism expanded beyond the suspicion of the immigrants because of their allegiance to a foreign ruler – the Pope of Rome. Thus, One Hundred Percent Americanism embodied a potent and historic hatred of Catholicism and equated Protestantism with white supremacy, repackaging it for the post-War generation, stoking old fears of Catholic infiltration and sedition.³⁸

During the First World War American Catholics were accused of a lacklustre enthusiasm for supporting the troops. In contrast were the Protestants, who were heralded as being more in tune with the country's needs. This aspersion to a Catholic's patriotism had been a common feature in the middle and late nineteenth-century anti-Catholic literature published by nativist, anti-Catholic, secret society-cum-political parties such as the Know Nothing Party (1844–1860), Free and Accepted Americans, and the American Protective Association (1870–1911).³⁹ The anti-Catholic newspaper, *The Menace*, stoked these prejudices by accusing the Church of being in league with the German Kaiser, as well as reporting on American 'heretic' citizens accused by suspected Catholic-infiltrated courts for teaching doctrines antithetical to the Roman Church.⁴⁰

In fraternal newspapers proponents of One Hundred Percent Americanism promoted an alternative history of white heritage for the new world. Articles in the anti-Catholic newspapers *Searchlight* and *The Torch* announced America's discovery by the Scandinavian explorer Leif Erikson instead of Christopher Columbus – an obvious slight at Italians and Catholics who had recently been lobbying for a national Columbus Day holiday.⁴¹ As such, it decried both foreigners and Catholics (who were often perceived as intertwined forces). Jews and the 'New Negro' were also included as un-American elements that did not possess the 'capacity for citizenship'.⁴² Even the most casual nativist characterized minority groups as uncivilized hordes that defiled white womanhood, spread ignorance, uncleanness, and a host of other un-American behaviours. Their subversion was usually accomplished by the corruption of youth, related in popular highly sexualised tales of female imprisonment and escape from a 'papal jail'.⁴³ One Hundred Percent

³⁸ M. Williams, *Shadow of the Pope* (Rochester: Whittlesey House, 1932), 12, 136; White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy*, 8; Advertisement, 'The Ku Klux Klan or the Knights of Columbus Klan', *The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922, 7. HWC.

³⁹ J. Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (1955, repr., New York: Atheneum, 1969), 191.

⁴⁰ 'California Citizen Sent to Penitentiary on Charge of Heresy', *The Menace* (Aurora, MO), 5 August 1918. https://archive.org/details/Kloran_201312

⁴¹ 'Norsemen Were Discoverers of America', *The Searchlight*, 5 August 1922, 2; 'Who Discovered America? Certainly Not Columbus', *The Torch* (Aurora, MO), 1 August 1922. HWC.

⁴² Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 190–191.

⁴³ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 41; Advertisement, 'The Ku Klux Klan or the Knights of Columbus Klan', *The Searchlight*, July 29, 1922, 7; 'Girls Revolt at papal Jail; Seek to Gain Liberty', *The Searchlight*, 5 August 1922, 1. HWC. For a detailed description of the Catholic conspiracy to corrupt and imprisonment of youth, see Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 120–139. Nineteenth century anti-Catholic publications featured lurid tales of abuse by priests, imprisoned children, or nuns – often with the undertones of eroticism and implying the even-

Americanism was also used to identify and physically punish or humiliate backsliding whites, who had succumbed to immoral behaviour such as the consumption of alcohol and prostitution.⁴⁴ One Hundred Percent Americanism was a symbol of clean living and good American values.

For the KKK One Hundred Percent Americanism demanded a vigorous and courageous action against corrosive elements, however vague, which precipitated the Klan's ability to proclaim themselves the saviours of whatever problem plagued a community. These positions allowed the Klan a unique opportunity to market themselves as a fraternity of *action*, not just ritual and a few charities. To that end the Klan and its leadership believed that it possessed the moral authority to wield One Hundred Percent Americanism as a means to regulate the behaviour of others.⁴⁵ Indeed, it marketed this position at every opportunity. Advertising the KKK took the form of not only flyers or pamphlets, but of a sustained campaign in sympathetic fraternal newspapers to accuse, taunt, and berate its enemies with a familiar message reminiscent of the 'Native Americanism' of the Know Nothings and the nativist rhetoric of the American Protective Association (APA).

This tactic served several desired outcomes. First, it promoted and defined Klan tenets. Secondly, it played on historical fears about immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and African Americans, and provided an urgent new spin on the imminence of America's decline. Thirdly, the campaign of abject fear and conspiracy excited and angered readers. And lastly, there was the cultivation of a dedicated and committed member who was willing to spend money and time to promote the Klan's objectives via existing fraternal/nativist newspapers like *The Menace*, *The Searchlight*, *The Fellowship Forum*, and *The Rail Splitter*.⁴⁶

Americanism programmes advocated the assimilation of American exceptionalism and values, while still upholding White Anglo-Saxon Protestant values and exclusivity. The majority of fraternal orders followed this same pattern by asserting their sectarian and ethnic preferences through mainstream concerns, such as the use of federal funds for parochial education.⁴⁷ The Klan also joined in this cause, but promoted their own One

tual triumph of Protestantism.

⁴⁴ J. B. Shults, 'The Ku Klux Klan in Downey During the 1920s' (MA dissertation, California State University, Long Beach, 1981), 62.

⁴⁵ M. Hernandez, *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America: Fighting Fraternities* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 5.

⁴⁶ 'Past Grand Comdr. George F. Moore, of Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, in Editorial Control of Fellowship Forum', *The Fellowship Forum*, 6 January 1922, 1. HWC. Although Moore was not known to be a Klansman, as the editor of the *The Fellowship Forum*, he was certainly known to be a friend of the organization; Advertisement featuring a presentation to the KKK by Wm. Lloyd Clark, editor, and publisher of the *The Rail Splitter*: 'Mr. Clark is a Methodist, a Mason and a Klansman.' Williams, 134. HWC.

⁴⁷ L. P. Jorgenson, 'The Oregon School Law of 1922: Passage and Sequel.' *The Catholic Historical Review* 54, no. 3 (1968): 457. Accessed January 4, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25018244>. Illustrative of the lasting impression the Klan's association with Freemasonry, and the anti-Catholic leanings of some Masonic groups, has had on historical memory, see the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project's article where the author discussed the support for these controversial bills touted by the Klan and Freemasonry. Regrettably, in attempting to recount

Hundred Percent Americanism as a solution. One reader of *The Searchlight* proclaimed, 'The next municipal election will see the downfall of the whole papal crew; and all the papist teachers will be weeded out . . . Our motto is: "Put only 100% Protestant Americans in office."' ⁴⁸ The distinctive trait of the Klan was that it was unrelenting about its anti-Catholicism and white supremacy, and set its sights on condemning individuals in addition to religious and social institutions. For the Invisible Empire, 'pure' or 'real' Americanism should be accepted as a divine gift to humanity that was so far interwoven with Christianity as to render it protected by the Bill of Rights. ⁴⁹ Following the same logic, Simmons reasoned that the United States was a Christian nation from its inception. ⁵⁰ As for the long history of Roman Catholics in the US, he admitted that they had been present at the founding of the republic, but could not be the *same* Catholics abhorred by the Klan. He directed his ire toward those who came later, those 'illiterate . . . verminous and insanitary' immigrants whom he believed lacked the most fundamental qualities to be transformed into American citizens.

As the US mainstream became convinced that neo-Lamarckism science and settlement houses might assist the immigrant to assimilate, ⁵¹ Simmons complained that the Church had purposefully kept immigrants uneducated and 'forever incapable of improving their situation.' ⁵² Only native-born gentile whites could inherit the claim to true Americanism, as evidenced in the interrogatories given to potential Klan members. In succession, each question answered positively articulated a belief in a gentile white supremacist Christian

the involvement of Masonic lodges, the Scottish Rite, and KKK Klaverns, the article identified the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry as an anti-Catholic organization, giving the reader the faulty impression that the fraternity maintains this position today. K. Dimick, 'The Ku Klux Klan and the Anti-Catholic School Bills of Washington and Oregon', Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, accessed 4 January 2021, https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/kkk_i49.htm. See also L. Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880–1930* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 115–147.

⁴⁸ 'Reader at Vicksburg Gives Some Ideas of the Workings of the Enemy', *Searchlight*, 29 July 1922, 2. HWC.

⁴⁹ 'The Ku Klux Creed', *Kloran*, 5th ed. (Atlanta: Ku Klux Press, 1915), 2. '[W]e shall ever be devoted to the sublime principles of a pure Americanism and valiant in defense of its ideals and institutions.'

⁵⁰ W. J. Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked* (Atlanta: William G. Thompson Publishing, Ltd., 1923), 54. Accessed 19 November 2017, <https://archive.org/details/TheKlanUnmasked>.

⁵¹ Neo-Lamarckism was named after the zoologist, Jean-Baptist Lamarck, who maintained that physical characteristics acquired by a parent can be inherited by its children. Historian Daniel E. Bender stated, 'Such a notion of acquired characteristics suggested that reform and degeneration left their marks permanently on the body.' Neo-Lamarckism was offered as an early twentieth century alternative to Darwinism. In an effort to reform the livelihoods of immigrant populations, Progressive-era proponents believed that their perceived weaknesses, with social conditioning programs such as hygiene and maternity classes, access to clean milk, and youth sports offered at government sanctioned settlement houses, true Americanization might take root. Thus, the regressive behaviours believed to be associated with the immigrants would be lessened in subsequent generations. Naturally, the settlement houses mostly catered to women and children. See D. E. Bender, 'Perils of Degeneration: Reform, the Savage Immigrant, and the Survival of the Unfit', *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 1 (2008): 5–29. Accessed January 4, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25096596>.

⁵² Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 69. The quote is reminiscent of popular sentiment, particularly those influenced by neo-Lamarckian science, namely that the immigrant needed the help to improve – particularly by those possessing the correct genetic and moral dispositions.

society (i.e., Protestant) and un beholden to foreign powers – which was an aspersion of papal influence.⁵³ American white supremacy confirmed that God made the divisions between the races for a particular reason and that the Klan maintained this divine order.⁵⁴

Simmons's claims of Klan exclusivity thus became the fraternity's hallmark and its justification for barring other groups. Members reasoned that they could not fully participate in Jewish culture because they were not Jewish, nor join the Knights of Columbus because they were not Catholic, and so forth. As a result, the Klan's existence was predicated on the fact that the white race also required its own exclusive organization to 'preserve . . . and maintain the purity of white blood without taint . . .', as the other races had done for themselves.⁵⁵

Imperial Kleagle William J. Mahoney publicly defended the order against its Masonic detractors, reasoning that the complaints of Klan-sponsored discrimination and violence of Catholics, African-Americans, and 'mongrel races' were merely projections of their own fears. Instead, a white man's Protestant army had arrived to defend its country, government, and race.⁵⁶ The aforementioned Bishop Alma White elevated the Klan's militant biblical rhetoric into apocalyptic prophecy. She warned that the goal of the 'Scarlet Mother' (i.e. the Church of Rome) was to transform the US into a Catholic regime by uniting church and state and enslaving citizens in 'prison houses'. Such tales were reminiscent of the lurid pulps describing the imprisonment and debasement of attractive young girls in Catholic convents and their harrowing escapes. White's reference to the unification of church and state promotes Catholicism as an agent working against the constitutional guarantee of the separation of the two entities. The Klan did not necessarily believe that the document provided American citizens equal rights under the law, but rather that it supported a conspiratorial worldview by serving as a divine dispensation against Rome's attempt to '[take] up weapons against those who hold the righteous principles of Americanism....'⁵⁷ Simmons chimed in, 'All we can say to our Catholic fellow citizens is just this: DO NOT FORCE TO US RESIST YOU!'⁵⁸

⁵³ *Kloran*, 25–26.

⁵⁴ *Kloran*, 26.

⁵⁵ Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 13. Simmons is rather inconsistent with his insistence that immigrants were incapable of reform, while also maintaining that an external force (i.e. Roman Catholicism) was inhibiting their abilities to evolve. He seems torn between hard-line Social Darwinism and neo-Lamarckism.

⁵⁶ W. J. Mahoney, 'Famous Mahoney Letter to Grand Masters of Country', *The Fellowship Forum*, 13 October 1922, 14. HWC.

⁵⁷ White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy*, 24, 25, 39, 70.

⁵⁸ Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 73: 'We are not anti-Catholic, but the Catholics are anti-Klan, for they see in the Klan a real Protestant movement sworn to champion and to proclaim those Protestant principals that are the sources and bases of our real American Protestant civilization...We are not anti-negro or anti-colored of any kind, but the colored and the mongrel races are anti-Klan because they see the forming of a powerful white man's organization, sworn to preserve the white man's race in all of its prestige and to maintain the purity of white blood without taint or stain of any kind . . . The Ku Klux Klan stands for undivided, unqualified, supreme and exclusive allegiance to the government of the United States . . .'

Historian Thomas Pegram noted that postwar immigration charged the United States with looking beyond those from western European and Nordic lands for an example of pluralism. The Klan perceived this not only as a sully of their white heritage, but also a warning that whites would have to share their jobs and social status. The simple fear of replacement and loss of historical privilege was a likely impetus for some to don the famous white hood.⁵⁹ With the nation under attack from a foreign entity, members of patriotic fraternal organizations would almost certainly take action. Their newspapers played a crucial role in marketing encouragement: ‘... a fearless interpretation of all . . . legislation which is of interest to Masonic and other one hundred per cent American societies and fraternities.’⁶⁰ Thus it was not considered nativism when fraternalists desired to unite against un-American elements. A correspondent to the *The Fellowship Forum* stated: ‘Masons and Klansmen owe their allegiance to the Stars and Stripes and the Constitution of the United States. Knights of Columbus owe their obedience to the Pope of Rome.’ Writing in the same periodical, a San Francisco resident expressed his displeasure that ‘Hobnobbing with the Knights of Columbus is not merely a pastime in our city’, implying that the Catholic fraternity possessed an undue influence with both civic and Masonic politics. These opinions reflected a syncretic union of the Klan’s patriotic militancy and fraternal zeal as it continued to define itself as an elevated, evolved form of Freemasonry.⁶¹

Marketing a Masonic Klan: The Fraternal Press

The postwar economy of the 1920s ushered in a new age of social and cultural changes. Driven by mass production, the decline in smaller businesses dependent on local commerce, urban populations boomed. New music and fashion inspired popular youth movements, representing a new wave of rebellion, along with the old order swept away by progressive reform.⁶² American minorities, bolstered by their increased position during the war, began to assert their own agency in society. Waves of immigrants entered the US, jockeying for resources claimed by US citizens. The social reorganization engendered a reactionary response as Americans, looking forward to the resumption of traditional roles, were confronted with what they perceived as a disintegration of their republic’s foundational morals bedrock. Criminality became associated with ethnicity, as Prohi-

⁵⁹ Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American*, 49.

⁶⁰ ‘Give Your Friends A Subscription to the Fellowship Forum as a Christmas Present!’, *The Fellowship Forum*, 16 December 1921, 9; ‘Militant Methodists Aroused over the Report that K.C.’s have \$1,000,000 to Drive Their Church Out of Rome’, *The Fellowship Forum*, 20 January 1922, 1; ‘Sedition in Propagandist Work in US: Masons Urged to Assist in Uncovering Crimes Against Gov’t’, *The Fellowship Forum*, 16 December 1921, 11. Library of Congress.

⁶¹ Letter to the Editor from ‘A Florida 32nd Degree Mason’, *The Fellowship Forum*, 28 July 1922, 9; ‘Decry Intimacy with Enemies’, *The Fellowship Forum*, 27 October 1922, 7. HWC.

⁶² M. A. Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 158–161.

bition, according to Higham, inaugurated new trade routes for contraband that would be exploited by 'alien lawbreakers'.⁶³ One Hundred Percent Americans believed that they could be a bulwark against the decline, with many already involved with organizations primed for this type of campaign. The ready-made patriotism, with its emphasis on old-world idealism, business, political, and community connections, and the crucial social role of fraternal societies, became the resource most natural and coveted by the Klan. Additionally, the historical antipathy toward the Catholic Church, stemming from the papal bulls of 1738 and 1884 by Popes Clement XII and Leo XIII against Freemasonry, essentially endeared a great many Masons to Protestant causes, despite the Craft's discouragement of religious sectarianism.⁶⁴

Mutual goals, therefore, already existed for the KKK to create and market an overlap with American Freemasonry. The emphasis on a pure Americanism, linked to traditional Protestant values, struck a chord with Masons proud of their fraternity's direct connection to the American colonies, the Revolution, and the founding fathers.⁶⁵ Its literature eloquently played on Masonic sentiments such as law and order, and by characterizing America as having lost its moral compass, playing on the fears that life for average Americans would only degenerate further.⁶⁶

Nordstrom notes that during the First World War the financial status of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic newspapers suffered, as concern was redirected toward the Germans and Catholics were free to express their patriotism.⁶⁷ The few surviving nativist newspapers such as *The Menace* and *The Rail Splitter* soldiered on – undoubtedly from additional subscriptions gained from advertising themselves as essential for fraternalists. An advertisement for a pamphlet titled 'Ku Klux Klan or Knights of Columbus Klan' urgently implored readers to assist *The Rail Splitter*,⁶⁸ with putting it in the 'hands

⁶³ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 266–268. Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 201.

⁶⁴ The papal condemnations of Freemasonry accused the Craft of unholy acts such as oath-taking and promulgating a natural religion. These bulls forbade Catholics from becoming Freemasons. The Taxil Hoax, which set the fraternity up on charges of occultism and Satanism, garnered it further condemnation by the Church. See Pope Clement XII, *In Eminenti*, 28 April 1738, Papal Encyclicals Online, accessed 25 October 2019, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/clem12/c12inemengl.htm>; Pope Leo XIII, 'Humanum Genus, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Freemasonry, April 20, 1884,' The Holy See, The Vatican, accessed 27 October 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18840420_humanum-genus.html; E. Frank, 'A Hoax', *l'Illustration*, 2827 (Paris, France, May 1, 1897), Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, accessed 2 December 2019, http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/taxil_confession.html.

⁶⁵ Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, 33–47.

⁶⁶ Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 180–182.

⁶⁷ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 196–198.

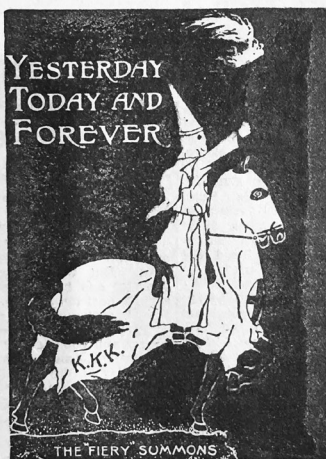
⁶⁸ 'Rail Splitter' was a popular nickname during Lincoln's presidential candidacy that referred to his early years engaged in physical labour, including splitting rails for the railroads. Later it became name of a pro-Lincoln newspaper published during his 1860 campaign. Anti-Catholic and nativist sentiments were popular and not unknown within the Republican rank and file and other pro-Union groups, as many Know Nothing (Order of the Star Spangled Banner) sympathizers were absorbed into the party. The conspiracy of a Catholic influence in his assassination gave more fuel to anti-Catholic sentiment. It is from these references that William Lloyd Clark, the early twentieth-

THE KU KLUX KLAN —OR— THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS KLAN

BY ARTHUR H. BELL

A patriotic and literary friend of the Protestant cause has written this new pamphlet. It is without question the greatest defense of our Protestant fraternal orders and the greatest unmasking of the Papal church that has been written in this country in half a century. As a defense of the K. K. K. and as an exposure of the K. of C., it is an education and an inspiration. Following is a brief synopsis: A short history of the K. K. K. and the K. of C. The K. of C. as it now stands. Hibernians, Molly Maguires, Clan-na-Gall and the Knights of Columbus. Two alleged oaths—Ku Klux and K. of C. The bloody record of the K. of C. Proven crimes of the K. of C. Membership of the K. K. K. and the K. of C. contrasted. The K. K. K. relative to the Public school; politics; separation of church and state; law and order; religious freedom; free speech; free press, etc. Rome's attack on all Protestant fraternities. The K. K. K. believes in the following: The tenets of the Christian

To know the whole truth about the K. K. K. a great fraternity, whose members have bound themselves together in a solemn compact and a common brotherhood and to conserve, protect and maintain the chastity of womanhood and to conserve, protect and maintain the distinctive institutions, rights, privileges, principles, traditions and ideals of pure Americanism, read this pamphlet.



To know the whole truth about the Pope's Knights of Mob and Murder, his Mafia of Christ, his plant tools who have bound themselves together in secret, unholy compact to destroy our free American Public School system, our constitution and its guarantees, to prevent as fast as they within their power the education and use of the Holy Bible, read carefully every line in this soul stirring pamphlet.

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Send your orders by return mail for the strongest and most fearless defense of Protestant Christianity and our free American institutions that has been written for half a century. Help us put this pamphlet in the hands of every Mason, Odd Fellow, Knight of Pythias, Klansman and fraternalist of every Protestant American organization just as rapidly as possible. Price, 15c; three for 30c; seven for 50c; fifteen for \$1.00; 100 for \$5.00. Also inclose 50c for The Rail Splitter, the greatest anti-Catholic paper on the American continent. Sample copy and book catalogue free.

Address **THE RAIL SPLITTER**
MILAN, ILLINOIS

Fig. 2. *The Rail Splitter* Advertisement in *The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922
Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

eth century publisher of the Rail Splitter newspaper and press, borrowed the name for his company. In 1911, Clark was convicted on two counts of criminal libel for his alarmist literature featuring nun kidnappings. He became an ardent supporter and organizer for the Ku Klux Klan and was lionized by the organization due to his one-man

of every Mason, Odd Fellow . . . Klansman, and every fraternalist of every Protestant American organization.⁶⁹

In 1922 the anti-Catholic publisher, *The Rail Splitter*, purchased advertisement space in *The Fellowship Forum*, promoting its provocative literature amongst other fraternal goods and services such as youth orders, fezzes, and scientific cures for ailments. It announced itself as ‘The greatest anti-Catholic monthly paper on the American continent!’⁷⁰ Immediately following, a cleverly placed advertisement for *The Fellowship Forum*’s new fraternal faction of One Hundred Percenters, ‘Militant Freemasonry’, proudly asserted that the ‘Fellowship Forum Stands for a Militant Freemasonry’. The ad then encouraged a membership drive from those who believed in the maintenance of American institutions along ‘sound progressive lines.’⁷¹ The suggested synthesis of progressivism and traditional values provides a possible insight into how One Hundred Percenters and the KKK perceived their brand of social reform as a modern utopian system, whereby a remembrance of traditional American institutions reflected a hierarchy of divine order. For the militant 100 Percenter fraternalists this perspective clothed them with the mantles of reformers and patriots; they were modern soldiers of Luther and Washington heralding ‘a campaign of enlightenment.’⁷²

With the decline of nativist newspapers and the limited readership of Klan-sponsored periodicals, two fraternally-supported papers became the most prolifically pro-Klan. *The Searchlight* was the official publication for the nativist fraternity, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM)⁷³ and the independently published *The Fellowship Forum*. The latter printed its first run in 1921, declaring on its front page to be ‘Freemasonry’s Representative at the Capital of the Nation’, and reporting upon both national and international fraternal affairs. Although its pages were, by and large, comprised more of Masonic-related news, *The Fellowship Forum* had no official connection with any fraternity, particularly Freemasonry (despite its claim of being a Masonic representative). It did, however, possess a rich Masonic lineage through editor George

effort produce and publish anti-Catholic literature. For information about the Lincoln-era newspaper, see ‘The Railsplitter (Cincinnati [Ohio]) 1860–1860’, Library of Congress, accessed 10 October 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/item/56049861/>; for references to the Clark publication, see ‘Rail Splitter Press’, OCLC, WorldCat Identities, accessed 10 October 2020, <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no2017088433/>; and J. Nordstrom, 183, 199.

⁶⁹ ‘The Ku Klux Klan or the Knights of Columbus Klan’, *The Menace*, 5 August 1922, 7. HWC.

⁷⁰ ‘The Rail Splitter’, *The Fellowship Forum*, 9 December 1922, 7. HWC.

⁷¹ ‘The Rail Splitter’, 7.

⁷² White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy*, 39.

⁷³ Founded on 17 May 1853, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM) began as a youth order under the patronage of the Order of United American Mechanics (formed on 8 July 1845). The younger order eventually eclipsed the elder as a popular alternative with membership growing rapidly, rocketing from 7, 732 in 1880 to 81,780 in 1890. See *Official History of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics and American Landmarks or Our Country’s Patriotic Shrines*, ed. E. S. Deemer (Boston: The Fraternity Publishing Company, 1897), 18–19, 50; ‘Objects of the Order’, Junior Order of United American Mechanics, accessed 23 November 2020, <https://www.jrouamnationalcouncil.org>.

The Fellowship Forum Stands for a Militant Freemasonry

The Fellowship Forum has established a name for itself as one of the most fearless, independent and progressive fraternal newspapers published. It should be read by everyone who believes in the maintenance of American institutions and their advancement along sound, progressive lines.

THE FELLOWSHIP FORUM should be in the home of every Freemason in America. It is America's Greatest National Fraternal Weekly Newspaper. It prints all of the important Masonic News of the World. It gives you this news in short, crisp, snappy articles that are easy to understand.

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Freemasonry's Representative at the Nation's Capital

Fig. 3. Marketing Militant Freemasonry in *The Fellowship Forum*, 11 August 1922 |
Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

Fleming Moore, who was the former Sovereign Grand Commander of the Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction. His work with the Fellowship Forum and its promotion of One Hundred Percentism provided one of many suggested connections to freemasonry, the KKK, and other allies. These two newspapers offer insight into the weekly activities of the KKK in easily digestible segments and snappy derivative commentary, making these papers appealing for the average person.

Placing pro-Klan articles and advertisements alongside commonplace fraternal events and subjects of general interest, the Klan portrayed itself as a standard but powerful force of American fraternal life that also shared its goals with other fraternities. Readers of *The Searchlight* or *The Fellowship Forum* read of Klansmen's surprise visitations to Protestant churches, presenting the pastor with donations 'as support and an endorsement in the fight being waged against blind tigers and other transgressors.'⁷⁴ Familiar with the mass degree conferrals that frequently drew hundreds of participants to the Scottish Rite or the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners), readers delighted at the initiations (called 'naturalizations') of thousands of fledgling Klansmen in Pennsylvania, or the attendance of 15,706 white-robed Knights of the KKK at a picnic in Waco, Texas. By turning a page, they could read about the popularity of Masonry on college campuses, or a large temple being constructed in New Haven, Connecticut.⁷⁵ One could

⁷⁴ 'McLendon Given Donation by Klan', *Searchlight*, 29 July 1922, 1. HWC.

⁷⁵ L. Brockman, *Theatre of the Fraternity: Staging the Ritual Space of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, 1896–1929*



Fig. 4. Normalizing the Klan in American Fraternal Culture
 (*The Fellowship Forum*, 8 November 1922, and *The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922)
 Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

even show their pride in membership by ordering novelty products, such as a 'Kluxer's Knifty Knife – A real 100% knife for 100% Americans.' This knife was a small token indicating that the bearer had aligned himself with the 'men with backbone', and was 'not afraid to stand out and fight the enemies.' Satisfied and encouraged, the reader could return to the reportage about what it meant to be a One Hundred Percent American.⁷⁶

The newspapers contrasted everyday fraternal life with harrowing and provocative articles of the Klan aggressively confronting un-American elements. Grim headlines reminded readers of the corruption assailing America, and provided additional evidence of the Klan's important role in national events. Alleged assassination attempts on Klan officials, mob attacks against parading Klansmen, or the Catholic campaign to make Columbus Day a national holiday not only provided weekly outrage, but further reinforced the readerships' understanding of current events apropos to *The Fellowship Forum's* slogan: 'A National Weekly Newspaper Devoted to the Fraternal Interpretation of the World's Current Events.'

Familiarity with fraternalism made an intersection with Freemasonry seem natural. In order to present the two organizations as co-equal or the same, Klan supporters reported events featuring the involvement of both fraternities. Associating a defence of the Klan with approval by Freemasons, *The Fellowship Forum* republished an account from *The Missouri Freemason* (a statewide magazine). The article described an anti-Klan orator in Texas who was snubbed by 'the best people in Waco', leaving him alone with the 'exception of a few Jews numbering thirty or forty.'⁷⁷ To be fair, there is no proof that the arti-

(Minneapolis: Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, 1996), 19–23; 'Class of 1000 Initiated by Klansmen of Keystone State Near Homestead', *The Searchlight*, 5 August 1922, 5. HWC; 'More Than 15, 706 Klansmen Attend Picnic Near Waco, Texas', *The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922, 6. HWC; 'Masonry Strong in Texas Colleges'; 'Masons Plan Large Temple', *The Fellowship Forum*, 1 September 1922, 2. HWC.; 'McLendon Given Donation by Klan', *The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922, 1. HWC.

⁷⁶ 'Kluxer's Knifty Knife', *Fellowship Forum*, 24 November 1923; 'Searchlight Attitude is Being Appreciated'; August 5, 1922, 2; 'What is the Creed of 100% Americanism?', *Searchlight*, 5 August 1922, 2. HWC.

⁷⁷ 'Waco, Texas Audience Snubs Dallas Orator', *The Fellowship Forum*, 11 August 1922, 3. HWC.

cle was quoted verbatim, but that would mean very little to the reader. In other accounts the pro-Klan faction presented itself as a defender or protector of Freemasonry from Romish plots, as was seen following the *New York World's* famous exposé on the Klan: 'Plot to Divide Fraternity into Factions Over Klan Fails', or 'California Masonry Clamors Against KC Intimacy.'⁷⁸

An effective tactic to attract more members was to advance the idea of cooperation between fraternities; solidarity gave them a sense that they were a part of something larger than themselves. In 1924 *The Fellowship Forum* published illustrations of Freemasons, Klansmen, and members of other fraternities dressed as labourers constructing the 'Temple of Americanism'. Another portrayed a crowd of angry fraternalists carrying the banners of their respective orders and driving bootleggers, Tammany tigers, Catholics, and other *aliens* 'into the sea.'⁷⁹ In September 1922 the paper announced the formation of an official union between the fashionable 'patriotic' fraternities and 'militant fraternalists'. Dubbed the 'National Council of Patriotic and Fraternal Societies of the US', this new organization was led by George Fleming Moore of *The Fellowship Forum* and William J. Mahoney, Imperial Kleagle for the KKK (and a self-proclaimed proud Mason). It was intended to serve as an aid for these societies 'to accomplish their aims.' Less vague, the accompanying article described the National Council as assisting with the aims of fraternal and patriotic societies by 'promoting through their patriotic endeavours the cause of Americanism.' The definition of Americanism remained vague but emotionally charged: '... many different aims and methods which tend to the true advancement of true loyalty to our country.'⁸⁰

With a sensationalized public display of Klan-Masonic propaganda, the Klan's official newspaper, *The Fiery Cross*, published an account of the joint-fraternal funeral of Robert H. Skaggs. A brief article was dominated by a striking photograph of apron-clad Masons and hooded Klansmen assembled in a snow-covered cemetery, paying their last respects for their mutual brother. The accompanying article promoted the cooperation of the 'two greatest secret organizations in the world...'⁸¹ The photograph starkly illustrated what was becoming evident in lodge rooms across the country: a growing belief that the two fraternities were interacting as co-joined associations, or were sharing some

⁷⁸ 'Plot to Divide Fraternity into Factions Over Klan Fails' *The Fellowship Forum*, 13 October 1922, 1; 'California Masonry Clamors Against K.C. Intimacy' *The Fellowship Forum*, 22 August 1922, 1. HWC.

⁷⁹ 'The Craftsmen at Work Building the Temple of Americanism', *The Fellowship Forum*, 24 August 1924, 1; 'Patriotic Fraternalism Will Drive Alienism into the Sea', *The Fellowship Forum*, 9 August 1924, 1. HWC.

⁸⁰ 'Militant Fraternalists', *The Fellowship Forum*, 15 September 1922, 7; 'Fraternal Societies Will Cooperate', 27 October 1922, 5; 29 September 1922, 1; Advertisement for the National Council of Patriotic and Fraternal Societies of the U.S.A., *The Fellowship Forum*. HWC; for a study on the vagueness of Americanism as a term, see "An Amorphous Code": The Ku Klux Klan and Un-Americanism, 1915–1965, *Journal of American Studies* 47, 4, (2013), 976.

⁸¹ 'Masons and Klansmen Attend Funeral', *Fiery Cross* (Indianapolis, IN), 9 March 1923, 5. Indiana University Libraries Digital Archive, accessed 19 October 2020, <http://bl-libg-doghill.ads.iu.edu/gpd-web/fierycross/192339.pdf>.



Fig. 5. The Funeral of Robert H. Skaggs (*The Fiery Cross*, 9 March 1923)

Courtesy of University of Indiana Bloomington Libraries

<http://bl-libg-doghill.ads.iu.edu/gpd-web/fierycross/192339.pdf>

type of fraternal bond.⁸² It is readily apparent that the photographs, cartoons, and articles portrayed a 'sameness' between the orders as a demonstration of a final act of brotherly love, or through shared mystical and patriotic goals. There was no attempt to hide the attempted association.

In articles published by pro-Klan fraternal newspapers both Masons and Klansmen were lauded as patriots and lovers of American heritage. Week after week *The Fellowship Forum* and *The Searchlight* marketed One Hundred Percent Americanism and fraternalism with feel-good revisionist and counter-factual articles. In their narratives lodge fellowship became representative of the unity espoused in American Republicanism: the Union; the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and *Freemasonry* were threads in the fabric of a great civic brotherhood. The papers trumpeted the alleged anti-Catholic stance of Freemason George Washington, claiming that he barred non-Americans from serving as sentries. They also educated their readers as to the Klan's link to the anti-

⁸² Letter from Leonidas Kirby to Samuel E. Burke, 15 June 1922. HWC. Kirby was concerned because Klaverns were known to meet in Masonic halls—presumably with the assent of lodges.

**America Needs
"Minute Men" Like
Those of 1776!**

YOU can be a Paul Revere in MOTIVE!
You must be! For the spirit of the great
Patriot has stepped out of the pages of history
at the hour when a shadow of danger looms
upon the Sacred Constitution.

The Things that Washington fought for
can be taken from you. History has told you
what the famous "Minute Men" did at Lexing-
ton. **They came when called and succeeded
because they were ready.**

You must prepare **today** by affiliating
with

**The National Council
of Patriotic and
Fraternal Societies
of the U. S. A.**

You are called now like those "Minute
Men" were 146 years ago. The founders of
this organization are creating at the Nation's
Capital a Clearing House for the Patriotic Ac-
tivities of all 100 per cent American Fraterni-
ties and Societies.

The National Council Officers:
George Fleming Moore, Pres.
Wm. J. Mahoney, D. D. LL. D., Vice Pres.
Gutzon Borglum, 2nd Vice Pres.
James S. Vance, Secretary.

Fill Out and Mail Coupon NOW

Fig. 6. Advertisement for the National Council of Patriotic and Fraternal Societies of the USA
(*The Fellowship Forum*, 8 November 1922)

Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

Catholic philosophies of presidents Grant and Lincoln: 'Attitude of Presidents Grant and Lincoln Unalterably anti-Romanist.'

Additionally, the National Council of Patriotic and Fraternal Societies of the USA placed a half-page advertisement in *The Fellowship Forum* that associated One Hundred Percent Americans with the Minutemen of the Revolution: 'America Needs Minute Men Like Those of 1776! ... You can be a Paul Revere in MOTIVE! You must be! For the spirit of the great Patriot has stepped out of the pages of history at the hour when a shadow of danger looms upon the Sacred Constitution.'⁸³ Less heavy-handed, a Klan recruitment

⁸³ Advertisement for the National Council of Patriotic and Fraternal Societies of the U.S.A., *The Fellowship Forum*, 27 October 1922, 5. HWC.

pamphlet waxed poetic about the Klan's mission: '... to warm the hearts of manly men ... to assuage the billowing tide of fraternal alienation.'⁸⁴

Each fraternity claimed to defend patriotism, law, and order, but *The Fellowship Forum* promoted a new category of soldier-fraternalist called a 'Militant Mason.'⁸⁵ Thus, in the wake of the press exposés, the Congressional hearings, and the admonition of five US Masonic jurisdictions,⁸⁶ *The Fellowship Forum* and *The Searchlight* had already framed the opposition as a Catholic plot to blame the KKK for sowing division in Freemasonry.⁸⁷ Their scoop published the screaming first page headlines: 'ROMANISM IS THE CAUSE OF FRICTION IN CALIFORNIA MASONRY.'⁸⁸

The Masonic Critique Against the KKK

For their vigilante justice and cruel intolerance American Masons indicted the KKK as un-American. The latter organization's worldview and reaction to Masonic objection proved that a philosophical chasm existed between each fraternity's interpretations of what constituted law, order, constitutionality, and tolerance. Equated with chaos and skullduggery, they were not legitimate representatives of American law and order: 'The Ku Klux Klan ... take it on themselves to judge, condemn, and execute overall whose views do not coincide with those of the Klan.'⁸⁹ Countering the Klan's patriotic protests, an editorial in the July 1922 issue of *The American Mason* equated the Masonic tenet of tolerance as distilled from the sources of an authentic American history: 'From its very beginning Freemasonry has stood for tolerance, law and order, religious liberty, and the zealous support of our governmental institutions.'⁹⁰

The *New York World's* unrelenting 1921 Klan exposé is arguably the catalyst for US-based Masonic Grand Masters' attention to the issue, along with the mounting attempts to woo American Masons (including Jesse Whited). With these in mind it is likely that the California Grand Secretary, John Whicher, was compelled to recommend that Grand Master Samuel E. Burke confront the Invisible Empire. Burke's subsequent response effectively warned the state's Masons that the Klan's actions were un-American and un-Masonic, and that no Mason should consider membership.⁹¹ This was a risky

⁸⁴ Anonymous, *The Ku Klux Klan: Who-Why-What, Yesterday, Tomorrow and Today* (c.1921), 2. HWC.

⁸⁵ 'White Men Beware', *The Searchlight*, 5 August 1922, 4; 'Masons Should be Free and Steadfast', *The Fellowship Forum*, 2 September 1922, 3; 'The Fellowship Forum believes in an aggressive militant Freemasonry', *The Fellowship Forum*, 11 August 1922, 1. HWC.

⁸⁶ The Grand Lodges of Massachusetts, New York, Texas, Iowa, and California openly warned their members against any affiliation with the KKK.

⁸⁷ 'Disrupt Masonry Plan of Enemies in Attack on Klan', *The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922, 1. HWC.

⁸⁸ 'Romanism is Cause of Friction in California Freemasonry', *The Fellowship Forum*, 11 August 1922, 1. HWC.

⁸⁹ Letter from California Lodge No. 1, San Francisco, to Samuel E. Burke, 5 June 1922. HWC.

⁹⁰ 'Masonic Officials Fight Un-American Ku Klux', *The American Mason* 1, no. 3 (Philadelphia), July 1922, 4. HWC.

⁹¹ Letter to Samuel E. Burke from John Whicher, 26 April 1922; Letter to the Masters, Wardens, and Brethren

move for Burke, though other American Grand Masters had taken a similar stand.⁹² The Klan's swift attack against Burke in the fraternal press may have originated with his previous involvement in a 1914 Grand Lodge investigation that came to be known as the 'Whitewash Committee'. This involved a controversial Knights of Columbus (KoC) oath that had been long circulated amongst Masonic circles as a proof that the KoC was a secret papal militia. Burke's committee, however, determined this oath to be an anti-Catholic forgery.⁹³

Because of Burke's previous defence of the Klan's arch-enemy, the Knights of Columbus, multi-page exposures in *The Fellowship Forum*, as well as several issues of *The Searchlight*, denounced him as a Romanist agent without hesitation.⁹⁴ The accusation excited the readership as his past was recounted as evidence of Catholic sympathy. His current stance, 'waging war against the Invisible Empire', was a more concerted campaign to divide Freemasonry from within, thereby rendering it incapable of withstanding further Catholic attacks. *The Fellowship Forum* insinuated that his (alleged) loyalty to the Catholic cause would cause him to join with them politically following his term as Grand Master.⁹⁵ Subsequent articles repeated similar charges with Burke being accused of adopting an un-American 'monarchical position', who demanded that his fellow Masons bow at his command...⁹⁶ Others were imaginative advertisements for the *Fellowship Forum*, labelling Burke a censor for discouraging the distribution of the newspaper (mentioned explicitly by name in both the section header and column) at the Masonic Temple in San Francisco.⁹⁷ Entering the fray, William Mahoney patronized Burke as a fool: 'As a Mason, I must express regret that you have exceeded the functions of your office . . . making an unwarranted attack upon an organization that is just as clean in character, just as pure in principle, and just as clear in conduct as is Masonry.'⁹⁸

By proscribing membership in the Klan supporters believed that Burke was interfering with their American right to free association.⁹⁹ The Klan sensationalized clandestine Romanist conspiracies and fears of abrogating of civil rights; they wasted no time in marketing Burke's position as a challenge to its goals. Although other Grand Masters who had taken a stand on the Klan had been previously insulted or threatened, Klan sympa-

from Samuel E. Burke, 2 May 1922. HWC.

⁹² Hernandez, *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America*, 166.

⁹³ For an account of the affair, see A. Kendall, 'The Whitewash Committee of 1914: The Knights of Columbus, Freemasonry, and Anti-Catholicism in California', *Heredom* 22 (2014), 219–40. Just as the Klan believed themselves to be an army for Protestantism, they considered the Knights of Columbus to be the same for the Catholic Church.

⁹⁴ 'Grand Master Burke Charged with Taking the Throne of Authority', *The Fellowship Forum*, 21 July 1922, 1, 3.

⁹⁵ *The Fellowship Forum*, 21 July 1922, 1. HWC.

⁹⁶ *The Fellowship Forum*, 21 July 1922, 3.

⁹⁷ *The Fellowship Forum*, 21 July 1922, 3.

⁹⁸ Letter from William J. Mahoney to Samuel Burke, July 20, 1922, HWC.

⁹⁹ Anonymous circular to 'All Masters and Members, F. & A.M. of Cal.', 27 May 1922. HWC.

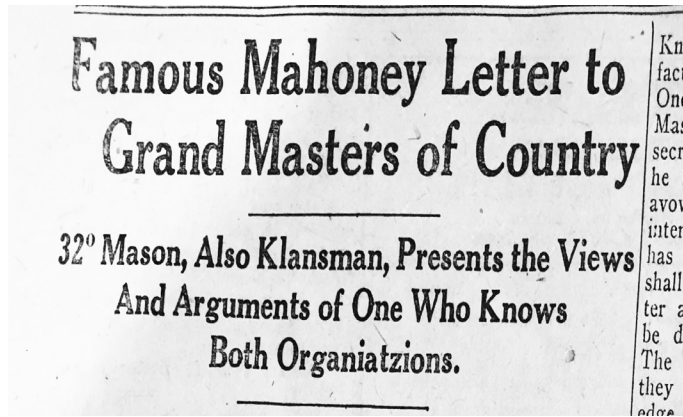


Fig. 7. Reprinting of the Mahoney Letter (*The Fellowship Forum*, 13 October 1922)
Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

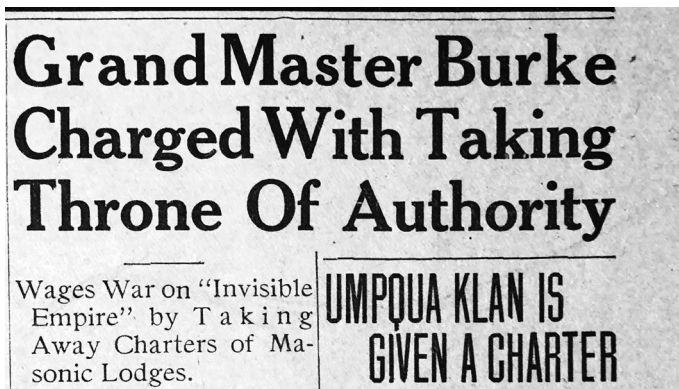


Fig. 8. Condemnation of California's Samuel Burke (*The Searchlight*, 29 July 1922);
Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

thizers singled out Burke specifically for his previous activities defending the Knights of Columbus.

A popular comparison involving the Klan's hoods and masks and treachery proved to Masons and a fearful public which faction possessed a more legitimate claim to law and order. References frequently appeared in Burke's private correspondence, in addition to Masonic periodicals such as *The National Trestleboard*, which reprinted his 2 May 1922 edict.¹⁰⁰ Burke charged that the Klan's 'workings' were interfering 'with the orderly and lawful administration of the processes of our courts; a society that skulks and strikes in

¹⁰⁰ 'Masonry and the Ku Klux Klan', *The National Trestleboard* 35, no. 12 June 1922, 1. HWC.

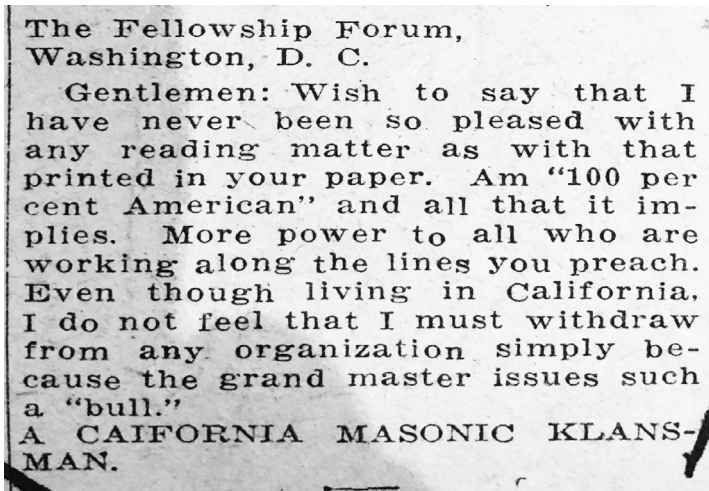


Fig. 9. Letter to the Editor (*The Fellowship Forum*, 27 September 1922)
Courtesy of the Henry W. Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry

the dark, under cover of masks.' His reference to 'a sheeted and hooded fraternity' had the effect of equating the garment with their use of extra-legal violence (e.g., kangaroo courts, violence, and harassment). The distinctive hood became synonymous with subversive secrecy, and an affront to democracy and law and order.¹⁰¹ New York Grand Master, Arthur S. Tompkins, repeated the sentiment: 'Masonry is based on universal brotherhood and toleration, but the Ku Klux Klan with its mask is a lawless organization whose aim seems to persecute . . . we have laws and courts . . . we do not need masked riders.'¹⁰² With this condemnation, a good number of California Masons believed the Klan to be a 'cancer' upon the lodges, a criminal organization which 'skulked in dark alleys of secrecy . . .'¹⁰³ Burke's proclamation became the basis for a lodge's talking points, which was repeated almost verbatim in their return correspondence.¹⁰⁴

A public response from Mahoney via *The Fellowship Forum* addressed the use of the hood, claiming that it represented in their ritual both protection from interlopers and lessons in trust: 'We hide our faces until the time him to be greeted as a Klansman.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Letter from Samuel Burke to the Masons of California, 2 May 1922. HWC.

¹⁰² Arthur S. Tompkins quoted in 'Friends of Freemasonry', *The Fellowship Forum*, 4 August 1922, 6. Archive of the Grand Lodge of F. & A.M. of California. The article title is sarcastic, characterizing the newspaper's common approach toward its 'enemies'.

¹⁰³ Letter from Eureka Lodge No. 16 to Samuel Burke, June 6, 1922; Letter from California Lodge No. 1 to Samuel Burke, 5 June 1922; Letter from Francis Keesling to Samuel Burke, 6 June 1922. HWC.

¹⁰⁴ Letters to Samuel Burke from California Lodges. HWC.

¹⁰⁵ 'William J. Mahoney, 32', K.C.C.H., Addresses Open Letter to All Grand Masters of the United States', *The Fellowship Forum*, 28 July 1922, 10. HWC.

Another article reminds the reader that not only has the Catholic Church used hoods for regalia since the fifteenth century, but it has also 'been masked since it first came into existence . . . it now concentrates all of her bigotry upon the Ku Klux Klan in an attempt to discredit the Klan for doing what the Catholic Church has done for nearly 600 years! It tells the world that patriots have no need for the mask . . .'¹⁰⁶ Simmons also defended the regalia, stating plainly that other fraternal orders and religions have worn similar vestments. The Ku Klux Klan's clothing, he revealed, was never intended to be an indicator of vigilantism. On the contrary, it was 'symbolic of the highest sense of patriotism, chivalry, and fraternalism . . . all great fraternal organizations are characterised by the robes they wear.' The design of the regalia, Simmons admitted, memorialized the original Ku Klux Klan.¹⁰⁷

Masons across the US were alarmed at the accusations of the KKK's un-American and un-Masonic behaviour; this was undoubtedly true for some California members. In a rare admission of reconsidering membership in the Klan, the master of Euclid Lodge in Los Angeles, related to Burke that two members of the lodge had approached the KKK, but had disavowed their interest in membership with the hopes of continuing their Masonic careers and being 'consistent Masons.'¹⁰⁸ Others also offered their loyalty. Callexico Lodge promised they would not be 'found lacking in Americanism or Masonry', affirming a traditional Masonic tradition to be loyal to the state.¹⁰⁹ Burke's mandate was clear that it did not matter how patriotic the Klan claimed to be: 'Respect for the law is enjoined upon our initiates as the first lesson in Masonry. They are taught to be exemplary in the discharge of their civil duties.'¹¹⁰ His statement underscored a frustrating disagreement in perspective between the Klan and American Masons regarding the allegiance to civil law and the defence of American principles. Both organizations believed themselves to be in the right. Still, the Klan and Militant Masons thought the US to be in a state of emergency, which justified their crusade against Catholics as necessary and just.

In contrast, from the perspective of mainstream Freemasonry history *was* on its side. Since the early eighteenth century Freemasonry had enjoyed its reputation as the premier institution with an accomplished membership, providing a sanctified inheritor of ancient wisdom, as well as staid social respectability. Steven Bullock asserts that since the formation of the American Republic Freemasonry's mission was to 'forge a common elite culture', distinct from the uncultivated or brute passions, which would cultivate

¹⁰⁶ 'Catholics, First to Mask, Show Hipocracy in Bigoted Fight on Hooded Knights', *The Fellowship Forum*, 30 August 1924, 11. HWC.

¹⁰⁷ Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 87.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from George Straith to Samuel Burke, 11 May 1922. HWC.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from L. S. Jacobson of Callexico Lodge No. 412 to Samuel Burke, 13 May 1922. HWC.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Samuel Burke to the Masons of California, May 2, 1922. HWC.

behaviours that ‘reached across local and even national barriers.’¹¹¹ As such, the well-bred egalitarianism of the fraternity enjoyed the patronage of eminent personalities such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, Voltaire, and others.¹¹² Freemasonry could argue a historical claim to traditions of civil order, so that when they declared the Klan un-American, it was also *un-Masonic*, thus joining the former and latter as a distinct foundation of American Masonic ideology and history.¹¹³ The fraternity also inculcated a philosophy of truth and tolerance rooted in the ideals of justice and a peaceable citizenry. Writing in *The Builder*, an anonymous Master of Evans Lodge in Evanston, Illinois opined: ‘... [P]atriotism is no virtue when it dwarfs the sympathies and narrows the soul’s horizon; it is simply bigotry and selfishness and becomes a menace to the world.’¹¹⁴

Perhaps the best articulation of Freemasonry’s position on the universal applications of tolerance, order, and democracy is a letter by John E. Garver to Samuel Burke. He provides a relatively balanced and touching sentiment that reflected how most Masons genuinely felt about their heritage, a present that was still coming to grips with modernity and its wartime toll, and what the future would portend. Countering the Klan’s smug attitude and menacing worldview, Garver advised that although Masons were seekers of knowledge, they should ‘remember that knowledge of itself is of little avail’ unless it had a life-long influence upon a person’s conduct. He implored men to look beyond their limited worldviews and personal education and station, and ‘see in each other a human being, and honour him as such. The progress of the modern world is dependent on this.’ He concluded with a thoughtful observation that democracy, as a humanist ideology, was dependent upon citizens for maintenance, and ‘may only be found wherever man recognizes in his neighbour his fellow man, his brother, and respects him as such.’¹¹⁵

For the better part of three years the Craft in the US engaged the Klan, though not as intensely as in 1922. In California, rather than pursue a scorched-earth policy against members, Burke and Burke’s successors sternly reminded the membership of Masonry’s upper hand in the battle about the definition of Americanism. For American Freemasons the lesson was that membership in the KKK was not only un-American but also un-Masonic. For his unique history involving the Knights of Columbus the Klan marketed him as a convenient example of how far their enemies would go to infiltrate American institutions – proving by their own account that their crusade was far from over.

¹¹¹ S. C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 34.

¹¹² Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 34–35; Tabbert, *American Freemasons*, 39–44.

¹¹³ Letter by Leon Speier to John Whicher, May 30th, 1922; Edict of Amos Alberson, Grand Master of Iowa, 21 September 1921; ‘Masonic Officials Fight Un-American Ku Klux’, *The American Mason*, 4. HWC.

¹¹⁴ Unnamed Master of Evans Lodge No. 524, ‘Patriotism as Interpreted by Freemasonry’, *The Builder* 9, No. 12 (1923): 3. HWC.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Dr John E. Garver to Samuel Burke, 9 May 1922. HWC.

Naturally, no rebuttals by anti-Klan Masons were ever given any meaningful space in the pro-Klan's fraternal press. Instead, it was recontextualized to support the Klan's marketing propaganda, obsessed with proving that Freemasonry had infiltrators in its midst – of whom the Klan and friends intended to identify and exile. Through traditional fraternal bulletins and Grand Lodge circulars, such as the anti-Klan edicts from Grand Masters, or journals such as *The American Mason*, the regular membership faced a sobering truth: that they 'choose one or the other.'¹¹⁶ This *suggested* choice, which had its own reward and punishment, inspired new arguments regarding freedom of association. However, the Masonic position was substantiated when a series of scandals shook the press, and the rape and manslaughter charges against Indiana Grand Dragon D. C. Stephenson shredded was left of the Klan's public reputation.

Conclusion

This essay intended to provide a brief overview of the primary ways in which the second Klan marketed themselves as a fraternal order in fraternal newspapers by promoting a militant form of fraternalism, and how it claimed an association with Freemasonry. The Klan predicated its campaign on an (assumed) shared legacy of Americanism: a well-known ideology intended to express the unity of the country's citizens as a commonwealth of goodness and truth. Americanism also taught a unique cultural mentality that was useful for promoting conformity, assimilation, and exceptionalism, reflecting the tenets of Freemasonry inherited from Enlightenment-era philosophy, such as truth, justice, and tolerance. It became a teaching tool for the fraternity in their lodges, as well as in philanthropic work. In contrast, the Klan believed that the country was under attack from foreigners, Catholics, and immorality. As such, it promoted a militant patriotism recontextualized as 'One Hundred Percent Americanism'. Armed with its new ideological weapon, the Klan sought to appeal to members of fraternal orders, particularly Freemasonry, who perceived a nationwide decline due to post-War excesses and social changes that seemed to benefit everyone except the god-fearing white Protestant.

Although the Klan followed a long tradition of mimicking American fraternal structures, it is insufficient to say that the Klan merely borrowed aspects from Freemasonry, or was an imitative offshoot of the the Know Nothings or the APA. There was always a tendency for organizations to borrow or inherit a blend of idealism, conspiracy, romance, partisan politics, and religious fundamentalism from other groups as was convenient. Fascism, Nazism, the Islamic State, and authoritarian religious and self-help cults are only a few of the most extreme examples. Current politics and alternative religious move-

¹¹⁶ 'Choose one or the other' is a quotation from a pro-Klan defence directed at Samuel Burke in 'An Open Letter', *The Crusader: A Patriotic Monthly for Thinking Americans* (San Francisco), August 1922, 8. It described ultimatums such as forcing a Mason to choose between Freemasonry or the Klan. See also the letter from George Strait, Euclid Lodge to Burke, 11 May 1922.; *The American Mason* 1, No. 3 (Philadelphia, PA), July 1922. Both sources: HWC.

ments also trade in this type of ideological currency. For Simmons's Klan the cult of One Hundred Percent Americanism embodied that perfect synthesis of ideology and action that enabled them to attract other fraternalists:

It is in that part of human nature where the loyalties and affections, the prejudices, and the passions are kept, and it is only the mystical, the mysterious, the intangible that can reach these forces in human nature, arouse them, and put them into action.¹¹⁷

Previous studies that have examined the Klan's overlap with Freemasonry and (more infrequently) the latter's response have concentrated on the Craft's social prestige and connections, in addition to its widespread membership. They have also attempted to explain the Klan's structure as a by-product of fraternalism's popular role in American communities. All of these factors are undoubtedly essential, and collectively contributed to the construction of the Invisible Empire. Also important was the romanticism engendered in fraternal halls, be it peaceful and militaristic or idealistic, which contributed to the Klan's worldview of patriotic chivalry. Not only did One Hundred Percent Americanism serve as mythology for the Klan, but it was also practical and political and created a distinct identity for the group. This type of tribalism allowed them to preserve what they believed was becoming watered down, or erased by emerging identities and hyphenated ethnicities. The ideology allowed for a broad appeal and skillset drawn from a specific population of Americans who feared that their country was failing, that immigrants were stealing their jobs, and that their privileged status was falling prey to *others*: the Roman Catholics, the Jews, and the African Americans.

The Masonic critique of the Klan's attempt at overlap has been successfully addressed in detail through the recent works of historians Kristofer Allfeldt, Miguel Hernandez, and Linda Gordon.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, to understand the Ku Klux Klan a re-examination of the American fraternal phenomenon is necessary. As explained in this essay, this might be accomplished by attempting to analyse how the historical memory of the Klan and fraternal orders were constructed, such as their claims to law, order, and American ideals. This type of study is, of course, possible from primary sources such as correspondence and other media. Unfortunately, these sources are exceedingly rare and only exist (often unknown) within the archives of Grand lodges and local lodges.

The newspaper articles referenced in this study exist as a first-hand testimony to this topic of national interest, but from the unique perspective of a virtually unknown corner

¹¹⁷ Simmons, *The Klan Unmasked*, 94.

¹¹⁸ K. Allfeldt, 'Jayhawker Fraternities: Masons, Klansmen and Kansas in the 1920s', *Journal of American Studies*, 46 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1037, and 'Murderous Mumbo Jumbo: The Significance of Fraternity to Three Criminal Organizations in Late Nineteenth Century America', *Journal of American Studies*, 50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1067–1088; L. Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liverlight, 2017); Hernandez, *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America*.

of society. This perspective is expressed through a medium (fraternal and nativist newspapers) that few – even in fraternal studies – have entertained. The reasons are fairly obvious: the activities of fraternal organizations have been rarely considered except in broad, top-down, intellectual, or cultural histories.¹¹⁹ Moreover, local accounts are often written with biases or little context; lodge histories or fraternal newspapers often fall into this category. Lastly, archival collections of nativist newspapers continue to be exceedingly rare. These were throwaway items, and the publishers themselves found it difficult to stay in business – thus reducing the number of copies in the public sector.

The Invisible Empire was one of many responses to fears and prejudices that have existed in the United States before its inception, often taking the form of a vast conspiracy involving Catholics, foreigners, and non-Whites. Like many other groups before it, it perceived itself as the leading defender of traditional American culture and tradition but was profoundly self-absorbed and self-conscious. Spurred on by the radical social reorganizations brought about by World War One, the KKK was a modern saviour of the US – a twentieth-century reformist society dedicated to purifying the Republic. As such it would be set upon by its Romanist foes, who, ensconced in every corner of American life, sought to cause a rebellion against goodness (and by extension the Klan). In every fraternal newspaper, the majority of articles were a veiled advertisement for the organization and featured two main themes: the Klan victimised and the Klan victorious. It existed by virtue of the actions of its enemies, and, in the end, became its own enemy. The organization sought mainstream support by capitalizing on contemporary class, ethnic, and religious prejudices exacerbated by the War but it could not hide the reports financial mismanagement, internecine struggles, rapes, and murders that began attracting the attention of national news outlets.¹²⁰ Members, especially Masons, who had joined the Klan for its ideology and not necessarily its vigilantism were appalled by the lawlessness and left the order.¹²¹ Unlike the experience with the New York World exposé and the Congressional investigation, they could not spin the loss of membership into a marketing scheme. When the Klan dramatically marched on Washington DC in 1926, it was already a shadow of its former self. The national version of the Invisible Empire of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan would fade away by 1929. Regrettably, its assumed association with Freemasonry would continue into the present day – not by Klansmen, but by

¹¹⁹ See Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*.

¹²⁰ Hernandez, *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America*, 192. Clarke's ouster from leadership for embezzlement and fraud was previously mentioned. Rising political star and Indiana Grand Dragon, D. C. Stephenson's rape and manslaughter charges were one of the final straws in a long list of transgressions. For a detailed account of Stephenson's career see M. W. Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1993); see K. Allerfeldt, 'Jayhawker Fraternities: Masons, Klansmen and Kansas in the 1920s', 1048.

¹²¹ Hernandez, *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America*, 192; Allerfeldt, 'Jayhawker Fraternities', 1048.

a public who, by virtue of the historical record and memory, along with a multitude of conspiracy theories, would take the apparent connection at face value.

