

# 'KLUXER THE KLAN

First Lesson in the Science and  
Art of Klankraft



## THE PRACTICE OF KLANISHNESS

Imperial Instructions  
Document No. 1,  
Series AD. 1918, AK. LII.

Being Official Instructions in K-uno in  
the border Realm of Karacter from  
the one who traversed the  
Realm of the Unknown,  
wrested the solemn Secret  
from the grasp of Night  
and became the Imperial  
Master of the great lost  
Mystery. Words of timely  
Wisdom from the soul of  
the great Imperial Wizard,  
who out of Mystic Dark-  
ness brings Light.

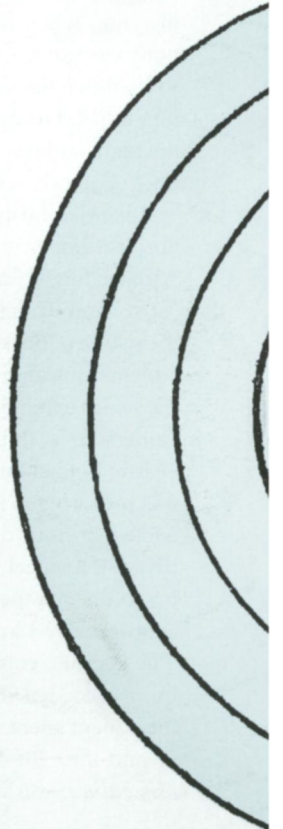
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AN IDEA OF THE MONTANA COUNCIL FOR DEFENSE

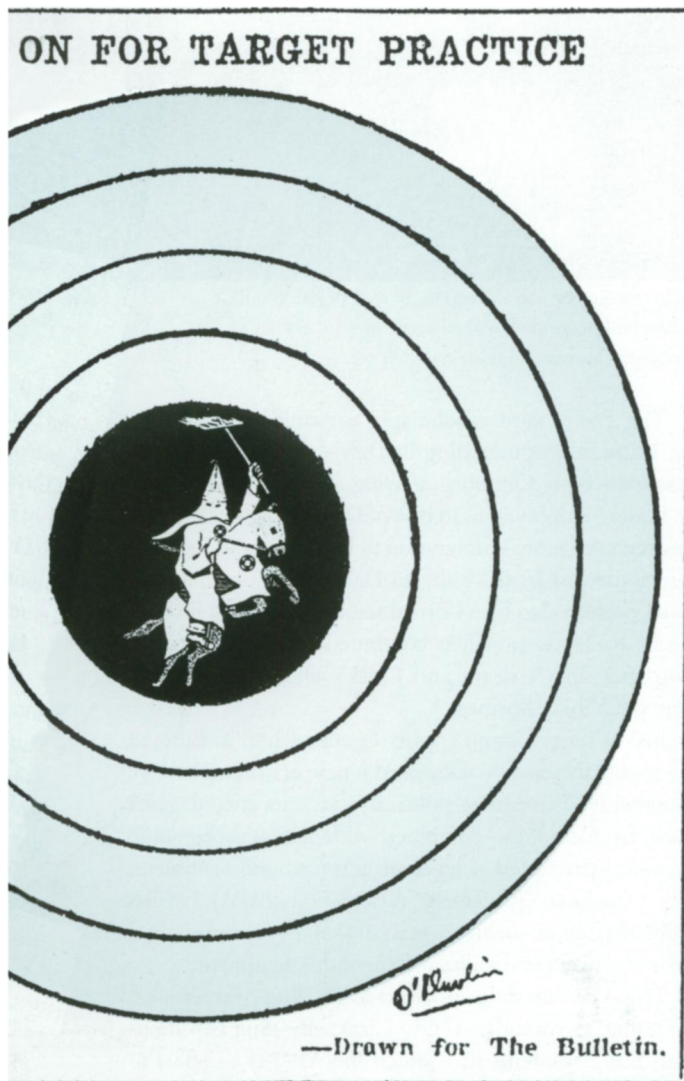


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# 'BLUES'

## CONFRONTS CATHOLICS IN BUTTE, MONTANA, 1923-1929

by Christine K. Erickson



Just over 5,100 Montanans signed up when the Ku Klux Klan marched into the state in mid-1921 to recruit white, native-born Protestants. Perhaps the joiners were influenced by the superpatriotism and “100% Americanism” advocated by the notorious Montana Council of Defense that was active during World War I. Whatever the attraction, the Klan met mixed reactions in Butte with its diverse ethnicity and large Catholic community, as reflected in the target (above) published in the *Butte Bulletin* on September 23, 1921.

OUR MEN HAVE ORDERS TO SHOOT ANY  
KU KLUXER WHO APPEARS IN BUTTE.

—*Sheriff Jack Duggan*

WE REALIZE THAT BUTTE IS THE WORST PLACE  
IN THE STATE OF MONTANA, SO FAR AS ALIENISM  
AND CATHOLICISM ARE CONCERNED.

—*Grand Dragon Lewis Terwilliger*

**I**n mid-1921 the Ku Klux Klan marched into Big Sky country to recruit white, native-born, Protestant Montanans who were willing to part with a ten-dollar initiation fee for the privilege of wearing the hood and robe. It was not altogether surprising that just over 5,100 Montanans welcomed an organization that preached patriotism and “100% Americanism.” Native-born citizens may have felt uneasy over the influx of immigrant miners, or perhaps the mood of superpatriotism and intolerance championed by the notorious Montana Council of Defense during World War I still lingered in the early 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever Montanans may have thought, the Klan’s Imperial officials surely viewed the state as a potential source of revenue and an opportunity to increase their political clout. It was within this spirit that on September 16, 1923, Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans, the Klan’s national leader, welcomed the Realm of Montana into the Invisible Empire. Complete with appropriate “herewiths” and “hereby ordereds,” the official charter briskly divided Montana into four Provinces, appointed Hydras and Great Titans to assist in governing, and sternly laid out the financial responsibilities of the Montana Klan to the Imperial Palace. Although these financial obligations would plague the Realm, such problems, and others, surfaced only later. The future appeared promising, at least to newly anointed Grand Dragon Lewis Terwilliger. In his first official circular, an optimistic Terwilliger pronounced that the Klan embodied “the very soul of America, and [was] growing by leaps and bounds from coast to coast.” Montana Klansmen were “now ready to get into the harness and operate as a real Realm organization.”<sup>2</sup>

Anxious to become part of Terwilliger’s vision, the Butte Kontinental Klan No. 30 received a charter on December 26, 1923. From its official recognition until its demise in late 1929, the chapter encountered experiences like no other Klan in the state. Surrounded by a large Catholic immigrant community, in a city where gambling, prostitution, and drinking flourished, Butte Klansmen soon discovered their limitations while enviously eyeing the growth of chapters in “real 100% towns” such as Livingston.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the Butte Klan’s situation was unique compared to others in the West, including those in Montana, precisely because of the immigrant mining culture that had simmered with religious tensions since the late nineteenth century. Largely due to the city’s unwelcoming atmosphere, Butte Klansmen increasingly drifted toward the fraternal and social aspects of their organization.





Butte did not seem a likely place for militant Protestants, but anti-Catholic sentiment had thrived there well before the Klan arrived. Rival Copper Kings Marcus Daly and William A. Clark had laid down divisive religious lines in 1888. The Butte view above was taken on July 17, 1922, from Montana Technical College.

**A**t first glance, Butte, Montana, hardly seemed a place where a white supremacist and militant Protestant order could prosper. Yet anti-Catholic sentiment existed well before the Ku Klux Klan arrived. The War of the Copper Kings, the much publicized and explosive feud between mine owners Marcus Daly and William A. Clark, contributed substantially to the city's religious tensions. Both Clark and Daly were Irish-born Democrats, but Clark was a Protestant, an Orangeman, who, by association, supported Great Britain's Irish policy—a slap in the face to any Irish Catholic. Daly, on the other hand, “wore his Irish Catholicism like a badge” and belonged to several Irish nationalist sects.<sup>4</sup> These differences came to the fore during Clark's 1888 campaign to become territorial representative and resulted in Daly and Butte's Irish Catholics voting overwhelmingly for Thomas H. Carter, the Republican candidate. Clark never forgave Daly for his loss, and the battle for domination of the mining industry started in earnest and continued until Daly's death in 1900. The divisive religious lines laid down in 1888, however, would last longer.

The Protestant-Catholic split certainly played out in the Butte mines, including in Daly's and Clark's hiring practices. Irish Catholics arriving in town could count on finding employment in one of Daly's mines, a fact that spurred even more immigration to Butte and undoubtedly contributed to Irish loyalty to Daly. Clark, on the other hand, preferred to hire Cornishmen, who had no love for the Irish. These practices continued through the 1920s, long after Daly's death and Clark's effective retirement from the mining business.<sup>5</sup>

Just as religious and ethnic tensions flared in Butte in the 1890s, the decade witnessed a new era of intolerance nationwide. Increasing political and educational gains made by Catholics—combined with national economic tensions—prompted a wave of anti-Catholic sentiment. The American Protective Association (APA), which claimed 2 million members at its peak in 1896, represented most organized and militant form of this sentiment.<sup>6</sup>

The APA certainly appealed to the Butte Protestants, including, as rumor had it, to Clark.<sup>7</sup> By 1894 two thousand Butte residents had joined the APA in an effort to oust the “dupes of Rome” from American institutions. Members even published a weekly, the *Examiner*, to keep

1. *Butte (Mont.) Miner*, July 16, 1921. Epigraphs are from *Spokane (Wash.) Spokesman Review*, October 23, 1923, copy in file 1, box 1, Collection 236, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Eastern Washington Historical Society, Spokane (hereafter KKK, EWHS); and Lewis Terwilliger to Mrs. D. Cohn, January 23, 1929, file 6, box 5, *ibid.*

2. Lewis Terwilliger, “Official Document 1,” 1923, file 31, box 4, KKK, EWHS.

3. Floyd S. Cofer to J. A. Bray, March 30, 1925, file 5, box 1, KKK, EWHS; J. A. Bray to Floyd S. Cofer, April 14, 1925, *ibid.*; David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875–1925* (Urbana, Ill., 1989), 239.

4. See David M. Emmons, “The Orange and the Green in Montana: A Reconsideration of the Origins of the Clark-Daly Feud,” *Arizona and the West*, 28, no. 3 (1986), 234.

5. *Ibid.*, 236–37.

6. Donald Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle, 1964), 180. The number of APA members is difficult to determine because of the secret nature of the order. Humphrey J. Desmond, *The A.P.A. Movement* (1912; reprint, New York, 1964), 12, 70, 71, believed that membership hovered around 1 million at its peak. The *Butte (Mont.) Examiner*, March 26, 1896, claimed that 2 million people had joined the APA by the beginning of 1895 and that membership had grown to 3.5 million by the next year. W. H. Trynor, president of the *North American Review*, asserted in June 1896 that the APA had a membership of 2.5 million.

7. Emmons, “Orange and the Green in Montana,” 233.

8. *Ibid.*, 115; Michael P. Malone, *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864–1906* (1981; reprint, Helena, Mont., 1995), 66; *Butte (Mont.) Examiner*, June 15, 29, August 3, 1895;



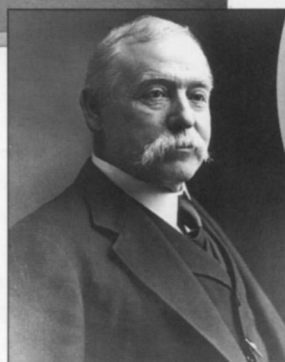
fellow "APAer's" informed of local events and target all who "wore the chains of Romanism."<sup>8</sup> Violence also marked the APA's arrival in the mining city: a riot on July 4, 1894, sparked by APA banners loudly displayed in two local saloons, pitted Irish Catholics against APA supporters and left one person dead and hundreds injured.<sup>9</sup> On the political front, in 1895 the Butte APA successfully backed sympathizer William Thompson for the mayor's seat, but two years later Thompson lost his bid for reelection when Marcus Daly "turned his thousands of miners loose" to vote for the opposition, an Irish Catholic candidate named Patrick Harrington.<sup>10</sup> By that time, the APA's membership and influence had peaked nationwide, with a corresponding decline in Butte. Not until 1923 was this reservoir of Butte nativism again tapped.

Ambitions of creating a national movement that would claim 3 to 5 million members at its peak in 1923-1924 and reach a sparsely populated western state such as Montana likely never entered the mind of Klan founder and fraternalist William Joseph Simmons. When Simmons resurrected the Klan from the graveyard of southern Reconstruction in 1915, he was oblivious to the order's potential power. But when Simmons teamed up with publicity and fundraising experts Edward Y. Clark and Elizabeth Taylor, the obscure southern fraternal order blossomed into a thriving business of national scope. As the Klan expanded its empire nationwide, however, internal tensions erupted at the Atlanta, Georgia, Imperial headquarters. Simmons,

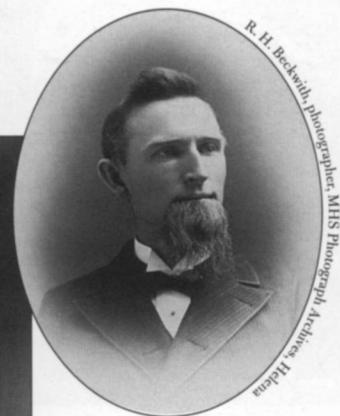
Emmons, *Butte Irish*, 98-99. On March 26, 1896, the *Examiner* stated that 3,952 Butte citizens had registered for the APA. APAers usually ended correspondence by signing "F. P. and P.," Yours in Friendship, Purity and Protestantism. Montana APAers were more enthusiastic and signed off with "F. P. and P. T. W. T. P.," Yours in Friendship, Purity and Protestantism, and to Hell with the Pope. Kinzer, *Episode in Anti-Catholicism*, 51.

9. Federal Writers' Project, *Copper Camp: Stories of the World's Greatest Mining Town, Butte, Montana* (New York, 1943), 55-59; *Butte (Mont.) Daily Intermountain*, July 5, 1894.

Mining magnates Marcus Daly (below, center) and William A. Clark (left, standing above his name) were both Irish-born Democrats, but Daly was an ardent Catholic and Clark a Protestant Orangeman. Their differences resulted in virulent rivalry when Catholic voters defeated Clark in his 1888 campaign to become territorial representative. He was beaten by Thomas H. Carter (below, right).



W. H. Hoover, photographer,  
MHS Photograph Archives, Helena



R. H. Beckwith, photographer,  
MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

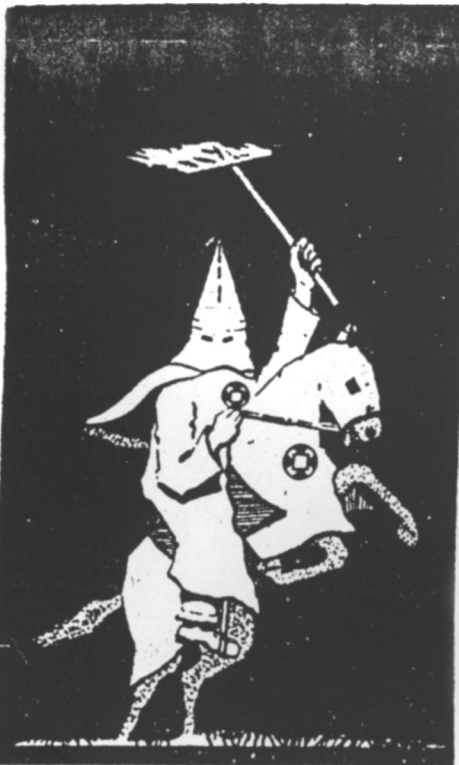
content with designing fraternal rituals, found himself on the losing end of a battle with Hiram Wesley Evans, an ambitious dentist from Dallas, Texas. By November 1922 Evans wore the purple hood and robe of the Imperial Wizard.<sup>11</sup>

Dreams of expanding his order's influence must have crossed Evans's mind in 1924 during the first of his two trips to Montana. Evans's one stop, in Billings, allowed him to assure isolated Klansmen, around 1,300 in attendance, that they were indeed an important and welcome component of the national organization, and he expressed confidence that the principles of "100% Americanism," Protestantism, and white supremacy would continue to draw more candidates into the Empire's fold. Yet Klan officials must have felt some apprehension when the organization began making inroads in Butte, since, as the APA had discovered, Catholic immigrants cared little for an organization that referred to the Pope as "an impatient, meddling individual controlled by a Jesuitical lot of assassinous villains."<sup>12</sup>

10. Federal Writers' Project, *Copper Camp*, 47; Emmons, *Butte Irish*, 98-99.

11. David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965* (New York, 1965), 105-7; Arnold S. Rice, *The Ku Klux Klan in American Politics* (Washington D.C., 1962), 7; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York, 1967), 10.

12. *Billings (Mont.) Gazette*, November 15, 1924; *Butte (Mont.) Examiner*, August 3, 1895. There were over fifty local Klans in Montana during the 1920s.



100 PER CENT AMERICANS  
ARE WANTED  
None Others Need Apply  
**KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN**  
ADDRESS  
P. O. Box 90  
Butte, Montana.

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*Livingston Enterprise*, October 11, 1948, MHS Library, Helena

"Ku Klux Klan Is Organizing" declared the article (right) that appeared in newspapers across the state during the week of August 8, 1921. The piece remarked on the Klan recruitment ad (above) that appeared in the *Butte Miner* on July 16, 1921, and noted the anonymity within the organization. One Klansman whose identity was known was Grand Dragon Lewis Terwilliger, a former Livingston mayor and leading Montana educator.

In this unwelcoming atmosphere, Kleagles, or field agents, had to know whom to contact. As a list of charter members of the Butte Klan reveals, Kleagles arriving in Butte most likely searched for recruits in the business community, as they did when recruiting in other parts of the country. Among the first members of Kontinental Klan No. 30 were a lawyer, two managers for large department stores, the president of Montana Motors, an accountant, a broker, and the manager of Western Fuel (who later became mayor of Butte).<sup>13</sup>

The Klan also knocked on the doors of fraternal organizations for prospects, particularly the Masons, the nation's largest secret fraternal order, which had a whites-only clause as well as solid anti-Catholic credentials stretching back to the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Although the Masons never officially sanctioned the relationship, the Masonic lodge no doubt served as a pipeline for the Kontinental Klan.<sup>15</sup> Judging from obituaries, fifty-eight of the sixty-eight Klansmen who died in Butte between 1933 and 1980 were Masons as well.<sup>16</sup> The percentage who belonged to both groups may have been even higher since it is quite probable that many of the Klansmen who left Butte after the late 1920s also enjoyed dual membership.

Between 1923 and 1929 approximately 181 residents of Butte "made the honorable decision to forsake the world of selfishness and fraternal alienation and emigrate to the delectable bounds of the Invisible Empire." The data indicates that members came from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, with most working in the trade, mechanics, and transportation industries. Of the thirty-nine Klansmen who worked in the mines, less than half worked

for the Daly-affiliated Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Most worked in the Elm Orlu, a Clark-owned mine. About a quarter of the men who worked in transportation jobs drove for the Butte Electric Railway, another of Clark's businesses, suggesting a parallel between the Klan's membership and the Protestant-Catholic split in the mining industry.<sup>17</sup>

Comparing employment data between Butte and other Montana Klans is difficult

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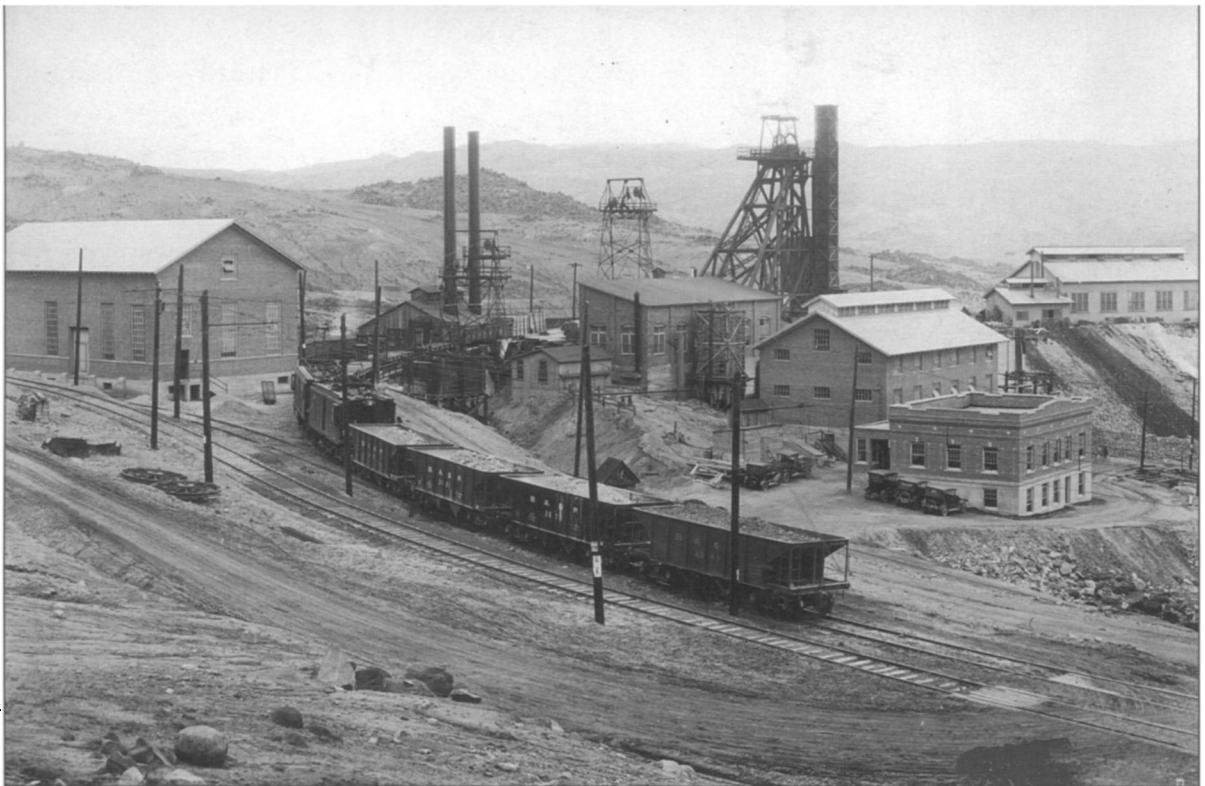
# KU KLUX KLAN IS ORGANIZING

FAMOUS ORDER OF RECONSTRUCTION DAYS GETTING  
FOOTHOLD IN MONTANA. •

Was Power in the South When That  
Section Was in the Hands of Negroes  
and Carpetbaggers; Only  
Native Born Americans Are Eligible  
to Membership. •

Noticed by an advertisement in the  
Butte Miner which asked 100 per  
cent Americans to communicate with  
P. O. box 90, the Ku Klux Klan, a  
fraternal order incorporated in the  
state of Georgia in 1916, is said to be  
forming its organization in Butte.  
No names have been made public in  
connection with the organization but

MHS Library, Helena



Klan members in Butte came from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, with most working in the trade, mechanics, and transportation industries. Of thirty-nine miners who belonged, most worked at the Elm Orlu, a Clark-owned mine, shown here.

because the records of Kloreros, the state conventions, provide only a few names. However, we do know that the Klansmen who served in leadership positions as Hydras or on a Realm committee included five lawyers, three doctors, an assistant high school principal, a pharmacist, a state superintendent of the Montana Children's Home Society, and at least ten ministers.<sup>18</sup> Grand Dragon Terwilliger was the former mayor of Livingston and "among the leading educators of Montana."<sup>19</sup>

Only one Klansman from Butte, Walter Aitkin, a master mechanic at Elm Orlu, acted as an officer, which suggests that either leaders looked to white-collar workers to assist in Realm activities or that Butte Klansmen rarely participated other than at the local level. The latter may have well been the case. Sales clerks, machinists, and conductors would have had a hard time securing money and time off work to attend the two-day state conventions.

Moreover, any activity sponsored by the Klan, whether conventions or outdoor meetings, increased the chance of being discovered. Butte Klansmen likely chose not to risk it.

Indeed, the desire for secrecy soon became an obsession for Butte Klansmen. Keeping the order hidden from the outside world while at the same time nudging the community toward accepting the Klan's agenda, however, proved to be a difficult task. The most basic requirement, a room in which to meet, proved hard to find, and Kontinental Klansmen spent much of their time skipping from one fraternal meeting place to another, adopting a new public name with each move. During the Kontinental Klan's first year, members enthusiastically called themselves the "Protestant Men's Community Club," the "Protestant Men's Welfare Council," and the "Magian Society" (the name of one of the group's "subcommittees"

13. Charter membership list, file 16, box 2, KKK, EWHS. The list included forty-two names with occupational information supplied for twenty-six.

14. Former Kleagle Edgar I. Fuller, writing under the pseudonym Marion Monteval, claimed that Klan membership "was directed from the beginning to a conquest of the Masonic fraternity." "Nearly all" Kleagles were Masons. Imperial headquarter's letters concerning the Masons support his claim. See Marion Monteval [Edgar I. Fuller], *The Klan Inside Out* (1924; reprint, Westport, Conn., 1970), 53-61. See also Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana, Ill., 1981), especially pp. 36, 41, 53.

15. For instance, when Knights of Columbus members uncovered a partially filled Klan membership list in the Roundup, Montana, Masonic lodge, the Masons pronounced the incident an "embarrassment." Louise G. Rasmussen, interview by Laurie Mercier, October 11, 1984, tape

1, Oral History 812, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena; C. Oliver, interview by author, August 2, 1990, notes in possession of author.

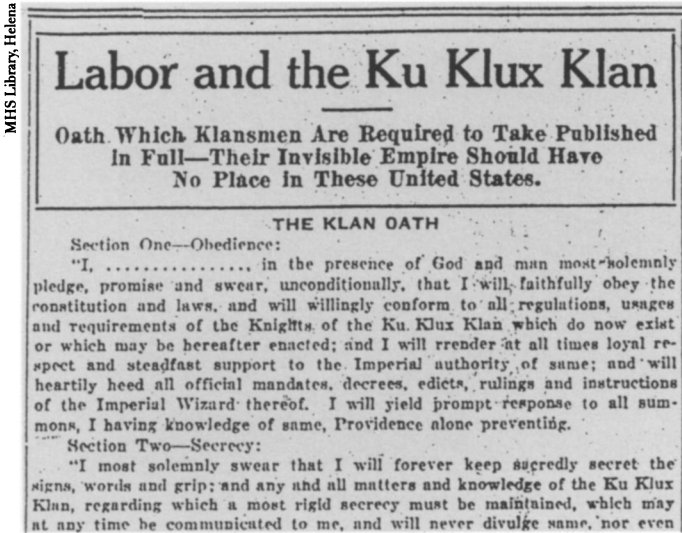
16. *Butte (Mont.) Miner*, *Butte (Mont.) Daily Post*, and *Butte Montana Standard* contained obituaries for sixty-eight Klansmen.

17. Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran* ([Atlanta, Ga.], 1916), 22; Butte city directories, Klecktoken receipts, and obituaries provided occupational information about Kontinental Klansmen.

18. Names are from Kloreros and personal letters, in KKK, EWHS; occupations are from Butte city directories.

19. *Progressive Men of the State of Montana* (Chicago, 1902), 883; Tom Stout, ed., *Montana: Its Story and Biography*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1921), 234. Lewis Terwilliger characterized as a man of "strong mentality" and "one of the best known Masons and Knights of Pythias in Montana."

Organized labor in Butte detested the local Klan. This clipping from Butte's *Labor Bulletin*, April 18, 1924, proclaimed, "Their invisible empire should have no place in these United States."



that conducted ritualistic work) and paid rent to both the Scandinavian Brotherhood and the Odd Fellows. In the spring of 1924 members held meetings in the Moose Hall, but in July the Exalted Cyclops, the Klan's local president, announced that the hall was "indeed insecure," too costly, and too small. When Klansmen moved to the Knights of Pythias Hall, "considerable discussion" concerning the new public name took place. It required a committee of seven to conclude that the "Butte Men's Literary Club" would be appropriate, and they promptly ordered matching stationery for business transactions.<sup>20</sup> For reasons that are unclear, Klansmen once again packed up their robes and Klorans, the Klan's "sacred book," and moved to the Masonic Hall in nearby Walkerville the next year. The public name changed accordingly, this time to the unlikely "Krishna Improvement Association." This paranoia continued off and on for at least a year with occasional

meetings at the Odd Fellows Hall under the alias of the "Monarch Club" or at a Klansman's home.<sup>21</sup>

The hopscotching about town and frequent name changing strongly indicate that the Kontinental Klan desired to escape scrutiny from other fraternities and from the community at large. In one case members cited expensive rental rates and inadequate space in which to conduct ritualistic work (the naturalization ceremony, the Klan's initiation rite, required three rooms) as a reason for the frequent moves, but these concerns played a secondary role to their fear of discovery. Whether or not the more established fraternities even cared about the much smaller Klan is not as important as the Klansmen's belief that they cared. In reality, the Klan posed little competition to other orders since many fraternalists enjoyed multiple memberships, though fraternalists may have been disturbed by the Klan's presence, especially because it was fast developing an unsavory reputation across the country as a terrorist order.<sup>22</sup>

The secrecy Klansmen held so dear did not fool the mailmen of Butte. Letters showed up months late; batches of pamphlets and membership cards failed to arrive. As early as 1924, Kligrapp Floyd Johnson, the secretary of the local Klan, requested Terwilliger to ask the Imperial Palace to not leave a "mark of any kind that will even suggest Atlanta or the Imperial Palace or the KKK." Frustrated, Johnson made an unsuccessful bid for postmaster in 1924 to, as he put it, "stop the mysterious straying of mail" in the community. (Johnson believed himself qualified since he had "100% American qualifications . . . and [was] a member of one real American order.") Johnson also assumed an alias to ensure that packages from Terwilliger and the Imperial Palace arrived safely. In one instance he informed Terwilliger, not without a hint of pride, that he would use "Knut Karl Knuteson, a real genuine Nordic name" for his next order of robes. In another case he requested that the Imperial Palace mail a box of supplies to the post office and address the package to "August Wilhelm" so that Johnson could pick them up without causing suspicion.<sup>23</sup>

Kligrapp Albert W. Jones experienced his share of problems after Johnson left in 1925. He remarked to

20. Minutes, May 7, November 21, 1923, March 26, July 15, 19, 1924, February 14, 1925, March 9, 1926, May 22, 1929, files 4, 6, 7, 11, box 3, KKK, EWHS; rental receipts, files 38, 39, box 1, and files 1, 2, box 2, *ibid.* See also J. S. Kula to Charles Steele, April 30, 1925, file 40, box 4, *ibid.*

21. The Kloran contained the ritualistic dialogue for the opening, closing, and naturalization ceremonies and explained the "way of the Klavern," descriptions of proper behavior such as how to properly enter the Klavern.

22. The *Butte (Mont.) Miner* printed many stories about the violence associated with the Ku Klux Klan, from escapades in Oklahoma to murders in Mer Rouge, Louisiana.

23. Floyd Johnson to Lewis Terwilliger, October 10, 1924, file 3, box 5, KKK, EWHS; Floyd Johnson to Dr. L. D. Johnson, March 29, 1924, file 24, box 1, *ibid.*; Kligrapp to Imperial Palace, January 10, 1925, form K-114, *ibid.*

24. Albert Jones to Lewis Terwilliger, February 13, 1928, file 27, box 1, KKK, EWHS; Lewis Terwilliger to Albert Jones, December 9, 1927, file 3, box 5, *ibid.*; minutes, January 6, 1928, file 5, box 5, *ibid.* Johnson was banished "for conspiracy to upset the harmony within the Klan . . . and for marked insubordination against its lawful authority." For reasons that are unclear, the Klan lifted the banishment two years later. Minutes, January 20, 1925, file 7, box 3, KKK, EWHS; minutes, February 9, 1927, file 9, *ibid.*

25. J. B. Kula to Lewis Terwilliger, April 27, 1924, file 1, box 5, KKK, EWHS. The Riders even used oil on their cross instead of gasoline for a more reddish glow. Oliver interview.

26. Lewis Terwilliger to W. C. Husband, July 22, 1924, file 1, box 5, KKK, EWHS; Cofer to Bray, March 30, 1925; J. A. Bray to Floyd S. Cofer, March 31, 1925, file 5, box 1, *ibid.*

27. Terwilliger to Cohen, January 23, 1929.





Terwilliger in 1928: “I dont [*sic*] think it is necessary to mark my mail personal. The last number of letters you sent, the envelope was torn on the end.” An anxious Jones even began to wait for the mailman each day to make sure that no one else would see the mail and steal it. The situation deteriorated to the point that Terwilliger finally secured a post office box for the Kontinental Klan under his son’s name to ensure that the mail would “come back to the right hands.”<sup>24</sup>

The atmosphere in Butte also hindered the formation of the Royal Riders of the Red Robe, the alternative fraternal home for those who believed in the Klan’s basic principles but were, regrettably, born outside of the United States. The request of Oregon-based Supreme Ragon Stephen Tighe for a list of twenty-five eligible candidates that he could organize and train met with considerable apprehension among Butte Klansmen. Besides the expense involved, a worried J. B. Kula told Terwilliger, there was the possibility the Klan’s cover would be blown. Kula added, “We do not think it advisable . . . for him [Tighe] to come here because in all probability some of the legal fraternity might see him, and begin to surmise the object of his visit. Things here, as you know, are very tender.” The Riders, or the Krusaders as the order was later called, did form in Butte, but the Kligrapp’s minutes and personal correspondence rarely mentioned the Riders except for an occasional reference to their organizational problems, which were perhaps due to the small number of “desirable” foreign-born candidates.<sup>25</sup>

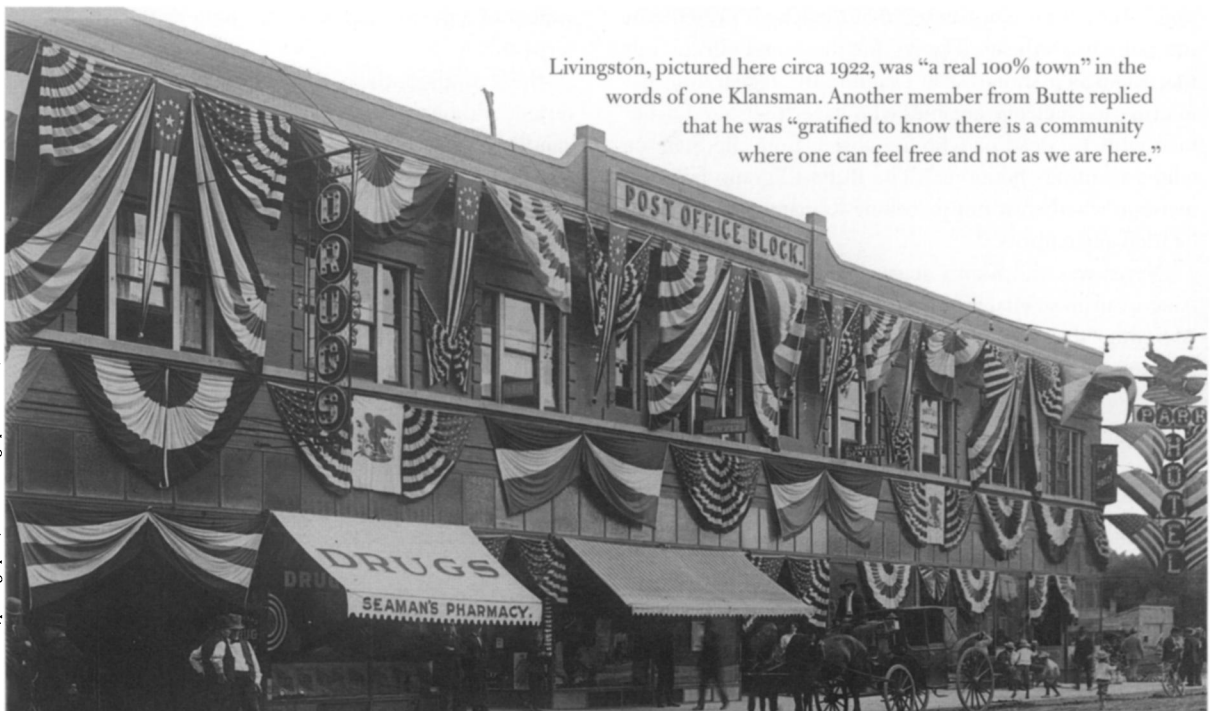
The Kontinental Klan’s concern for secrecy extended beyond the borders of Butte. Correspondence between Terwilliger, the Kontinental Klan, and other Montana Klans indicates that Klansmen across the state were expected to exercise great caution when dealing with Butte. Terwilliger warned in 1924 that Butte Klansmen’s

identity should not be revealed, even to other Klansmen, “unless necessary.” Kontinental Klansmen noticed an appreciable difference between the atmosphere of Butte and other cities. After member Floyd S. Cofer transferred to the Livingston Klan in 1925, for instance, he gushed in a letter to Butte Kligrapp James Bray that “Livingston is sure a real 100% town.” Bray replied that he was “gratified to know there is a community where one can feel free and not as we are here.”<sup>26</sup>

Yet the Kontinental Klan occasionally found supporters. One seventy-one-year-old Butte woman, a former writer for the APA’s *Examiner*, frequently corresponded with Terwilliger and kept him posted on local conditions. Addressing her letters to the “Brothers of America,” Mrs. D. Cohn ranted about the number of Catholics in Butte and the “Protestants [who] are going to sleep at the switch.” Mrs. Cohn often gave Terwilliger gifts. On one occasion she sent a miniature replica of a little red schoolhouse; another time she sent a small statue of Catholic presidential candidate Al Smith in a coffin (“where he belongs” applauded Terwilliger). The Grand Dragon assured Cohn that the Klan was present in Butte “to give Protestants and real Americans a fair deal,” but his was an optimistic sentiment.<sup>27</sup>

Not surprisingly, Kontinental Klansmen were eager to throw a wrench into the political status quo in Butte. They were particularly interested in education. At least two Klansmen ran for election to the school board in 1924 on the Citizens Ticket. The Citizens Ticket insisted that religion should not be a factor in hiring school teachers, although, admittedly, its three candidates were “on the Protestant side of the fence.” (All three were soundly defeated in the election.) The Klansmen’s efforts to effect change in the educational system did result in the formation of several investigatory committees, such as the

Livingston, pictured here circa 1922, was “a real 100% town” in the words of one Klansman. Another member from Butte replied that he was “gratified to know there is a community where one can feel free and not as we are here.”



F. M. Alkin, photographer, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena





Michigan State University Library, East Lansing

Montana Klansmen, threatened by the immigration of nonwhites and non-Protestants to the United States, would have liked to mandate the hiring of native-born and public-educated schoolteachers, but knew such a law would never pass the state legislature.

one that in 1924 warned that 85 percent of Butte teachers were Catholic. Legislation mandating native-born and public-educated teachers could solve this problem urged Kligrapp Jones, but the chances of the state legislature even considering such a bill were

minuscule. Moreover, Terwilliger opted for a “defensive” posture in Montana political affairs because of the small numbers of Klansmen in office.<sup>28</sup>

Although the Klan did not have enough power to swing Butte elections, members carried out “good work” in the community. In 1924 at least one Kontinental Klansman volunteered to guard each of the thirty-three precincts’ polling places for any signs of wrongdoing and to “stop if possible” opponents who attempted “to steal [the] election.” Terwilliger emphasized that the Klan’s presence at the polls was crucial, if only “for the moral effect,” but that Klansmen should also examine the registration list in order to challenge enemies who have “registered many men who are dead or who are absent from the State or who are entirely fictitious.” The Butte Kligrapp failed to mention whether or not patrolling Klansmen ever apprehended any culprits.<sup>29</sup>

Never was the Klan’s sense of duty and the call to Americanism so vital as during the 1928 presidential race. Al Smith, “the candidate of Rum and Romanism,” elicited the worst fears and prejudices of Klansmen. One Boze-

man Kligrapp predicted that “in a few years we and our families will be slaves” if Smith were elected. No doubt existed about the Kontinental Klan’s point of view. Members wrote a scathing three-and-a-half-page response to a *Butte Miner* editorial that defended the Democratic candidate. The Klan blasted the editors and the Democratic Party for backing Smith, “a Tammanyite of small education, who has no knowledge of world affairs and longs for the return of the day when he can put his foot on the rail and blow the froth off.” Only editors who were Catholic or Protestant “of the luke warm variety” could defend the “autocracy” of the Catholic Church. Irate Klansmen also objected to the “decidedly insanitary condition of affairs in the kissing of the [bishop’s] ring by so many different lips.” The *Butte Miner* elected not to print the letter.<sup>30</sup>

Kligrapp Albert Jones prepared for the election battle by corresponding with several Protestant orders, including the International Protestant Foundation, American Publicity League, and Society of Protestant Americans. More anti-Catholic propaganda was available through the Rail Splitter Press, self-proclaimed as the largest antipapal publishing house in the country. For a fee, Kontinental Klansmen could pick up the latest literature, such as the *Dastardly Deeds of Irish Sinn Feiners*, *God’s World against Romanism*, or *The Anti-Catholic Joke Book*. If supplied as well with offerings from the *Fellowship Forum*, the Klan-backed magazine that touted itself as “A National Voice for Protestant Fraternal America,” the devout Klansman would be well informed about the upcoming election. James S. Vance, the *Fellowship Forum*’s general manager, told Jones that if he wanted “a Protestant American newspaper that will bore down under the hide of alienism, boozeism and Romanism,” he must submit his order for the November 3 issue immediately to beat the rush. “This number,” promised Vance, “will actually sizzle with facts” about the Catholic conspiracy to destroy America’s system of government “with Al Smith as the head of the serpent.”<sup>31</sup>

Such propaganda, however, only preached to the converted. Although Republican candidate Herbert Hoover handily defeated Smith for the presidency, 53 percent of voters in Silver Bow County cast their ballots for Smith, making it one of two counties in Montana where Smith won. The Kontinental Klan’s hopes fared little better with the county ticket. Sadly responding to Terwilliger’s query, Jones remarked that voters elected candidates, who were,

28. *Butte (Mont.) Miner* April 3, 5, 6, 1924; minutes, May 6, 1924, file 6, box 3, KKK, EWHS; Albert Jones to Lewis Terwilliger, November 20, 1928, file 27, box 1, *ibid.*; “Official Circular,” March 1925, file 5, box 5, *ibid.*

29. Minutes, April 24, 1924, file 6, box 3, KKK, EWHS; Lewis Terwilliger, “Official Circular,” October 30, 1924, file 5, box 5, *ibid.*

30. Bozeman Kligrapp to Albert Jones, July 18, 1928, file 27, box 1, KKK, EWHS; July 3, 1928, letter to the editor, “A few objections to an editorial appearing in the *Butte Miner* of June 27, 1928,” file 27, box 1, *ibid.*

31. Robert J. Warren to Albert Jones, 1928, file 27, box 1, KKK, EWHS; International Protestant Foundation, Inc., membership solicitation, October 20, 1927, file 23, *ibid.*; membership card, file 28, *ibid.*; *Rail Splitter Catalogue* (Milan, Ill., n.d.), copy in file 10, *ibid.*; James S. Vance to Albert Jones, October 18, 1928, file 27, *ibid.*



Opposed by the Montana Klan as the “candidate of Rum and Romanism,” 1928 presidential aspirant Al Smith won Butte’s Silver Bow County with 53 percent of the vote, even though Herbert Hoover (below) defeated him handily nationwide. At left Smith campaigns in Helena.

except for the sheriff, “all wet and Catholics.” Results from the race for the state legislature proved equally dismal: “Bryon E. Cooney is a journalistic prostitute [*sic*]. . . . Mr. M. J. English is an attorney and is an Irishman with a brogue . . . [and] Mr. S. T. Pallard is a teller in the Metal Bank, poor Mason and wet, his soul is such as he would not call his soul his own.” This effort to change the Catholic machinery, or at least make a small dent in it, marked the last gasp of the Kontinental Klan’s political aspirations.<sup>32</sup>

The Kontinental Klansmen’s failure to “clean up the community” equaled their political impotence. Two potential targets, bootlegging and the illegal consumption of alcohol, did not capture much of the Butte Klan’s attention, which is surprising considering the secret order’s aggressiveness toward these vices in other parts of the country. If, however, the Kontinental Klan had decided to crack down on violators of Prohibition, members would have had their work cut out for them. During the 1920s Butte enjoyed a reputation as Montana’s leader in consumption of illicit liquor, and the almost-daily arrests of bootleggers and destruction of distilleries in the city prompted the *Kalispell Times* to assert that Silver Bow was “probably the most open county in the state.” Still, in one instance, a committee of two Klansmen set out to investigate a “moonshine joint” in the back of the First National Bank. In another case, the Exalted Cyclops ordered a Klansman to make inquiries about a fellow member who had been arrested for handling liquor. Unfortunately, the Kligrapp never mentioned the results of these investigations and what, if anything, they yielded.<sup>33</sup>

Minutes from the Klan’s meetings reveal that members usually met in Klonklave twice a month, more if the Exalted Cyclops thought it necessary. After performing the opening ceremony and listening to the reading of the minutes from the previous meeting and any official documents from Realm or Imperial headquarters, Klansmen



settled down to discuss the business at hand. Often an appointed member read from the national Klan’s lecture series on subjects such as Christ as the Klan’s role model or the Klan’s obligations in the community. At other times, the desecration of the American flag, the oath of the Knights of Columbus, or the decoration of the graves of Klansmen captured the attention of the men. Racism permeated the minutes as members jumped into lively discussions about the supremacy of the Nordic race, intermarriage between blacks and whites, or “the evils existing in this community.” Almost as an afterthought, one Kligrapp dutifully noted that during a meeting “a motion [was] made and carried” for the Exalted Cyclops

32. Ellis Waldron and Paul B. Wilson, *Atlas of Montana Elections, 1889–1976* (Missoula, Mont., 1978), 115; Albert Jones to Lewis Terwilliger, November 13, 1928, file 27, box 1, KKK, EWHS. Jones and Terwilliger continued to correspond about the character and track records of Butte candidates for the state ticket at least through 1930.

33. *Kalispell (Mont.) Times*, September 7, 1922; minutes, November 9, 1927, file 9, box 3, KKK, EWHS; minutes, September 16, 1925, file 7, *ibid.* Butte was quick to violate the Volstead Act after Montana enacted its prohibition law in January 1919. The *Butte Evening News* reported on January 1, 1919, that police raided two saloons, one where over thirty men were drinking. The April 11, 1924, *Butte Miner* noted that Butte wanted “a cleanup of the bootleggers for it is heartily tired of the way bootleggers have been cleaning up here.” See also Malone, *Battle for Butte*, 74; and Federal Writers’ Project, *Copper Camp*, 10.

Miles City Daily Star, October 12, 1924

# KNIGHTS of the KU KLUX KLAN

and

## WOMEN of the KU KLUX KLAN

### *Their Principles and Ideals*

1. Tenets of the Christian Religion.	5. Religious Liberty.	9. White Supremacy.
2. Upholding of the Constitution of the United States.	6. Freedom of Speech and Press.	10. Limitation of Foreign Immigration.
3. Sovereignty of our State Rights.	7. Compulsory Education in Free Public Schools.	11. Closer Relationship Between Capital and American Labor.
4. Separation of Church and State.	8. Protection of Our Pure Womanhood.	12. Just Laws and Liberty.

*This organization is not anti-Jew, anti-Catholic nor anti-Negro but we do restrict our membership to native born white, Protestant, Gentile, American citizens. In exercising this right we do not become "anti" in any respect. Consider the fact that the Jewish people have their B'nai B'rith, the Catholics their organizations known as the Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of America. Consider also that every organization in the United States places some limitation of one nature or another upon its membership.*

### ARE WE NOT ENTITLED TO THE SAME PRIVILEGE?

<p style="text-align: center;">We stand for law enforcement by the legally constituted officers of the law. At no time do we take the law into our own hands.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">If you are a native born White, Protestant, Gentile, American, Citizen, of good moral character, and of legal age, you are eligible for membership in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Your Country is your religion—Klan membership is your religion.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P. O. BOX 101 MILES CITY, MONTANA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I am a real American and in opening this window for which Dr. Ku Klux Klan stands, I would like to become a member.</p> <p>Name: _____ Home Address: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">All Correspondence Strictly Confidential.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">We stand for Religious Liberty and recognize the constitutional right of every man to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, be he Jew, Roman Catholic or Protestant, regardless of any reports you may have heard to the contrary.</p>
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Even while declaring the Klan not "anti in any respect," this newspaper advertisement listed among the Klan's principles white supremacy and limitation of foreign immigration.

to tell "six nigger stories." Usually, the men finished the evening with the closing ceremony and, in later years, a banquet.<sup>34</sup>

That Klansmen in Butte were prejudiced is not a surprising discovery. The minutes revealed, however, that there was more to the Kontinental Klan meetings than the telling of racist jokes. Since they were so constrained socially and politically, members spent much of their time in fraternal pursuits. Klansmen organized committees to report on sick members and to provide appropriate gifts. One committee, for instance, over a period of time gave an ailing "brother Parker" four dozen donuts, assorted fruit, and a box of cigars. Parker especially appreciated the cigars and expressed his gratitude by asking Kligrapp Jones to "give my best regards to all the Boys." Klansmen also sent flowers to sick mothers and wives on numerous occasions. Jones's mother described the Klansmen who remembered her seventy-seventh birthday as her son's "good thoughtful friends."<sup>35</sup>

Klansmen's efforts to provide for their fellows went beyond purchasing cigars. In early 1924 they proposed a relief fund, separate from the Klan treasury, to provide financial assistance for needy members or for deceased Klansmen's families. Reminding members that this was not a "burdensome" request, the committee suggested

that Klansmen could raise funds by giving "dances, card parties, smokers, or any other of numerous social activities." In addition, a relief box could be placed "in a conspicuous place" in each Klonklave for direct donations. Although the fund never gained acceptance as an official relief effort, unofficially Kontinental Klansmen attended to their own. One example was the case of a Klansman who fell ill in late 1923 and died the following year. As soon as the sick committee reported that he was suffering from financial difficulties, the Exalted Cyclops instructed it to start soliciting funds. Collection efforts quickly netted a hundred dollars.<sup>36</sup>

Besides providing assistance for members, the Kontinental Klansmen spent a good deal of time debating rules and regulations, suggesting amendments to Klan bylaws, proposing new in-house rules, and discussing the more esoteric details of the ritualistic work. Most interesting were the deliberations on the use of shortened versions of the opening, closing, and naturalization ceremonies. (Just what the shorter versions omitted remains unclear, but probably much of the ritualistic dialogue was excluded.) Klansmen occasionally objected to paring down the rituals, such as the time in 1924 when the Klavern naturalized two candidates using the ceremony's short form. After the meeting, the perturbed Kligrapp "commented on the manner in which the work was put on" and urged

34. "National Klan Educational Program," 1923, copy in file 13, box 4, KKK, EWHS; minutes, January 20, April 14, November 24, 1925, file 7, box 3, *ibid*.

35. Minutes, November 28, 1928, file 10, box 3, KKK, EWHS; minutes, December 14, 1927, file 9, *ibid*.; James L. Parker to Albert Jones, January 10, 1929, file 27, box 1, *ibid*.; Mrs. Jones to "Albert's friends," January 9, 1929, *ibid*. Minutes, June 9, 1925, July 1, 1927, February 22, 1924, files 6, 7, 9, box 3, KKK, EWHS, are just three examples of the Klan's relief efforts.

36. Relief Committee report, February 24, 1924, file 21, box 3, KKK, EWHS; minutes, February 13, 22, March 12, 1924, file 6, *ibid*.; special meeting minutes, March 26, 1924, file 6, *ibid*.

37. Minutes, October 21, 1924, file 8, box 3, KKK, EWHS; minutes, March 23, 1927, file 9, *ibid*. Walkerville, as well as numerous other nearby towns—Anaconda, Whitehall, Jefferson Island, and Cardwell—had Klan chapters.





the Exalted Cyclops to reopen the meeting for comment. During a 1927 meeting a Klansman made a motion to initiate a candidate with the shortened ceremony, but the other members voted against it. Still, in another instance, Klansmen repeated the initiation ceremony for a member who had previously received the shortened version at Walkerville "which was very unsatisfactory." Debate over the rituals indicates that some Klansmen were struggling to retain the traditional elements of the order just as secret fraternities everywhere were trying to cope with questions of protocol in the face of slipping membership and growing apathy. Obviously, rituals imparted significance, not only the meaning and message of the ritual but also in the enforcement of ceremonial aspects of secret fraternalism—the solemnness, responsibility, secrecy, and exclusiveness.<sup>37</sup>

As the Butte Klan's membership dwindled by the mid-to late 1920s, however, meetings assumed a more relaxed air. Members may have conducted the long form of the initiation ceremony, but they tended to use the shorter closing ceremony. The Kontinental Klan and the Jefferson Klan from Whitehall, a town thirty miles east, held joint gatherings with greater regularity, so long as there was no conflict with Masonic meetings. Often a banquet followed the meeting, and refreshment committees began to replace political ones as the two Klans negotiated the cost of hot dogs, pickles, and cigars.<sup>38</sup>

**T**wice a month for six years Kontinental Klansmen slipped quietly to their Klaverns, formed their secret investigatory committees, and muttered darkly over the state of affairs in Butte. Constrained by their very surroundings, however, Klansmen focused their energies on fraternal pursuits, which, as it turned out, were not enough to keep members interested.

Klansmen became apathetic in part because of the organization's impotence in Butte. Pressure from national headquarters to increase membership placed heavy demands on local orders. Klan officials judged the worthiness of local orders by their ability to provide a steady flow of cash into Imperial coffers. The institution of fraternal funds to be distributed locally or the hosting of festive banquets failed to impress.

When compared with other Butte fraternal organizations, the Kontinental Klan, on the balance, came out

the loser. Secret fraternities such as the Masons and the Knights of Pythias were well established and accepted while the Klan was relatively new. Although potential members would not find in the other secret fraternities the vehement anti-Catholicism and racism or the aspiration to political involvement, most secret fraternities harbored enough nativist sentiment to satisfy at least some of these longings.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, membership in the Kontinental Klan failed to offer insurance benefits or a viable avenue for furthering one's social contacts; indeed, it was probably a disadvantage to those seeking social betterment. Other orders provided camaraderie, entertainment, and fraternal insurance, along with a generous dose of secret mysteries and dramatic ceremonies. True, the Klan typified secret fraternalism with its solemn rituals, binding oaths, and escape from the ordinary, but secret fraternalism was one thing, having to hide one's membership from the community was another.

Another of the Klan's disadvantages was the order's economic demands. The toll on Klansmen's pocketbooks began with the ten-dollar initiation fee called a Klecktoken. It continued with the purchase of the robe and helmet and ritualistic degrees, quarterly taxes to Imperial and Realm headquarters, and local dues.<sup>40</sup> Klansmen were also expected to contribute to political and fraternal funds and subscribe to the *Kourier*, the Klan's official magazine, and other publications.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the cost of belonging added up in a hurry. These expenses on top of other fraternities' demands might force a financially strapped fellow to question whether membership was worth the price. Many decided it was not. One telling letter came from J. A. Orrell in December 1927. Orrell stated firmly:

Now Mr. Jones I do not want the boys to think I am trying to side step my duties or obligations, but I am not in a position to keep up my payments. . . . I have had to drop all but my Masonic order and I am not paid up with them. . . . So if the Boys will grant me a withdrawal card I certainly appreciate it then when I feel able to go on I will join again.<sup>42</sup>

He never did. Indeed, Klan numbers continued to tumble. By the time Jones read Orrell's letter, membership in the Kontinental Klan had slipped to fifty-five.

Butte Klansmen also had to contend with the negative publicity the Klan received. For an organization that took itself seriously, nothing could be worse than scorn,

38. Minutes, July 1, 1928, file 10, box 3, KKK, EWHS; C. U. Brown to Albert Jones, August 3, 1928, file 27, box 1, *ibid.*

39. Noel P. Gist, "Secret Societies: A Cultural Study of Fraternalism in the United States," *University of Missouri Studies*, 15 (1940); Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, N.J., 1989), 131-32.

40. For a few months in late summer, the Klecktoken increased by five dollars and included the cost of a robe. Lewis Terwilliger, "Official Cir-

cular," November 11, 1924, June 24, 1927, file 5, box 5, KKK, EWHS; "By-Laws of Kontinental Klan No. 30," December 26, 1923, copy in file 35, box 1, *ibid.*; "Constitution and Laws of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan" (Atlanta, Ga., 1926), 34, copy in file 1, box 4, *ibid.*

41. Minutes, March 21, 1924, file 6, box 3, KKK, EWHS.

42. J. A. Orrell to Albert Jones, December 17, 1927, file 26, box 1, *ibid.* Besides revealing that he could no longer afford to pay his dues, Orrell's choice of fraternities clearly indicates that the Masons registered a notch higher on the fraternal hierarchy than the Klan.



By the mid-1920s the Butte Klan faced a no-win situation. Opposition by local law enforcement, including Jack Dugan (below); competition from mass entertainment, including movies, sports, radio programs, and a growing network of service clubs; and an association with murder and violence in the minds of many people caused membership to dwindle. At right Emmet Burke (left) and Ed Craney do the *Night Owl* program on KGIR radio, and below, center, is Butte's Rialto Theatre.

Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, Butte, Montana



of which there was plenty in the mining city. The editors of the *Butte Miner* described the Klan as a "farce comedy," a "consummate sham," and suggested that the secret order's "conception of 100 per cent Americanism . . . appear[s] to

be largely based on hate." As one man stated defiantly in 1923, "Those Ku Kluxers ain't going to get me. . . . [They] ain't scaring nobody." Certainly, members could not count on local law enforcement for support; sheriff Jack Duggan curtly asserted in his "official greeting" that Klansmen would be "shot down like wolves."<sup>43</sup>

Besides a critical press and the "false prejudices" of some aliens (as an irate Klorero put it), the Continental Klan, like other secret fraternities, was competing in a losing battle with mass entertainment. By the mid-1920s Americans were sampling new forms of recreation, including cars, radio, sports, and movies. These read-

43. *Butte (Mont.) Miner*, December 2, 1923, January 13, 1924, July 22, 1921; *Anaconda (Mont.) Standard*, March 23, 1923. "Slim" made this statement to the police after he received a threatening message signed by the Klan.

44. Klorero minutes, 1928, file 29, box 4, KKK, EWHS; Gist, "Secret Societies," 41-43; Charles W. Ferguson, *Fifty Million Brothers: A Panorama of American Lodges and Clubs* (New York, 1937), 232-33; Charles C. Alexander, *Crusade for Conformity: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920-1930*, Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association Publication Series, vol. 6, no. 1 ([Houston, Texas?], 1962), 79.



Al's Photo Shop, photographer, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

ily available and increasingly popular activities beckoned to those who wanted to keep in time with a changing American society. Moreover, recreational and sports clubs were cheaper than fraternities. The rapidly growing network of service clubs such as the Lions, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs offered an alternative

for those who desired camaraderie and business contacts but who wanted to dispense with the traditional and time-consuming rituals of secret fraternalism. In particular, the Klan's "crusading spirit . . . seemed out of place" in this atmosphere where Americans were ready for "a long, prosperous, happy weekend."<sup>44</sup>

How could secret fraternities possibly keep up with the wide variety of entertainment, where each week and each season ushered in different activities? Men simply became too busy to give the same kind of attention to secret fraternities that they, or their fathers, had in the past. This trend was most notable among younger men. Since secret fraternities depended on a steady supply of young people to replenish the ranks, the decreased interest in fraternal mysteries on the part of the young spelled imminent disaster. Secret fraternities had once provided a traditional rite of passage from youth to manhood. Now, instead of learning "the masculine message of the rituals," rituals that glorified and emphasized conventional values, young men looked to their peers for approval and for guidance. As historian Mark Carnes remarked in his study of secret fraternalism, "the movement was dying of

45. Carnes, *Secret Ritual*, 51-55; Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood*, 260. See also Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, Conn., 1989), 151-56. Ages for sixty-five Klansmen derived from cemetery records and membership receipts (average age = 39.2; median = 37.5; range = 23-77). File 1, box 3, KKK, EWHS.

46. Albert Jones to Lewis Terwilliger, February 14, 1931, file 27, box 1, KKK, EWHS. By 1931, with the Depression deepening across the country, local Klans were dissolving, and the Realm of Montana had re-formed into the Grand Klan of Montana. If folks wanted to remain involved in the Klan but did not have a local chapter, they could still keep in touch with Klan activities through Terwilliger, Grand Dragon of the Grand Klan.



old age.” The Klan had to face these concerns just as much as other secret fraternities: the median age of Kontinental Klansmen in 1925 was 37.5 years.<sup>45</sup>

Additional problems plagued the hooded order. Scandals rocked the Invisible Empire, especially when Indiana’s powerful Grand Dragon, D. C. Stephenson, was convicted of second-degree murder in a highly publicized trial. The whippings, lynchings, and other acts of violence long associated with the Klan made not only front-page news but also a mockery of the Klan’s claim that it was simply a Protestant fraternal order looking out for the interests of all Americans. Finally, the Klan’s attempts to purge communities of bootlegging, immoral activities, corruption, and, especially, of Catholics who held jobs in the arenas of politics and education failed miserably. The Klan could not prevent Al Smith’s nomination as standard-bearer for the Democratic party in 1928. People still drank. Gambling and prostitution still existed. And Catholics, along with an increasing number of second-generation immigrants, were settling down nicely, adjusting to American society as Americans were adjusting to them.

Kontinental Klansmen likely shifted uncomfortably in their robes as they witnessed these changes. Just because members had turned more toward the secret fraternal aspects of the order did not mean that they closed their eyes to the world around them nor did it mean that the Klansmen were any less anti-Catholic or racist because of their impotence in the community. It simply meant that the Kontinental Klan faced a no-win situation. Not accepted by the community at large, it could not successfully pursue

an activist program. Emphasis on the fraternal aspects of the order only put the group in competition with other fraternities and new forms of entertainment.

The Klan’s experience in Butte suggests that, although not immune to either Imperial decree or scandal, local Klansmen often hobbled along as best they could, bending a few rules here and there when it suited them and trying to create a community of like-minded comrades. As with other Klans, intolerance and bigotry dominated Klan halls in Butte, but the men who joined, at least in the early years, were often respected community leaders culled from fraternal networks. Indeed, this article confirms the importance of the fraternal connection, especially with the Masons, in soliciting candidates.

Certainly, the appeal of belonging to the Klan did not diminish for Albert Jones. In 1931, two years after the Kontinental Klan disbanded, he wrote a letter to Terwilliger hoping for a bit of fraternal help in finding his brother a job. Jones also wanted to purchase the January *Kourier*. Ever cautious, Jones requested that the Imperial Palace send the magazine “under a plain cover” and without the “letter K 30” after his name. Butte may have forgotten about the Ku Klux Klan, but fear of exposure still gnawed at the soul of the former Kligrapp.<sup>46</sup>

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By the late 1920s Butte citizens were putting the Klan behind them, and many communities in Montana no longer had local chapters. Though Butte Klansmen could keep in touch with Klan activities through Grand Dragon Terwilliger, they still feared exposure.



Al's Photo Shop, photographer; MHS Photograph Archives, Helena