

"Ku Klux Klan

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The Ku Klux Klan, or KKK as known today, was started in the spring of 1866. Six Confederate veterans formed a social club in Pulaski, Tennessee. This KKK only lasted a short six years, but left tactics and rituals that later started in generations. (Ingalls, 9) The Klan was a small group very much in secrecy at first. The exact date of the beginning is unknown. Despite all of the secrecy the six KKK members initiated new members to join their social club. (Ingalls, 9)

A year after the creation of the KKK, the onetime social club joined the raising campaign against the Republican Reconstruction. The "new" direction of the Klan was well planned and organized. The Klan was now ready to expand to a bigger group. The Klan adopted a prescript. This was an organizational structure permitting the Klan to spread across the south. New members had to be over 18, pay \$1, sworn to secrecy, recruits pledged to "protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless, from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal." The highly centralized plan for expanding the KKK, spread so rapidly that most chapters operated alone. The founders of the KKK lost control, and it became impossible to talk about a single KKK. Yet Klan activities still followed a common pattern throughout the south. (Ingalls 11-12)

The Klan now started to spread across Tennessee. At first the Klan used tricks to keep blacks "in their place". At first, the Klan would ride around on horses, and with their white robes, and white pointed masks, try to scare blacks. They would try to act like ghost with their white uniforms. Unfortunately, the Klan quickly moved to more violent pranks.

(Ingalls, 12) The Klan would now suppress blacks. The Klan leaders proved unable to control their followers. Although the violence was often random, there was a method in the madness. The victims were almost always black or if white, associated with the hatred of the Republican party. The Klan had fear of black equality and sparked attacks on schools setup for freed slaves. The Klan would warn the blacks not to attend school, and would scare the teachers, most from out of state, to leave town. (Ingalls 12-13)

Many groups started forming around the south called the Ku Kluxers. The Klan was being noticed as "The Invisible Empire". However and wherever Klan's were formed they all followed the same pattern set by the Tennessee Klan. The Klan became the greatest terror in 1868, when their attacks were against Republicans and elect democrats. Thousands of blacks and whites fell victim to the murders and beatings given by the KKK. (Ingalls, 13)

In 1869, General Forrest, the Grand Wizard of the KKK ordered Klansmen to restrict their activities. The Klan was getting out of control, and Congress passed a Ku Klux Klan Act in 1871. By the end of 1872, the federal crackdown had broken the back of the KKK. Because of the restriction and

the Act passed violence was isolated but still continued.

The KKK was dead, and Reconstruction lived on in southern legend . This would not be the last of the KKK.

On the night of Thanksgiving in 1915, sixteen men from Atlanta, Georgia climbed to the top of Stone Mountain and built an altar of stones on which they placed an American flag. They then stood up a sixteen foot long cross and burned it. One week later, this group applied for a state charter making it "The Knights of the KKK, Inc." This was put in effect during the Reconstruction. The new Klan at first received little attention. Only in time, it became the biggest and most powerful Klan in history. Klan membership was limited to native-born, white, Protestant American Men. The Klan message was clearly to appeal to people who were troubled by abrupt changes in American Society. (Ingalls, 16-17)

Many believe that the biggest growth of the KKK began when Colonel Simmons, considerably the founder of the new KKK, linked up with Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler. In June 1920, Clarke and Simmons signed a contract that guaranteed Clarke a share of Klan profits. Clarke and Tyler would receive a good amount of money for every new KKK member, which the fee would be \$10.00, \$4.00 went to the Kleagle (an official in the KKK), \$1 went to the King Kleagle (state leader of the Klan), \$.50 to the Grand Goblin, and \$2.50 to Clarke and Tyler. The final \$2.00 went to Colonel Simmons. This promotion brought over 85,000 new Klan members, and over \$85,000 in Klan profits. The KKK was still due for more publicity, in the 1920s many Americans felt threatened by the variety of recent changes , and in 1920 most Americans were living in cities. Many Americans were scared that cities would be dominated by Jewish and Catholic immigrants. Americans also thought their country was coming apart at the seams. The KKK presented itself as the "100 percent Americanism." This slogan proved popular because it meant everything to the frightened man who flocked into the Klan. By the end of 1922 there were approximately 1,200,000 members in the Klan. This time was supposedly the highest number of Klan members ever. (Ingalls, 24-25)

One of the greatest Klan strengths came in 1925 when Klan members from all directions poured into the nations capitol Washington DC on August 8th, 1925 a mammoth parade began. At the head the Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans, and 40,000 Klan members followed in their robes and hoods, but no masks. 200,000 friendly spectators lined the parade and applauded as the Klan made their way to a rally at the Washington Monument. The impressive demonstration was intended to show the Invisible Empire never lost any of its strengths. (Ingalls 63-64)

Even though the parade was grander then expected, it could not conceal the fact that the Klan was diminishing, the empire was collapsing. The peak of the Klan was actually in 1924. The Klan was forced to admit its growing weakness.

Time answered quickly, by 1930, the Klan was almost invisible, less than 40,000 members nationally. The story of the

collapse is very complicated. (Ingalls, 63) In 1924, Congress responded to the growing hatred to foreigners by restricting immigration into the U.S. Before the restriction, immigrants were pouring in at over 1 million immigrants a year before World War 1. So when the Congress restricted the immigration it was a major reason for the collapse of the KKK.

(Meltzer, 60) Another main reason for the collapse was that Klansmen also fought amongst each other. In 1927, Wizard Evans resorted to a lawsuit to quell open in the Realm of Pennsylvania, which was the highest Klan member state in the northeast. This divided the group deeply. The lawsuit that Evans filed was for \$100,000 which sent his Pennsylvania opponents into submission. It seemed that the Klan was falling apart in many areas. For example, In New Jersey the Mayor of Atlantic City called for an anti-Klan meeting. 4,000 angry rioters showed for the anti-Klan meeting. Only several hundred Klan members came to support the Klan. The anti-Klan rioters began to maul the Klansmen and beat them so bad the Klan barely escaped. In Chicago a council made up of a Jew, a Catholic, and a black was appointed to recommend legislation on the Klan. Illinois passed a state law saying that no one was allowed to wear a mask in public. In New York there were anti-Klan acts also. However, after all this against the Klan they still managed to stay alive as did their prejudices. (Ingalls, 65 and 69)

The Klan fell into what is called the depression years. With the growing poverty in America, Klan members fees became a luxury which only a few Americans could afford. Even though it looked like everything was going all wrong for the KKK they stayed alive again. The north was almost totally diminished with the Klan. There were still some Klan rallies on Long Island, Hudson River Valley, cities in New Jersey, Ohio, and Michigan, but only at the most 1,000 Klan members in each area. (Meltzer 64-65) Meanwhile in the south Klansmen still continued to resort to violence. Beating any whites who would cater to blacks. Also to ensure white supremacy, the KKK tried to keep blacks from voting. Klansmen would invade black sections of cities and leave messages on cards for blacks to stay away from the voting polls. (Meltzer, 66)

By 1936, the Klan started calling communism the main enemy. During this depression Florida's Realm became the biggest KKK movement, with around 30,000 members and the Klan started to show light of coming back again. In the fall of 1946 the Klan burned its first cross atop Stone Mountain. This was showing a sign of coming back for the Klan. From California to New York the Klan started showing signs of life. (Meltzer, 55) Since the Klan was coming back it began to meet strong opposition again. Attorney General Tom Clarke of Texas said he would use every law in the book to break up the Klan. In many states and cities laws and ordinances were designed to hamper the Klan. The Klan continued to be violent by using terrorist acts. They planted bombs in churches and schools there would be used be either Jews, Catholics, or blacks. (Ingalls, 66)

After that the Klan went back and forth starting to gain

members and then losing them again, starting to rally in certain areas but then dying out again. The Klan always and still does have violent attacks against Jews, Catholics, and blacks.

For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, whites began to worry about losing their jobs, and special programs were being set up for blacks, and this concern led to new Klan activity which is still in effect today. Today in the Klan there are approximately 10,000 Klan members. (World Book Encyclopedia J-K, 310)

In conclusion, the Klan has formed and diminished many times in the past. If the Klan tries to keep adding members, there will always be opponents there to try and stop the Klan. It is a real shame that a social group only made for the purpose to scare freed slaves turned into such a horrible sight today, and will always continue to haunt America. It seems that the Klan will never give up on trying to start up another successful Klan . The U.S. must do something about this in our country today. People have to realize that everyone is equal, and from now on it will always be that way. There will no longer be white supremacy like the KKK is trying to preach along with other groups such as the Skinheads. If the Klan ever starts coming back strong again in the U.S., The U.S. is going to have to worry and set laws so it never happens again.