

KKK plants seeds of hate in Daviess County

By Jerry Long
c.2025



The **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)** is an American Protestant-led Christian extremist, white supremacist, far-right hate group. It was founded in 1865 during Reconstruction in the devastated South. Historians have characterized the Klan as America's first terrorist group. The group contains several organizations structured as a secret society, which have frequently resorted to terrorism, violence and acts of intimidation to impose their criteria and oppress their victims, most notably African Americans, Jews, and Catholics.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 23 August 1921, p.1:

**Offer Is Being Made To Organize
Ku Klux Klan Branch In Owensboro**

Although surrounded by deep mystery and secrecy it is known that an effort is being made to organize a branch of the Ku Klux Klan in Owensboro, but so far, according to information available, with but meagre success.

Dr. G. S. Long, of Tulsa, Okla, who registered here on August 6 was, so far as can be learned, the first person to approach local citizens on the matter. He left a representative here and there have been at intervals other men interested, in the effort here since then. N. P. Stewart, of Muskogee, Okla., who is stopping at a local hotel, was reported to have been with Dr. Long and to be pushing the effort to organize the branch here. Mr. Stewart, however, denies knowing Dr. Long, or having any connection with the Ku Klux Klan.

Several local citizens are said to have been approached in regard to the organization, but so far no one has been found who will admit being a member. It is known that an organizer recently met with a small group of local citizens and presented his proposition which received a very cold response. When he was asked what the purpose of the organization was he said it was to foster Americanism, but refused to go into details. Fuller information would be given persons joining the organization, he said. Such an indefinite proposition failed to warm up any interest in those to whom it was presented, it is said.

Considerable interest has been manifested in the statement issued Monday by Mayor Geo. Weissinger Smith, of Louisville, in which he said that the so-called Ku Klux Klan, a branch of which an attempt is being made to organize in Louisville, "is promoted by paid organizers and is not a patriotic organization." He declares that it is nothing more than an effort to stir up old race prejudice of reconstruction days and that he will use every lawful means to prevent and suppress its growth.

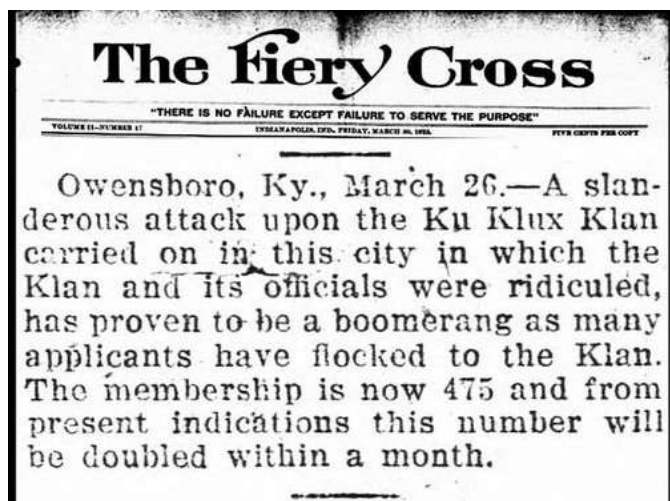
When Mayor Calhoun's attention was called to this announcement of Mayor Smith on Monday he said that he had not heard of any attempt being made to organize a branch of the Ku Klux Klan here and that he did not know much about the organization.

The Ku Klux Klan in answering Mayor Smith's statement claims that the organization already has 3,000 members in Louisville. It claims 150,000 members in the United States.

Mayor Smith's announcement came following the publication of advertisements in Louisville papers soliciting members for the organization.



The Fiery Cross, Indianapolis, IN, Friday, 30 March 1923:





Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 4 June 1923, p.1A - headline:

**FIERY CROSSES,
EMBLEMS OF KLAN
ARE BURNED HERE**

One At Chautauqua and
One At Bon Harbor;
Needless Run Is Made By
Fire Department.

.... This is the first physical indication of the presence of the nightshirted order in Owensboro or Daviess county, although last February, an organizer was said to have been at work in this part of the state.... etc.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 5 August 1923, p.1B - headline:

**KU KLUX KLAN DENIED
USE OF CHAUTAUQUA
PARK BY CITY HEADS**

Mayor Tells K. K. K. Envoy
He Will Use Every Legal
Step To Prevent Holding
of Meeting.

Thinks Organization Will
Only Cause Strife Be-
tween Home People.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 10 August 1923, p.1:

**Willow Beach Is Scene of Burning
Of "Fiery Cross" By Ku Klux Klan**

Sputtering and apparently having a hard time becoming fully ignited in the clammy night air of Willow beach, a "fiery cross," acknowledged emblem of the Ku Klux Klan, flared on the island opposite Riverview park, about 9:40 o'clock: last night, casting its reflection onto the high and muddy Ohio and attracting a large crowd to the water front.

Apparently the intended display had been well advertised among friends, for there were easily more than a hundred cars in the vicinity of the park, with 300 people, men, women and children, assembled at the river's edge awaiting the exhibition.... etc.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 14 August 1923, p.12 - headline:

**City Officials Consider Fine And
Jail For Wearing Masks Publicly**



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 21 August 1923, pp.1 & 10:

**KLAN ASKS USE
COURT LAWN;
TURNED DOWN**

County Judge, Mayor, County Attorney Give Views on Klan
OPPOSE SPEAKING

Man Declaring Intention Become Owensboroan Presses Klan Side

The fiscal court of Daviess county voted this afternoon not to allow use of the courthouse square for a Ku Klux Klan speaking advertised by the Klan to be held there Wednesday night.

Elmer Little, who told the Inquirer that he signed the petition to permit the meeting merely as a citizen of Owensboro, and C. E. Gipe, who was at the courthouse when the petition was presented and sat beside Squire Horn in support of it, declared, when interviewed following the meeting, they did not know what action would be taken, if any, toward carrying out the intention to have a Klan lecturer here. They said that the move was not their move, but that of Clifford Miller, recent arrival in Owensboro. What his plans would be they said they had no way of knowing.

Elmer Little, J. W. McFarran and Clifford Miller petitioned the fiscal court this morning to

permit the organization known the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan to hold a public speaking on the courthouse lawn Wednesday night. Little and McFarran were not present in person. Miller told the court he had taken a three-year course in the Southern Theological seminary, a Baptist institution of Louisville, and would move to Owensboro as soon as he could locate a home here.

When the reading of the petition was completed Commissioner W. N. Horn moved the court it be received and filed and concurred in. There was no second to Mr. Horn's motion. It was then asked by Commissioner Riney why there were not some citizens present to support the petition.

Mayor's Opinion Asked For

J. W. C. Huff and Charles Gipe then took seats beside the commissioner as representative citizens endorsing the petition.

Commissioner Riney called the attention of the court to the fact the city officials, including the mayor, had denied the use of the Chautauqua park for holding the speaking of the Klan, and he said he believed it would be a slap in the face of the mayor for the court to grant the permit, and as the court had deferred to the wishes of the mayor in the matter of giving permits to persons to use the lawn of the court house, he believed the commissioners should be requested to express an opinion in this regard.

Judge McFarland told Miller, who was present in the court room, that the city, with the Elks Lodge had appropriated a large sum of money for the upkeep and beautification of the county property and the court had always felt it should permit the mayor to have concurrent jurisdiction with the court in granting the use of the lawn for any purpose.

Membership Representative. Said

Miller told the court, as stated in the petition, there would be no masks or regalia worn and that no offense would be offered to anyone attending the speaking and the speaker himself, said to be a national figure, would be the only one present not a citizen of the county. He said in Owensboro there were preachers, bankers, doctors and business men members of the Klan. He said that it numbers among its members some of the best citizens of the town and county.

"It will be seen by the secrecy of the order, which is part of its ritual, that members cannot come before the court, without disclosing their identity," Miller said. "There should be no reason presented to this court why a public speaking should not be held. We have heard of none so far. If there is any one objecting to this holding of a public speaking, we want to know who it is, so we can carry it back to the members of the Klan." were the concluding words of the theological student from Louisville.

Petition Presented

An unexpected turn was taken at the end of the discussion this afternoon of the motion not to allow use of the courthouse lawn for a speech by a Ku Klux Klan speaker Wednesday night.

After various speeches had been made by Commissioners Riney and Horn, and Mr. Horn had called for the ayes and noes vote on the motion Judge McFarland was called for his vote. He rose to his feet slowly and started to speak. Mr. Horn asked County Attorney Miller to preside at the meeting of the court.

Judge McFarland said to Mr. Horn: "I am still the presiding officer of this court, sir." He hesitated for a moment and began:

"I have been a public officer of this county since 1910, when I was elected county school, superintendent. I haven't dodged many issues put up to me since the people the county entrusted me with their business. Perhaps if I had an I had learned the business of artful dodging, I might be better off, but I'm not beginning that now.

Speaks Out Feelings

"Too many people in this country have too little backbone, and when I say that I don't mean there should be hard headedness on matters which might be handled otherwise. But it has been by practice when I believed I was right to speak out my feeling, and I propose do that now.

"This country was founded by people from the four corners of Europe who were seeking a place to worship God as they chose. They came to America for that purpose and found a safe refuge for their religious freedom. For hundreds of years we have believed in that, in this country and the countries of Europe have now adopted our plan.

"I am not a of the Klan. Perhaps I could not become a member of the Klan. I don't know. But I do know from what I read that this organization does promote lawlessness. It promotes strife amongst peaceful people, who have lived together in peace and harmony for centuries.

Believes Lawlessness Aided

"As the chief peace officer of this county I want to say that the actions of this organization, members who put masks over their faces and go forth to intimidate and terrorize our citizens. are violating the penal statute of this state. When they disguise themselves and go about in bands and seek to take the law into their own hands they are promoting lawlessness. We have officers and courts to punish law breakers. and they are the proper tribunals, and not the disguised criminal on the roadside.

"For these reasons, gentlemen, I vote for this motion.

"And Mr. Miller," he said, addressing Clifford Miller, "you might report that back to your organization."

Commissioner Riney also arose to his feet and, addressing Miller, the theological student, who had in pseudo-threatening manner informed the court his klansmen would want to know how each member of the court stood, said: "Also report how I stand on this proposition, Mr. Miller."

Mayor Hickman Speaks

Mayor Hickman accepted the invitation of the fiscal court to meet with it in the afternoon, and when the court had convened, he was invited to express his opinion and did so prior to the vote being taken.

The mayor said there had been spent a lot of money on the courthouse lawn and it was now very much better looking than it had been in the past. He objected to allowing any assemblage of people who, he said, would undoubtedly destroy its beauty.

Mayor Hickman then in a few words recounted some of the alleged acts of klansmen as reported from various cities, and speeches reported having been made in other places.

In concluding, the mayor said: "I appeal to you commissioners to not grant the use of the court house lawn for this meeting. For a hundred years our people have lived in peace and harmony, trading with one another, inter-marrying. and without any serious disturbance.

Says Would Invite Trouble

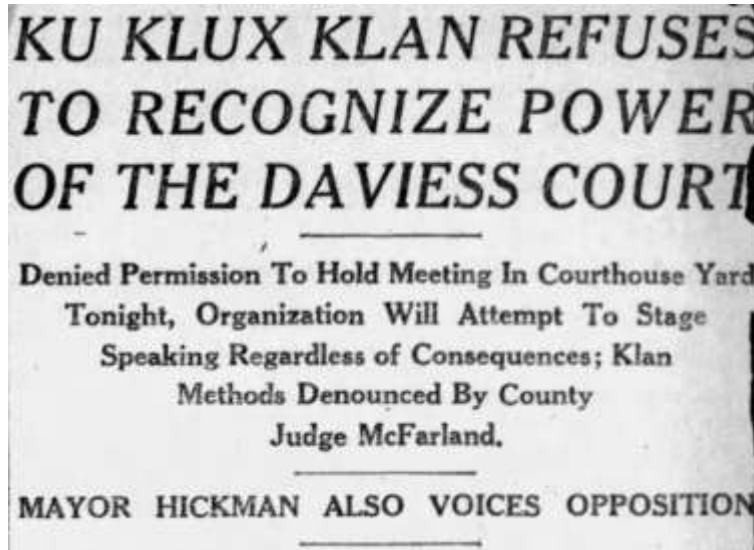
"To permit a speaking in behalf of this organization, known to be a concern that promotes strife, would be to invite trouble into community, and we do not want it. We do not want this organization in our city. It can do no good, but can do a lot of harm.

"These strangers come into our midst, get what money they can out of our people and leave our folks with the bag to hold, after they have started meanest situation possible. They create sores than cannot be healed in 25 years. Why have this among our people?"

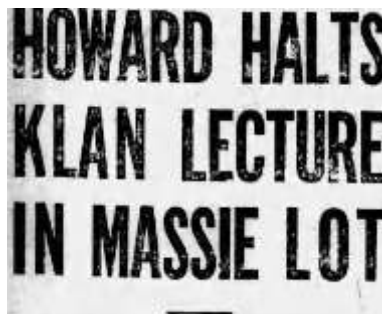
"I appeal to you, gentlemen, in behalf of the better element of our citizenship, in behalf of the good feeling that should prevail among all of us, and does now prevail, that you do not grant permission to hold this speaking in the public court house yard."



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 22 August 1923, p.1 - headline:



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 23 August 1923, pp.1 & 3:



Lecturer's Attack on Catholics Is Followed By Arrest
BE TRIED TUESDAY
Two Held on Charge of Interfering With Officers

To be "one hundred per cent American" according to the ideas of the Ku Klux Klan, as explained by E. H. Lougher, klan lecturer from Indiana, to a crowd of about 3,000 Owensboroans just before his arrest last night by Sheriff Howard on a charge of committing a felony you must believe in driving from public office any official who holds as unlawful, public speeches that foment racial religious strife and result sometimes in serious outbreaks and sometimes in laying the ground for later lawlessness, according to the officials.

According to Mr. Lougher, the klan also believes that to be American through and through you must be in favor of expelling from the police forces of this country a large percent of the

Catholics that he says now hold places on them, sufficient to reduce the Catholic police numbers to 10 per cent., of the size of the police forces in America. You must also, according to this speaker, be in favor of closing the Catholic parochial schools of America and turning their children into the public schools, if you could be "one hundred per cent American" according to the klan idea. And, you must be determined to see to it that under this sort of an arrangement not more than ten per cent of the teachers are Catholics, ten per cent being the speaker's estimate of the proportion of Catholic population of the United States.

"Pure Bunk," says Speaker

Another requirement of the klan's "one hundred per cent Ampericanism" is that you agree with the idea of hiding your membership in this organization from your neighbor for the purpose the speaker said, of obtaining information concerning law violators. He dismissed as "pure bunk" reports of klansmen using their masks and robes to wait at night upon law violators or those believed to be law violators or people of questionable morals. He denied that klansmen ever take the law into their own hands. He said that they furnish information to legally constituted authorities which they obtain only by hiding their identity and talking to law violators, obtaining from them valuable admissions.

Mr. Lougher did not get to tell his audience what your attitude should be toward the negro or the Jew. He was on the point of saying what the klan's position was toward the negro race when, in the m_?__ of county officers he had already said more than had a he legal right to say. "Go home quietly," he admonished his hearers, when Sheriff Howard told he was under arrest. There were cries from some in the audience "speak on." To this he replied, "No, go home quietly, klansmen always obey the law."

A restive spirit that was confined to a limited few soon subsided, but before it had, two had been placed under arrest for alleged interference with the arresting officers and one woman standing near the speaker's platform had cried out, "aren't there enough of you here to stop that." Cool heads, however, predominated and quietly the crowd started moving away.

Massie Demands, to Know

A large part of it was stayed, however, for a few minutes when R. E. Massie and his son Ellis, pushed through to the stand where the speaker had stood and Mr. Massie mounted it demanding to know by what right the officers had arrested Lougher who Massie said, "was making a nice speech," on Massie's land. He expressed the opinion that they had no right to do it since they do not pay his, Mr. Massie's, taxes. But there was nobody to tell him by what right it was being done, since the officers had gone with the speaker and nobody remaining, it seemed, either knew or felt disposed to try to explain.

Lougher, who says that his home is in Lexington, Ky., but when placed under arrest in Lexington, gave Greenfield, Ind., as his residence was taken before County Judge R. L. McFarland, who was at his office in the court house, awaiting the action of the officers. Upon arrival there a warrant was issued charging him with confederating and banding together for the purpose of intimidating and injuring others, a felony charge, conviction for which carries a punishment of confinement in the penitentiary of from one to five years.

While the warrant was being prepared, R. E. Massie appeared at the court house and announced he would become surety in the bail bond of Lougher, but immediately left. When the bond was prepared for signatures of the sureties, J. R. Beck, I. C. Winstead and P. B. Perry, went on the bond of Lougher and he was released, pending examining trial next Tuesday.

Two Others Arrested

Ben C. Taylor and J. C. Vanover were arrested by the officers for an alleged interference

by them when they proceeded to arrest Lougher at the speaking. They were charged with breach of the peace and their trials set for 2 o'clock Saturday afternoon for Taylor and 9 o'clock Monday morning for Vanover.

After he had denounced the city and county officials for refusing to allow him to make his speech in Owensboro at one of the parks or the court house, Mr. Lougher attacked Mayor Lonnie Jackson, of Central City, for his statement denying the klan's adhesion to American principles as laid down by the forefathers. He then said, "They. you that we, are anti this and anti that, but are not. They tell you that we are anti-Catholic that we encourage religious strife, but I deny it. We know that nothing permanent can be built on hate. We do not hate. We are constructive, not a destructive organization," said the speaker in coming to discuss the attitude of the klan toward the Catholic church and Catholic institutions. A few sentences after he had intimated that the klan's religious attitude was pacific, the speaker had launched into a most scathing denunciation of Catholic institutions. In it sarcasm, feigned humor and direct assault were used with vigorous effort.

Excitement Suppressed

"There was an air of suppressed excitement when the speaker began his attack on the Catholics. A few people in the crowd applauded his thrusts and his references to Chinese history and French history in the days of Papal temporal power which he waved like a red flag in the faces of his hearers. He got scant applause when he declared that the Catholic church in America was, to use his words, "seventy-five percent political and twenty-five percent religious." The great body of those present showed little sympathy, did at this juncture. The speaker did not say where he got his figures but presented that as though their authenticity could not be denied. When he said the Catholic school teachers in the public schools should be expelled, some one standing near the platform from which he spoke said, "then Catholics should not be taxed to support the public schools." The speaker replied shortly, "O, yes they should. I'll tell you what should be done and what we are going to do if we have the power. We are going to close the parochial schools and turn the children of Catholics into the public schools going with our own."

Without suggesting any possible conflict of statements, Mr. Lougher said early in his address that congress had found no fault with the klan and had authorized its operation. Yet when he came to discuss the Catholic attitude he declared that the church had the most powerful "bloc" at Washington, one that let nothing pass the house our senate without its careful scrutiny and every effort being made by it to prevent anything it disapproved.

Crowd Not Responsive

A very small percent of the crowd applauded the speaker's attacks on the Catholics, and there was bitter resentment on the part of others to some of the charges he made. He was preparing to launch into a discussion of the klan's attitude toward the negroes when the officials decided they would be derelict in their duty if they allowed the man to continue a speech, which they believed would cause trouble among citizenship that has lived in peaceful and friendly relations for a hundred years.

Lougher had finished telling of "six Catholic policemen" arresting him in Lexington, and when Sheriff Howard and the other officers pushed their way through the crowd, he said, "I seem to have some more visitors."

Warrant Not Necessary

"You will have to stop speaking," declared Sheriff Howard.

"Have you warrant" asked Lougher.

"It is not necessary to have a warrant when an offense is committed in my presence,"

declared Sheriff Howard.

The officers quickly hustled Lougher out of the crowd and placed him in an automobile and took him to the courthouse.

When the officers had gone two women got upon the platform and undertook to get quiet from the crowd and raising an American flag that stood beside a large electrically lighted cross one led off with America. Part of those remaining tried to follow but the pitch was high and many seemed not to know the words.

Preceding the arrest of Lougher at Massie's lot south of town, people began assembling on the northwest corner of the court house yard. By 7 o'clock probably 500 people, which included a few women, some well up in age, had assembled in the yard. Sheriff John Howard and his deputies and Chief of Police John Lyons and eighteen members of the police force were patrolling the yard. Mayor Hickman was at the sheriff's side.

Announces Change of Location

At a few minutes after 7 o'clock an automobile driven by J. W. McFerran, in which was standing Lougher, circled the block announcing the speaking would be held at the end of the street car line on the Livermore road. There was an immediate exodus of people from the yard and streets to street cars and waiting automobiles. Hundreds of men, women and children who could not be accommodated by any other vehicles, proceeded to walk to the place designated. And others were still walking half an hour later when the sheriff returned with his prisoner.

Upon the announcement of transferral of the place of speaking to the county, a conference was called between Mayor Hickman and County Judge McFarland, with County Attorney Miller and City Prosecutor Floyd Laswell, Following this the entire police force was mobilized at headquarters and Sheriff John Howard administered the oath making each of them a deputy sheriff, Instructions were given in a few words and the officers left for the scene of the speaking.

There was a continuous stream of motor cars out the Livermore road. Half a mile from the Massie farm the road was solidly blocked by cars. The officers parked their automobiles and proceeded on foot followed by a large crowd which had been unable to get further and had abandoned their vehicles in the road.

There had been erected in the center of the large Massie field a platform of new lumber, and on this was mounted a large American flag. Abundant lights were placed about the platform and to the north of it was mounted a large cross on which were electric bulbs, lighted from storage batteries.

A crowd of probably 3,000 people had assembled for the speaking. Among them were many who were there out of curiosity. In the main the people were good humored and seemed to be enjoying themselves, except for the rather cold weather which had set in. Immediately after the speaking started the man was plied with questions by people in the crowd. Exceptions seemed to be taken by some in the crowd and from mutterings around it was becoming apparent that trouble might start at any time.

Officers Walk Through Crowd

Sheriff Howard and Chief of Police Lyons and their men walked about through the crowd for probably 20 minutes. They were accompanied by County Attorney Miller, who heard the statements of the speaker relative to the subjects he had touched upon. After he had concluded his denunciation of Catholics, after having commented on the county officials, and had begun his attack on negroes, Mr. Miller directed the sheriff to arrest the man as having committed an offense in his presence.

The court house yard was quickly filled with boys and men when the sheriff arrived with

Lougher, and while the county officials were preparing the warrants and bail bonds. The shrubbery which has been getting into good condition for the last two years was badly ramped by people scrambling for a position to see merely a few men on the inside of the building. For nearly two hours the crowd stood, only to learn at the end of that time that the klan speaker had been admitted to bail for his examining trial next Tuesday.

The only comment made by Lougher was to ask who was responsible for his arrest on the Massie farm, object to the charge of confederating, claiming that he alone responsible for what had been done. J. W. McFerran wound up the affairs at the speaking scene and brought the flag and other paraphernalia to his home in the Abe Baer flats, on Frederica street.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 28 August 1923, p.1 – headline:



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 24 February 1924, p.1B:

JEFF VANOVER

The first funeral to be conducted in Daviess county by the Ku Klux Klan was held at Brushy Fork Baptist church Friday, February 22, over the remains of Jeff Vanover. of the Panther neighborhood. Rev. L. O.Logsdon, formerly of Owensboro preached the funeral, after which 35 robed Klansmen in full regalia, took charge of the ceremonies at the grave and conducted an impressive service lasting about 20 minutes.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 29 April 1924, p.3 - headline:

**K.K.K.DENIED USE
OF CITY PARKS BY
COMMISSIONERS**
—
**Hold Recreation Is
'Parks' Aim**

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 11 June 1924, p.6:

**Ku Klux Klan Meeting
At The Fair Grounds**

The Ku Klux Klan of this county has leased the Daviess county fair grounds for the entire day and night on July 31, and will stage a meeting at which klan members from surrounding counties will be invited to attend. The meeting will be similar to one held in Henderson on May 30.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 1 August 1924, pp.1 &3:

**MASKS ARE WORN
BY KLANSMEN IN
MARCH OVER CITY**

**Agreed If Allowed To Parade State Law Would
Not Be Violated; Large Crowd At Celebration.**

The first Ku Klux Klan celebration ever held in Owensboro was staged yesterday and last night at the fair grounds. It was attended by a crowd estimated at between 6,000 and 7,000 people. There were hundreds of visitors in attendance from all of the surrounding countries and towns and from Southern Indiana. Rockport, Ind., and Henderson, sent the largest representation.

There were 834 persons to participate in the Ku Klux Klan parade through the streets of Owensboro last night. The announced line of march was not followed, and caused some confusion. Constable Harden Brown acted as marshal of the parade riding a horse, but he was not gowned. There were four floats, four bands, eighty-four automobiles and sixteen horses in the parade.

Despite the fact that W. N. Horn and Emmett Wells, when they asked permission from Mayor Hickman to have the klan parade, assured the mayor that none of the klansmen would have their faces covered, more than two thirds of the marchers were masked. Mayor Hickman explained to Mr. Horn and Mr. Wells that it was a violation of the state law to parade in masks, and was told that the klan stood for law and order.

After the parade "naturalization" ceremonies were held at the fair grounds, followed by a display of fireworks. The crowd at night was equally as large as that during the afternoon.

It is said to be the custom at celebrations of this character for the local klan to take the background and give the visitors the front seats.

There was not the slightest sign of trouble during the day or night and notwithstanding the large number of automobiles on the streets, there were only a few minor accidents.

Two Speeches made.

Following the barbecue dinner at the fair grounds, two klan speakers gave addresses on the "principles" of the organization. The first of these was said to be an imperial representative, whose name the leaders would not divulge.

This speaker was bitter in his frequent attacks on the Catholics and made frequent reference to a "Roman Catholic political machine." He called the Democratic and Republican parties "two of the rottenest organizations in the state," asserting that the Democrats "bowed down" to their boss, Billy Klair, who is a Roman Catholic. He also charged the Republicans with paying homage to a boss in the person of Maurice Galvin, also a Catholic.

The "imperial representative" asserted that all the founders of America were Protestants and the object of the klan was to preserve the nation for Protestants,

Dr. Lougher Speaks.

The next speaker was termed the "feature of the day", by the announcer, who introduced Dr. E. H. Lougher, who seemed proud of his record of having been arrested and jailed more often than any man in Kentucky, making frequent reference to it during his address.

At the outset, Dr. Lougher insisted that the Ku Klux Klan was not fighting any religion. The Pope of Rome was charged with exercising political power over Catholics and with coveting the United States.

The recent Democratic convention at New York was ruled by the same "political machine". referred to by the speaker before him, according to Dr. Lougher. He also expressed the opinion that it "seemed funny" that the Democrats didn't think: any of the Protestant preachers of New York or Brooklyn good enough to open their convention with prayer, but had to call on Cardinal Hayes, a Catholic, who had recently returned from Italy, where he received the red hat from the Pope.

He gave the Protestant preachers credit for "putting over" the klan organization, claiming that 70,000 preachers belonged to the klan.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 21 July 1925, p.2:

KU KLUX KLAN		
Special Attraction! <i>Hear</i> Judge Chas. J. Orbison OF INDIANAPOLIS, IND. <i>Deliver An Address Appropriate for the Occasion</i> Judge Orbison is a leading attorney of Indiana. He stands high in Masonic and other fraternal circles, and all who have heard him are high in praise of his eloquent, logical and forceful oratory.	BARBECUE —AND— CELEBRATION FAIR GROUNDS All Day Thursday, July 23 EVERYONE INVITED TO ATTEND Under Auspices and For Benefit of DAVIESS COUNTY KU KLUX KLAN	Barbecued Meats and Refreshments Entertainments--- Parade and Fireworks in the Evening Absolutely No Admission Charge <i>Come and Enjoy the Day</i>



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 24 July 1925, p.1:

VERY FINE CROWD
 AT FAIR GROUNDS
 FOR K. K. K. PICNIC

Speeches by Rev. E. H. Lougher and Judge C. J. Orbison;
 Colorful Parade Held About Race Track.

A splendid crowd was in attendance at the all-day picnic and barbecue given at the fair grounds on Thursday by the Daviess county Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. A large number of visitors was in attendance from the surrounding counties and Southern Indiana.

The morning and afternoon were given over to an old-fashioned picnic, the chief attraction being an address in the grandstand by the Rev. E. H. Lougher, of Lexington. He discussed the klan at length, telling of its growth and purposes.

At night there was an enormous crowd in attendance. There was a colorful parade of the hooded and gowned knights about the race track. This was followed by a lengthy address by Judge Charles J. Orbison, of Indianapolis. Judge Orbison is a law partner of Governor Ed Jackson, of Indiana, and has held high offices in the klan in his state. He is an excellent speaker, and held the attention of huge crowd for more than an hour, reviewing the activities of the klan in Indiana and other states. Loud speakers were arranged in the grandstand so that Judge Orbison was heard by everyone. His speech was liberally applauded.

Following the speaking there was a brilliant display of fireworks, ending the program of the evening. The managers of the affair were greatly pleased with the success of it.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 3 August 1925, p.6:

Public Moonlight Excursion
THURSDAY, AUGUST 6th
STEAMER IDLEWILD
Music By Bob Miller's Steamer Idlewild Orchestra of Radio Fame
ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL
KLAN SONG QUARTETTES—WHITE AND COLORED STRING BAND
NO DANCING
THE FIRST TO BE GIVEN BY THE DAVIESS COUNTY
KU KLUX KLAN
OOL OMFORTABLE LEAN
BENEFIT CHARITY FUND
Boat Leaves 8 P.M. Fare 75c Returns 11 P.M.



Autobiography of Judge R. L. McFarland, transcribed by his sister, Miss Bertye McFarland, probably written during 1960-1961; copy included in article, “Judge Roy Leighton McFarland (1884-1961)”, by Jerry Long, on website, West-Central Kentucky History & Genealogy, pp.10-12:

I served as County Judge from the first Monday in January 1922 to the first Monday in January 1930. This being two consecutive four year terms. I believe It will be well to consider the fact that this was immediately after the close of the first World War, and immediately after the adoption of the Prohibition Amendment by the United States and by Kentucky, and about this time, or previously, there had been a marked resurgence of what is known as the Klu Klux Klan [sic]. This was one of my major problems. I feel that this should be so considered because of the more or less unusual conditions to be met at that time, this being immediately after the end of the first great war in the United States since the Civil War. It seems that immediately after the close of a great war the people are upset and at this period it was characterized by an outbreak of lawlessness in general. There are many people living today who remember or have been told by their parents of the general lawlessness that followed immediately after the close of the Civil War. I have heard many stories by my father and other people of the lawlessness that prevailed here in Daviess County immediately after that war. So I regarded then, and do now so regard, the outbreak of what is known as the Klu Klux Klan not only in Kentucky and here in Daviess County, but in, many other states. I have always felt, and do now, that the County Judge of any Kentucky County is primarily the Chief Peace Officer of that

County. Toward the last half of my first term as County Judge it was being whispered around generally that there was some great secret organization in Daviess County that you had better be afraid of. Here and now I want to say that I think there were many good citizens became very much worried about this and would come into my office and state that there was a secret organization in the County, and that I should be careful not to offend that secret organization. I would tell each one, "You must be referring to what is known as the Klu Klux Klan," and that I was not a Klu Klux Klan and did not intend to become one, and if they were a Klu Klux that was their business so long as they obeyed the law. That I was not a Catholic and didn't want any one to try to compel me to be one, that I was not a Negro and didn't want any one to try to compel me to be one, but if they were a Negro that is his business. I am not a foreigner, but if you are, that is your business, but don't want any one to try to compel me to be something I do not believe in and to do something I think I should not do as an officer of the law and an honest man. At this time, one of the three commissioners, Mr. William Horn was a member, and one of the few people who admitted that he was a Klu Klux and he devoted much of his time in trying to persuade others to join. Mr. J. B. Hocker, at that time Tax Assessor, admitted that he was a member of the Klu Klux Klan. They requested me to meet them up in Mr. Hocker's office and expressed their concern about me not joining the Klu Klux Klan, and stated there was no middle ground, that you must be with us or against us, and they would be compelled to oppose me for re-election as County Judge if I did not join. I replied that I was very sorry that I could not be for them. It would be well to explain that at that time Owensboro was a third class city, and I understood that under the law, third class cities were responsible for damages to citizens whether to their person or their property. In addition to this, my predecessor told me that Mayor Hickman who was a well known park enthusiast, had obtained the sum of \$1000 as a gift from the Elks Lodge for the purpose of beautifying the Court House Yard and the right of oversight of any meeting of the public in the Court House Yard. The beautifying of the yard consisted of building walks and planting shrubbery. In other words, making the Court House Yard as nearly as possible a city park. In view of this, any person or group of persons wishing to use the Court House Yard were referred to Mayor Hickman and the reason for referring them. With no exception that I can recall, this arrangement was perfectly satisfactory. So when the Fiscal Court was in regular session one day, a person came into my office and informed me that he wanted to use the Court House Yard for a meeting of the Klu Klux Klan of Daviess County on a certain night. He gave his name and stated he was from Louisville and wanted to address the Fiscal Court. He and I went from my private office immediately into the County Court Room and I informed the members of the Fiscal Court that this gentleman wanted to address the Court, and they agreed to hear him. In his address to the Fiscal Court he said he wanted the use of the Court House Yard on a particular night for the use of the Klu Klux Klan of Daviess County, and that if it was not granted he would like to know just who was responsible for it not being granted. I immediately arose and informed him that I had not consulted the other members of the Court and was not speaking for them, that I was only speaking for myself as one member of the Court, and under the circumstances I felt it my duty as a peace officer to be responsible in so far as I was able to prevent any body or persons either masked or unmasked from holding any meeting in the Court House Yard especially at night, without the permission of Mayor Hickman, and that he could inform the Klu Klux Klan of Daviess County my feelings on the matter. Whereupon Mr. W. G. Riney, Commissioner from the Western Commissioner District, and Mr. B.W. Barrett, Commissioner from the Eastern Commissioner District, each arose and stated that my statement just made represented their feeling in the matter. The other member, Mr. William Horn, Commissioner from the Owensboro Commissioner District made no comment. Now it should be bourn in mind that there was a Kentucky law providing that it was a felony for any two or more persons to band themselves together for the purpose of

intimidation. Under the circumstances that existed on the night that had been demanded to hold a meeting in the Court House Yard, the entire Sheriff's Office and several other officers of the law were at the Court House early in the night and seemed thoroughly able to prevent such a meeting in the Court House Yard. Confronted with this situation, the great crowd of people made no attempt to hold a meeting in the Court House Yard, but withdrew to the farm of Mr. R. E. Massey on the Livermore road near the city limits, the premises now being occupied by Wesleyan College. The Sheriff's office made affidavit stating that this law was being violated and asked for a warrant for arrest. The County Attorney presented the warrant to me and I signed it as County Judge. Members of the Sheriff's office proceeded to the meeting being held in Mr. Massey's field and arrested two or three persons, one being the imported speaker of the night and one or two others present, and brought them into my office and I read the warrant to them, and asked them when they wanted an examining trial, and put them under bond for appearance. On the date for the examining trial they appeared in the Circuit Court Room. I heard the testimony and felt there was not sufficient evidence to hold them over to the Daviess County Grand Jury and so dismissed the case. Otherwise I do not feel that my problems as County Judge were materially different from those which usually confront any County Judge in Kentucky.



Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks, Lee A. Dew & Aloma W. Dew,
Rivendell Publications, Bowling Green, KY, 1988, pp.134-136:

Women marched to the polls, and sports fans cheered the Red Devils, but the twenties had a darker side. Throughout the country, racism and prejudice were rearing their heads anew as evidenced by the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan used its terroristic tactics and anonymity to attack not only Negroes, but Catholics, Jews, and aliens as well. Owensboro's Klan experiences seemed to be mostly aimed at Catholics, who made up a large part of Owensboro's population. In April 1923, the KKK petitioned for permission to hold a meeting at the Courthouse which was denied by a 3-1 vote. Mayor Hickman was steadfastly opposed to allowing the Klan to hold a meeting on public property and appealed to the commissioners to refuse the petition as the people of Owensboro had lived in harmony without serious disturbance for 100 years. He reasoned that this organization, which was known to promote strife, could only bring trouble to the community which might take a long time to heal. He admitted that he was opposed to the KKK meeting anywhere in the city.

Klan organizer Clifford Miller argued that in Owensboro there were preachers, bankers, doctors, and businessmen who were members of the KKK and they should be allowed to hold a public meeting. County Judge R. L. McFarland accompanied his dissent with a speech in which he contended the county had been founded as a refuge for religious freedom and he did not feel that the Klan should be allowed to mask their faces and go about intimidating and terrorizing local citizens.

Undeterred by the Commission's steadfast refusal, the Klan moved the rally south of the city to the property of R.E. Massie on the Livermore Road, the present site of Kentucky Wesleyan College. By the time set for the meeting, a crowd of about 350 men had gathered at the Courthouse. The Rev. E.H. Lougher, a Klan spokesman, drove by and announced through a megaphone that the meeting would take place "at the end of the street car line on Livermore Road." His

announcement was met with cheers as the crowd surged toward Frederica Street, joined by hundreds of automobiles which by the time of the speech were lined up for a half mile along the road with many more parked in nearby fields.

The night sky was illuminated by an electric-bulb studded cross. A hum of excitement and anticipation moved through the crowd estimated at 3,000 people. Lougher stood inside an open automobile which served as a mobile speaker's platform. He began by defending the KKK as unjustly accused of being anti-Catholic, anti-Jew and anti-Negro. He attacked local officials as the true lawbreakers, contended that the Constitutional rights of himself and every Owensboro citizen were violated, and urged the voters to oust the offending officials. One way to protect their rights was suggested to be membership in the Klan, which according to Lougher, was seven million strong. Further, he declared, "... in two and a half years there will be 20 million."

Law enforcement officials and the County Attorney had driven to the meeting to observe, but to take no action unless a riot was started or incendiary remarks made which could lead to trouble. After about 30 minutes Lougher launched into a bitter attack against Catholics; but he received only moderate applause, with many in the audience being only lukewarm and many openly resentful of his remarks. As he began his discussion of the Klan's attitude toward Negroes, the officials felt his remarks inflammatory enough to stop him. Lougher's arrest on the grounds of conspiracy with others to intimidate and alarm resulted in an incident when Massie jumped into the car and demanded, "What right has a sheriff to come on my private land and arrest a man without a warrant? This is my private land, and if he can do that, why he can pay my taxes." As Lougher was being taken to the Courthouse to be charged, a Mrs. J.W. McFerran climbed into the automobile, waved an American flag and shouted, "Let's all sing the Star Spangled Banner." Some in the crowd responded with a partial rendering of "America."

Charges against Lougher were dropped after a civil libertarian plea for free speech declaring that no laws had been broken. Attorney C.W. Wells argued that Lougher had the same rights to free speech as any other citizen.

The Klan returned to Owensboro in August 1924. A crowd estimated at between six and seven thousand was on hand, far short of the expected 20,000. Mayor Hickman denied the use of city parks or other public places for a rally, so the celebration was held at the Daviess County fair grounds. Hickman had, however, granted permission for a parade through the city as long as the Klan did not break the state law forbidding the wearing of masks. Hickman declined an invitation, which must have been facitious considering his outspoken opposition to the KKK, to head the parade. The parade of four floats, four bands, four automobiles, and sixteen horses was led by Constable Harden Brown, acting as parade marshall. 834 persons took part in the parade, more than two-thirds of whom were masked despite the promises that the state law would be honored. The parade wended its way through downtown Owensboro and back to the fairgrounds where "naturalization" ceremonies and a fireworks display followed.

A barbecue dinner was followed by anti-Catholic speeches. One speaker, declared to be an "Imperial representative" whose name and identity were not revealed, asserted that the founders of America had been Protestant and it was therefore the goal of the Klan to keep the nation for Protestants.

Dr. Lougher, who proudly made frequent reference to his record of being arrested and jailed often, was free for the moment, and in his address claimed that 70,000 Protestant preachers belonged to the Klan and accounted for much of the success of the organization.

Two huge crosses made from telephone poles studded with light bulbs illuminated the scene, symbolic of the small-mindedness and intolerance which were so much a part of the twenties

in America. There is no indication that the Klan created any lasting problems among the Catholics and Protestants of Owensboro. Perhaps many of the throng attending the rallies came more from curiosity than hate; but nevertheless it was a shameful episode in Owensboro's history that intolerance and prejudice were given so large an audience.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 20 August 1998, p.1C:

75 years ago, city kept Klan from planting seeds of hate

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

No celebrations are planned. But you might want to stand a little taller on Friday. And hold your head a little higher.

It's the 75th anniversary of the day Owensboro and Daviess County told the Ku Klux Klan to take a hike.

In the summer of 1923, the Klan was growing all over America, and in August, organizers came to establish a klavern in Owensboro.

First, they approached the city and asked to hold a rally in Chautauqua Park. Mayor J.H. Hickman turned them down.

So, they went to Daviess Fiscal Court on Aug. 21 and asked to hold a rally on the courthouse lawn.

But County Attorney Wilbur K. Miller told fiscal court members that the Klan should not be allowed to use public property.

In an emotional appeal, Hickman said, "To permit a speaking in behalf of this organization, known to be a concern that promotes strife, would be to invite trouble into our community, and we do not want it."

Commissioner William G. "Squire" Riney said that for the county to allow the Klan to use the courthouse lawn would be a "slap at the mayor." And he made the motion to deny the permit.

County Judge Roy McFarland declared that "too many people in this country have too little backbone."

The Klan, he said, "promotes strife amongst peaceful people who have lived together in peace and harmony for centuries."

Only one commissioner voted to grant the permit.

But the Klan didn't give up easily.

The next night, it erected a large electric cross –

bare light bulbs on crossed telephone poles – in a field along the Livermore Road just south of town.

Ironically, the site is now the front lawn of the Kentucky Wesleyan College campus.

Newspaper reports say 3,000 people gathered that night to hear the Rev. E.H. Lougher, an Indiana minister, present the Klan's case.

One thing you have to remember about the Klan in 1923: It wasn't just down on African Americans. It also was opposed to Jews, Catholics and most foreign-born Americans.

And Daviess County has Kentucky's largest population of Catholics west of Louisville.

For some reason, Lougher decided to begin his speech with an attack on Catholics. By the time he launched into blacks, Sheriff John Howard had heard enough.

He moved in with deputies and arrested Lougher on a charge of "willfully and feloniously banding together with diverse other persons ... for the purpose of intimidating, alarming, disturbing or injuring others."

Charges were dropped eventually. You can't stop a man from speaking, the courts ruled.

In their history "Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks," Lee and Aloma Dew write that the Klan returned a year later to try again.

Between 6,000 and 7,000 people gathered at the fairgrounds on 18th Street to hear the speeches, which were followed by a parade.

The Dews say there were four floats, four bands, four cars, 16 horses and 834 people in the march. About two-thirds of them wore masks in defiance of the law.

They had two electric crosses at their rally that night. They ate barbecue, and they denounced Catholics.

I'm sure there are still a few Klan sympathizers left in Owensboro. And I'm sure I'll hear from every last one of them.

But their hate and intolerance was never able to take hold in this community.

And that's something to be proud of.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 24 March 2002, pp.1C & 3C:

500 attend loud, but safe Klan rally

Downtown gathering marked by sharp exchanges, tight security

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

A crowd estimated by police at 500 people lined Second Street in front of the Daviess County Courthouse at noon Saturday, waiting to see the first rally of the Ku Klux Klan here since 1924.

Most, like the three men in tuxedos who had wandered over from a downtown wedding and refused to give their names, came out of curiosity.

Others like Bridget Richards, a young white woman from Maceo, came to protest.

"They need to go back where they came from," she said.

April Brown, a young black woman, agreed.

"I think this is wrong," she said. "They shouldn't be here. They need to go home."

Others like Heath Crossley, a young Owensboro man, came to support the Klan.

"I live here," said Crossley, who was wearing a Confederate flag handkerchief on his head and a black T-shirt with a Confederate flag on the front. "But I'd have traveled across the country to be here."

Donald Shreve, a middle-aged man from Ohio County, came with a cotton Confederate flag with the words "The South Will Rise Again" across the front.

"It's been above my bed since I was 16," he said.

Sharon Ward of Owensboro was unhappy about being searched before she entered the courthouse grounds.

"They didn't search the NAACP when they had their march," she said. "Everybody is entitled to their opinion."

The courthouse lawn was sealed off with orange plastic fencing and yellow crime scene tape to keep protesters on the northwest side separate from the supporters of the SS Knights of the Ku Klux Klan on the northeast side.

Sheriff Keith Cain said there were approximately 65 city, county and state police officers around the courthouse, along with a few intelligence officers from the Louisville Police Department.

Some officers watched the crowd from rooftops.

Everyone who entered the courthouse grounds was searched, videotaped and photographed.

At 12:08 p.m., a white van and a black car, escorted by two Owensboro patrol cars, pulled into the parking lot across St. Ann Street from the courthouse. And the crowd strained for a look at the occupants.

As he put on his black robe and pointed hat, Alan Schmidt, the imperial klaff (second in command), said, "We're based in Louisville, but we have members in several counties in Kentucky and southern Indiana. We're about to go national."

The SS in the name, he said, stands for "Southern Saviors."

"We're trying to unify all white Christians," Schmidt said. "We don't believe in violence."

Only five of the 13 Klansmen wore robes. Four wore black, and Scott Smith, the imperial wizard (leader), wore red.

"We're trying to unify the skinheads and the Klan," he said. "We don't wear white robes."

The SS Knights has some members in Daviess County already, Smith said. But he wouldn't say how many.

"That's why they call us 'the invisible empire,'" he said.

As the Klansmen entered the courthouse grounds, they held up a large sign that said, "Thanks for the yellow ribbons in support of the SS Knights."



Owensboro residents Chelsea Feekes, left, and April Winstead watch as a member of the SS Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, far left, raises his hand in a Nazi salute on Saturday during a KKK

rally on the lawn of the Daviess County Courthouse. The women were in attendance to protest the Klan's visit.

More than 60,000 yellow "unity ribbons" were distributed last week in a silent protest against the rally.

But some preferred a vocal protest.

When the Klansmen unfurled a red flag with a black swastika on a white field, someone screamed, "This is America. Not Nazi Germany."

"Stick that flag where the sun don't shine," another protester yelled.

"Go home, Ku Klux Klan," another shouted.

"Personally, I'm glad to see them," said a black man who gave his name only as Leachman. "It's the ones under cover that I worry about. It surprises me that it took this long for them to do this."

As the Klansmen gave a "white power" salute, the speakers blared a song: "Stand up and be counted/Show the world that you're a man/Stand up and be counted with the Ku Klux Klan."

Many of the songs contained racial slurs and profanity.

"Go home," a woman screamed.

"We are the master race," a Klansman countered.

Schmidt told the crowd that "God created all men. He also created beasts." Blacks, he said, are beasts, not men.

Protesters offered a middle-finger salute.

As music played - "All Skinheads Are Brothers" - some in the crowd, including small children, came to pose for pictures with the Klansmen.

Daviess County Judge-Executive Reid Haire, watching from the sidewalk, said, "I never thought I'd see a swastika in front of the Daviess County Courthouse. That's unacceptable."

"People say they don't want us here," Schmidt said. "We're here. If you thought we were wrong, you wouldn't be here."

"Go home, you piece of trash," somebody yelled.

By then, protesters had figured out that if they went through the screening process, they could get onto the lawn near the Klansmen. Soon, the crowd on the lawn swelled to an estimated 200 people.

The taunting and the shouting intensified. But law enforcement officers formed a human wall between the groups.

"Once something happens, it's out of control," Cain said.

About 1:20 p.m., 40 minutes ahead of schedule, the Klan rally ended.

"We achieved what we wanted to," Smith said. "We have a decent number of members in Owensboro, and we'll probably get more."

Asked if he was taking a lesson from the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent protests of the 1960s that often incited his opponents to violence, Smith grinned. "We don't take lessons from Martin Luther King," he said.

"I'm glad they've gone," Haire said as he watched the Klansmen leave. "It's unfortunate the amount of taxpayer money that had to be used this way."

He said he didn't have a cost estimate for rally security. But Cain said most of the law enforcement officers were on overtime.

Owensboro was at least the fourth city visited by the SS Knights. Previous rallies were in Elizabethtown, Leitchfield and Lexington. The Lexington rally drew an estimated 250 people - about half the size of the Owensboro crowd.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 5 September 2007, pp.1A & 2A:

KU KLUX KLAN
KKK's middle-of-night
actions stun residents

Klan leaves business cards in neighborhood

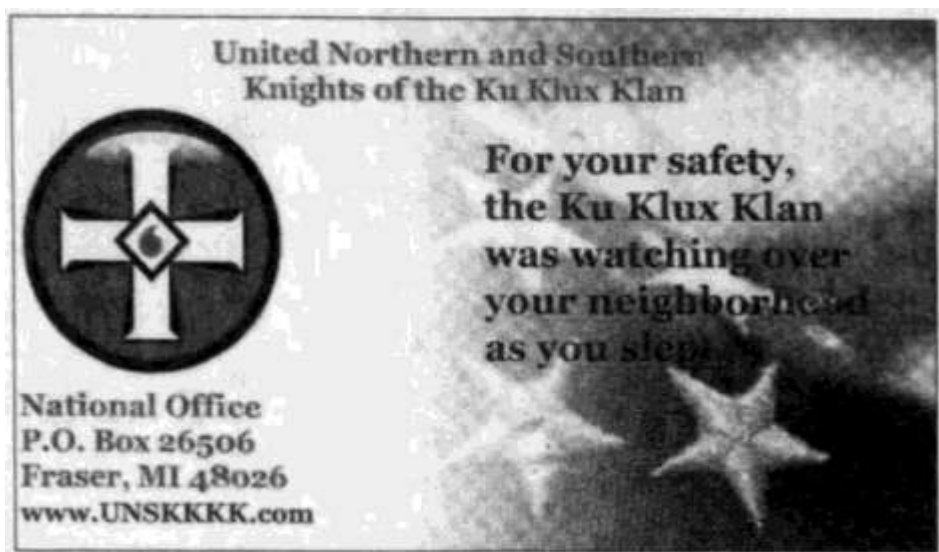
By Joy Campbell, Messenger-Inquirer

Neighbors who live on streets off East Byers Avenue awoke Sunday morning and found disturbing calling cards with a message from the Ku Klux Klan.

"I guess I was angry that they came in the night, and the card said they were watching over us as we slept," said Tony Minton, who lives on Michaels Court. "It never occurred to me that they would be in our neighborhood."

The business cards, which were left at the ends of driveways and stuck in mailboxes, are white with a screened American flag image on both sides along with the KKK logo on the left front side.

The message: "For your safety, the Ku Klux Klan was watching over your neighborhood as you slept," is from the United Northern and Southern Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.



Someone distributed these cards to homes on several streets off East Byers Avenue.

The card's flip side says, "You have been visited by the Ku Klux Klan."

Minton said one neighbor collected most of the cards, and another alerted other residents of the pre-dawn visits.

James Smith, who lives on Rogers Court, said he was disturbed and unhappy about the cloak-and-dagger methods the unknown visitors used. He and another neighbor heard two car doors close about 4 a.m.

"That's not unusual since we have young people who live here," Smith said. "But now we'll pay more attention."

Debbie Gilbreath, another Michaels Court resident, said her initial reaction was disbelief that the Klan would be in the neighborhood and be so bold. "It didn't give me an easy feeling, and I did not feel protected or comfortable," she said.

Ann Hood was leaving her Michaels Court home for a walk Sunday when she encountered a man picking up the cards. He was upset, she said, and asked if she had seen one.

"I saw the KKK emblem on the card, and I didn't even read it; I ripped it up," Hood said. "I was offended. It was not something I would ever support, and I felt it was brazen for them to litter our street."

Gilbreath said a neighbor reminded her of the right to free speech. Even so, she hopes residents become aware of the Klan's presence.

Several neighbors were concerned about state Rep. Jim Glenn's reaction to the Klan's message. Glenn, who is black, also lives on Michaels Court.

Contacted Tuesday, Glenn said he was out of town all weekend and had not seen the cards or heard about them.

He wouldn't speculate on why the neighborhood was targeted. He has lived there 10 or 12 years, he said.

David Kelly, executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Commission, said the Klan activity may have been prompted by recent reports about the arrests of 20 members of a gang accused of dealing crack cocaine. Eighteen of the 20 are black, Kelly said.

"The article may have incited some emotions," Kelly said. "I can see the KKK seeing that and saying, 'See, we told you, this is what happens, and we're here to help.'"

Kelly said the drug bust came as a shock to him since most resources and attention are focused on methamphetamine. The indication was that a small segment of the population is responsible for a large percentage of crime, he said.

"When we see announcements on programs and grants, we never see them about crack," he said. "If it's been going on that long and is of that magnitude, we should be devoting resources to it."

Kelly plans to take both issues - the gang arrests and the KKK activity - to the next commission meeting.

KKK in Kentucky

Twelve hate groups are operating in Kentucky, and seven are Klan groups, according to Mark Potok, director of The Intelligence Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The project monitors these groups.

The cards left in Owensboro were from the United Northern and Southern Knights of the Ku Klux Klan with chapters in Newport and Maysville. That group's main office is in Fraser, Mich.

"Basically, they're trying to get publicity and increase their memberships," Potok said in a phone interview.

The Klan knows they won't get positive publicity, but they don't care, he said.

"There will be a tiny percentage of your readers who will read the story and say, 'Finally, a group who's going to tell it like it is,' and they'll get members, dues and gain popularity."

Potok said Kentucky's number of hate groups is relatively low compared to surrounding states. The Intelligence Report says Ohio has 31; Indiana, 16; Tennessee, 35; Illinois, 23; Missouri, 23; Virginia, 31; and West Virginia, 9.

The Intelligence Report lists these additional Klan groups in Kentucky: Brandenburg and Dawson Springs, Imperial Klans of America; Buffalo, White Mountain Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; and Lexington, National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

The last Klan activity in Owensboro was in March 2002 when the SS Knights of the Ku Klux Klan from Louisville (Fairdale) held a rally in front of the Daviess County Courthouse. A "unity" group countered that show with yellow ribbons, and others protested the Klan's message.



Note by Jerry Long

There were four largely publicized and promotional rallies conducted by the Ku Klux Klan organization in Owensboro, KY – 22 August 1923, 31 July 1924, 23 July 1925 and 23 March 2002. In addition to these there were many other "Ku-Kluxing" episodes and demonstrations of racial hatred in the city and county. During the 1920's there was an extensive presence of the Klan throughout the country. In the Owensboro newspapers during this decade hardly an issue went by without some story on a KKK event somewhere.

The Owensboro newspapers in their coverage of the KKK events had a noticeable difference in repeating the Klan's anti-Catholic and their anti-Negro rhetoric. The Klan's anti-Catholic views were freely repeated, however, the papers pointedly avoided the Klan's vile degrading of the Negro race. No doubt this was done out of the fear of inflaming racial hate and violence.

Since the 1950's and 1960's there has been a lessening of racial bigotry, however, it still contaminates the hearts of many. I pray that it continues to be a little less each day.



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