

Ku Kluxers in a Coal Mining Community: A Study of the Ku Klux Klan Movement in Williamson County, Illinois, 1923-1926

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On the night of April 14, 1926, John H. Smith was standing in front of his auto garage with countless bullet holes. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, he said, "Look at my garage. It is like a sieve. I'm through. I want peace. For six years I've fought for law enforcement, but I'm through now. For the last two years I've slept up here in my garage with a sheet of steel screen around my bed. Yes, I'm tired of it all and I want peace. They can open up a saloon on both sides of my place if they want to. I won't fight no more." The next day, Smith sold his business and left the town.²

John H. Smith was a successful businessman of Herrin, Williamson County, Illinois. In the early 1920s, he owned two auto garages in southern Illinois, one in Herrin and the other in Harrisburg, Saline County. An advertisement in the *Marion Daily Republican* introduced his shop as "the largest accessory house in Southern Illinois." The federal census of 1920 listed John H. Smith as garage mechanic, thirty-four years old, husband with a stepson, renter, and a native of Kentucky. Besides being a leading businessman, he was an active participant in local civic affairs. During the big religious revival of 1925, he served as a lay leader and when it was too hot in the tabernacle, donated fans for use by the sweating crowd.³

In the mid-1920s, John H. Smith had another face, one as a member of the Herrin chapter of the Ku Klux Klan (Herrin Buckhorn Klan). From December 1923 to April 1926, Williamson County was in a state of civil war in which Klan and anti-Klan factions engaged in fierce battles over Prohibition enforcement on the streets as well as at the polls. Led by a freelance detective named S. Glenn Young (not a resident of the county), Klan vigilantes conducted a series of massive raids on illicit liquor joints in the winter of 1923 to 1924. The raids were very successful, resulting in fifty-five jail sentences and \$55,025 fines at the federal court. The following April, the triumphant Klan had its members elected in the city, township, and county elections. Yet, the raids were violent. Klan vigilantes kicked doors open, beat up men and women, and even stole money and other valuables. The raids

angered the bootlegging gangsters, including Charlie Birger and Earl Shelton (they were among the arrested), and the officials allegedly in league with them, notably Sheriff George Galligan. The gunfights between the two factions left nineteen men dead and brought state troopers into the county five times in little more than two years. John H. Smith played a part in the Klan war, and two of the five major gun battles took place at his Herrin garage. During the last of these battles, the "election day riot" of April 13, 1926, anti-Klan gangsters poured hundreds of shots into the Smith garage, making it look like a "sieve." The riot concluded the civil war in favor of the bootleggers and put the hooded organization out of existence in "Bloody Williamson" County.⁴

The history of the 1920s Klan has received more thorough historical investigation thanks to the series of studies on Klan membership that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. Focusing on specific communities and using Klan membership rosters, these "revisionist" studies have shown that Klansmen were ordinary Americans representing an occupational cross section of the local white Protestant society. They also indicate that the secret order recruited those who had taken an active part in the community's civic and political affairs. These men donned the white robe, believing that the hooded organization would help solve community problems, such as bootlegging and gambling, and create a more moral and orderly society. This article tests the validity of the revisionist thesis by looking at Williamson County, Illinois—one of the nation's largest coalmining communities during the 1920s.⁵

No membership lists survive for the Williamson County Klan. Yet, it is possible to collect sufficient data from local newspapers and make lists of "suspected Klansmen" and "Klan supporters." The Invisible Empire of Williamson County was in fact highly visible. Some openly admitted their membership. Sam Stearns, the first Exalted Cyclops of the Marion chapter, once stated that he was proud of being a Klansman. The stockholders, editors, and regular advertisers of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*, also enter the list of suspected Klansmen. The paper declared that it was "owned by Klansmen, edited by Klansmen, and printed by Klansmen." On November 7, 1924, B. E. Green, editor of the *Herald*, wrote, "We will state plainly that we belong to the Klan and we are proud of it, just as proud as we are of our church membership." In addition, the list includes members of the Herrin Conservative Party, the political front of the secret order, and candidates on

other Klan-endorsed tickets. Finally, we have the names of the vigilantes indicted by the county and city courts and those of the Klan-side casualties in the gun battles. Arlie Boswell, a Marion Klan leader, admitted that all the liquor raiders, except S. Glenn Young, belonged to the hooded order. (Young later joined the organization.) State's Attorney Delos Duty and Judge E. N. Bowen of the Herrin city court, both anti-Klansmen, were more than willing to prosecute the vigilantes who used excessive violence during the raids. The funerals of the "martyrs," attended by a number of robed figures, became occasions to demonstrate the power of the secret empire. In all, suspected Klansmen amount to 302 in number.⁶

Klan supporters consisted mostly of the signers of the bail bonds of the alleged Klansmen arrested and indicted for their vigilante activities. During the Klan war, bond filing was a public act reported in the local and area newspapers. On March 18, 1924, the indicted liquor raiders and those who volunteered to sign their bonds staged a mammoth parade in protest to the "ninety-nine indictments" handed down by the special grand jury of the Herrin city court. The parade and giant bond filing after that was unmistakably a Klan event. Anyone who had no sympathy with the secret order stayed away from such a demonstration. Signing the bonds of its members could mean losing friends and business customers. It could also mean risking one's own life, since notorious gangsters like Charlie Birger and the Shelton brothers were on the other side. Thus, it was common in Williamson County then to regard the bond signers as supporters of the Klan's fight against bootlegging, if not of its nativist ideology. (At least eleven of the bond signers were foreign-born, including an Austrian-born Jewish merchant.) With a few other advocates of strict law enforcement, they make up the list of Klan supporters, which contains the names of 385 persons.⁷

The profiles of these 687 individuals obtained from the 1920 federal census, county and city directories, and local newspapers fit the image of hooded knights presented in the recent Klan studies. In stark contrast to the violent outcome of their struggle, the people who rallied around the secret order were ordinary citizens of Williamson County. The Klan's "cleanup" movement, which aimed to eradicate bootlegging joints, encompassed the entire native-born white Protestant community, representing virtually all occupational groups and political parties. Instead of adventurous young men having little stake in the community, the majority of the suspected Klansmen were middle-aged, married men living in houses of their own.

Many of them took an active part in local civic affairs, having served public office *before* joining the secret order. Indignant at the rampant violation of the liquor laws, these civic-minded family men almost single-mindedly went after bootleggers and moonshiners with guns in their hands.

Occupation

Williamson County is in the center of southern Illinois, which, according to Bruce Bissat, was known as the "largest high grade cheaply mined, continuous deposit of bituminous coal in the world." From 1883 to 1924, the county led the area and the entire state in coal output. In fiscal year 1920-1921, for example, there were seventy-two mines (fifty shipping mines) in operation employing over 11,000 miners and producing more than 10 million tons of coal. Williamson County was also a wholly unionized community. All miners belonged to the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The Sub-district No.10 with headquarters in Herrin was one of the strongest in the state UMWA (District No.12), which was reputedly the most powerful unit of organized labor in the United States. By 1920, the number of UMWA-card holders exceeded eleven thousand, about sixty percent of all the males over twenty-one years of age. The miners' union was an integral part of the community and dominated local politics. Union officials entered the elite segment of the community and shared civic-political leadership with businessmen and professionals. Since many of the coal mines in Williamson County were under absentee ownership, local bankers and businessmen had little power to control the economy of their community. Their own survival depending solely on the well-being of the coal miners, the businessmen stood solidly behind organized labor, ready to help unemployed or striking miners.⁸

Coal miners stood out in Klan leadership as well as in the rank-and-file. Of the 266 suspected Klansmen whose occupation can be determined between 1920 and 1923, thirty-three percent were coal miners, the largest occupational group of all. Eleven men engaged in other mining related occupations, such as mine carpenters and mine electricians. The number of the UMWA then becomes thirty-seven percent of the total membership. For example, Thomas C. Kearns, I.N. Thetford, and John W. Ford were principal figures in the Conservative Party and were all union leaders. Kearns, a stockholder of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*, was president of Local No.1248

between 1923 and 1924 and a member of the National Scale Committee of the UMWA that negotiated with the mine operators in February 1924. Thetford, another stockholder of the *Herald*, served as president of Local No.1000 consecutively from 1922 to 1926. Ford was president of the Herrin Trades Council for 1923 and a member of the Executive Committee of the Illinois Farmer-Labor Party. On March 31, 1923, Ford's former comrades wrote in the *Herrin Journal*, "Brother Ford changed over night from the most radical human being in Herrin to a tame CONSERVATIVE and now has the unmitigated nerve to tell the people of Herrin that there are other things more important than Industrial Unionism."⁹

In addition, at least seventeen of those classified as non-miners had once worked in the mines. State Representative Wallace Bandy, a Marion Klan leader, had been a coal miner before becoming a salesman and then an insurance agent. Representative Bandy always championed the cause of organized labor. Police Magistrate Abe Hicks, a stockholder of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*, was a life-long miner and acknowledged labor leader of Herrin. As an organizer for the American Federation of Labor, Hicks helped establish many of the city's craft unions. He served as president of local No. 986 and No. 2621, and of the Herrin Trades Council. He also headed Herrin's Socialist party since the 1900s. Among the other ex-miners were Justice of the Peace W. F. Keaster, Charles N. Green, a grocery manager, and Marshall McCormack, a grocery store owner. They were all leading figures in the Conservative Party. Including those ex-mine workers, the persons who held UMWA cards constitute forty-three percent of the total membership.¹⁰

Coal miners also predominated among the people who provided financial and moral support for the secret order. Of the 355 Klan supporters for whom occupation can be determined between 1920 and 1923, thirty-one percent were coal miners, the largest occupational group of all. By including eighteen men who engaged in other mining-related jobs, UMWA members made up thirty-six percent of the total. In addition, at least eighteen of those classified as non-mine workers had worked in the coal mines before 1920. The number of the persons who were once active members of the miners' union amounts to forty-one percent of the total. In a county where nearly two-thirds of its adult male population carried UMWA cards, these figures appear to indicate under-representation of the local coal mining community. However, considering the coal mines employed a number of foreign-born workers who were ineligible to join

the Klan and generally anti-Prohibition, it is possible to say that the Klan built a significant base of support among the native-born coal miners.¹¹

The above findings corroborate contemporary observations about the Klan's infiltration into the county's union miners. J. D. Pridgen, a Herrin miner and supporter of the cleanup movement, wrote in the *Illinois Miner* on May 3, 1924, that the majority of the liquor raiders were union miners. In his article in the *Survey* in October 1924, McAlister Coleman, an anti-Klan labor journalist, said, "It is an open secret that a number of American-born miners belong to it [the Klan]." Even the radical *Chicago Daily Worker* admitted, "[A] number of deluded miners rallied to the Klan banner." The findings also explain why the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald* regularly carried labor-related news at the local, state, and national levels and opposed the idea of creating a state police on the ground that the police might be used during labor troubles "as guards for the protection of strikebreakers and mines and plants."¹²

Nonetheless, the anti-Klan faction presented the secret order as an enemy of organized labor, since there was no better way to disgrace a person in Williamson County than calling him anti-labor. According to the *Illinois Miner*, for example, the Klan was "a conspiracy of small businessmen" and an "open shop, anti-labor" organization funded and protected by powerful forces "higher up." The allegation probably stemmed from the fact that merchants assumed leadership of the cleanup movement and that the Klan borrowed money from the county's banks, six of whose presidents signed the bonds of the indicted vigilantes.

Owners of small businesses made up the second largest occupational group—numbering twenty-three percent of the suspected Klansmen and twenty-five percent of the Klan supporters. They furnished much of the money needed to carry out the wholesale raids and to bail out the indicted raiders. In this group, retail merchants appeared most susceptible to the messages of the secret order. Fourteen percent of the suspected Klansmen and sixteen percent of the Klan supporters engaged in retail business. Marshall McCormack of the McCormack Bros. Grocery Store was an initiator of the cleanup movement and one of the largest stockholders of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*. Harry O. Fowler, a stockholder of the *Herald*, was once "Herrin's most popular and prosperous grocery man," according to a contemporary pamphlet. Leading Conservatives like C. G. Copeland, a stockholder of the *Herald*, and Charles Denham, a regular advertiser in the *Herald*, also ran groceries stores. Although not a business owner, Carl

Neilson, Exalted Cyclops of the Herrin Buckhorn Klan, was a well-known merchant who had managed the Herrin branch of the Howard-Casey Wholesale Grocery since 1913.¹³

Klan opponents further asserted that anti-labor businessmen had organized the hooded order in order to help convict the union miners indicted for the killing of strikebreakers and mine guards during the Lester mine riot. The Lester mine riot, or the Herrin Massacre, was one of the worst outbreaks of industrial violence in American history. The riot broke out at a mine near Herrin on June 21, 1922, as a fight between the local miners then on strike and the strikebreakers and mine guards hired by the mine owner. Twenty-three men lost their lives, of which twenty were strikebreakers and mine guards—all lynched in broad daylight. The trials of the indicted miners, which ended in not-guilty verdicts, took place while Klan organizing was in progress in Williamson County (between late 1922 and early 1923). Klan opponents took advantage of the coincidence. Sheriff George Galligan, for example, wrote in his book *In Bloody Williamson* that the Klan's "chief purpose was to work in a secret manner toward the conviction of the men charged with the mine massacre murders." According to Galligan, it was only after the court failed to convict the defendants that the secret order took up the issue of Prohibition enforcement. Some even circulated a rumor that S. Glenn Young was one of the mine guards employed by Lester at the time of the riot. Young's career as a detective for the Illinois Central Railroad and alleged involvement in the shop men's strike of 1922 made the rumor somewhat credible.¹⁴

Yet, an attempt to discredit the Klan by associating its growth to the bloody labor strife was bound to fail. Hal Trovillion, editor of the anti-Klan *Herrin News*, admitted that the Klan's anti-vice campaign "had little or no connection with the 'massacre' of 1922." Moreover, anyone who reviews the local newspapers during the mine riot trials will discover that more future Klan sympathizers appeared for the defense than for the prosecution. John Arms and Thomas Thornton, both prominent liquor raiders, sat on the coroner's jury that returned a pro-labor verdict naming the mine owner as responsible for the massacre. Otis Maynard, a Conservative Party member, was himself among the indicted miners. Thirty-four of the suspected Klansmen and twenty-eight of the Klan supporters, mostly small businessmen, signed the miners' bonds. These bond signers included Harry O. Fowler, Carl Neilson, Marshall McCormack, Walter Graham, James M.

Smith, Guy A. Bell, J. M. Griffin, C. G. Copeland, I. D. Gosnell, and Charles N. Green, all stockholders of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*. John H. Smith was also a bond signer. Moreover, eleven of the suspected Klansmen and six of the Klan supporters testified for the defendants. Among the defense witnesses were Abe Hicks, Dawson Meadows, Harold Crain, John Crompton, Walter East, and Alvin Misker, familiar names in the cleanup movement. In contrast, only five of the key state witnesses later sided with the Klan. Delos Duty, the State's Attorney who prosecuted the miners, became one of the bitterest enemies of the secret order.¹⁵

This fact does not mean, however, that the Klan was on good terms with the coal mining community of Williamson County. The truth was that coal miners disagreed over Prohibition and its vigilante enforcer. The anti-Klan *Chicago Tribune* said, "Men who participated in the Herrin massacre are split over liquor law enforcement and the Klan." The division was not just between native-born Protestants and foreign-born Catholics. Wet miners resented the cleanup campaign, while dries thought it was a Godsend. A dry miner wrote in the *Illinois Miner* that the Klan vigilantes had done wonderful work, "for which many of us are thanking God." Another said three weeks later, "I say God give us more Klansmen—more real men, men that stand for just laws." Responded an anti-Klan miner in the *Illinois Miner*, "I don't believe the coming of Glenn Young was 'a prayed for blessing.' For God would not send a disciple into the land to drive good people insane, destroy property, brutalize, and abuse men and women." Attitudes of the local unions also varied. Local No.1000, led by I. N. Thetford and J. W. Newcom (president of the Herrin Law and Order League), adopted a resolution asking the Department of Justice to investigate the county officials' complicity with bootleggers. On the other hand, Locals No. 986 and No. 1248 passed anti-Klan resolutions, probably overriding the opposition of pro-Klan miners.¹⁶

It is a well-known fact that America's organized labor of the early twentieth century discriminated against racial and ethnic minorities. Racism as well as economic self-interest motivated native-born white unionists to adopt exclusionary policies against Asians, African Americans, and new immigrants. Organized labor was in the forefront of the immigration restriction campaign in order to save America from "undesirable" or "inferior" races. Yet, we may still hesitate to accept the idea that a good union worker could join a racist-nativist organization like the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan as a national organization (headquartered in Atlanta) was neither

a friend nor a foe of organized labor. Official Klan publications, such as the *Imperial Night-Hawk*, stated only that the Invisible Empire stood for "a closer relationship of capital and labor" and opposed "unwarranted strikes by foreign labor agitators." Klan writers occasionally attacked industrialists for being selfish and supported anti-child labor legislation. But the attitude of the hooded order toward labor remained ambiguous during the 1920s. Organized labor, for their part, denounced the secret order unequivocally. Because of the order's reactionary image and labor's anti-Klan position, scholars have tended to present the hooded order as non- or anti-union labor. In *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930*, Kenneth T. Jackson wrote, "The greatest source of Klan support came from rank and file *non-union*, blue-collar employees of large businesses and factories" (emphasis added). More recently, Nancy McLean has portrayed the Klan as a petit-bourgeois organization opposing both labor and capital, suggesting that Klansmen were ready to suppress organized labor with violence if necessary.¹⁷

Our hesitation to associate union workers with the Klan would be stronger if the workers belonged to an industrial union like the UMWA, one of the most progressive of the AFL-affiliated unions. Unlike other racially exclusive craft unions, the UMWA, with a socialist-leaning membership, opened the door to African Americans and new immigrants. Consistent with such racial liberalism, the miners' union unequivocally denounced the hooded order, making Klan membership grounds for expulsion from the union. The constitution of the Illinois UMWA declared, "Any member accepting membership in the...Ku Klux Klan shall be expelled from the United Mine Workers of America." The *Illinois Miner*, edited by socialist Oscar Ameringer, taunted men in the white gown.¹⁸

Yet, the UMWA's interracial policy and opposition to the hooded order did not necessarily mean that miners espoused racial egalitarianism and cultural liberalism. It is true that rank-and-file members tended to be more politically radical than union leadership and occasionally showed interracial class solidarity while on strike. However, most white miners, whatever their political leanings, continued to believe in white supremacy and rejected social equality among different races. Fully unionized coal towns of southern Illinois, such as Herrin and Marion, maintained racial and ethnic segregation. The first expulsion of southern Illinois miners from the UMWA for Klan membership arose in Livingston, Madison County, the center of the state's "radical" southwestern coalfields. As Gary Gerstle has

suggested, it was no contradiction for a person to be a militant unionist and a cultural conservative at the same time. One's identity is multiple, shaped by his or her cultural as much as economic experience. Some of the union activists in Williamson County were leading members of the Protestant churches who promoted cultural conservatism. In early 1923, these unionists chose to stand for the churches and joined the Klan; by doing so, they did not have to compromise with their commitment to industrial unionism. Convinced that something more fundamental was at stake than their fight for industrial unionism, the coal miners decided to wear the white robe even at the risk of losing their union membership.¹⁹

What is most remarkable about the occupational background of the suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters is that the secret order united some of those who had conflicting economic interests. In small towns where coal mining was the sole industry, local business and union labor tended to maintain a symbiotic relationship. On January 2, 1923, the *Marion Daily Republican* quoted Walter Graham, a Herrin jeweler, as saying, "When we dig coal down here we have money; when we don't we don't have any money." It was not uncommon for the two groups to socialize in the same civic organizations, share political leadership, and help each other in times of trouble. Yet, even in coal mining small towns, the management-worker relationship inside the coal industry should hardly be symbiotic, if sometimes amicable. The mine superintendent, often representing absentee ownership, could become principal enemy of the union miners, as brutally demonstrated during the Lester mine riot. Once in the Invisible Empire, however, they appeared to forget their differences and become "brothers." For example, in April 1924, the Herrin Klan slated T. C. Kearns, a union leader, and J. W. Bennett, a mine farm superintendent, on the same Conservative ticket for township offices, and Abe Hicks, a union leader, and John C. Wilson, a mine superintendent, for city offices. Surprisingly enough, the township Conservative ticket included one of the union miners indicted for involvement in the Lester mine riot and a member of the grand jury that returned indictments on the miners. Two of the stockholders of the Herrin Herald Company, Charles N. Green, manager of the miners' co-op grocery in Carterville, and Ben F. Bowen, manager of the C. W. & F. Mining Company Store, would not otherwise have shared the same economic interest. Apparently, the hooded order exploited an issue that transcended occupational and class boundaries. The issue was liquor law enforcement.²⁰

Table 1: Occupations, 1920-1923

	Suspected Klansmen		Klan Supporters	
Mine Worker	Coal miner 87 Mine engineer 3 Mine electrician 3 Mine carpenter 2 Mine blacksmith 1 Mine mechanic 1 Mine motorist 1	98	Coal miner 103 Mine engineer 5 Mine mechanic 4 Mine fireman 2 Mine bricklayer 2 Mine carpenter 1 Mine electrician 1 Mine examiner 1 Mine inspector 1 UMW board member 1	121
Mine Supervisory Official	Superintendent 1 Assistant superintendent 1 Farm superintendent 1	3 3	Superintendent 3 Assistant superintendent 1 Pit boss 1 Stable boss 1	6
Business Owner	Grocery 22 Auto sales/garage 7 Insurance/real estate agency 6 Transfer company 3 Hardware store 3 Jewelry shop 3 Battery station 3 Restaurant 2 Furniture dealer 2 Department store 1 Clothing store 1 Confectionery 1 Meat market 1 Bakery 1 Book store 1 Shoe store 1 Fruits/Ice dealer 1 Tire shop 1 Photo Studio 1 Undertaker 1	62	Grocery 30 Insurance/real estate agency 11 Auto sales/garage 6 Hardware store 6 Clothing store 4 Feed/farm implement store 4 Lumber yard 3 Department store 2 Restaurant 2 Confectionery 2 Book store 1 Variety shop 1 Book store 1 Variety shop 1 Flour mill 1 Concrete factory 1 Marble works 1 Meat market 1 Furniture dealer 1 Sewing machine dealer 1 Radio shop 1 Shoe store 1 Fruits/ice dealer 1 Newspaper publisher 1 Undertaker 1	85
Business Manager	Grocery 3 Lumber yard 2 Music store 1	6 6	Auto sales 3 Clothing store 1 Grocery 1	5 5
Business Executive			Bank 12 (President 6, Cashier 6) Building and loan association (Secretary) 1	13 13



	Suspected Klansmen		Klan Supporters	
Professional	Minister 14 Physician 3 Attorney 2 Teacher 2 Veterinarian 1 Druggist 1 Civil engineer 1	24	Minister 7 Physician 6 Druggist 4 Dentist 3 Veterinarian 2 Osteopath 1 Teacher 1	24
Clerk/ Bookkeeper	Grocery 3 Railroad office 2 Newspaper office 1 Mine office 1	7	Confectionery 2 Grocery 2 Post office 1 Mine office 1 Railroad office 1 Lumber yard 1	
Skilled Worker	Barber 11 Carpenter 8 Painter 5 Auto mechanic 3 Baker 1 Plumber 1 Tinner 1 Butcher 1 Railroad mechanic 1 Railroad powerhouse fireman 1 Shoemaker 1 Pipe organist 1	34	Carpenter 8 Plumber 2 Plasterer 2 Brick Mason 2 Blacksmith 2 Painter 2 Barber 2 Baker 2 Locomotive engineer 2 Locomotive fireman 1 Ice Plant Engineer 1 Tinner 1 Butcher 1 Bricklayer 1	29
Public Official	Justice of the Peace 1 Police Magistrate 1 Police Chief 1 Deputy Circuit Clerk 1 Constable 1 Postmaster 1	6	Assistant Fire Chief 1	1
Other	Farmer 9 Teamster/truck driver 4 Railroad agent 1 Fraternal order agent 1 Auto salesman 1 Traveling salesman 1 Railroad brakeman 1 Railroad switchman 1 Railroad detective 1 Mine guard 1 Mail carrier 1 Laborer 1 Student 1 Unclassified employee 2	26	Farmer 13 Teamster/truck driver 6 Salesman 5 Janitor 3 Conductor (interurban railroad) 1 Auto salesman 1 Fruits salesman 1 Poultry raiser 1 Night watchman 1 Mail Carrier 1 Taxi service 1 Laborer 1 Student 1 Unclassified employee 4 Retired 3	43
Totals		266		335

Source: *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Williamson County, Illinois; Page Directory Company's Herrin, Illinois City Directory 1923; and Heber Page's Williamson County Directory 1923-24-25.*

Age, Marital Status, Homeownership

The age, marital status, and homeownership of the suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters indicate that the secret order attracted mature, established citizens of Williamson County. The estimated average age of the 221 suspected Klansmen in 1923 was forty-one years. The largest age group was 35-44 years (seventy-two), followed by 45-54 (fifty-five), 25-34 (fifty-one), 55-64 (twenty), 18-24 (eighteen), and over 65 (five). Of the 287 Klan supporters whose age in 1923 can be estimated, the largest age group was 35-44 years (ninety-four), followed by 45-54 (eighty-one), 55-64 (forty-three), 25-34 (forty-three), over 65 (twenty), and 18-24 (six). Their average age was forty-six years. Naturally, most of them had a family. Of the 258 suspected Klansmen whose marital status between 1920 and 1923 is known, 234 or ninety-one percent were married or widowed, while 309 or ninety-six percent of the 321 Klan supporters were listed as such. Most of them were also homeowners. Between 1920 and 1923, seventy-four percent of suspected Klansmen owned their homes, nineteen percent rented, and seven percent lived with a family member who owned the property. For the Klan supporters, the figures are respectively eighty-six percent, nine percent, and five percent of the total 302.²¹

Prominent liquor raiders, such as Carl Neilson, John W. Ford, Caesar Cagle, Albert Jones, and Sam Childers were in their thirties to forties, married with children, and were homeowners. Some of the Klan leaders, like Sam Stearns, Abe Hicks, T. C. Kearns, and I. N. Thetford, were over fifty years of age when they launched the cleanup movement. These otherwise ordinary citizens carried a big handgun day and night or hired an armed bodyguard in fear of assassins' bullets. It was no wonder the metropolitan press, scornful of "Bloody Williamson" County, depicted Herrin as a wild frontier town of the Old West.

Party Affiliation

On January 30, 1923, the *Herrin Journal* reported that "a new fusion party" had appointed a committee composed of three Republicans and three Democrats from each ward to choose candidates for the April city election. The new party was the Conservative Party, the political front of the

Herrin Ku Klux Klan. Like the Anti-Saloon League, the Klan of the 1920s took a non-partisan approach to achieve its specific political goals. When Klan officials claimed the secret order was not in politics, they meant that as a reformer, it was free from old partisan politics. In Williamson County, as elsewhere, the issue-oriented Klan recruited from the major political parties, and its members cast a united vote for the candidates, regardless of party label, who received the organization's endorsement.²²

Evidence shows that the Williamson County Klan was literally a fusion party. Of the 115 suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters whose party affiliation is known, sixty or fifty-two percent were Republican, forty-seven or forty-one percent Democrat, and eight or seven percent Socialist. Williamson County was a Republican stronghold, where victors in the April Republican primary usually won in the November general election. Therefore, these figures appear to show slight overrepresentation of Democrats in the Klan faction. Indeed, Carl Neilson, Harry Fowler, Marshall McCormack, I. N. Thetford, and G. C. Chamness, stockholders of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*, were all life-long Democrats. So was Rev. B. E. Green, editor of the Klan newspaper. Herrin's third ward, the Klan bastion in the city, usually voted Democratic. James H. Felts, publisher of the pro-Klan *Marion Evening Post*, was an undisputed leader of the Williamson County Democratic Party. In early 1924, a Republican wrote to Governor Len Small (Republican) that the Klan was a Democratic conspiracy to overturn the Republican domination of local politics. Indeed, the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald* sometimes characterized the Klan's anti-vice campaign as a political insurgency against the county's "Republican machine" which had done nothing to curb lawlessness. At the same time, however, the hooded order attracted leading members of the local G.O.P., such as Sam Stearns, T. C. Kearns, and John W. Ford. Liquor raiders Caesar Cagle and Brady Jenkins had run for township office, constable, and school trustee respectively on the Republican ticket before joining the Conservative Party. In the primary of April 1924, the Klan's endorsement went to the Republican ticket headed by Wallace Bandy.²³

Just like union coal miners, members of the political parties disagreed among themselves over Prohibition and the Ku Klux Klan. Wet Republicans allied with wet Democrats to defeat the radical dry insurgents within their own parties. Mayor C. E. Anderson, Sheriff George Galligan,

and Deputy John Layman led the anti-Prohibition, anti-Klan wing of Herrin's Republican party and battled with Klan Republicans like John W. Ford. The same was true of the Williamson County Socialist Party. While Abe Hicks, Marion Collard, and Charles Ingraham published the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*, Benjamin Hoy of Marion, who had emigrated from England in 1903, ran for State Representative as an anti-Klan independent to challenge Wallace Bandy.²⁴

Civic Activism

One of the aspects of the 1920s Klan that deserves more attention is its civic activist ideology. Klan periodicals and pamphlets advocated civic activism, constantly exhorting Klansmen to be exemplary citizens. A good Klansman was a good citizen who would work tirelessly for the welfare of his community. He should go out of the lodge room, investigate the issues needing more attention, and formulate constructive programs to get best results. Participation in local politics, above all, was an excellent way to demonstrate his good citizenship. The Klansman should acquaint himself with all the issues involved in the election and all the candidates in the field in order to cast his "intelligent" ballot for the best candidates regardless of party label. Going to the polls, however, was not enough. The Klansman was also a potential candidate for public service. The organization encouraged its members to hold office whenever possible, saying it was one of the fundamental duties of good citizenship. Accordingly, the secret order participated in local elections more actively than any other fraternal organization.²⁵

Political activism of hooded knights was evident in Williamson County. From 1923 through 1926, the names of the men identified with the secret order appeared regularly on the ballot in the city, township, and county elections. Politically awakened Klan members dutifully went to the polls, and as a result, some of the elections recorded the largest vote cast in local history and ended in Klan victories. In Herrin's special aldermanic election of September 1923, there was only one ticket (the Klan's Conservative ticket) and one candidate (Charles Denham) in the field. Yet, according to the *Herrin Journal*, the election "attracted more votes than an ordinary ward election would attract with more than one candidate."

Apparently, Klan membership promoted one's interest and participation in local politics.²⁶

Recent studies have shown, however, that the Klan appealed to those who had already taken an active part in local civic-political affairs. In his study of the Anaheim, California chapter, Christopher Cocoltchos argued that one's civic activism led to Klan membership rather than the opposite. The same was true of the Klan movement in Williamson County. Though some on the Klan tickets were political novices, others were well-known figures in local politics who had served elective or appointive offices before 1923. Sixty-five of the suspected Klansmen and fifty-eight of the Klan supporters had run for elective office at least once *before* joining the secret order. John L. Whiteside, the second Exalted Cyclops of the Marion Klan, had been mayor of Creal Springs. Harry Fowler was elected city treasurer of Herrin in 1905, when he was just twenty-four years old. Marshal McCormack was also twenty-four years old when he ran for assistant supervisor of West Marion Township in 1917. Carl Neilson had served the Herrin Township High School Board consecutively since 1917. He was also an aldermanic candidate in the 1919 city election. After an unsuccessful bid for mayoralty, T. C. Kearns was elected city treasurer in 1917, while his son-in-law John D. Perrine, a *Herald* stockholder and Conservative Party member, was elected city clerk in the same election as the youngest man (twenty-two years old) to hold that office. Perrine then became postmaster of Herrin. Some of the pro-Klan ministers, too, had a record of public service. Rev. A. M. Laird of Marion had once served as police magistrate, while Rev. J. E. Story of Herrin was former mayor of West Frankfort, Franklin County, elected on a ticket backed by the city's Law and Order League, of which he was a leader.²⁷

Among the tireless aspirants for office were Herrin's Socialist trio, Abe Hicks, Marion Collard, and Charles Ingraham. Before his election to police magistrate in 1921, Hicks had appeared on the Socialist ticket six times (three times for mayor). During the 1915 mayoral campaign, according to the *Herrin News*, he declared, "All I have to say to the voters is this—if you believe in human rights above property rights, vote the Socialist ticket." Marion Collard was one of the first board members of the Herrin Township High School, though he was never successful in his six-time candidacy for other elective offices. Ingraham founded the *Herrin News*

(later sold to Hal Trovillion) and served as the first mayor of Herrin from 1900 to 1901. He, too, was a perennial (seven-time) candidate, his aspiration ranging from city alderman to state representative. The Socialist trio, all in their late fifties, donned the white robe and joined the management of the Herald Publishing Company.²⁸

"Socialist Klansman" may sound odd, but in the 1920s, many socialists and ex-socialists identified with the secret order. The Klan established a flourishing chapter in Milwaukee, the home of Victor Berger and undisputed center of Midwestern Socialism. Historian Norman Weaver wrote, "In Milwaukee the group that responded to the Klan's blandishments most readily, surprisingly enough, was the Socialists." Scholars have also suggested that the decline of the Socialist party in the Midwestern states, such as Indiana and Ohio, was due in part to the Klan's tremendous growth in that region. (Incidentally, D. C. Stephenson, who ruled the Indiana Klandom, was an ex-socialist from Oklahoma.) The Socialist Party of America was not an ideological monolith. In the ranks and leadership of the party were white supremacists, anti-Catholics, and Prohibitionists, together with those who opposed all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Defying the party's anti-prohibition policy, a number of Socialists supported the anti-saloon laws, and as Richard Judd has pointed out, "Anti-vice and liquor-law enforcement were...often distinctive feature of small-town Socialist politics." Thus, it was hardly surprising that the Klan's law-and-order message attracted some of the prominent Socialists in Williamson County.²⁹

The secret order also drew support from the citizens working for a more "progressive" Williamson County. At least ninety-six of the suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters belonged to civic organizations, such as the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the Greater Marion Association, and the Herrin Improvement Association. Harry Fowler, Carl Neilson, and John D. Ferrine were members of the Herrin Improvement Association, whose purpose was "to boost every interest that pertains to the welfare and growth of the city." Charles Pope, an organizer of the Conservative Party, belonged to "more than a dozen civic organizations in Herrin," reported the *Danville Commercial-News*. L. W. Steckenrider, another Conservative, was a leading member of the Lions Club and "the champion booster of Herrin." He helped to complete such big projects as the interurban railway and the

Ly-Mar Hotel, reputedly the best in southern Illinois. The same booster organizations, however, included many anti-Klansmen as well. Former mayor A. T. Pace, a Klan opponent, headed the Herrin Improvement Association, while Mayor C. E. Anderson, Sheriff George Galligan, Judge E. N. Bowen, and Joe Dell'Era (proprietor of the European Hotel) were all prominent members of the Herrin Lions Club and archenemies of the hooded order. These civic organizations of Williamson County, as well as the miners' union and the political parties, were divided over the Ku Klux Klan.³⁰

One's civic involvement could take a variety of forms, and for some citizens, the war against the saloon offered a stage for their activism. During the days of local option, the towns in Williamson County constantly switched between wet and dry camps. In Herrin, the Labor Party and the Citizens Party, representing the wet and dry factions, battled at every election over whether or not to license the saloons. (They virtually agreed on other issues.) National Prohibition ended the two-party battle, but advocates of a dry Herrin continued their fight in the Herrin Law and Order League. Impatient with the unchanging (even deteriorating) moral conditions of the city, League members frequently attended city council meetings to demand stricter law enforcement. In Marion and Johnston City, too, dries formed similar organizations and urged officials to perform their duties. The Klan's main base of support came from this segment of the Williamson County population.³¹

The names of the temperance activists overlap with those of the suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters. Former members of the Citizens Party include B. F. Bowen, G. C. Chamness, Harry Fowler, George Otey, and I. N. Thetford, all stockholders of the *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald*. Fowler was also a founding member of the Herrin Law and Order League. Thetford, a prominent miner and union leader, was one of the most vocal proponents of Prohibition in Herrin. Rev. P. R. Glotfelty, a mastermind of the Klan's cleanup, served as president of the Law and Order League and often headed the League delegation to the city council meetings. In July 1921, the League offered thirteen "volunteer policemen" at the mayor's disposal. Among these citizen officers were John W. Ford, a Klan leader, Rev. B. E. Green, editor of the *Herrin Herald*, James M. Smith, a stockholder of the *Herrin Herald*, Thomas Welty, a Conservative alderman, John Veach, a

Conservative alderman, Frank Roberts, a Conservative constable, Rufus Whitson, a pro-Klan policeman, and Henry Childers, a bond signer for the Klan raiders. In Marion, Sam Stearns and Rev. A. E. Prince, both self-admitted Klansmen, belonged to the city's Law Enforcement League. Almost without exception, these men were active members of the Williamson County Anti-Saloon League. The local dry leagues had been in operation well before the Klan entered Williamson County, which suggests that one's activism for temperance led to Klan membership rather than the opposite.³²

Conclusion

Sheriff George Galligan, representing the anti-Klan faction, wrote that Ku Kluxers were mostly the "poor white trash" type and "crumbs" of society. This study has shown that it was not the case: the people behind the Klan movement were stable members of a southern Illinois coalmining community. The majority of the suspected Klansmen and Klan supporters were middle-aged married homeowners. More than a third worked in the coal mines and belonged to the UMWA. The rest came from a variety of occupational groups—grocers, garage owners, mine superintendents, carpenters, farmers, doctors, and Protestant ministers. The secret order infiltrated into the ranks of the Republican, Democratic, and Socialist parties. The hooded organization was remarkably adept at uniting people with diverse, sometimes conflicting, economic, and political interests. In addition, Williamson County knights and their backers included those who had taken an active part in community building by holding public office, joining booster organizations, or enlisting in the temperance movement. Civic-activists as well as an occupational and political cross-section of the local society, they conform to the image of 1920s Klansmen presented in the revisionist studies.³³

What united these diverse people was a desire to make Williamson County a morally fit place to live in and vindicate the community before the nation. The Lester mine riot of June 1922 and the "miscarriage of justice" afterwards ruined the county's reputation. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* called the massacre as "butchery utterly without excuse, an appalling disgrace to organized labor, a disgrace to the State of Illinois, a disgrace to

the American nation." When the court acquitted all the defendants, the *Chicago Tribune* wrote, "Herrin is a murderous community. The courts cannot convict its residents of murder and punish them physically, but the civilized opinion of the entire United States convicts them of wholesale murder and perversion of justice, and will punish them by contempt and ostracism from the society of decent people." Williamson County became a despicable blot on the country, an extremely violent, semi-civilized place that no sane American would dare to visit. The people of the county felt an intense need to do something to remove the dishonorable sobriquet "Bloody Williamson."³⁴

Some found a way to restore the county's reputation in the campaign for dry law enforcement. Williamson County had never been an arid place, but after the Lester mine riot, there developed a "program of debauchery" seldom seen in other American communities. In a speech quoted in the *Marion Daily Republican*, Judge W. W. Duncan of the Illinois Supreme Court said, "After 1922, the gunmen and thugs of East St. Louis, St. Louis, Chicago, and elsewhere came to Williamson County believing that this county was a haven for criminals and thieves... [and] opened up road houses along the roads in our county and sold illicit liquor." Herrin became a "rendezvous and hiding ground" for those wildest gangsters. In 1923, saloons were "so thick" in the city that "anyone could get a drink of whisky over the bar at 20 or 30 places," in the words of a Herrin man quoted in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Though the sobriquet "Bloody Williamson" would stay for a while, many people thought, they could at least show their determination to live a clean, moral life by ousting bootleggers. Not only long-time dry activists but also some of the civic leaders formerly in the wet camp joined the crusade for law enforcement. According to the same *Post-Dispatch* article, John H. Smith said, "I was never an advocate of prohibition... But things here, a year and a half ago, simply got so bad that a woman couldn't go on the streets without being insulted. Drunken men were lying around, and half-drunk ones were everywhere." The author of the *Post-Dispatch* article concluded, "The massacre... encouraged lawlessness in Herrin, and the Klan's organizers, working there early in 1923, found a ready response to their appeal to make Herrin 'more like home and less like hell.'"³⁵

Ironically, the Ku Klux Klan, employing violent vigilante tactics, made Williamson County bloodier and more like hell. The people realized by early 1925 that the Klan's cleanup campaign accomplished nothing but giving the county more notoriety. The dry coalition disintegrated, and in April 1925, Herrinites elected an anti-Klan mayor who repudiated the extra-legal method. The new mayor was none other than Marshall McCormack, a former liquor raider and Klan leader. A year later, bullets of anti-Klan gangsters completed the ousting of the secret order. The Klan's reign in Williamson County thus ended ignominiously.

Notes

1 The author thanks Michael Keepper, Director of Herrin City Library, for his assistance in completing this article.

2 *Chicago Tribune*, 15 April 1926, 6. See also *Carbondale Free Press*, 15 April 1926; 1, 16 April 1926, 1; and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 April 1926, 10.

3 *Marion Daily Republican* (hereafter cited as *MDR*), 8 April 1922, special automobile number. *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Williamson County, Illinois* (microfilm); *Page Directory Company's Herrin, Illinois City Directory 1923* (hereafter cited as *Herrin City Directory 1923*) (Springfield and Lebanon: Page Directory Company, 1923), 108; *W. H. Hoffman's City Directory of Herrin, Illinois 1926* (Quincy: The Hoffman Directories, 1926), 191. The directories are available in the Herrin City Library and the Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, respectively. For Smith's participation in the revival, see *Herrin Journal* (hereafter cited as *HJ*), 4 June 1925, 1; and *Carbondale Free Press*, 14 April 1926, 1.

4 Local and area newspapers reported the Klan war in detail. The best secondary work is Paul M. Angle, *Bloody Williamson: A Chapter in American Lawlessness* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992). See also David E. Goss, "The Ku Klux Klan in Southern Illinois, 1922-1926" (M.A. thesis, Illinois State University, 1972); and Edmund C. Hahey, "The Newspaper Editor and Community Conflict: Williamson County, Illinois: 1922-1928" (M.A. thesis, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1956). The author's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Ku Klux Klan Movement in Williamson County, Illinois, 1923-1926" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005), is being revised for publication.

5 For the new interpretations of the 1920s Klan, see Leonard J. Moore, "Historical Interpretations of the 1920s Klan: The Traditional View and Recent Revisions," in Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 17-38 and a slightly differ-

ent version in *Journal of Social History* 24 (1990): 341-53. See also Shawn Lay, *Hooded Knights on the Niagara: The Ku Klux Klan in Buffalo, New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 177-91; and David A. Horowitz, ed., *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 1-4.

6 For Sam Stearns' admission of his Klan membership, see *MDR*, 25 January 1924, 6. The *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald* (hereafter cited as *HSWH*) was published from 22 February 1924 to 3 July 1925. The quote "owned by Klansmen..." is from *HSWH*, 17 February 1925, 2, and B. E. Green's statement from *HSWH*, 7 November 1924, 2. For the names of the *Herald* stockholders, see *MDR*, 6 July 1925, 1; *HSWH*, 7 October 1924; 4, 14 April 1925, 2; 3 July 1925, 2; and *K. K. K. Experiment in Journalism* (Herrin, 1925). *K. K. K. Experiment in Journalism* is a small pamphlet issued by the *Herrin News*. The pamphlet is included in Paul Angle, *Bloody Williamson Papers*, Folder 6, Chicago Historical Society. The names and photos of leading Klansmen appeared in *S. Glenn Young Memorial Edition of the Herrin Herald*, 2-8, and those of Conservative Party candidates in *HJ*, 29 March 1923, 8; 20 April 1925, 4. For the names of the indicted Klansmen, see *HJ*, 13 March 1924, 1, 6; *Herrin News* (hereafter cited as *HN*), 14 March 1924, 1, 7; and *MDR*, 14 March 1924, 1, 3. The original true bills of indictment are preserved in a box labeled "Indictments, No.1600-2399" at the Williamson County Clerk's Office in Marion. For Boswell's admission of the raiders' Klan membership, see *MDR*, 9 January 1924, 3. Ten Klansmen died in the gun battles. The funeral of S. Glenn Young drew reportedly the largest crowd ever assembled for a funeral in the county. Photos of the funeral appeared in *S. Glenn Young Memorial Edition*, 7.

7 For the names of the bond signers, see *MDR*, 18 March 1924, 6; 19 March 1924, 1, 6; 20 March 1924, 1, 6; 21 March 1924, 1, 6; *HJ*, 18 March 1924, 4; 19 March 1924, 1, 5; 20 March 1924, 1, 4; 21 March 1924, 1, 4; *HN*, 18 March 1924, 1, 2, 7; 21 March 1924, 1, 3; 10 June 1924, 1, 3; and *HSWH*, 21 March 1924, 1, 3. Photos of the protest parade appeared in *Illinois Fiery Cross*, 4 April 1924, n.p. For additional bond signers, see *MDR*, 22 February 1924, 1; 28 May 1924, 1; 24 July 1924, 1; 26 July 1924, 3; 13 August 1924, 1; 26 August 1924, 1, 3; 17 September 1924, 1; 6 November 1924, 1; 21 July 1925, 1; *HN*, 5 August 1924, 1; and *Danville Commercial-News*, 10 September 1924, 16. Except the Austrian-born Jewish merchant, all the foreign-born bond signers were "old immigrants." Seven came from Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland), one from British Canada, one from India (with British parents), and one from Germany.

8 Bruce Bissat, *Southern Illinois: Past, Present, and Future* (Herrin: Southern Illinois Incorporated, 1942), 6. The number of mines and miners and the total output of 1920-1921 were taken from *HN*, 2 March 1922, 7. For the growth of the southern Illinois coal industry, see David Sibley, "The Bituminous Coal Industry of Southern Illinois, 1880-1940" (M.A. thesis, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1965), 20-40; and Daniel J. Prosser, "Coal Towns in Egypt: Portrait of an Illinois Mining Region, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973), chapter 1. The Marion Chamber of Commerce withdrew from the National Chamber of Commerce in protest to the latter's anti-labor attitude, dissolved itself, and merged with the Marion Merchants Association to form the Greater Marion Association. In Herrin, there had been no local Chamber of

Commerce until April 1943.

9 For Kearns, see *Herrin City Directory 1923*, 67; and *HN*, 5 July 1923, section 2, 9; 5 February 1924, 1. For Thetford, see *Herrin City Directory 1923*, 116; *HJ*, 27 June 1923, 2; and *HN*, 29 June 1922, 4; 25 July 1925, 1. Thetford was also a member of the Illinois Farmer-Labor Party and vice-president of the Herrin Trades Council for 1926. For Ford, see *Herrin City Directory 1923*, 45; and *HJ*, 31 March 1923, 2, 7 November 1923, 4; 8 December 1923, 1.

10 For Bandy, see *HN*, 25 April 1918, 8; 5 January 1922, 2; 28 March 1924, 2; and *MDR*, 20 December 1921, 1. For Hicks, see *Herrin City Directory 1923*, 59; and *HN*, 30 October 1913, 4; 22 April 1920, 1. Keaster and Green were listed as coal miner in the 1920 census but as justice of the peace and grocery manager in *Herrin City Directory 1923* (page 67 and 51, respectively). For McCormack, see *Herrin City Directory 1923*, 76; and *HN*, 19 January 1926, 1.

11 In 1920, 8.5 percent of the county's population was foreign born, and many adult male immigrants worked in the coalmines.

12 *Illinois Miner*, 3 May 1924, 3; McAlister Coleman, "Herrin," *Survey* 53 (1 October 1924): 56; *Chicago Daily Worker*, 7 February 1925, 1; 9 February 1925, 6; and *HSWH*, 10 March 1925, 2; 24 March 1925, 2.

13 *Illinois Miner*, 1 September 1923, 8; 3 May 1924, 8, 31 January 1925, 2. On 7 August 1926, Grand Dragon Gail Carter of the Illinois Klan visited Williamson County to pay off the debts (totaling \$7,400) of the Williamson County Klan to four banks in the county. The estimated amount of the loan was between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The assumption of the debts by the national organization signified the Klan's withdrawal from the county. *MDR*, 9 August 1926, 1. The six bank presidents are John H. Burnett, Thomas A. Cox, and Shannon Holland of Marion, George H. Harrison of Herrin, W. H. Grant and R. G. Fleming of Johnston City. The quote about Fowler is from K. K. K. *Experiment in Journalism*, 4. For Copeland, Denham, and Neilson, see *Herrin City Directory 1923*, 32, 38, 88, respectively.

14 For the Lester mine riot, see Chatland Parker, *The Herrin Massacre: A Fair and Impartial Statement of All the Facts: The Trial, Evidence, Verdict* (Chicago: Parker Publishing Company, 1923; reprint, Marion: Williamson County Historical Society, 1979); Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 3-71; McAlister Coleman, *Men and Coal* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), chapter 12; Woodrow W. Everett, *A Caterwaul from Egypt: Anatomy of the 1922 Herrin Massacre* (New York: Vantage Press, 1970); and Michael Day, "The Herrin Massacre of June 22, 1922: The Influence of Masculinity" (M.A. thesis, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, 2001). George Galligan, *In Bloody Williamson: The Story of My Four Years Fight with the Ku Klux Klan* (n.p., 1927; reprint, Marion: Williamson County Historical Society, 1985), 14-15, 20, 23. Union activist Thomas Tippet also indicated that those who wanted to have the defendants convicted formed the Klan. Tippet, "One-sided Justice at Herrin: Illegal Methods of Law Enforcement and Use of State Troops against Labor Bring Tragedy to Illinois Mining Camp," *Locomotive Engineers Journal* 59 (April 1925): 258. For Young's career as a railroad detective, see *HN*, 21 July 1921, section 2, 5; and *Danville Commercial-News*, 16 February 1924, 1. For his alleged involvement in the shop men's

strike, see MDR, 22 July 1924, 1; *Chicago Daily Worker*, 7 February 1925, 2; and Galligan, *In Bloody Williamson*, 27.

15 Hal W. Trovillion, *Persuading God Back to Herrin: Being a True Account of a Successful and Unusual Experiment in Journalism Conducted by the Herrin News by Resorting to the Old Time Religion to Regenerate a Community that Some Thought God Had Forgotten* (Herrin: Herrin News, 1925), 8. William Chenery, an outside observer, wrote in September 1924, "Today, in Herrin and in Marion, men of various shades of opinion will assert that there is no connection between the 'massacre'...and the [Klan-related] rioting and murder which have occurred since last December." *New York Times*, 14 September 1924, section 9, 1. The names of the coroner's jury, defendants, bond signers, and witnesses appeared in MDR, 26 June 1922, 1; 8 September 1922, 1; 25 September 1922, 1; 26 September 1922, 1, 3; 28 September 1922, 1; 14 December 1922, 1, 6; 15 December 1922, 6; 18 December 1922, 4; 5 January 1923, 1, 6, 8; 6 January 1923, 1, 6; 12 January 1922, 6, 8; 15 January 1923, 3; 16 January 1923, 8. See also Parker, *The Herrin Massacre*, 78-100. For an insightful argument on alliance between small businessmen and union workers, see Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

16 *Chicago Tribune*, 13 January 1924, 5; *Illinois Miner*, 1 March 1924, 3; 22 March 1924, 3; 3 May 1924, 3. The resolutions of the miners' locals are included in Angle, *Bloody Williamson Papers* and in *Len Small Papers*, Box 312 A, Folder 6. The latter is available at Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. See also *Illinois Miner*, 2 August 1924, 3; 20 September 1924, 2; and MDR, 15 October 1924, 1.

17 For labor nativism, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955, 2002); A. T. Lane, *Solidarity or Survival?: American Labor and European Immigrants, 1830-1924* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987); and Gwendolyn Mink, *Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development: Union, Party, and State, 1875-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). For the Klan's official attitude toward organized labor, see *Imperial Night-Hawk*, 2 May 1923, 7. According to Imperial Wizard William J. Simmons, "a large percentage of its membership is composed of union and non-union elements of labor." Simmons, *The Ku Klux Klan: Yesterday Today and Forever* (Atlanta, 1922). For pro-labor Klans, see *Searchlight*, 19 August 1922, 5; 7 October 1922, 6; and Horowitz, ed., *Inside the Klavern*, 19. For the Klan's anti-labor activities, see Brooks R. Blevins, "The Strike and the Still: Anti-Radical Violence and the Ku Klux Klan in the Ozarks," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 52 (1993): 405-25; and Brian Kelly, *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908-21* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 153, 194-6. Organized labor made their anti-Klan position clear in a series of resolutions. See MDR, 1 October 1923, 1; *HN*, 12 September 1924, 8; and *Illinois Miner*, 20 September 1924, 1. Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 241; Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). For the argument that the Klan was anti-labor, see also John M. Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1924), 97-98; David Chalmers,

Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan (3rd edition) (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 145, 156-7; and Michael Newton, *The Invisible Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 61. Even Robert D. Johnston, who found pro-labor, progressive petit bourgeoisie in early twentieth-century Portland, Oregon, claimed somehow that the Klan was a reactionary petit bourgeois organization, a tool of the city's corporate elite. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class*, chapter 19.

18 For the Socialist influence on Illinois miners, see John H. M. Laslett, "Swan Song or New Social Movement?: Socialism and Illinois District 12, United Mine Workers of America, 1919-1926," in Donald T. Critchlow, ed., *Socialism in the Heartland: The Midwestern Experience, 1900-1925* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 167-214; and David Thoreau Wieck, *Woman from Spillertown: A Memoir of Agnes Burns Wieck* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992). For the anti-Klan position of the Illinois UMWA, see *HN*, 24 November 1921, 7; and *Illinois Miner*, 1 September 1923, 8; 31 May 1924, 1.

19 Studies focusing on miners' interracial solidarity are legion, including Kelly, *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields*; Ronald L. Lewis, "Coal Miners and the Social Equality Wedge in Alabama, 1880-1908," in John H. M. Laslett, ed., *The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity?* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 297-319; and Daniel Letwin, "Interracial Unionism, Gender, and 'Social Equality' in the Alabama Coalfields, 1878-1908," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (August 1995): 519-54. For a recent study on union miners' radicalism and nativism, see Carl R. Weinberg, *Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005). For the ethnic segregation in Williamson County, see Prosser, "Coal Towns in Egypt." The Madison County case was reported in *Klan Courier*, 20 June 1924, n.p.; and *Searchlight*, 5 July 1924, 2. For the Klan's strength in Midwestern coalfields, see Robert L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), chapter 6. The secret order had a substantial following in Colchester, McDonough County, a coalmining center of Illinois. As in Williamson County, the Colchester Klan attempted to enforce Prohibition. John E. Hallwas, *The Bootlegger: A Story of Small-Town America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 193-213. Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

20 *MDR*, 2 January 1923, 8. For the township and city elections, see *HN*, 28 March 1924, 6; 4 April 1924, 3, 4; 18 April 1924, 2. Whether the Williamson County Klan pursued a nativistic goal is a moot question. Pointing to the Klan's "singleness of purpose," the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (anti-Klan) wrote, "The fight...has not been a religious or racial affair. It has been a campaign to 'clean up' Herrin by stopping the open sale of liquor." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 1 February 1925, 13; 8 February 1925, 1-B. Yet some anti-Klan leaders, such as Delos Duty and George Galligan, asserted that the Klan's advocacy of law enforcement was a mere cloak to hide its nefarious goal (racial-religious persecution). For Duty, see *HN*, 16 September 1924, 2. Later scholars tend to accept the anti-Klan opinion. See, for example, Joseph C. Buford, "Some Aspects of Cultural

Geography of Little Egypt, Illinois" (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1962), 14, 41-42; Goss, "The Ku Klux Klan in Southern Illinois," 80; Prosser, "Coal Towns in Egypt," 145-6; William N. Macfarlane, *Magic City of Egypt: History of Johnston City, Illinois* (El Paso: Complete Printing, 1991), 81; and Paula Davenport, "Bloody Williamson," in Stan J. Hale and David A. Hurst, *Williamson County, Illinois Sesquicentennial History* (Paducah: Turner, 1993), 109. Evidence suggests that Williamson County Klansmen subscribed to the nativist ideology of the national organization. Local and invited Klan orators occasionally attacked immigrants, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Knights of Columbus. The *Herrin Semi-Weekly Herald* reprinted anti-Catholic articles from national Klan publications. Letters to the *Herald* also reveal the bigotry of its subscribers. Moreover, Klansmen acted violently and used abusive language during the raids on the homes of foreign-born residents. However, none of these substantiates the assertion that the Klan used law enforcement as a cloak to persecute ethno-religious minorities. People of foreign descent, Italians in particular, were prominent among liquor law violators, and most of the "victims" of the raids pleaded guilty at the federal court. Paul Angle was probably right when he wrote, "since most of the Italians were wine makers, and many of them bootleggers as well, they suffered the same consequences they would have if the Klan had been moved by religious or racial prejudices." Angle, *Bloody Williamson*, 205. (Yet one might still argue that Prohibition itself was a form of ethno-religious persecution.)

21 The data on age, marital status, and homeownership were obtained from *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Williamson County, Illinois; Herrin City Directory 1923*; and *Heber Page's Williamson County Directory 1923-24-25* (Marion, Ill., Springfield and Lebanon, Mo.: Heber Page Directory Company, 1923). Homeownership was extensive in Williamson County. In 1923, for example, seventy-seven percent of Herrin citizens owned their homes. See "Facts about Herrin" in *HN*, 24 May 1923, 3.

22 *HJ*, 30 January 1923, 1; 2 February 1923, 1. For the Klan's official attitude toward politics, see *Official Message of the Emperor of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan to the Initial Session of the Imperial Klowlvation* (Atlanta, 27 November 1922), 7; *Papers Read at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Together with Other Articles of Interest to Klansmen* (Asheville, N.C., July 1923; New York: Arno Press, 1977), 103; *Searchlight*, 15 December 1923, 4; *Dawn*, 28 July 1923, 11, 15; and *Klan Courier*, 13 June 1924, n.p.

23 The Republican letter writer mentioned here is W. L. Duncan, former sheriff of Williamson County (1910-1914). Duncan's letter is included in *Len Small Papers*, Box 312 A, Folder 6. For the "corrupt Republican machine," see *HSWH*, 26 September 1924, 2; 26 June 1925, 2; 30 June 1925, 2. The Klan ticket consisted of Wallace Bandy (state representative), Arlie Boswell (state's attorney), Fred Simpson (recorder), Leonard Stearns (circuit clerk), George Bell (coroner), and Charles Sherertz (surveyor). *HSWH* (8 April 1924, 1) reported their election as "A KLAN VICTORY: Wrong Dethroned, Righteousness Wins."

24 Benjamin Hoy's campaign advertisement, "The Only Man Who is Out and Out Against the Ku Klux Klan," appeared in *MDR*, 3 November 1924, 4.

25 "Individual Klansmen must be the most active of all men in civic affairs," according

to *Klan Building: An Outline of Proven Klan Methods for Successfully Applying the Art of Klankraft in Building and Operating Local Klans* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, n.d.), 15. A document in Monticello, Arkansas also stated that Klansmen should be exemplary citizens. See Donald Holley, "A Look Behind the Masks: The 1920s Ku Klux Klan in Monticello, Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 60 (Summer 2001): 138.

26 *HJ*, 18 September 1923, 3; 19 September 1923, 1.

27 Christopher N. Cocoltchos, "The Invisible Government and the Viable Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Orange County, California during the 1920's" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979). For the men named here, see *HSWH*, 3 March 1925, 4 (Whiteside); *HN*, 21 April 1905, 1 (Fowler); *MDR*, 4 April 1917, 1 (McCormack); *HN*, 19 April 1917, 5; 10 April 1919, 8; *HJ*, 16 April 1923, 1 (Neilson); *HN*, 22 April 1915, 1; 19 April 1917, 1 (Kearns); *HN*, 19 April 1917, 1; 24 July 1919, 1 (Perrine); *MDR*, 1 May 1922, 1 (Laird); *MDR*, 12 August 1920, 1; 8 January 1923, 2; *HN*, 14 July 1921, 4; 23 March 1922, 3; *HJ*, 27 March 1923, 2; 13 September 1923, 1 (Story).

28 For the three Socialists, see *HN*, 3 April 1908, 1; 23 April 1909, 1; 22 April 1910, 1; 10 November 1910, 1; 20 April 1911, 1; 15 April 1915, 1; 22 April 1920, 1 (Hicks); 23 April 1909, 1; 8 April 1910, 1, 10 November 1910, 1; 20 April 1911, 1; 17 April 1913, 1; 9 April 1914, 1, 11 March 1920, 4 (Collard); 19 May 1900, 1; 20 April 1901, 1; 20 April 1906, 1; 9 November 1906, 1; 2 June 1910, 1; 17 April 1913, 1; 5 November 1914, 1; 20 April 1916, 1; 2 November 1916, 3 (Ingraham).

29 Norman F. Weaver, "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1954), 40-144 (the quote is from 74); James R. Simmons, "The Socialist Party in Indiana, 1900-1925," in Critchlow, ed., *Socialism in the Heartland*, 63; John T. Walker, "The Dayton Socialists and World War I: Surviving the White Terror," in Critchlow, ed., *Socialism in the Heartland*, 127. For D. C. Stephenson, see M. William Lutholz, *Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1991), 10-12. For ideological conflicts inside the Socialist party, see Charles Leinenweber, "The American Socialist Party and New Immigrants," *Science and Society* 32 (Winter 1968): 1-25; Philip S. Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans: From the Age of Jackson to World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977); Mink, *Old Labor and New Immigrants*, 228-35; and Sally M. Miller, ed., *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Twentieth-Century American Socialism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996). Richard W. Judd, *Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 34. For an example of intraparty division over the liquor issue, see Errol W. Stevens, "The Socialist Party of America in Municipal Politics: Canton, Illinois, 1911-1920," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 72 (November 1979): 257-72.

30 For the Herrin Improvement Association, see Hal W. Trovillion, ed., *Williamson County, Illinois, in the World War, 1917-1918* (Marion: Williamson County War History Society, 1919), 321; and *HN*, 30 June 1921, 1; 13 October 1921, 17. For the other civic organizations, see *HN*, 7 July 1910, 1; 29 June 1922, 1, 9 January 1925, 1; *MDR*, 29 November 1921, 1; 15 December 1921, section 2, 2; and *HJ*, 24 April 1923, 2; A. W. Steel, a stockholder of the Klan newspaper, represented the Herrin Lions Club at the National Lions Convention in Omaha. *HJ*, 1 July 1924, 1. For Pope, see *Darville Commercial-News*,

12 January 1924, 1, and for Steckenrider, *HN*, 22 December 1921, 6.

31 The Herrin Law and Order League was organized on 6 February 1916. League members began attending city council meetings in 1922. *HN*, 10 February 1916, 1; 25 May 1922, 1, 12; 15 June 1922, 1. For the Marion Law Enforcement League (organized on 20 June 1922), see *MDR*, 21 June 1922, 1; 27 June 1922, 1, 21 August 1922, 1; 22 August 1922, 1, 4; 16 January 1923, 1. According to the *HN* (31 August 1922, 6), George Marks, a member of the Johnston City Law Enforcement League, was arrested for grafting. Marks later became a Klan liquor raider. In January 1923, these law and order organizations around the county united to form the Williamson County Law Enforcement League, whose membership overlapped with that of the Klan.

32 For the members of the Citizens Party, see *HN*, 20 April 1916, 1 (Bowen); 1 March 1912, 1 (Chamness); 21 April 1905, 1 (Fowler); 22 April 1915, 1 (Otey); and 24 April 1908, 1 (Thetford). Thetford spoke at length on the wickedness of Herrin at the city council meeting of 13 August 1923. *HJ*, 14 August 1923, 1. His career was testimony that one could be a dry crusader and Klan leader as well as a union leader. For the volunteer policemen, see *HN*, 13 July 1922, 1; 27 July 1922, 14. Rev. Prince admitted his Klan membership in his memoir included in Robert J. Hastings, *We Were There: An Oral History of the Illinois Baptist State Association, 1907-1976* (Springfield: The Association, 1976), 26.

33 Galligan's comment on Klan membership appeared in *HN*, 12 September 1924, 8.

34 *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 24 June 1922, 14; *Chicago Tribune*, 9 April 1923, 8.

35 *MDR*, 8 January 1925, 2; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 8 February 1925, 1-B, 3-B. The phrase "program of debauchery" is from James J. Coale, "Are Herrin's Churches Guilty?" *Christian Century* 41 (October 2, 1924): 1272. The description of Herrin as a "rendezvous point and hiding ground" comes from *Klan Courier*, 27 June 1924, n.p. The civic leaders without dry background include Lewis Steckenrider and T. C. Kearns, both of whom had belonged to the wet Labor Party before joining the Conservative Party.

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Cover

Born in 1886 in Albany, Georgia, William Levi Dawson was the third African-American elected to the United States Congress and the first from Illinois, serving in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1943 to 1970. Dawson, a Democrat from Chicago, represented Illinois' 1st District, and was the first African American appointed to a standing congressional committee. Photo courtesy the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.