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A Case Study of Belleville and Hastings County

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article présente un compte rendu microhistorique du Ku Klux Klan et de son chef, George Marshall, dans la région de la baie de Quinte dans les années 1920. Il soutient que le Klan et ses opposants se sont livrés à une guerre des mots essentiellement non violente, reflétant deux visions concurrentes de la britannicité de l'Ontario. La première est le modèle de citoyenneté étroitement défini par le Klan - un modèle racialisé, exclusif et fondé sur la supériorité du protestantisme anglo-saxon. La seconde s'opposait au Klan et se composait d'un réseau peu structuré prônant la réduction des fractures raciales, la tolérance religieuse et une société plus ouverte. Les activités du Klan, et même de ceux qui prétendaient le représenter, comprenaient des actes de violence et d'intimidation à l'encontre des Juifs et des Asiatiques, mais leur vitriol était principalement dirigé contre les catholiques romains. Cet article approfondira et remettra en question l'affirmation selon laquelle la britannicité historique de l'Ontario était monolithique ; en fait, elle comportait de multiples souches interdépendantes et concurrentes qui ont donné l'impulsion aux débats entourant l'évolution de l'identité de la province au cours des années 1920.

THE KU KLUX KLAN AND ONTARIO'S EVOLVING BRITISHNESS

A Case Study of Belleville and Hastings County

by Trevor Parsons

The Ku Klux Klan is one of if not the most prolific hate group to have arisen in the United States. Its blend of white supremacy, nativism, and as one Georgia Klansmen put it, "100 per cent Americanism" appear to stand in stark contrast to the firmly entrenched Britishness that defined pre-1960s Ontario. Building upon the recent works of James Pitsula and Allan Bartley, this paper presents a microhistorical account of the Ku Klux Klan and its leader, the Rev. George Marshall, in the Bay of Quinte region during the 1920s. It argues that the Klan and its opponents engaged in a largely non-violent war of words reflecting two competing visions of Ontario's Britishness. The first was the Klan's narrowly defined model of citizenship—one that was racialized, exclusive, and based on the superiority of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. Standing in opposition to the Klan was a loosely organized network advocating for the mending of racial divides, religious tolerance, and a more open society. The activities of the Klan, and even those purporting to represent it, included threats of violence and intimidation directed against Jews and Asians, but the mainstay of their vitriol was directed towards Roman Catholics. This paper will add greater depth to and challenge the assertion that Ontario's historical Britishness was monolithic; in fact it had multiple interrelated and competing strains providing the impetus for debates surrounding the province's evolving identity during the 1920s.

While archival records on the Hastings Klan are scarce, they do exist and can be buttressed by ancillary sources such as newspapers. The *Daily Intelligencer* was founded in 1834 by George Benjamin and later came under the editorship and proprietorship of Mackenzie Bowell, the Conservative prime minister from 1894 to 1896. It remained within the Bowell family until 1924 when it was sold to Sylvester Dawson. Ida Bowell, widow of Charles Bowell, was initially reticent to

Abstract

This paper presents a microhistorical account of the Ku Klux Klan and its leader, George Marshall, in the Bay of Quinte region in the 1920s. It argues that the Klan and its opponents engaged in a largely non-violent war of words reflecting two competing visions of Ontario's Britishness. The first being the Klan's narrowly defined model of citizenship—one that was racialized, exclusive, and based on the superiority of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. The second stood in opposition to the Klan and was comprised a loosely organized network advocating the mending of racial divides, religious tolerance, and a more open society. The activities of the Klan, and even those purporting to represent it, included violence and intimidation directed against Jews and Asians, but the mainstay of their vitriol was directed against Roman Catholics. This paper will add greater depth to and challenge the assertion that Ontario's historical Britishness was monolithic; in fact it had multiple interrelated and competing strains providing the impetus for debates surrounding the province's evolving identity during the 1920s.

Résumé: *Cet article présente un compte rendu microhistorique du Ku Klux Klan et de son chef, George Marshall, dans la région de la baie de Quinte dans les années 1920. Il soutient que le Klan et ses opposants se sont livrés à une guerre des mots essentiellement non violente, reflétant deux visions concurrentes de la britannicité de l'Ontario. La première est le modèle de citoyenneté étroitement défini par le Klan - un modèle racialisé, exclusif et fondé sur la supériorité du protestantisme anglo-saxon. La seconde s'opposait au Klan et se composait d'un réseau peu structuré prônant la réduction des fractures raciales, la tolérance religieuse et une société plus ouverte. Les activités du Klan, et même de ceux qui prétendaient le représenter, comprenaient des actes de violence et d'intimidation à l'encontre des Juifs et des Asiatiques, mais leur vitriol était principalement dirigé contre les catholiques romains. Cet article approfondira et remettra en question l'affirmation selon laquelle la britannicité historique de l'Ontario était monolithique ; en fait, elle comportait de multiples souches interdépendantes et concurrentes qui ont donné l'impulsion aux débats entourant l'évolution de l'identité de la province au cours des années 1920.*

sell refusing Dawson's first offer. Writing to Arthur Meighen, B.C. Donan noted that, "We have been making an effort to interest the local Conservatives in the purchase of the '*Intelligencer*' and you may be assured that we will not sell to the opposition until we have had a refusal from the Conservatives."[1] When the *Intelligencer*'s ownership was transferred to Dawson, it remained a faithfully Conservative-supporting newspaper. *The Daily Ontario* and its twin publication, the *Weekly Ontario*, under the editorship of W.H. Morton and J.O. Herity, were the staunchly Liberal-supporting competitors to the *Intelligencer*. Both published largely unfavourable pieces on the Klan, particularly the *Intelligencer* after Dawson was accosted by Klansmen.

Navigating Archival Silences

The secrecy surrounding the Klan and the unwillingness of descendants of former Klan members to provide oral testimony or documentary evidence compounds existing problems surrounding methodology. According to a local source, some close relatives of deceased Klansmen/women were unwilling to offer oral testimonials. And, as Blee has stated, those who do give oral histo-

[1] B.C. Donan to Arthur Meighen, 23 July 1923, Meighen Papers, ser 3, MG 26, I, vol 116, c-3436, p. 68258.

[2] Kathleen M. Blee, "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," *Journal of American History* 80:2 (September 1993), 597.

ries tend to make "romantic assumptions about the subjects of history from the bottom up—assumptions that are difficult to defend when studying ordinary people who are active in the politics of intolerance, bigotry, or hatred."[2] The source's own views of the Klan's activities in Hastings County and surrounding townships are similar; he intimated that the Klan were "sincere in their own way[s]" and lacking the explicit racial rhetoric seen in the United States."[3] Further, it was feared that unpleasant memories for the community at large could potentially be dredged up and the ramifications of possible guilt by association. In *Belleville: A Popular History*, Gerry Boyce also equivocates and downplays the Klan and its members. According to Boyce, it was "simply a benevolent organization" to some while for others it was based on "bigotry and intolerance."[4] This ignores the conscious efforts by the Klan's opponents to present a racialized Britishness and, as Boyce acknowledges, the pledge of members to "strive for the eternal maintenance of White Supremacy" while pledging that they were "White, Gentile, and Protestant."[5] Still, Martin Robin's *Shades of Right,* one of the earliest scholarly discussions of the Klan, is not dissimilar to the views of Boyce and Morton: "Ontario Klansmen," he wrote, "remained for the most part, mundane fraternalists eager to dissociate themselves from the reputation of violence and lawlessness, tar and feathers, that plagued their American relations."[6]

The usefulness of first-hand accounts can also lead to stilted or even fantastical reconstructions of alleged memories. In neighbouring Prince Edward County, Helen Irwin recalled an encounter with a group of Klansmen during her youth that is almost certainly exaggerated or, perhaps, entirely fictitious. She recounted that, while visiting a friend, she "heard the cars and went outside" to find a group of Klansmen pull up to the farmhouse. They were immediately recognized "because they all wore those white getups with the pointed hats." The leader declared his intention to burn the family's barn to which Irwin, who was already carrying her rifle, "put a few bullets in the doors of their car"[7] before shooting a bullet directly through the hood of the leader. The story itself mimics recorded instances of Klan violence. Irwin mentions that both she and her friend's family were Quakers and conscientious objectors during the Great War; of paramount importance to the Klan was service to the Empire with many veterans

[3] Telephone conversation with Evan Morton, curator, Tweed Heritage Centre, 25 June 2021.

[4] Gerry Boyce, *Belleville: A Popular History* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), 200.

[5] *Ibid*, 197.

[6] Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and Fascist Politics in Canada, 1920-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 14.

[7] Ian S. Robertson, "Whispers in the Night: The Ku Klux Klan in the County," in *Prince Edward County: An Illustrated History*, eds. Steve Campbell, Janet Davies, and Ian Robertson (Bloomfield, County Magazine, 2009), 136-37.

joining the hooded order.

In any case these archival gaps, or silences, compound the larger question of how to treat the Klan's existence within debates surrounding Ontario's Britishness. The limited archival sources nevertheless present the Klan as a reaction against the changing nature of cultural and political Britishness in 1920s Ontario.

The Klan before 1920

Why the Klan arrived in the Bay of Quinte and who initially organized it locally are unknown but the organization's exploits were widely known as far back as 1868 when the *Daily Intelligencer* opined of the double standard of some American newspapers, notably the *Tribune*, in supporting the Fenians. The *Intelligencer* wrote that

> If the Tribune thinks it right that the Fenian organization be allowed to plot against the British Government, and instigate such a horrible butchery as that which deprived us of the lamented [D'Arcy] McGee, what reason has it for objecting to the people of the South plotting against the Government at Washington... If the one is right, the other is also.[8]

In subsequent decades, the Klan was occasionally referenced, usually when its members committed murder, but the *Intelligencer* took little interest until its early-twentieth-century revival coinciding with release of D.W. Griffith's silent epic, *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915. The portrayal of the Klan in the film clashed with predominant views of Canadian nationalism rooted in Britishness. Greg Marquis contends that "White Canadian audiences suspended their sense of British 'fair play' and supposed law-abiding nature and cheered the Ku Klux Klan vigilantes as heroes."[9] Reviews across Canada were overwhelmingly positive and the "universal verdict" wrote a reviewer in *The Daily Ontario* was that its first showing was a "wonderful work of the art... words entirely fail to express what the eye and ear appreciate." The reviewer urged its readers to "take every opportunity of witnessing these performances." *The Birth of a Nation* was effective in presenting the Klan not as a band of terrorists likened to the Fenians but as the saviors of white southerners against the "degradation to which the south was sunk for a few years" caused by the "lawless black element."[10] To those who were uncomfortable with this globalization of American culture, they could at least take stock in a similarly positive reception in the United Kingdom where Queen Mary attended a special screening along with her children and the dethroned former King of Portugal. This, for some, was a saving grace but the film challenged perceived notions of Anglo-Canadian fair play and of an organic society rooted in law and order.

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[8] "Coming Home to Roost," *The Daily Intelligencer*, 14 April 1868.

[9] Greg Marquis, "A War Within a War: Canadian Reactions to D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 47:94 (June 2014), 422.

[10] "Marvellous Was 'Birth of a Nation' at Scott's Theatre," *The Daily Ontario*, 9 December 1915. While the reviewer's name is not given, it was presumably written by one of three men: Baldwin Bryant, editor, Philip Harrison, or John Mather, both reporters.

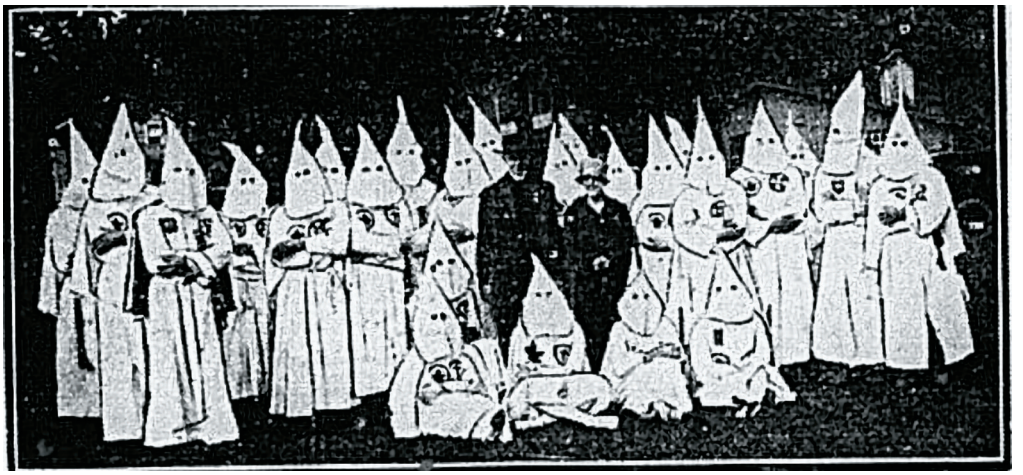

Image 1: George Marshall (centre) poses with fellow Klansmen. The Daily Intelligencer*, 5 August 1927.*

Moreover Marquis utilizes David Roediger's 'whiteness theory' arguing that the underlying acceptance of *Birth of a Nation*'s "inflammatory racial messages suggests that distorted and discriminatory attitudes towards racial minorities were deeply internalized."[11] While contemporary racial discourse in Ontario and the United States emanated from peoples' supposed superiority and/or inferiority as determined by their skin colour and ethnic origin, this was much less pronounced in rural eastern Ontario owing to the marginal communities of non-whites. The 1921 census for Hastings County, for example, recorded a population of 59,850 of which 79 were classified as Chinese and only 17 as 'negroes'. By far the largest non-white community were the Tyendinaga Mohawks, listed as 'Indians', numbering 1,106. This presents another obstacle in the narrative for none of the recorded speeches in local newspapers make even a passing reference to the Mohawks. Even in James Pitsula's *Keeping Canada British*, an account of the much more prominent Klan in Saskatchewan lacks a substantive discussion of indigenous peoples. While invectives against Chinese, Japanese, blacks, eastern Europeans, and Roman Catholics are well documented, the absence of anti-indigenous rhetoric in the views espoused by George Marshall, the Klan's local leader, and likeminded members remains unexplained.

Unsurprisingly, those of British stock formed the overwhelming majority within Hastings County accounting for 50,744 out of 59,850, or 85% of the total population. This was followed by French (3,236 or 5%), Dutch (2,695 or 4.5%), Indian (1,106 or 1.8%), and German (1,077 or 1.8%). The remaining 1.6% was composed of nearly thirty other groups. The origins of those living

[11] Marquis, "A War Within a War," 422.

in Belleville and Hastings County[12] differed slightly according to census data. Belleville was home to a higher number of people born outside of Canada. In 1921, those born in the British Isles constituted nearly 14% of the city's population while those born elsewhere accounted for 3.8%. In total, approximately 82% were born in Canada. In Hastings County, 92% of residents were born in Canada compared to 5.8% and 1.8% born in the British Isles and elsewhere, respectively. The religious composition of Belleville and Hastings County differs slightly. While Methodists formed a plurality in both areas (36% in Belleville and 47% in Hastings County), their proportion was considerably larger in Hastings County. Conversely, Belleville was home to a larger proportion of Anglicans numbering 30% compared to 19% in Hastings County. Roman Catholics constituted a slightly higher percentage of the population in Hastings County numbering 18% compared to 16% in Belleville. Similarly, Presbyterians formed 13% in Belleville and 11% in Hastings County.

Ethnic discourse was certainly widely discussed but the connotations of race were based almost exclusively on inter-ethnolinguistic and religious differences. When Alderman G.A. Reid of Belleville spoke of "keep[ing] Canada British" it was considerably more benign than the later speeches of Marshall. "What we want," Reid declared, "is [sic] the proper settlers and when they come here they should be taken by the hand and made welcome. Show them our ways that they may help to improve this country."[13] When famed sinologist, art historian, and professor, James Calvin Ferguson delivered a talk in Belleville, he too spoke more plainly, musing that the Anglo-Saxon race "was a composite one." He then directly addressed the so-called colour problem: "we cannot determine the future of the world on the color line, or a question of who was superior or inferior. China had been 400 years with a continuous form of government. Were they then so inferior to us who were but of yesterday?" Indeed, he was explicit in rejecting the "implied superiority of the white man" while commenting that it was necessary to move beyond the colour line towards a "plane of equality."[14] To be sure Ferguson was an outlier but, for the most part, it appears that the integrationist 'composite' model was the most widely accepted view. Some, like barrister and former mayor of Belleville John Flint, opposed the Klan on religious grounds. In a letter to the editor, Flint evokes the theme of intolerance challenged by the prolific author Sir Philip Gibbs in *Ten Years After*. In doing so, Flint remarked "All men have some God in their hearts, Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Mohammedan, Hindoo [sic], or Buddhists. All of

[12] Belleville is the seat of Hastings County but for the purposes of this study, their demographics will henceforth be treated separately. The demographic data is taken from the *Report of the Sixth Census of Canada 1921* Volume I (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1924), 294, 680-81.

[13] "Orange Walk in Trenton One of Largest in District," *The Daily Intelligencer*, 13 July 1928.

[14] "Dr. Ferguson's Visit," *The Daily Intelligencer*, 17 June 1921.

these have the same attributes of mercy, justice, love, under whatever name they worship the spirit." To this end, he believed, that the Klan "must never acquire a foothold in our beloved Canada"[15] but by the time this was written, the Klan was well established in Belleville.

Shades of Orange and White

Allan Bartley argues that "Ontario's political culture in the 1920s was marked by an imperial legacy which, although under siege in a post-war world, still animated its citizens and public officials." Implicit in this was the belief in an inherently superior Canadian, and therefore British, society. This is a direct contrast to the United States, which, through immigration, was losing its supposed Anglo-Saxon character. Citing Carl Berger, he asserts that "there was a racist element to this sense of Imperial superiority"[16] impelling many Canadians to became worried about racial degeneration. An important similarity, on the other hand, was the tendency of the Klan to draw support from "communities of the same British and Ontarian character which supported the Orange Order."[17] The dominance of the Orange Order within Ontario political culture was thus a "major impediment to the growth of the Klan as a political force" hindering any new organization, like the Klan, with complimentary aims. Although the Order could "afford to tolerate the Klan up to a point," the "whiff of criminality associated with the Klan ensured that it would run afoul of the established order and prevailing prejudices."[18] A number of local Klansmen in Belleville were elected officers within the Orange Order, including businessman Cannif Ruttan as worship master, Everett Bell as auditor, and Marshall himself as a deputy chaplain.[19] Early on, William Mikel, mayor of Belleville, shared a belief that the Klan was "unnecessary" in Canada. The Orange Order, he claimed, "emphasized the detesting of an intolerant spirit... The principles and the constitution of the Order are open for all the world. They are not hidden behind masks or shrouds, and it is in the interests of Orangemen and all classes to discourage the introduction of the K.K.K. in Canada."[20]

Cecil Houston and William Smyth asserted that the Klan "represented a much more narrowly defined extreme of Protestant sentiment than did the Orange Order and as a consequence were unable to conjoin with the established pattern of political compromise found within the established pattern of political compromise found within Canada's parties."[21] The Klan's desire to eliminate

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[15] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 15 July 1925. Flint was mayor in 1872.

[16] Allan Bartley, "A Public Nuisance: The Ku Klux Klan in Ontario, 1923-1927," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30:3 (Autumn, 1995), 157

[17] Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, 156.

[18] Bartley, "A Public Nuisance," 169, 158.

[19] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 14 December 1925 and 4 February 1925.

[20] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 19 December 1924.

[21] Cecil Houston and William Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange*

Roman Catholics from the social and political life paralleled the aims of another organization of another time. The Protestant Protective Association [PPA], another "secret, oath-bound, anti-Catholic society," worked secretly in the 1890s "to protect the institutions of Canada against what it alleged to be a Roman Catholic conspiracy to take control of the state... [It discriminated] against Catholics personally by boycotting their businesses, and also attempted to drive Catholics out of political life."[22] Similarly, Klan leaders Marshall and Ruttan sought to intimidate Dawson into dismissing Catholic employees of his newspaper and to shutter Chinese and Jewish businesses in favour of "gentile economic betterment."[23]

Though the PPA was not the first instance of anti-Catholicism activism not was it the most week known incident in Hastings but it was an "intensified [strain] within the dominant social and psychological spirit of the time."[24] I attracted more militant Orangemen and those supportive of "extreme and narrow anti-clericalism,"[25] to wit, anti-Catholicism. The Klan's programmes were, in some ways, banal with an emphasis on Canadian nationalism. Suggestions for rallies included readings of the works of Pauline Johnson and of John McCrae's *In Flanders Field*; speeches on the history of the union jack, the English language, and democracy in Canada. Women and children were taught "temperance, soberness and chastity, and in the older ages the child was even sworn to poverty, chastity and obedience."[26] The PPA's paranoia and conspiratorial zeal were also evidenced with the Klan. One Klan bulletin to members warned to "watch Rome and study Rome at the present. The papists are using every strategy within their reach to get political control in Canada. Their untaxed property is a real menace, their school system is a tragedy, and their bilingualism a curse to Canada."[27] While these expressions of Britishness were mainstream the meanings behind them—remnants of "fierce English-Canadian nationalism and national identity that had been percolating since the Boer War"[28]—ossified in an emerging post-First World War society.

Arriving with a Whimper

The tepid reaction on the potential northward expansion of the Klan

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Order in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 156.

[22] James Watt, "Anti-Catholic Nativism in Canada: The Protestant Protective Association," *The Canadian Historical Review* 48:1 (March 1967), 45.

[23] "Ku Klux Klan of Kanada," *The Colborne Express*, 25 August 1927.

[24] Watt, "Anti-Catholic Nativism in Canada," 45.

[25] Hereward Senior, "Orangeism in Ontario Politics, 1872-1896," in *Oliver Mowat's Ontario*, eds. Donald Swainson (Toronto: Macmillan, 1972), 149.

[26] Bulletin #10, February 1928, 10.

[27] Bulletin #21.

[28] Kevin Anderson, "'The Cockroaches of Canada': French-Canada. Immigration and Nationalism,

Image 2: Klan hood, ca. 1930. Glanmore National Historic Site Regional Collection, 966.032.001.

and its aim to uphold '100 percent Americanism'[29] drew the ire not only of editor W.H. Morton and John Flint but from an increasingly alarmed attorney general William Raney. Purportedly after receiving "hundreds of applications"[30] from Canadians and Britons, leading American Klansmen, including Baptist preacher Oscar Haywood, cast aside their previous reticence and supported the creation of a Canadian Klan. Such was the fear of lawlessness among some Ontarians that Raney addressed the issue directly in a speech at the Labor Temple in Toronto. He assured the audience that "our courts [are] clothed with authority to send them to penitentiary. They will discover that the prerogative of Justice means something in the Province of Ontario."[31]

It is telling that so many prominent city elders were voraciously outspoken in their indictment of the Klan denying them what was craved most, legitimacy through the participation or endorsement of widely respected community leaders. Morton, as editor of *The Daily Ontario*, published a damning indictment of the Klan in a piece entitled "No Room in Canada" in 1921, years before Marshall is understood to have embraced the Klan. He wrote "Canadians should think seriously, and very seriously, before they allow themselves to be allied with any new order or organization" that sought to "divide the Canadian people into two separate and distinct camps." It continued, "[t]here are enough—and more than enough—influences doing this poor work at the present moment. Canada has no need and no room for any sect or organization that seeks to set sect against sect or class against class... It has no place in the makeup of this country."[32]

Anti-Catholicism in English-Canada, 1905-1929," *Journal of Religious History* 39:1 (March 2015), 117.

[29] "No Ku Klux Klans Permitted to be Formed in Canada," *The Deseronto Post*, 6 October 1921.

[30] "Ku Klux in Canada," *The Daily British Whig*, 27 November 1922.

[31] "Raney Warms Ku Klux," *The Weekly Ontario*, 18 December 1922.

[32] "No Room in Canada," *The Daily Ontario*, 24 September 1921.

In a bid to preempt the formal and public organization of a local Klan, Mayor William Mikel, like Raney, addressed the topic at a speech before the Loyal True Blues. "As far as we can judge," he said "It is not British in principles, because we are told it attempts to take the administration of justice out of the hand of the law, and arrests and punishes those who it deems offenders. We are also told it interferes with the right of person in the practice of their religion, which is contrary to British principles..."[33] In formulating a sense of Britishness derived not from sectarian strife or a clarion call for racial or ethnic supremacy, Mikel highlights the changing nature of Ontario society after the First World War wherein a civic-based identity was beginning to take hold.

With most Ontarians still ascribing their identity from a sense of Britishness, the words of Mikel and like-minded individuals dissuaded some who may have been tempted to join the hooded order. Underscoring Mikel's message was the fear of lawlessness and certainly this fear was compounded by Belleville's relatively tiny police force consisting of just nine officers; not nearly enough to counter potential mob violence. Mikel was undoubtedly aided in his anti-Klan rhetoric by the *Intelligencer*, still under the control of the Bowell family and which sometimes eschewed advocating explicitly racialist pieces. During the Great War, for instance, when William Ridgeway, a professor of archaeology at Cambridge University, stated publicly that the outcome of the war was a necessary struggle for racial supremacy, the *Intelligencer* commented that this "man would be more at home in a German university."[34] Thus, the perception of a Britishness that rejected the clarion call of racial supremacy remained an editorial fixation under the editorship of the Bowells and later S.B. Dawson although this was far from absolute.

Moreover, Mikel was particularly sensitive to reconciling 'natives' and 'newcomers' in the final months of the Great War. Chairing a 'Better Understanding Meeting' in July 1918 with leading intellectuals and political figures in English and French Canada, Mikel mused that there was only

> one way by which we can make our boys at the front proud of us: That is, promote a better understanding among the people at home. It will be sad to have these splendid heroes come back to the people for whom they have been fighting only to find the people quarrelling among themselves... if the people knew each other better and understood each other better there would be less trouble, because no Canadian desires to see Canada torn assunder [sic] and kept in turmoil and strife...[35]

This was directly related to political gamesmanship; the conscription crisis and Regulation 17 strained relations between conservative parties federally and provincially and this was Mikel's attempt to reposition his party while currying fa-

[33] "Mayor Mikel Would Banish Ku Klux Klan," *The Daily Intelligencer*, 19 December 1924.

[34] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 10 May 1915.

[35] Transcript of 'Better Understanding Meeting', July 1918, TR 825, CABHC.

vour with French Canada. A similar attempt was made by provincial Conservative leader and later premier Howard Ferguson who was closely identified with the draconian restrictions imposed on French-language schools. As late as 1916, while serving as Minister of Lands, Forests and Mines, he reaffirmed that "the government I represent upholds British traditions, British institutions and one flag and one language for the Dominion. Unless something is done to meet this French speaking invasion, this national outrage, this Dominion will be striken [sic] to its foundations..."[36] Upon becoming leader of the Conservative Party, Ferguson attempted to moderate his views on French language schooling. The Klan was neither the first group nor the last to capitalize on anti-Catholic sentiment in Belleville but they were the first to openly call for the total exclusion of Catholics from public life.

One of the first reported incidents of cross burning occurred in the summer of 1925. The *Daily Ontario* noted that a "flaming cross was burning last night at 11 o'clock on Zwick's Island on the promontory between the Bay Bridge and the mainland." The police were called with Sergeant Detective Truaisch, Sergeant Boyce, and PC Franks answered the call that night finding a wooden cross measuring thirty feet high and between fifteen to twenty feet across soaked in oil and wired to a small tree for support. Whoever was responsible, it was reported, "receive a vote of thanks from the passengers of the steamer Brockville which passed the point while it was burning. The scene was the nearest to fireworks that has been seen around these parts for some time."[37] This seemingly jovial reaction was soon tempered as it became apparent that the Klan had indeed arrived in the city.

The man who as leader of the local Klan would inflame the smoldering embers of anti-Catholic and nativist sentiment was a local minister who was an emigrant to Belleville himself. Behind his austere frock and pastoral respectability, the Rev. George Marshall, preached the gospel of intolerance from his pulpit at the Emmanuel Reformed Episcopal Church on Victoria Street in Belleville. Born in Kent in 1862, it was not until Marshall was fifty that he emigrated to Canada. He appears to have had no formal education but was apprenticed as a draper. The origins of what became the Emmanuel Reformed Episcopal Church on Victoria Street in Belleville were schismatic dating back to 1876 when "party spirit" within the local Anglican parish "was at its height and much dissension was occasioned by the extreme partisanship of certain members of the congregation."[38] It was not until 1888, however, when these dissidents decided to breaka-

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[36] Quoted in Peter Baskerville, *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario* (Don Mills, Oxford University Press, 2005), 187.

[37] *The Daily Ontario*, 30 July 1925.

[38] Frank Peake, "The Reformed Episcopal Church in Canada: Origins and History," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 49 (2007), 100.

way and form their own congregation that became the Emmanuel Reformed Episcopal Church. It is unknown when this draper-turned-preacher began his involvement in the Reformed Episcopal Church but its evangelical origins and suspicions of alleged creeping popery within the Anglican Church fit within Marshall's virulent anti-Catholic outlook. The first reference to Marshall was made in passing in *The Ottawa Journal* in May 1913: "Mr. George Marshall occupied the pulpit in the Westboro Methodist Church last evening."[39] The next reference comes in July 1916, when a piece announced that "Rev. George Marshall, of Ottawa, conducted the services held in Union Church on Sunday last."[40] It appears that Marshall was consecrated as a clergyman sometime between 1914 and 1916 although it was not until 1918 that he appears in a position of authority within the congregation having been elected as a vestryman at the annual meeting of the Emmanuel Reformed Episcopal Church in Ottawa.

The surviving charter of the 'Maple Leaf Klan' for the district of Hastings lists eight petitioners. Those whose names can be confirmed are Annie Mason, F. Bell, and Louis Marshall. Mason is listed in *Vernon's Directory* working as a doorchecker at Hotel Quinte and living at 47 Geddes Street. Flora Bell was the wife of a Canadian National Railway carpenter living at 230 Coleman Street. Louis Marshall was wife of Klan leader, George Marshall. The five remaining individuals—A. Bell, A. Thompson, S. Morgan, M. Thompson, and M. Gerow—match multiple names within the directory. The only probable match is Marshall Gerow, listed as a carpenter and living at 76 Front Street. Within the Hutchison fonds, the minutes of a Kloncilium at Toronto move the banishment of a Belleville member, Fred Smith, and question if such an action should be taken against his wife, Elizabeth. No reasons for the banishment are listed.[41] Fred Smith is listed as a drayer and living at 10 Geddes Street.[42] The only other confirmed member apart from Marshall was Canniff Ruttan the managing director of the Belleville Sash and Door Company whose family were also owners of a department store. He was elected as an alderman for Belleville in 1926 but was defeated for reelection the following year.[43]

As Imperial Wizard George Marshall would later emphasize, his own version of Britishness wherein the Klan was "a great British-Canadian, patriotic fraternal organization" promoting "pure British Patriotism... cultivating genuine loyalty to the Dominion of Canada and

[39] *The Ottawa Journal*, 26 May 1913.

[40] *Ibid*, 22 July 1916.

[41] Queen's University Archives [QUA], Hutchison fonds, Minutes of Kloncilium, 6 June 1927; a special bulletin was sent out days later confirming Smith's banishment.

[42] See *Vernon's Directory* for Belleville, 1924, 1928, and 1929.

[43] *Vernon's Directory, 1924*, 71; Mikel, *City of Belleville History*, 41; See also Henry Ruttan, *A Part of the Family of Ruttan 1590-1986* (Ottawa: Emery Publishing, 1986), 150, 180.

the British Crown, of promoting and protecting institutions of the British Empire, and keeping the Empire secure from both foreign tyranny and internal treason…" in addition to the maintaining "the supremacy of the White race, the rights of Gentiles, and the integrity of the Protestant faith, to shield the sanctity of the home and the chastity of womanhood, to uphold law and order and insist on the complete separation of Church and State."[44] James Pitsula, who has written on the history of the much larger and more influential Saskatchewan Klan, rejects the tendency to situate the rise of the Klan merely as an "eruption of hatred and prejudice" instead arguing that the Klan's ideology was infused with Britishness to create "a somewhat more extreme version of what most people thought."[45] Thus, the Klan in Canada was not an exact replica of its American counterparts, who were "catalysts, [and] nothing more."[46] The differences between Marshall as a born and bred Briton and the Britishness of Anglo-Ontarians was merely the degree to which significance was attached to amorphous ideas from Christianity to the attachment felt towards the Empire. Where Marshall and other Klansmen differ were the degree to which such views were radicalized and racialized.

The first, although not the last time that Marshall and his hooded order would occupy the platform in front of Belleville city hall took place on 23 July 1924. The *Intelligencer* noted how the ceremony opened with a rendition of God Save the King followed by an unhooded man speaking of the "antagonistic attitude taken towards the K.K.K. at first, especially by the press," but now they had "succeeded [in silencing] the press." The vitriolic speeches touched on an array of prejudices extant within Belleville to varying degrees. Another spoke of wanting "Canada to be the same" as Australia with 88% of British stock. During a tour of the western provinces the previous year, one speaker, presumably Marshall, witnessed the "startling condition" that "hundreds of children of Slavish parentage were being taught in their native tongue, with no English being spoken on the playgrounds and in the classrooms." It was noted that many veterans had "left this country to seek their fortune in the land to the south of us." Racial miscegenation between whites and non-whites, it was argued, would lead to the fall of civilization, citing the example of Egypt.[47]

At a rally held at Roblin's Mills in neighbouring Prince Edward County, Marshall shared a platform with the Canadian-born Methodist preacher T. Porter Bennett of Sidney, Nebraska. "All should be interested in this great Protestant and reform movement," proclaimed

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[44] QUA, W.H. Hutchison fonds, 2014-071, folder 1, "A Proclamation," n.d.,

[45] James Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 5.

[46] Pitsula, *Keeping Canada British*, 248.

[47] *The Intelligencer*, 24 July 1924.

Image 3: District meeting of the female members of the Ku Klux Klan near Deseronto, ca. 1927. Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County, HC 2031.

Marshall who also declared that "he was not ashamed of being connected with the Klan... The klans have turned things upside down in the United States and now they come to Canada to do good." Bennett's speech, however, ties directly into fears of the loss of Ontarian Britishness. He began by stating that "the United States does not want Canada. What Canada wants is one flag and that flag [the Union Jack] and the Maple Leaf... [and] true patriotism was showing respect and admiration to the flag under which a living is made." It was not simply a piece of bunting to be displayed but representative of national determination. "Shame on the man or women [sic]," he continued, "who would desire to change the flag of Canada and the Empire... Canada has played its great part in the history of the Empire. It is up to all to see that the Dominion of Canada live up to its reputation for good." He also called on all Canadians to reject any political actors or groups who desire a "severance from the motherland."[48]

'If foreigners ever get control, Good Bye British Empire'

The Klan's arrival coincided with a growing concern about the racial health of the nation as Anglo-Saxons began to represent a declining proportion of immigrants supplanted by eastern and southern Europeans and, to a much lesser extent, non-Europeans. Fears surrounding a demographic decline of Canadians of British stock was cause for concern for Klansmen like Marshall and Ruttan, whose conceptions of race blended conventional xenophobia and Anglo-Saxon

[48] "Klansmen Meet at Roblin Lake 4 Crosses Burn," *The Intelligencer*, 22 July 1926.

supremacy, and most importantly who racialized most groups not descendants of the United Empire Loyalists or British settlers, particularly those who were deemed as unassimilable. As elsewhere, the Klan drew upon existing anxieties but exaggerated these fears to draw upon greater support. Shifting demographics, however minute locally, were seen as emblematic of larger trends occurring across Canada. Fears surrounding immigration were buttressed by a corollary—the supposed link between immigrants and immorality.

Nativist "concerns dovetailed with changes over traditional small-town and rural associations" according to Jane Nicholas, thereby breaking down conventional "networks of kin and community, replacing familiarity and character with anonymity and personality."[49] Thus, contemporary discussions of vice and morality reflected the nativist fears of middle-class, white, and Protestant Ontarians. Furthermore, Adam Crerar has shown how agrarian celebrations of the province's early history, like that of the 140th anniversary of the arrival of the Loyalists on the shore of the Bay of Quinte, were "infused with ideas of racial inheritance" of the "pioneer stock." This culminated in an irrational fear by some of being 'swamped' by immigrants they termed inassimilable, particularly those from China. The "economic betterment" of gentiles was another repeated theme. The Klan "carried powerful anti-Semitic messages from plots of domination in industry, plots against Christianity, and the spread of vice and immorality."[50]

In 1924, *The Daily Ontario* reported that Belleville's "local Chinatown... is really not a Chinatown at all, for the Celestial population of Belleville is spread all over the city" numbering around thirty. Their prominence in the "café and laundry trades,"[51] however, fed into Klan rhetoric against Chinese immigrants. Although the *Intelligencer* generally shied away from explicit racialist rhetoric under S.B. Dawson, this was not the case under the proprietorship of Ida Bowell. The *Weekly Ontario* was no stranger to reporting on the supposed danger posed by the 'Chinaman':

> Morphine and cocaine are the pair mostly in demand. Foreigners are responsible for most of the traffic, and the Chinamen lead the race as drug peddlers. When a Chinaman comes to this country it is his duty to mind his business and attend to his laundering or quick-lunch places. When he takes it upon himself to smear this country with his drugs, it is true to take him by the scruff of his neck and lead him to the dock, there to await the first boat that points toward China.[52]

Clearly, such editorials played into local Klan rhetoric. Of paramount impor-

[49] Jane Nicholas, *The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 30.

[50] Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 321.

[51] "Belleville's 'Chinatown' Numbers only 30 Souls," *The Daily Ontario*, 18 February 1924.

[52] "The Drug Evil," *The Weekly Ontario*, 3 June 1922.

tance was the maintenance of Canada as a "white man's country" and to this end, the few groups that existed locally, namely Chinese but also religious minorities like Jews, became targets. In one speech, Marshall claimed that "all the restaurants with the exception of one were conducted by foreigners" while white gentiles were "afraid to start in this sort of business for fear of failure." Of the eight restaurants operating in Belleville in 1926, five were owned by Chinese immigrants: Perfect Cafe by Frank and Him Lum; Quinte Cafe by the Ling brothers; Radio Cafe by Chon Hor Lee; Royal Cafe by O.K. Wong; and Tom's Cafe by J.S. Tom.[53] He warned of the supposed loss of womanly virtue among women across the country in Vancouver who chose to live with "Chinamen and Mongolians and other foreigners"[54] The solution was the prevention of mixed-race marriages between Britons and those deemed inferior. This was the case in Belleville where, according to the 1921 census which counted 12,206 residents, racialized groups constituted infinitesimal numbers. A single family of four constituted the only black residents while the Jewish and Chinese populations were thirty-two and fifty-seven, respectively.

Writing in a 1974 article, M.G. Decarie asserted that "nativism was limited but prohibitionism was vulnerable to it"[55] particularly with the fear among prohibitionists that non-Britons would "lend their ballots to the forces represented by the saloon."[56] This encapsulates Marshall's own rhetoric on this issue and the ensuring scrum between himself and Father Charles Killeen, pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic church in Belleville. Their arguments were essentially the same but inversed. In an editorial, Killeen wrote:

> Prohibition is not a law for the people of Ontario. I do not believe there is any need for such a law. I view with a great deal of concern the increase in lawlessness and crime that prohibition has engendered. It leads to a spirit of distrust. It is no use saying to people you cannot have liquor. Those who want it will get it. Fifty-one per cent of the people cannot impose their will on the other forty-nine per cent... I never tell my people what do in politics, but this is a moral issue. We must have a law that people will respect.[57]

Even before his move to Belleville in January 1919, Marshall was heavily involved in the prohibitionist cause. At a Dominion Methodist Church fête held in celebration of prohibitionist referenda victories in Hull, Aylmer, and Buckingham, Marshall introduced and paid tribute to well-known campaigner E. Tennyson Smith, a Briton who travelled across the British Empire and the United States arguing in favour of prohibition.[58] Not only did Killeen provide fodder for the

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[53] See *Vernon's City of Belleville Directory* (Hamilton: Henry Vernon & Son, 1926).
[54] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 28 June 1926.
[55] M.G. Decarie, "The Prohibitionist's Road to Racism in Ontario," *Ontario History* 66:1 (1974), 18.
[56] *Ibid*, 19.
[57] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 17 November 1926.
[58] *The Ottawa Journal*, 13 June 1917.

Klan's determination to enforce prohibition, but prominent businessman and furrier, Harry Yanover, was also targeted; teetoling Marshall used such attacks as a way of associating opponents of prohibition with un-British criminality. Yanover, the son of Jewish immigrants from Russian Poland saw his house "constantly raided"[59] between 1923 and 1927 with eight total charges, months in prison, and thousands of dollars in fines. In September 1925, Yanover's home at 129 South John Street saw a "large cross" engulfed in flames on his front yard burning "brightly for many minutes causing the usual interest and excitement in the neighborhood."[60] When reporters viewed the smoldering remains of the cross the next morning, they were told that the police had not been informed of the incident. Even this did not deter Yanover, who, just one month later, saw his house raided unearthing evidence suggesting that he was engaging in an extramarital relationship with another woman; he claimed that she was merely a visitor while the *Intelligencer* reported that his children called her 'maw'.[61] Rumours of philandering and engaging in illegal activities were likely the cause of the cross burning that occurred weeks before Yanover was arrested.

While Jews and non-whites became victims of the Klan's hatred, anti-Catholicism remained the mainstay of their venomous campaigns. In a letter published by Caniff Ruttan to local Klansmen, this point was made clear. He wrote that it was their duty to stand "against the hereasy [sic] of Rome and the foreign element coming into this Country."[62] Marshall brought forward more conspiracies whereby French Canadians would be settled in northern Ontario to dilute the growing Anglophone population. It was alleged that "Plans have also been brought to light that by the repatriation, they will be placed at points in Northern Ontario and Saskatchewan." The desired outcome was to use the supposed 125,000 French Canadian settlers to "dilute [the province's] Britishness."[63]

Paradoxically, the largest racialized group, the Tyendinaga Mohawks, numbering over two-thousand at the time, were absent from Marshall's invectives. There is currently no archival evidence to suggest that the Klan actively targeted the Mohawks, either physically or verbally leaving us to speculate. It could be that they adopted the idea of the 'dying Indian' as employed by racial theorists across North America and the British world. Alternatively, the Mohawks could have been viewed through the lens of their assimilability and therefore they were seen

[59] Claude William Hunt, *Booze, Boats and Billions: Smuggling Liquid Gold!* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 175.

[60] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 14 September 1925.

[61] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 7 November 1925.

[62] QUA, W.H. Hutchison fonds, 2014-071, folder 1, C.A. Ruttan, letter to "Faithfull Klansman and Klanswomen," ca. 1926.

[63] QUA, W.H. Hutchison fonds, 2014-071, folder 1, Bulletin #10, February 1929.

as a model minority. In *Historic Hastings*, Gerry Boyce wrote that "many Indians have little knowledge of their proud heritage" and that the "Tyendinaga Reserve is regarded as a model reserve by the government."[64] Assimilability is particularly convincing but it ignores a shared past and agency on the part of the Mohawks to embrace a dual identity that was both indigenous and British. Anthropologist Charles Hamori-Torok notes that the Mohawks were "Strong Anglicans and extremely loyal to the British Crown."[65] A prominent Tyendinaga Mohawk, Oronhyatekha, or Peter Smith, was indicative of how many others in Tyendinaga saw themselves. He "lived in between two worlds; that is, the largely non-native Victorian culture outside of native territories, and Haudenosuanee society."[66] Thus the implicit Britishness of the Mohawks—their Anglicanism, fidelity to the crown and empire, and a desire to maintain a hybrid identity—shielded them from the abuses hurled at other minorities. It should also be noted that a certain reticence of openly attacking Mohawks would create further tensions with local Conservatives; the Klan in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, for example, drew upon the support of Conservative leaders; however, the same was not true in the Bay of Quinte where Conservatives like former MP Guss Porter, were prominent advocates of Mohawk rights.

'Slaying the Klan Goliath'

On 22 October 1926, Sylvester Dawson, editor of the *Intelligencer*, noted how the Klan's arrival in the area was met with "tolerant amusement... It was good fun to watch the 'hooded warriors' maneuver on unaccustomed horse-back" along with their fiery speeches and public spectacles. Dawson was relatively new in his position and decided to shuffle around a few employees and assign new asks. An elderly Protestant employee was given lighter duties due to his advanced age and declining health but had no reduction in his pay. In this man's place was a young Catholic. This resulted in "the ugly head of bigotry and intolerance [being] raised in Belleville"[67] according to *Saturday Night* in recounting an incident between Sylvester Bray Dawson, the editor of the *Intelligencer*, and two Klansmen, George Marshall and Caniff Ruttan.[68]

Marshall and Ruttan demanded the dismissal of the recently promoted

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[64]Boyce, *Historic Hastings*, 267-68.

[65] Charles Hamori-Torok, "The Iroquois of Akwesasne (St. Regis), Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte (Tyendinaga), Onyonta'a:ka (the Oneida of the Thames), and Wahta Mohawk (Gibson), 1750-1945," 265, in Edward Rogers and Donald Smith, eds, *Aboriginal Ontario: Historical Perspectives on the First Nations* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1994).

[66]Keith Jamieson and Michelle Hamilton, *Dr. Oronhyatekha: Security, Justice, and Equality* (Toronto, Dundurn, 2016), 30.

[67] "Ku Klux Klan Crops Up at Belleville," Saturday Night, 30 October 1926.

[68] *Vernon Directory*, 1924, 71; Mikel, *City of Belleville*, 41.

Image 4: Mounted Klansmen saluting in front of a cross somewhere near Belleville, ca. 1927 . Community Archives of Belleville and Hastings County, HC 2029.

Catholic printer arguing that he was promoted ahead of more capable, Protestant peers. An even more egregious demand was foisted upon Dawson: "Marshall, obviously a disgrace to the cloth of a Christian clergyman, wishes to enforce a rule that no Roman Catholic be permitted to earn a living in Belleville, and in this is a fitting exponent of Klan tactics." What followed was the "most tawdry form of attempted blackmail" the cancellation of some subscriptions and a "campaign of slander."[69] Dawson was resolute in the defence of his employee:

> It was admitted that the young man in question was honest, capable, loyal to his employer, that he paid his debts, lived a moral life, was a good husband and father, maintaining his family in decency and comfort... but because he worshipped with a different ritual than laid down by the Rev. Mr. Marshall, he was not to be permitted to earn his living in Belleville.

Dawson was outraged at the Klan's demands; so much so that he responded to Marshall and Ruttan on the front page of the *Intelligencer* recalling the events that took place in front of city hall. He wrote that he

> went out of his element to meet his opponents on their own ground... [to] avoid even the appearance of unfairness in attacking the Klan through the Press. Against professional orators before a hostile audience an amateur speaker had little chance. If the Rev. George Marshall or any other Klansman wish[ed] to answer the charges against their organization through the columns of the *Intelligencer*, they [could] have all the space

[69] "Ku Klux Klan Crops Up at Belleville," *Saturday Night*, 30 October 1926.

> they require[d].

Marshall adamantly denied that the delegation that visited Dawson was affiliated with the Klan but, as Dawson pointed out in his editorial, Ruttan was the Kleagle for Hastings County while Marshall was "generally understood to be their Chaplain and a leading spirit in their movement."

This incident led to a public row at Belleville city hall with both Marshall and Dawson speaking to a crowd of embittered Klansmen. Marshall told his own audience at the gathering that Dawson must be a Roman Catholic but

> his platform was offensive and meant to be so. His antics were, no doubt, intended to be funny and his jokes and allusions passed with some of his audience as humour, but they had no bearing on the question at issue which is simply this: Is sectarian strife to be introduced into Belleville as a stumbling block to the city's progress.

The events were recounted by Dawson on the front page of the *Intelligencer* but news of this incident was reported on as far away as Michigan. All sorts of slanders and lies were tossed at Dawson including that he was a secret Catholic or, even worse for his contemporaries, an atheist. He was neither. Dawson was a practicing Presbyterian. Dawson wrote that:

> There is no place in Canada for the Klan. It is an imported exotic growth from the Southern States and Canada would be wiser to leave it in the land of its birth. Its appeal is solely to the uneducated who are caught by its trappings and find an outlet for their flawed emotions is its air of mystery and adventure. The use of the Cross and the Holy Bible as its symbol and in its ritual are offensive to many and borders on impiety. Belleville and Canada can well do without the Klan.

In rebuking the Klan, a spirited defence of the Orange Order was offered: it was a "Protestant [organization], of course, but it stands for absolute equality of opportunity and treatment of every class and creed—'Equal Rights For All, With Special Privileges to None.'"[70] That, Dawson declared, was the basis of British fair play.

The following year, Dawson once again challenged the anti-Catholic rhetoric embracing the legacy of Wilfrid Laurier. He wrote:

> while religious and racial tolerance in Canada leaves something to be desired, as the recurrent bilingual controversy shows,... it is manifestly far better established than with us. Canada did not hesitate to intrust [sic] her government to the Catholic Sir Wilfrid Laurier for fifteen years, a longer continuous term than any other Prime Minister has served. Such an organization as the Ku Klux Klan can gain no foothold on Canadian soil; such American institutions as the race riot and the lynching...cannot exist in the Canadian atmosphere.[71]

In 1924, the longstanding MP for Hastings West, Guss Porter, resigned to protest James Murdock's insider trading with the Home Bank and while the subsequent election campaign itself hinged on this issue, Marshall ensured that the

[70] "K.K.K.K.," *The Daily Intelligencer*, 22 October 1926.

[71] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 7 June 1927.

Klan rallied behind Porter who subsequently lost to former Belleville mayor Charles Hanna. When a federal election was called the next year, a larger and emboldened Klan actively targeted Hanna, whose hardware store was the site of a cross burning and vandalism. At a community dance sponsored by Hanna and the local Liberal association, the Klan "invaded the fair grounds and burned a fiery cross"[72] causing the large crowd to evacuate the building and prevent any damage to the surroundings. Although the Klan claimed to be above petty party politics, this could not have been further from the truth. James S. Lord, the Conservative MLA for Charlotte County in New Brunswick was a key organizer and ally of Marshall. It was in Saskatchewan where the Klan was openly embraced by Conservative premier James Anderson; this is detailed extensively by James Pitsula in *Keeping Canada British*. Unlike Saskatchewan and to a much lesser extent New Brunswick, the Conservative Party organization throughout Quinte never fully embraced the Klan. In fact, leading members such as William Mikel often became its loudest critics and the Intelligencer was a long-time conservative publication founded by former Conservative prime minister. William Davy Cowan, a Unionist MP from 1917 to 1921, visited Foxboro in September 1930 to speak at a Klan gathering with "hundreds in attendance." *The Intelligencer* reported that the name of the speaker "was withheld at his own request but it is understood that he is a former member of parliament in the western provinces" but Cowan's prominence within the Klan easily identifies his identity. Praising eastern Ontario more generally and the Belleville district in particular, Cowan praised the "British descendants" who maintained the province's unique British character while lamenting that "other areas [were] anything but centres of true British activity."

The Ku Klux Kitschy Klan

Even if the Klan itself was not implicated, the very mention of the group evoked a sense of unease among those it deemed un-British. In September 1926, Tom Meraw, a young farmer received a note purportedly sent by the Ku Klux Klan. It read "You are not obeying the law. Right your ways and pay full measure to all... If not look for trouble it is already near."[73] Meraw, a Roman Catholic whose French-Canadian father had settled in Hastings County, contacted the police. The story quickly found its way into the *Intelligencer* after the investigation concluded. The letter had, in fact, not been written by a Klansman as explained: "anonymous letters thick and fast have been flying around recently between three young residents of Madoc Township." It continued, "the matter is a rather tangled affair... a young lady had been corresponding with a gentleman [Meraw] and several 'loving epistles' were

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] TR 1783, CABHC.

exchanged between the two." The two became estranged with the woman eager to have the letters returned to her; she recruited another man to assist her. This second man "penned a note" to Meraw "ordering him to return the letters, otherwise action would be taken by the Ku Klux Klan of which he [falsely] professed to be a member."[74] Such was the Klan's reputation that to some, it became a useful boogeyman. On the other hand, for many the Klan became a laughing stock including, it would appear, Charles Hanna whose Kiwanis Club band would don the infamous white robes emblazoned with 'K.K.K.' although the meaning was changed to the Kiwanis Klub of Kanada.[75]

An Ignoble End?

Despite a paucity of relevant archival sources, it is apparent that a battle raged over the meaning of Britishness in Belleville and Hastings County in the 1920s. Both Klansman and their opponents sought to impose two competing but interrelated strands of Britishness—one that was exclusive with an undercurrent of racialism, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant superiority while the other was formulated around a civic identity rooted in a rejection of sectarianism and racial supremacism. While the Klan was able to mobilize a large segment of the citizenry, so too did its critics. After 1929, Klan rallies and meetings appear less frequently until 1931 when the last article appeared in the *Ontario Intelligencer*. Its fade in relative obscurity and eventual disappearance stands in contrast to Edward Buckley who, in his history of St. Michael's parish, opines a far more definitive and alliterative closure of this chapter in Belleville's history. He writes that Dawson's public stand "seemed to close the Klan issue for Hastings County." Dawson, was a modern-day David "in his sling-shot war with the Klan Goliath."[76]

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[74] *The Daily Intelligencer*, 30 September 1926.

[75] Nick and Helma Mika, *Belleville: Friendly City* (Belleville: Mika, 1973), 158.

[76] Edward Buckley, A History of the Parish of St. Michael The Archangel, Belleville, Ontario, 1829-1993 (self-published, 1993), 109.