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"Only a Passing Idiocy":
The Ku Klux Klan in Maine State Politics

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Bridgewater State University

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"Only a Passing Idiocy":
The Ku Klux Klan in Maine State Politics

"The Ku Klux hullabaloo is deplorable, but presumably it is only a passing idiocy."
"The Ku Klux Mischief," *New York Times*, November 23, 1922.

Introduction

During the late the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, French Canadians migrated to the United States to fill existing labor gaps in New England's textile mills. By the 1920s, French Canadians and Franco-Americans dominated textile labor in Maine. Despite its general rural cultural landscape, the modernism of the 1920s did come to influence the lived-experience of Maine's French-speaking population. Urban centers like Lewiston-Auburn, Portland, and Bangor were urban-industrial towns that tended to be oppositional to the state's more rural and conservative demographic. This sparked a general counter-movement among Maine's conservative Protestant population. Similar to other rural regions in the United States, the Ku Klux Klan played a role in this conservative backlash against Maine's immigrant and Catholic population. Historians of race hatred, immigration, modernism, and labor articulate that the desire for an unskilled labor force, mixed with fears of modernism and Catholicism created a scenario for the Ku Klux Klan to oppose French Canadians and Franco Americans in Maine for a brief, but significant part of the 1920s.

In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan redefined itself as an organization that fought for what they perceived to be traditional American values under the banner of "One Hundred Percent American." Scholarly research shows that the 'New Klan' championed what they perceived as traditional, American, and Protestant values against the emerging modernism

of the twentieth century, a cultural movement that questioned traditional ideals, as well as a new wave of Catholic immigrants. All parts of the country felt the impact of the Ku Klux Klan, as they targeted any group deemed a threat to traditional values. In Maine, French Canadians and Franco Americans became the targets. French Canadians and Franco Americans settled in Maine throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in large numbers, and due to their Catholic beliefs, faced opposition from the Klan. Throughout the 1920s, the Klan sought to limit the economic and political influence of French Canadians and Franco Americans by utilizing hate rhetoric masked by the appearance of political power through the state's Republican Party, but they proved unsuccessful and lacked the ability to make any legislative or political impact. The Ku Klux Klan's power across the state mirrored the Klan's power across the nation; a temporary movement that sought to infringe upon the lives of those not white, native-born, and Protestant by attempting to disrupt political institutions. While the early 1920s showed a Klan filled with political power, a closer examination of the Klan in Maine shows that their use of hate rhetoric was only temporary, one that ceased to exist by the end of the decade.

Hate in American Political Rhetoric

To understand the root of hate, scholars need to understand the historical context in which hate emerges. Society manufactures hate when threats to the social order, the economy, political power, and race become prevalent. To understand hate in a larger historical context, it is necessary to understand the threats to everyday aspects of life. Jack Levin's book, *Why We Hate*, explores the idea of hate and the different situations it can arise in, focusing on violence, fear, and the political uses of hate. Levin identifies immigrants as a

main focus of hate-related actions throughout the United States' history. He recognizes the necessity of immigrants to the labor pool, but notes the tensions that arise during times of economic hardship.¹ The light in which native-born Americans view immigrants depends heavily on the economic situation of that time. In the late nineteenth century, immigrants entering the United States needed to find jobs, often finding employment in low skill and low wage jobs. The necessity of these jobs led to employers exploiting the immigrant laborers, knowing they would not leave due to their monetary needs. Levin argues "a growing prejudice against these newcomers often developed to justify their continued exploitation, keeping them tied to lowly positions in the economic order."² The justification of keeping immigrants in lower positions led to increased tensions between immigrants and native-born Americans when employment became scarce and native-born Americans needed to work.

The 1920s offer sociologists an important case study in which to examine the relationship between economic hardship and the tensions between native-born Americans and immigrants. As Levin detailed in his book, at the beginning of the 1920s, the United States slowly worked their way out of a recession. During this time, tensions between native-born American workers and immigrant workers continued to increase due to job competition. Psychologists in the 1920s utilized IQ tests to determine that some immigrants entering the United States from southern and eastern Europe held lower intelligence levels than the immigrants from northern and western Europe. Levin credits the passage of the 1924 quota system as a step taken to decrease the total amount of

¹ Jack Levin, *Why We Hate* (Amherst, MA: Prometheus Books, 2004) 128.

² Levin, *Why We Hate*, 130.

immigrants entering the United States from southern and eastern Europe, thus limiting competition for jobs.³ Economic hardship and depressions played a key role in hate aimed at immigrants, but underlying anxieties and the ability of a group to act upon them also promotes the idea of hate.

Scholars often note that religious or ethnic identities can create a basis upon which hate groups flourish, but such patterns of hate are often rooted more in larger contexts of a weakened economy, instability in the government, or the decline in living conditions among the mainstream population.⁴ These structural (economic, political, or social) changes create anxiety amongst those mostly effected, usually that demographic of Americans who perceive a loss of power. When these anxieties continue to consume the lives of everyday people, they search for ways to stabilize their threatened structures.⁵ In the 1920s, Americans utilized the Ku Klux Klan in an attempt to stabilize the threats of modernism and a changing economy following the First World War. In Maine, this antagonism between native-born white Protestants and the new influx of Catholic French-Canadian immigrants largely revolved around work in the state's urban textile mills.

The Shift to Immigrant Labor in New England's Textile Industry

In the early-nineteenth century, the early development of industrialism flourished in New England, creating opportunities for women to work outside the household. During the nineteenth century, young, Yankee women, seeking independence from their rural lives,

³ Levin, *Why We Hate*, 130-131.

⁴ Rory McVeigh, *Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 31.

⁵ Levin, *Why We Hate*, 140.

constituted the main labor demographic in New England's textile mills. Initially, small spinning mills accompanied household responsibilities, as its impact on time consumption remained minimal. After 1813, when the first full textile mill opened up in Waltham, Massachusetts, an economic shift occurred, moving labor out of the household, and into the factories. New textile mills required a large power source, often a river, which required them to locate the mills in rural areas where there was a general lack of housing. To deal with this problem, mill companies built boardinghouses for their young female employees. These boarding houses were part of a larger paternalistic system where companies, most controlled by one group of investors known as the Boston Associates, asserted their control along with a sense of care giving responsibility by providing a place to reside. Mill owners intended to protect the morals of the female workforce, thus contrasting the American system from manufacturing cities in Europe. This utopian experiment sought to create a safe environment for the female employees by staffing the boarding houses with religious women of high respect and creating regulations that limited the freedom of the employees.⁶ The female employees often came from rural areas and the transition to these company towns came with ease, as it often mirrored the paternalistic atmosphere of their home. The company towns created a situation where the women lived together and went to church together, establishing a type of homogeneity among these employees.

The *Lowell Offering* was also part of this larger paternalistic effort. Women wrote, edited, and read the articles that appeared in this newspaper and they discussed topics ranging from the community, education, to their families back home. The Boston Associates controlled the newspaper, as well as 90 percent of textile mills in New England, which

⁶ Dublin, *Women at Work*, 78.

raises questions about its accuracy. The article, "The Spirit of Discontent" portrays a debate between the advantages to working in the Lowell mills. The unknown author, writing under the name, 'Almira,' stated, "I believe there is no place where there are so many advantages within the reach of the laboring class of people, as exist here; where there is so much equality, so few aristocratic distinctions, and such good fellowship, as may be found in this community."⁷ The author referred to the equality and connection between the female mill employees, which shows the connection among employees based on the unifying factor of their gender.

Employment for females in the mills was seasonal and typically lasted just a few years. Many of these young women move to these mills due to the urban appeal and the desire for a more independent life from their fathers. As the females worked and lived together, a sense of sisterhood naturally formed. The female employees found it fairly easy to blend into culture and social expectations at the boarding houses due to the fact that the women all came from relatively the same background. Thomas Dublin's book, *Women at Work* discusses the transformation of the Lowell mills in the nineteenth century. In a section focusing on the boardinghouses, Dublin argued "Women recruited one another into the mills, helped each other adjust to work in the mills and life in Lowell, and came to a consciousness of themselves as a sisterhood."⁸ The female employee's ability to form and recognize themselves as a sisterhood played a key role in their ability to create change

⁷ Almira (Pseudonym), "The Spirit of Discontent", *The Lowell Offering* v. 1 (1841): 111-114, in *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)*, edited by Benita Eisler (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 161.

⁸ Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* 2nd Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 82.

within the workplace. The sense of sisterhood also played an important role when issues with management arose, as the female employees banded together to voice their concerns.

After mills earned large profits in their first few years of operation, they expanded production, and thus naturally the size of their workforce. In the mid-1830s, mill management decided to lower the employee's wages and increased their boarding house fees, all within two years. Contrary to popular movements of the 1830s, female textile workers had not unionized, which some historians attribute to their notion of temporary employment.⁹ Yet, the women did organize strikes to protest their reduced wages and increased boardinghouse fees. The organization of the female employees signifies their increased consciousness, which became evident in the ten-hour movement, which female employees sought in the 1840s. This movement resulted in constant petitions to the state legislature, in which they asked for a ten-hour workday law. The push for this legislation came from continued frustrations faced with new methods in the mills. Techniques such as the speedup and stretch-out successfully increased production, but the female employees opposed it, due to the potential degradation of workers. Furthermore, in 1844, as tensions continued to grow, the Lowell Female Labor Reform Associates formed in alliance with other local unions. Together, they fought for the ten-hour work day, but continued to be unsuccessful. William Schouler of Lowell led a committee to determine whether the ten-hour work day required legislation. Labor activists quickly pointed to his ties to mill owners and corporations as a sign that he would not be impartial in his analysis. Ultimately, the committee decided that legislation was unnecessary, and the women in the mills came to realize the new political and economic power held by mill owners.

⁹ Dublin, *Women at Work*, 88.

As their strikes proved unsuccessful, women began to leave the mills and sought other employment opportunities. The *Voice of Industry*, a newspaper written and edited by workingmen and women, published an article discussing the need for the ten-hour work day. Written by a Committee of Factory Girls, they described the necessity of the ten-hour work day, claiming "that these causes are sufficient to impair health, induce disease, premature old age, and death... To say nothing of the intellectual degeneracy which must necessarily result from the want of mental recreation and cultivation."¹⁰ The long hours and lack of break time, combined with the detrimental health effects from working in the mills, contributed to the built-up resentment towards management, forcing the women to strike and ultimately leave the mills. Due to the vacancy left by female employees, opportunity arose for immigrant workers to gain employment.

The growing frustrations among "Lowell Girls" in the mills only partially explains the transition to immigrant labor within New England textile industry. Evolving techniques in factories and a need for a different type of worker by the mid-nineteenth century also allowed for a greater number of immigrants to enter the workforce. Mill owners mainly utilized the "Rhode Island" system throughout the eighteenth century, which sought to integrate textile production into the existing rural economy by utilizing entire families during the agrarian off-season. The introduction of the power loom allowed for a different labor strategy among mill operators. The new "Waltham system" initially allowed for the hiring of young, relatively well-educated Yankee women, prior to marriage. The "Lowell Girls" dominated the labor pool for the majority of the middle decades of the nineteenth

¹⁰ A Committee of Factory Girls, "The Manufacturing Establishments of New England, *Voice of Industry*, June 26, 1845.

century. As the "Girls" began to strike and eventually leave the mills, mill owners also recognized that higher retention rates among their employees meant more experienced workers, which was necessary for the introduction additional looms for increased profits. The low retention rates of Yankee women proved to be unprofitable to mill owners and they soon learned that high retention rates meant more skilled workers regardless of their ethnic background. An immigrant laborer dependent on the mill accumulated important (and profitable) workplace experience. In his 2003 article, "Technology and Learning by Factory Workers: The Stretch-out at Lowell, 1842," James Bessen discusses the technologies utilized by mills and how that impacted the profits of companies. Bessen argues, "Thus the transition that took place after 1842 was also a transition to a local labor force where many experienced workers, having left the mills, were available for rehire. But this pool of local labor included many immigrants and illiterates."¹¹ The necessity of a stable workforce to generate higher profits justified abandoning the mills' traditional reliance of 'Yankee Girls' and allowed local, low-paid immigrant workers to become the dominant demographic.

By the 1840s, the priorities of the mills shifted with the introduction of immigrants to the labor force. Mills faced new competition and employed a new system of production, turning to speed-up and stretch-out methods to increase productivity without having to increase labor costs. In the ensuing years, the numbers of native-born females working in the mills decreased in ratio to the number of female-immigrant workers. This can be attributed to new employment opportunities for those female operatives (such as the new

¹¹ James Bessen, "Technology and Learning by Factory Workers: The Stretch-out at Lowell, 1842," *The Journal of Economic History* 63, no. 1 (2003): 52.

female-dominated profession of teaching), or the decreasing economic necessity among native-born females to work for such low wages. Immigrants looking for employment opportunities found refuge in the mills hiring them, regardless of the low wages and degrading working conditions. Mill owners still employed native-born females, but they went to great lengths to keep divisions among both groups in regard to housing and separation within the mill. Dublin's *Women at Work*, spends time focusing on the introduction of immigrant labor into the mills, and he argued "by separating Irish and native-born in the mills, management to a certain extent was able to apply the techniques of speedup and stretch-out selectively, undermining working conditions in predominantly Irish departments, while protecting standards in the largely native-born rooms."¹² Mill owners created a divide amongst immigrant and native-born female workers in the mills by holding them to different standards in regard to their wages and expected work. This divide created tensions among the immigrant class and native-born working class, which undercut the power of a unity based on sisterhood. Dublin focused mainly on the influx of Irish immigrant workers to the New England mills, as French-Canadian immigrants did not begin to move to New England in large numbers until the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, French-Canadians immigrated south to New England. French-Canadians fled from unstable employment, poor wages, and the desire to improve their individual situations in Quebec. New England emerged as a clear choice due to the economic opportunity industrialization provided. French-Canadians intended for their move to New England to be temporary, where they sought to earn

¹² Dublin, *Women at Work*, 156.

enough wages to finance a more comfortable lifestyle in Quebec. Contrary to these goals, the United States economy experienced multiple recessions, forcing many of these immigrants to permanently reside in the United States. After the Civil War, the United States experienced large waves immigrants from French Canada, ultimately resulting in "Little Canadas." These flashes of French-Canadian culture and lifestyle created opportunities for chain migration and the foundation of a strong community. These "Little Canadas" faced problems when it came to their faith, as they felt that they did not belong in the same church as the Irish in New England. In the Irish parishes, they delivered the sermon in English creating a language divide between the Irish and French-Canadians. Furthermore, the Irish and French-Canadians experienced tensions that stretched beyond their religion and into the workplace. Irish workers blamed the new French-Canadian immigrants for their decreasing employment opportunities. Not only did the French-Canadians receive resentment from Irish workers in New England, but they also faced backlash from their previous neighbors in Quebec. The clergy and provincial politicians feared the impact emigration caused Quebec. The elite in Quebec compared those who emigrated to slaves, cowards, and traitors. Due to Quebec's traditional and rural lifestyle, the elite and the clergy felt that industrialism destroyed the soul and they viewed Quebecers leaving for industrialism in the United States to be far worse. They feared the assimilation of French-Canadians in the United States and their loss of national identity. In his 2004 book, *The Franco-Americans of New England: Dreams and Realities*, Yves Roby discusses the long history of French-Canadians and Franco-Americans in the United States. Roby argues "Of course, if the emigrants wanted to safeguard their interests and exert every right possible, they would have to acquire American citizenship, but even then, and

above all, they would remain, at heart, French Canadians."¹³ Even while the elite and the clergy in Quebec feared the assimilation and loss of culture amongst French-Canadians in the United States, it became clear that they intended to retain their identity and heritage, regardless of their opposition. Mill owners in the United States recognized the importance of French-Canadian labor, regardless of their ties to their identity, and began searching for ways to encourage more immigration to New England.

As French-Canadians explored options for economic success, New England mill owners sought out ways to improve their profits and lower production costs. At the end of the Civil War, industrialism rose and advancements in technology created an opportunity for mill owners to employ unskilled workers for lower wages than the previous workers. Realizing the value of French-Canadian workers, mill owners explored different avenues to encourage French-Canadian migration and ultimately their employment within the mills. Factories sent recruiters to Quebec to find struggling families and encouraged them to emigrate to the United States and work in their mills. This recruitment and other forms of encouragement resulted in a large number of French-Canadians working in the cotton textile industry. In Maine, French-Canadian workers comprised over 60 percent of the cotton textile industry, with a majority of French-Canadian women being the base of this industry.¹⁴ Native-born Americans and Irish immigrants regarded the French-Canadian immigrants poorly for a multitude of reasons, one being their role in strike breaking. Mill owners often employed French-Canadians as strike breakers all around New England and

¹³ Yves Roby, *The Franco-Americans of New England: Dreams and Realities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 36.

¹⁴ Iris Saunders Podea, "Quebec to 'Little Canada': The Coming of the French Canadians to New England in the Nineteenth Century," *The New England Quarterly Inc.* 23, no. 3 (1950): 369.

French-Canadians opposed unionization efforts. At this time, native-born workers viewed unionization as their strongest tool in the workplace and strikes represent one utilization of this tool. Iris Podea's article "Quebec to 'Little Canada': The Coming of the French Canadians to New England in the Nineteenth Century," discusses the different aspects of French-Canadian life upon arrival in the United States during the nineteenth century. Podea argues "French-Canadian influence was held partly responsible for the failure of New England cotton mill operatives to build stronger organization, but rather do without wages during strike they preferred a low income regularly."¹⁵ Unlike native-born workers and Irish workers, the French-Canadians accepted lower, consistent wages rather than striking, which often resulted in termination from the workplace, but this acceptance only facilitated deeper tensions between French-Canadians and native-born workers. As the twentieth century approached, labor and social relations among French-Canadians and native-born Americans increasingly became agitated.

The introduction of direct rail lines from Quebec to Portland, Maine aided French Canadian migration to New England. Railroads made it cost effective for entire families to migrate to New England, and by the twentieth century, in places such as Lowell, Massachusetts, French-Canadians came to be a majority demographic in the mills. Coming from an economically poor situation in Quebec, French-Canadians started their time in New England with little to their name. In an interview, Henry Boucher, a French-Canadian who lived in Woonsocket in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, shed light on the lived-experience of French-Canadian immigrants in New England. He recounted coming to the States with very little and being the youngest of six other children. His father and older

¹⁵ Podea, "Quebec to 'Little Canada'," 374.

brothers worked in the mills upon their arrival and made very little money to start. When Henry turned 14, he took a literacy test, which asked him for his name and address. Since he attended French parochial school, he passed this easily and the head of the school granted him permission to work. Boucher began working in the mills in 1912 with his brother. The war years created enormous demand and textile workers benefited from the surge of production with good wages, stable employment, and even promotion opportunities. Boucher told the interviewer "During the years 1915-1917 the mill was running day and night. The rate of pay had been raised many times until in 1917, I was making \$40 a week... My father and my brother were also making plenty of money."¹⁶ Henry Boucher experienced a great deal of success working in the mills and received promotion multiple times, but in the broader context, he does not represent a typical French-Canadian textile worker in New England. Boucher did not recount any experiences of dealing with nativism within the workplace, like other French-Canadians did.

Native-born Americans in the working class often met immigrants entering the United States with great hostility due to their underlying fears and the French-Canadians eventually suffered from this hostility. Native-born workers often blamed immigrants for poor economic situations and poor working conditions, using immigrants as a means to put a face to their own problems. Immigrants often found themselves working in urban and industrialized centers, places where some conservative Americans believed were morally corrupt. With large masses of Irish immigrants entering the United States, facing resentment for their Catholic beliefs and their industrial work, one assumes that French-

¹⁶ Henry Boucher, oral interview conducted by Mr. Guilfoyle, in *The French-Canadian Textile Worker, New Hampshire Federal Writers' Project, 1939.*

Canadians, also migrating to work in industrial centers and practicing the Catholic faith, faced the same resistance Irish immigrants faced. Yet, evidences shows that Americans and mill owners welcomed French-Canadian immigrants. Initially, with smaller numbers than Irish immigrants, native-born Americans did not view French-Canadians to be as threatening as the Irish, and felt that the immigrants intended to work hard and assimilate into American society. By the late-1880s, however, it became evident with the creation of French-Canadian institutions that these immigrants did not intend to abandon their French-Canadian identity. During depression years, French-Canadians appeared ready and willing to work as strike breakers, initiating great resentment from native-born Americans. Fearing backlash, Quebec elite advocated for the French-Canadian emigrants who faced the hostilities, arguing that hostility among native-born Americans occurred due to the situation mill owners created with poor wages and poor housing. Yves Roby spends a section in his book discussing the role of French-Canadians in New England, focusing on their role in labor and the response of Quebec elite. Roby argues "By invoking the past, by defending themselves in the face of accusations leveled against French Canadians of the United States, they were able to present their compatriots as model Americans with every right to the consideration of their hosts."¹⁷ The French-Canadian population in New England played a critical role in the mills and the Quebec elite helped ensure their continued contributions in the United States and this labor force

French Canadians faced great resentment from Irish-Americans in New England because of their employment within mills. These two group had more in common than they both realized. Both groups left their home country seeking better economic opportunity,

¹⁷ Roby, *The Franco-Americans of New England*, 63.

they both found employment within mills, and both groups predominantly practiced Catholicism. Prior to the arrival of French-Canadians, the Irish provided a majority of the labor in the mills, but slowly left the field for better paying jobs. The arrival of French-Canadians helped mill owners who did not want to raise wages and did not need skilled workers.¹⁸ Upon the arrival of French Canadians, Irish-Americans disregarded their commonalities and treated them poorly, even though at one point, the Irish faced the same predicaments as French Canadians. Their nativist sentiments did not go unseen by French-Canadians and that becomes clear through interviews. One interview with Philippe Lemay, explores many different avenues of French-Canadian life in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. Living in Manchester, New Hampshire, he discussed mill life, specific people within the mills, and the resentment of Irish workers in the United States. The actions by Irish-Americans deterred French Canadians from attending church, drinking public water, and even eating their lunch outside. Lemay stated "Our troubles came mostly, not to say entirely, from Irish people who, it seems, were afraid that we had come here to take their jobs away from them in the mills and who tried hard to send us back to Canada by making life impossible for us in America."¹⁹ Even though Irish-Americans and French-Canadians shared a similar battle to improve their quality of life, the fear of new immigrants and the fear of losing employment to an immigrant prevailed among Irish-Americans. This fear became evident within the workplace regarding managerial positions for French-Canadians.

¹⁸ James Allen, "Migration Fields of French Canadian Immigrants to Southern Maine," *Geographical Review* 62, no.3 (1972): 372.

¹⁹ Philippe Lemay, oral interview conducted by Louis Pare, in *The French-Canadian Textile Worker, New Hampshire Federal Writers' Project*, 1939.

Despite this opposition from Irish Americans, French Canadians easily found work in the textile mills. French-Canadian immigrants carried with them a reputation that employers sought, as they often worked for low wages and did not unionize, due to their notions of their temporary work. French Canadians worked alongside Irish immigrants within the mills and in the cases presented by the interviews, French Canadians faced promotion more often than the Irish. These promotions, their unwillingness to unionize, and their employment as strike breakers contributed to the negative responses they received. Nativist sentiments ran high among Irish Americans and native-born Americans, which they directed at French Canadians by making them targets of their injustices. French-Canadian labor played a key role within textile mills in New England and the success they garnered after their initial struggles represents this. Eventually, the Ku Klux Klan targeted French Canadians and Franco Americans in part due to their role in the mills and the increasingly high tensions between native-born Americans and immigrants.

Modernism and Ethnic and Religious Identities in the 1920s

The beginning of the 1920s ushered in new political and cultural ideas. The previous decade saw a series of events that ultimately changed American life. Progressivism helped successfully improve labor relations, gave women the right to vote, and helped find solutions to an abundance of social problems.²⁰ With the end of the First World War, and a clearly disheartened American public, changes in government and the daily lives of the people became inevitable. While some people felt that a multitude of factors gave way to a

²⁰ Nathan Miller, *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of America* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2003) 13.

country that began to lack morals and threatened society, others embraced these new ideas. Scholars have shown that with this acceptance emerged modernism, a cultural idea that challenged the old notions of Victorian lifestyle and embraced the new cultural ideas surrounding class, religion, and race.²¹ In hindsight, scholars understand that modernism resulted from years of changes to the fundamental concepts of the American ideal.

Improvements in technology, increases in immigration, and higher urbanization created the space for the development of a modernist philosophy and became a central part of American life in the 1920s.²² Modernism contributed to the growth of the Harlem Renaissance and helped increase the understanding and acceptance of science, but it also generated a great deal of backlash, as it threatened the power of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, and conservative groups, such as fundamentalists and the Ku Klux Klan.

Perhaps most importantly, modernism empowered ethnic minorities to embrace their cultural uniqueness. Historians often focus on African Americans, but the black experience in the 1920s can also provide context for understanding other ethnic groups' efforts to establish their own identity and resist the power of the Anglo-Saxon majority. Social changes and challenges to the racial order helped the Harlem Renaissance gain momentum and grow to be a strong cultural and intellectual movement. Much like French Canadians migrating south to urban New England, the African-American experience in the 1920s revolved around mobility and urbanization. In the beginning of the twentieth century, African Americans sought ways out of the South, hoping to escape economic hardships and racism. Referred to as the Great Migration, millions of African Americans

²¹ Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995) 13.

²² Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 7-9.

moved first to smaller regional cities in the South and then, by 1910, to major industrial cities in the North, where there was a higher demand for unskilled labor.²³ Cities such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia became popular destinations for African Americans searching for work.²⁴ African Americans faced housing and labor difficulties in the North, which led to an increase in racial tensions. In 1919, these tensions resulted in race riots in multiple cities.²⁵ The race riots sparked the use of the term the "New Negro." Dumenil shows in her book, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*, how the development of this term rejected Booker T. Washington's ideas for African Americans to be patient and temporarily accept segregation and disenfranchisement but instead, pushed African Americans towards W.E.B. Du Bois' ideas of pursuing an education to combat discrimination and disenfranchisement.²⁶ This push for education created passionate and outspoken African American writers and artists, resulting in the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay and Jessie Fauset are only some of the influential writers who emerged during the Harlem Renaissance. Their writings concerned issues of racial identity, fitting right into the modernist idea of challenging the previous racial and social norms.²⁷ Two schools of literature emerged from the Harlem Renaissance; one focusing on spiritualism and folk culture, and another on the emergence of pan-Africanism. Nathan Huggins shows in his book, *Harlem Renaissance*, that the use of Africa came from an inner search for identity and heritage. While on this search

²³ Miller, *New World Coming*, 48.

²⁴ Stewart E. Tolnay, "The African American 'Great Migration' and Beyond," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2003) 216.

²⁵ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 218.

²⁶ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 288-289.

²⁷ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 160-161.

for identity, Huggins argued that "From this effort would come a revitalized black culture and self-esteem. Whatever else, the era produced a phenomenal race consciousness and race assertion, as well as unprecedented numbers of poems, stories and works of art by black people."²⁸ Contributors to the Harlem Renaissance used their literary and artistic works to grab hold of their beliefs and challenge the status quo of race in the United States by creating a new identity for African Americans, the New Negro. At the same time, other groups felt the modernist movement threatened their identity and the moral basis of the nation. These groups also used religion as an attempt to defend their identity, which they saw as the cultural foundation of the United States.

Religion contributed immensely to the American identity and has consistently been a crucial aspect of American life. While historians have shown that the total number of people attending church regularly declined, the total amount of churches increased, showing that even though less people attended church, religion continued to spread.²⁹ Modernism played a key role in the challenging of traditional religious practice. While modernists and a majority of the American public widely accepted new scientific ideas and findings, religious denominations saw these ideas as a threat to their orthodox religious views.³⁰ A new religious movement amongst evangelicals led to a group of multi-denominational religious men and women, leaving their churches and entering the Fundamentalist movement. While the movement existed prior to the 1920s, up until 1918, fundamentalists peacefully coexisted with liberals and modernists, but the new attacks on

²⁸ Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 83.

²⁹ Miller, *New World Coming*, 229.

³⁰ James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, 120.

religion changed that.³¹ Dumenil shows that the group worried about the decline occurring in society and within churches, blaming modernists for their role in changing religious views to agree with new ideas circulating the country.³² The fundamentalist movement consisted of three goals: achieve a nationwide fundamentalist movement, take control of major northern denominations, and to prevent Darwinian science from being taught in public school.³³ Fundamentalists scored a major victory with the passage the Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting the production and sale of alcohol, which they saw as a social and moral evil. Fundamentalists moved on to attack the teaching of Darwinism in public schools, seeing mild success by advocating for the passage of antievolution laws in 20 state legislatures.³⁴ In Tennessee, where antievolution measures passed, the 1925 trial *State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* became the epicenter of the evolutionist debate. Fundamentalists enlisted the support of William Jennings Bryan, who acted as the lawyer for the defense. The case revolved around the actions of a substitute teacher, John Scopes, who taught evolution in a biology class, a violation of Tennessee state law. Clearly, Scopes committed the crime, but the case turned into a trial about fundamentalist ideas and the logistics of these ideas. The basic notion of fundamentalism relies on a literal understanding of the Bible and during the trial, the defense called William Jennings Bryan to the stand as an expert on the Bible. Bryan, also the attorney for the prosecution, was an outspoken advocate for fundamentalism and wanted to combat the moral injustices committed by modernists. The defense asked Bryan a multitude of questions on the Bible,

³¹ Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017) 112.

³² Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 185.

³³ Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 112-113.

³⁴ Miller, *New World Coming*, 244-245. Fitzgerald, *Evangelicalism*, 120.

ultimately showing that even Bryan did not take the Bible literally at all times, the opposite of fundamentalist beliefs.³⁵ After the trial, Bryan faced ridicule from both fundamentalists and modernists, the former due to their feeling of defeat and Bryan's inability to defend fundamentalism successfully.³⁶

New evangelical denominations relied heavily on large amounts of publicity, which they easily received due to the behaviors and actions of their leaders. The Holiness and Pentecostal movement grew out of feelings of anger towards the American public for accepting new modernist ideas. Those who joined the movement usually came from poor and working-class backgrounds and sought purity and simplicity from the increasingly modern and complex world.³⁷ Aimee Semple McPherson believed in this movement, creating her own sect of the Pentecostal movement. She utilized ideas of "old-time religion" often criticizing modernist ideas. She relied on her radio show to reach millions of Americans on a daily basis, where she promised spiritual healing. McPherson disappeared for over a month in 1926, claiming to have been kidnapped and tortured in Mexico. Many journalists at the time found her story to be shocking, as she did not appear with any physical signs of a kidnapping. Rumors soon spread that McPherson ran off to a resort with an employee at her radio station and she began to receive negative publicity. A grand jury looked into the case due to reports of a false kidnapping, but eventually the judge dismissed all charges. McPherson continued to preach against modernism and worldliness, but her reputation continued to be damaged.³⁸ Ultimately, the effects of modernism and

³⁵ David Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States: 1920-1940* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002) 153. Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 187. Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 137.

³⁶ Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals*, 139.

³⁷ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 177.

³⁸ *Modern Temper*, 181. *New World Coming*, 232.

the reluctance of rural Americans to embrace these changes played a key role in the infiltration of the Ku Klux Klan into 1920 politics.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, progressivism emerged in the United States as a popular and powerful social and political ideal. As a response to rapid industrialism, progressives concerned themselves with a wide variety of social and political concerns, including, but not limited to matters of female and child labor laws, unsanitary working conditions, growing urban populations, and corrupt politics.³⁹ Progressivism thus became difficult to precisely define due to this wide range of focus. As World War I began, the fight for social progress declined and all focus shifted towards the United States' indirect and direct contributions to the war. By the end of the war, in a sense, the American spirit had been broken. As David Goldberg credits in his book, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s*, the Senate's rejection of the Versailles Treaty, the overwhelming amount of immigrants entering the country, large-scale unemployment, and the discovery of the fixed 1919 World Series all played a key role in breaking the spirit of Americans and taking away any hopes for progress.⁴⁰ Scholars have also argued that the after effects of World War I created a general fear of others amongst Americans, reaffirming and strengthening wartime patriotism to the level of jingoism and thus creating opportunities for hate-based organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan to gain momentum.

³⁹ David Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1.

⁴⁰ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 120.

The Emergence of the New Klan in the 1920s

The Klan that grew out of the twentieth century differed greatly than the Klan dominant during the Reconstruction Era. The first Klan sought to limit the newly gained rights of African Americans, focusing their efforts mainly in the South. In the 1920s, the 'New Klan' widened their scope on who they targeted, but retained the same wardrobe and traditions of the old Klan. In 1915, William Joseph Simmons, revived the Ku Klux Klan, after inspiration from the film, *Birth of a Nation*.⁴¹ The film, based on novel, *The Clansman*, depicted the closing of the American Civil War with the Ku Klux Klan emerging as a post-war savior of the American South.⁴² As Wyn Wade shows in his book, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, the film received a great deal of backlash. Wade describes the efforts of Jane Addams and the NAACP to fight the release of the film, as the former challenged its historical accuracy. Wade also argued that due to the dramatized efforts of D.W. Griffith to paint the Klan in a positive light and show African Americans as dangerous and threats to society, the film rallied white Americans around a nonexistent past.⁴³ Of course, Simmons used this feeling of unity amongst white, native-born Protestant Americans to promote his newfound Klan organization.

Simmons most notably devised the plan for the new Klan. Growing up, Simmons' father participated in the Klan during the Reconstruction Era as an officer. This background allowed Simmons to understanding the traditions and practices of the Klan, while also marveling at the idea of creating a new Klan. Prior to the foundation of the second

⁴¹ Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017) 12.

⁴² Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 123.

⁴³ Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 133.

organization, Simmons bounced around from different types of employment. Originally intending to be a doctor, he found that the programs cost too much money, so then sought a leadership role in the church. Ultimately, that endeavor came to an end, where he then explored sales for a short amount of time, and finally ended with fraternal organizing.⁴⁴ In 1965, David Chalmers, who wrote the first encompassing book on the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, published *Hooded Americanism*, where he described the similarities between organizing activities for the Klan with those of other popular fraternal organizations. Having affiliations with fraternal orders such as the Elks, the Masons, and the Odd Fellows, Simmons recruited members from these organizations to join his reconstructed Klan. The recruits often came from middle-class backgrounds, as was true for other fraternal organizations during the time.⁴⁵ The true beginning of the Simmons' Klan began on the night before Thanksgiving in 1915, where he and 15 other men marched to the top of Stone Mountain and lit a cross on fire.⁴⁶ In the years to come, recruitment numbers slowly increased, but a series of events in the early 1920s contributed to their swift rise in numbers.

The 1920s opened up opportunities for the Klan to increase in size and in power. Those who opposed the Klan felt that by giving them poor publicity and revealing the true nature of their actions, ultimately, would force them out of commission due to the potential backlash they may receive. In 1921, the *New York World* published an exposé on the Ku Klux Klan, exposing their membership lists and the actions of their members.⁴⁷ Multiple

⁴⁴ David Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan 1865-1965* (Doubleday and Company Inc., 1965), 29.

⁴⁵ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 30.

⁴⁶ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 118.

⁴⁷ Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, 19.

newspapers republished these articles, allowing most of the country to gain insight into the organization. Contrary to the newspaper's original goal of discrediting the Klan, membership numbers began to increase and the Klan's power continued to rise. In the same year, the House Committee on Rules began congressional hearings to investigate the Klan's activities and acts of vigilantism, calling Simmons to testify. During his testimony, his charisma aided him in his ability to prove the Klan was not at fault for any crimes and reasserted the fact that the Klan was only a fraternal and nativist organization. Simmons' also claimed that the organization only existed to voice its opposition to immigrants, Catholics, and African Americans, while not directly taking any illegal steps against those groups or individuals within those groups.⁴⁸ While these events played a large role in the recruitment numbers of the Klan, the hiring of the Southern Publicity Association also played an important role in this matter.

The Southern Publicity Association, an organization of two people, Elizabeth Taylor and Edward Young Clarke, who specialized in public relations, held a reputation as a business which promoted fraternal organizations.⁴⁹ The hiring of this agency changed the ways in which hopeful citizens gained membership into the Klan. In its recruitment, people wishing to join the Klan paid a ten-dollar membership fee, of which, the Southern Publicity Association earned eight dollars for each member. Despite only gaining 20 percent of the membership fee, historian David Chalmers estimates that Simmons roughly made \$170,000 from these early dues.⁵⁰ The Southern Publicity Association utilized propaganda and

⁴⁸ Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, 19. Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics*, 21.

⁴⁹ Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, 13.

⁵⁰ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 35.

worked to increase Simmons' ability to convey messages to the public. In her work, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, Linda Gordon argues that Clarke and Young used a rhetoric which appealed to fearful, moral Christians. The Klan successfully exploited fears of native-born Americans, citing the growing numbers of immigrants, African Americans, Jews, and those who took up "immoral pleasures."⁵¹ The Southern Publicity Association proved to be extremely successful in its utilization of propaganda and giving the Klan the publicity it needed to gain recruitment numbers. Their success led to personal success and great profits for Simmons, Clarke, and Young, but their success also led to growing resentment among Klan members.

Although the organization stood for prohibition and protested other indulgences associated with the immorality of the 1920s, those at the top of the Klan did not often live up to the moral standards that the organization set for its own members. Many scholars often note that Simmons, the Imperial Wizard of the Klan, enjoyed alcohol and could often be found publicly drunk.⁵² Clearly, this hypocrisy emerged as a dividing factor within the organization, due to their stance on prohibition. Furthermore, David Goldberg notes in his research that Clarke and Tyler were both arrested for disorderly conduct, but the final straw appeared when Clarke was arrested for possession of alcohol shortly after a speech in support of prohibition.⁵³ When a significant majority of the KKK membership concluded that their own leaders lacked the ability to represent the ideals of the Klan they launched an internal coup. Hiram Wesley Evans, with the help of other Klan members, overthrew

⁵¹ Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, 14.

⁵² McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 23-24.

⁵³ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 119.

Simmons, and became the Imperial Wizard in 1922.⁵⁴ This overthrow of power resulted in legal battles, of which, Simmons ended up with the copyrights to the Klan rituals, regalia, and signs of the Klan and Evans received the title of Imperial Wizard. The Klan remained fractured, as people who supported Simmons left the organization to follow him and his new fraternal order, Knights of the Flaming Sword.⁵⁵ Others left due to the poor reputation the Klan gained via the various scandals. Evans faced a daunting challenge to bring back both the "prestige" and the membership of the Klan.

Hiram Wesley Evans brought a new vision for the Klan focused on making the organization a more powerful political force. With Simmons at the top, the organization remained very similar to other fraternal or social organizations of the day, but Evans brought forth a new set of goals that eventually made the Klan a distinct type of organization in 1920s' America with real political and social power. Upon his promotion to Imperial Wizard, he wasted no time in cleaning up the order and shifting gears. He immediately fired the Southern Publicity Association, as he deemed their services unnecessary since the Klan had become a national force. He moved the headquarters from Atlanta to Washington D.C. to improve their opportunities of being a more significant political organization. Evans also tightened the ranks within the Klan, threatening to expel those who broke the standards the Klan intended to enforce.⁵⁶ He envisioned the Klan as a strong power in local, state, and national politics.⁵⁷ Klansmen and Klan-backed politicians in Georgia and Oregon respectively won positions in local offices. The Klan did not base

⁵⁴ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 24.

⁵⁵ Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, 16.

⁵⁶ Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK*, 16-17.

⁵⁷ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 26.

their support in political parties, which becomes evident when exploring the differences of northern and southern Democrats. In Oregon, the Klan supported a Democrat, but in Maine, the Klan supported a Republican.⁵⁸ While the preference for political parties differed across the country, the type of members recruited into the Klan carried general themes.

As scholars, such as Rory McVeigh and David Goldberg have noted, the Klan gained their membership from white, native-born and Protestant members of society. Being the Klan's calling card, this of course makes a great deal of sense, but McVeigh explores the possible reasoning behind increasing Klan membership. He describes the Klan as a right-wing, conservative movement, defining it as a "social movement that acts on behalf of relatively advantaged groups with the goal of preserving, restoring, and expanding the rights and privileges of its members and constituents. These movements also attempt to deny similar rights and privileges to other groups in society."⁵⁹ This definition clearly defines the Klan: white, native-born Protestants in the United States who often came from middle-class backgrounds and in this case, appeared as the advantaged group who sought to deny Catholics, immigrants, and the other groups that they opposed the same privileges they themselves received. The type of people the Klan desired often participated in other fraternal orders or attended Protestant churches, which made bloc recruitment crucial to increasing their numbers. The Klan appealed to Protestant ministers, enticing them to recruit their church members while also giving the ministers free memberships. By 1924,

⁵⁸ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 26. Mark Paul Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation: The Ku Klux Klan Confronts New England in the 1920s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 50.

⁵⁹ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 32.

the Klan claimed their membership included about 30,000 Protestant ministers.⁶⁰ The Klan also recruited from the Masons and Odd Fellows, fraternal orders that Simmons had previously used in his own recruitment efforts. These sources of bloc recruitment played an essential role in increasing membership numbers.

The Klan's swift rise in membership numbers after World War I and throughout the early 1920s raise questions regarding why Americans joined the Klan. Scholars have noted the shared characteristics with fraternal orders, as a place to socialize, but McVeigh credits the broader changing social order of the time period. For decades, the social order and economy faced changes in the United States, due to industrialism and growth of the labor market. Middle-class American workers grew uneasy with the increasing use of unskilled labor, which were normally immigrants, women, and African Americans. Rural Americans and agricultural industry suffered major setbacks due President Harding's high tariffs, which resulted in counter-tariffs from other nations and drastically decreased American exports of foodstuff.⁶¹ Women's suffrage also suggested major social and cultural upheavals that conservative Americans feared. These social and economic changes effected the conservative middle-class the most and McVeigh argues that, "With abundant organizational resources available to those who were adversely affected by structural change, and in a political context that provided them room to operate, a mass movement occurred- a movement that aimed to wrest political power from those who opposed its agenda."⁶² Those most affected by increased industrialization, utilization of unskilled labor,

⁶⁰ Thomas Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011) 8.

⁶¹ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 53-62.

⁶² McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 31.

and big corporations began to feel unrest and turned to the Klan as a source to their problems. The Klan on a national level held shared ideas about education, prohibition, racial hierarchy, but it was often events at the local level that actually brought most people into their local Klan organization.

On the local level, the Klan appealed to the people based on local concerns and prejudices. With lower numbers of African Americans in the Midwest and the North, the Klan needed to appeal to native-born Protestants by opposing Catholics and standing for prohibition. The Klan used terms such as "100 percent American" and "comprehensible Americanism" to garner support for their movement against Catholics and immigrants. On local levels, politicians used some of these terms to gain supporters and votes. For example, in Oregon, Walter Pierce's run for the governorship invited Klan members and sympathizers to support him. He claimed to be "100 percent American" and supported legislation that targeted Catholics.⁶³ In McVeigh's research he found that the level of activism by the Klan for a certain topic depended on its geographic location. He found that the locations where the Klan opposed the utilization of unskilled labor only occurred in places where that transition took place. Locations that did not experience this transition did not need an organization, such as the Klan, to oppose this change because it did not occur. The same idea holds for education. In locations with high public-school attendance, the Klan emerged as an organization advocating for public school funding, but in areas with high private school attendance, no one needed their help.⁶⁴ The Klan played a greater role

⁶³ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 26.

⁶⁴ McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 166.

at the local level, which can be partially attributed to the responses to the Ku Klux Klan at the federal level.

In 1921, the year Warren Harding won the presidency, the Klan began to emerge as a real political force in an increasingly fractured America. By 1921 the Klan had earned for itself a growing reputation as a violent organization. Local leadership often found the talk of anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, and anti-black civil rights to be too muted to ensure effective retention of white, native-born power. For them, words had to be followed by action. When the Klan became involved in vigilantism, its public image gradually changed. The American people turned to politicians for a solution to the growing violence and many of those politicians turned towards Harding. Instead of dealing with the Klan as a national issue, Harding deemed the Klan to be a state problem.⁶⁵ Yet, some politicians did not agree with this decision and argued that due to the Klan's national scope they fell under federal jurisdiction. Congressman Peter Tague from Massachusetts attempted to limit the Klan's power by claiming they consistently violated the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Thirteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Ultimately, his efforts amounted to nothing, and the Harding Administration, through the attorney general's office, reiterated that the Klan was a state-level issue. A promise to aid states in combatting the the Klan appeared to be the only sense of reassurance state governments received.⁶⁶ Without federal support and the growing power of the Klan, it became safer for politicians to avoid talking about the Klan if they sought reelection or some type of political appointment. On the federal level, the Klan supported political figures who shared the ideologies and policies they advocated.

⁶⁵ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 36.

⁶⁶ Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 198.

The Klan focused on issues regarding education, prohibition, and immigration. Evans felt that these issues played a key role in the demoralizing culture of the United States and by fixing these emerging problems, the morals and values essential to protecting the American ideals would be restored. With growing interest in this assumed moral crisis across America's mainstream demographics playing a part in local politics did not come with much difficulty for Klan leadership. To achieve more legitimacy in this emerging 'culture war,' Evans focused on the issue of education. In his article, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Education Reform," Adam Laats explores the Klan's national and local activism to help make them a mainstream political organization.⁶⁷ Laats finds that Evans felt the role of education played a crucial role of fixing the other problems he found in society: degradation of values, lack of white supremacy, and public immorality.⁶⁸ The Klan's reform efforts aimed at bringing back the education program of the nineteenth century, a clear anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant movement. Yet, the Klan muted the extremism of the group by opting to support educational reformer ideas supported by a wide variety of American interest groups; such as the push for the Smith-Towner bill. As Laats states, "The bill proposed a cabinet-level Department of Education with a budget of \$100 million to reduce illiteracy, improve teacher training and pay, and increase Americanization efforts in public schools."⁶⁹ Evans, along with other conservative reformers of the time, viewed this legislation as the key step in reducing the immorality they saw in society. Furthermore, Evans viewed it as the potential cure for the threat

⁶⁷ Adam Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and Educational Reform," *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no.3 (2012) 325.

⁶⁸ Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross," 327.

⁶⁹ Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross," 328.

immigrants brought into the country through their language and their values. He intended for all public schools to be taught in English, which would force immigrants unable to afford private education to learn English and lose their mother tongue.⁷⁰ Since many immigrants came from Catholic nations, Evans further assumed that a public education focused on an Anglo-American culture would also impose a Protestant ideology on immigrants. Catholics attempted to avoid this Protestantization by public school by sending their children to parochial school, but even attempts to do this raised opposition from the Klan. While the Klan's platform called for education reform, this platform varied based on the location of a specific Klan chapter.⁷¹ In many other cases beyond education, the Klan assumed a position of disruption to achieve their ideological ends.

Anti-Catholicism and a Defense of Ruralism in Maine

When the Klan more easily fit within the existing cultural context of a place they were able to play supportive roles to established social or political groups. This was the case in the American South and much of the Midwest. Yet, in regions where the Klan's ideology did not neatly fit the established culture, the organization was forced to play the role of outside antagonist. This was the case in New England, which did not readily and easily accept the Klan's more hate-focus rhetoric targeting immigrants, Jews, and African Americans. Mark Richard has argued that anti-Catholicism was the basis of New England's Klan activities. While anti-Catholicism certainly played a key role throughout New England,

⁷⁰ Laats, "Red Schoolhouse, Burning Cross," 331.

⁷¹ Roby, *The Franco-Americans of New England*, 240.

in Maine the Klan also built upon a conservative rural ideology that saw the burgeoning urban landscape as a real political and cultural threat.

In his book, *Not a Catholic Nation: The Ku Klux Klan Confronts New England in the 1920s*, Mark Richard explores the Klan throughout the region by focusing on both Klan anti-Catholic agenda actions and the reactions to that agenda by the region's large Catholic population. Unlike other works on the Klan, he argues that "In New England, nativism, religious prejudice, and class differences account for the Klan's remarkable growth during the twenties much more convincingly than do its functions as a social, fraternal, or civic organization."⁷² The Klan in New England, while it may have offered social events and fraternal-like characteristics, did not represent the same politically-charged movement as it did elsewhere in the country. The Klan in New England mobilized to confront Irish-Americans and French-Canadians for their Catholicism but also for the large role they played in region's urban manufacturing economy.⁷³

In the 1920s, Catholics composed a large majority of the population in New England. The Klan's fight for white supremacy lacked any substantial meaning in New England, as African Americans represented a minute part of the population.⁷⁴ Recognizing that appealing to New England residents required a different factor, not just the notion of bringing back white supremacy, the Klan in New England decided to instead focus on the assumed control Catholics had over education and local governance. Irish and French-Canadian immigrants became the face of these attacks, as they represented both the immigrant population and Catholic population that middle-class Protestant, native-born

⁷² Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 5.

⁷³ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 6.

⁷⁴ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 12.

Americans feared. Resentment continued to grow amongst native-born, white Protestant New Englanders as they watched French-Canadians and other Catholic immigrants send their children to parochial school, where they practiced their religion and their own language.

A conservative defense of ruralism constituted the second base upon which Klan activity worked in Maine. Maine's lower population density in comparison to other New England states played an important role in shaping the ruralism of the state.⁷⁵ Maine relied heavily on its natural resource economies throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continued to do so into the twentieth century even as much of the rest of the country, including its New England neighbors, became increasingly industrial and urban. The state depended on the production of oats, corn, and potatoes, mainly due to the fact that farmers produced these crops in high numbers.⁷⁶ Maine's agrarian sector began to suffer due to competition from agricultural businesses in the Midwest, an event that preceded the rising industrialism in the state.⁷⁷ Historians have shown that the crucial decade for American urbanization was the 1910s. In 1910, the US census reported that 54 percent of the nation's population was rural, yet by the 1920 census only 48 percent remained rural; the first census to indicate that a majority of the American population lived in towns and cities.⁷⁸ In Maine, this decline in rural life occurred, but not at the same rate,

⁷⁵ Kenneth T. Palmer and G. Thomas Taylor and Marcus A. LiBrizzi, *Maine Politics and Government* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992) 8.

⁷⁶ Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maine State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 58.

⁷⁷ Richard W. Judd, Edwin A. Churchill, and Joel W. Eastman, eds., *Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1995).

⁷⁸ Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maine State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 43-63.

dropping only 3 percent to 61 percent in 1920. Maine's population reached 768,000 in 1920, yet less than 300,000 lived in an urban area; and most of those were really large towns.

The pockets of urban growth in places like Lewiston, Bangor, and Portland contrasted sharply with the declining value of Maine's rural economy. In 1915, the state's Department of Agriculture published the *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of Maine*. The report addressed the state of the agricultural sector, improving health conditions, and different ways to approach agricultural concerns. The first section of the report addressed the difficulty of finding seasonal agricultural labor. Commissioner William T. Guptill argued that Maine's farmers netted such low profits for their products that they were often unable to provide competitive wages for seasonal workers, who increasingly turned elsewhere for employment. He wrote "At the present time the labor conditions are such that it is well-nigh impossible to get help temporarily, for either the seed time or the harvest. I might say that it is well-nigh impossible to get help for any season during the year on their farm."⁷⁹ Maine's agricultural industry experienced an economic shift, one that forced the farmer to rely solely on the labor they or their own machinery could provide because the declining economic value of their production did not provide them the financial security to employ more workers. The decline in agricultural profitability and strengthening industrial economy in Maine facilitated a shift in labor, one that slowly occurred throughout state.

⁷⁹ Maine, Department of Agriculture., *Report of the Agricultural Commissioner* (Waterville: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1915), 5.

The demographics of Maine's farming population sheds light into the general population of the state. The Maine's State Compendium report from 1920, a report documenting population, agriculture, manufacturing, and education in Maine shows that white males in Maine dominated the farming industry. In 1920, according to agricultural census data, there were 48,227 farms. Of these farms, white farmers owned 48,214 or about 99.7 percent of all the farms in Maine. Aroostook County, located in the most northern part of Maine, held the most native-born white farmers in the state and also produced the most cereal crops, such as corn, oats, and wheat.⁸⁰ In the agricultural sector, Aroostook County proved to be the most profitable county in Maine, with a total crop value of over \$100 million in 1920. Aroostook County commanded 52 percent of the state's total agricultural economy. Aroostook's prosperity did not extend to all counties in the state. In smaller agriculturally-based counties, the value of crops represented a smaller portion of value than in Aroostook County. For example, when the value of cereals reached over \$50 million for Aroostook County, the next closest county, Penobscot County, only reached a little over \$8 million.⁸¹ The *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of Maine* vocalized the uncertainty and slow decline of Maine's agriculture. It captures the mindset of the state's farmers when it wrote, "They entertain much anxiety for the future of their great industry. What course to take, in what direction to move, they are uncertain. There appears little light ahead. Somewhat confused by present unusual

⁸⁰ Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maine State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 58.

⁸¹ Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maine State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 59.

conditions, many farmers are merely marking time."⁸² While some counties in Maine held strongly to their agricultural connections, the state government recognized the concerns of smaller farmers and the changing economic system of the state. While Maine maintained a dominate rural and agrarian culture throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is clear from these agricultural reports that that sector experienced slow, yet persistent, decline; resulting in an increasing demographic of rural poverty. Maine's urban counties, such as Androscoggin County, however, experienced a different transition into the twentieth century; a transition dominated by urbanism, modernism, technology, and immigration.

When French Canadians migrated to the United States, they found a home in Androscoggin County, specifically the city of Lewiston. The county as a whole consisted of a largely urban population, constituting almost 40 percent of the entire state's urban population.⁸³ Specifically in Lewiston, French-Canadian immigrants comprised over 20 percent of the city's population, a number significantly higher than any other town or county. As French-Canadian immigrants entered Maine, they left their former employment in low-skill manufacturing jobs or in the agricultural and lumber industries. The poor economy in Quebec influenced their move to find employment opportunities elsewhere. Mill owners in Maine soon sought out unskilled or low-skill manufacturing laborers from Quebec, sending recruiters to different Quebec towns to convince French Canadians to migrate south. As the number of French-Canadian immigrants increased, they built a

⁸² Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maine State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 9.

⁸³ Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Maine State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 17.

reputation as a reliable and hardworking workforce. During the Great Depression, the Federal Writer's Project, a program funded through the Work Progress Administration, sought to uncover the lived-experiences of working people in the United States. Robert Grady, employed with the WPA, interviewed an anonymous French-Canadian who described the lives of French-Canadians in Maine and their employment experiences. After the interviewee described the declining lumber and agricultural industry, he reportedly stated, "The saw mills disappeared as the lumber gave out, but in their stead there appeared two woolen mills, two pulp mills, two box mills, and a number of smaller industries. A large proportion of the workers in these factories are French Canadians or their descendants."⁸⁴ The decline in value and reliance on the lumber and agricultural industry created a pathway for French Canadians to dominate the workforce in the mills, an increasingly valuable industry in the state. The growing value in mills and the positive reputation French Canadians gained as employees aided in their ability to grow in numbers and receive more employment, which further contrasted them from the dominate white, native-born, rural population.

Due to the overwhelming employment opportunities in Maine mills for French Canadians, their population sizes continued to grow throughout the beginning of the twentieth century. The labor gap that emerged with the abandonment of mills by Yankee women contributed in the increasing need of low-skill workers. Younger, native-born Mainers struggled with the poor economic conditions and sought employment and higher wages out of state.⁸⁵ French Canadians found themselves settling in areas shared by the

⁸⁴ Robert Grady, "Noted French Canadian Personalities," *Federal Writer's Project*.

⁸⁵ "How Klan Figures in Maine Election," *New York Times*, August 31, 1924. Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 35.

same demographics and places in need of workers, most often Androscoggin County, but specifically the cities of Lewiston and Auburn. These cities became important urban centers, home to textile mills and shoe factories. The urban population of Androscoggin County steadily increased, with over 74 percent of the county living in an urban area. The urbanization and rising population led one to anticipate this trend carrying over into the development of the economy, but this did not appear to be the case throughout the 1920s. In a *New York Times* article, titled "How Klan Figures in Maine Election," the anonymous author described the economic and political climates in the state of the Maine. In this description of the economic situation of Maine, the author noted, "Unlike its three neighbors, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, Maine is not a rich state. It has fewer quarries than Vermont and not near so many factories as either Massachusetts or New Hampshire."⁸⁶ Within this context of increasing poverty, Maine's poor French Canadians population became the target for native-born Americans' anger and uncertainties. These fears became more public and expanded when hate organizations exploited the urban and immigrant population for the foundation of their message.

The increasing tensions between new labor demographics and native-born workers in Maine was not unique to the state alone, but appeared as a national trend. As the historiography shows, the 1920s represented a time of isolationism and a heightened sense of fear among white native-born Americans. The United States entered a recession

⁸⁶ "How Klan Figures in Maine Election," *New York Times*, August 31, 1924. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Massachusetts State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 175. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "New Hampshire State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 79. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Vermont State Compendium," *Fourteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, GPO, 1925) 75.

following the end of the First World War. Economic hardship contributed to the development of nativist thoughts and rhetoric, a trend evident throughout the 1920s. In different parts of the country, the Ku Klux Klan emerged as the power to further nativist ideas and goals. The fundamental ideas behind the group were not new to American society, as the country experienced with the rise of earlier nativist societies like the Know Nothing Party, and other anti-Catholic, anti-black, and anti-Semitic movements.⁸⁷ The Klan may have been somewhat unique in their white-hooded robes, their oddly-named positions of power, and their own form of law and order, but their rhetoric and message carried similar themes of nativism that were a common conservative defense against what they perceived as radical departures from the status quo. For an organization that prided itself on their secrecy, they often made a spectacle out of their public protests and voiced their opposition to ideas that contradicted their brand of "Americanism." In Maine, the Klan tried to combine its anti-Catholic rhetoric with a conservative defense of ruralism in a bid to secure a position within the state's two-party political system.

The Klan in Maine State Politics

By 1922, a majority of politicians and government officials recognized the Klan as a problem. An article published by the *New York Times* in 1922, described the response of Senator Joseph Ransdell of Louisiana to the Ku Klux Klan as a state and national problem. When the anonymous author of the article began comparing the labor violence occurring in Louisiana to the Ku Klux Klan, they stated "it is not so dangerous as a brooding, continual conspiracy against the reign of law, against the rights of individual citizens and large

⁸⁷ "The Ku Klux Mischief," *New York Times*, November 23, 1922.

classes of citizens under the law, whatever their origin or their religion."⁸⁸ The journalist recognized that although the nation may be filled with acts of violence, no movement or ideas can compare to the hate-filled, discriminatory organization of the Ku Klux Klan. While the Klan held a reputation as an anti-black organization enforcing their own laws in the American South, in the 1920s they emerged as an organization targeting anyone who did not meet their standards of native-born, white, and Protestant throughout the nation.

The "new" Klan attempted to assert its power through the use of local and state political offices. National news organizations began to recognize the force the Klan carried in the early 1920s, with the *New York Times* reporting on Klan activity throughout the country. Some opponents to the Klan found that their vigilante acts and their outright racism warranted immediate opposition, while others found that the use of the first Klan's terminology and traditions undermined the goal of the Reconstruction-Era Ku Klux Klan. A *New York Times* article from 1923 discussed Thomas Dixon denouncing the Ku Klux Klan. Thomas Dixon wrote "The Clansman," a dramatized story of the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction Era and the basis for the film *Birth of a Nation*. In the article, he reportedly acknowledged that white men held superiority over all other races, but he also denounced the Klan for their assault on the "foreigner" and the threat to the nation their existence created. The article quoted him reportedly stating, "...if they dared to use the disguise in a secret oath-bound order today, with the courts of law working under a civilized government, the end was sure- riot, anarchy, bloodshed and martial law... unless this thing is throttled promptly we are in sight of martial law."⁸⁹ Dixon, whose novel inspired the

⁸⁸ "The Ku Klux Mischief," *New York Times*, November 23, 1922.

⁸⁹ "Klan is Denounced by 'The Clansman'," *New York Times*, January 23, 1923.

rebirth of the Klan in the 1920s, recognized that the free reign of the Klan to act as an enforcing body to promote white superiority could only result in a type of social chaos, one that would cause harm to the country and its people. Dixon was not alone in recognizing the Klan's damaging actions as local and national politicians also began to comment on the Klan and their increasingly popular presence across the country.

The resistance to a Klan chapter depended largely on their location. The Klan flourished in places like the American South and, by 1924, the organization picked up traction in other rural parts of the country, such as Oregon and Indiana.⁹⁰ The Klan's presence in New England did not meet the same excitement it received in other parts of the country, but they still managed to be a force that required political acknowledgment. Klan chapters existed in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In the early 1920s, Massachusetts appeared at the forefront of anti-Klan attitudes. Massachusetts's senator, David Walsh, sought out federal help to combat the Klan, but US Attorney General Harry Daugherty informed the senator that no evidence emerged showing the Klan violated any constitutional rights or laws. The attorney general left it to state governments to prosecute the Klan, setting a national precedent if state officials intended to target the Klan for their illegal actions.⁹¹ Prior to this lack of help, the Massachusetts District Attorney, Joseph Pelletier, called for steps to be taken against the Klan in the state. A *New York Times* article from 1921 briefly discussed the Klan emerging in New England states, describing the push for Americans to use legitimate law enforcement agencies, rather than a de facto organization such as the Klan. Pelletier, reportedly stated, "The Ku Klux Klan are not only

⁹⁰ "Local Issues Big in This Campaign," *New York Times*, October 22, 1922.

⁹¹ "Rules Ku Klux Acts Are States' Cases," *New York Times*, December 5, 1922.

un-American, but rabidly anti-American, and it is the duty of every good citizen not to take the law into his own hands, but to report to the proper official the formation."⁹²

Massachusetts government officials found the Klan's actions to represent the opposite of what they claimed they fought for, "Americanism," but the federal government left the state alone to combat this increasingly popular and national problem. As the Klan began to trickle through Massachusetts, it continued north, planting itself in Maine as an ally to the Republican Party.

By 1923, the Klan became a noticeable presence in Maine, and a widely discussed newspaper topic. Both *The New York Times* and a local Maine newspaper, the *Lewiston Daily Sun*, reported on Klan activities in the state of Maine. While the Klan supported small, local government positions, the 1924 gubernatorial election brought the Klan into the public eye.⁹³ Governor Percival Baxter, a Maine Republican, held office from 1921 to 1924 and represented an exception to Republican Party politicians in New England, advocating for an anti-Klan platform. As Baxter prepared to move out of office, the *Lewiston Daily Sun* published an article entailing his worries and his vision for the Republican Party of Maine. The article discussed the internal fractioning of the party, current election issues, and the Ku Klux Klan. Baxter, unlike other Republican politicians during this time, made it clear that the Klan represented a threat to governance and the political system. When discussing the Klan and the Republican Party, he reportedly believed, "On both sides of this unfortunate division are Republicans, and as a result the Republican party is endangered..."

⁹² "Fights Klan in Boston," *New York Times*, September 19, 1921.

⁹³ "Klan-Endorsed Are Winners in Portland," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, December 5, 1923. "Klan Forces Defeated in a Hotly Contested Election at Gardiner," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, November 28, 1923.

I deeply regret that religious dissent is rampant throughout the State and that the split between races, sexes, and creeds daily grows wider."⁹⁴ Baxter's public anti-Klan platform remained an anomaly in the Republican Party of Maine and by the time the gubernatorial election approached, the Klan emerged as the central issue and a key divider for voters. Baxter himself would find it difficult to hold on to such a strong anti-Klan stance.

By 1923, the Klan in Maine allied itself with the Republican Party, a party that already had the clear support of the majority of people in the state. Mark Richard notes that although Baxter opposed the Klan in beginning of his governorship, like other politicians during the time, he later went back on this position claiming to not know of any illegal activities the Klan participated in.⁹⁵ Some hypothesize that this reversal occurred because Baxter actually agreed with some of the messages the Klan sent in Maine. One the Klan's primary goals in Maine was the elimination of public funds to parochial schools, a goal that Baxter and other Maine politicians stood behind. While Baxter may not have directly supported the Klan and the Klan did not directly support him, that cannot be said for other politicians in Maine during the 1920s.

In 1924, Ralph Brewster ran in the gubernatorial race as a Klan-backed politician. Brewster gained the support of Klansmen, members of the Loyal Orange Institution's Grand Lodge in Maine, Anglo-Canadians, and native-born residents of Maine. The Orange Order, an organization of Protestant Irish opposing Catholic Irish spread from Ireland first to Canada and then New England, sympathizing and helping the Klan in Maine.⁹⁶ Brewster

⁹⁴ "Baxter Warns Republicans of Danger to Party in the Growing Strength of Klan," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, February 13, 1924.

⁹⁵ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 19.

⁹⁶ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 39.

gained the support of these groups based on his views on education in Maine. Brewster wanted to create a clear division between public school and parochial school. He felt that in the tax-supported schools, which nuns often taught in, there needed to be a clear distinction between religious education and their public education. Without this distinction, public schools would not differ much from parochial schools and Brewster and his supporters feared the strength of Catholicism spreading. The support of the Klan for separation between public education and religious education does not appear surprising, due to the Klan's stance on education. The Klan opposed supporting any type of sectarian school through public funds, which they make clear in their "Kreed."⁹⁷

The Ku Klux Klan supported most Republican political positions in Maine, including the governor's seat. Ralph Brewster ran against Frank Farrington for the nomination, with Brewster ultimately winning the spot after a series of recounts.⁹⁸ Farrington represented the more progressive wing of the Republican Party, and strongly opposed Klan-backed bigotry. After the recount, however, Farrington needed to help unite the Republican Party and supported Brewster, a candidate backed by the Ku Klux Klan. Attaining the Klan's support became the key factor in Brewster's bid for the governor's seat. A *Lewiston Daily Sun* article reported on the accusation that Brewster sought the endorsement of the Klan. The 1924 article described the accusations made towards Brewster about his relationship with the Klan in Maine. Brewster reportedly stated, "I am not a member of any secret organization nor have I sought the endorsement of a secret organization in my candidacy."⁹⁹ While

⁹⁷ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 40.

⁹⁸ "Brewster Forces Ask Examination of the Ballots in Lewiston," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, June 25, 1924.

⁹⁹ "Brewster Has Not Sought the Endorsement of Any Secret Order, He Avers," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, January 18, 1924.

Brewster claimed he did not support the Klan or request their endorsement, he still missed an opportunity to outright denounce the organization. Brewster may not have necessarily needed the Klan's support in the election, but he recognized the advantage their support gave him in gaining votes.

The Republican primary was the real contest in the state's governor's race, and as such Brewster easily won the general election. Although the state consistently voted Republican, French-Canadians dominated the locations where Democrats won the most votes. Clearly, Republicans and the Klan shared a similar agenda in opposition to French-Canadians and Democrats. The Democratic nominee, William Pattangall, used an anti-Klan message as his primary platform against Brewster.¹⁰⁰ Pattangall loudly voiced his opinion on the Klan, unlike Brewster, who refused to comment on the organization, knowing that the Klan helped his candidacy. When Brewster easily won the election, in a sense, it legitimized the Klan, and disproved Pattangall's strategy of targeting the Klan as a hate group.¹⁰¹

William Pattangall consistently emphasized his opposition to the Ku Klux Klan. Nationally, the Democratic Party was hardly unified over the Klan issue, as many southern Democrats not only refused to denounce the Klan, but were in fact active members. Pattangall recognized the disadvantage he faced in this election as a Democrat and sought out help from the national Democratic Party. Pattangall attended the national convention where he sought a party unified in opposition to the Klan. The 1924 *New York Times* article, "How Klan Figures in Maine Election" discusses Pattangall effort to steer the national

¹⁰⁰ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 46.

¹⁰¹ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 49.

Democratic party towards an anti-Klan position.. The anonymous journalist wrote, "The plan [to denounce the Klan] failed, for the convention, despite Mr. Pattangall's advocacy of an anti-Klan platform declaration, refused to adopt it... The Maine delegates returned home... without the endorsement of their party."¹⁰² If Pattangall successfully secured his party's opposition to the Klan, it would have diluted the Klan's power not just in Maine, but across the whole nation. Yet, the South was the base of the national Democratic party and in the South, the Democrats certainly did not distance themselves from the Klan.

Patangall's effort to redirect the Democratic party away from its southern, rural, and conservative base was ahead of its time. The national Democratic party's refusal to endorse Patangall's opposition to the Klan did not stop him from making the Klan a central issue in state elections, which were also clouded by ongoing debates about school funding.

An amendment to the state constitution deciding whether public funds should be used in parochial schools became the central issue during the gubernatorial campaigns for the 1924 election. Opposition to parochial schools in Maine derived from native-born fears concerning the lack of assimilation among Catholic immigrants in the state. Franco-American families often sent their children to parochial schools to foster their culture, language, and religion, but this created opposition from Maine's Republican Party and the Klan. Franco-Americans felt conflicted when deciding whether to send their children to parochial or public school. The former allowed a continued growth in Franco-American culture and language, while the latter promised to assimilate immigrant children into American society. The Klan, alongside many native-born Americans in Maine, feared the allegiances Catholic immigrants brought to the country and felt that parochial schools

¹⁰² "How Klan Figures in Maine Election," *New York Times*, August 31, 1924.

represented a place for the growth of anti-American thoughts. The Klan became very outspoken against parochial schools and argued that not forcing Catholic immigrants to assimilate into American society threatened the safety of the United States. Eugene Farnsworth, an organizer for the Klan, became an outspoken champion of Protestantism and promoted a "100 Percent American" national identity. In the *Lewiston Daily Sun's* 1923 article, "Names of Local Klan Agents Disclosed at Meeting in Auburn," the paper quotes Farnsworth promoting Klan attitudes. Farnsworth reportedly stated, "If they are teaching Americanism in Parochial schools they are false to Rome. If they don't they are false to America."¹⁰³ Farnsworth claimed that a person could not be both a Catholic and an American because the individual loyalties associated with both groups would cancel each other out. He believed that Catholics always answered to the Pope before they would answer to the United States government and based on that premise, he believed Catholicism should not be supported directly or indirectly by public funds. Contrary to what Farnsworth and Klan-sympathizers believed, Franco-Americans laid their loyalties within the United States and sought to be the ideal immigrant and thus, the ideal American.

The amendment that many Republicans and the Klan sought to limit public funding to parochial schools did not carry to all Republicans or members of the state. The idea that limiting this funding would only hurt Catholic parochial schools appeared to be false, as the amendment would cut funding to Quaker, Methodist, Baptist, and Protestant parochial schools, all schools that if this amendment passed, would suffer greater harm than Catholic

¹⁰³ "Names of Local Klan Agents Disclosed at Meeting in Auburn," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, April 19, 1923.

schools.¹⁰⁴ The power behind this legislation came from a strong encouragement on Eugene Farnsworth's part, when he declared that the United States "always has been and always will be a Protestant nation."¹⁰⁵ This rhetoric did not bode well with many Americans and specifically, Franco-Americans, who turned to the United States' recognition of the separation between church and state. For the Franco-American population in Maine, they viewed this amendment as another attack on their culture, similar to the 1919 law passed prohibiting the use of the French language in public schools. After Farnsworth's speech, *Le Messager*, a French-language newspaper read and produced by the large Franco-American population in Lewiston and surrounding areas, published an article questioning the right and basis for Farnsworth's claims. In the article "Le Ku Klux Klan," Louis-Philippe wrote, "Where does this claim that the American nation is Protestant come from? She is no more Protestant than she is Catholic and no more Lutheran than Methodist ... The separation of Church and State exists in the United States and we have no right to say that the nation is Protestant."¹⁰⁶ Philippe, and by extension, the Franco-Americans of Maine, recognized that Farnsworth, who claimed to promote the best for the United States and represent an organization fighting to keep the United States safe and pure from the social threat of immigrants, undermined basic constitutional values in the United States by promoting the country as Protestant. The two different positions for the amendment to

¹⁰⁴ "Baxter Warns Republicans of Danger to Party in the Growing Strength of Klan," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, February 13, 1924.

¹⁰⁵ "Names of Local Klan Agents Disclosed at Meeting in Auburn," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, April 19, 1923.

¹⁰⁶ "Le Ku Klux Klan," *Le Messager*, April 23, 1923. "Alors d'ou vient que ce farceur soutient que la nation américaine est protestante? Elle n'est pas plus protestante qu'elle n'est catholique et pas plus luthérienne qu'elle n'est méthodiste... La séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat existe aux Etats-Unis et on n'a pas droit de dire que la nation est protestante."

limit the spending of public funds on parochial schools contributed to the broader issue of the 1924 election, the Ku Klux Klan.

By September of 1924, the Klan appeared as the central issue of the gubernatorial election and the school funding debate. For months, William Pattangall based his campaign on anti-Klan rhetoric and accused Brewster of being a Klan candidate. Brewster, on the other hand, continued to state his positions of policy throughout the campaign, only commenting on Pattangall's accusations a handful of times. It became customary for Republicans in the state and across the country to avoid mentioning the Klan, finding that a lack of acknowledgement and denunciation proved to be the most beneficial strategy during contested elections.¹⁰⁷ Pattangall's attacks on the Klan may have lacked major support, but in the city of Lewiston, his platform rang strong among one the largest Franco-American populations in the state. Five days before the gubernatorial election, the city of Lewiston held its first Democratic rally, where Mayor Louis Brann and William Pattangall attempted to rally support for the party. In Pattangall's address to the attendees, he only discussed the Klan's influence in Maine and the impact they would have if Brewster won the election. Pattangall did not take the Klan to be a religious issue, but an issue of politics and morality. Pattangall reportedly stated, "Any rational Republicans, Democrats and even Klansmen will agree if they give the matter a little thought, that no secret society or order regardless of its standards, philosophy or aims has a place in the Maine politics and government."¹⁰⁸ Pattangall's opposition to the Klan came from a need to preserve party politics and the legitimacy of government structures, because allowing a secret order to

¹⁰⁷ "Soft Pedal on Klan is Urged by GOP Mentors; Close in Androscoggin," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, September 3, 1924.

¹⁰⁸ "Mayor Brann Denies Disloyalty Charges," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, September 5, 1924.

take government control undermined the validity of democracy. Pattangall worked to secure a Democratic victory, but on the day of the election, the Republican Party emerged victorious and, by association, the Klan claimed victory as well.

When Ralph Brewster won the gubernatorial election in 1924, the outcome did not come as a shock to the people of Maine. Since the Civil War, Maine most often supported the Republican Party. Brewster won the election by receiving 57 percent of the votes, a percentage not much different from previous years. According to Maine's *State Year-Book and Legislative Manual*, a book published every year compiling information about the state, during the 1922 election, the Republican candidate, Percival Baxter won the election with 58 percent of the votes and in 1920, the Republican nominee, Frederick Parkhurst, won with 66 percent of the votes.¹⁰⁹ The rhetoric leading up to the election showed a strong sense of confidence for Pattangall, who believed thousands of Republicans would cross party lines to support him in their opposition to the Klan.¹¹⁰ His confidence continued to grow as he continued to attack the Klan, due to his belief that they carried some political power in the state. Pattangall believed that if Republicans won the election, the Klan would be the real winners. In his speech at a Lewiston Democratic rally, he reportedly stated "If Senator Brewster is elected it will be hailed as a Klan victory all over the country and not as a Republican victory."¹¹¹ Feeling that a Republican victory equaled a Klan victory shows the power of the Klan's rhetoric in the state, but this rhetoric did not translate into direct power. Previous election results coupled with the less than evident Klan power illustrates

¹⁰⁹ Portland Directory Company, *Maine Register State Year-Book and Legislative Manual*, 1924.

¹¹⁰ "Pattangall Claims 20,000 Republicans Will Vote for Him," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, September 6, 1924.

¹¹¹ "Mayor Brann Denies Disloyalty Charges," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, September 5, 1924.

that in Maine, the Klan represented a vocal-hate minority, rather than a substantive political group able to create change through the Brewster administration. The Klan's public support of Brewster may have aided in bid for the governorship, but the Klan failed to influence or create laws in the state. While the organization lacked in their ability to create legislative change, instead, they did influence the way Franco-Americans in Maine voted during the election.

Franco Americans faced much opposition from the organization and increasingly turn to their vote as their means of opposition. In the 1924 election, residents in Lewiston overwhelmingly voted for Pattangall, the Democratic nominee. Over 70 percent of Lewiston's population voted for Pattangall, a city dominated by industrialism and Franco Americans.¹¹² A *New York Times* article, "How Klan Figures in Maine Election," from 1924 described the layout of Maine's economy and the upcoming election. When referring to the growing Franco-American population, the journalist reported, "Heretofore the French-Canadians in those counties of this State in which they are most numerous have generally voted the Republican ticket, but on the anti-Klan issue raised by Mr. Pattangall they may not do so this year."¹¹³ Franco Americans in Maine realigned their political affiliations to the Democratic Party based on local Democratic opposition to the Klan's rhetoric, a feat evident by the overwhelming support for Pattangall in a city such as Lewiston. Yet, the 1924 election was not the last in the state in which the Klan played a role, and it was far from conclusive as to which party the Klan would most ally with.

¹¹² "How the State Voted," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, September 9, 1924.

¹¹³ "How Klan Figures in Maine Election," *New York Times*, August 31, 1924.

In August of 1926, Senator Bert Fernald died, introducing a special election to be held in November of that year. At the time, the floor remained open for anyone to run, but most predicted former Governor Baxter would run for election.¹¹⁴ Ironically enough, the Klan at this time supported the Democratic nominee, Fulton Redman, due to the Republican nominee, Arthur Gould's anti-Klan platform. After William Pattangall's loss in the 1924 election, he predicted the type of relationship the Republican Party and the Klan may share in the future. In one of the *Lewiston Daily Sun's* articles, "Maine Will Not Long Endure Rule of Klan," the article quotes Pattangall's opinion about the future of the Klan's relationship with the Republican Party. Pattangall reportedly stated, "We are temporarily defeated by a combination of religious intolerance and blind partisanship but Maine will not long endure the rule of the Klan and the Republican organization will find it a difficult partner with which to do business."¹¹⁵ Pattangall accurately predicted the future between the Klan and the Republican Party in Maine. He recognized that the type of hate-rhetoric the Klan practiced could not be carried over into political power in the state. The outcome of the 1926 election proves Pattangall's prediction and provides insight into declining Klan power.

In 1926, the majority of the nation looked to Maine's special election, due to its importance in deciding what political party controlled the Senate. The election in Maine drew up a wide array of opposing views and crossing party lines. The Ku Klux Klan opted to place their support behind Fulton Redman, the Democratic nominee, and pushed a campaign that attacked Arthur Gould for his campaign spending, a notion that proved to be

¹¹⁴ "Fernald's Successor to be Named at Special Election Next November," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, August 24, 1926.

¹¹⁵ "Maine Will Not Long Endure Rule of Klan," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, September 10, 1924.

unsubstantiated after investigation.¹¹⁶ Alongside the Klan, Republican Ralph Brewster, who won the gubernatorial election in 1924, also voiced his opposition to the Republican nominee and supported Redman. Furthermore, long-standing Democratic cities and towns in the state, such as Lewiston, appeared to largely support the Republican, Arthur Gould. After the election, *The New York Times* reported on the election results and where cities placed their votes. In the 1926 article, "Gould Wins in Maine; Gives Republicans Half of the Senate," the journalist described the political fight up to the election, and the result after. When describing Klan influence in the election, the article stated, "Democratic cities like Lewiston, Biddeford and Rockland all went against his own party voting against him to punish the Klan... The vote from the rural districts also indicated that the Klan vote did not come out in full."¹¹⁷ In 1924, Franco Americans abandoned the Republican party to vote for Pattangall. Just two years later, they switched again, leaving the Democratic party to support the Republican candidate. Twice, Franco Americans crossed partisan lines to support an anti-Klan candidate. Lewiston, dominated largely by Franco Americans who voted for Democratic candidates in the past, continued to use their power of voting to voice their opposition to the Klan and Klan-backed politicians, assisting in the Klan's decline throughout the state.

Conclusion

By 1926, resistance and opposition to the Klan across the nation took hold and Klan chapters began to fall apart. Mayors and cities denied Klan chapters the ability to meet in

¹¹⁶ "Maine Fixes Today Control of Senate," *The New York Times*, November 29, 1926.

¹¹⁷ "Gould Wins in Maine; Gives Republicans Half of the Senate," *The New York Times*, November 30, 1926.

city halls, state legislation required permits to wear a hood and mask in public, and more legislation required secret societies to hand over their membership lists to the town government, legislation clearly aimed at the Klan. The future of the Klan did not look promising and by the 1930s, no important Klan events could be found in Maine.¹¹⁸ By then, Klan power in the state of Maine had largely disappeared, if not completely vanished. The organization suffered in the latter half of the 1920s, with financial troubles and internal factions. These factions continued to divide the Klan with the arrival of Edward Gayer, the new King Kleagle in Maine, prompting many Klan members to leave and follow Eugene Farnsworth. The *New York Times* reported that Klan membership in Maine continuously declined, especially in the Portland area.¹¹⁹ Many local and national politicians predicted that the Klan would not be a lasting or influential political organization. While they aligned with both the Republican and Democratic parties in Maine whenever their religious intolerance and bigotry fit with either party's message, many believed this vocal-hate minority was a temporary issue. In the *New York Times* article, "The Ku Klux Mischief," the journalist reported on the foundation of the Ku Klux Klan and their influence, if any at all. When describing the Klan as a national and local issue, the journalist put it best by writing, "The Ku Klux hullabaloo is deplorable, but presumably it is only a passing idiocy."¹²⁰ The Ku Klux Klan's power across the state mirrored the Klan's power across the nation; a temporary movement that sought to infringe upon the lives of those not white, native-born, and Protestant by attempting to disrupt political institutions. While the early 1920s showed a Klan filled with political power, a closer examination of the

¹¹⁸ Richard, *Not a Catholic Nation*, 53.

¹¹⁹ "Political Power of Klan Dissipated," *New York Times*, February 5, 1928.

¹²⁰ "The Ku Klux Mischief," *New York Times*, November 23, 1922.

Best, "Only a Passing Idiocy"

Klan in Maine shows that their use of hate rhetoric was only temporary, one that ceased to exist by the end of the decade.

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