In the winter of 1926, Ku Klux Klan organizers entered the Province of Saskatchewan. Lewis A. Scott and Hugh Findlay “Pat” Emmons were experienced Klan organizers from Indiana. They aroused old prejudices and revived the anti-Catholic and anti-French feeling that lay dormant in the province.1 Basing themselves, respectively, in Regina and Moose Jaw, Scott and Emmons spent the spring and summer of 1927 travelling throughout the province selling memberships at $13 a time. Late in August of the same year they vanished from the province with the Klan funds.2

With the scandal of the missing Klan leadership and funds, the Klan should have collapsed in Saskatchewan; however, it survived thanks to a new indigenous Klan leadership. John W. Rosborough, a Regina accountant, became the Imperial Wizard (Provincial Leader) and Charles H. Ellis, a Canadian National telegraph operator, became the Imperial Kiligrapp (Secretary). Thomas Pakenham, Melville’s ex-police chief, Charles H. Puckering, a milling company manager, along with Daniel Carlyle Grant, a Moose Jaw tramway brakeman and union organizer known as “spark plug,” became kleagles (organizers).3

The reorganized Saskatchewan Klan employed Dr. John H. Hawkins, a Klan organizer from Virginia, who held a doctorate in Optometry and J. J. Maloney, a fanatical anti-Catholic from Hamilton, Ontario. Maloney had travelled throughout Canada “denouncing the errors of Romanism” and the Liberal Party.4 The reconstructed Saskatchewan Klan was to have links to the provincial Conservative Party as well as the Orange Lodges.5

During the summer of 1928, Klan organizers once again spread across Saskatchewan. Their meetings were well attended and Klan speakers attacked the Catholic church, the Saskatchewan Liberal Party and “non-preferred” European immigrants.6 Although the Klan was supposed to be an “invisible Empire,” it claimed a membership of 40,000.7 During this period of Klan popularity in Saskatchewan, ambitious Klan organizers attempted to expand beyond the provincial borders into Manitoba.

The first rumours of Klan activity in Manitoba date back to November 1922. A fire gutted the St. Boniface College near Winnipeg and ten students were killed. Rumour blamed the Klan but nothing was ever proved.8 During the summer of 1924, J. R. Bellamy, a Klan organizer from Oklahoma, gave a lecture in Winnipeg and claimed that Canada was “being overrun with undesirable sects and beliefs” and Canadians will “welcome our aid in freeing you.” Bellamy stated that “sheeted figures of the local subjects of the Invisible Empire will ride at night.” However, Bellamy soon returned to the United States and nothing came of his visit.8

During February 1925, a Colonel Machin, working for the Toronto, Ontario, Ku Klux Klan of Canada, travelled to Winnipeg. His attempt at organizing a Winnipeg Klan did not accomplish anything, and soon he moved his activities from Winnipeg to Kenora, Ontario.10 Later that year, R. G. Wallace, a former Chief Kleagle for the Klan in Oregon, attempted to organize a Klan in Winnipeg. This Klan was to be a “fraternal organization” not to be involved in law and order issues. It soon faded from the scene, and Wallace became an Imperial Wizard of the Canadian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Vancouver, British Columbia.11

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On 8 May 1926, Klan Imperial Wizard Rosborough stated that “...as the aims and objectives of all the Klan organizations in Canada are fundamentally the same, we look forward to the day when there will be an equal Protestant loving Patriotic Canadian organization, embracing all Klan organizations throughout the whole dominion.”12 Less than one month after Rosborough’s statement, Saskatchewan Klan Kleagles moved across the provincial border into Manitoba and began to organize.13

Daniel Carlyle Grant, the Moose Jaw-based Klan Kleagle, now calling himself the “Organizer for the Western Division of the Ku Klux Klan of Canada,” based himself in Brandon, Manitoba. Grant, a shrewd and capable organizer with “the instincts of a shark,” knew how to attract attention.

On 1 June, Grant held his first meeting in Winnipeg at the Royal Templars Hall at 360 Young Street. In this meeting, his attack on Roman Catholics and Jews set the pattern for his future Winnipeg campaign. In his speech, Grant informed his audience that the Roman Catholic Church controlled the Dominion and that the Jews had crucified the Son of God. Shortly after this meeting, Grant returned to Saskatchewan believing that the Klan could take hold in Winnipeg.15

By autumn 1928, Grant was back in Manitoba once again, basing himself in Brandon. Grant, now calling himself the Manitoba Organizer of the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, plotted the Klan invasion of Winnipeg. In October, Grant shifted his activities to Winnipeg and set himself up at the Marlborough Hotel on Smith Street just north of Portage Avenue. He was joined by Charles H. Puckering and Andrew Wright, a local klansman. The trio soon made their plans of action for their Winnipeg campaign.16

After placing a series of advertisements in the local newspapers, a Klan meeting was called for 16 October at the Norman Dance Hall at 275 Sherbrook Street. Puckering and Wright were introduced as joint chairmen and were cheered by the 150-strong audience. Wright, however, asked the audience to keep the noise down as the hall was rented on the understanding that the klansmen would not create a disturbance.17

Grant gave the keynote speech and told the audience that the Klan had cleaned up Moose Jaw and now “Winnipeg was next; Vice and wantonness, graft and corruption walk hand in hand in this city; and the Ku Klux Klan is going to abolish all this. We’re going to disembowel Winnipeg of vice, we’ll clean up Winnipeg.”18

Grant then turned to the topic of race and explained that the Klan strove for “racial purity. We fight against intermarrying of Negroes and whites, Japs and White, Chinese and Whites. This intermarriage is a menace to the world. If I am walking down the street and a Negro doesn’t give me half the sidewalk I know what to do.” He then lashed out at the Jews and said that “The Jews are too powerful ... they are the slave masters who are throttling the throats of white persons to enrich themselves.” Grant claimed that the federal Liberal government was allowing the “scum of Papist Europe to flood the country and refuse to allow immigrants into the country who are not Roman Catholic ...”19

Pamphlets containing the Manitoba Klan Creed were distributed. The Manitoba Creed was exactly the same as the Saskatchewan Klan Creed, as were the membership fees. The Klan Creed stated that:

The Klan believes in Protestantism; racial purity, gentle economic freedom, just laws and liberty, separation of church and state, pure patriotism, restrictive and selective immigration, freedom of speech and press, law and order, higher moral standards, freedom from mob violence, and one public school. These questions are of paramount importance to all liberty loving Canadian citizens.20

In a post-meeting interview, Grant told a reporter from the Manitoba Free Press that Winnipeg Chief of Police Chris H. Newton and Morality Inspector William Eddy should be removed from office. Grant claimed that the police knew of hundreds of gambling dens and disorderly houses in the city that were not raided, and he threatened that if the police did not take action the Klan would. To provide further interest Grant declared that the Klan would soon be meeting at St. Boniface, the predominantly Roman Catholic area across the Red River.21

Reaction to Grant’s statements came immediately. The Priest in charge of St. Boniface Cathedral, Monseigneur Wilfred Jubinville, accused Grant of being a coward, and warned him to stay out of St. Boniface. The priest stated that the Roman Catholic Church would fight the Klan to the full extent of its power. Monseigneur Jubinville summed up the Klan’s activities in Winnipeg as a “scheme to raise a little ‘easy money’.”22

St. Boniface police chief Thomas Gagnon stated that, “There is nothing in St. Boniface to attract the Klan,” and furthermore, he denied that the city “was held in a grip of vice.” Police chief Gagnon went on to say that if the Klan “raided” St. Boniface, drastic police action would be taken.23

Winnipeg mayor Daniel McLean, a businessman and distinguished soldier who was Colonel-in-command of the Canadian 101st Battalion in France, 1916–1918, dismissed all the Klan’s charges and noted that “when outsiders come into Winnipeg and criticize as these people have done, we simply pay no attention to their remarks.”24

Grant’s attacks on the Winnipeg Police Force came at a very inopportune time for the Klan. Police chief Chris H. Newton had reorganized and rebuilt the force after the 1919 General Strike and instilled a pride in the department. During the 1920s, the force had captured or killed bank and drug store robbers such as Percy Moggie, Wilfred Bonnin and Carl “Gunner” McGee. The Winnipeg police had also played a large role in the conviction of American serial killer Earl “The Strangler” Nelson. Nelson had killed at least 24
Ku Klux Klan in Winnipeg

At another meeting on 22 October at the Scottish Hall, East Kildonan, Grant once again attacked both the Roman Catholics and the Jews. He then rhetorically asked the 175-strong audience if “the Klan had a right” to say no to intermarriage and mixing of races. “It has,” he answered, “… and it is going to see that it is enforced.” Grant then listed who was against the Klan. He said, “every criminal, gambler, thug, libertine, girl miner, home wrecker, wife beater, dope peddler, moonshiner, crooked politician, shyster lawyer, white slaver and every brothel madam is fighting the Klan.” Grant went on to say that “… gentiles today were in economic stress … The Jews controlled the centers of finance.”

At this meeting, Grant explained the Ku Klux Klan’s pricing structure. For men there was a $13 joining fee followed by a $1 monthly subscription. For women the fee was $6.50 and a subscription of $1 every three months.

On 23 October, Grant held a second Klan meeting in St. Boniface, this time at the Sergeant Hall. Along with the usual Klan audience were two members of the Winnipeg Jewish community who sent a report to the Western Canadian District of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Grant’s anti-Semitic rants were a departure from the Klan’s previous attitude towards the Jews in Western Canada. In the United States the Klan was violently anti-Semitic. It initiated boycotts of the Jewish shops and businesses, forcing many Jews out of business. In Saskatchewan, this never happened. Other than excluding Jews from the Klan, the Klan in Saskatchewan tended to ignore them.

The Saskatchewan Jewish community, which in the late 1920s numbered around 5,000, also ignored the Klan. Occasionally, as well as reporting Klan activity in the United States, Western Canadian Jewish newspapers would criticize local Klan activities in Saskatchewan. An article in the Winnipeg-based Western Jewish News of 2 February 1928 stated that “the Ku Klux Klan’s purpose in Canada is only that of money making. Its promoters find racial prejudice a fertile field for which to plough for shekels.” The report went on to say that “the most regrettable feature of the Ku Klux Klan’s advent into Saskatchewan is that it has aroused racial prejudices in the simple type of mind.”

Although attacked by the Jewish press, the Klan in Saskatchewan did not retaliate. The Klan did not link bootlegging with Harry Bronfman and his brothers who made whisky at their plant in Yorkton and owned export houses along the United States border at Estevan, Bienfait, Carnduff, Carievale, Gainsborough and Glenewen.

In June 1928, Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman of the Holy Blossom Synagogue in Toronto was lecturing in Saskatchewan under the auspices of the B’nai Brith. Rabbi Isserman, 29, was born in Belgium but educated in the United States. He was devoted to the cause of social action and was the first rabbi in Canada to exchange pulpits with a Christian minister for ecumenical lectures.

In Regina, on 1 and 3 June, Rabbi Isserman addressed the Saskatchewan conference of the United Church of Canada where he later spoke with John W. Rosborough,
the Klan Imperial Wizard. Rabbi Isserman wrote that Rosborough “told me that he went to the church especially to hear me speak, and that he enjoyed my address.” Rosborough evidently failed to convince Rabbi Isserman “that the Klan is not an organisation inimical to Canada’s highest interests.” Rabbi Isserman lectured in other churches and at the Saskatoon YMCA, with no protest from the Ku Klux Klan.

The probable reason for the Klan not attacking the Jews in Saskatchewan was the influence of the British Israelite Association throughout the Klan leadership. The British Israelites believed that the Anglo-Saxon people were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel. Lewis C. Fowler, one of the original founders of the Ku Klux Klan of Canada in Toronto, was a British Israelite, as was J. J. Maloney, the Saskatchewan organizer. Furthermore, the British Israelite Association’s secretary in Regina, E.W. Painter, was a tireless worker for the Klan.

Because the Klan had not been overtly anti-Semitic in Saskatchewan, the Winnipeg Jewish community, which numbered 15,000, was not at all prepared for Grant’s anti-Semitic rants. It was left to non-Jews to respond to and attack the Klan. In a letter to the Manitoba Free Press, John Queen, the Chairman of the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba and its leader in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and Robert Durward, the Independent Labour Party secretary, wrote a scathing attack on the Klan.

We read in Wednesday’s papers of an organizational meeting of the Ku Klux Klan, held in Winnipeg. The statements of those in charge of the meeting were of such a nature as to fill every decent citizen with disgust. We would advise the people of the province to think well before they become connected with this organization. We are not aware that Jews, coloured people and Catholics behave differently from other citizens in their social relationships. The threat of the K.K.K. going to take the law into its own hands is one that we cannot accept, and should receive the immediate attention of the Attorney General of the province. The virulent remarks of the organizers at their inaugural meeting should create a feeling of hostility against such an organization as the K.K.K.

The longer Klan activities went on in Winnipeg the more opposition they aroused. The Klan came under attack in the editorials of the Manitoba Free Press and in the pages of The Manitoban, the University of Manitoba students’ union newspaper. William Hughes, the president of the student debating society, issued a challenge to Grant to debate the respective merits of the Klan. Grant avoided this challenge.

The Klan found yet another formidable opponent in Marshall J. Gauvin. Born in 1881 in New Brunswick, Gauvin was self-educated and became an educator and lecturer with a mission to “free his audiences from the superstitions of religion and free them for a life based upon fact, truth and reason.” Lecturing in Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and Minneapolis for fourteen years, he came to Winnipeg in 1926 where he formed the Winnipeg Rationalist Society. He lectured every Saturday to packed houses at the Metropolitan, Garrick and Dominion theatres.

Although Gauvin believed that all religion was superstition, he condemned anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews. Gauvin enjoyed debating and debunking the beliefs of Christian fundamentalists. On 5 November, he turned on Grant and the Ku Klux Klan in a lecture entitled, “The Ku Klux Klan: A Power for Good or Mischief Maker.” It was one of the most emphatic attacks on the Klan in Canadian history. Gauvin started his lecture by stating that “Canada is not a Protestant country. It is a social necessity to allow other men to believe in what he wants to.” He then went on to say that “If I could believe that this man Grant could succeed in building up the Klan in our community … I would regard him as the most dangerous in our midst.” Gauvin then accused Grant as “… lying in the multitudes to get Klan members and money … Why does Mr. Grant talk so much about racial purity? Because a man like Daniel C. Grant needs a little money.” He continued, “You know this man is a dangerous beast. But, watch out

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Marshall J. Gauvin (1881–1978) came to Winnipeg in 1926 and lectured weekly at theatres around the city.
for the man who sets man against man … He is a menace and a danger and I challenge him to come here and show me a rational argument that the Klan is a power for good. It is, I know, a mere mischief maker.”

D. C. Grant did not take up Gauvin’s challenge; in fact, he quickly shifted his activities from Winnipeg and moved northwest to The Pas. In early December, he held a meeting in The Pas that attracted a small audience. He now called himself the Grand Organizer of the Ku Klux Klan (King Kleagle). He discovered that “Ninety-five per cent of the crimes in The Pas were committed by foreigners.” He went on to say that “People who laugh at the ‘hooded hoodman’ always felt sorry for it afterward.”

Grant soon left The Pas and returned to Winnipeg in mid-December. On 19 December, he held another meeting at the Norman Dance Hall. However, only 23 people bothered to turn up. His speech was received in silence, and although he called other meetings, very few people attended.

Grant withdrew from Manitoba and returned to Saskatchewan where he campaigned for the Klan against Premier James Gardiner and the Liberal Party in the 1929 provincial election. After the Anderson Conservative Party victory, Grant was given a job in charge of the Weyburn Employment Bureau. Soon after the Liberal Party’s return to power in 1934, Grant was sacked from his job. However, in 1935 he came into prominence once again as one of Tommy Douglas’ Co-operative Commonwealth Federation campaign workers in the federal election of that year.

The Klan lingered on in Brandon and other small Manitoba towns until 1932. A few Manitoba klaverns were represented at both the 1929 and 1930 Saskatchewan Klan conventions. On 31 July 1931, a cross was burned at Selkirk, and on 1 November 1931, six members of Klan 49, of the “Realm of Manitoba”, laid a wreath at the cenotaph in Selkirk. On 1 November 1931, six members of Klan 49, of the “Realm of Manitoba”, laid a wreath at the cenotaph in Selkirk.

The Manitoba Free Press reported that at midnight at the Winnipeg cenotaph a cross of poppies was laid by many of Winnipeg’s Anglo-Saxon and Anglicized Scandinavians. For example, the University of Manitoba students wanted to debate Grant not because they disagreed with the objectives of the Klan, but because they “disapproved with the methods of the Ku Klux Klan.”

Most Canadians wanted selective immigration and the maintenance of a Canada with a firm British identity. They also favoured a halt to what they perceived as a moral disorder that was sweeping across the country.

One important reason why Grant failed in Winnipeg was the widespread perception that the Klan was nothing but a money-making racket. There was an emphasis at Klan meetings on membership fees and subscriptions. Grant never explained where the collected money was going. The Manitoba Free Press labelled those who joined the Klan as “$13 suckers.”

Another reason for the Klan’s failure was its inability to forge a cordial link with the Orange Order. The Orange Order also had a vision of Canada as a British Protestant nation and believed in “God, the King, the British Empire, the Union Flag, the Protestant Church and the English language.” However, unlike the Klan in Saskatchewan, there did not seem to be any Klan-Orange Order cooperation. There may have been some overlap in membership, but Grant was not given access to Orange Lodge Halls for his Klan meetings.

Grant’s attack on the Winnipeg police department was a crucial miscalculation that immediately backfired. Generally, in Canada the Klan supported the local police departments and “law and order”. Grant, however, was highly influenced by Hugh Findlay “Pat” Emmons’ 1927 “clean up Moose Jaw” campaign. In Moose Jaw, there had been a genuine problem with police corruption and illegality. They had allowed prostitution, gambling and drug peddling to get out of control. Although the Klan initiated the “clean up” campaign in Moose Jaw, it was a newly reorganized police force who raided the “bawdy houses” and “gambling dens” and brought the perpetrators to trial.

In Winnipeg the police department had earned the respect of the general public, and Grant’s attack on them was resented.

Furthermore, the Saskatchewan Klan had a political agenda, which the Manitoba Klan lacked. In the run-up to the 1929 provincial election, the Saskatchewan Klan supported the Conservative Party in its efforts to defeat James Gardiner and the Liberals. Grant, however, did not have a political agenda. The Manitoba “school issue” had been settled in 1916 when Manitoba had to accept a unilingual school system. Furthermore, the province had recently held provincial elections in 1927 culminating in a minority Progressive Party government with support from the United Farmers of Manitoba. So the wider political issues were just not available to the Klan.

Lastly, the Anglo-Saxon population of Winnipeg probably preferred the more subtle prejudices of exclusions and quotas in their institutions, businesses and clubs to the crude methods advocated by Daniel Carlyle Grant and his Ku Klux Klan.
Ku Klux Klan in Winnipeg

Notes


8. Ibid., p. 2.

9. Martin, Shades of Right, p. 16

10. Ibid., p. 16; The Isrealite Press, 27 February 1925.

11. City of Vancouver Archives, AM 1535-: CVA-1501; MFP, 19 December 1925.

12. MFP, 9 May 1928.

13. Brandon had an established Klan. Thomas Packenham, the Melville, Saskatchewan ex-police chief, lectured at a Klan meeting at the Odd Fellows Hall. He explained that the aims of the Klan were “Protestantism, loyalty to the British Empire and its ideals, morality and purity of race.” See Rivers Gazette, 19 July 1928. Other Manitoba towns with Klan klaverns were Souris, Selkirk, Virden and Norwood.


15. MFP, 2 June 1928; Israelite Press, 5 June 1928.


17. MFP, 17 October 1928; Israelite Press, 17 October 1928.

18. MFP, 17 October 1928; Regina Morning Leader, 18 October 1928; Martin Robin, Shades of Right, pp. 16–17; James H. Gray, Roar of the Twenties, Markham, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2000, p. 275.

19. MFP, 17 October 1928.

20. MFP, 17 October 1928. The Klan Creed was published in the MFP, 18 October 1928.

21. MFP, 18 October 1928; MFP, 19 October 1928; The Jewish Post, 19 October 1928; Gray, Roar of the Twenties, p. 276.


23. MFP, 9 October 1918.


26. MFP, 18 October 1928.

27. MFP, 27 October 1928.


29. MFP, 20 October 1928; La Liberte, 24 October 1928; The Israelite Press, 22 October 1928.

30. MFP, 20 October 1928; The Israelite Press, 22 October 1928.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. MFP, 24 October 1928; The Israelite Press, 26 October 1928.

34. Pitsula, Keeping Canada British, pp. 194–195; Gray, Roar of the Twenties, pp. 145–146.

35. Canadian Jewish Review, 15 June 1928; Rabbi Isserman also had a meeting with Hugh Findlay “Pat” Emmons, the Moose Jaw Klan organizer. Emmons admitted that the Klan simply “fed people ‘antis’.” Whatever we found that they could be taught to hate and fear, we fed them. We were out to get the dollars and we got them.”


37. Western Producer, 15 September 1927. One correspondent to the Western Producer newspaper describes Painter as being “led astray by a loose screw or something,” Western Producer, 29 September 1927.

38. MFP, 20 October 1928; The Israelite Press, 22 October 1928.

39. MFP, 26 October 1928.


41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. MFP, 6 November 1928, See Marshall J. Gauvin, “The Ku Klux Klan: A Power for Good or Mischief Makers,” Box 22, Folder 1, Marshall G. Gauvin Papers. Lectures, Publications, etc., 1915–1972, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

44. MFP, 12 December 1928.

45. MFP, 20 December 1928.


47. Pitsula, Keeping Canada British, p. 100.

48. MFP, 13 July 1928; MFP, 12 November 1928.

49. MFP, 20 October 1928.

50. MFP, 26 October 1928.


52. MFP, 26 October 1928.


54. Pitsula, Keeping Canada British, pp. 35–38.

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