A thank you from Klavern 66 to the voters of Dallas following their electoral victories in the July 22, 1922 Dallas County elections. Texas 100% American (Dallas), August 4, 1922. From the Microfilm Collections of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.
Political Turmoil in Dallas: The Electoral Whipping of the Dallas County Citizens League by the Ku Klux Klan, 1922

By Kevin G. Portz*

Social upheaval marked the decade after World War I in the United States. Massive numbers of immigrants arrived from southern and eastern Europe, and African Americans moved from the South to northern cities. Along with these demographic changes, new “Jazz Age” social trends seemed to celebrate drinking, looser sexual mores, and at least some racial integration. The United States of the early 1920s seemed to be in moral disarray and awash in racial and religious pluralism, a shift some of those of “original American stock” (meaning white and Protestant) considered to be unacceptable. Reaction manifested itself in immigration restrictions, Prohibition, and other guises.

One of these guises was the resurgent Ku Klux Klan. Not seen in half a century, the Klan of the 1920s became a fixture in cities across the nation, including Dallas, Texas. Hoping to return the country to “one hundred percent Americanism,” the Klan sought political influence, and in Dallas they were highly successful in gaining it. The local Klan chapter ran candi-

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*Kevin G. Portz holds a master of arts degree in history from the University of Texas at Dallas and currently serves as an adjunct professor of history at Richland College in Dallas. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in history at the University of Oklahoma in 1977 and retired in 2011 after a thirty-four-year career with the Social Security Administration. Portz would like to thank Dr. Natalie J. Ring, Associate Professor of History at UT Dallas for her wisdom and encouragement in guiding him through his research, and for her insightful editing comments. He would also like to thank Dr. Michael Wilson, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, School of Arts and Humanities at UT Dallas, for guiding him into academia, as well as the Southwestern Historical Quarterly’s anonymous reviewers and Ryan Schumacher for their critiques and suggestions.

1 André Siegfried, America Comes of Age: A French Analysis, trans. H. H. Hemming and Doris Hemming (1927; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1974). 3. Siegfried’s monograph opens with the observation that “[t]he essential characteristic of the post-war period in the United States is the nervous reaction of the original American stock against an insidious subjugation by foreign blood.”
dates for every office in the county elections of 1922 and won nearly every contest. In doing so they bested entrenched political forces that had ruled Dallas since the turn of the century.2

The strategies employed by the election’s contestants are at the heart of understanding the results. On the losing side, city fathers in the form of the Dallas County Citizens League (DCCL) assumed that traditional campaign tactics and the voice of the municipal aristocracy would be sufficient to keep voters in tow. The DCCL’s failure to engage in grassroots political organizing, while maintaining a public posture perceived by many as elitist, would prove to be a recipe for electoral disaster. On the winning side, savvy Klan operatives manipulated the press while taking advantage of the DCCL’s overconfidence and lack of strategic creativity to swing voters to their side and shock the city’s established leadership.

Dallas in the early 1920s was booming. The new Magnolia Petroleum Building at the corner of Akard and Commerce was nearing completion as the tallest building in the American South. The expanding oil industry was bringing people and money to the city. A potent mixture of commercial investment, municipal planning, and efficient governance had established Dallas as a regional economic power. At the political heart of this boom was the Dallas Citizens Association, formed in 1907 by leading bankers and real estate interests. The goal of the association was to identify men with “appropriate backgrounds” for election to key positions such as mayor and city commissioner. The association dictated the political platform these men ran on, energized public support for them, and focused its influence and financial resources on the electoral process to ensure they won.3

Vigilant in protecting their position as political kingmakers, this privileged cohort of Dallas patricians began to see the expanding influence of the Dallas Ku Klux Klan as a two-headed hydra. First, there were indications the local KKK Chapter, identified as “Klavern 66” by the national Klan office in Atlanta, was seeking entrance into the local political arena through the election of supporters into key law-enforcement positions.4

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4 The centrally controlled KKK of the early twentieth-century created multiple terms that began with the letters “kl” to identify particular officials and events. “Klavern,” followed by a numeric designation, identified individual Klan chapters and their respective meeting halls. Other terms, such as “kleagle” (a paid recruiter), “klokard” (a Klan lecturer), or “klonvocation” (a national KKK convention), typify the curious nature of this Klan nomenclature. See Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 21, 24 149; MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 89.
Second, the very presence of the Klan threatened the association’s carefully crafted image of Dallas as a “forward thinking, cosmopolitan city ripe for eastern investment capital.” The Klan’s challenge to the association’s municipal hegemony became a growing concern to its members and supporters.

The local chapter of the KKK had announced itself to the city in April 1921 with a well-publicized beating and branding of a black Hotel Adolphus elevator operator, followed six weeks later by an “awesome” evening parade. The procession began promptly at 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 21, as nearly eight hundred hooded Klansmen exited the old Majestic Theatre at Saint Paul and Main Streets in downtown Dallas. Led by an American flag and a flaming cross, the procession marched silently in single-file down Main and up Elm as police officers blocked traffic to facilitate the “weird” cavalcade. Many of the Klan marchers hoisted banners bearing provocative phrases such as “white supremacy,” “all native born,” and “degenerates go.” Among the downtown crowd of shoppers and theatergoers some applauded, most were silent, but undoubtedly all were stunned. Rapid growth in its membership rolls forced Klavern 66 to abandon its initial meeting hall on Elm Street in downtown Dallas, shifting to more capacious facilities across the Trinity River in Oak Cliff at the intersection of Tyler and Jefferson. The organization soon boasted its own local newspaper, the Texas 100% American. Though its maximum circulation of eighteen thousand was dwarfed by the unflinchingly anti-Klan Dallas Morning News (which by the 1920s reached nearly ninety thousand readers), the partisan editors of the Klan’s weekly tabloid proved quite capable of maximizing its impact.

By the spring of 1922 few if any Dallas area public officials or civic leaders had publicly condemned the increasingly outrageous actions of Klavern 66, an exception being the Dallas Morning News, which had commenced a strident reporting campaign opposing the KKK in May 1921.
voked politically dangerous accusations of sympathy for Catholics, race mixing, and a host of other “sins” from local Klansmen. Even the leaders of the vaunted Citizens Association remained quiescent. Nonetheless, indications of complicity by Dallas police and the sheriff’s office in the area’s extra-legal beatings and abductions, well documented by the *Dallas Morning News*, became increasingly difficult to ignore.\(^9\) When law-enforcement authorities’ brazen responsibility for a particularly brutal beating was excused by a Dallas jury, the elite leaders of the city determined it was time to act.

In late March 1922 the explosive issue of lawless violence and vigilante justice in Dallas reached a courtroom crescendo. Having heard reports of over sixty river-bottom whippings and floggings since the spring of 1921, the city was now captivated by the trial of police officer J. J. Crawford, who had been charged with the March 6 kidnapping and flogging of local Jewish merchant Philip J. Rothblum.\(^10\) First reported by the *Dallas Morning News* on March 8, many in Dallas assumed the assault on Rothblum was the work of the local Ku Klux Klan chapter.\(^11\) On the afternoon of Friday, March 31 Dallas learned the outcome of the trial. Despite Rothblum’s testimony that he recognized Crawford as one of eight men who “took off my vest, took my pants down and with a large whip . . . lashed me about twenty-five times,” the jury found Crawford innocent on its first ballot. Jurors apparently were swayed by Crawford’s tenuous alibi and the “colorfully expletive adjectives of odium . . . applied to Rothblum by the defense attorneys.” Crawford received a hero’s welcome from his fellow officers upon returning to the police station after the verdict was read. There were others in Dallas, influential politicians and businessmen among them, who had an entirely different reaction to the verdict; it was, they concluded, time to remind the Klan and the citizenry of Dallas who was in control.\(^12\)

Their remedy was a new organization soon to be known as the Dallas County Citizens League.\(^13\) In a time when the KKK was rapidly expanding across the country, the DCCL was probably the nation’s first formal anti-

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\(^12\) “Ex-Officer Identified by Rothblum as One of Men in Flogging Party,” *Dallas Morning News*, Mar. 31, 1922 (first quotation); “Former Policeman Is Acquitted of Assault in Flogging Case,” *Dallas Morning News*, Apr. 1, 1922 (second quotation); “Patrolman and Sergeant to Be Restored Today,” *Dallas Morning News*, Apr. 1, 1922.

\(^13\) As to the correct spelling of the league’s name, some sources place an apostrophe before the “s” in “Citizens” and some after. The league’s own stationery shows none. For purposes of this essay, the full name of the DCCL will be spelled as the league chose to do, regardless of spelling in cited sources. M. M. Crane to Dan Harston, Apr. 29, 1922, folder Apr. 13, 1922–Apr. 30, 1922, box 3N105, DCCL Correspondence, Martin McNulty Crane Papers (Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; cited hereafter as DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH).
Klan group. Organized by many of the city’s most prestigious leaders, including Mayor Sawnie Aldredge, leading Jewish financier Alex Sanger, Professor C. A. Nichols of Southern Methodist University, and Reverend Charles E. DeBow of the influential First Methodist Church of Dallas, the DCCL was committed to eliminating the Klan’s emerging political influence in the city, and its concomitant stain of backwardness, by controlling the outcome of the Dallas County elections scheduled for July 22. The DCCL’s essential strategy, similar to that which had worked in the past for the Dallas Citizens Association, was to recommend a slate of candidates willing to publicly denounce the Klan and sweep Klavern 66 from the political horizon of Dallas through electoral victory. The fruit of the DCCL’s labors, however, was stinging political defeat. Nineteen Dallas County officials were chosen by voters in the July election, and the DCCL lost every race but one. As returns poured in the night of the election, Dallas Klansmen paraded throughout the downtown area wild with enthusiasm. It was an event that would remain etched in the memory of Dallas residents for years to come. Though the outcome of the election is well documented, questions remain as to why the seemingly well-organized efforts of the DCCL failed to sway voters.

The Klan’s rise as a political force in Dallas has attracted the interest of many journalists and historians. Kenneth Jackson included Dallas

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15 Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 69.
as one of his urban case studies in his review of the Klan experience as manifested in American cities from 1915 to 1930. His work challenges assumptions that “hooded Americanism” was a primarily a rural reaction to the “homegrown evils” of the nation’s emerging urban centers. Jackson declares the success of the KKK in Dallas was typical of what occurred in other vibrant southern cities such as Houston, Atlanta, Memphis, and Knoxville; however, his narrative suggests that Klavern 66’s startling level of political achievement was, in comparison, exceptional.17 Darwin Payne’s broad review of “Big D” in the twentieth century finds a pattern of business oligarchs dominating municipal affairs through their actions as civic problem solvers. His study makes it evident their hegemony was vulnerable. Payne sees the KKK’s sudden seizure of city hall as leading to the total collapse of the influential Dallas Citizens Association, which was exacerbated by the fact that many city leaders initially supported the Klan. The elite forces of Dallas would not reestablish their dominance until the next decade with the emergence of the Citizens Charter Association, testifying to the strength of the Klan during its political command of the city.18

Michael Phillips’s more recent work focuses on race and class in historicizing the efforts of elite whites in Dallas to “form a permanent ruling structure” from the city’s inception, one that relied upon “divisiveness” to prevent any attempt at alliance between poor whites and African Americans. He posits that the initial embrace of the Klan by portions of this powerful faction reflected an assumption the local Klavern would channel the discontent of the city’s white laboring lower classes, but the elites’ support waned when they began to perceive Dallas Klansmen as “uncouth undermen.” Phillips’s nuanced study argues that the sustained ability to wield civic power in Dallas was long tied to “whiteness,” and that inclusion within that “white identity” was requisite for social advancement. This paradigm supported the exclusion of not only blacks, but Jews and Catholics as well because of their suspected “alien racial origins.” Nonetheless, according to Phillips the fluid nature of such a taxonomy whose nucleus was a “division between black and everything else” created ambiguities and opportunities for the small but visible Jewish population of Dallas. As a result, members of the Sanger family and other affluent Jewish men had

17 Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, xiv, 81. “Hooded Americanism” is drawn from the title of David Chalmers 1965 monograph *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), which was the first scholarly attempt to survey the KKK from a comprehensive, national perspective. Chalmers, according to Jackson, continued to adhere to the urban-versus-rural analysis which had dominated the subject’s historiography for decades.

18 Payne, *Big D*, 30, 105–106. This portion of Payne’s monograph draws from his article that elucidates the pitched battle waged by the *Dallas Morning News*, and the more “lively” though less influential *Dallas Dispatch* (referred to by Klavern 66 as the “nigger daily”) in opposition to the political encroachments of the KKK; Payne, “The Dallas Morning News and the Ku Klux Klan,” *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas* 9 (Spring 1997), 18, 23.
tenuously integrated themselves into the ranks of the city’s early twentieth-century elites.19

While each of these sources addresses the political battle between the Klan and the Dallas County Citizens League, they leave unanswered an important question about the July 1922 county elections. Why did the DCCL fail to achieve its goal of blocking the Dallas Klan’s emergence as a political player? Examination of the evidence indicates that the DCCL leaders’ class-based arrogance, their strict reliance on traditional campaign tactics, and their failure to engage in grassroots organizing ultimately spelled doom for the anti-Klan candidates they supported. In contrast, the unscrupulous yet undeniably clever election strategies employed by Dallas Klansmen, particularly via print media, effectively countered the well-laid plans of the DCCL. KKK operatives recognized that attacks by elite city fathers on their organization only served to increase Klan popularity among the blue-collar and laboring classes, despite evidence that the majority of those who formally joined and led the Dallas Klan chapter were middle and upper-middle class businessmen, a socio-economic condition that was typical in Klan chapters throughout the nation.20

Klavern 66 countered its opponent’s tactics by waging a savvy media campaign that branded the DCCL as a band of upper class snobs: men who were not only corrupt, but possessed a deep and decidedly un-American affinity for the Roman Catholic Church and the pope. Its vehicle for this effort, the weekly *Texas 100% American*, managed to influence undecided voters who already possessed a degree of sympathy for the ideas and policies espoused by the Klan. Comparing the campaign efforts of the two opposing sides offers two outcomes. First, it crystallizes the combined factors that led to the DCCL’s electoral failure. Second, it suggests a new level of class complexity among the Klan’s rank-and-file members and its peripheral adherents, cohorts often dismissed by historians as little more than “society’s dregs.”21

The four components of the DCCL campaign strategy provide a con-
The day after Dallas newspapers carried reports of the verdict in J. J. Crawford’s trial, banner headlines on page one of both the *Dallas Morning News* and its late edition, the *Dallas Journal*, announced that a mass meeting for “citizens who are not Klansmen” would be held the following Tuesday night. News articles listed the names of nearly four hundred individuals who had signed a petition calling for the meeting and reported that the gathering would address the recent crimes of abduction and assault that “the undersigned do not hesitate to say . . . were committed by the Ku Klux Klan.” The speed with which the petition was produced and the meeting called suggests community leaders had anticipated the Crawford verdict. The main achievement of the meeting would be to authorize the formation of the Dallas County Citizens League, which came into being the following day.

The mass meeting that occurred on April 4 is well documented in scholarship and contemporary newspapers. Convened at the ornate Beaux-Arts style city hall on Harwood Street, it was standing room only as two thousand attendees crowded inside while thousands more waited outside for their turn to hear the speakers. Headlines in the major Dallas newspapers announced five thousand citizens had attended the anti-Klan gathering and that a “County Citizens League” had been formed. Another declared that the “anti-Klan body would begin its work at once” at the urging of the enormous convocation. These proclamations provided the newly formed DCCL, as well as the citizens of Dallas, with a sense of inevitable victory for the forces gathering to smite the emerging Dallas Klan chapter. In addition, the news reports were filled with the names of Dallas-area lumi-

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naries who spoke at the mass meeting as well as those who were in support-
ive attendance. Dozens of well-known businessmen, bankers, merchants,
ministers, and politicians were willing to declare their animus towards the
KKK and determination to defeat Klan candidates at the polls. Speakers at
the mass meeting placed responsibility for the spate of Dallas lawlessness
squarely on Klavern 66 and publicly condemned members of local law-
enforcement agencies who were members of the Klan, demanding they
“take off either their badges or their robes.”25 It was strong evidence of

25 “5,000 Attend Anti-Klan Mass Meeting,” Dallas Morning News, Apr. 5, 1922 (quotation); “Anti-
the DCCL’s belief that the reputations of these respected members of Dallas’s ruling class would sufficiently influence voters to guarantee electoral victory.

This assumption ignored the ominous level of support afforded the Klan by a competing roster of esteemed Dallas professional and clerical elites. By the spring of 1922 the Klavern’s Executive Committee included attorneys, physicians, public utility magnates, and bankers such as future Dallas mayor R. L. Thornton. 26 Meanwhile, prominent pastors commanding the pulpits of Dallas’s Westminster Presbyterian Church, Forest Avenue Baptist Church, and Rosemont Christian Church found the “hand of God . . . working through the Ku Klux Klan” and said as much in Sunday sermons. 27 Nevertheless, officially inaugurated by the actions of the April mass meeting, the Dallas County Citizens League immediately established its headquarters in room four, a second floor parlor, of the venerable St. George Hotel at 1012 Main Street in downtown Dallas and went to work. 28

The Dallas Klan was quick to identify endorsements and name recognition as the central pillar of the DCCL’s campaign strategy, and it soon developed plans to counter the effect of the league’s overwhelming support from community leaders. Dallas Klansmen took note of an article on page one of the April 4 edition of the Dallas Morning News, published the morning before the mass meeting was held. It identified the meeting’s chairman, M. M. Crane, and three key speakers: Sam P. Cochran, O. B. Colquitt, and Dr. J. B. Cranfill. 29 Klan organizers also noticed the surnames belonging to each man began with the letter “C.” The result was a cleverly conceived “branding” campaign Klavern 66 used to ridicule the leaders of the DCCL while simultaneously implying they were sympathetic to, if not in fact members of, the Roman Catholic Church. Carried out through the pages of the Texas 100% American, the branding tactic, infused with anti-Catholic trappings, resonated well with reactionary voters in Dallas County.

Of the four men the Texas 100% American routinely attacked in its campaign of ridicule, only Martin McNulty Crane played a significant role in the DCCL’s activities. Sam Cochran was a successful insurance executive and known for his work as a Mason, though he is better remembered for remarrying at age eighty, his new bride barely twenty years old. 30

26 Payne, Big D, 87; Phillips, White Metropolis, 85.
27 Payne, Big D, 90 (quotation), 92.
28 DCCL stationery found throughout the Crane archival records show an address of “St. George Hotel, Room 4, Phone X 3110.” See J. G. Morrow to M. M. Crane, July 22, 1922, folder July 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH; Sam Childers, Historic Dallas Hotels (Mount Pleasant, S.C.: Arcadia, 2010), 16–17; Worley’s 1911 Directory of Greater Dallas (Dallas: Worley Printing Company, 1911), 801.
29 “Mass Meeting to Oppose Klan Will Be Held Tonight,” Dallas Morning News, Apr. 4, 1922.
Cochran’s life-size bronze statue still graces the entrance to the Scottish Rite Cathedral at the corner of Young and Harwood in Dallas. 31 Oscar B. Colquitt had been a newspaper publisher before entering Texas politics. He was elected governor in 1912 as a reformer, took a pro-German stance prior to the United States entry into World War I, and was defeated in his 1916 run for a seat in the U.S. Senate. 32 James B. Cranfill was a widely recognized Baptist minister and published theologian who ran as the national Prohibition Party candidate for vice president in the 1892 national election. 33 These men offered the league prestige through their endorsements and participation in Executive Committee meetings, but little else.

In the April 7 edition of the Klan’s weekly newspaper, the Texas 100% American, the front-page banner headline read “Anti-Klan Meeting Proves a Big Fizzle.” The article opened by declaring the “Citizens of Dallas gathered Tuesday night at the call of the clan of c c c’s to hear the death warrant of the K.K.K’s read. The c c c clan composed of Colquitt, Crane, Cranfill, and Cochran . . . have had their say.” 34 Subsequent articles in the Klan newspaper routinely pressed this “CCCC” brand, attempting to create an association between the DCCL’s leadership and negative images of money-grubbing elitists in cahoots with the pope.

In tandem with the “CCCC” branding tactic, the Klan was relentless in using the Texas 100% American to publish scurrilous news articles and cartoons that attacked the four men who initially appeared to be the leaders of the DCCL. One article printed a few weeks after the DCCL mass meeting noted “the new political organization known as the ‘Citizens League,’ formed, no doubt, behind the closed doors of the Knights of Columbus and launched at a mass meeting of a FEW PERSONS, headed by the four c’s, has about pounded itself to smithereens against the solid rock of public opinion.” 35 A political cartoon published three weeks later pictured Pope Pius XI seated on a throne while an infant labeled “Dallas News” sucks on a baby bottle connected to the pope’s left big toe. At the same time, small figures labeled “Cochran,” “Cranfill,” “Colquitt,” and “Father Crane” kiss the toes of the pope’s right foot, Crane pictured in the garb of a Catholic priest. 36 The Klan newspaper continued its libelous conversation in the front-page article of a June edition that said of Colquitt and Cranfill,

34 “Anti-Klan Meeting Proves a Big Fizzle,” Texas 100 % American (Dallas), Apr. 7, 1922.
35 “Citizens Political League Got Its Head In a Noose,” Texas 100 % American (Dallas), Apr. 21, 1922.
36 The People’s Verdict,” Texas 100 % American (Dallas), May 12, 1922.
“The ‘Col’ will ‘quit’ his unholy fight on 100 per cent Americans AS SOON as he finds that it DOES NOT pay. Nobody knows however, how DEEP his hand is in the pope’s pocket, or how LONG the spigot will run the wherewithal. It wasn’t half hard to get June Bug Cran to quit buzzin’ around.”

The public and lifelong association all these men had with various Protestant faiths only magnifies the stunning absurdity of the Klan’s accusations.38

The Klan’s strategy was twofold. First, it framed the DCCL’s executives, and by association the entire anti-Klan campaign, as not only venal but wholly indifferent to the political and economic concerns of the working-class voter. Second, it “Catholicized” the totality of the DCCL: its leaders, its members, and its positions. The strategy’s efficacy is documented in various pieces of correspondence found in the papers of George Bannerman Dealey, publisher of the Dallas Morning News. The effectiveness of the “CCCC” brand is found in an August 16, 1922, letter directed to Dealey by Graydon M. Terry of Dallas, in which he fulminated over anti-Klan articles in Dealey’s newspaper. The typed note, mailed a few weeks after the Dallas County election had ended in overwhelming victory for the Klan, was a screed of anti-Catholic vitriol with this comment written on the back: “One of the anti-Klan – a friend of mine I hope (I don’t fall out with his heart but I do pity his head) told me that he was surprised when the election went overwhelming for KKK, all because the News & CCCC (Oscar B. & M. Martin) had him believing a lot of false [information].”39 Terry’s reference to the “CCCC” indicates the Klan branding strategy was successful in fusing the leadership of the DCCL into a single image.40

The effect of Klavern 66’s stinging indictment of the DCCL and its

57 “Now Watch Little Col(quit),” Texas 100 % American (Dallas), June 2, 1922. The article’s language includes a not-so-subtle reference to Colquitt having withdrawn in March from the race for a Texas seat in the U.S. Senate, a decision Klavern 66 applauded. The remark about Cranfill is unclear, but may address his lack of participation in the DCCL campaign following the April 4 mass meeting. Regarding Klan coverage of Colquitt’s withdrawal from the Senate race, see “Colquitt Quits Race for the US Senate,” Texas 100 % American (Dallas), Mar. 9, 1922.


59 Graydon Terry to Editor, Albany News, Aug. 16, 1922, folder 317, box A6667, folder 317, George Bannerman Dealey Collection (DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas; cited hereafter as GBDC/DL/SMU).

40 Sitting beneath Terry’s letter in the Dealey Collection is a single sheet of paper used by Dealey to pass it on to Alonzo Wasson for his reading enjoyment. Dealey scribbled this remark in pencil on the sheet; “Was, this man is an illiterate ass. He admits that he bought the news for 36 years, but now condemns it utterly. He will change his mind again. GB 8/20.” Wasson was the Dallas Morning News editorial writer who independently established the anti-Klan policy of the newspaper with his editorial titled “Dallas Slandered” in its May 24, 1921, edition. See Payne, Big D, 90.
allies (especially the *Dallas Morning News*) as loyal supporters of the Catholic Church is evident in multiple pieces of correspondence received by Dealey. His archival records include dozens of letters from readers demanding to know if in fact the *Dallas Morning News* was staffed by Catholics, as routinely suggested in the weekly diatribes printed by the Klan in the *Texas 100% American*. In April 1922, J. M. Horne, principal of the school in Tolbert, Texas, wrote to the newspaper stating, “I hear the charge frequently made the *News* is a Catholic paper. I would like to know for my own personal satisfaction what the church affiliation of the owner and the staff of the *News* is. I realize that it is none of my business if you are Mormons or Mohamedans, but I would just like to know. I give you my word of honor not to use the information without your permission.”

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41 J. M. Horne to *Dallas Morning News*, Apr. 14, 1922, folder 314, box A6667, GBDC/DL/SMU.
Political cartoon suggesting local police were facilitating Klan violence in Dallas by routinely refusing to arrest the perpetrators. This illustration appeared the same day Police Officer J. J. Crawford was found not guilty of kidnapping and assaults Philip Rothblum. *Dallas Morning News, March 31, 1922.*
Others, such as C. A. Mitchell of Iredell, Texas, preferred to assume the accusations of the Klan were accurate. On June 4, 1922, he wrote the *News* stating, “Owing to the fact that I believe nothing that you publish in your sheet, I ask you to discontinue my paper and I won’t (sic) it to take affect at once. I am a 100% American and I don’t owe the pope or rome nothing.”42

Mr. J. Reynolds of Hot Springs, Arkansas, was more to the point. His letter to the *News* dated July 15, 1922, read; “Gentlemen, Please stop your rotten old Catholic sheet coming to my address. Don’t send me another copy. Respectfully, Jeff Reynolds.”43

Dealey was determined to thwart the Klan. In an editorial published May 24, 1921, his newspaper moved far ahead of most Dallas news outlets and a great deal of public opinion by characterizing Klavern 66 as a menace: “If freedom is endangered, it is by the redivivus of the mob spirit in the disfiguring garb of the Ku Klux Klan.”44 There is some evidence that Dealey became concerned over the possibility of declining subscriptions because of his newspaper’s position, though he evidently remained convinced the barrage of sensational Klan coverage in the *Dallas Morning News* would win as many readers as it lost.45 Nonetheless, the stalwart Dealey clearly felt compelled to respond to most letters he received questioning the *News*’s anti-Klan campaign, particularly those determined to discover the religious background of those who produced the newspaper. His response to J. M. Horne’s correspondence was typical of the dutiful and polite reply that eventually became something of a form letter:

Dear Mr. Horne: We are in receipt of yours of the 14th, and take pleasure in answering your inquiries. You state that you have heard that the management of the *News* is controlled by Catholics, so we call your attention to the enclosed clipping of the *News* of Sept. 15th . . . We also enclose a copy of the last statement of ownership, which the government requires us to publish every six months. In this statement you will find a list of the persons who own 1% or more of the total stock of our corporation. I cannot answer as to the religious affiliation of all these people, because I do not know, but the great bulk of ownership rests with a few people, and I will name these and their religious affiliation:

- Mrs. J. B. Peabody—Episcopalian
- Mrs. A. H. Belo—Episcopalian
- Louis Blaylock—Methodist
- G. B. Dealey—Presbyterian

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42 C. A. Mitchell to *Dallas Morning News*, June 4, 1922, folder 316, box A6667, GBDC/DL/SMU.
43 Jeff Reynolds to *Dallas Morning News*, July 15, 1922, folder 315, box A6667, GBDC/DL/SMU.
44 *Dallas Morning News*, “Dallas Slandered,” May 24, 1921. See also “Mass Meeting to Oppose Klan Will Be Held Tonight,” *Dallas Morning News*, Apr. 4, 1922.
Mrs. L. D. Beetham—Methodist
Miss Alice G. Dealey—Methodist

You might like the following information with reference to our Directors and their religious affiliation:

Mrs. J. B. Peabody—Presbyterian
Mrs. A. H. Belo—Episcopalian
G. B. Dealey—Presbyterian
C. E. Lombardi—Episcopalian
Jno. F. Lubben—Lutheran
John Sealy—Episcopalian
Tom Finty, Jr.—Don’t think he is affiliated with any church, but his folks are Christian Scientists.

We are glad to give you this information, and will be glad to answer any other proper questions you may ask . . . Yours very truly,

G. B. Dealey
President and General Manager.

The news article referenced in Dealey’s reply was a response to “several letters from readers stating that they have heard the News is owned or controlled by ‘Catholic interests,’ and asking whether this is true.” It included the first of these letters, dated September 7, 1921, from O. F. Zimmerman of Naples, Texas, in which the author asks, “Is it not a fact that the News is controlled by Catholic interests? No quibbling gentlemen; may I have a straight answer? Please do not confuse your answer by stating that you are opposed to the K.K.K. because it will destroy organized government, etc. The public is thoroughly conversant with your writings along this line.” In a postscript, Zimmerman added, “I am not a member of the K.K.K.” The remainder of the article is the standard News response to questions regarding the church connections among company staff that many other individual letter writers, including Mr. Horne, would receive in the coming months.

The centrality of anti-Catholic sentiment to the reconstituted Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s may surprise readers of not only Texas history, but American history as well. The usual association of the Klan with violence directed towards African Americans in the American South is certainly accurate with respect to the KKK in its initial incarnation following the Civil War and during the turbulent years of Reconstruction. That con-

46 G. B. Dealey to J. M. Horne, Apr. 22, 1922, folder 314, box A6667, GBDC/DL/SMU.
nection also accurately typifies its later resurrection during the passionate battles of the Civil Rights era in the 1950s and 1960s.49 But the conditions that sustained the meteoric rise of the Klan during the 1920s were more complex. The impetus for the post-World War I version of the Klan is found in the transnational collision of dense issues such as race, religion, creed, and national origin that had introduced an unprecedented degree of pluralism into early twentieth-century America, a demographic change which generated multifaceted tensions among many traditional, white, Protestant citizens. These tensions resulted in a conservative, anti-elitist world view Nancy MacLean has identified as “reactionary populism,” a perspective intensified by the diaspora of impoverished southern and eastern Europeans who immigrated to the United States during the period of 1885 to World War I. 50 Historic in its proportions, this transoceanic migration was unrestricted except for health exams at ports of entry and included millions who seemed dangerously alien to many Americans. The demographics of this tide of humanity approached a nearly complete non-Protestant status, a fact that “lowered the general social acceptability of the immigrant” in the eyes of many Americans, the overwhelming majority of whom were Protestant. 51 Many of these immigrants were adherents of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics had long been portrayed in American history as innately hierarchical people who fostered non-democratic values in perpetual thrall to papal power. 52

The reactionary responses to this influx of Catholic migrants and other perceived threats to the traditional order, including radical political movements and looser sexual mores, became the warp and woof of the emerging Klan voice and attracted a broad base of support that proved to be national rather than sectional. Unlike the post-Civil War Klan, which was strictly rooted in the states of the old Confederacy, the KKK of the 1920s, aided by a brazen injection of public relations grooming, found recruiting success in nearly every part of the United States. Dallas boasted one of the nation’s most populous Klaverns, peaking at 97,000 members (Klavern 66 leader Hiram Evans, a Dallas dentist, became the Klan’s national imperial wizard in 1922), while its greatest state-wide influence was likely found in Indiana. 53 On the Pacific coast, Klansmen in Oregon managed to per-

50 MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, xiii (quotation), 77–97.
53 MacLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, 5; Phillips, White Metropolis, 101; Pegram, One Hundred Percent American, 17–18, 189–190, 205–206.
suade the state legislature to outlaw the enrollment of school children in Catholic parochial schools, but in 1925 the law was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.54

A letter Dealey received from John D. White of Antlers, Oklahoma, dated March 29, 1922, perfectly illustrates the kind of anti-Catholicism promoted and exploited by the resurgent Klan. White had become convinced that the Dallas Morning News was controlled by the Catholic Church and implored Dealey to “be reasonable, be sane, be sensible (sic).” He reminded Dealey that “These men are doing good . . . They will continue to protect your home and mine against the virtue stealers, the slanderers and home breakers while we sleep . . . O, the ingratitude of Americans.” White then focused on those he believed are endangering the nation: “Only four classes of people are against the Klan: The Catholics, Jew, law violaters and the uniformed. Every man can pick his class by knowing which three of the four he is not.”55 But Dealey was far from alone among the DCCL elites fending off accusations of Catholic sympathies.

Martin McNulty Crane was the driving force behind the Dallas County Citizens League. As a result, he became the more frequent target of the Klan newspaper’s acid pen which routinely identified him as “Father Crane.”56 Crane was the keynote speaker at the April 4 DCCL mass meeting and served as its chairman throughout its life.57 Born in 1855 and orphaned by age five, Crane journeyed from his native West Virginia to Kentucky and then to Tennessee. By 1872 he had arrived in Johnson County, Texas. Having survived and learned from a hardscrabble childhood of poverty, he was admitted to the Texas bar in 1878 and quickly became a successful lawyer and politician. By 1884 he had become a member of the Texas legislature representing the Thirty-Sixth District. He supported the Texas Farmers Alliance during the populist revolt of the late nineteenth century and later aligned himself with various reformist factions. Crane eventually served in the Texas Senate and won statewide election as lieutenant governor and attorney general.58 His reputation and political acumen perfectly positioned him to serve as the DCCL chairman, orchestrating the league’s campaign from the confines of his private

55 John D. White to Dallas Morning News, Mar. 29, 1922, folder 313, box A6667, GBDC/DL/SMU.
56 “Father Crane’s Dilapidated Show Takes to the Woods,” Texas 100% American (Dallas), May 5, 1922.
57 “Mass Meeting to Oppose Klan Will Be Held Tonight,” Dallas Morning News, Apr. 4, 1922; “5,000 Attend Anti-Klan Meeting,” Dallas Morning News, Apr. 5, 1922.
Among the DDCL activities aimed at marginalizing the Dallas Klan Crane directed were public-speaking opportunities. Crane and his colleagues assumed prominent speakers would not only influence voters to back anti-Klan candidates, but as prestigious community figures, they would be welcomed wherever they appeared. Plans for DCCL speeches denouncing the Klan were made in venues throughout the county. How-

59 The Martin McNulty Crane Papers contain multiple pieces of correspondence directed to Crane that show the location of his personal office in the Western Indemnity Building. For example, see Murphy W. Townsend to M. M. Crane, Apr. 13, 1922, folder April 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH. For the street location of the building, see “Dallas Will Have New National Bank,” Dallas Morning News, Aug. 26, 1922.
ever, the controversy over league plans to speak in Garland, Lancaster, and Mesquite indicates the DCCL misjudged the situation. In doing so, the league handed the Klan another opportunity to heap ridicule on its efforts through stories in the *Texas 100% American*. On May 11, the *Dallas Morning News* carried a small article reporting the DCCL had scheduled speaking engagements to be held in Garland, Lancaster, and Mesquite the following Saturday.\(^60\) No doubt catching the DCCL off guard, a furor immediately erupted over these plans. Crane received a petition signed by several citizens of Mesquite, the first signature belonging to the mayor, which read:

> We the undersigned citizens of Mesquite, without regards to affiliation as members of the Anti-Klan organization, or as members of the Ku Klux Klan organization, or as sympathizing for one or the other, respectfully request that your organization hold no Anti-Klan meeting in our City on Saturday, May 13th or at any other date and in the event this issue does arise that you permit us to settle this matter for ourselves and among ourselves.\(^61\)

According to an article in the Klan newspaper, Crane received a similar petition from Garland citizens.\(^62\) Seeking to avoid conflict, a hasty meeting of the DCCL leadership was called, after which Crane announced the speaking engagements would be postponed. In a telegram sent to the editor of the *Garland News*, Crane wrote, “In deference to your views and that of other friends, we will postpone our appointment for speaking at Garland.”\(^63\)

Eventually the DCCL decided that canceling the speaking engagements was a mistake and rescheduled them for the next Saturday. Concluding that to do otherwise would only strengthen the Klan’s chances for electoral success, a DCCL spokesperson announced “no further attention will be paid to petitions asking that meetings be called off.”\(^64\) On May 20, the speeches were delivered as planned but the commotion over them would not subside. A scathing letter-to-the editor critical of the DCCL appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* while the *Texas 100% American* blasted the league with a front page-story accusing it of “insulting” the entire city of Lancaster.\(^65\) Crane’s records contain a hyperbolic letter from T. A. Hope,


\(^{61}\) Citizens of Mesquite to M. M. Crane, undated, folder May 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.

\(^{62}\) “Garland Citizens Opposed Anti-Klan Demonstration,” *Texas 100% American* (Dallas), May 19, 1922.

\(^{63}\) M. M. Crane to Will Hallford, May 13, 1922, folder May 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.

\(^{64}\) “Give Schedule of Anti-Klan Meets,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 18, 1922.

\(^{65}\) “Lancaster Looks After Its Own,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 27, 1922; “The ‘Cits’ Insult Lan-
concerned that “You are doing a great deal of harping about the people of Lancaster objecting to you sending a bunch of speakers out there to discuss the Klux Klan. You charge them with obstructing ‘free speech.’ Now are they as free as you? Haven’t they as much right to refuse to listen to you as you have to make speeches?” The resistance to the speaking engagements illustrates how one of the essential pieces of DCCL strategy that should have been easy to organize, public speaking opportunities, turned into a public-relations nightmare. The disruptions that arose as the speaking events were organized made it easy for the common citizen to view the DCCL as a coterie of arrogant patricians, having made broad assumptions their remarks would be welcomed anywhere they chose to speak.

As analysis of the historical sources begins to give substance to the nature of the DCCL campaign, a broader consideration of Crane’s archival letters provides an important insight into his perception of his role as the DCCL chairman. For the period April through July 1922, the collection contains 153 unsolicited letters relating to the DCCL. Of those, 138 praised the DCCL. They offered cash donations, urged Crane to run for the U.S. Senate, requested anti-Klan literature, offered advice for defeating the Klan, or requested speakers for venues outside of Dallas County. The remaining fifteen letters expressed sentiments ranging from mild support for the Klan to rabid hatred of Catholics, Jews, and blacks. Crane responded to nearly all of them in professional, typewritten business letters. Some of his replies were short, but many of them spanned multiple pages providing substantive political, religious, and philosophical commentary. This was true whether he was in accord with the author or not. When Crane did disagree, he was particularly verbose. His prose suggests he believed he could draw the other mind to his side through the power of his words and reasoning. For example, after Crane received the previously mentioned letter from Mr. Hope concerning DCCL speeches in Lancaster, he proceeded to wage a war of correspondence with the man in an exchange of three more letters over the right of free speech and the true nature of Jews and Catholics.

The time and effort Crane put into this portion of his responsibilities as chairman of the DCCL indicates he saw great value in doing so. Per-
caster Citizenship,” Texas 100% American (Dallas), May 26, 1922. “Cits” was the widely recognized nickname for the Dallas Citizens Association created in 1907. By conflating the DCA and the DCCL in this headline, Klan newspaper editors created another way in which they could suggest the league was a tool of the wealthy elite of Dallas. See Payne, Bid D, 14.

66 T. A. Hope to M. M. Crane, May 23, 1922, folder May 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBC AH.

67 Various letters, folders April through July 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBC AH.

68 T. A. Hope to M. M. Crane and M. M. Crane to T. A. Hope, various letters folders, May through June 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBC AH.
haps not to have replied fully to each piece of correspondence would have breached the professional etiquette of the time; yet, it is hard to imagine this preoccupation added one vote to the DCCL column in the upcoming elections. The combined evidence suggests an organization whose leader was consumed with form over process: behavior suitable for a business magnate, but hardly germane to the job of a political strategist. It also conjures a vision, albeit one anchored in hindsight, of Chairman Crane awkwardly guiding the Dallas County Citizens League toward political defeat. Of course, the written word has an undeniable power to influence, and the DCCL as an organization embraced that concept by producing what it hoped would be a game-changing publication.

What was expected to be the most important portion of the DCCL’s campaign involved the creation of a pamphlet for distribution. The publication, titled *The Case against the Ku Klux Klan*, was a slick, sixteen-page production and likely seen by DCCL executives as the hammer by which they would crush the political aspirations of Klavern 66. Its cover suggests they were sold to cover the costs of printing (“Three cents per copy; two dollars per hundred; fifteen dollars per thousand”), though donations from wealthy supporters presumably funded the project. Professional in appearance and scholarly in approach, the pamphlet presented well-crafted arguments weaving together every possible basis for rejecting the influence of the KKK in all spheres of private and public life. It opened by quoting sections of the Texas State Constitution, which the DCCL claimed were violated by Klan principles. The remainder of the document is divided into eight chapters, their focus ranging from the dangers of the Klan’s secrecy oaths to violence, the treatment of women, propaganda, the “gutter press,” politics, boycotts, and a final section of pronouncements from noted politicians as well as secular and religious organizations condemning the Klan.69 Fifty thousand copies were printed and released to the public sometime in June. According to newspaper reports, one copy was sent to every registered voter in Dallas County.70 The level of gravity attached to the pamphlet by DCCL executives is reflected in a letter sent to Crane by the league’s assistant secretary and former president of the Dallas Chapter of the American Institute of Banking, J. G. Morrow.71 The letter urges Crane to attend the upcoming DCCL Executive Committee meeting at which the final version of the pamphlet was to be approved for printing. The letter comments, “this is one of the most important pieces

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69 Dallas County Citizens League, *The Case Against the Ku Klux Klan*, June 1922 (Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Special Collections and Archives, Southern Methodist University, Dallas).
of literature that will be gotten out of this Committee, and you are therefore urgently requested to be present at the meeting Monday evening.”\(^{72}\)

Sound reasoning characterizes *The Case against the Ku Klux Klan*. Despite its cogent arguments, however, it is difficult to imagine the pamphlet swaying the common voter. In fact, its bully-pulpit tone, length, and lofty language very likely intimidated or bored many recipients. It could be argued that the publication in fact embodied the sense of elitist privilege and entitlement that Klavern 66 was trying to attach to the DCCL through its newspaper articles and various campaign activities. One can imagine Dallas County voters finding the document in their mail and placing it on a bookcase for later consideration, only to be forgotten. After its release in June, there was little mention of the pamphlet in the press or in Crane’s letters, aside from a few requests for copies.\(^{73}\) It appears that the heralded DCCL pamphlet came and went; it could not compete with the outpouring of propaganda from the KKK and ultimately had a negligible impact on the overall campaign.

The fourth segment of the DCCL’s campaign strategy involved an attempt to expose public officials and candidates for office who were either Klan members or embraced Klan ideology by use of a questionnaire. This was the league’s “most aggressive gambit in attempting to limit Klan involvement in local politics.”\(^{74}\) The questionnaire was developed soon after the DCCL formed in April and subsequently mailed out to area politicians. Its preface states the “undersigned have been empowered and instructed by the mass meeting of Dallas County citizens to make inquiries of office-holders and candidates . . . regarding their affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan, or their approval of, or sympathies with, the purpose and activities of such order.”\(^{75}\) Included were nine questions that addressed different angles of potential support for the Klan. Inquiries about membership, planned membership, or sympathy with the Klan as well as an affinity for masks and secret oaths no doubt generated a feeling of inquisition when read by some recipients. The questionnaires directed the candidates to forward their replies to Crane and bore his original signature. The *Dallas Morning News* assisted the DCCL in its efforts to unmask politicians with Klan sympathies by routinely printing the remarks included in individual questionnaire responses in its daily editions.\(^{76}\) And though many recipi-
ents of the questionnaire did reply, some of the responses may not have been what Crane and his colleagues expected.

There are nineteen replies to these solicitations in Crane’s archives. Nearly half reflect dutiful responses that leave no doubt about the senders’ firm anti-Klan position. But the majority of them are letters that either refuse to respond to the questions for reasons of impartiality, or indignantly reject the DCCL’s right to pose the questions. John Davis, a Dallas attorney, wrote to Crane that as a public official for several years, he had “uniformly declined to make reply” to questionnaires such as the one forwarded by the league, and that he assumed “the Ku Klux Klan may also issue a list of questions and forward a copy to me. If they do, I shall respectfully refuse to answer them.” Crane wrote back to Davis telling him “you are wrong. Do you believe we should be governed by the law, or by the mob? My dear friend, you should not hesitate to answer these questions.” With a hint of threat, Crane added “I am withholding your letter from publication, hoping that you will take a different view of it.” A few days later, an agitated Davis replied to Crane, stating “if my life of twenty five years in the city and county of Dallas does not enable you and others interested to know where to place me in matters of this kind, then I have lived and toiled in vain.” This time Crane did not reply.77

An even more compelling reply came from Louis Blaylock. In the summer of 1922 Blaylock was serving as the commissioner of finance and revenue for the city of Dallas. A Dallas Morning News stockholder, he would be elected mayor in the 1923 city elections, aided by his consistent position of shrewd political ambivalence toward Klavern 66, neither embracing it nor condemning it.78 Blaylock wrote to Crane “I am amenable to all the people of Dallas . . . not a fractional part thereof. I am governed by my oath of office and the best service I can render the City. I could assign many reasons for refusing to answer a questionnaire from any source, but deem this sufficient.” Crane shot back “I admit that you are within your legal rights to refuse to answer. But I do not admit that 7,000 of your constituents were impertinent because they dared to ask you a question as to whether you took the same view of the Ku Klux Klan that they did . . . This letter needs no answer, and I expect none.”79

There is one reply to the questionnaires in the Crane archives that stands out for its humor. J. H. Webster, an aging Dallas real estate mogul and candidate for justice of the peace, promptly sent his completed questionnaire back to Crane. Even though he had been “a ‘KKK’ fighting for

77 J. Davis to M. M. Crane, Apr. 15, 1922 (first and second quotations); M. M. Crane to J. Davis, Apr. 15, 1922 (third and fourth quotations); J. Davis to M. M. Crane, Apr. 17, 1922 (fifth quotation), folder April 1922, box 3N105, DCCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.
78 G. B. Dealey to J. M. Horne, April 22, 1922, folder 314, box A6667, GBDC/DL/SMU; Payne, 119.
79 L. Blaylock to M. M. Crane, Apr. 24, 1922 (first quotation); M. M. Crane to L. Blaylock, undated (second quotation), folder April 1922, box 3N105, DCCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.
the rights of the South (though only a boy) in Mississippi and Tennessee, just after the Civil War,” his responses confirmed a pro-DCCL stance.\(^80\)

Webster’s answer to question four evokes his sense of humor. The question asked “Have you a demit from the organization known as the Ku Klux Klan?” The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “demit” as an archaic verb meaning to relinquish or lay down an office, chiefly used by early-modern Scottish writers.\(^81\) Apparently the DCCL wanted to know if a candidate was now, or had ever been a member of the Klan. It was an inquiry that foreshadowed the McCarthy-era demands of the House Un-American Activities Committee (“Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?”).\(^82\) This inquiry, likely disconcerting to some recipients of the questionnaires, must have struck Webster as odd, and lacking a dictionary he may not have known what the word “demit” meant. His response reads “I have no demit, permit, or any other kind of ‘mit.’” One can only guess how Chairman Crane might have reacted to this bit of levity upon its deposit into his in-basket during the frenetic days of the county election campaign. Webster’s reply to question four was paraphrased into language more befitting the seriousness of the issue when it appeared in the *News*: “I have never belonged to the Ku Klux Klan.”\(^83\)

Ultimately, the questionnaire failed in its mission of forcing pro-Klan candidates to declare themselves. Politicians open to Klan support simply refused to respond, as did many candidates who were not supportive of Klavern 66, but found the questions intrusive. The local press took note of the initiative’s course in its news coverage of the ongoing campaign. An angry *Dallas Morning News* editorial claimed Blaylock’s refusal to respond to the questionnaire was proof “he cannot be depended upon to oppose . . . the mob influences growing out of . . . the Klan’s existence . . . in Dallas County.”\(^84\) As with most aspects of DCCL strategy, the *Texas 100% American* found ways to turn the questionnaire issue to the Klan’s advantage. It published alternative questions more suited to the “best interests of the . . . American people” in stinging rebukes to the DCCL’s project. The Klan newspaper’s suggestion that candidates be asked about their membership in, acquaintance with, or intentions to join the Knights of Columbus mimicked the structure of the DCCL questionnaire and likely drew the approbation of many readers.\(^85\) The fate of the DCCL question-


\(^81\) *Oxford English Dictionary*, compact ed., seventeenth printing, s.v. “demit.”


\(^84\) “Mr. Blaylock Answers,” *Dallas Morning News*, Apr. 26, 1922.

\(^85\) “The Texas American Makes a Suggestion,” *Texas 100% American* (Dallas), Mar. 31, 1922;
naire followed a trajectory similar to that of its public speeches. Initially, it seemed a simple yet powerful way to influence the decision of voters. Instead, it evolved into a divisive measure, easily evaded by candidates who in fact supported the Klan and angering those who wished to stay above the fray. The scheme, as with others initiated by the DCCL, impaired its efforts to win votes by heightening the perception of the league as highbrow and presumptuous, even among those who were in actual sympathy with their cause.

As the July 22 election approached, Crane and the Dallas County Citizens League remained confident of victory, incredulous that voters could reject their traditional appeals. Not only did they publish the final slate of DCCL supported candidates in the *Dallas Morning News* based upon responses to the anti-Klan questionnaires they eventually received, the league also hosted a final mass meeting in the new Majestic Theatre on Elm at which the list of approved candidates was publicly declared and celebrated. Ominously, only twelve to fifteen hundred were in the audience, less than one quarter of those who had attended the initial and more boisterous DCCL mass assemblage back in April.86

On the day of the election, Crane received an invitation to the final meeting of the DCCL executive committee. “We hope that the necessity for this organization will end today” the assistant secretary wrote. He clarified the meeting on July 24 would be “for the purpose of officially ending the labors of the organization.”87 Indeed, the election results led to the league’s demise, but not for the reasons Crane envisioned. Only questions and recriminations would remain to fill the agenda of the DCCL’s post-election gathering. The correspondence generated after the election found in Crane’s archives is weighted with a sense of chastened disbelief among those who participated in the failed campaign.88 According to Darwin Payne, “the Klan’s victory spelled an effective end to the Citizens League’s efforts against it.”89 Of the eighteen races in the Klan’s win column, the most significant was Shelby Cox’s conquest of incumbent District Attorney Maury Hughes, Hughes having vigorously investigated the

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86 “The Paramount Issue,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1922; “Speakers Score Klan and Urge Citizens to Act,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 22, 1922. Klavern 66 was more aggressive in this regard. They published the Klan slate of candidates in the *Texas 100% American* and printed an extra thirty thousand copies for distribution to remind voters how they should cast their ballot. See “If Your Colors Are True Blue Then Show Them,” *Texas 100% American* (Dallas), June 30, 1922; See Morris, “Saving Society through Politics,” 153.

87 J. G. Morrow to M. M. Crane, July 22, 1922, folder July 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.

88 Nester Morrow to M. M. Crane, July 24, 1922; W. F. Kelley to M. M. Crane, July 24, 1922; Jessie Daniel Ames to M. M. Crane, July 27, 1922; M. M. Crane to Jessie Daniel Ames, July 29, 1922; folder July 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.

89 Payne, *Big D*, 100.
As the July 22 Dallas County elections approached, readers of the Klan's Dallas newspaper were reminded that Klavern 66 was raising the Dallas County Citizens League out of the "pit of the misinformed." This political cartoon draws heavily upon a familiar image created during the Progressive era characterizing President Theodore Roosevelt as a "muckraker." A comparison of the two suggests KKK operatives enlisted an intriguing variety of propaganda tools to frame the Klan as an engine of social and governmental reform in their pursuit of electoral success. *Utica Saturday Globe*, circa 1906; License for use of image granted by Corbis Images. *Texas 100% American* (Dallas), July 7, 1922; From the Microfilm Collections of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.
earlier whippings. Late on election night, as the magnitude of the Klan victory crystallized, a frenzied parade of Klansmen snaked through downtown Dallas, one of the speakers declaring “the Dallas News [has] been asking for an unmasked parade. Well [we] have staged one tonight!”

Norman Brown quotes sources that characterized the election as “probably the most decisive victory ever achieved by any party or political or quasi-political organization in the history of Dallas County.”

A final consideration of the factors leading to the DCCL’s overwhelming electoral defeat may best be considered through the lens of a letter Crane received early in the canvass from a Dallas attorney declining an invitation to serve on the DCCL Advisory Committee. The author was Murphy W. Townsend, a well-placed lawyer, financier, and socialite whose name can be found throughout the financial and society pages of the *Dallas Morning News* during the early 1920s. In his correspondence, Townsend explained to Crane that after due reflection, he must decline the invitation to join the league as an advisor, hoping to document his decision in writing “so that there may not be any possibility of my position being misunderstood.” Townsend made it clear he opposed the Ku Klux Klan and that “all lawful means should be adopted to destroy it.” But it is the final paragraph of Townsend’s declination that is so intriguing: “I believe however that the methods and policies adopted by the League are more likely to strengthen the Klan and increase its membership than they are to weaken it or bring about its dissolution. For this reason and for this reason alone, I shall decline to become a member of the League.” Sadly, this is one of the few letters in Martin Crane’s archives lacking a response; hence, we are left to ponder what Crane made of this input. Regardless, it is evident that Townsend had taken note of the emerging DCCL campaign strategy and perhaps the respondent vitriol beginning to spew forth from Dallas’s Klan tabloid. Townsend apparently concluded that flawed logic underlay the strategies adopted by Crane and his colleagues. He might have perceived that the DCCL was too dependent on the voice and influence of the traditional Dallas power structure and was being led by a cadre of aging patricians insensitive to the concerns of the common citizen. Possibly Townsend surmised that a mountain of endorsements supplemented only by staid campaign tactics would do little to prevent voters from being influenced by the barrage of Klan propaganda that was manifest not just

90 Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City*, 73–74.
94 Murphy W. Townsend to M. M. Crane, Apr. 13, 1922, folder April 1922, box 3N105, DCCLC/MMCP/DBCAH.
in Dallas, but throughout the nation. Or was it Townsend’s failure to note any sort of substantive plans to make personal, grassroots contact with voters on behalf of the candidates they supported that convinced this sophisticated civic leader that the DCCL canvass was doomed?

The issue of voter contact may indeed have been the root cause of the league’s failure. Though the DCCL had spent time, money, and energy on a campaign that valorized speeches, endorsements, and questionnaires, it had engaged in a paucity of grassroots activity. Mailing a copy of its glossy pamphlet, The Case against the Ku Klux Klan, to voters was the closest the league came to one-on-one contact with them. In contrast, Klavern 66 had developed a political machine by cross checking poll tax lists with Klan membership lists to establish a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary in each precinct of Dallas County outside of the regular Democratic Party organization. These individuals then recruited additional like-minded campaign workers who were encouraged to “beat the bushes [and] spread propaganda.”

It is also possible that Townsend, likely an informed citizen and daily consumer of the news, declined to join the DCCL advisory committee because he sensed the rapidly changing face of American communities in the aftermath of World War I, and the implications that had for the political sentiments of the working- and middle-class voters of Dallas County. The trends ensured that “the Klan was not so easily defeated. It had found a niche in the population of Dallas who were concerned with the cultural changes facing the nation and perceived that some of these problems existed in Dallas.” Economic, social, and cultural concerns involving ethnic and religious pluralism and immigration, manifested themselves throughout the United States in this period, and there is no reason to think Dallas was immune.

These factors, however, provide only a partial explanation for the DCCL’s defeat in the 1922 Dallas County elections. The Klan used the Texas 100 % American effectively to brand the league as a bunch of out-of-touch elitists complicit in promoting Catholicism. The DCCL never effectively countered the emotional appeal of the Klan’s rhetoric. Mass meetings, speaking engagements, The Case against the Ku Klux Klan, personal correspondence, and the support of the Dallas Morning News all failed to win over enough voters. Moreover, a questionnaire designed to demonstrate widespread support for the DCCL’s campaign against the Klan among Dallas leaders seems to have backfired by offending and confusing potential supporters. While the Klan’s dominance did not last, the rhetorical strategies it employed in the period leading up to the 1922 election gave it the decisive edge against its well-heeled opponents.

96 Ibid., 110.
97 McLean, Behind the Mask of Chivalry, 3–52; McVeigh, The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1–19; Pegram, One Hundred Percent American, 3–21.