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- The following presentation contains potentially disturbing images and text
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**HUAC vs. the
“Greenville Benevolent
Association:”
Investigating the Klan
in Eastern North
Carolina, 1965-66**

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October 15, 2020

KKK rally in Greenville, NC, October 1965. Source: Daily Reflector Image Collection (<http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/3690>)

Contents

- Federal Documents as Primary Sources
- The KKK in North Carolina
- House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)
- The Investigation
- The “Greenville Benevolent Association”
- Conclusion
- Sources

Federal Documents as Primary Sources

- Often overlooked as a potential source
- Perceived lack of relevance
- Lack of familiarity/esoteric quality
- Intimidation factor
- Add broader perspective to state/local history

Federal Documents as Primary Sources

- HUAC investigations related to North Carolina offer a case study in how federal docs might be relevant to state/local history
- HUAC's 1965-66 investigation of the KKK is the only one to involve Greenville and Pitt County

The Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina



Source: <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/23542>

The KKK in North Carolina

- First iteration: 1868-72
- Second iteration: 1920s
- 1950-52: Active in SE
- Revitalized by Brown v. Board
- 1958: Maxton incident
- KKK appeared moribund in NC by 1960

The KKK in North Carolina

- 1961: Founding of United Klans of America (UKA)
- 1963: UKA comes to North Carolina
- Bob Jones (pictured) as Grand Dragon
- Grew rapidly: est. 12,000 UKA members in NC by 1965, more than all other states combined
- Greenville “klavern” organized in late 1964

Source:

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/klansville-gallery/>



The KKK in North Carolina

- Strongest in eastern NC
- Mass political organization
- Less violent than in other states
 - New Bern bombings
 - Plymouth incidents
 - Numerous acts of intimidation



Source:
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/klansville-gallery>

The KKK in North Carolina

- Preservation of white supremacy/bitter resistance to integration
 - Neglected by “establishment”
- Lower/lower-middle-class white identity politics
 - “Whiteness”
 - Christianity
 - Enforcement of traditional social/racial norms
- Civic/fraternal functions
 - Insurance/charity/social events

The KKK in North Carolina

“The Catholics have their Knights of Columbus, the Jews have their B’nai B’rith, the Negroes have the NAACP and we have the Ku Klux Klan.”

- Bob Jones, November 1963

Source: Cunningham, David. *Klansville USA: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 44.

The KKK in North Carolina

- “How did you happen to become a member of the Realm of North Carolina UKA ?
- I was at a rally that was held in Farmville and I obtained an application card there and filled it out and handed it in to the Klavern.
- Mr. Williams, why did you join the United Klans of America ?
- In the speeches that was made at the rally, the Klan was out for politician reasons, you know—men in office work to get the color and all out of the schools and kind of work to—get the colored out of the schools and keep the races from mixing and kind of hold down the colored from mixing in the South.”

(Testimony of George Leonard Williams. January 28, 1966. *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations in the United States, Part 3, 1965-66*, p. 2868)

The KKK in North Carolina

Source:

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/american-experience/features/klansville-gallery/>

UNITED KLANS OF AMERICA, INC.

Will Present a Program

SAT. MAY 15 *1965*

8:00 P. M. - DUNN, N. C.

Hwy. 421 West of Dunn, N. C. on Bypass

COME HEAR THE TRUTH

THE WHITE PUBLIC ONLY!

The Grand Dragon of North Carolina and
Other Good Speakers

AUTHORIZED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS THE UNITED KLANS OF AMERICA, INC.
National Office: Suite 401 Alton Bldg. Tallahassee, Alabama
N. C. Office: Box 321 Granite Quarry, N. C.

—

The KKK in North Carolina

UNITED KLANS OF AMERICA, INC.

Will Present a Program

SAT. JUNE 26 *1965*

8:00 P. M.

U.S. Hwy. 64 West at APEX, N. C.

STREET WALKING IN RALEIGH at 4:30

COME HEAR THE TRUTH

THE WHITE PUBLIC ONLY!

The Grand Dragon of North Carolina and
Other Good Speakers

AUTHORIZED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS THE UNITED KLANS OF AMERICA, INC.

National Office: Suite 401 Alston Bldg. Tuscaloosa, Alabama

N. C. Office: Box 321 Granite Quarry, N. C.

Source:


[https://davidcecelski.com/2017/09/13/
the-klan-last-time-part-3-hot-dogs-and-
cake-raffles/](https://davidcecelski.com/2017/09/13/the-klan-last-time-part-3-hot-dogs-and-cake-raffles/)



House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

Source: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/hec.25582/>

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

- Created as a special committee to investigate Nazi propaganda in 1934-5
 - Re-established in 1938; continued through 1944
 - Became a permanent standing committee from 1945-1968
 - Name changed to House Internal Security Committee in 1969
 - Disbanded in 1975
- 

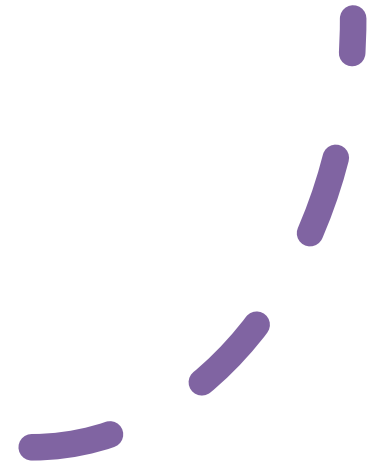
House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

- HUAC was prompted to investigate the UKA by Viola Liuzzo murder: March 1965
- Rep. Charles Weltner (D-GA) driving force
- HUAC investigation opposed by most civil rights activists
 - Suspicion of committee
 - Fear they would be targeted

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House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

- This was NOT the first congressional investigation of the KKK:
 - 1871-72
 - 1921
 - 1940





HUAC Investigates the Klan

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/klansville-gallery/>

HUAC Investigates the Klan

- HUAC opened its investigation of the klan in October 1965
- 37 days of hearings; nearly 200 witnesses
- Ended in February 1966
- Final report in December 1967
- Investigation revealed that NC had more UKA chapters (“Klaverns”) than any other state (112)
 - Majority in eastern NC

HUAC Investigates the Klan

- Pitt County had seven klaverns:
 - Benevolent Association No. 53 (Greenville)
 - Ogden Christian Fellowship Club No. 53 (Greenville)
 - The Benevolent Association (Winterville)
 - Pitt County Improvement Association No. 37 (Farmville)
 - Ayden Christian Fellowship Club (Ayden)
 - Grifton Christian Society (Grifton)
 - Fountain Klavern (cover name not given)
- Every county bordering Pitt had at least one klavern
- Lenoir County had five

HUAC Investigates the Klan

- Several witnesses from in and around Pitt County testified before HUAC regarding the KKK:
 - James Huey “Sonny” Fisher (Farmville)
 - KKK Official
 - Rev. J. H. Crum (Raleigh)
 - Threatened at Farmville cross-burning
 - James G. DuBois (Goldsboro):
 - KKK official who resigned on witness stand

HUAC Investigates the Klan

- “I respectfully decline to deliver to the committee any and all documents and records as demanded by the committee in a subpoena(sic) dated October 21, 1965, for the reason that I honestly feel that to do so, the same might tend to incriminate me in violation of my right as guaranteed to me by amendments 5, 1, 4, and 14 of the Constitution of the United States of America.

- (Testimony of James Huey (Sonny) Fisher. October 22, 1965. *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations in the United States, Part 1*, 1965, p. 1870)

- Source: <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/8603>



HUAC Investigates the Klan

- **“Mr. Appell.** Were you in Farmville, North Carolina, on September the 26th of 1964?
- **Mr. Crum.** Yes, I was.
- **Mr. Appell.** Reverend, did you attend an open public meeting of the Ku Klux Klan in Farmville, North Carolina, on September 26, 1964?
- **Mr. Crum.** Yes, I did.....I went, sir, with my wife and with the Reverend W. S, Taylor, Jr., and with Father Gordon Kendall. We drove out to the site of the rally, just outside Farmville, at the intersection of Highway 264-A and Highway 264.”

(Testimony of John (Jack) Hammond Crum. October 22, 1965. *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations in the United States, Part 1*, 1965, p. 1820)

HUAC Investigates the Klan

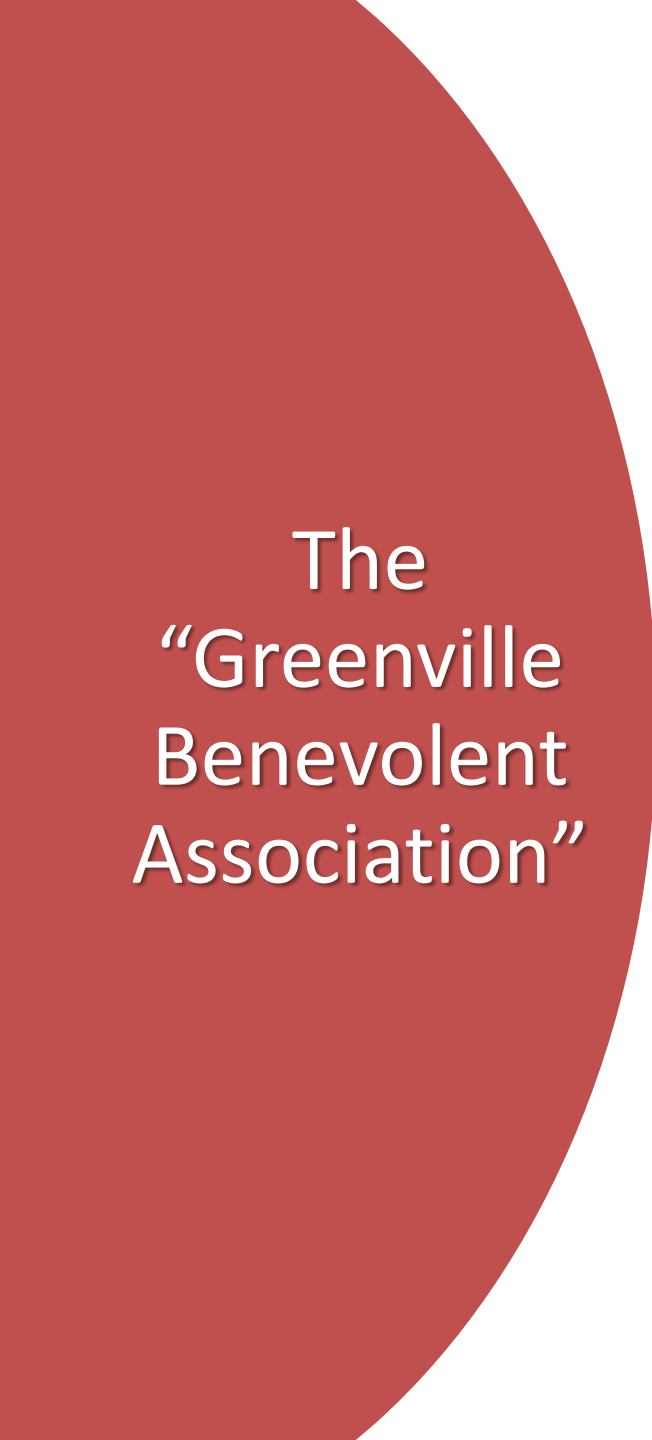
- “At this time, under the circumstances of the fifth amendment that the people have been taking on this, I would like to resign as a Klan member, and as treasurer of my local unit, and I have the people—I have nothing against my people of the unit. They are garden variety Americans. As far as I know, there is nothing subversive in it. I have found nothing subversive in it, and if it is found to be subversive, I have already resigned, but I hope that is no reflection on it as being subversive, because I have seen nothing.”

(Testimony of Joseph G. DuBois. October 22, 1965. *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations in the United States, Part 1*, 1965, p. 1833)


The “Greenville Benevolent Association”

- Source:
<http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/8603>



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The “Greenville Benevolent Association”

- Cover name for the Greenville Klavern of the UKA
 - Also known as the “Pitt County Christian Fellowship Association”
 - About 40 active members (340 on the books)
 - Leaders included Charlie Edwards (Police chief of Grimesland)
- 
- A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several purple, curved, brush-stroke-like shapes arranged in a partial arc.

The “Greenville Benevolent Association”

- George Leonard Williams (Greenville) was the most damaging anti-klan witness
- Joined July 28, 1965
- Member of Greenville and Pactolus klaverns
- Shot in Plymouth incident (8/31/65)
- Ordered to beat up Mayor of Vanceboro
- Left klan in November 1965
- Testified 1/28/66

The “Greenville Benevolent Association”

- “I don't know for sure why, but I was at a cafe on Friday night, tonight a week ago, and it was brought out that Harry Ferguson was at a Good Neighbor Council, **East Carolina College**, and the chief of police recognized him, and after the chief made his speech he said, ‘I see we have one of our Klan leaders here.’ He said, “Maybe he would like to say a few words.”
- And he said, Ferguson said, “He had never been a leader of anything but a mule.”

(Testimony of George Leonard Williams. January 28, 1966. *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations in the United States, Part 3, 1965-66*, p. 2888)

Conclusion

- The negative publicity generated by Klan hearings provoked NC authorities into cracking down on the organization
- One of several factors in UKA decline
 - Legal fees/contempt cases
 - Corruption allegations
 - FBI COINTELPRO
 - Defeat of official segregation
 - African-American resistance

Conclusion

- Membership declined 50% by summer 1966
- 4,300 NC UKA members by early 1967
- Less than 1,000 active by Spring 1968
- The UKA was a non-factor by the end of the 1960s

Sources

- *Activities of Ku Klux Klan Organizations in the United States, 1965-66, 6 v. (SuDoc no: Y 4.Un 1/2: K 95/)*
 - Pts. 1 and 3 contain information on the Klan in NC
- *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement. Report by the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Ninetieth Congress, First Session. December 11, 1967. (SuDoc no: Y 1.1/7: 90-377; also Joyner NC Stacks: HS2330 .K63 A56)*

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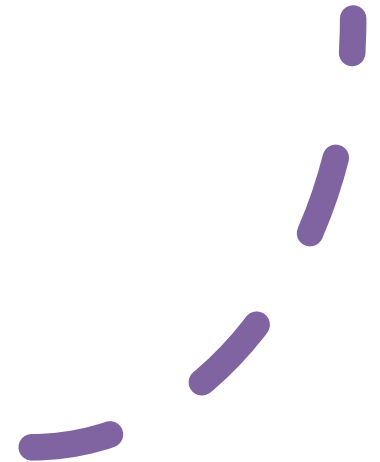
- Cunningham, David. *Klansville USA: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. (Joyner NC Stacks HS2330 .K63 C75 2013)
- Goodman, Walter. *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968. (Joyner Stacks E743.5 .G64)
- Wade, Wyn Craig. *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987. (Joyner Stacks: HS2330.K63 W33 1987)

Sources

- Klansville, USA website:
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/klansville/>
- David Cecelski Blog:
<https://davidcecelski.com/category/the-klan-last-time/>

CWIS Blog & LibGuide

- Blog:
<http://blog.ecu.edu/sites/cwis/>
- LibGuide:
<http://libguides.ecu.edu/cwis>



Questions?



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