

Steel Valley Klan: the Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley

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fair in his assessments of both Riley's strengths and weaknesses. The author suggests that William Bell Riley's impact extended far beyond his revival crusades, his numerous books, and his pulpit oratory at First Baptist Church in Minneapolis. In addition, Riley helped create an "empire" of conservative evangelical Protestantism that extended throughout the upper Midwest. His legacy may be clearly seen even today.

Steel Valley Klan: The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley, by William D. Jenkins. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1990. 222 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$27.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JUDITH SEALANDER, WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

In this useful case study, William Jenkins enters the scholarly debate about the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the 1920s. Jenkins, who agrees with Robert Goldberg that the KKK, when successful, thrived on local rather than national concerns, has produced a study of the KKK in Ohio's Mahoning Valley.

Although *Steel Valley Klan* makes references to developments throughout the region in the northeastern corner of Ohio, it focuses on the rise and fall of the KKK in Youngstown. Indeed, the history of the city supports Jenkins's thesis that the KKK succeeded in areas that experienced "overly rapid" (ix) cultural as well as economic change. Surrounded by coal fields and seams of iron ore, Youngstown became a center for the booming national steel industry. Between 1890 and 1920, Youngstown's population tripled as newly incorporated steel companies invested tens of millions of dollars in plant and equipment and provided tens of thousands of new jobs. In 1890 a small city of less than fifty thousand mostly Protestant residents of predominantly Welsh and German background, Youngstown by the end of the twenties had a population of more than 170,000 people. Most of the newcomers were Catholics from southern and eastern Europe.

The initially hostile reaction of many of the city's leaders to the appearance of the KKK in the area in 1921 changed to support as they came to view the KKK as a powerful tool for Protestant moral reform. By 1923 a KKK supporter was mayor of Youngstown. Smaller towns and villages throughout the valley copied Youngstown's example. By 1924 the KKK was a power throughout the region. The organization's rise was spectacularly rapid. So was its fall. By 1926, the KKK was everywhere in retreat. Once able to hold torchlit parades with tens of

thousands of marchers, it had only a few hundred remaining members.

Jenkins argues that the KKK in northeastern Ohio was a "Protestant defense league" (94). When its members discovered that not only was it not going to bring about a millennial Protestant cultural order, but that KKK leaders were at best ineffective, and at worst corrupt, they abandoned the organization they had joined as a moral cause. Moreover, even if KKK leaders condoned violence, Mahoning Valley KKK members were typically passive, law-abiding citizens. When Italian immigrants formed the Knights of the Flaming Circle to challenge the KKK and sent protesters armed with guns, clubs, and knives to its parades, KKK members quailed and fled.

Steel Valley Klan's most important contribution is its emphasis on the KKK as an effort by Protestant moralists to force their values on their communities. As such, the KKK was directly within the tradition that produced the Anti-Saloon League, the American Protective Association, and the Immigration Restriction League. The disappearance or destruction of important records has hindered the efforts of scholars researching the revival of the KKK. Jenkins's fortuitous discovery of a complete list of KKK members for Youngstown and Mahoning County has enabled him persuasively to challenge standard assessments about KKK membership. Rather than an organization of fundamentalist, blue-collar, native whites angered by economic competition with recent immigrants, Mahoning's KKK drew from all social strata and classes among Protestant whites. The bond between KKK members was fervent support for an imposed pietistic moral order, for the rigid enforcement of blue laws, antiprostitution codes, and ordinances forbidding alcohol.

Jenkins makes effective and intensive use of this membership data. However, gaps in the historical record hindered his efforts to recreate the history of the Mahoning Valley Klan. Relevant gubernatorial and mayoral papers no longer exist. KKK trial records, as well as records from grand jury hearings investigating violence at KKK parades, have disappeared. KKK meeting records were destroyed. Thus Jenkins relied heavily on accounts in contemporary newspapers. Given their importance as sources, the reports in the *Youngstown Telegram* and the *Youngstown Vindicator* need more context. The political roles played by the editors of these papers, the positions taken by the papers on other topics, and profiles of the newspapers' potentially differing readerships, for instance, would have been helpful.

In his conclusion, Jenkins writes very briefly about the role of women in the rise of the KKK. Women, of course, could not join the KKK itself, but they were allowed to become members of a women's

auxiliary. Jenkins suggests that there may have been a link between the KKK's crusade for moral order and the granting of woman suffrage in 1920. Were any evidence available, Jenkins should have expanded his speculations and included them in the text proper, rather than inserting them as an aside in the book's final two pages. Were, for instance, regional records of the Women's Christian Temperance Union available? Jenkins makes no use of such records but does note (102) that the KKK and the WCTU joined forces in Youngstown to attack bootleggers.

Jenkins notes in his preface that *Steel Valley Klan* represents "an effort to continue the work" (viii) of other scholars. In that the book succeeds admirably.

Democracy Delayed: Congressional Reapportionment and Urban-Rural Conflict in the 1920s, by Charles W. Eagles. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990. xiv, 173 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, appendix, index. \$25.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY STANLEY PARSONS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, KANSAS CITY

In *Democracy Delayed*, Charles Eagles uses a wide variety of sources and methods to illustrate a relatively new historical concern, the history of congressional reapportionment, and a rather old concern, the role of rural-urban conflict in America during the 1920s. Heeding Morgan Kousser's recent complaint that historians are attracted by works that totally replace previous interpretations rather than build on what has been written before, Eagles directs his research toward reaching a more exact understanding of the nature of rural-urban conflict. While doing that, he also provides an interesting and original account of the difficulties of securing reapportionment in the House of Representatives.

Eagles introduces his study with a thorough discussion of the major historiographical interpretations of the 1920s, ranging from Frederick Lewis Allen, whose *Only Yesterday* depicted the twenties as dominated by the disillusionment caused by World War I, to the more recent emphasis on rural-urban conflict. It is the subtle variations of the rural-urban theme that concern Eagles.

To accomplish his objective, Eagles selects the epic struggle to reapportion Congress during the 1920s. For the only time in American history, Congress went an entire decade without apportioning the number of seats given each state in the House of Representatives. That occurred because the census of 1920 had revealed that for the first time more Americans lived in urban areas than on the farm. For

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