

Ku Klux Klan material from Altoona, Pennsylvania

Ms. Coll. 1244

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2016 November 17

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Marshall, John F., 1900-
Title	Ku Klux Klan material from Altoona, Pennsylvania
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1244
Date [inclusive]	1924-1929
Extent	0.2 linear foot (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	This collection documents the day-to-day running of the Altoona chapter of the Ku Klux Klan from 1924 to 1925. Researchers will find correspondence to and from Sam D. Rich, the Imperial Representative of Pennsylvania, and John F. Marshall, secretary to the Altoona chapter; correspondence and tallies relating to the 1924 presidential election, and publications and brochures produced by the Ku Klux Klan.

Cite as:

Ku Klux Klan material from Altoona, Pennsylvania, 1924-1929, Ms. Coll. 1244, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

The Ku Klux Klan emerged in Pennsylvania in 1922 and saw dramatic growth during the middle of the decade. Pennsylvania's Klan was led by Sam Rich, the Imperial Representative of Pennsylvania, who according to John M. Craig, "initiated, or at least approved," all Klan activities in the state (p. 14). He worked alongside Hiram Wesley Evans, who was elected as Imperial Wizard in 1922 and "intended to transform the Klan into a powerful political force, a goal that required accelerating the already impressive trend of membership growth," (p. 36). According to Craig's book, *The Ku Klux Klan in Western Pennsylvania, 1921-1928*, the majority of Klan members in Pennsylvania were white Protestants whose main agenda appears to have been anti-Catholic. By 1925, there were more than two hundred chapters in western Pennsylvania, with membership totaling at least 140,000. The Altoona chapter was the largest chapter in Pennsylvania with membership of more than 2,800. John F. Marshall served as Kligrapp (or secretary) of the Altoona Chapter, at least from 1924 to 1925. Existing court and other archival records show that the median age of Altoona members was 44 and that they were "overwhelmingly settled members of the community, broadly representative of the social and economic structure of the area," (p. 154). The Klan in Pennsylvania "initiated riots that led to serious injury and death. Disdainful of the rule of law, they promoted disorder and mayhem in pursuit of racist, nativist, anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish agendas" (p. xvi). One Klan riot of note took place in Lilly in 1924 and resulted in multiple fatalities. Sam Rich, who wielded significant power in Pennsylvania from 1922 to 1925 was eventually "banished" in 1925. He was accused, by his fellow Klansmen, of "neglecting financial obligations to individual klaverns, misappropriating funds, illegally banishing members, the 1923 East Liberty child kidnapping, ordering the 'incomplete' lynching near Beaver, and using 'violent and offensive language and swearing bitterly' during meetings in his office," (p. 193). By 1928, the popularity and the influence of the Ku Klux Klan had diminished significantly in Pennsylvania.

Works cited:

Craig, John M. *The Ku Klux Klan in Western Pennsylvania, 1921-1928*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2015.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the day-to-day running of the Altoona Klan from 1924 to 1925. The bulk of the material consists of letters to and from Sam D. Rich, the Imperial Representative of Pennsylvania, and John F. Marshall, the Kligrapp (or secretary) of the Altoona chapter of the Klan. These letters vary in topics, but many relate to ordering robes, requests that circulars be distributed, discussion of holding parades and demonstrations, and appointments of, transfers of, petitions by, and dismissal of members of the Altoona Klan. Letters frequently mention Dr. Hiram W. Evans, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. An undated form with a list of twenty questions (found at the back of folder 2) probably served as a preliminary step in recruitment.

Researchers will also find a brief newspaper clipping about Hiram W. Evans, a tracing paper sketch of a "knight" on a horse which may have been for the Altoona Klan seal (an official one could not be issued because at the time the Altoona Klan was not chartered), and a number of documents relating to the Ku Klux Klan's interest in the 1924 Presidential election in which there were eight candidates one month before the November election. A number of straw votes were held in October and early November.

The collection also includes a few publications relating to the Ku Klux Klan: "The Klan of Tomorrow," by H.W. Evans, 1924; "Ku Klux Klan Discloses its Position on the Presidency," [circa 1928]; and "The Truth about Women of the Ku Klux Klan," reprinted from the *Arkansas Traveller*, undated [two copies].

Administrative Information

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2016 November 17

Access Restrictions

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Source of Acquisition

Sold by Aaron Benneian Historical Americana, 2016.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At the Pennsylvania State Archives: Pennsylvania State Police Collection, 30.16-30.19 (30 microfilm reels)

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Ku Klux Klan (1915-).

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Brochures
- Correspondence
- Publications (documents)

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Altoona (Pa.)--History--20th century
- United States--History--20th century

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Rich, Sam Durant, 1894-1967

SUBJECT(S)

- Ethnic relations
- Race relations
- Racism
- Secret societies--United States
- White supremacy movements--United States

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Correspondence to and from Sam D. Rich and John F. Marshall, 1924 February-June.	1	1
Correspondence to and from Sam D. Rich and John F. Marshall, 1924 July-1925 January, 1929.	1	2
Newspaper clipping regarding Hiram W. Evans, undated.	1	3
Presidential candidate (1924 election) straw vote, correspondence and tallies, 1924 October-November.	1	4
Publications/brochures regarding the Ku Klux Klan ("The Klan of Tomorrow," by H.W. Evans, 1924; "Ku Klux Klan Discloses its Position on the Presidency," [circa 1928]; and "The Truth about Women of the Ku Klux Klan," reprinted from the <i>Arkansas Traveller</i> , undated [two copies]), 1924-1928, undated.	1	5

Tracing paper sketch of Ku Klux Klansman on horse, undated.

1

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