

# LEAKS IN THE ROOF OF PARADISE

## THE JOHNSTOWN BLACK COMMUNITY

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Raynor began by expressing an opinion shared by many at the time: it is impossible for colored people and whites to coexist in the same land. Raynor described the scene in Johnstown. There were five hundred black citizens, many of whom had never lived in the South, plus ex-slaves from Maryland and Virginia. Some had fought valiantly for the Union during the Civil War.

Raynor had interviewed a black man who described other black men who had done well, including a barber with his own shop and a successful contractor. These men worked hard and were honest. The spokesman next expressed his own credo, an attitude probably welcomed by paternalistic whites:

*The colored man must remember his position and must not think he is better than the white man. . . his ancestors for centuries were slaves and he cannot catch up with the others. He has a place of his own, and so long as he stays in his place and attends to his business he will succeed in his work.*

Raynor had also interviewed two prominent educators about black children in the schools. He was told there were sixty to seventy colored pupils. "They are not discriminated against," stated one of the educators.

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Upper Yoder Township. The new site, initially 132 acres, was big enough for the eighteen-hole golf course the club officers were seeking.

The tract was leased for twenty-five years for one dollar per year plus all property taxes. H.A. Tillinghast of Philadelphia planned the golf course, and Henry Rogers designed the clubhouse. The Sunnehanna Country Club was officially opened with a dinner dance on September 3, 1923.<sup>185</sup>

### Johnstown Motor Club

In September 1923, several prominent citizens founded the Johnstown Motor Club to promote route markers and directional signs along highways approaching the city.<sup>186</sup> The club also sought to furnish its members with the best routes between communities and to provide current highway condition information. The club also supported good roads.

Tom Nokes, always in the civic picture but rarely the front man, was the first secretary. His successor, Rudolph Kirschman, developed a full-time staff and opened an office in the Fort Stanwix Hotel. In October 1923, the club became an affiliate of the American Automobile Association (AAA).<sup>187</sup>



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*school, and as long as they remained they proved studious and intelligent. But most of them leave when they get in the middle grades, either going to work or quitting for some other reason...As soon as they reach the higher grades and their numbers have become depleted...they are alone.*

### Jim Crow Migrates North

There were subtle indications that the peaceful coexistence between the races that seemingly prevailed in turn-of-the-century Johnstown was breaking down. The growth in animosity probably reflected a nationwide transformation wherein Northern whites were becoming sympathetic to Southern whites, gradually taking on some of their racial hostility.

In November 1906, black leaders sought to prevent Thomas Dixon's play, *The Clansman* from showing at the Cambria Theater. The group petitioned Mayor Charles Young, citing the drama's glorification of mob vengeance and lynching. The play did show in Johnstown and was such a success, it returned to the city in April 1908.<sup>489</sup> When the movie version, D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, came to Johnstown in November 1915, and again in March 1917, it was hailed locally as a film masterpiece and the Ku Klux Klan scenes were described as "especially thrilling."<sup>490</sup>

An editorial, "The Negro Problem," appearing in the *Weekly Democrat* on March 8, 1907, described the change besetting the North. Its author believed the changes were also happening slowly in Johnstown:

*Ten years ago, the "Jim Crow" cars were unknown in the North. Now they are multiplying in the states of Indiana and Illinois, especially on those railroads which have outlets from the South...Within recent years, Negro lynchings have occurred with...frequency in the highest centers of northern civilization.*

While the author did not define exactly what he meant by the "Negro problem," he implied hostility between the races, especially white attitudes toward blacks.

## II. THE MASS IMPORTATION OF BLACKS INTO JOHNSTOWN

After the Great War erupted in Europe, immigrant workers stopped coming to the United States. To meet a mounting labor shortage, recruitment of Southern black workers got underway. Prior to his 1912 retirement, Charles Price made arrangements for his horseman and servant, "Jack" Johnson, a black man, to work in the Cambria Steel office building downtown. Well known to company officials, Johnson soon managed the corporate dining room.

Faced with a labor shortage prior to United States' entry into the war, the company sent Johnson to Southern states to recruit workers. Johnson "checked in" with police authorities



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everywhere he went. Those enrolled, about fifty at a time, were seated on railway coaches destined for Johnstown.

The recruits were typically single black males. Their migration cannot be quantified, inasmuch as there were returns home, secondary migrations and blacks who arrived on their own initiative. From before 1917 until the end of the war, labor was at a premium in Johnstown, and "colored families...came by rail and bus and...a few on foot."<sup>191</sup>

From the individual interviews and testimony given in 1920 to the Interchurch World Movement's Commission of Inquiry in regards to the 1919 steel strike, the Cambria Steel Company was reportedly continuing black worker importation after the strike.<sup>192</sup> At this time the recruitment would have been done to replace foreign workers who were returning to Europe after the war. The following table summarizes the Johnstown black population using census data:

Selected Black Population Data, 1900 to 1920

	City of Johnstown	Cambria County	Franklin/E. Conemaugh
1900	314	519	N/A
1910	442	640	N/A
1920	1,650	2,492	445

Between 1910 and 1920 there was little net increase in the number of blacks in Cambria County, other than those in and around Johnstown.

### Settlement Conditions

Once black workers had arrived in Johnstown, they were usually housed in company-built bunkhouses in Rosedale above the Lower Works, and in both Franklin and East Conemaugh Boroughs near the Franklin Works.

The fewer, earlier resident blacks generally lived in Kernville, Old Conemaugh Borough, Prospect and downtown. According to the 1920 census, these sections were home to 560 blacks—361 males and 199 females. In the Fourteenth Ward, however, which included Rosedale after its 1918 annexation, there were 767 blacks—646 males and 121 females, a ratio of more than five to one. While comparable data is not available for Franklin and East Conemaugh, the imbalance would have been like Rosedale's. Meanwhile Rosedale itself was being used for coke ovens and a new sintering plant. There were no efforts to establish a wholesome residential environment.<sup>193</sup>

In the spring of 1923, Dean Kelly Miller from Howard University visited Johnstown bunkhouses and described their conditions as deplorable. He claimed never to have seen "such pitiable conditions as prevailed in Johnstown." Miller wrote that the black men were "poor, untutored newcomers from the South." There were no wholesome places of amusement and little for them to do in their spare time. They would have been avoided by whites, both foreign and American, and were probably shunned by Johnstown's established black community. Young male newcomers with neither family nor community support systems were logically prone to vice, gambling, Prohibition-era alcohol, drugs and violence.<sup>194</sup>

## Labor's Attitudes

There are no indications that blacks were being recruited to Johnstown in 1919 specifically as strikebreakers. Unlike other steel centers, the Cambria Steel Company's planned strategy was to close its mills completely in the event of a strike. Nonetheless, in August 1919 (just before the strike), labor leaders met with Mayor Franke after "the arrival of a number of Negroes in the city." Franke was urged "to take action to prevent the importation of 'undesirables.'"<sup>195</sup>

During the individual Johnstown steelworker interviews undertaken by Interchurch World Movement staff in 1919, there was frequent mention of black workers still being recruited by Cambria Steel. The typical comment was decidedly negative. White steelworkers stated that recent black arrivals were lazy and unproductive.

## Social Disintegration

With the United States' entry into the war, crime increased in Johnstown and the numbers of arrests per average day were breaking previous records. From April 1 through April 15, 1917, there were 350 arrests—almost 25 per day. A police spokesman explained:

*Hundreds of men are being brought every month by the industrial concerns of this city. The laborers imported include many men of questionable habits and inclinations, and the police are kept busy during all hours.*<sup>196</sup>

By July 1917, the city council was preparing for race riots, including contingency plans for deputizing citizens as policemen. Councilman George Hershberger was the proponent. "All over the country we hear of unrest among the Negroes coming up from the South," he noted. "Our police department is not...equipped to handle a big riot."<sup>197</sup>

Johnstown newspapers published a stream of accounts describing altercations involving black arrivals, often those living in company bunkhouses. In early December 1918, a bunkhouse supervisor, Charles Stanton, awakened Joe Boston, a "giant Negro" from Texas. Boston got violent, saying he had been awakened too early. A fight ensued and the police were summoned. Boston beat up both Stanton and Patrick Coyle, a Franklin policeman. Boston was shot by Franklin's police chief, Dan Wirick. Although wounded, Boston continued fighting until he died.

In August 1920, two blacks attacked and robbed Edwin Lane, a shoemaker and repairman located on Haynes Street. Lane had been beaten in the head. One assailant was caught. In May 1921 two blacks were severely wounded in a Rosedale bunkhouse shooting that had erupted during a poker game. Later that November, a dispute broke out between two black men, Frank Hodge and Seymour Johnson, at a Rosedale dance. Hodge followed Johnson home. Johnson got a gun and killed his assailant, "in self-defense," he pleaded.<sup>198</sup>



## III. THE KU KLUX KLAN

On Freedom Day, September 22, 1921, a resolution was passed at the AME Zion Church urging Johnstown's two congressmen, Anderson Walters and John Rose, "to use their influence in any way whatever, and to vote for a measure for a thorough investigation of this infamous [Ku Klux] Klan."<sup>499</sup>

Nothing indicates Johnstown's black citizens were aware of there being a local Klan organization. There had been news accounts of chapters being formed in Ohio and other parts of Pennsylvania. Sensing the community's growing animosity toward the newcomers, which would affect all blacks and, recalling Johnstown's affection for *The Clansman* and *The Birth of a Nation*, Johnstown's established blacks had reason for concern.

In late January 1922, the *Johnstown Tribune* reported that "a large class of prominent men" had been initiated into a local organization of the Ku Klux Klan. A ceremony had taken place "under the light of the fiery cross." Everything and everyone was shrouded with secrecy. Whoever wrote the article concluded with, "it has been announced that the work of the Ku Klux Klan throughout this section is progressing most satisfactorily."<sup>500</sup> In April, a second initiation and cross burning took place. The news article referred to the initiates as "prominent men," but no names were given.

To be a member, one had to be of "good moral character," a native-born American and a firm believer in the Christian religion. While not mentioned, native-born blacks, Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Jews were ineligible. Ostensibly, the Klan favored Prohibition. Klan organizations were also being formed in Somerset, Bellwood, Barnesboro and other places.

After dark on August 25, 1922, Johnstown was exposed to a strange, somewhat frightening spectacle. High on Green Hill near downtown, a tall cross blazed in flames. Many Johnstownians sought to get closer but were denied access. Stationed all around the burning cross were hooded Klansmen dressed in white robes. One man, also hooded, was dressed in black. He was the master of ceremonies and head of the Klan in the Cambria district. The cross burning was reported not to have been an initiation. The occasion was not given. It was said that thousands of people flocked downtown to get a good view.<sup>501</sup>

On September 22, a brief but unusual ceremony occurred at the YWCA on Somerset Street. YWCA officials had announced in advance there would be a surprise. After most attendees had arrived, a number of automobiles pulled up in front of the building. In single file, an uncounted number of hooded Klansmen paraded up the front walk and into the lobby. Saying nothing, one of them presented an envelope containing seventy-five dollars in cash and a pamphlet describing the purposes of the KKK. Without pausing for thanks or ceremony, the group immediately filed out. The *Tribune* referred to the incident as "enjoyable."<sup>502</sup>

Something similar occurred at an evening service at the Beulah United Evangelical Church in Dale Borough on March 11, 1923. Fifteen hooded Klansmen entered the church in the middle of a service and presented the pastor with an envelope containing fifty dollars for the church's building fund, an apology for the interruption and a pamphlet describing the Klan and its purposes. The group departed immediately.<sup>503</sup>





Johnstown Ku Klux Klansmen on Bedford Street in Dale Borough in the mid-1920s.

The local Klan was obviously seeking to boost its image and win public favor. At that time there had been an investigation (with a finding of no fault) into the group by Congress, and recent violence had broken out in Ohio between the Klan and another group organized to counter it. Even in Johnstown and Cambria County, Anderson Walters, smarting over his May 1922 Republican primary defeat by George Wertz for congressman-at-large, had blamed the KKK for opposing him politically. An editorial scuffle erupted between the *Tribune* and the *Democrat*. A *Tribune* editorial went on to say that the newspaper had obtained much information about two Klan groups. Never, however, did either newspaper publish the names of any KKK organizers, officers, members or affiliated organizations.<sup>501</sup>

Phillip Jenkins, in a study of extremist groups in Pennsylvania and using state police information, stated that the Johnstown klavern (No. 89) had approximately 1,775 members in 1925. Statewide, the Klan had peaked at about 250,000 members in the 1920s. Considering the membership restrictions detailed above, the figures represent a significant percentage of the eligible.<sup>505</sup>

In the late afternoon of June 19, 1923, a fifteen-year-old-girl was allegedly attacked by an unknown black man in a wooded area between Conemaugh and Headricks Cemetery. On Tuesday, June 20, hooded KKK members went into the black settlement in nearby East Conemaugh and burned a cross. Borough police said the cross burning was a "warning."<sup>506</sup>

#### IV. ROSEDALE

In the summer of 1923, the rash of thefts and violent crimes in and around Rosedale was escalating. Almost always, blacks were victims of blacks. John Scott was charged by William Richardson for shooting at him. Two Rosedale black women got into a fight and one chased



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the other with a razor. Two men were charged on July 23 with fighting. In mid-August, John Knox was shot and killed in a Rosedale barbershop. Frank Williams, another black and the alleged murderer, was said to have been hidden by six other black men, all of whom were either charged with accessory to the fact or "of suspicion."<sup>507</sup>

### The Rosedale Incident

Just before midnight, August 30, 1923, Joseph Grachen, a city patrolman, was sent to investigate a domestic disturbance between Robert Young and his live-in girlfriend on Rosedale Street. Grachen concluded things had calmed down and resumed patrolling.

Shortly after midnight, he came upon an automobile accident in which two blacks, Levi Samuel and a companion named "Dad," had hit a pole near Young's residence. One of the pair was bleeding. As Grachen dealt with the accident, Robert Young (who may have been in the vehicle earlier) came over in a drunken, drug-crazed condition and pointed a gun at the patrolman. A fight ensued, and Grachen was shot in his right lung. Grachen fired a few rounds and managed to get to a nearby bunkhouse where a man named Myers called police headquarters. Shortly after 12:30 a.m., two cars bearing seven police officers arrived. One in the group, Joseph Abrahams, was immediately struck in the heart with a bullet. Abrahams was pronounced dead when his body reached the hospital. Another detective, Otto Nukem, was hit as he left the same car, but the wound was not serious. County Detective John James was shot and killed as he entered the building where Young was hiding. Lieutenant William Bender and Captain Otto Fink were also seriously wounded as they pursued Young within the building. Detective John Yoder finally reached Young and shot and killed him.

There had been confusion amidst the tense excitement. Some of the wounded policemen later reported having seen multiple scattered gun flashes in the darkness, reports that gave rise to news accounts that many blacks were battling police officers.

Police Chief Charles Briney talked to his police officers, rounded up and interrogated about twenty blacks from the area and conducted a thorough investigation. Briney concluded that Robert Young had been the sole gunman. In truth, with the exception of seeing Joseph Abrahams being hit, no surviving policeman witnessed the actual fatal shooting of any other policeman.

Briney's conclusion was significant. Had there been a widespread belief that the killing of two and wounding of four police officers was a result of a black mob riot, broad-scale violence might have erupted.<sup>508</sup>

After dark on September 1, the Klan burned a large cross on Benshoff Hill. Klansmen had come from afar to Johnstown. Tensions were high. Mayor Joe Cauffiel kept telling people that blacks should leave town for their own safety. Meanwhile Rosedale remained heavily patrolled. The state police had sent in six troopers to help maintain order. More were dispatched later.

### Mayor Cauffiel

The "silly season" of Johnstown politics usually begins Labor Day, and Joe Cauffiel was seeking renomination in some of the primaries, then being held in mid-September. On



Monday, September 3, eight blacks were arrested in Minersville for being "disorderly" and "on suspicion." They were charged with having made threatening remarks against Johnstown policemen during the Rosedale crisis early August 31. In police court, Cauffiel fined them various amounts and sentenced them to jail. He then used their incarcerated predicament to pressure them to leave Johnstown.

Two days later the mayor fined Levi Samuels, H.R. Samuels and "Dad" Hall for gambling. Samuels and Hall had been in the wrecked automobile in Rosedale investigated by Patrolman Joseph Grachen early August 31. Following the shooting, the three had been confined to the city jail "on suspicion." Cauffiel imposed fines and ordered them to leave town. They agreed to depart.<sup>509</sup>

Cauffiel had earlier been blamed with treating blacks in demeaning ways. In late 1920, the AME Zion Church's new pastor, G.W. Kincaide, became vocal in asserting the rights of Johnstown's blacks. In March 1921, the congregation had passed a resolution attacking both Cauffiel's "horse play" toward them in police court and his practice of jailing blacks "on suspicion."

On January 17, 1923, Cauffiel had made a public statement denouncing the importation of "undesirables." His words were probably intended for the new corporate officialdom, as Cambria's acquisition by Bethlehem was being finalized at that time.<sup>510</sup>

### The Expulsion

Seven days after the Rosedale Incident, on the evening of September 6, 1923, Joe Cauffiel issued a public order, which came out in the *Johnstown Democrat* through an interview with Ray Krim, a reporter:

*I want every Negro who has lived here less than seven years to pack up his belongings and get out.*<sup>511</sup>

Cauffiel's "newspaper" order had other features: future importation of Negro and Mexican workers into Johnstown were banned. Black visitors invited as guests of Johnstown's entrenched citizens must register with the mayor or chief of police. Until further notice, except church services, all black gatherings such as dances, picnics and similar functions were forbidden.

Cauffiel praised the city's established blacks who had already undergone his seven-year investiture. He even predicted their cooperation:

*They want to do what is right. I am convinced they are as ashamed of the Rosedale occurrence as anybody can be... My mind is made up: Negroes must go back from where they came. They are not wanted in Johnstown.*<sup>512</sup>

Cauffiel also ordered the police to search the homes of Johnstown blacks for weapons, guns, hammers and kitchen knives.<sup>513</sup>

There is no reliable information on how many blacks departed Johnstown following the Rosedale Incident. Cauffiel stated that many had left before his expulsion announcement,



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“for their own safety.” Florence Hornback, having interviewed many blacks eighteen years later, reported:

*Frightened, penniless and not knowing what else to do, Negro families of men, women, children and old folk gathered up a few belongings and set out on the highway.*<sup>514</sup>

As had been true with his “good beer will be allowed” announcement a year earlier, Cauffiel generated national publicity, but his expulsion was widely condemned in both the North and South. The *Johnstown Democrat*, which had served as Cauffiel’s mouthpiece, attacked his action as a politically motivated publicity stunt—totally illegal, immoral and unworkable.<sup>515</sup> The *Johnstown Tribune* neither reported Cauffiel’s edict nor editorialized for or against it. The evening of the day following Cauffiel’s expulsion announcement, the KKK ignited twelve crosses in and around Johnstown, visible for miles.<sup>516</sup>

A telegram was sent from James Weldon Johnson, secretary of the NAACP, to Governor Gifford Pinchot, asking him “to protect the colored citizens of Johnstown against the Ku Klux Klan methods of Mayor Cauffiel.”

The Mexican Embassy and its consul at Philadelphia each complained to both Cauffiel and the governor about the treatment of Mexicans in Johnstown. Pinchot cabled Cauffiel asking for a complete statement of the facts, and on September 18 Cauffiel answered him by letter.<sup>517</sup>

The governor decided to let the matter blow over. Cauffiel’s term was soon ending. Proving Cauffiel a liar might have triggered further riots. Pinchot did, however, send Cauffiel a polite but firm letter dated October 2, 1923.

Cauffiel had not sought the Republican nomination for mayor. Candidates could cross-file, and although nominated by the Prohibition Party, he withdrew before the general election.

## V. THE LILLY RIOT

In late March of 1924, an outbreak of mob violence took place in Lilly, Pennsylvania, resulting in three deaths and many serious injuries. A large number of Johnstown Ku Klux Klan members were involved.

In early 1924, tensions had been developing between Catholics, especially Italians, and Protestants in and around Lilly, a small borough situated between Portage and Gallitzin in Cambria County. As part of its mission to champion Protestant and American values—seen by the KKK as virtuous—and to fight foreign and Catholic influences—equated by the Klan as “evil”—Klansmen were beginning to view Lilly as the site of a miniature Armageddon in the making. The ethnic and Catholic residents of Lilly were also believed by KKK members to have been a source of recent extortion racketeering surfacing in Johnstown.

Pursuing their notions of virtue, Klansmen from Johnstown and outlying areas had begun making trips to Lilly on Saturday nights, both to recruit members and intimidate ethnic Catholics.



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In February 1924, someone had fired shots into the Lutheran Church parsonage at Lilly. Pastor E.S. Brown's wife was almost hit. A similar attack was repeated a few nights later and again on March 21. The day following the final shooting, two men—Dominick Naples and Amedeo Tranquillo—were arrested.

Both men insisted they had not fired the shots but were being blamed for actions perpetrated by their accusers, Klansmen guarding the parsonage. The two Italians claimed the shots were fired to attract hordes of Klansmen to Lilly to agitate against Catholic foreigners.

Lilly's tensions soon reached a fever pitch. Local leaders sought help from the Pennsylvania State Police. A department spokesman assured them that a detail of troopers, capable of handling any potential trouble, was being sent to Lilly.<sup>518</sup>

### The Klan Special

Shortly after 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, 1924, a chartered train from Johnstown carrying more than four hundred Klansmen arrived in Lilly. Donning white robes and hoods, most of the group marched four abreast through Lilly's streets toward Piper Hill.

As they moved forward, Lilly townspeople along the route began jeering and insulting them. Youngsters driving two automobiles attempted to break up the marching columns. The town was then plunged into near-total darkness by someone who had pulled a switch at an electrical substation.

Despite these annoyances, the marchers reached Piper Hill, where they conducted a ritual ceremony and burned two crosses. Next, parading in orderly fashion, the Klansmen began returning to their train. Meanwhile, a group of townspeople told the train crew that dynamite under the "Klan Special" would soon explode and urged the crew to get the train out of Lilly at once.

A railroad detective ordered the train moved a short distance so the tracks and the railcars could be examined. The warning had been a hoax, a failed attempt to leave the more than four hundred Klansmen stranded at Lilly.

As Klansmen filed back through Lilly, someone got a fire hose and began directing heavy streams of water at the marchers. Fights broke out and shots were fired. Two innocent bystanders were killed instantly and a third person, Frank Miasco, one of the men operating the hose, was mortally wounded. Twenty other people were severely injured, many needing hospitalization.

Finally the train was boarded. With some passengers bleeding, the "Klan Special" began chugging toward Johnstown.<sup>519</sup>

### The Arrests

Sheriff Logan Keller and a few state troopers conducted an investigation into the events at Lilly. As each Klansman departed the train at Johnstown, he was searched. While it was reported that many abandoned revolvers were found, those who still had weapons were singled out for arrest unless they could prove non-involvement in the riot.

Twenty-seven Klansmen and thirteen people from Lilly were initially arrested and incarcerated in the county jail at Ebensburg. All were denied bail.<sup>520</sup>



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### Sympathy Demonstrations and Counter Demonstrations

The arrests of the Klansmen prompted an outpouring of protests from other klavern units, especially in Western Pennsylvania. Crosses were burned and speeches charging abuse and loss of liberty were common. In Beaverdale, Sheriff Logan Keller and state troopers quelled a near riot. Klansmen were also being countered by a Catholic group, the Flaming Circle, an organization seeking to outdo the Klan's crosses by igniting large circular designs that blazed at night on prominent hillsides.<sup>521</sup>

### The Martyrdom of Owen Poorbaugh

An arrested Klan member, Owen Poorbaugh, contracted pneumonia while jailed at Ebensburg. He died at Memorial Hospital on April 25, 1924. The death prompted renewed criticism of the bail denial and precipitated charges of poor treatment at the county jail.

Poorbaugh's funeral and burial became a well-publicized martyrdom ceremony. On April 27, Klansmen and their families and friends, said to have come from nine counties packed into Johnstown for three services: the first at Poorbaugh's Roxbury home, the funeral itself in the brand new Beulah Evangelical Church in Dale Borough and the burial itself in Grandview Cemetery. An estimated two thousand people wearing KKK robes paraded about in linear columns. While crowd sizes are often exaggerated, the *Johnstown Tribune* estimated there were "between 20,000 and 25,000 persons gathered in Grandview Cemetery to witness the KKK burial of Owen Poorbaugh."<sup>522</sup> The spectacle and publicity surrounding Poorbaugh's funeral turned out to have been such a triumph, the Klan was eager for more.

In early July, while her husband, Reuben, was serving a two-year term for involvement in the Lilly episode, Josephine Miller suffered severe burns while incinerating rubbish at her home. She died on July 6. On an impressive but smaller scale than the Poorbaugh spectacle, Josephine Miller was also accorded a Klan burial, which her husband, Reuben, was released to attend. Robed Klansmen lined the Dale streets between the Miller residence and the Evangelical Church. After the funeral, a large procession of robed Klansmen paraded down Bedford Street, crossed the Haynes Street Bridge and went up to Grandview Cemetery for the Klan burial rites. Traffic was tied up for twenty minutes.<sup>523</sup>

A Klan monument to Owen Poorbaugh was also dedicated in Grandview Cemetery on October 13. An estimated ten thousand Klansmen attended.<sup>524</sup>

### The Trial

By the trial date, forty-four people had been charged with carrying concealed weapons and inciting and participating in a riot that had resulted in deaths. With two opposing sets of defendants being charged for the same offense, the nature of the trial was an unusual and difficult one. Percy Allen Rose, the lead attorney for the Klansmen, petitioned for a



separate trial for each of those he represented. He stated there were "two antagonistic factions here represented—the Ku Klux Klan and the Catholic Church." Rose argued that because of the clash of interests, there was no way to seat an impartial jury. Rose's motion was overruled and a jury was impaneled through the firm hand of a special judge, Thomas Finletter from Philadelphia.

The next test occurred the afternoon of Tuesday, June 10, at about three o'clock. When a witness testified proudly that he was indeed a member of the Ku Klux Klan, an outpouring of cheers and approving applause exploded in the packed courtroom. Judge Finletter used the outburst as an excuse to clear the courtroom. Afterward the trial was lightly attended, and the courtroom atmosphere became calmer and more relaxed.<sup>525</sup>

Over four days, the story of the Lilly episode was probed in detail. Fifteen Lilly residents gave testimony for defendants and provided them with alibis. On Thursday, the defense rested. Judge Finletter immediately dismissed cases against thirteen of the forty-four. No evidence had been presented against them.

The next day the jury reached a verdict. All thirty-one men were found guilty of "affray and unlawful assemblage." The riot charges were dropped. Petitions for a new trial were rejected, and twenty-eight of the thirty-one people—eighteen Klansmen, including Klansman Samuel Evans, who had shot Frank Miasco during the fight over the hose, and ten Lilly residents—were all sentenced to two years in the county jail. Although found guilty, the other three were not sentenced.

## VI. THE JOHNSTOWN KLAN FADES AWAY

Following the Lilly incident and the trials, the Klan peaked in membership and for a time was able to mount ostentatious cross burnings and mass gatherings. When the new Beulah Evangelical Church was completed in Dale Borough, its former church building, located farther east on Bedford Street, was sold for a Klan recreation center and headquarters.

The day after Josephine Miller's (July 10) funeral, a cross was burned at the edge of Evan Du Pont's estate in Viewmont. Whether Du Pont was an intimidation target is not known.<sup>526</sup>

Two weeks later, three hundred new members were initiated at a cross-burning on Berkley Hill above Roxbury Park. It was reported that four thousand members from Cambria, Somerset and Westmoreland Counties had attended.<sup>527</sup>

In early August, a new Klan organization, the Junior Ku Klux Klan, held its organizational ceremony near Walnut Grove. With adult supervision, young boys ignited a cross visible over much of Johnstown.<sup>528</sup> Ten days later, on August 14, 1924, "Klan Day," a well-organized picnic with games and sporting competitions, was celebrated at Ideal Park. Approximately fourteen thousand people including many from other counties attended. Klan Day ended with the burning of a cross said to have been sixty-five feet high—perhaps a Klan record. A huge crowd sang "America" and "The Old Rugged Cross."<sup>529</sup>



## LEAKS IN THE ROOF OF PARADISE

### The Decline

After its post-Lilly, Poorbaugh-martyrdom peak, the Johnstown Klan seemingly declined. Its appeal was wearing thin. The enormous manpower effort to burn crosses was getting fewer volunteers. The hero status of the eighteen Klansmen doing time in the county jail gradually faded, especially after many of them were released through appeals or for good behavior.<sup>530</sup>

The Klan had developed a reputation for donating funds to help churches construct new buildings. Ironically, the Mount Olive Baptist Church, the second oldest black congregation in Johnstown (c. 1876), was relocating to a new site at Main and Adams Streets, and its pastor, R.B. Birchmore, actually requested a contribution from the KKK. In late October 1924, the Klan made a \$100 donation.<sup>531</sup>

How such a contribution matches the Klan's white supremacy tenets is hard to fathom. The Mount Olive Church was identified with blacks who had decades-old roots in Johnstown and who perhaps did not welcome the floods of arrivals from the Deep South. The Rosedale Incident, which had prompted Cauffiel's expulsions, had occurred just over one year earlier. At its best, the Klan may have been religiously generous. At its worst, it may have been seeking to divide an already fragmented black community.

From 1925 to 1927, cross burnings became less frequent. Their mystery, novelty and excitement had eroded. The Klan itself suffered losses in esteem due to KKK violence elsewhere. There was a scandal and a lawsuit over national dues in 1927.<sup>532</sup> While its decline is not easily explained, by 1929 Johnstown's klavern (No. 89) was becoming moribund.

do I see that the change of government provided for a king or dictator." After Walter became a councilman, his attacks continued.<sup>415</sup>

In late December 1975, the city council approved a general fund budget of \$5,847,663 with a half-cent tax hike. Pfuhl immediately vetoed the budget ordinance, charging the council with fiscal mismanagement and holding secret meetings.

Pfuhl gave many sound reasons for his veto—inadequate appropriations to cover mandatory labor arbitration awards, supervisory personnel receiving less pay than their subordinates and no pay raises for non-union employees.

Nonetheless the council voted six to two to override Pfuhl's veto. The situation had quickly deteriorated into one with no give and take between the mayor and the council. They were scarcely talking to each other.<sup>416</sup>

Council next sought to revise the administrative code to give to itself the sole authority to appoint the city solicitor. Pfuhl vetoed the ordinance and the council overrode the veto. The matter was immediately challenged judicially. Pfuhl was upheld. The court ruled that the council could not take back for itself the sole authority for naming the solicitor, after having earlier established a procedure for mayoral appointment with a council advise and consent role.<sup>417</sup>