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# Initiating Race: Fraternal Organizations, Racial Identity, and Public Discourse in American Culture, 1865-1917

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Initiating Race:  
Fraternal Organizations, Racial Identity, and Public Discourse in American Culture, 1865-1917

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

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December 2016  
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This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

Drawing on ritual books, organizational records, newspaper accounts, and the data available from cemetery headstones and census records, this work argues that adult fraternal organizations were key to the formation of civic discourse in the United States from the years following the Civil War to World War I. It particularly analyzes the role of working-class white and African-American organizations in framing racial identity, arguing that white organizations gave up older, comprehensive ideas of citizenship for understandings of Americanism rooted in racism and nativism. Counterbalancing this development, now-forgotten African-American fraternal organizations were among the earliest advocates of Afrocentrism. These organizations, form a bridge of continuous intellectual and cultural development between the post-Civil War clashes of the first Ku Klux Klan and the African-American Union League and the World War I era emergence of the second Klan and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. While white organizations clung to a cultural and political vision rooted in the traditional, patriarchal family, African-American organizations showed a breadth of responses to modernity, including creating organizations that breeched the gendered public and domestic spheres and allowed women to exercise significant leadership in partnership with male co-fraternalists.

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## Acknowledgements

This project began on a trip with my dad to eat catfish at the One Stop in Georgetown in southeastern White County, Arkansas. On the outskirts of town, I noticed that the cemetery was full of headstones from the Woodmen of the World. I thought it had to mean something, though I was not sure what. This set me tromping through other cemeteries and, in the African-American portion of Kensett's Crow Cemetery, I found the broken tombstone of Lizzie Walker with the inscription "333 – 777 International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor, Bulah Tab. No. 366." From finding that tombstone to finishing a dissertation on the role of fraternal organizations in framing American concepts of race, many people have lent a hand.

The staff members of the Library of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, and Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library all provided invaluable help. Jeff Croteau of the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum and Library in Lexington, Massachusetts was incredibly generous with his time and introduced me to the world of fraternal regalia catalogs. The staff of Interlibrary Loan Services at the University of Arkansas's Mullins Library regularly performed miracles.

A number of mentors gave me valuable insights and kept me on track. Professors Elizabeth Markham and Rembrant Wolpert put me on the path of seeing fraternal ritual as an important medium for shaping members' perceptions of the world beyond the lodge room. Dean Lynda Coon and Professor Joann D'Alisera gave me many of the theoretical tools I needed as well as permission to study weird stuff. Professors Michael Pierce and Patrick Williams gave me the opportunity to incorporate my historiographical research into their coursework and taught me a great deal about Arkansas sources and editing in my time as assistant editor of the *Arkansas*

*Historical Quarterly*. Professor Calvin White made me keep my eye on the different meanings of class in African-American communities and encouraged me to remain open to where the sources led. Professor Beth Barton Schweiger gets her own page in a moment.

Friends and family contributed a great deal to this project. Visits to my mother in Searcy, Arkansas frequently turned into drives in the country to scout cemeteries. Thanks to the internet, friends from my years in the Northeast remained a constant source of encouragement, particularly Tim Cravens, Paul Goings, Brian McCord, William Myers, John Plummer, and Tom Simota, who is actually just up the road.

Finally, I owe an unrepayable debt to Jaime Dohrn, who encouraged me, fed me, put up with me, and loved me during this process, in addition to photographing a lot of manuscripts.

## **Dedication**

To Beth Barton Schweiger, who brought me to and through the University of Arkansas.

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## Introduction

The history of rise and decline of American fraternalism from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of World War I is integral to understanding the period's political, social, and cultural history, though it has largely been overlooked by historians of Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, and the Progressive Era. For as many as thirty million Americans, including a disproportionate number of civic leaders and social agitators, the ritual vocabulary of fraternalism formed their discourse on individual and group identity and of citizenship.<sup>1</sup> While a number of scholars have looked at middle-class white organizations or studied aspects of African-American fraternalism, no comprehensive study of this phenomenon exists. By examining working and lower-middle-class African-American and white organizations, this project shows that these groups were integral to the reformulation of racial identity during this fifty-year period and also contributed significantly to the debate on the limits of American citizenship. New ideas about the "scientific" basis of racism as well as counter arguments about the ancient contributions of Africa to world civilization would find ready venues in fraternal ritual.

As the nineteenth century progressed into the twentieth, older republican and fraternal comprehensive ideals of citizenship and appeals to the bond created by the dignity of labor gave way to an increasingly racialized and militaristic rhetoric that crystallized in the second Ku Klux

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<sup>1</sup>The thirty million figure is an approximation and an indication of how little is known of the scope of fraternalism. While reliable membership figures exist for Freemasons only from 1924, information is scarce or, in the case of most African-American and working-class institution, entirely unavailable beyond the groups' own statements. The common practice of belonging to multiple organizations further clouds the picture. See, Craig Heimbichner and Adam Parfrey, *Ritual America: Secret Brotherhoods and Their Influence on American Society: A Visual Guide* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2012), 1-21.

Klan and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Rather than being sudden reactionary responses to changing economic and political circumstances, both organizations drew their strength from fifty years of evolving but unbroken fraternal rhetoric stretching back to the post Civil War clash of the Union League and the first Ku Klux Klan. Scholars have given various explanations of Garvey's 1922 meeting with Ku Klux Klan Imperial Wizard Edward Young Clarke, but their meeting becomes comprehensible when the two are viewed as the endpoints of parallel fraternal processes of racialization. This project examines the period between the Reconstruction-Era clash of the first Ku Klux Klan and Union League and the World-War-I era of the second Klan and UNIA to uncover the fraternal organizations that incubated and refined racial ideology in these years. In the intervening period, groups ranging from the white Knights of Pythias to the African-American Supreme Royal Circle of the Friends of the World would be active participants in defining Americans' racial self-understanding.

In the years after the Civil War, the United States suffered from a double identity crisis. Rapid industrialization and the rise of permanent wage work had frayed the credibility of older, republican concepts of citizenship. As Mark Noll has shown, animosity generated by decades of debate over the licitness of slavery had destroyed the religious consensus coming out of the Second Great Awakening and its confidence that common sense readings of the Bible would create a national religious vision.<sup>2</sup> Fraternalism exploded over this fractured landscape, growing from a relatively small number of groups including the Freemasons, Odd Fellows, and a handful

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<sup>2</sup>Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

of others before the Civil War to millions of members belonging to hundreds of national fraternal organizations founded in the thirty years that followed it.<sup>3</sup>

Ami Pflugrad-Jackisch has argued convincingly that, before the Civil War, Freemasons and Odd Fellows were already helping to reshape male identity in the South to stress whiteness rather than class in order to mitigate the tensions caused by the market revolution.<sup>4</sup> In the years after the War, there would be tension working and lower-middle-class groups stressing similar themes and those attempting to create worker and farmer identities built around the dignity of labor and ideas of social transformation. In the 1880s and 1890s, this second group of organizations such as the Knights of Labor, the Knights of Honor, and the Woodmen of the World provided a framework that sometimes allowed Americans to bridge race, class, and religion as they debated the boundaries of the public and private spheres. In the same period, working-class African-American groups would drive the earliest instances of mass dissemination of Afro-centrism as a counter offensive against the social Darwinism used to justify disfranchisement and legal segregation.<sup>5</sup> By the outbreak of World War I, increased racial coding in both black and white organizations strengthened African-American organizations' positions as power centers in the ongoing struggle for civil rights. In white organizations, a rising tide of racism and nativism in both newer and older organizations would drown out older calls for workmen's solidarity and prepare the way for the triumph of Jim Crow and the rise of the second

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<sup>3</sup>Alvin J. Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 367-370. This figure drastically under reports African-American organizations and does not include a number of trade-based organizations such as the Knights of Labor.

<sup>4</sup>Ami Pflugard-Jackisch, *Brothers of a Vow: Secret Fraternal Orders and the Transformation of White Male Culture in Antebellum Virginia* (Athens, GA: University Of Georgia Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup>John Treat, "Ham-Amun and Cush-Osiris as Guardians of the Ark: Ethiopia, Egypt, and Israel in the Ritual Work of Moses Dickson," European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism, Riga, Latvia, April 2015.

Klan. Both groups of organizations would add new paramilitary units complete with elaborate uniforms and drills for public parade in which black and white manhood and discipline were put on display as a statement of solidarity and, sometimes, menace.

To understand the fraternal model's ability to redefine the way individuals and groups conceived of themselves and others, one must understand the psychological power of fraternal rituals. Scholars of religious studies, anthropology, musicology, and neurobiology have all examined this phenomenon in a literature generally overlooked by historians. The shared experience of initiates, described by anthropologist Victor Turner in his concept of the liminal state, and the behavioral effects of spoken and musical repetition and rhythmic movement, documented by neurobiologists, coalesce in fraternal organizations to produce changed patterns of thinking. While economic and sectional interests are of foremost importance for understanding the period, to understand the political identities people crafted and the choices they made, one must understand the hold of the fraternal system on millions of Americans and its rituals' ability to define ideas such as "brotherhood," "citizenship," and the "Americanism," in ways that no stump speech or party platform could compete with, but which the skilled politician knew how to appeal to. While many fraternalists, particularly white male organizations, touted the apolitical nature of their organizations, the coding that took place in secret society rituals set many of the parameters of political discourse.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 326–39; Ian Cross, "Music and Social Being," *Musicology Australia* 28 (2006): 114–26; Aniruddh D. Patel, "Music as a Transformative Technology of the Mind" (Music: Its Evolution, Cognitive Basis, and Spiritual Dimensions, Wolfson College, Cambridge University, September 19, 2008), [http://www.nsi.edu/~ani/Patel\\_2008\\_Templeton\\_Essay.pdf](http://www.nsi.edu/~ani/Patel_2008_Templeton_Essay.pdf).

Cultural anthropology has a long-established body of work analyzing the role of ritual in society. The field of religious studies is producing a growing literature of fraternalism, primarily under the aegis of the study of western esotericism. Yet, over the last fifty years, history as a discipline has produced only a thin and contradictory body of work on fraternalism. Political, labor, and economic historians have treated fraternal organizations as nuisances, whose impact must be downplayed, or straightjacketed to fit models of market behavior. Millions of Americans belonged to initiatory organizations as varied as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Templars of Honor and Temperance, the Order of the Eastern Star, and the International Order of Twelve. Yet, this very numeric strength often becomes a reason to discount the importance of fraternal organizations on the grounds of their ubiquity, dismissing them as a Victorian and Edwardian phenomenon that does not signify.

Cultural historians have primarily studied fraternalism through the lens of gender, emphasizing how male organizations supported the gender binaries of the emerging public and private spheres and, more broadly, how middle-class fraternal organizations championed bourgeois values. Only in histories dealing with African-American fraternal groups have fraternal organizations been granted agency in their own right. As of yet, there is no major study of native-born, white, working-class fraternal groups to shed light on how they are similar to and different from more elite white groups and from African-American groups.

Ami Pflugrad-Jackisch's work, cited above, represents a hopeful, but only partial shift in the historical literature. Her 2011 *Brothers of a Vow* follows the arguments made a generation ago by Mark Carnes and Lynn Dunemil that fraternalism was an eminently gendered affair that

helped midwife the world of the separate spheres.<sup>7</sup> Until quite recently, labor historians have been squeamish about the fraternal character of many early unions and craft groups, agreeing with Eric Hobsbawm that fraternalism among the working classes was a case of “misplaced ingenuity”—a waste of energy that could have been directed toward meaningful activism.<sup>8</sup> In the last twenty-five years, social historians have managed to validate the role of fraternal organizations in social change while simultaneously devaluing their fraternal character.

The most important piece of recent scholarship on the role of fraternalism in American history comes from sociologist Theda Skocpol and her fellow contributors to the 2006 *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African-American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality*.<sup>9</sup> Skocpol’s work challenges previous work by cultural historians, who have portrayed fraternal organizations as uncritical supporters of the gendered world of the two spheres. She argues that black organizations patterned on white middle-class organizations (Prince Hall Freemasonry, the Knights of Pythias) did often fall into this category, but those that were founded by African Americans often gave women leadership roles and real power that was not to be found in white organizations. Historian John Giggie, building on the work of Evelyn Higginbotham, has argued that black women resisted fraternalism in partnership with African-American ministers, who felt similarly threatened. Skocpol’s model suggests that Giggie’s

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<sup>7</sup>Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>8</sup>Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 11.

<sup>9</sup>Theda Skocpol, Ariane Liazos, and Marshall Ganz. *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality*, 1st ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

monolithic conception of fraternalism misses important differences in the roles and power open to women.<sup>10</sup>

This work combines social and cultural history. Theories from the fields of cultural anthropology, religious studies, the emerging field of neurobiology will build a comprehensive argument about the power of initiatory organizations to transform individuals and to create group cohesion. Victor Turner's twinned concepts of liminality and *communitas* offer a starting argument for the ways in which initiations create both new self-understanding and group bonds.<sup>11</sup> Henrik Bogdan's *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, which focuses on Masonic rituals, is a groundbreaking analysis not only of Turner's ideas but also the more recent literature of initiation in the field of religious studies by scholars including Antione Faivre of the Sorbonne and Wouter J. Hanegraaf of the University of Amsterdam. Bogdan contends that "the secret of a Western esoteric ritual of initiation is the experience of undergoing the ritual" rather than any actual secrets the ritual purports to impart and that "[i]t is through an [individual] act of interpretation of the experience . . . that the ritual . . . becomes an initiation in the strict sense of the word."<sup>12</sup>

The work of neurobiologists Ian Cross and Aniruddh Patel validate the ideas of anthropologists and religious studies scholars such as Bogdan. Cross and Patel's research shows that group rhythmic activities create a receptivity and sense of community far more effectively

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<sup>10</sup>John M. Giggie, *After Redemption: Jim Crow and the Transformation of African American Religion in the Delta, 1875-1915*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59-95, 102; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup>Victor Turner, "Liminality and *Comunitas*," *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Michael Lambek, ed., 2nd ed., 326-39 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

<sup>12</sup>Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, Kindle edition, Suny Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), loc. 653, 660.

than rational discourse alone. Cross labels this phenomenon “entrainment,” and, while he was primarily studying the phenomenon as it relates to music, he sees its implications for other forms of rhythmic, synchronized activity, which characterize fraternal rituals in addition to their explicit, and often extensive, musical components.<sup>13</sup>

Analysis of individual organizations’ rituals forms an important part of this study. Like the complex relationship of the families of biblical manuscripts, these rituals almost entirely spring from the Ur source of Freemasonry, often directly, but also via the rituals of other groups inspired by it. Looking at this process of adaptation reveals key messages that group leaders hoped to send and the values they wished to instill. The differing definitions and uses of terms across the fraternal oeuvre provide important insight into the worldviews individual groups aspired to inculcate or challenge. They also show how these rituals became more racialized and nativist over time.

A key figure underpinning these arguments about the role of these rituals in American society from the Civil War to World War I is Wellesley religious studies professor Steven Marini. Marini has argued that Americans were able to build a protestant theological consensus that transcended individual sects because most protestant denominations shared a body of hymnody, which built a pan-protestant group identity. Fraternal ritual functioned in an equally pervasive and powerful way, giving black and white Americans across the class spectrum a shared political and moral lexicon which could both create unanimity and also provide a basis for

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<sup>13</sup>Aniruddh D. Patel, “Music as a Transformative Technology of the Mind,” *Music: Its Evolution, Cognitive Basis, and Spiritual Dimensions*, Wolfson College, Cambridge University, September 19, 2008; Ian Cross, “Music and Social Being.” *Musicology Australia* 28 (2006): 114–26.

significant dissent by contesting definitions of what rhetorician Richard Weaver labeled “god terms.”<sup>14</sup>

The daily growth of internet repositories such as Archive.org and Google Books make it possible to study fraternal organizations in a way that was not possible for scholars writing even a few years ago. Theda Skocpol and her fellow authors of *What a Mighty Power We Can Be* had to rely on ebay auctions and antique stores to obtain source material.<sup>15</sup> Today, hundreds of rituals, volumes of annual proceedings, and long-out-of-print fraternal histories are available online. These have proven invaluable in shedding light on American fraternalism.

Ritual books, whether obtained online or from archives are at the heart of this project. Their constant use within the group formed their members’ identities and their frequent revision shows in almost real time how various groups responded to changing social and political circumstances. Likewise, the annual proceedings published by national, state, and local organizations can make for dry reading, but provide invaluable insight into group health and shared concerns via their ledger pages, rosters of local lodges, and transcribed speeches of various officials.

An invaluable and unexpected resource has been the fraternal regalia catalogs printed in the period and the magic lantern slide sets used to teach new initiates the meaning of the ritual they had passed through. This window into material and visual culture allows the researcher to see the different paraphernalia used by different groups and classes as well as documenting their ideas about religion and race in illustrations of costumes and background scenes. Extensive

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen A. Marini, “Hymnody and the Development of American Evangelicalism,” in *Singing the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land: Hymnody in the History of North American Protestantism*, ed. Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer and Mark A Noll, Religion and American Culture (Tuscaloosa, Ala: University of Alabama Press, 2004); Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics Of Rhetoric* (Literary Licensing, LLC, 2011), 211–14.

<sup>15</sup>Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be*, xi-xiii.

catalog sections for magic lanterns and special effects machines show that, while most of the groups studied claimed their authority from imagined golden ages of the past, they were avid consumers and popularizers of the latest technologies, hinting at the tension they attempted to balance between purportedly timeless values and the contemporary imperative to champion progress qua progress.

For white working-class groups and for African-American groups along the class spectrum, newspaper articles remain an invaluable source for groups whose records have long been lost. As Google Books and Archive.org have drastically changed the availability of bound volumes available to scholars, newspaper databases such as Gale's Nineteenth-Century U.S. Newspapers, African-American Newspapers 1827-1998, Newspapers.com, and the Library of Congress's Chronicling America have yielded hundreds of articles linking individuals to fraternal organizations where no other records exist.

This work consists of seven chapters, which assess the scholarly literature, argue for the importance of fraternal ritual in conveying ideas and concepts, and examine how white and African-American groups used ritual to instill messages about race and values. Chapter One examines the specific contributions of recent historians to the literature of fraternalism and challenges the pervasive opinion that fraternal organizations were more odd cultural artifacts than powerful contributors to political, social and cultural history. Chapter Two draws on work in anthropology, neurobiology, and religious studies to argue that the fraternal initiatory model provided a uniquely powerful way to transform the individual's self-concept, create group identity, and to define important political and moral terms. Chapter Three traces the development of working-class white fraternal organizations and how ideas of shared class identity were increasingly replaced by a stress on racial identity, eventually becoming explicitly nativist and

racist organizations by World War I. Chapter Four argues that African-American fraternal groups that have been largely forgotten today were integral to creating grassroots African-American leaders and to instilling positive racial identity in ways that have been overlooked and which contextualize the later popularity of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Chapter Five examines the African-American International Order of Twelve (IOOT) on the ground in Kansas, providing an in-depth case study of an African-American organization's growth and decline over a sixty-year period. Chapter Six focuses on class and gender dynamics in the IOOT with a case study of its Arkansas members. Chapter Seven looks at Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, both recovering the importance of its essentially fraternal character and showing how earlier African-American fraternal organizations had prepared the intellectual and organizational ground for its rapid growth.

What follows is by no means comprehensive. Only a handful of African-American and white organizations are studied, but those organizations and the lives of their members show that fraternalism is an integral part of America's racial and civic history during the fifty years following the Civil War. Names like Moses Dickson and Richard Williams need to be added to conversations about the history of black agency and separatism in that have long revolved around the familiar names of Henry McNeal Turner, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey. Discussions of why America's white working class failed to develop a worker identity need to expand to include the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, the Knights of Pythias, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which kept producerist rhetoric alive long after it ceased to be a political possibility and which were key sites for the creation of the idea of whiteness. This is an illustrative beginning of those conversations.

## Chapter 1

### The Historical Literature of Fraternalism

The contemporary historiography of fraternalism and its use of ritual is a thin oeuvre. The earlier historians of fraternalism were primarily interested in discussions of middle-class gender roles in the Victorian Era and the related concept of the male public sphere and the female domestic sphere. While this work did shed important light on the middling and elite white men and women studied, it did little to explain the appeal that fraternalism had among working-class whites and among African Americans. Most of these earlier examinations also fail as comprehensive models because they privatize fraternalism in the same way that religion was being privatized in the second half of the nineteenth century. This work argues that fraternalism was very much a public and political phenomenon exactly because discredited religious paradigms were being pushed into the domestic sphere, creating a need for a new basis for a vocabulary of citizenship and virtue in the public sphere. Where Protestant Christianity was increasingly unable to provide a shared, stable vision of what it meant to be a good American, fraternal ritual offered powerful drama and transformative experiences, which assured initiates of their virtue and worthiness. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the ways in which both black and white fraternal groups would become primary sites for perpetuating and refining ideas about race.

The argument here is that the promising but incomplete historiographies of fraternalism based on gender analysis and white social anxiety must be supplemented by the insights of anthropology, religious studies, and sociology, to explain why fraternal organizations multiplied into the hundreds in the years after the Civil War and enrolled millions of members in the United

States. To do this, this chapter and the next move from history proper, then to promising insights from the three fields named above, and finally to a comprehensive explanation of the function of fraternalism in the context of the United States.<sup>1</sup> The first edition of the *Cyclopaedia of Fraternities*, published in 1899, claimed that forty percent of American men over the age of twenty-one belonged to one or more of the 350 adult fraternal organizations it listed. Women accounted for 500,000 members of these groups.<sup>2</sup> As will be shown, fraternal organizations' membership claims are hard to pin down and tended toward optimistic boosterism, but the movement was undeniably large.

There seems to have been something particularly American about this phenomenon. According to the same figures in the 1899 *Cyclopaedia of Fraternities*, the United Kingdom had a population, including Ireland, which was about half that of the U.S., but the ten largest organizations there counted only a little over half of a million members. This puts the level of fraternal membership in the U.K. at about 40% of that in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Statistics are not readily available for other European and American countries, but the literature suggests that figures were substantially lower outside of the English-speaking world.

Historians have been inclined to take fraternal organizations as a cultural given of the Victorian Era along with gothic revival architecture and the novels of Walter Scott. Fraternalism was often regarded as an embarrassing pre rational holdover or resistance movement against modernity that held no importance in economic and political development. To the extent that

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<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations*, 365-377.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Clark Stevens, *The Cyclopaedia of Fraternities; a Compilation of Existing Authentic Information and the Results of Original Investigation as to More than Six Hundred Secret Societies in the United States* (New York: Hamilton Printing and Publishing company, 1899), pp. v, xvi, 5; *Twelfth Census of the United States – 1900 Census Reports Volume II – Population Part II* (Washington: United States Census Office, 1901), 112, 118.

<sup>3</sup> Heimbichner, *Ritual America*, xix.

these organizations could not be omitted from the historical narrative, as in the case of the first and second Ku Klux Klan, the early labor unions, and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, their fraternal aspects were downplayed as being incidental to the groups' political and economic roles.

Mark Carnes' 1989 *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* broke new ground in proposing that historians needed to take fraternal organizations and rituals seriously. Carnes regarded them as ways in which Victorian men addressed cultural tensions and worked out their self-understanding. Rather than seeing fraternalism as what Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. had dismissed as the "plain citizen" who "sometimes wearied of his plainness," Carnes asked why men after the Civil War felt a need for initiatory brotherhoods and joined such organizations by the millions. Carnes' book's continuing importance as *the* frame of reference in scholarly debate merits it being examined at some length.<sup>4</sup>

In a book as layered as the rituals he decrypts, Carnes proposes that fraternal ritualism in the U.S. served as a powerful corrective to a feminized, liberal Protestant culture that left young men in need of a way to break out of the domestic sphere dominated by women and move into the public sphere's world of adult men. Fraternal culture, he argues, rather than being a boy's night out, a way of making business contacts, or a means of community and individual uplift, corrected a deficiency in male identity.<sup>5</sup>

Tracing the decline of fatherhood and the rise of motherhood from the mid eighteenth century, Carnes proposes that the ideology of the Revolution and the lure of commercial farming both encouraged young men to rebel against patriarchal fathers and strike out on their own and that it also fostered increasingly gendered spheres of work and family, accelerated by

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<sup>4</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

industrialization. All of these were topics of scholarly discussion at the time of Carnes's work in the 1980s. The topic is particularly well-addressed in summary in Karen Halttunen's 1982 *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870*.<sup>6</sup> Writing at the same time as Carnes, Elaine Abelson's 1990 *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store* argued that similar feelings of alienation among middle-class women in an increasingly gendered world would be medicalized as neurasthenia.<sup>7</sup> Men's problems also eventually moved from character deficits to medical conditions, as Peter Allen would argue in his 2000 *The Wages of Sin: Sex and Disease Past and Present*, but in the interim, fractured concepts of male self-understanding would seek out other means of repair.<sup>8</sup>

Carnes argues that prevailing cultural trends separated father and son, as women bore responsibility for child rearing in an ever more religious culture where the goal was to keep a young man's morals intact by keeping him in his mother's orbit for as long as possible, preferably until he could be handed over to the surveillance of an equally vigilant wife. Relying on the work of anthropologists Victor Turner and John Whiting, Carnes argued that fraternal organizations filled a need common in other cultures to move young men into the adult sphere through a ritual liminal state to deliver themselves from a "cross-sex identity conflict: in which the feminine and immature old self died and the young man learned that while his mother gave

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<sup>6</sup> Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Elaine S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Peter L. Allen, *The Wages of Sin: Sex and Disease, Past and Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

birth to his physical body, it was initiation into a fraternal organization of men that would whelp his soul.”<sup>9</sup>

The idea that the enlightened man could control his own fate and grow in virtue and knowledge in the company of his brothers provided an attractive message in an era of social dislocation. In this respect, Carnes’s work suffers by emphasizing the way initiation rituals made boys into men rather than the ways in which they made men into brothers and peers, as Turner’s work stresses. Carnes overlooks men’s need to create lateral social bonds at a time when the extended family was in decline because of increased geographic mobility and when economic instability threatened men in new ways, as outlined by Halttunen.<sup>10</sup> His thesis has merit in its emphasis upon growing male alienation from an increasingly feminized organized religion, but fails to examine the ways in which men increasingly found themselves in a society of rapidly shifting social and political institutions. Fraternal initiation rites adopted men into a stable group and assured them that they shared a bond far beyond casual acquaintance.

Other authors have argued how party affiliation, another key pillar of masculine identity began to lose its power after the Civil War as party identity became a component of regional identity rather than a locally fought conflict. Party identity would take another blow after the election of 1896 as Republicans fractured among themselves and rates of political participation began to decline. Carnes’s approach to fraternalism does not speak to how the rise in fraternalism may have filled this breach in the public sphere. With religious identity and partisan identity both in decline as components of men’s core identities, fraternalism’s promise that there was an immutable order of creation from a sovereign God down to the lowliest creature and its elaboration of a hierarchy of duties allayed political as well as personal anxieties. Fraternal oaths

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<sup>9</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 110, 113-114, 120.

<sup>10</sup> Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, 2-32.

generally bound their members into a defined hierarchy of relationships beginning with obligation to one's God—often abstractly conceived—then to family, then to one's co-fraternalists, which carried an innate shading of loyalty to race and class, then to one's fellow countryman or humanity in general. Along with this social order came extensive use of values words, discussed in Chapter Three, which gave further moral guidance and assurance. Both of these were reinforced through the power of ritual to anchor weakening identities or to cement new ones. These new identities were shared with a band of brothers or sisters that might number in the hundreds of thousands. When one moves from elite organizations and takes in the power of temperance fraternities and labor groups organized on the fraternal model, the political and social power of these groups cannot be questioned.

Fraternal organizations also served as alternative exercises in democracy for those disenchanted with national politics. Local lodges and state bodies generally elected officers on an annual basis and national ones at annual conventions every three or so years. In some cases, lodges also served as purified or rectified democracies in which those regarded as being incapable of exercising citizenship—women, freedmen, Catholics, and immigrants—were excluded from the fraternal body politic. Conversely, and particularly for African Americans, lodges were a place to learn politics during Reconstruction or to create alternative political community in the era of Jim Crow. This will be discussed at length in Chapters Three and Four.

Carnes examines how fraternal organizations added new degrees, often simply called the “Uniform Rank,” which allowed members to don military uniforms, take up swords, and march and drill in public. Carnes argues that these new degrees were a response to a crisis of white, bourgeois masculinity, particularly among a new generation who had not been able to prove their manhood in the Civil War. Since Carnes largely overlooks race and class, he fails to see how

these rituals were also statements about fear of racial degeneracy and a veiled assertion both by whites and African-Americans that they were fit and willing to protect their race.<sup>11</sup> As subsequent chapters will show, this rising paramilitarism laid the groundwork for the militaristic displays both of the Second Ku Klux Klan and of Garvey's Universal African Legion.

Yet Carnes made an important contribution to social and cultural history. His interpretation of fraternalism is that most frequently cited by other authors and retains its importance three decades on. Books as recent as Ami Phulgrad-Jackisch's 2011 *Brothers of a Vow: Secret Fraternal Orders and the Transformation of White Male Culture in Antebellum Virginia* expand and refine the Carnes model more than challenge it.<sup>12</sup> Lynn Dumenil's 1984 *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880-1930* had made a less radical version of Carnes's argument, arguing that Freemasonry reinforced liberal, white middle-class Victorian values and supported the wider Protestant culture. Hers is the only study comparable to Carnes's work by a historian, but her more modest claims failed to catch scholarly imagination and interest, as can be seen by the book's only coming back into print as an on-demand publication in 2014.<sup>13</sup> Carnes's contribution appears less and less satisfying the further one moves from white bourgeois domesticity. His thesis cannot answer why poor white men working in the sawmills of Arkansas would join the Woodmen of the World or the Knights of Honor.

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<sup>11</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 140-143, 213 n. 26. On the fear of racial degeneracy, see David G. Horn, *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance* (New York: Routledge, 2003) and Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005),

<sup>12</sup> Pflugard-Jackisch, *Brothers of a Vow*.

<sup>13</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Finally, Carnes's gender-based arguments about fraternalism are asymmetrical, portraying women as less interested in fraternalism and focusing largely on groups such as the Order of the Eastern Star, which were auxiliaries of men's organizations. His argument does not speak to elite women, who were leaders in esoteric fraternal organizations like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society. He fails to explain African-American women's large membership in mixed gender groups like the International Order of Twelve that gave women significant opportunities for leadership.

Alexandra Owen's work has given fraternalism and, particularly, esotericism, a more gender-positive interpretation, but as a cultural historian of modern Britain, her work has had little influence on Americanists. Owen's *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (1989), and, more importantly, her *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (2004) show how esoteric fraternal orders empowered women as they were increasingly excluded from the public sphere.<sup>14</sup> *The Darkened Room* argues that mediumship allowed women to resist both the social restraints and the tedium of the domestic sphere. In *The Place of Enchantment*, Owen argues that emerging esoteric orders, such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, created a space where elite men and women could meet on equal, if sexually fraught, terms and voyage together into spiritual realms where women did not suffer the social disabilities as they did in their terrestrial, middle and upper-class world. Significantly, she also sets the emergence of esoteric fraternal orders against the background of industrialization and the birth of modernity. She argues that the vocabulary of esoteric fraternalism was quintessentially modern in that it offered both mastery and self-control in a

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<sup>14</sup> Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004); Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, Kindle Edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004),

socially unsettled period as older authorities were challenged by biology, psychology, and anthropology. In Owen's argument, the language of these new disciplines is co-opted to support and expand what, on the surface, were antiquarian forms. In this light, her "place of enchantment" is a foil to Weber's thesis of disenchantment with modernity, arguing that rather than being backward looking, esotericism and more mundane forms of fraternalism were very much grounded in and products of modernity.<sup>15</sup>

While Owens broadens Carnes's elucidation of gender and fraternalism, her bourgeois focus again leaves no rationale for fraternalism and ritualism in the broader culture. Her Golden Dawn initiates are wealthy Bloomsbury avant-gardes. Her argument is also tightly focused on the reception of modernity in British culture, largely in the metropole of London. There is little here in the argument as stated for poor African-American women in the Mississippi Delta or white male factory workers and small farmers. Esoteric culture remains resolutely elite and less elite forms of fraternalism go unexplored.

American religion scholar Stephen Prothero offers some insight into the lacunae of Carnes and Owen's in his *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (1996).<sup>16</sup> In his work on Olcott (1832-1907), a founder of the Theosophical Society along with Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), Prothero argues that the Theosophical Society and related movements were upper class attempts to quell and control the democratic impulses of Spiritualism by confining it within the fraternalists' hierarchical lodge system and to purge the earlier movement of its tawdriness and chicanery. Prothero sees them as responding to the lower classes. His work in some ways prefigures Pflugrad-Jackisch's argument that fraternalism

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<sup>15</sup> Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, 1-2, 144-145, 249.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen R Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).

became a way for an earlier generation of Southern men to create a broadly-based definition of manhood that quelled social tensions by creating a space where the gentleman and the artisan could interact on the basis of their shared whiteness. What Prothero does not address is the role being filled by middling and working-class organizations. Fraternalism did have a heavy self-segregation by class. Prothero understands the importance of class, but primarily sees the fraternal model as a way to co-opt an unstructured popular movement.

The final significant contribution to the general historiography of fraternalism by an Americanist historian is John Giggie's 2011 book chapter, "For God and Lodge: Black Fraternal Orders and the Evolution of African American Religion in the Postbellum South." Giggie takes the world of fraternalism into the black culture of the Mississippi Delta, arguing that lodges became a space for African Americans to exercise manhood as they were squeezed out of the public sphere by the collapse of Reconstruction. Giggie does a great service in looking at the importance of non-elite, non-white organizations, yet he pays less attention to the specifically fraternal aspects of these organizations than to their political and economic role. He also argues that black male fraternal orders had an oppositional relationship with the black church and its ministers, aided by black women, who felt the social authority conferred upon them in the church—examined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her 1993 *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church: 1880-1920*—was being undercut by the rise of the all male lodge. Giggie does not address black ministers being vastly overrepresented in black fraternalism, including in its founding period, long before it was made, as he argues, subservient to the church. Giggie also overlooks the importance of women in black fraternal organizations, particularly the strength of mixed gender organizations among African Americans.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Giggie, *After Redemption*, 55-95; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*.

As the preceding pages have shown, the present state of the debate among American historians is that fraternalism is best discussed as a phenomenon of elite white men with a more limited place for elite white women and black men. That this essay has already delved extensively into other fields to fill out the discussion shows the relative poverty of the debate. As the work of Alexandra Owen and Margaret C. Jacob's *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Europe* shows, historians of modern Europe have been willing to engage fraternalism as a cultural force in ways their Americanist counterparts have not.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Breadth of the Fraternal Model**

Recent scholarship accords fraternal organizations influence because they were fraternal organizations. The following pages contrast older and more recent scholarship on four types of groups: white male fraternal organizations, vigilante and paramilitary groups, labor unions, and so-called mutual benefit groups. The more current scholarship in each of these cases demonstrates that these groups owed a good degree of their effectiveness to their successful adaptation of explicitly fraternal forms including the idea of brotherhood, inculcation of shared values, and the use of ritual. While this is promising, even more recent scholarship shows that the unique impact of the fraternal model is not yet appreciated.

### **White Male Fraternal Organizations**

As shown above, white male fraternal groups received a fair amount of scholarly attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the scholarship centered narrowly around their ability to assuage anxiety about masculinity in a changing society and relegate women to the

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<sup>18</sup> Margaret C Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

domestic sphere. Contemporary scholarship still recognizes the gendered nature of these groups, but also argues that they had other functions. Most importantly, recent scholarship on African-American and white ethnic groups show that outside of the white middle-class context, these groups often fulfilled quite different purposes and represented different outlooks on gender. To date, there is no major study of poor and working-class white native-born groups to shed light on how they are similar to and different from more elite white groups.

While white male groups have been overrepresented in the literature, they did invent the template for American fraternalism beginning with the establishment of Freemasonry in the colonies in the eighteenth century. Freemasonry's rituals and organizational model were important for organizations ranging from other white fraternal orders, to paramilitary organizations, unions, and so-called mutual benefit groups, to the creation of Wiccan forms in the mid twentieth century.

Ami Pflugrad-Jackisch is the latest of a long line of authors who have viewed white male fraternal organizations through the lens of gender, but she also looks at how these groups also helped define new ideas of race and class and how they intervened in the public sphere.<sup>19</sup> Pflugrad-Jackisch writes about Freemasons, Odd Fellows and the Sons of Temperance on the verge of the Civil War. In *Brothers of a Vow: Secret Fraternal Orders and the Transformation of White Male Culture in Virginia*, Pflugrad-Jackisch argues that the growth of fraternal orders in Virginia was a response to the destabilizing effects of the market revolution. She argues that these groups redefined southern manhood from being a slaveholder to a shared concept of white manhood in which both artisans and elites could participate.<sup>20</sup> In this new system, a man's worth would be defined on the basis of his character and his economic success in the public sphere. She

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<sup>19</sup> Pflugrad-Jackisch, *Brothers of a Vow*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

argues that this emphasis on shared race and gender both smoothed over class tensions between slaveholders and non slaveholders and created a civic space that included the emerging middle class. Fraternal members would claim that they were the rightful guardians of civic virtue, a claim they bolstered by their conspicuous turnouts at public events.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Pflugrad-Jackisch believes fraternal orders locked women more firmly into the domestic sphere. Members of fraternal orders appropriated women's role in charity and aid work, arguing that they brought organization and moral discernment to the process.<sup>22</sup>

Fraternalism and gender tension were at the center of the work of Mark Carnes and Lynn Dumenil, but Pflugrad-Jackisch makes a strong case that fraternal organizations played their primary role in the public rather than the private sphere. She shows is that these organizations diffused the class tension resulting from the market revolution and created a new basis for exercising civil power for white men.<sup>23</sup> In this she takes issue with many of the conclusions of Paul Goodman's *Toward a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the great transition in New England, 1826-1836* (1988).<sup>24</sup> Goodman argued that Freemasonry was the bogeyman for those affected by the market revolution in New England.<sup>25</sup>

Pflugrad-Jackisch also has important disagreements with Carnes, who can be taken to task for emphasizing how these organizations allowed young men to enter the public sphere and older men to act out patriarchy that he severely plays down the importance of the lateral bonds these organizations created. Pflugrad-Jackisch shows how these facilitated social and business

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 100–106.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 73–78, 95–98.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic : Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 9. 21.

contacts across class and party lines based on a shared self-concept of being Christian gentlemen.<sup>26</sup>

### **Vigilante and Paramilitary Groups**

Scholars do not generally think of vigilante and paramilitary groups as fraternal, but Chapters Three and Four will show that activities from military parading to organized violence were integral to many fraternal groups' identities. While these group's purposes set them apart from Freemasons in the popular imagination, many of them saw themselves as a brotherhood, directed their nefarious and noble actions to furthering shared values, and grounded themselves in a secret ritual. This has precedent in the radical lodges of the French Revolution and on, as Mark Lause shows, to the struggles for Italian unification.<sup>27</sup>

Lause's *Secret Society History of the Civil War* is a messy book. It ranges well before and after the Civil War and many of the groups he covers would better be called clandestine organizations in that they lack the ritual and hierarchical structure most scholars of fraternal organizations would consider essential to their definition of these groups. He is most interested in European-inspired radical groups, particularly small labor and abolitionist groups that he can trace to the European radical tradition of Italy, but he does cover one group that meets the generally accepted definition of a secret society: the Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC). Founded in the 1850s by Cincinnati-born con man G. W. L. Bickley, the KGC became a formidable vigilante organization that provided the template for the Knights of the White Camilla and the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan helped southern redeemers in their return to power

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<sup>26</sup> Pflugard-Jackisch, *Brothers of a Vow*, 24–25, 35–36.

<sup>27</sup> Mark A. Lause, *A Secret Society History of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

through a brutal campaign of assassination and intimidation in the early years of Reconstruction. The precursor KGC launched its own campaign of intimidation against those in the upper South who questioned secession. They also unsuccessfully plotted stirring up rebellion in the West. Most KGC attempts at large scale action failed. Lause argues that its greatest impact was inspiring fear. The KGC went into decline during the war and never recovered.<sup>28</sup> While Lause finds much comical in Bickley's ever shifting stories and the organization's constantly changing plans, he found that it was an effective means for organizing extra-legal violence on behalf of the southern elite, leaving a ready-made template for the Klan.

Michael Fitzgerald's 1989 *The Union League in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction* assesses a quasi-fraternal movement among the freedmen of Alabama and Mississippi from 1867-1869.<sup>29</sup> Though it was reviled by the Dunning School of historians as a clandestine organization with "its oaths and mysteries as means by which the Republicans manipulated the credulous freedmen," Fitzgerald argues that Union or "Loyal" League was one of America's most important experiments in mass political organizing.<sup>30</sup> He shows that it was an organization in which African Americans learned to wield political capital and organized for self-improvement. He admires the political organization and success of the Union or Liberty League, yet is distinctly uncomfortable with the fraternal aspects of the organization.<sup>31</sup>

The Union League had its beginnings in the North in the aftermath of Republican losses in 1862 as an organization with a Masonically inspired ritual dedicated to bolstering support for

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 51–53, 61–68.

<sup>29</sup> Michael W Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change during Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 20, 114.

the Civil War. Before the War's end, the League reached into the South, recruiting Union soldiers and southern unionists. After the first Reconstruction Act in 1867, Republican leaders viewed it as a logical body to organize enfranchised freedmen.<sup>32</sup> Fitzgerald demonstrates how freedmen, who were politicized by disappointments over land redistribution and the Black Codes, swelled the League's ranks and learned political skills and made local Leagues more responsive to community needs.

The League briefly dominated freedmen's politics across the South, offering political savvy and institutional know-how to create a block of solidly Republican voters that would long outlive the organization. At its high water mark, it counted tens of thousands of members, but, a succession of blows from 1868 onwards broke the organization. Organized violence and intimidation meted out by another secret society, the Ku Klux Klan, crippled the League. Whites argued that the League justified the Klan and League members were frequent targets of Klan violence. The rise of Redeemer governments and northern Republican ambivalence about continued support ended the League's activity.<sup>33</sup>

Fitzgerald takes little interest in the League's fraternal and ritual character except to emphasize the practical advantages of secrecy. Perhaps he downplays initiations as "solemnly pretentious" because the Dunning School had emphasized them as evidence of freedmen's credulousness. Implying that ritual and serious political purpose were somehow incompatible, he dismisses the ritual saying it might have interested some members, but that most were interested in helping Radical Republicans and in helping themselves. The Union League and Fitzgerald's work are discussed further in Chapter Four, where the argument is made that the League's

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 11, 17, 61.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 216, 234, 237.

fraternal forms had a large and lasting impact on African-American fraternalism in the generations that followed.<sup>34</sup>

### **Labor Unions**

Labor unions have been overlooked by almost every scholar of fraternal organizations and labor historians have tended to downplay early unions' fraternal aspects, dismissing them, as strange pieces of period culture rather than being integral to their mission and function. Two books by Leon Fink and Robert Weir on the Knights of Labor (KOL) illustrate the larger labor-fraternal phenomenon and the changing understanding of its importance. Fink represents the older line of thinking, praising the KOL's effectiveness, but showing a distinct discomfort for the fraternal bits of the story.<sup>35</sup> Weir represents the newer trends in cultural history, analysing the KOL through the lens of anthropology and spending a significant amount of times exploring explicitly fraternal themes.<sup>36</sup> He shows that the fraternal nature of the KOL was not a distracting bit of window dressing but was yet another successful adaptation of the fraternal model.

Fink's 1985 *Workingmen's Democracy* assesses the Knights of Labor (KOL) in five city case studies. He argues that, rather than being a reactionary movement of the petit bourgeoisie, the organization in fact readily adapted to changing circumstances and brought skilled and unskilled workers together. The KOL was founded in Philadelphia as a secret and highly ritualized brotherhood of skilled craftsmen in 1869 and was a precursor to later unions. The labor balance tipped decisively from agriculture to industry between 1870 and 1890 and that the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>35</sup> Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

<sup>36</sup> Robert E Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

majority of the industrial workforce was either immigrant, second-generation, or African American.<sup>37</sup> Fink summarizes the bewildering array of responses to the emerging prospect of a country of permanent wage laborers from socialism to the single tax, but argues it was only under great social strain that workers gave up communitarian values of the revolutionary era and shows how laborers shared the emerging middle class's reverence for thrift, family, temperance, and self-improvement.<sup>38</sup>

KOL membership ballooned from 28,000 in 1880 to 800,000 in 1886 before collapsing to 100,000 by the end of the decade.<sup>39</sup> Some have seen this rapid rise and fall being related to having an ideology of vacuous generalities and Fink recognizes the difficulty of advocating workers' political rights without having a concrete program.<sup>40</sup> Rather than joining the KOL's naysayers, Fink uses the work of Swedish political theorist Daniel Tarschys to place the KOL in the context of a western radical tradition, which made similar vacillations at the time between admiration for an absolute state, a democratic state, the association, and the commune. He finds a fairly comprehensive vision in the KOL's "workingmen's democracy," with its stress on revitalizing democratic citizenship and advocating a regulated marketplace to protect the public good.<sup>41</sup>

Fink takes little interest in the KOL as a fraternal organization. Neither "ritual," "initiation," "ceremonies," "brotherhood," nor even "secrecy" appear in the index, evidence that Fink might support Eric Hobsbawm's quip that labor group rituals were "misplaced ingenuity."<sup>42</sup> The KOL's elaborate ritual had been significantly simplified 1882 under the leadership of

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<sup>37</sup> Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, 35, xii.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 11.

Terence Powderly. Carnes makes a point of recording how Powderly was impatient with the ritual structure he had inherited, complaining that meetings were taken up by initiating members then instructing them in useless symbols.<sup>43</sup> Sadly, Fink pays little attention to how the KOL's values were communicated in its ritual system and how this might have dictated the range of acceptable courses of action or how the gutting of the ritual in 1882 might have also watered down the KOL's values and loyalty base. Fink struggles to explain the KOL's self-understanding, but never reviews the ritual, the primary text purporting to communicate those beliefs to the union's members.

In the 2006 *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor*, Robert Weir showed how much things had changed since Fink's work. The very inclusion of the word "culture" in the title signals a sea change and Weir does not disappoint as he attempts to bring anthropologist Clifford Geertz's concept of thick description to bear on the KOL in the years from 1869 to 1893. Dividing the KOL's history into an early fraternal period and a later broad-based solidarity period, Weir argues that the KOL failed, if it did, because it was beaten down by Gilded Age capitalism, not because of antiquated or contradictory ideas.<sup>44</sup> Weir sees that, while dispensing with ritual may have aided the Knights' rapid expansion, it likely also sowed the seeds of its rapid dissolution:

The varied meanings of fraternalism served mainly to ensure its decline throughout the 1880s. ... even Powderly admitted that old practices appealed better to the "heart and intellect" of adherents. In his zeal to make the order more modern, Powderly threw out the heart and naively trusted intellect.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil*, xix.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 92.

He divides the work into various areas of cultural production to make his case that the KOL was trapped between three cultures: its own, the new commercial culture, and bourgeois hegemony, but that “for a fleeting moment it stood as all things to all people, a spongy but all-encompassing Order.”<sup>46</sup> He argues the KOL created an oppositional culture appealing to a variety of workers.<sup>47</sup> Departing sharply from Fink’s approach, Weir devotes a good deal of space to the theme of brotherhood and to the KOL ritual, reminding the reader that, at a time when unions faced tremendous persecution, the secret fraternal model offered practical protection and that “[r]itual created a symbolic social order that embodied utopian notions of the perfect society.”<sup>48</sup>

The protection argument, however, as in Fitzgerald, is painfully thin. There is little necessary relationship between the need to keep an organization clandestine and the need for it to have a ritual, unless perhaps one believes that members were particularly credulous. While Weir appreciates that the lifting of secrecy and simplification of ritual under Terence Powderly cleared the way for rapid growth, he also argues that it undercut the fraternal spirit that helped hold together the KOL’s socioeconomic and political diversity.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, Weir’s work improves on earlier work that has made these organizations almost exclusively the domain of political and economic history, and it shows promise for analyzing any number of other groups and movements from the Grand Army of the Republic to Arkansas’s Agricultural Wheel and the various railroad unions of the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 17, 232.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 56–57.

### **Mutual Benefit Organizations**

While so-called mutual benefit organizations had rituals and lodges, they have mostly been studied for their insurance programs. Too many scholars seem to be unaware that such schemes were also common to both middle and working class organizations and that many had multiple elaborate degree ceremonies, indicating a role far beyond the safety net they provided.

The rise of mutual benefit organizations in the late nineteenth century shows one more successful adaptation of the fraternal model. For white immigrant communities and a growing class of urban blacks, these societies used the fraternal idea of brotherhood (here often based in ethnicity and race), the rhetoric of shared values and interests, and the binding force of ritual, tailored to the particular group's own historical experience, to build social and financial capital not available by other means.

Lizabeth Cohen's 1990 *Making a New Deal* gave these groups a place in the rise of corporate welfare capitalism and then the social welfare programs of the New Deal in Chicago from 1919 to 1939.<sup>50</sup> Cohen primarily deals with the importance of white ethnic mutual aid organizations as well as ethnic banks and religious institutions. She argues mutual benefit organizations died from a one-two punch of welfare capitalism's providing benefits that previously came from ethnic mutual aid groups and welfare capitalism's competing social institutions, which broke down ethnic identity, abetted by the rise of mass culture. A second blow came from the Depression, which bankrupted or severely weakened these organizations, which faced additional pressure from new federal insurance regulations. Large for-profit companies could meet these regulatory demands, but smaller organizations could not. This forced many organizations to turn for-profit or enter partnerships with for-profit institutions that

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<sup>50</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

eventually spelled the organization's demise as surely as that of the numerous mutual benefit organizations that collapsed following the crash of 1929 due to unsound actuarial or investment policies.<sup>51</sup>

David Beito's *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services 1890-1976* (2000) credited fraternal organizations with creating a system that was a major precursor to the modern welfare state.<sup>52</sup> Beito focuses only on fraternal institutions, broadens the sample to include both white and African American groups, and carries the discussion into the Great Society. This expanded racial and ethnic pool as well as the expanded time scale are important. By including white and African American groups, Beito can offer valuable comparisons across ethnicity, race, class, and time. By continuing his narrative up to the Great Society, Beito shows that many of these organizations and their benefit schemes weathered the financial crisis of the Great Depression with some even expanding their services.<sup>53</sup>

In Beito's argument, fraternal organizations built America's first extensive social welfare system, though he is not quite the determinist that Pflugrad-Jackisch is in her argument that it was the unmet need for insurance that drove the initial explosion of these organizations. He stipulates that these were not welfare organizations in the traditional sense. Lodges worked on the idea of reciprocity and he argues that their moral standards with regard to work habits, sobriety, and physical fitness ensured that the base was able to provide that reciprocal aid when it was needed.<sup>54</sup> These were not charitable organizations devoted to helping those in need, at least in their benefit programs. He documents these groups growing professionalism as they adopted

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 55–56, 64–66, 193, 210–11.

<sup>52</sup> David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 185–99.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 2–3.

modern actuarial standards and better investment practices. He shows a variety of different approaches to benefit programs from the white Independent Order of Odd Fellows, who were among the first to institute a payment schedule to the Knights of Tabor's Mississippi hospital instituting something very near an health maintenance organization model in the 1940s.<sup>55</sup>

Beito does not give a definitive reason why these groups died. He agrees with Cohen that this was partially a result of financial collapses during the Depression and partially due to both the social welfare programs and the increased insurance regulation of the New Deal. His following how a number of black organizations continued to thrive could be turned to a powerful argument that, while ethnic identity broke down and lessened the need for these organizations among white ethnics, the persistence of racial discrimination, kept the model viable for African Americans. Added to this, African-American organization's rituals continued to offer an alternative worldview to the oppression of the majority culture.<sup>56</sup>

Historical sociologist Jason Kaufman takes a view diametrically opposed to Beito's in his *For the Common Good?: American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (2003).<sup>57</sup> Kaufman believes that very little that was good came of fraternal or mutual benefit organizations, which he conflates in unhelpful ways. Responding to the discussion of the formation of civic capital launched by Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Kaufman argues that fraternal organizations launched a "competitive voluntarism," that increased ethnic and racial self-segregation, stymied the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 35–39, 134–36.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 222–34.

<sup>57</sup> Jason Kaufman, *For the Common Good?: American Civic Life and the Golden Age of Fraternity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

development of working class identity and, somewhat ironically, kept the U.S. from developing a national health insurance program.<sup>58</sup>

Kaufman focuses on the years 1880-1900, the height of the golden age of fraternity, which he defines as running from the Civil War to World War I. As Pflugrad-Jackisch later would, he says the greatest impetus for their growth was the need for health and burial insurance. However, he argues that once the organizations took off, the fraternal form proved itself to be incredibly malleable, accommodating everything from businessmen to immigrant workers to reformers.<sup>59</sup>

Kaufman is particularly critical of reformers like the Knights of Labor. He argues that the KOL failed because it made lofty moral and political claims but offered no concrete forms of support and set back broad-based working class organization until the time of the New Deal. He argues that this left Americans believing that unions were interested in the pay and benefits of their members, not in systemic issues worthy of support.<sup>60</sup> In the same vein, fraternal organizations encouraged Americans to segregate themselves by religion, race, and ethnicity, undermining development of a shared identity based on economic issues and stalled discussion of a national healthcare system since it would undercut their most important revenue stream.<sup>61</sup>

An important critique of Kaufman comes from Theda Skocpol and her fellow contributors to the 2006 *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African-American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality*.<sup>62</sup> Skocpol et al. find that while fraternal groups often self-segregate by race and class, that groups like the black Elks and Prince Hall Freemasons lent

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 7, 85–100; Robert Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 2001).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 144–62.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 101–19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 178-192, 150–60.

<sup>62</sup> Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power*.

financial backing and organizational support to the civil rights movement from the 1920s to the campaigns of Martin Luther King, Jr. While these groups were imperfect by contemporary community organizing standards, they were often key players both behind the scenes and in the public conversation at times when African Americans, poor whites, and immigrants have been portrayed as being politically inactive.

Fraternal organizations did help fragment American society, but they also provided some of the earliest community organization for immigrant groups and began to create a social safety net for their members. Kaufman fails to present an alternative to ethnic and religious self-help, and treads lightly around the fact that labor unions were among the leading opponents of health insurance in the early twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> Lizabeth Cohen's *Making a New Deal* also criticized fraternal organizations, but argued that they heightened people's expectations and provided a useful step on the road from welfare capitalism to government entitlements.

While Beito and Kaufman disagree violently, both have made important arguments for taking these groups seriously, for good, for ill, or somewhere in between. More scholarship is needed to explore whether the reason for their demise was financial strain because of New Deal programs or whether it owes more to the breakdown of ethnic identity with the suburbanization of the country after World War II. More work is also needed to provide a taxonomy of these groups. Scholars have yet to agree on what makes a group mutual benefit as opposed to one that is fraternal but also providing insurance schemes. Too often it seems that this decision has been made on the basis of race, ethnicity, and class, with working-class groups defined as being mutual benefit, while middle-class and elite groups are defined as fraternal regardless of whether the mutual benefit groups worked elaborate ritual schemes or whether the fraternal organizations

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<sup>63</sup> Kaufman, *For the Common Good?*, 148–49.

offered insurance. The perspective of cultural history can add needed complexity to what is currently a solely economic analysis.

### **Religious Studies**

If anthropology has refined the theory of ritual, as will be discussed in the next chapter, scholars of religion have defined the relationship between fraternalism and ritual, both as a phenomenon and as an academic discipline. Religion scholars studying fraternalism and esotericism are overwhelmingly Europeans who are also Europeanists in their field of study. After defining a few terms and spending a bit of time on the intellectual antecedents of today's scholars, the discussion will turn to the work of Antoine Faivre, Wouter Hanegraaff, and Henrik Bogdan. Religion scholars offer an important framework for defining fraternalism, for tracing and interpreting its fortunes in the academy, and for describing fraternal initiation ceremonies.

Fraternalism and esotericism cannot be separated as distinct phenomena, as much as that might horrify the average Knight of Columbus or Christian fraternity member. The vocabulary of fraternal ritual vocabulary draws on hermetic sources for ideas of enlightenment and initiation. On the other hand, esoteric organizations most often have their ritual basis in Freemasonry, whose forms have imprinted themselves upon western rituals of all sorts since the seventeenth century.

While indisputably esoteric groups like the Theosophical Society and Crowley's Thelemites are small in relation to the Elks, their kinship in both form and pedigree are undeniable. The historiography of esotericism is integral to any study of the larger fraternal movement. Antoine Faivre, whose work is discussed below, defined Western Esotericism as being that body of thought running from the Alexandrian hermetic corpus, through the

Renaissance, to Rosicrucianism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and finally into Freemasonry and the so-called occult groups of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Faivre is explicit that this tradition is also shaped by Judaism, via Christian conceptions of the Cabbalah (a spelling often preferred to separate the Christian variant from the Jewish original), and by the encounter of Islam, which had its own tradition of speculative philosophy rooted in the Alexandrian schools.<sup>64</sup>

A friendly critic of Faivre, Wouter Hanegraaff's *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (2012), deals with skepticism about esotericism as a legitimate and worthwhile branch of academic inquiry.<sup>65</sup> He argues that esotericism has been through four distinct phases in its relationship to intellectual life in the modern West. The first is the Renaissance, where esoteric thought was undifferentiated from other areas of inquiry and could be broadly viewed as an attempt to write a history of truth.<sup>66</sup> Hanegraaff's second epoch is defined as polemical in which Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox or Pietists and Confessional Lutherans used the charge of a dependence on esoteric and Eastern wisdom to associate the opponent with paganism. Finally, scholars like Diderot in his *Encyclopedia*, discarded anything that was seen as not being rational, consigning what had been considered

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<sup>64</sup> Antoine Faivre, *Western Esotericism: A Concise History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 11–24; Henrik Bogdan, "New Perspectives on Western Esotericism," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 13, no. 3 (2010): 97–105, doi:10.1525/nr.2010.13.3.97.

<sup>65</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Much of the discussion of Esotericism in the Academy is summarized from an excellent critical review by Kennet Granholm. "Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture." *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 60, no. 5/6 (November 2013): 683–87.

<sup>66</sup> Granholm, "Esotericism and the Academy," p. 683-684.

rational by Enlightenment standards, so the older attempts to create lineages of wisdom were sidelined.<sup>67</sup>

As Europe and the U.S. moved deeper into the Enlightenment, Christianity lost cultural authority to the sciences. Now Hanegraaff argues, as the mystical lost its influence to rationality, words like “supernatural” and “magic” were redefined to express their oppositional nature to real, rational knowledge. As scholars abandoned alchemy for chemistry and the line became clearer between astrology and astronomy, the older disciplines became the province of popular writings in the mass press by amateurs. Hanegraaff argues that separating astrology and astronomy from “real” science before the Enlightenment is an anachronism because they could not be separated in earlier periods from what is now the province of science.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Hanegraaff charts the twentieth century reentry of esotericism into the Academy. First, the “occult” was viewed as an independent tradition of knowledge spun as a reaction against the enlightenment. Thinkers like Jung and Eliade as well as early scholars of esotericism like Corbin and Scholem brought stature to the field, but, their scholarship was not without problems since many were also practitioners. From there he traces developments leading to the work of Yates and Faivre, bringing us into the debates covered here.<sup>69</sup>

Hanegraaff, unlike those who looked for perennial wisdom, is clear that the academic study of esotericism is a construction of scholars. While Faivre’s definitions remain important, the field has now passed its infancy and there are vigorous debates about its parameters. In 1995, Hanegraaff acknowledged this in his role as the principal editor of the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, both in his inclusion of gnosis in the title and by declining to define

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 684.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 684–85.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 686.

western esotericism in the preface. The field as it stands today is thoroughly multidisciplinary drawing scholars from anthropology, religion, literature, sociology, and history, but the debate about its precise nature continues.<sup>70</sup>

One of the most promising of the second generation of scholars of western esotericism is the University of Goteborg's Henrik Bogdan has devoted significant energy to the symbiotic relationship between esotericism and Freemasonry and, from Freemasonry, by extension to all fraternal groups. His *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (2008) breaks the impasse on the definition of the esoteric at least as it applies to groups.<sup>71</sup> Bogdan argues that rituals of initiations have remained remarkably stable since the seventeenth century when the first masonic initiations took shape. All initiation rituals in the West from speculative masonic groups like the Scottish Rite to Gerald Gardner's Wiccan covens contain the same identifiable pattern.

Drawing on Faivre's concepts of secrecy and transmission, Bogdan argues that the initiation ritual itself is where the initiate obtains knowledge, not by what he or she is told, but by their subjectivising of the experience. To put it another way, he says "the veil [of secrecy] constitutes the message itself."<sup>72</sup> The manner in which this transition functions will be discussed in the next chapter.<sup>73</sup>

His criteria of initiation offer an important way to determine which groups are fraternal and which are merely civic or social. They also offer an important basis for comparing groups to one another, a point that will be touched upon below in the discussion of sociologists' contributions to this body of knowledge.

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<sup>70</sup> Bogdan, "New Perspectives on Western Esotericism," 99–100.

<sup>71</sup> Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (*SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions*), Kindle ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 641-654.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 2310–15.

## Sociology

If anthropologists have made the most important contributions to the study of ritual, and scholars of religion have made some of the most important recent theoretical advances, sociologists have made some of the most important contributions to individual groups and to categorizing individual families of groups. Kaufman's extensive examination of fraternal organization and his negative appraisal of their impact on American culture have already been discussed, but others have also made constructive contributions.

Noel Gist, who taught sociology at the University of Missouri made a lasting contribution to the study of fraternalism and esotericism in his *Secret Societies: a Cultural Study of Fraternalism in the United States* (1940).<sup>74</sup> Like Bogdan, Gist was interested in classifying groups by their characteristics. He classified fraternal organizations in eight categories. The following list combines examples drawn from his work with my own:

1. Adult Fraternal (Freemasons, Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias)
2. Collegiate Greek (undergraduate fraternities and sororities)
3. Labor (Knights of Labor, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers)
4. Mutual Benefit (Royal Arcanum, Knights and Ladies of Honor)
5. Advocacy (Knights of Temperance)
6. Ethnic (Ancient Order of Hibernians, B'nai B'rith)
7. Religious (Knights of Columbus, Knights of St. Peter Claver)
8. Esoteric (Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Fraternitas Rosae Crucis)<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Noel Pitts Gist, *Secret Societies: A Cultural Study of Fraternalism in the United States*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 1940).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

Gist's categories can be challenged on many fronts. For example, his mutual benefit organizations can be hard to distinguish from adult fraternal. While many white ethnic and African American groups provided death, burial, and disability insurance to their members, so did fraternal groups like the Odd Fellows. One would be hard pressed to find the substantive difference between the African-American International Order of Twelve, usually classified as a mutual benefit organization, and the Black Knights of Pythias, usually identified as a fraternal organization based on either differences of complexity of ritual on the one hand or benefits provided to members on the other. It seems the Pythians, patterned on a large white fraternal group ride the coattails of their brethren, while the I.O.O.T., unique to African Americans gets put into the mutual benefit category. It is also notable that mixed-gender organizations seem to get the same sort of default sorting into mutual benefit while single sex organizations are viewed as adult fraternal.

Sociologist Mary Ann Clawson offered a taxonomy of fraternalism in her *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternalism* (1989). Some of her analysis overlaps with Carnes, but she proposed four distinctive characteristics of fraternal organizations:

1. Use of a corporate, hierarchical idiom,
2. Construction of ties among members through ritual and ceremony,
3. The celebration of ideas of artisanal craft and proprietorship, and
4. Assertion of patriarchal privilege and authority.<sup>76</sup>

Several of these concepts, like patriarchy and ritual have already appeared in this chapter in the work of Carnes, Bogdan and others. The idea of the corporate, hierarchical nature of fraternal organizations is important because, as Prothero argues, in addition to ritual, the other essential

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<sup>76</sup> Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be*, 97.

characteristic of these organizations is to be organized into lodges, though different groups use different descriptors.<sup>77</sup> A fundamental character of these lodges in Clawson, Carnes, and Prothero's argument is hierarchy either in ranks of officers, levels of initiation or both. The third characteristic of celebration of ideas of artisanal craft and proprietorship goes beyond groups associating their origins with stone masons or wood cutters. To assert proprietorship is to assert a connection to the republican ideas of the yeoman farmer and self-employed craftsmen who control their own destiny.<sup>78</sup> Even though fraternal organizations boomed after most Americans had become wage workers, the ongoing importance of the producerist ideal is confirmed by its persistence in the mythology of groups founded long after it had ceased to be a viable economic school.

Sociologist Theda Skocpol, Bayliss J. Camp, Orit Kemp, and their fellow contributors to the 2006 volume *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality* were the first to recognize that African-American groups did not fit the Carnes model of men seeking a hierarchical brotherhood and women being instructed (usually by male ritual authors) in the language of domestic subservience. The authors concur with others that white male rituals were "patriarchal" and white female rituals centered on being a "helpmate," but they add a third category they refer to as "pilgrimage," which sees those initiated as being on a journey of world transformation together rather than reinforcing ideas of rigid social hierarchy.<sup>79</sup> This allows for a far more subversive understanding of fraternal

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<sup>77</sup> Stephen Prothero, "From Spiritualism to Theosophy: 'Uplifting' a Democratic Tradition," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 3, no. 2 (July 1, 1993): 207–8, doi:10.2307/1123988.

<sup>78</sup> Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 45–52.

<sup>79</sup> Bayliss J. Camp and Orit Kent, "'What a Mighty Power We Can Be' Individual and Collective Identity in African American and White Fraternal Initiation Rituals," *Social Science History* 28, no. 3 (2004): 439–83.

organizations than Carnes and Clawson's yoking them to the perpetuation of patriarchy, creating the possibility that fraternal organizations can be vehicles for social transformation, not simply social conservatism. It also allows a new way to view the mixed-gender organizations so often lumped into the mutual benefit category. The idea of mutual pilgrimage sets up the image of a group united by its purpose rather than by shared characteristics. At the other end of the spectrum, it gives a new lens on Owen's elite esotericists.

It may seem that the survey of the religious studies and sociological literature has been an exercise in list making with Faivre's definition of esotericism, Bogdan's elucidation of initiation rituals, Gists categories of fraternal groups, Clawson's characteristics of fraternal groups, and Skocpol's categories of rituals. Yet they offer a matrix to analyze different groups as historical actors. The work of the modern Europeanists has already shown that these groups are more than male coping mechanisms or devices of female subjugation.

### **Church Historians**

Finally, while the sociologists give us several factors to account for the rise of fraternalism in the period after the Civil War, the field of church history completes the picture. Mark Noll helps to explain why fraternalism became important after the Civil War. Stephen Marini's work on the role of the hymn in creating a cultural theological consensus sheds further light on the power of ritual.

Mark Noll, an expert on the fortunes of Calvinism in American political history, provides a broader lens through which one may view Carnes's Victorian men in crisis. In his books *America's God* (2002) and *The Civil War as Theological Crisis* (2006), Noll charts the rapid downfall of the interrelated American ideals of political republicanism and Christian

providence.<sup>80</sup> Noll chronicles, as others have, the downfall of republicanism as Jefferson's ideal of freeholder yeomen gave way to the prospect of permanent wage workers, who in republican thinking could not be free citizens because they could not control their economic destiny, but he adds to this the parallel crisis of faith. This weakened the unique American synthesis of the Enlightenment, common sense epistemology, political republicanism, and a vision of American exceptionalism rooted in an idea of the nation's special covenanted relationship with God. Sectional tension over slavery created a crisis of Biblical interpretation. Both sides mustered arguments from scripture to defend their positions, raising grave questions about a hermeneutic grounded in Baconian epistemology and integral to the Second Great Awakening. After this consensus collapsed in the Civil War, Americans preferred to take their faith into the private sphere rather than to make bold new claims for its ability to solve pressing political problems.<sup>81</sup>

Noll's observations strengthen Carnes's ideas of a cultural vacuum. With the weakening of republican ideals, commonsense interpretation of scripture, and America's providential role, the nation faced a major identity crisis and a danger of atomization. This religious vacuum grew in the period from the Civil War to World War I, before high-brow neo-orthodoxy and popular fundamentalism reinvigorated and, to some extent, re-homogenized American Christianity.

Historian Stephen Marini's *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (2003) is analyzed in the next chapter.<sup>82</sup> Marini posits that, in a time of increasing religious division and social segmentation, a collective body of hymns common to all Protestants created a shared theological vocabulary that allowed conversations between members of different sects

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<sup>80</sup> Noll, *America's God*.

<sup>81</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War with a New Introductory Essay* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1995); Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 91–93.

<sup>82</sup> Stephen A. Marini, *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

and facilitated agreement on many points and the creation of an American Protestant identity.<sup>83</sup> The contention here is that fraternal ritual did much the same. By giving millions of Americans both male and female, black and white, and a wide diversity of economic and ethnic backgrounds a common vocabulary that Bogdan has shown comes from a common source, it was possible to reground the nation's *civilis conversatio*, to borrow a phrase from Jesuit political theologian John Courtney Murray.<sup>84</sup> The chapter on ritual will discuss the particular ways in which open-ended terms, group rhythms, and shared musical experiences create agreement in ways neurobiology is now telling us can be as or more powerful than conscious, rational assent to ideological propositions.

The historical importance of fraternal organizations is undeniable. These are critical to understanding political and economic movements as well as the daily lives of millions of Americans. Skocpol has examined African American fraternal organization's role in the years leading up to the classic era of the Civil rights movement, but no one has examined how they linked the hopeful days of Reconstruction, through the advent of Jim Crow, to the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement. White working class groups shaped views of race and politics, something religious studies scholars and sociologists have suggested.

Faivre's definition of western esotericism offers a matrix for analyzing fraternal discourse, which is itself a roadmap for political and social possibilities. It is crucial to analyze how words like "brotherhood" and "sisterhood" were transmitted across groups while other terms like "improvement" were held in common, but with contested definitions, and terms like

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<sup>83</sup> Stephen A. Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion," *Church History* 71, no. 2 (Je 2002): 285–86.

<sup>84</sup> John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths : Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 117. Murray is recasting a phrase used by Thomas Aquinas.

“injustice” and “sobriety” were innovations representing the orientation of specific groups.

Bogdan’s initiatory framework allows one to analyze which portions of the ritual were stressed by which groups, a small piece of which was done in Skocpol’s work which preceded Bogdan’s, and created the subversive category of “pilgrimage” rituals and fraternalism.

Finally, Hanegraaff’s recent work on the rocky relationship between esotericism and intellectual life provides a useful tool for claiming the relevance of these organizations as victims of scholarly willful ignorance. Even scholars with the best of intentions have blind spots in their analytical framework. By demonstrating that bias against fraternal and esoteric groups as appropriate objects of scholarly inquiry is a product of the so-called Enlightenment project now under severe critique, perhaps there is hope for hastening the speed and size of their reappraisal.

## Chapter 2

### The Power of Fraternal Ritual

This chapter addresses why fraternal organizations use ritual. These rituals include initiations into one or more grades or degrees of membership, opening and closing ceremonies, and other ceremonies ranging from funeral rites for members to ceremonies for children's auxiliaries. This chapter draws on anthropology, sociology, and neurobiology as well as history to consider fraternalism's relationship to religion as defined by sociologist Emile Durkheim, to anthropological theories of the function of symbol and ritual, and to new insights about music and the brain. Finally, it argues that ritual settings provide a unique venue for what Turner described as "communitas."

Ritual in fraternal settings allows the new initiate or established member to take in terms and ideas that define and bind the group, yet puts them across with a light hand. Properly done, it allows the initiate to integrate terms and concepts that comport themselves with his or her life experiences rather than forcing agreement with overly precise definitions and didactic methods. Finally, initiatory rituals transform the individual not by imparting substantive "secret" knowledge that the initiate acts on rationally, but via the experience of initiation itself.

Historians have been too cavalier in dismissing the social and political effects of fraternal organizations. As Wouter Hanegraaff argues of esotericism, the greatest barrier to the serious study of fraternal groups within the academy is their association with discarded, irrational worldviews that have nothing to contribute to the modern pursuits of knowledge descended from

the Enlightenment. Situating fraternal and esoteric organizations in the world of religion, as will be demonstrated, provides a variety of tools for rebutting this now venerable bias.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter offers a synthesis that also introduces multiple points of tension and possibility for contradiction. It eschews the approach that applies one or two theories to a period or group to offer a definitive explanation. The fraternal ritual model was uniquely suited to address a cultural breakdown that had left older religious and political ideas discredited. It created solidarity and conversely justified differentiation by means of a fraternal vocabulary that revalorized old terms like “justice” and added new terms like “mutuality.” Ritual, not logical discourse lent authority to these terms. With the evangelical consensus destroyed by the Bible’s inability to resolve the crisis over slavery and republicanism, Mark Noll has argued that belief was forced into the private sphere where it was safe from scrutiny, but increasingly impotent to exert authority beyond the individual. This epistemological crisis offered a way to reconstruct citizenship, virtue, manhood, and race—or at least to reframe the debates on the meaning of these terms. Ritual did this through the member’s experience of ritual rather than through logical reasoning.<sup>2</sup>

To build the case for ritual’s soft power, this chapter mines anthropological and sociological literature, giving particular attention to the work of Victor Turner. It then turns to the work of two British neuroscientists, Ian Cross and Aniruddh Patel, who have studied the phenomenon they have named “entrainment,” which relates to the ways human beings are caught up in rhythmic group actions in ways that go far deeper than any surface sounds and gestures. As

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<sup>1</sup> Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1–4.

<sup>2</sup> Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 386–401.

part of that discussion, the work of historians Stephen Marini and Mary Carruthers lends insight to notions of group behavior and the ways in which knowledge is internalized.

Anthropologists have largely owned the field of the study of ritual with an ancillary role played by religious studies scholars' examinations of the rites of particular traditions. In more than a century of study, anthropologists have gradually moved from grand organizing theories of religion and ritual to embrace complex, interdisciplinary explanations rooted in the complexity of human experience rather than psychologically determined forms, linear concepts of societal progress, or economic structures within a given society. Obviously it is not enough to say that fraternal organizations lend themselves to this line of inquiry simply because they have rituals and value systems or that their modern study has found its most welcoming home in the discipline of religious studies. Blue Lodge Freemasons, the oldest branch of Masonry, would argue vehemently that they are not a religion, a stance reinforced by three hundred years of suspicion from Christian sects ranging from the Catholic Church to twentieth-century fundamentalists. To justify this methodology, this chapter begins with the century-old work of French sociologist Emile Durkheim, whose work is seminal in defining religion, to show that fraternalism fits his categories. Next it turns to the applicability of work on symbols, myth, ritual, and community by anthropologists including Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and Sherry Ortner, Eric Wolf, Tanya Luhmann, and Sarah Pike. Finally, this section summarizes what anthropology and older sociology can tell us about the importance of ritual.

A French Jew working at the time of the Dreyfus Affair and the rancorous debates over *laïcité* or state secularism, Emile Durkheim defined religion in societal rather than doctrinal terms in his 1912 book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Durkheim says that religion is the epitome of collective life. By examining symbols, he emphasizes the societal value of

practices and beliefs, rather than simply classifying them as primitive or degenerate in comparison to contemporary social ideas. Durkheim was reacting against reductionist definitions based on comparisons of “primitive,” “animistic” religion of the undeveloped world with the evolving rationality of the religious and philosophical thought of Western Europe. His rejection of fixed human constraints in favor of historical development allows him to assert the revolutionary idea that “all ideas are true after their fashion.” In sum, Durkheim argued that ideas are socially and experientially constructed, concluding that all ideas are likely the original products of religious and therefore collective representations.<sup>3</sup>

Durkheim divides religious phenomena into beliefs, which are states of opinion conveyed through representations, and rites, defined as specific actions that are set apart from other types of activity by their object. These two functions create a dichotomy between that which is profane and that which is sacred, set apart, and isolated. A sufficient number of sacred things organized in relatively coherent coordinate and subordinate relationships that do not fall into another social system constitute a religion. Religion that is shared and creates coherence among a group constitutes a church. These definitions of religion and church work well for fraternalism and fraternal organizations, as will be shown below.<sup>4</sup>

Fraternal life stresses the collective element that Durkheim found essential. It generally has elaborate systems of symbols representing its beliefs about individual morality and the ideal society. Its ceremonies certainly fall within his definition of rite, with their special physical locations and dress, which tell the member that they have left the ordinary world and entered into a different time and space. One can overcome the fraternalist’s objection that fraternalism is not

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<sup>3</sup> Emile Durkheim, “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,” in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

a religion by countering that it is not an exclusive religion, an idea that works well in Eastern thought, where Confucianism blends with Buddhism or Buddhism with Shinto, but does not rest so easily on the western mind with its tendency to see truth as unitary rather than pluriform.

It is notable that this new form arose at precisely when Carnes and Noll agree that older forms of Christianity were in disarray as evangelical authority declined and many men forsook mainline Protestantism all together as the province of women. Carnes, as has already been noted, argues that the feminization of religion was one reason that men needed fraternal groups. Using Durkheim's definition, one may argue that they did not find a substitute for religion, but flocked to a new form of popular religion that was untainted by the factors that led to collapse of the old and whose ritual methodology must have seemed a welcome departure from the discredited approach of common-sense epistemology.<sup>5</sup>

In his 1965 essay, "Religion as a Cultural System," anthropologist Clifford Geertz defined religion as a system of symbols. In Geertz's argument, symbols motivate members of a culture by creating a persuasively "factual" vision of the order of existence and this, in turn, makes the particular modes of conduct recommended by said system seem uniquely realistic or correct to members of that culture.<sup>6</sup> For Geertz, a symbol is an object, act, event, or relationship that lends itself to being used for abstract conceptualization. These extrinsic sources of information give meaning to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to represent it and by shaping reality to themselves. These symbols create dispositions within the worshipper, which shape his activities, both in creating motivations, defined as directional proclivities to perform or avoid certain acts, and moods, which are scalar degrees of affect giving

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<sup>5</sup> Noll, *America's God*, 422–38; Mark C Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 73–77.

<sup>6</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, 1966, 1–46.

tone to life. To give a fraternal example, the Masonic concept of God as Grand Architect of the Universe and the All-Seeing Eye become potent symbols in unsettled times. At a basic level, the idea of an architect conveys that there is an order and plan for human destiny, even in seeming chaos, and the eye assures the Mason that God sees and knows the morality both of his acts and those of others. On a more sublime level, the architect is archetype for the individual Mason's quest to create order and a better world and the eye speaks of God's mystical availability via contemplation.<sup>7</sup>

Symbols and symbol systems, Geertz argues, give human beings the ability to negotiate their world and perceived weaknesses in these systems raise profound anxiety, especially when they touch upon the limits of human analytic capacity, endurance, and moral insight. To Geertz, a religion must be able to confront opacity, to explain empirical phenomena and contextualize suffering and evil within a larger pattern of fundamental order. This religious perspective allows the believer to see meaning much as commonsensical, aesthetic, or historical perspective would in other contexts, but moves beyond and completes these.

In ritual, which Geertz defines as "consecrated behavior," adherents not only bear witness to, but actually generate their conviction that their religious conceptions are sound. Ritual, he argues, shapes the spiritual consciousness of a people by providing models not only of what is believed but models for believing.<sup>8</sup> The dispositions induced by ritual shade the individual's conception of the everyday world. The believer lives for short times in the intense and transformative world of ritual, but everyday life, Geertz argues, is shaped by the lasting shadow of that experience. The worlds of ritual and the everyday are distinct, but, Geertz argues, rather than existing as an isolated state, the experience of the ritual world transforms the individual's

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 28, 31–35.

perception of the everyday and the differences in these experiences across religions drive much of the difference among cultures.<sup>9</sup>

Geertz's argument is key to understanding the rise of fraternalism in the U.S. in two ways. In a negative sense, his arguments about the anxiety caused by the breakdown of a symbol system speaks to the cultural anxiety in the United States following the Civil War, explaining why the fraternal model was so readily accepted by Americans when previously it was largely confined to a much smaller population of Freemasons, Odd Fellows, and temperance orders. The collapse of one symbol system necessitated the creation of another or, at a minimum, necessitated bolstering the damaged system by lending authority to existing symbols when they no longer presented a convincing underpinning for the social order.

From a positive approach, Geertz's notion that rituals do not merely demonstrate conviction, but generate it, is important for understanding how the repetition of ritual ingrained values and terms within members. Ritual may well have been particularly attractive because it contrasted so sharply with the praxis of the culturally weakened Protestant worship. Three generations before the Civil War, the Second Great Awakening created ecstatic experiences of dancing, speaking in tongues, and uncontrollable laughter, which affirmed the validity of Protestantism for the believer. Later, in this chapter, Stephen Marini will argue that the collective experience of singing hymns played a more important role than theological discourse in building a Protestant consensus. However, by the time of the Civil War, the means to instill religious truth in the believing Protestant was the discourse of the sermon. This, Geertz would argue is the pedagogical opposite of the collective action of ritual, an insight contemporary neuroscience will refine later in this chapter with researchers' insistence that the argumentative nature and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 35.

specificity of this type of discourse may keep the worshipper by taking teachings into their deepest levels of consciousness.

Finally, Geertz gives a model for understanding how fraternal ritual shaped the member's perception of the everyday world. His contention that the shadow of ritual is far longer than its short but intense practice shaped the believer's worldview shows how fraternal definitions of ethics and community entered public sphere, perhaps in ways that the member was not even usually conscious of. Carnes saw this when he argued that the repetition of ritual might be expected to be tedious after one has been initiated and then watched others pass through the same ritual many times each year, but that instead these repetitions renewed the member's own initiatory experience and renewed his or her bond with the organization and its worldview.<sup>10</sup>

Sherry Ortner's 1973 essay "On Key Symbols" and Eric Wolf's 1958 essay, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," each offer insights that can be blended with Geertz's work to further refine the ways symbols function in fraternal ritual and culture.<sup>11</sup> Ortner categorizes the ways in which key symbols that aid in sorting out experience, may be categorized. She argues that these symbols operate on thought or action within a culture and contribute to its distinctive organization. She arranges her key symbols in a continuum between those which summarize and those which elaborate. Summarizing symbols distill rather than encourage reflection while elaborating symbols are "root metaphors" that aid in comprehension and organization of cultural categories and are formally related to a culture's core ideas,

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<sup>10</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, 123.

<sup>11</sup> Sherry B Ortner, "On Key Symbols," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1338–46; Eric Robert Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, 2002, 168–74.

cognitive assumptions, and values. Finally, key scenarios express a culture's means-end relationships in ways people can act upon and may include ritual behavior.<sup>12</sup>

While less directly related to ritual, Ortner's model shows how the values and concepts imprinted on the fraternal member during ritual shapes his or her worldview by offering both summarizing and elaborating symbols. A summarizing symbol may be as conceptual as the word "sisterhood," which compresses ideas about community, relationships, and mutual obligation into one word. Conversely, a summarizing symbol might be as literal as a ceremonial sword in a lodge guard's hand, reminding the member that he or she is an initiate separated out from the rest of the world and also of the more literal importance of keeping the confidence of the group. Elaborating symbols would include Masonic symbol of the stone cutter's square, which calls the initiate to reflect upon ideas of justice and their application. Ortner's summarizing symbols could be used argumentatively or as a plea for shared agreement while elaborating symbols invited discussion and debate about issues and the opportunity to reason analogically.

In "The Virgin of Guadalupe," Wolf examines how the Guadalupe functions as a "master symbol," a representation of a culture's hopes and aspirations which members of a culture can use in their dealings with one another. Wolf shows the cult of the Guadalupe as model of warmth and maternal satisfaction for the Mexican family on the one hand and of rebellion and hope on the other for the Indian. For the Indian, the master symbol of the Guadalupe also offers a saving syncretism, saving his or her soul and faith in the older gods and also putting Indians into relationship with conquering Spaniards thereby checking unbridled oppression. In this view, the Guadalupe watches over her chosen nation, a new order of which the apparition at Tepeyac was the harbinger and the Revolution its culmination. She thus becomes the master symbol in which

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<sup>12</sup> Ortner, "On Key Symbols," 158.

ideas of well being, hope, and destiny find their expression, linking and mediating the relationships of colonial past and independent present.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of a multivalent master symbol is important to fraternal orders in at least two contexts. First, most fraternal systems have an identifying master symbol. In the case of Freemasons, this would be light, which becomes a symbol of knowledge, growing enlightenment and the divine. In an equally important way, Wolf's argument that the master symbol may have a flipside or countervailing interpretation sheds light on the experience of minority fraternalists and esotericists. In Wolf's thinking, the African-American Prince Hall Mason or the Irish Knight of Columbus may be taking the ritual and symbols of the dominant culture and using them both to create and then to validate a vocabulary of dissent. Terms like "brotherhood" can become an expansive "brotherhood of man" or pleas for greater light are not simply statements about the desire for greater knowledge by for the individual but of greater light upon the culture, which may be seen as blinded to injustice.

The earliest anthropologists argued that myth and ritual were generally fixed constructs. Later anthropologists asserted that both myths and the rituals which operate in living dynamic systems shaped by their societies in response to concrete challenges and changes. Likewise, the fraternal model was able to transform and adapt itself, both by shifts in symbols and rituals within existing groups and in the creation of new groups that combined old forms and symbols with new insights and beliefs to create something that was new and yet could claim the authority of older systems. The plasticity of ritual and myth show how multiple ritual and mythic systems could function within a single society or individual, an important point for a nation teeming with hundreds of fraternal groups and in which an individual belonged to multiple groups as often as

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<sup>13</sup> Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe," 163–64.

to one. It also serves as a corrective to the gendered focus of Dumenil, Carnes, and Clawson and supports Kaufman's contention that the fraternal model was an adaptable tool rather than a fixed cultural system.

In his 1926 *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, Bronislaw Malinowski argued that a society's myths are actually a "social charter." For Malinowski this meant that these myths were the ways in which societies set the parameters of their arrangement and activities. Rather than being static, Malinowski found that myths are transformed to resolve societal contradictions. In this, he makes a powerful case for looking at the social power of myth not only in "primitive" cultures, but also in the contemporary West.<sup>14</sup>

Malinowski's view of myth has both internal and external implications for fraternal culture. Within the fraternal world, Malinowski's notion shows how rituals and the lessons they taught evolved, as in the degrees of Scottish Rite Masonry augmenting older Masonic ideas with the thinking of the Enlightenment. These changes could also happen in response to more specific circumstances, as when the African-American Daughters of the Tabernacle added a fourth degree to their ritual system at the collapse of Reconstruction. This new degree ceremony represented one of the earliest expressions of Afro-centrism, pushing back against the exclusion of African Americans from the public sphere and the growing currency of Social Darwinist racial theory by asserting that Africa was the mother of western civilization and had imparted her wisdom to Europe.

Fifty years later, Marshall Sahlins would build on Malinowski's concept to show the dialectical relationship between Western political philosophy and sociobiology in his 1976 "Folk

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<sup>14</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 168–75.

Dialectics of Nature and Culture.” Sahlins shows how pendulum swings of intellectual fashion, from Hobbes to Darwin to E. O. Wilson have created mutually reinforcing views of both human nature and the animal kingdom of life as an individualistic struggle for survival. While Malinowski looked primarily at the role of religion, Sahlins shows how even economics and science can be used to create and elaborate the “charter myth” of western, capitalist society. Sahlins’s essay offers powerful support to Hanegraaff’s argument that the third and fourth stages of western intellectual’s views of esotericism were formed by defining esoteric and hermetic approaches as being outside the bounds of rational discourse rather than interrogating them for what they might teach about the past and about the limitations of present epistemologies.<sup>15</sup>

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White take a romp through Russian semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque in their 1986 *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Bakhtin had proposed that the carnivalesque, based on the medieval parody of the feast of fools, was a mode in which social tension was released via ritualized parody of the values at the heart of the culture. Stallybrass and White use Bakhtin’s frame to examine cultural binary networks of ideas of high and low and their symbolic inversion and transgression. They conclude that ritual and symbolic inversions of the established order both define and question the usefulness of a given cultural order.<sup>16</sup> Historian Elaine Frantz Parsons, whose work is discussed in Chapter Three, has recently argued the first Ku-Klux Klan made extensive use of this European charivari tradition in both its public performances and in its private acts of violence.<sup>17</sup> This mode also

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<sup>15</sup> Marshall Sahlins, “Folk Dialectics of Nature and Culture,” in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 176–82.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, “The Politics and Poetics of Transgression,” in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, 2nd ed., Blackwell Anthologies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 176–82.

<sup>17</sup> Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015)

explains the carnivalesque orientalism of the Shrine, which was invented to let masons be able to break from their normal public persona of rectitude and dependability. In their private spaces, fraternal organizations also make room for the comic mode in initiation rituals, where the blindfolded initiate becomes the buffoon.<sup>18</sup> This shows yet another way, along with trading the sermon for ritual, that the new religion of fraternalism offered a catharsis not readily available in Calvinist Presbyterianism or the Arminianism of Methodism.

As anthropology matured as a discipline, its adherence to rigid models grounded in evolution, linear models of progress, and more strictly economic applications of Marxism, faded and, along with it, the interest in symbol in the majority of the works discussed to this point. In symbol's place came a growing interest in ritual and performance. This increased attention to ritual and performance in the literature over symbols might also be seen as a growing understanding that religion is grounded in the totality of experience rather than in abstract ideas or neatly determined economic patterns. This brings the discussion, at last, to Victor Turner's concept of *communitas* so important in the work of Mark Carnes. The argument here is not with the centrality of *communitas* to analysing fraternal ritual, but in Carnes's limited portrayal of the phenomenon, both in his focusing on a narrow band of middling and elite male organizations and in his limited appreciation for how these seemingly private experiences of *communitas* affected the larger culture.

Turner's 1969 "Liminality and *Communitas*" describes rites of passage in which participants move from one state of life to another by passing through a liminal state. Turner proposed that through various forms of hazing, the initiates old identity was stripped away and for some period of time, he or she was left as *tabula rasa* in a liminal state not unlike the womb,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 77, 96.

death, or the stripping of a prisoner's identity. During this state, he argued, those going through the ritual experience a sense of *communitas*, a strong, unstructured bond, which both questions and renews formal social structures. This is a primal experience of connectivity unmediated by the social structures of the everyday world made possible by the liminality of the environment. Upon emerging, the initiate is reborn, with old defects erased or rectified and reenters the everyday world, but the experience of liminality and *communitas* remain touchstones as do the bonds with those who shared the experience.<sup>19</sup>

Three fellow anthropologists add to Turner's ideas in ways that are useful for understanding fraternal ritual. In the posthumously published 1999 *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Roy Rappaport proposed that ritual achieves its effects through the communication of meaning. Rappaport argues that "ritual is *the* basic social act" and separates belief from acceptance, which he identifies with outward action, Rappaport posits that the performative aspects of ritual action are intrinsic to the liturgical form. He argues that to choose to participate in a ritual action is to accept a social contract that creates, maintains, and bridges the boundaries between public and private acts. Rather than bringing about inward transformations, liturgical acts serve to make society possible by articulating shared understandings, behavioral norms, and rules.<sup>20</sup>

Rappaport's work shows how fraternal rituals are social contracts with fellow group members. While Turner's explanation of the importance of rites of initiation was internal, Rappaport draws on the work of Gregory Bateson to show its external power. Rather than only renewing the individual and bonds with a select group, ritual casts a wide net renewing the

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<sup>19</sup> Victor Turner, "Liminality and Comunitas," in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Michael Lambek, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 326–39.

<sup>20</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137–38.

society. The repetition of ritual polices the group by renewing commitment to the group's values and norms, but becomes voluntary since assent comes via participation rather than in ascribing to a list of propositions. In the world outside of the lodge room, the individual still carries the group's norms and ideals.

The final two anthropologists discussed here focus specifically on contemporary western esoteric groups. T. M. Luhrmann's 1989 *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* aptly uses the tools of anthropology to interrogate the culture of the modern West. Rather than simply studying the rituals and social groupings of English Wiccans and ceremonial magicians, Luhrmann shows why "modern," "rational," "educated" people commit themselves to a system of beliefs that is regarded as irrational and outmoded. Luhrmann's informants act as if magic is true and ritual transformative rather than spending time proving its truth to others and to themselves. Luhrmann argues that the ancient magician, saw him or herself as working within a set of universal laws which he could interpret through the use of his reason. In contrast, the modern magician sees his or her practice as being outside of the normal realm of concerns and part of a world that admits the usefulness of the irrational. In this vein, magical practitioners, she argues, are able to separate belief strictly construed from ritual practice, a division bolstered by both Freud and Jung's stress on the importance of the unconscious. Luhrmann argues that those she studied generally first embraced practice and, over time, continued practice led to a change in beliefs via what she defines as an example of "interpretive drift." This is a most important insight for the study of esoteric as well as more mainstream practice. In the words of Pierre Bourdieu, the practitioner has formed a "habitus," a pattern of behaviors and ideas that become ingrained without becoming part of conscious deliberation, which over time works cognitive changes. Luhrmann has also created an argument

that esoteric practice is akin to the Christian notion from late antiquity of *lex orandi, lex credendi* or “praying shapes believing.”<sup>21</sup>

Twenty years after Rappaport’s work and a dozen after Luhmann’s, Sarah Pike’s *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (2001) explored the ways in which neo-pagans in the United States find and create community in the context of large festival gatherings, giving a western test to Rappaport’s notions of ritual and community. Pike builds on Turner’s concept of liminality to show the ways neo-pagans map themselves onto a mental landscape of the festival, which contrasts to their day-to-day lives in “mundania.” They use the festival to integrate childhood memories into their personal narratives and to negotiate conflicts around gender and sexuality, which both test neo-pagan community ideals and create a space for integration and healing. Pike also shows the consciously postmodern ways in which festival participants create their traditions and engage their own subjectivity.<sup>22</sup>

Pike’s work illustrates how Turner’s liminal state and its accompanying *communitas* need not be the small group affair it is often imagined as being. After all, Turner himself used the hippie communities of his era as an example. Aside from its direct application to neopagans, Pike’s provides a model of how settings not be construed as strictly ritual settings open the fraternalist to a mass experience of *communitas* ranging from a fraternal convention to parades, banquets, and military drilling competitions. In these venues one also has the experience of being removed from “mundania,” stripped of normal identity, and surrounded by those who share a commitment to a particular worldview. In these regional, national, and international gatherings,

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<sup>21</sup> T. M. Luhmann, *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 307–23; Erwan Dianteill, “Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion: A Central and Peripheral Concern,” *Theory and Society* 32, no. 5/6 (December 1, 2003): 529–49.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community*, Kindle ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), loc. 453-552.

participants build *communitas* outside of their local communities and create strong bonds across the organization built on shared experience rather than ideals and values in the abstract.<sup>23</sup>

These insights from anthropology can be given order and argumentative force, beginning with Durkheim’s definition of religion to show the deep level at which fraternal organizations—even those as seemingly frivolous as the Shrine with its clown costumes and tiny cars—shape the lives of their members. Multiple insights from the field will create what Geertz would call a “thick description” of fraternal ritual and its effects: Symbols form the basis of fraternal ritual, creating the basis for shared ideas and values in Ortner’s summarizing symbols. They create the possibility for debate and discussion, in the case of her elaborating symbols. In the case of Wolf’s master symbols, they create opportunities for deep shared identification while at the same time leaving room for alternative and oppositional identities by those outside of the dominant group. Turner’s *communitas* provides a key for understanding the ongoing power of initiation. Rappaport and Pike show how ritual can create even larger experiences of *communitas* and bind the member to the group.

### **Neuroscience, Church History, and Medieval Studies**

The ideas of the anthropologists receive substantive support from neuroscience. The work of religious historian Stephen Marini analyzes ritual, of a sort, and has a direct bearing on the more recent findings of neuroscience in a way that couples them with those of the anthropologists. As introduced in the previous chapter, Marini proposes that a shared body of pan-Protestant hymnody during the nineteenth century offered cohesion in an increasingly diverse religions landscape. American Evangelicals of different traditions built a common

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<sup>23</sup> Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*.

theological language through song. He argues that formal theological rhetoric—the treatise, the sermon, and the inter-denominational public debates about competing truth claims—give a skewed view of American religious history that has veiled the ways in which shared musical experiences bridged denominational differences and helped to build a national religious consensus in the nineteenth century. In the shared world of the hymn, Marini says Protestants were far less interested in establishing the bona fides of various doctrines than in exhortation, meditation, and testimony.<sup>24</sup>

Ian Cross, director of Cambridge University’s Centre for Music and Science, takes Marini’s insight even further in his 2006 article, “Music as Social Being.” Drawing upon recent research in neurobiology, Cross argues that, while music does not seem to have the same innate biological basis as language, it does seem to have similarities across cultures that make it more than an evolutionary remnant. If one broadens the standard Western definition to think of music as patterns of events occurring at regular temporal intervals, then dance, the chanting of religious texts, and other activities are more easily seen as part of the larger phenomenon. Cross argues that these phenomena all bring their participants into a state of mind he calls “entrainment.” He defines this as the shared experience of the regular pulse, with participants coordinating their behavior with that of other participants and all organizing the timing of their actions and sounds around a common pulse or beat. A group of disparate individuals, in Cross’s thinking, are literally caught up in a beat and brought into a shared experience.<sup>25</sup>

Marini spoke of a belief structure “more mythic than systematic” that allowed agreement across confessional lines. Cross identifies the biological basis, arguing that, while the pulse of

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen A. Marini, *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Ian Cross, “Music and Social Being,” *Musicology Australia* 28 (2006): 114–26.

the music draws a group together, it is powerful because of its light touch. Language, he says, has coercive features, but shared musical experience allows those it engages to feel that they are part of a common experience while at the same time allowing highly individual interpretations of the meaning of that experience. The power of music, he argues, lies not in an ability to make people think or believe the same thing but to “modulate emotion and mood states,” drawing participants into something very like Victor Turner’s liminal state, but, as music is an “unconsummated symbol,” it has a “floating intentionality.”<sup>26</sup>

This openness minimizes conflict by creating a shared experience that is open-ended and communicative and contributes to both social and intellectual flexibility. Cross argues that, over the long course of human evolution, music or rhythmic action has created space for group interaction and negotiation of the sort that Aristotle described as distributive justice or that Cross calls a tendency toward social justice. The shared experience of lodge ritual and fraternal drill partakes in the same characteristics as Marini’s hymns and Cross’s entrainment: building group bonds and creating a shared vocabulary.

In a 2008 essay for the Templeton Foundation titled “Music as a Transformative Technology of the Mind,” Aniruddh Patel of the U.K.’s Neurobiology Institute goes even further than Cross to argue that, music not only regulates an individual or group’s mood, but also fosters an individual or collective self-concept based on the ideas and mood that a piece of music expresses. For Patel, music is not an art but a “transformative technology” since it builds on existing brain systems to change the individual’s perception and image of reality.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 120–21.

<sup>27</sup> Aniruddh D. Patel, “Music as a Transformative Technology of the Mind” (Music: Its Evolution, Cognitive Basis, and Spiritual Dimensions, Wolfson College, Cambridge University, September 19, 2008), [http://www.nsi.edu/~ani/Patel\\_2008\\_Templeton\\_Essay.pdf](http://www.nsi.edu/~ani/Patel_2008_Templeton_Essay.pdf).

Aside from its extensive use of both instrumental and vocal music, fraternal ritual's use of set texts, group recitation, and group movement lend themselves to Cross and Patel's interpretation. Ritual gave certain words and concepts cultural authority, but left their definitions suitably vague so that participants might invest them with personal meaning. Nowhere does a masonic monitor or the Knight's of Labor's ritual the *Adelphon Kruptos* define key terms like "brotherhood" in the case of the former or "remuneration" in the case of the latter. These terms allowed wide latitude of interpretation, building loyalty based on the assumption that others in the group had similar understandings, and assuring that each individual had a personal commitment to the term or symbol because its definition was one of their own making.<sup>28</sup>

Medievalist Mary Carruthers lends an important insight to how these terms and symbols might have functioned in "Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture: The Role of 'Place' in the Arts of Memory." As argued earlier, religious historians have shown how Americans Protestants were influenced by what is variously known as Baconian Epistemology or Scottish Commonsense Realism, a school of thought stressing that a thing is what it appears to be and thus the facts of nature can be readily apprehended. Carruthers shows what a recent phenomenon this actually is and how alien it would be to earlier masters of rhetoric and logic. These earlier thinkers designed schema for mnemonic recall focused not on literal recall of texts to be used as proof in arguments so much as to be a fruitful method for reassembling memorized "chunks" of sense units. Much as a computer hard drive searches for packets of information with similar strings, the well trained memory could find and assemble its own packets of information.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Knights of Labor and Samuel Wagar, "Adelphon Kruptos: The Secret Ritual of the Knights of Labor Reprinted from the 1886 Ezra Pook Edition," August 2003, <http://www.history.umd.edu/Gompers/KOL%20ritual.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Mary J Carruthers, "Mechanisms for the Transmission of Culture: The Role Of 'place' in the Arts of Memory," *Translatio / Ed. by Laura H. Hollengreen.*, 2008, 4,5.

Taking a literal view of the Latin “translatio,” Carruthers shows how various mnemonic schema “carried across” information from a variety of subjects produced novel combinations in the work of the commentator and preacher. The joints of the hand might become a repository for basic units of moral theology or the six wings of the seraph might become major headings for sermons on penitence while individual feathers represented subtopics. To remember was to know the set figure, but also to be able to reassemble its contents. Earlier scholars have complained that these methods are actually quite poor for aiding rote memorization. Carruthers shows how they were essential for cognition and creativity.<sup>30</sup>

In our still Baconian culture, rote memorization is seen as the enemy of creativity, but, to the medieval, the arts of memory were its fertile ground, allowing those who had learned their figures and phrases to create something new. In the case of fraternal organizations, the symbols held in place in the ritual gave the member a similar stock of sense units, which were ingrained upon the memory in ways that gave the member ready recall of concepts that could be combined in any number of patterns to make sense of a personal or public issue. “Justice,” “obligation,” and “community” might spring from the mind unaided to form a particular inclination, or in discussion, the initiate would find that he or she had a ready stock of abstract concepts to deploy. Tracing boards, pillars, squares, compasses, and the position of altar lights made the lodge room itself an mnemonic device. This suggests just one way in which fraternal ritual equipped its members for public life beyond the obvious practice gained in holding a lodge office and debating its business.

There seems to be a direct connection here to the work of Cross and Patel in their arguments that the open-endedness of shared musical experience creates shared group sympathy without

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1.3, 12, 20-22.

stamping out the “free-floating intentionality,” which allows the participant to create an interpretation of the experience that integrates it into his or her own experience and values. In the conclusion to *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, Henrik Bogdan argues that Masonic symbols are left for the individual to interpret in the context of the rituals he experiences. Masonic ritual stabilized terms within the culture, yet left them open-ended enough to allow them to be integrated into the initiate’s own experience, leaving room for debate with other initiates over definitions even though they agreed upon the authority of the term.

Masonic rituals for the first three of its degrees were largely standardized in the United Kingdom by 1730, as evidenced by the publication of Samuel Prichard’s *Masonry Dissected*. While content and emphasis would vary, the Masonic form remained remarkably stable as it was appropriated by other groups. Bogdan, proposes the following overall schema of ritual initiation already mentioned:

1. Formal opening of the ritual work at which the candidate is not present,
2. Admission of candidate into the lodge and questioning,
3. Circumambulations of the candidate around the lodge room led by an initiator that often includes a mythic story or symbolic ordeal,
4. The swearing of an Oath usually including obligations to secrecy and to uphold certain moral precepts,
5. Formal admission to the order/degree,
6. Instruction in the secrets of the order or degree,
7. Receiving of visible tokens of the order or degree, and
8. Formal closing of the lodge at which the initiate is present.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation (Sunny Series in Western Esoteric Traditions)*, Kindle (State University of New York Press, 2008), 2315.

Bogdan's schema serves as a roadmap for Turner's journey into liminality and *communitas* and for Cross's entrainment. The unvarying opening ceremony pulls the participants outside of their normal existence, aided by the space of the lodge room with its symbols of the order and regalia including robes, badges, and swords. Circumambulation brought the candidate, who was entering into the organization's ritual world for the first time, out of his own everyday experience as he was led in a circle around the hall as many as three times. This rhythmic action, which was often accompanied by singing or instrumental music brought the new initiate more deeply into the experience, but also pulled current members into the group mind. The candidate then swore his oath, creating an emotional bond with the organization, and existing members were reminded of their own bond. Introducing the new initiate to the secrets of the degree allowed him or her to begin to form that key hybrid understanding, which took words belonging to the group and put them into an interpretive frame belonging to the candidate. Receiving the tokens of the degree, usually a combination of handshakes, hailing signs, and secret words gave the experience a further somatic depth as the mythos of the order was inscribed on the candidate's body. For the members who watched the process, as Carnes argued, their own commitment was renewed as they identified with the candidate and had feelings evoked tying them to their own initiation. Finally, the set closing ceremony helped those present to reenter the everyday world just as the opening ceremony had helped them to enter the organization's ritual world.

The rituals, like the symbols they convey are multilayered phenomena. Hundreds of organizations appropriated this basic Masonic form, which meant that, though form of transmission itself was borrowed, it carried each organization's unique claims of authority based on its particular mythos. This overlapping of forms and symbols among disparate groups is an

example of Faivre's concept of concordance, where a claim or form's appearance in multiple traditions is treated as evidence of validity rather than falsification. Members of multiple fraternal organizations would feel bolstered in their convictions and, in some cases, see this as part of a profound, mystical pattern undergirding human society. In a time of social upheaval and failing religious confidence, this esoteric web of meaning reassured the fraternalist that the hand of the Divine was still at work. Rather than seeing his supernatural beliefs as having been discredited and chased from the public square, he was seeing a pattern that was obvious to the initiate, but hidden from those outside of the fraternal world.<sup>32</sup>

The overlapping of rituals and symbols added to rather than detracted from their power, then, much as shared tunes, styles, and structure among Protestant hymns legitimized novel ideological content because the new partook of the form of the familiar. Fraternal organizations used music to validate tradition, either using existing hymns and popular songs in their rituals or adapting them, as when the temperance group the Independent Order of Good Templars adapted the tune of Auld Lang Syne so that the chorus became "And all our race shall echo yet—The wine we ne'er will take." This borrowing of form and tune from a familiar context and frequent repetition in its new form can be seen as yet another instance Bourdieu's habitus, a pattern of behaviors and ideas that become ingrained without becoming part of conscious deliberation. The ritual form legitimized the form and the form legitimized the value content transmitted. Far from being a Victorian oddity that "does not signify," neurobiology, anthropology, sociology, and

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<sup>32</sup> Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 14.

critical theory combine to create a complex testament to the power of ritual to influence culture.<sup>33</sup>

The terms and symbols in the fraternal ritual spectrum become a roadmap for political and social possibilities. Some, like “brotherhood,” were transmitted across groups maintaining largely stable definitions. Other terms, like “improvement,” were held in common, but had their meanings transmuted and contested. Finally, some terms, like “injustice” and “sobriety” were innovations representing the interest of particular groups.

The fields of sociology, anthropology, neurobiology, and critical theory all offer insight on why some rituals “worked” and some did not. Put simply, a ritual that worked was one that let the participant become caught up in its flow and experience its symbolic world, but did so with a light hand. Overly didactic and strident approaches were likely to fail except with those whose beliefs and life experiences were almost exactly congruent with that of the writer.<sup>34</sup>

These insights also explain the ubiquity and adaptability of the model whose wide net captured elite esotericists and journeyman bricklayers. Regardless of the groups’ outlook or purpose, the forms arrived at by eighteenth-century Freemasons turned out, whether by long trial and error, luck, or a combination of the two, to furnish an experience that created a sense of community and shared purpose in a short amount of time and which, the evidence suggests, could sustain even incoherent and poorly conceived groups for longer than they would otherwise have lasted. The anthropologists’ symbols and ritual and the neurobiologists’ entrainment all contributed to a formula that was just short of . . . magical.

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<sup>33</sup> International Order of Good Templars International Supreme Lodge, *Degree Book of the Independent Order of Good Templars, under the Jurisdiction of the R.W. Grand Lodge of North America, Adopted 1853* (Jameson & Morse, 1866), 23.

<sup>34</sup> The idea of ritual that “worked” and the “light hand” are metaphors of Carnes and Cross referred to earlier.

### **Ritual in Practice**

Seen through the lens of this theoretical framework, it becomes easier to see how the culturally destabilizing events of the mid nineteenth century made the period from the Civil War to World War I the golden age of American fraternalism. Fraternal and ritual culture not only gave men and women a shared vocabulary of values with which they could frame larger social questions, it rooted itself in appeals to one or another imagined golden ages from ancient Egypt to the High Middle Ages. If common sense republicanism was failing, Americans now bolstered their cultural identity with appeals to mysticism and revealed knowledge and yet they generally structured these innovations in such a way that they were seen as supporting and validating rather than supplanting the older forms. Masonic ritual would reinforce reason by stressing its status as a divine gift and by portraying the order of human society as being as logical as a set of blue prints from the table of the Grand Architect of the Universe.

Just as fraternal ritual bolstered the political order, it supported a flagging Protestantism. One could reasonably argue, following Dumenil rather than Carnes, that, while fraternal ritual worked from much of the same value system as liberal Protestantism, stressing objective ideals and a faith in human progress, liberal Protestantism's increasing emphasis on imminence over transcendence left it unsatisfying as religious experience and its adherents unsure of its efficacy. Fraternal ritual gave these values an experiential and mystical heft that liberal Protestant forms of worship and preaching did not. Formal ritual reconciled the contradiction between a growing belief in human progress, which Russell Kirk called "imminentizing the eschaton," with the believer's need for supernatural authority.<sup>35</sup> This merely scratches the surface of this complex symbiosis, so for now it will have to be sufficient to say that, from at least the time of the conflict of the freedmen of the Union League with the white redeemers

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<sup>35</sup> W. Wesley McDonald, *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology*, 1st ed. (University of Missouri, 2004), 36.

of the Ku Klux Klan at the end of the Civil War, values bolstered by ritual transmission shaped American self-understanding.

### **Ritual as Transmission**

Cross and Patel stressed the positive potential of entrainment for community building and even for social justice, but earlier authors writing in the shadow of World War II grasped its darker implications. Writing about the rise of the mass “culture industry” in general and of film in particular, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer decried the fact that “people use words and expressions which they have either ceased to understand or employ only because they trigger off conditioned reflexes; in this sense, words are trade-marks.”<sup>36</sup> Writing a few years later, University of Chicago rhetorician Richard Weaver labeled this use of connotation over denotation as “god terms” and “devil terms.”<sup>37</sup> Weaver’s concept of god terms and devil terms has significant importance for the consideration of the ways in which ritual shaped public discourse, but first it is necessary to look a bit more in depth at the forms of fraternal ritual itself.

The lodge and its formal ritual became the *sine qua non* of transmitting civic knowledge in the late nineteenth century, as is illustrated in the diversity of groups that embraced it, though it certainly proved itself as amenable to subversive as homogenizing groups. Freemasonry offered a familiar, ready-made, and successful model for the transmission of ideas about society and human destiny that was rooted in the concept of initiation. Carnes, Dumenil and others have noted how initiation fulfilled a need for belonging or status validation in a period of social

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<sup>36</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (1944),” trans. Unknown, 24, accessed May 5, 2013, <http://comp.uark.edu/~wolpert/Adorno-CultureIndustry.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Fred Douglas Young, *Richard M. Weaver, 1910-1963 : a Life of the Mind* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 147–149; Jacques Derrida, “Difference,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2008), 3–27.

instability, but this hardly exhausts the social power of the lodge and initiation model. As already mentioned, a number of scholars have commented on the nature of the gothic revival as a modern reaction against modernity.<sup>38</sup> The idiom of initiation, with its appeal to ages past, provided a way to revalorize old value words and to add patina to new ones in the same way the skin of a gothic castle could both veil and legitimize an armory or police station within a Victorian urban environment. Weaver and others have written of how mystery plays an important function in legitimizing ideals and giving them a force beyond the power of a mere rational commonplace.

Those will realize, who are capable of reflection, that the reality that excites us is an idea, of which the indirection, the veiling, the withholding, is part. It is our various supposals about a matter which give it meaning, and not some intrinsic property which can be seized in the barehanded fashion of the barbarian.<sup>39</sup>

Bogdan argues that secrecy and symbolic layering are both the message and medium for the transfer of initiatory knowledge:

Even so, the person who makes the effort to read all ... of the texts hinted at [in initiatory texts], finds himself nevertheless confronted by a circular discourse made of images and symbols, a veil, as it were. It is as if that veil constituted the message itself.<sup>40</sup>

Bogdan takes this insight to its logical conclusion in his own words:

it is not so much the ritual itself as the experience of it that constitutes the message. . . . the purpose of the secrecy is not so much a matter of keeping the rituals secret as to keep that which is noncommunicable secret. . . . Ergo, the secret of a Western esoteric ritual of initiation is the experience of undergoing the ritual--an experience that by definition is noncommunicable.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>39</sup> Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 26–27.

<sup>40</sup> Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation (Sunny Series in Western Esoteric Traditions)*, Kindle (State University of New York Press, 2008), loc 636.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 647.

There seems to be a direct connection here to the work of Cross and Patel in their arguments that the open-endedness of shared musical experience creates shared group sympathy without stamping out the “free-floating intentionality,” which allows the participant to create an interpretation of the experience that integrates it into his or her own experience and values. In his conclusion to *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, Bogdan draws upon the work of J. A. M. Snoek, concluding that, “most of the symbols used in Freemasonry have different meanings, and it is up to the individual mason to form his own interpretation of the rituals that he is undergoing.”<sup>42</sup> Masonic ritual stabilized terms within the culture, yet left them open-ended enough to allow them to be integrated into the initiate’s own experience, leaving room for debate with other initiates over definitions even though they agreed upon the authority of the term.

### **Consensus and Contention**

To create a comprehensive lexicon of the fraternal vocabulary of citizenship and virtue and to begin to accurately capture how the basic Masonic texts were transmitted, intentionally transmuted, and accidentally transformed would require a careful study of at least fifty rituals from a cross section of groups. In addition to Pitts’s eight organizational categories mentioned earlier, a comprehensive study would also need to take external factors into account such as region, time period, social class, gender and gender mix and also be attentive to ritual-specific characteristics such as musical usages, modes of recitation of texts, and use of ritual movement.

Later chapters will focus on how fraternal rituals were key in shaping and popularizing concepts of race and, to a lesser extent, gender. Here, as a brief example, four rituals from four organizations will be briefly considered to examine their shared vocabulary and adaptations:

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., loc 2333.

1. The 1866 text of the Degree of Entered Apprentice of Blue Lodge Freemasonry, a fraternal organization of white men, which arrived in the US in the eighteenth century and provides the basic ritual form for American Fraternalism,<sup>43</sup>
2. The 1866 Degree of the Heart of the Independent Order of Good Templars, a temperance advocacy fraternity founded in Utica, New York in 1851,<sup>44</sup>
3. The 1886 *Adelphon Kruptos* Initiatory of The Knights of Labor, one of America's earliest mass membership unions,<sup>45</sup> and
4. The 1923 text of the Degree of Adoption of The Daughters of the Tabernacle, a fraternal and mutual benefit organization for African American women founded in Missouri in 1872, which, with the Knights of Tabor, formed the main body of the International Order of Twelve.<sup>46</sup>

Other than the Knights of Labor, each of these organizations had multiple degrees of initiation, but here, only the initial degrees of the other three organizations will be considered, offering a limited, if sufficient, sense of the ways in which the initiatory model created a vocabulary of citizenship and virtue.

The Degree of Entered Apprentice, as the first in a series of degrees, might be said to focus upon the idea of initiation itself. Great stress is placed upon the candidate moving from darkness to light and being prepared to receive further knowledge. No instrumental music or singing is specified, but instrumental music frequently covered the circumambulation, adding to the sense of a mystical journey. Within the rite, there are 36 value words, most of which would enter the general usage of other rites. Some terms, such as “brotherhood,” were given a prominence they had previously lacked. Twenty-nine of these—“charity,” “duty,” “neighbor,” and “honor,”—were positive or neutral while only seven, such

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<sup>43</sup> “Duncan’s Ritual and Monitor of Freemasonry, 1866,” *Sacred Texts*, May 3, 2013, 18–46, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/mas/dun/dun02.htm>.

<sup>44</sup> Lodge, *Degree Book of the Independent Order of Good Templars, Under the Jurisdiction of the R. W. Grand Lodge of North America, Adopted 1853*, 13–23.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel Wagar, “Adelphon Kruptos: The Secret Ritual of the Knights of Labor Reprinted from the 1886 Ezra Pook Edition,” August 2003, <http://www.history.umd.edu/Gompers/KOL%20ritual.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> “Daughters of the Tabernacle - Ritual of Degree of Adoption,” accessed May 5, 2013, [http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/dot\\_r1.html](http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/dot_r1.html).

as “darkness,” and “vice,” might be classified as negative. All tend to be fairly general terms with some being defined within the ceremony, such as the obligation to be honorable and to be charitable toward a brother and to defend him. Some of these terms carry male, middle-class connotations, but the overarching stress upon mutual aid and security points to a larger sense of cultural insecurity. Even “brotherhood” may be read as a newly pessimistic take upon the American project. Unlike “patriot” or “citizen,” brotherhood suggests less optimism in universal affinities and the need for ties to be reinforced by special considerations beyond shared citizenship. The founders had feared party and faction, but the explosion of fraternal brotherhoods after the Civil War may be read as an indication of pessimism in a period of economic uncertainties and class and ethnic antagonism.

The Independent Order of Good Templars was the largest of a number of fraternal groups based on the promotion of temperance. The 1907 *Cyclopaedia of Fraternities* shows it to have had 158,788 members in the US, making it the fourth largest fraternal organization.<sup>47</sup> The order of the Degree of the Heart follows the general Masonic form, though the circumambulation comes at the end of the rite as something of a victory lap. Though the degree is built around the Biblical story of the abstemious Rechabites in the days of King Josiah, there is no symbolic ordeal in this ritual, so it is interesting to note that the author of the ritual found the progress around the lodge room important to retain, even though its purpose had been removed, perhaps because the author found the circumambulation something that “worked” or, perhaps, it was retained simply because it was an established trope—a part of the authoritative initiatory form. While the Freemasons often had instrumental music for this portion of the ritual, the Good Templars sang a one-verse song to the tune Old Hundredth:

You’re welcome to our loving band--  
We’re pledged in heart, we’re joined in hand,  
Our hopes elate, our hearts are free,

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<sup>47</sup> Stevens, *The Cyclopaedia of Fraternities*, xxi, 68.

From every path of vice we're free.<sup>48</sup>

At other intervals in the ritual, those present joined in singing a “Pledging Air” to the hymn tune Hebron and also the song referenced earlier to the tune Auld Lang Syne.<sup>49</sup> Songs to well-known tunes would be a feature of many fraternal rituals. Over time this likely contributed to the rituals having diminishing effectiveness as tastes in hymn tunes and popular music changed.

Given the focus of the group and its ties to the evangelical mores of the period of its pre Civil War founding, it is not surprising that the Templars' short ritual uses 60 values words. “Tempter,” “vice,” “diligence,” and “temperance,” are hardly any more surprising than the shared Masonic words of “fidelity and “honor.” More surprising is the keen interest in the wider social order, with words such as “instability,” “allegiance,” “progressing,” and “divine government.” The Good Templars ritual shows a comfort with political engagement for the Order's ends, something specifically forbidden in Freemasonry.

The ritual of the Knights of Labor, known as the *Adelphon Kruptos* (“Secret Brotherhood”) is likely an example of how entrainment and other elements of ritual transmission break down. The simplified version considered here was adopted in 1886 at a time of rapid expansion. Older members felt these simplifications destroyed the brotherhood while those who proposed the change argued they were necessary.<sup>50</sup> The new rite allowed for the admission of multiple candidates within a single rite, doing violence to Bogdan and Faivre's paradigm of the initiation experience. More importantly, the ritual seems to have moved from the open experience described by Cross and Patel, which leaves room for the initiate to interpret and integrate the experience, to one that is much more didactic, using technical terms

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<sup>48</sup> Lodge, *Degree Book of the Independent Order of Good Templars, Under the Jurisdiction of the R. W. Grand Lodge of North America, Adopted 1853*, 22.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 21.

<sup>50</sup> Robert E. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 56–57.

like “public opinion,” “capital,” “combination,” “general strike,” and “remuneration.” Written more than twenty years after the version of the Good Templars ritual studied here, this is a far more explicitly political ritual, even though it seems likely that it was far less successful as ritual proper.

Coming last historically, but perhaps falling closest to Freemasonry in its self-concept, the Degree of Adoption of the Daughters of Tabor shows both fidelity and innovation. The Daughters’ ritual draws heavily from scripture, using a number of vignettes of Israel’s wandering in the desert and the story of Miriam mixed with admonitions from both Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament. This results in the ritual’s value words being drawn heavily from scripture, yet using verses expressing many of the same values as the Masonic original.

The Daughters also make more extensive use of song, in this case hymns. During the movement of the candidate, the Degree of Adoption includes “Like her who on Samaria’s ground,” first published as a poem by Harriet Beecher Stowe; “Spirit Divine Attend Our Prayer,” an 1829 hymn by Andrew Reed, and two of the middle verses of John Keble’s “Sun of My Soul.”<sup>51</sup> Sadly, there is no indication of the tunes used, but by using relatively obscure hymns or hymn verses, the Daughters drew upon familiar forms but not on pieces that might be laden with other contexts.

As would be expected, the Daughters share a large number of concepts with the Freemasons, stressing mutual aid and defense as well as obligation, secrecy, friendship and honor common to all of the rituals examined. Other words seem to speak specifically to the African American women’s particular experience of discrimination and their aspirations for a better life with words like “slander,”

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<sup>51</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Woman In Sacred History a Series of Sketches Drawn From Scriptural, Historical, and Legendary Sources*, 1873, 282; “Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers,” *Hymnary.org*, accessed May 5, 2013, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/spirit\\_divine\\_attend\\_our\\_prayers](http://www.hymnary.org/text/spirit_divine_attend_our_prayers); Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Kregel Publications, 2002), 276.

“wrong,” “gloriously,” “incorrupt,” and “triumphed.” Notably, this is the only ritual of the four that does not use the word “race” in either a general or prescriptive sense.

All four rituals attest to the belief in the model of initiation for transmitting values. Each shows a shared base vocabulary and form as well as individual additions. Higher degrees reinforced earlier lessons and added complexity and depth to the words and concepts transmitted. None of these groups fundamentally altered the basic eight-element form of the Freemasons.

Chapters Three and Four will take examine the rituals of a number of White and African-American groups. In particular, these chapters will analyze the ways in which these groups’ rituals and their mythic setting contributed to popularizing scientific racism among the former and in instilling racial separatism and Afro-centrism among the latter.

## Chapter Three

### White Fraternalism and Race

The parade of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics here on Wednesday afternoon was a deeply impressive one to some persons. There were hundreds of the members of the order, and they wound through the streets to the music of enough brass bands to make furious discords. It probably was the most awkward, ungainly, uncut and uncarved procession that ever raised clouds of dust on sun-beaten streets. . . .

Asbury Park creates nothing. . . . This is a resort of wealth and leisure, of women and considerable wine. . . . The procession was composed of men bronzed, slope-shouldered, uncouth and begrimed with dust. Their clothes fitted them illy, for the most part, and they had no ideas of marching. They merely plodded along, not seeming quite to understand, stolid, unconcerned and, in a certain sense, dignified—a pace and bearing emblematic of their lives. . . . Such an assemblage of the spraddle-legged men . . . whose hands were bent and shoulders stooped from delving and constructing, had never appeared to an Asbury Park summer crowd, and the latter was vaguely amused.<sup>1</sup>

A twenty-one-year-old Stephen Crane may have lost his job at the New York *Tribune* for the column above.<sup>2</sup> He painfully captures the assertion of dignity of one of America's largest nativist organizations and the contempt it engendered among its betters. E. A. Canfield, one of the paraders wrote to the paper to defend the Mechanics:

Sir: I . . . take the liberty of writing to The Tribune in the name of all who belong to this patriotic American organization, in answer to the uncalled-for and un-American criticism published. . . .

. . . Our main objects are to restrict immigration. . . . We also demand that the Holy Bible be read in our public schools. . . . We are bound together to promote Americans in business and shield them from the depressing effects of foreign competition. . . . We are brothers, one and all, bound together to honor and protect our country and to vow allegiance to the stars and stripes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Crane, "The New Jersey Coast," *New York Tribune*, August 21, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Robertson, *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1997), 71–73.

<sup>3</sup> "Selections from the Mail," *New York Tribune*, August 24, 1892.

The Junior Order of American Mechanics (JOUAM) is known as a nativist organization and tried to restrict immigration and to quash public support for parochial schools. This chapter argues that the Mechanics and similar organizations were not a sudden flowering of nativist sentiment in fraternal trappings, but instead represented a final stage in a longer dialogue on Americanism and whiteness. Cultural historian Matthew Frye Jacobson has documented how the wave of mass immigration that began in the 1840s caused “the older, supremacist meaning of whiteness” to be “completely overthrown by the new paradigm of plural white races.” Eugenicist Madison Grant would famously argue a theory of there being three white, European races of differing abilities and proclivities in his 1916 *The Passing of the Great Race*, but the debate had been going on for at least two generations. Whiteness moved from a binary with blackness to a gradation, a perniciously slippery slope.<sup>4</sup> As Jacobson summarizes:

the political history of whiteness and its vicissitudes between the 1840s and the 1920s represents a shift from one brand of bedrock racism to another—from the unquestioned hegemony of a unified race of “white persons” to a contest over political “fitness” among a now fragmented, hierarchically arranged series of distinct “white races.”<sup>5</sup>

Nancy MacLean has pointed out how the JOUAM and other fraternal groups were allies and recruiting grounds for the Klan, but no author has examined in depth how the second Klan should be understood as a final stage in a long of a long-developing arc of anxiety about whiteness within white working-class fraternalism.<sup>6</sup>

Even among elites, “scientific” racism was propagated in popular cultural forms as well as in lecture halls and the journals. William DeWitt Hyde, President of Bowdoin College, wrote

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Kindle ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), loc. 943, 1784-1793.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, loc. 955.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy K. MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1995), 7.

the hymn below in 1903 at the height of Progressive Era optimism. Vice President of the Immigration Restriction League and a friend of Theodore Roosevelt, to whom he dedicated his *The College Man and the College Woman*, Hyde embodied the contradictions of the era.<sup>7</sup> “Creation’s Lord, We Give Thee Thanks” expresses the optimism that man, armed with science and reason, would reshape the world and finish the redemption of creation as the human race continued its upward evolution:

Creation's Lord, we give thee thanks  
That this thy world is incomplete;  
That battle calls our marshalled ranks,  
That work awaits our hands and feet;

That thou hast not yet finished man,  
That we are in the making still, -  
As friends who share the Maker's plan,  
As sons who know the Father's will.

Since what we choose is what we are,  
And what we love we yet shall be,  
The goal may ever shine afar, -  
The will to win it makes us free.<sup>8</sup>

Hyde’s confidence is two-fold: that humanity will continue to evolve and progress and that white elites, like himself, had a providential role as co-creators of this new world. As this chapter will show, as this message moved down the social ladder, it could become far cruder, depending upon whether whites felt that they were the actors or whether they feared that they were lumped with those lesser people, whose destiny it was to be shaped and paternally guided.

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2009), 197. The Immigration Restriction League, founded in 1894, included a number of New England intellectuals and is often considered the first major organization to endorse eugenics.

<sup>8</sup> William Channing Gannett and Frederick Lucian Hosmer, *Unity Hymns and Chorals: With Service Elements : A Book for Heart, Home, Church* (Chicago: Unity Publishing Company, 1911), 127.

The ritual evidence shows that many white fraternal organizations acted as key sites for popularizing scientific racism. It is unlikely that the name of Yale scholar William Graham Sumner was on the lips of the average laborer or small shopkeeper, but the ritual milieu of fraternalism provided a way to transmit these ideas to a popular audience. In the revision of their ritual texts during the closing years of the nineteenth century and in the costumes, backdrops, and magic lantern slides they used to reinforce the message of the text, fraternal groups brought a new emphasis on racial hierarchy to Americans who were unlikely to be reading Sumner or Sir Francis Galton, who coined the term eugenics in his 1883 *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*.<sup>9</sup>

In the years after the Civil War, tension increased between groups stressing these themes and those attempting to create broadly-based worker and farmer identities built around the dignity of labor and ideas of social transformation. In the 1880s and 1890s, this second group of organizations such as the Knights of Labor, the Knights of Honor, and the Woodmen of the World provided a framework that sometimes allowed Americans to bridge race, class, and religion as they debated the boundaries of the public and private spheres. The ritual of the Knights of Labor has already been discussed in the previous chapter. But, as the Gilded Age moved into the Progressive Era, a rising tide of racialized thinking in both newer and older organizations drowned out older calls for workmen's solidarity and prepare the way for the triumph of Jim Crow and the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan. Here, the discussion will be limited to examples of this ritualization of racism to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the

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<sup>9</sup> Francis Galton, *Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1883), p. 24-25.

Knights of Pythias, the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, and the second Ku Klux Klan.

### **The First Ku Klux Klan**

Organized American racism and nativism did not begin with the Klan, but, as Elizabeth Frantz Parsons has recently argued, the Klan of the late 1860s and early 1870s became a powerful force in the American psyche. Parsons argues that the first Klan's fraternal character and its organization were not so highly developed as earlier scholars such as Allen Trelease have thought. Instead she argues that locally-focused, "embodied" vigilantes must be separated from a national, "disembodied" phenomenon created in the press and in post-war political discourse. Though the Klan was initially organized around fraternal lines by its Pulaski, Tennessee founders, its name and utility were quickly seized upon by groups who learned of it from the press. Rather than an "Invisible Empire," the first Klan was a disparate body of local cells, most-short lived, which used the aura of the Klan to perpetuate political violence whose goals were local.<sup>10</sup>

Parsons argues that, rather than being backward-looking, the Klan aggressively borrowed from contemporary popular culture to advance a modern agenda. Rather than using the language of Southern plantation honor culture, Klan documents show young professionals' concerns with modern business methods and integrating themselves into an emerging national culture. Integral to this integration was rehabilitating defeated Southern manhood and articulating a new racial *modus vivendi* for the South and the nation. Klan activity became a venue in which participants

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<sup>10</sup> Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 6–7, 9–10; Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, Reprint edition (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1979).

“marked and mourned the fall of antebellum white southern manhood and erected a new modern southern manhood in its place.” At the same time, a key Klan stratagem was the degradation of Black manhood, both by acting out stereotypes of black subservience and incompetence and by forcing black victims to act out these roles, drawing on the tropes of popular minstrel show culture.<sup>11</sup>

Trelease argued that the Pulaski, Tennessee founders of the Klan used an elaborate ritual derived from college fraternal material. Parsons argues that, whatever had been in the minds of the founders, as the Klan spread, initiations consisted of simpler acts of hazing, but still contained a “structure of terror, death, and rebirth.” While it is unlikely that many Klan groups functioned as imagined in the bylaws written by the Pulaski, Tennessee founders, or even that a large number of members were initiated according to the forms they laid out, the idea struck a chord with many contemporaries and subsequent generations. Newspaper accounts, popular fiction, and theaters offered the curious glimpses into the Klan’s imagined ritual world. The Great European Circus and Hippodrome Parisien [sic] even included a Klan initiation in its lineup, sandwiched between the clown acts and the lion tamer.<sup>12</sup>

The first Klan contributed little directly to the organizations that followed it, but the idea of it conjured images of an organization able to rehabilitate injured manhood and confirm one’s place in the social order, conforming well if crudely with Carnes’s notions of fraternalism as a treatment for injured manhood. The idea of the Klan consciously or subconsciously inspired later fraternalists, culminating fifty years later in the birth of the second Klan as a fully formed fraternal organization. The second Klan drew on the myth of the first Klan, but its organizational

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<sup>11</sup> Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 37–41, 85–88, 101–5.

<sup>12</sup> Trelease, *White Terror*, 5; Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 91–94, 124–25; “Advertisement,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 30, 1870.

pedigree was firmly rooted in developments in American fraternalism in the decades between the two.

### **The Independent Order of Odd Fellows**

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows predates the Civil War, having been founded as a working-class organization in the U.K. in 1810. The Odd Fellows came to the U.S. in 1819 and became independent of the British parent group in 1843, both because of their desire to develop a more elaborate ritual and because their aspirations to respectability put them at odds with the boisterous tavern culture of their British brothers.<sup>13</sup> While the Odd Fellows did attract a large number of middle-class members, they retained a significant working-class base. Based on case studies of nine lodges, historian George Emery estimates that thirty-five to eighty percent of Odd Fellows were working class, a figure similar to the Knights of Pythias, but far higher than that for Freemasons. Emery points out that this figure would be even higher if one considered those who had joined as young workers and moved into the middle class. By 1897, they were the reputed to be the largest fraternal organization in the U.S, with a membership of 810,000 compared to Freemasonry's 750,000 members.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 25-28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 25–28; George Neil Emery and J. C. Herbert Emery, *A Young Man's Benefit: The Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Sickness Insurance in the United States and Canada, 1860-1929*, McGill-Queen's/Associated Medical Services Studies in the History of Medicine, Health, and Society 7 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 32.



*Patriarchy and militarism: Costumes from the 1911 Ward-Stillson I.O.O.F. catalog.*<sup>15</sup>

The early American Odd Fellows rituals mixed a stress on the virtues of friendship, love, and truth, each being taught in a separate degree ritual, with a ritual milieu that exemplified what one scholar has called “democratizing monarchy.” The members’ elevation from their middle and working-class daily lives was signified by elaborately embroidered aristocratic, priestly, and military costumes similar to those found in Freemasonry’s Scottish and York Rites. In the 1820s, a new series of three “Encampment Degrees” used the mythology of the Biblical patriarchs to elevate members to the status of “Patriarchs Militant,”<sup>16</sup> though the earliest forms of these rituals are described as being mere skeletons. Further revisions were made to these in 1835 and 1845.<sup>17</sup> Following the major revision of the degrees in 1880, one author described the new ceremonies as having “clothed what was then a mere fragment, or skeleton, with beauty and solemnity.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The Ward-Stillson Co., [*I.O.O.F.*] *Encampment Goods & Supplies. Catalog No. 43* (New London, OH: The Ward-Stillson Co., 1911). Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library collection, Lexington, Massachusetts, FR 002, 166.

<sup>16</sup> Craig Heimbichner and Adam Parfrey, *Ritual America: Secret Brotherhoods and Their Influence on American Society: A Visual Guide* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Feral House, 2012), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Blanchard, *Revised Odd-Fellowship Illustrated: The Complete Revised Ritual of the Lodge, Encampment, Patriarchs Militant, and the Rebekah Degrees* (Chicago: E.A. Cook, 1893), 453-455.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.



*Costumes for the brown, yellow, and black races from the 1911 Ward-Stillson catalog.*<sup>19</sup>

Whatever their beauty and solemnity, or lack thereof to modern eyes, these revised rituals reflect contemporary white social anxiety. White supremacy is valorized in the Encampment's Golden Rule Degree in its description of the costuming before any words are spoken. Four of five imagined races of the world are given an exotic costume denoting their utter separation from American culture. Of the white race, the ritual says only that those representing it "may wear the usual dress."<sup>20</sup>

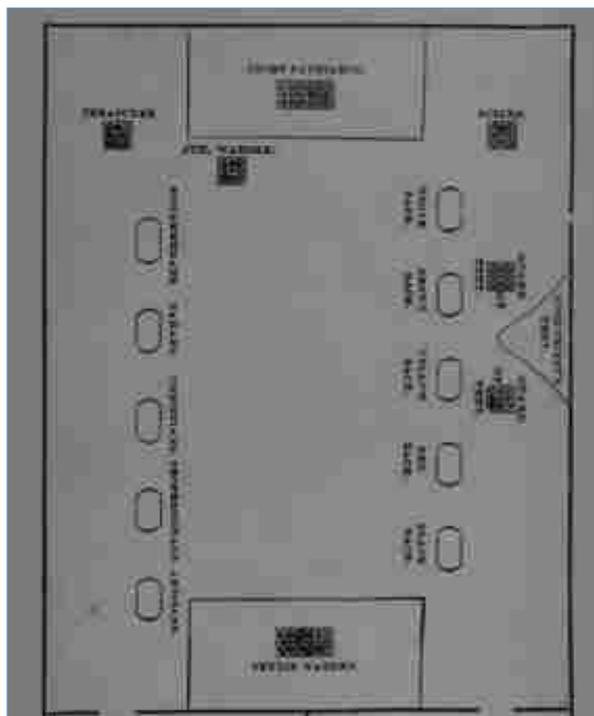
To make the lesson visually clearer, the representatives of the races are grouped in a descending order along the south side of the lodge room from whites, standing nearest to the chief patriarch's chair, to brown, to yellow, to red, to representatives of the black race standing nearest the lodge door.<sup>21</sup> To make these distinctions clearer still, fraternal regalia catalogs offered painted backdrops of "racial habitats" to place behind each racial grouping, with those for the

<sup>19</sup> The Ward-Stillson Co., [*I.O.O.F.*] *Encampment Goods*, 144.

<sup>20</sup> Blanchard, *Revised Odd-Fellowship Illustrated*, 189.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

brown and yellow races depicting highly Orientalized structures, while the black race was given a grass hut surrounded by jungle.<sup>22</sup>



*Hierarchical position of the races in the lodge room for the Golden Rule Degree.*<sup>23</sup>



*"Racial Habitations" backdrops from the Ward catalog.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Ward-Stillson Co., [*I.O.O.F.*] *Encampment Goods*, p. 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

Lest the initiate worry that the white race might be inferior to the brown race for its proximity to the Middle-Eastern location of the Patriarchal degree stories, he was assured that its origin lay in the “region once occupied by Adam, Noah and Abraham, but now overrun by semi-barbarous hordes,” reducing the current Arab occupants to the role of usurpers of a historically white land and its stories.<sup>25</sup>

The brown and yellow races are given suitable Orientalist flourishes, being praised for their “grand temples” and “mysterious . . . handiwork.”<sup>26</sup> The appraisal of the black race is much harsher, with the initiate being told:

It inhabits, as hordes, the wilds of Africa. In general they are barbarians and monsters in the practice of the most dire rapine; yet some of them are more gentle-as the Nubians, who dwell upon the burning sands of the Equator and dance to the music of a reed beneath the spreading palm.<sup>27</sup>

The description implies that, at best, the black race may rise to some degree of the exoticism of the brown and yellow races. The re-Africanization of African Americans erased their historic place in and contributions to American society and implicitly delegitimized their claims to citizenship.

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<sup>25</sup> Blanchard, *Revised Odd-Fellowship Illustrated*, 189-190.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



*Ward-Stillson black race costume with "realistic" leopard skin and "excellent representation of Negro's hair."<sup>28</sup>*

In this one degree ceremony, we find contemporary racial ideals and accompanying assurances of white supremacy artfully packaged in a memorable ritual format. The ancient Near

<sup>28</sup> The Ward-Stillson Co., [I.O.O.F.] Encampment Goods, 133.

East becomes a white homeland, the African-American is erased from U.S. history, and the white initiate is assured of his superior position both to African Americans and to other groups entering the American consciousness in the age of empire. He is reassured that his mission of civilizing dominance is required by nature and therefore its success and continued dominance is assured. Here is Malinowski and Shalins's notion of charter myth in ritual, neatly resolving social contradiction as Malinowski described. Seeming threats to superiority are dissolved by appeals to the historic order of nature and its hierarchy of civilizations.<sup>29</sup>

If any further doubt remained about white superiority, the contrast of the officer's robes to those of the other races made the point clear. In contrast to tribal and stereotypical coolie dress, the initiating officers wore rich robes representing biblical patriarchs and high priests, a visual witness to the whiteness of sacred history that the ritual taught. These costumes were available in a variety of price points depending upon the materials chosen, which ranged from simple wool to silk velvet. A high-priest's breast plate with twelve semiprecious stones in gold-plate completed the ensemble. Providing assurance from a different time period, lodge guards wore uniforms that echoed more contemporary European military fashion, complete with spiked helmets.<sup>30</sup>

While attention here has been focused upon Odd Fellows' views of African Americans, the organization had a long history of sharpening its restrictive views of race, which would only grow more precise over time, mirroring the increasing specificity of scientific racism within the larger culture. Three examples from 1859, 1877, and 1912 illustrate the hardening and refining of the racial line.

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<sup>29</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*. (Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1971), 168–75; Marshall Sahlins, "Folk Dialectics of Nature and Culture," 176–82.

<sup>30</sup> The Ward-Stillson Co., [*I.O.O.F.*] *Encampment Goods*, 36, 58, 123, 159.

In reporting on the 1858 meeting of the Grand Lodge of the United States in Baltimore, the *Odd Fellows Casket and Review* of Cincinnati devoted almost half of its coverage to the possibility of admission of Chinese and Native American members to the order. The constitutions specified that members were to be “free white males of good moral character.” In 1855, the grand lodge of California, in a period of greater tolerance before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, had granted the option of lodges operating in Chinese to those attesting belief in “a Supreme Being, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe.” Though the article notes that no Chinese had taken the Californians up on their offer, some brothers queried whether this offer was in order since the same set up had been denied to American Indians. On reconsideration, the national grand lodge agreed that neither group should be considered white. Interestingly, the Odd Fellows of 1859 were skeptical of ethnology as a tool to answer their question, noting:

even if the science of ethnology, whose origin is so recent that its very name is not to be found in dictionaries and encyclopedias published only thirty years ago, should finally decide that the so-called Indian races have little or no affinity with each other, that would not impair the fact that they have been designated as Indians in history and legislation for several centuries.<sup>31</sup>

The Odd Fellows settled for a traditional legal definition of white rather than a scientific one, realizing that a scientific definition was all too liable to slippage. Defending a “Roman” understanding that the world was comprised of three races only: Caucasians, Indians, and Ethiopians, only the first of which was white, the remainder of the Grand Lodge’s report draws attention to the authors’ understanding of the precariousness of whiteness as a concept, but one to be defended all the more so for this very reason:

If Mongolians are held to be eligible to membership, we should be moved to concede the whole matter in dispute, and at the same time to reject the word “white” from our constitution; for the eastern races run into each other by such

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<sup>31</sup> “Meeting of the Grand Lodge of the United States,” *The Odd-Fellows’ Casket and Review*, November 1858, p. 50.

small gradations of color, that it would be impossible to determine any point in the series from the Chinese to the Malay, where it would be said that black, and not white, had become the designation of color. It is only by adhering strictly to an absolute and unmistakable standard that we can obtain an infallible solution . . .

. . . .  
 . . . However much we may hope for the future elevation of other races, the pure white Caucasian race is the only one which has ever shown itself capable of sustaining free institutions, or which possesses the great characteristics of honor and veracity. . . . With the Chinese, sunk in a depth of moral, social and political debasement . . . and their kindred races, false, sensual and corrupt, ought not to be permitted to enter into a covenant which they can neither comprehend nor perform.

By 1877, the matter of the “Brown” and “Yellow” races was a settled question. Possibly reflecting the revisions of the Golden Rule Degree mentioned above, Rev. T. G. Behrrell’s *Odd Fellows Monitor and Guide* could confidently state:

Love, as taught in the Encampment Odd Fellowship, involves the Golden Rule, and it ranges the European, with all his cultivation and refinement, alongside of the African, Asiatic, Laplander, Jew, Moslem, and the uncultivated child of the forest.<sup>32</sup>

Even though the Golden Rule Degree ritual of twenty years later would still be assuring members that the Biblical patriarchs, whom their ritual was written around, were white, by 1877, Jews had joined Mongolians and Ethiopians as being outside of Caucasian civilization.

By the early twentieth century, even Caucasian ancestry would not be enough for the Odd Fellows as anti-Catholicism rose. The Vatican banned membership in the society in 1894, though George Nell Emery finds that some continued to join despite the ban. In 1912, Nell reports that a number of Polish Catholics withdrew from the lodge they were members of, perhaps due to church pressure. In response to this Michigan’s Grand Sire, the equivalent of a Masonic state grand master, replied “any Roman Catholic may become an Odd Fellow . . . [but no] Odd Fellow

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas G. Beharrell, *Odd Fellows Monitor and Guide: Containing History of the Degree of Rebekah, and Its Teachings, Emblems of the Order* (Indianapolis: R. Douglass, 1877), 93.

can remain a Catholic [unless the brother] decides that Odd Fellowship means more to him than his religion.” Nell contends that by this period, “Oddfellowship was acquiring an ethno-religious identity in the larger cities. Its members were part of a shrinking Anglo-Protestant majority in communities that were attracting large numbers of European immigrants.”<sup>33</sup>

Whiteness was an ever-shrinking category for the Odd Fellows, moving from “Ethiopians” to suspect white ethnics within a span of fifty years. One cannot help but to interpret this as an index of lower-middle and working-class white men’s shrinking sense of cultural security. The largest of the era’s fraternal organizations was far from alone in this ever narrowing definition, but, as the next chapter will show, its African-American counterpart used ritual equally effectively to resist the rising tide of scientific racism and nativism.

### **The Knights of Pythias**

The Knights of Pythias were a distinctly American order, founded in Washington, DC in 1864. Several of the seven founders were government clerks in the city and several were Freemasons. After the War, it grew rapidly in the Northeast and Midwest, reporting 450,000 members by 1907. With the motto, “Be Generous, Brave, and True,” the ritual centered on the story of the friends and followers of Pythagoras, Damon and Pythias, who had been willing to lay down their lives for one another. As in Freemasonry, there was a core system of three degrees, here called Page, Esquire, and Knight, representing a progression in masculine power and authority.

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<sup>33</sup> Emery, *A Young Man’s Benefit*, 29–30.

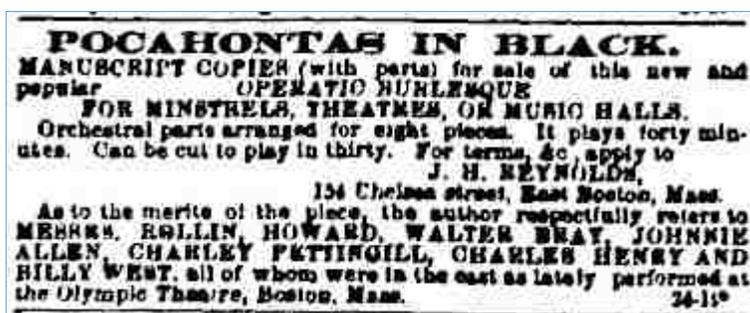
Justus Henry Rathbone (1839-1889) conceived the idea of an order based on Damon and Pythias and wrote the first ritual. He was born in upstate New York to a lawyer father who was the son and grandson of Baptist ministers and to a mother who was a member of the New England Dwight family and a descendant of Jonathan Edwards. According to family historians, young Rathbone rebelled against his upbringing, dropping out of Colgate at eighteen and traveling the Midwest with various theatrical and musical groups, becoming part owner of a traveling minstrel show. Only after his father's death in 1861 did he enter the Surgeon General's office and, after the War, other government and publishing work. Even during these years, Rathbone was an enthusiastic musician and composer, his most notable piece being a minstrel burlesque titled "Pocahontas in Black." An extant 1869 ad for the music praises it as a forty-minute piece for "minstrels, theatres, or music halls," with orchestration for eight instruments. An 1890 history of the order reports that Rathbone himself appeared in the title role of Pocahontas in several amateur productions "and gained unbounded applause."<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly, Rathbone's family biographer reports that he was one of the minority who voted to accept African Americans into the order in 1869 by a vote of twenty-four to thirteen. It is possible that Rathbone's vote at the time was a tactical move against his rivals who controlled the order. If this was not the case, Rathbone's seemingly contradictory authoring of and performing in minstrel shows, yet supporting black membership in the order he founded, illustrates both the pervasive racism of the period and also that racial ideology had not yet

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<sup>34</sup> James R. Carnahan, *Pythian Knighthood, Its History and Literature: Being an Account of the Origin and Growth of the Order of Knights of Pythias* (Cincinnati: Pettibone Manufacturing Company, 1890), 111–14; "Knights of Pythias Founded by Justus Henry Rathbone," *The Rathbun-Rathbone-Rathburn Family Historian* 5, no. 2 (April 1985): 20–21, 26; "Advertisement," *New York Clipper*, September 18, 1869.

hardened to the extent it would in the coming decades, both in the society at large and among the Knights of Pythias.<sup>35</sup>



1869 advertisement for Pythian founder Justus H. Rathbone's "Pocahontas in Black."<sup>36</sup>

In a footnote in *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, Mark Carnes points out that the Pythians' third degree ritual was rewritten in 1874 by The Right Rev. Brandram Boileau Ussher of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Carnes is puzzled that a man who was a bishop of a church founded in protest against the growth of Romish ritualism in the Episcopal Church should be writing an elaborate ritual that featured a journey through Hades and an encounter with a skeleton. Carnes rightly connects the growth of fraternalism with the parallel trend of men abandoning liberal Protestantism. As Chapter Two argued, part of the attraction of fraternalism to men abandoning active participation in contemporary churches was the attraction of fraternal ritual for those who were Protestant and anti-Catholic in their personal identity, but still craved the validation afforded by the same sorts of ritual they decried in Roman Catholicism. The Anglo-Irish Ussher was certainly against ritualism in church. In an 1881 sermon in Toronto, he railed against Anglican churches where "the eye is greeted by an imposing altar . . . where should be an honest Communion Table" and priests whose vestments "look . . .

<sup>35</sup> Hugh Gould Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias and Its Branches and Auxiliary; Together with an Account of the Origin of Secret Societies, the Rise and Fall of Chivalry and Historical Chapters on the Pythian Ritual* (Anaheim, CA: The Uniform Rank Co-operative Association, 1910), 139–42; "Knights of Pythias Founded by Justus Henry Rathbone," 21.

<sup>36</sup> "Advertisement," *New York Clipper*, September 18, 1869.

as if he had come directly from the Romish mass house.” At the same time, he actively participated in creating elaborate, cathartic ritual experiences for his fellow Anglo-Protestants.<sup>37</sup>

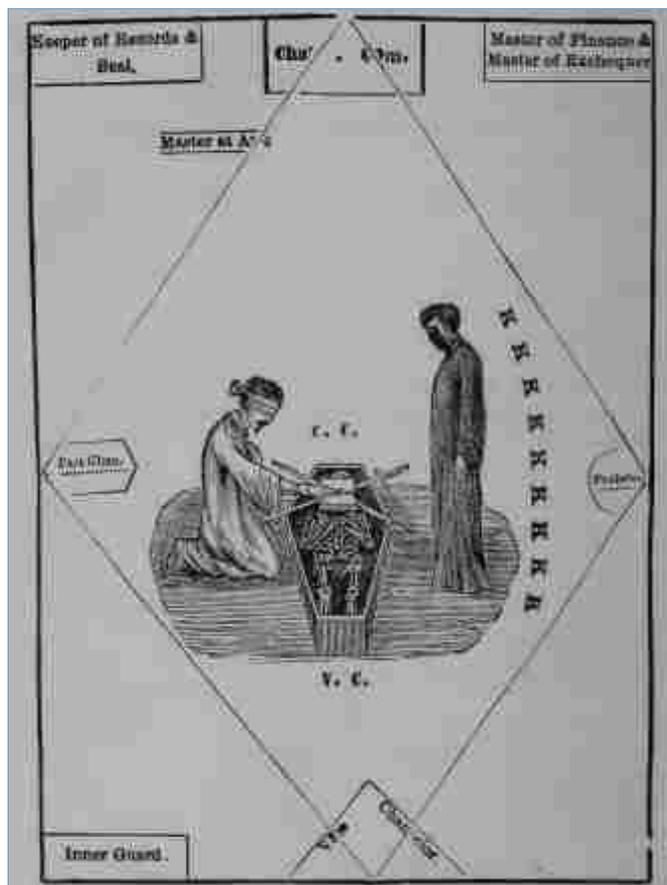
Despite Ussher and Rathbone’s ritualistic and theatrical efforts, the early knights’ ritual is rather bland. The candidate for the rank of page is dressed in a white robe and conducted around the lodge room to solemn organ music for the requisite three circumambulations as black-robed and masked brothers look on. After appropriate charges and warnings, he kneels to make his obligation and his blindfold is removed. The candidate finds himself at the altar with his hand on a Bible resting on two crossed swords. The altar itself is an open coffin containing a full skeleton, which he learns is an emblem “of our honored and revered patron saint, Pythias.” The language of “patron saint” and the skeleton enshrined in an altar both echo the Roman Catholic veneration of the cult of the saints and their relics. This seems misplaced in a heavily Anglo-Protestant organization, but as with the Odd Fellows ritual, suggests that Pythian ritualists understood that effective ritual required more than logical discourse on correct ideas and borrowed forms accordingly, even if their original sources were suspect.

In the second degree, the esquire to be bears a shield and learns the lesson of caution, primarily through a series of lectures. Finally, in the third degree, the candidate faces an ordeal of bravery involving what turns out to be a board of rubber spikes and is admitted to knighthood.

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<sup>37</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 188 n. 74, 61; *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol. 1 (Clifton, NJ: J. T. White, 1893), 85; Brandram Boileau Ussher, *Are We in the Old Paths? A Sermon Preached in St. Bartholomew’s Church, Montreal, November 20th, 1881, on the Evening of the 4th Anniversary* (Montreal: privately printed, 1881), 3, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/aeu.ark:/13960/t5n880g23>.

The reliance on the skeleton and spikes demonstrate that perhaps even the ritualists knew that the content was a bit thin and that some extra oomph was required.<sup>38</sup>



*A Pythian esquire makes his obligation.*<sup>39</sup>

### Pythian Progression from Color Racism to Protestant Americanism

The Pythians, like the white Odd Fellows, raised an ever higher racial barrier. In the 1871, the Supreme Lodge clarified its membership policy, likely in response to the founding of the African-American Knights of Pythias of North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia:

<sup>38</sup> *Knights of Pythias Illustrated by a Past Chancellor: A Full Illustrated Exposition of the Three Ranks of the Order with the Addition of the Amended, Perfected and Amplified Third Rank* (Chicago: Ezra A. Cook & Co., 1886), 19–59, quote 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

**202. The Supreme Lodge** does not recognize Lodges of the Order composed of ladies, persons under age, or colored persons; and the Supreme Chancellor is authorized to make such public declaration or publication of this fact as may in his judgement be necessary to prevent deception or imposition. (Jour. 1871, 382)

**203. Lodges** composed of colored persons cannot be formed under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Lodge, nor can colored persons be admitted as members in any subordinate Lodge of this order. (Jour. 1871, 379, 383.)<sup>40</sup>

The first of these two proscriptions tacitly ties blacks with dependency, placing them with women and children.

By 1875, there was a need to fine tune the color line with the clarification that “the Order does not permit the initiation of natives of the Hawaiian Islands and their descendants.”<sup>41</sup> This was not, it turns out, an abstract concern, but a response to a request from a lodge in Oahu, which found itself on unclear ground in Hawaii’s fluid racial culture. The Oahu members asked to be permitted to admit Native Hawaiians, arguing that:

The foreign community of these islands is largely cosmopolitan in its character; the aboriginal natives, a copper-colored race, of supposed East Indian origin, are law-abiding, civilized and Christianized to an extent that will compare favorably with most nations of Europe; many *respectable* foreigners having *intermarried* with the natives, have raised families which in personal appearance, manners, and habits are in no important respects different from Europeans or Americans; they are in no way allied to nor do they resemble the African race;”<sup>42</sup>

The deputy supreme chancellor of Hawaii specifically addressed the issue of miscegenation in a letter to the Supreme Lodge:

I hope that the Supreme Lodge will grant us our request and allow us to receive applications from natives, half natives and quarter natives. . . . Our K. of R. and S. is married to a half native woman . . . his boys being printers and it is with much regret that we are not allowed to receive applications from them.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Knights of Pythias, *First Digest of the Laws of the Supreme Lodge of the World* (Chicago: Knight & Leonard Publishers, 1877), 61.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 60–61.

<sup>42</sup> Carnahan, *Pythian Knighthood, Its History and Literature*, 311–12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

The Hawaiians' pleas fell on deaf ears with their white, stateside brethren. The committee assigned to the matter determined that a change in the constitution would be required and "it is inexpedient to recommend any change." Three years later a plea was again raised, this time only on behalf of those "who are of one-half or one-fourth native descent" and again the request was deemed "inexpedient." Not being inclined to give up, by 1886, the Hawaiians had gone ahead with initiating several members "born of Caucasian fathers but Hawaiian or partly Hawaiian mothers" and requested that the Supreme Lodge recognize that this did not violate the 1877 rule against initiating "aboriginal" Hawaiians. The Supreme Lodge partially relented, finding those admitted "not aboriginal," but stipulating "it is doubtful whether they are 'white persons,' as required by the Constitution." Those already initiated were permitted to remain members in good standing, but further such initiations were forbidden.<sup>44</sup> The standards for racial purity were clearly rising within the order, despite the Hawaiians small victory.

Nativism seems to be raising its head among the Pythians by 1886, when the *Complete Manual and Text-book*, in addition to the usual fraternal requirements of sound mind body and character, stipulates that those applying to form new lodges must be "white male citizens."<sup>45</sup> This was also the year that the Pythians reorganized and gave final approval to their Uniform Rank<sup>46</sup> and the two do not seem to be so unrelated as it may at first appear. Writing four years after the fact, one Pythian historian says of it,

Viewed from a patriotic stand-point, this Rank . . . stands not only as the representative of a fraternal and benevolent organization, but it also proclaims citizenship, loyalty to constituted authority—combined with the skill and prowess necessary to maintain and defend individual and national honor and integrity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 311–16.

<sup>45</sup> John Van Valkenburg, *The Knights of Pythias Complete Manual and Text-Book* (Canton, OH: Memento publishing co, 1886), 112.

<sup>46</sup> Carnahan, *Pythian Knighthood, Its History and Literature*, 365–66.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 526.

The character of the Uniform Rank was unapologetically paramilitary. The same author recognized the utility of “something that would attract the attention of the public and especially of the young men,” but insisted there was a purpose far more serious than marching in local parades:

For in truth, how shall a man be a citizen or a subject without being able to defend, as well as to enjoy, his country and his citizenship? Why should a man wear a sword if he knows not how to use it in defense of his person, his home, or his native land?<sup>48</sup>

Whatever previous attitudes may have been, by the early 1890s, the debate broadened from citizenship to include language. In 1893, a new ritual came into effect which was the first major revision in ten years. Some found the language too elevated.<sup>49</sup> Traces of what may have put members off certainly remains in the stilted language of the 1898 ritual, as when the candidate is asked, “Will you maintain and uphold this chivalrous order of Knighthood, speaking naught but truth of your fellow Knights, and defend the honor and good name of each individual Knight Loyal, when unjustly assailed?”<sup>50</sup> The Grand Lodge of Kansas passed a resolution “to urge the revision of the new ritual in the direction of the old ritual . . . and a simplification of its language so as to have it easily understood by those who are not graduates of Yale.” Leaders reassured the rank and file that the new prose “gives us something to strive for . . . as we inculcate a higher morality, a greater love for one’s country, a zealous loyalty to Pythian tenets and an ideal citizenship.” Clearly, citizenship was an increasingly important theme for Pythians and the new ritual sought to give it proper heft within the Pythian lexicon of values words.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 533-534.

<sup>49</sup> Knights of Pythias., *Official Record of Proceedings of the 18th Convention of the Supreme Lodge, Knights of Pythias* (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1894), 6540–41.

<sup>50</sup> “Uniform Rank, Knights of Pythias - Ritual of the Rank of Loyalty,” 1898, Stichting Argus, [http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/pythias-ur\\_r.html](http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/pythias-ur_r.html).

<sup>51</sup> Knights of Pythias, *Proceedings of the 18th Convention*, 6753.

The real controversy arose over the stipulation that the new ritual would only be printed in English. Since 1868, the ritual had been printed in German. By 1871, it had been translated into French, likely in deference to the Canadian lodges, as well as Bohemian, Danish, Spanish, and Swedish, though these do not seem to have gained a substantial following. In 1890, James Carnahan, major general commanding of the Pythians' Uniform Rank still called the policy of translations a "wise provision [that] has been of immense benefit . . . and has enlisted into our ranks thousands of our best foreign born citizens." Whether Carnahan was out of step with the times or the ground shifted quickly, by 1893 the Pythians were increasingly worried about the Americanism of immigrants.<sup>52</sup>

Until 1893, lodges were free to use the German or the English version, but there was clearly growing animosity over "foreign" usage. Belonging to one of the imagined lesser Caucasian races or even being of Anglo-Saxon stock, as the Germans were, was no longer sufficient. Now members needed to demonstrate rigorous Americanism. At the eighteenth meeting of the Supreme Lodge in Washington, DC in 1894, the controversy came to a head. When German members threatened to secede and form their own order, members were urged not to permit "less than 13,000 total . . . to dictate the policy that must control the large majority of 450,000 active American citizens" and

that the English language is a language of necessity . . . and understanding of the same is a necessary adjunct to good citizenship. . . . Our order being purely American born, bred under the enlightened teachings of free and progressive America. . . . Why should we not go even further, and . . . declare that we will engraft upon our body politic that sublime principle, "Loyalty to government"<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Carnahan, *Pythian Knighthood*, 180, 263; Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, 142.

<sup>53</sup> Knights of Pythias, *Proceedings of the 18th Convention*, 6548, 6549.

A committee on the issue adopted a resolution previously passed by the Grand Lodge of Tennessee with even stronger language:

American Pythianism, as living in its organization and in its ritual, is the fraternal home of American citizens. . . .

. . . In the terminology and true jurisprudence of American Pythianism, there is no such nondescript as an Irish-American, a German-American, a Jewish-American, a Russo-American or any sort of annex-American. We are Americans, thank God! pure and simple<sup>54</sup>

Here, the didactic value of ritual in framing members' sense of civic obligations is clear, It is in the ritual that the Pythian learns the true meaning of Americanism, an idea admitting no hyphenated admixture.

The growing conflation of Pythianism and Americanism is clear in the 1898 revision of the Uniform Rank's Degree of Loyalty. Here the tension between a defensive desire for isolated purity and the potentially competing desire for martial conquest and empire clearly guide the ritualist's hand. The emphasis on the universal brotherhood of man of the degrees of Freemasonry here becomes an expressly nationalistic, defensive, and near paranoid bond among "the loyal" amidst bugle calls and military drill formations of those already initiated. The oath of the degree blends contemporary concerns of loyalty and government authority with older ritual ideas about the patriarchal structure of the family:

. . . Will you, as an honorable and just Knight, be loyal and true to the country or nation of which you are a citizen, ever standing ready to defend with your life, if need be, its constituted authority?

. . .  
Will you faithfully, honestly and truly protect and defend from all danger of whatever kind, if in your power so to do, the wife, daughter, sister or kinswoman of a Brother in Arms, and give needed aid to the widow or fatherless children of a deceased Brother in Arms?<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 6552.

<sup>55</sup> "Uniform Rank, Knights of Pythias - Ritual of the Rank of Loyalty."

A knight is a loyal defender of his patria and also respects and defends his brothers' personal patrimonies, both of which the ritualist seems to believe to be susceptible to attack. After completing the oath, its message and sentiment are reinforced in ways Marini, Cross, and Patel would appreciate with the singing of the hymn "America" ("My country tis of thee"), then reaching the height of its popularity in American hymnals. The hymn reinforces the oath, reminding the initiate that he is a citizen of the "land of the noble free" at which his "heart with rapture thrills," both reinforcing the ideals of the oath and outlining the correct emotional response in a tune with  $\frac{3}{4}$  time and particularly sharp cadence indicative of Cross's musical entrainment. The effect is further heightened throughout the ritual by the choreographed movements of the other knights as drill formations move about the candidate.<sup>56</sup>

The commanding general now takes charge of the ceremony, reminding the initiate that "[s]trong hands, loyal hearts and ever-watchful eyes, guard and keep our land secure" and that "exalted loyalty to home and country which is the crowning glory of the subject and citizen as well as the true soldier." Next the knight-to-be is invested with the spurs, tunic, helmet, gloves, scarlet belt, and sword of a knight as the organ plays a "softly solemn air." A new identity is literally put on the initiate and his new knightly manhood banishes personal doubts and political and racial fears. Yet, even here, the tone is defensive, with the instruction that the tunic "is your fortress and shall protect you against dishonor, injustice and disloyal hands" and the general presenting the sword "as a sign of security against his enemies and the foes of his country."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," *Hymnary.org*, accessed July 31, 2016, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/my\\_country\\_tis\\_of\\_thee\\_sweet\\_land](http://www.hymnary.org/text/my_country_tis_of_thee_sweet_land); Ian Cross, "Music and Social Being," *Musicology Australia* 28 (2006): 114–26.

<sup>57</sup> "Uniform Rank, Knights of Pythias - Ritual of the Rank of Loyalty."

The general's final admonition to the candidate reinforces "loyalty to each other, and loyalty to their land and country," insinuating that only Pythians can be trusted to be fully loyal, and rather than encouraging loyalty to God, the cardinal virtues or family, he is told:

add the loyalty of Damon to Syracuse, wherein he counted life as not worth the living, if his country were lost. Give to your land and nation the strongest, the highest, the best of your life. Seek in all honorable ways to bring renown to your country and people, and thereby you will most benefit and befriend your fellow men.<sup>58</sup>

In the final part of the ceremony, the Spanish-American War and its wresting of territory from a supposedly degenerate power of an inferior racial group enters the discourse explicitly:

"territories and possessions may be wrested from a nation, but the mode of acquiring them can never be forgotten, and the glory of the conquest is independent of all accident. The glory of the achievements of her brave and loyal sons shall adhere to the nation's name, and is immortal."<sup>59</sup>

The Pythians' concern for loyal Americanism was clearly on the rise. An M. C. Lilley catalog for 1899 offered four pages of American flags, ranging in price from fifteen cents to seventy dollars. Even Pythian music veered from the brotherly to an increasingly paranoid patriotism. Supreme Chancellor John Van Valkenburg's 1885 edition of the Pythians' Complete Manual and Text Book still published the opening ode for lodges as John Henry Rathbone's original lyrics set to the tune America:

Great God, to Thee we raise  
Our hopeful song of praise —  
Grant us Thy love.  
Let us in friendship be;  
Let us harmonious see,  
Our Order extended be,  
All nations o'er.

Let brothers hand in hand  
True to each other stand

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Throughout all time.  
 Then when life's labor's o'er,  
 Leaving Time's earthly shore,  
 May we meet to part no more  
 In Heaven above.<sup>60</sup>

If not overly original or majestic, Rathbone's words are focused on fraternity and essentially hopeful, keeping the pattern of its original, "God save the Queen." By 1910, the opening ode remained set to America, but the lyrics had become much more pessimistic and supplicatory:

God bless our Knightly band;  
 Firm may it ever stand,  
 Through storm and night:  
 When the wild tempests rave,  
 Ruler of wind and wave,  
 Do Thou our Order save,  
 By Thy great might.

For this our prayers ascend;  
 God bless, protect, defend,  
 God guard our rights;  
 Thou who art ever nigh.  
 Viewing with watchful eye,  
 To Thee aloud we cry,  
 God save the Knights.<sup>61</sup>

God who formerly benignly blessed happy brothers and gathered them in heaven is now invoked to save "where wild tempests rave" and to surveil "with watchful eye" the machinations of those who would take a Pythian's rights.<sup>62</sup>

In *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, Nancy MacLean argues that an increasingly national economy of large manufacturers and chain stores above them and increasingly independent

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<sup>60</sup> Valkenburg, *The Knights of Pythias*, 236–37.

<sup>61</sup> Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, xiii.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

wives and children below them produced an identity crisis in the white petit bourgeoisie of small proprietors and farmers, as well as the clerks and skilled laborers who made up the second Klan. MacLean argues that the Klan's producerist thinking was often bolstered by its members' own rise from humble circumstances. In this, she sees the Klan creating a powerful appeal, building both on more recent populist anxieties of lost independence and manhood and on an older tradition of fraternalism, in which "male producer-proprietors prided themselves both on their own economic independence and relative equality."<sup>63</sup> The Pythians' experience maps this growing anxiety in the two generations before the second Klan's emergence. In the Pythians' dread of unspecified enemies, one sees how easily these latent fears would coalesce in the second Klan's aggressive support of the first Red Scare following World War I. MacLean argues that communism functioned as Eric Wolf's master symbol of all of the leveling forces the embattled Klansman feared. These ranged "from economic concentration to the organization of African Americans, immigrants, women, and youth" as well as fear of an un-American and enervating urbanism.<sup>64</sup>

This growing concern with Americanism and disloyalty did not mean that older, more basic concerns about race were fading into the background as other fears engendered by modernity came to the fore. Instead, these too were becoming more nuanced.<sup>65</sup> In the same 1910 volume recording the revised Opening Ode, Hugh Gould Webb brought ethnology into the service of the order to prove the whiteness of the societies in which the story of Damon and

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<sup>64</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 74, 82. For Eric Wolf's work on master symbols, see Chapter 2.

<sup>65</sup> M. C. Lilley, *Illustrated Catalogue and Price List; Knights of Pythias Lodge Paraphernalia and Costumes for All Three Ranks* (Columbus, OH: Berlin Printing Co.), 1899), 204–7, <http://archive.org/details/illustratedcatal00lill>.

Pythias was set as well as the locales of other major ancient mystery cults and myths. While Pythians made no claim to ancient origins and gloried in being “instituted in America by America and primarily for the benefit of Americans,” the use of ancient myths in their rituals still presented a potential problem of racial taint in an increasingly racialized society. Like the Odd Fellows, Pythians now policed not only the racial purity of their members, but also their mythology.<sup>66</sup>

Webb describes his 450 page volume as a look into “the inner recesses of the ritual” with its “scenes and events” from “the far distance of early, and even prehistoric times” to benefit those who “have neither the time nor inclination to look up the matter.” If studied, his history “will give us a greater comprehensive idea of the ritual, and will thus impress it more firmly upon our minds.” Webb seeks to validate the truth of ancient myth with the tools of contemporary scholarship and science, asserting that “secret societies were the first great schools of the Arts and Sciences.” Perhaps Webb thought his approach would bolster the faith of brothers whose trust in the order was fading. His work certainly has contemporary parallels in that of his contemporary Harvey Spencer Lewis, who attempted to validate his Rosicrucian order as a scientific system and in the work of other New Thought leaders of the period who employed similar strategies to resuscitate the authority claims of older esoteric orders.<sup>67</sup>

Webb’s first three chapters give an overview of the objects of Pythianism, a biography of Rathbone, and a general history of secret societies. Before closing this chapter, he carefully delineates two types of secret societies. The first kind, he says:

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<sup>66</sup> Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, 126.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., xvi; Cecile Wilson, “Is AMORC Rosicrucian?,” *Aries* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 73–94, doi:10.1163/15700593-01401005.

consists of orders like that of the anarchists, Mafia, Clan-Na-Gael, who . . . keep their membership secret . . . . The only thing known about them is their names, and the pernicious, unlawful and criminal results of their deliberations.<sup>68</sup>

Here, Webb validates paranoia about internal enemies and also about immigrant disloyalty, easily moving from ancient racial types to modern fears of immigrant degeneracy. All three groups named were associated with immigrant groups. In contrast to these, his second type of secret societies:

proclaim themselves to the world in the parades seen upon our public streets. . . We find among them the most law abiding citizens of the country, from the President to the laborer; any good, sober, honest man can join them<sup>69</sup>

The first group is terroristic and cowardly, the second is open about both its martial character and its patriotism. The second group is the natural home for all ranks of good Americans, while the first represents the dangers posed by those who cannot be assimilated.

This chapter is separated from the next series of chapters on the various ancient and medieval mysteries, with a three-page poem titled “A Dream of the Prehistoric.” Its author, Duncan Campbell Scott rose to be Canada’s deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, creating its policy of assimilation and vigorously supporting the now infamous system of residential schools for Native youth. Scott famously said, “I want to get rid of the Indian problem . . . . Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.”<sup>70</sup> The poem itself embraces human evolutionary development:

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<sup>68</sup> Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, 40.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Robert L. McDougall, “Duncan Campbell Scott,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/duncan-campbell-scott/>; David MacDonald, “First Nations, Residential Schools, and the Americanization of the Holocaust: Rewriting Indigenous History in the United States and Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 40, no. 4 (2007): 1002.

Naked and shaggy, they herded at eve by the sound of the seas

. . .

And with tears almost human the mother looked down on the babe on her breast,  
And her pain was the germ of our love, and her cry was the root of our speech.

. . .

And here in the after-times, man, the white-faced and smooth-handed came by,  
And built him a city to dwell in and temples to his god.

. . .

And the brains from whose twilight of instinct has risen the dawn of our-  
thoughts.<sup>71</sup>

Scott's feelings about aboriginal peoples combined with Webb's preceding prose and that which follows cast the work firmly in the racist ethnology of the period with some groups representing more evolved types who will rise, while others are destined to fade away, but whose savagery, be it violence or a weakening of the stock through miscegenation, still present a danger to the superior group.<sup>72</sup>

The final section of Webb's history, comprising almost half of the book, contains twelve chapters giving detailed histories of various ancient civilizations and schools of philosophy.

Using the latest racial scientific thinking, the reader learns that the earliest inhabitants of Egyptian were a:

white or light-skinned race . . . . They were a "long headed" people i.e., their skulls were longer from front to back, than they were broad; their hair short and of a light color . . . faces regular and oval<sup>73</sup>

Webb solves the problem of Arabs' admirable civilization and their imagined Oriental decadence by expounding the theory of their being two Arab races. One Group, "the proper or 'pure Arabs'" were from the region of the Queen of Sheba and created the University. The other

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<sup>71</sup> Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, 42–44.

<sup>72</sup> On the fear of racial and ethnic degeneration, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-c.1918* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17–22.

<sup>73</sup> Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, 333–34.

group were the clannish Bedouins, who adopted a variety of barbarous Asiatic customs. From the genius of the pure Arabs came the flowering of Cordova, whose culture was “much superior to that of all forms of Christianity, as understood then and long afterwards.” From this passage, one may safely deduce that, in Webb’s opinion, a scientific heathenism was clearly preferable to Catholic depravity.

In the same way, the accomplishments of the undeniably Semitic Babylonians are due only to the tutelage of the racially distinct Accadians, to whom “belong the Chaldean cultivation and civilization.” Any other cultural accomplishments of the Fertile Crescent are to be chalked up to the racially distinct Sumerians, subjugated by “Semites . . . wandering from their home in Arabia.” Here, he draws on the work of German Biblical critic Carl Heinrich Cornill, who in his *The Culture of Ancient Israel*, says, “the heroic figures of the early Maccabees justly awaken our admiration, and even their degenerate descendants, during the period of the people’s decadence, are themselves not altogether destitute of a certain attraction.”<sup>74</sup>

In describing Sicily, home of Syracuse, Pythagoras, Damon, and Pythias, Webb says that the modern inhabitants “are exceedingly lazy, and in any other less prolific soil, they would certainly starve.” Here, Webb the Californian parrots tropes about the Native American population of California.<sup>75</sup> The island’s earliest inhabitants, the Sikans, are dismissed as “members of the same widespread stock as the Iberians and Ligurians of Spain, Gaul, and even Italy” a “pre-Aryan population . . . which has doubtless largely influenced later settlers.” The Aryan Sikels conquered these as they in turn were subjugated by the Greeks, becoming “tillers of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 551–354, 356 (quote), 389 (quote), 392 (quote); Carl Heinrich Cornill, *The Culture of Ancient Israel* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1914), 2.

<sup>75</sup> Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 72–85.

the land for their foreign masters.”<sup>76</sup> Webb’s Sicily reads like a modern list of feared foes within and without:

Sicily . . . was inhabited by various races, of which the Greeks held the eastern portion. . . . Mingling with them were the Sikels, who became their slaves . . . in the center . . . dwelt the primitive inhabitants, the Sikens, while the western third of the Island was held by the Phonecians and their allies, the Elymeans.<sup>77</sup>

Here we have a master group, the Greeks, their subalterns the Sikels, the primitive Natives, the Sikens, and the external threat of Alien culture, the Phonecians. It all neatly maps onto a North America of Anglo-Saxons, Eastern Europeans, Native Americans, and Spanish and Asian threats at the borders.

The selections above far from exhaust the toxic richness of Webb’s text, but they do illustrate Pythian culture’s trajectory in the years immediately before the founding of the second Klan. From being an order that once toyed with the idea of African-American members, the Pythians had drawn an every higher standard of racial and cultural purity for its ranks. In the final stage, even the racial origin of its founding myths were sanitized to ensure their appropriateness for patriotic, white Americans.

### **Junior Order of United American Mechanics**

The Ancient Order of United American Mechanics had its beginnings in the Know-Nothing movement of the 1840s, disparaging employers who hired immigrant labor rather than native-born workers. Congruent with this, the Mechanics were ardent anti-Catholics and avid supporters of the use of the Protestant Bible in the public schools. While thoroughly nativist, the

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<sup>76</sup> Webb, *A History of the Knights of Pythias*, 271–75.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

early order's racial views were not nearly so hardened as they would later become.<sup>78</sup> In a book of resolutions by Pennsylvania chapters memorializing the assassination of Lincoln in 1865, the fallen president is hailed as a “liberator of the oppressed,” a victim of the “slave power,” and “an apostle of the equality of labor.”<sup>79</sup>



Cover of the C. E. Ward 1909 J.O.U.A.M. Catalog, emphasizing Anglo-Saxon Americanism in the public schools.<sup>80</sup>

In 1853, the Mechanics chartered a branch for young men called the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. By 1885, the popularity of the Junior Order was such that it became an independent order with “Junior” no longer referring to the age of its members and “Mechanics” no longer restricting the occupations of its membership. The Junior Order eventually subsumed the smaller membership of the original order and, by 1900, membership surpassed 200,000 and included members such as Georgia Populist Tom Watson.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations*, 171-172.

<sup>79</sup> Order of United American Mechanics, State Council of Pennsylvania, *In Memoriam: Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States* (Philadelphia: Geo. Hawkes, Jr., 1865), <http://archive.org/details/inmemoriamabraha00orde>, p. 35, 38, 80.

<sup>80</sup> The C. E. Ward Company, *Ward's Catalog Jr. O.U.A.M. Regalia, Costumes, and Supplies, No. 25* (New London, OH: The C. E. Ward Company, 1909). Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library collection, Lexington, Massachusetts, FR 002.

<sup>81</sup> Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations*, p. 171-172; MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 7.

Perhaps as a result of the perceived successes of the Knights of Labor and portions of the People's Party in taking a more moderate racial stance, some within the Junior Mechanics proposed a more liberal position on African-American membership. The minutes of the 1894 National Session held in Asheville, North Carolina, report taking up "the old question of eligibility to membership of any one with other racial blood in him other than 'white.'" The majority held the line, passing a motion clarifying that "an applicant with any African blood in him was ineligible to membership."<sup>82</sup> Racial thought among the Junior Mechanics would only become more hardened in passing years.

In a 1909 regalia catalog, one sees that the some of the initiators' costumes for other degrees had a startling degree of menace and seem to echo the dress of the members of the First Ku Klux Klan and anticipate the black robes and hoods of the Second Klan's elite vigilante group the Black Legion. While this "executioner's costume" had no direct connection to the role the uniform later played in the Black Legion, the second Klan's appropriation of it showed the fertile ground fraternal culture had prepared for the second Klan to flourish.<sup>83</sup>

The 1909 revision of the Junior Mechanics ritual, the initiation into the second Degree of Liberty had become an elaborate affair. Based on the story of the founders of New England, the Puritan candidate made a symbolic journey clinging to the mast of a boat in the middle of the lodge. During the initiation, he was admonished that, in the land he was founding

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<sup>82</sup> M. D. (Marcellus Deaves) Lichliter, *History of the Junior Order United American Mechanics of the United States of North America* (Philadelphia : Press of J. B. Lippincott company, 1909), p. 335. <http://archive.org/details/historyofjunioro00lich>.

<sup>83</sup> The C. E. Ward Company, *Ward's Catalog Jr. O.U.A.M. Regalia, Costumes, and Supplies, No. 25* (New London, OH: The C. E. Ward Company, 1909), p. 11; "History: The Black Legion, Where Vets and the Klan Met," *Veterans Today*, accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2012/11/28/history-the-black-legion-where-vets-and-the-klan-met/>.

law will mean not the heavy hand of power, but the even hand of justice. May you fulfill the high destiny of your blood and race. You will now be conducted to the sacred altar upon which you will be obligated as a free man in your new land of liberty.<sup>84</sup>

The combination of whiteness, in the exaltation of blood and race, and of laissez-faire in the exaltation of a light-handed government in a land of liberty, show how completely any older producerist or more radical labor thought and any hint of racial optimism had been banished from the Mechanics' thinking by the twentieth century.



Left: 1909 JOUAM Initiatory Tribunal Costumes.<sup>85</sup> Right: A Los Angeles Police officer stands with Black Legion member R.F. McGarry, Los Angeles, 1936.<sup>86</sup>

This shift in perspective and blending of old and new causes can also be seen in a pamphlet published by the Junior Workmen to address Colorado's Ludlow Massacre in 1914.

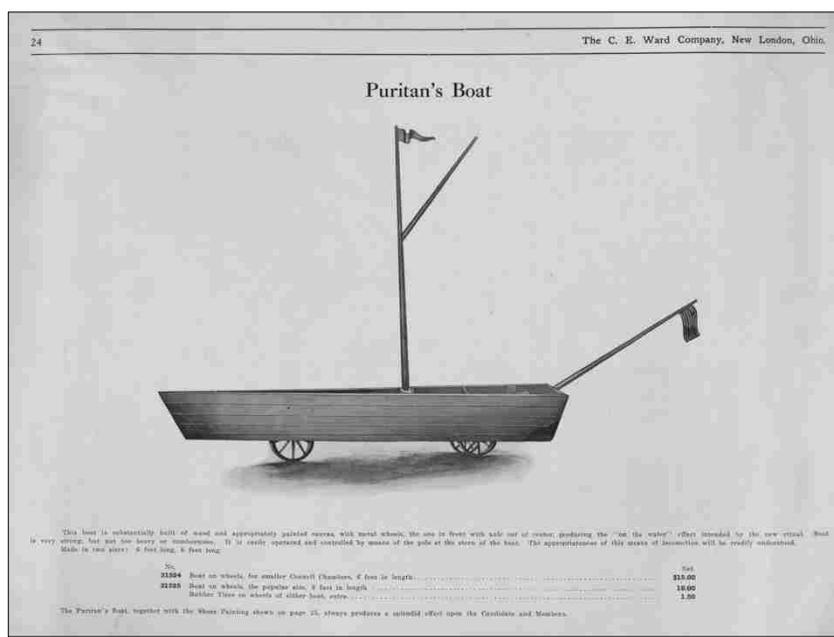
<sup>84</sup> "The Nativist Orders," *Phoenix Masonry*, accessed February 6, 2016, [http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/jr\\_aoum.htm](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/jr_aoum.htm).

<sup>85</sup> The C. E. Ward Company, *Ward's Catalog Jr. O.U.A.M. Regalia*, 11.

<sup>86</sup> *Police Officer Stands with R.F. McGarry, Member of the Black Legion Secret Society, Los Angeles, 1936*, photograph, 1936, Lost Angeles Times Photographic Archive. Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, [http://lit250v.library.ucla.edu/islandora/object/edu.ucla.library.specialCollections.losAngelesDailyNews%3A5747/print\\_object](http://lit250v.library.ucla.edu/islandora/object/edu.ucla.library.specialCollections.losAngelesDailyNews%3A5747/print_object).

Describing themselves as “professional men, workingmen, and business men,” the Denver Council describes the miners’ camp at Ludlow as

an armed camp under strict control of the Union leaders and was peopled ... ‘ignorant, lawless and savage South European peasants.’ They spoke twenty or more different languages, and most of them could not speak English at all.<sup>87</sup>



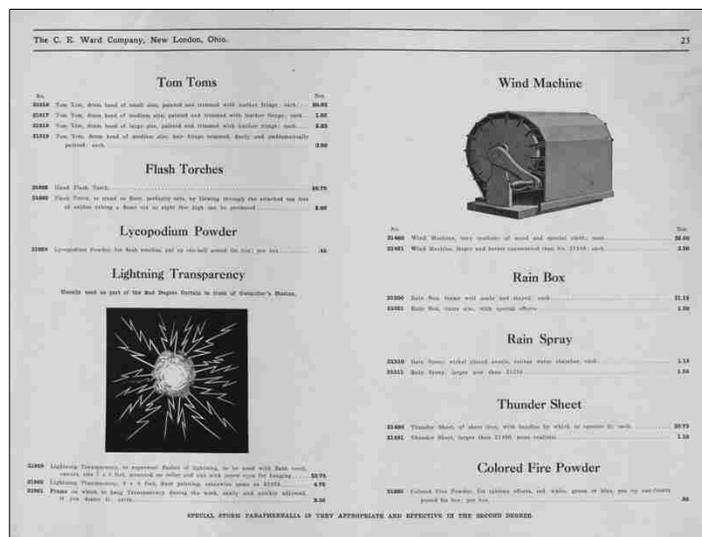
*Puritan's boat for the initiate's journey to America during the JOURNAL second degree.*<sup>88</sup>

If the Mechanics looked back to an imagined golden age of American Anglo-Saxon purity, they eagerly embraced the authority of technology to validate their message, a theme that recurs across the fraternal landscape. We have already seen several examples of illustrations of costumes and backdrops available from the fraternal regalia catalogs of the period, but fraternal members were equally interested in props and special effects to bring their rituals alive and drive their points home. Above is an illustration of the wheeled Puritan boat used in the Junior

<sup>87</sup> Junior Order United American Mechanics. Denver. Kensington Council No. 16, *Statement of the Strike Situation in Colorado ... a Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Investigate and Report to Kensington Council No. 16, Junior Order United American Mechanics, Denver, Colorado*. Printed by E. L. Wepf, c1914), <http://archive.org/details/statementofstrik00junirich>, 1-2.

<sup>88</sup> The C. E. Ward Company, *Ward's Catalog Jr. O.U.A.M. Regalia*, 24.

Mechanic's second degree to simulate a rough sea. Lest the simulated bucking of the waves not be enough, the facing page offers an elaborate wind machine, a lightning transparency, and flash torches and powder to make the most of the initiate's experience. Both of these show the seriousness with which the order took its ritual performance and, likely, the competitiveness among fraternal groups to provide the most dramatic experience.<sup>89</sup>



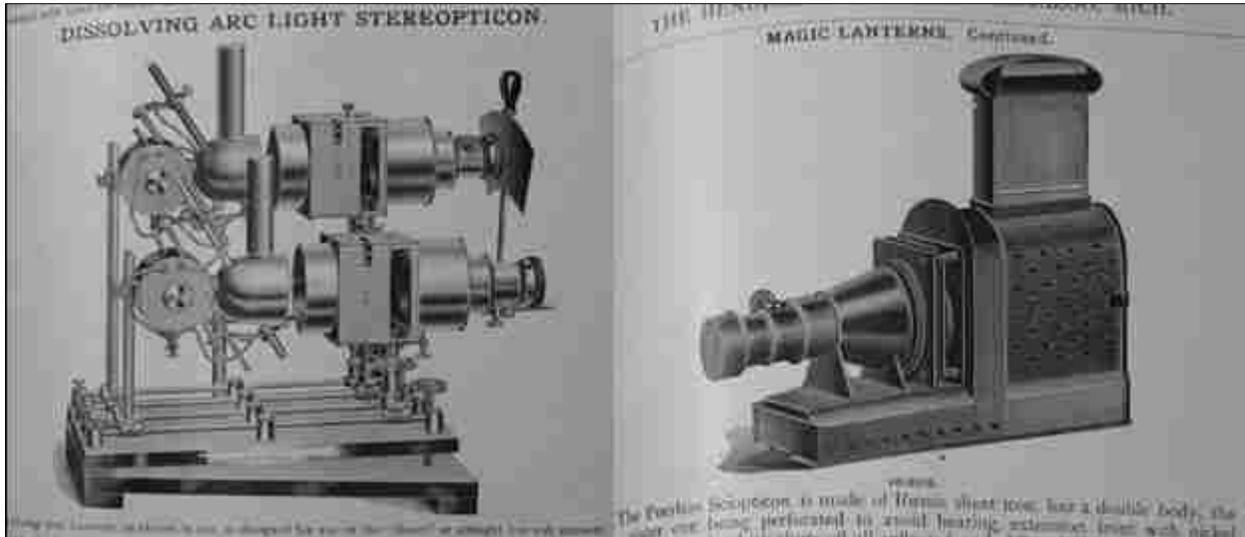
*JOUAM lightning and wind machines.*<sup>90</sup>

Nowhere is this fascination with technology more apparent than the embrace of magic lantern technology. Largely forgotten today, these precursors of the moving picture were a significant form of popular entertainment as well as an important form of popular instruction for traveling lecturers, Sunday schools, and most every imaginable civic group. Between 1881 and 1920, Joseph Boggs Beale, America's most famous creator of slide art, produced at least 258 sets of magic lantern slides illustrating everything from folk tales to Bible stories to fraternal rituals.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 23.

Only a few Junior Mechanics slides for the first degree, drawn between 1917 and 1920 are known to survive. These portray ten scenes including the ideal home and the immigrant threat.<sup>91</sup>



*Deluxe and basic magic lantern models from the 1897 Henderson-Ames JOUAM catalog.*<sup>92</sup>

Other slide sets give an idea of fraternal content and how it was reinforced by sharing illustrators who also produced religious, historical, and scientific material. In one of his slides illustrating the Lord's Prayer, Beale portrays a white American missionary single-handedly teaching the exotically costumed peoples of the world. In another, for an unidentified temperance fraternity, he depicts a writhing African American under the power of a whiskey demon.<sup>93</sup> Other

<sup>91</sup> Terry Borton and Deborah Borton, *Before the Movies: American Magic-Lantern Entertainment and the Nation's First Great Screen Artist, Joseph Boggs Beale* (Bloomington, IN: John Libbey Publishing 2014), 160-161.

<sup>92</sup> Henderson-Ames Company, *Regalia, Paraphernalia & Supplies for Junior Order United American Mechanics, Catalogue No. 159* (Kalamazoo, MI: Henderson-Ames Company, 1897). Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library collection, Lexington, Massachusetts, FR 002, p. 25, 27.

<sup>93</sup> Borton, *Before the Movies*, 151.

slides were cruder and more direct, as in an 1887 cartoon set reproducing Currier and Ives's "Dark Town Lodge," a set that was popular with white fraternal lodges.<sup>94</sup>

In their role as avid consumers and popularizers of the latest technologies, one sees these fraternalists' attempt to balance between purportedly timeless values and the contemporary imperative to champion progress qua progress. This appeal to the authority of technology is in the same vein as these groups' appeals to the authority of racial science, a tension between modernity and the desire for a fixed society aptly elucidated by MacLean.<sup>95</sup>

The Junior Mechanics aided in the spread of the second Ku Klux Klan after its founding in 1915. As the preceding pages have shown, the second Klan did not arise from a vacuum or from a sudden enthusiasm for D. W. Griffith's film "Birth of a Nation," but from a national fraternal culture that had spent decades preparing the ground for its emergence. In fact, prospective initiates into the Klan were instructed that it was "essentially a patriotic, fraternal, benevolent Order."<sup>96</sup>

In Georgia, Junior Mechanics and the Klan would jointly publish the newspaper *The Searchlight* from 1921 under the motto "Free Speech: Free Press: White Supremacy."<sup>97</sup> By 1923, the paper claimed a national readership of 68,000 and served as a model for later Klan publications around the country.<sup>98</sup> In that same year, Georgia Klan leaders proposed the

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<sup>94</sup> "The Lincoln-Darwin Bicentennial," *The Magic Lantern Gazette*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2008): 11; Library of Congress Online Prints and Photographs Catalog, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002699714/>.

<sup>95</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*.

<sup>96</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1916), 25, [http://archive.org/details/KloranOfTheKKK\\_201404](http://archive.org/details/KloranOfTheKKK_201404).

<sup>97</sup> Scott M. Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations: A History*, Routledge Communications Series (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 399-400.

<sup>98</sup> Felix Harcourt, "Journalism of a Peculiar Sort: Ku Klux Klan Newspapers in the 1920s" (American Journalism Historians Association, New Orleans, LA, 2013),

establishment of “The Great American Fraternity,” combining the Klan, the Junior Mechanics, the Odd Fellows, and nine other nativist and mainstream fraternal organizations. *The Nation* called the proposed organization “a super-organization of haters.”<sup>99</sup> While the grand fraternal alliance failed, the attempt shows the degree to which the Second Klan rightly knew itself to be the progeny of earlier fraternal orders.

### **The Second Ku Klux Klan**

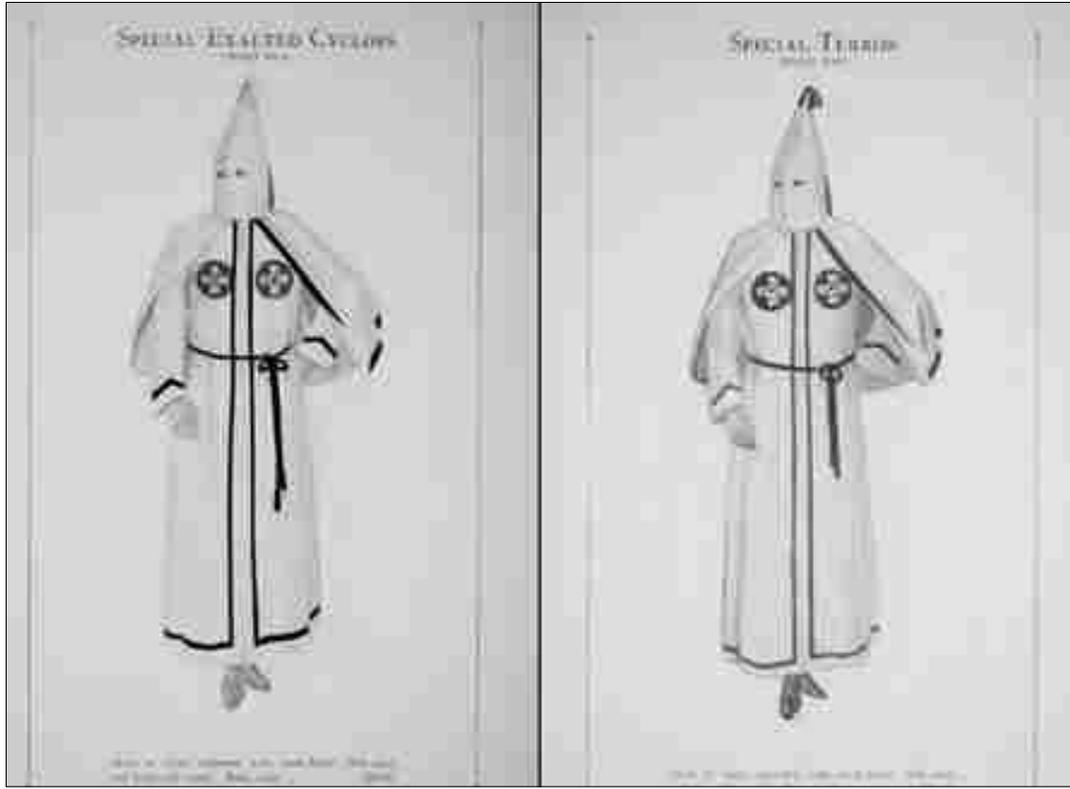
The second Klan and its ritual were the brainchild of William Joseph Simmons, whom *Time* later described as having a “fetish for fraternalism.” He was a former Methodist lay preacher, a former employee of the Woodmen of the World, and reputedly a member of twelve fraternal organizations. While it took the hiring of two public relations professionals to spur Klan membership into the millions, it was Simmons who tied all of the fraternal phobias of the past two generations into a united crusade against “booze, loose women, Jews, Negroes, Roman Catholics (whose ‘dago’ Pope was bent on taking over the U.S.), and anybody else who was not a native-born white Protestant Anglo-Saxon.”<sup>100</sup>

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[https://www.academia.edu/4738422/\\_Journalism\\_of\\_a\\_Peculiar\\_Sort\\_Ku\\_Klux\\_Klan\\_Newspapers\\_in\\_the\\_1920s](https://www.academia.edu/4738422/_Journalism_of_a_Peculiar_Sort_Ku_Klux_Klan_Newspapers_in_the_1920s), p 2-3.

<sup>99</sup> Charles P. Sweeney, “The Great Bigotry Merger,” *The Nation*, July 5, 1922, p. 8-10, quote, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> “The Various Shady Lives of the Ku Klux Klan,” *Time*, April 9, 1965, p. 32.



*Uniforms from the second Klan's in-house regalia catalog.*<sup>101</sup>

The second Klan's mythic universe lacks the high-brow racial verbiage of Webb's explication of the Pythian ritual, but an examination of the 1916 ritual, *The Kloran*, shows it to be no less embedded in the modernity which MacLean has shown so threatened its members' sense of economic security and their claims to patriarchal authority within their families. Assertions of manhood mixed with expressions of fearfulness appear in the opening ceremony's opening "klode," which blends the tune of the missionary hymn "From Greenland's icy mountains" with the chorus of "Home sweet home":

We meet with cordial greetings  
 In this our sacred cave  
 To pledge anew our compact  
 With hearts sincere and brave;  
 . . .

<sup>101</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Catalogue of Official Robes and Banners* (Atlanta: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1925).

Here honor, love and justice  
Must actuate us all;<sup>102</sup>

The Knights proclaim their bravery, but meet in a cave. They embrace traditional values of honor, love, and justice, but seek to “actuate” them. At a later point, candidates are praised for being “actuated by manly motives,” blending older ideas of manhood with newer ideas of interior motivation.<sup>103</sup>

The initiation ritual is full of thoroughly modern concepts. Like the Pythians and JOUAM, the major metaphor is citizenship. The aspirant presents a “Petition of Citizenship” representing his hope “to forsake the world of selfishness and fraternal alienation and emigrate to the delectable bounds of the Invisible Empire.” The Exalted Cyclops (the president), says the petition is “[i]mportant in that it evidences human progress.” The rite itself is called the “Naturalization Ceremony.” The entire frame casts even white men as being both an “alien” in the legal sense, but also as being in a state of “alienation,” with its distinctly modern psychological overtones. Each of these words appears in the initiation ritual seven times. The Klan “naturalizes” the alien and heals his psychic breach of alienation by imparting a constructed national identity that validates both his worthiness to be a citizen and his whiteness. Rather than being a rallying point for those who know themselves to be racially pure and fully American in their values, like the earlier Pythians and Mechanics, the Klan ritual assuages not only the external fear of racial, ethnic, and political threats, but also relieves the candidate’s internal doubts about his own worthiness. The rite presents a classic example of passing through Turner’s

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<sup>102</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran*, 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

liminial state into a new identity and it imbues “citizenship” with the weight of one of Weaver’s god terms, making citizenship and ultimate determiner of personal worthiness.<sup>104</sup>

Before being admitted to the lodge room, the candidate was required to answer a list of questions certifying his worthiness. These included the guarantee that he was “a native-born, white, Gentile American citizen,” that he was not beholden to any “sect or ruler that is foreign to the United States of America,” that he would “strive for the eternal maintenance of white supremacy,” and that he would practice “clannishness” toward fellow klansmen. While these questions ostensibly guard the purity of the Klan, they also assure the candidate in his identity, much like Christian baptismal rites wherein the candidate publicly renounces evil and turns toward Christ. These interrogatories validate his manhood and assure him of his racial and religious worthiness to be lifted out of alienation and uncertainty.<sup>105</sup>

The Kloran even psychologizes the penalties for betraying the Klan. In the Masonic model, which gave rise to the term “the third degree,” the initiate is given the details of the gruesome death that awaits the traitor. In the Kloran, the initiate is told that “dire things will befall him,” almost as an aside. The majority of the traitor’s punishment is internal: “conscience would tenaciously torment him, remorse would repeatedly revile him.” Rather than suffering death or dishonor, the faithless Klansman will be driven to neurosis, his already nagging doubts about his manliness getting the better of him. This surely would have struck nineteenth-century Masons or members of the first Klan as being quite odd and, quite probably, unmanly.<sup>106</sup>

The rite itself makes use of all of the standard fraternal tropes with candidates circumambulating the cave and receiving moral instruction from various officers. When the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 21, 23, 22.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 28.



cruel heart of Jezebel she slaughters the souls of thousands of her devotees daily.<sup>108</sup>

The gloss in several places, as here, is biblical, but the gist is the language of Populist producerism set in opposition to corporate capitalism, as MacLean has argued. She sees the Klan creating a powerful appeal, building both on more recent populist anxieties of lost independence and manhood in which “male producer-proprietors prided themselves both on their own economic independence and relative equality.”<sup>109</sup> She argues that because members of the Klan were “[s]till committed to economic individualism,” they would, like other fraternal organizations, largely reject class as a meaningful lens of analysis and insist on the solidarity of white men while stressing social division along the “‘natural’ lines of race, sex, and age.”<sup>110</sup> The ritual bears her out, with candidates twice being welcomed in from “the world of selfishness” and warned that the “lustre of the holy light of chivalry has lost its former glory and is sadly dimmed by the choking dust of selfish and sordid gain.” It is this malady that is causing men to “forget their patriotic, domestic, and social obligations and duties.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>109</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 74. The organizations of the populist era certainly drew on the fraternal heritage as well, as can be seen in the fraternal and ritual organization of the Agricultural Wheel.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran*, 36, 39, 34, 35.



*A Klan candidate takes the oath in Omaha, Nebraska in 1921.*<sup>112</sup>

The rite climaxes, literally, when the candidates, still kneeling at the altar after taking the final oath are baptized into the Klan. Though the phrases “dedication” and “to set apart” are used the baptismal intention is foregrounded with a purpose-written verse of the revival hymn “Just as I am”:

To Thee, oh, god I call to Thee—  
 True to my oath, oh help me be!  
 I’ve pledged my love, my blood, my all;  
 Oh, give me grace that I not fall.<sup>113</sup>

The candidates are doused multiple times with a “dedication fluid” with unmistakably seminal overtones. The chaplain says that it is a “transparent, life-giving, powerful God-given fluid, more precious and far more significant than all the sacred oils of the ancients.” It is poured on the head

<sup>112</sup> “Christian Ceremony of Baptism Is Parodied in Initiation of Ku Klux Klan Candidates,” *News Sentinel*, September 13, 1921.

<sup>113</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran*, 39.

and back, then scattered in the air and around the candidate's head, representing his transformation in body, mind, spirit, and life. The "powerful God-given" fluid's seminal symbolism is hard to deny. Deficient manhood is remediated and power to compete in a world that has left the candidate behind is granted out of the plentitude of divine potency. Older tropes of a feared white male inadequacy in the face of black potency and newer fears of being unfit specimens being left behind in an economic contest of survival of the fittest are blended in this new rite of deliverance remaking revivalist baptismal ceremonies.<sup>114</sup>

It would be hard to find a hymn and tune combination more powerful for the second Klan demographic than Charlotte Elliott's "Just as I am" and William B. Bradbury's *Woodworth*. It was published steadily in hymnals from 1850 onward and was a prominent song of invitation in American revivals long before Billy Graham made it a feature of his twentieth-century crusades. Bradbury, while not now so well-known as many other nineteenth-century hymnists, was one of the most successful tune writers of his era. In addition to *Woodworth*, he wrote, or wrote the well-known tunes for a number of cathartic hymns still in use, including "Jesus loves me! this I know," "On Christ the solid rock I stand," "Sweet hour of prayer," and "He leadeth me, O blessed thought."<sup>115</sup>

The English literature scholar T. Walter Herbert's work on Willie Nelson's use of "Just as I Am" explains why it makes such a potent combination with this particular rite by the memories of the original lyrics and what they would have stirred in the hearer:

It is an old gospel tune that completes the formation of the stranger as a religious reality, not as a figure of self-contained imperial violence, but of abject moral

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 40–41.

<sup>115</sup> "Just as I Am, Without One Plea," *Hymnary.org*, accessed August 3, 2016, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/just\\_as\\_i\\_am\\_without\\_one\\_plea](http://www.hymnary.org/text/just_as_i_am_without_one_plea); "William B. Bradbury › Tunes - Hymnary.org," accessed August 3, 2016, [http://www.hymnary.org/person/Bradbury\\_William?sort=desc&order=Instances&tab=tunes](http://www.hymnary.org/person/Bradbury_William?sort=desc&order=Instances&tab=tunes).

failure. . . . The . . . male here finds welcoming mercy in the male lover who died for him.

. . .

The ecstasy is the sweetest way station . . . culminating and blessing the torments built into his rage.

With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
 Fightings and fears within, without,  
 Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.<sup>116</sup>

The “dedication fluid” and the tune bring together the ideas of Carnes and Marini to repair uncertain manhood and uncertain whiteness. The meaning of the rite is further elucidated in the prayer that follows it:

Now, oh, God! We, through Thy goodness, have here dedicated with Thine own divinely distilled fluid these manly men at the altar kneeling, who have been . . . impelled by noble impulses to turn from selfishness and fraternal alienation and to espouse with body, mind, spirit and life, the holy service of our country, our klan, our home and each other<sup>117</sup>

This is the first time that the candidates have been told that they are “manly.” It is only now that the Cyclops declares that the candidates are “citizens” and members of an empire not only of chivalry, honor, and love, but, tellingly, of industry. Neurasthenia, formerly a malady of enervated upper-class men has been both democratized and banished by the rites of the Invisible Empire. Disappointingly, at least one contemporary source reports that the mysterious dedication fluid was not an elaborate concoction, but only water.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> T. Walter Herbert, “Willie Nelson and Herman Melville on Manhood: Pierre and ‘The Red-Headed Stranger,’” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 35, no. 4 (1993): 432.

<sup>117</sup> Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, *Kloran*, 42.

<sup>118</sup> For the evolution from a culture of sin and anomie to one of self-realization and the fear of neurasthenia, see T. J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, 1st ed. (Pantheon Books, 1983), 1–38; “Christian Ceremony of Baptism Is Parodied in Initiation of Ku Klux Klan Candidates.” *News Sentinel*. September 13, 1921.

Before splendidly crashing amid sex and financial scandals in the 1920s, the second Klan would become both America's largest hate group and its most powerful fraternal organization. Its rapid rise and its national reach were possible only because so many fraternal organizations had already laid the framework for its ideology, its organization, and even its merchandizing. As MacLean documents, the Klan offered a disaffected and fearful petite bourgeoisie a model of respectability that was itself becoming shopworn, but in the 1920s fraternal orders counted thirty-million members in more than 600 organizations. Before it began losing traction in the Roaring Twenties and entering a steep decline after World War II, it produced this great corpse flower, showing for the last time the power the model had in forming American's value system since the end of the Civil War.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 7, 52–76.

## Chapter Four

### African-American Fraternalism and Race

Just as white fraternalism was key to creating, refining, and propagating white racial identity in the decades after the Civil War, African-American fraternal groups were key to rebuffing these tropes, propagating themes of racial uplift, and even disseminating early forms of Afrocentrism. This chapter argues that the first Klan's nemesis, the Union League, deposited seeds that would be nurtured by intervening groups until the flowering of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.

#### The Union League

Michael Fitzgerald's rehabilitation of the Union League has been discussed briefly in Chapter One. Far from being a vehicle of outside agitation to manipulate freedpeople, the League taught African Americans to wield political capital in their own right and to organize for self-improvement. Fitzgerald painstakingly documents the scope and high level of organization achieved by the Union League before Redemption. He credits an explosion of independent black churches and social betterment organizations with allowing early League organizers both to tap into community networks and to camouflage their activities. Support by military and Freedmen's Bureau leadership in Alabama led to a more centralized structure than in other states such as Mississippi, but Fitzgerald maintains that local councils worked in similar ways at the local level in both states, with the Alabama League counting as many as 30,000 members by April of 1867.

This extensive membership would create a ready pool of receptiveness and expertise for later fraternal organizations.<sup>1</sup>

While white organizers dominated the League's early days, as freedpeople became accustomed to politics and to the organizational structure they exercised increased influence and made local Leagues more responsive to community needs.<sup>2</sup> Meetings usually started with initiations followed by lectures on relevant legislation and issues of concern. Fitzgerald characterizes them as being "conducted hierarchically, as a sort of political school."<sup>3</sup> Members being sworn to secrecy made it more difficult for white conservatives to identify and retaliate against them, though this also led to uneasiness among some freedmen and at least one unionist white ironically drew parallels to the Know-Nothings.<sup>4</sup>

Though its existence was brief, the League left a memory of organizational power and laid down ritual forms, such as the ring and drilling. By creating a vision of economic independence and family protection grounded in a free labor ideology, the Union League molded a solidly Republican block of African American voters in the South. At its high water mark, the League counted hundreds of local councils across the South, but, a succession of blows from 1868 onwards would break the organization. Organized violence and intimidation meted out by the Ku Klux Klan crippled the League. Whites argued that "the League justified Klan terror" and one Mobile newspaper said of the Klan, "[t]he first object of these clubs should be a persevering and systematic movement to break up the 'Loyal Leagues.'"<sup>5</sup> The rise of Redeemer governments

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<sup>1</sup> Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 68–69, 144–80, 189; Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement*, 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

coupled with northern Republican ambivalence ended any hope of renewal, despite limited efforts to revive it in the Hayes administration.<sup>6</sup>

Fitzgerald, like most others who have written on the League, takes little interest in its fraternal and ritual character, except for emphasizing the practical advantages of secrecy. Perhaps he downplays initiations as “solemnly pretentious” because the Dunning School had emphasized them as evidence of freedmen’s credulousness.<sup>7</sup> Implying that ritual and serious political purpose were somehow incompatible, he writes that the “ceremonial aspects of the order may have piqued some freedmen’s interest, but they all understood that the goal was to help the Radicals and secure black uplift generally.”<sup>8</sup>

A closer examination of the 1868 edition of the ritual confirms Fitzgerald’s view that it was “quasi-masonic.” Candidates in the vestibule are warned of the oath they are about to take, they are conducted around the lodge, where they learn more of the League and its purposes, then brought to the altar, where prayer is offered and an oath sworn. While the form is familiar, the content inverts the norms of Masonic ritual. Here, the content is not only expressly political, but doggedly partisan. The candidates waiting outside the lodge room are told that, while the “first grand purpose of our organization has been accomplished,” its:

legitimate fruits . . . are yet to be secured in . . . the establishment of equal liberty; the elevation and education of the toiling masses of the republic; [and] the complete and final overthrow at the ballot-box, as in the field, of the oligarchy of political leaders, who sought to ruin when they could not rule, and through whose errors and wrongs our country has been baptized in blood<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 234, 237.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Walter L. Fleming, *Documents Relating to Reconstruction* (Morgantown, WV, 1904), No. 3, p. 21.

The chaplain prays that God will “protect the loyal people of the United States” and later pointedly mentions the danger of “domestic traitors.” With hand on the Bible, Declaration of Independence, and Constitution, those taking the oath promise, “I will do all in my power to elect true and reliable Union men . . . and none others.”<sup>10</sup> Steven Hahn’s description of the Union League oath shows how it strengthened organizational bonds by drawing on familiar forms:

The league’s initiation ritual, in which inductees took a sacred pledge while forming a circle “with clasped and uplifted hands,” in fact bore resemblance to the ring shout and other forms of spiritual communion in their religious worship.<sup>11</sup>

The 1870 revision of the ritual is a bit briefer, but even more politically pointed. Now the initiate swears himself to support specific and more expansive political goals:

I will aid and defend the working men of the nation, and in all lawful methods endeavor to secure to them the right to labor and enjoy the full fruit of their labor; and that I will not countenance or employ anyone who is in any manner hostile to the working men of the nation.<sup>12</sup>

The mention of “working men” is not rhetorical. Clearly the Union League’s ritualists sought to instill a common identity of worker among freedmen over and against the image of the parasitic planter. In a time when the future shape of land ownership and tenancy was a matter of speculation, this was not an abstract concern. However, the symbolism of the order went even further. In addition to the Bible, a sword, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution, the flag-covered altar was to contain a “Sickle; Shuttle; Anvil; and other emblems of industry.” In the lecture following the oath, the new initiates are told that these “symbols of industry which greet you upon the altar, are to remind you of one of the main purposes of our order and to

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., No. 3, 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 184.

<sup>12</sup> Fleming, *Documents Relating to Reconstruction*, No. 3, p. 26.

represent the foundation on which our institution rests.” As subsequent sections of this chapter will show, while appeals to a worker identity over a racial and ethnic identity failed among some African-American groups, ritual invocations of the ideals of work and industry proved attractive.<sup>13</sup>

Fitzgerald shows how local councils demonstrated their increased independence from white leaders by organizing militia companies with public drilling and demonstrates how these groups were important for self-defense in the face of rising white violence and may have creatively deprived whites of black labor.<sup>14</sup> But these practices also built identity and conferred and asserted black manhood, much in the way that Carnes’s sons of Civil War veterans clamored for martial ceremonies in their lodges to redress the deficit of masculine valor they had been deprived of earning on the battlefield.<sup>15</sup>

Hahn’s *A Nation Under Our Feet* shows this aspect of League life, emphasizing marches, paramilitary drills, and the near revival character of meetings and showing its integration with religious organizations and family structures.<sup>16</sup> Hahn puts the importance of paramilitary drilling succinctly:

Better than anyone in the former confederacy or the nation—then and since—they understood that the rites of democracy had been built on rituals of violence and suppression directed against them. . . . Paramilitary organization had been fundamental to the social and political order of slavery; it remained fundamental to the social and political order of freedom.<sup>17</sup>

Hahn understands that paramilitary organization built group identity, provided a venue to exercise manhood, and strengthened the bonds formed in secret meetings and ritual, much as

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 3, pp. 17, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South*, 67–68.

<sup>15</sup> Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 139–41.

<sup>16</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 180–4, 265–8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

Freemasons public parades on St. John's day served these functions. In at least one case, the drillers had only sticks to use and, in another, that drilling was used as a public display of strength during a strike. Hahn argues these performances and practices "helped forge solidarities across plantations and farms that necessarily transcended ties of kinship, while investing the process with special political meaning."<sup>18</sup> This legacy continued to be central to African-American fraternal organizations. In 1911, the Supreme Chancellor of the black Knights of Pythias recounted an Indianapolis parade by the order's uniform rank, saying:

No person who witnessed that military display could help feeling his heart swell with pride at the noble spectacle of men of our race, trained in military tactics, and imbibed with civic pride, to honor their race as well as their Order by their manly conduct and their knightly bearing.<sup>19</sup>

A final area of League innovation was its informal incorporation of women into the life of a fraternal organization, or, perhaps, women's incorporation of themselves into a male fraternal organization. While membership was restricted to adult males, Hahn finds that women were key to the League's success. They participated in meetings, sometimes had a say in the election of officers and the drafting of bylaws, spoke at public gatherings and marched in League processions. As subsequent pages will show, this breaching of gender segregation was a notable feature of a number of African-American organizations, an arrangement unthinkable to most white fraternalists of either gender.<sup>20</sup>

The League did not survive the Confederate-led Redeemer governments, but its legacy lived on in a vibrant African-American fraternal community. A subsequent generation of

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 304-305, 174-75.

<sup>19</sup> S. W. Green, *Third Biennial Report of S. W. Green, Supreme Chancellor, to the Seventeenth Biennial Session of the Knights of Pythias of North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia, the Supreme Lodge Thereof: held at Baltimore, Maryland, August 26-30, 1913*. (Nashville: Sunday School Union Print, 1913), 25.

<sup>20</sup> Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet*, 185.

organizations borrowed from its ritual, continued the martial tradition of drilling and parading, and incorporated women. No where would this inheritance be clearer than in the International Order of Twelve, but first it is instructive for comparison to look at the more moderate approach taken by an African-American adaptation of an existing white group.

### **The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows**

In his 1909 collection of fraternal humor, *The Lodge Goat*, Odd Fellow and regalia manufacturer James Pettibone gives a telling view of the relationship of white and black Odd Fellows:

A colored man was busily engaged in sawing wood for Colonel Powis, when the latter observed that the bosom of the "man and the brother," so to speak, was adorned by an Odd Fellows' breastpin.

"Do the white Odd Fellows and the colored Odd Fellows in this city affiliate?" asked Colonel Powis.

"Do n't 'fillyate wuff a cuss, but dey helps each other out."

"Well, that's the same thing, ain't it?"

"No, sah, hit 's not de same ting."

"What 's the difference ?"

The colored man stopped sawing wood, and made the following explanation :

"Las' week, when dat norther war a-freezin' the marrer in yer bones, I went into der saloon of a white man what totes dis werry same emblem. I was in dis tress, as I had n't had a dram dat mornin', so I gib him de sign ob distress."

"Did he respond ?"

"He did n't gib the propah response. De propah response would hab been to hab rubbed his lef ear wid his right han', an' to hab sot out de bottle."

"Then he did not respond correctly?"

"No, sah. He made a motion at de doah wid one han', an' reached under de bar wid de odder. I made de Odd Fellows' signal ob distress once moah, an' den sumfin' hard hit me on de side of de head an' knocked bungstarter what dat white Brudder Odd Fellow had frowed at me in response to de distress signal."

"Then the colored Odd Fellows and the white Odd Fellows do not affiliate?"

"Jess what I tole yer. Dey do n't 'fillyate, but dey helps each odder out. I was helped out inter de street wid de bungstarter, but 'fillyate means to set out de hisky."<sup>21</sup>

In other anecdotes in the book, two blackface golfers speak of how their clubs “whiteball” those they reject and Goliath is portrayed in an illustration as a ten-foot tall black minstrel-figure giant.<sup>22</sup> Another story begins with the customary accusation that African-Americans love fraternal regalia, but have no appreciation of its deeper meanings:

To the average colored man the privilege of donning a "bergalia" is an honor not to be sneezed at. But to own and turn out on parade in the still more showy "rig" is the very acme of his ambition.<sup>23</sup>

The story that follows relates how a man rushes into his burning house to save his new parade uniform that cost \$37.50 and, only after the uniform is safe, goes back to save his baby. It is easy to understand that black parading and drilling in particular, as well as parallel black fraternal organizations in general would have been particularly irking to white fraternalists. If black men could use similar demonstrations and ritual tropes to validate and assert their manhood, how much consolation could the white fraternalist take from his own? White orders went to great lengths to sue their African-American counterparts for infringing upon their intellectual property. The first three decades of the twentieth century saw extensive litigation and legislation attempting to bar African-American organizations from using the names and rituals of established white groups. The issue would not finally be settled until a 1929 Supreme Court decision upholding the rights of black Shriners.<sup>24</sup> African-American parallel orders were not

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<sup>21</sup> James Pettibone, *The Lodge Goat: Goat Rides, Butts and Goat Hairs. Gathered from the Lodge Rooms of Every Fraternal Order; More Than a Thousand Anecdotes, Incidents and Illustrations from the Humorous Side of Lodge Life* (Cincinnati: James Pettibone, 1909), 86–87.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 67.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>24</sup> For an extended discussion of these legal battles, see Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be*, 135–67.

only attacked by whites. Distinct, black-founded orders often sniped at them from the other side, arguing that their derivative character made them unworthy for black men and women.<sup>25</sup> To answer challenges from both groups, African-American fraternal organizations like the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows had to creatively adapt what they found useful in the parent order while developing a distinct ethos that set them apart.

The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows was not a separate black foundation, but a chartered and recognized body of the English Grand United Order. The first lodge was founded in New York in 1842 with the assistance of Peter Ogden, a man of African descent who was a member of the Liverpool lodge.<sup>26</sup> The English order looked upon itself as, “one undivided institution existing for the benefit of one common humanity amongst all peoples of every nation and color throughout the world.”<sup>27</sup> When Ogden was appointed deputy for America, the few remaining lodges in Pennsylvania affiliated with the English parent withdrew. All subsequent lodges would be composed of people of color, but the GUOOF followed the English model and continued to cast itself as being open to “[a]ll persons of good character, without regard to race or color.”<sup>28</sup> By 1907, the GUOOF claimed 70,000 members in more than 2,500 lodges.<sup>29</sup>

Not surprisingly, the elaborate racial mythology of the white Odd Fellows found no place in the GUOOF ritual milieu. It was not merely omitted, but rejected, with the GUOOF asserting that its values needed no elaborate history of origins to prop them up. The 1902 *Official History*

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 135–37.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Clark Stevens, *The Cyclopædia of Fraternities* (New York: E.B. Treat and Co., 1907), 236.

<sup>27</sup> Charles H. Brooks, *The Official History and Manual of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America: A Chronological Treatise* (Philadelphia: Odd Fellows’ Journal Print, 1902), 124.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>29</sup> Stevens, *The Cyclopædia of Fraternities*, 236.

*and Manual of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America* makes this point very clearly. First, it explicitly contrasts its own stand to the racialized beliefs of its white counterpart: “We claim a brotherhood with the members of our Order in all parts of the world. A stranger from any land, bearing the title of Odd Fellow, is welcome amongst us as a brother.” Next, the text claims that, whatever their historical origins, its principles “are eternal, being essentially coeval with the existence of Deity.” After claiming divine origin, the History dismisses the mythic history so dear to many fraternalists:

It has been asserted and generally believed, that the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows was established by the Goths, in the early part of the fifth century. This, however, it is to be feared, is an erroneous notion. . . . The system adopted by the Goths may have been the precursor of the Order instituted in London by John de Neuville, in the twelfth century; but even this Order cannot be said to have had anything in common with the secret Orders of modern times, with the exception of secret words. This lodge in London undoubtedly gave rise to many others. . . . But the idea that the designs of these lodges bore any approximation to that of our lodges, is, to say the least of it, a very groundless one. . . . These lodges were never organized for man's happiness; they never contemplated human wants, nor cultivated the flower of moral philosophy. The laboring man was not permitted to set his foot upon their threshold . . .

. . .  
 . . . These societies of the middle ages alluded to were instituted for the purpose of assassinating political and religious opponents, and to carry out the most selfish designs and the most odious plots.<sup>30</sup>

Even though the GUOOF was fully recognized by the original parent body in the United Kingdom, it distanced itself from mythic European origins. Perhaps this was a jibe at the grandiosity of its white American counterparts, but perhaps this was also to blunt criticism from African-American groups. The passage sums up its claims with a more extended appeal to universal values:

We claim for it a more ancient origin than that set down by those who have hitherto written, upon the subject, when we avow that its principles are of eternal

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<sup>30</sup> Brooks, *The Official History and Manual of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America*, 218, 219, 219–20.

duration. And yet, we would not urge this as any very cogent reason why the people generally should become . . . members of our fraternity. We advocate Odd Fellowship . . . because of the intrinsic merits of its principles than which we believe no human institution can boast of better as its foundation.<sup>31</sup>

The GUOOF instituted its first Patriarchy in Philadelphia in the 1873, decades after the white IOOF, and it was a very different, and less important division, than its white counterpart. In the GUOOF, the Patriarchy was a strictly honorary body known as the Most Venerable Patriarchs, whose membership was reserved for past grand masters of “particularly meritorious service.” In 1907, there were only 89 Patriarchies with 1,889 members. Patriarchy in the GUOOF was a recognition of more tangible fatherhood in the order rather than serving as a broad-based validator thereof.<sup>32</sup>

White Odd Fellows made use of a charter myth to reinforce racial hierarchy. Black Odd Fellows used the same strategy, but, by moving the time scale from the ancient to the primordial, they invalidated their white counterpart’s claims. While the GUOOF did not spurn the concept of patriarchy, its far more minor place in the Order’s ritual structure suggests that African-American fraternalists found other ways of validating their manhood, a point that will be examined further in the next chapter.

### **The International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor**

In the hands of African-American fraternalists, the rhetoric and tropes of nineteenth-century orientalism and scientific racism sometimes became an alternative discourse of liberation. Rather than seeing Africa and the Near East as decadent or degraded cultures, as the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>32</sup> Stevens, *The Cyclopædia of Fraternities* (1907), 236; Brooks, *The Official History and Manual of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America*, 134, 128–29.

white Odd Fellows did, African Americans in some cases embraced contemporary myths of the exoticism of these regions to fashion their own stories of racial uplift and liberation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ritual work of Moses Dickson, who founded the International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor in 1872, just as the Union League was dying in the South.

Dickson's use of Biblical symbolism, particularly that of the Exodus and the stories of liberation in the Book of Judges, is hardly surprising, but his use of Zoroastrian Media, Pharaonic Egypt, and a conflated Ethiopia and Cush were novel in African-American fraternal ritual not simply for their settings, but for how Dickson makes them a backdrop for an early black nationalism in which Africans were the source of civilization and guardians of primordial wisdom.

Moses Dickson's work is also remarkable for the relatively equal place he gave to women in his rituals. Certainly various utopian communities had offered radical views of gender at an earlier period, but scholarship of mainstream fraternalism has tended to view women's orders as "helpmates," acting out proper bourgeois Victorian roles. Bayliss Camp and Orit Kemp challenged this view, describing a number of African-American organizations as organizing their rituals around mutual pilgrimage and world transformation. This is clear in Dickson's ritual oeuvre, which had men and women working degree rituals together several years before the founding of more esoteric and elite orders such as the esoteric Golden Dawn and the masonic *Driot Humain*.



Moses and Mary Elizabeth Dickson.<sup>33</sup>

Little can be said for certain of the Rev. Moses Dickson before he begins to appear in the press and public records of St. Louis in the years following the Civil War as an African Methodist Episcopal Minister and Republican Party activist. According to the biography printed in the front of the 1891 edition of the *Manual of the International Order of Twelve*, he was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1824 to free parents recently arrived from Virginia. Learning the barber's trade as a teenager, from the age of sixteen, Dickson later worked on steamboats up and down the Mississippi where "he witnesses such scenes of monstrous cruelty as caused his African blood to boil with suppressed indignation at the sight of the outrageous suffering of his people."<sup>34</sup> African-American studies scholar Sam Livingston has also suggested that the extreme racism and periodic pogroms of Cincinnati in Dickson's youth contributed to his black nationalist

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<sup>33</sup> Moses Dickson and International Order of Twelve, *A Manual of the Knights of Tabor, and Daughters of the Tabernacle: Including the Ceremonies of the Order, Constitutions, Installations, Dedications, and Funerals, with Forms, and the Taborian Drill and Tactics* (St. Louis: G. I. Jones, 1879), viii; Moses Dickson and International Order of Twelve, *Manual of the International Order of Twelve of Knights and Daughters of Tabor, Containing General Laws, Regulations, Ceremonies, Drill, and a Taborian Lexicon* (St. Louis: A. R. Fleming, 1891), 19.

<sup>34</sup> Moses Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 8.

outlook.<sup>35</sup> In 1848, in the river town of Galena, Illinois, he married Mary Elizabeth Peters, a widow six years his senior, who was the daughter of a German-immigrant father and African-American mother from Ste. Genivieve, Missouri. Mary Elizabeth would be his companion and collaborator until her death, in 1891. From 1882 she bore the title of Mother of all Knights and Daughters of Tabor.<sup>36</sup> At least one scholar has suggested that Moses and Elizabeth had a highly egalitarian relationship, but biographical information on the Dicksons is disappointingly scant.<sup>37</sup>

It is for the year 1846 that Dickson makes his most stupendous claim. His biography in the 1891 edition of the manual states that on Tuesday, August 11, 1846, Dickson and eleven others he had met in his travels across the South assembled in St. Louis, and founded the Knights of Liberty, vowing “I can die, but I cannot reveal the name of another member until the slaves are free.”<sup>38</sup> In the 1891 account, the organization grew over the next decade to 47,240 knights across the South and Border States who stood ready to launch an armed insurrection “to break the bondage of the Israelites,” but Dickson reports that he urged men to wait and later encouraged his Knights to join the Union Army when it became possible.<sup>39</sup> Contemporary analysis of Dickson’s claims, for which no documentary evidence exists, have ranged from acceptance, to skepticism, to outright dismissal.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel Livingstone, “An African Life of Resistance: Moses Dickson, the Knights of Liberty, and Radical Abolitionism, 1824-1857,” *Griot: Official Journal of the Southern Conference on Afro-American Studies, Inc.* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 11–14.

<sup>36</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 19-20.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Rebecca Harbour, “‘Bury Me in a Free Land’: African-American Political Culture and the Settlement Movement in the Antebellum and Wartime Midwest” (PhD diss, University of Iowa, 2008) 84-86.

<sup>38</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 8-10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> The 1879 edition of the manual contains more modest claims about the founding of the Knights of the Knights of Liberty, though the name is not used. The presence of a long note of clarification from Dickson at the end of his biographical sketch in the 1891 Manual seems to indicate that his claims were problematic in his own day. For an example of acceptance of

An 1878 Kansas newspaper account of the Order's history claimed that the Order of Twelve was founded in Galena, Illinois in 1855 and functioned sub rosa in the South in the late 1850s, spreading word of important events among the enslaved and preparing for the coming conflict. The writer explains that the disruptions of the war and the deaths of several early leaders in battle lead to a period of disorganization and that since "lodges have been organized and reorganized." No mention is made of a pre-existing order of Knights of Liberty and this account quotes from and largely follows that of the 1879 manual. When the specific story of the Knights was added is unclear. This slipperiness of the Order's early history must have become a problem for the IOOT since the 1891 manual makes the founding of the Knights of Liberty and the Knights of Tabor two distinct events with a clarification that the "organization of the Order of Twelve was made in Galena, Ills., in 1855, was made to perpetuate the names of the Twelve Knights of Tabor, who were so successful in enrolling the 47,000 Knights of Liberty." The names of the Knights of Liberty are withheld because many of their families "hold high positions" and "might be injured by revealing the secrets."<sup>41</sup>

Leaving aside the veracity of Dickson's claims about the Knights of Liberty, the model itself is not far-fetched for the place and period. The Independent Order of Good Templars, founded in 1850 to combat drinking and vice, became one of the country's largest fraternal organizations. The Knights of Labor, the U.S.'s first important trade union, was founded as a secret society with a particularly elaborate ritual in 1870. As has been discussed previously,

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Dickson's claims about the Knights of Liberty, see John A. Wright, *Discovering African American St. Louis: A Guide to Historic Sites*, second edition (Saint Louis: Missouri History Museum Press, 2002), 14-16. For skepticism, See Livingstone, "An African Life of Resistance," 15-16. For denial of the validity of Dickson's claims, see Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power*, 52-53.

<sup>41</sup> "History of the Knights of Tabor," *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor*, January 24, 1878; Dickson *Manual* (1879), 5-6; Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 10-11, 14-15 (quote).

Fitzgerald and Hahn have described in detail the Reconstruction-era clashes between the reactionary Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and the freedmen of the Union League. Certainly by the time Dickson was publishing his rituals and manuals thirty years later, the model he proposes for the Knights of Liberty would not have struck his fellow Americans as particularly far-fetched and Southern white fears of and exaggerations about the militancy of the Union League would have added credibility to the claim. While it seems likely that Dickson's story of the Knights of Liberty was to legitimize his later endeavors, the story shows a keen understanding of which themes would resonate with his audience and the larger culture. Like many founders of secret societies and of more mundane institutions, Dickson understood the appeal of a link to a mythic and noble past. He also grounded his organization's founding myth firmly in the idea of black agency. As Reconstruction was coming to an end in the South and former supporters in the North increasingly questioned black fitness for citizenship, Dickson created a milieu in which tens of thousands of black men had stood ready to liberate their own people without white guidance. In this vein, the Knights of 1846 are a rebuke to Southern claims of white supremacy and Northern whites' own mix of supremacy and vacillation. It was a message that would resonate with many who still lived in the former slave states or who had made their way North and West.

Whatever the truth about the Knights of 1846, Dickson's subsequent ventures would meet with success as great as that claimed for the first. In 1865, he organized the Prince Hall Mason's Heroines of Jericho for the female relatives of Master Masons, an order that exists to the present day. In 1872, he organized the International Order of Twelve, which came to include the Knights of Tabor, the Daughters of the Tabernacle, the mixed-sex Palatium of the Royal House of Media, and the youth divisions of the Tents of Maids and Pages of Honor. By the end of Dickson's life, the International Order of Twelve claimed as many as 125,000 members

organized in eighteen state grand temples.<sup>42</sup> The Order suffered the same long decline faced by many other fraternal groups in the United States from World War I onward, but many of its members served as a living bridge between the hopeful days of Reconstruction and the classical phase of the American Civil Rights Movement in the mid twentieth century. The most famous of these was Dr. T. R. M. Howard, chief medical officer of the IOOT-sponsored hospital in all-black Mound Bayou, Mississippi. Howard, president of the Regional Council of Negro Leadership, hired a young Medgar Evers as a salesman in his insurance company in 1952 and became his mentor in civil rights.<sup>43</sup>

Dickson's documented involvement with fraternal orders begins with his membership in St. Louis's first Prince Hall Lodge, founded in 1856 by the Grand Lodge of Ohio. When Dickson was initiated or whether he was initiated in St. Louis or elsewhere is unknown, but, by 1865, he was the first Grand Lecturer of the new Grand Lodge of Missouri and served as Grand Master in 1866.<sup>44</sup>

Dickson's first published foray into fraternal ritualism comes with the set of degree rituals he created for the Heroines of Jericho in 1872.<sup>45</sup> While at least one New York court of Heroines claims to have been founded in 1859, Dickson claimed that his St. Mary's Court, founded in St. Louis in 1865, was "the first and oldest regularly organized Court in the United

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<sup>42</sup> "Father Dickson Cemetery," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/docs/moachp/Father%20Dickson%20Cemetery.pdf>, accessed November 17, 2014, p. 8

<sup>43</sup> David T. Beito, "T. R. M. Howard: Thirty Years Later," *History News Network*, May 1, 2006, <http://historynewsnetwork.org/blog/24570>.

<sup>44</sup> "Grand Lodge of Missouri History." Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri. Accessed February 26, 2015. <http://glmopha.org/missouri-masons/>.

<sup>45</sup> "Heroines of Jericho," *Pacific Appeal* (San Francisco), December 20, 1873, p. 2.

States.”<sup>46</sup> In an extant copy of the Heroine’s landmarks from 1884, Dickson makes his case for the legitimacy of his Heroines, stating “these degrees were known and given when we had nothing but the good Ancient Craft Masonry, which is almost as old as creation” and that “[h]istory plainly tells us that as far back as A. D. 1283 the H. of J. was well known and practiced by Master Masons, and their wives and daughters.”<sup>47</sup> While Dickson gives no source for his claim, given that the Prince Hall Order of the Eastern Star would not be organized until 1874 and that the white order only began to gain momentum after the Civil War, Dickson shows himself to be an early pioneer of women’s fraternalism regardless of the provenance of his Heroine’s degrees.<sup>48</sup>

Albert Mackey’s 1879 *Encyclopædia of Freemasonry* describes the white Heroine’s single ceremony as “brief and unimpressive” and “intended to instruct its female recipients in the claims they have upon the protection of their husbands’ and fathers’ companions.”<sup>49</sup> In what would later become common in other African-American women’s groups, but that may have been novel with the Heroines’ ceremonies, Dickson took the one-degree white ritual and elaborated it into a three-degree system.<sup>50</sup> Heroines initiated members into the degrees of Master

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<sup>46</sup> *Most Ancient Grand Court Heroines of Jericho State of New York Jurisdiction – Prince Hall Affiliation*. Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New York, n.d. <http://princehallny.org/files/Download/HeroinessOfJericho.pdf>; Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 20.

<sup>47</sup> Moses Dickson, *Landmarks and Ceremonies of Courts of Heroines of Jericho* (Cairo: IL: n.p., 1884), 5-8.

<sup>48</sup> Mjagkij, Nina, ed., *Organizing Black America* (New York: Garland, 2001), 471. For the white Eastern Star see Schmidt, *Fraternal Organizations*, 97-98.

<sup>49</sup> Albert Gallatin Mackey, *An Encyclopædia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences* (Philadelphia: Moss & Company, 1879), 34, 336.

<sup>50</sup> As pointed out above, the black Order of the Eastern Star, which would also use a three-degree system was not yet founded. The black Odd Fellow’s auxiliary, the Household of Ruth, founded in 1857 had a three-degree system, but it is not clear whether this was always the case since early accounts seem to speak of only one degree; Brooks, *The Official History and Manual of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America*, 80. In 1866, Albert Pike republished an eighteenth-century French Eastern Star ritual of three degrees (Apprentice, Companion, and

Mason's Daughter using the story of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, True Kinsman, in which the initiate is adopted as was the biblical heroine Ruth, and Heroine of Jericho, based on the story of Rahab in the second chapter of Joshua. The court is built around a replica of the ark of the covenant, frequently carried in procession as the Book of Joshua says the biblical ark was around the city of Jericho. Each heroine was invested not only with an apron and collar, in the manner of a male Mason, but also with a crown to remind her of "the queenly honors and dignity" she has been invested with.<sup>51</sup> With its three degrees, regalia, and enlarged role for women's leadership, Dickson stretched the boundaries of women's fraternalism.



*A Heroine of Jericho's combination collar and apron.*<sup>52</sup>

### **Taborian Ritual**

At the same time he was publishing the Heroine's ritual, Dickson founded the International Order of Twelve, which would be his life's work. The 1891 manual states that the current order dates from August 12, 1872 when three Daughters' tabernacles and two Knights'

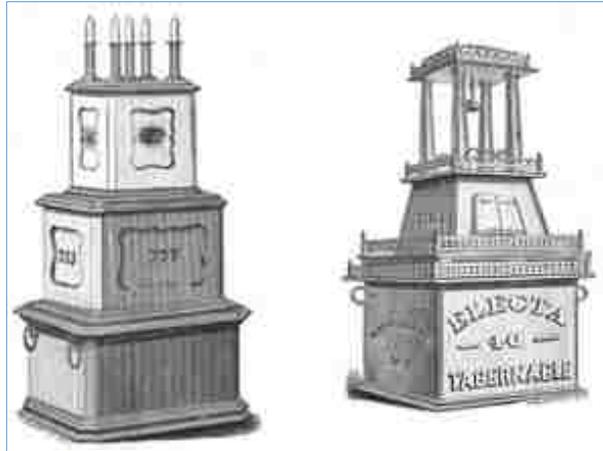
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Mistress), but it is unclear if this was known to any Eastern Star ritualists, white or black; Stevens, *The Cyclopædia of Fraternities* (1907), 100-101.

<sup>51</sup>Moses Dickson, *Court of Heroines of Jericho* (n.p.: n.p., copyright 1895; reprint: Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing, n.d.), 15-57, quote 57.

<sup>52</sup> Rev J. B. Green, *Green's Manual of the Heroines of Jericho* (Jacksonville, FL: J.B. Green, 1919), 117.

temples convened in Independence, Missouri to organize the Order of Twelve and to elect the first grand officers.<sup>53</sup>



*Knights' temple house and Daughters' tabernacle.*<sup>54</sup>



*A Third-Degree Knight of Tabor with spear.*<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 5-6; Dickson, *Manual*, 1891, p. 14-15.

<sup>54</sup> Dickson and International Order of Twelve, *A Manual of the Knights of Tabor, and Daughters of the Tabernacle*, 67, 167.

<sup>55</sup> Moses Dickson, *Taborian Constitutions of the Several Departments* (St. Louis: A. R. Fleming & Co., 1894), 31.

From their founding in 1872 until at least 1879, both Knights and Daughters each had three degrees.<sup>56</sup> The Knights' mythos was rooted in the story of Deborah and Barak's defeat of the much larger army of Sisera in the book of Judges, the plateau of Mount Tabor being where their forces gathered. One can see the particular resonance of the story of the oppressed overthrowing their occupier for African Americans of the period. In the hopeful, early days of the order when Reconstruction was in full swing, it must have seemed that they were living out the story of Barak and his men. In later years, as the rights gained after the Civil War began to be taken away, the story must have given hope. The Daughters' three degrees focused around the Tabernacle at Sinai, with the first Degree of Adoption focusing on Miriam's song of liberation at the Red Sea and the second Advance Degree focusing on the construction of the Tabernacle. In the third degree of Sealed Daughter, the newly initiated finds herself in front of the Tabernacle's ark and learns the lessons of valor, honor, and truth, values one would normally associate with male rituals and a far stretch from the white Eastern Star values of truth, friendship, kindness, fervency and innocence.<sup>57</sup>

In all of these the candidate is blindfolded and tied and subjected to some of the mild hazing more characteristic of men's rituals than women's. Clearly the Daughters were not what sociologist Mary Ann Clawson described as a ritual for "helpmates." Again, the Daughters' ritual sets up strong role models such as Miriam and the Samaritan woman at the well rather than the more demure Eastern Star's models of Esther and Martha.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 86, 142.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Macoy, *Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star : A Book of Instruction* (New York : R. Macoy, 1876), 12-16.

<sup>58</sup> Macoy, *Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star*, 12-16; 1. Moses Dickson and Children of Mt. Tabor, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle* (Chillicothe, MO: Kiergan & Hatcher Printers, 18??), 9-10.

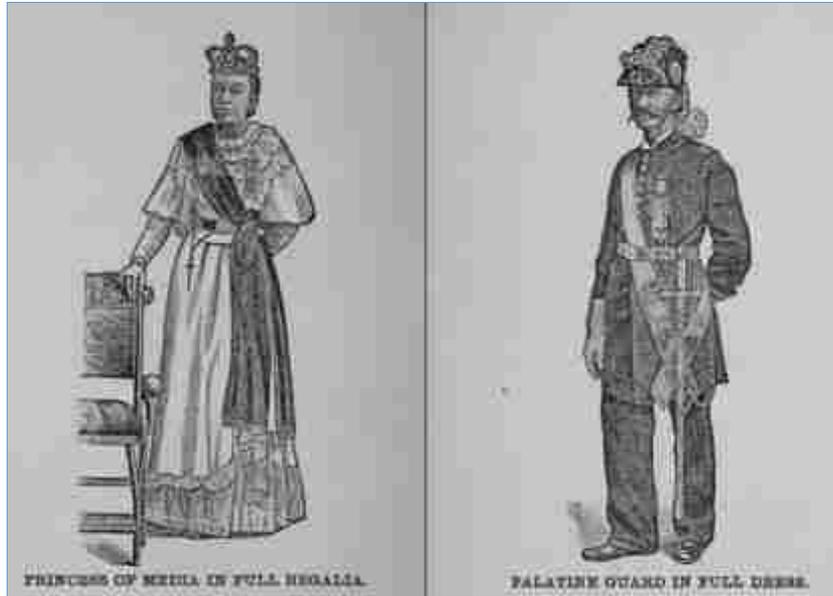
Sometime between 1879 and 1883—between the end of Reconstruction and the Supreme Court’s gutting of the Civil Rights Act of 1875—both the Knights and Daughters added a fourth degree. In addition to the new degrees, an entirely new mixed-gender grouping was added, the Palatium of the House of Media, in which fourth-degree knights and daughters met in relative equality and worked three joint degrees, a surprising innovation for the time.<sup>59</sup> The palatiums never succeeded same way that the temples and tabernacles did. At the very least, the temples and tabernacles remained the focus of action and frequently appear in newspapers up until World War I, while only about a quarter as many mentions are made of palatiums.<sup>60</sup> The Palatium may have been an ill-fated attempt to combat gains being made by the black Knights of Pythias, organized in 1880 and its affiliated women’s Order of Calanthe, organized in 1883. From what can be gathered from the 1891 manual, the Palatium ritual, like that of the Pythians, was based on the myth of the self-sacrificing friendship Damon and Pythias and the beautiful Calanthe, but with the setting moved to Media and with a liberal sprinkling of Zoroastrian references.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The years can be narrowed down a bit by some probable guesswork: Martin Delany published his *Principia of Ethnology* in 1879, setting the earliest possible date for the degree and Dickson copyrighted the Daughters’ Consolidated Ritual in 1883. Whether “consolidated” indicates the first edition of the ritual with the degree of Saba Meroe added to the original three degrees cannot be determined with certainty, but seems likely. Emory University’s Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library’s copy of the Consolidated Daughters’ ritual dates from no earlier than 1901, since it mentions Dickson’s death, but the texts do not match those of the Daughters’ 1923 ritual, indicating that there may have been as many as four revisions.

<sup>60</sup> The author has made extensive use of Gale’s Nineteenth-Century Newspapers database and the Library of Congress’ Chronicling America database. The assertion about the palatiums is based on that research.

<sup>61</sup> Nina Mjagkij, *Organizing Black America* (New York: Greenwood, 2001), 167-169. For information on the palatiums, see Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 181-197, 328-332, 334-335, 346.



*Princess of Media and Palatine Guard.*<sup>62</sup>

The Knights new fourth degree, known as the Degree of Uniform Rank, is of moderate interest compared to the Daughters' fourth degree. The blindfolded and bound third-degree Knight returns once again to the plateau of Tabor, where, after the usual sorts of stational stops and oaths, he is given a previously lost "mysterious word," "the key to the ineffable name of Elohim." This obvious bit of Masonic borrowing is kept within the Knight's framework of the story of Barak and Deborah by making it the word that made the "stars stand still in their courses," at the battle with Sisera, a word which "seemed to have been lost when Malachi closed the Book of Prophecies." The initiate is told that this is the same word given to Moses at Sinai, the word used by Joshua to make the sun stand still, and the word used by Elijah when he called down fire from heaven." The chief mentor then reveals to the new Knight of Uniform Rank that the word is, not surprisingly, the Tetragrammaton (spelled in the rite as "Yahveh"). While the big reveal of the word, a common device in secret-society usage, is a disappointment to scholars of ritual, in Carnes criteria of what "worked," it is not difficult to see how the ritual was a success.

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<sup>62</sup> Dickson, *Taborian Constitutions* (1894), 110–11.

At the very time options for African-American men to exercise power in the public sphere were narrowing, Dickson offers them a word of power, a name that could make armies real and figurative stand still.

This promising buildup is allowed to fall flat as the initiate is seated and given eleven tokens in succession, ranging from a wooden key to a glass all-seeing eye and a Bible, all of which seem to have little relationship to what has gone before. Only the eleventh emblem may hold lasting significance. This final token is a triple candlestick holding burning green, white, and red candles, which the initiate is told represent eternal life, innocence and purity, and blood. These three are made an allegory of the trinity and eternal life through the death of Christ.<sup>63</sup> This bears a strong resemblance to the colors later chosen for Marcus Garvey's Pan-African flag, which the Universal Negro Catechism explains as follows:

Red is the color of the blood which men must shed for their redemption and liberty; black is the color of the noble and distinguished race to which we belong; green is the color of the luxuriant vegetation of our Motherland.<sup>64</sup>

The green for eternal life from God the Father becomes the green life-giving of Mother Africa. Red is blood meritoriously shed in both cases. White has, understandably, become black. As Chapter Seven will show, there are a number of links between the IOOT and UNIA.

One other interesting passage occurs in the middle of the Knights' fourth degree ritual. Bayliss Camp and Orit Kemp note the text's assertion, in relation to the Biblical judge Deborah, that "the higher duties of leading the people to the plains of honor and success are often given to

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<sup>63</sup> Moses Dickson, *Ritual of Taborian Knighthood, Including: The Uniform Rank* (St. Louis, MO: A. R. Fleming & Co., 1889), 62-68.

<sup>64</sup> George Alexander McGuire, *Universal Negro Catechism: A Course of Instruction in Religious and Historical Knowledge Pertaining to the Race* (New York: Universal Negro Improvement Association, 1921), 32.

a woman.” They took this as an indication of “a slightly different attitude toward women . . . than one might typically find.” The Daughters’ new fourth degree ritual bears this out.<sup>65</sup>

The Daughters fourth degree departed radically from all of the other degrees and represents a much higher order in its symbolism and creativity. Here Dickson abandons the canonical Biblical script. As the Knights’ Uniform Degree gave the lost word, the Daughters now received the lost history of people of African descent in an example of Afro-centrism predating the better-known work of the Garvey and the Noble Drew Ali of the Moorish Science Temple by thirty-five years.



*High Priestess of Saba Meroe in full regalia.*<sup>66</sup>

In a lengthy prologue to the degree, the reader is told that that the scene of the action for this “Philosophic Degree of Saba Meroe” has moved to the most ancient tabernacle in the

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<sup>65</sup>Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 187-188; Camp and Kent, “Proprietors, Helpmates, and Pilgrims,” 109.

<sup>66</sup> Dickson, *Taborian Consitutions* (1894), 78.

Ethiopian city of Meroe on the banks of the river Saba. The initiate learned that the Jewish tabernacle was but a copy of a more ancient tabernacle of the Ethiopians that was known to Moses. She learned that after the flood, Ham settled in Africa, but unlike contemporary arguments linking him to African inferiority, the Daughter was told that Ham had ruled under the name of Ramses I and, at his death, was deified as Jupiter Ammon. Likewise, his sons Mizram and Cush were respectively Rameses II, deified as Sestoris, and Ramses III, deified as Osiris. This positive reorientation would have far-reaching implications in Taborian culture. Using the metaphors of the ritual, Taborian newspapers set contemporary racial tropes on their head, referring admiringly to notable members as “a proud son of Ham.”<sup>67</sup>

In the milieu of the Saba Meroe, women are religious and political equals of men. They are priestesses who ministered in the temples of all lands and were only excluded from their full roles from the time of Moses. In this synthesis, women were encouraged to be faithful Christians, but made privy to an older tradition in which prohibitions on female leadership were merely cultural and conventional rather than ontological. Rather than contradicting Christian orthodoxy, the Saba Meroe ritual gives the church a secret prehistory in which society’s increasingly limited role for black women was contested and Daughters of the Tabernacle could meet Knights of Tabor on near equal footing.

Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has written extensively on the tension between traditional Christian teaching on women’s leadership in the church and African-American’s women’s demands to expand their leadership roles in the church and community. Either on his own or through the influence of the women in his life, Dickson found a formula that threaded the needle.

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<sup>67</sup> Moses Dickinson, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle*, 61-62; “Sir S. B. D. G. M.” *Taborian Banner*. August 24, 1906.

John Giggie saw a protracted conflict between lodges and black ministers, who felt their power threatened, and women, who felt they were being excluded from a key venue. Dickson created an organization in which women's gifts were recognized and in which there was ample opportunity to exercise them.<sup>68</sup>

Drawing largely from Martin Robison Delany's *Principia of Ethnology* and Josephus's *Antiquities*, the Saba Meroe ritual argues that all civilization has its roots in Ethiopia and that its royals, priests, and priestesses were monotheists. In this alternate world, women were ruling queens and high priestesses of the primordial tabernacle, paying external tribute to the gods now thought of as Egyptian, but keeping alive the knowledge of the one god.<sup>69</sup>

Delany's 1878 *Principia of Ethnology: The Origin of Races and Color, with an Archeological Compendium of Ethiopian and Egyptian Civilization, from Years of Careful Examination and Enquiry* was one of the earlier works ascribing the origins of Western Civilization to Africa.<sup>70</sup> In this 112-page work dedicated to evolutionary and race theory enthusiast, the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, Delany rejects theories of multiple racial origins popular at the time arguing in favor of older ideas of all humans being descended from Noah, and argues instead that the sons of Moses differed only in their pigment, not in their capacities.<sup>71</sup> Delany holds with those who believed Shem to be the father of Asians, Japheth, the father of Europeans, and Ham the father of Africans.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 122–23; Giggie, *After Redemption*, 55–95.

<sup>69</sup> Martin Robison Delany. *Principia of Ethnology: The Origin of Races and Color, with an Archeological Compendium of Ethiopian and Egyptian Civilization, from Years of Careful Examination and Enquiry* (Philadelphia: Harper & Brother, 1880); Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 2, chapter 10; Dickson, *Consolidated Ritual*, 76–89.

<sup>70</sup> Delany, *Principia*, 20–22.

<sup>71</sup> Tommie Shelby, "Two Conceptions of Black Nationalism: Martin Delany on the Meaning of Black Political Solidarity." *Political Theory* 31, no. 5 (October 1, 2003): 673–677.

<sup>72</sup> Delany, *Principia*, 43.

It is Delany who associates Ham, Mizram, and Cush with the three Ramseses and the three deities. In this triple conflation of Biblical characters, Egyptian deities, and historical figures, Delany creates a mythology acceptable to the avowedly Evangelical Christian members of the International Order of Twelve.<sup>73</sup> He argues that Amun, Sestoris, and Osiris, whom he portrays as a triple god, showed that Ethiopians were the first to comprehend the Holy Trinity long before the advent of Christianity. Delany goes further, asserting that priestesses had equal religious power in Ethiopia, with the implication that they could exercise greater roles of leadership in Christianity and Christian Society as well. In his 1854 *Origin and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry*, Delany had gone so far as to assert that the Queen of Sheba could enter Solomon's temple because she was a high priestess in her own land.<sup>74</sup> This may well have influenced Dickson's assertion in the Saba Meroe that the highest official of the Ethiopian tabernacle was the Queen regnant and that, in times when there was a king, the king's oldest daughter filled the role of high priestess.<sup>75</sup>

Delany's work is at least in part a response to the ascendant American School of Ethnology and particularly to George Robins Gliddon's *Ancient Egypt*.<sup>76</sup> Much remains unknown about what Delany drew from various sources and what came from his own fertile mind. Associations of Ham with Amun and his sons with various other gods had been common in the exegetical literature for well over a century, as had theories of Egyptian monotheism.<sup>77</sup> What is

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<sup>73</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Martin Robison Delany, *The Origin and Objects of Ancient Freemasonry, Its Introduction Into the United States, and Legitimacy Among Colored Men: A Treatise Delivered Before St. Cyprian Lodge, No. 13, June 24th, A.D. 1853* (Pittsburgh: W.S. Haven, 1853) 14 n.

<sup>75</sup> Moses Dickinson, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle*, 84-89.

<sup>76</sup> Mario H. Beatty, "Martin Delany and Egyptology," *Ankh: Revue d'Égyptologie et Des Civilizations Africaines* 14/15 (2006): 78-99.

<sup>77</sup>For associations of Ham with Amun in scholarship of the period, see Augustin Calmet and Charles Taylor. *Calmet's Dictionary of the Holy Bible: With the Biblical Fragments*, fifth ed.

novel is Delany's conflating of these theories with the theory of the Ethiopian/Cushite origins of civilization to upend the racial tropes of the period. Delany's *Principia* has been seen as a work of frustration written by a man whose personal disappointments paralleled the larger reversals faced by African-Americans in the 1870s. It seems that, whatever his personal motivations, Delany's work hit a larger chord.

The Saba Meroe ritual would be written within two years of the publication of the *Principia's* more widely distributed second edition. Its popularity and meaningfulness can be seen in the changes it brought to the terminology of the order. In the 1879 manual, the chief officer of a tabernacle is the chief preceptress. In the 1891 edition, she is either the chief preceptress or high priestess. In the 1895 edition, references to the chief preceptress disappear from the constitution entirely in favor of the term high priestess. The ritual would be worked through the advent of Jim Crow, into the period of the Great Migration, with a new edition appearing in 1923, and would continued to be worked up to the advent of the classical era of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Dickson's creative use of Delany, as well as his own additions from Heroditus and Josephus show an organization far different than a mere "mutual benefit" society providing burial insurance and headstones. Skocpol and her colleagues have shown how African American fraternal organizations were key contributors to the infrastructure of the classical phase of the civil rights movement in largely unrecognized ways. Further examination of Dickson's work and

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(London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1830) vol. 1, p. 605 and "The Origin of Idolatry," *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, and Religious Intelligencer*, June, 1814, vol. 7, p. 230. For a seventeenth-century example in the work of Isaac Newton, see J. E. Force, and R. H. Popkin. *Newton and Religion: Context, Nature, and Influence* (Springer Science & Business Media, 1999), 253-254. For a smattering of eighteenth and nineteenth century works on Egyptian monotheism, see E. A. Wallis Budge, *Tutankhamen, Amenism, Atenism and Egyptian Monotheism, with Hieroglyphic Texts of Hymns to Amen and Aten* (London: M. Hopkinson, 1923), 140-142.

the legacy of the International Order of Twelve provides an institutional bridge between Reconstruction and Selma, providing one more argument in favor of a historiography of a Long Civil Rights Movement. In this St. Louis minister's work and the lives of the *IOOT*'s members concentrated along the Mississippi, we find radical ideas about African origins and gender equality as well as esoteric work of a high order, all far from the coastal and urban enclaves of the Theosophical Society and other elite, white organizations.

Until Lana Finley's reappraisal of him, Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875), the African-American Rosicrucian has been a sign of contradiction—a shooting star who made a name in what has almost by the construction of its definition been a white world. The work of his exact contemporary, Moses Dickson shows us that there is far more here than a list of failed mutual benefit organizations.<sup>78</sup> In the pages of the *Chicago Defender*, Roscoe Conklin Simmons defended Dickson's brilliance and lasting importance in 1949:

The Knights and Daughters of Tabor. . . forms perhaps the greatest evidence of the native wizardry of Africans in the New World that is known or may be discovered.

. . .

. . . Moses Dickson ranks [with] Nat Turner, who rightfully divides fame with L'Overture; with Daniel Payne and Richard Allen; men . . . exhibiting qualities of which great peoples are established and states maintained<sup>79</sup>

### **The IOOT and Gender Roles**

As noted in Chapter Two, Sociologist Theda Skocpol and her fellow contributors to *What a Mighty Power We Can Be* were the first to recognize the divergence in ideas about gender

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<sup>78</sup> Lana Finley, "Paschal Beverly Randolph in the African American Community." In *Esotericism in African American Religious Experience: "There Is a Mystery,"* edited by Stephen Finley, Margarita Guillory, and Hugh Page Jr, (Boston: Brill Academic Pub, 2014), 37-51.

<sup>79</sup> Roscoe Conkling Simmons, "The Story of Moses Dickson," *Chicago Defender, National Edition*, May 14, 1949.

between white fraternal groups and many, particularly mixed-gender, African-American orders. Skocpol and her fellow contributors largely accept that Carnes, Dunemil, and Clawson are correct in their characterization of white groups, classifying white male rituals as patriarchal and white female rituals as “helpmate,” but the authors add a third category they refer to as “pilgrimage,” which see those initiated as being on a journey of world transformation together rather than divided into a rigid hierarchy.<sup>80</sup>

African-American groups founded at the turn of the century used masonic forms to carry a message of racial uplift and to argue for African Americans’ place in the larger white society. This practice is well illustrated in the funeral rituals of the Daughters of the Tabernacle, which contrast sharply with the funeral rites of the white branch of the Order of the Eastern Star, the largest and, likely, most bourgeois of the masonic women’s groups. Fraternal funeral rites function at two levels. On the one hand, they are a farewell to a departed member wherein the group renews its own shared bonds and beliefs. On the other hand, they are a rare public ritual where large numbers of non members are given a peek inside and where the organization can make statements about itself.

The 1876 ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star shows signs of the feminine bourgeois deference hinted at by Carnes, Dumenil, and Clawson. The services are primarily in the hands of the family of the deceased. The prologue sets the tone:

No showy regalia are worn, and no adornment, save that of a simple badge of recognition, an emblem of a meek, sad, and loving spirit. . . . The language is that of acquiescence in the will of the Supreme Grand Patron of the universe . . . and the pure affection for a much-loved sister and friend.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Camp and Kent, “Proprietors, Helpmates, and Pilgrims,” 99-107.

<sup>81</sup> Macoy, *Ritual of the Eastern Star*, 2. [The burial service is at the back of the book and numbering for it starts at p. 1.]

The language here is a mix of proper middle-class sentiment, feminine acquiescence, and deference to hierarchy, climaxing in “the Supreme Grand Patron of the universe.” Deference to Victorian middle-class institutions continues in the instructions. Arrangements for the service are not in the hands of the local Worthy Matron, the highest officer of the chapter, but in those of the chapter’s male masonic patron. It is he who, having been informed by proper, presumably male, channels of a member’s death, orders the secretary to inform the chapter.<sup>82</sup>

Dress for funerals likewise follows conventional propriety. Members are instructed that the “proper clothing to be worn at a funeral is black or dark clothes.” The only adornments prescribed are the jewels of office for the chapter’s officers draped with crepe and, for the rank and file, a rosette on the left breast, “for an elderly person to be made of black crepe; for a young person to be of white and black ribbon.”<sup>83</sup>

The funeral service at the church or home is left entirely in the hands of the family of the deceased, with only a fifteen-inch floral star on the casket calling attention to the order.<sup>84</sup> As in masonic funerals, it is only at the grave where the order, if invited, takes part, due deference being shown to the institution of family and the headship of male relatives.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 5.



representing Biblical heroines to remove different colored flowers from each point of the star and to recite the virtue it represents along with the lesson it teaches before casting it into the grave.

These heroines with their virtues and their lessons are:

Heroine	Color	Virtue	Lesson
Adah	blue	friendship	undying love,
Ruth	gold	disinterested kindness	unending possession
Esther	white	truth and innocence	heart purity
Martha	green	immortality	undeviating sincerity
Electa	red	fervency	unfading beauty

Each is accompanied by an appropriately sentimental speech extolling these appropriately feminine virtues.<sup>89</sup> It is notable that these are all heroines of appropriate femininity, a far cry from the assertive Miriam and the inquisitive Samaritan woman at the well enshrined in the ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle.<sup>90</sup>

Only when the last flower is cast into the grave does the worthy matron speak, directing those present to think how flowers are “Emblems of our own resurrection” and “of the brighter, better land” as she scatters flowers on the grave, before holding aloft a single white rose, extolling it as a symbol of the belief in a “purer and better state of existence beyond the grave” and of how the resurrected will “come forth from the grave radiant.”<sup>91</sup> The patron resumes control by commending the virtues that have been extolled and by placing the remainder of the floral star in the grave, after which is sung “Shall we gather at the river,” or some other appropriate hymn. Following this hymn, the patron cautions those present that, while “the duty we owe to the dead is performed,” the living must be on their guard that they not “leave their duties imperfect” and remain steadfast in charity, hope, and faith. After this, “Nearer, my God to

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 12-16.

<sup>90</sup> Dickinson, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle*, 9-10.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

thee” or another appropriate hymn is sung before the presiding clergyman or, in his absence, the associate matron, leads a prayer asking God to remind the mourners that “the ties of kindred, affection, and friendship are not broken by death, and that the family in heaven and on earth are the same.”<sup>92</sup> In the Eastern star rite, nothing offends Victorian propriety, from the male patron setting preparations in motion to the final prayer’s assurance that the institution of the family continues in heaven much the way it existed on earth.

The rites of the Daughters of the Tabernacle take on a different tone, though it is sometimes more evocative than overt. Even though the Daughters were affiliated with the male Knights of Tabor, just as the Eastern Stars were of Freemasons, their funeral rite has more place for the leadership of women and a stronger view of the church militant on earth rather than an unbroken life and afterlife of placid, bourgeois comfort. While the Eastern Star’s very membership requirements were rooted in subordination, requiring a woman to be a close blood relative of a male mason, Daughters were admitted to tabernacles on the same basis as men to their temples: good moral character, sound mind and body, and a belief in the supreme being.<sup>93</sup>

As with the Eastern Star rites, the Daughters’ ceremonies were written by a man, but Moses Dickson’s very different view of women’s ritual is as evident here as it is in his other rituals for the Daughters. Though his burial rite, like that of the Eastern Stars draws from Masonic forms, Dickson’s Daughters retain much of the agency that male Masons have in their own burial ceremonies, but Dickson is not content simply to re-gender familiar roles. He also draws from African-American traditions, creating the sort of synthesis one would expect of an order wedding mainstream ideas of American accomplishment to racial pride.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 16-22.

<sup>93</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1879), p. 140.

The difference in the two rituals becomes apparent from the introductory paragraph, where the service is described as “a token of affection and respect to the memory of the departed daughter.” Also on the opening page, it is stated that it is the duty of the chief preceptress, the highest female officer of the Tabernacle, “to issue orders to the Tabernacle to make preparations to attend the funeral.” While the Tribunes of the brother Knights of Tabor are to arrange the burial and the chief mentor or chief orator of the local Temple is to preside, it is the chief preceptress who is ultimately in charge, down to selecting which Knights are to be a Daughter’s pallbearers. As in the Saba Meroe Degree, Dickson’s funeral rites bear out Camp and Kemp’s notion that the IOOT held a rather exceptional view of women.<sup>94</sup>

In fact, in subsequent years, the IOOT introduced mixed-gender higher orders, the Palatium, mentioned previously, and the Past Arcanum, in both of which women served as second in command and presided along with men. Women also held office in the state-wide organizations and frequently lead devotions in mixed-gender groups, even though there were usually ordained Christian ministers present. Most notably, state grand temples later held many of their sessions in the women’s Saba Meroe degree, in which women were exalted as priestesses of the primordial tabernacle and keepers of ancient wisdom.<sup>95</sup>

The funeral dress of a Daughter of the Tabernacle differed from that of an Eastern Star. The Eastern Stars would likely have approved of the Daughters’ required brown dress, but might

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<sup>94</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 187-188; Camp and Kent, “Proprietors, Helpmates, and Pilgrims,” 109.

<sup>95</sup> Frank Wilson, *Revised Taborian Constitutions of the Several Departments* (Kansas City, MO: Russell Printing Co., 1906), 90-92, 123-127; “Knights and Daughters,” *The Leavenworth Times*, April 30, 1891; “Annual Convention: Colored Benevolent Organization to Meet in Salina,” *The Salina Daily Union*, June 6, 1899; Moses Dickson and International Order of Twelve. *Saba Meroe: Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle International Order of Twelve*, (n.p.: n.p., 1907) 88-89.

have looked askance at it and the black veil being trimmed with white, much less the obligatory white gloves. In a further stipulation differing from the dress of the Eastern Stars, which almost let them blend into the crowd, officers of the local tabernacle carried their rods and staves. While the prescribed dress and bearing wands of office gave Daughters an identity as a body and pointed out female authority, it also served at least two other purposes.



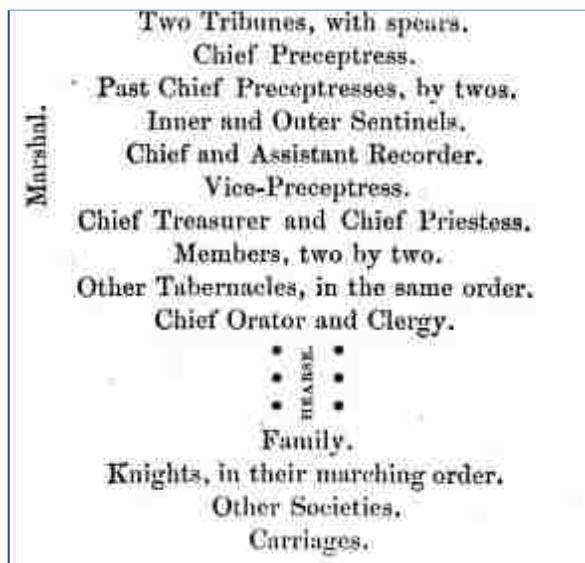
*A Daughter of the Tabernacle in mourning dress for a funeral.*<sup>96</sup>

First, before the funeral, the opening ritual of the Tabernacle was held in a convenient location and not closed again until after the funeral. The ritual reminds Daughters that “A Tabernacle in procession is under the discipline of an open Tabernacle, and no one must leave ranks without the positive permission of the chief preceptress.” The chief orator or chief mentor may have more speaking parts, as would be expected in a public religious service of the period, but, behind it all, the chief preceptress maintains control of the ritual.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Moses Dickson, *Manual of the International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor: Containing General Laws, Regulations, Ceremonies, Drill and Landmarks*. (Glasgow, Mo.: Dickson, 1918), 213.

<sup>97</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 189.



*Daughters of the Tabernacle, order of funeral procession to the Church.*<sup>98</sup>

Second, and more importantly, processing in formation was integral to Daughters' ritual. The officers' rods showed their martial authority and the rank and file's white trim and, particularly, white gloves, called attention to the women's movements. Marching and drill were such a part of the Ritual of the Knights of Tabor that the manual of the order closes with a section titled "Tactics and Drill for the Use of the Knights of Tabor," showing elaborate figures for use by members with their spears and swords. Among the Knights and Daughters, women shared in marching and drilling, nowhere more conspicuously than at the funeral of a fellow Daughter.<sup>99</sup>

After the Tabernacle was opened, members marched in a meticulously ordered procession to the home of the deceased to receive the body, then to the church with the chief preceptress leading the way flanked by knight tribunes with spears, followed by members by rank before the hearse. In this, the Daughters borrow their form from the usage of the masonic lodge rather than the more demure rites of the Eastern Star.<sup>100</sup> And, by 1891, even the male Knight tribunes with

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>100</sup> *The Masonic Funeral Service: Peoria Lodge No. 15, A.F.A.M* (n.p.: Cremer & Spalding, printers, 1867), 7-8.

their spears would be replaced by two female members of the fourth degree with spears of their own.<sup>101</sup>

On arriving at the church, the lines of Daughters opened ranks for the casket and family to pass through, forming a salute to the deceased, then the Daughters filed into the church to take their own seats for a funeral service in the hands of a minister or the local Temple's chief orator. The Daughters assembled once again at the service's end to file by the corpse and make a second ordered procession to the cemetery, using carriages if the distance required.<sup>102</sup>

At the cemetery, Knights and Daughters formed a circle around the grave with the family of the deceased at the head and the chief orator and any ministers at the foot. Given the precision of the order of the processions to the church and to the cemetery, this rather informal circle seems surprising, especially given that the Eastern Star ritual gave a very precise diagram where various officers and representatives of the Biblical heroines were to stand. However, this seeming informality may be seen as an allusion to a more powerful African-American form. Just as the processions called to mind the drilling of the Union League, the circle around the grave evoked the ring shout, used by the League in its initiation ritual and possibly representing a survival of African culture among generations of enslaved African Americans. Others have seen parallels to the ring in black initiation rituals, but the Union League parallel is even clearer when, after singing a hymn on assembling at the grave, the encircling Knights and Daughters join hands and raise them above their heads as the chief orator gives a prayer, at the end of which "all say: 'Amen, amen, amen!' raising and lowering their hands slowly three times."<sup>103</sup> This clearly mimics the League's use of the form in their initiation ritual as described by Hahn. Later in the

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<sup>101</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 173.

<sup>102</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 190-191.

<sup>103</sup> Camp and Kent, "Proprietors, Helpmates, and Pilgrims," 123.

service, those assembled punctuate a verse and response prayer by the chief orator with single claps, further paralleling the ring.<sup>104</sup>

As the ritual movements of the Daughters differ from those of the Eastern Stars, so too does the rhetoric. While the Eastern Star ritual can be characterized as assuring the living that the life after death is not to be feared because it will be much like the one here, the Daughter's ritual speaks of toil passed and triumph gained. The opening prayer referenced above speaks of rest for the departed and "receiv[ing] the kingdom prepared for you." The hymns used speak of the tomb as a place without grief, pain, or anxious fear, of the joy that comes from being free from this life, and of the dead as "prisoners now released from slavery's sad abode." While the Eastern Star was assured that the hereafter would be much like the here and now, the Daughters were comforted that they were going to a quite different and better place than this world.<sup>105</sup>

In contrast to the bourgeois Victorian sentiment of the hymns suggested for Eastern Star funerals, the Daughters' ritual goes back to the hymnody and circumspect piety of the eighteenth century. The optimism about human perfectibility that had so affected the increasingly affluent mainline Protestantism of the period seems to have had little appeal to African-Americans, who continued to struggle against too many concrete obstacles. Rather than being assured of

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<sup>104</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 184. Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 193. In some forms of the masonic funeral, the assembled members of the lodge did join crossed arms to form a "chain" and pass a secret phrase, but the effect was quite different; Freemasons Grand Lodge of Michigan and Jefferson S. Conover, *Michigan Masonic Monitor: Adopted by the Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Michigan 1897* (n.p.: Grand Lodge, 1897), 15.

<sup>105</sup> The three hymns for the graveside service include two by eighteenth-century hymnist Isaac Watts ("Unveil thy bosom faithful tomb" and "How still and peaceful is the grave") and one by contemporary Seventh Day Adventist Franklin E. Belden ("Dear as thou wert, and justly dear"), which stands in sharp contrast to the Eastern Star's use of hymns from within the previous fifty years with more optimistic sentiments: "I would not live away" (circa 18240), "Shall we gather at the river" (1864) with its composer's note of "cheerful," and "Nearer my God to Thee" (1841); Dickson, *Manual*, 1879, p. 192-196; [www.hymntime.org](http://www.hymntime.org) (accessed February 9, 2015); [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org) (accessed February 9, 2015).

continued progress, Dickson's Daughters were assured that the hard fight of life would lead to eternal victory, as in the third verse of "Dear as thou wert," which says:

Triumphant in thy closing eye  
The hope of glory shone  
Joy breathed in thine expiring sight,  
To think the fight was won.<sup>106</sup>

In fact, in the exhortation delivered by the Chief orator after a hymn while the casket is lowered into the grave, Tabernacle meetings are described as "our undisturbed retreat, away from the worldly-minded, to enjoy a little season of happiness."<sup>107</sup>

After the versicle and response prayer mentioned above and a final hymn, the chief orator leads a final prayer reassuring the mourners that the bodies that now sleep will be "made like unto His own glorious body" and that Christ will "subdue all things unto himself." At the prayer's conclusion, the orderly procession of Daughters returns to the place where it began the day and the chief preceptress and officers conduct the closing ritual.<sup>108</sup>

In summary, the Eastern Star ritual models the contemporary, hierarchical, gendered society, with Masons maintaining control of the proceedings, women being praised for appropriately feminine virtues, and all being assured that not even death itself would dissolve familiar institutions and relationships. In sharp contrast, the Daughter's funeral ritual shows women exercising leadership, even over male co-fraternalists, using images and music that recognize the suffering and uncertainty of the present while assuring members of future triumph, and allowing women to display martial discipline without excessive deference to male authority. While the Eastern Star funeral service reminded women of their place and limits, that of the Daughters of

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<sup>106</sup> Dickson, *Manual*, 1879, p. 193.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-169; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 184.

the Tabernacle modeled a reality in which women could exercise agency on more equal terms with men and encouraged members to believe that the struggles of this life would be vindicated in eternity.

### **Taborian Rise and Decline**

The next chapter makes an extended case study of the order's rise and fall in Kansas and of the individual lives of several Arkansas Taborians. This section sketches the broader outline of Taborian history. In the order's earliest years, its focus seems to have been on the mythology of the Knights of Liberty. Frequent references are made to the Knights serving as a vanguard preparing for war and of their work in the Underground railroad. The truth of the former, as has been discussed, is doubtful, and documentation supporting the latter has never come to light, but the assertions of black agency resonated powerfully. Also, in these early years, the press stresses the paying of endowments to the deceased and the work of the Knights rather than the daughters. Over time, the focus would shift toward the Daughters and the identification of the order would reflect this in the increasing use of "International Order of Twelve" and "Taborians" to describe the members.

It is hard to say what drove this shift. Dickson certainly had a long-standing interest in women's place within the fraternal world, as his work with the heroines shows. As Chapter Six will show, women came to constitute two-thirds or more of the order at an early date. Whether the power given to Taborian women made the order less attractive to men or whether this distinctive simply made it extra appealing to women is unclear, but the women of the order would be its driving force, even if men often disproportionately made up its public face in the press.

The order had its ups and downs during the Dickson years. For a time from 1878 to 1880, Dickson was briefly unseated as the head of the order. In 1883-1884, John H. Johnson of Augusta, Arkansas, a lawyer, large landholder, and former state legislator, again challenged Dickson for the leadership of the IOOT. His sudden death in 1885 may have been the only thing that preserved Dickson's leadership. During these same years, former Missouri district deputy P. A. Reed and other dissidents organized the Independent Knights of Tabor, claiming "corruption and tyranny" in the parent order. In 1886, the dissidents claimed to have 2,000 members in five states, but they soon disappear from the news record.<sup>109</sup>

In the early years, there was an annual meeting of the single Grand Temple and Tabernacle, but, as the order grew, changes were required. In Mobile in 1887, the IOOT was reorganized into a model of state temples and tabernacles, which would meet annually, and an International Grand Temple and Tabernacle, which would meet every three years. This arrangement would continue throughout the life of the order.<sup>110</sup>

Whatever the fits and starts of the early years, Dickson became the living symbol of the order, referred to in Taborian rhetoric and the press as "Father Dickson," the name which the St. Louis cemetery where he was buried in 1901 still carries. Press accounts estimated that more than 5,000 attended the funeral. Dickson's will showed that he was very conscious of what he thought to be his greatest asset. Over half of the will discussed the copyrights for the IOOT ritual

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<sup>109</sup> "Knights of Tabor." *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), August 13, 1879; "John H. Johnson - Arkansas Black Lawyers," accessed July 3, 2016, <http://arkansasblacklawyers.uark.edu/lawyers/jhjohnson.html>; "Knights of Tabor," *Arkansas Weekly Mansion*, November 24, 1883; "Knights of Tabor," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 13, 1884; "The Mystic Orders," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 28, 1883; "The Mystic Orders," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 5, 1883; "Knights of Tabor," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 14, 1886.

<sup>110</sup> "Knights of Tabor," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 11, 1887.

and other publications, which he leaves to his daughter, Mamie A. Robinson. Dickson stipulated that she might sell the copyright to the International Grand Temple at a price agreed upon by her and the Triennial session. Eventually, the the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of the Kansas-Nebraska Jurisdiction purchased the copyright. This personal ownership of ritual copyright and its subsequent sale to benefit a founder's heirs was not unique. When John E. Bush, Little Rock, Arkansas founder of the Mosaic Templars died, the organization eventually paid his heirs \$150,000 for the rights to its ritual.<sup>111</sup>

Dickson was succeeded by International Vice Grand Mentor Scipio Africanus Jordan, a long-time Little Rock, Arkansas letter carrier and the state temple and tabernacle's chief grand mentor. Jordan remained in office until 1930, a tenure matching Dickson's own. Under Jordan, the order expanded, with new jurisdictions established in California, Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Virginia. A *Chicago Defender* article claimed that the order grew from 30,000 members to 175,000 adult and 40,000 juvenile members between Dickson's death and 1922, but articles in Dickson's lifetime had claimed more than 172,000 adult members. Fraternal membership figures are notoriously slippery, as Chapter Five will demonstrate. In 1918, the Arkansas Temple and Tabernacle dedicated a grand new headquarters on Little Rock's Ninth Street that served as a de facto international headquarters. All in all, Jordan seems to have been an able caretaker. The shape of the order and its ritual work had been set by the founder and accounts of triennial sessions give little evidence that Jordan felt a need to put a personal stamp

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<sup>111</sup> "The Founder and Father." *Freeman* (Indianapolis), July 31, 1897; "National Register of Historic Places. Father Dickson Cemetery. St. Louis, St. Louis County, Missouri. Pending," n.d.; "Passing of Rev. Dickson," *The Topeka Plaindealer*, December 20, 1901; Moses Dickson, "Last Will and Testament of Moses Dickson.," Record of Wills, 1826-1928, Missouri Probate Court (St. Louis City), accessed August 7, 2016, Ancestry.com Missouri, Wills and Probate Records, 1766-1988; "Knights of Tabor Closes Successful Session," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 20, 1923; "Templars Buy Ritual for \$150,000," *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), August 8, 1925.

on the revered Father Dickson's organization. Unfortunately, changing times would lead the order into crisis.<sup>112</sup>

In the 1920s the evidence suggests that the IOOT was hit with a perfect storm of declining recruitment, a growing number of deaths of elderly members, an antiquated assessment system for death benefits, and the onset of the Great Depression. Chapter Five examines at length how this played out in the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction and the story seems to have repeated itself in many jurisdictions, each of which was responsible for its own finances. In Arkansas, the state temple and tabernacle, where Jordan remained chief grand mentor, sold its benefits program to a white-owned insurance company in 1926, provoking a furor in the state and among other Taborians. Records showed that the jurisdiction owed tens of thousands of dollars in unpaid death claims and the deal included transferring Little Rock's Taborian Hall to the new owners. Jordan stepped aside as International Chief Grand Mentor at a poignant triennial session in Montgomery in 1930, where the delegates made a pilgrimage to the Tuskegee Institute and the grave of Booker T. Washington, whose ideals had so well matched those of the Taborians.<sup>113</sup>

While most jurisdictions seem to have been wiped out in the 1930s, some survived and even thrived. In Mound Bayou, Mississippi, which became de facto IOOT headquarters under

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<sup>112</sup> Berna J. Love, *Temple of Dreams: Taborian Hall and Its Dreamland Ballroom* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2012), 16, 21–23; “Progress and History of the K. and D. of Tabor,” *Chicago Defender*, March 18, 1922, national edition; “Knights and Daughters of Tabor to Meet in Boston,” *Boston Post*, August 9, 1896.

<sup>113</sup> “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Sell Insurance Company,” *Plaindealer*, October 15, 1926; “Local Delegates Tells of Knights of Tabor Meeting,” *Kokomo Tribune*, September 1, 1930.

International Chief Grand Mentor P. M. Smith, the order opened a new hospital in 1942, which provided free healthcare to members. Nevertheless, the organization's glory days were over.<sup>114</sup>

### **The Supreme Royal Circle of the Friends of the World**

While the Taborians eventually moved their headquarters to Arkansas, a second important fraternal group was founded there. The Supreme Royal Circle of the Friends of the world, often known as the RCF, provides a template of an African-American organization that is more clearly a mutual benefit organization, but even here there are racial distinctives and an explicitly racial message. Possessing only opening and closing ceremonies and a single initiatory degree, the RCF nevertheless contributed significantly to African-American organization, particularly in rural areas, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Seven.

The RCF was founded in 1909, thirty-five years after the first meeting of the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of the IOOT. If the IOOT had been formed by resistance to the collapse of reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow and disfranchisement, the RCF was born into a society where the new order was firmly established, though resistance had certainly not ceased. Its founding also came from a new generation of leaders. Its founder, Dr. Richard A. Williams, was born in Forrest City, St. Francis County, Arkansas in 1879. He completed his high school training at Virginia's Danville Industrial High School, a hint at his family's relative comfort, along with a biographer's comment that he was neither born on a farm nor with a silver spoon in his mouth. Beginning at age 14, he taught school in the heavily African-American East Arkansas

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<sup>114</sup> "400 Attend Taborians' Convention," *Chicago Defender*, September 2, 1939, national edition; "National Register of Historic Places. Mound Bayou Historic District, Mound Bayou, Bolivar County, Mississippi. National Register #13000735," n.d.; "Personals," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 13, 1947; "Religion Briefs," *Daily Press* (Newport News, VA), July 27, 1996.

Delta in Cross and Mississippi counties as well as his native St. Francis County and became the first graduate of Little Rock's Arkansas Baptist College. Returning to Forrest City, he ran a grocery store for two years before entering Nashville's Meharry Medical College in 1898. After practicing medicine in Knoxville, Tennessee from 1902 to 1905, he returned to Arkansas, establishing a practice at the Mississippi River town of Helena.<sup>115</sup>

In 1909, Williams founded the Supreme Royal Circle of the Friends of the World. Aside from his demonstrated drive and intellect, Williams' experience as a merchant and teacher in Arkansas's black-belt counties and his time at Arkansas Baptist gave him an extensive network of contacts. Helena, while lacking the size of St. Louis or Memphis was an important regional trading center with a lively African-American population built up not only by pre-war slavery, but also by the town's occupation by Union forces for the majority of the Civil War and by the in-migration of African-Americans into the state in the years after the War. The 1910 census reported that Helena had 5,596 black residents out of a total population of 8,772, an increase of 63% from 1900. Levee expansions aided this population explosion, which fueled the timber industry and agricultural expansion. In 1907, the Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad was completed, running from Joplin in the Ozarks of southwestern Missouri to Helena, further increasing its importance as a commercial center and Mississippi river port. Little Rock and Pine Bluff had larger African-American populations, but Helena was the state's only major black-majority city and its size and location made it a capital of the state's Delta black belt.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Green Polonius Hamilton, *Beacon Lights of the Race* (Memphis: E. H. Clarke & Brother, 1911), 287–90.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 291; "Helena-West Helena (Phillips County) - Encyclopedia of Arkansas," accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=950>; Frank Lincoln Mather, ed., *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago: n.p., 1915), xviii.

Green Polonius Hamilton, author of the 1911 *Beacon Lights of the Race*, said that the RCF's ritual work "is interesting, attractive and even sublime, yet the fact must not be overlooked that this fraternity is, first of all, a high-class business organization." Williams was no doubt partially inspired by Little Rock's Mosaic Templars, a fraternal organization built on a well-regarded insurance program, which had been founded by John Bush in 1882. Bush, a national-known business leader no doubt inspired Williams by his methods and his success. The RCF, like many white and black organizations, offered membership to those who paid an initial fee of \$2.50, which included the cost of a medical examination. Members paid endowment dues of one dollar per quarter and were entitled to a \$300 death benefit. Those who were members of ten years standing were also entitled to a \$100 one-time disability payment, and funeral and headstone coverage were later added.<sup>117</sup>

The RCF ritual is the simplest of any included in this study, but its racial elements are no less evident from the chaplain's opening prayer for "blessings upon our Fraternity, which has been established in Thy name and for our people." The 1910 opening ceremony is the usual form of each officer stating his or her duties, though there is a strong emphasis on hierarchy, with officers promising "to obey the orders of the President and my superior officers." The president reinforces this when, as the last officer to state his duties, he says that "he sits in the East, from whence came the Wise Men of old and from whence comes the sun in his radiant glory to dispel darkness and to preside as King of the Day." The sense of order and hierarchy, which departs from Camp and Kent's notion of mutual "pilgrimage" model among mixed-sex African-

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<sup>117</sup> Hamilton, *Beacon Lights of the Race*, 291, 296; "Supreme Royal Circle of Friends of the World - Encyclopedia of Arkansas," accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5861>.

American organizations is emphasized a final time at the end of the opening ceremony, when all members repeat together the duties of circle members:

To attend every meeting of the Circle; to obey the laws, rules and regulations of the Subordinate, Grand and Supreme Circles; to obey the edicts, mandates and instructions of the Supreme and Grand Presidents, and to obey the orders of the President of this Circle, and to exemplify in our daily lives the principles of Friendship, Love, Mercy, Kindness, Honor, Truth, Fidelity, Benevolence and Charity.<sup>118</sup>

The initiatory itself, known as the Royal Degree, conforms more to the pilgrimage model in that it lacks hazing. The candidate is blindfolded, but not bound, and, though he or she is marched around the hall twice on entering during the singing of a hymn, there is no attempt to unnerve the candidate either now or later in the ritual. When the candidates their obligation, they are seated on a chair before the altar rather than being forced to kneel. In the oath, the candidate promises to patronize friends in their businesses and professions and that "I will see no evil, I will speak no evil, I will hear no evil," which becomes the theme of the mythological story that follows.<sup>119</sup>

The initiatory drama is built around "the strange, weird story of Tileetka, an Indian prince, a man of culture and refinement, the last of his race and tribe." The setting is primordial and nonspecific. It is said to be

ages and eons ago, when the huge dinotherious [mammoth] and the mighty Leviathan held sway; long before the Golden Rule was formulated and long before Confucius . . . long before civilized men had gone beyond Simla and Bombay.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> "Royal Circle of Friends of the World - Initiation Ritual," *Stichting Argus*, accessed August 8, 2016, [http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/r/rcfw\\_r.html](http://www.stichtingargus.nl/vrijmetselarij/r/rcfw_r.html).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

This framing, in and of itself, pushes aside rival claims of cultural superiority in much the same way as the ritual of the black Odd Fellows by putting the order's claims to moral authority in a time before known civilizations. It further eludes pinning down by obscuring the nature of its "Indian" setting, sometimes referring to place names such as Bombay and Simla [Shimla], but more often using terms one would consider descriptive of Native Americans, such as "tribe," "chief," and "Great Spirit." The one certainty in the setting is that it is non white.<sup>121</sup>

The initiate is told that the noble Tileetka was defeated by the evil Wahnona and kept imprisoned in chains on a diet of bread and water. He was kept this way for ten years until famine and death, showing the Great Spirit's displeasure at Wahnona and his people, forced Wahnona to send for him. Tileekta rebukes Wahnona in terms that would have spoken powerfully to African Americans in the Mississippi Delta where the order was born:

Such, O Chief, are the results of an unholy ambition, an evil lust for power, an inordinate greed for gold and gain, a boastful, selfish, mean and unjust spirit, together with all utter disregard for the teachings of the Great Hook and the Great Spirit. . . . O Chief, remember that every man is your brother, every woman is your sister, and the Great Spirit the father of all, and in your relations with them exercise Friendship, Justice, Love, Mercy, Kindness, Honor, Truth, Fidelity, Benevolence and Charity, and all will be well.<sup>122</sup>

After hearing the story, the candidate is led to each officer's station to receive further instruction in these virtues. Friendship receives a particularly communitarian cast, when the candidate is told that, "No man can go very far with strength and courage, if he goes alone and without friends, through the weary struggles of life." Love is made a force for respectability, because it "finds man rough, uncouth and selfish and leaves him a refined and courteous gentleman [and] transforms the timid, bashful girl into the woman of matchless power for good." After being

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

instructed in these and the other virtues, and instructed in the signs and passwords, the order's very brief closing ceremony takes place. Though higher degrees are mentioned in some news accounts, it is not clear whether these were conferred ritually or were merely honorary designations.<sup>123</sup>

Drilling and parading were also important RCF activities, though fewer specifics are available than about the Taborians or white groups. In the 1910 ritual, the commander of the circle states that his duties are “to have charge of the members in procession and upon funeral occasions [and] to teach the drills and tactics of the order.” A 1915 article on Jonesboro, Arkansas in the Indianapolis *Freeman* mentions that the local RCF military company under Captain John Bennett and Commander J. C. Mahones plans to “bring home the bacon” at the upcoming meeting of the grand lodge. In 1919, the quadrennial gathering in Little Rock featured a parade with two bands and more than 100 automobiles. In 1924, winning military drill units at the St. Louis Convention included those from Jackson, Tennessee; Memphis; Brinkley, Arkansas; and Cleveland. A 1932 *Chicago Defender* article on a southern states convention in Little Rock made special mention of the favorable attention attracted by the military companies from Forrest City during the parade. Given the size and reach of the RCF by the 1920s, the mention of two RCF companies from East Arkansas in national news stories suggests that the tradition of drilling and marching remained particularly strong in the Delta.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.; “Royal Circle of Friends Hold Quadrennial Session: Royal Circle of Friends Meet: Second Supreme Quadrennial Session Held at Olivet Baptist Church,” *Chicago Defender*, Big Weekend Edition, September 6, 1919.

<sup>124</sup> “Royal Circle of Friends of the World - Initiation Ritual.”; “Notes of Jonesboro, Ark.” *Freeman*. August 21, 1915; “Royal Circle of Friends Hold Quadrennial Session”; “Royal Circle Closes Banner St. Louis Meet: All Supreme Officers Were Re-Elected and Ovation Given Dr. Williams,” *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, September 6, 1924; “Royal Circle of Friends Holds Southern Convention,” *Chicago Defender*, national edition, September 10, 1932.

The RCF initiatory lacks the refinement of Dickson's degree ceremonies. The story telling is uneven, the virtues embraced are too numerous, and the opening ritual is taken up with a long litany of job duties, but something here worked. Likely the central message of the injustice of oppression of another race and extolling the need for community cooperation struck a deep chord in the early Delta members. The RCF's success may have been partially attributable to something so simple as that the RCF opened lodge membership to the people of rural agricultural communities for whom Taborian membership, with its various assessments on top of dues and endowment premiums, would have been a stretch and membership in Freemasonry or the Eastern Star unthinkable. A 1921 news story touted this feature, saying "The total cost to stay in the Order is \$1.25 per Month and NO TAXES."<sup>125</sup>

If the Taborians found their niche among those who hoped to make their way into the middle class, the members of the RCF tended to be of even more modest backgrounds. In the 1915 *Who's Who of the Colored Race*, more than 100 of those listed reported being Masons and there were a similar number of Odd Fellows. Eight men and one woman were members of the IOOT. Only five men and one woman are listed as members of the RCF. Even these six *Who's Who* entrants all have business or geographic reasons to be RCF members. Two are undertakers in Memphis and one in Fort Smith, a good business policy for those operating in the organization's area of greatest geographic strength. One is a Marianna, Arkansas physician and insurance company president. One is a Pine Bluff, Arkansas minister. Finally, one is a native of Helena, Arkansas, where the RCF was founded. By the 1942 edition of *Who's Who in Colored America*, only ten of those listed were RCF members.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> "A. L. Richmond, Grand Supervisor," *Kansas City Advocate*, January 21, 1921.

<sup>126</sup> *Who's Who of the Colored Race*; Thomas Yenser, *Who's Who in Colored America*, 6th ed. (Brooklyn: Thomas Yenser, 1942).

The combination of the ritual and the RCF's tangible benefits proved to be very popular. By the end of the first year, there were already more than 500 members. In 1909, a house organ, the semi-monthly *Royal Messenger*, was offered for one dollar per year. By 1911, there were more than 9,000 members organized into more than 300 circles, as lodges were called, in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Oklahoma. In 1913, a *Chicago Defender* story on an RCF convention in Little Rock reported there were 21,000 members and that the RCF was "the strongest order in the South" and "the marvel of the age." By 1915, the RCF claimed 30,000 members and, by 1919, one news article claimed 100,000 members and \$1 million in benefits paid only ten years after the order's founding. In 1923, state insurance records confirmed more than 13,000 members in Arkansas alone. That same year, the endowment secretary reported 131,401 members in 2,127 adult and 381 juvenile circles. In 1926, it opened hospitals where members received free treatment in Little Rock and Memphis.<sup>127</sup>

As with the Taborians, women were given ample opportunities to exercise their leadership. In each Circle, the governess not only presided over the women's work, but also over the circle in the absence of the president, taking precedence over the vice president. A 1923 article claimed "[n]o fraternal organization in America has given such a large number of its

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<sup>127</sup> Hamilton, *Beacon Lights of the Race*, 291, 296; "Supreme Royal Circle of Friends of the World - Encyclopedia of Arkansas." Accessed August 8, 2016. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5861>.; "Royal Circle of Friends Holds Southern Convention," *Chicago Defender*, national edition, September 10, 1932.; "Royal Circle of Friends Hold Quadrennial Session: Royal Circle of Friends Meet: Second Supreme Quadrennial Session Held at Olivet Baptist Church." *Chicago Defender*, Big Weekend Edition, September 6, 1919.; "15,000 Invade St. Louis for Big Convention: Royal Circle of Friends Hold Largest Gathering in History of Order." *Chicago Defender*, national edition, August 30, 1924.; Blake Wintory, "Draft: Arkansas African American Fraternal Headstones (May 2014)," 2, accessed June 13, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/5557928/Draft\\_Arkansas\\_African\\_American\\_Fraternal\\_Headstones\\_May\\_2014\\_](https://www.academia.edu/5557928/Draft_Arkansas_African_American_Fraternal_Headstones_May_2014_).

official and executive honors to the educated and talented women of the race.” The piece named Lula Blunt of Forrest City, general endowment secretary as well as key women organizers and officers in Chicago and Memphis. Most interestingly, the article noted that “thousands” of women held the presidency of their local circles. Clearly, the guaranteed authority of the office of governess was not enough for RCF women.<sup>128</sup>

While generally noticed in the press for its business practices, race remained at the forefront of the order’s concerns. At the 1919 convention, speakers felt “that the Race would cease to accept disfranchisements, humiliation and segregation without a protest with their face to the enemy.” National committees appointed that year included those on the state of the country and on racial condition. Both of these were headed by Arkansans, the former was chaired by Dr. J. H. Clayborn. The latter was chaired by Professor P. L. Van Pelt and included Estella Wads of Jonesboro. More traditional concerns continued as well, with Dr. E. J. Lunon of Edmonson, Arkansas heading up the temperance committee. In 1921, the president and secretary of a Kansas City, Kansas Circle were encouraging the development of local black enterprise to “build for our children, so that they may have something to do, other than being servants.” Later that spring, Dr. Williams was a guest at the Chicago-affiliate convention of the NAACP where the spread of the Ku Klux Klan into Illinois was condemned in the strongest language. In 1925, he shared a stage in Chicago with W. E. B. DuBois, speaking on the importance of thrift and savings to advance the race.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> “Royal Circle of Friends of the World - Initiation Ritual”; “Chares E. Stump, Who Is Known In All Parts Of This Country,” *The Broad Ax* (Chicago), November 24, 1923; “Royal Circle of Friends to Meet in St. Louis, Mo.,” *Chicago Defender*, national edition, *August 23*, 1924.

<sup>129</sup> “Royal Circle of Friends Hold Quadrennial Session”; “Can We Succeed without Efforts,” *Kansas City Advocate*, March 25, 1921; “Chicago Branch N. A. A. C. P. Condemns Advent Of Ku Klux Klan And Calls Attention of Public Officials to Menace,” *The Broad Ax*, May 7, 1921; “Prof. W. E. B. Du Bois, Editor of the Crisis, New York City,” *The Broad Ax*, March 5, 1927.

Despite this promising beginning, the RCF, like many organizations heavily defined by or dependent upon revenue from their benefits program, would not survive into the second half of the twentieth century. In 1919, Williams moved headquarters from Helena to Chicago. This may have been an attempt to expand the organization beyond its southern base, but historian Blake Wintory believes that it may also have been a response to the Elaine Massacre. In the community of Elaine, twenty-five miles southeast of Helena, hundreds of African Americans, who had been organizing for better conditions for tenant farmers, were killed over a three-day period in the fall of 1919 in what many believe to be America's bloodiest incident of racial violence. By 1925, the RCF had acquired the Hyde Park Masonic Temple at Fifty-First Street and Michigan Avenue with a mortgage of \$120,000. In 1928, the *Royal Messenger*, which had remained headquartered in Helena until moving to Chicago in 1921, became the *Standard News-Royal Messenger*, after a merger with a Chicago paper. The last RCF tombstone in an Arkansas cemetery dates from 1930, likely reflecting a collapse of the program as members could no longer pay their assessments during the sharpest downturn of the Great Depression. Possibly suffering from these dues short falls caused and general economic conditions, the RCF hospital in Little Rock closed in 1934.<sup>130</sup>

Despite these setbacks, the RCF continued for another decade. When Williams died in 1944, the *Chicago Defender* reported that the organization remained sound, with more than 100,000 members and \$500,000 in assets. Another article hints that Williams's personal real estate investments and those of the RCF might not have been neatly separated and a public administrator was appointed to settle the estate. This comingling of personal and RCF business

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<sup>130</sup> Wintory, "Draft: Arkansas African American Fraternal Headstones," 2; "Dr. Richard A. Williams." *The Broad Ax*. August 13, 1927.; "In RE Royal Circle of Friends Bldg Corporation," accessed August 8, 2016, <https://www.ravellaw.com/opinions/20a2b9ea1b4da3f272f9e2f6f6817026>; "Chips." *The Broad Ax*. July 2, 1921; "Supreme Royal Circle of Friends of the World - Encyclopedia of Arkansas."

may have been of long standing as Lulu Blount-Bryant, the endowment secretary was also Williams' sister. As early as 1925, dissident Chicago members had requested an investigation of Williams' business practices, raising questions about his real estate transactions and lifestyle. By 1947, the organization was in bankruptcy and the Chicago headquarters repossessed.<sup>131</sup>

The Union League, International Order of Twelve, and the Royal Circle of Friends each had a rapid rise and fall, but each had a lasting impact in instilling race pride, providing avenues for women's leadership, and perpetuating a tradition of self-reliance and overt or symbolic self-defense. The next two chapters make an extended case study of Taborians in Kansas and Arkansas, before the final chapter returns to these themes, showing how the IOOT and RCF laid regional groundwork for Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, making an unbroken organizational chain from Reconstruction into the classic era of the modern Civil Rights Movement.

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<sup>131</sup> "Williams' Heir Claims Right To Execute Estate." *Chicago Defender*, National edition, March 18, 1944; "Chares E. Stump, Who Is Known In All Parts Of This Country." *The Broad Ax*. November 24, 1923; "Bitter Fight On Between The Members Of The Royal Circle Of Friends Of The World." *The Broad Ax*. March 28, 1925.

## Chapter 5

### Taborians in Kansas and Nebraska

An unusually rich supply of newspaper accounts and the conspicuous activity of its leaders make the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of Kansas and Nebraska the most complete case study possible of a Taborian jurisdiction. More than 250 newspaper articles track Taborian activity in the two states from the 1880s to the 1930s and the high profiles of the long-term chief grand mentor, Rev. Frank Wilson, and the long-term chief grand preceptress, Emma Gaines, add to the information available. This press coverage is invaluable because of the scarcity of Taborian records in particular and records of non-elite fraternal groups, black and white, in general. The Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction never published its minutes, a practice that seems to have been the norm for Taborian international and state bodies.<sup>1</sup>

While some jurisdictions printed newspapers for various lengths of time, none have been extensively preserved. The only membership records that exist for most Taborians and members of similar groups are their headstones. The Kansas-Nebraska documents offer a unique opportunity to look inside the IOOT at the state level and to get a clear picture of members' backgrounds, the order's growth, its social concerns, and the reasons for its decline. The boosterism inherent in many of these articles certainly obscures the picture, but even so, the documents provided an unprecedented look at the inner workings of a non-elite fraternal organization.

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<sup>1</sup> "Knights of Tabor Grand Session at Coffeyville; to Fort Scott in 1926," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 24, 1925. The only minutes for any IOOT body located to date are those of the Grand Temple of Georgia for 1913, 1920, and 1921 at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. International Order of twelve of knights and daughters of Tabor, ed., *Minutes* (Columbus, Ga., n.d.).

## Early Years

Moses Dickson himself is likely responsible for the IOOT's rapid spread into Kansas. The first five tabernacles and temples he organized in 1871-1872 were in Kansas City, Missouri, his home at the time, and in Liberty and Independence on its outskirts. In the latter half of the 1870s, Dickson was the A.M.E. pastor in St. Joseph, Missouri, another Kansas border town and brought the IOOT headquarters with him. Later, Dickson lived in Higginsville, Missouri, fifty-six miles from Kansas City, Kansas. Church and masonic work took him frequently into Kansas. In 1876 alone, he attended a Good Samaritans meeting in Leavenworth, addressed an A.M.E. gathering in Fort Scott, where he also attended the first meeting of the Kansas A.M.E. conference, and mixed his fraternal and ecclesiastical roles by presiding over the Masonic cornerstone ceremony at a new A.M.E. church in Kansas City.<sup>2</sup>

Likely the most important boost for the IOOT was Dickson's work with the so-called Exodusters. As conditions for African-Americans deteriorated with the collapse of Reconstruction in 1877, thousands headed north and west to escape increasingly oppressive conditions, creating an internal refugee crisis in Missouri and Kansas. Numerous articles in newspapers across the state wrote of Dickson's relief work on the Exodusters' behalf or published letters from him, giving Dickson credibility within established African-American communities as well as with the newly arrived. The Exodusters themselves were a final piece of the IOOT's Kansas success, in that they more than doubled the state's African American

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<sup>2</sup> For the early temples and tabernacles, see Dickson, *Manual*, 1891, p. 12-13. For Dickson in St. Joseph, see, "Religious Frenzy," *The Sedalia Democrat* (Sedalia, MO), March 17, 1875 and "History of the Knights of Tabor," *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor* (KS), January 24, 1878. For various Kansas trips, see "Love, Pruity and Truth," *Leavenworth Times* (KS), July 21, 1876; "Notice," *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor*, October 3, 1876; "Proceedings of the First Session of the Kansas Conference of the African M. E. Church," *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor*, October 5, 1876 and "A.M.E. Excursion," *Leavenworth Times*, July 12, 1876.

population and contributed greatly to the creation of dense, organizable African-American communities by their settlement patterns. In 1860, Kansas had reported a free black population of 625, which grew to 17,108 in 1870 out of a total population of 346,377 and to 43,107 compared to 952,155 white citizens by 1880 at the height of migration. By 1890, the boom had leveled off, with the African American population of 49,710 in 1890 to growing to only 52,003 in 1900, representing 3.6 percent of the state's population. The state's African-American population was small relative to that of southern states, but its new communities filled with those who had left the South in order to improve their economic, social, and political condition made it fertile ground for IOOT organizing.<sup>3</sup>

Rapid settlement encouraged cohesive African-American colonies, creating opportunities for civic organizing which would not have existed had the African-American population been more evenly spread. By 1900, sizable African-American communities were well established in Kansas City, Leavenworth, Topeka, and Wichita, as well as in river communities such as Atchison and Leavenworth, and border towns, such as Parsons. All of these would become centers of Taborian activity by the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For two of the numerous examples of Dickson in the Kansas press during the Exoduster crisis, see "Appeal for Aid," *Recorder-Tribune* (Holton, KS), April 24, 1879 and "Telegraphic," *Emporia News* (KS), May 2, 1879. For further information on the Exodusters, see "Exodusters," Kansas Historical Society, *Kansapedia*, accessed June 28, 2016, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/exodusters/17162>. For demographic information, see United States, Census Office, and Francis Amasa Walker, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States: Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, Selected Ages, and Occupations ... Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census . . .* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 4, 11; United States, and Census Office, eds., *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880): Embracing Extended Tables of the Population of States, Counties, and Minor Civil Divisions . . .* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1883), 378; *Census Reports. Volume I to X, 12th Census of U.S. Taken in Year 1900* (Washington, DC: United States Census Office, 1901), vol. 1, cxii.

<sup>4</sup> Cambbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For Large Cities And Other Urban Places

It is unclear when the first temples and tabernacles were organized in Kansas and Nebraska, but the border town of Fort Scott appears to have been an early center. A January 1876 blurb in the Fort Scott *Daily Monitor* refers to a gathering at the Knights of Tabor Hall on Wall St. A May 1877 article in the same paper records a festival for the installation of the new officers of the Western Queen Tabernacle by Moses Dickson himself with an address by Rev. J. W. Hughes of St. Louis, presiding elder of the A.M.E.'s Missouri District.<sup>5</sup>

In January of 1878, the same paper described the history of the order in ways that would be particularly appealing to the growing number of African Americans arriving from the South and who had fought for the Union:

During the years 1856-57-58-59 the order was established in many of the Southern States and known by various names. . . . Many of the old members now living who have passed through the years of suffering and trials will remember the words of comfort and advice they received in the Order of Knights of Tabor. In the darkest hours just before the breaking out before the breaking out of the civil war their links were fixed at all the new centers so that in a few hours in every hamlet and in every town, city and plantation, the members of the order kept the people posted on that which interested them most. The old members of the order can tell you of a system of telegraphing unknown to Prof. Morse, by which they reached every man and woman and prepared them for the coming events. In the conflict and during the war and the changing of residences of many of the leading members, the order gradually went to sleep. Many of their number fell battling for freedom and their bodies lie beneath the sod of many battlefields.<sup>6</sup>

In one driving paragraph, the author summons up a golden age of black agency at the very time the last Reconstruction governments were falling and as Republican commitment to maintaining civil rights in the South was wavering. The legend of the Knights of Liberty is told here literally

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In The United States," Population Division Working Paper No. 76 (Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau, 2005),

<https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> "City News." *Fort Scott Daily Monitor* (KS), January 6, 1876; no headline, *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, May 15, 1877; no headline." *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, May 15, 1877.

<sup>6</sup> "History of the Knights of Tabor," *Fort Scott Weekly Monitor* (KS), January 24, 1878.

with the names of seven founders in the preceding paragraph. Whether Taborians and prospective members accepted it as such, one can see its power in this period and particularly in this locale. For freedmen finding their way in a new state, these recent Knights of Liberty were a far more more compelling than the Masons' historically distant architect, Hiram Abiff, and whose lodge doors were likely closed to many rank-and-file IOOT members in any event.

The message must have been well received in Fort Scott. News items from the late 1870s indicate that the Taborian hall functioned as a community center, hosting frequent social and church gatherings and even the local debating society's discussion of whether slavery had been a blessing or curse. An account of an 1888 Taborian gathering in Topeka reports that 400 people had come up from Fort Scott by train.<sup>7</sup>

Also, by 1877, the Knights of Leavenworth were hosting a festival and picnic with the Sons of Bethel. Coverage of the 1882 convention in Little Rock lists Thomas Williams of Leavenworth, Kansas, among the national officers as "C.G.D.M.," presumably chief grand district mentor and a man by that name appears in contemporary local news accounts in association with Prince Hall Masonic activities. An 1883 article speaks of a meeting of the national board of curators to be held in Leavenworth.<sup>8</sup>

The order had reached Kansas City, Kansas by 1877. In July, two local papers noted the installation of officers at Dunning's Hall, with *The Wyandott Herald* telling of a large crowd

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<sup>7</sup> For examples of use of the hall, see no headline, *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, March 24, 1877 and "Local Items," *Fort Scott Daily Monitor*, January 31, 1878. "Knights of Tabor: The Annual Election of Officers--Several Excursions.," *Topeka Daily Capital* (KS), July 14, 1888.

<sup>8</sup> "Picnic and Festival." *Leavenworth Times* (KS), July 24, 1877; "The Mystic Orders," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 17, 1883; Thomas Williams, *Leavenworth Kansas City Directory*, Ancestry.com - U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995, accessed June 28, 2016, interactive.ancestry.com "Personal Paragraphs," *Leavenworth Herald*, August 18, 1894; no headline, *Leavenworth Herald*, June 29, 1895; no Headline, *Leavenworth Herald*, August 24, 1895.

attending and *The Wyandotte Gazette* insisting that the hall was “crowded to its utmost capacity.” An 1877 article in the *Leavenworth Times* took note of two train cars and a baggage car of “knights and their ladies” from Kansas City and Lexington, as well as the Kansas City Central Band, passing through on their way to the order’s annual grand session in St. Joe. By 1880, the Knights were organizing a temple in the nearby city of Rosedale, now part of Kansas City, and the new group was talking of building a hall of their own. The members of the Kansas City temple seem to have been eager boosters of the order. In addition to their St. Joe excursion, an 1880 article places them in a train car with the band again, this time to attend the installation of officers and ensuing festival at Lang’s Hall in Leavenworth.<sup>9</sup>

In Nebraska, the first extant print reference to Taborian activity comes from an August 1881 *Omaha Daily Bee* article gives notice that Eureka Temple, No. 71, will be giving its first annual picnic at South Omaha Park. In April 1882, the *Bee* gives a somber account of a child’s funeral conducted by the local tent of maids and pages. If the article is correct, this tent had been organized only the month before by “Sir” W. H. Wallace, who is described as Deputy Grand Mentor of the National Temple. Wallace, according to the article, had come to Omaha to reorganize the city’s temples and tabernacles, which had been established previously, but “eventually became disorganized.” The piece is heavy with the usual message of uplift, stating that “The Maids and Pages Tent was organized for the purpose of uplifting the colored race by organizing the children and drawing off their attention from the usual frivolities of life.” It repeats the story of the 1852 founding, and claims that the IOOT now has more than 10,000

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<sup>9</sup> “Local Intelligence.” *Wyandott Herald* (KS), July 24, 1879; no headline, *Wyandotte Gazette* (KS), July 25, 1879; “Knights of Tabor,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 14, 1880; “Rosedale Items.” *Wyandotte Gazette*, April 2, 1880; “Festival at Lang’s Hall” *The Leavenworth Times*, June 1, 1880.

members. Wallace made a favorable impression upon the paper, as did the procession of little girls in white marching behind a white hearse. This mixture of public spectacle with a message of racial uplift would prove a winning formula in the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction as it did in other parts of the country.<sup>10</sup>

By 1883, the IOOT was clearly on the ground in some force when the meeting of the national temple was held in Leavenworth. Kansas Taborians seemed to have participated in the national grand temple from their earliest days. In addition to the 1877 mention of Kansas City Knights attending the grand session in St. Joe, news coverage of the 1880 grand session in St. Louis mentions Kansas knights marching in the parade. In 1883, no names are given for the Leavenworth hosts, but the news accounts praise them several times in general terms. One assumes that the local temple and tabernacle members were fairly numerous given that the newspapers report 400 delegates from eleven states attended the sessions in the local Odd Fellows Hall, where delegates adopted a new assessment scheme for death claims and elected officers for the coming year. A Thursday-night festival drew more than 1000 people. The session concluded with a Friday parade with two bands, one of which was born on a chariot drawn by black and white horses. The Palatine Guards, marched with swords drawn, and carriages bore Daughters and the grand officers. Afterwards, the new officers were installed and a second festival given. While the order was clearly growing, the officers elected show that its strength remained in Dickson's home territory, with him successfully fending off a challenger and four of the grand officers coming from western or central Missouri.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Local Brevities," *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 12, 1881; "Maids and Pages: A Child's Burial by the Children of the Tent," *Omaha Daily Bee*, April 20, 1882.

<sup>11</sup>"K. of T." *Leavenworth Times* (KS), August 17, 1877; "Knights of Tabor: Meeting Yesterday in Odd Fellows Hall of the Chief Grand Temple," *Leavenworth Times*, August 15, 1883; "Knights of Tabor: A Resolution to Organize State Jurisdictions Defeated," *Leavenworth Times*,

Uplift and spectacle were not the order's only strategies. An 1885 article from Atchison underscores another important ingredient of Taborian success: the support of the clergy, which has also cropped up previously. In Atchison, a visiting minister, identified only as Rev. Gray made a seamless mix of Taborian and Christian missionary effort to the two-hundred-fifty plus members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, which had been founded from the merger of two older congregations in 1879. After preaching three services to good effect, Gray invited the people to a Monday meeting to organize the IOOT in the city and "succeeded in getting several names." Gray is but one of a number of ministers who would prove crucial to the success of the jurisdiction and of the blended missionary zeal that would lead Kansas-Nebraska chief grand mentor and C.M.E. minister, Rev. Frank Wilson, to sign letters "Yours for Christ and Tabor."<sup>12</sup>

Kansas temples and tabernacles, like those in other states, took a prominent part in key African-American celebrations. It is easy to see how the order's stress on its own role in emancipation made Emancipation Day celebrations times of particular pride as well as an opportunity to burnish the reputation of the IOOT with the wider public. In 1879, an Emancipation Day parade by the Knights of Leavenworth led by a band from Lexington, Missouri is praised for "making a very fine showing" followed by a "numerously attended" picnic. In 1887, the Knights of Tabor were among the groups marching at the annual celebrations in Leavenworth marking emancipation in the West Indies and the United States. That summer, the same Topeka paper places Father Dickson in Kansas City as a featured speaker at a

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August 16, 1883; "Knights of Tabor: Election of Officers Yesterday and Other Business," *Leavenworth Times*, August 17, 1883; "Knights of Tabor: Parade Yesterday Afternoon and Public Installation Last Night," *Leavenworth Times*, August 18, 1883.

<sup>12</sup> "Atchison Topics," *Topeka Tribune and Western Recorder* (KS), June 27, 1885; "Church Difficulties," *Atchison Daily Champion* (KS), August 6, 1885; "Knights and Daughters of Tabor Greeting" *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS) August 12, 1904.

celebration honoring Exoduster leader Benjamin “Pap” Singleton. Dickson, described as part of the gathering’s “galaxy of ministerial, legal, and literary lights,” addressed the crowd on “Our Secret Societies” and music was provided by the Knights of Tabor Band. In 1890, an Atchison emancipation celebration drew IOOT members from Leavenworth and St. Joseph.

While identifying the order with important events in African American history was always important, festivities focused on fellowship, and often a bit of fundraising were important as well. By 1887, Kansas City’s St. Halyard’s Tabernacle No. 8 and Henrietta James Tabernacle No. 196 were in a position to throw an elaborate reception and banquet at Hanson’s Opera House. The evening served to introduce more people to the IOOT as well as have a bit of friendly fundraising competition for a silver tea service. Throughout the years, Kansas Taborians, like most fraternalists, were conspicuous for their picnics and banquets in parks, public halls, and in their own spaces. The mix of racial pride and fraternal fellowship seems to have worked well in expanding the order’s reach in Kansas, as activities in Topeka and Leavenworth appear in addition to those in Kansas City and Atchison. One article makes reference to a train carrying 800 Knights from Kansas City to Topeka being delayed over a fare dispute.<sup>13</sup>

The Kansas Taborians demonstrate how fraternalists were key to building social cohesion and political community. Conventions and outings introduced members from different areas of the state, different religious denominations, and different social classes to one another. To bridge

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<sup>13</sup>“Emancipation Day,” *Leavenworth Times* (KS), August 2, 1879; “Annual Celebration at Leavenworth Kansas,” *Benevolent Banner* (North Topeka, KS), July 2, 1887; no headline, *Benevolent Banner*, August 13, 1887; no headline, *Atchison Daily Globe* (KS), September 22, 1890; “Grand Banquet,” *Benevolent Banner*, October 22, 1887. For examples of picnics and galas in 1890-1891 alone see “City News,” *Leavenworth Advocate*, August 9, 1890; “Notice,” *Leavenworth Advocate*, November 22, 1890; “City News,” *Topeka Call* (KS), November 1, 1891; no headline, *Atchison Daily Globe* (KS) July 14, 1888.

these gaps, they spoke the shared language of Taborianism learned in their ritual, whether it be the shared identity of being proud Sons of Ham or the devotional idea that the Christian God had first been the “God of Ethiopia.”<sup>14</sup> In a state such as Kansas, where most African-American communities were newly-founded, the Taborian bond no doubt bore extra weight, substituting for the familial relationships and familiar institutions left behind.

### **Leadership**

Following the growing order’s 1887 decision at Mobile, Alabama, to organize state grand temples and tabernacles rather than having one national jurisdiction which met annually, Kansas and Nebraska were initially included in the territory of the Missouri Grand Temple and Tabernacle. By 1891, there was a movement afoot to create an separate Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction. At a meeting in Lawrence from April 28 to 30 of 1891, the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of Kansas and Nebraska was organized with Moses Dickson presiding and with temples and tabernacles present from Fort Scott, Independence, Kansas City, Lawrence, Lincoln, Omaha, and Topeka. Rev. Frank Wilson of Kansas City was elected chief grand mentor, a position he would hold until his death and Anna King of Lawrence was elected chief grand preceptress. Celebrations included an afternoon parade, led by a coronet band from Platte City with uniformed knights marching ahead of Daughters in carriages. In the evening, a banquet was held in the G.A.R. Hall, which the always complimentary *Leavenworth Advocate* decribed as “filled to overflowing” and praised the “spectacular” grand march and drill. The 1892 meeting of the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of Kansas and Nebraska was set for May in Omaha.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Dickson, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle*, 77.

<sup>15</sup> “Knights of Tabor,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 11, 1887. No records have come to light making the Kansas-Nebraska territory’s inclusion in the Missouri Grand Temple and

Kansas Taborians seem to have chosen wisely in their leaders. Frank Wilson, who led the jurisdiction for twenty-eight years from 1891 to 1919, seems to exemplify the sort of striver typical of so many Taborians. Wilson was born into slavery 1854 in Clay County, Missouri, and moved to Wyandotte County, Kansas soon after the war. By 1870, he was listed as a laborer living in the Quindaro settlement in what is now Kansas City, Missouri, in the household of his stepfather George Robinson with his mother Julia and two younger stepbrothers. A newspaper biography says that he “was engaged in farming and wood chopping until he reached the age of 16 years when he engaged in steamboating on the Missouri River.” In 1880, the twenty-seven-year-old Frank was still single and living at home and listed as a laborer. Quindaro would have made a particularly appropriate place for a future Taborian leader to spend his formative years. Founded as a point of entry to the state for antislavery settlers in 1856, it boomed during the years of Bleeding Kansas, only to fade away after the Civil War. While little remained of the original settlement by the time Wilson was a teenager, it is likely that a bright young man born into slavery was conscious of its past. From 1880 to 1884, he worked as a railroad brakeman and, exemplifying the ethic of self-improvement, hired a private tutor to acquire the education he had not received as a young man. Sufficiently prepared and, presumably, with his savings from his salary, he studied at Ohio’s Wilberforce College, with its deep abolitionist roots, from 1884 to 1887.<sup>16</sup>

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Tabernacle explicit, but the connection may be inferred from references to the Missouri chief grand mentor visiting Kansas lodges and to Kansans attending grand sessions in Missouri. For instance, see “Personal” *Leavenworth Advocate* (KS), December 6, 2016; “City News” and “Personal” *Leavenworth Advocate*, July 26, 1890. For the organization of the Kansas-Nebraska Grand Temple and Tabernacle, see “Knights and Daughters,” *Leavenworth Advocate*, May 2, 1891 and “Officers,” *Leavenworth Advocate*, May 9, 1891.

<sup>16</sup> “Rev. Sir Frank Wilson Again Heads the Knights of Tabor,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 18, 1919; “Rev. Frank Wilson, C.G.M.” *Fair Play* (Fort Scott, KS), July 22, 1898; manuscript census returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, population schedules, Wyandotte

The nature of Wilson's work after returning from Ohio is obscure. A 1908 profile in the Topeka *Plaindealer*, which served as the Taborians' official state organ praises him as "hard toiler and economizer" who "owns several good paying pieces of property in Kansas." It was only in 1893, two years after becoming chief grand mentor, that he was licensed to preach by the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. By 1895, forty-three-year-old Frank had established his own household with his seventy-five-year-old mother and, interestingly, is listed as having attended school within the last year. It was not until 1907, at age fifty-five, that he made his first marriage to the twenty-nine-year-old Mae O. Cavanaugh of Parsons, setting up housekeeping there with his new bride and his now eighty-seven year-old mother, Julia in Parsons, Kansas.<sup>17</sup>

Like Moses Dickson, Wilson's marriage was an indication of how far he had moved up in the world. Mae Cavanaugh was the sister of Professor Shelton French, the acting president of Quindaro's Western University, an African Methodist Episcopal school modeled on the Tuskegee Institute. They had a son, Frank Marion Dickson Wilson, named in honor of Moses Dickson, and a daughter, Louisa Julia, named in honor of Wilson's mother, but were married twelve years before his death at age sixty-five.<sup>18</sup> Midway into his tenure as chief grand mentor, Wilson said the IOOT "shows the ability of the Negro to organize his people. It has been said that he will not be led by a member of his own race. This order proves this statement untrue."

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County, KS; 1875 Kansas State Census, roll: ks1875\_20, line: 8; manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules, Wyandotte County, KS; Alan W. Farley, "Annals of Quindaro: A Kansas Ghost Town." *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1956): 305–20.

<sup>17</sup> "Order of Twelve Has Made Good," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), December 18, 1908; 1895 Kansas State Census, roll: v115\_166, line: 12; "Rev. Sir Frank Wilson, Head of Knights of Tabor Has Been Captured by Cupid," *Plaindealer*, September 6, 1907.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*; "Western University," *Kansapedia*, Kansas Historical Society, accessed June 29, 2016, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/western-university/15492>; "In Sad Memoriam of Rev. Frank Wilson Who Departed This Life on Aug. 7, 1919," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS). July 30, 1930; "Knights and Daughters of Tabor Greeting," *Plaindealer*, August 12, 1904.

The years of Wilson's tenure, which were congruent with the high tide of American fraternalism bore his statement out.

Wilson's fraternal past before being elected chief grand mentor, like the details of his early life in general, is opaque. Local newspapers list him as a local and state officer of the mixed-gender Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria, a temperance and mutual benefit organization, which, like the Taborians, practiced a high degree of egalitarianism. At an unknown date, Wilson became a Prince Hall Mason and had been Grand Master of the Kansas-Nebraska York Rite for five years before his death.<sup>19</sup>

Frank Wilson's long-time collaborator was chief grand preceptress Emma Gaines of Topeka. Her tenure from 1894 to 1930 ran a decade beyond Wilson's, stretching from nearly the beginning of the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction to its collapse.<sup>20</sup> Gaines's life, stretching from freedwoman émigré to successful business woman and fixture of Kansas' African-American organizations represented the hopes and ambitions of most Taborians.

Gaines and her husband Thomas, by their own account, were born into slavery in Kentucky, he in 1857 and she in 1861. Official documents produce considerable confusion about their ages. Though such census errors are common, Emma Gaines gets consistently get younger. The 1880 Census places Thomas at thirty, a seven-year gain over his headstone, and Emma at twenty-three, four years above her age listed in Topeka Cemetery. The 1920 census places Thomas and Emma's ages at seventy and fifty-five, a seven-year uptick for Thomas, and a four-year reduction for Emma. One wonders whether Emma, a striking woman who worked for years

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<sup>19</sup> No headline, *Leavenworth Advocate* (KS), August 3, 1889; "The Grand Lodge," *Leavenworth Advocate*, July 5, 1890; "In Memoriam," *Leavenworth Advocate*, April 25, 1891; "Chief Mentor Wilson Dead," *Plaindealer*, August 8, 1919, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> "Knights of Tabor," *The Kansas Blackman* (Topeka, KS), May 11, 1894.

as a hairdresser, might have given the census taker's pencil a nudge for professional reasons. By 1940, with Emma retired from her various professional and charitable undertakings, their ages have returned to those that appear on their headstone.<sup>21</sup>

Sometime between the birth of their only child, Benjamin, in Kentucky in 1879 and the 1880 census, they settled in Topeka, Kansas. The Gaines family arrived at the migration's height and settled in Topeka's new African-American community of Tennessee Town, so named for the large number of Tennessee migrants there.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1880 census, the family is living on Fillmore Street. Emma is listed as a homemaker with Thomas being a laborer. Emma is listed as being able to read, but not write and Thomas is recorded as being entirely illiterate. In 1900, six years into Emma's career as chief grand preceptress, Thomas has found work as a janitor, Benjamin, now 21, is working as a porter, and the family owns a mortgaged home on Fillmore St. Benjamin is listed as being able to read and write, but neither Thomas nor Emma's literacy status has changed. In the Kansas state census of 1895, the house remains mortgaged and Benjamin has moved out.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "The Story of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gaines," *Capital Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), January 10, 1937; Emma Gaines (1861 - 1949), Thomas Gaines (1857-1943), Benjamin F Gaines (1879-1950), Mary E Gaines (1900-1970), Find A Grave Memorial, accessed July 2, 2016, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com); manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS; manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS; manuscript census returns, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS; manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS.

<sup>22</sup> Manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS; "Exodusters"; "Blacks Found Hope in Pre-War Ks.," *The Topeka Capital Journal* (KS), April 17, 1930.

<sup>23</sup> Manuscript census returns, 1880, 1900; 1905 Kansas State Census, roll: ks1905\_152, line: 30.



*Advertisement for Stonestreet and Gaines from the March 4, 1910 Topeka Plaindealer.*

By 1910, the family had entered a new enterprise, going into the undertaking business with the established undertaker, Frederick Stonestreet, Sr. at Seventh and Quincy Streets. Ads for the new firm show a fine horse-drawn hearse and tout having three licensed embalmers, two phones, and “one of the finest lines of undertaking goods in the state.” Emma’s relationship to the undertaking business is unclear, but, according to the census, she was contributing to the household as a hairdresser working out of the home and may have served the mortuary business in this capacity as well. Ben had returned to his parents’ house with his first wife, Cyrene, who seems to have been keeping house for the three working members of the family. The family remained on Fillmore Street and the mortgage remains on the house, but their rise in prosperity must have been clear to their neighbors.<sup>24</sup>

The joint venture with Stonestreet did not last and, by 1920, seventy-year-old Thomas and fifty-five (or fifty-nine) year-old Emma are listed as not working, but Benjamin is earning a

<sup>24</sup> Frederick M. Stonestreet, Sr., *Notable Kentucky African Americans*, accessed July 2, 2016, [http://nkaa.uky.edu/record.php?note\\_id=2501](http://nkaa.uky.edu/record.php?note_id=2501); advertisement, *Topeka Plaindealer* (KS), March 4, 1910; manuscript Census Returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS.

good wage as a private car porter and Cyrene is keeping house. At some point in the late 1920s, their marriage broke down. In the 1925 Kansas census, Emma, Thomas, Benjamin, and Cyrene are all living at 1182 Buchanan Street, with Ben listed as the head of the household and as a steward on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe. By the 1930 federal census, Thomas, Emma, and Benjamin remain on Buchanan Street, but Cyrene has been replaced as Ben's wife by Mary Emma Gaines, a woman twenty-one years his junior whom he seems to have married around 1927. Cyrene was living on Grand Avenue in 1930 with a James Buford, who is listed as her brother in law. She would continue to live in Topeka until her death in 1945.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the domestic tumult of the mid 1920s, in 1927, the family returned to the undertaking business, in which they would continue for the remainder of Emma and Thomas's lives. In a story describing the new firm, Emma receives top billing. The all-caps lede reads "Mrs. Emma Gaines, husband and son are the new firm and will be up-to-date" and the first half of the article is given to describing Emma as "one of the most active women of the race in the city and state" and detailing her fraternal and religious accomplishments. In addition to her role as Taborian chief grand preceptress, Gaines was, by now, also the long-serving president of the Kansas Missionary Baptist State Convention's Women's Home and Foreign Mission Board, showing that it was not only Taborian men who juggled both church and fraternal roles.<sup>26</sup>

The new location was only a few blocks from the old Stonestreet establishment, but the Gaineses would soon move it across the Kansas River to Buchanan Street with the family living above the business. It was here that Emma would spend her declining years. When she ended

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<sup>25</sup> 1925 Kansas State Census, roll: KS1925\_147, line: 15; manuscript census returns, 1930; Cyrene Gaines(1885 - 1945), *Find A Grave Memorial*, accessed July 2, 2016. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=13128783&ref=acom>.

<sup>26</sup> "Newly Organized Undertaking Firm Has Purchased Former Topeka Undertaking Company," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), January 7, 1927.

her long run as chief grand preceptress in 1930, she had already begun losing her eyesight and suffered injuries in an automobile accident in 1931. Emma would go entirely blind in the 1930s and Thomas would lose a limb in the early thirties before dying in 1943. Emma followed him in 1949 and Benjamin died childless in 1950, bringing their remarkable family to an end.<sup>27</sup>

As with Frank Wilson, it is uncertain when Gaines's affiliation with the IOOT began. At the first session of the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction, she was appointed to the Board of Grand Judges and she attended the Kansas-Nebraska Grand Session in Omaha in 1892. She seems to have been a member of the Daughters of Liberty from about the same time as her involvement began in the I.O.O.T and is listed as its Topeka president in 1902, well into her tenure as chief grand preceptress.<sup>28</sup>

Gaines's life, like Wilson's, offers the ideal Taborian striver. Both worked their way from slavery to middle-class respectability. Both were respected in the religious community and both became significant property owners. For rank-and-file members, their leaders must have been among the most powerful advertisements for the value of being a Taborian.

### **Golden Years**

At the time the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction was organized, Dickson was living in St. Louis. He made a tour of Missouri and Kansas in late July of 1892, as usual mixing the fraternal and religious. He addressed the A.M.E. church in St. Joseph before speaking to the Knights and Daughters of Topeka, where the *Kansas State Ledger* referred to him as "Father Dickson." In

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; "The Story of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gaines"; "Kansas Baptist in Session," *Negro Star* (Wichita, KS), October 9, 1931.

<sup>28</sup> "Officers," *Leavenworth Advocate* (KS), May 9, 1891; "City Items," *Times-Observer* (Topeka, KS), May 21, 1892; *Radges' 1902 Directory of Topeka and Shawnee County and Gazetteer of General Information* (Topeka, KS: Hall Lithographing Co., 1902), p. 116.

Atchison, he addressed the Crescent Tabernacle, where the *Atchison Blade* referred to him as “the great Secret Society man.” Kansas Taborians shared the press’s admiration of Dickson. In Parsons, the local temple was Moses Dickson Temple and, at a state gathering there in 1898, a local A.M.E. minister “spoke of the originator of the order in glowing terms and its grand principles which he grouped and blended together, all originating in a Negro brain.”<sup>29</sup>

Members understood themselves to be setting up a lasting organization. In October of 1892, 106 Knights and Daughters met in Topeka to find a cemetery and burial lots for the organization’s use. The organization’s death benefit was certainly touted by its leaders in addition to the IOOT being a black-founded organization with ties to emancipation. In 1894, Frank Wilson reported to the *Atchison Blade* that the order had paid eleven fifty-dollar death claims since 1892 and, after a visit with the editor of Topeka’s *Kansas Blackman*, the paper made a special note that “endowments had been promptly paid.” By 1893, Lawrence’s *Evening Call* was referring to the IOOT as “one of the strongest secret societies among our people.”<sup>30</sup>

The presence of such benefit programs has been used to diminish the fraternal character of organizations such as the IOOT and to classify them as mere mutual benefit organizations. In Kansas, this false dichotomy is clear in an 1899 report on the Prince Hall Masons’ grand lodge meeting. One newspaper report gives the preponderance of its coverage to the report of the Mason’s Widows’ and Orphans’ Fund, reporting that beneficiaries received \$100 each. This shows the fallacy both of the “mutual-benefit” distinction and also provides an important clue to the relative means of Masons with their \$100 benefit and Taborians, who provided only \$50 per

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<sup>29</sup> “St. Joseph, MO.,” *Times-Observer* (Topeka, KS), July 16, 1892; “Capitol City News,” *Kansas State Ledger* (Topeka, KS), October 14, 1892; “Racial Hints,” *Atchison Blade* (KS), July 30, 1892; “The Grand Lodge,” *Parsons Weekly Blade* (KS), July 16, 1898.

<sup>30</sup> “Capitol City News”; “City News,” *Atchison Blade* (KS), April 1, 1893; “Knights of Tabor,” May 11, 1894; no headline, *Evening Call* (Topeka, KS), June 29, 1893.

claim. No scholar classifies Freemasonry as a mutual benefit organization, though clearly its ethic of mutual aid was at the center of the organization's concerns.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to annual sermons preached to local temples and tabernacles, the press frequently takes note of Taborian festivals and fetes in the early years. Leavenworth Knights gave an afternoon picnic in the park in 1890 followed by an evening festival at the G.A.R. hall, which played host to a similar event in December. Topeka Knights followed much the same formula in November of 1891 with an afternoon street parade led by a band followed by "a grand entertainment at Luken's opera house." In 1892, the *Atchison Blade* reported that the Knights across the border in St. Joseph hosted "a grand o'possum supper under the auspices of the Palatine Guards at their hall" with the most popular lady receiving a gold ring and the most popular gentleman a gold watch chain. By 1894, even the small village of Williamstown, five miles north of Lecompton, were able to pull off "quite a notable festival at Perry Opera House."<sup>32</sup>

These gatherings were not strictly social and often functioned as fundraisers. In the case of the Leavenworth gathering at G.A.R. Hall, the Water King Soap Co. ran ads reminding those attending there would be "a grand display of their Water King and Ladies' Favorite soap" there and "not [to] fail to see it and buy your soap cheap." Atchison Daughters commercialized their annual installation of officers in 1895, advertising music, refreshments, and promising "Daughters will turn out in full dress" all for fifteen cents for adults and ten cents for children. This combination of spectacle and financial practicality likely raised some eyebrows among the

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<sup>31</sup> "Negro Masons," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), August 25, 1899.

<sup>32</sup> "City News," *Leavenworth Advocate* (KS), August 9, 1890; "City News," *Leavenworth Advocate*, December 12, 1890; "St. Joseph Briefs," *Atchison Blade* (KS), November 19, 1892; "Williamstown Items," *National Baptist World* (Wichita, KS), October 12, 1894.

black professional class on occasion, as this inventive combination from the Leavenworth Herald suggests:

The Knights of Tabor gave a grand entertainment at Scard's hall last Saturday night. They made a parade, headed by the Benevolent band. Daisy Harris, the cakewalker, was out in full dress, and during the evening he did some fancy walking for two and a half a piece.<sup>33</sup>

This combination of religious, social, and racial activities seem to have done well for the order in Kansas and Nebraska. By the summer of 1896, the order was reported to have a thousand members and were expecting 2000 visitors for a gathering in Atchison with excursion trains from Leavenworth, Omaha, St. Joseph, and Topeka. In an interview before the session, Wilson reported that he had come from establishing a new temple in Salina and that three temples and two tabernacles had been established in the last year. By the 1898 grand temple and tabernacle meeting in Parsons, the jurisdiction claimed 400 Knights and 1000 daughters, enough of whom attended the meeting that they required 40 carriages for the annual parade. While these numbers are not overly impressive on their face, it would put the membership at somewhere near five percent of Kansas' adult African American population at the time. Two years later, Kansas' Prince Hall Masons claimed only 1400 male members, showing the younger organization's pace of growth relative to the older, more established group.<sup>34</sup>

The practice from 1898 onwards of naming a newspaper as the jurisdiction's "official organ," to which temples and tabernacles were expected to subscribe, lends an unusually rich picture of life among the Taborian rank and file in the glimpses it provides into the lives of

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<sup>33</sup> "Notice," *Leavenworth Advocate* (KS), November 22, 1890; "Installation," *The Atchison Daily Globe* (KS), May 22, 1895; no headline, September 28, 1895.

<sup>34</sup> No headline, *Atchison Daily Globe* (KS), July 10, 1896; "Sir Frank Wilson in Town," *Parsons Weekly Blade* (KS), May 9, 1896; "The Grand Lodge," July 16, 1898; "Kansas Masons," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), August 15, 1900.

individual temples, tabernacles, and members. Fort Scott's weekly *Fair Dealer* was the first such official paper, adding regular IOOT updates to its coverage of local and national race matters, support for the Republican Party and its coverage of black Kansas troops in the Spanish-American War. Local correspondents were particularly careful to report the sicknesses and recoveries of IOOT members and important comings and goings. More substantial Taborian news ranged from reminders of musical nights with food and refreshments at Fort Scott's Taborian Hall to a lawn social jointly hosted by three Lawrence tabernacles that produced good times if not the hoped for financial results. The Saba Meroe Tabernacle of Kansas City assured readers that "children are growing up in the work, so when our work is done they can take hold and carry on the good work we have begun." Other local correspondents, like Rev. Garner of Coffeyville whose mind was on the 1898 elections, were less prosaic:

We as a race of people ought to look forward and stir up more, and come closer together. We have the brains, the knowledge and wisdom what more do we want for God's sake? Put some of our best men in the field this fall.<sup>35</sup>

Brotherly love and perfect harmony were not always the order of the day. The vice mentor of Moses Dickson Temple in Parsons reported that there had been considerable consternation over their hall's renting committee letting the hall on the Daughters' regular meeting night for the duration of the campaign season. Topeka's Pearly Rose Tabernacle, Emma Gaines's home tabernacle, reported suspending a sister, though the reasons were not given. An anonymous writer reported his dissatisfaction with what he perceived to be grave discourtesy on the part of the local Taborian hosts at the 1898 session of the jurisdiction at Parsons:

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<sup>35</sup> "The Grand Lodge," July 16, 1898; "Hear Ye, Hear Ye," *The Fair Play*, August 5, 1898; "Taborian Department, for the Jurisdiction of Kansas and Nebraska," *The Fair Play*, September 9, 1898; "Taborian Department, for the Jurisdiction of Kansas and Nebraska," *The Fair Play* (Fort Scott, KS), September 16, 1898.

The excursion was a grand success, except the Temple and Tabernacle of Parsons failed to have a committee at the depot when the train arrived, which caused some dissatisfaction. Many said they would never go to Parsons again.

The picnic at the fair grounds was all right.<sup>36</sup>

At its July session in 1899, the jurisdiction moved its newspaper patronage to Topeka's *Plaindealer*, a relationship that would last until the order's demise in the state. In its coverage of that session, the *Plaindealer* reports at length on Emma Gaines's annual address in which she sets out Taborian history and ideals and their implications for rank-and-file members in both defiant and inspiring language. It is notable how her rhetoric, like that of Booker T. Washington blends the older vocabulary of producerism and Victorian propriety with newer language of the Progressive Era to create her own powerful synthesis to inspire the rank-and-file but also to rebuke "elite" critics:

I observe throughout my trips great industrial signs; great improvement among our people in the purchase of homes; much repairing; a new desire to keep pace with the progress of the age. . . . The members of this jurisdiction constitute no small percentage of the substantial labor population. This is especially true to Southeastern Kansas where even at this time colored miners are being imported from Alabama and other points. . . . The spirit of our order is against idleness, loafing and degeneration. It is not the place for the joinist, the gambler, and the grumbler. Ours is a school where honest, toiling men and women are taught that there is no excellence without labor . . . that sideshow greatness and so-called "high life" are a monster cancer which is eating out the life of the young men and women and shrouding the race in shame. As the disciples of the Sainted Dixon [sic], we owe it to ourselves and to the International Order of Twelve to stamp out once for all, this false idea of society, of appearing to be something which we are not. The fathers of our triumphant organization, far back in the '70s, builded wisely when they sought to dignify and protect Negro manhood. . . . It has been charged by our enemies that we have little regard for the sanctity of home, for virtue and . . . for the elite of society. . . . Hurl back this monstrous falsehood into the teeth of such ungodly slanderers. Tell them we have rescued the perishing, lifted up a celestial standard of morality . . . out of [our organization] have gone giant men and queenly women with the scepter of Taborian power occupying places of honor.

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<sup>36</sup> "Taborian Department, for the Jurisdiction of Kansas and Nebraska," September 9, 1898; "Knights of Tabor," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), March 16, 1900; no headline, *The Fair Play* (Fort Scott, KS), July 22, 1898.

After this, she turns immediately to the joint power of women and men within the order, which may well have been one of the elements that the unnamed elites criticized:

it is a pleasure to me to refer to the harmony and peace that have existed between the two offices, the C.G.M. and C.G.P. . . . No jars, cisms and contentions have threatened the safety of the ship of state. . . . The Benedict Arnolds, the Cassious and Judas Iscariots must not be elevated to places of honor. Indeed, the teachers, the leaders of the army of Taborian Knights must be persons of intelligence, and virtue—industrious and of unquestionable integrity, sober, temperate and spiritually minded. God grant that the . . . sword of reason and the cimeter [sic] of intellect fell the enemies of God and man. Then . . . will ring out . . . a ballad of perpetual freedom to all men, “God created all men free and equal.”

So, noble men, strive to rise and press on,  
To that glorious goal the heritage of all;  
Who, to labor’s anvil and honor’s roll do respond  
Against the steel and poisonous breath,  
Of a cruel world, press on!<sup>37</sup>

Gaines does not name the foes within and critics without, but her rhetoric suggests that upper-class African-Americans disparaged the order’s spectacle, blending of gender roles, and lack of deference to imagined betters by the empowered rank-and-file who found strength and purpose either on the plateau of Mount Tabor or in the tabernacle of Saba Meroe.

Gaines and Wilson were both noticed for their abilities by the International Grand Temple and Tabernacle. Gaines was elected international queen mother at Dallas in 1899, placing her over the order’s youth division. Wilson was elected International Grand Treasurer in 1902, an office he would hold until his death, and was elected International Grand Orator in 1904.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “U.K.T. Hold Their Annual Session at Salina,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 21, 1899.

<sup>38</sup> No headline, *Plaindealer*, September 29, 1899; “Order of Twelve Has Made Good.”

## **Drilling and Marching**

The years from 1900 to World War I seem to have been a golden age for Kansas Taborians. Steady leadership and steady growth brought the order the respectability its members strived for and the order's financial position seems to have been solid. The *Plaindealer* loyally celebrated the success of the 1901 grand session in Leavenworth claiming 2,500 people came to town "in buggies . . . on trains, in face, any way so long as they got here." The last day of the festivities included a parade of 500 leaving from the Grand Army of the Republic's hall, where "Daughters dressed in robes of purple and gold, rode in carriages."<sup>39</sup>

The white *Omaha Daily Bee* was largely interested in the material aspects of the 1902 gathering in that city, with a headline for the article announcing the parade reading "Colored People on Parade: Knights and Daughters of Tabor Perambulate with Paraphernalia." The article described the sanctuary of St. John's A.M.E. church as "enhanced with the elaborate paraphernalia of the order and in each corner is the banner of the order on which appears the legend: 'In Solo Deo Salus.'" By the next day, the *Bee* seems to have been dazzled, if still distracted by the impedimenta, headlining the previous day's activities with "Brilliant Street Parade: Knights and Daughters Resplendent in the Uniform Colors," noting that the members "have not stinted themselves in providing paraphernalia" and providing a five-paragraph description of the parade and the marchers' costumes. Its description of the installation of officers continued the established theme, comparing the occasion to the following month's coronation of Edward VII:

The coronation of the king may as well be called off. It stands no chance now. The installation of the grand officers of the International Order of the Knights and Daughters of Tabor at Hibbiers park last night eclipsed it even as the

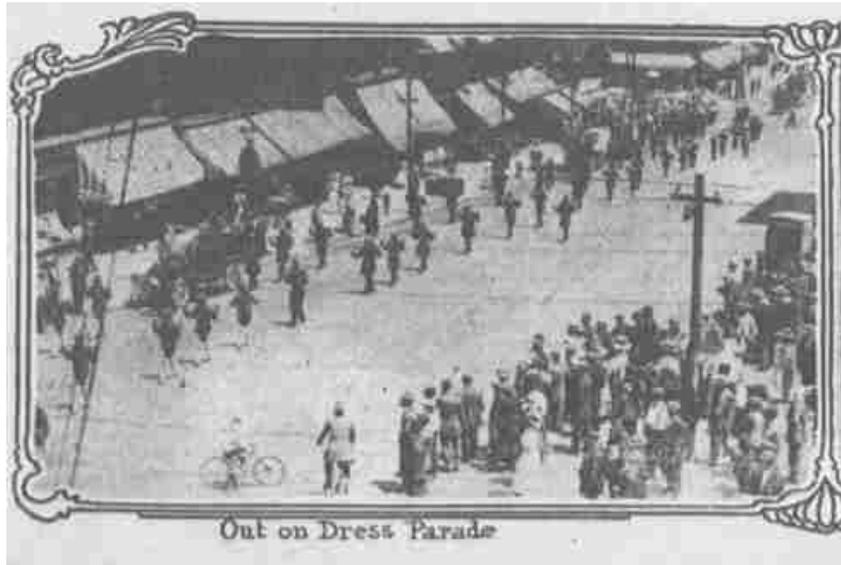
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<sup>39</sup> "Knights of Tabor Have Adjourned," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 19, 1901.

sun eclipses the glow worm. Sir Frank Wilson . . . knows . . . how to throw his shoulders back to show off his gold-braided epaulets . . . And the women! They were queens to the manor born. They wore long trailing robes of pink and mauve, lavender and purple, glittering with a thousand jewels. . . Upon their heads were coronets and in their white gloved hands they carried scepters, emblems of sovereignty.<sup>40</sup>

While the *Bee*'s coverage may have been back-handed in its praise, its obsessive length shows the effectiveness with which the Taborians were able to make use of public spectacle to call attention to their order and their dignity. As with many white papers, the *Bee*'s preoccupation with Taborian spectacle continued to drive its coverage. When the grand session returned to the city in 1910, the story on the parade included two photos and this description:

Bright uniforms, flaunting plumes, glittering regalia, flashing swords, gold-hued crowns, vari-colored sashes, marshals on gaily caparisoned horses, . . . marked the annual parade of the Knights of Tabor and Daughters of the Tabernacle.<sup>41</sup>



*Knights of Tabor on Parade in Omaha. Omaha Daily Bee, July 12, 1910.*

<sup>40</sup> "Colored People on Parade," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 11, 1902; "Brilliant Street Parade," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 12, 1902.

<sup>41</sup> "Tabors March in Costume," *The Bee* (Omaha, NE), July 16, 1910.



*Daughters of the Tabernacle in carriages in Omaha. Omaha Daily Bee, July 12, 1910.*

The press' note of spectacle was not limited to parade. Knights and Daughters drill in the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction was also noted with interest. The same issue of the *Bee* took note of the drill after the formal installation of officers, noting that "a Zouave drill was executed by the crack women's drill squad from Kansas City." Three drill teams of Knights competed for a prize of twenty dollars.<sup>42</sup>

This martial streak in Taborian women seems to have been tolerated but not sanctioned. While the 1918 manual gives a long description of the Princes of Media's role as the drilling Palatine guards, Princesses of the house are still described as making the Palatium "pleasant and sociable." The manual mentions cadets drilling under the direction of the queen mother, but it is the father of the tent who is to instruct them and there is no provision for drilling by Maids. As with earlier editions of the manual, the book concludes with a drill manual, but only for Uniform Rank Knights, Palatine Guards, and javelin drills for Taborian Cadets. The 1921 revision of Wilson's 1906 edition of the constitutions gives two pages of regulations pertaining to the

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<sup>42</sup> "Johnson Is Presiding Prince," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 16, 1910.

organization and operation of Palatine Guard units, but makes no provision for similar activities by princesses. The only mentions of women processing in the official books was to place limitations on the activity. The 1879 manual had allowed tabernacles only one public “turnout” per year in the month of May, other than funeral processions or receiving a national officer. Other parading and marching required a dispensation from their jurisdiction’s chief grand mentor. By 1921, this rule had broadened slightly, moving the annual procession to August 12, the founding of the order, and allowing for turnouts at the the annual sermon, and installations of local officers as well as for funeral processions.<sup>43</sup>

An 1890 article implies that the genders may have even competed against one another, at least at the juvenile level, describing “a dozen little girls wearing blue dresses and carrying tin swords, real tin” holding a competitive drill with boys from Atchison.<sup>44</sup> The drill competition for the 1927 grand session includes one drill team of cadets; the “White Rose Tent Drill Team,” which seems to have been composed of maids; two squads of Palatine Guards; and three companies of adult Princesses. The article notes that this was the first year for juveniles to participate at grand session, but makes no mention of a winning juvenile group as it does for the adult princes and princesses, making it impossible to know if maids went toe-to-toe with pages.<sup>45</sup>

Drilling by either gender was a serious business. The cost of the cheapest uniforms was substantial for people at or near the economic margins and those of greater means could still be encumbered by ordering uniforms of more expensive materials. In 1919, the fourteen members

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<sup>43</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 231, 264, 335; International Order of Twelve, and Frank Wilson. *Revised Taborian Constitutions of the Several Departments*. Kansas City, MO: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1921, p. 92-93, 57; Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 150.

<sup>44</sup> “News Notes,” *Atchison Daily Globe* (KS), n.d.

<sup>45</sup> “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Hold One of the Order’s Best Sessions in the City of Leavenworth,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 22, 1927.

of Raleford's Lady Palatine Guards of Topeka were reported to have invested \$500 in their uniforms, a cost of \$35.71 per person. Once the uniform was donned, tremendous pride was invested in the exercises. An 1899 account of a social between the Taborians of Atchison and St. Joe, Missouri noted:

The St. Joe colored people who attended the Knights of Tabor picnic in Atchison yesterday, beat the Atchison colored men at baseball, beat them drilling, beat them out of their girls and intimated they could beat them fighting.<sup>46</sup>

As the article implies, drill competitions were a regular feature of smaller gatherings as well as of grand temple and tabernacle functions. A 1916 article reports on a "third annual conclave," which seems to have been a gathering of the jurisdiction's Palatine Guard drill units along with those from St. Joseph, Missouri. Men's units from Atchison, Kansas City, Leavenworth, and St. Joe faced off against one another as did an unclear number of women's units. The men and women of St. Joe went home with the winners' banners that day, as they had in Atchison seventeen years earlier.<sup>47</sup>

Drilling and Marching remained a characteristic feature of the order until the end of the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction, though clearly their popularity, like that of the order, waned in the 1920s. An account of the women's drill competition at the 1928 grand session sounds quite spirited with a flattering description of the women's drill team from Topeka defeating the Princess Palatine Guards, but the rest of the story makes it clear that the male Wilson Palatine

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<sup>46</sup> "Rev. Sir Frank Wilson Again Heads the Knights of Tabor," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 18, 1919; "City News," *Atchison Daily Globe* (KS), n.d.

<sup>47</sup> "Knights of Tabor Conclave at Atchison, Kansas," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), November 3, 1916.

Guards of Omaha had held the cup for several years because no other competing male teams remained.<sup>48</sup>

Earlier still in the piece, the author noted that there were only six cadets in the annual parade, surely an ominous sign for the future. A 1924 article makes it plain that this was a problem for fraternal organizations across Kansas when it tells of the founding and first year of operation of a new Kansas City League of Uniform Ranks, which allowed a pooling of resources and joint fundraising for drilling among the male and female drill divisions of the Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, United Brothers of Friendship and York Rite Masons.<sup>49</sup>

Whatever the fortunes of drilling, women's ritual influence remained at the fore of the order. Grand Sessions of the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction and those of the other states were conducted in the women's Saba Meroe degree. The opening entailed the grand officers presiding in their rich robes and crowns, with the chief grand preceptress taking the throne and ordering the altar fire lit. After this, the Daughters formed a double-file procession to make four circumambulations of the altar. On the fourth, they sang the somber and majestic hymn "Eternal power! Almighty God," with its praise of God dwelling in "accessless light," and imploring the Deity to "condescend to cast a look below" on those who "trembling . . . adore" and "rise to speak thy praise." As the hymn concluded, the Daughters formed a circle around the burning altar and the preceptress gave a long prayer invoking God's blessing upon the earthly tabernacle to which all responded with the motto of the order, "In God alone is safety." The chief grand preceptress returned to the throne and, after the priestesses rang the bells at the four quarters, she

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<sup>48</sup> "The Knights of Tabor Holds a Great Session in Lawrence," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 20, 1928.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*; "First Anniversary Celebrated Tuesday Night," *Advocate* (Kansas City, KS), January 18, 1924.

declared that Saba Meroe was “guarded at the outposts of Ethiopia and Egypt. . . . We are ready for mystic work. Let us freely consult the oracle of business.”<sup>50</sup>

The robed women circling the fire, first in silence and then singing a hymn to Georgian court composer Thomas Dupuis’s solemn tune Shepham must have made quite an impression on those present. The invocation followed by the assurance that now all was guarded and the oracle might be consulted added to the solemnity. Frank Wilson may have presided over most of the business of the annual session, but there could be little doubt that Emma Gaines was a high priestess in more than title.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Twentieth Century and Activism**

At the turn of the century, a decline in Taborian fortunes must have seemed an impossibility. In a 1901 letter to the jurisdiction printed in the *Kansas City American Citizen*, Frank Wilson had good news from all around thanks to his recent visits, which included a new tabernacle at Wichita, a new tent there and in Omaha, warm fraternal relations in Leavenworth and improved conditions in Kansas City. During this same visit, Wilson had gone to Lenapah in Indian Territory, where he assisted Father Dickson and S. A. Jordan, then international vice grand mentor, in organizing the territory into its own district temple and tabernacle. After this, Dickson gave a lecture to the Taborians of Coffeyville on “the five leading orders among the race.” Wilson assured his readers of the order’s growing respectability writing that “that the work of the race is being cared for by the better class of our people in just proportion as you care

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<sup>50</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1918), 140; Dickson, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle*, 70–74; “Eternal Power, Almighty God,” *Hymnary.org*, accessed September 1, 2016, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/eternal\\_power\\_almighty\\_god](http://www.hymnary.org/text/eternal_power_almighty_god).

<sup>51</sup> William Barclay Squire, “Dupuis Thomas Sanders,” ed. Leslie Stephen, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Elder Smith & Co., 1888), [www.wikisource.org](http://www.wikisource.org).

for your sick members just so our order will grow in the heart of the better people of the race.” It was likely also Dickson’s last visit among his Kansas children before his death that November. Gaines and Wilson both attended the funeral. A year after Dickson’s death, the *Plaindealer* reported that the IOOT had “the largest membership of any secret body of the race in Kansas.” The *Plaindealer*, also being the official organ of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, gives credibility to the claim. The writer closes noting, “All the printing for this grand Order is done by colored printers. They patronize their own race strictly. Long live the order.”<sup>52</sup>

Taborian commitments to the race were not limited to public spectacle and supporting African-American businesses. While it was Masonic policy that politics never enter into lodge discussions, Kansas Taborians fused politicking on behalf of the race with the order’s mission as eagerly as they fused the order and religion. Like the International Grand Temple, Kansas Knights and Daughters heard an annual report on the condition of the race in the jurisdiction and they combined their observations with practical action. The 1918 grand session in provides a rich glimpse into Taborian activism, beginning with Wilson’s opening address in which:

He told how the race had been deceived by white men who had come on bended knee only to forget after they had been elected. He admonished the next United States Senator from Kansas to be fair to the race and not to make any promises unless he is honest and sincere. He said that the colored men and women had profited by past experience and that no white men could expect to retain their suffrage unless he stood up bravely for the things that would elevate the race.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> “To the Knights and Daughters of Tabor Kansas-Nebraska Jurisdiction,” *American Citizen* (Kansas City, KS), October 4, 1901; “The Dickson Funeral,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), December 6, 1901; “The Order of Twelve,” *Plaindealer*, November 14, 1902; no headline, *Wichita Searchlight* (KS), October 14, 1911.

<sup>53</sup> “Taborians in Annual Meet,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 12, 1918.

On Wednesday, the IOOT Committee on the Colored People of Kansas-Nebraska found much that was encouraging, but urged strong action on the part of women laundry workers. The delegates adopted a resolution based on the report which read in part:

Our women who are employed in laundry work and other positions are not being paid as much as they earn, and should organize in every city and town, demand better pay for their small wages, while they pay for their homes, educate their children and support those who are dependent upon them.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, in a mixture of the political, religious, and Taborian, the delegates endorsed Rev. H. W. White, chief grand orator, as Republican candidate for the state legislature from North Topeka.<sup>55</sup>

These were not isolated incidents. In 1903, the grand session had passed a resolution praising the governor of Indiana for “upholding the dignity of his state, also offering sympathy for the outraged Jews of Russia.” Greetings were also sent that year to President Roosevelt asking he use “his aid and influence in the behalf of the outraged people of our country.” Stories on the annual grand sessions stick closely to the election of officers, the entertainments, and parades and contests, making certain that the maximum number of member names get into the paper, so much of the actual business of the sessions goes unrecorded. What does get into print, such as these resolutions and snippets of Gaines and Wilson’s speeches, indicate that though Taborians accepted Booker T. Washington’s economic philosophy, they did not embrace political quietism<sup>56</sup>

Neither were Taborians afraid to take on other secret societies or even the church when they felt it was called for. The *Taborian Banner*, the official organ of the Texas jurisdiction and one of the few Taborian publications for which any issues are extant, had sharp words for both in

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> “777 K. and D. of T. 333,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 24, 1903.

1906. It challenged other societies that were “paying these high toned dudes’ per diem, board bills and Jim-crow railroad traveling expenses” to invest in the community and “turn this into stores and trade trends.”<sup>57</sup>

Consistent with the IOOT’s close alliance with churches, the *Banner* praised Christian morality and decried desecration of the Sabbath. One letter from a former Texas Daughter now living in Illinois wrote to assure old friends that she was “still living for God and Tabor.”<sup>58</sup> But for those who said Christianity called for patience in this world expecting reward in the next, it said

Let the Banner persuade the Negro race to drop that old song, “You Can Have all the World, But Give me Jesus.” The other races have taken you at your word. You can have some of this world and Jesus too. Get it or die.”<sup>59</sup>

By 1905, a directory of addresses of local chief preceptresses and chief mentors included thirty-six tabernacles and eleven temples in the jurisdiction, which give a picture both of the order and the jurisdiction’s concentrations of population. Of these forty-seven local outposts, thirty-six were located in Kansas and six in Nebraska. The remaining temples and tabernacles show that the jurisdiction served as a catch-all for Western states with small black populations with one each in Iowa, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, and Washington. A 1911 directory shows moderate growth with thirty-seven tabernacles, a gain of one, and eighteen temples, a gain of six. It also lists seven palatiums and twenty-six tents, categories omitted from the previous directory.

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<sup>57</sup> “Have the World and Jesus,” *Taborian Banner* (Galveston, TX), August 24, 1906.

<sup>58</sup> No headline, *Taborian Banner* (Galveston, TX), September 21, 1906; “Letter,” *Taborian Banner*, September 21, 1906.

<sup>59</sup> “Have the World and Jesus.”

In 1918, Wilson's final year as chief grand mentor, the Topeka Daily State Journal reported that the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction had 4,000 members.<sup>60</sup>

While these numbers would seem to indicate a solid organization in Kansas and Nebraska, they are far more modest than those listed in a *Chicago Defender* story on the 1912 international triennial in Louisville. In the *Defender's* recounting of the international grand scribe's report, Kansas-Nebraska is listed as having 4,748 members in 137 lodges. Even if tents and palatiums are being counted, this would be an increase of forty-nine lodges over the 1911 directory. The temple and tabernacle listing in the 1911 directory numbers lodges by their foundation, not reusing numbers of defunct bodies. By this counting, up to the year 1911, 19 temples, 93 tabernacles, and 46 tents had been chartered in the jurisdiction since its founding for a total of 158 bodies, a number far closer to the 1912 Louisville number. Perhaps the number was some combination of the two or perhaps it derived from another source entirely or perhaps the Louisville number was more aspirational and promotional than real. While it is impossible to verify any of the Louisville numbers, they may at least be an accurate indicator of the relative size of Taborian jurisdictions to one another. The 4,748 figure puts Kansas-Nebraska in a middle-of-the pack group of jurisdictions with Georgia, Illinois, and Kentucky, far larger than the thousand or fewer members in Florida, Indiana and Massachusetts, but far smaller than the 25,000 plus claimed by each of the three super-jurisdictions of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Knights and Daughters of Tabor," *Wichita Searchlight* (KS), September 9, 1905; "Topekan at Head." *Topeka Daily State Journal* (KS), July 10, 1918.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*; "Knights and Daughters of Tabor," *Chicago Defender*, Big Weekend Edition, September 7, 1912.

Whatever the reality of the numbers, the *Plaindealer* was fulsome in its praise. A long 1908 article with the headling “Order of Twelve Has Made Good” enumerated the successes of the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction and its officers “moving in the electric age.” Coming in for particular praise was the realization of the long-term dream of purchasing a twelve-room home for the aged and orphans in Topeka for \$4500. The article praised its beauty and features, from the bathing facilities to the columns supporting the façade’s two-story porch.<sup>62</sup>

Wilson served as superintendent of the home and was praised for being able to purchase it without having to levy assessments on the members. He was also praised for his business acumen generally, with the writer noting that “he never allows his members to be taxed unless it is for something to be used at once and needful” and “when there was no money to pay death claims he would advance his own. Being a prudent man, he always managed to have a dollar.”<sup>63</sup>

The article notes not only Wilson’s success in real estate, but also his sideline in fraternal merchandise: “All supplies and books for the order are now furnished by the Chief Grand Mentor from the home. The members purchase their regalia and other paraphernalia from him.” As discussed previously, the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction owned the copyright for the IOOT ritual and books, but Wilson seems to have distributed them through his own Moses Dickson Regalia and Supplies Company, which eventually sold wares for most black fraternal orders with Emma Gaines acting as an agent, at least in the early years. This intermingling of the personal and fraternal by long-term officers is not unlike Dickson’s own ventures and was certainly open to abuse, though it was established practice in the fraternal world.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> “Order of Twelve Has Made Good.”

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Advertisement,” *The Kansas City Sun*, March 25, 1916; “Advertisement,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), June 5, 1903.

Gaines is praised as well in the article as the person who found the property for the home. She is described as someone that “members of the order obey . . . with ease, knowing that if she makes a mistake . . . she will readily correct it.” She is also praised for her orderly home life and the industriousness and prosperity of her family.<sup>65</sup>

Sarah Williams Forbes served as the long-time chief grand recorder. William Corte, chief grand treasurer of fifteen years, was the Topeka city license collector and a fellow member with Gaines at the Shiloh Baptist Church. A. W. Hopkins of Leavenworth, chief grand scribe, had served since being appointed by Dickson at the jurisdiction’s first grand session in 1891. All but Corte, who died in 1916, would still be in office at the time of Wilson’s death in 1919. This longevity and camaraderie among all of the jurisdiction’s major officers certainly provided continuity, but may have created other problems by the complexities of the arrangements it nurtured and by blocking the development of a new generation of leaders.<sup>66</sup>

In 1918, the jurisdiction claimed \$80,000 in real estate and \$87,000 in endowment funds. This may well have been the order’s financial high water mark. A precise breakdown of real estate for that year is unavailable, but a 1929 account claims \$100,000 (\$1.2 million in 2015 dollars) in property free and clear. The piece values the Taborian Home in Topeka at \$5,000 and lists the lodges of Salina, Topeka, and Lawrence as owning property free and clear and Kansas City and “several other towns too numerous to mention” as owning property as well. The manual had long encouraged Knights and Daughters in each city to own their own hall, a dream that seems to have been realized with some success in the jurisdiction if the 1929 numbers are to be believed. The 1911 directory listed 55 temples and tabernacles in 22 towns. Assuming that

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<sup>65</sup> “Order of Twelve Has Made Good.”

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.; “Topekan at Head,” *Topeka Daily State Journal* (KS), July 10, 1918; “Taborian Order in Grand Session,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 21, 1916.

there had been little geographic expansion (or contraction) by 1918 and subtracting the value of the Topeka Taborian Home, this would put the average value of Taborian real estate per town at \$3,410 in 1918 (\$53,525 in 2015 dollars) at a time when the average U.S. home price was about \$3,200 according to census data. This would give the average town a modest but pleasant hall, usually shared by a temple and an average of two tabernacles. Such halls also commonly provided the potential for income, with commercial rental space on the first floor, as the 1929 article alludes to and as was common practice for fraternal organizations.<sup>67</sup>

### **Decline and Collapse**

Accumulated real estate value could do little to balance changing cash flows, that likely took a hit from the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1919, which, when combined with an aging membership, produced a financial burden from which the jurisdiction seems to have never recovered. The order had never modernized its insurance system, relying on regular and special assessments to meet the cost of death benefits. This worked well with an able-bodied and growing membership, but, as many similar organizations found, proved disastrous if recruitment fell off as the long-term members aged.

In 1900, the order paid out \$1000 in death benefits against \$1500 collected. In 1903, claims amounted to \$1,470. In 1905, payouts rose to more than \$3,000, though it was reported that there was more than \$3,000 on hand to pay off future claims. In 1916, the number of deaths was in line with the previous year at thirty-one, which should have resulted in \$3,720 in

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<sup>67</sup> “Rev. Sir Frank Wilson Again Heads the Knights of Tabor”; Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 62–63; “A Glimpse at Your Expenses 100 Years Ago,” *US News & World Report*, accessed July 11, 2016, <http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/2015/01/02/a-glimpse-at-your-expenses-100-years-ago>.

payments. In 1917, the numbers jumped precipitously, when the order paid approximately \$12,000 in death benefits for over seventy members. The tone of the 1919 report was upbeat and full of racial pride, but the numbers in the wake of the Spanish Influenza epidemic were grim. They revealed that death benefits for the previous year ran to more than \$17,000, but the report assured members that thousands of dollars remained in the treasury. There was also considerable pride that:

whilst the white fraternal orders couldn't withstand the ravages of the flu this one did. White insurance companies who are prejudiced to colored risks should take notice.<sup>68</sup>

Moving from payments of around \$3,000 per year to \$12,000 to \$17,000 would have been a tremendous shock on the order's financial system.

The order in Kansas took a second and perhaps more damaging blow a month later when Frank Wilson, chief grand mentor for twenty-eight years died unexpectedly. Newspaper accounts reported a thousand people present at a service in Topeka before Wilson's body was taken home to Kansas City, where a three-block long funeral procession with two bands conducted the body to the Pleasant Green Baptist Church. At the church, two thousand members of the IOOT, York Rite Masons, and Heroines of Jericho waited. Andrew M. Harold of Omaha, vice grand mentor of the jurisdiction who succeeded Wilson in office, had charge of the ceremonies.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Met and Adjourn'd," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 20, 1900; "333. Knights of Tabor Hold and Interesting Session. 777," *Plaindealer*, July 21, 1905; "Taborian Order in Grand Session," *Plaindealer*, July 21, 1916; "Omaha Royally Entertains Great Fraternal Order," *Plaindealer*, July 20, 1917; "Taborians in Annual Meet"; "Rev. Sir Frank Wilson Again Heads the Knights of Tabor."

<sup>69</sup> "Chief Mentor Wilson Dead"; "Thousands Mourn at the Bier of The Rev. Frank Wilson," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), August 22, 1919.

Harold had become vice grand mentor sometime between 1912 and 1915 and had also served as a district grand mentor. His tenure would be rocky. Harold came from outside the order's largest area of members in Eastern Kansas. Omaha city directories for 1909, 1914, 1923, and 1925 list him as an elevator operator, building engineer, or janitor in several Omaha apartment complexes. This puts him well within the norm of rank-and-file membership, but professionally beneath Wilson, a Methodist minister and successful landlord, and Gaines, whose family owned businesses and property.<sup>70</sup>

Harold's early years seem to have been peaceful. The *Plaindealer* did not cover the 1920 session, the first after Wilson's death, instead printing a long poem in his memory by his widow. If this was a hint at editorial misgivings, grand session coverage was back to its usual form for 1921, when the paper noted that it was the first time in history when all officers were elected without opposition. Harold was praised for having "put new blood and new life into the order" and settling various long-running disputes. Grand Treasurer A. W. Burdette was praised as one "who handles more money than any other Colored man in the state of Kansas and who can account for every cent at any minute in the day or night. Grand Recorder Sarah Forbes was said "to have no equal as a recorder" and that "[h]er records are almost perfect. Once again the only hint of trouble was that "[t]he death list was rather large."<sup>71</sup>

The 1922 report was similarly positive, stating that "[t]he order is growing in numbers, conditions are being improved and everything is on an upward trend." Harold was particularly

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<sup>70</sup> U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995, Ancestry.com accessed July 14, 2016, interactive.ancestry.com; "Knights and Daughters of Tabor Show Great Progress." *Wichita Protest* (KS), September 5, 1919; "Tabors Still Lead," *Wichita Searchlight* (KS), July 22, 1911.

<sup>71</sup> "In Sad Memoriam of Rev. Frank Wilson Who Departed This Life on Aug. 7, 1919," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 30, 1930; "30th Annual Grand Session of the Taborian Order Goes Down in History as One of the Most Successful and Harmonious," *Plaindealer*, July 22, 1921.

praised for his annual address being “one of the finest and most complete documents ever presented to the order” and noted he had taken charge of Frank Wilson’s regalia and book business on behalf of the jurisdiction, which had purchased the copyrights from Wilson’s widow. The only ominous note was, once again the number of deaths, which stood at 66. This would have again taken the jurisdiction’s payout above the \$10,000 mark.<sup>72</sup>

While the *Plaindealer* began lambasting the jurisdiction in 1924, its account of the 1923 grand session, like those of 1921 and 1922, had been glowing, with a subhead proclaiming “Everything and Every Body Were on the Harmony Line.” Harold was reported have “worked hard during the past year, overlooking every department as he detailed every item of his financial transactions for the order.” The other officers were praised saying “Each has held his office for years and always report to a penny in the reports. All reports of the other officers were made and showed they were exercising a vigilant eye over their departments.” The only cloud in the report was the note that “Eighty-three deaths last year was the largest number in the history of the organization.” But the article assured readers that “All claims were paid and thousands left in the treasury.” At \$160 in benefits per casualty, this would have raised endowment expenses above \$13,000, not including burial expenses.<sup>73</sup>

In 1924, Harold replaced Topeka’s *Plaindealer* as the order’s official organ with Omaha’s *New Era*. The *New Era* was originally edited by George Parker Wells, Afro-centrist author of “The African Origins of Grecian Civilization” and *The Children of the Sun* and founder of the Hamitic League of the World. After Wells’s departure for Chicago in 1923, the paper was

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<sup>72</sup> “Atchison Entertains Knights and Daughters of Tabor,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 21, 1922.

<sup>73</sup> “Knights of Tabor Closes Successful Session,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 20, 1923.

edited by Count Wilkinson, with whom the *Plaindealer* picked an ongoing fight, airing the financial condition of the order.<sup>74</sup>

*Plaindealer* editor Nick Chiles went on the offensive in his coverage of the 1924 grand session, with an opening paragraph disparaging the black community of Omaha:

A very few colored people are engaged in the mercantile business.

No grocery, clothing, furniture, or shoe store—not even a junk yard or second hand furniture or clothes store. Pool halls, barbecue and fish places seem to predominate. One drug store and one paint and wall paper firm employing 15 to 20 people constitute the business of eight thousand colored people in Omaha, and two unfinished churches at a cost of \$100,000 which are composed of a membership among the supposed progressive members of the race—something wrong!<sup>75</sup>

Chiles's opening salvo was no doubt popular with many Kansas Taborians who felt that their rightful place of leadership in the jurisdiction had been usurped and, once he had established common cause with his readers, he turned to the personal and financial. After years of praising elections by acclamation as a sign of the officers' competence and the order's harmony, Chiles took a new position, criticizing the annual reelection of officers by acclamation and what he said amounted to control of the order by "a secret ring." He questioned the \$700 salary that Chief Mentor Harold received while holding another full-time job, when Wilson had received only \$500 and had worked only for the order. Gaines, who had received years of praise from the paper for her official conduct, was not spared either, with Chiles questioning her \$400

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<sup>74</sup> "The New Era.," *Chronicling America*, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86063444/>; Cary D. Wintz and Bruce A. Glasrud, *The Harlem Renaissance in the American West: The New Negro's Western Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 128–29; "The Hamitic League of the World." NYPL Digital Collections, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-a15b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>; "Notice Sir Count Wilkerson." *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), August 29, 1924.

<sup>75</sup> "Grand Session of Knights and Daughters of Tabor Met in Omaha. Need Better System of Government," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 18, 1924.

salary plus her per diems received for official functions. After saying that local chief mentors and chief preceptresses did far more work for no compensation and still had to pay their dues, Chiles complained about the excess of deference to the officers and the lack of transparency:

There is too much personal worship and bowing down and looking up and scraping and “skinning ‘em back” to these grand officers. . . . They are now so dignified they do not write or read their annual addresses. We do not know whether they are incompetent, or whether they wish to show their power of authority by ruling to be exacted from members, because they have the power.<sup>76</sup>

Chiles criticized a one-dollar assessment leveled on the membership in 1923 and again the next year, asking if they would be necessary without the high officer salaries. He compared these costs to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge and Order of the Eastern Star, which he said are of the same size, yet whose grand master and grand matron receive no salary, making due with per diem and mileage. Next he turned against the antiquated assessment system, urging it to be replaced with a modern insurance scheme with higher benefits and that the money from premiums be lent at interest to local temples and tabernacles to build lodges and halls.<sup>77</sup>

Chiles closed with indictments of Omaha Taborians. He disparaged the general conduct of the Omaha meeting, accused the local organizers of price gouging and financial chicanery, and accused the Presiding Prince, another Omaha resident, of general laxity and of attempting to rig the grand session drill contest. He concluded with an attack on Omaha’s numbers and its real estate:

Omaha Knights claim over one thousand members, yet they own a one story frame shack on North 24<sup>th</sup> St., which is obscured by billboards and the tall, tall weeds. This is the home of the Chief Grand Mentor. . . . Can the blind lead the blind? The race needs progressive leaders at the head.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

These attacks on the Omaha membership at the beginning and end of the piece went beyond general insults. Chiles uses the language and values of the IOOT to attack the new regime's fitness to lead. Industriousness and property ownership were at the heart of the Taborian ideal. By attacking the Omaha member's lack of professional success and the condition of their property, Chiles was saying that they were unworthy Taborians.

The *New Era* did not take the attack lying down, but its counter arguments can only be judged from a follow-up piece by Chiles in August. He once again hammered on the salary issue and on Gaines and Harold's ability to manage the jurisdiction and now suggests it is time for a change of leadership and annual audits. After once again questioning the actual number of Taborians in Omaha and asking "if the tall weeds and billboards still obscure the wooden shack on 24<sup>th</sup> St," Chiles spoke of the financial condition of the order and hinted that he has far more to tell if something is not done.<sup>79</sup>

Chiles's fulminations seem to have fallen on deaf ears. In 1925, all officers were reelected by acclamation, causing the *Plaindealer* to ask whether the members cared about the state of things. The mortality statistics continued their upward trend, with 80 death claims, not counting six more claims for the month of the grand session, which were yet to be processed. The treasury held only \$940.84. A new endowment assessment of thirty-five cents a month was adopted, but, at the same business session, the death benefit was increased from \$160 to \$165 and the previously adopted one-dollar annual assessment was dropped because more than 1,000 members of a reported 3,000 adults had not paid. Chiles also now fumed about the lack of transparency caused by the long-standing policy of not publishing the minutes of grand sessions.

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<sup>79</sup> "Notice Sir Count Wilkerson."

He closed warning “with no sinking fund, with a big death tote and a large falling off of members will break the order, so let us get busy.”<sup>80</sup>

Chiles’s complaints are clearly self-interested. \$1,200 per year for salaries may have been excessive and Harold may not have measured up to the standard of Frank Wilson, but the Chiles exposé lends credence to the hints provided by news stories of earlier years that the Taborian rank-and-file was aging and that growth was stagnant. These factors led to an unsustainable growth in death claims as income was shrinking, straining an assessment system predicated on healthy, working-aged members.

Unfortunately for the historian, the breach between the *Plaindealer* and the Taborian leadership was closed within two years, drawing the veil again over any internal dissention. Whether this was because of the demise of the *New Era* in 1926 or because Chiles’s accusations generated enough controversy that he had to be conciliated is unclear, but the July 1927 Grand Session in Fort Scott was given almost the entire front page with a headline in the same size as the masthead reading “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Make Wonderful Improvement—Hold 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Sermon.” The first paragraph was cloyingly conciliatory, noting that the *Plaindealer* was back in as the official organ, apologizing for the intemperance of recent times, and assuring the state officers that no dirty laundry would appear in its pages again. The next paragraph turned cat in pan from 1924 and 1925, declaring, “The financial condition of the Order was never better, the members paying up and death claims are being paid promptly, and there is a neat balance in the Treasury.” Plans were made for membership expansion contests for the coming year, but no financial information is given and the number of deaths and even mention of

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<sup>80</sup> “Knights of Tabor Grand Session at Coffeyville; to Fort Scott in 1926.”

the annual memorial service are omitted, even though Chiles makes space to list the names of all members of competing drill teams.<sup>81</sup>

In October, the grand temple and tabernacle had an ad for a membership contest in the *Plaindealer*, fulfilling the plans discussed at the grand session and indicating that the leadership was taking the concerns Chiles had raised seriously. Hoping to enroll 1,000 new members, cash prizes were offered for successful recruiting including \$5.00 in gold for winning Knights in various categories and a traveling bag and parasol to the top two recruiting Daughters. The article also included a reminder that temples and tabernacles needed to send their receipts in on schedule to ensure that benefits were paid in a timely manner. A December ad for a Topeka-area Christmas gathering urged readers to “[t]ake the Plaindealer so you can know what is going on among the Tabors” included Emma Gaines among the signatories, further indicating the resumption of old alliances.<sup>82</sup>

Coverage of the grand session of 1927 in Leavenworth continues the glowing publicity, but small details seem to hint of the trouble on the horizon. While the membership competition had been advertised with much fanfare, only one prize, the handbag for most new tabernacle members is mentioned as being presented, and the winner only initiated eighteen new members and restored four suspended ones, missing the twenty-five-member minimum threshold that was advertised. No mention is made of the parasol for second place, the men’s prizes of cash in gold, or the Queen Mother’s prizes for tents. It is said that the treasury received \$12,000 in receipts during the year, but no amount of disbursements is given. No number of deaths is reported, but the

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<sup>81</sup> “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Make Wonderful Improvement—Hold 35th Annual Sermon,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 23, 1926.

<sup>82</sup> Advertisement, *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), October 15, 1926; advertisement, *Plaindealer*, December 10, 1926.

description of the annual memorial service is reported to have lasted two hours and as being “more enjoyed by the delegates and representatives than any other part of the meeting.” The length seems to indicate that the number of deaths had not abated and the members’ enjoyment suggests an older group remembering friends.<sup>83</sup>

The description of two visitors to the session seems calculated to assuage fears. C. G. M. Joe E. Herreford of Missouri reported to the Kansas-Nebraska members that his own jurisdiction had seen 110 deaths in 1926 but still had \$28,000 in its treasury. H. I. Monroe, grand master of Missouri Odd Fellows and Prince Hall past grand master asked mothers and fathers to bring up their children properly “so they could take up the work where they leave off.” He criticized “young men throwing their money away for automobiles and for a good time” who should be using their money to acquire property and praised the values of the IOOT.<sup>84</sup>

Beneath all of the praises, a picture emerges of declining interest in the order by the young as the bulk of the membership entered its declining years. The *Plaindealer*’s coverage of the 1928 grand session in Lawrence is ecstatic in its praise of the officers, the organizing committee and drill teams, but absolutely no financial information is given, even though the article rolls over parts of pages one, three, and four.<sup>85</sup>

While the coverage of the grand sessions from 1926-1928 are opaque, and increasing number of stories about the activities of the jurisdiction’s districts and notices from district grand masters make it apparent that the order in Kansas was in crisis. An October 1927 update on District Fourteen, centered on Topeka, assured readers that the local order was “getting along

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<sup>83</sup> “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Hold One of the Order’s Best Session in the City of Leavenworth.”

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> “The Knights of Tabor Holds a Great Session in Lawrence.”

nicely at this time. We are paying all our bills. Just a few sick and not serious,” but an item immediately below this update may indicate Plaindealer subscriptions were falling:

The C.G.P. Dtr. Gaines has a long seeing eye. See Knights and Daughters coming from every angle. Do not forget the Plaindealer. Be sure and call.<sup>86</sup>

District Fourteen is particularly worth watching since it was by far the jurisdictions biggest district with four temples, six tabernacles, one palatium, and four tents of maids and pages. The next month, D.G.M. Ransom Taylor, again wrote of the order “taking on new life” and reminded readers that the Taborians would be holding a major Christmas celebration open to all Taborians as part of a district drive for 200 new members.<sup>87</sup>

D.G.M. Taylor likely provides a snapshot of the aging membership of the order at this time, though his position as D.G.M. probably places him in its upper economic and social echelons. Taylor was born about 1863 in Tennessee, like his wife, Jennie. He first appears in the 1888 Topeka city directory as a laborer and, in 1900, he is listed as a day laborer living in a house he owns free and clear on Golden Avenue with his wife and only child, eleven-year-old Nettie, who is at school. At the time he appears in the *Plaindealer*, the 1930 census and the 1927, 1929, and 1930 city directories list him as a sixty-seven-year-old city railway worker, still living in the house on Golden Avenue, now valued at \$1,000. His wife Jennie is not working, but the couple does have a forty-one year-old unrelated lodger in the house. Whether the Taylor’s arrived in the early wave of Exodusters or at some point a few years later is unknown, but their rise from migrants to a tenuous middle-class prosperity parallels the condition or at least the

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<sup>86</sup> “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Show Great Progress.” *Wichita Protest* (KS). September 5, 1919; “Knights of Tabor,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), October 14, 1927.

<sup>87</sup> “Knights of Tabor District 14,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), November 1927.

aspirations of many members of the order.<sup>88</sup> In March of 1928, Taylor found it necessary to chide his members, saying “Let us all do our best as the Grand Session is drawing near. Let us keep paid up. Let us get together and build a fine hall for the Grand Temples and Tabernacles and start paying claims.”<sup>89</sup> Taylor’s mix of optimism, at the possibility of a grand temple building, his chiding to pay dues and his reassurances that the order was secure by mentioning a recent claim payment must have matched the hopes and anxieties of many Kansas Taborians at the time.

In December, vice grand preceptress Lenora Gray of Omaha wrote in to say that there had been several local cases of the flu in District 5, including C.G.M. Harold, who also served as the local district grand mentor. After hoping for a speedy recovery for the ill, Editor Chiles departed from his conciliatory position of the last three years to take the her to task, asking how many temples and tabernacles have managed to pay yet another special assessment. He goes on to scold her for filling her report with accounts of sickness, saying it encourages other members to get their doctors to file for sick benefits for them, further draining the treasury. He alludes to there being outstanding claims, but says there won’t be a problem if members keep paying and leaders stop “singing the Blues.”<sup>90</sup>

This is the first time that Chiles gave indication here that death claims were going unpaid. Soon the problem would overtake the jurisdiction. In January, District Fourteen’s Ransom Taylor was forced to make an urgent plea:

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<sup>88</sup> Manuscript census returns, Eleventh Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS; U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995; Ancestry.com; manuscript census returns, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules, Shawnee County, KS.

<sup>89</sup> “Knights of Tabor District 14,” *Plaindealer*, March 25, 1928.

<sup>90</sup> “Omaha Knights of Tabor Slowly Waking Up,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), December 14, 1928; “Knights and Daughters of Tabor Show Great Progress,” *Wichita Protest* (KS), September 5, 1919.

It has pleased the Great Head of the Universe to take from us three of our beloved daughters. They stayed with us until the end came so now let us be true as they were. . . . We have nothing to regret if we stand by our obligation. . . . The tabors have lots to be proud of. We have no report for our young people to go and dance and play cards, we replace the place with churches and Sunday School. . . .

Let us pay our special tax at once so we can help those whom our Knights and Daughters have left behind. . . . Let us so live that no one can rise up and turn us down, by so doing we will sweep through the gate into the city where there will be no night.<sup>91</sup>

Taylor's combination of the fraternal and religious is a well-established Taborian theme, but here it is clearly in the service of reminding members of their financial obligations to the order in a time of pressing need. In May, the call for the grand session announced another membership drive similar to that of 1926-1927, but this time the goal was reduced from 1,000 to 500 new members. In May, Taylor went so far as to print the year's accounting 1928-1929 for his district in the *Plaindealer*, showing that his district had collected \$568 during the year, paid out \$517.97, and had \$267.13 on hand.<sup>92</sup>

Everything unraveled at the July 1929 grand session in Salina. It was revealed that the State Attorney General had been investigating the order since March and had discovered a total of 42 unpaid death claims, totaling \$6,000 to \$7,000. The *Plaindealer* blamed the problem on the high death toll of 1926, but the available numbers show that deaths had been steadily rising for a decade earlier. Chiles tried to be upbeat, but the details of the agreement with the attorney general made it clear that the state had assumed charge of day-to-day operations, appointing U. A. Graham to take charge of the order's finances. The article referred to Graham as a "supervisor," but he was clearly a receiver. The elections proved to be the most volatile in the jurisdiction's history. Sarah Forbes, long-time Grand Recorder, was too ill to attend and word of

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<sup>91</sup> "Knights of Tabor District 14," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), January 11, 1929.

<sup>92</sup> Advertisement, *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), May 17, 1929; "Knights of Tabor Dist 14," *Plaindealer*, May 31, 1929.

her death reached members during the session. The Grand Scribe and Treasurer were both replaced and A. M. Harold only held onto the chief grand mentor's seat by seven votes. Only Emma Gaines seems to have come through unscathed, being reelected for the thirty-fifth time.<sup>93</sup>

Chiles did his best to put a good face on things, showing how all of these apparent problems were actually solutions to the ongoing anxiety over attracting younger members: Mr. Graham was young and would attract young people and that the change in officers made room for younger blood and showed that young people were "fast coming into control of this organization." He also pointed out that the Grand Queen Mother had presented twenty Maids and Pages who had come of age for membership in the Knights and Daughters. It was a heartening statistic, but most members would realize it fell far below the replacement rate for dying members.<sup>94</sup>

The clearest sign that the years of demoralization and recent financial revelations had taken the life out of the order is the lack of public display at Salina. The drill competition was reduced to an exhibition drill by the Princesses of Topeka and the Cadets of Kansas City. More telling still, there was no public parade. Chiles tried to make this a sign of the seriousness of the delegates writing, "The members went there to do business and had no time to frolick and have a good time. This was a serious thinking body, who came there to do business." No amount of serious business would have distracted older members from the fact that this was the first year without one of the parades that always generated so much interest and excitement since the Platte City

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<sup>93</sup> No headline, *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 19, 1929.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

coronet band had led Moses Dickson and the delegates of the first grand session down Leavenworth's Main Street in 1891.<sup>95</sup>

Through the summer and fall Chiles kept up a steady stream of assurances, beginning the week after the grand session with a headline in type larger than the masthead reading, "Knights of Tabor Branches Own \$100,000 of Real Estate Clear of All Debts—How Can Such an Order Fail." The front page story in this issue, while listing the order's holdings in various cities, made the recruiting crisis clear: "We would like to see young active people join the order and build up this large institution and make it stronger than ever." Another front-page piece promised that the new supervisor would be visiting lodges around the state and that his initial review of the books led him to believe all would be well.<sup>96</sup>

An August article indicated that Graham was asking members to pay their dues plus an extra ten cents a month so that back claims could be paid. In September, D.G.M. Taylor was urging members to attend a fundraiser in Lawrence, hoping to generate \$100 to pay claims—an amount less than the value of one death claim. An October listing of jurisdiction officers lists only the supervisor, recorder, and a "home treasurer," which makes it seem that Harold and Gaines had been removed from office or resigned. This seems to be confirmed by coverage of the 1930 grand session, where neither is mentioned as being present. As if all of this were not enough, Nick Chiles of the *Plaindealer* died at the end of October, though his daughter Thelma Chiles Taylor would continue to edit the paper and cover the order until it ceased publication in Topeka in 1932. With so many dominos falling, the October stock market crash and the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.; "Knights and Daughters," *Leavenworth Advocate* (KS), May 2, 1891.

<sup>96</sup> "Knights of Tabor Branches Own \$100,000 of Real Estate Clear of All Debts - How Can Such an Order Fail - Don't Get Excited, They Nedded a Supervisor," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 26, 1929; "Order of Knights of Tabor Is O.K.," *Plaindealer*, July 26, 1929; "Knights and Daughters of Tabor, Kansas, Nebraska Jurisdiction Will Survive," *Plaindealer*, July 26, 1929.

economic chaos and unemployment that followed it must have made the jurisdiction's prospects seem impossibly bleak.<sup>97</sup> A May 1930 letter from D.G.M. Taylor hints at the panic among members that threatened to turn into a stampede:

We have had a hard winter. Some have been forced to slack on dues for the lack of work and the Supervisor is still paying claims. Some have paid in lots of money. You should stay in and reap what you sow. When we take an oath with the Bible we should stand by it. . . . It is foolish to quit one order and join another. Don't lose the money you have paid in.<sup>98</sup>

At the 1930 grand session, Missouri C.G.M, Herreford, listed as "International Chief Grand Deputy" presided until delegates elected A. F. Wilson as chief grand mentor and vice grand preceptress Lenora Gray of Omaha as chief grand preceptress. The article is the briefest coverage of a grand session in many years, perhaps reflecting the new editor's priorities or perhaps showing that she felt the less said in the current circumstances the better. Even this proved too much. A subhead proclaiming that \$13,000 in claims had been paid at the session had to be retracted and corrected the next week with the meager figure of \$1,300. The body of the original article states that during the year, the jurisdiction paid \$6,000 in endowment claims and "all of its current expenses," the syntax bearing witness to the fact that death claims remained outstanding.<sup>99</sup>

The IOOT was hardly alone in its troubles as the Great Depression deepened in the early 1930s. In July of 1931, the *Plaindealer* carried the story of the Washington, DC suicide of an

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<sup>97</sup> "Knights and Daughters of Tabor Rallying to the Support of U. A. Graham," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), August 9, 1929; "Social News," *Plaindealer*, September 20, 1929; "Official Organ," *Plaindealer*, October 11, 1929; "Knights and Daughters of Tabor Hold Unusual Session," *Plaindealer*, July 18, 1929; "A Martyr for His Race Gone," *Plaindealer*, November 1, 1929; "The Kansas City and Topeka Plaindealer," *Chronicling America*, accessed July 16, 2016, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066913/>.

<sup>98</sup> "Knights of Tabor Dist. NO. 14," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 26, 1929.

<sup>99</sup> "Knights and Daughters of Tabor Hold Unusual Session"; "Correction," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 25, 1929.

actuary employed by the National Benefit Life Insurance Company. The company in question was an African-American insurance company with \$6,000,000 in assets at the center of a federal probe.<sup>100</sup> In August, a Kansas City paper reported that the recent grand session of Kansas Knights of Pythias and the sister Court of Calanthe were fighting their own economic difficulties, lamenting that “the MARGIN of existence of fraternal bodies now as much different from what it was at that early day. Like the Taborians, the Pythians were undertaking a membership capmaign. The Pythians experienced a prodigious drop in national membership during this period, going from a reported 130,000 members in 1919 to 70,000 in 1930 and 22,000 in 1934. In December 1930, the *Plaindealer* reported that a receiver had also been appointed for the Kansas jurisdiction of the United Brothers of Freedom.<sup>101</sup>

The 1932 grand session of the Kansas-Nebraska Jurisdiction is the last to be found in the *Plaindealer* and the last to be located. It is little more than a list of names of officers. The collapse of the jurisdiction as a vibrant body was complete by 1936 when the courts allowed the Kansas Attorney General to seize the Topeka temple and tabernacle’s remaining real estate. The local organizations were declared defunct and the property reverted to the grand temple and tabernacle for payment of more than \$17,000 in outstanding death claims that remained unpaid. This was to be the first of several proceedings against local lodges. Subsequent mentions of the IOOT in the Kansas press are limited to City Recreation Department basketball games in Tabor

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<sup>100</sup> “Insurance Co. Official Takes Life as National Benefir Probe Starts,” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 10, 1931; “Suit Filed in Nat’l Benefit Case Against Former High Officials,” *Plaindealer*, July 17, 1931.

<sup>101</sup> “Grand Lodge of Knights of Pythias Makes Good Showing at Parsons,” *Wyandotte Echo* (KS), August 7, 1931; “Barcus Tells Why Pythians Body Failed.” *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), October 18, 1935; “Pitter Pat,” *Plaindealer*, December 26, 1931.

Hall in Kansas City and the Works Progress Administration using the same building for tap dancing classes for African-American children.<sup>102</sup>

No one dramatic factor undid the Kansas-Nebraska Jurisdiction. The collapse of the antiquated fixed assessment system under the double pressure of a rising death rate and the financial difficulties was certainly the proximate cause, but other factors contributed and may well have been more decisive. The closed leadership group re-elected year after year certainly insulated the organization from new ideas and new blood. Related to this, the news accounts make it clear that young people lost interest in the order, though it is unclear whether young Kansans were uninterested in lodges in general or the IOOT in particular. D.G.M. Taylor's final letter in the *Plaindealer* in September of 1931 must have sounded particularly antiquated to the younger generation:

The Knights of Tabor will celebrate the emancipation of Freedom in District No. 14 at their hall, 1300 Quincy Street, September 22, 1931.

Let every member attend. We are paying our claims. We want to thank God for His blessing for our race. He is just the same now as He was in days of Moses' prayers tho the Lord will send more labour in His harvest. . . . Let us pay all our debts, get homes and stand for the right and God will bless us.<sup>103</sup>

The old formula of mythic ties to emancipation, religious fervor, racial separatism and uplift, and middle-class respectability had lost its power among a more educated population formed in the Jazz Age and on ascendant ideas of integration.

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<sup>102</sup> "Taborians in Annual Meet"; "Decision Involves Huge Sum," *Plaindealer* (Kansas City, KS), March 27, 1936; "City Tourney Filing Date Ends March 13," *Plaindealer*, March 19, 1937; "Dancing Class in Tapping Feature," *Plaindealer*, March 19, 1937.

<sup>103</sup> "Social News," *Plaindealer*, September 4, 1931.

## Chapter 6

### Taborians, Gender, and Class in Arkansas

The Mural Crown (see Manual) is the highest-priced Crown that is worn. It is made of metal, and ornamented with a variety of colored stones. But if you want a cheap Crown, which will look just as well, it can be made of pasteboard, cut in the same shape, to fit the head, covered with gold paper. Mucilage will do for pasting, and will make a firm Crown. It may be ornamented with white and colored beads, or in any manner to suit your taste.<sup>1</sup>



*Palatine Princess of the Royal House of Media in gown, sash, crown, and jewel.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Order of Twelve and Frank Wilson, *Revised Taborian Constitutions of the Several Departments* (Kansas City, MO: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1921), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Moses Dickson, *Manual of the International Order of Twelve of the Knights and Daughters of Tabor Containing General Laws, Regulations, Cereminies, Drill and Landmarks*, 10th ed. (Glasgow, MO: The Moses Dickson Publishing Company, 1918), 30.

This is how the 1921 *Taborian Constitutions* describe the crown of a Princess of the Palatium of the Royal House of Media, the most exclusive degree open to the general membership of the IOOT. The extensive description of how to construct a pasteboard crown is at variance with the prosperous image of a Princess in full regalia in the 1918 *Manual*. While assembling a member's regalia certainly constituted a major expense, the fact that Princesses nearly fifty years after the order's founding still availed themselves to cardboard rather than catalog-purchased crowns says a good deal about the social location of the average Taborian. Clearly the Kansas-Nebraska rhetoric about members who were "poor washwomen and hard working men who are laboring in the ditch" and being an order for the "great masses of the laboring class of people of the race" were not empty flourishes.<sup>3</sup>

The lives of Arkansas Taborians show the prominent place of rural southerners in the order, a group that accounted for a large percentage of the membership. These Arkansas lives show that Taborianism was often more of a faith in the ability to rise than a credential attesting that one had or, in other cases, a shelter for those whose modest prosperity remained tenuous. By examining the lives of a number of Taborian women and men in Arkansas, what follows establishes that, while many Taborians likely were neither sharecroppers nor domestics, neither did they come from the emerging black upper class or even the secure rungs of the black middle class in Arkansas. Fon Louise Gordon has defined as Arkansas's black middle class as the domain of

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<sup>3</sup> "Grand Session of Knights and Daughters of Tabor Met in Omaha. Need Better System of Government," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), July 18, 1924; "Order of Twelve Is Booming," *Plaindealer*, June 28, 1907.

ministers, landowning farmers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, editors and publishers, businessmen, and those employed by the post office and railroads. They were primarily urban and less economically dependent on whites for their livelihood.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of IOOT members were women. The lack of existing institutional records makes the exact percentage difficult to calculate, but the available evidence seems to suggest that the ratio may have been higher than two-to-one. The stipulations for grand temples and tabernacles in the 1891 constitution specify that they are required to have four dozen copies of the Daughters' ritual, but need have only two dozen Knights' rituals. An 1898 article reports 400 knights and 1000 daughters in the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction. In 1905, the Kansas-Nebraska Jurisdiction reported 531 knights and 1192 daughters and, in the youth division, 198 pages to 397 maids. In 1911, the same jurisdiction reported eighteen temples to thirty-seven tabernacles. A 1906 report for the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of Texas, showed tabernacles making contributions to the grand body totaling \$6107.70 while temples had only given \$1558.25. A Texas directory in the same newspaper, which may have listed only paying institutions, recorded fourteen tabernacles, but only three temples. A 1911 directory of temples and tabernacles for Kansas and Nebraska lists nineteen temples and twenty-three tabernacles, implying that the difference between the knights and daughters was not so much geographic reach as it was the disparate sizes of local male and female divisions. The Committee on Credentials for the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of Illinois session of 1916 reported twenty tabernacles, but only eleven temples present. Finally, the 1916 Taborian Hall in Little Rock contains memorial plaques purchased by twenty-four tabernacles, but only six temples.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Fon Louise Gordon, *Caste and Class: The Black Experience in Arkansas, 1880-1920* (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 41; "The Grand Lodge," *Parsons Weekly Blade* (Parsons, KS), July 16, 1898; "Report of Knights of Tabor," *Vindicator* (Coffeyville, KS) August 11, 1905; "A Faithful Member of the International Order of Twelve." *Wichita Searchlight* (Wichita, KS),

Three letters in the September 21, 1906 issue of the *Taborian Banner*, the official organ of the Grand Temple and Tabernacle of Texas show varied approaches to the Order's gender disparity. Male organizers seemed to accept the inherent disparity in membership. District Grand Organizer Sir S. B. Miller reported that he hoped to establish 70 tabernacles, but only 50 temples in his region. Dtr. A. J. Johnson, high priestess of a local Texas tabernacle, in a letter in the same newspaper issue, was magnanimous about the disparity. Johnson, high priestess of Mt. Carmel Tabernacle in Greenville, reported that she had recently organized a new tabernacle of forty-three daughters in Sulphur Springs and was sure that a temple would soon follow. The high priestess and recorder of Earnest Worker Tabernacle No. 78 in Houston lived up to their institutional name. Not being content to trust in providence or male organizers, Anedia Carvin and Gertrude Davis reported that they had seventeen working daughters and "we are working up a temple too." With women exercising leadership in Taborian institutions to an equal or greater extent than they did in the church, it is possible that men found the IOOT less attractive than other organizations for the same reasons they were less inclined to take an active part in churches.<sup>6</sup>

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October 14, 1911; "Evening Session," *Taborian Banner* (Galveston, TX) July 20, 1906; "Directory of Temples, Tabernacles, Palatiums, and Tent for 1906-7," *Taborian Banner*, July 20, 1906; "A Faithful Member of the International Order of Twelve," *Wichita Searchlight*, October 14, 1911, p. 1; "Knights of Tabor Hold Grand Lodge," *Chicago Defender*, 29 July 1916; "Taborian Hall - Arkansas Flag & Banner - Little Rock, Arkansas," accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.arkansasties.com>.

<sup>6</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 41; "The Grand Lodge," *Parsons Weekly Blade* (Parsons, KS), July 16, 1898; "Report of Knights of Tabor," *Vindicator* (Coffeyville, KS) August 11, 1905; "Evening Session," *Taborian Banner* (Galveston, TX), July 20, 1906; "Directory of Temples, Tabernacles, Palatiums, and Tent [sic] for 1906-7," *Taborian Banner* (Galveston, TX), July 20, 1906; "A Faithful Member of the International Order of Twelve," *Wichita Searchlight* (Wichita, KS), October 14, 1911; "Taborian Hall - Arkansas Flag & Banner - Little Rock, Arkansas," accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.arkansasties.com>; "Sir S. B. Miller, D. G. Organizer on the Field," "Mt. Carmel No. 96," "Earnest Workers Tab. No. 78," *Taborian Banner*, September 21, 1906.

The radical nature of the Tabernacle ritual has been discussed at length, but women's power did not rest solely in numerical superiority and ritual blandishments. The Taborian constitutions guaranteed women's voice and political power within the order. Women held office in the state-wide grand temple and tabernacle, with grand preceptresses often presiding in joint sessions and women serving as grand scribes, recorders, treasurers, and sentinels. They served as members of Boards of Curators, the trustees of grand temples and tabernacles. In the International Grand Temple and Tabernacle, each state jurisdiction had twelve vote, six of which were voted by the Chief Grand Mentor and six of which were voted by the Chief Grand Preceptress. While this arrangement underrepresented women's numerical superiority in the order, it went far beyond the authority granted to women's auxiliaries by most all fraternal orders. Over the years, the IOOT introduced two higher, mixed-gender orders, the Palatium and the Past Arcanum, in which women served as second in command and presided along with men. Finally, women frequently lead devotions in mixed-gender groups, even though there were usually ordained male ministers present. Most notably, state grand temples and tabernacles held their sessions in the women's Saba Meroe degree, in which women were exalted as priestesses of the primordial tabernacle and keepers of ancient wisdom and into which Taborian men were also initiated.<sup>7</sup>

Women's authority was not limited to the adult divisions of the temples, tabernacles, palatiums, and arcanums. In the youth division of the Tents of Maids and Pages of Honor, women's authority was perhaps more pronounced than in the adult divisions. First, it is notable

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<sup>7</sup> International Order of Twelve, *Revised Taborian Constitutions* (1906), 90-92, 123-127; "Knights and Daughters," *The Leavenworth Times* (Leavenworth, KS), April 30, 1891; "Annual Convention: Colored Benevolent Organization to Meet in Salina," *The Salina Daily Union* (Salina, KS), June 6, 1899; "The Grand Lodge," *Parsons Weekly Blade* (Parsons, KS), July 16, 1898, p. 4; "Board of Grand Curators," *Plaindealer* (Topeka, Kansas), January 3, 1902; Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 30; Dickson, *Consolidated Ritual of the Daughters of the Tabernacle* (1907), 88-89.

that there was one mixed-gender organization for boys and girls, rather than the separate, gendered organizations that would become common in most fraternal organizations. Second, the tents' constitution guaranteed women and girls' leadership prerogatives.

In each tent of maids and pages, a chief maid presiding ruled the tent with a chief page vice assisting. The chief record keeper, chief of the chest, and chief tent keeper (inner sentinel) were also to be girls, with the vice record keeper and chief tent marshal being boys. This gendered division of offices also held for a tent's adult officers. Each tent was to have a queen mother, vice queen mother, and a father. The queen mother was the unchallenged chief officer, with the constitutions stipulating "the government of the Tent is under the control of the Queen Mother" and that the "Queen Mother shall have full control or management of the Tent." The queen mother represented the tent in the state Grand Temple and Tabernacle, creating another group of seats for women. She was also the gatekeeper for admission to adult temples and tabernacles. While it is not surprising that queen mothers gave maids their transfers to local tabernacle membership, it is a shock that it is the queen mother, not the tent father, who gave cadets their transfer to male temples, making women gatekeepers over a significant source of male membership. This shows that, while Mark Carnes may be correct that gender separation was key to the success of white, middle-class organizations, the IOOT was clearly committed to a high degree of gender integration.<sup>8</sup>

The tent constitutions also recognized the differing ages of maturity of boys and girls. Cadets could remain tent members until the age of eighteen, at which time they were eligible for temple membership. Maids could only remain tent members until the age of sixteen, at which time they were eligible for tabernacle membership. Certainly one factor in this must have been a

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<sup>8</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 213-222; Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood*, 2.

recognition of different marriage ages in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but, on a practical level, it often must also have meant that a tent would have sixteen-year-old girls holding offices superior to those of eighteen-year-old boys.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, the arrangement of the government of the tents went beyond placing women in nurturing roles for children. Sitting behind the chief maid presiding, the queen mother in her coronet, belt, and robe of office provided a powerful lesson for the maids and pages. To boys, she taught respect for female authority and to girls she provided a powerful example of women's leadership.<sup>10</sup> When a jurisdiction's grand queen mother took her place on the dais at its annual meeting, many men present were reminded that she and her local counterparts were truly their mothers in Tabor, women who had brought them to maturity in the tents and, in an inversion of Carnes's model, had birthed them into the adult order. Far from being a symbol of domestic submission, she was *fons et origo*—the source and origin—of their life in on Mount Tabor.

The Taborians seem to have found their way around Giggie's proposed conflict between fraternal organizations and women and ministers of the black church. Rather than being a place where women were excluded, the IOOT created a new venue for women to exercise leadership alongside men. Taborians danced a delicate cultural line in their experiment. Women and men were members of their separate temples and tabernacles, and state chief grand mentors were always male knights, but the state jurisdictions gave women a disproportionate voice, not only in the offices specifically reserved for them, but in the cumulative votes held by the larger number of tabernacles and the votes given to queen mothers of each local tent of maids and pages. This is not surprising in an organization whose male membership had a high proportion of male

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<sup>9</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1891), 214-215.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

ministers, but the degree to which this was in the initial design of the order and the degree to which it was a pragmatic evolution over time is obscured by the lack of records of the order's earliest years.<sup>11</sup>

The unusual power granted to Taborian women is all the more remarkable because of who these women were. The women of the IOOT ran the gamut of the educational and class spectrum, but examination seems to bear out that far more were strivers hoping to rise than those who had arrived. Far more common than members of the growing black middle and upper classes were those whose social respectability was more marginal and tenuous. Relative to absolute gender parity is generally associated with elite fraternal and esoteric organizations in this period—Theosophy, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Co-Masonry, and Spiritualism. To find this degree of parity far from elite coastal enclaves is more than a bit surprising.

At the top of the strata of Taborian life were women like Dr. Georgia Rooks Dwelle (1884-1977), who became one of Georgia's first black women physicians and ran a successful infirmary in Atlanta while still finding time to write for Taborian publications. The daughter of a former slave, she graduated from Spelman then Meharry Medical College in 1904, receiving almost perfect marks on her medical boards. Exemplifying the Taborian mindset, she once said, "Competent women physicians can find or create their own opportunities."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>For the conflict between lodges, women, and ministers, see Giggie, *After Redemption*, 55–95.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Bunyan Caldwell, ed., *History of the American Negro and His Institutions* (Atlanta: A. B. Caldwell, 1917), 378–80; Joan-Yvette Campbell, *In Search of Respect and Equality: Life Incidents of Slave and Free Women in North America and European Colonies* (n.p.: CreateSpace Publishing, 2012), 66-67.

More typical of the leadership of the organization seem to be ambitious women like Emma Gaines of Topeka attempting to move up in the world. Beneath the likes of national and international officers such as Gaines, the female rank and file seems to have been composed of middling and poor women, in small towns and rural communities, many of whom eked out an existence and for whom dues and premiums must have been an occasional to constant burden. Whatever their social standing outside the organization, the scope they were given as leaders within the IOOT sets them apart even from most of their privileged white contemporaries.

One might expect the story of Taborian women to focus on Mary Elizabeth Dickson, Mother of All Knights and Daughters of Tabor, but there is less here to report than one might expect. Historian Jennifer Harbour has argued that the Dicksons had a quite egalitarian marriage, based on her eulogy in the 1891 *Taborian Manual*, which states that, "If equals be added to equals, the remainder will be equals,' is a fitting analogy of the conjugal ties between Father and Mother Dickson; each was suited and equal to the other." However, another passage describes her in more traditionally feminine terms as one who "fed the hungry, clothed the naked, comforted the lowly in spirit" and another as the "the hidden force behind the executive chair." The later statement is borne out by the available historical record. Mother Dickson rarely appears in news accounts of the order, other than occasionally to be recognized at gatherings and only one account has come to light of her speaking at a one public gathering, and this a state conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church held in St. Louis.<sup>13</sup>

Mary Elizabeth Dickson was more active in the Heroines of the Court of Jericho, holding the office of Worthy Grand Matron in the original St. Mary's Court in St. Louis and as Worthy

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<sup>13</sup> Harbour, "Bury Me in a Free Land," 84-86; Dickson, *Manual*, (1891), 22; Eric Gardner, "Face to Face': Localizing Lucy Delaney's From the Darkness Cometh the Light," *Legacy* 24, no. 1 (2007): 50-71; "Using Church Funds," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 14, 1887.

Grand Matron in the Missouri Grand Court. One wonders if this reflects a preference for being among friends and staying closer to home, in contrast to her gregarious, peripatetic husband, or whether it might also reflect the different class milieus of the Heroines and the Daughters. Heroines were relatives of the more elite Prince Hall Masons. Mary Elizabeth, the daughter of a prosperous white father, a product of convent schools, and the widow of a merchant in prosperous Galena, Illinois, might well have felt more at home among the Heroines of St. Louis and Kansas City than among the Daughters of Topeka and Atchison. Whether Dickson's low profile was a matter of temperament or class, other women provide robust examples of female leadership.<sup>14</sup>

The data yielded by individual members and tabernacles in Arkansas may paint the most accurate picture of the Taborian woman. Arkansas became the headquarters of the I.O.O.T when Scipio Africanus Jordan succeeded Dickson as international chief grand mentor in 1901. In 1910, the organization claimed 16,000 members in the state and in 1916 it built Taborian Hall, the grandest building constructed by the order, in the heart of Little Rock's famous ninth street Line. The lives of six Taborian women in Central Arkansas and ten in East Arkansas and those of seven Taborian men around the state show the membership to be a mix of urban and small-town strivers along with a number employed as servants and tenant farmers.<sup>15</sup>

The 1916 cornerstone of Taborian Hall in Little Rock records that Lula B. West was chief grand recorder of Arkansas and a member of the state Board of Curators. Born around 1875, she

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<sup>14</sup> Eric Gardner, "Face to Face': Localizing Lucy Delaney's From the Darkness Cometh the Light," *Legacy* 24, no. 1 (2007): 55-57

<sup>15</sup> Berna J. Love, *Temple of Dreams: Taborian Hall and Its Dreamland Ballroom* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2012), 5-6. "Local Delegates Tells of Knights of Tabor Meeting," *Kokomo Tribune* (Kokomo, IN), September 1, 1930; "Grand Temple Meeting Is Here," *Arkansas Democrat* (Little Rock, AR), July 18, 1910.

had one son from a previous marriage when she married physician Edward M. West. By 1910, the couple resided in rural Hensley Township in southern Pulaski County, where Edward practiced medicine and Lula taught school and they owned a farm on which they had a mortgage. Though Lula gave birth to four children, only her son, adopted by Edward, lived to maturity and, but 1920, he has left the household, but his children are beginning to live with his parents. By 1920, the mortgage had been paid off and Lula was no longer working outside the home, which presumably left time for her duties as a state officer of the IOOT and to care for her mother, a six-year-old granddaughter, and her ninety-one-year-old grandmother, who were all living with her and Edward. Around 1930, there may have been some disruption in the household since Edward is not listed in the census and Lula is listed as head of the household and has returned to teaching. She has been joined by two grandchildren as well as a twelve-year-old boy and girl who are listed as servants. Whether the West's problems of the early 1930s were financial, personal, or a mere lacuna in the records, life seems to have returned to normal and an upward trajectory by the mid-1930s. In 1940, there were six grandchildren in the house and Lula continued to teach, as did her oldest granddaughter. The city directories show that Edward had established a practice at 1207 E. Washington Ave. near the river front in North Little Rock and continued to reside in Hensley with Lula, though how they managed the considerable distance between the two is unknown. While the West's life may seem a great success in comparison to those of other African Americans in Arkansas, it was clearly not without its sorrows and difficulties.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Taborian Hall - Arkansas Flag & Banner - Little Rock, Arkansas"; manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Population Schedules, Pulaski County, AR; manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; manuscript census returns, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the

Frankie Stanback's name also appears on the Taborian corner stone in Little Rock as chief grand preceptress, the highest office of a state tabernacle. Stanback, who seemed to exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit of Emma Gaines, her husband James, five years her junior, and their only child, Jessie, represent the desire to rise. She first appears in the news in 1910 already holding the office of chief grand preceptress of Arkansas. At the time, she was living in Forrest City and reported that she has visited 120 tabernacles in the course of the year. In the 1910 census, the family has moved to Little Rock. James is listed as a hotel laborer, a good position for an African-American in Little Rock. Frankie is listed as a wage-earning organizer for a secret society, presumably the IOOT, and the ten-year-old Jessie is in school. They own their home, on which they are paying a mortgage, and, at the high noon of fraternalism, the future must have looked bright. In 1915, Stanback remained in office as chief preceptress and attended the triennial session in St. Louis, where it was hoped that plans would be announced for a new international temple headquarters building befitting the growing order. By 1920, the Stanbacks seem to be making good progress. Forty-nine-year-old Frank is now a porter in a dry goods firm, Frankie has given up working, and Jessie is a high-school student. Sadly, the city directories of the mid-1920s show how the couple's fortunes changed. In 1925, the family is still living at 2806 Center and James is working as a porter at a 1211 Chester St. location of the Beal-Burrow dry goods firm. In 1928, Frankie is still living in the house on Center Street, but is listed as a widow and Jessie is working as a cook. The next year, the two have moved to 3120 Louisiana, perhaps after losing the house in the Crash and as a result of James's death. Jessie is listed as working as a maid. Frankie does not appear in the 1930 census, but she reappears in the

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United States, 1940, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; Ancestry.com - U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995, [www.interactive.ancestry.com](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com), accessed June 23, 2016.

1940 Census as a sixty-eight-year old lodger in Chicago who is unable to work. The now thirty-nine-year-old and single Jessie is living with her and listed as a maid who has been out of work for sixty-five weeks. The family's fortunes form an eerie parallel with those of the IOOT<sup>17</sup>

Lives of the rank and file members, who constituted ninety percent of the order are far harder to reconstruct than those of the leadership, whose names frequently appear in newspaper articles because of their work with the order or because of their own social standings. Tabernacle records have been lost, meaning members can most often only be identified by their headstones and poor African Americans rarely appear in the available local newspapers outside of the legal pages.

A sampling of ten Little Rock Daughters, whose names can be gleaned from headstones in Little Rock's Fraternal Cemetery, show how much Lula West and Frankie Stanback stood apart from rank-and-file daughters in their community. Of the first ten women with IOOT headstones who could be identified from census records, four were laundresses, two were cooks in private houses, two were elderly women living with their daughters' families, and only two were listed as not working. Of these latter two, one's husband worked in a carpenter shop and one is listed as a railroad laborer. Six of these families were renters, one woman was a cook living in, one was a lodger in a private house, and only two owned homes free and clear. Only

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<sup>17</sup> "Taborian Hall - Arkansas Flag & Banner - Little Rock, Arkansas"; "Grand Temple Meeting Is Here," *Arkansas Democrat* (Little Rock, AR). July 18, 1910, p. 3; "Knights of Tabor: Reports of Various Departments Show Order to Be in Flourishing Condition" *Arkansas Democrat*, July 21, 1910, p. 3; manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; "Taborians to St. Louis." *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), August 22, 1915; manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; Ancestry.com, U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995; manuscript census returns, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; Ancestry.com, U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995, [www.interactive.ancestry.com/](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com/), accessed June 23, 2016.

forty percent were literate. As has been argued, Taborian ideals of property ownership were more aspirational than operational in many, if not most, cases in Little Rock.<sup>18</sup>

In the small towns of Central Arkansas, Taborians seemed to have fared a bit better. Lizzie Walker (1873-1925) of Bulah Tabernacle No. 366 in the small railroad town of Kensett, Arkansas is one of these silent members. It is only her tombstone in the Crow Cemetery that provides evidence of the existence of her tabernacle or that she was a member. As with many African Americans in the South, the railroad provided the Walker family with economic opportunity.<sup>19</sup>

Kensett had been founded as a railroad town in 1872 along the route of the Cairo and Fulton. In 1907, the Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad passed through as well, providing stable employment for the small local population, which was only 480 in 1920. Gathering trade from former steamboat towns in White County, such as Searcy, Judsonia and West Point, and with the added activity of the lumber yards of the Doniphan Lumber Company, Kensett proved to be an unusually prosperous place for Central Arkansas. Lizzie's husband would not rise to be

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<sup>18</sup> Hannah Barber, manuscript census returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR, accessed June 22, 2016 [www.interactive.ancestry.com](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com); Rebecca Adams, Mary Armstrong, Eliza Beecham, Lettie Bledsoe, Rebecca Cole, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR, accessed June 22, 2016, [www.interactive.ancestry.com](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com); Hattie Abrams, Matilda Cook, Fannie Crump, Fannie Deskard, manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR, accessed June 22, 2016, [www.interactive.ancestry.com](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com).

<sup>19</sup> It was finding Lizzie Walker's tombstone on a walk through Crow Cemetery that I first ran across the IOOT. In the same cemetery, on the same day, I found the first marker I had seen for the Supreme Royal Circle of the Friends of the World. Birth and death dates and tabernacle information from a personal photo of the author of Lizzie Walker's tombstone in Crow Cemetery, Kensett, AR.

a Pullman porter, a job which launched so many blacks into the middle class, but he would find steady work in the railroad yards, which would allow him to support his family.<sup>20</sup>

Lizzie Walker was born in Arkansas in 1873 to parents born in Mississippi and Tennessee. James was also born in Arkansas to two parents from Alabama. Both families likely represented the significant in migration of African Americans to Arkansas following the Civil War, which African Methodist Episcopal bishop Henry McNeal Turner had dubbed “the great negro state of the country” in comparison to the more repressive conditions for blacks in the Deep South. The 1900 census records that James and Lizzie had married in 1890, when she was seventeen and that the couple had owned a home on which they had a mortgage. Both James and Lizzie are listed as being able to read and write and Lizzie is not listed as working. Presumably, James’s income was sufficient for her to keep house and to care for her three sons and two daughters ranging in age from six to six months.<sup>21</sup>

In all, Walker gave birth to eleven children, at least eight of whom survived infancy and all of whom attended school. In the 1910 census, she is listed as a day laborer, likely returning to work after her children were older. All of her living children, six sons and two daughters ranging from 16 to one-and-one-half are living in the house. Two of James’s brothers, aged twenty-seven and eighteen are now living with the couple as well. James’s older brother, Willie, as well as his sixteen-year-old-son Willie are listed as mill laborers, likely at the Doniphan lumber mill, while his younger brother, Philip, is listed as a railroad section hand. In the meantime, James has

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<sup>20</sup> Scott Akridge, “Kensett (White County) - Encyclopedia of Arkansas,” [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net), accessed June 23, 2016; manuscript census returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules, White County, AR,” accessed June 22, 2016, [interactive.ancestry.com](http://interactive.ancestry.com).

<sup>21</sup> Story Matkin-Rawn, “‘The Great Negro State of the Country’: Arkansas’s Reconstruction and the Other Great Migration,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 5.

changed his own profession, being listed as renting a farm. Things seem to be going quite well for the household with four men and one woman in the workforce as their mortgage is now listed as being paid off. In the 1920 census, five years before Lizzie's premature death at the age of fifty-two, the household has been reduced to Lizzie and James and their sons Brown, nineteen; Johnnie, sixteen; Ottis, eleven; and new arrival George, five. James has returned to railroad work and has been joined by Brown. Lizzie is no longer listed as working and all four boys have attended school in the last year. The house remains clear of a mortgage.

While less dramatic than the rise and fall of Frankie Stanback, Lizzie Walker's story demonstrates the precarious economic position of African Americans in the Jim Crow South. A husband's railroad wages placed the family in a better condition than that of most African Americans in their county and allowed the family to educate their children to the extent available in a rural community, but it was still necessary for Lizzie to work as a day laborer and to rely on the incomes of other teenage and adult family members living within the household. Lizzie's cause of death is unknown, but it is likely related to the strain of being the only adult woman in a household that counted as many as twelve members while working to support the family. While she managed to give her family a better-than-average life, Lizzie Walker's harried life reminds one of the Daughter's funeral ritual calling tabernacle meetings "our undisturbed retreat, away from the worldly-minded, to enjoy a little season of happiness."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Manuscript census returns, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, population schedules, White County, AR; manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, White County, AR; manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, White County, AR; Dickson, *Manual* (1879), 194.



*Tombstone of Lizzie Walker in the Crow Cemetery, Kensett, Arkansas. Author photo.*

Twenty-five miles southeast of Kensett in the White River town of Des Arc, Lizzie Walker's near contemporary, Fannie Anderson (1876-1920) was a member of the town's Southern Light Tabernacle No. 68. Anderson was born in Arkansas to parents who had come from Virginia and Mississippi. Around 1903, she married Henry Anderson and lived with her husband, a thirteen-year-old son from a previous marriage, and a niece. Des Arc was booming from lumber and expanding rice cultivation, having grown from 640 in 1890 to 1061 in 1910, but Fannie and Henry's lives show the unevenness of the prosperity. In 1910, they lived in a rented house and Henry, a teamster, had been out of work for three months, though all members of the

household could read and write and the children had both been in school. Things were not so dire that Fannie had sought work outside the house.<sup>23</sup>

By 1920, Des Arc had grown to 1307 and noted Arkansas Architect Charles Thompson had recently completed a house for a prominent local family, but Henry and Fannie's lives seem to have remained much the same. Henry is listed as a teamster in a stores mill and Fannie continued to stay home. Her son, Ellison, remained at home, but was now listed as a laborer in a stores mill and had brought a wife, Delia, into the household. While the year began promisingly enough, it would end tragically. Fannie's tombstone records that she died on March 14 at the age of forty-three. No cause of death is listed, but in the records of Lakeside Cemetery, where she is buried, there is a grave for a second Fannie Anderson, aged four, daughter of Henry Pool Anderson, who died on the same day. It seems that after twelve years of marriage without a child of their own, Henry and Fannie had a daughter. Des Arc's *White River Journal* does not record this double death, though it mentions several cases of white citizens with flu in March and April and dedicated two stories to the sudden death of one white infant as well as lending condolences for the death of a citizen's long-unseen sister in his native Germany. It is only Anderson's death certificate reveals that she died of tuberculosis, which seems likely to have caused the death of her daughter as well.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Blake Wintory, "Draft: Arkansas African American Fraternal Headstones (May 2014)"; "Des Arc (Prairie County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*," accessed June 25, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net>; manuscript census returns, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Prairie County, AR.

<sup>24</sup> "Des Arc (Prairie County)"; manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Prairie County, AR; "Fannie Anderson (- 1920) - Find A Grave Memorial," accessed June 25, 2016, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com). No headline, 1, *White River Journal* (Des Arc, AR), March 11, 1920; "Greer McKenzie McQueen," "Notes from up the Creek," "Local and Personal Happenings," *White River Journal* (Des Arc, AR), March 18, 1920; "Local and Personal Happenings," *White River Journal*, March 25, 1920; "Local and Personal Happenings," *White River Journal*, April 8, 1920; "Death Certificate for Fannie Anderson,

Fannie Anderson represents one more economic stratum of IOOT membership. While less fortunate than Lizzie Walker, she likely had a better life than most African Americans in Prairie County. Henry's employment may have been unsteady at times, but he was a tradesman, not a laborer and, while they continued to live in a rented house, Fannie did not work outside the home.

Amanda Pollard Hullett (1853-1925) of Hazen, Arkansas, the other county seat of Prairie County, is another of those rank-and-file members, whose connection to the order is known only by her headstone. The bottom half of her stone is broken, meaning the name, number, and town of her tabernacle are lost, but she most likely belonged to Green Grove Tab, No. 154 in Hazen. Her daughter Emma Hullett Smith was interviewed by the in 1933 for the Federal Writers' Project Slave narrative project and gave this brief, poignant account of her mother's life<sup>25</sup>:

My folks belong to Dr. Hazen. He brought families from Tennessee. When the war broke out he took em to Texas. Then he brought em back here. When they was freed I heard my mother say they worked on for him and his boys (Alex and Jim Hazen) and they paid them. He was good to them. They had er plenty always. After the war they lived in good log houses and he give em land and lumber for the church. Same church we got cept a storm tore it down and this one built in place of it. He let em have a school. Same place it stands now. My mother (Mandy Huiett) got a Union pension till she died. She cooked at the first hotel in Hazen for John Lane. She washed and ironed till she died.<sup>26</sup>

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March 15, 1920, Primary Registration District No. 3808, Arkansas Department of Health," Certified copy in possession of the author.

<sup>25</sup> I happened across a photo of Amanda Hullett's tombstone on the blog of author M. E. Hubbs, who also transcribes Emma Hullett Smith's narrative. M. E. Hubbs, "'She Washed and Ironed Till She Died': Amanda Hulett, Former Slave," *Eras Gone*, accessed November 18, 2014, [www.erasgone.blogspot.com](http://www.erasgone.blogspot.com). Tabernacle membership information from "Taborian Hall - Arkansas Flag & Banner - Little Rock, Arkansas."

<sup>26</sup> "Amanda Hullett Smith," *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project*, vol. 2, Arkansas, Part 6, (Washington, DC: Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Arkansas, 1941), 185-186.

Located in Central Arkansas's Grand Prairie, Hazen was founded in 1854, when, as Smith indicates, Dr. William Cogswell Hazen and his family of Covington, Tennessee, settled the area with twenty-one slaves, who were valued at \$14,700 in 1860. By 1871, the town had recovered sufficiently from the Civil War to have its own cotton gin and later was a major center of hay, lumber and, most notably, rice production. Hazen's population grew from 458 to 783 from 1890 to 1920, but the census records bear out Amanda's daughter's account of her hard life. In 1910, Hullett is listed as the widowed head of the household who had given birth to twelve children, of whom only four were living. While she owns her house free and clear, both she and her daughter Emma, 33, are listed as working as washerwomen. Emma is listed as married, but no husband is listed for the household. Four grandchildren, ranging from twenty to twelve with the last name Haley live in the house as does a fifteen year-old grandson with the last name Thomas. Despite these difficulties, all of the children are listed as being able to read and write and those of appropriate age are listed as having attended school. Hullett's oldest grandson, Sam Haley is listed as a musician.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1920 census, Amanda is again head of a household, living with her twenty-six-year-old grandson, Harry Haley who is a laborer on a rice farm, her twelve-year-old granddaughter, Rosa Maxie, and a six-year-old girl named Jessie M. Smallwood, who is listed as "adopted." Harry is listed as being able to read but not write. Rosa is recorded as having been in school, but, like her grandmother, is listed as not knowing how to read or

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<sup>27</sup> "Hazen (Prairie County) - Encyclopedia of Arkansas," accessed June 23, 2016, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net); manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Prairie County, AR.

write.<sup>28</sup> The conclusion of Emma's narrative makes it clear that things had gotten only more difficult for the family and their neighbors by the 1930s:

. . . we wash and iron all we can get now. None of us not on relief. . . . I can't wash no more. My hands and arms swell up with rheumatism. I still iron all I can get.

The present conditions seems awful unsettled; wages low, prices high and work scarce at times. Men can get work in the hay two months and bout two months work in the rice or pickin cotton, either one. Then the work has played clean out till hay time next year. How do they live? Some of their wives cooks for white people and they eat all they make up soon as they get paid. Only way they live.<sup>29</sup>

Amanda Pollard Hullett is the poorest of the Central Arkansas women in this study, but she is more typical of the Taborian women who can be identified in both in Little Rock and also in East Arkansas. In Lee, Monroe, and Phillips Counties in the Arkansas Delta, ten women can be identified in the census records from their headstones. These women are far more likely to be rural, engaged in farming, and at the economic margins than their Central Arkansas sisters. Lee County was seventy-seven percent African-American in 1920. Monroe and Phillips were sixty-one percent and seventy-four percent African-American, respectively.<sup>30</sup>

Sallie Deal was a member of Deborah Tabernacle No. 85 in Blackton, Arkansas. She lived in rural Hindman Township in Monroe County in the East Arkansas Delta and died in 1918 at the age of thirty-six. In 1910, she and her husband, Sam, were tenant farmers raising cotton,

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<sup>28</sup> Manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Prairie County, AR.

<sup>29</sup> "Amanda Hullett Smith," 185-186.

<sup>30</sup> University of Arkansas at Little Rock, "Population by Race and County 1910-1950," *Institute for Economic Advancement*, accessed June 25, 2016, <http://www.aiea.ualr.edu/arkansas-census-data.html?id=165:population-by-race-and-county-1910-1950&catid=1&tmpl=component>.

living with their two-year-old son and infant daughter. While Sam could read and write, Sallie could not.<sup>31</sup>

Bere Doyle of Brinkley, the Monroe County seat, was a member of Metropolitan Tabernacle No. 246. She was born in Arkansas to a Tennessee-born father and a mother from Mississippi. In 1910, she was one of five children in a household that also included her parents, maternal grandparents, an uncle, and a cousin. All members of the household were literate except for her grandfather. Her railroad-worker father, Doyle, had been out of work for twenty-two weeks of the previous year. In the 1920 census, at age twenty, she was still living with her parents. Though they still lived in Brinkley Township, they had left Ward Three and were now living on a rented farm. Bere died in 1925 at the age of twenty-six.<sup>32</sup>

Like Bere Doyle, Mary Holloway, who died at age 30, is buried in Brinkley's Haven Rest Cemetery. Her headstone is broken, so it is uncertain to which of the town's tabernacles she belonged. Her father had been born in Texas and her mother in South Carolina. In the 1910 census, she and her husband, Ed, are living in a rented house with their three children. Ed is listed as a laborer in the building industry and both he and Mary can read and write. Mary is not listed as working outside of the home and Ed has not been out of work during the previous year.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Sallie Deal, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Lee County, AR, accessed June 22, 2016, [www.interactive.ancestry.com](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com).

<sup>32</sup> Manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Monroe County, AR, accessed June 22, 2016, [www.interactive.ancestry.com](http://www.interactive.ancestry.com); manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Monroe County, AR, accessed June 22, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, population schedules, Monroe County, Ar, 1910.

In all of the ten women and their families who can be identified in these three counties, four families were tenant farmers or sharecroppers, two lived on mortgaged farms, and only two owned farms free and clear. Of the two families not engaged in farming, one Daughter was the wife of a laborer, living in a rented house. The other was a widowed cook who worked for a family, but lived in a paid-for house. These East Arkansas Daughters, like their Little Rock sisters, come much closer to the Kansas Taborian rhetoric of being an order for washer women and the laboring masses.<sup>34</sup>

Amanda Pollard Hullett, Fannie Anderson, Lizzie Walker, Sallie Deal, Bere Doyle, and Mary Holloway present the lives of more typical tabernacle members than do those of Lula Walker and Frankie Stanback, much less Dr. Georgia Rooks Dwelle. An examination of a partial list of Arkansas tabernacles adds to this conclusion. Twenty-four tabernacles and six temples purchased commemorative bricks at the Taborian Hall in Little Rock. These numbers themselves attest to the relative strength of the tabernacles versus that of the temples. While this is not a complete list of tabernacles in the state at the time, the list does show the IOOT's overwhelmingly rural and small-town constituency, even though it likely represents only the most affluent tabernacles:

Figure 1: Temples and Tabernacles That Purchased a Brick in Taborian Hall

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<sup>34</sup>Lurinda Miles, manuscript census returns, Lee County, Ar, 1900; Katie Clark, James McKinzie (widower of Lizzie d. 1919), Caldonia Scruggs, manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Lee County, AR; Sallie Deal, Bere Doyle, Mary Holloway, manuscript census returns, Monroe County, AR, 1910; Bere Doyle, manuscript census returns, Monroe County, AR, 1920; Mary Payne, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Phillips County, AR; Ada Mae Brooks, manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, population schedules, Phillips County, AR.

County	City	Name	Pop. 1910
Chicot	Dermott	New Surprise	1602
Conway	Meniffee	Rosebud	
Crittenden	Ebony	Morning Star	
Crittenden	Marion	Silver Queen	
Crittenden	Pinckney	Morning Star	
Crittenden	Pinckney	St. Peter's	
Desha	Ark. City	Tillman	1485
Desha	Ark. City	Good Shepherd	1485
Jefferson	Sherrill	Loving Sisters	
Lafayette	Stamps	Pearl of Stamps	2316
Lee	Haynes	Golden Daughter	255
Lee	Marianna	Blooming Light	4810
Lee	Marianna	Silver Star	4810
Lonoke	Scott	Mary Gilden	
Mississippi	Osceola	St. Mary's	1769
Monroe	Brinkley	Metropolitan	1740
Phillips	Turner	Magnolia Blossom	
Prairie	Biscoe	Gideon	310
Prairie	Hazen	Green Grove	687
Pulaski	Argenta	Cedar	11,138
Pulaski	Hensley	Beauty of Hensley	
Pulaski	Wrightsville	Beacon Light	
Yell	Dardanelle	Pearl Divers	1757
Yell	Dardanelle	Queen Esther	1757

(Biscoe population is for 1920)

Of twenty-four tabernacles listed, only fourteen were located in a community that had a census population figure for 1910 or 1920. The average population of these fourteen is 2566. If the single “large” city of Argenta (North Little Rock) is removed, the average population drops to 1906. Of the ten unincorporated communities, two were incorporated by 1940, one by 1970, and one by 1980. Six remain unincorporated. Most tabernacles were clearly located in communities more similar to Lizzie Walker’s Kensett and Sallie Deal’s Blackton than to Lula West’s North Little Rock and Frankie Stanback’s Little Rock.

The fourteen counties in which these twenty-four tabernacles lie are also telling:



*Arkansas Counties with Taborian Temples and Tabernacles.*

Eight are in East Arkansas “black-belt” counties: Crittenden, Chicot, Desha, Lee, Jefferson, Mississippi, Monroe, and Phillips. All but one of these counties were black majority in 1910, with an average African-American population of seventy percent, compared to the state’s overall African-American population of twenty-eight percent. The remaining tabernacle in a South Arkansas county is located in black-majority Stamps in Lafayette County with an African-American population of 52%. The tabernacles of the three Central Arkansas Counties are also largely in black majority communities: Biscoe in Prairie County; Scott in Lonoke County, home to the Marlgate Plantation; and Hensley and Wrightsville in rural, southern Pulaski County. The sole tabernacle listed Conway County is in the black-founded community of Meniffee in the

Arkansas River Valley and the sole temple in Yell County is in the Arkansas River town of Dardanelle.<sup>35</sup>

Amanda Hullett's Green Grove Tabernacle in Hazen is in forty thirty-two percent African-American Prairie County, as is the Biscoe Tabernacle and Fannie Anderson's Southern Light Tabernacle in Des Arc. Hullett's story illustrates the town's significant black domestic and agricultural workforce and the coherence of the community, but other factors may be significant as well for the seeming overrepresentation of tabernacles within the county. In the 1880s, Prairie County was the birthplace of the biracial Agricultural Wheel movement, which brought together tenant farmers and others in a precursor to the national populist foment of the 1890s. The original Wheel was organized at the Wattensaw school house near Des Arc and the movement quickly spread into Lonoke County, home to the Scott tabernacle and White County, home to Lizzie Walker's Bulah Tabernacle in Kensett. While there is presently no evidence linking IOOT families to Wheel activities, the activism of the preceding generation does much to explain the presence of tabernacles in these counties outside of the Black Belt or Pulaski County's vital black communities.<sup>36</sup>

As with the sizes of the towns in which they were located, the tabernacles' geographic distribution roots the IOOT firmly in rural black-majority communities seeking to defend themselves during the rise of Jim Crow and disfranchisement. It is easy to see how an

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<sup>35</sup> All city population data is from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed June 23, 2016, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net). County racial data is from "Population by Race and County 1910-1950," Institute for Economic Advancement, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, [www.aiea.uarl.edu](http://www.aiea.uarl.edu), accessed June 25, 2016. "Marlgage Plantation," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, accessed June 23, 2016, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net).

<sup>36</sup> "Agricultural Wheel - Encyclopedia of Arkansas," accessed June 25, 2016, [www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net).

organization billing itself as follows in 1914 would be particularly appealing in these ever more difficult circumstances:

The International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor is a race institution; every phase of its government, its ritualism, its literature and all its manifold paraphernalia is the work of the Negro mind, Negro brains, Negro ingenuity.<sup>37</sup>

While Hullett, Deal, and Holloway may not have had the success of Emma Gaines, each of these women knew herself to be a priestess of the primordial tabernacle of Saba Meroe, a descendant of the race which brought enlightenment to the world, an initiate who had passed through the snakes and beasts of the underworld to claim her birthright. The significant overlap between the sites of these tabernacles and future sites of divisions of the Universal Negro Improvement Association will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

As with the women of Mount Tabor, the male upper echelon of the organization touched the upper rungs of African-American society in the South, if it did not exemplify its summit. S. A. Jordan's social circles overlapped with S. A. Jones, the noted Little Rock attorney who served as the I.O.O.T's counsel, and J. E. Bush, Little Rock founder of the Mosaic Templars of America and member of the executive committee of Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League, but Jordan was certainly not their social peer.<sup>38</sup> As with the rank-and-file Daughters of the Tabernacle, the Knights tended to represent a middling layer of middle America's black communities, rising above the marginal existence of sharecroppers and domestics, but generally

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<sup>37</sup> Advertisement, *Kansas City Sun*, July 25, 1914.

<sup>38</sup> "Scipio Africanus Jones (1863–1943) - Encyclopedia of Arkansas," accessed July 3, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2427>; A. E. Bush, *History of the Mosaic Templars of America: Its Founders and Officials* (Fayetteville, Ark: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 65.

not rising into the ranks of the professional and political class. Topeka's *Plaindealer* put it well in 1907:

This order reaches out for great masses of the laboring class of people of the race, places every member on a level, no preference being shown any particular member of the lodge. If the individual member does not succeed in living up to the teachings of the order, thereby causing him to lose his standing, it is his own fault and not that of the body which gives proper and wholesome instruction. Many persons have secured homes and good positions for living up and carrying out the rules of the order.<sup>39</sup>

The state's most prominent Knight of Tabor was John H. Johnson of Augusta, who served as international vice grand mentor and challenged Dickson for leadership in the early 1880s while serving as a district grand mentor for the state. Johnson represents an exception to the image of the middling Taborian and, had he lived longer, might well have changed the order's socioeconomic profile. A union veteran, attorney, major landholder, and state legislator, Johnson was grand master of Arkansas's Prince Hall Masons from 1873-1878. After his leadership contests with Dickson at St. Louis in 1883 and Memphis in 1884, he disappears from the available Taborian records and died unexpectedly at the age of 45 in Little Rock in 1885.<sup>40</sup>

Had Johnson lived and maintained his position in the order's upper echelon, it is possible that the IOOT might have penetrated more deeply into the state's upper class. Instead, Johnson's last fraternal activity seems to have focused on the founding of the Mosaic Templars. Here too Johnson's ambitions would be sidetracked. Stories of the 1883 founding of the Templars list

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<sup>39</sup> "Order of Twelve Is Booming" *Plaindealer* (Topeka, KS), June 28, 1907.

<sup>40</sup> "Knights of Tabor," *The Leavenworth Times* (Leavenworth, KS), August 17, 1883; "Knights of Tabor," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, August 13, 1884; "Knights of Tabor," *Arkansas Weekly Mansion* (Little Rock, AR), November 24, 1883; "John H. Johnson - Arkansas Black Lawyers," accessed July 3, 2016, <http://arkansasblacklawyers.uark.edu/lawyers/jhjohnson.html>; "A Noted Colored Man Dead," *Daily Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), July 14, 1885.

Johnson along with J. E. Bush and C. W. Keatts, but, by the time Bush's son published the order's official history in 1923, Johnson had disappeared from accounts of the founding.<sup>41</sup>

In a different reading of Johnson's career with the IOOT and his role in founding the Mosaic Templars, one might argue that his affiliation with the former was more a matter of practicality than solidarity. The growing IOOT offered a man of Johnson's position and ambition a ready-made national vehicle. Johnson was not someone who thought of himself as a rank-and-file Taborian, but instead thought himself an appropriate person to displace Dickson, the founder. His very assumption that he could enter and lead says volumes about his opinion of the position of its leaders, much less of its average members.

Once one leaves the top echelons of the order, the male rank and file are much more difficult to identify and analyze, even more so than the women of the order given the scarcity of Knights' headstones compared to those of Daughters. This leaves the selection to Knights whose names appear in the news, a degree of prominence which already skews the sample upwards since newspaper mentions were generally reserved for state officers. Recognizing this bias in sampling, a few such Arkansas names will prove have to stand in for being as close to exemplary as possible.

Johnson's fellow district grand mentor in Arkansas during the early 1880s was Lawrence Coleman, and the contrast in their relative social positions is stark. In 1883, the thirty-one-year-old, Virginia-born Coleman was described by the *Arkansas Weekly Mansion* as "one of the most prominent members of the order," and, while clearly a respectable member of Little Rock's African-American community, the facts of his life indicate that Coleman is a more typical

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<sup>41</sup> "Mosaic Templars," *Arkansas Weekly Mansion* (Little Rock, AR), July 14, 1883; "A Spicy Letter," *Arkansas Weekly Mansion*, August 18, 1883; Bush, *History of the Mosaic Templars of America*.

Knight than Johnson. In the 1876 city directory, he is listed as a laborer. In the 1880 census, he is recorded as a cook and one of five male borders in the home of Rubin Armstrong. In the 1883 city directory, he appears as a cook at the Deming House Hotel, which advertised itself to commercial travelers. At the time of his involvement with the Knights, Johnson was clearly a young man working his way up in the world, but his rise was recent and his hold tentative.<sup>42</sup>

The Taborian men of Hot Springs provide a bit more information on something closer to the typical Taborian. These samples skew affluent because the names are limited to names that appear in the news and to those of officers listed in city directories. They are further skewed by Hot Springs being an atypical Taborian location for the state. The city's 1910 population of 14,434 puts it at seven times the average size of the incorporated towns in the table of known Arkansas temples and tabernacles and making it a metropolis to those living in the many unincorporated rural communities. Further, the high number of hotel and other service-industry jobs in the city skew the economic demographics away from those of the Black-Belt and Central Arkansas counties. Nevertheless, the backgrounds of these more affluent Taborians show that the order as a whole drew from the lower reaches of middling African Americans in the state.<sup>43</sup>

Jackson Allen of Hot Springs provides an example of the local Taborian officer in Arkansas. Allen's name appears in the August 25, 1883, edition of the *Arkansas Mansion* in relation to the national grand session in Lawrence, Kansas:

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<sup>42</sup> "Knights of Tabor," *Arkansas Mansion* (Little Rock, AR), November 24, 1883; Ancestry.com - U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995; manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; Advertisement, *Daily Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), March 8, 1883.

<sup>43</sup> "Hot Springs (Garland County) - Encyclopedia of Arkansas," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=887>.

Jackson Allen of Hot Springs, late of this city, passed through here last Tuesday en route home, from Lawrence Kansas, where he had been in attendance on the grand lodge of the Knights of Tabor and Daughters of the Tabernacle.<sup>44</sup>

Even this mention sets Jackson above the rank and file, showing that he was of sufficient status in the order to attend a national meeting and that he was a person on familiar terms with the editor of the *Mansion*, Little Rock's African-American newspaper.

The 1880 census for Pulaski County lists Allen as living at 815 Fourteenth Street with his wife Luvenia, two sons, and five daughters. The census reports Allen to be a forty-eight-year-old laborer, born in Georgia, who, like his wife and nineteen-year-old son Henry, can neither read nor write. The family is sufficiently secure that Luvenia is listed as keeping house, but Henry is a hotel worker and fourteen-year-old Lee is working in a store. Twelve-year-old Nedie and ten-year-old Julia are both in school while three younger daughters are at home. The children's birthplaces put the family arriving in Arkansas in 1870 in the black in-migration to the state that followed the Civil War. Jackson Allen does not appear in the census for Hot Springs or the available city directories. The 1881-1882 Hot Springs city directory does list both a Henry and a Lee Allen as porters for barbers Frank Fountain and Charles Valentine, who operated out of the Arlington Hotel, one of the city's premiere resorts. The literacy of the younger children, the household supported by three working men with a wife keeping house in Little Rock, and the two son's eventual positions in an exclusive barber shop elicit an image of a family on the rise to security, with the sons rising a notch above their father's more modest means.<sup>45</sup>

The 1881-1882 Hot Springs directory does not have any listings for African-American secret societies other than the Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, and Household of Ruth, but the 1883-

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<sup>44</sup> "Personal," *Arkansas Mansion* (Little Rock, AR), August 25, 1883.

<sup>45</sup> Manuscript census returns, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, population schedules, Pulaski County, AR; Ancestry.com - U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995.

1884 directory lists Ozark Temple No. 137 as meeting every Thursday at Ledwidge Hall, which was also the meeting place of the Prince Hall Masons and African-American Odd Fellows. George N. John is listed as chief mentor and Robert C. Upshaw as secretary. Chief Mentor John appears in the 1881-1882 city directory as a grocery clerk at S. C. Spalding. Upshaw is a waiter at the Arlington Hotel, which was considered one of the city's three best, but was then a considerably less grand establishment than it would become after rebuilding and subsequent expansions. Neither has a personal listing in the 1883-1884 directory where they appear as K.O.T. officers. While the information on these two men is limited, they do begin to create a picture of Taborian life in Hot Springs, especially when their information is combined with that of the Allen brothers. One easily imagines a lodge populated by clerks and porters, many of whom began life in slavery and have since obtained some degree of professional and community standing. At the same time, the professions of the two officers likely indicate that the social range of the Ozark Temple did not rise much higher than this group and likely included laborers in more tenuous positions, and this in what was by all indications a particularly prosperous temple.<sup>46</sup>

This picture of the Hot Springs Taborians' social location becomes clearer when its officers are compared to those listed for the Prince Hall Masons, Odd Fellows, and Knights of Pythias in the 1883-1884 directory. The Masons' worshipful master and secretary were, respectively, a bathhouse attendant and a porter at the Avenue Hotel, considered one of the city's best after the three major resorts. Two Odd Fellows officers are listed in the available directories, one as an attendant at the Old Hale Bathhouse and the other is the principal at the Whittington

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<sup>46</sup> Ancestry.com - U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995; *The Hot Springs Arkansas Picture Book* (St. Louis: The Woodward & Tiernan printing co., 1892), 32.

Avenue School. Of two Pythian officers who can be identified, one owns a grocery and the other is the head waiter at the Waverly Hotel, which an 1892 guide lists in the second tier of establishments behind major resorts like the Arlington. The officers of each of these lodges represent a higher social strata than Ozark Temple, with a school principal, a business owner, and a headwaiter clearly outranking a grocery clerk and a dining room waiter. The positions of one Prince Hall Mason as a hotel porter and another as a bathhouse attendant may seem surprisingly modest for what one would expect to be the city's most elite lodge, but porters and attendants could both earn superior tips and fees. The 1892 guide says that a bathhouse attendant was allowed to charge fifteen cents per bath or three dollars for a bather's standard course of twenty-one baths.<sup>47</sup>

The notable category of exceptions to the rule for male membership is to be found among ministers affiliated with the order. Given the order's popularity among women committed to respectability, this is little surprise, but even here, ministers tended to be more middling and rural rather than filling top urban pulpits. Chapter Five showed something of Dickson's relationship with the A.M.E. church and Wilson's middling status within the humbler C.M.E. church, but here too, an Arkansas example may be illustrative.

Rev. Ruben B. White of Little Rock is the most elite minister identified with the IOOT in Arkansas. He served as grand scribe of the national temple in 1879-1880 and vice grand mentor in 1880-1881. He likely knew Dickson from immigration work as he had served as a member of the Arkansas Colored People's convention when it discussed migration. White was a free-born native of Indiana. In 1860, he was living at home near Indianapolis on his father's farm, whose

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<sup>47</sup> Ancestry.com - U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995; *The Hot Springs Arkansas Picture Book*, 15, 39, 46.

personal and real property were valued at \$775. While the family was comfortable, and the children were attending school, the household included Reuben's mother, his Methodist-minister brother, Henry, his brother, James, who would also be a Baptist minister, and two other siblings. Reuben, like many blacks and whites born on similar farmsteads, would need to make his own way in the world.<sup>48</sup>

Arriving in Arkansas around 1868, White rose rapidly. His brother James, six years his senior, had already established himself in Helena and reported \$9,500 in property in 1870. The younger White served alongside his brother in the Arkansas Senate representing Little Rock for a term before the recapture of the state by Redeemer Democrats in 1874 severely circumscribed the ambitions of African-American politicians. White continued to be active in Republican ward politics in the city of Little Rock, but largely focused on growing the First Missionary Baptist Church at Seventh and Gaines Streets, of which he was the second pastor. By 1883, he had successfully completed an impressive gothic revival church building in red brick, which still stands. In August of 1886, he died suddenly while visiting Chicago and the very time the IOOT was having its national convention, which it seems likely he was in the city to attend.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Rev. R. B. White," *Daily Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), August 26, 1886; Blake J. Wintory, "African-American Legislators in the Arkansas General Assembly, 1868-1893," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 428; manuscript census returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Population Schedules, Marion County, IN.

<sup>49</sup> Wintory, "African-American Legislators," 428; Chris W. Branam, "'The Africans Have Taken Arkansas': Political Activities of African Americans in the Reconstruction Legislature," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (Autumn 2014): 259–64; "Knights of Tabor," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 10, 1880; "Knights of Labor [sic.]," *Daily Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), August 14, 1880; "The Colored Citizens," *Arkansas Democrat* (Little Rock, AR), April 15, 1879; "The Republicans," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, March 27, 1877; "Republican Primaries," *Daily Arkansas Gazette*, June 29, 1882; R. B. White, Cook County, Illinois, Deaths Index, 1878-1922, Ancestry.com; "Knights of Tabor," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 14, 1886.

White is an excellent example of what sociologist E. Franklin Frazier characterized as “retreating into ‘the world of make-believe’” or which historian John Gigge has more recently described as blacks turning to build up the structures of the church and secret societies as Southern whites increasingly closed the public sphere to them. One can certainly see the appeal of creating parallel power structures to an ambitious man like White, who found himself out of office after redemption and found himself locked in internal battles between largely white native Brindletail Republicans and the largely northern and African-American Minstrel faction. The IOOT’s focus on uplift and its emphasis on blacks as capable of public responsibility because they were the descendants of the authors of civilization would certainly have been appealing.<sup>50</sup>

White’s peak of activity in the IOOT overlaps the institution of the Uniform Rank and Saba Meroe degrees, with the latter’s emphasis on Africa as the mother of civilization. One can see White’s amenability to this line of thinking in an address delivered by Little Rock Dentist and fellow political activist J. H. Smith at the dedication of White’s new church in 1883. Smith told the congregation:

the first building or pyramid put up in this world was erected by a colored man. The first architect was a colored man, whose name was Nimrod the mighty hunter. He built the pyramids of Egypt. Thus, we have not always been behind. We were once a foremost people.<sup>51</sup>

The *Arkansas Weekly Mansion* summarized the rest of the address and its themes of respect for women, self-defense, and mutual aid:

He said one of the most important questions with the colored people was we do not respect our women. . . . A man should die for his wife should any one insult her. He said the word negro was a despised name, but all the great nations sprang from a name given in derision. We must learn to love the word negro. . . . There is

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<sup>50</sup> Gary R. Kremer, “The World of Make-Believe: James Milton Turner and Black Masonry,” *Missouri Historical Review* LXXIV, no. October (1979): 52; Giggie, *After Redemption*, 12.

<sup>51</sup> “Grand Opening of the Missionary Baptist Church Last Sunday,” *Arkansas Weekly Mansion* (Little Rock, AR), November 24, 1883.

nothing more disgusting than to see our educated children dressing themselves in white aprons to be waiters. No master will show a servant that respect that he would his equal.

. . . White men have no faith in the virtues of a negress. When our young ladies go into a store they don't mind insulting them, they turn and smile and perhaps take a dress before they leave. He said the next to be considered was to secure homes of our own. It is a shame on our people, when one dies that don't belong to a secret society the funeral expenses has to be begged or the city must bury them.<sup>52</sup>

White certainly shared Smith's sentiments, though it is unclear whether the prominent Dr. Smith himself was a Knight. White's own address that day was taken from Psalm 50:15, "Call upon me on the day of your trouble and I will deliver thee." The church raised the prodigious sum of \$308 that day toward retiring the building debt. Part of this came from charging one dollar for admission for the day's services and the remainder was raised by a method that Daughters of the Tabernacle would no doubt have approved for giving women their due:

The pastor had a hole cut on each side of the pulpit, called the missionary box, where the ladies stepped up one side and the gentlemen on the other. Some women put in \$2 and \$3, after paying one at the door, to pay money for the church. There is not a better paying poor people to be found.<sup>53</sup>

At first glance, White appears to be unquestionably a member of the elite, but the details of his life show why the more modest milieu of the IOOT may have appealed to him. White was not born an upper-class mulatto, like his Senate colleague, James W. Mason, who was the privately-educated son of a wealthy planter, nor was he an A.M.E. district elder, whose denomination and rank gave him entre to the upper wrungs of black society. Instead, he was a self-made man, who found his political ambitions circumscribed by the closing of the state's political sphere to African Americans and then found new ways to exercise leadership. His status was tied to his

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

being a successful minister of a less prominent denomination, the same denomination as Emma Gaines and many other Taborians.<sup>54</sup>

The picture that emerges in this chapter is of Taborians as strivers, doing their best to rise in a society where Reconstruction's promise of economic mobility was giving way to Jim Crow's restrictions. For many, especially in rural farming communities, this remained little more than an aspiration. Many of the Daughters and Knights whose lives are sketched here have to be taken as exceptional rather than illustrative. To be a woman who could afford payments for a headstone or a man whose name rated a listing in the press already sets these individuals above the Taborian rank and file. As the next chapter will show, this did not stop the Taborians from making impressive future contributions to the struggle to exercise agency and seize opportunity.

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<sup>54</sup> Branam, "The Africans Have Taken Arkansas," 239.

## Chapter Seven

### The Universal Negro Improvement Association

The meteoric rise and fall and lasting cultural impact of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association has been documented by Colin Grant and others. What has been understudied are UNIA's undeniably fraternal characteristics and how an existing fraternal culture, particularly that of distinctive African-American organizations like the IOOT and RCF, prepared the way for African-Americans to resonate with UNIA's ideals and to drive its rapid growth. Here, those fraternal characteristics will be elucidated and their parallels to preexisting usages shown. The final two-thirds of the chapter look at how the Taborians and Royal Circle members expressly prepared the ground for Garveyism, providing a living institutional link from the Union League to UNIA.<sup>1</sup>

On its surface, UNIA was a mass organization open to all people of African descent, but Grant recognizes UNIA's underlying fraternal characteristics. He notes that Garvey saw a death insurance benefit as a central feature and that he referred to the bylaws of existing fraternal organizations when he composed UNIA's constitution. He credits the latter as the source of UNIA titles like potentate, chaplain general, supreme commissioner, and high chancellor, even noting that "the titles came first, the costumes would follow."<sup>2</sup> Where Grant errs is in his reliance on Freemasonry in general, and English and Caribbean Freemasonry in particular, as Garvey's models. He overlooks the rich, distinctly African-American developments of fraternalism when he writes:

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*, Kindle ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–19.

Mutual improvement associations were nothing new. Garvey's innovation was to attempt to weld commercial and cultural aspirations onto the body of the soon-to-be-improved Negro.<sup>3</sup>

Just as his devaluing of uniforms omits the importance of the long tradition of African-American drilling, here he shows a lack of familiarity with a number of black fraternal groups with a long commitment to racial uplift and economic development. Particularly relevant here are the Mosaic Templars, long closely associated with Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League, the IOOT, with its near religious zeal for home ownership, savings and investment, and the RCF. As will be discussed later in this chapter, it was precisely in these organizations' strongest areas of concentration that UNIA enjoyed some of its greatest recruiting success.<sup>4</sup>

UNIA's ritual structure fails to live up to Bogdan's initiatory model in some important ways. Notably that there was no initiation, per se. The Universal Negro Catechism outlines two categories of members:

Q. Who are the ordinary members of the Association?

A. All people of Negro blood and African descent are regarded as ordinary members, and are entitled to the consideration of the organization.

Q. Who are the active members?

A. Those who pay monthly dues for the upkeep of the organization, and who in consequence have have first claim for all benefits to be dispensed.<sup>5</sup>

In the organization's rhetoric, UNIA represented the entire African race and therefore one need not be initiated as one had been born into the order. But, to maintain the organization's fraternal character without damaging the claim to speak for all people of African descent, the category of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>4</sup> C. Calvin Smith, "John E. Bush: The Politician and the Man, 1880-1916," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (1995): 127-30; "Booker T. Washington Again Re-Elected President," *The Broad Ax* (Chicago), August 26, 1911.

<sup>5</sup> George Alexander McGuire, *Universal Negro Catechism: A Course of Instruction in Religious and Historical Knowledge Pertaining to the Race* (New York: Universal Negro Improvement Association, 1921), 20.

“active” members recognized those who had made a special commitment. Garvey seems to have wisely understood that a required initiation would have limited the organization’s claimed scope and, perhaps also, that it would have limited reach to those with religious scruples on the subject, like the growing number of African-American Pentecostals.

Neither was UNIA’s ritual particularly elaborate, and this too seems to have been tactical. The UNIA ritual was something closer to an order of service for the weekly meetings. Perhaps more significant than its content is *The Universal Negro Ritual*’s name. It is neither *The Universal Negro Service Book* nor *The Universal Negro Prayer Book*. It is a ritual, the fraternal, not the religious term.

Like the catechism, *The Universal Negro Ritual*, published in 1921, was written by chaplain general George Alexander McGuire, who, after becoming disillusioned during his years as the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas’s Archdeacon for the Colored Work and eventually falling out with Garvey, went on to become the founding bishop of the African Orthodox Church. The weekly Sunday division meetings included opening with the missionary hymn, “From Greenland’s Icy Mountain,” prayers adapted from the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, hymns written for UNIA, such as “O Africa awaken” and “Shine on Eternal Light,” one or more addresses, additional prayers, and the singing of UNIA’s African national anthem, “Ethiopia, land of our fathers.”<sup>6</sup>

The meetings did have much in common with church services in their form. Randall K. Burkett, curator of African American Collections at Emory’s Rose Library, has written of

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Jay Beary, “Birds of Passage: A History of the Separate Black Episcopal Church in Arkansas, 1902-1939” (master’s thesis, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1993), 20–21; Randall K. Burkett, “The Religious Ethos of the Universal Negro Improvement Association,” in *African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Gayraud Wilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 71.

UNIA's vocabulary as a religious one. His findings are cogent, but closer analysis shows that this language also has much in common with the fraternal vocabulary discussed in Chapter Two. Burkett argues that rather than being escapism or utopianism, Garvey's message used powerful symbolism to motivate and reassure his followers and the only question is whether "these are isolated and/or extrinsic elements adopted only for their instrumental value or whether they have a larger significance." Burkett argues the latter, analyzing the importance of "commitment, determination, and sacrifice" in spoken and written calls for the redemption of Africa. He reads this and the importance of various "life pledges" in religious terms. Chapter Two argued that the distinction between religion and fraternalism is a false one. One may read much of UNIA's language as expressly fraternal, without denying that it is also religious. Commitment, determination, and sacrifice lie at the heart of most fraternal mythology, whether it is the IOOT's image of Gideon's band on Mount Tabor facing an overwhelming enemy or the willingness to die for a friend in the myth of Damon and Pythias. Life pledges, in the form of oaths, were, of course a central feature of fraternal initiation, wherein the candidate publicly affirmed his loyalty to his new identity.<sup>7</sup>

In another instance, Burkett describes a Hot Springs, Arkansas man's "conversion" to Garveyism. The language of the account is revivalist, as William L. Sherrill speaks of the profound experience he had in hearing Garvey speak after wandering into a meeting off the street, but Sherrill concludes his account by saying that, when it was over, "I knew my sacred obligations to my Creator, and my responsibilities to my fellow men." This is the language of fraternalism. In fraternal oaths and in post-initiation explanatory lectures, the hierarchy of duties to God, family, fellow fraternalists, and humanity in general often form a central feature. Garvey

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<sup>7</sup> Burkett, "The Religious Ethos of the Universal Negro Improvement Association," 62, 67–68.

knew how to use the forms of religion to create a bond with the intentionality and intense identification of fraternalism.<sup>8</sup>

UNIA hymns reiterated the theme of African identity as surely as Pythian ritual created knights or the IOOT created priestesses of Amun. The titles of the hymns “I am a stranger here, Africa is my home” and “O’ Africa awaken,” both hint at the importance of identity creation in terms Marini’s thesis on Protestant hymnody elucidates. Historian Claudrena N. Harold argues that UNIA music had five main themes: “race pride, the need for black unity across international lines, the pernicious effects of global white supremacy on African descended peoples, the rank-and-file’s devotion to Marcus Garvey, and African redemption.” Garveyism’s goals were more systematic and this-worldly than those of Protestant Christianity. The fraternal model was necessary to create and maintain the commitment UNIA’s vision required.<sup>9</sup>

In his analysis, Burkett cites a 1928 article in *The Nation* by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier. Frazier’s analysis of UNIA makes its essentially fraternal character even clearer. He expressly compares the motivating power of UNIA to that of the second Klan among whites. While Frazier distinguishes UNIA from the lodge and church as being a mass movement, many of the attractions he lists are fraternal, in terms similar to those used by Giggie in *After*

*Redemption*:

Garvey. . . . made the Negro an important person in his immediate environment. He invented honors and social distinctions. . . . While everyone was not a “Knight” or “Sir” all his followers were “Fellow-men of the Negro Race.” Even more concrete distinctions were open to all. The women were organized into Black Cross Nurses and the men became uniformed members of the vanguard of the Great African Army. A uniformed member of a Negro lodge paled in significance beside a soldier of the Army of Africa. A Negro might be a porter

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>9</sup> Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918–1942* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 22–23.

during the day . . . but he was an officer in the black army when it assembled at night in Liberty Hall.<sup>10</sup>

Frazier argues that what was new about UNIA was not in its forms—he testifies to the importance of the use of existing fraternal forms—but that Garvey inscribed the time-proven formulae with a new sense of urgency and ultimacy. Burkett rightly refers to this as “a not infrequent note of apocalypticism.” Moses Dickson offered his fraternal family a vision of the glories of a primordial Africa as a source of identity. In Frazier’s words, Garvey “endows the redemption of Africa with the mystery of the regeneration of mankind.” The template was not new, but Garvey gave the esoteric, ancient Africa of Delany and Dickson an eschatological immediacy and urgency that galvanized hundreds of thousands compared to the tens of thousands mobilized by the back-to-Africa and fraternal movements that preceded him.<sup>11</sup> The abstract assertions of black fraternal drilling in the decades since the demise of the Union League were revived by UNIA. Other fraternal parallels are equally clear. Harold reports that a number of UNIA divisions in southern cities purchased their own “Liberty Halls” and that street celebrations were an important part of articulating group identity.<sup>12</sup>

### **How the IOOT Prepared the Way for UNIA**

Hahn recognized the roots of UNIA’s success, without exploring it in detail. He writes:

the meetings of local chapters employed rituals highly evocative of Union Leagues and, especially, fraternal and benevolent societies, with their oaths and pledges, their use of UNIA’s Constitution and book of laws, and, on occasion, their resplendent, quasi-military displays.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> E. Franklin Frazier, “Garvey: A Mass Leader,” *The Nation*, August 18, 1926.

<sup>11</sup> Burkett, “The Religious Ethos of the Universal Negro Improvement Association,” 67; Frazier, “Garvey: A Mass Leader.”

<sup>12</sup> Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement, 1918–1942*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 469.

He also recognizes that UNIA “seems to have been particularly attractive to the first generation of southern migrants to the Urban North.” In this, he gives an explanation of how northern black communities, which seem to have shown little interest in Taborianism’s florid displays and Afro-Centric thinking, suddenly found themselves fertile recruiting areas for Garveyism. Hahn argues these southern migrants likely experienced “a profound resonance between the experiences and sensibilities” between their own culture and “the ideas and culture of Garvey and UNIA.” Sadly, Hahn’s discussion in this chapter of organizations contributing to this sentiment goes no further than the Knights of Labor and the Colored Farmers Alliance. He recognizes that fraternalism is important in African-American political and community development and sees echoes of the Union League, but does not examine how fraternalism survived and developed in the fifty years that separate the League and UNIA. Neither the IOOT, nor the Mosaic Templars, nor the Supreme Royal Circle of Friends, nor any of the distinct African-American Fraternal organizations discussed so far appear in Hahn’s work. His discussions of fraternalism are limited to two paragraphs, one recognizing them as part of “a formidable and intermeshed infrastructure of social and political organizations” and the other a laundry list of benevolent organizations from W. E. B. Dubois’s “The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia.”<sup>14</sup>

This is perhaps not surprising of Hahn, but it is more surprising of Mary Rolinson. Rolinson’s 2007 *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* made an important intervention in the historiography of UNIA, moving the focus away from the territory of the Harlem Renaissance to the Deep South, where the majority of Garveyites lived. Rolinson is exceptionally attentive to the organizations that built upon the work of UNIA, but is not nearly so interested in organizations that might have been its

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 469 (quote), 474, 463, 372.

basis. As with Hahn, none of the southern founded or based black distinctive orders appear in her work. She acknowledges that “churches, fraternal orders, and lodges, provided ready forums for spreading the message,” but this is not an avenue she pursues. The nearly complete absence of organizational records and African-American newspapers for Arkansas certainly make stitching such links together a daunting challenge, but the indirect evidence for the IOOT and RCF midwifing UNIA and aiding in its rapid growth are considerable.<sup>15</sup>

First, there is the undisputed evidence that the IOOT provided an ideological framework that prepared African-Americans to receive UNIA’s message. Taborians’ external mythology rested on the Knights of Liberty—that tens of thousands of black men who stood at the ready to be their people’s own liberators rather than needing to be liberated by beneficent whites. The story was not only a feature of speeches at IOOT gatherings, but one which circulated in newspapers and, no doubt, also by word of mouth. Black capacity for political and economic self-liberation was intrinsic to its mythos and to its Washington-inspired message of uplift.

Internal Taborian mythology rested on its most widely worked degree, the Saba Meroe. Here, Africa was presented as the mother of civilization, the teacher of Moses. Jim Crow and Social Darwinism were actively countered with a vision of Africans as great architects, scientists, and philosophers. It is not too far of a stretch to see how the red, white, and green candles of the Knights of Tabor’s Uniform rank suggested the colors of Garvey’s Pan-African flag.

Second, while drilling and parading may have embarrassed black elites, Taborians were prime promoters of this tradition that so appealed to Garveyites. The black and white press had spent decades giving detailed accounts of Taborian parades before UNIA’s founding. Princes in

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<sup>15</sup> See the discussion of the Knights of Tabor Fourth Degree in Chapter Four.

parade uniforms and princesses, either crowned in carriages or competing in drills, easily translate into Garvey in his uniform and the massive demonstrations of the conventions.

Third, the two organizations share an unusual rite, which Taborians called adoption and the Garveyites called baptism. In the Taborian manuals, the adoption rite was for children of Knights and Daughters under five and ideally took place during a state's grand session. The rite opened with the hymn, "How lovely are Thy dwellings fair" in which the singer speaks of the pleasantness of God's tabernacles, her desire to see God's temples, and the happiness and strength of those who dwell therein. After this, the chief grand orator prayed in part for God "to accept this child to Thy service, and to prosper this, our adoption. Then, the chief grand mentor, with the child in his arms says:

In the name of the International Order of Twelve, I do this day adopt (gives the name of the child) to be the child of the Knights of Tabor of the Grand Temple and Tabernacle . . . . . and jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup>

Those present responded "We honor, welcome, and accept." The child is then given to the grand high priestess, who says, "In the name of the Daughters of Tabor of the Grand Temple and Tabernacle for . . . . . and jurisdiction, we adopt this child," to which the assembly makes the same response. Next the child is given to the grand queen mother, who says, "In the name of the Maids and Pages of Honor of the Grand Temple and Tabernacle for . . . . . and jurisdiction, we accept the adoption of this infant, and assign this child as a member of . . . . . Tent, No. . . . ." The rite concludes with the chief grand mentor announcing "every Knight and every Daughter of the State and jurisdiction are god-fathers and god-mothers of this child."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1918), 368–69.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

After this, three verses of a rather obscure Isaac Watts hymn, “The spacious earth is all the Lord’s,” are sung. Though the hymn is still in use in the 1918 Taborian *Manual*, it was probably not published in a hymnal after the 1860s and in only 14 hymnals total. By comparisons, popular Watts hymns, such as “Alas, and did my Savior bleed” and “When I survey the wondrous cross” appeared in as many as 1000 hymnals by the time of the 1918 *Manual*’s publication.<sup>18</sup> The first two verses state God’s sovereign rule over creation and humankind, but the third verse makes the hymn appropriate to this particular rite:

But for Himself this Lord of all  
 One chosen seat design’d  
 Oh! Who shall to that sacred hill  
 Deserved admittance find?<sup>19</sup>

The holy hill of the Temple or Tabernacle is open to the Knights and Daughters and now to the child who has been adopted. The lyrics are, on their surface, conventionally pious, but, in this context, have brought the child to the primordial tabernacle of Saba Meroe, where he or she is now grafted into the order.

The Garveyite rite of baptism is outwardly derivative, largely following the forms of the *Book of Common Prayer*. At the promises of the godparents, the chaplain required them to promise the child “be taught the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Catechism of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.” After the baptism, UNIA’s colors were placed upon the child and the chaplain said:

We receive this child into the general membership of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and lay upon him these colors, the red, the black, and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 369–70; “The Spacious Earth Is All the Lord’s, The Lord’s Her Fullness Is,” *Hymnary.org*, accessed August 5, 2016, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/the\\_spacious\\_earth\\_is\\_all\\_the\\_lords\\_the](http://www.hymnary.org/text/the_spacious_earth_is_all_the_lords_the); “Isaac Watts - Hymnary.org,” accessed August 5, 2016, [http://www.hymnary.org/person/Watts\\_Isaac?sort=desc&order=Instances](http://www.hymnary.org/person/Watts_Isaac?sort=desc&order=Instances).

<sup>19</sup> Dickson, *Manual* (1918), 370.

the green, in token that hereafter he may fight manfully under this banner, for the freedom of his race, and the redemption of Africa unto his life's end.<sup>20</sup>

The service concluded admonishing the godparents and parents to instill in the child “the aims and principles of this Association, as set forth in our Catechism, so that when he shall come to riper years, he may be ready to perform the duties of membership.”<sup>21</sup>

Infant dedication ceremonies are quite popular among today's Evangelicals, but these two rites from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were quite exotic for their time. In each, an infant is grafted into a racial/fraternal community. The Taborians admit the child into a specific tent of maids and pages in which he or she will be taught of the order and all adults pledge to be his or her godparents. In the Garveyite ceremony, the child, though theoretically a UNIA member by birth as a person of African descent, is dedicated as one who will be brought up to be a worthy, active UNIA member with specific people promising to see that the child would be taught the association's catechism.

The geographic overlap between the IOOT and UNIA seems to go beyond coincidence. Rolinson's mapping of UNIA strength in the Arkansas and Mississippi Delta overlays neatly with Taborian strength. In 1912, each of these two states claimed more than 25,000 members, with Arkansas claiming 1,253 lodges with 29,784 members and Mississippi claiming 1,196 lodges with 26,536 members. Even if the membership numbers were inflated, the Taborians were still reporting that forty-five percent of their total membership was in these two states, which Rollinson credits as hotbeds of UNIA activism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, vol. 13, ATLA Monograph Series (Metuchen, NJ & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. and The American Theological Library Association, 1978), 81–82.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 82.

<sup>22</sup> “Knights and Daughters of Tabor,” *Chicago Defender*, Big Weekend Edition, September 7, 1912; Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association*

A closer look at Arkansas shows that there is a significant overlap between communities with a strong Taborian presence and those with a UNIA presence. Only 32 IOOT temple and tabernacle locations are extant for Arkansas from the listing in Taborian Hall out of the 1,253 claimed for 1912. Rolinson maps forty-two UNIA divisions in Arkansas. Both cluster heavily in the black-belt counties of the Delta, which is not surprising, since these tended to be black-majority counties, but it does show how the ground had already been prepared for UNIA by four decades of Taborian presence.

In the Phillips County community of Postelle, where Rolinson documents extensive UNIA activity, headstones provide ample evidence of Taborian activity. A headstone in the Postelle Cemetery documents that the community was home to Union Love Tabernacle No. 293 by at least 1920. A headstone eight miles away in Marvell's Lone Valley Cemetery shows that the tabernacle was still active in 1923 and shows that the Postelle Tabernacle was still active in 1923 and hints at its geographic reach. Seven miles south of Postelle in Turner, three members of at least one different tabernacle were buried between 1916 and 1935, indicating that Taborian activity there preceded UNIA's appearance in the community. Three broken headstones do not list tabernacle names, but the bricks in Little Rock's Taborian Hall record that the town was home to the Magnolia Blossom Tabernacle No. 479.<sup>23</sup>

Ten miles north in the Pine Ridge Cemetery near Blackton, home of UNIA organizer Henrietta Cobb, is a 1918 headstone from Deborah Tabernacle No. 85 in Brinkley. Brinkley is the county seat of Monroe County and lies 21 miles north of Blackton, again showing the geographic reach of Tabernacles and Temples in rural areas. Brinkley, which had a population of

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*in the Rural South, 1920-1927*, Kindle ed., The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 6.

<sup>23</sup> "Taborian Hall - Arkansas Flag & Banner - Little Rock, Arkansas."

2,714 in 1920, was home to at least four tabernacles during the period covered by Rolinson according to the headstones in its Haven Rest Cemetery: Metropolitan No. 211, Loveheart No. 441, the already-mentioned Deborah No. 85, and Tabernacle No. 428, whose name is not readable.<sup>24</sup>

Six miles north of Lexa in Lee County, home to one of Rolinson's UNIA divisions, was the crossroads community of Clifton, now known as Felton, home to Queen Esther Tabernacle No. 47. In the Lee County seat of Marianna, Rolinson notes that multiple readers wrote letters to UNIA's *Negro World*. In that same period, the town was home to Silver Spray Tabernacle No. 10 and Quintessence Tabernacle No. 367. These examples use only the limited headstone data for Monroe, Phillips, and Lee Counties that is available on internet databases. Many African-American cemeteries in these counties are unphotographed or only partially photographed. A thorough on-the-ground search would no doubt establish even stronger connections.<sup>25</sup>

Across the river in Mississippi, the strongest geographic case lies in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, which Rolinson describes at length as a center of UNIA activity. Rolinson cites Mound Bayou as having two UNIA divisions and uses a letter from its inhabitants to show that southern UNIA members had a spiritual attachment to Garvey. As mentioned previously, this all-

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<sup>24</sup> Bertha Whisby's Postelle tombstone is complete, but two out of three Israel Chapel headstones in Turner are broken, though one has enough lettering on the bottom to be certain that it is not from the Union Love Tabernacle in Postelle. The third appears to be a locally made headstone combining the IOOT and the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows. Ada Mae Brooks (Phillips County), Sallie Deal (Monroe County), Bere Doyle (Monroe County), Mary J. Holloway (Monroe County), Lula Mahone (Monroe County), Mary Payne (Phillips County), Bertha Whisby (Phillips County), Margaret Williams (Phillips County), *Arkansas Gravestones*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://arkansasgravestones.org>; "Brinkley (Monroe County)." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Accessed August 6, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Katie Clark (Lee County), Lurenda Miles (Lee County), Caldonia Scruggs (Lee County), Arkansas, *Arkansas Gravestones*, accessed August 6, 2016, *Arkansas Gravestones*, accessed August 6, 2016, <http://arkansasgravestones.org>.

black town was the center of Taborian activity in the state, having had a Taborian presence since the 1880s. After 1939, Mound Bayou became the Order's de facto headquarters when local leader F. M. Smith, who had been the state's chief mentor since 1926, became the long-serving international chief grand mentor. Two years later, the town became the home of the black-staffed Taborian hospital, which is considered a forerunner of modern health maintenance organizations.<sup>26</sup>

The southern Garveyites and the Taborians are not a perfect class match. Rolinson portrays the average southern UNIA member as one who “lived in a majority-black community, farmed cotton on someone else's land, and struggled to maintain a stable and safe family.” She estimates that three-quarters of the Georgia Garveyites she studied were tenant farmers and wage laborers. All but one of her Arkansas subjects that she could identify from census rolls lived on cotton farms. As the case study of Arkansas Taborians in Chapter Six showed, the state's Taborians in general straddled the UNIA demographic and the black lower-middle class, but the East Arkansas Taborians came much closer to the UNIA profile for that region. The ten Taborian women these counties, who can be identified in the census records, compare favorably to their UNIA counterparts. Four out of ten lived on tenant farms. Two lived on mortgaged farms, and one lived in a rented house with her laborer husband. While not all Taborians were likely UNIA members, even those who were not were in a prime social location to have influenced those who did join. Doctors, lawyers, and newspaper editors had less ongoing contact with tenant farmers than did black farm owners, middling tradesmen, and wage workers. Taborians in these lower-middling positions had ample opportunities for their rhetoric to

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<sup>26</sup> Archon Robert J. Smith, “Managed Health Care: The Taborian Hospital Experience, 1942-1983: [1],” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 95, no. 1 (January 2003): 84–86; “400 Attend Taborians' Convention,” *Chicago Defender*, national edition, September 2, 1939.

influence those just below them on the social scale and there seems to be every evidence they did just that. Rolinson notes that there was no record of outside organizers visiting Arkansas.

Someone had already prepared the ground and no existing organization had a more significant ideological overlap with UNIA than the IOOT. This is further supported by the average UNIA member being forty-three in Rolinson's study. Rather than being a young person's movement, UNIA members in the Arkansas Delta were people with mature opinions responding to an organization that spoke to their worldview. While older back-to-Africa movements were no doubt a part of this, the extent to which UNIA divisions became operational in a short amount of time speaks to preexisting organization.<sup>27</sup>

### **The RCF Contribution**

If the Taborians were not always an identical match for the UNIA rank and file, the Royal Circle of Friends was and its membership and organizational reach were likely even stronger in the Delta than that of the IOOT. The RCF was founded in the Delta and found its earliest growth there. Reference has already been made to how the RCF opened the lodge model to those who had formerly been economically excluded. Its ideological compatibility with UNIA and the commitment of its members to the parading and drilling tradition have already been discussed in Chapters Four and Six. As with the Taborians, local membership records are not extant, but an examination of cemetery evidence in Lee, Monroe, and Phillips counties bears the RCF's forming another base for UNIA's rapid expansion.

As with the Taborian headstone data, the RCF sample size is small, severely limited both by the data available online and because it disproportionately relies on subjects dying an early

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<sup>27</sup> Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 94, 99, 104, 105, 96, 109.

death to receive a headstone before the program ended in 1930. Even so, what is available makes an impressive case. To date, forty-four individuals in these three counties have been identified by their RCF headstones, though not all have legible names for the individual or their circles.

Working from the legible stones, ten communities in the three counties boast a total of twenty-two circles active between 1914 and 1929, as determined by the earliest date of death available for members of a particular circle. Having to rely on death dates means that most all of these circles were likely active years earlier. Twelve of these circles are attested in rural cemeteries, matching Rolinson's profile of a UNIA membership of small farmers. The other ten are in the Monroe County seat of Brinkley and the eastern Phillips County town of Marvell, which had a population of 781 in 1920. The circles in both of these communities likely included rural members if the geographic reach of the Taborian Tabernacles is any indication of lodge membership range.<sup>28</sup>

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>RCF CIRCLE</b>	<b>EARLIEST HEADSTONE</b>
<b><u>Lee County</u></b>		
Aubery	St. Mark, No. 23	1918
Aubery	St. Mark, Juv., No. 415	1927
Aubery	Spring Lake, No. 332	1920
Aubery	White Stone, No. 88	1927
Gill	New Light, No. 609	1914
Phillips Bayou	Excelsior, No. 18	1929
Phillips Bayou	Phillips Bayou, No. 55	1921
<b><u>Monroe County</u></b>		
Brinkley	Fidelity, No. 33	1914
Brinkley	Griffin, No. 328	1927
Brinkley	Harmony, No. 102	1928
Brinkley	Peace Prosperity, No. 117	1916

<sup>28</sup> This data has been compiled from ARGenWeb.net, ArkansasGravestones.org, BillionGraves.com, findagrave.com, and RootsWeb.Ancestry.com. "Marvell (Phillips County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=951>.

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>RCF CIRCLE</b>	<b>EARLIEST HEADSTONE</b>
Keevil	Honey Dew, No. 62	1923
Turner	Lone Star, No. 124	1916
<b><u>Phillips County</u></b>		
Hornor Township	New Zion, No. 204	1919
Hornor Township	No. 17	1918
	Renorick Grove, No. 58	
Lexa	(?)	1916
Marvell	Asberry, No. 20 (?)	1920
Marvell	Mount Everett, No. 129	1913
Marvell	New Light, No. 142	1916
Marvell	Rosedale, No. 104	1917
Poplar Grove	Grandalier, No. 83	1921
Poplar Grove	Scott Circle, No. 93	1917
*Turner is in Phillips County, but Israel Chapel Cemetery is in Monroe County.		

*Figure 2: RCF Circles in Lee, Monroe, and Phillips Counties*

Of the forty-four headstones, eight are in Brinkley, eleven are in Lone Valley Cemetery on the outskirts of Marvell, and the remaining twenty-five are in rural cemeteries. Sixteen of the families of these rural members can be identified in the census records with a fair to high degree of certainty. They make an excellent match Rolinson's profile of the typical Delta UNIA member. Thirteen live on farms, of whom eight are tenant farmers. Two own their farms with a mortgage and only three own their property free and clear. Of the three who are not farmers, one is a farm laborer living in a rented house and one is a cook for a private family who also takes in boarders. The remaining family is the only one that approaches middle class, owning a store free and clear in the Phillips Bayou community of Lee County. Ten can read and write while six cannot.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Griffin, Luana Scott, Amanda Cass Waits, Eliza Webb, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Lee County, AR; Rendia Adams, Angeline Chandler, Ollie Kneeland, George Morris (Minnie), Sallie Phillips, Ida B. Robinson, Catherine Stewart, manuscript census returns, Fourteenth Census of the United States,

True to the RCF's acceptance of women to full membership, fifteen of sixteen of those who can be identified are women. Several seem to be particularly strong women at that. Eliza Webb of St. Francis Township in Lee County is a cook for a family, but also rents rooms to three adult male boarders in the house that she herself rents. In the community of Aubery in Lee County, Sallie Booker, Angeline Chandler, and Ida Robinson are all widows who are heads of their own households and tenant farm in their own right. Ollie Kneeland's family's ownership of a local store no doubt made her a community leader as well.

As both the Taborian and RCF data show, the Delta was well-seeded, both ideologically and organizationally, for the arrival of UNIA. Taborian ideas of Afro-centrism and the RCF's milder rejection of white myths of civilization prepared people to accept Garvey's pan-African ideology. Both organizations had kept the drilling and parading tradition of the Union League alive. Both stressed entrepreneurial uplift and RCF members were already accustomed to receiving organizational news via their own paper, the *Royal Messenger*. The argument works equally well for UNIA's success in the Mississippi side of the Delta, where both organizations were strong, and likely explains how UNIA could catch fire so rapidly across the South as well as in states like Kansas with large Southern émigré populations. Garvey's message was novel in the ambition of its agenda and its eschatological qualities, but the ground had been prepared by decades of previous fraternal organizing.

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1920, population schedules, Lee County; Willie Madden, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Monroe County, AR; Lillie Butcher, Melvina Quarles, Elizabeth Walker, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Phillips County, AR; Willie Madden, manuscript census returns, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, population schedules, Woodruff County, AR.

## Conclusion

Roscoe Conkling Simmons may have summarized a significant factor in Taborian decline in a 1949 story on Dickson in the *Chicago Defender*, when he preempted readers' feelings about his subject matter:

Come now, may cry the gallants riding away on books they cannot bridle and themes they cannot saddle, he is about to address us on secret societies which we put behind us when we entered lettered fraternities upon whose signs we still gaze and whose brassy trinkets we still adore.<sup>1</sup>

Organizational fashion had moved on, with secret societies among African-Americans giving way in many cases to the Greek-letter organization. Suburbanization and transience would hurt lodges of both races, but breakfast and lunch civic clubs—Rotarians, Optimists, Lions, and Kiwanis—would grow dramatically. These would have their own methods of organization and their own god terms to shape their members' community engagement.

This study has not attempted a conclusive answer to the important question of why the fraternal model, which had worked so long and so well for so many, went into decline in the years after the First World War. The Taborians of the Kansas-Nebraska jurisdiction offer a detailed study of the factors that brought down one organization in one place. Lizabeth Cohen and David Beito's argument that the post stock market crash collapse of the fraternal insurance business was a major blow to fraternal culture. Carnes argued that, by the 1920s, the domestic sphere was collapsing and men and women were socializing on more equal terms, ending the need for male rites of passage from female care.

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<sup>1</sup> Simmons, "The Story of Moses Dickson."

In Chapter Two, it was suggested that the role of a re-energized Protestantism in the early twentieth century was worth examining, as elite religion again found a new confidence and a public voice in Barth's Neo-Orthodoxy and working-class religion entered the public sphere with a confidence lent to it by Christian Fundamentalism, which often went hand-in-hand with a suspicion of the orthodoxy of secret societies. One might also find it worth looking at whether the emergence of a broadly-shared American "civil religion," evinced by the civic clubs mentioned above, robbed fraternal organizations of a major purpose. All of these questions are beyond the scope of this study, but weighing the merits of each potential cause of decline may prove invaluable in illuminating additional aspects of its initial popularity.

Whatever put the fraternal model on the decline, by the years after World War II, the pattern of membership holding even rapidly gave way. At their peak in 1929, there were 3.3 million Freemasons in the U.S, which translates to almost one in ten adult men belonging to the organization. In 2014, there were only 1.2 million Freemasons, which, adjusting for population growth, translates into masons now only claiming somewhere a bit more than one in 100 adult men in the U.S. Other groups have fared even worse with many ceasing to exist entirely. Rather than disappearing with no notice or hostility, the golden age of fraternalism that ran from the end of the Civil War to World War I should be ranked in the important events of the Long Nineteenth Century somewhere behind the territorial acquisitions, the Second Industrial Revolution, and the Civil War, but perhaps on par with or even slightly ahead of Populism, the Gold Rush, and the telegraph as the American civic institution par excellence.

This study only scratches the surface on a number of issues. It shows that much work remains to be done on the role of fraternal organizations in shaping a host of attitudes. Here, race has been added to the existing body of literature on manhood and occasional markers have been

left to show fraternalism's impact on concepts of citizenship and virtue. The material on race has only scratched the surface by looking at a small number of groups. Beyond race, a world of categories remain to be examined.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four speak to how fraternal organizations were important conduits for popularizing or recasting elite ideas among the working class. What has been examined shows there is much productive work left to be done on their contribution to the formation and retardation of class identity and the interrelated concept of respectability. Neither has the complex relationship between these group's claims to ancient wisdom and their simultaneous enthusiasm for technology been fully examined.

Finally, it is clear that the study of fraternalism has much to tell us about identity formation and the conduct of politics in rural American in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here a bit has been added to Rolinson's work on rural African Americans, but nothing has been said about the Woodmen of the World and Knights and Ladies of Honor who populated small white communities and farmsteads. While these groups later became feeders for the second Klan, there is significant evidence that a generation earlier they had provided members and organizational know how to the Populist insurgency.

Hundreds of organizations that commanded untold hours of their members time and directed millions of dollars in resources remain unexamined. The few things sketched out in these chapters suggest that many productive avenues of scholarship remain untapped.

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