The Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction

“Revised and Amended Prescript of the Order of the * * *” 1868

Character and objects of the Order
This is an institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism; embodying in its genius and its principles all that is chivalric in conduct, noble in sentiment, generous in manhood, and patriotic in purpose; its peculiar objects being

First: To protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless, from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal; to relieve the injured and oppressed; to succor the suffering and unfortunate, and especially the widows and orphans of Confederate soldiers.

Second: To protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and all laws passed in conformity thereto, and to protect the States and the people thereof from all invasion from any source whatever.

Third: To aid and assist in the execution of all constitutional laws, and to protect the people from unlawful seizure, and from trial except by their peers in conformity to the laws of the land.

Titles
Sec. 1. The officers of this Order shall consist of a Grand Wizard of the Empire, and his ten Genii; a Grand Dragon of the Realm, and his eight Hydras; a Grand Titan of the Dominion, and his six Furies; a Grand Giant of the Province, and his four Goblins; a Grand Cyclops of the Den, and his two Night Hawks; a Grand Magi, a Grand Monk, a Grand Scribe, a Grand Exchequer, a Grand Turk, and a Grand Sentinel. …

Territory and its Divisions
Sec. 1. The territory embraced within the jurisdiction of this Order shall be coterminous with the States of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee; all combined constituting the Empire.

Sec. 2. The Empire shall be divided into four departments, the first to be styled the Realm, and coterminous with the boundaries of the several States; the second to be styled the Dominion and to be coterminous with such counties as the Grand Dragons of the several Realms may assign to the charge of the Grand Titan. The third to be styled the Province, and to be coterminous with the several counties; provided the Grand Titan may, when he deems it necessary, assign two Grand Giants to one Province, prescribing, at the same time, the jurisdiction of each. The fourth department to be styled the Den, and shall embrace such part of a Province as the Grand Giant shall assign to the charge of a Grand Cyclops...

Interrogations to be asked
1st. Have you ever been rejected, upon application for membership in the ***, or have you ever been expelled from the same?

2d. Are you now, or have you ever been a member of the Radical Republican party, or either of the organizations known as the "loyal League" and the "Grand Army of the Republic?"

3d. Are you opposed to the principles and policy of the Radical party, and to the Loyal League, and the Grand Army of the Republic, so far as you are informed of the character and purposes of those organizations?
4th. Did you belong to the Federal army during the late war, and fight against the South during the existence of the same?

5th. Are you opposed to negro equality, both social and political?

6th. Are you in favor of a white man's government in this country?

7th. Are you in favor of Constitutional liberty, and a Government of equitable laws instead of a Government of violence and oppression?

8th. Are you in favor of maintaining the Constitutional rights of the South?

9th. Are you in favor of the re-enfranchisement and emancipation of the white men of the South, and the restitution of the Southern people to all their rights, alike proprietary, civil, and political?

10th. Do you believe in the inalienable right of self-preservation of the people against the exercise of arbitrary and unlicensed power?...

...9. The most profound and rigid secrecy concerning any and everything that relates to the Order, shall at all times be maintained.

10. Any member who shall reveal or betray the secrets of this Order, shall suffer the extreme penalty of the law.


**Governor William W. Holden of North Carolina – Testimony before the Congressional Committee Investigating the Ku Klux Klan – 1871**

Respectfully referred to the Honorable Secretary of War
By order of the President: (22 enclo.) D. E. Babeoth

Received W. D. Jany. 7, 1871

The jail of Lenoir County broken open, and five men taken out, their throats cut, and their bodies thrown in Neuse river.

The jail of Orange County broken open, and three men shot at, two escaped, but one was wounded, and died of his wound.

The jail of Chatham County broken open and a United States prisoner released. He was in jail for violating the revenue law. He has not since been arrested.

The Sheriff of Jones County and Colonel of Militia, shot and killed from behind a blind, in the open day, on the public highway. His death was decreed by a Kuklux camp in the adjoining county of Lenoir. He was hated because he was a Northern man and a Republican.

A colored man who was on horseback, in company with Sheriff Colgrove, was also shot and mortally wounded.
The Colonel of the Militia of Jones County, and a Justice of the Peace, shot and killed in the open day while at work in his saw mill. A colored man with him, at the same time badly shot.

A man named Grant shot and killed in Lenoir County, by order of a camp, because he threatened to divulge the secrets of the Kuklux. …

The family of Daniel Blue, colored, murdered in Moore County. Blue was wounded and escaped. His wife was killed. She was heavy with child. His five other children were murdered, the house set on fire, and the bones of all found next morning. …

A colored woman near Pittsborough, Chatham County, beaten with a club until her life was despaired of, because she complained to a magistrate that a white man, a Kuklux, had stolen her chickens.

A colored minister of the gospel in Gulf Township, Chatham County, compelled to take a torch and burn his own church, which he and others had built on his own land. The next morning, after the Kuklux had departed, the melancholy sight was presented of the minister and his congregation holding prayer over the ashes of his church. …

A colored woman drowned in a mill pond in Orange County, because she had been "impudent" to a white lady! This is the only charge.

Two colored men taken out of their houses in Orange County, and hanged, on suspicion of having burnt barns.

A colored man in Orange County hanged, because he was found in the house of a white man at night, and suspected of being intimate with his daughters.

A colored boy in Orange County taken at midnight from his father, while they were burning charcoal, and hanged. The charge was that he had made some improper and foolish remark about the white ladies. His body hung ten days until the vultures partly consumed it …

An expedition from the camp at Hillsborough, Orange County, to Gilbreath's Bridge, to aid in murdering Mr. Shoffner, one of the Senators from Alamance and Guilford, because he had introduced into the legislature a bill to protect life and property and to punish the Kuklux. A leading Kuklux, fearing the consequences of such an act, met this force of Kuklux and turned them back.

Wyatt Outlaw, a colored man, hanged near the Court House in Graham, Alamance County. He was a leading Republican, an industrious mechanic, and a man of unblemished character. His offense was that Gov. Holden had appointed him a justice of the Peace, and he had accepted the appointment, and was President in that county of the Union League of America. It was charged that he had incited colored men to fire on the Kuklux on the public highway, but this statement can be disproved by respectable witnesses. He was dragged from his house at midnight, his little son clinging to him as long as he could, and his aged mother pleading for him. He was hanged near the Court House, that the Kuklux might thereby show their contempt for the civil law. …

The Rev. Mr. Conliss, a native of Vermont, and a teacher of a colored school at Company Shops, Alamance, was taken from his house at night and badly whipped. His wife endeavored to protect him, and was struck on the head with a heavy pistol and badly wounded. Mr. Conliss was lame, and went on crutches; but the Kuklux had no mercy on the poor old crippled man. He was whipped because he taught a colored school and was a loyal man. …

In Forsyth County, a colored man was taken from his house, his hands and feet were tied, and a gag, described thus, placed in his mouth: -- a ball of hardwood, filled with hard, sharp, wooden pegs. This
was forced into his mouth, and by leather strings attached to it, it was tied behind his head. He was then laid on his face, and one hundred lashes given him on his bare back.

In Alamance County a colored man named Noah Trollinger was whipped, and compelled to take a knife and hack and mutilate his private parts! After they had whipped Trollinger, and compelled him to mutilate himself, they rubbed his back with a rough persimmon stick! …

These are some of the worst Kuklux cases in North Carolina. Hundreds of other cases of scourging, and the cases of mutilation are necessarily omitted.

There have been no cases thus far in which the parties have been convicted by the civil courts. As the result of the action of Gov. Holden about sixty have been bound over for trial in the counties of Lenoir, Jones, Alamance and Caswell. We shall see whether any of these 60 persons, thus charged with crime, will be convicted by a jury.


**Testimony of Wyatt Prince, a black man – Testimony before the Congressional Committee Investigating the Ku Klux Klan – 1870**

Being first sworn to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, says he is a citizen of North Carolina, and a resident in the County of Chatham.

In the month of July, while at home with my family, and all in bed asleep, a company of white men, masked, approached my house, and without giving any warning, burst the door in and one of the number struck a match, and from the light thereof saw where I was lying and exclaimed, "there he lies, come in boys, come in," and immediately the house was filled with men who gathered around him. I attempted escaped, when one of the number exclaimed, "God damn him! Shoot him boys! Shoot him." Whereupon they commenced shooting with pistols and wounded me in the right arm, left side, left thigh, and below my left knee. During this time I had moved from my first position and they missing me, they endeavored again to strike a match, and not succeeding, I made my escape through a window and fled to the woods. For several weeks I was bedridden with my wounds. I am now a refugee from my home, and cannot return for fear of losing my life. These Ku Klux frequently visit my house of a night and have declared that if they ever catch me, they intend to cut me open and fill my body with rocks and sink it in the river. My family are still in Chatham, I cannot go to them, nor can they come to me. My corn crop still stands in the field ungathered and my cotton has been gathered in part by one of my enemies and appropriated to his own use. I believe I know four of the persons who may made the attack upon me.

Alvin Nash, colored, who brought the information of the outrage upon me to Raleigh has been persecuted for the part of friendship he showed to me. His liberty has been taken from him, and he is under arrest under false charges.

I am not sensible of having done anyone a wrong - I attended to my own business, and only have given offence by being, or I believe, a true Republican.

Wyatt (X) Prince

Sworn and subscribed before me this the 21st day of December, 1870.

W. Whitaker, J. P.

Elias Hill, a black minister in York County, SC – Testimony before the Congressional Committee Investigating the Ku Klux Klan – 1871

Elias Hill is a remarkable character. He is crippled in both legs and arms, which are shrunken by rheumatism; he cannot walk, cannot help himself, has to be fed and cared for personally by others; was in early life a slave, whose freedom was purchased, his father buying his mother and getting Elias along with her, as a burden of which his master was glad to be rid. Stricken at seven years old with disease, he never was afterward able to walk, and he presents the appearance of a dwarf with the limbs of a child, the body of a man, and a finely developed intellectual head. He learned his letters and to read by calling the school children into the cabin as they passed, and also learned to write. He became a Baptist preacher, and after the war engaged in teaching colored children, and conducted the business correspondence of many of his colored neighbors. He is a man of blameless character, of unusual intelligence, speaks good English, and we put the story of his wrongs in his own language:

"On the night of the 5th of last May, after I had heard a great deal of what they had done in that neighborhood, they [the Ku Klux Klan] came. It was between 12 and 1 o'clock at night when I was awakened and heard the dogs barking, and something walking, very much like horses....At last they came to my brother's door, which is in the same yard, and broke open the door and attacked his wife, and I heard her screaming and mourning....At last I heard them have her in the yard. She was crying and the Ku-Klux were whipping her to make her tell where I lived....Some one then hit my door. It flew open. One ran in the house, and stopping about the middle of the house, which is a small cabin, he turned around, as it seemed to me as I lay there awake, and said, 'Who's here?.' Then I knew they would take me, and I answered, 'I am here.' He shouted for joy, as it seemed, 'Here he is! Here he is! We have found him!' and he threw the bedclothes off of me and caught me by one arm, while another man took me by the other and they carried me into the yard between the houses....The first thing they asked me was, 'Who did the burning? Who burned our houses?' - - gin-houses, dwelling-houses and such. Some had been burned in the neighborhood. I told them it was not me; I could not burn houses; it was unreasonable to ask me. Then they hit me with their fists, and said I did it, I ordered it. They went on asking me didn't I tell the black men to ravish all the white women. No, I answered them. They struck me again with their fists on my breast, and then they went on....

They pointed pistols at me all around my head once or twice, as if they were going to shoot me, telling me they were going to kill me; wasn't I ready to die, and willing to die? Didn't I preach? That they came to kill me - - all the time pointing pistols at me.....One said 'G- d d - - n it, hush!' He had a horsewhip, and he told me to pull up my shirt, and he hit me. He told me at every lick, 'Hold up your shirt.' I made a moan every time he cut with the horsewhip. I reckon he struck me eight cuts right on the hip bone; it was almost the only place he could hit my body, my legs are so short - - all my limbs drawn up and withered away with pain....They all had disguises on. I then thought they would not kill me. One of them then took a strap, and buckled it around my neck and said, 'Let's take him to the river and drown him....'

They said 'Look here! Will you put a card in the paper next week like June Moore and Sol Hill?,' They had been prevailed on to put a card in the paper to renounce all republicanism and never vote. I said, 'If I had the money to pay the expense, I could.' They said I could borrow, and gave me another lick. They asked me, 'Will you quit preaching?' I told them I did not know. I said that to save my life. They said I must stop the republican paper that was coming to Clay Hill. It has been only a few weeks since it stopped. The republican paper was then coming to me from Charleston. It came to my name. They said I must stop it, quit preaching, and put a card in the newspaper renouncing republicanism, and they would not kill me; but if I did not they would come back the next week and kill me.

Source: Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States (Washington, 1872)