

History 2/Summer

Abstract

The Ku Klux Klan's anti-Hellenic mission in the Pacific Northwest was no distant threat to the local Greek community of Atlanta that struggled beneath a pall of terror and privation in the wake of a resurgent Klan. Just two years earlier in 1922, as a direct response to local anti-Greek measures orchestrated by the Klan, Greek community leaders founded the Mother Lodge of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association in Atlanta, home to the Imperial Palace of the Knight Riders. These anchored the Klan's national anti-Hellenism campaign of the 1920s that featured boycotts of Greek businesses amid sporadic outbreaks of anti-Greek violence so far afield as Spokane and Toronto. Many Greek storefronts shut down as entire Greek communities migrated to Northern cities. By 1924, the Greek community all but abandoned Atlanta itself and AHEPA moved to Washington, DC. From its inception, AHEPA embraced a program of non-violence, educational outreach, and full Americanization in response to Klan anti-Hellenism. The latter contrasts with ethnic advocacy groups that stressed cultural institutions above assimilation, "the pure and undefiled Americanism among the Greeks" proclaimed in the Charter of AHEPA.

This research will reconstruct a narrative of Klan-directed anti-Greek activity, such as the local Atlanta boycott, and of defensive measures by the Greek-American community that organized around the Order of AHEPA. While significant scholarship has examined anti-Hellenic actions elsewhere, no published texts have closely examined these events at the epicenter of both anti-Hellenic Klan activity and the Greek-American response, and none include any Greek-language sources from the era. My research incorporates the Greek-language press, Klan-issued materials, and a range of 'mainstream' sources toward reconstructing the dynamic interaction between the Ku Klux Klan and the Order of AHEPA during their period of hostile coexistence in Atlanta.

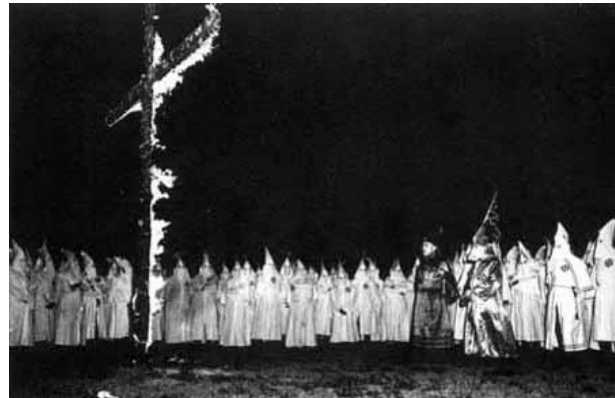


Year 1924. The Ahepa Patrol of Atlanta, Ga. Chapter No. 1 at the Atlanta Greek Orthodox Church, with Ahepans, members of the Greek community, and children of the Greek School.

Description of Research

Election Day 1924 found the Ku Klux Klan near the peak of its power, vaulting Klan-endorsed candidates into eight governor's mansions and seven senate seats from Georgia to Kansas to Colorado to Oregon. At polling sites across the nation, Klansmen passed out cards that declared:

When cotton grows on the fig tree
And alfalfa hangs on the rose
When the aliens run the United States
And the Jews grow a straight nose
When the Pope is praised by everyone
In the land of Uncle Sam
And a Greek is elected President
THEN – the Ku Klux won't be worth a damn.



Atlanta Ku Klux Klan Rally, 1920s

While the legacy of discrimination against Jews and Catholics remains vibrant in the historical memory of America, even most Greek-Americans express disbelief at finding out that Greeks were comparably targeted by the Knight Riders of nativist terrorism. Yet the heritage of Greek-Americans is similarly littered with stark episodes of abuse and victimization. In 1909, a lynch mob of some 3000 rampaged through “Greek Town” in Omaha, Nebraska – prompting the entire Greek community of over 1000 to flee the city en masse. Greek men were flogged in Florida for dating ‘white’ women, stabbed in Utah for ‘stealing’ American jobs, and abducted by Klansmen to witness ‘lynching parties’ in the South, where they were beaten and sent off with a warning to get out of town. While these events have featured in journal articles and scholarly accounts of the Greek immigrant experience, none have closely examined the Klan-instigated Atlanta boycott of the early 1920s that in turn inspired the founding of AHEPA. My research seeks to recover this ‘lost chapter’ of the Greek-American experience through archival records, press accounts, and period publications in Atlanta. The resulting manuscript will chronicle how AHEPA emerged to protect the Greek-American community from Klan attacks and how it set Greek-Americans on a path to ‘whiteness’ so successful that few remember they were ever thought otherwise.

Due to my fluency in Greek I can incorporate the Greek-language press of the United States into my research – a notable absence from other scholarship on the history of anti-Greek nativism. For most Greek immigrants in the early twentieth century this was their principal news source regarding both the Greek-American community as well as the world at large. The foremost of these Greek-language publications during the 1920s were two national daily newspapers with a combined readership of some sixty thousand: *Atlantis* and *Ethnikos Kyrikas* (*National Herald*) published out of New York City. *Atlantis* was the largest-circulation Greek-language newspaper

in the U.S. during the 1920s and covered national events of relevance to the Greek-American community from a conservative position. The rival *Ethnikos Kyrikas* covered these same events from a liberal position and therefore reached a rather different audience. The only archives that have preserved issues of *Atlantis* and *Ethnikos Kyrikas* from the 1920s are the Balch Institute of Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia and the Library of Congress, respectively. These archival records are only available for on-site usage and thus I must travel to these locations if I am to draw upon these crucial yet neglected sources of Greek-American history.

I have made a preliminary research trip to AHEPA National Headquarters in Washington, DC and have spoken with the President of the Atlanta Chapter of AHEPA. AHEPA officials and archivists have readily agreed to assist my efforts to locate early records that will enable my reconstruction of AHEPA's first two years in Atlanta. These include detailed minutes from the founding meeting on July 26, 1922 as well as early issues of the AHEPA magazine that began publication in 1923. As these bound records are too fragile for digital scans I must travel to study them in Washington and Atlanta. I have also contacted members of the nearly-defunct Greek American Progressive Association in Pittsburgh. GAPA emerged in 1923 to resist AHEPA's Americanism, proclaiming its prime mission as "the preservation and dissemination of the Greek ideals, and especially of the immortal Greek language and of the life-giving Orthodox Christian faith." While these GAPA leaders have been equally supportive, the effort continues to locate surviving copies of early print materials such as *Vēma tēs GAPA (The GAPA Tribune)*.



Atlanta Cross Burning

My parallel study of Ku Klux Klan publications and materials dating from early 1920s Atlanta similarly requires travel to the University of South Carolina Archives that preserve copies of the *Imperial Kighthawk*, the Emory University Archives that preserve copies of the *Klan Courier*, and the University of Georgia Archives with its extensive collection of Klan ephemera such as publications, records, and correspondence. The UGA archives also house issues of *The Atlanta Independent* from the early 1920s, Georgia's foremost African-American newspaper that was the only local journalistic voice that opposed the Klan's primacy in Atlanta during the period. A significant collection of Ku Klux Klan materials at the Kenan Research Center of the Atlanta Historical Society is also available for on-site research and yet another major source of Klan-related historical records are the archives of the American Civil Liberties Union housed at Princeton University, which include annual boxes that detail Klan activities starting from 1921. While digital copies may be requested, I cannot specify what might prove relevant to my research without first surveying the collection on-site.

The ultimate objective of my research project is to draw together these scattered and obscure primary sources, along with the two leading Atlanta dailies of the period – the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution* – so as to reconstruct this pivotal yet remarkably understudied and

all-but-forgotten chapter in the history of the Greek-American community. Grounded in existing scholarship of the Greek immigrant experience and of American nativism, the resulting research paper will serve as both my History Senior Thesis at UNC Asheville and as the basis of an article for submission to relevant scholarly journals. The history of AHEPA's struggle against the Klan has almost entirely vanished from Greek-American consciousness, to say nothing of the broader collective memory of American society. Its retrieval and preservation seems long overdue.

Timeline

From July 8, 2012 to July 14, 2012

Research at AHEPA National Headquarters and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC; the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia, PA; and the Princeton University Archives.

From July 15, 2012 to July 21, 2012

Research at University of South Carolina Archives, at University of Georgia Archives, at Emory University Archives, and at Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Annunciation in Atlanta.

From July 22, 2012 to August 4, 2012

Complete ongoing research into primary and secondary sources.

From August 4, 2012 to August 14, 2012

Complete first draft of 20-25 page Undergraduate Research Thesis.

Budget

Gasoline (Research Travel) \$415

At minimum, my research will require travel to the following destinations.

From Arden, NC to Washington, DC:	483 miles
From Washington, DC to Philadelphia, PA:	137 miles
From Philadelphia, PA to Princeton, NJ:	45 miles
From Princeton, NJ to Arden, NC:	665 miles

Total round-trip mileage, Phase 1: 1330 miles

Round-trip Arden, NC to Columbia, SC:	292 miles
Round-trip Arden, NC to Athens, GA:	294 miles
Round-trip Arden, NC to Atlanta, GA:	392 miles

Total round-trip mileage, Phase 2: 978 miles

This adds up to a minimum of 2308 travel miles not including any additional driving to specific archives at each destination. My vehicle gets approximately 22 miles per gallon. Therefore, my research travel will require a minimum of 105 gallons of gasoline.

As of April 8, 2012 the average price per gallon of gasoline in Asheville, NC is \$3.95. Of the other states on my destination list, the average price per gallon of gasoline ranges from \$3.73 in South Carolina to \$4.19 in Washington, DC. Gasoline prices are volatile and forecast to rise further during the summer of 2012.

At \$3.95 per gallon the estimated total cost for 105 gallons of gasoline is \$415.

Meals and Boarding (Research Travel) \$585

I project that my research travel will require at least two overnight stays in Washington, DC; two overnight stays in Philadelphia, PA; and one overnight stay in Atlanta, GA. Hotel rates of course vary considerably in these regions, with about \$100 as the low-budget average for July. At this estimated rate, the minimum amount required for my research travel is \$500.

I further request reimbursement for one meal a day during the six days of travel to Washington, Philadelphia, and Princeton; one day of travel to South Carolina; and three days of travel to Georgia. At an estimated \$8.50 per meal this amount adds up to \$85.

Stipend (Research and Writing) \$1500

I am requesting the maximum stipend amount of \$1500 to cover the six-week period from July 8, 2012 to August 14, 2012 during which I will conduct my archival research, complete my study of additional sources of scholarship, and write my research paper.

TOTAL REQUESTED: \$2500

Publication Outlets

I expect to submit my research article for prospective publication in one or more of the following scholarly journals.

The Journal of Southern History

A quarterly publication of The Southern Historical Association
Sheridan Press: Hanover, PA

The Journal of Modern Greek Studies

A semiannual publication of the Modern Greek Studies Association
Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD

The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora

A semiannual publication of The Hellenic American Society
Pella Publishing: New York, NY

The Georgia Historical Quarterly

A quarterly publication of The Georgia Historical Society
Georgia Historical Society: Athens, GA

I expect to submit my research for presentation at the Fall 2012 UNCA Undergraduate Research Symposium and at the 2013 National Conference for Undergraduate Research at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse on April 11-13, 2013.

Further potential outlets for presentation of this research include the Southern Historical Association Conference in St. Louis, Missouri on October 31- November 3, 2013 and the American Historical Association Conference in Washington, DC on January 2-5, 2014.

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