

Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, by M. William Lutholtz. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1991. xix, 362 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.50 cloth.

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D. C. Stephenson, the Grand Goblin of the midwestern Ku Klux Klan, had escaped a full-scale historical investigation until now. M. William Lutholtz, a publications editor and free-lance writer, has traced all the little-known details of the life of a man who claimed to be the law in Indiana, but eventually spent thirty years in prison. Lutholtz uses newspaper accounts, court records, and oral interviews to compose a revealing and thorough portrait of a power-seeker and charlatan whose taste for women and alcohol betrayed his Klan followers.

A Texas sharecropper's son, Stephenson moved to Indiana in the early 1920s to escape a failed marriage. There Stephenson joined the Klan in the midst of its initial sales campaign. Stephenson's successes in recruiting members brought him attention from the national Klan and control of the midwestern Klan when Hiram Evans became Imperial Wizard. Lutholtz deftly probes the fissure that developed between Evans and Stephenson, whose political machine enabled him to quit the Klan and yet maintain his power—until, of course, he abducted and raped Madge Oberholtzer and then refused to obtain treatment for a poison she had taken. Her death resulted in his conviction for rape and murder. That sensational incident, often credited for the collapse of the Klan in 1925, takes up almost half the book. A detailed and entertaining account of the trial ends, however, with speculations that Oberholtzer may have been pregnant and seeking an abortion. Lutholtz's conclusions must be judged as highly speculative at best.

Lutholtz, a journalist, has written a readable, thoroughly researched account of Stephenson's life. For historians, Lutholtz has created a convincing portrait of Stephenson's lack of character. The account could have benefited, though, from a more wide-ranging reading of recent works regarding the Klan.

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