

# Marshall's battle begins



COURTNEY CASE/News Messenger

**THE STEPS OF** the Sam B. Hall Jr. Federal Courthouse, which previously housed the Marshall Post Office, is seen Thursday in downtown Marshall. Local businessman Ray Daniels was abducted from this location on Feb. 20, 1922, to be tarred and feathered by members of the Ku Klux Klan.

## Klan marches into Marshall, changing lives

**PHIL LATHAM**  
Publisher & Editor

Two men: one white, one black. One brutally murdered while standing at the gate to his homestead, the other kidnapped, beaten and burned by hot tar while being covered with feathers.

Neither man committed any crime, broke any moral code or local custom. Both men were well-respected within their communities.

Their innocence did not keep them from being victims of Marshall Ku Klux Klan No. 168, an organization which, one member boasted, had as many as 1,700 members in 1924 and which, one newspaper opined, probably controlled all the local levels of justice, from the courthouse to the flogging field west of town.

For three years — from 1921 to 1924 — the Klan ruled the black citizens of Marshall and Harrison County in a reign of terror. It might have held almost complete power for years longer had it not been for a few courageous citizens who refused to back down.

The story of Marshall Klan No. 168 can only be told through its public actions — all those who might once have known what took place in secret conclaves are long since dead. And the public actions of the Klan almost always produced victims. This is the story of two of those victims — though there were dozens or hundreds of others.

Ray Daniels, respected white businessman, and Ike Buffin, prominent black farmer.

Their lives and the lives of those closest to them were changed forever by Marshall's Invisible Empire. In the chronology of the story, Daniels' ordeal comes first.

It was around Christmas 1921 when Ray Daniels — manager of the local Perkins' Brothers store — received a letter bearing the of-



Today: First appearance

Monday: Fighting back

Tuesday: Above the law

Wednesday: Going public

Thursday: Murder in Waskom

Friday: Waning influence

Official seal of Marshall Klan No. 168. As with most Klan letters, it was short and to the point: Daniels was to leave town.

Soon.

The Klan, the note said, "knew" about his affair with Mrs. Burris Brassell, a young, white woman who worked for Daniels at Perkins Brothers. It would not tolerate the sin of adultery in their town.

Daniels must have been confused when he read the note. He was certainly not having an affair with Mrs. Brassell — a fact that would later be proved.

Surely the misunderstanding could be resolved without his having to leave town. Daniels reached out to some friends he believed were close to the Klan to help him. He never heard from the Klan again. He later said he thought the matter was settled.

Unfortunately, he forgot an axiom of the reborn Ku Klux Klan: "We only warn once."

Daniels was by no means the first

person to receive such a letter. *The Marshall Messenger* reported on July 30, 1921, that Herbert Quinn, who owned a home in Harleton, but who actually lived in Washington City on the Texas coast, received such a note adorned with the skull and crossbones while he was back in the area visiting. He was warned to leave or he would be in trouble.

Quinn told the Messenger he had no intention of complying with the order. There is no evidence he was ever harmed.

On Feb. 11, 1922, the *Marshall Morning News* wrote in an editorial that at least 15 people — "some of them women, many of them good citizens" — had received warning letters from the Klan.

Then, oddly, the editorial discounted all the reports saying, "As a matter of fact we do not suppose any one of them have received such a letter."

The newspaper's opinion likely changed radically just about 10 days later.

Well connected to the local power structure, Daniels must have been among the crowd — estimated by both Marshall's newspapers to have been 10,000 strong — that watched the first official appearance of the Klan in Marshall as cloaked, hooded men marched through the streets of downtown on Jan. 27, 1922.

The parade occurred about a month after Daniels had received his warning letter.

*The Marshall Morning News* reported that 371 fully robed and masked Klansmen walked in the parade, led by three horsemen carrying a cross. Many of the Klansmen were thought to have come from out of town, as an extra train arrived from Shreveport and other Klansmen came by car from Longview.

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