York Had ‘Kyklos’ in 1868

South Carolina’s First Klan

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YORK—The Ku Klux Klan, subject of a current congressional investigation, is not a stranger to York County, the county seat of which was put under martial law nearly a century ago because of the activities of certain of the area’s former slaves eligible to vote, and with Dr. Bratton at the front, rode to Williams’ house, not far from historic Brattonsville.

"Capt. Jim" as he was called, was taken quietly from his home and hanged from a stately pine nearby. A Klansman who was not at the hanging asked Dr. Bratton a few minutes later, "Where is he?"

He is in hell, I expect," Bratton is supposed to have said.

Bratton remained in York County until the following year, practicing among the federal soldiers who were sent here to enforce martial law, and even testified before a congressional committee sent to York to investigate Klan activities.

A short while after he testified (without ever incriminating any of his fellow members of the Invisible Empire) word was brought to Dr. Bratton that a warrant had been issued for his arrest.

He slipped away and went to Bernwell, staying there with his sister for a short time. Word soon came that federal authorities were hot on his trail and he fled to Selma Ala.

There Bratton associated himself with another native of York, Dr. William Barron. Federal authorities were persistent, however, and Bratton soon had to flee to Memphis, Tenn., where he joined with his brother John S. Bratton, also a fugitive Klansman.

From Memphis, Dr. Bratton went to London, Ontario, Canada, where he became a respected citizen. However, the Pinkerton Detective Agency, under contract to the United States, learned of Bratton’s whereabouts and conspiracy was made with a Canadian detective to kidnap the South Carolinian.

Bratton was brought back to York to stand trial, but was released from the Yorkville jail on bond. Then he learned that the British government had demanded his unconditional release and return to Canada on the grounds that he had been unlawfully kidnapped. Diplomatic correspondence of a threatening nature was sent to the United States by Great Britain and Bratton was freed.

Bratton returned to Canada. His Canadian kidnapper was convicted and sent to prison. Bratton lived there for eight years. Then he returned to York County and resumed his practice.

Source: The State, October 31, 1965