

1933: Boulder, Berlin, and on Being Forever Young

By Bart Costello, May 9, 2016

Many of us in Boulder have pondered the quote over the west entrance of CU's Norlin Library, which says:

WHO KNOWS ONLY HIS OWN GENERATION REMAINS ALWAYS A CHILD

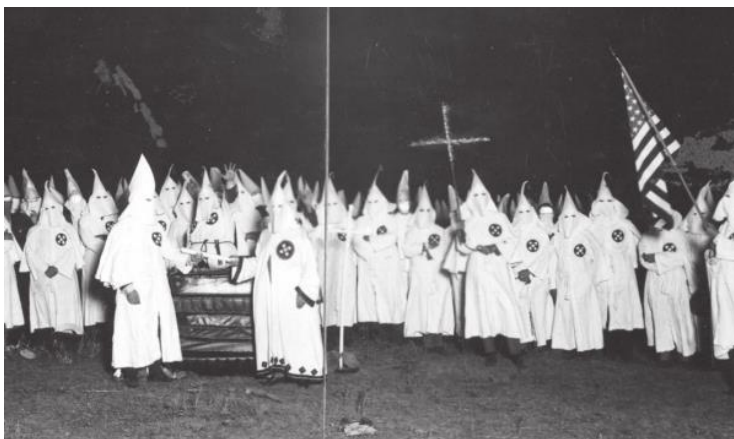
George Norlin was the President of CU at Boulder from 1919 until 1939. He is famous to this day for his cogent, calm, yet unswerving opposition to the KKK. The KKK was unknown in Colorado in 1920, but by 1925 the Klan thoroughly controlled Colorado politics. During 1925, at the height of their power, Klan members openly ruled the Colorado House and the Colorado Senate. They held the Office of the Secretary of State, the Colorado Governor, and the Denver Mayor. KKK members also comprised a majority of the members of the Denver City Council, and a majority of the judges on the Denver District court. One very visible Klansman was a Colorado Supreme Court Justice.

It is an historical fact that during 1925 the KKK had more influence over Colorado than they did in *any* other state in the Union, including all of the usual suspect states located in the deep south. Given that context, George Norlin was a real troublemaker.

The KKK approached George Norlin in the early 20's and demanded that he fire all CU faculty and staff members who were Jewish and Catholic. After Norlin refused, the KKK had CU's funding cut by the Colorado legislature.



Professor George Norlin



A KKK rally held 5 miles north of Boulder's then city limits on "an abandoned road east of Twelfth". 200 Boulderites attended this event on July 15, 1922.

In August of 1922, a month after the Klan's first Boulder organizational meeting shown at left, 300 Klan members paraded along Pearl Street in downtown Boulder preceded by 63 cars and a float. According to the *Boulder Camera* newspaper, masked men on the float threw out circulars stating "We stand for free speech, free press, free public schools and separation of church and state" as well as "the purity of womanhood and are pledged to protect and defend the sanctity of the home." "We are anti-

nothing...save those principles which are un-Christian and un-American. Watch us grow in Boulder."

Which brings us to Germany in 1933. **George Norlin lectured for an entire year in Berlin during 1933** about American Civilization. While in Germany, Norlin wrote and spoke extensively about why the Nazis would never prevail in the long run of history – hardly a popular position in the Berlin of 1933:

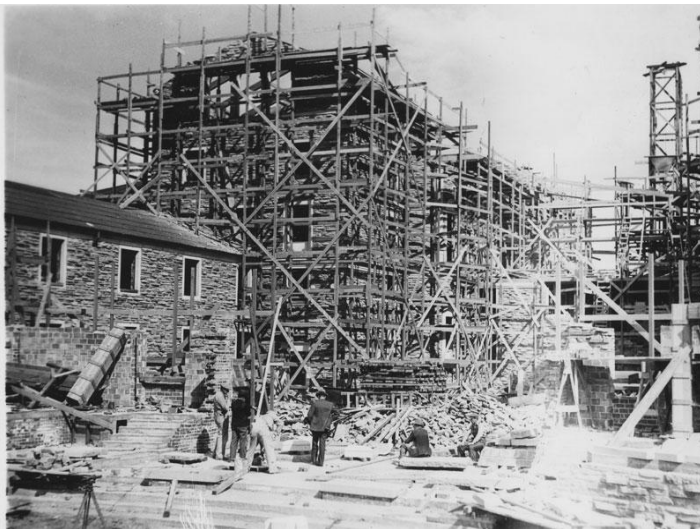


**Berlin October 11, 1933.
Montagenhalle, Berlin.**



The SS at the Brandenburg Gate. Berlin, 1933

While Professor Norlin was being booted in Berlin, on the other side of the world his Boulder campus was growing. Construction of Sewall Hall was commenced in 1933, as was Boulder's Art Deco Courthouse on Pearl Street.



My college dorm during 1971, Sewall Hall is pictured here under construction in 1933.



**The Old Boulder County Courthouse.
Boulder, Colorado. Art Deco. 1933.**

AND SO, I profoundly thank Professor Norlin for the ten simple words he wrote three generations ago. Words that help guide me as I grow older yet foolishly yearn to stay..... forever young.

