

The Plaques of E Clampus Vitus: by Sublime Grand Noble Bill Wensrich

No. 4 Kingpin Hydraulic Giant Humbug Chapter No. 73

“If you ain’t plaque’n, then you ain’t Clampin’”

Chartered by Grand Council in May 1973, Humbug Chapter wasted no time erecting their first historical plaque. Callahan’s Mel Cramer, one of the founders and first Humbug (Chapter President) of the Chapter, was the spark for getting this plaque erected. Located at 910 Main Street in Yreka in front of the Siskiyou County Museum, it serves as a good example of an E Clampus Vitus historical marker.

Hydraulic mining, a very efficient method of getting gold out of the ground, was avariation on ground sluicing. Hydraulic miners shot water through a nozzle at high pressure onto cliff faces washing away tons of boulders, gravel, dirt, and ounces of gold. Entire hillsides would collapse with all the debris ending up in a series of huge sluice boxes catching the gold.

Edward Mattison is recognized as the innovator for this method of mining. In 1853 he supplied water through a rawhide hose to a nozzle he carved out of wood. Miners later upgraded their hoses to metal; the nozzle component soon became iron. Product names for these iron nozzles included Hoskin’s Dictator and Hoskin’s Little Giant. The name that stuck, the Monitor, was a product name from the Craig Company. It eventually became the colloquial description for water canon, just like the word Kleenex today has become the generic term used for facial tissue.

With small-scale placer mining mostly exhausted, hydraulic mining reached its height of operation by the early 1860s. Decades of hydraulic mining resulted in catastrophic environmental damage. During high water events rivers and streams overflowed their banks. Massive deposits of sand and gravel washed down stream onto adjacent farm land destroying the crop producing potential of the land. Vast areas of farmland in the Sacramento Valley were buried by mining sediment. Farmers

demanded an end to hydraulic mining. In a most renowned legal fight, farmers against miners, hydraulic mining operators were sued. The landmark 1884 case of Edwards Woodruff v. North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Company made its way to US court in San Francisco where Judge Lorenzo Sawyer decided in favor of the farmers. He declared hydraulic mining to be “a public and private nuisance.” Revived in 1893 when Congress passed the Camminetti Act, hydraulic mining was allowed if sediment detention structures were constructed.

Red Hill mine located about five miles east of Forks of Salmon utilized the No. 4 Kingpin Hydraulic Giant, one of the largest water cannons of its era. Cramer obtained the monitor and hauled it to the Museum to be placed alongside the plaque monument. The beginning date of use listed on the plaque appears to be in conflict with the law mentioned above. Written history changes through the years as more information is found and validated. Mel may have obtained the 1890 date from some document or interview he conducted. The

information could have been off by a few years. Maybe the source(s) meant “around 1890” or beginning in the “early nineties.”

Following the placement of this first plaque, Humbug Chapter has gone on to erect, or relocate and renovate another 40 historical markers and monuments. Along the way they’ve acquired new members to assist with preservation of the historical record. The secret to finding prospective new members is similar to finding gold. Clampers are not made my friend, they are born! Like the gold of southern Oregon and California’s past, they just have to be discovered. Are you waiting to be discovered?

Relive history with family and friends. Take time and visit the museum. The water canon next to the plaque is an excellent illustration of the technology. Touch the monitor and imagine the roar as it transformed steep, rocky forested terrain into moonscape. Miners standing next to an operating monitor wouldn’t be able to hear one another talk. Once afflicted with gold fever, men will do anything for more gold.

Today in History: by The Associated Press

Today is Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, the 45th day of 2018. There are 320 days left in the year. This is Valentine’s Day.

Today’s Highlights in History:

On Feb. 14, 1918, Russia converted from the Old Style Julian calendar to the New Style Gregorian calendar, “losing” 13 days in the process (for Russians, the day before was Jan. 31). The musical “Sinbad,” starring Al Jolson and featuring the song “Rock-a-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody,” opened on Broadway.

On this date:

In 1663, New France (Canada) became a royal province under King Louis XIV.

In 1778, the American ship Ranger carried the recently adopted Stars and Stripes to a foreign port for the first time as it arrived in France.

In 1849, President James K. Polk became the first U.S. chief executive to be photographed while in office as he posed for Matthew Brady in New York City.

In 1859, Oregon was admitted

to the Union as the 33rd state.

In 1903, the Department of Commerce and Labor was established. (It was divided into separate departments of Commerce and Labor in 1913.)

In 1912, Arizona became the 48th state of the Union as President William Howard Taft signed a proclamation.

In 1929, the “St. Valentine’s Day Massacre” took place in a Chicago garage as seven rivals of Al Capone’s gang were gunned down.

In 1949, Israel’s Knesset convened for the first time.

In 1962, first lady Jacqueline Kennedy conducted a televised tour of the White House in a videotaped special that was broadcast on CBS and NBC (and several nights later on ABC).

In 1979, Adolph Dubs, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, was kidnapped in Kabul by Muslim extremists and killed in a shootout between his abductors and police.

In 1988, Broadway composer Frederick Loewe, who wrote the scores for “Brigadoon,” “My Fair

Lady” and “Camelot,” died in Palm Springs, California, at age 86.

In 1990, 92 people were killed when an Indian Airlines passenger jet crashed while landing at a southern Indian airport.

Ten years ago: A former student dressed in black walked onto the stage of a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University and opened fire on a packed science class; the 27-year-old gunman killed five students before committing suicide. Republican campaign dropout Mitt Romney endorsed John McCain for the party’s presidential nomination.

Five years ago: Double-amputee and Olympic sprinter Oscar Pistorius shot and killed his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, at his home in Pretoria, South Africa; he was later convicted of murder and is serving a 13-year prison term. Billionaire Warren Buffett agreed to buy H.J. Heinz Co. for \$23.3 billion. American Airlines and US Airways announced an \$11 billion merger that turned American into the world’s biggest airline.

One year ago: Authorities

lifted an evacuation order for nearly 200,000 Northern California residents living below the Oroville Dam after declaring that the risk of catastrophic collapse of a damaged spillway had been significantly reduced. A former store clerk was convicted in New York of murder in one of the nation’s most haunting missing-child cases, nearly 38 years after 6-year-old Etan Patz (AY’-tahn payts) disappeared while on the way to a school bus stop. The Senate confirmed former wrestling entertainment executive Linda McMahon to lead the Small Business Administration. Rumor the German shepherd won best in show at the Westminster Kennel Club at New York’s Madison Square Garden.

Today’s Birthdays: TV personality Hugh Downs is 97. Actor Andrew Prine is 82. Country singer Razzy Bailey is 79. Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is 76. Jazz musician Maceo Parker is 75. Movie director Alan Parker is 74. Journalist Carl Bernstein is 74. Former Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., is 71. TV

personality Pat O’Brien is 70. Magician Teller (Penn and Teller) is 70. Cajun singer-musician Michael Doucet (doo-SAY’) (Beausoleil) is 67. Actor Ken Wahl is 61. Opera singer Renee Fleming is 59. Actress Meg Tilly is 58. Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Kelly is 58. Singer-producer Dwayne Wiggins is 57. Actress Sakina Jaffey is 56. Actor Enrico Colantoni is 55. Actor Zach Galligan is 54. Actor Valente Rodriguez is 54. Rock musician Ricky Wolking (The Nixons) is 52. Tennis player Manuela Maleeva is 51. Actor Simon Pegg is 48. Rock musician Kevin Baldes (Lit) is 46. Rock singer Rob Thomas (Matchbox Twenty) is 46. Former NFL quarterback Drew Bledsoe is 46. Actor Matt Barr is 34. Actress Stephanie Leonidas is 34. Actor Jake Lacy is 32. Actress Tiffany Thornton is 32. Actor Brett Dier is 28. Actor Freddie Highmore is 26.

Thought for Today: “Age is something that doesn’t matter, unless you are a cheese.” — Jack Benny, American actor-comedian (born this date in 1894, died in 1974).



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