

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

Clampers Meeting Hall

41.4353 degrees north latitude 122.3814 degrees west longitude
The Plaques of E Clampus Vitus--Humbug Chapter No. 73

The thirteenth in a continuing series of articles prepared by Bill Wensrich
“If you ain’t plaque’n, then you ain’t Clampin’”

We know Yreka included an ECV Chapter because Harry L. Wells made a report of their tom foolery in his 1881 History of Siskiyou County. He reports that after a fire in 1854 consumed the log building where the Sheriff’s office was located, a number of new brick buildings were erected on or nearby the same site. One of these new buildings erected on Fourth Street housed the meeting hall for E Clampus Vitus. Harry further recounts the antics of ECV during Yreka’s 1856 Fourth of July parade.

“Large crowds of miners from Greenhorn, Hawkinsville, Deadwood and Humbug, were in town and whiskey flowed as freely as water. Revelry ran higher and higher, and the jollity increased as the day

advanced.”

ECV is said to have been started around 1845 by one Ephraim Bee, a tavern keeper, surveyor, blacksmith and state legislator from what is now West Virginia. The organization’s roots germinated in California when a man named Joe Zumwalt, traveling to the 1849 gold rush, brought an eastern lodge ritual book with him. Taking hold in 1851, Mokelumne Hill became recognized as California’s first official ECV Lodge. The organization, by nature, was a spoof on more dignified and straight-laced fraternal orders of the day such as the Freemasons. Some believed those Orders took themselves too seriously and looked down on the mining working class.

With the movement of miners up and down California during the gold rush, their traditions and rituals spread to every mining camp and town in the Mother Lode as well as the Northern Diggins.

Throughout 19th century California multiple newspaper articles account for the activity of Clampers. A few highlights from that era follow.

San Francisco Herald—Oct. 18, 1855
E CLAMPUS VITUS

It is stated that a movement is underfoot in this city for the permanent establishment of a Society under the above title, and that a meeting will be held this evening for the purpose of initiating a large number of candidates for membership into the secrets of the order.

The Beacon, Red Bluff—Feb. 2, 1859
E. C. Vitus

This ancient, honorable and benevolent institution, after a year or two’s suspension, has resuscitated, and judging from the noise they make each Friday Evening, immediately over our office, are in a flourishing condition.

Quincy Union, Feb. 11, 1865
E.C.V. Nelson Point

A large and flourishing lodge of the Ancient and Most Honorable Order of the E.C.V. is now in full “blast” at Nelson Point. The Lodge Hall is a magnificent one, and the regalia, etc., the best that could be procured. Some 20 “wand(er)ers” have recently been admitted into the “mystery of all Mysteries” and have been brought from darkness into light, so as to “see themselves as others saw them.” The N.G.H. of the order intends delivering a mystical course of lectures during the next two months.

Marysville Appeal Democrat—Jan. 25, 1896

BRIEF CRITICISM

Lord Sholto Douglas let the Marysville people make a fool out of him one night when he joined a secret society, and the next night he made fools out of the people when they crowded his house and paid him \$300.

With the decline of mining and depopulation of the camps and diggings, ECV declined. Revived in the 1930’s the resurgence of ECV has produced 40 Chapters and two Outposts located in nine western states today.

The ancient and honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus was and continues to be characteristic of the spirit that existed in the mining camps of the gold rush era. Where else but in a Clampers’ Hall of Comparative Ovations can a man rediscover those values that seemed otherwise lacking in the hard life found in the mining canyons. When the Hewgag brays it signifies a sucker has appeared in camp and is ready to have veil of ignorance lifted from his eyes by having revealed to him the truths and secrets of this ancient and mystical order.

Today in History: by The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, May 30, the 150th day of 2018. There are 215 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On May 30, 1958, unidentified American service members killed in World War II and the Korean War were interred in the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

On this date:

In 1381, the Peasants’ Revolt against economic injustice erupted in England during the reign of King Richard II; the king and his men, initially caught off-guard, were able to crush the rebellion several weeks later.

In 1431, Joan of Arc, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rouen (roo-AHN’), France.

In 1536, England’s King Henry VIII married his third wife, Jane Seymour, 11 days after the king’s second wife, Anne Boleyn, was beheaded for treason and adultery.

In 1883, 12 people were trampled to death in a stampede sparked by a rumor that the recently

opened Brooklyn Bridge was in danger of collapsing.

In 1911, the first Indy 500 took place at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway; the winner was Ray Harroun, who drove a Marmon Wasp for more than 6 1/2 hours at an average speed of 74.6 mph and collected a prize of \$10,000.

In 1922, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. was dedicated in a ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding, Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Robert Todd Lincoln.

In 1937, ten people were killed when police fired on steelworkers demonstrating near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago.

In 1943, during World War II, American troops secured the Aleutian island of Attu from Japanese forces.

In 1968, the Beatles began recording their “White Album” at EMI Recording Studios in London, starting with the original version of “Revolution 1.”

In 1971, the American space probe Mariner 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on a journey to Mars.

In 1982, Spain became NATO’s 16th member.

In 1996, Britain’s Prince Andrew and the former Sarah Ferguson were granted an uncontested decree ending their 10-year marriage.

Ten years ago: A construction crane snapped and smashed into an apartment building on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, killing two workers in New York City’s second such tragedy in 2 1/2 months. Diplomats from 111 nations meeting in Dublin, Ireland, formally adopted a landmark treaty banning cluster bombs. (The United States and other leading cluster bomb makers — Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan — boycotted the talks.) Lorenzo Odone (oh-DOH’-nay), whose parents’ battle to save him from the rare nerve disease ALD inspired “Lorenzo’s Oil,” died in Fairfax, Virginia, a day after his 30th birthday.

Five years ago: Syria’s President Bashar Assad said in an interview with Lebanese television that he was “confident of victory” in his country’s civil war, and he

warned Damascus would retaliate for any future Israeli airstrike on his territory. Arvind Mahankali (AHR’-vihnd MAH’-hahn-KAHL’-ee), a 13-year-old from Bayside Hills, New York, won the Scripps National Spelling Bee by correctly spelling “knaidel,” a small mass of leavened dough, to win the 86th version of the competition.

One year ago: The Pentagon scored an important success in a test of its oft-criticized missile defense program, destroying a mock warhead over the Pacific Ocean with an interceptor. Michael Dubke (DUHB’-kee), a top communications aide to President Donald Trump, announced his resignation. Kathy Griffin appeared in a brief video holding what looked like President Trump’s bloody, severed head; the comic ended up apologizing, saying she had gone way too far.

Today’s Birthdays: Actress Ruta Lee is 83. Actor Keir Dullea is 82. Actor Michael J. Pollard is 79. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Gale Sayers is 75. Rock musician Lenny Davidson (The Dave

Clark Five) is 74. Actor Stephen Tobolowsky is 67. Actor Colm Meaney is 65. Actor Ted McGinley is 60. Actor Ralph Carter is 57. Actress Tonya Pinkins is 56. Country singer Wynonna Judd is 54. Rock musician Tom Morello (Audioslave; Rage Against The Machine) is 54. Actor Mark Sheppard is 54. Movie director Antoine Fuqua is 53. Actor John Ross Bowie is 47. Rock musician Patrick Doherty (Live) is 47. Actress Idina Menzel is 47. Actor Trey Parker is 46. Rapper Cee Lo Green is 43. Rapper Remy Ma is 38. Actor Blake Bashoff is 37. Christian rock musician James Smith (Underoath) is 36. Actor Jake Short is 21. Actor Sean Giambrone is 19. Actor Jared Gilmore is 18.

Thought for Today: “There is a Law that man should love his neighbor as himself. In a few hundred years it should be as natural to mankind as breathing or the upright gait; but if he does not learn it he must perish.” — Alfred Adler, Austrian psychoanalyst (1870-1937).

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