

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

Moonlit Oaks

The Plaques of E Clampus Vitus--Humbug Chapter No. 73

The 44th in a continuing series of articles prepared by Bill Wensrich.

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

The notion of a two-sided historical monument had been discussed for years. Yreka’s Humbug Chapter No. 73 of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus finally took action in 2012. Our presiding Humbug (Club President) J.J. Minard met an unfortunate and untimely death in early July of that year. He was murdered; a very sad affair. To keep the club running, Ex-Noble Grand Humbug James “Dirt” Ordway stepped up and assumed the chair of Chapter Humbug again. I assumed the role of Clampatriarch for the year. Together, James and I orchestrated the erection of the Moonlit Oaks Dance Pavilion historical monument.

Years ago after reading numerous Siskiyou Pioneer and Yearbook volumes produced by the Siskiyou County Historical Society, I particularly enjoyed the issue that discussed the dances and touring bands of the 1920s and 1930s. From that volume I crafted proposed wording for a Moonlit Oaks Dance Pavilion plaque. Club historian at the time, Dan Wimers, reviewed and edited the proposed wording and together we honed a final version. The Chapter approved the idea for a 2012 historical monument.

The next step was to obtain permission for erecting the plaque. We wanted to erect the plaque on Moonlit Oaks Avenue on the Black Bear Restaurant property for two reasons:

1. The old Dance Pavilion was located there, and

2. The Chapter’s previously erected plaque across the street at the closed old Boston Shaft restaurant site had been removed by us about four years prior; we wanted to re-erect it near the same location.

I had been in contact with Black Bear management through email for the previous year or two and had been unable to obtain permission. Finally, in late 2011 we had a Eureka moment, or more correctly a Yreka moment, receiving permission to erect the monument near the bus stop.

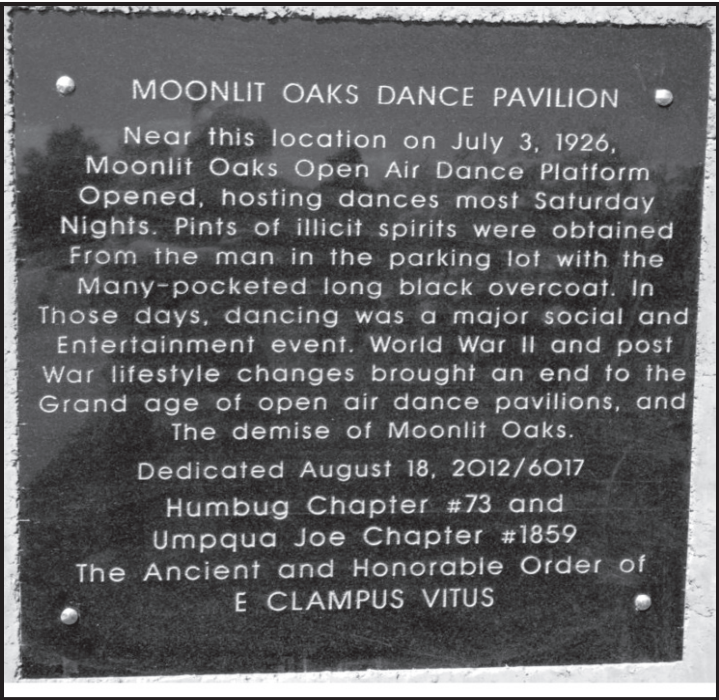
With that piece of the puzzle solved, James contacted our former ECV Outpost in Oregon to help us pour the concrete monument and co-sponsor the plaque. Dirt arranged for our summer Doin’s party to be held on Humbug Creek. The dye was cast and the concrete and forms were ready. The weekend of Aug. 18 and 19 we held our summer function. On Friday our Poor Blind Candidates assisted plaque master Glenn Hearrell and his crew with the monument erection. James came up with the notion to mix in 30 pounds of red dye into the concrete. What turned out to be a spectacular historical monument was given a reddish color. Red and black are the colors of ECV. Side one of the monument holds the story of the Moonlit Oaks Dance Pavilion and side two holds the relocated Boston Shaft plaque that tells the Clyde Johnson hanging story. That plaque, originally erected in 1991, had been held in safe keeping by Dirt from the time we removed it from its concrete monument at the old Boston Shaft Restaurant location across the street.

Saturday at noon 20 Clampers came down the hill from Humbug Creek and along with 10 civilians dedicated the two plaques.

A fine example of a two-sided ECV historical monument, one can easily view these two plaques by driving to the Black Bear Restaurant located on Main Street and Moonlit Oaks

Avenue in Yreka, California. Next to the bus stop you’ll find the historical monument.

Bill Wensrich serves on the E Clampus Vitus Board of Directors. His recently published Guide Book for the ECV Transierra Roisterous Alliance of Senior Humbugs titled “The Trail to Sailors’ Diggin’s from Paragon Bay” is available for purchase from the nonprofit Del Norte County Historical Society Museum located at 577 H Street in Crescent City, California.



Diary of Alonzo P. Turner: by Greg Walter

Part 5 of 7

A recently discovered photograph reveals what “the Ranch” looked like before it was burned by Native Americans during the Rogue River Wars of 1855-56. This was an image believed to have been taken by Phillip Castleman, who was an early photographer and himself a Rogue River Indian War veteran. He came out to California with 18 others following a rush of argonauts to the gold fields there. Seven of the 19 would fall to cholera, which was beginning its death toll on westward emigrants.

Castleman would move to Oregon in 1851, settling near Eugene and establishing a lumber mill there. By 1853, he moved down to the Rogue Valley area,

establishing another sawmill and would sell or part with his interests there and go back east to both visit family and also learn a new photography technique known as daguerreotyping. He then came back out to the Eugene area and established the first daguerreotype studio in 1854 and did occasional trips into southwestern Oregon. This rare image is one of the only known pictures taken in Josephine County by Castleman at that time.

Farming would dominate the life of Alonzo P. Turner, but he would also recognize the amount of money he would make from the heavy drinking that happened in the course of this letter sent on May 8, 1853:

Butter is selling at 12 a Ib. eggs are worth 6 dollars a dozen, pickled pork 75c a Ib beef 35 cents, flour is at its standard price 35c a pound. I bought 2 pare of thick stogy boots at 16\$ a pair, a pair these common Boston or welted boots 10\$ a pair. If the crop comes off one half as well as we expect I shall be able to come home this winter. If the crops fail in any degree so that we will have but 2 or 3 thousand dollars a peace (apiece). We shall try it another year. I am bound to make 5 or 6 thousand dollars anyway and back I come. If I stay here two years I will not be satisfied without 10 thousand.

My dear, the prospects are that I will come home next

winter, but do not look for me for certain. I may take a notion to stay another season at any rate & make a big pile. It depends on how well the mining terminates. If they seem to fail, I shall certainly quit the country, but this season we have the sure thing of it. We are getting along much better than I expected when I wrote to you last. We are getting a good deal of travelling customers. Every meal brings us one dollar. All the beef we can kill brings us 35c a pound. Every animal we get to pasture or what we call here. Ranching brings us one dollar a week. Every drink of whiskey is 2 dollars. I never was in a country where so much of it is used. Drinking & gambling is carried on to a great

extreme. There is hardly a night which our table does not bring 5 dollars just for the chance of playing cards. Neither of us play for money or drink. I for one will never drink or play my money as long as I have a beloved wife and children at home that I would give handfulls of the yellow dust to see & Kiss once more.

By August, Turner had been gone for over a year and had been sick with typhoid fever. He details the price of hay in his sixth letter and the the location of the brisk commerce he received. Additionally, he made further mention of how the area would never be fit for settlement or civilized society.

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