

Joaquin Murrieta



ECV 13

THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ORDER OF
E CLAMPUS VITUS

You have become a brother in the oldest Historical Organization in the world; one that dates back over 6000 years to Adam. Founded in 4005 B.C., it is 5 years older than the Masons! Membership in our grand Order has included many of our most distinguished and honorable citizens, legislators, men of all professions...laymen and good persons in every walk of life. Such men as Thomas Jefferson, Earl Warren, Ronald Reagan, to name but a few, have all "seen the elephant" and have been elevated to the light. It is therefore only right that you should know something of the glorious past of the Ancient and Honorable Order~

~**Ephraim Bee, "Grand Lama": Our Order in the modern era was created in 1845 by Ephraim Bee of Virginia (now, West Virginia).** Bee, a notorious joker, revealed that the Emperor of China had entrusted him with certain sacred rituals from the mysterious East. Politics and the Civil War caused the Order to fade in the east. However, Brother Bee retains credit for dispatching the Order west.

When the Order reached the California Gold Fields it spread like wildfire. The Gold Rush produced a fertile ground for the growth of the Ancient and Honorable Order~ Why? Men make fools of themselves for gold, and the mines were a society of men...with few restraints.

~The glorious era of ECV~

~**Joseph Zumwalt**, a member of the mass migration of **Argonauts**, arrived in California in 1849 with a copy of our sacred rituals.

The Order took root in Mokelumne Hill in 1851. E Clampus Vitus spread like wildfire through the mountains. Few, indeed, were the camps where the order's great horn...the "Hewgag"...did not on occasion hoarsely bray. When the Hewgag blew, the brethren gathered from far and near. It was a signal that a sucker had appeared in camp...some "Poor Blind Candidate" ripe for a new experience...for the only ritual of the Ancient and Honorable Order of gold rush days was that of the initiation.

Clampusus: Clampusus, with the "s" is the form found in newspapers and printed rituals from the 1850s through the 1890s throughout the mines.

Clampsis: used in the east (Pennsylvania)

Clampus: Today's spelling. In the words of our great Revivifer, Carl Wheat, "Let no benighted individual place a period after that fateful "E" and let no person of whatever race, color, or previous condition succumb to the heretical placing of an "s" after the "p" of Clampus."

~**Mining Life:** Placer mining was incredibly inefficient with very limited production. The long, hard days coupled with poor diet and disease made for a hard life...(hence the growth and appeal of ECV.) Few miners (perhaps less than 10%) actually struck it rich.

"Panning is exceedingly laborious and taxes the entire muscles of the frame. In its effect, it is more like swinging a scythe than any work I ever attempted. The abundance of gold in California has not been as much overrated as the labor of procuring it has been underrated." William McCollum, 1849

Although the miner's life was one long gamble, miners were no mere roisterers. On the contrary, they were made of stern stuff, and the remains of their "workings" along the streams and bars and flats of the Sierra foothills still offer mute evidence of their almost superhuman industry.

1851: Most were "mining for beans" and by **1852** men by the score were heading down to the valleys "dead broke." The dams and flumes of that year were largely failures. It's in this atmosphere that ECV began to flourish. Why? Consider our motto:

~**Credo Quia Absurdum:** "I believe because it is absurd." (or, "Faith rests on Absurdity.")

Having fun in the realization of the absurdity of much of their situation...their situation being a brutal, harsh and often short life.

~**ECV provided an excuse for horseplay,** for everything about ECV was in jest and it was therefore the perfect counterpoint to the harsh lives the miners led. "After a hard day in the dirt and muck of some Sierra diggin's where else but in the Clamper's "Hall of Comparative Ovations" could a man rediscover those values that otherwise seemed so lacking in the hard life of the California canyons." Carl Wheat

Further, ECV ridiculed the stuffy secret, fraternal, and political societies common at that time...groups such as the Masons, Odd Fellows. ECV was always regarded as a burlesque of the various secret societies of the time.

“**Tin**” ~ To mock the badges worn by such orders as the Masons, etc., Clampers would often make badges out of old tin cans and affix them to their vests while parading through town during a saturnalia. (big word, look it up)

~**ECV provided aid to fellow miners** who were down on their luck, *Red Shirts or not.* As **Noble Grand Clampatriarch Adam Lee Moore** stated,

“Most of the people who are not members of the Order have no conception of the good work and good deeds that was done by the Order in the early days of California, to a family or persons in distress, or needing help. Whether they belonged to the Order or not made no difference; when they called on the Clampers they got help, and without any red tape, but at once.”

Clamper meetings were held in the **“Hall of Comparative Ovations,”** usually “libation emporiums, where they reach states of well being, free of pain and distress.” The brethren were called together by the braying of the **“hewgag,”** a large tin horn. Prospective members, Poor Blind Candidates, were literally “taken in” by the requirement of contributing a poke of gold dust. Once he had endured the initiation and “seen the light,” he was delighted to find that **“All Clampers are officers and all officers are of equal indignity!”**

As age promoted young **red-shirted** miners to graybeards, the Ancient and Honorable Order gradually lapsed. ~**Red Shirts:** The 19th century male wore underwear strictly for warmth. The style was a two-piece outfit, button-up shirt and bulky baggy drawers. Red flannel with fleece lining was the vogue. It was believed woolen underwear would ward off rheumatism. Wool was the only fiber that would take the red cochineal (pronounced: kotch-in-eel) dye of the era and hold without running. Americans soon learned any flannel that was red had to be made of pure wool. (In the interest of historical accuracy, it should be noted that many miners wore *blue shirts* rather than red.)

~**Revival: 1915: Marysville, & Oroville.** ECV revived and incorporated...without the “s.” These Clampers held ceremonies **to bury the “hammer,” the symbol of “knockers” who bad-mouthed everything.** These chapters declined partially as a result of WW I

~~~Revival in the Modern Age~~~

~E Clampus Vitus Redivivus:1931~

The Revivifiers met at Clift's Hotel in San Francisco to establish the revived order. Why revive the order? Carl Wheat stated, "We thought western historians were getting too solemn and stuffy and that it was high time to recapture the spirit of fun."

Who were the principals among these noble Revivifiers?

~**Carl I. Wheat, THE Revivifier**: A noted attorney, editor of the California Historical Society's Quarterly. Wheat read widely in California history. The Mariposa Gazette remarked in 1936 the "Mr. Wheat has probably edited more published volumes on California history than any other individual." One of his projects was editing the Gold Rush diary of Charles E. DeLong. April 27, 1856, DeLong wrote, "Helped organize the E Clampus Vitus Order on the hill." (Young's Hill, near Camptonville.) This was the first of many ECV mentions in DeLong's diary. These led Wheat to write a detailed endnote stating, "The Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus (sometimes written 'E Clampus Vitus') was one of the most ludicrous sideshows of life in the mines of California." This, along with input from George Ezra Dane, triggered a notion within Wheat to revive the Ancient and Honorable Order. As XSNGH (1965-67) Sid Platford said, "There is only one Wheat, the rest of us are chaff."

~**G. Ezra Dane**: Also an attorney, an associate editor of the Harvard Law Review, a supporter of the California Historical Society. His grandfather had crossed the plains to mine in Tuolumne County and his father was born there. His book, Ghost Town, focuses on the Gold Rush community of Columbia during its heyday.

~**Leon Whitsell**: Another attorney, President of the California Railroad Commission (now PUC), a Grand Master of the Masons of California.

~**Adam Lee Moore:** an old mining engineer, became a Clamper in 1868 and was the final Humbug of Balaam Lodge, No. 107,304 in Sierra City. Moore read of the revival of ECV in a newspaper and contacted Carl Wheat. With the discovery of this Clampatriarch of the old order, the new order was blessed with the aura of **Apostolic Succession**.

~**William Bull Meek:** Another Clamper of the Old Order. Meek was a native Californian, born in 1857. He drove freight wagons in his youth and served many years as Wells Fargo & Co.'s agent in Camptonville. He was a clamper in Marysville in the 1890s.

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~**Capitulus Redivivus Yerba Buena #1** came into existence at a "speechfyin" banquet, April 12, 1932

~**Yerba Buena #1 held 2 meetings a year: (1) the "speechfyin" banquet in SF and (2) a "pilgrimage to the diggin's" in late May or early June...when the new Humbug was inaugurated.**

The destination of the 1st clamptrek was Camptonville. **William Bull Meek** told the brothers they would recognize Camptonville by the ancient inscription seen below:

DRINK NOW FROM

The Ass Sets of the E Clampus Vitus

The resurrection of the E Clampus Vitus, which during its existence recognized no depression—allowed no human suffering—made men out of fools, Christians out of infidels, and knocked the hell out of grafting politicians. The springs of the ECV are again flowing; Drink, Brother, Drink, that the blood of our ancestors may again course through our veins.

Following those first events, the Order quickly grew and soon more chapters would be established. **Present day Clampers would find their purpose in commemorating the sites and historic events of the west, as well as honoring the people responsible for its growth. Most importantly we seek out those people who are lesser known who might otherwise be overlooked.**

Platrix #2, established in Los Angeles in 1934 was the **first to plaque**: "The memory of the forgotten miner"... "at the place of discovery of gold in San Gabriel Canyon, 1854"

Also in 1934, **LSD #3**. Lord Sholto Douglas illustrates how Clampers would come to the aid of those in need *and* how chapters were named in honor of those lesser known participants in the Western drama.

Numbering of new chapters continued in order until, William Bull Meek #10 in 1936. It was then noticed that continuous numbering of new chapters was at odds with our motto of *Credo Quia Absurdum*.

For example, **Joaquin Murrieta #13**-1976, was established after **29** chapters since Meek #10. Joaquin Murrieta held its first meetings at the Clayton Club, located in the historic old town of Clayton. Old town Clayton had been a stop in the 1939 Clamptrek.

The name of Joaquin Murrieta was chosen for our chapter because it superbly fit into the Clamper sense of absurdity. Murrieta may or may not have existed. He may or may not have been a hero of the downtrodden or a vile bandit...a Zorro, a Robin Hood, or a Jesse James. He and his gang may or may not have operated in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. He may or may not have been killed by the California ranger, Harry Love. And, it may or may not have been Joaquin's head that was displayed throughout the west after his dead...(but never displayed in Calaveras County, where Murrieta was "well known.") *Credo Quia Absurdum!*

The number 13 was chosen because it was considered to be lucky...or could there be other connotations for the number 13?

The aims and purposes of ECV, as set forth in the draft constitution of 1938 are just as valid today:

- 1. To promote interest in and veneration and respect for the historic past of the great State of California.**
- 2. To cherish and safeguard historic landmarks of California by undertaking activities that lead to the proper, permanent marking and the safe preservation of these.** (Joaquin has placed over 64 plaques.)
- 3. To bind together into one fellowship, social and intellectual, the clumpselective and well-winnowed membership of this order.**
- 4. To transmit unto future ages without mar or blemish the manifold secrets, lore, traditions and esoteric practices bequeathed to us from out of the ancient times and handed down by a long and venerated line of sages and heroes.**

What say the brethren?

Satisfactory!

And so recorded!

Notes & illustrations were liberally plagiarized. Sources include, but are not limited to:

- E Clampus Vitus Now & Then
- YB#1's: ECV: 75 Years of Making History
- Carl I. Wheat: The Clampers
- Dr. Samuel Gregg George Chapter 1855
- Julia C. Bulette, 1864
- Personal interviews and "facts" I made up

Revised March 2009

The following page contains a note to Francis P. Farquhar from Carl Wheat, inviting Farquhar to lunch at the Clift Hotel to discuss the revival of ECV. Farquhar, a graduate of Harvard (as were Wheat and Dane), was intimately connected to the Sierra Club, serving as its president 1933-1935.

CARL I. WHEAT
SALFORD BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO

Dec. 11, 1931.

Dear Francis

A few of us are going to
get together for lunch at 12th Friday,
Dec. 11, at the Clift Hotel to discuss
ways & means for the revival of

the Ancient & Honorable California Order of

E. Clampus Vitus

Please join us. It will be a
small group, but we have large ideas.

Yours,

Carl

Francis Fitzgerald



**OhD eA rbRo Th Ery Ourt EnMi nUt Esis
UpY Ouha Vesee Nth eLig Hta nDre cEe
Ivedt hEst Aff oFRe LiE F tH ean Cie Nta
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