PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-01

The earliest dated mention of E Clampus Vitus yet found: Connersville, Indiana, 27 February 1846

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SUMMARY

In February 1846 a letter-writer at Connersville, Indiana, defending mesmerism, turned on two newspaper editors who had ridiculed it: “To both of these learned expositors of news our citizens are universally of the opinion that they are naturally qualified members of the ‘Eclampsus Vitus’ society, an order of which, we have in our town.” Printed in the *Indiana American* of Brookville on 27 February 1846, it is the earliest dated mention of E Clampus Vitus we have found anywhere. By July a “Tent No. 43” was meeting at Indianapolis “attired in full regalia,” and that winter a bill to charter a lodge at Centreville came before the legislature, and a committee turned it down with a joke. The order was at home in Indiana before any dated record its own histories cite.

THE RECORD

1. ***Indiana American*** **(Brookville, Ind.), 27 February 1846, p. 2, a letter dated Connersville, 20 February 1846**

   > *A defence of "Human Magnetism" against its scoffers, among them "Stewart," the Connersville editor "just returned from the State Legislature," and the editor of the Cambridge Reveille: "To both of these learned expositors of news our citizens are universally of the opinion that they are naturally qualified members of the 'Eclampsus Vitus' society, an order of which, we have in our town."*

   Hoosier State Chronicles, Indiana State Library · See the record (https://newspapers.library.in.gov/?a=d&d=IA18460227.1.2)

2. ***Indiana State Sentinel*** **(Indianapolis), weekly of 16 July 1846, p. 3 (also the semi-weekly of 15 July)**

   > *A notice to "the members of Tent No. 43 of the order of Eclampees Vitus" to meet in their hall on 16 July, "attired in full regalia."*

   Library of Congress, Chronicling America (also Hoosier State Chronicles, Indiana State Library) · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn82015677/1846-07-16/ed-1/?sp=3)

3. ***Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana***, **31st session, 1846–47, pp. 259, 272, 345**

   > *House bill No. 242, "An act to incorporate Jackson Lodge of the ancient order of Eclampses Vitus, of Centreville, Indiana," read on 30 and 31 December 1846. On 6 January 1847 the committee on corporations reported that "the bill is for the benefit of a species of animals with which the country is now abundantly supplied, and of which it is not desirable either to increase the number or improve the breed," and recommended that it be indefinitely postponed; the House concurred and laid it on the table.*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journalofhouseof184647indi)

4. **Albert Shumate, "The Mysterious History of E Clampus Vitus," talk to the San Francisco Corral of Westerners, 25 June 1991, as published by the Julia C. Bulette Chapter No. 1864, E Clampus Vitus, "ECV History"**

> *Documentation of the early order "in Bedford Pennsylvania, (1847); Metropolis, Illinois (1849); and Bowling Green, Missouri (1849)."*

Julia C. Bulette Chapter No. 1864 · See the record (https://juliacbulette.com/ecv-history/)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The order's own histories begin later, and elsewhere. Its historian Albert Shumate spoke, in a talk to the San Francisco Corral of Westerners on 25 June 1991, published on the Julia C. Bulette chapter's website, of documentation "in Bedford Pennsylvania, (1847); Metropolis, Illinois (1849); and Bowling Green, Missouri (1849)"; none of the histories we have read mentions Indiana. The founding is usually told as Ephraim Bee's, at West Union, Virginia, in 1845, but no document of 1845 naming the order has been found: Bee is first tied to it in a Weston paper of 1853, known only from a quotation of 1931, and in papers that can be read from 1855 (Research Note 2026-03). The Connersville letter moves the earliest dated record to February 1846, and to Indiana.

LIMITS

The letter shows the order at Connersville by February 1846; it does not say when the lodge began, or who began it. We read it on the Hoosier State Chronicles page and its text; we did not find the issue on Chronicling America. The Tent No. 43 notice was read on the page at the Library of Congress. An earlier dated record, anywhere, would supersede this note, and we ask to be told of one.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Full-text searches for “Eclampsus Vitus”, “Eclampses Vitus” and “Clampus Vitus”; Hoosier State Chronicles; Internet Archive; Wikipedia’s articles on E Clampus Vitus and Ephraim Bee and their references; ecvinc.org and chapter websites; *Then and Now* (E Clampus Vitus, 1966); the Shumate list of early lodges as given by the Julia C. Bulette chapter; HMDB; the 1888 *Biographical and Historical Record of Vermillion County, Indiana*; the research repositories Zenodo, OpenAlex and Crossref, with Google Scholar, JSTOR, Academia.edu and ResearchGate through web searches (OSF, Semantic Scholar, CORE, SSRN and arXiv could not be searched from our tools).

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/).

“New” means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note’s version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. *Weston Herald* (Weston, Va.), 28 November 1853 (vol. 1, no. 13), as quoted by Boyd B. Stutler, “Ephraim Bee, Grand Gyascutis,” *West Virginia Review*, August 1931; reprinted in *Credo quia absurdum* (Placerville: E Clampus Vitus, 1949). A typescript index and transcription of the *Weston Herald* from this issue to 3 June 1861 is held by the West Virginia & Regional History Center, West Virginia University (Box 22, Notebook 10, pp. 6–78). https://archives.lib.wvu.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/51858
2. Boyd B. Stutler, “Ephraim Bee, Grand Gyascutis,” *West Virginia Review*, August 1931; reprinted in E Clampus Vitus, *Credo quia absurdum* (Placerville: ECV 5954, 1949). https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31822035077338

3. Michael Urbanski, “Ephraim Bee in the newspapers, 1855–1860: the remembered founder of E Clampus Vitus in records of his own day,” Project Scroll Research Note 2026-03, version 1 (Project Scroll, 25 October 2026), doi:10.5281/zenodo.23631262. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23631262
4. Hoosier State Chronicles: Indiana’s Digital Historic Newspaper Program, Indiana State Library, accessed October 2026. https://newspapers.library.in.gov/
5. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, accessed October 2026. https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/
6. Internet Archive, full-text search. https://archive.org/
7. Wikipedia, “E Clampus Vitus,” and its references, accessed October 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E_Clampus_Vitus
8. Wikipedia, “Ephraim Bee,” and its references, accessed October 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim_Bee
9. E Clampus Vitus, Inc., “Chapters” (51 recognised chapters in 11 western states), accessed 22 October 2026, and the chapter websites linked from it. https://www.ecvinc.org/Chapters.htm
10. Dave Dunlap, R. Coke Wood and others, *Then and Now: The Story of E Clampus Vitus* (Stockton: E Clampus Vitus, 1966). PDF published by the Joaquin Murrieta Chapter No. 13. https://ecv13.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Then_and_Now_1966.pdf
11. The Historical Marker Database (HMDB), series “E Clampus Vitus Historical Markers,” accessed 22 October 2026. https://www.hmdb.org/results.asp?Search=Series&SeriesID=30
12. *Biographical and Historical Record of Vermillion County, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1888), p. 276 (Vermillion Township, Newport: “Order of Eclampsus Vitus!”). Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/biographicalhist00inchic/page/n289/mode/1up

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in E Clampus Vitus: the complete record (projectscroll.com/news/e-clampus-vitus-the-complete-record/). In the discoveries register:

- `connersville-1846` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#connersville-1846)
- `tent-43-indianapolis-1846` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#tent-43-indianapolis-1846)
- `jackson-lodge-centreville` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#jackson-lodge-centreville)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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BibTeX

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