PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-02

The Cassopolis lodge of 1846: the earliest lodge of E Clampus Vitus yet found with its members named

Michael Urbanski ORCID 0009-0006-8183-5828 (https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8183-5828), Project Scroll · Issued 25 October 2026 · Version 1 · doi:10.5281/zenodo.23631260 (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23631260)

SUMMARY

In the spring of 1846 four men instituted a lodge of the "Ancient and Honorable Order of the Eclampsus Vitus" at Cassopolis, Michigan: Dr. E. J. Bonine, Laban Harter, J. P. Osborn and Dr. L. Osborn. James M. Shepard set the story down, and the county histories of 1875 and 1882 printed it. It is the earliest lodge of the order yet found with its founders named, and the first known in Michigan. The names lead somewhere. Between 1844 and 1854 three of the four men married sisters of one family from Centreville, Indiana (when the lodge was founded only Bonine had yet married into the family), the town whose own lodge came before the Indiana legislature for a charter that winter; the fourth married a daughter of Eber Root, the innkeeper whose Union Hotel, by our reading, held the lodge's ball.

THE RECORD

1. **Howard S. Rogers, *History of Cass County, from 1825 to 1875* (Cassopolis: W. H. Mansfield, 1875), pp. 253–254**

   > *"A Lodge of the 'Ancient and Honorable Order of the Eclampsus Vitus,' which was instituted in the spring of 1846, with Dr. E. J. Bonine, Laban Harter, J. P. Osborn and Dr. L. Osborn as charter members." The account goes on: "A grand ball was given by the Lodge in the winter of 1846-7, at the Union Hotel, at which over two hundred badges of the 'Ancient and Honorable Order' were displayed." (Mathews, p. 174, reprints it as the "Order of Eclampsus Vitus.")*

   University of Michigan, Making of America · See the record (https://name.umdl.umich.edu/BAD0871.0001.001)

2. **Alfred Mathews, *History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882), pp. 170, 174, 178, 180–181**

   > *The same account in quotation marks, credited to James M. Shepard (p. 174); Eber Root's hotel, which in 1882 "still bears in faded letters the name, 'Union Hotel'" (p. 170); and Root's children, "Isabella (Mrs. J. P. Osborn), Mary (Worthington) and Jane (wife of L. D. Smith)" (p. 178). Shepard's own biography (pp. 180–181) gives his birth at North Brookfield, Massachusetts, on 24 November 1840, and his settling at Cassopolis on 3 September 1868.*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofcasscou00wate)

3. **Obituary of the sisters' brother, Nathaniel ("Than") Beall, *Niles Daily Star*, 12 September 1898, reprinted in the *Niles Weekly Mirror*, 14 September 1898, p. 1**

   > *Lists among his survivors "Mesdames E.J. Bonine and Laban Harter … of this city" and, a few lines on, "Mrs. Osborne, of Vandalia": the wives of three of the four charter members.*

   Friends of Silverbrook Cemetery, Niles (a volunteer transcription from the Niles District Library's microfilm) · See the record (https://friendsofsilverbrook.org/site5/obituaries/1423-beall-nathaniel)

4. **Gilbert Cope, *A Genealogy of the Sharpless Family* (Philadelphia, 1887), pp. 734, 749**

> *Daughters of Nathaniel Beall and Sarah Talbot, who married at Centreville in 1826 (p. 734): Evaline, who married Evan J. Bonine at Centreville on 8 August 1844 (p. 749); Emily P., who married Laban Harter on 5 September 1847; and Helen M., who married Dr. Leander Osborn at Calvin, Michigan, on 12 November 1854 (p. 734).*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/genealogyofsharp00cope)

5. **W. A. Norton, *Directory of Dowagiac, Cassopolis* ... (1899), "Historical Sketch of Cassopolis" by Lowell H. Glover, pp. 237–238**

> *The Odd Fellows instituted on 18 February 1847 "in the ball room of the Cassopolis hotel, a frame building standing on the lot now occupied by the Baptist church which was burnt down in 1859"; the Masons' first meeting "in the Union Hotel, the building afterwards turned into the planing mill, June 12th, 1852."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/3256376.0001.001.umich.edu)

WHAT IT CHANGES

Most early lodges of the order are known from a notice, or a later memory, that names no one, or only an officer. Cassopolis names all four founders, and so they can be followed: to the Beall sisters of Centreville, to Eber Root's tavern, and back across the state line to the Indiana town whose own lodge wanted a charter. In the spring of 1846 only Bonine was yet married into the family; Harter followed in 1847 and Leander Osborn in 1854. Even so, the family links suggest the road by which the order came from Indiana to Michigan. (Records written earlier do name members of other lodges, such as the *Weston Herald* of 1853, known from a quotation of 1931; the Cassopolis account was written in 1875, about a lodge of 1846.)

LIMITS

The account was written nearly thirty years after the event, and the 1882 history reprints the 1875 text rather than confirming it. No record written in 1846 has been found for the lodge, and Shepard was no witness: born in Massachusetts in 1840 or 1842 (the Cass County books of 1882, 1893 and 1906 give 1840; *Michigan Biographies*, 1924, and the Library of Michigan give 1842, as does the age of 84 in a death notice of 1927) and raised in Boston, he settled at Cassopolis as a dentist only in 1868 (Mathews, pp. 180–181). Root also built a second hotel, burned in 1859, but that house was the "Cassapolis Hotel," in whose ball-room the Odd Fellows were instituted on 18 February 1847 (Rogers, p. 254; Norton, 1899, p. 237); the Union Hotel was his first tavern, later the planing mill (Norton, 1899, p. 238; Glover, 1906, p. 146). The earliest record of the name written at the time is an advertisement of 1859, so that the name was the same in 1846–47 is our reading, and who kept the house that winter is not recorded. The 1898 obituary is known to us from a volunteer transcription, which counts "two sisters and three brothers" but names three women and two brothers; Cope's genealogy shows all three women were Beall sisters. A notice written at the time, or an earlier named lodge elsewhere, would change this note.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Full-text searches of Hoosier State Chronicles and the Internet Archive for "Eclampsus Vitus", "Eclampses Vitus" and "Clampus Vitus"; 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; Rogers (1875) and Mathews (1882); the Cope genealogy (1887); the Friends of Silverbrook Cemetery's transcribed obituaries from the Niles papers of 1898; in-item searches of the Indiana House Journal of 1846–47; Rogers (1875), p. 254, and Norton's *Directory* (1899) for the hotels of 1847; Chronicling America for "Union Hotel" at Cassopolis (*Cass County Republican*, 1858–60); the Root genealogy (1870); Glover (1906) for the deaths of the Osborns; the Cass District Library's index of *Vigilant* reels (a gap from 14 May 1874 to 13 January 1876). Digital Michigan Newspapers could not be searched; 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. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, 31st session, 1846–47 (Indianapolis, 1846–47), pp. 259, 272 (House bill No. 242, Jackson Lodge of the order at Centreville), 345 (the committee on corporations' report, 6 January 1847). Indiana State Library, via Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/journalofhouseof184647indi
2. *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
3. 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
4. Wikipedia, "E Clampus Vitus," and its references, accessed October 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E_Clampus_Vitus
5. Wikipedia, "Ephraim Bee," and its references, accessed October 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim_Bee

6. 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
7. 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
8. 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,” accessed October 2026. https://juliacbulette.com/ecv-history/
9. James Pierce Root, *Root Genealogical Records, 1600–1870* (New York: R. C. Root, Anthony & Co., 1870), no. 1432 (Eber Root’s daughter Isabel, “m. Jordan Osborn of Cassopolis”). Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/rootgenealogical00root
10. L. H. Glover, ed., *A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 146, 264, 386, 556–558. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/twentiethcentury00glov
11. *Cass County Republican* (Cassopolis, Mich.), 15 November 1860, p. 3: “UNION HOTEL. M. J. BALDWIN, PROPRIETOR, CASSAPOLIS” (also 1 December 1859, p. 4). Library of Congress, Chronicling America. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn85033611/1860-11-15/ed-1/?sp=3
12. Cass District Library, Local History Branch (Cassopolis), *Research Guide: Index to the Microfilm Reels of the Cassopolis Vigilant* (2021), accessed October 2026. https://www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Research-Guide-Index-to-the-Microfilm-Reels-of-the-Cassopolis-Vigilant.pdf
13. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Berrien and Cass Counties, Michigan* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1893), pp. 288–289 (James M. Shepard). Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/portraitbiograph00bio/page/288/mode/1up
14. *Michigan Biographies*, vol. 2 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1924), p. 283 (James M. Shepard). Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/michiganbiograph0002vari/page/283/mode/1up
15. “Colonel James M. Shepard,” death notice, *The American Foreign Service Journal*, vol. 4, no. 10 (October 1927), p. 340. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/sim_foreign-service-journal_1927-10_4_10/page/340/mode/1up

16. Digital Michigan Newspapers, Central Michigan University (could not be searched from our tools), October 2026. https://digmichnews.cmich.edu/
17. Library of Michigan, Michigan Legislative Biography: James M. Shepard (24 November 1842 – 13 August 1927), accessed October 2026. https://mdoe.state.mi.us/legislators/Legislator/LegislatorDetail/1131

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in A lodge of E Clampus Vitus, in Cassopolis, in 1846 (projectscroll.com/news/e-clampus-vitus-in-cassopolis-1846/). In the discoveries register:

- `cassopolis-1846-lodge` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#cassopolis-1846-lodge)
- `cassopolis-1846-sisters` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#cassopolis-1846-sisters)
- `cassopolis-1846-centreville` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#cassopolis-1846-centreville)
- `osborn-root-son-in-law` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#osborn-root-son-in-law)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

Michael Urbanski, “The Cassopolis lodge of 1846: the earliest lodge of E Clampus Vitus yet found with its members named,” Project Scroll Research Note 2026-02, version 1 (25 October 2026), https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-02/. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23631260.

BibTeX

```
@techreport{urbanski202602,
  author      = {Urbanski, Michael},
  orcid       = {0009-0006-8183-5828},
  title       = {{The Cassopolis lodge of 1846: the earliest lodge of E
Clampus Vitus yet found with its members named}},
  institution = {Project Scroll},
  type        = {Project Scroll Research Note},
  number      = {2026-02},
  year        = {2026},
  month       = {oct},
  url         = {https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-02/},
  doi         = {10.5281/zenodo.23631260},
  note        = {Version 1}
}
```