PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-23

E Clampus Vitus at Peru, Illinois, in 1850, in two Ohio villages, and at Port Douglas, British Columbia, in 1862: three new records of the order before the California revival

Michael Urbanski ORCID 0009-0006-8183-5828 (https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8183-5828), Project Scroll · Issued 4 November 2026 · Version 2 · doi:10.5281/zenodo.23968672 (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23968672)

SUMMARY

Three records widen the map of E Clampus Vitus before its California revival of 1931. On 11 May 1850 the *Ottawa Free Trader* of Ottawa, Illinois, quoting the *Peru Telegraph*, reported that "Quite a number of brethren (!) and members in good standing, of the ancient order of Old Eclampsis Vitus passed through Peru on Thursday last," and turned the joke on the *Telegraph*'s editor, 'Squire Holbrook, "the very personification of Old Eclampsis himself." It is the order's earliest appearance yet found in northern Illinois and the earliest record yet found spelling the name "Eclampsis." Two Ohio county histories remember lodges of their own: at Zanesfield, Logan County, "the Eclampus Vitus, whose history was as brief as its initiatory ceremony was unique" (1880), and at Woodstock, Champaign County, where, in a town long "anti-secret society," the first of the other lodges named is "the 'E Clampus Vitus' which prospered for a few years" (1907). And on 11 February 1862 the *Weekly British Colonist* of Victoria reported that "A lodge of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E. Clampsus Vitus has been organised at Port Douglas, B. C.," where "Members are initiated nightly": the order's earliest record yet found in British territory, on the road to the Cariboo gold fields.

THE RECORD

1. ***Ottawa Free Trader*** **(Ottawa, Illinois), 11 May 1850, p. 3, col. 1, quoting the *Peru Telegraph***

   > *"Quite a number of brethren (!) and members in good standing, of the ancient order of Old Eclampsis Vitus passed through Peru on Thursday last. Their condition was tolerably good."*

   Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84038582/1850-05-11/ed-1/?sp=3)

2. **W. H. Perrin and J. H. Battle, *History of Logan County and Ohio* (Chicago, 1880), p. 419, Zanesfield**

   > *"the Eclampus Vitus, whose history was as brief as its initiatory ceremony was unique"*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofloganco00perr_0/page/n390/mode/1up)

3. **Joseph Chamberlin and Warren D. Sibley, *History of Woodstock* (Woodstock, Ohio, 1907), p. 48, "Other Societies"**

   > *"Woodstock was an anti-secret society town for many years. The Lodges organized were the 'E Clampus Vitus' which prospered for a few years; then the 'Know Nothings'"*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofwoodsto00cham/page/n53/mode/1up)

4. ***The Weekly British Colonist*** **(Victoria), 11 February 1862**

   > *"A lodge of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E. Clampsus Vitus has been organised at Port Douglas, B. C. Members are initiated nightly, and the lodge is in a flourishing condition."*

   University of Victoria, via the Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist311uvic)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The order is placed in northern Illinois by May 1850, a new spelling of its name ("Eclampsis") is dated, Ohio joins the states where lodges of the old order were remembered, and the order is shown across the border in British Columbia in 1862, four years after the Fraser River rush and a decade after it reached California.

LIMITS

The Peru report is known through the *Free Trader*'s quotation of the *Telegraph*, and its tone is a joke between rival editors. The two Ohio accounts are local histories written decades later, and neither gives a year for its lodge. The Port Douglas report is a single paragraph in the Victoria paper.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Chronicling America, every spelling of the order's name state by state for 1846–1852 (about 2,000 pages screened); the Internet Archive's full text of county histories, 1800–1935; Hoosier State Chronicles, 1838–1855; the order's histories (*Then and Now*, 1966; *Credo quia absurdum*, 1949; Wilson, 1995). We found none of the three records cited in them.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"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.

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WORKS CITED

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

1. E Clampus Vitus, *E Clampus Vitus: Then and Now, 1852–1966* (Stockton, 1966). https://ecv13.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Then_and_Now_1966.pdf

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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:

- `peru-illinois-1850` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#peru-illinois-1850)
- `ohio-lodges-zanesfield-woodstock` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#ohio-lodges-zanesfield-woodstock)
- `port-douglas-bc-1862` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#port-douglas-bc-1862)

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CHANGES TO THIS NOTE

5 November 2026: Port Douglas called the earliest record yet found in British territory (Honolulu, 1858, is older); Woodstock’s lodge quoted in full; the paper named as the Weekly British Colonist; “yet found” added; four years, not three, after the Fraser River rush.