

REV. MSGR. H. E. MATTINGLY
EDITOR

197 EAST GAY STREET
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215



THE FAMILY OF "JOHNNY" CLEM
DRUMMER BOY OF CHICAMAUGA

By Herman E. Mattingly

The fame of "Johnny" Clem, Drummer Boy of Chicamauga, needs no further testimony. His bravery during the War between the States, particularly at the battles of Shiloh and Chicamauga, has been told and retold. Of interest, however, is his family.

Be it noted, first of all, that the family name was Klem. Whether by error or by design, Johnny's family name became Clem sometime after he joined the Union army. His father was Roman Klem, born August 9, 1815, in Alsace-Lorraine. His mother, also a native of Alsace-Lorraine, was Magdalene (Weiber?), born December 17, 1817. Both were members of the Catholic Church.

It seems that the young couple decided to come to America shortly after their marriage in their home land. More than one factor must have influenced them to leave Alsace-Lorraine, part of France at that time. One was, no doubt, the greatly unsettled political situation which prevailed throughout most of Europe during the middle of the nineteenth century. Of particular concern must have been conditions in France itself where a revolution occurred in 1848. And, of course, there was the hope of finding better conditions in the young and growing country across the Atlantic to entice the young Roman Klem and his bride.

St. Francis de Sales parish in Newark, Ohio, was known in its early days as a "German" parish. It is likely that Roman Klem knew someone in the area, and was thus prompted to settle there. His arrival must have been in 1850 or shortly before.

Three children were born to Roman and Magdalene Klem. The first one was baptized John Joseph in St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark, some days after his birth August 13, 1851. The next to grace the household was Mary Elizabeth ("Lizzie") who was born in September, 1853. More than two years later, on November 13, 1855, the second son, Louis, was born. Unfortunately, the register of Sacraments for that period at St. Francis de Sales church has been lost or burned. There is no doubt, however, that all three children were baptized there and attended the parish school.

Tragedy came to the family when Magdalene Klem was hit by a train while she was crossing the railroad yards in Newark. She died as a result on August 2, 1860, and lies buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery at Newark.

Sometime later Roman married one Elizabeth. Born in 1828, she was a Lutheran by faith, but later joined the Catholic faith of the little family. She was devoted to the children and they were devoted to her, including young Johnny who was already in the army. Apparently no children were born of this second union.

Roman Klem died November 17, 1890, at the age of 75, and lies buried next to Magdalene. His second wife survived him, living until 1905. She also is buried in the family plot in Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

With the outbreak of the War between the States, fever naturally ran high in the hearts of the young men of the period. John Joseph Klem, not yet ten years of age, ran away from home to join the army. Many reports indicate that he left in May of 1861. He himself wrote in an article published years later in the Outlook magazine: "I was not ten years old when, in May, 1861, I offered my valuable services as a drummer to Captain McDougal of the Third Ohio Regiment of Volunteers, which was on its way to the front. . . . This was at Newark, Ohio, where at the time I was going to school. My mother was dead; my father had no notion of allowing me to go to the war. . . ." His mother's death, the natural dislike of a boy his age for the confinement of the classroom, as well as the possibility of "spring fever" could only add to the impelling desire to join the army.

It is a family tradition that Johnny had gone to church with his younger sister and brother, probably to evening May devotions, and left them there with some excuse for not entering the church with them. When he did not return home his father searched for him. But young John managed to elude his father.

Just as Johnny's efforts to join the Ohio contingent were rebuffed, so were his attempts to become part of any other group of soldiers. Eventually he attached himself to the Twenty-second Michigan Volunteers Regiment. He made friends with the enlisted men, won their affection and protection. He served as the drummer boy of the regiment, and received pay though he was not on the official muster-roll.

Young John had not yet received his First Communion when he left home. He had hardly arrived at any maturity of faith. As a result he drifted away from it in the army where conditions provided little to sustain him in the practice of his religion. Later in life, when he married, he joined the Episcopal Church of his bride.

While the spelling of his family name had changed from Klem to Clem, so also his middle name took a change. He dropped the Joseph of his Baptism and, because of his admiration for the President, became known as John Lincoln Clem.

It is not the purpose here to outline the military record of the Drummer Boy of Shiloh and Chicamauga. Suffice it to state that he served in four wars: The War between the States; the Indian Wars in Texas; the Spanish-American War, and was an instructor during World War I. For many years he was prominent in working to obtain financial aid for veterans and their widows. At the end of his life he had been promoted to Major General, U.S.A., Retired.

Among the generals under whom John Clem served was General William Stark Rosecrans, older brother of the Rt. Rev. Sylvester H. Rosecrans, first Bishop of Columbus. In 1880 when the General, who had retired to San Francisco, was elected to Congress, Lieutenant Clem wrote to congratulate him. In the letter John recalled the kindness the General had shown him both while in military service and afterwards. (This letter is found in the collection of General Rosecrans papers at the University of California in Los Angeles.)

John Clem was a First Lieutenant when he married Anita Rosetta French, daughter of Major General and Mrs. William H. French, on Monday, May 24, 1875, in St. Luke's Church, San Antonio, Texas. The first three children born of this union died in infancy. On June 8, 1885, the couple was blessed with a son whom they name John Clem, Jr. At the time the father was stationed at Ft. McHenry, Baltimore, Maryland.

John Clem's first wife died August 5, 1899, at New Castle, Delaware. A few years later, September 23, 1903, he married Elizabeth Sullivan, whose parents were quite wealthy, and devout Catholics. A native of Indianola, Texas, Elizabeth was born in November 1878.

To the new union was born one daughter, Elizabeth Ann, who was baptized in St. Mary's Church, San Antonio, Texas, not long after her birth on June 24, 1906. Although her father was now more than 54 years of age, the young Elizabeth became the center of his attention and affection and remained so until he died.

His military duties and interests occupied John Clem throughout his life. He spent much of his time in the Quartermaster Corps, and had risen to the position of Assistant Quartermaster General by the time of his retirement. The family travelled much because of his work, but San Antonio, Texas, became their home.

When his daughter entered the convent of the cloistered Discalced Carmelite nuns in 1929, he found the sacrifice difficult, but was at peace knowing that she was happy. Later he attributed to her the grace he received to return to the Catholic Church. Announcing the happy event of his return he wrote June 15, 1931, to his niece, Mary Adam, in Newark:

You will be glad to learn that I am again a full fledged "Holy Roman" and feel happy as I know all my family will be pleased. Spent three days at Manresa (1) and took my First Communion yesterday. It is a beautiful "Retreat" over-looking Annapolis across the Severn River. We had 39 laymen and they were all most kind, and presented me with a prayer book and every member signed it as did the two Fathers McDonnell (2) who is the one that got this beautiful sight, and Father Treacy (3) who is his able assistant, as well as being on the Georgetown University staff.

I have been very busy since I got back to Washington and am now pretty well up with my work. These three days at Manresa have been very pleasant and instructive and very tiresome to we older laymen. My knees are still sore. I would have fallen if my friend General Lenihan had not supported me at the Communion. After that the Fathers told me not to kneel any more.

Tell your dear mother (4) I am glad and happy to be with my family again. My sweetheart daughter is the one that finally got me over, It was hard to break away from my life-long Masonic friends. Most of them, however, will think I have taken the right course. Love to all. Your loving Uncle, Jno L Clem.

John Clem was confirmed while visiting his daughter who was then in the monastery of the Carmelite nuns at Indianapolis. Bishop Chartrand officiated at the ceremony which took place October 6, 1932, in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, Indianapolis.

Of John Clem's two children, the older, John Clem, Jr., married and was the father of two children, Lillian and Florence, both born in San Antonio, Texas, where his widow now lives at the age of 89. John, Jr., died on May 13 about fifteen years ago. His daughter, Lillian, married Clarkson Groos, and lives in San Antonio. Florence married army General Dwight Edward Beach. The parents of six children, they now live in Dexter, Michigan.

When Elizabeth Ann was born her brother was already 21 years of age. St. Mary's Church, San Antonio, was the scene of her Baptism, her First Communion and her Confirmation. Doted upon by her parents and her brother, she received the best of education. Schools she attended included Miss Sand's School, attached to St. Matthew's Church (now Cathedral), Washington; St. Margaret's (Episcopal) School, Washington; Miss Wasson's School, San Antonio; Sacred Heart Academy (Dominican Sisters), Washington; Holton-Arms School, and Rosemont College (Holy Child nuns), Rosemont, Pa. She then went to Europe for further education in France and Belgium.

Elizabeth, now a young lady, wished to become a cloistered Carmelite nun. Her mother persuaded her to wait until she was 21. While waiting she made her debut as a socialite in Washington. Not long after, however, she received the veil of a nun at the Carmelite Monastery, New Albany, Indiana. Her father and mother were present as Bishop Joseph Chartrand of Indianapolis officiated at the ceremonies. She became known in religion as Sister Anne of the Trinity.

Later the monastery was transferred to Coal Springs Road, Indianapolis. When the Sisters made a foundation at Reno, Nevada, in 1954, Sister Anne of the Trinity was one of those assigned to the new monastery known as Our Lady of the Mountain. It is there that she continues to lead the life of these privileged religious.

General John Clem's sister, Mary Elixabeth Klem, married John Peter Adam in St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark, on November 30, 1882. Her husband was a native of Etzling, Alsace, where he was born in 1853. After a short time spent in Iowa where their first child was born, they returned to Newark. Their seven children were Mary Elena, born Nov. 14, 1883; John Roman, Born Dec. 9, 1885; George Leonard, Born October 27, 1887; Sylvester Andrew, born Dec. 18, 1889; Edward Clement, born November 25, 1891; Cecilia Elizabeth, born August 5, 1896, and Elizabeth Magdalene, born November 19, 1898.

The oldest of the Adam Children, Mary Elena, never married. The second, John Roman, married (1911) Margaret Kerwick, and was the father of five children. The third child, George Leonard, and his wife, the former Mary Lapp, lived with their five children in Wenatche, Washington. Sylvester Andrew, next of the Adam children, married Mathilda Desch and lived in Newark. They were the parents of three children, two boys and a girl. The latter died in infancy; the boys were named Bernard and George.

The fifth child of John and Mary Adam was Edward Clement, who remained single. The sixth child, Cecilia Elizabeth, married William P. Hutchison and lived in Akron. The youngest of the family, Elizabeth Magdalene, married (1942) John Birmingham. Her husband is now deceased, and she lives on North Eleventh Street in Newark, Ohio.

John L. Clem loved his younger brother, Louis, dearly. His letters to him reveal his concern and his brotherly aid. He was instrumental in obtaining work for Louis in Washington, and wrote to him often to give help and advice. "Do not get homesick," he wrote. "Remember you had a brother who left all friends long before he was as old as you. Go to Church tomorrow (I mean Sunday) and always attend to your Christian duties. Do not miss school. Let me know whether you are happy."

From Ft. McKavett, Texas, John wrote (4) to Louis on March 1, 1872: "I am very glad to hear that you are going to school and church regular. . . . You had better give up the idea of coming to Texas. You are doing well in Washington and I will write to Gen Walker, Baker and Mr. Seaton and see that you get in the Pension Bureau. If you were to come down here you would have to work very hard and get poor pay, and no chance to go to school. . . . I am glad to hear that you are saving your money still." Again in a letter of May 8, 1872, he wrote to Louis: "Be a good boy and attend to your studies."

Louis was appointed to a position with the Pension Bureau. His older brother wrote to him in July, 1872: "When you write me again tell me where you have been since you were discharged from the Census, and what you have been doing, and if you go to church and Sunday school regularly. I am real glad to hear of your appointment. . . ." In another letter of December 5, 1872, John wrote: "Keep to your books, Read History at all spare times. It is both interesting and instructive. Be careful with your morals. Write home often and let them know how you are getting along. . . ."

John was constantly advising his younger brother about his studies, his efforts in business, and offered to help him in setting up a bookstore. Frequently he urged Louis to write home often.

Apparently the younger brother had thought of going to the Wyoming Territory, for on January 31, 1874, John wrote to him: "I am glad you showed your good sense in not going to Wyoming Territory. It will be better to just earn your board the first year, than to go to Wyoming Territory. . . ."

Louis did undertake a business venture in Washington. This is evident from a letter of John written February 28, 1874. But whether or not the business prospered, the yearnings of Louis for adventure and travel to the West must have won out over business. He was killed in a battle with the Indians at Custar City, May 1, 1876. John's letter to his parents from Ft. McHenry, Md., May 23, 1876, reveals his sorrow and worry:

My dear parents and sister: I was worried nearly to death when I received your telegram today. I cannot believe that my dear brother is killed. I rec'd a letter from him dated May 1st or April 30, so am sure John Kline is misinformed. The General sent your telegram to the Adjutant General almost immediately after I received it, asking him if the Indians had killed any people in Custar City and if so to give their names. I will go to W(ashington) tomorrow myself. The General also wrote to General Sherman. Of course, they will know whether Louis was killed as the military authority always sends the names of the persons hurt in Indian engagements. I cannot believe that the dear boy is hurt. I will telegraph you if I hear good news, which I hope to God I will hear tomorrow. Do not be down-hearted, as these Indian reports are false nine times out of ten. I hope and pray Louis is well and hearty. Anita is nearly well again. I arrived Saturday. Will write soon again. Write me what John Kline wrote. Hoping that we may hear good news tomorrow, I am, affectionately, Jno L Clem.

Louis is buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Newark. His tombstone gives the day of his death as May 1, 1876. He was hardly 21 and one half years of age.

John L. Clem, the Drummer Boy of Shiloh and Chicamauga, did not fail to visit his family and home town regularly. In return he is held in affection in Newark, Ohio, where one of the public schools is known as the John L. Clem Elementary School. As a bicentennial project the city will dedicate a statue this summer in honor of its famous son.

John Lincoln Clem was a small man, known to be quiet, gentle and kind. Many honors came to him during his life, and he has been honored greatly since his death. Indicative of his appeal to youth was his enrollment in the Ohio Teenage Hall of Fame on March 2, 1959.

Major General John L. Clem lived a full and fruitful life. He was more than 85 years of age when he died in bed, saying the Rosary, at his home, 404 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas. The date was May 13, 1937. He was given full military honors as he was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. On his tombstone is the simple inscription: "The Drummer Boy of Chicamauga."

- (1) Manresa is the name of a retreat house operated by the Jesuit Fathers not far from Annapolis, Maryland.
- (2) Rev. E. DeL. McDonnell, S.J.
- (3) Rev. Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.
- (4) His sister, Mary Elizabeth Adam Klem Adam.
- (5) The letters of General Clem are quoted here through the courtesy of Mrs. Betty Birmingham, Newark, Ohio, who now possesses them.

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THE CIVIL LICENSE OF REV. N. D. YOUNG, O.P.
TO PERFORM MARRIAGES

By Donald M. Schlegel

Civil laws regulating marriage in Ohio were first established by the government of the Northwest Territory in 1788 and were amended in 1792, 1799 and 1803. The section of law regulating the solemnization of marriages remained the same from the first meeting of the Ohio State legislature until amended in 1824. This section (1) stated:

Be it further enacted, that it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace in his respective county, to solemnize marriages, and ordained ministers of any religious society or congregation, (such minister producing to the court of common pleas of the county in which he resides, credentials of his being a regular minister of such society) whereupon the court is hereby required to grant such minister a license, whereby he shall be authorized to solemnize marriages, so long as he shall continue a regular minister in such society or congregation, between any persons legally applying to him, within this state; and the society of people called Quakers and Menonists, in their public meetings, or agreeable to the rules and regulations of their church, are authorized to join together as husband and wife, all persons not prohibited by this law, who may apply to them in manner herein after provided.

In order to ensure the civil legality of marriages among his flock and to avoid the penalties for marrying without a license, Rev. Nicholas D. Young, O.P., obtained such a license. The first minute book of the Court of Common Pleas of Perry County, Ohio, contains this notation for the September term of 1818 (2):

On application of J. B. Orton, it is ordered by the court that the Reverend Nicholas D. Young be licensed to solemnize marriages throughout the State of Ohio, & that certificate be issued.

This license allowed Rev. Young to solemnize marriages on his missionary journeys throughout the entire state. According to his own account (3), he had not yet arrived in Perry County when this license was issued, but this record indicates that he already considered Perry County to be his permanent residence; this was about two months before St. Joseph's was dedicated.

John B. Orton, who represented Rev. Young before the court, was an attorney residing in Perry County. He had been prosecuting attorney of Fairfield County in 1816, before Perry County was erected (4), and he was elected state senator from Perry and Morgan counties in 1831 and 1832 (5). He became a Catholic in 1820 (6).

(1) Acts Passed at the First Session of the Eighth General Assembly of the State of Ohio; begun and held in the Town of Chillicothe, December 4th, 1809...; printed in Chillicothe by J. S. Collins & Co., 1810, page 120.

Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Ohio First Session (begun and held at Chillicothe, 1 March, 1803); printed in Chillicothe by N. Willis, printer to the State, 1803, page 31.

(2) Perry County Court of Common Pleas, Minute Book A, page 31.

- (3) History of Perry County by E. S. Colborn; W. H. Beers, Chicago, 1883, page 290.
(4) Pioneer Period and Pioneer People of Fairfield County, Ohio, by C. M. L. Wiseman; F. J. Heer, Columbus, 1901, page 33; and History of Fairfield County by C. Miller; Chicago, 1912, page 96.
(5) Colborn, op. cit., page 51.
(6) Catholic Record Society "Bulletin", Vol. I, page 2.

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Acknowledgements

The following volumes have been added to the Collection of Diocesan Authors of the Catholic Record Society:

- Our Quest for Happiness by Bishop Clarence E. Elwell, & Others. 4 Vols. Mentzer, Bush & Co., Chicago. 1956. Gift of Bishop Clarence G. Issenmann.
Make the Way Known by Katherine Burton. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, New York. 1959. (The history of the Dominican Congregation of St. Mary of the Springs, 1822 to 1957.) Gift of Sister Mary Charles, O.P.
Life of Christ by Rev. J. Puiseux translated by Rev. Roderick A. McEachen. D. H. McBride & Co., New York, Akron, Chicago. 1900. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Montel, Shawnee, Ohio.
Four volumes of the Rev. Clement Crock, gifts of St. Charles School: Grace and the Sacraments(1936); The Commandments in Sermons (1935); No Cross, No Crown (1949), and The Apostles' Creed (1938).
The Golden Secret of Green Acres a Pageant of Rural Life, by Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Cousins, Ph.D. Rosary Press, Somerset, Ohio. 1950. (Two copies). Gift of Rev. John P. Byrne.
Profile History of the Ohio Province, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, 1901-1970. M. Rosenthal Company, Cincinnati. 1974. Gift of Sister Agnes Immaculate, S.N. D.N.

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Note: The "Journal" of Sylvester H. Rosecrans in Rome will be continued in the August issue of the "Bulletin".