

Infamous Unexpected Visitors at the Mouth of Double Bayou

by Andrea McClelland

During my years growing up south of Anahuac, I was privileged to sit at the feet of some of the most intriguing and versatile storytellers of the time. They didn't just tell stories. They made them come alive. They weren't just storytellers, they were characters.

They could thrust listeners into the center of the action. The smells, sights, sounds and sequence of events of each oral history tale excited and enthralled young and old alike. Two such characters and storytellers were Delbert "Delly" Comstock and W. C. Clyde Sullivan. They lived the history, relished it, and passed it on for generations to enjoy.

During the middle of the Great Depression, growing up at the end of the road on Double Bayou, had its advantages. The bay road, which was little more than a muddy cattle trail, had only three houses on it at the time. One had to be going there for a reason and not simply passing through. The population was very sparse even when one came to the end of the road. This made the area, not only peaceful, but a good hide out for those not wishing to be easily discovered.

One of those few homes on the bay road was Katie Krammer Sullivan's place. Her father Henry Krammer, and son Clyde Sullivan lived on the land with her. The family raised beef cattle and were farmers after Willie Sullivan, Clyde's father, was killed in an oil field accident. This home survives today and is owned by Warren Sullivan.

The Comstock place met its fate long ago deteriorating into ruins as the descendants of the family moved to California and became restaurateurs. It was located where the cement cistern and old oak tree were in Job Beason Park prior to the renovation of the park in 2009.. Long ago thick groves of oak trees covered this entire area. During this particular era, Abe Comstock, the father of "Delly", tended the two light houses located in Trinity Bay; one west of the Sullivan place and one south of the mouth of Double Bayou.

In another part of Texas, not too far away from Chambers County, near Crockett Texas, another story was unfolding. The crime life of Clyde Barrow had begun in the month of December, 1926. He was incarcerated at Eastham Farms, a penitentiary near Crockett, Texas. Clyde was constantly on the look out for possible ways to free himself from his incarceration.

On January 27, 1932, Clyde Barrow went to extremes by having a fellow prisoner cut off two of his toes. His goal was to be moved away from Eastham Farms to a possibly less secure incarceration. The ploy evidently worked well for him, for on the 8th of February, 1932, Governor Ross Sterling pardoned Clyde Barrow.

Once Barrow was free, it afforded him the opportunity to go back to Dallas and get his Bonnie, a cafe' waitress and amateur poet, meet up with his older brother, Buck and wife, Blanche, and pick up a few more unsavoury characters, such as W.D. Jones and Henry Methvin. It was during these years from 1932 -1934, which were considered The Barrow Gang's, "heyday."

During this era residents living around the mouth of Double Bayou utilized the Post Office and General Store located by Eagle Ferry and operated by the Gottfried Wolff family. The few families who lived in the island had time to spend tending their citrus orchards, gardens, fishing, and generally enjoying the slow country life which included visiting and sitting on the porch playing 42. Open range was still the law of the land in Texas and cattle roamed at will. Thus, it was noticeable when outsiders came down the muddy cattle trail to the island, and certainly more noticeable when they were driving a car.

Teenagers found much to occupy their time in this peaceful setting by building and sailing their own boats up and down the forks of the bayou and out the mouth of the bayou into Trinity Bay. Many additional activities occupied their days; riding their horses, catching the Eagle Ferry to visit with friends, and attending Graydon school were only a few. When there was free time, after chores, they idled the time away exploring the land. However, every day was not idyllic.

Some days the teenagers just knew to hide. Between the years of 1932 -1934 when the Ford with TX Lic. Plate 587-956 came down the road to the mouth of Double Bayou, young people climbed off their horses and hid in the edge of the woods to get a glimpse of The Barrow Gang and watch the action. From this vantage point they could view the gang, their car, and the array of guns and ammo contained in the "arsenal on wheels". They watched as the gang picnicked and enjoyed their hiatus of running from the law and their wayward ways.

The Barrow Gang had close ties to Chambers County. What and who those were are not precisely clear at this time. When things got "too hot" for the gang as they travelled their triangle from Texas, to Missouri, to Oklahoma, they would head south to hide out and have a break where no one would suspect them. That destination, was the mouth of Double Bayou. to the end of the road, the Bayside Subdivision, south of Anahuac, Texas.

The things the teenagers saw astounded them. The boys later realized when they grew older they could have been shot dead in their earlier years, just as easily as the other 12 victims of The Barrow Gang. Clyde and "Delly" could remember seeing the way the gang dressed, the description of the car, and the many guns and multitude of ammo the gang carried with them. They

remembered keeping their horses further back in the woods and crawling on their bellies and elbows to view the actions of the gang. The eye witnesses said there were 10,12,. and 20 gauge shotguns, both pump and single shot in various models and years.

They said Bonnie's favorite appeared to be a 1930 Browning, .20 gauge and Clyde always had a 1908 Colt Automatic Pistol by his side. The gang would picnic, relax in the sun, fish, target shoot and camp out on the bayou, safe from the hustle and bustle of running from the law. The Barrow Gang did a lot of target practice on the bayou. They visited the area on more than one occasion. To the knowledge of the boys they never harmed anyone or caused any trouble while they were on the bayou. They would stay for days at a time and then leave just as they had come, driving their "arsenal on wheels" back up that muddy cattle trail.



Bonnie and Clyde were ambushed on a country road near Gibsland, Bienville Parish, Louisiana, on May 23, 1934. The team which brought an end to the Bonnie and Clyde Era included two ex Texas Rangers; Frank Hamer and Manny Gault.

This story is one of many which came alive for the listeners of the story tellers from the place now referred to in part as West Bayshore Road and Oak Island, Texas.

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This resource list is for reference only and should not be printed with the story, in The Progress, but kept for back up support in the museum.

Primary resources for this article:

interviews with W. Clyde Sullivan and Delbert "Delly" Comstock who were teenagers on the Double Bayou when Bonnie and Clyde were on their rampage.

Older citizens, Forrest Watson and Katie Krammer Sullivan Kocijan supported the stories with eye witness accounts.

The author of this article who grew up in the area, heard these stories from these people.

Secondary Resources:

S. F. took Bonnie and Clyde out in Trinity Bay fishing more than once from his fish camp in the area. This information was given to Andrea Y. McClelland by Modena K. Sullivan who heard it from her husband Clyde. Sullivan who had witnessed these actions.

Fred Kruger who ran the boat, "The Ella", to Galveston from Double Bayou also saw Bonnie and Clyde on numerous occasions. This information was given to Modena Kruger Sullivan and Melvin R. Kruger by their father, Fred, and shared with the author of this article.

Other primary and secondary resources for this article:

Older citizens who saw Bonnie and Clyde in Hankamer and Oak Island.

Information attained at the Texas Rangers Hall of Fame in Waco, Texas.

Ambush The Real Story of Bonnie and Clyde, by Ted Hinton as told to Larry Grove. 1979. Southwestern Historical Publications. Dallas, TX

Bonnie and Clyde Internet Public Domain Site - pic.jpg. t304629a

