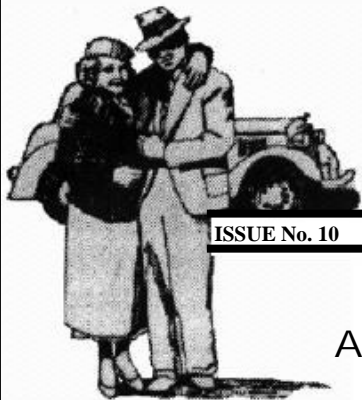


# On The Road To Gibsland

**BARROW-PARKER NEWSLETTER**P.O. BOX 225803, DALLAS, TEXAS 75222  
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## GIBSLAND WELCOMES YOU BACK TO THE 71<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMBUSH OF BONNIE AND CLYDE



### “Bonnie and Clyde Ambush Museum Opens”

News Release  
By Charles Heard

Northwestern Louisiana has a new historical attraction with the opening of the Bonnie and Clyde Ambush Museum located just off I-20 near Shreveport-Bossier City. The museum occupies the exact historical location in Gibsland, Louisiana of Ma Canfield's Café where Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow dined for the very last time before driving off and being blasted into eternity by a determined lawmen's posse. Here, you will experience a trip back to 1934 when the most notorious outlaw couple of all time met their bloody fate in a deadly ambush.

The museum is home to the authentic movie car from the classic 1967 Warner Brothers' film, *Bonnie and Clyde*, starring Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway.

Inside the museum is a custom theater showing exclusive film footage taken by the law enforcement posse immediately following the ambush along with a vintage 1930's seldom seen documentary on the outlaws.

Historical artifacts relating to the ambush inside the museum include seized weapons from Bonnie and Clyde's death car and an extensive exhibit of rare photographs. Genuine 1930's documents, vintage posters and publications, and an impressive array of pop culture memorabilia pertaining to the star crossed outlaw lovers is to be seen here.

Ken Holmes Jr., co-owner of the museum and a historical researcher/scholar in many fields, states that “the opening of the Bonnie and Clyde Ambush Museum represents the fulfillment of a life-long dream to tell for the first time the true story of the ambush as it happened.” Holmes hired the son of Deputy Sheriff Ted Hinton, participant in the actual ambush, to manage the museum and be it's spokesman. “L.J. “Boots” Hinton is a walking-talking encyclopedia on the subject of the ambush and a very colorful character in his own right” states Charles Heard, business partner of Ken Holmes.

The museum gift shop sells a unique selection of books, videos, photographs, souvenirs, and memorabilia.

Plans to host special events including historical tours, lectures and book signings by history experts and authors are in the works. And the museum is gearing up for the annual Bonnie and Clyde Festival of Gibsland featuring ambush reenactments, street fair, food and music. This years festival will be held on May 21<sup>st</sup> with the historians meeting on the evening of the 20th.

The Bonnie and Clyde Ambush Museum is open daily 10 am to 6 pm. Admission is \$7.00 for adults with discounts for seniors, military, and children. Take I-20 Exit 61, 1.2 miles south to Gibsland - 39 miles east of Bossier City. Physical Address - 2419 Main Street, Gibsland, La. 71028 - Phone Number - (318) 843-1934

### The Authentic Bonnie and Clyde Festival 2005 By Pam Valentine

Mark your calendars, folks. The Bonnie and Clyde Festival Committee is completing plans for this year's big event set for the afternoon of May 20, 2005 and all day on Saturday, May 21, 2005. If you've never been to this festival, you have missed a truly unique experience! Where else can you safely witness “shoot-outs” in the streets and a factual reenactment of events surrounding the demise of the infamous outlaws, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, who killed and robbed during the early 1930's?

The town of Gibsland, created in 1883 with the coming of the railroad, recaptures the era of the 1930's with an assortment of events to remind one of a by-gone day when it was a thriving village of several thousand inhabitants who were there and saw the passing of Bonnie and Clyde.

At 9:15 a.m., May 23, 1934, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were blasted into history on highway 154 nine miles southwest of Gibsland. Hidden in the brush on top of a hill, six officers—four of them from Texas and two from Louisiana—pumped more than 50 slugs into their car before Bonnie and Clyde could raise a hand, or a gun, in self-defense. The ambush splashed headlines around the globe and gave birth to a legend that has long out-lived the officers who ambushed them. The four Texas Rangers and the Louisiana Sheriff and Deputy Sheriff are to be highly commended and honored for they put their life on the line to end the career of the notorious outlaws.

The Authentic Bonnie and Clyde Festival will begin on Friday with booths setting up after 1:00 p.m. These booths will be selling many delicious foods, arts and crafts on Friday afternoon and all day long Saturday! There will be two inflatable Space Jumps for the children to enjoy!

On Friday night the Lorraine Joyner Historical Meeting will be held in the Gibsland Grill at 6:00 p.m. Admission to the meeting is \$5.00 and this includes a delicious meal of gumbo, salad and dessert. Ken Holmes, a Dallas historian who is co-owner of the Ambush Museum, will preside over the meeting and has lined up several speakers for the much-anticipated event. This will be a highlight of the weekend so be sure to plan to participate!

Saturday morning will begin with a pancake breakfast at the Lions Club building from 8:00-10:00 a.m. for \$5.00 per plate. Live entertainment will begin at 9:00 a.m. Our stage will feature continuous live entertainment with various types of music. At 12:00 there will be a parade with many antique cars, floats, motorcycles, etc. to thrill the viewers. Please bring your children and have a good time!

The streets will come to life Saturday with the sound of guns firing blanks. A new group, “Public Enemy”, will be reenacting the shoot-outs this year. The actors will be dressed in period costumes and will portray the two outlaws and their gang. They will bring this period of history alive to visitors and hometown folks. Two shoot-outs will be held downtown and late in the afternoon the group will reenact an authentic ambush at the site.

The Authentic Bonnie and Clyde Museum will be open Friday and Saturday all day with free admission. The official festival t-shirts will be sold in the museum for \$10.00 each along with various other souvenirs. Gibsland Bank and Trust's booth will also be selling the official festival shirts. Read about Bonnie and Clyde in historical newspaper articles and see a large exhibit of photographs and memorabilia of the couple at the Authentic Bonnie and Clyde Museum. The museum also has historical pictures of the town and local artifacts. If you want to take a piece of Bonnie and Clyde history home with you, you can buy Bonnie and Clyde souvenirs, ranging from newsprint history and a book with copies of historical newspaper articles to picture postcards of the pair. The museum will be something you will not want to miss!

Visit the new Bonnie and Clyde Ambush Museum. The museum occupies the exact historical location in Gibsland, La. of Ma Canfield's Café where Bonnie and Clyde dined for the last time. Here you will experience a trip back to 1934 when the most notorious outlaw couple of all time met their bloody fate in a deadly ambush. You can also meet L. J. “Boots” Hinton, museum spokesman and son of Deputy Sheriff Ted Hinton, participant in the actual ambush. This museum will be something new you will really want to see!

Please make plans to be in Gibsland, La. on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of May for good times and great fun!!

### In Memory of

**Robert “Bob” Elston  
and Robert “Bob” Skelton.****LORRAINE JOYNER MEMORIAL HISTORIANS MEETING**

Time - 6:00P.M. - Cajun Gumbo Dinner - Cost: - \$ 5.00 Donation

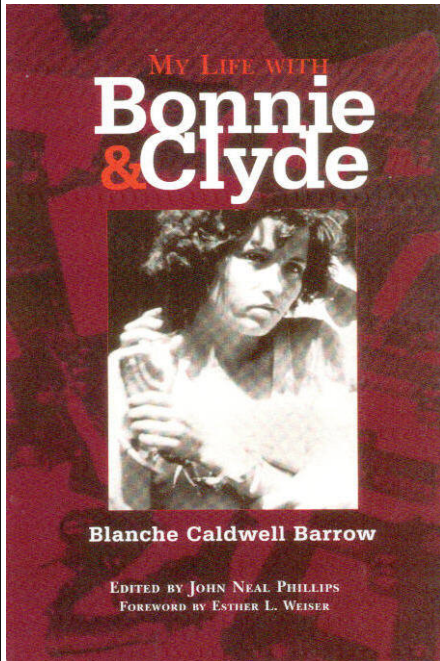
Location: Back Room of Gibsland Grill

Program: - Speakers and Discussions, Ends 10:30 P.M.

For more information call Ken Holmes (214) 747-2362

# My Life with "My Life with Bonnie and Clyde"

By John Neal Phillips



Five years ago I was sitting in the café of a Dallas hotel, sipping coffee with my friend and colleague Ken Holmes. We'd been invited there by the others seated at the same table, among them Esther L. Weiser. Ms. Weiser, or Lorraine as her friends know her, had asked Ken and me to meet with her so that we could examine something she had, a manuscript. Actually, it was only a photocopy. The original was locked safely away in a vault, and for good reason. The document, handwritten on the delicate pages of a sixty-six year-old school notebook, represented the only first-hand, eyewitness account of some of the most intense moments in the story of Bonnie and Clyde. Titled, "My Life with the Barrow

Gang", the narrative was penned (or penciled, actually) by a close friend of Lorraine's. And although the name of Esther Lorraine Weiser was, for the moment, unknown to me, the name of her friend was not – Blanche Frasure, or as the world knows her, Blanche Barrow.

Lorraine wanted us, Ken and me, to authenticate the manuscript. To that end, Ken brought handwriting samples from Blanche, whom he'd known for many years. And I, well, I just brought myself. My part was to read portions of the manuscript and determine whether the account sounded anything at all like the story I'd grown to know during the two decades of my research into the subject.

What we found was indeed the real thing – an eyewitness account written in the hand of Blanche Barrow herself. Eventually I was asked to edit and annotate the manuscript for publication. The finished book, now titled "My Life with Bonnie and Clyde", was released last October by University of Oklahoma Press and has already sold out of two printings. Many of you have no doubt already read the book. But if you haven't, and you're interested in this subject, then this book is a must! As Ken Holmes has pointed out more than once, Blanche's account is the only one that actually puts the reader in the car with her, Buck, Bonnie, Clyde, and W. D. Jones during those supremely violent months of 1933.

I can't say that I really knew Blanche, but I did speak with her on more than one occasion during the early 1980's when I was working on my first book, "Running with Bonnie and Clyde" (University of Oklahoma Press 1996, 2002). I made contact with her through Ralph Fults, who also introduced me to Marie Barrow, among others. Blanche had just been diagnosed with cancer and was in a lot of pain but she readily spoke with me about her past. At times it seemed that her memories were growing more painful than her physical condition, especially when speaking of the death of Buck. I asked her more than once if she wanted to continue. She always said yes, adding at one point that it was good to talk about her time with Buck and Bonnie and Clyde, as if it were a kind of therapy.

I have no idea why she opened up to me, a total stranger who'd thrust himself into her life. But she did talk to me, quite frankly at times. Maybe it was because I'd broken the ice first by talking about fishing, which she loved. But I tend to think it was because I knew Ralph Fults. She always liked Ralph. There are at least two pictures of him in her scrapbooks. She told me she thought Ralph was "very handsome" in his younger days. But she quickly qualified the statement by adding that W. D. Jones was "the best-looking" of them all! Blanche always had an eye for the boys, apparently. She really had a crush on Warren Beatty, but she hated the movie, "Bonnie and Clyde". "That movie made me look like a screaming horse's ass!" she told me.

It's no secret that initial accounts of Blanche's activities with Buck and Bonnie and Clyde painted her as a bewildered non-participant, screaming and acting in a generally hysterical manner during her nearly three months on the run. The best known accounts originated with Jan Fortune's "Fugitives". First published in 1934, "Fugitives" appeared at a time when Blanche could have still been charged with murder in Missouri, not to mention a seemingly endless list of lesser offenses perpetrated in multiple other states. Indeed, murder charges hung over her all her life. And although in later years the likelihood of her actually being charged with murder greatly diminished, the possibility was still very real in the mid-1930's.

This brings us back to the portrayal of Blanche as such an unwilling innocent in 1933. While editing and annotating Blanche's manuscript I uncovered evidence that "Fugitives" was not only used to clear Blanche of complicity in the crimes of the Barrow gang, including three murders, but was definitely a factor in her early release from the Missouri State Prison for Women. And Blanche even represents herself as basically guiltless in her own manuscript, often Buck as well. But that manuscript was written in prison under the close scrutiny of prison officials and was certainly

crafted with that fact in mind. And it should be read with that in mind. Her image appears to have been fabricated to protect her. Indeed, the Blanche I interviewed in 1984 was someone quite apart from the wide-eyed, blameless child of popular depiction. Among other things, she vividly described robberies that she and Buck staged together, many robberies, especially while Clyde was still in prison. And auto thefts. She also gave me frightening, moment-by-moment accounts of the Joplin and Platte City gunfights and many, many other things. Much of this I included in the annotation that accompanies Blanche's own words. And truthfully, apart from Blanche's apparent misrepresentations of her actual involvement, the rest of the manuscript is utterly compelling.

And now it's time for the annual convergence on Gibsland. However, I'm very sorry to say that because of my teaching schedule I won't be able to attend the big blow-out this year. I have always enjoyed the Friday night historians' meetings. I'll certainly miss being part of it this year. Nevertheless, I'll still be conducting my semi-annual Bonnie and Clyde bus tour for the Dallas Historical Society on May 30, Memorial Day Monday. And then, Esther L. Weiser and I, among others, will be involved in a talk and this book signing at the seventh floor Texas/Dallas History Archives of the Dallas Central Public Library on June 4. Perhaps you can make it to one or both of those events. In the mean time, have fun in Gibsland.

## My Life With Bonnie & Clyde

Blanche Barrow's prison journal  
edited by John Neal Phillips

### Book Signing and Program

Saturday, June 4, 2005  
2 to 4 p.m. (program at 2:30 p.m.)  
Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division (7<sup>th</sup> floor)  
Dallas Public Library  
1515 Young Street

Married to Clyde's brother Buck, Blanche Barrow was the only member of the notorious quartet to survive and tell her story. Hear her tale from respected Bonnie & Clyde historian John Neal Phillips.

- \* See rare Bonnie & Clyde era artifacts
- \* Books will be available for purchase
- \* Visit with special guests Esther L. Weiser and Rhea Leen Linder

## A NEW NAME FOR OLD FRIENDS

By Jonathan Davis

For the eight years from 1997 to 2004, the living history group "Re-enactments Early Thirties Crime" (RETC), based in Denison, Texas, performed at the Authentic Bonnie and Clyde Festival in Gibsland, Louisiana. The group also appeared in Gibsland for the 1994 festival, which commemorated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ambush of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. RETC's performances of 1930's era lawman-outlaw shootouts in downtown Gibsland and their re-creation of the Barrow-Parker ambush at the death site were always applauded and well received by the crowds attending the festival.

Tragically, during 2004 the group lost two of its leaders, Robert "Bob" Elston (who acted as president from RETC's creation in 1988), and Robert "Bob" Skelton (also a RETC leader). After a meeting to determine their future course, the other members of the organization voted to continue the re-enactments under a new name: PUBLIC ENEMIES: G-MEN AND GANGSTERS. While the name of the group is new, those performing in it are the same people the Gibsland festival patrons have applauded in past years: Keith White, Jack Nash, Roger and Michelle Groves, Bob Higbee, Steve Beavers, Lance Cryan, Josh Dilley, Jonathan Davis and expected new performers Newt Newsome from North Carolina and Clint and Emily Brooks from Kansas. The new group is getting off to a fast start. In addition to Gibsland, "Public Enemies" will be performing at Southfork Ranch (site for the TV series "Dallas") in Parker, TX, in June. The city of Alma, AR (site of another Barrow gang episode), is also interested in the new group in connection with a future 1930's town festival. So expect to see a and hear from "Public Enemies" in the future and welcome them to Gibsland in 2005!

If you have any information that would have interest to our readers, please send photo's and information by February 1, 2006 to On The Road To Gibsland Newsletter.