

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark

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These days one of my greatest pleasures is visiting with some of the people I have known all my life. Getting them to share stories from their time of growing up around these parts and tales that were passed down to them are history lessons unlike anything to be had in any school book. It's an unwritten record of our heritage stored in the minds of people who experienced that special time in our town's life.

One such recent visit was with John Tucker who now resides just outside of Pipe Creek. I have known John as far back as my memory goes in my childhood. His family lived at the corner of Cypress and 11th Street in the wood frame house that is still standing. It was close to my Granddaddy Kindla's house which was and is located just about in the center of that block.

He told me stories passed on to him by his uncle Lee Smith who lived over in the Tarpley area. He said the early cattle drives coming into Bandera from the south crossed the river at the big rock. That is the rock just upstream of the dam located in the city park today. He said the cattle were held on the flats in the river loop area south of downtown where there was grazing available.

The drivers took their break from the trail in town where beer and whiskey were kept in barrels back then. As the story was relayed by his uncle the cowboys would roll empty barrels down the street, then draw their pistols and start shooting at them. That draws a picture of when Bandera was part of the wild and woolly West. Can you imagine how tough it was to be a sheriff in a town like Bandera back in the day?

My dad had told me a story of the old jail in Bandera and a certain man who was a regular overnight guest in the hoosegow. After the sheriff locked up and left for the night the prisoner would climb up and go out through the old tin roof to spend the night with his family and then be back in the morning when the sheriff returned.

Stories like these and others about my ancestors in and around the area are real treasures. Having known and associated with some of the oldtimers it gave me insight into their character. Believe me, some of them were real characters.

Their tales of adventures could paint a picture so real it was almost like I was there. Among my favorites was one about my Granddaddy Clark who used to plow fields around Bandera with what was known as a Poppin' Johnny. That was a name given to certain early John Deere tractors because of the noise made by their exhaust.

I can't begin to tell people just how much those kind of stories mean to me. I know there are others who share my passion for things from our past. Never pass up a chance to visit with someone from an older generation because there is a wealth of local history in the stories they tell. In the case of my latest visit with John Tucker he even gave me a jar of homemade Agarita Jelly before departing. I dare you to try and top that one!!!