The Bandera Prophet

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark
The Bandera Prophet

Celebrating our past here in Bandera has been around as long as I can remember. The old Stompede Days celebration was a three-day event organized by business people to bring visitors to town and fill the coffers. At the time, we could have used a few more motels in town to accommodate the crowds that arrived by the thousands.

Oldtimers have differing views about those days of parades, rodeos and just plain hell raisin'. I was about 13 years old when the last Stompede celebration took place, and my most outstanding memory is of those crowds. Traffic on Main Street was bumper to bumper from one end of town to the other. At night, people were sleeping in cars and on the ground all along the river. The Crowbar Hotel out behind the courthouse was usually packed every night.

Due to modern day problems, sleeping on the river while camping overnight is no longer tolerated. The current nightly rates at hotels could have bought you a pretty good used car back in my high school days. There are probably some oldtimers out around the Houston area who might be happy to know the Bandera sheriff's jail accomodations have improved immensely, as they recall their 1950s Bandera experience so many years ago.

Sadly, in modern times there is not much attention being given to the real beginnings of our town when the first stores and businesses were being established. They made it a place suitable as a staging area for some of the great cattle herds gathering for the drive north to the railheads. They were an early part of our history, but the cypress mill on the Medina River is what gave birth to the town of Bandera.

Early immigrants introduced to the rough life of what was to become Bandera's sawmill and shingle making era were a breed unequaled in determination. Living in tents, they scratched out a living in an area of the new world that was still plagued by Indian raids, disease and a civil war. They created something we now neglect in our local history celebrations. I guess there just isn't enough money to be made in it.
The life of my great-great grandfather on my dad's side of our family is well documented and familiar to just about everyone around these parts. The name Amasa Clark is well known and is recognized as one of the earliest settlers in the area, but that doesn't tell the whole story about our family.
On my mom's side, we claim some fame, too, with the Kindlas and Mazureks who came in with the earliest settlers. I guess it was just my luck that they were some of the Polish immigrants who decided to move on from Panna Maria and get their start in Bandera. I'm not sure how growing up in Panna Maria would have worked out for me. Growing up in Bandera was such a blessing and I wouldn't trade a minute of it for the best hound in the litter.

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