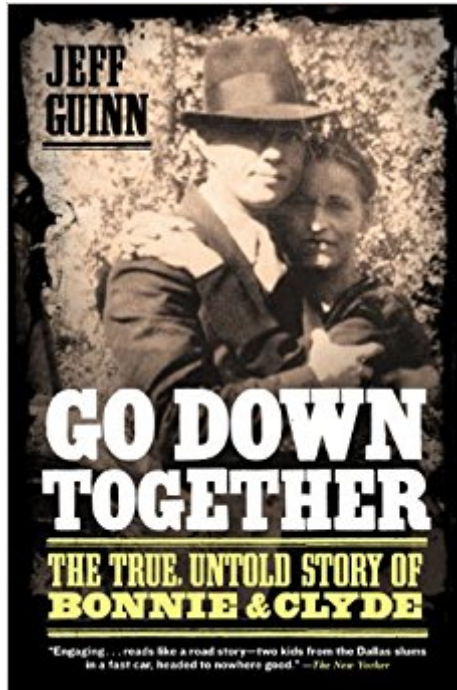


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Go Down Together: The True, Untold Story Of Bonnie And Clyde



Synopsis

Bestselling author Jeff Guinn combines exhaustive research with surprising, newly discovered material to tell the real tale of two kids from a filthy Dallas slum who fell in love and then willingly traded their lives for a brief interlude of excitement and, more important, fame. *Go Down Together* has it all—true romance, rebellion against authority, bullets flying, cars crashing, and, in the end, a dramatic death at the hands of a celebrity lawman. This is the real story of Bonnie and Clyde and their troubled times, delivered with cinematic sweep by a masterful storyteller.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have no idea of how I stumbled across "Go Down Together", but I am certainly glad I did. While I enjoy mysteries and police procedurals, I don't consider myself to be a crime buff. My experience with Bonnie and Clyde was limited largely to the classic 1967 movie and bits and pieces that I had acquired here and there. Guinn is very serious about his subjects, Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker. He fills 82 pages with notes, bibliography and acknowledgments. It was his good fortune that he secured access to two previously unpublished manuscripts by family members. Guinn acknowledges that the historical record of the infamous pair is incomplete and cluttered with lies, exaggerations, questionable recollections and much else that isn't true. Clyde and Bonnie - the way the pair was known until the movie - were children of poverty. Though most impoverished kids made it out of their West Dallas slum neighborhood without robbing a corner grocery or killing someone, Clyde Barrow didn't. Petty thefts and stealing cars became a way of life for the poor boy and he was

packed off to prison. Texas wasn't a congenial state to the poor in the 1930s. (What state was?) The agricultural markets had collapsed followed by the financial markets and the economy as a whole. Social mobility wasn't what it is today: back then, if you were born poor, you generally stayed poor. Texas prisons were harsh environments and young Clyde Barrow was assigned to Eastham, a farm run from the notorious Huntsville prison. There he was continually raped by another prisoner. Clyde demonstrated his outlook on life by murdering the perpetrator. Released from prison, Clyde put together a "gang" that was incredibly inept.

I've got a pretty fair library on 1930s crime and this ranks right at the top. There are two things that stand out. First, it gets the facts right, as much as it is humanly possible to do so. And with Bonnie and Clyde, that's a great service, since their story was mythologized and fictionalized from day one. Second, and more unusual, is that the book places Bonnie and Clyde in their specific social and historical context. It doesn't just tell their story against the general background of the 1930s in America, but delivers an up-close look at what it meant to be poor and uneducated in West Dallas, the grim slum (almost a shantytown) that they both lived in. Guinn takes care not to excuse their crimes, but I think his reading of their story is persuasive -- that they were two people from a doomed underclass who were unable to accept the long years of misery and deprivation that would ordinarily have been their fate. He also does a good job of placing them in the context of 1930s crime -- yes, like John Dillinger they (at least occasionally) robbed banks, but they were worlds apart. Dillinger had access to a world of sophisticated criminal contacts. Many of his robberies were set-up jobs in which the banks were in on the deal. He had access to hideouts in "safe" towns like St. Paul and Hot Springs, connections to serious organized crime, doctors who could be trusted, and a whole network of highly experienced and capable confederates. Bonnie and Clyde were just two kids from the very wrong side of the tracks. They had large and loyal families, but other than that, they were pretty much on their own.

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