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**Historic Marker at Bonnie & Clyde ambush site.**

**On the Trail of  
Bonnie & Clyde:**

**Why Frank Hamer Wasn't  
Serving as a Texas Ranger  
A New Theory**

**By Robert Nieman**

**It was an email from  
my good friend  
Harrison "Sonny"**

**Hamer III that started me down the road to reaching this theory.**

Any student of Frank Hamer or Bonnie and Clyde knows that Hamer was not a Texas Ranger when he led a team that ended the careers of the murderous duo— he was then a special investigator of the Texas prison system. The team consisted of former and future Texas Ranger Manny Gault, Dallas County Deputies Ted Hinton and Bob Alcorn, and Bienville Parish [Louisiana] Sheriff Henderson Jordan and his deputy Bryan Oakley.

It is well known that Hamer and all the other Rangers had either resigned or been fired when Miriam "Ma" Ferguson was elected governor in 1932. It was only at the request of his close friend Colonel Lee Simmons, head of the Texas prison system, that Hamer tracked down Bonnie and Clyde. Hamer was appointed as a special investigator, a position created specifically to track down and end the careers of the killers. He would work for and answer only to Colonel Simmons.

That's where the story stood until I got that email from Sonny. He asked if I knew who the Senior Ranger Captain was in May 1934 when his uncle led the team that killed Bonnie and Clyde. I have to admit that I didn't remember, but I checked with our library and found out it was Estill Hamer, Frank's older brother! As soon as I read this, alarm bells immediately started going off.

There were five Hamer brothers: Estill, Frank, Harrison, Clint [Sant], and Flavus. All but Sant were Texas Rangers at one time or another. Estill and Frank were both Senior Ranger Captains.

**In September of 2000, I was privileged to visit with Harrison**

Hamer III and Bobbie Hamer Smith, grandchildren of Harrison Hamer, and Bud Hamer, son of Flavus. Needless to say, this was a very interesting time.

Frank and Flavus were close, but because of Flavus' extensive travels outside Texas, he did not see his brothers that often. When it came to Frank and Harrison, however, they "were always very close—very, very close," according to Bobbie Hamer Smith. The same cannot be said about Frank and Estill.

In 1932, Frank was the Senior Ranger Captain but when Ma Ferguson was elected governor, he quit the Rangers on November 1. Perhaps in spite, Ferguson named Frank's brother Estill as his replacement.

In the words of Harrison Hamer III, "Frank and Estill nearly came to a fist fight over that . . . I think he [Frank] felt like Uncle Estill stabbed him in the back. I don't think they would talk to each other after that at all."

As Paul Harvey, everyone's favorite radio commentator, would say, "Now the rest of the story."

There is absolutely no reason to doubt the truthfulness of Frank Hamer only agreeing to pursue the desperadoes under the prison system, but what if . . .

What if Frank refused, under any condition, to serve under his brother? What if Estill refused, under any condition, to allow his brother to serve under him? Considering their feelings toward one another, that may be a well-founded theory—and theory is all this is.

You will not find anything written on the subject by either of the Hamer brothers. Of course this is not unusual. Frank was one of the greatest Texas Ranger. Indeed, there are those who would say he was THE greatest ever. But there was one thing he was not great at—report writing. Estill was not a writer either, but for a different reason. According to Bud Hamer, Estill "told my dad [Flavus] something one time. I'll never forget it. He said, 'Words spoken are as free as air, but words written are always there,' and he said he wouldn't put anything down on paper."

Estill continued as Senior Ranger Captain until 1935, when Ma Ferguson was defeated in the general election. Frank never again served as a Texas Ranger.

Until their deaths, brothers Frank and Estill neither forgave nor forgot.



**The road leading to the ambush site today.**