

Bonnie and Clyde



Bonnie and Clyde! – the names still raise eyebrows, at least on people whose eyebrows haven't been plucked recently. But what of Bonnie, Clyde, Edna and Moe? Many people don't know that before Bonnie and Clyde became outlaw folk heroes, they were part of Moe's Rumbleseat Orchestra – so named because they performed from the back seat of Edna's 1930 DeSoto Coupé. A tight fit, to be sure – tight as the nylons on Bonnie's gams! Moe played piano and Edna told fortunes. Bonnie played a darned good fiddle and Clyde played with his mustache. Mostly, he twirled it, but he could also coax a sweet little melody out of it when it was freshly waxed. By rubbing it back and forth (east-west), he could produce an entire D major scale; when he stroked it up and down (north-south), he got minor thirds and, if the hairs were especially bristly, a diminished fifth – coincidentally, the usual state of the bottle of moonshine that Moe stashed behind the spare tire. Edna was known as "the Leopard Lady" because her body broke out into a spot-like rash when she told her fortunes. The moment the music began, she'd go into a trance, begin to growl in a low, feral voice, and then, without fail, the spots would appear, everywhere but on her head and arms. It never failed to raise the hackles on Bonnie's neck, but, oh, what great theater it was! And was it ever lucrative! Wherever they played, they made a killing. Which, eventually, gave Clyde an idea for another, less politically correct career. One night in 1932, the quartet was in Omaha opening for the Fliederer Family Circus. As usual, Edna transformed into the prognosticating Leopard Lady. But when it was time to be Edna again, she couldn't, or wouldn't, switch back. Regretfully, Moe consigned her to the Circus's nascent Sideshow Of Abnormalation, where she reigned as Queen Oddity until Yarngirl showed up 24 years later. Clyde and Bonnie, meanwhile, quit the band to go into the banking withdrawal business full-time. And Moe? Well, that's *another* story.