

# Infamous Boyd Gang had hide-out at Musselman Lake

Were you shaking your bootie in the '70s with Kool and the Gang in those crazy disco days? They weren't really a gang at all, just a bunch of guys singing disco and getting down and dirty.

Not like the James Gang. Now, that was a real rowdy bunch. Jessie James led a band of hard drinkin, hard livin cowboys on one robbery heist after another.

Nearly a century later, in the 1950s, Toronto and York Region had its own pistol shooting, bank robbing bad boys; the Boyd Gang.

Before the police brought down the Boyd Gang, they hid out in our own backyard. Yes, Musselman Lake was a temporary home to the notorious gang for a time during their spree of terror. Many residents will remember the story of the gang well.

Edwin Alonzo Boyd first became known to the Toronto Police when he was arrested after a botched bank robbery.

The birth of the Boyd Gang occurred shortly after in a dark cell at the Toronto Jail. Boyd's cellmates Leonard Jackson and William Jackson (not related) were to play prominent parts in the future activities of the gang.

On November 4, 1951 the three gangsters made a successful jailbreak.

Leonard headed for Montreal with his girlfriend Anne Roberts. Prior to the escape he had made arrangements with another unsavory character by the name of Valent Lesso.

It was Lesso's job to find a hiding place for Boyd and William Jackson.

The terrible threesome robbed a Toronto bank and quickly went their separate ways to avoid detection. Little did Lesso's parents, Joseph and Elizabeth, know their home would become a hideout for two weeks for two of the robbers.

Boyd and William Jackson thought the coal bin at Lesso's parents' home would be the perfect spot to stash their cash. But they were wrong. Joseph Lesso easily found the money and took off to the United

States for a "vacation". I think the term "shop 'til you drop" was coined by our Mr. Lesso.

He lived like a king for several weeks and police in the U.S. later found evidence that it was a pretty lavish holiday for a factory janitor.

On learning their money was gone, Jackson and Boyd went to Quebec and moved in with Valent Lesso and Mary, his common law wife where they plotted further robberies. Now, Mary had a special job with the gang on their return forays from Quebec to Toronto. Before a robbery would take place, Mary would scout out a hiding spot. The holdups all took place in East York, North York and Toronto.

Mary would book rooms in one of the motels on the outskirts of the city where the gang would hold up until the coast was clear to make a getaway back to Quebec.

About this time, bad guy William Jackson was arrested in Montreal for causing a disturbance on December 28, 1951 in a restaurant. William was carrying a revolver which proved to be his downfall. Police checked him out and found out he was a wanted man. Kingston Penitentiary was William's new home for the next 29 years.

On January 25, 1952 the gang travelled from Quebec to Toronto once again and proceeded to rob a Toronto Dominion Bank on Kingston Road. They collected about \$10,000 with that heist.

By March funds were low and another robbery, this time on College Street was planned. This time the take was close to \$25,000.

Naturally, the string of hold-ups resulted in an intense hunt to apprehend the Boyd Gang and two eager policemen, Sergeant of Detectives Edmund Tong and Detective Sergeant Roy Perry were hot on their trail.

Next week in part two: gun shots fatally wound detective and the Boyd Gang's reign of terror comes to an end.



Rural Route Ruth

Ruth LeBlanc

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TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

### TENDER CALL

Sealed tenders, for the following contracts, placed in the envelopes provided, clearly marked as to contents, will be received by the Clerk's Department, Municipal Offices, 19 Civic Avenue, Stouffville, Ontario, L4A 7Z6, until:

THURSDAY, MARCH 21ST, 1996  
3:00 P.M. LOCAL TIME

#### CONTRACT WS-96-02 - ROAD SWEEPING

The contract consists of the supply and operation of street sweepers, as specified in the tender.

#### CONTRACT WS-96-03 - GRADALL RENTAL

The work is for the supply and operation of a gradall unit suitable to mechanically excavate ditches and/or road bases for the term of this contract, as outlined in the tender.

If information is required, please contact the Public Works Department, at (905) 640-1900 or 895-2423.

The Corporation of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville reserves the right to accept or reject any tender and also reserves the right to accept other than the lowest bidder.

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