

# JAMES FARM JOURNAL

Newsletter of

"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



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## 1984 Annual Meeting And Reunion

Our 1984 Meeting and Reunion will be held the weekend of September 22, 1984. A whole host of things to do will be featured. Here are some:

United Rodeo Associations Championships will be held Friday night, Saturday and Sunday afternoons in nearby Kearney. You are invited to attend the performance of your choice. Riding will be finalists who have completed all summer for the cherished prizes. It will be as always, exciting and colorful.

Kearney will have its annual James Festival Parade Saturday morning, which will include bands, marching units, horse clubs and western history floats. Tremendous crowds will line the streets for this event.

Continuing crafts shows, street dances and other competitions will be held through the weekend.

We will have our meeting and programs at the James Farm, Saturday afternoon, September 22nd. In addition to our meeting we will host the annual reunion of the James and allied families; present historical programs, a barbeque and a western art exhibit.

We will also have our annual Frank and Jesse James Pistol Marksmanship contest when owners of vintage pistols try to beat the records of Frank and Jesse by firing at the same kinds of targets they did, immediately after the reunion.

Kearney is only 20 minutes north of Kansas City, Missouri, on I-35, and there are plenty of accommodations to fit all budgets as well as plenty of things to do. We hope you will put this weekend on your calendar.

Full details of the meeting will be sent to you about a month before so you can make your plans.

## Jesse on the Floorboards ... And Game Room

At least two dramatizations about Jesse James have been produced this year. One, "Jesse and the Bandit Queen", was presented by the South Jersey Regional Theater at the Gateway Playhouse, Somers' Point, New Jersey, in late April. The script, by David Freeman, takes great liberties with recorded history. It allows Jesse and Belle Starr to have a romantic relationship and dwells on fantasies each has concerning the other.

James Farkas played Jesse and Charlotte Maier the dual roles of Belle and Jesse's wife, Zee. According to a review by Kathy Brennan in the *Atlantic City Press*, April 27, "It's an amusing and ambitious play ... Both Maier and Farkas [gave] finely tuned performances ..."

The other play is "Diamond Studs", which has been performed throughout the summer at Arrow Rock, Missouri, a restored 19th century village between Kansas City and St. Louis. "Studs" is a musical version of Jesse's life and is quite good. The characters are believable, the story line even and the songs quite pleasant. It has been performed off-Broadway, by the Nebraska Repertory Theater, and by the Tacoma, Wash., Actors' Guild, that we know specifically. It has probably been produced more often than that.

(Our thanks to member Jean Halpin for sending us information for this story and the one about the Northfield Robbery.)

Member Ted Yeatman tells us that there is a board game available about the James Gang. It is called "Gunslingers" and is published by Avalon Hill, for \$20. Has anyone played it?

## Keeping Busy Passing The Word

We have been requested to present programs at several rather interesting historical conferences this year. The first was an illustrated discussion on the restoration of the James cabin and house and excavation of Jesse's original gravesite in the yard of the house. This was presented at the 11th Annual Rendezvous of the National Association and Center for Outlaw and Lawman History in Spokane, Washington, July 28th. Among the other programs there was one about Harry Tracy, "The Last Desperado"; "Wyoming Outlaws", "B. Tavern, Author of The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," several historical tours and dinners.

We have also been invited to present a paper on how we can plan a museum about "America's Robin Hood" to the International Council on Museums Committee on Biographical and Literary Museums in Budapest, Hungary, October 7-12.

## Harry S. Truman And The Jameses

This, the centennial of his birth, seems to be the year for Harry Truman stories. He grew up in Independence, Missouri, only a few miles south of the James Farm. Independence was Annie Ralston James', Frank's wife, home town and he and she visited her family often when he lived at the Farm in the early 20th century.

Truman used to remark as to how he saw Frank several times on the courthouse square in Independence and met him there. He said he read everything he could find as a boy about the Jameses and once, when his teacher found one of the dime novels in his school books (where he hid them to read in school) she told his father, who gave him one of the "soundest lickings" he ever got in his life!

He often met groups in the auditorium at the Truman Library and Museum in Independence after his presidency and one of the statements he liked to make was this:

"Missouri has produced three notorious characters in her history: Mark Twain, Jesse James and Harry Truman—all in that order!"

## Tours . . . Open to Public

Carrying a shotgun, a decidedly suspicious Zerelda Samuel met a group of persons who claimed to be lost and were asking for directions at her house one Saturday afternoon in late April. When the leader of the group explained their plight, she invited them all to the house and decided to give them a meal of stew and cornbread she had been preparing. Not having enough chairs for the 20 or 30 people, she had some bales of hay brought out from the barn and placed on the porch.

While they were wandering about the yard, some of the visitors noticed two horsemen on a rise south of the house. After hiding behind some trees, they gradually approached the house and were recognized by Zerelda who invited them in, introducing them to her visitors as "Mr. Woodson and Mr. Howard". One wore a white linen duster over his frock coat and a fine hat; the other was dressed in an old Union Army coat and wore a straw hat and checked pants. Beneath their coats were a pair of Navy Colt Civil War revolvers.

Mr. Woodson was tall and slender and had a dark moustache; his companion was shorter with blue eyes that blinked often.

As they sat on a hay bale for lunch, Zerelda brought out some chicken and gave it to them. They discussed the weather, said they had come to visit Zerelda and had not seen her for "awhile". They said they had ridden with Quantrill, and had no love for Redlegs and Yankees. When asked if they knew Frank and Jesse, they answered to the affirmative, but rather guardedly. When a visitor remarked that they had been to Liberty and visited the bank there that had supposedly been robbed by the Jameses, Zerelda bristled and loudly proclaimed that her sons "were good boys from good stock".

When someone asked them if they had ever been to Gallatin, Missouri, they refused to reply, concentrating on their food. Finally one said that though Jesse and Frank had been accused of that robbery, they had an alibi and had been in Clay County that day.

Suddenly Howard spotted a tall frock-coated individual who, though he claimed to have served in Joe Shelby's Brigade in the Confederate Army, knew little about Shelby. Howard made him show his hands and told him he thought he might be a Pinkerton Agent posing as a preacher. The man strongly denied this and several members of the group spoke for him.

Finally, Zerelda told the "boys" she felt her company could be trusted and told the visitors they were indeed Frank and Jesse. Afterwards, Jesse related a story of a posse raid on the house and showed two authentic bullet holes he had fired through a cabin door.

All of this of course was role-playing for a group of travel agents sponsored by the Hilton Airport Plaza Inn of Kansas City and Kansas City Sightseeing Tours as a preview of a tour that is being offered to the public this summer. It was fun, and painstakingly researched. The actors were superb and Zerelda's food delicious. It is an experiment at interpreting the farm and its history for the public and, we hope, will be successful.

## Friends Publications

Though there is a long list of books, articles and booklets about the Jameses, only a handful are really good. We are constantly amazed here as to how much misinformation has been accepted as fact—but that's the penalty for becoming a part of folklore. Folk legends don't always stick to facts.

The Board of the Friends in order to rectify this has adopted a new venture: to publish original research of value to scholars and interest to the public. Each publication will be original and fresh and present knowledge we did not have or which has never been gathered.

Two publications have been approved as follows:

A number of pictures purported to have been of Jesse James have circulated for years, creating confusion and consternation. Actually there are very few. Jesse was reluctant to have photographs taken because his anonymity was his cloak. Only a few people—certainly not law enforcement or the Pinkerton Agency—knew what he looked like. Actually, the only photographs, he allowed were for his

family. These and pictures of the body are the sum total.

Board Member George Warfel is a recognized artist who specializes in portraits of historical western persons. He has been studying pictures of Jesse for forty years and has developed a way of comparing the photographs. He has offered to write a booklet about the documented pictures of Jesse. He will use only pictures of which there is no question as to their authenticity. The book will tell the time, place and photographer (if known) of each picture; where it was located and the circumstances surrounding its being taken. Though relatively few, they will provide a gauge for comparing other, unauthenticated photographs and help in verifying them.

The second book will be an up-to-date family history, which includes the Coles, Samuels, Lindsays, Woodsons, and other related families together with genealogical charts. We know there are large numbers of persons related in some way and this booklet will make determining that much simpler. Board Member Phillip Steele, a published author of several books, will be the author.

Anyone with information they feel would be of interest are urged to send it to the Farm and we will see that it gets to the correct author.

# Passing Of The Last Grandson

Only three weeks after the death of his mother, Lawrence, Chester Barr, the last surviving grandson of Jesse James, died March 22, 1984 in Kansas City at age 76. He was one of three brothers born to Mary James Barr, Jesse's daughter. All were born, together with a sister, who died in infancy, at the Claybrook House, the magnificent house across the road from the James Farm.

He is survived by one son, Fred Barr of California.

# Youngers Friends Meet

An organizational meeting of the "Friends of the Youngers" was held in Lee's Summit, just east of Kansas City and the home of the Youngers, together with a reunion of the Younger family, June 30th.

The previous evening they joined in a parade for Lee's Summit's annual "Cole Younger Days" riding in a hay wagon. Saturday was a full day. The morning program consisted of introductions, family "talk" and a group photo. After lunch they had a reenactment of Cole Younger's famous speech "What Life Has Taught Me" by Dr. Phil Neal followed by a historical paper on "Quantrell and the Youngers" by Donald Hale, author of *Quantrell and They Called Him Bloody Bill*. A panel of historians discussing the Youngers followed a paper on the Civil War "Order Number 11" which tried to deprive Quantrell's guerillas of their support in the western Missouri border.

An excellent dinner that evening was capped by Marley Brant, Board Member of the

Friends of the James Farm, who is writing a book and plans to produce a motion picture on the Youngers and James who presented an illustrated program, "In Search of the Youngers".

We think a lot of our members will want to join this organization. They will receive meeting notices, a newsletter and a directory of members, among other things. Send your inquiries to: Friends of the Youngers, P.O. Box 1603, Studio City, Ca. 91604.

# Northfield — Again!

It must have seemed like deja-vu in Northfield, Minnesota, Monday, April 30, when a gunman walked into the First National Bank and robbed it.

The 108-year gap since the James-Younger Gang attempted the same thing seems not to have weakened the response of Northfield's citizens nor their resolve. As the gunman — who was wearing a Colt Frontier Peacemaker revolver which, according to the teller, looked like a "Jesse James gun" — was leaving, who should he encounter, but the Chief of Police, Mancel Mitchell, who "just happened" to walk down the street from Fred's Ideal Cafe. The president of the bank, David Shumway, ran out into the street, shouting that the robber was driving off in a car.

The Chief ran after him, and who should he encounter? Wayne Nelson, a city councilman driving in his van. Off they went, chasing the bandit car in a 9" snowfall. In the meantime, the alarm sounded by the bank was answered by the police, who joined the chase in three cars.

The pursued car ended up skidding into a ditch several miles out of town and the driver was apprehended, but not before he opened his coat to expose the Peacemaker.

The accused, a 36-year-old unemployed man, said he got the idea for the robbery from a Jesse James movie. However, we don't think he watched the entire film. If so, he would have known that the citizens of Northfield react quickly when their bank is robbed!

# Genealogical Findings

We recently received information about the Thomason family from Russ Thomason of Morehead, Kentucky. Sallie Lindsay Cole, Frank and Jesse's maternal grandmother, married Robert Thomason in 1838, eleven years after her first husband and father of Zerelda Cole, their mother, died. She and Thomason moved to Missouri in 1839. After Zerelda, who was attending a Catholic girls school married Robert James, a student at Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, they visited her mother. The next year, 1843, after Robert's graduation, they moved to Clay County, Missouri where the Thomasons lived.

One interesting fact to come out of this is that John S. Thomason, a Clay County Sheriff, who tried to capture Frank and Jesse several times, was a nephew of Robert Thomason. He did not let family ties stand in the way of his duties however.

Dr. Till M. Huston, of Athens, Georgia has kindly sent us material that adds to our knowledge of the family of Dr. Reuben Samuel, step-father of Frank and Jesse James.

The name Reuben was common in the family — in fact there were several persons with that name, including an uncle, the grandfather and great-grandfather of our Reuben. Dr. Huston is a great-grandson of Riley Grandison Samuel, an uncle of Reuben.

# James Farm Sales Items

BOOKS	
(1) <i>Jesse James Was His Name</i> by William Settle .....	\$7.50
(2) <i>Background of a Bandit</i> by Joan Beamis & William E. Pullen (genealogy) .....	\$6.00
(3) <i>Goodbye Jesse James</i> (collection of newspaper articles) .....	\$4.50
(4) <i>40 Years of History at the James Farm</i> by Martin McGrane .....	\$4.50
(5) <i>Jesse James and Bill Ryan at Nashville</i> by Ted Yeatman .....	\$3.00

# Yes, I wish to join the Friends of the James Farm

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

Individual .....	\$20.00 per year
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Corporate .....	\$100.00 or more per year

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