

JAMES FARM JOURNAL

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"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



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Dr. Samuel Identified - At Last!

One of the most elusive persons in the James saga has been Dr. Ruben Samuel, step-father of the James boys. It has been known that their mother, Zerelda, married him on September 26, 1855; that he was born in Kentucky on January 12, 1829, and died March 1, 1908, in St. Joseph, Missouri. They had 4 children — John, Sallie, Fannie and Archibald. The last was tragically killed January 26, 1875, during the explosion that occurred in the kitchen of the old cabin when detectives raided the house at the farm. He was only nine years old.

Dr. Samuel was hanged by Federal militia in 1863 in an attempt to force him to reveal the whereabouts of Frank James and his comrades, who were serving with Quantrill's guerrilla organization. The poor man didn't have this information. He was rescued by his wife but never regained his full mental powers afterwards. Historians have speculated this to have been because of the loss of blood to his brain for an extended time.

But this is about all that was known of him. He has been a shadowy figure — present during the most exciting times, yet little was known of him. Who were his family? Where did they live? Who are they now? None of these questions could be answered.

Board Member, Phillip Steele, of Springdale, Arkansas, is a folklorist who has published numerous articles and books on folklore in northwestern Arkansas. Phillip found some people there named Samuel who claimed they were related to our Dr. Samuel. However, we have many who were told of people who felt they were related to the Jameses in some manner but proof was lacking. So Phillip and I joined forces to check out this one. The results have been most rewarding.

History has not recorded who Reuben's parents were. These Arkansas people were descendants of one Fielding Samuel who died in Clifty, Arkansas, May 4, 1886. He was born in Kentucky on May 26, 1803. The family had said he had lived in Clay County, Missouri, and that he and his family moved to Arkansas for fear their sons would be too closely associated with the James boys.

I examined the Clay County census, sure enough, there Fielding was in 1850-1870, buying a farm about a mile from the Jameses. However, Reuben was not listed with them. The family maintained he was a son by a previous marriage, but we were unable to determine this even though I retraced him to Owen County, Kentucky, on the census. Prior to 1850, censuses listed only the head of the family, the others being noted in various age and sex categories. By charting these, it did appear that there could have been a first wife and several children, but no clues led us anywhere.

Another Board Member, Marley Brant, of Los Angeles, discovered that Reuben received his medical training at the Medical College of Ohio in 1851-1852, but he never seemed to have engaged in his practice, always being listed as "farmer" in the censuses.

The major breakthrough came when I found a series of articles in the Kansas City *Times* of January 29 and 30, 1875, which discussed a raid made by the Clay County sheriff on this home on January 27 (just after the "bombing") hoping to catch Jesse and Frank. Instead, they found four young men, one of them Fielding Samuel's youngest son, Edward, who told the reporter that "my half brother married the James boys' mother" and that he lived with his parents "within a mile and a half" of the farm. This of course, verified what we had been seeking, (and we found another son, William P., who lived there, and is buried in Kearney. Previously the Arkansas family had lost track of him.)

Edward's arrest certainly would have given his parents cause for concern, because the sheriff considered him a lookout for Frank and Jesse. Captured with him were Ed Miller, whose brother Clell was a member of the gang, and George James, son of William, uncle of Frank and Jesse, whom we wrote about last issue. They were jailed in Liberty and their attitude was one of bravado or as the reporter described it; "as careless as if they had been getting about a beer table or preparing for a game of euchre." Samuel, he said "seemed to have the credit of being the 'party of deep laid schemes.'"

All were released. Miller subsequently joined the gang, and young Samuel moved with his parents to Clifty, Arkansas. He died July 11, 1935. Descendants of the Samuel children

live in the area — all related to Frank and Jesse's step-father.

Phillip Steele is now including this material in a new book he is writing.

(Now I have a strong sense of serendipity — that happy facility of being able to find things of interest and importance as if by accident — and all good historians must have it. Finding that paper with young Samuel's name was such an incident. It was in a large collection of papers I had photocopied sometime back for our files, never dreaming it would hold the clue to verifying the Samuel history.)

— Milt Perry

Lawrence H. Barr

It is my sad duty to report that Lawrence H. Barr, grandson of Jesse James and Board Member of the Friends, passed away at his home, 9519 El Monte Street, Overland Park, Kansas 66207, on the morning of February 25, 1984. He was 81.

Mr. Barr had attended the joint James-Younger Reunion at the Farm in September, and appeared to enjoy himself. He was hospitalized during the fall of 1983 for an operation and began a slow recovery. However, he appeared to be doing well recently and had regained the vim and pitch to his voice and was becoming more active. His sudden passing was a shock to us all.

He is survived by his wife, Thelma and a daughter, Betty, of the home.

Mr. Barr's mother was Mary, daughter of Jesse and Zerelda James. He was born October 16, 1902, at Claybrook, the magnificent pre-Civil War plantation house opposite the James Farm, which is now being restored by the Clay County Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites. His father was Henry Barr, of Kearney. He graduated from William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., which his great-grandfather, Rev. Robert S. James, helped found. Mr. Barr was an accountant for Hallmark Cards in Kansas City for 38 years, before he retired.

The James Farm was acquired by Clay County as an historic site in 1978 through the cooperation of himself and other members of the family. He devoted much time and energy in assisting us with research and information during restoration of the old log cabin in 1979 and with the restoration of Claybrook. He often drove out to the farm and was always ready to be of assistance. At the time of his death he was compiling a history of his grandfather "from the family's point of view."

Burial was in Mount Moriah Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri.

Signs of Our Times

Feb. 22, 1984

Mr. James F. Sullivan, Associate Director
Membership Division
American Assn. of Retired Persons
1909 "K" Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20049

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

Your recent letter to Jesse James enclosing a plastic membership card in the AARP, together with a request for membership is too late. Mr. James was shot and killed by Robert Ford in St. Joseph, Missouri, April 3, 1882, at the age of 34. He is therefore ineligible for membership in your fine organization.

Unfortunately, computers cannot distinguish between living, retired persons and folklore heroes when such letters are sent out. This card will be an interesting artifact for our museum about Jesse James.

Cordially,
/s/ Milton F. Perry

Annual Meeting and Reunion in Planning

The annual meeting of the Friends is being planned for the third weekend in September to coincide with the City of Kearney's annual James Days Festival. We haven't outlined the program or which day we want to have our events yet.

Last year we had our meeting on Friday, and Kearney had their events Saturday and Sunday. However, some people told us it was difficult for them to come on Friday. If you would prefer we meet either Saturday or Sunday, please drop us a note and state your preference. Also tell us some events you would like.

We will have our Pistol Shooting Contest for persons with old-time firearms, shooting at targets that Frank and Jesse used; there will be rodeos in Kearney, a parade, and an arts and crafts fair. Suggestions range from a music event, to a play, to historic tours. Tell us what you'd prefer!

Restoration of the James Home

The front portion of the James Home, which was built in 1893, has been undergoing restoration by the Clay County Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites this winter. In spite of bad weather, the contractor has been able to install new concrete foundations beneath the original cut limestone blocks, place a layer of gravel beneath the floors for moisture absorption, replace rotted floor joists, restore the front and rear porches, replace the roof, insulate, install hidden electric heaters and new wiring, and restore interior walls.

Grading and painting will be done soon and the house completed in time for the summer tourist season. We will have a picture of the restored house in the next issue.

RESTORATION OF CLAYBROOK HOUSE

Restoration of Claybrook House, the home of Mary James Barr, Jesse's daughter, across the road from the James Home is nearly completed. The west bedroom and parlor are now being restored, and will be open this summer. Restoration has involved installation of walls, wall papering, restoration of floors, ceiling, woodwork and mantels and fireplaces.

Saving a James' Landmark

Recently, the City of Nashville, Tennessee, issued a demolition permit for a house at 711 Fatherland Street, "for disrepair and below minimum housing standards". It turned out that the house was lived in by Jesse James (as J. D. Howard) in 1881.

Located in the Edgefield Historic District it was necessary for the Metro Historical Zoning Commission to pass on the matter. Ensuing publicity was nationwide and resulted in a hearing and inquiries by persons interested in rescuing the structure.

Bill Beard was one of those and drove by it out of curiosity. He liked what he saw and ended up buying the house. He plans on restoring it to live in. We wave out dusters in honor of Mr. Beard!

Unreal People

Those of you who saw the segment about Jesse James on the March 7 "Real People" television program witnessed TV sensationalism at its worst. The program focused on claims by a commercial cave operator in south central Missouri for J. Frank Dalton as the "real" Jesse James.

Completely ignored were the facts that the cave operator 25 years ago offered to give \$10,000 to anyone who could prove Dalton was not Jesse. Stella James, Jesse's daughter-in-law and her daughters took him up on it but he refused to pay, so he was sued by them. On May 7, 1970, a Missouri jury found in their favor. He appealed, and on September 28, 1971, the Missouri Appellate Court upheld the verdict.

Surely the current operators — the son and widow of the man sued — knew of the trial, and the TV writers didn't do enough research to know about it. All they did was swallow hook, line and sinker those often discredited

fantasies of the last of a lot of old men imposters and pass it off to the public as "fact".

Not that they hadn't been warned. Myself and member Steve Eng of Nashville, TN, wrote Hollywood and sent material including a letter Dalton printed in 1936 saying he was at Ft. Riley, Kansas, when Jesse was shot, that he identified the body as Jesse and those imposters were "cheap notoriety seekers".

Either way, the man was a liar. But TV has continued to pander the credulity and ignorance of the viewing public.

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

POSTERS

(1) Missouri "Wanted" Poster	\$1.00
(2) Kentucky "Wanted" Poster	\$1.00
(3) Minnesota "Wanted" Poster	\$1.00
(4) Map (shows sites of robberies)	\$1.00

POSTCARDS

(1) Old Grave Site	
(2) New Grave Site	
(3) 1885—Family Members in James Yard	
(4) Frank Standing By Gate	
(5) James Farm, Kearney (before restoration)	
(6) Jesse's Home, St. Joseph	
(7) James Farm, Kearney (front view restored)	
(8) James Cabin, Kearney (after restoration)	
(9) Jesse James	

(3 for \$1.00)

Signs of Our Times

From an actual letter addressed to Mr. Jesse W. James, Kearney, MO

"Dear Collector:

Everyone is interested in money — and maybe that's why so many people collect banknotes.

But, actually, there's much more to it than that. Antique banknotes have been collected avidly for years. They're fascinating and many of them are extremely rare. So rare that they're often worth thousands of dollars — some are almost priceless. In fact, when collectors get together to talk about banknotes, the words you hear most often are "value" and "rarity."

If you tried to assemble a collection of the world's most famous banknotes, it would be virtually impossible to do — even if you had a great deal of money and an unlimited amount of time. But we've come up with a unique way for you to build your own "banknote collection" — conveniently and at reasonable cost."

But Jesse had already developed his own unique way to collect banknotes!

Genealogical Findings

For those of you interested in the genealogy of the Jameses and related families, we would recommend you join the "Woodson Watcher and Allied Families" which is published three times a year. It is devoted to the name Woodson in general. The family includes such persons as First Lady Dolley Madison and Frank and Jesse Woodson James.

Each issue has 40 pages and is full of interesting items. If you don't like the first issue they will give you a full refund. Subscriptions are \$12.00 a year and well worth it. Send to: "Claudette's", P.O. Box 37010, Bloomington, Minnesota 55431.

Jesse James in Song

As one of America's greatest folk heroes, Jesse James has been the subject of a famous nineteenth-century ballad with at least a hundred verses, drawn from various parts of the country. We're probably all aware, also, of Paul Kennerly's fine "concept album" *The Legend of Jesse James*, featuring Levon Helm, Johnny Cash and Charlie Daniels, issued by A&M Records. Then there are Steve Eng's evocative ballads included in the booklet *Jesse James and Bill Ryan in Nashville* by Friend Ted Yeatman.

Lesser known, however, is a hauntingly lovely contribution by a rock music group called "Journey". Entitled *Still He Rides*, the song conjures the image of a ghostly James gang that yet wanders the earth, like Flying Dutchmen.

Jesse's name and story are still known — a name and story that matter in American history.

— Philip A. Shreffler

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

Individual	\$20.00 per year
Family	\$30.00 per year
Student	\$15.00 per year
Supporting	\$50.00 per year
Benefactor	\$100.00 or more per year
Corporate	\$100.00 or more per year

(MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM)

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"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"
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Kearney, Missouri 64060

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