

JAMES FARM JOURNAL

Newsletter of
"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



VOLUME 1 • NUMBER 5

DECEMBER — 1983

1983 Reunion and Meeting Notes

Those of you who weren't able to attend the joint reunion of the James and Younger families and the annual meeting of the "Friends" September 16 missed an enjoyable day. First of all, we arranged perfect weather—clear, mild and sunny; the programs kept everyone's attention and the modest meal we served was accepted with some nice compliments.

Our morning was filled with discussions of family history—and again, relatives who had never known one another (or in some cases who never even knew of one another) met and exchanged information. That's one of the greatest benefit of reunions; to meet and discuss matters of common interest; and what a thrill it must be to meet a cousin you never even knew about!

All morning there were clusters of people eagerly going through books, pictures and documents; often taking notes or turning on tape recorders.

After lunch we heard two interesting historical papers presented at the annual "Friends" meeting. Tom Moore, of Kansas City, has been searching contemporary newspapers and court records in towns where some of the early bank holdups occurred and has discovered that in some cases other groups of men were not only charged, but actually tried!

Phillip Steele of Springdale, Arkansas is a collector of folklore and presented a paper about some imposters of Jesse and Frank James. Not only are there many stories about them in the mountains of Arkansas, but some of the imposters lived there.

Another attraction here was artist George Warfel's exhibits of portraits of the Jameses and Youngers and other famous persons of the period which were displayed in the yard. Members also toured the James home and Claybrook, the home of Mary James Barr (Jesse's daughter). Many of our members attended the United Rodeo Championships at Kearney that evening, the parade Saturday, and the annual Frank and Jesse James Pistol Shoot Sunday.

The winner of the Frank James Contest was Doug Delsemme who shot the top score. Paul Leavitt won the Jesse James Contest by shooting out the flame from a burning candle at a distance of 30 feet. Interesting enough, he did this by shooting with his left hand, using a borrowed pistol! The crowd was delighted.

Reporters from TV, radio, newspapers and magazines circulated through the audience seeking interviews, and the meetings received good coverage on TV, newspapers and magazines, all over the United States and as far away as Australia and New Zealand. An article will appear in *True West* magazine next month. Watch for it!

We enjoyed having you here and we hope you will return in 1984.

Informed of Lawrence Barr's Illness

Lawrence Barr, grandson of Jesse James was in the hospital recently for several days for treatment of several complaints. He is now at home recuperating. For those of you who want to send him a card, his address is: 9519 El Monte, Overland Park, Kansas 66207.

Signs Of Our Times

While in Dublin, Ireland in August, guess whom I saw on Irish TV? It was "Jessie (sic) and the James Boys", a country western group that is quite popular over there. I never did get used to hearing American "country" done with an Irish brogue though.

You might like to know that the Jesse James Auto Parts store in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, has been repaired after a devastating fire.

The house in which Jesse James was killed in St. Joseph, Mo., was robbed of a Smith & Wesson revolver last August. It was a clumsy robbery at best. Three men spent a good amount of time going through the house asking a lot of questions. Within minutes of closing, they smashed through the back door, ripped the pistol out of its case and ran to their car—before a number of eyewitnesses. The car was stopped by police on the highway and the pistol recovered. (The car was wearing a bumper sticker telling us that "When guns are outlawed only outlaws will have guns").

We have an inquiry asking us if the person named James (first name unknown) who served aboard the USS *Smith* (DD378) in World War II, was a member of this James family. Reunions are held occasionally and they would like to track this person down.

And—at long last, after a 3 year struggle—the Missouri Department of Transportation has finally allowed us to install two large direction signs to the "Jesse James' Birthplace" on I-35, north and south of Kearney. Already visitors are telling us the signs helped bring them here.

We get many interesting visitors at the Farm. Among them recently was a Pinkerton agent named Robert Ford! Nope, no relation to the other Bob Ford.

New Publications Planned At Annual Meeting

One of the decisions made at the 1983 Annual Meeting was to institute a series of new publications. They will be published as booklets, and each will be the product of thorough research and be fully documented. Each booklet will be a valuable contribution to our field of research and add to our knowledge. We expect they will be quite popular to those interested in this field of history. All Regular, Benefactor and Patron members will receive them as part of their membership. Subscription members can order them at a 10% discount. The first will be out in 1984.

Your Input Requested

We are compiling information of all kinds of historic places associated with the James: buildings, sites of buildings, graves and such. If you know of any, please write and tell us about them so we can include them in the *Journal*.

We also want genealogical information about the family information known and queries. Perhaps another member has the answer to your question.

James Literary Items

Several books are in progress about the Jameses. Member John Koblas is working on a detailed study of the Northfield Raid; Ted Yeatman is still collecting information about Frank and Jesse's years in Nashville, Tennessee; and Phil Schreffler is doing the same about motion pictures featuring the Jameses. In addition, a movie is being planned on the Jameses and Youngers. It will be based on fact—a refreshing change from all the movies of the past!

Frank James Acquitted of Murder Charge!

A jury of 12 men "good and true" acquitted Frank James of murder and train robbery during a re-enactment of his "trial of the century" by the Law School of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, September 9. James was tried on these charges in August, 1883, in Gallatin, Missouri which resulted from the robbery of a train near Winston in 1881. The re-enactment was arranged by the Law School as part of its 50th anniversary celebration.

The re-enactment lasted 6 hours (3-9 p.m.) although the original took several days. The facts testified to by the witnesses were drawn from original transcripts of the trial, but the manner of adducing the facts on direct examination and cross examination was at the discretion of those who portrayed trial counsel.

A distinguished group participated in the trial. Presiding as Judge Charles H.S. Goodman, was retired Circuit Judge Paul E. Vardeman of Kansas City. Prosecuting attorneys were Edward R. Stein (playing William D. Hamilton) of the University of Michigan School of Law and James W. Jeans, Sr. (as William H. Wallace), Professor of Law at UMKC, who also put the program together. For the defense, William R. Wilson, Jr., president-elect of the Arkansas Bar Association (as John F. Phillips), and Paul Bardacke, Attorney General of the State of New Mexico (as William H. Rush).

Frank James was portrayed by U.S. Magistrate Richard H. Ralston and his wife Jean, (a member of the Friends) was Mrs. James.

Other members of the Friends were our President, Wilbur Zink, and Board Member Fred Lee, who were jurors. Secretary-Treasurer Milt Perry played the role of General Joseph Shelby, who was fined for contempt of court for being drunk when he testified, (as in the original trial).

Members Are Active In Our Nashville Branch —

Those members in Nashville, Tennessee certainly are active. Here are a few of those activities:

Restoration of the Earthman Store where "Big Bill" Ryan was captured.

Appearances on radio and television stations.

Publication of *Jesse James and Bill Ryan at Nashville* by Ted Yeatman (original ballads by Steve Eng), now in its 2nd edition. (Also sold at the James Farm).

Re-erection of the State Historical Marker at the Earthman Store.

Award by the Metro Historical Commission for Architecture, given to the Earthman Store restoration May 12, 1983.

"Annual Jesse James and Bill Ryan Days", have been held for three years at the Store featuring re-enactments, historical programs and performances by singer Steve Eng.

An interview with Beth Thomas, who lives at 903 Woodland Street, Nashville where Jesse James and his family lived in January-February, 1881.

For information on these and other events, write Ted Yeatman, 5099 Linbar Drive, [J-170], Nashville, TE 37211.

The Woodson Watcher

An informative genealogical publication is *"The Woodson Watcher."* Most of the Woodsons came from Dr. John and Sarah (Winston) Woodson and this includes Frank and Jesse James and First Lady Dolly Paine Todd Madison. There are 3 issues a year and the subscription is \$10.00 a year. Those interested can subscribe by sending your check to P.O. Box 37010, Bloomington, Minnesota 55431.

Genealogical Searching

One of the most elusive branches of the James family as far as we are concerned is that of William James, Jesse's uncle. William was born in Logan County, Kentucky, Sept. 11, 1811 and was the older brother of Robert, father of Frank and Jesse. Little is known about his early life except his ordination as a Methodist minister in 1832. He preached in Oldhorn County, Kentucky and was a merchant there. His first wife was Mary Ann Variable. He then moved to Greenville, Missouri in 1847 and was associated with his brother Drury Woodson James in a store there. He was listed in the 1850 Clay County census as being worth \$400. Rueben Samuel, a young Kentucky doctor lived with him in Greenville where he met the lively widow Zerelda James Simms, (Frank and Jesse's mother) and married her.

William married Jesse James and Zerelda A. Mimms at the home of her sister Lucy Browder, April 24, 1874 in Kearney. He tried to talk "Zee" out of the marriage but she and Jesse prevailed.

William married Mary Ann Gibson Marsh, of near Platte City, Mo., a widow, on April 24, 1865. Her house had been burned by Federal troops on July 14, 1864. The marriage failed and she went to California to live with a son. Her father was an early settler of Platte County and was "genial and intelligent, and a well read "Universalist" who liked to argue. Her first husband, John S. Marsh, "was a man of some culture". She was "a lady of spirit and refinement."

William was quoted extensively in the press after Jesse was killed on April 3, 1882. At that time, he was living in Kan-

sas City with a daughter. He died there November 14, 1895 and is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.

The 1850 census lists 3 children: Thomas W., 3; William, 2; and Mary, 8 months. His obituary lists Mrs. L.A. Chapman (Alice James); Mrs. C.E. Dixon (Laura James); and Mrs. George Kirkpatrick (Mary James) all of Kansas City; Luther W. James of Washington, D.C.; and George James of Clay County. Other children were Julia, and Gustavus. To our knowledge none of their descendants have joined our organization. If you are one or you know of such, please write us as we would like to expand the family history.

Frank James' Houses

Member Paul Nichols has tracked down for us the house where Frank James and his family lived in Fletcher, Oklahoma in 1907-11.

It was sold in 1969 to a gentleman from Cache, Oklahoma, Herbert Wolsner, who moved it to that town and restored it. It is there today and, we understand, can be seen by appointment. We will obtain a photograph of it for our next issue.

Mrs. Gellete Beckwith of Toluca, Illinois writes that her father and mother once lived in the Frank James house in Nevada, Missouri, and that one of her sisters was born there. This is still in Nevada and is in good condition. Unfortunately, it has not been restored, but the owners do take pride in its history.

In addition, local citizens can point out to you the location of the shoe store on the square where Frank worked and the house Dick Liddle lived in.

Restoration of James Home

The log cabin portion of the James Home was restored by the Clay County Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites in 1978-79. This fall, the County received a grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources that will permit the restoration of the 1893 portion of the house. Foundations will be stabilized; floor joists replaced or strengthened; the roof will be replaced, the porch restored, the yard graded to carry excess water away, and the house painted. New electric wiring and concealed electric heating elements will also be installed.

During the restoration, this portion of the house will be closed, but the log cabin will remain open. It is estimated work will be completed in early 1984.

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)

RETURN TO:
"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"
Route 2 • Box 236
Kearney, Missouri 64060

Non-Profit
Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 36
Kearney, MO 64060