

JAMES FARM JOURNAL

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"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



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ANNUAL MEETING

The Friends of the James Farm held their 1984 meeting under threatening skies September 23, 1984. An interesting historical program featured Richard Pence, a nationally known genealogical researcher, an author of genealogical research books, who gave a most interesting paper on the family of Bud and Donnie Pence, two of the James Gang members — both of whom later "went straight". In fact, Donnie (Alexander Doniphan) Pence was the sheriff or deputy of Nelson County, Kentucky, for 30 years. Frank James attended his funeral.

Chris Edwards, a young composer from Columbia, Missouri, is writing a folk opera based on Quantrell's raiders. Chris and his group performed several selections, which were filmed for television, at our meeting.

We also were privileged to watch the Kansas City Carriage Club members ride around the farm in their vehicles. Drivers, of course, were in period costume, and the horses were beautifully groomed for the occasion.

After a barbeque supper, we watched the annual Frank and Jesse James pistol shooting contest. Most of the participants this year were dressed in period costumes which added to the festivity of the events. A single shooter, Phil Sommerfield, won both events. The scores of the shootists were: Frank James Contest — Phil Sommerfield 380, Bryan Ivlow 310, Phil Henson 300, Terry McGinnis 220, Michael Kalney 20; Jesse James Contest — Phil Sommerfield 130, Dennis James 80, Bryan Ivlow 60, Paul Nichols 20, and Art Haney 10.

We also attended performances of the United Rodeo Association in Kearney, watched Kearney's annual parade (which gets bigger each year), as well as being entertained by other events.

At the business meeting, we elected Martin McGrane, of Pierre, South Dakota, our President. Dr. William A. Settle, Jr., of Tulsa, Oklahoma, was re-elected Vice President, and two honorary members were elected: Judge James A. Ross, of Los Angeles, California, and Mrs. Lawrence Barr of Overland Park, Kansas. We re-elected for a new term on the Board, Philip Scheffler of St. Louis, and Marley Brant of Los Angeles. Wilber Zink, our outgoing president, was also elected to the Board.

James-Younger Family Connection, at Last!

Though it is popularly believed Frank and Jesse James and Cole, Bob, Jim and John Younger were cousins, living relatives and modern historians have never been able to find any link and so they deny the claims. However, recent research has uncovered a possible, very weak link.

I have been researching Benjamin A. Simms, second husband of Zerelda James and the first step-father of the James children. So little has been known about him that some writers missed him altogether. He married the widow James on September 3, 1852, two years after her first husband, Robert died. By all accounts it wasn't a happy union. He was 51, she 27. The family said they were separated when he died January 2, 1854.

I have been collecting material for an article about him and have identified a number of his relatives. The article by our Board Member Marley Brant in the current *Frontier Times* mentioned that Thomas Coleman Younger, uncle of the Younger boys, married Augusta Peters Inskip of Clay County, Missouri, and took her to California. Her name had a familiar ring and, sure enough, I found her listed as a niece of Benjamin Simms. Her mother was



Pictured here are the Shootists who participated in the Frank and Jesse James Pistol-Shooting contests held at the James Farm this past September.
— Photo by Virginia Page James

Frances Simms Peters and evidently her first husband, Mr. Inskip, had died. In 1850 she was 25 and her daughter Florence, 4.

This made Zerelda Simms her aunt by marriage and the children — Frank, Jesse, and Susan, and Florence and her half brothers and sisters — were cousins by marriage. Since Coleman was the uncle of the Younger boys, it could have meant that they and the James boys were also marriage cousins. I don't know whether either family recognized this as a basis for a relationship, and in any event the marriage of Benjamin and Zerelda lasted but a few months.

However tenuous, this is the first actual connection we have found between the two families.
— Milt Perry

Jessee Woodson James

An examination of the spelling of the name of the third son of Robert and Zerelda James has uncovered an interesting bit of information. It appears his parents originally intended his name to be "Jessee Woodson James", rather than "Jesse" as it's commonly spelled.

The first time this spelling is found is in the family Bible where the father Rev. Robert S. James, wrote, "Jessee Woodson James, the son of Robert and Zerelda James was born the 5th of Sept. 1847". The name is clearly "Jessee."

The same Bible has the following two entries:

"Jessee W. James and Zerelda Mimbs was married Apr. the 24th 1874" and "Jessee W. James the son of Robert and Zerelda James, departed this life April the 3rd 1882 age 34 six months and 27 days".

Both of the latter entries are in handwriting different than the first. Though Jesse's wife's maiden name was spelled "Mimbs" in the first entry, it was "Mimms" when his death was recorded.

The 1850 census-taker spelled the name "Jesse". He visited the farm when their father was on the way to the California gold fields. However, legal documents in the Clay County, Missouri, Probate Office regarding his estate, spell his son's name both "Jessee" and "Jesse".

The 1860 census also spelled it "Jesse".

However, a framed funeral remembrance, hanging on the wall of the house clearly states "in Loving Memory of My Beloved Son, Jessee W. James . . ." This last was evidently done at the request of his mother and, personally approved by her.

This evidence seems to indicate that the parents originally intended the baby to be named "Jessee"; but as he grew older his name came to be "Jesse", even though the entries in the family Bible and the death remembrance adhered to the original spelling.

It is interesting to add that both of his grave markers, the first acquired by his mother and the one that replaced it, spelled his name as "Jesse".

Our Own "Twilight Zone" Event

I presented a paper on the restoration of the James Farm and our plans for a visitor center and museum at a meeting of the International Council of Museums in Budapest, Hungary, October 8-12, 1984. There were 25 nations represented there and one of the delegates, Dr. Alexander Krein, Director of the Pushkin Literary Museum, Moscow, U.S.S.R., congratulated us on our work. He said he thought preserving the historic sites associated with folklore figures was an excellent idea and he was quite interested in it.

During the final banquet, he proposed a toast to "J.J." and our activities and declared he wanted to be a "benefactor" of the museum and a member of the Friends. So doing, he presented me with a newly minted Pushkin coin as a memento.

Dr. Krein is a highly respected scholar and has a long and distinguished career as a museum director. He has written numerous books and given speeches in many countries. I consider it an honor that he feels so interested in our work.

But a "Twilight Zone" sequel to this story is the fact that after I returned, one of our staff members gave me a small bronze medal she had found on a path in the yard here. I immediately recognized it as a medal of Alexander Pushkin, the Russian poet. His name is in Russian as is the word "Moscow" which leads me to think it might be associated with the Pushkin Literary Museum there. We suspect it was dropped by one of our visitors some years ago. I intend to send a picture of it to Dr. Krein to see if he can fully identify it.

The Kansas City *Star* newspaper was so intrigued by this, it featured it in a large story recently.
— Milt Perry

Dan James — "Danny Santiago"

Earlier this year, the media revealed that the author of the widely acclaimed novel *Famous All Over Town* by "Danny Santiago" was none other than Dan James, a descendant of Thomas M. James of Kansas City, one of the uncles of Frank and Jesse. This makes Dan a cousin of the James boys.

Dan is a native of Kansas City and has written several screen plays and stage productions, including "Bloomer Girl". He has lived in California for many years, and attended our reunion in 1981.

As he said, the "outlaw blood" still runs in the family!

Articles of Interest

The February 1985 issue of *Frontier Times*, now on the newsstands features no less than a half dozen articles about the Jameses. The major piece is "Outlaws's Inlaws in California" by Board Member Marley Brant of Hollywood. It tells of the activities of Drury Woodson James, uncle of Frank and Jesse, who helped found the city of Paso Robles and was a successful rancher and businessman.

Featured also is Thomas Coleman Younger who settled in San Jose and, like D. W. James, was a prominent and successful businessman. He was an uncle of the Younger boys. (An interesting parallel is found in that both Jesse Woodson James and "Cole" (Coleman) Younger were given their uncles' middle names.)

Marley also recounts the activities of the Daltons in the Golden State. Coleman was their uncle also.

Another piece is our letter correcting a number of errors in a recent article about the Pinkertons, and the "Reel Cowboys" column tells about the movie "Jesse James" with Tyrone Power.

Two more features are included, both photo layouts. They are about the reunion of the Younger family in Lee's Summit, Missouri, last summer and the rescue from destruction and restoration of Jesse James' home on FATHERLAND STREET in Nashville, Tennessee.

The last bit is a geological inquiry.

If you can't find the magazine, write Western Publications, P.O. Box 665, Perkins, OK 74059.

Activities at the James Farm

We are now improving the appearance of the entrance to the James Farm. The old barbed wire fence across the front is being replaced by a split-rail fence and the entrance pillars are being widened so as to admit buses and recreation vehicles. We are also planting old cedar trees between the trailer home and the old house, to screen the former. The lot to the north of the house, long a storage area for old lumber, is being cleaned, graded and landscaped.

Last year at this time, we were just beginning restoration of the 1893 portion of the house. These newest improvements will compliment that phase very well.

Allen and Susie Parmer's Home

Susan Lavenia James was the younger full sister of Frank and Jesse. She was born here at the family farm, on March 25, 1849. She never knew her father, Reverend Robert S. James who went to the California gold fields the following spring intending to stay away a year. he died a month after he arrived. She attended the Liberty seminary at the county seat, 10 miles south, as did Zerelda Mimms (who married Jesse) and Carrie Nation, and sometime during the war met a guerilla, Allen Parmer (Palmer) a Clay County lad. After the war, Allen was implicated in some of the earlier robberies of the gang. He and Susie were married in Kansas City, Nov. 24, 1870, and moved to Boonesboro in Northwestern Arkansas where Allen's parents had a farm. They evidently lived there for about three years. Local legend has it that Susie taught at the nearby Bethesda school.

Today, the village is called Cane Hill. It is a

few miles west of Fayetteville and has some very nice old homes. The Parmer house still stands on an old dirt road just southwest of town. Actually a log cabin, it was moved several hundred yards and joined to another section. All of it has been faced with local rock but the upstairs of the interior still retains its original feeling. Board Member Phillip Steele of Springdale checked it out in legal records and local traditions after we had found a picture of it being for sale in *National Home* magazine.

At this writing, it is still for sale.

Jesse, Jr., Imposter

Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 1915 — Mrs. Elsie Lindley James, who for five years has supposed herself to be the wife of Jesse James, Jr., son of the noted bandit, is trying to find out who she really married.

Jesse James, Jr., son of the bandit, is a well-known and respected lawyer of Kansas City, Mo., who has a wife and four children. He has written that he knows nothing about the Mrs. James here who is suing for a divorce. Mrs. L. Taylor, who lives in Los Angeles, corroborates the statement of the Kansas City man and states that the photograph of the husband of Elsie Lindley James is not the likeness of the Kansas Citian.

When Mrs. James was told late last night that her husband is not the son of the outlaw Jesse James she was speechless with amazement. She stated that for three years, while she and her husband were living together, he posed continuously as the son of the bandit and had many photographs and other pictures of his "father" in the various phases of his spectacular career.

Mrs. James and a man who called himself Jesse James, Jr., were married in Los Angeles in 1910. A honeymoon trip was taken across the continent in a covered wagon and they were happy for three years. However, two years ago in St. Louis the young husband experienced difficulty in obtaining an engagement in his profession as a prize fighter, and Mrs. James, with her little daughter, came to her parents' home in Los Angeles. She received

a number of letters from her husband and in one of them he instructed her to meet him at the station here. She did so, but he did not come. For the last two years she has heard nothing from him and through her attorney, Arthur W. Green, she is endeavoring to obtain a divorce on the grounds of desertion. Because of the fact that she had no witnesses here to corroborate her story, Judge Monroe denied the decree.

Jesse James, Jr., the attorney, who lives in Kansas City at 4117 St. John Avenue, and has offices in the Scarritt Building, said last night that he does not know the Los Angeles woman and that he never resided in California.

(The real) Mrs. Jesse James, Jr., was distressed yesterday because of the report that her husband, with whom she has been living in harmony for several years, had been sued for a divorce by another woman.

"A woman who calls herself Mrs. Jesse James has written me several letters in the last month, claiming she married Jesse James, a son of the late Frank James, who used to live in St. Louis, several years ago," Mrs. James said. "Robert James, a son of the late Frank James, who used to live in St. Louis, tells me there was a Jesse James there, who was no relative of our family. He was a street car conductor. Evidently he has been telling his wife that he is the son of the late Jesse James, which is untrue." — *Kansas City Journal*, April 3, 1915, Kansas City, MO

JUNIOR JESSE JAMESSES

Jefferson City *Tribune*, July 26, 1884 — A Jesse (sic) James gang has been formed among some of the hopeful young Americans, and their blood-curdling war-whoops can be heard resounding from the vacant lots after the shades of night (have) fallen, as they swoop down on imaginary trains and stage coaches and relieve the passengers of their wealth. Officer Erhardt and a good stout shingle might reform the would-be bandits before it is everlastingly too late.

— *Missouri Historical Review*
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