

JAMES FARM JOURNAL

Newsletter of
"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 2

EDITOR — Milt Perry

APRIL — 1987

Jesse James First Photograph



JESSE JAMES, at the Age of Fourteen.
(From a Photograph.)



FRANK JAMES, at the Age of Sixteen.
(From a Photograph.)

This is the earliest known photograph of Jesse James. The original has been lost, but an engraving of it appeared in J. A. Dacus, *Illustrated Lives and Adventures of Frank and Jesse James and the Younger Brothers, the Noted Western Outlaws*, (St. Louis, N.D. Thompson & Co., 1881.) Dacus said he had made "visits of length" to Mrs. Zerelda Samuel, the James boys' mother. He collected his material over a period of three years, but the first edition (1880) of his book did not include these pictures. The publisher noted that for the 1881 edition, he had collected "numerous" pictures that were "taken from actual photographs", and it is noted on the captions that these engravings were copied from the originals.

The picture depicts young Jesse James dressed for the occasion, wearing a black suit and bow tie, stylishly tucked under the shirt collar. The pose is stiff and fixed for the long exposure required.

Above it, Dacus printed an engraving of Jesse's older brother, Frank, similarly dressed.

Captions indicate they were taken three years apart. Frank's vest appears to have been buttoned backwards. If so, it would indicate the engraving followed the photograph, which was a reverse image. The buttons on Jesse's seem correct, suggesting the engraver

turned the photograph around so he would appear natural.

Jesse's hair is parted on the left, but later likenesses show he sometimes reversed the part. Perhaps it had to do with fashion.

But the biggest problem posed by these photographs is trying to determine when and where they were taken. The captions tell us only that Frank's photograph was taken when he was sixteen years old. He was born January 10, 1843, so we can assume he posed for it in 1859. If Jesse was fourteen as the caption claimed, his picture was taken after September 5, 1861, his fourteenth birthday.

No photographer has been identified as working in Liberty, Missouri, the nearest town to the James Farm at this time, but two were in Kansas City, some 25 miles away in 1859, and a total of four in 1861. Until the original of these pictures are found, hopefully bearing the stamp of the photographers, they cannot be identified.

The engraved copies are poor and show few details. One can see the shape of their faces and placement of their ears, mouth and eyes, but that is about all.

Strangely, these pictures were published more than a century ago but historians of the Jameses have missed them and consistently call pictures taken in 1864 as the first ones.

— Milt Perry

All exhibits will be installed by a professional exhibits firm and the audiovisual program is being produced by the Madison Group of Kansas City, who have had extensive experience in this field.

The oil portrait of Rev. Robert S. James, Frank and Jesse's father, will soon be restored by the Friends and placed in the museum. Now that we are building the museum, the Friends can make many important contributions to the effort.

"The Life and Times of Jesse James"

Our historical outdoor drama, "*The Life and Times of Jesse James*", will be produced at the James Farm again this summer, July 24 thru September 6, each Friday, Saturday and Sunday night.

The play received wide acclaim last year and played to sell-out audiences, and we expect an even more enthusiastic reaction this summer.

Professionally written, directed and produced, all actors are professionals, as is lighting and sound. The playwright wrote the script based on historical research Milt Perry provided. It tells the story of the James family from 1845, when they purchased the cabin, until 1882, when Jesse was killed in St. Joseph. It is set on the very site (the porch of the log cabin and the yard in front) where these events occurred. This makes it unusual in the history of theatre.

The members of the audience are part of the production in that they play the role of visitors to the farm during the summer of 1901 when Frank and his mother took them on tours. Indeed, Frank welcomes them from the porch and tells them he will talk about what has happened here. He is joined by his feisty mother, Zerelda Samuel, who had been sitting in the audience. She storms into the yard to present her version of the events and as the drama unfolds, we begin to get two views of Jesse: Frank's more pragmatic one, and the mother's dotting one. The audience is left to decide which presents the truest picture of Jesse — or is there some truth in both?

The drama features live music, horses, gun shooting and a dramatic recreation of the midnight raid on the house by detectives, and the subsequent bombing and killing of little Archie Samuel and the maiming of his mother.

We encourage all our members to make plans now to see this outstanding drama. Further details will be in the next *Journal*.

Progress on our Museum

The museum building at the James Farm is up and the interior is being finished. It will contain a museum about the Jameses and their times; a small auditorium, where a multimedia slide program will be shown to visitors, and a large area for the sale of historical publications and souvenirs, and new restrooms, offices, workshops, a library and artifact storage area. We hope to have the auditorium and slide program ready by mid-June, in addition to the sales and admissions section and some exhibits. The rest of the exhibits will be completed next year.

The current road and parking lot will be eliminated. Instead, visitors will use a new road and parking lot for the museum which is located a couple of hundred yards southeast of the house, behind a small hill. After viewing the museum, the public will walk along the original road, cross a wooden bridge over the creek past the old swimming hole and ice house site to visit the house. All 20th century struc-

tures will be removed from the house area and utilities will be buried. The shingled roof of the museum, the exterior of which will resemble a farm building, is all that will be seen of that building from the house. Everything will look as it did in the 19th century.

The initial exhibits in the museum will tell about the tradition of "the Highwayman", such as Dick Turpin, Robin Hood and Claude DuVal, whom the Jameses emulated; the history of the James family and the restoration of the house. Later exhibits will tell their entire story. Among artifacts to be seen here will be a magnificent porcelain bowl that has Thomas Hart Benton's engraving of Jesse James on it acquired by the Friends, the original James family Bible; the feather duster Jesse was holding when he was killed; Dr. Reuben Samuel's medical kit; a wooden "recorder" (a flute-like instrument) Jesse made and gave to his step-brother, Archie, and many other interesting items. We would also welcome the donation of other items of interest relating to their careers for the museum.

Public Relations Men Take Note

During the reign of the James boys in Missouri it was observed that the trains of the Hannibal and St. Joe were never molested by the James boys or their banditti . . .

It was all due to an annual pass. One day while in the office of the general superintendent at Hannibal, a news reporter saw a list of persons to whom annual passes were issued. Among the number was the name of Mrs. Samuels of Kearney, Mo. This station is a primitive settlement of houses that resemble match boxes whitewashed . . .

"How's that?" was asked of the superintendent in astonishment, when it was recalled that Mrs. Samuels was none other than the one-armed mother of the noted robbers.

"My dear boy," responded the railway official.
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Letter from a "Friend"

Mr. Milton F. Perry, Sec.-Treas.
Friends of the James Farm
Rt. 2, Box 238, Kearney, MO 64060

Dear Mr. Perry,

I appreciate having been voted an honorary member of your Board and I would be glad to attend any of the meetings if I am able.

It is good of you to suggest that I present a paper on my great grandfather, Thomas Martin James, but I do not feel able to do that. As you undoubtedly know, he and his wife both came here from Kentucky and settled in Kansas City in the early '50's. He owned and operated a general store, but when they were left with an over supply of china, he liked that part of the business and decided to specialize. The family story goes that after their father's death, my great grandfather took Frank and Jesse to raise with his two boys, Crawford and Luther. This did not last very long, as their mother thought that my great grandfather was disciplining the boys too much. He said he was just raising them the way he did his own two sons, but their mother took them away. In retrospect, this firm family guidance was probably what they needed, as both my grandfather and his brother led more stable lives.

My great grandfather was always closer to Frank, and again a family story is that when there was a price on his head, Frank would step out of the dark and meet my grandfather coming home from an evening prayer meeting at the Calvary Baptist Church and join him for a visit.

As you know, Thomas Martin James was one of the founders of William Jewell College. In spite of his close Baptist connections, he sent at least my grandfather back to Brown University. He had hoped to go to Yale, but Brown accepted him first and he felt he couldn't give up the \$20 or so that he had paid. However, he was quite sure that he would send his two sons to Yale, and he did do that.

If you want more family history, while my grandfather was at Brown, he courted Fanny Shouse, who came from Kansas City and was a member of one of the earliest, if not the earliest, classes at Vassar College. How my grandfather got from Providence to Poughkeepsie I never understood, because I know that travel was so difficult that the first years my grandmother did not come back for Christmas.

T. M. James and Sons China Merchants continued in business. My father, who had been President, sold out his and his family's interest in 1955. This was a wholesale company. The retail section had been sold to Halls (Hallmark Cards) about 1950.

If there is any other information I can give you about my grandfather, do call me.

With Best Wishes,

/s/ Barbara James McGreevy

(Editor's Note: I think Mrs. McGreevy has done such an excellent job I have decided to use her letter. I hope we will receive more letters of this nature to publish. — Milt Perry)

The 1987 Annual Reunion of the James and Allied Families and the annual meeting of the friends of the James Farm will be held at the Park Place Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri, Saturday, July 25, 1987, instead of out at the Farm. Please make a note of this important date now!!!

Everybody, just keep quiet, and nobody gets skunked, OK?

Kansas City Times, March 2, 1987

By William Hollan

More than a century after Jesse James battled Pinkerton agents at the family home near Kearney, the cabin has become the lair of another gang of desperadoes.

Like the James gang, the family of skunks that holed up under the cabin a few weeks ago is well-armed and considered dangerous or at least odorous, by those who want to flush the skunks from their hide-out. Unlike Clay County's bank-busting favorite sons, the outlaw skunks are not wanted — dead, alive or any other way.

The problem is, how can the county persuade the squatters to find another place to winter without the shedding of blood or skunk fumes beneath one of the county's biggest tourist attractions?

If anyone in the Kansas City area has any suggestions, we're open," said Pat Thomas, Clay County superintendent of parks. "We're really not sure what our options are."

The first cautious efforts to drive the skunks away or catch them alive for release elsewhere have failed, Thomas said.

"We have tried ammonia," he said. "We still have traps set ... We might get lucky and trap one, but if we trap one, there are others

underneath there. They may very well be breeding."

Thomas plans to consult with officials of the county Sheriff's Department to determine whether the skunks could be smoked out. At issue, Thomas said, is the undesirable possibility that the smoke would be noxious enough to kill the skunks or annoy them to the point of retaliation.

Milt Perry, Clay County curator of historic sites, whose office in the James cabin is directly above the skunks' digs, chuckled at the attempts to budge the beasts.

"They set up traps the other night and caught a yellow cat," Perry said last week. "It's skunks 2, Pat Thomas 0."

The skunks make their presence known with occasional squeals, scuffling and scents, Perry said.

"It hasn't been overpowering, but it's there," he said of the smell. "It hasn't been enough to drive anybody out. Most people laugh about it. So far, we've been living pretty peacefully side by side."

Perry said the unwelcome tenants are not likely to keep visitors away from the farm, "not unless somebody upsets the skunks."

"We've got to be careful not to antagonize them," Perry said. "Please don't upset skunks."

Public Relations Men

(Continued from Page One)

ficial, with a suave smile and an exuberant twirl of his watch chain, "that annual pass saves the St. Joe road thousands of dollars, and our trains are, as you know, never molested by the James boys. We have carried her for years and will continue to do so as long as we turn a wheel. She possesses the only life pass on the road."

Not long afterwards when Frank James was pardoned . . . he was asked about the incident and responded feelingly:

"We never boarded a St. Joe train just on that account. The kindness shown our crippled mother and the refusal of the road to run a special train of Pinkerton men to surprise us touched the hearts of both Jesse and myself. That is why we never bothered that road."

Reprint from the *Palmyra Spectator*,
May 8, 1890

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
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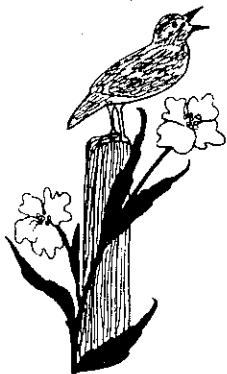
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