

# JAMES FARM JOURNAL

Newsletter of

"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 3

EDITOR — Milt Perry

SEPTEMBER — 1987

## James Play Produced Again

The outdoor historical drama *The Life and Times of Jesse James* was produced weekends last summer from July 23 to September 12. The play, written, produced, directed and acted by professional theatre persons, tells the story of Jesse James and his family and was seen each Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights by enthusiastic audiences.

The drama is actually a play within a play, with the audience as a part of it, for it plays the role of visitors-to the Farm during the summer of 1902 and old Frank and his mother, Zerelda James Samuel, welcome them and, to help explain the story for a group this large, allow some local actors to enact various roles while they narrate.

Whether Frank and, especially, Jesse, were "good" or "bad" is left for the audience to decide, for we see events through the idealized eyes of Zerelda and, the cold, pragmatic views of Frank.

The play featured drama, humor and music and some scenes, such as the nighttime raid on the cabin by detectives bearing flaming torches was dramatic to the extreme. The Centerville Militia Civil War reenactors dashed across the "stage" on horseback often, shooting or waving sabres, and the loud explosion of a "bomb" is a high point of the action.

A unique feature of the drama is that it was presented where it actually happened and the excitement and pathos visually moved the audience.

## 1987 Annual Meeting A Rousing Success

The annual meeting of the Friends was held in conjunction with the Annual Rendezvous of the National Organization for the Study of Outlaw and Lawmen History, at the Park Place Hotel, in Kansas City, Missouri, July 22 - 26, 1987. It was, to say the least, a spectacular meeting.

In all, we had about 150 people from all over the United States and Canada. The speakers were excellent, and the tours full of interest. Those of you who missed it should regret it, for it was a nice time.

California Superior Court Judge James Ross, great grandson of Jesse James, was the keynote speaker and presented a moving program about his grandfather, Jesse Edwards James, son of Jesse. Jim was accompanied to the meeting by his aunt Ethel Rose Owens, granddaughter of Jesse James. Though originally from Kansas City, she had not visited it for more than thirty years and took time to see some of the old homes she remembered. She saw Mrs. Thelma Barr, (widow of Lawrence, son of Mary James Barr, Jesse's daughter), and Betty, Thema's daughter. She met another relative for the first time. It was Nancy Walker, great-granddaughter of Susan James Farmer, sister of Frank and Jesse.

Besides the James family, we had present, the great-granddaughter of Belle Starr, and relatives of Bat Masterson, the Youngers, the Daltons and others.

Other papers delivered at the meeting were by Donald Hale who discussed Quantrill's men; Marley Brant, "The Youngers"; Milt Perry, "Photos of Jesse James"; Bob Ernst, "History of the United States Marshal's Service", and Phillip Steele, "Belle Starr".

Tours took them to the graves of Frank and Jesse James and the Youngers, to the Jesse James Bank, the Old Jail in Independence, where Frank James was held awaiting trial,

and the James Farm where they were treated to a cookout, and saw the play *The Life and Times of Jesse James*.

The gala banquet on Saturday night, featured many persons dressed in clothes of the Old West and many photos were taken of the relatives.

We have gotten many calls and letters from folks who say this was the BEST historical meeting they had ever attended.

## Portrait Restored By The Friends

Unveiled at the annual meeting was our portrait of the Reverend Robert S. James, father of Frank and Jesse, who died in California in August, 1850. The oil painting was donated to the Farm by William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, of which he was a founder. It has needed cleaning and restoration for many years.

I contacted the Art Department of Penn Valley College, in Kansas City and a former assistant of mine when we were at the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Sonny Directo, undertook the task.

Sonny, now Director of the Art Department, and his assistant carefully cleaned all the old dirt and smoke from the surface; next they removed the old varnish and exposed the painting itself. Tiny flakes of the original paint came off as the canvas was restretched on the frame and, as bits flaked off in rows, it indicated the painting was once rolled and stored.

The artist carefully "inpainted" where each flake had been, and restored the plaster frame by making claymolds of the missing parts by copying parts still there. These were next cast and added to the frame and gilded.

The painting is indeed beautiful and was the centerpiece for the banquet. It will hang in our new museum.

## Jesse James Bank Acquired

Clay County, Missouri is now operating the Jesse James Bank Historic Site in Liberty, ten miles from the James Farm. The owner of the attraction, which was restored twenty years ago, Jack Wymore (Vice-President of the Friends) has leased the bank, the first ever held up in peacetime, to the County and the City of Liberty. Though the robbers have never been identified, the James brothers have been accused by some historians as having participated, though others point out that Jesse was still suffering from his Civil War wound, and may not have been able to withstand the physical strain of riding at that time.

## The Jameses and Fords Meet Again

All was peace and harmony when at the annual meeting a relative of Bob Ford (who shot Jesse, James in 1882) met descendants of Jesse James, the first time the Jameses and Fords had gotten together since the event in 1882.

Shelly Bullock, of Springfield, Missouri, was the Ford, and Jim Ross, Ethel Rose Owens and Betty Barr were the Jameses. They posed together for photos many times, gave out autographs, and were featured on two Kansas City TV stations and made the front pages of several newspapers, The Kansas City Star, Kansas City Times, and papers in St. Joseph and Springfield, Missouri.

It was indeed a history-making event and we are pleased to say that all became good friends.

## Gunfighter Reenactments at the Farm

The National Old Gunfighters Association held regional competitions at the Farm, on July 26. The event featured teams from Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri, who reenacted gunfights, not only for the public, but for a panel of judges.

Teams performed in a mock-up of a western town, with fronts of a saloon, jail, bank, doctors office and other typical buildings. Participants would present skits and were judged on authenticity of clothing, authenticity of dialogue, and the overall presentation, scored by the judges.

The winner this year was the Confusion Creek Rangers, of Kearney.

Plans are now being made for at least two competitions next year.

## Centerville Militia Recreated

Last summer, with Sonny Wells, a Civil War reenactor, we created — or recreated, that is, the Centerville Militia.

This was a Home Guard company founded by Frank James and George Claybrook, among other local citizens, in 1861. They drilled at Mr. Claybrook's home which still stands, and is being restored by Clay County.

The first weekend of each summer month, the Militia camped in the yard of the house and conducted drills and demonstrations.

The public was invited to watch. Soldiers pitched tents, cooked over fires, groomed horses and conducted mounted drills with sabre and pistol.

Several times a day, they rode to the James Farm and presented entertainment for visitors there.

They will return next year, and we plan on furnishing a room in Claybrook House, featuring their military gear and equipment.

## Elections and Annual Meeting

Phillip Schreffler, a college professor of St. Louis, Mo., was elected President of the Friends at our annual meeting July 25. Jack Wymore, of Liberty, Mo., is Vice-President, and Pam Banner, Manager of the James Farm, Secretary-Treasurer.

Board members elected are: Martin McGrane of Madison, South Dakota, Marley Brant of Hollywood, California and Phillip Steele, of Springdale, Arkansas.

Milt Perry was appointed Executive Director.

## Museum Opens

Though it will not be completed for some time, the Museum at the James Farm is open for visitors. Complete is a ten minute audio-visual program shown in the theatre, which tells the history of the James Farm and the stirring events that occurred there. Utilizing three projectors, and stereophonic sound, the presentation is most enjoyable and informative.

Some exhibits are completed and installed, including the exhibition of a beautiful Wedgewood bowl of the limited edition "Americana" series, featuring lithographs by famed artist Thomas Hart Benton one of which is "Jesse James". It was acquired by the friends for the museum.

(Continued on Back Page)

A large panel features the Jesse James section of the famous Missouri Statehouse mural by Benton.

Also on display is a beautiful bronze sculpture "Sounding the Rails" by Western artist Tom Beard. It depicts Frank and Jesse just prior to the Glendale train robbery. Frank is on one knee, his ear against railroad tracks, listening for the train, while Jesse, standing, consults his watch; both next to a pile of ties on the track to stop the train. The bronze has been lent to us by the artist.

Visitors will also see the restored portrait of Rev. Robert S. James, father of Frank and Jesse, and a large genealogical panel.

A large gift shop is also a part of the museum.

Visitors who visit the museum, tour it, then follow a path past the old swimming hole in the creek in front of the house, and go through the restored house. Leaving, they retrace the path, which will have several historic markers pointing out the creek, the ice house site, the original road, and other places, back to the museum where, they visit the gift and crafts shop.

During summer months visitors can visit Claybrook House, across the road, at no additional charge. Claybrook was the home of Mary James Barr, Jesse's daughter, and is being restored.

## Funeral of S. J. Ralston

Remains Will Be Interred at Independence Tomorrow

The funeral service over the remains of the late Samuel J. Ralston, who died at his home in Englewood, between Kansas City and Independence, Wednesday afternoon will be held from the family residence Saturday afternoon at 2:30 o'clock. The services will be conducted by Dr. Madesire (?). The deceased was a charter member of the Independence Lodge A. F. and A. M. and was also a member of Royal Arch chapter, the members of which order will have charge of the funeral. Interment will be made in the cemetery at Independence.

Samuel Ralston was well known in Jackson county. He came here in 1848 and had passed the last fifty-eight years of his life in this vicinity. He was born in Ireland where at that time there was a great deal of trouble. He was sent to the United States by an uncle when he was 16 (or 18?) years old. Upon his arrival in North Carolina he began to farm and a few years later married. With the opening of the west he moved to Missouri and settled in Jackson county, two miles east of Independence. He was the father of one child by his first wife. That child, John, is now living in St. Louis. A few years after he had settled in this county he married Miss Mary C. Hill and eight children were the result of this union: Fedora, Sam, Annie (Mrs. Frank James), Adam, Hugh, Kate, Harry M. and Margaret.

The deceased took no part in the civil war, with the exception of the fight at Rock Creek, a few miles distant from this city. In that fight he was wounded.

Mrs. Annie James, wife of the famous ex-bandit king, Frank James, who is a daughter of the deceased, arrived in Independence last night to attend her father's funeral.

This article was published in the *Kansas City Times*, Friday, January 6, 1899, p.8.

Researched by: Fred L. Lee (Board Member of the Friends) 1815 E. 76th Terr. Kansas City, Mo. 64132 17 July 1987

## Letter from a "Friend"

Often we receive very interesting letters. Here is one of them:

To whom it may concern at the Jesse James home in Kearney, Mo.

At the advanced age of 88 I decided the time had come to sit down long enough to do something about a lifetime of memo-criteria if, for no other reason than to spare my "children" the problem of coping with it.

I came across the enclosed news paper clipping a couple of days ago. No doubt you have it but I thought it might interest you to hear the tale that my grandfather told me when I was a little girl.

He worked for the Railroad and had been moved from their home, near Buffalo, to Sedalia, Missouri, in the sixties. (My mother was born there in 1872) His name was James Doty Brown.

In those days friends (even neighbors) were mighty few in that part of the country. Sedalia and Kearney are not far apart and my grandparents knew Jesse James parents.

One night "Papa Brown" (I called him, as I had a great Grandfather living) was on a train that was robbed by Jesse James. He demanded that every one stand up and empty their pockets into the pouch he was carrying.

As he continued to pass down thru the car he came to my grandfather and, of course, he recognized him immediately, so he said,

"Jim, you sit down."

I, well, remember saying,

"What did you do, Papa Brown?"

He said, "I sat down!"

Cordially,

signed/ Eleanor B. Garfield

Mrs. Rudolph H. Garfield,  
1102 B Roberts Street,  
Camden, So. Carolina 29020  
formally from Mentor, Ohio.

Riverside, June 26, 1987

Dear Friends,

I don't know how to start this letter. So I will start at the beginning.

In June of 1983 I watched with my parents the movie "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral" on T.V. For some reason I wanted to bet my

mother that Wyatt Earp was real (I didn't even know it was true). She didn't want to bet. But as soon as school started again I went to the Library in our school and checked out books about the west. I read them from the first to the last page. I got me more and more books and started to look for the names of the persons I found most interesting. Jesse W. James was among them.

On June 2, 1984 I watched the movie "Jesse James" on T.V. and this got me more interested in his person.

On July 13 I went to my grandmother's and got old T.V. magazines with close-ups to the movies "Jesse James" and "The Return of Frank James" — and also an article about them, including a photograph of Jesse James. These and the book "Manhunter" by Matt Braun I got on the same day are the first pieces of the collection I started about Jesse W. James.

Over the past three years I collected every little thing that dealt with Jesse James: a comic strip, novels, magazines, and copied articles out of non-fiction books.

Jesse James drove me to come to the U.S. as exchange student with the hope inside me that I would be staying in Missouri. But instead I got to go to Oregon and California.

With my German-American (and little English) parts of my collection I think I have a fairly large collection.

But as I heard about your organization I wanted to contact you. When I found the address in "The Atlas of the Outlaw West" by Richard Patterson I wrote this letter.

Please, send me more information about "The Friends of the James Farm" and how to become a member.

My current address (until July 29, 1987) is:

Wiebke Klostermann  
c/o The Christians  
9391 Cypress Ave.  
Riverside, CA 92503

My home address is:

Wiebke Klostermann  
AM Rueten 80  
2800 Bremen 33  
West — Germany

Thank you very much.

Sincerely signed/W. Klostermann

### 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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