

# Friends of the James Farm Journal

Volume 15, No. 1 • Spring 1998

MARCIA SMITH, EDITOR

## President's Message

It's about that time of year again...time to swap stories, swig and swill, shoot six-shooters, scratch and spit and stretch our sense of history about the James family and their times.

And, in anticipation of this the Friends of the James Farm's 17th Annual Reunion Meeting (June 19 & 20), local members have been hard at work planning for you what will undoubtedly be remembered for years to come as the BEST and BIGGEST BANG-UP Reunion ever. You will not want to miss this one, I promise you.

Friday, June 19 at 5:30 we'll start with the Executive Board meeting at the 110-year-old Mt. Gilead Church and School historic site. Following that gathering, at 6:30 will be a reception and social "hour". This party is for ALL members, not just board members.

Clay County has recently restored this site thanks to a \$231,000 state grant, plus county funds. I know you'll be impressed with the numerous and extensive improvements.

Beth Beckett, Historic Sites Supervisor will greet everyone Saturday morning at the James Farm Museum to update us on Farm news. At that time we will remember Friends who have recently passed away.

In memory of his mother, Naohm Hoffman Coop, James Searce, has graciously made available to us the invaluable scrapbook of his grandfather, Harry Hoffman.

Inasmuch as he was a close friend of the Jameses and Youngers, this book is an absolute treasure of old photos, letters and news articles. We also will be able to hear for the first time a taped interview of Mr. Hoffman relating tales of Jesse, Frank and Cole. Mr. Searce is hopeful that he will be able to attend our Reunion.

Fortunately Marcia Smith and Duane Ranstrom had an opportunity to interview Naohm Hoffman Coop on video several years ago. This fascinating tape will be shown during the morning.

Bill Breckenridge and Thelma Barr also will be memorialized at a tree planting ceremony.

The afternoon promises to be fun and interesting with the dedication of our most recent project, the slave cabin, and the Great Jesse James Black Powder Shoot Out. For those not so interested in gun play, we will be showing at this time, the 1920

movie *Under the Black Flag* in the museum. In this silent film Jesse Jr. plays his father, Harry Hoffman plays Cole Younger and Hoffman's young daughter, Naohm, also has a part.

Saturday at 4:15 we adjourn across the street to Mary and Lawrence Barr's former home, Claybrook Plantation, for the General Membership meeting barbeque and entertainment.

Additionally, we have added a new event...a Costume Parade! We will give prizes for the most authentic Civil War era costume and for the most impressive Western outfit.

Soooo, come in costume this year if you possible can. Wear your best, be that silk and linen or calico and homespun and help us get into the spirit!!

## We Need Auction Items!

"Silent" auctions which use written bids are popular and enjoyable fund-raisers and we had a wide variety of unusual items for last

year's auction, ranging from Jesse James belt buckles to baseball tickets and local beer. We are planning another silent auction for our reunion this June.

We still need donations. Any James or Western-related items are always welcome including videos and books; but other items are great, too. Suggestions: gift certificates, crafts, homemade food items, collectibles. Please consider making a donation and help support the Farm and Museum while helping the Friends have fun this June.

We have not had any additional orders for a silver coin commemorating Jesse's 150th birthday. Therefore, unless we are overwhelmed with orders the weekend of June 20, this project must be regrettably dropped.

You will note that the cost of reservations for the year's reunion has increased. After calculating our expenses from the 1997 reunion we realized that we had to make this adjustment just to cover basic costs. We still think that it's a bargain for the Friday night party which your Executive Board hosts, plus a whole day of activities and dinner Saturday. We hope you do too. See you all June 19 and 20!!

Jeanne



Restoration in process at Mt. Gilead School

# Goodbyes to Five Friends

We'd like to be able to report only happy news in the *Journal*, but that isn't always possible. In the past few months, fans of Jesse James history have lost five longtime friends. Not only will we miss them, but their passing reminds us of the importance of preserving the memory of historical events and people for future generations.

## Eva Mae Hall McGinley

Eva Mae Hall McGinley has left us after a long life of 92 years. Mrs. McGinley was the granddaughter of Fannie Quantrill Samuel.

Like another friend who passed on recently, Naohm Coop, Mrs. McGinley was one of our last personal links to James history. She had memories of Frank James, her great-uncle, as well as her great-grandmother, Zerelda.



**Eva Mae Hall McGinley with a photograph of her great-uncle, Frank James. By permission of Liberty Tribune**

## In Memory of Naohm Coop

On February 19th Naohm Hoffman Coop, one of the last people with personal memories to share, passed on at Fairfield Bay, Arkansas.

Mrs. Coop was the daughter of Harry Hoffman, who was a friend of Jesse James, Jr. and of Cole Younger and Frank James. A deputy marshal of Jackson County, Hoffman had played as a boy with "Tim Howard" whom he later met as Jesse James, Jr. Along with Jesse, Jr., Hoffman was one of two people whom Cole asked to hear a deathbed account of the Northfield raid.

Naohm, born in 1902, grew up in the Kansas City area and clearly remembered "Uncle Cole" visiting their home regularly as a friend of her father's. She recalled that Cole frequently asked her to play the piano for him and that he was especially fond of hymns.

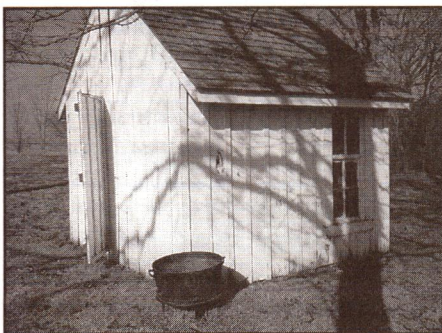
Harry Hoffman's interest in James-Younger history may have extended beyond his friendship with Cole, however. He stated, in a note later preserved in the family scrapbook, that guerrilla leader and James comrade-in-arms, Bill Anderson, was a cousin; "my paternal grandmother's nephew."

Four years ago Mrs. Coop shared her memories with the Friends of the Youngers at their annual reunion in Lee's Summit and not long afterward two members, Duane Ranstrom and Marcia Smith, taped a brief interview which the Friends hope to show at our reunion this June.

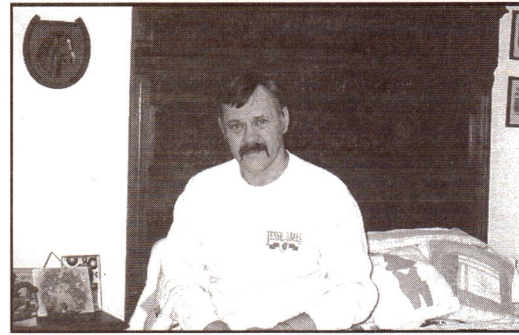
## William Breckenridge

By Beth Beckett

"Bill," as he was known, loved Jesse James and had worked



**Slave Cabin at the James Farm will be dedicated Saturday June 20 at 3:30.**



**Bill Breckenridge and one of his auction treasures, a bed that Frank James slept in. By permission of Liberty Tribune**

as an historic interpreter at the museum for several years. He was an avid collector of anything related to the Civil War, Jesse James, WWII ships, and old classic cars. He absolutely loved his job at the museum. He told me once, while we were having lunch, that as a young boy he was always fascinated with Jesse James and the Civil War, and decided long ago that he was bound and determined to live near the Jesse James Farm and Museum. Well, he lived just about as close as he could get—less than a half mile away.

If we ever needed someone to work on short notice, we could always call Bill and he'd be here as soon as he combed his hair and put on his "Jesse" T-shirt. And let me tell you, Bill could talk forever to the tourists about Jesse and Frank. Those of you that have been on his tour know!

Bill will be missed by all of us here at the Jesse James Farm and Museum. He passed away March 27, 1998 at age 59.

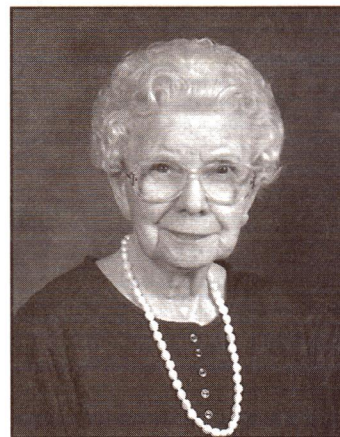
## Author Carl Breihan

Also associated with James history was Carl Breihan of St. Louis, who passed away March 3rd, at age 83.

Family members estimated that he had written about 32 books on Old West history. Though he wrote on subjects such as Billy the Kid and "wild women" of the West, James history fans will remember him for a number of books on the subject published during the 1950s and 1960s: *The Complete and Authentic Life of Jesse James* (1953), *The Day Jesse James Was Killed* (1961), *The Outlaw Brothers: The True Story of Missouri's Younger Brothers* (1961), and *Quantrill and His Civil War Guerrillas* (1959).

## Thelma Barr

By David Smith



**Thelma Barr Jan. 21, 1906-March 11, 1998**

Thelma Duncan Barr, 92, of Overland Park, Kansas, died March 11, 1998 in Overland Park. Mrs. Barr was the widow of Lawrence Barr, grandson of Jesse James. Lawrence's mother was Mary James Barr, Jesse's only daughter. Thelma was born on January 21, 1906 in the Holt community just north of Kearney, Mo. She married Lawrence Barr in 1926. Thelma was a dedicated historian of the James family and of Clay County. For years, she researched the James family, responded to thousands of letters and generously donated artifacts to the James Museum. Thelma was a dedicated "Friend" and will be greatly missed. Funeral services and burial were March 14, 1998 in Kansas City, Mo. She is survived by her daughter Betty, of the home who is a lifetime member of the Friends Executive Board.

## Slave cabin project dedication is slated

The highlight of the afternoon June 20 will be the official dedication of the restored replica of the slave cabin near the James home. We hope this represents an expansion of the James story, which has previously excluded some little-acknowledged, but vitally important, people.

Thabit Murarah, Curator of the Black Archives of Mid-America, will be present to dedicate the new exhibit and donate an artifact from the Black Archives. He will also be one of our guest speakers that evening. Mr. Murarah will talk about the history of slavery in Missouri.

The Friends have accepted donated items to furnish the cabin such as a quilt, butter churn, a small iron kettle, a table, two small beds and laundry implements. Member Steve White has generously offered an "agitator" as a display artifact for the slave cabin. In the 19th Century an "agitator" didn't necessarily mean a noisy troublemaker; it was a club-shaped device for stirring clothes in a laundry pot.

## Farm News

Kansas City has been talking lately about a movie being shot in Missouri which may be of special interest to James history buffs. Director Ang Lee (*Ice Storm*, *Sense and Sensibility*) was in the KC area during March, working on a new movie about the lives of two Missouri brothers who join the guerrilla fighters during the Civil War. Not about the Jameses but the similarities are very close. Shawn Butler of the Ghost Riders re-enactment group has been cast. The movie also features singer Jewel as a "Civil War widow" and Skeet Ulrich (*Scream*).

Based on the book *Woe To Live On*, by Daniel Woodrell, the movie was previously titled *To Live On*, but has been renamed *Riding With the Devil*. In announcing the name change, the *Kansas City Star* referred to Quantrill melodramatically as the "Avenging Nemesis, Descendent of Cain and the Forbidding Monster of Assassination."

Jesse has been thrust into the computer age. First an E-mail address and now a Web page! We thank Jessica Stout, historical interpreter at the Farm, Marcia Horn, Angie Borgedalen and Jim Roberts, local Friends and computer nerds for working on this project and Clay County Parks for purchasing this site. It is jesse-james.com.

The town of Liberty will hold its "Spring On the Square" event on May 16th, Shelby's 5th will re-enact the Liberty Bank robbery.

*Continued on page 4*

## Descendants Claim Ties to Jesse James

Excerpts from the *Liberty Sun-News*, March 18, 1998  
(Used by permission)

By Jack Miles

Members of the Smith family of Clay County received confirmation this week that stories they heard about their ancestor having a family tie to Jesse James are true.

For years they had heard they might be related in some way, said Marla Renee Smith, 42, of Liberty, but outsiders seemed to doubt the story because the Smiths are of African heritage.

The past is not always easy for some blacks to talk about, said former Liberty Councilman Sam Houston, a community leader who grew up attending the city's segregated Garrison School. But Marla says she wants to learn about her ancestor, Perry Samuel, who lived together as a brother with the James



**The James family on the lawn of the Clinton County Courthouse, Plattsburg, Mo., during filming of the movie, "James James, Under the Black Flag," in 1920. Jesse James Jr. in costume as his father is in the center of the back row. His wife, Stella James, is on his left as are Norma and John Samuel, half-brother of Jesse James. Mary, Jesse Jr.'s sister stands to his right and to her right are Effie Nicholson, Belle Nicholson and "Uncle Joe" Hall, brother-in-law of Jesse. One the second row, L-R are: Harry Nicholson, Addie Hall, Arch Nicholson, George Hall, Frank Nicholson and Leda Nicholson. On the front row are: Nadine Nicholson, Perry Samuel (in foreground), Josephine Hall and John Nicholson. James Farm collection**

boys, a fact seldom found in books and never on film. "On TV, they never show a slave," Marla said.

The slave family consists of an adult

couple who bore three children, including Perry Samuel. Records strongly suggest Perry is the son of Jesse's stepfather, Reuben Samuel. "Let's just say he bore a striking resemblance to Mr. Samuel. Also, in the 1890 census, (Perry) listed himself as a mulatto," Phil Stewart of the James Farm said.

According to an older story, told by Jack Wymore of Liberty, "Perry was at the farm when Frank and Jesse were in the barn. When Sheriff Thomason came to arrest them, Perry opened the door to the barn and they rode out, and shot the sheriff's horse."

Perry remained at the farm for several years after the Civil War before starting his own family. When Perry left, Zerelda James-Samuel gave him the family violin, Wymore

said.

Marla says she plans to attend the slave cabin dedication June 20th.

## “How I Joined”

**Steve White**, a longtime member, had an unusual inspiration for his interest in James-related history: a common birthday. “It began when I was a kid, about 1965,” Steve explains. “I was looking through a book and noticed that Jesse’s birthday and mine are the same, September 5th. That’s why my interest started.” A little later, Steve recalls, his interest was reinforced when he read that Jesse was left-handed, “but history now seems to disprove that notion.”

**Thurman E. DeVore** got interested in James history through events in his hometown of Huntington, West Virginia, where, he recounts, “on September 6, 1875 a band of masked gunmen, alleged-

ly the James Gang, robbed the Bank of Huntington. At the time of the robbery the Bank of Huntington was a two story brick building. During Huntington’s urban renewal project in the 1970s, this old building was saved and moved to Huntington’s Heritage Village where it remains a permanent fixture of Huntington’s history.”

Thurman first visited the James Farm on April 3, 1982. “We also visited the Mount Olivet Cemetery in Kearney where Jesse James was laid to rest,” he recalls, “not realizing at the time that it was the 100th anniversary of his assassination by Bob Ford, and wondering who might have placed flowers on Jesse’s grave.”

Thurman has also visited the Museum since it opened. Other visitors have noted that Jesse’s, Frank’s, and the Youngers’

graves are usually decorated with flowers.

And **Marie McWhirter** writes from Ontario, Canada that she and her husband “were always interested in Civil War history and thought the story of Jesse James was very exiting and romantic, and we named our first boy Jesse after Jesse James.” In 1982, on a family vacation to James historic sites, the McWhirters got to Kearney the day after the Friends’ first reunion, and made an unexpected new friend: a kitten from a litter at the James Farm. “Bandit,” as he was named, “is still going strong sixteen years later!” Marie has returned to the farm several times since and notes that “our interest in Jesse led us to discover what a truly beautiful place Missouri is.”

## Welcome New Members!

In the past year we have made a number of new Friends. They are:

Sharon Estrada  
Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Rushing  
Aaron DeMent  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Fulkerson  
F.E. Holder II  
Mr. and Mrs. S. Cole  
Mr. and Mrs. Dave Para  
Sharon Johnson  
Mr. and Mrs. B. Carney  
Mr. and Mrs. Gene Gentrup  
Miles Krasovic  
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Ralston  
Johnny Bozworth  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Fletcher  
Sandy Ferrell

Salvatore Asaro  
M. Louise Cobb  
Justin O’Rear  
Forrest Holder, Jr.  
Keith Leske  
R.C. Marciano  
Marvin Leslie  
Charles McLaughlin  
Charles Schroeder  
William Teaney  
Debra Estes  
Woodrow Neff  
Fred Rushing  
Ray Brock

Home Guard: Whipple Printing

Border Ruffians: Mr. and Mrs. Michael Henry  
Pony Express Bank  
Rita Hubbard

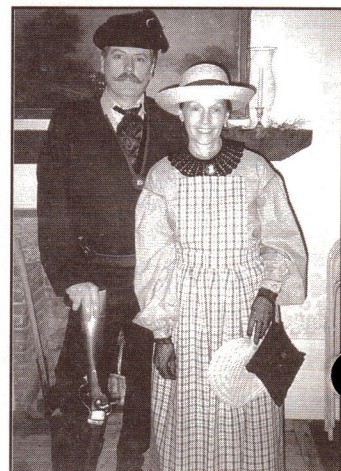
## Farm News

*Continued from page 3*

On April 3rd, Claybrook hosted a “Pantaloons and Pantalettes” fashion show. The re-enactment group Elliott’s Scouts and a number of fashion-conscious ladies attended, wearing all the latest fashions from the ‘60s (1860s, that is).

The Farm had a record attendance for February in 1998 as 547 people visited. Farm staff figure they were inspired by our El Nino-inspired preview of spring during that month this year.

Phil Stewart, who has been in the hospital after donating a kidney to his sister, is now doing fine. He has also been instrumental in researching the Perry Samuel family history.



**Friends members Robert and Evelyn Marciano model period costumes.**

## Friends of the James Farm

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