

# JAMES FARM JOURNAL

Newsletter of

"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



VOLUME 3 • NUMBER 2

EDITOR — Milt Perry

MAY — 1985

## Why the James Brothers Became Outlaws

Given their backgrounds, the James brothers seem unlikely to have become America's best known outlaws. They came from "good stock"; their family had been upstanding and prominent; their father was a respected Baptist minister; their stepfather, a doctor; they had a better than average education and they had not suffered through want or neglect. Later, both married fine women, each of whom came from good families: Frank's wife, Annie Ralston, was the lovely daughter of one of Independence's most prominent citizens; Zee James was the well-educated daughter of Jesse's aunt, whose husband ran one of the most popular hotels in Kansas City. Their uncles were ministers, dentists, and outstanding businessmen.

Most authorities agree that they became outlaws partially because of bitterness engendered before, during and after the Civil War and for a sense of adventure. In 1863, their stepfather had been cruelly tortured by Union militiamen, their pregnant mother jailed and young Jesse severely beaten; simply for being of Southern stock and having one member of the family (Frank) serving with Confederate guerillas. It was these acts that caused 15-year-old Jesse to run away and join Bill Anderson's guerilla band. Later, their family was banished from the state.

The guerillas included many youths with bitterness in their hearts for the way their families had been tortured, maimed, kidnapped or murdered. The Civil War on the border was much more of a personal conflict than in other areas. For several years, fierce no-quarter warfare had existed between citizens of Kansas and Missouri and the War intensified the situations — murder, torture, kidnapping, arson and other cruelties — creating great hatred. The James brothers and their comrades were caught up in it even before the war, and when their turn came, practiced on their enemies. The "Bushwhackers" fought under the fabled "black flag" — which required no prisoner be taken. They lived off the land, received no pay, attacked and pillaged Union strongholds and towns, giving vent to their feelings and tying down large bodies of enemy troops. Of course, the "Jayhawkers" from across the border were as bad. They fought fiercely and passionately.

At the end of the war, Jesse was shot in the act of surrendering and lingered for months, near death. When Frank, who surrendered honorably, returned home, he found desolation, bitterness and hatred in the neighborhood.

During their military service, they had served with units in which individual initiative was prized. In the eyes of their supporters they were brave and daring and they did take many chances. They rode over the countryside often being welcomed and greeted as heroes, the stuff young men thrive on; but with the end of hostilities, they joined the ranks of hundreds of thousands of veterans, not especially admired anymore, and often reviled by many of their neighbors.

Robbing banks in daylight during peacetime had never been done in this country. However, when the guerillas captured towns, they sacked banks; so it followed that these restless young men sought to "strike back" at the very bastions they believed primarily responsible for the war — the banks, and, at the same time, to relive those adventurous times.

It was indeed a daring and dangerous concept and from the first robbery in Liberty, Missouri, February 13, 1866, they were being compared with classic highwaymen and freebooters by the press and public. Banks were unpopular institutions for the public and attacks on them found favor — especially among ex-Confederates who accepted banks as a source of Yankee power. Later it included railroads.

Newspapers gave them recognition and prominence; certain politicians denounced them; others praised them; and segments of the public admired their daring and so, they became heroes to some; and today Jesse James is probably the best-known American who has ever lived.

## Frank James in Tascosa, Texas

Tascosa, now a ghost town, was one of the liveliest and toughest towns in the Texas Panhandle. It originated as a sheep camp, and in 1876, a blacksmith shop and general store opened for business followed by a saloon that served thirsty riders on the cattle and freight trail that crossed the Canadian River at Tascosa Ford.

Some of the riders were Pat Garrett, Batt Masterson, Billy the Kid, Charlie Siringo and Frank James. Bypassed by the Ft. Worth and  
(Continued on Back Page)

## Mt. Gilead Historic Site

A new site has been added to the Division of Historic Sites for Clay County, Missouri. It is the old Mt. Gilead Church and School about three miles west of Kearney, some six miles from the James Farm.

It was organized in 1830, seven years after the first church in the county was founded. A church and school were built on the property which was replaced by the present buildings in 1873.

The church is a beautiful brick building with its original pews and is in a good state of preservation. The school, about 50 yards south, is a two-story frame building which originally accommodated nine grades. A lovely cemetery containing more than 200 graves is adjacent. The oldest stones date from the early 1840's.

Though it was in existence during the time he lived in Clay County, we thus far have found no record of the Rev. Robert S. James having preached there. A full history of the church and its members will be compiled.

We are beginning to develop restrooms in a restored building on the site; install a caretaker's apartment in the upper floor of the school, restore the exterior of the buildings and the graveyard and open them for visitors. We want to use the church for meetings and gatherings and the school for 1880's type classes for youngsters.

This site will be added to the following historic sites over which we have jurisdiction:

- The James Farm (on the National Register of Historic Places)
- Historic Claybrook House (on the National Register of Historic Places)
- Aker Pioneer Cemetery (on the National Register of Historic Places), being restored.
- Rollins-Porter House, not yet restored.
- Woodhenge Pre-Historic Solar Calendar.

Just discovered that there is a James gang board game available. It's called "Gunslinger" and is put out by Avalon Hill, retailing for \$20. It apparently has several scenarios, including the O. K. Corral and the Dalton gang as well. Wonder if they'd consider one called "Impostor"?  
— Ted Yeatman

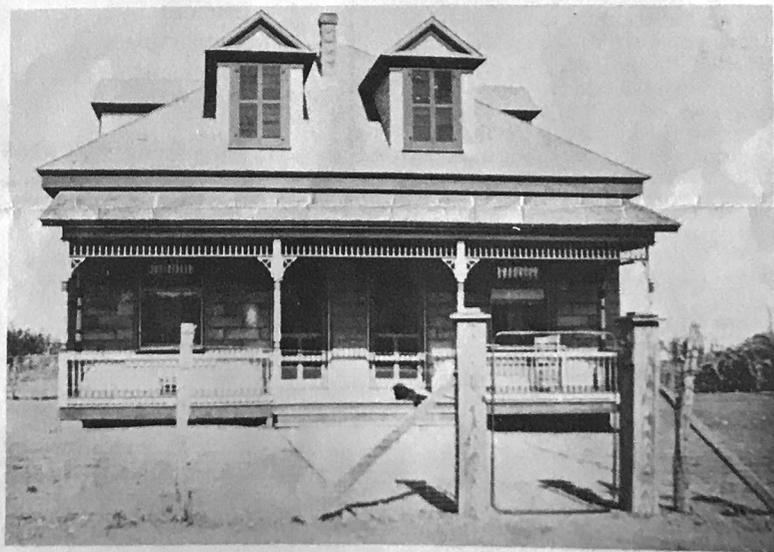
## A Note of Interest

We understand that in the same cemetery in Arkansas, where Joe Vaughan, an imposter of Frank James is buried, there is also a "Clell Miller" — which should be of interest to the family of Clell who is buried in the Muddy Fork Cemetery a few miles north of the James Farm at Kearney, Missouri. Clell was killed during the Northfield Raid, September 5, 1876.

## Jesse James Retired

Recently, a plastic card, with "reminders" from Abraham Lincoln, James Russell Lowell and Charles Dickens made out to Jesse James was received at the Farm. It was part of a package of items designed to get Jesse to join the American Association of Retired Persons. He was even given a membership number — and it included his spouse.

We can understand organizations sending materials to recently deceased persons, but to someone who died 103 years ago???



## Allen Parmer House, Alpine, Texas

This house, built in 1908 or 1909 in Alpine, Texas, was purchased by Allen Parmer who married Susan James, sister of Frank and Jesse. He lived there until his death in 1927. Known as "Uncle Allen" in the community, Parmer was well liked there. Parmer died at Wichita Falls, Texas, October 25, 1927, and is buried there beside Susan, who died March 3, 1889.

It is owned today, by members Mr. and Mrs. Gerald V. Scott who appreciate its historical value and are trying to get it designated as a Texas State Historic Site.

# News of Some of Our Friends

PHILIP SHREFFLER of St. Louis, is now editor of *The Baker Street Journal*, the publication of the Baker Street Irregulars, the New York based Sherlock Holmes fanciers.

MILT PERRY of Kansas City: his Civil War book, *Infernal Machines: The Story of Confederate Submarine and Mine Warfare*, will be reprinted by the Louisiana State University Press this summer.

CARL BREIHAN of St. Louis announces the publication of a new book, *The Crimson Trail of Frank and Jesse James*; a journal kept by Frank.

PHILLIP STEELE of Springdale, Arkansas, tells us that an article about some historic buildings we will be interested in will appear in a forthcoming issue of *True West* magazine.

JACK WYMORE, owner of the Jesse James Bank Museum in Liberty, Missouri, announces that the refurbishment of the museum and gift shop has been completed.

REBECCA WESELY of Nebraska, tells us she teaches a criminology class and "featured Jesse as the prototype of the American criminal-as-hero." Everyone, she says, responds to the James-Younger story.

DR. TILL M. HUSTON of Athens, Georgia, has collected a good deal of information on the Samuel family which we will use in a new publication by the Friends.

TED YEATMAN of Tennessee sent us some interesting material about English highwaymen. Interesting how they paralleled the James story — even to including some of the same legends!

MARIE McWHIRTER of Caledon Village, Ontario, Canada, tells us that Canadian TV has been showing lots of Jesse James films recently. They had the Tyrone Power, "Jesse James" back to back with Henry Fonda's "The Return of Frank James" as well as "The Long Riders", and "Bad Men of Missouri". Like a lot of us, the McWhirters are taping these films.

young man. He drank and smoked sparingly and raced horses.

He had a marked sense of humor and was an excellent pistol shot. He took chances that Frank wouldn't have considered.

He was a natural leader of men and seemed to need to have people around him. Though he probably came to regret his life style, he felt justified in his actions because of the way he and his family had been treated by these forces (northern banks and railroads which supported the Union cause). He was caught up in the "Robin Hood" image the newspapers helped create.

He was probably a basically restless person and though outgoing, insecure. He constantly wore his pistols and carefully observed his surroundings and nearby people. He considered himself a good judge of character but when he took off his pistols and turned his back on a pair of confederates (Bob and Charley Ford) he was murdered for a reward.

Perhaps his early days as an outlaw were exciting and daring and he liked the publicity, but eventually it palled. Like Frank, he had withdrawn from "outlawing" for three years while living in Nashville, Tennessee, from 1876-1879, but mounting debts brought on by illness and racing caused him to resume. By the time he was killed he was considering purchasing a farm so he could "retire" for good.

## Frank James — A Profile (Alexander Franklin)

Born January 10, 1843, at a farm near the James Farm.

Frank (often called "Buck" by his mother and Jesse) was about 6 feet tall; slim, with a narrow face, long nose, big ears. He was a quiet, sober, solitary person with little sense of humor — though he appeared to mellow in his old age. He read constantly, liked literature, especially Shakespeare, and could recite many passages of the preferred *Henry IV*. He enjoyed going to the theater and discussing philosophy, and theology and seemed to thrive on obtaining knowledge. He was conservative and calculating and in some ways rather ruthless and once he had made up his

mind, it was difficult to get him to change.

He deviated from the characterization once by eloping with the lovely daughter of one of the most respected citizens of Independence, Missouri; was a loving husband and father and respected lawful and moral authority. He drank more than Jesse and chewed tobacco. He was a good shot and probably shot several people, some in cold blood.

The life style of an outlaw began to pall on him and his family. In 1876, he withdrew for nearly 5 years and ran a lumberyard and pig farm, but succumbed to Jesse's exhortations and in 1881 went back to robbing trains. After Jesse was killed, he feared for the safety of himself and his family and, on October 5, 1882, dramatically surrendered to the Governor of Missouri. Tried in Missouri and Alabama, he was acquitted both times and lived for 30 years, dying at age 72 at the James Farm on February 18, 1915.

## Frank James in Tascosa, Texas (Continued from Front Page)

Denver City Railroad in 1887, the town was abandoned.

In 1939 the Maverick Boys Ranch took over the site, using the original stone courthouse for a headquarters. Foundations of the former buildings are now marked, and visitors are welcome. Location: Oldham County, on Texas #385, about 22 miles north of Vega. (From *Prospector, Cowhand and Sodbuster*, U.S. National Park Service, 1967, p. 244.)

## James Farm Sales Items

### BOOKS

(1) <i>Jesse James Was His Name</i> by William Settle .....	\$7.50
(2) <i>Background of a Bandit</i> by Joan Beamis & William E. Pullen (genealogy) .....	\$6.00
(3) <i>Goodbye Jesse James</i> (collection of newspaper articles) .....	\$4.50
(4) <i>40 Years of History at the James Farm</i> by Martin McGrane .....	\$4.50
(5) <i>Jesse James and Bill Ryan at Nashville</i> by Ted Yeatman .....	\$3.00

## Jesse Woodson James — A Profile

Born September 5, 1847, in the log house at the James Farm. Four years younger than Frank. He was about 5'9" though often taken for being taller. At times he was stocky, but illness caused him to lose a great deal of weight from time to time.

His disposition was generally pleasant and he was more trusting than Frank — unless he was crossed. Then he could be ruthless and vindictive. He had a quick temper but did not appear to hold grudges the way Frank did. Normally, he was inclined to be outgoing and even jovial. Like Frank, he dressed neatly, trimmed his beard, was well mannered and spoke well.

He suffered from bullet wounds in his chest and right leg and contacted malaria in 1876. He had "granulated eyelids" which caused him to blink often. He had cold, blue eyes — a feature people remembered most about him.

Jesse was a good husband and father and "doted" on his children, often playing with them. Religion was important to him and he once sang in a church choir in Kearney when a

## 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