

JAMES FARM JOURNAL

Newsletter of
"FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM"



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EDITOR - MILT PERRY

OCTOBER - 1989

Jesse James Relics Presented to Museum

The family of Mary James Barr, Jesse's only daughter, presented to the James Farm Museum, during the 1989 banquet, several very significant and historically important artifacts which had been given to Mary by her mother, Mrs. Zerelda James.

Perhaps the most significant, is the feather duster Jesse James was holding when he was shot in the back of the head by Robert Ford, in his home in St. Joseph, Missouri, April 3, 1882, together with the picture he was dusting. Contrary to various speculations by many writers, the picture is a framed lithograph of an embroidery, "In God We Trust."

In addition, the museum received the James family Bible, with entries written by the Rev. Robert S. James and his wife,

Zerelda. Here are the births, deaths and marriages of the family, including Jesse, Frank, their brothers and sisters. These items were given by Betty Barr, great-granddaughter of Jesse James, and Mrs. Thelma Barr, widow of Lawrence Barr, a son of Mary.

John Nicholson, great-grandson of Zerelda Samuel (grandson of Sallie Samuel Nicholson, Jesse and Frank's half-sister) presented us with a wooden recorder (flute) given by Jesse to his young half-brother, Archie Samuel. When Archie was killed in the bombing of the house in 1875, his mother kept it and give it to Archie Nicholson, Sallie's son and John's father, who was named for Archie Samuel.

New Museum Exhibits

A series of new exhibits were opened at the James farm Museum during the annual meeting of the Friends of the James Farm. These Exhibits are about the Rev. Robert S. James, father of Frank and Jesse, and feature the James family Bible, the original manuscript copy of his license to preach, an engraving of Georgetown College, Kentucky, which he attended and received his Master of Arts degree, in 1847, and information about his death at Placerville, California, in August, 1850.

The exhibit about Zerelda Samuel, mother of the Jameses, has the combination knife and fork she used after the loss of her right hand in the bombing of the house, January 25, 1875, a needlework sampler she made while at St. Catherine's Academy, Lexington, Kentucky; a quilt she made, and other items. Her portrait, presented by the family of Jesse James, Jr., is also included.

Paintings Given to Museum

Two fine paintings were presented to the James Farm Museum during the banquet, August 5. They are "That Dirty Little Coward," and "The Northfield Raid," both by Earl L. Norem, and were a gift of the artist. These paintings originally were on the cover of Real West magazine and are now hanging in the museum.

The exhibits about Frank and Annie James display examples of her sewing, his spats and collars, button box, a pistol holster, a razor strap and shaving brush, her doll's quilt, (given to us by Mrs. Thelma Barr), and other personal items.

The new accessions exhibit features items that will later be introduced into theme exhibits as the museum expands. It now includes the original letter of surren-

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Movie Goers Greeted by "Frank James and Governor Crittenden"

Greeting us at the banquet, August 5, were none other than "Governor Thomas T. Crittenden, of Missouri, and Frank James," who welcomed the audience and informed them of Frank's surrender and his impending trial at Gallatin. It was obvious both men, though respecting one another, also have a bit of mistrust in one another's motives and several scathing, satirical remarks were detected. However, the "Governor," the smooth, suave politician he is, held his temper and bragged about how he has kept an election promise to rid Missouri of "outlawry."

"Mr. James," ever courtly and charm-

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Portrait of Frank James Given to Museum

Board member and noted western artist, George Warfel, presented the James Farm Museum with an original portrait of Frank James, that he executed for the museum. It will accompany a portrait of Jesse James he painted and presented in 1988. It is indeed an interesting and significant painting.

Jesse James Pistol Belt Loaned to Museum

Wilbur Zink, Board Member and first president of the Friends of the James Farm, has generously placed on extended loan to the museum, a pistol belt of Jesse James. It came from Harvey Hoffman, a close friend of Jesse, Jr., who was thoroughly familiar with the Jameses. Hoffman was a Jackson County, Missouri, Deputy Sheriff and had an extensive collection of James' material.

It is now on exhibit in the museum.

"True Confessions" Meets Jesse James

By Ron Beights

On Saturday, January 31, 1874, five masked gunmen, thought to have been Jesse and Frank James and cohorts, diverted a southbound passenger train onto a sidetrack at Gads Hill, Missouri, and there committed the state's first train robbery.

While doing research on this early train robbery, I came across a name in one of the old newspaper accounts which grabbed my attention — McFadden.

If I may, I'd like to "switch tracks" myself for a moment and reminisce about a gentleman of that name who, a few decades ago, was known as the Father of Physical Culture, one Benarr MacFadden (with an "a").

Few remember him today, but back in the 1940's and 1950's MacFadden, then in his eighties, was making world headlines by parachuting out of airplanes, leaping over the backs of chairs, standing on his head for fifteen minutes at a time and other such physically demanding stunts. He claimed that his strict vegetarian diet and program of exercises would retard the aging process and that he would live to be 125.

Although famous for his eccentric behavior and showmanship, Benarr MacFadden was also well-known as a writer, publisher, editor and lecturer. He wrote volumes of books and articles on health-related subjects and published a very successful magazine called *Physical Culture*.

Perhaps MacFadden's most successful venture was the founding of the *True Story* magazine empire which published (and still does) such magazines as *True Confessions*, *Modern Romances*, *True Detective* and many others of that genre.

After parachuting over Paris, France, in 1952 to celebrate his 84th birthday, MacFadden decided to hang up his chute. He continued to perform most of his other athletic feats, however, right up until his "premature" death of jaundice at age 89.

The Father of Physical Culture failed in his dream to live to 125, but he had enjoyed a full life. He had known movie stars, presidents and kings and, interestingly, early in his life, he ap-

parently crossed trails with the legendary outlaw, Jesse James.

The day before the Gads Hill train robbery, a group of strangers, described as "well-armed and excellently mounted", rode into Mill Spring, Missouri, a tiny Ozark village twenty-seven miles south of Gads Hill. They reportedly spent the night and left early the next morning.

The following excerpt, from the St. Louis *Daily Times*, February 1, 1874, is most interesting:

Hollywood Draws a Picture

Jesse James Family Sees Him Plus Glamor, Minus History

Four grand-daughters of Jesse James, the Missouri outlaw, saw him ride across a movie screen last night, guns blazing and posses in pursuit.

But when they left the theater after a two-hour preview, they were shaking their heads. "It may be entertainment, but it isn't Jesse James," they declared.

Jo Frances James, a Los Angeles bank executive, was credited by Twentieth Century-Fox studio with assisting in assembling the historical data for the \$2,000,000 color picture of her grandsire's bank-robbing career.

"I don't know what happened to the history part of it," said Jo. "It seemed to me the story was fiction from beginning to end.

"Of course, Tyrone Power as Jesse James, and the other actors were fine, and the color effects were beautiful and the scenes were well directed, but about the only connection it had with fact was that there once was a man named James and he did ride a horse."

MANY CELEBRITIES

Celebrities by the hundreds turned out for the special showing, applauding liberally the production that was made last fall at Pineville, Mo., 1700 miles from Hollywood.

Jesse James, Jr., retired Kansas City lawyer, who is shown in the picture as a 5-year-old boy, was unable to attend because of illness. His wife, four daughters, and Mrs. Lutie Mimms, niece of the famed outlaw, came and

The men who are supposed to have perpetrated the barefaced robbery . . . came up and stayed at McFadden's (sic) at Mill Springs (sic) Friday night. McFadden's is a gambling resort and bears the reputation of being the rendezvous of the worst characters in Southeastern Missouri.

The newspaper apparently misspelled the name. Benarr MacFadden was born in Mill Spring in 1868. He would have been six years old at the time of the outlaws' visit. — The end.

were almost lost sight of in the throng.

To many in the audience, fact and fancy blended smoothly in the film's unfolding, but the James clan confessed "disappointment."

"You see," said Jo, "they made a railroad the villain of the story, when it was really the hatreds engendered by the Civil War. They showed Jesse getting drunk and quarreling with his

"I don't know what happened to the history part of the story."

men, when that never happened. They had him surrendering and then breaking jail, though he never gave up his freedom in his whole life. They had him away from his wife when his son was born, but, in fact, they were together in Tennessee.

"They showed his mother being killed by a railroad agent. Why, she actually outlived him by more than 20 years.

"This is the second movie about Jesse James. Fred Thompson starred in one about 10 years ago. It was fiction, too.

"If I ever get rich, I'd like to produce a true picture of my grandfather. I think the truth's a lot more interesting than fiction."

Los Angeles Times, Jan. 10, 1939

Banquet and 50th Anniversary Film Showing

Our 1989 banquet was held in the beautifully restored Granada Theatre in downtown Kansas City, Kansas, the evening of August 5th.

The audience was thrilled by the magnificence of the theatre with its subdued lights, atmosphere and "stars" and moving "clouds" on the ceiling. A concert on the mighty theatre organ, entertained them during the cocktail hour.

During the banquet, the James Farm Museum was presented with a number of significant artifacts, described in detail elsewhere; which was followed by the 50th anniversary showing of the landmark motion picture, "Jesse James," starring Tyrone Power, Henry Fonda and a host of other stars. Though the movie was filmed a half century ago, the color of the print is still sharp and vivid. Though it was not good history, it was and is, a fine motion picture and seeing it on the big screen as it was meant to be, gave it a greater appeal than on the screen of a TV set.

Everyone agreed it was indeed, a significant and enjoyable event. One that will long be remembered.

Authors Sign Books at Conference

Several authors were at our historical conference and banquet and signed copies of their books. Present were: Superior Court Judge James R. Ross, author of *I, Jesse James*; Larry Bradley, author of *The Making of a Legend*; Wilbur Zink, author of *The Roscoe Gun Battle*; and Phillip Steele, author of *Frank and Jesse James: A Family History*.

Pistol of Arthur McCoy Presented to Museum

Member Merle J. McCoy, of Tigard, Oregon, has presented to the James Farm Museum, the Civil War revolver of his grandfather, Arthur McCoy, a member of the James gang, together with a set of

*The pistol is now on
exhibit at the museum..*

buttons from his Civil War uniform coat.

Arthur McCoy was implicated in several robberies of the gang: the bank at Russellville, Kentucky, March 20, 1868; the bank at Saint Genevieve, Missouri, May 27, 1873; the train robbery at Adair, Iowa, July 21, 1873, and a stage holdup near Hot Springs, Arkansas, January 15, 1874; the train robbery at Gads Hill, Missouri, and train robbery at Muncie, Kansas, Dec. 8, 1874.

Merle also gave us a collection of research material he has amassed about his grandfather.

Outdoor Play a Hit in 1989

The outdoor historical drama, *"The Life and Times of Jesse James"*, was performed at the James Farm weekends August 4, through September 3, 1989, to several sold out houses. Performed by professional actors, it has received good critical attention and awards. There was one rainout in 1989, a hazard all outdoor attractions must face.

The Legend that Never Dies

"The daring exploits of the outlaws Jesse and Frank James have fascinated America for over a century. Growing up on a Missouri-Kansas border farm, their lives were greatly affected by the turmoil of the Civil War. Having difficulty adjusting to society after the war, the James brothers, like many other former soldiers of both sides, took up a life of crime. For seventeen years the James brothers and their gang robbed banks, trains, and stage coaches, many controlled by northern financial interests."

Ethel Rose Owens, the only living granddaughter of Jesse James, as well as great-grandsons James Ross and Carl Barr; Milt Perry, Curator of the James Farm and Museum and others knowledgeable of the true James story also appear in the film, narrated by member Phillip Steele, much of it was filmed on actual historical James sites. Copies can be obtained from: American Productions, Steele Centre, 703 N. Thompson Suite 101, Springdale, AR 72764, (501) 751-2001. Price \$39.95

- LETTER -

Ms. Marley Brant, Director
Friends of the James Farm
% Incarnat Productions
710 E. Roselli Street Burbank, CA 91501

Dear Ms. Brant:

I was pleased to receive your letter informing me about the Friends of the James Farm organization and its interest in featuring the Twentieth Century Fox film "Jesse James" at its annual meeting in August. Organizations such as yours play an important and valuable role in helping Americans everywhere preserve a sense of our nation's history, and we at Twentieth Century Fox are honored that you would include "Jesse James" as part of your celebration agenda in Kansas City.

Over the past 50 years, "Jesse James" has thrilled millions with its action and adventure, as well as its fine technical qualities. As one of the early films to be shot in Technicolor, it stands as a testament to Darryl F. Zanuck and other film pioneers who realized the enormous audience appeal color movies would have. With Henry Fonda and Tyrone Power leading a uniformly strong cast, "Jesse James" continues to enjoy widespread popularity among people like yourselves, who appreciate it as a motion picture of enduring quality as well as an enjoyable showcase of Americana.

Again, thank you for your interest in making the 50th anniversary of "Jesse James" part of your historical program this year. I wish your organization the best of luck throughout the celebration and in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Leonard Goldberg
President & Chief Operating Officer
Twentieth Century Fox

Historical Conference

The conference was welcomed by the Honorable Edward J. Bauman, Presiding Commissioner, Clay County, Missouri Commission, who told of his interest in history and his efforts in having the county obtain the James Farm, 19 1977.

Larry Bradley, author of *The Making of a Legend*, was the keynote speaker, telling of the filming of the movie, "Jesse James," in and near Pineville, Missouri, in 1938, and its release in 1939. His book describes the filming. It was one of the earliest technicolor films and most of it was filmed on location at, (for that time,) the remote Ozark village. Many of the local inhabitants are in the movie and its filming was a landmark occasion that is still celebrated there.

'89 Meeting a Great Success

Everyone who attended the 1989 meeting of the Friends of the James Farm agreed that it was a success and that they thoroughly enjoyed it.

There were two parts to the meeting: during the day the historical conference was attended by an overflow crowd at the beautiful Clay County Commission Meeting Room at the restored art deco Clay County Courthouse, in Liberty, Missouri. The evening event was a spectacular showing of the 50-year-old film, "Jesse James," in a restored 1930's movie house in Kansas City, Kansas. The latter event was featured on the Society page of the widely distributed Kansas City *Star*, one of the nation's major, big city newspapers.

(One of my friends told me, "You've now done the impossible: you've got Jesse James on the society pages! He couldn't do that when he was alive.")

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California Superior Court Judge, James R. Ross, great-grandson of Jesse James, told of the family's reaction to the film. (This is described in the contemporary news article reprinted elsewhere in this issue.) He also gave more information about why he wrote his novel *I, Jesse James*.

Board member, Phillip Steele, showed his newly completed video, "The Truth of a Legend," and told how much of it was filmed on the actual sites the events took place. (Information as to how you can get a copy of the video is elsewhere in this issue.)

Directors of museums featuring exhibits about Jesse James from Clay County; St. Joseph, Missouri; Adair, Iowa and Winston, Missouri, discussed how they portray him in their exhibits. The consensus was that museums should not pass judgement on him, but be as objective as possible.

The last session featured new geneo- logical finds about the family.

Museum Exhibits From Page One

der Frank James wrote in Missouri Governor Thomas T. Crittenden, September 30, 1882; pistol of Allan Parmer, husband of Susan James, the James boys sister, and of Arthur McCoy, a member of the gang.

The museum has been visited by many thousands of persons from this country and abroad this year. Plans are now under- way for new exhibits.

Gov. Crittenden From Page One

ing, is capable of launching into a recital of Shakespeare, as he is wont to do whenever the occasion arises. However, he steadfastly denied he committed any crime, and had never been convicted of any and stated his belief that he will be found innocent after the trial. (Our thanks to re-enactors Terry Haggard and Gregg Higgenbotham.) We will see them next year!

Yes, I wish to join the Friends of the James Farm

Name _____

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

Subscription	\$ 10.00 per year
Individual	\$ 20.00 per year
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