



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The first thing I must do is tell you that our long-time board member and former president, Monte Griffey, is resigning as a board member. We are very pleased, however, that he is going to continue his support and membership in the Friends. Monte has been what I consider a super member. These super members are people who know the history of the area and, like Vivie Tison and Pam Banner, were supporters of the farm before the existence of the Friends. These people may have a family history here from before the Civil War, such as Monte Griffey and Scott Cole, or have researched the area history well enough to have written books about it such as Marty McGrane or the late great Harold Dellinger, who knew all the hideouts and grave sites in at least the western half of the state. There was a former member named Jim Baldwin who showed us old cemeteries so overgrown you found the old tombstones by tripping over them! We appreciate Monte being available with his knowledge.

Planning for our combined reunion with the James-Younger Gang is coming along nicely. We have reserved the Claybrook Shelter for our ending dinner, have two talks lined up for Saturday afternoon and we have selected the caterer. During the reunion we want to have a discussion about closer coordination between us, the James-Younger Gang and possibly the William Clarke Quantrill Society.

Besides our new board member, Laura Ganschow/Dellinger, we have another new board member named Caleb Pooker. I look forward to introducing these young, energetic new board members to you at our next reunion. BI



BY BRYAN IVLOW

## SURVIVING THE WINTER

It was a pretty long winter this year! The Farm was closed several days due to the snow but luckily, someone was always on hand to take beautiful pictures like this!



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# The Friends of the James Farm

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David Smith

[www.jessejames.org](http://www.jessejames.org)



**Friends of the James Farm**  
c/o The Jesse James Birthplace  
21216 Jesse James Farm Road  
Kearney, Missouri, 64060

# NEW & IMPROVED WEBSITE



Be sure to check out the new Jesse James Birthplace website, if you haven't done so already. You might remember that the Jesse James Birthplace and Museum was the grateful recipient of a \$5,000 grant to build a new website and this can now be viewed at [jessejamesmuseum.org](http://jessejamesmuseum.org). The site provides a history of the James Farm as well as offering suggestions about other local sites and accommodation. There are dedicated pages to vintage images of the family, James genealogy and a calendar of events, as well as links to items on sale in the gift shop.

Speaking of the Gift Shop! There are a number of new additions to the catalog. All items are available at the Jesse James Birthplace and can be shipped if necessary. For more details call the Birthplace or, better still, pay them a visit!



Above left: One of a kind Jesse James Collectible Bullet Pens  
Above: New T-Shirt design  
Left: Jesse James Pocket Knife

## THE CLAY COUNTY SAVINGS ASSOCIATION

On a snowy day in February 1866, in the river town of Liberty Missouri, something big happened... a bank robbery! The robbers were brazen enough to do it in broad daylight! \$60,000 was stolen, and a college student was killed. This was the first in a string of robberies committed by what would soon be known as The James Gang.

The Clay County Savings Association was robbed at 2:00 in the afternoon, on Tuesday, February 13. The head cashier, Mr. Greenup Bird, wrote an account of the happenings. He said two men entered wearing blue soldier overcoats and warmed themselves at the stove. One stepped to the counter and asked to change a bill. His son, William, who was assisting that day, hurried forward. Upon reaching the counter, the man drew his revolver and demanded all the money from the bank. William stepped back in surprise; the man jumped over the counter and ordered William into the vault. The robber produced a large grain sack and forced William to empty the contents of the safe into the sack.

The other robber, with weapon drawn, also jumped the counter. Bearing down on Mr. Bird, he demanded the greenbacks from him. Mr. Bird motioned to a money box, and the robber emptied it of its contents. He then handed the money to his partner in the vault and ordered Mr. Bird inside. Mr. Bird began to parley, but the robber told him if he did not go in, he would be shot down, so Mr. Bird went in. The robber inside the vault hurried out with the bag of money, ordered the cashiers to be still, and shut the vault door with the two men inside.

The robbers exited the building, mounted up, and one shot was fired at two young men across the street, John Reardon and George Wymore, students at William Jewell College. Wymore, 19, was killed by a shot to the chest while Reardon was unharmed. The other gang members started yelling and firing into the air as they quickly rode out of town.

Upon realizing the vault door was not locked, Mr. Bird and his son hurried to the window, hoisted it, and Mr. Bird alerted the town the bank had been robbed. He saw a dozen or so men riding east, shooting off pistols.

And so began the career of The James Gang. But do you know how the Jesse James Bank Museum came to be?

The building itself was constructed in 1858 as a new branch of the Farmers Bank of Missouri in Lexington at the direction of Col. Stephen Wentworth. Heavily supporting the Confederacy, it was forced to close due to losses in 1864. The bank was quickly reorganized and opened as the Clay County Savings Association.

The robbery occurred two years later, on February 13, 1866. A Stockholders meeting was called on February 16. The minutes of this meeting are unknown, but on February 19 customers were paid 60 cents on the dollar and the bank shuttered its doors for the final time.

A handful of businesses have occupied the building, including the post office, two banks, millinery, a tea shop, a haberdashery, an insurance office, and a five and dime.



BY MICHELE  
POYNTER



Top: The Jesse James Bank Museum, sitting proudly on the corner of the Liberty Square. And, below, a view of the inside of the Bank during a 1987 re-enactment there.

Photos courtesy of the Jesse James Bank Museum.

Harold Wymore and his son Jack purchased the building from the Crawford family in 1965 for \$60,000. The Crawford's had owned the building since 1886, purchasing it from Col. Wentworth of Lexington, Missouri. "What Jesse took, we paid," Jack once told reporters, commenting on the price. The Wymore's had sentiment behind their purchase of the building - George Clifford 'Jolly' Wymore, who was killed during the bank robbery, was a relative. They hoped to preserve the history of the beginnings of the James Gang, as well as the history of Liberty.

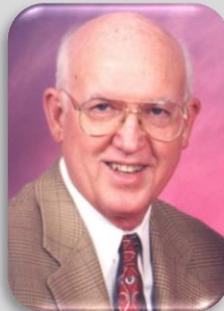
After time consuming research, the restoration began. With chisel in hand, the fireplaces were uncovered, layers of flooring were carefully removed, plasterwork repaired and iron shutters were made to duplicate the originals. And the furniture? "We've traveled 15,000 miles trying to find appropriate furniture that was originally made within a 150 mile radius," Jack said. Two pieces were built for the space; the customer counter and a large desk with a bookcase. Props were acquired and placed throughout the building; a set of Missouri law books, a wood stove, a frock coat and hats, walking sticks and spittoons. Ledger books were a must and a Farmer's Bank original was found to add to the collection.

The museum was ready. A re-enactment was planned and scripted, with Allen Case and Christopher Jones, actors from the television show *The Legend of Jesse James* (1965-66), performing as their characters, Frank and Jesse James. The crowds loved it! Tours began, and as visitors stepped through the door, they were transported 100 years back in time. It's a transformation we continue to this day. **MPoynter**

## Jack Wymore

7 DECEMBER 1925 - 8 AUGUST 2016

Jack was a lifelong Clay county resident. He graduated from Liberty High School and attended William Jewell College before serving in the Army during WWII. Returning home, he went into business with his father and married Carlida Breckenridge in 1954.



As well as establishing the Jesse James Bank Museum, Jack was active in civil affairs and received awards for his efforts. An author and local historian, Jack was a member of the Clay County Archives and served on the Board of Trustees of the Watkins Mill Association.

Source – online obituary

## Seth Thomas CALENDAR CLOCK



The patent dates on the clock are 1854, 1857, 1860, and the last is March 4, 1962. It shows the second, minute, hour, day of the week, date of the month, and month. Originally, it was the official timepiece for the Santa Fe Railroad in Topeka, Kansas. The dates of service are scratched on the inside of the wooden case. An identical clock is owned by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., with a plaque which states there is also one in the Jesse James Bank Museum in Liberty, Missouri. Clocks of this size were made for train depots and large office buildings. They were considered very fine, and many were sold in the New England area. This one keeps good time, but is stopped to hold the day, date, and time of the robbery.

# FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM SHOOT

## 6 April 2019



The April Shoot participants on the porch. (Photo courtesy of Emily Martin)

The 6 April 2019 shoot came off very well. The weather couldn't have been better. The only noticeable difficulty was the muddy area next to the backstop berm where the woodpecker targets were set - that was so bad, I thought I was going to lose my shoes in there!

We had a total of thirty-one shooters, many who were new to our shoot. That created a gross total of \$775.00 before expenses.

Our Special Target this shoot was Bob Ford, as the date was so close to the anniversary of Jesse's death at St. Joseph.

Also at the shoot was a representative from the Clay County Board of Tourism who took quite a few pictures. This will help boost participation in the next shoot. As an additional boost, Beth Beckett has placed an advertisement about the next shoot in the electrical co-op monthly magazine, Rural Missouri.

Board members present were Vivie Tison, Laura Ganschow/Dellinger, Paul Weller, myself and our newest board member, Caleb Pooker, who was voted onto our Board at the short board meeting at the end of the shoot. BI

**Next shoot - June 15.**



BY BRYAN IVLOW

### THE CAP & BALL WINNERS OF THE GENERAL SHOOT:

**First place:** Caleb Blackwell  
**Second place:** Gary Blackwell  
**Third place:** Randy Klinginsmith

### THE CAP & BALL WINNERS OF THE SPECIAL TARGET:

**First place tie:** Caleb Blackwell  
**Second place:** Gary Blackwell  
**Third place:** Randy Klinginsmith

### THE CARTRIDGE & GENERAL SHOOT WINNER OF THE ANNA JAMES CATEGORY:

**First place:** Jende Smith

### THE CARTRIDGE REVOLVER WINNERS OF THE GENERAL SHOOT:

**First place:** Bruce Houston  
**Second place:** Andrew Anderson  
**Third place:** Randy Webber

### THE CARTRIDGE REVOLVER WINNERS OF THE SPECIAL TARGET:

**First place tie:** Andrew Anderson and Bruce Houston  
**Second place:** Tim Godwin  
**Third place:** Del Warren

## THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM



BY MICHELLE  
POLLARD

While researching the Robert G. McCubbin Auction for inclusion in this edition, I happened upon a December 2013 True West interview with Mr. McCubbin in which he spoke of the newest addition to his collection. It was a small book “published in St. Joseph, a week after Jesse James was killed, titled *An Authentic and Graphic*

*Account of the Assassination of Jesse W. James at St. Joseph, Mo., April 3, 1882.*” The author was a St. Joseph newspaperman and this newest acquisition, McCubbin said, was a “very fragile little book [and] the only copy known to still exist.” Being a James enthusiast, I became instantly intrigued and enlisted the invaluable help of Gay Mathis to find out more.

At the time of Jesse’s murder, Jacob William Spencer was the correspondent for several large newspapers. He had been one of the first on the scene in St Joseph and, on learning the identity of the dead man, saw an opportunity.

On the same day of the murder I contracted with a large printing establishment to publish a book for me of about 200 pages... My contract called for the delivery of the book the following Monday. After my day’s work at the office I wrote all night in order to supply copy for the printers. The book was delivered on time and before the last copy was bound the entire edition of 5,000 copies were sold to news dealers in many cities of the country. Had the edition been 500,000 copies I could have sold every one of them

- St Joseph Observer, 16 September 1922.

There was one discrepancy in Spencer’s recollections; he noted the book as being called, *The Life and Career of Frank and Jesse James*. Were there two books or was the title provided by Mr. McCubbin a typically long and descriptive bi-line that had also appeared word for word in the St Joseph Evening News (at right) of 14 April 1882? Whatever the case, the first book that contained details of Jesse’s assassination was published on 12 April 1882, just nine days after the event.

If you happen to have a copy of this book, please do get in touch and let us know. MP



J. W. Spencer with his wife, Emma  
Emergency Passport Application

**The History in Book Form.**  
Mr. J. W. Spencer, of the *Evening News*, will be the first to launch forth a history of the assassination in book form. The pages are now in press at Combe’s, and the book will be ready for issue next Tuesday. Already orders are in for ten thousand copies.

St Joseph Herald, 7 April 1882

**The History.**  
The first book on the assassination, life and character of Jesse James was issued yesterday from the office of the *Evening News*. It meets with a ready sale, and Mr. Spencer, the author, is heartily congratulated on the success of his book.

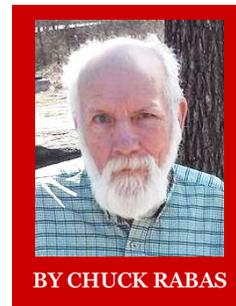
St Joseph Herald, 13 April 1882

—**Jake W. Spencer, of the St. Joseph Evening News, has just published a neat book, giving an authentic and graphic account of the assassination of the notorious outlaw, Jesse W. James, which occurred in St. Joseph, April 3rd. Price twenty-five cents. Address J. W. Spencer, Evening News, St. Joseph, Missouri.**

St Joseph Evening News, 14 April 1882

## THE MYSTERIOUS JACK KEENE

Of the known members of the various phases of the "James Gang," the most elusive is Jack Keene (aka T. J. Webb). Following the September 1875 (various sources give the date as either Sept. 5 or 6) robbery of the bank at Huntington, West Virginia, Keene was captured on September 27 with between four and five thousand dollars in his possession, some of it reportedly bloodstained. He was tried and convicted in December of that year and was sentenced to fourteen years in the state penitentiary at Moundsville, where he is listed as Jack Keene, alias T. J. Webb, in the 1880 U.S. Census. He was pardoned on Thursday, Feb. 8, 1883 and released from prison the following day.



BY CHUCK RABAS

Jesse James was apparently not among the four men who robbed the Huntington bank, as it is generally agreed that those involved were Frank James, Cole Younger, Thompson McDaniel and Jack Keene. Despite this, Keene was obviously well-known to Jesse. Following the Muncie train robbery, Jesse sent a letter dated May 24, 1875 to an unnamed "official." It was published as part of an article in the May 18, 1882 edition of the Kansas City Journal. The article states that *"It was written upon two full sheets of foolscap paper, in pencil..."* and that *"The letter is here given in full, with no changes in its spelling and only such punctuation added as is required to assist the reader. The envelope bears the Kansas City postmark of May 26, two days later than the date of the letter."* The pertinent portion of the letter reads:

Clell Miller, Tom McDaniel, Wm. McDaniel, Jack Kene and Sol Reed are the five men who robed the Muncie Kan R R train the 8th of Dec 1874. Wm. McDaniel is in custody. Clell Miller, Tom McD, Jack Kene and Sol Reed are the four men who robed the store in Henry co Mo a few days ago, they cannot be a doubt of this for I have had a true determined man on their track, they can all be identified as the store robbers and they is no trouble about convicting them of the Muncie robbery which they is a reward of \$3,500 for each one of the party. But it is not this reward I seek. I wish to vindicate the persecuted. I will now give you the history of Reed and Kene. Reed is a brother to the celebrated robber Jim Reed who was killed in Lamar co Tex Aug 6th 1874 by John T. Morris, and Sol Reed is a noted Horse thief and robber. Jack Kene is a brother in Law to Reed [*"Kene" was married to Solomon Reed's sister, Sarah Ann Reed. CR*] and was outlawed several years ago for robing and old man in Pettis co Mo. He then fled to Texas and was with Jim Reed and Cal Carter one year ago when they robbed the Elpaso stage between Austin and San Antonio Tex. Kene was then going by the name of Rodgers. They is a reward of \$2,250 for Kene from Texas for this stage robbery. After Jim Reed was killed Kene fled to Clay co Mo, his object was to come to Clay co and steal and rob in the Jameses names which he has successfully done. Last winter he lived near Fielden Kendlys on Mr. Arnolds farm and went by the name of Tom Brock. Sol Reed married a daughter of Arth Deness [*Sol married Jude Dean Davis. CR*] and lived on Willmore Rileys farm. [*Properties owned by W. P. Riley & F. Kenley, whose land bordered that of W. Arnold, can be found just northwest of Kearney on an 1877 plat map of Clay County. CR*] When those scoundrels robbed the train at Muncie they took a horse and rode it to Clay co and turned it out to leave the impression that it was the James boys. A few months ago Reed and Kene left Clay co very secretly but after a thorough search I have located them. They have got a house rented in the northeast portion of St. Joseph Mo. near the tan yard and Reed is going by the name of Tom Brockman [*If "Kene" had been using the name "Tom Brock" earlier, "Tom Brockman" was probably "Kene" as well. CR*] and I believe that is where all the stolen horses go to from Clay co. I believe that is headquarters for Miller and McDaniel and I believe all four of those men are in St. Joe at present. From the description of Strawther Gains horse I believe Jack Kene was riding it in the store robbery in Henry co. and no doubt but the horse is in St. Joe at this time."

So who was Jack Keene? While researching the Otterville train robbery, I found the answer. In an article in the July 26, 1876 edition of the Sedalia (Missouri) Democrat was the account of a posse searching for Samuel McKeehan, suspected of participating in the Otterville robbery. Believing McKeehan to be there, the posse surrounded a farmhouse occupied by Albert Harris and his wife, Margaret. While the article dealt primarily with the death of Margaret Harris, who was killed by the accidental discharge of a posse member's shotgun, one paragraph revealed the true identity of Jack Keene:

Jack McKeehan, who owns a half interest in the farm on which Harris resides, his brother Sam McKeehan owning the other half, is now serving out a fourteen year's sentence in the Moundsville penitentiary, West Virginia, for

assisting to rob the Huntington bank in the same State. At the time of his capture there was found on his person \$4,000, and Samuel McKeehan, his brother, is one of that party as well as a Missouri Pacific train robber.

Despite his apparently unsavory reputation, Samuel McKeehan cannot be linked to any of the James-Younger gang's crimes. He was not captured by that posse, and apparently left the area. No subsequent record of him has been found.

"Jack Keene" would prove to be Thomas John McKeehan, Jr.. U.S. Census records indicate that he was born in 1849. That the name mistakenly appears as "McKean" in the 1860 U.S. Census leads me to believe that was how it was commonly pronounced and could easily be heard simply as "Keene" or, in Jim Cummins' case, "Matt Keene." A St. Louis newspaper of the time identified Margaret Harris as the sister of the McKeehan brothers, but research reveals that her mother, Irena Brock Willoughby, was the sister of Thomas John McKeehan, Jr.'s mother-in-law, Susan Demanda Brock Reed, which made her a cousin to Thomas' wife, Sarah Ann Reed McKeehan.

In a list of those in the James-Younger gang in his creatively names "Jim Cummins' Book", Cummins stated: "Matt Keene (known as Brock), captured after the bank robbery at Columbia, Tenn., severed seven years in the penitentiary and was living in Kansas at last accounts." It is worthy of note that Brock was McKeehan's mother-in-law's maiden name. Cummins was mistaken as to the particular robbery of which "Keene" was convicted and likely as to his whereabouts "at last accounts".

In a letter to the Governor, a team of four physicians wrote: "We beg leave to represent to Your Excellency that we have this day given to T. J. Webb, now confined in the state prison at Moundville, for the robbery of the Bank of Huntington, and sentenced to fourteen years, having passed that time, a careful examination, and found him suffering from pulmonary disease; and it is our opinion unless he is set at liberty, he will not live one year from this date." An article in the February 10, 1883 Canton (Ohio) Daily Repository about his release ends with - "his friends, who have been instrumental in effecting his release, intend taking him to Kansas City, but it is feared he cannot stand the trip and will die enroute." I have found no subsequent record of him. His wife, still listed as Sarah McKeehan in the 1880 census, married her second husband, William F. Bush, around 1886. CR

## ROBERT G. McCUBBIN COLLECTION GOES UP FOR SALE

The Robert G. McCubbin Collection, consisting of 1,500 items, went to auction on January 25-26 2019 at Brian Lebel's Old West Auctions in Mesa, Arizona.

Mr McCubbin's collection is regarded as one of the largest selections of photographs, artefacts and American West ephemera in private hands.

Items included the ice mallet that killed Ben Kilpatrick, Wild Bill Hickock's straight razor, Billy the Kid's knife and, of course, several photographs and letters relating to the James family.

The James lots included CDVs of the 1864 and 1875 images of Jesse, a collection of photographs of Mary and Jesse Edwards, newspapers relating to Jesse's death and letters, photos and other ephemera relating to Frank.

For more details visit [oldwestevents.com](http://oldwestevents.com).

### MORE FROM THE BLACK POWDER SHOOT



Photos courtesy of Emily Martin and Kerrie Beisel

## LEXINGTON: A MUST SEE STOP FOR ANY HISTORICAL VACATION

There's nothing quite like living along this part of Missouri known as Little Dixie. The city in which I live (Lexington) has such a vast history in Missouri going back 200 years. It was once the largest and most important western port along the Missouri River long before Kansas City was ever settled.

Whether you are in Missouri on vacation or taking a staycation, a trip to Lexington is a must for anyone wishing to enjoy Missouri history.

While Lexington has its ties to Jesse and Frank James, it has a plethora of other attractions sure to please anyone out to visit 19th century life. I have found that I often think of Jesse and Frank riding through Lexington throughout all their travels during the war and post-war, whether passing through or possibly committing a crime. As one tours the battlefield, thoughts turn to Frank who fought there. As one walks downtown, thoughts turn to Jesse who surrendered here, or Arch Clement who was shot and killed in the downtown area. There are many buildings still standing where the brothers rode by and saw, just as we do today.



### First Settler

Most of the early settlers came to what we now know as Lexington as early as 1815 – 204 years ago. **Gilead Rupe** and his family were the first settlers, and, even though they endured a very serious attack from local Indians, he survived and became a prosperous farmer.<sup>1</sup>

### Machpelah Cemetery

Rupe's grave can be found fairly easily in **Machpelah Cemetery** – a must see for any serious tourist. The south entrance of Machpelah offers a nifty directory to the graves, which house a number of notables, from various Confederate soldiers as well as a monument to "The Confederate Dead," to the earliest settlers, to the William Waddell family (Pony Express), the Aull family, Stephen Wentworth, the founder of Wentworth Military Academy, which closed in 2017, to a mass grave for those who lost their lives in the Steamboat Saluda explosion in 1852, to its most recent notable, Congressman Ike Skelton, who died in 2013.

Interestingly, it was William Waddell who donated the family cemetery and nearby land to form Machpelah in 1849. The cemetery is located off 20th Street, just behind Dave's Market and across from the fire station.



### Lexington's Early Growth

Lexington grew quickly. By 1822 it became the new county seat of Lafayette County. The first large business was a store and warehouse owned by John Aull. His brothers Robert and James came in 1825 and soon there were four stores, a hemp ropewalk, flour and lumber mills, along with an informal bank.<sup>2</sup>

The **Santa Fe Trail** also winds through Lexington with markers noting the trail's path. Nearly 200 years ago, the trail offered up a nice trade for fur trappers and traders.

James Aull was another supporter of abolitionism, though both men kept their opinions fairly quiet. The hemp growing business was one of the largest and most profitable here in Lexington and required a multitude of slaves to work the plantations.

By the 1840s, hemp was being baled for shipment to St. Louis where it was made into burlap for wrapping cotton bales.<sup>3</sup>

Farming and growing tobacco were also large crops here.

**Finis Ewing**, one of the founders of Cumberland Presbyterians in Kentucky, came here as the Federal land registrar. Ewing also built a church here and freed his own slaves as a strong supporter of the abolitionist movement.

The original church, built in 1846, is now **Lexington's Historical Museum**. It is located next door to **Christ Church Episcopal** just before the intersection of Main Street and Business 13. It's a must-see for any visitor to Lexington.

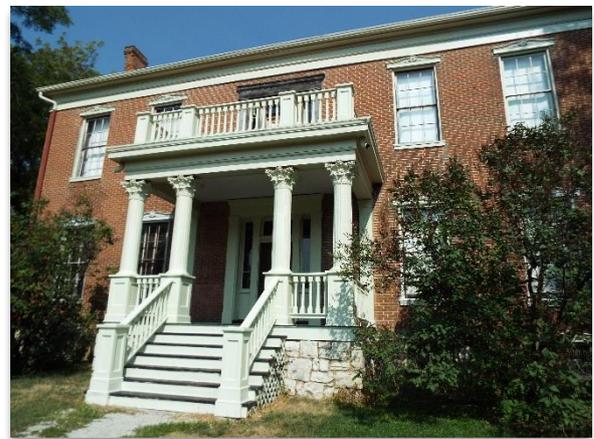
Lexington kept growing and by 1845, there were 1,697 people living here. To put that in perspective, that is slightly more than a third of the present-day population. By this time, Lexington was Missouri's third largest city!<sup>4</sup>

### Anderson House

River traffic was a booming business by 1845 and Lexington one of the major stopping points for travelers heading west.

The house was built in 1853 by Oliver Anderson, who came to Lexington from Nicholasville, Ky. The property overlooked the Missouri River and Anderson quickly became a prosperous hemp farmer. The house is built in Greek Revival Style and has many beautiful and interesting features, not the least of which are the numerous bullet holes that pepper the walls inside and out from the September 1861 three-day Battle of the Hemp Bales.

The Anderson House is part of the Battle of Lexington State Historic Site and is open for tours through the visitor center located on the grounds at 1101 Delaware Street.



Above – The Anderson House

Far left – Showing the home as it was during the 3 day Battle of the Hemp Bales.

Left – Evidence of the fighting.

### Battle of Lexington

The siege of Lexington took place Sept. 18-21, 1861 mostly on the Anderson property, although various skirmishes occurred all around Lexington including the aforementioned Machpelah Cemetery.

For three days the Missouri State Guard, under the lead of General Sterling Price laid siege against Union commander Colonel James Mulligan.

In a brilliant move, the Confederates soaked numerous hemp bales in water in order to absorb "hot shot" and permitting the Confederates to force the Union troops to surrender.

The Anderson House had become a battlefield hospital and it changed hands three times during the siege.

**Frank James** fought in the 3-day battle as a soldier in the Missouri State Guard.

In addition to the extensive exhibit in the visitor's center on Delaware Street near the Anderson House (many books and souvenirs are available there), visitors



can walk along the trails that wind throughout the battlefield. The views of Ray County from the battlefield are stunningly beautiful.

Inside the historic site museum, one can find maps with directions to assorted historic buildings and sites around Lexington. Many of the original buildings that survived the battle remain standing today. Additionally, the visitor center has a number of local books for sale.

### Lafayette County Courthouse

The courthouse was built in 1847 and is considered the oldest courthouse in continuous use west of the Mississippi River.

The courthouse was built for \$14,382.46 (just a little under half a million in 2019 dollars) and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Not only is the beautiful Greek Revival building a highlight of any visit to Lexington, but it also houses a replica of the cannonball-shot it received in the upper left column of the building during the siege of Lexington in 1861.

Visitors must not leave the courthouse without heading to the western side of the building to visit the **Veterans Memorial** (South 10th Street) a monument to all local participants in the wars from all branches of the military.



### Steamboats, River Traffic, the Saluda Explosion

According to Images of America: Lexington by Roger E. Slusher, steamboats were one of the larger vessels to arrive at Lexington's landing and it was not unusual to see six or eight steamboats per day stopped at the landing. At least 10 steamboats sank at a bend near Lexington.

Sadly, on April 9, 1852, the steamboat **Saluda** exploded on the river along the shores of Lexington.

April 9th that year was also Good Friday, which cemented the memory of the explosion and incredible loss of life in the minds of locals.<sup>5</sup>

The river has always been a dangerous, hostile and unforgiving body of water. I wrote several articles for the *Richmond News* in which I researched the navigation of the river in the 1800s up to and including the 21st century. Steamboat and barge captains stated time and time again just how dangerous the trek is upriver and downriver on the Mighty MO.

Between 1819 and 1897, two hundred and eighty-nine steamboats sank in the Missouri River. On July 4, 1915, the river even changed its course, across the river and slightly west from Lexington in Ray County along the Camden riverbank. Those who lived in the riverfront city of Camden and who went to bed the night of July 3rd, awoke the next morning to find themselves now several miles inland.

### The Steamboat Saluda

Nearly 100 of the passengers on the Saluda were Mormons on their way to Utah. About 40 of those Mormons died when the Saluda exploded shortly after 7:30 a.m., April 9 when the steamboat pushed off from Lexington's landing.

A memorial pocket park dedicated to the **Saluda** is located on the corner of Franklin Street and Business 13 across from Christ Church Episcopal.

### Churches

There are a number of historic churches in Lexington, but one of the oldest and most beautiful is **Christ Church Episcopal**. The church was founded in 1844 by Bishop



Jackson Kemper. The sanctuary was built in 1848, with a sacristy and guild room added in 1883. The bell tower was built in 1890 and the parish hall added in 1957.

The church has a small tracker pipe organ that arrived by steamboat in 1870 and is still in use today. The pews are made of native Missouri walnut. The church even survived a few hits from cannon fire during the 3-day Civil War battle in 1861 that took place just about one mile due south of the church. The church has a number of splendid stained glass windows imported from France in the 1800s with the exception of the small triangular window that was built in Kansas City. It is situated over the door to the sacristy. A funeral service for the Saluda steamboat victims took place at this church in 1852.

Also built before 1900 was the **Second Baptist Church**, located on Main Street, that was built by the First Christian Church in 1840. It was bought by the Baptist's in 1873.

**Immaculate Conception Catholic Church**, located at 18th and Main streets, was built in 1898 and is still active today.

The **Presbyterian Disciples Church** was built in 1844 on the donated property of James Aull. The church faced the square where the new courthouse would be built. The bell tower and other additions were made around 1900.

### Madonna of the Trail

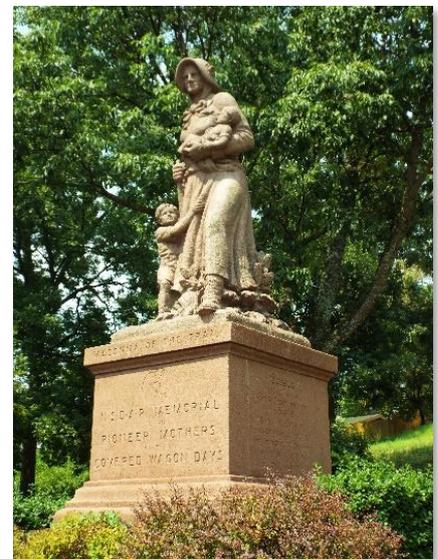
The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) have been instrumental in securing the designation of the National Old Trails Road from Maryland to California.<sup>6</sup>

A **Madonna of the Trail** was situated in each of the 12 states that comprise the National Old Trails Road. The monument honors the courage of pioneer women who, as mothers and wives, sisters and daughters, helped to blaze the trail across the western United States. The monument in Lexington was dedicated in 1928 by none other than Jackson County Judge and future President Harry S. Truman, who was national chairman of the project. The monument is located at the corner of Commerce Street and Highway 224 just as you head west out of Lexington toward the river. In fact, the monument faces the Missouri River.

### College Park

A **Masonic College** for young men, specifically for orphaned sons of Masons, opened before the war in 1847 and closed prior to the war in 1857. The building was chosen by Union forces occupying the town for use as their headquarters. There was considerable battle damage to the building as it was located not far from the battlefield. The college is more well-known for it being the site where Colonel Mulligan slept with nearly \$1 million in money the Union forces had taken from the Farmers Bank buried beneath him.

The college no longer stands today, however a replica is in its place and is lovingly maintained by the Lexington Masonic Lodge. The replica is surrounded by a lovely park with a playground for children. **College Park** is located next to Ray County Memorial Hospital at 16th and State streets.



Top – Christ Church Episcopal Centre - The Madonna of the Trail  
Bottom – College Park

**Jesse James and the War**

On May 15, 1865, and under an assault by the Third Wisconsin and possibly some of the Johnson County militia, Jesse was riding with Arch Clement and others on Salt Pond Road outside of Lexington. Jesse later claimed that his horse was killed and that he was shot through the breast. "I was running through the woods pursued by two men on horseback, one of them riding a black horse, and they were pressing me hard, every jump that I made the blood would spurt out of my wound ..." He was near a creek and lay in the water all night. Jesse crawled out of the creek the next morning and was taken in by a man plowing his farmland nearby.<sup>7</sup>

He later surrendered in Lexington before heading up river to nurse his debilitating wounds.

It has taken some time to discover just where Salt Pond Road is. Frankly, the road no longer exists and, in fact, the creek where Jesse spent the night is off of what is now called Burns School Road.



**A Lexington Robbery**

It is believed that on Oct. 30, 1866, the James-Younger gang rode into Lexington where the Alexander and Mitchell Bank was robbed of approximately \$2,000. Jesse and Frank James were said to be involved in the robbery but this has never been proven. The bank building still stands today on the southwest corner of 9th and Main streets in Lexington.



The bank building as appears today and an ever popular bank robbery re-enactment.

**So much more to Lexington**

Downtown Lexington offers a most picturesque area full of Antebellum homes still lovingly maintained and lived in or operating as businesses today.

There is much more to visiting Lexington that includes bed and breakfast establishments, historic homes, churches and buildings and several festivals that are held downtown each year. In addition, Lafayette County has a wonderful winery trail for those who enjoy spending an afternoon sipping wine and enjoying the views. For more information, visit: [visitlexingtonmo.com](http://visitlexingtonmo.com) or call the Lexington Tourism Bureau, at 660-251-3270, 111 South 11th Street, Lexington. ◀

1. Images of America: Lexington, by Roger E. Slusher and the Lexington Historical Association.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Explosion of the Steamboat Saluda, by William G. Hartley and Fred E. Woods.
5. Ibid.
6. Images of America: Lexington, by Roger E. Slusher and the Lexington Historical Association.
7. Frank and Jesse James: The Story Behind the Legend, by Ted Yeatman.

# THE VIRGINIA HOTEL, LEXINGTON, MO

The following is a complete list of the bushwhackers who have surrendered at Lexington, up to date :

C. W. Simmons, S. M. Symonds, S. M. Starks, B. L. Greenwood, J. Watson, J. W. Wagoner, W. H. Palmer, B. G. Geans, J. F. F. Rush, D. C. A. Poole, J. Rector, Benkam, T. B. W. Belt, D. A. Stanard, F. Gregg, C. Powell, 2d Lt. J. Moore, J. hoit, J. E. man, W. W. G. V. Elliott, R. Comming, C. Helm, R. H. M. W. D. B. W. Weld, S. W. W. A. Atchia, Capt. J. Bradley, Fox, J. Scott, W. Owens, B. Hill, J. ter, B. L. ley, J. W. Ester, J. P. Fiewel, art, G. M. Wilcox, J. J. West, W. Enonds, J. W. Scott, E. K. Ellington, G. W. Barnett, H. P. Frasser, J. Chinn, J. A. Tucker, H. Clements, M. Huffaker, J. S. Tuskup, W. Jackson, W. P. Gib-son, J. T. son, J. T. Sanders, C. Tracy, J. Mead, J. W. Fisher, G. Smith, J. A. Smith, G. T. School, J. W. James, J. M. Helm, H. C. Gist, J. S. Constable, J. C. Ware, D. T. Pritcher, W. Watson, R. H. Truitt, J. King, J. Constable, N. B. Kerr, A. Powel, S. Atchison, J. Parnett, W.

**VIRGINIA HOTEL,**  
**B. FISH, Proprietor.**

This House is situated near the business part of the town. Persons stopping at this House will be conveyed to and from Steam Boat Landing, without delay. No effort will be spared by the Proprietor to render

**HIS GUESTS COMFORTABLE**

THERE IS ALSO A  
**Livery Stable Connected with the House,**  
And persons can procure conveyances to any portion of the country at moderate charges.

On 15 May 1865, Jesse James was shot in the chest by a soldier of the 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry on the Salt Pond Road, six miles outside Lexington, Missouri.

A few days later, he was found by a farmer who immediately called on Dr. A. B. Hereford for help. Jesse “was left at a farm house,” recalled a resident of Lexington in 1882, “and the next day one of his friends brought him here in a carriage. He put up at the Virginia hotel, and there, lying on a bed, wounded, he, with uplifted hand, took the oath and subscribed to the parole.”<sup>1</sup>

The Virginia hotel was evidently an establishment of high regard within the town and proved to be as resilient as the man who survived the terrible wound inflicted before his visit there.

Reports after 1865 always referred to the hotel as ‘the old hotel’. The Virginia changed hands several times in the aftermath of Jesse’s visit. On 21 June 1866, the Lexington Weekly Register reported that Mr. Comer, proprietor of the Virginia Hotel, has fitted up this old established house in a style that can’t be surpassed in the Western country. The ‘Virginia’ is pleasantly located and travellers will find that the ‘Virginia’ is a comfortable place to be put at.” Although this sounded promising, Mr. Comer was there just one year before the hotel was taken over by Col. G. W. Edwards of Kentucky. Once again the old hotel was subjected to refitting and furnishing by a man who, according to the Missouri Valley Register of 7 March 1867, came “well recommended as a landlord.”

On 4 April 1868, The Weekly Caucasian noted that, once again, the hotel had changed hands. “We understand that Mr. Jerry Goodwin has rented the Virginia Hotel and will open that establishment in a few days, with new furniture, &c. We hope him the best of luck.”

At a time when there were but two hotels in Lexington – the Virginia and the City – the former seemed to thrive under its variety of owners.<sup>2</sup>

Kansas City Journal, 7 June 1865. With thanks to Gay Mathis. Photo courtesy of Armand De Gregoris. The advertisement at left appeared in the 1865 edition of the Missouri Gazetteer, Shippers Guide and Business Directory. It is possible B. Fish was the proprietor when Jesse was taken there.

Mr. Ehrlich, for example, operated a dancing school at the hotel while others opened butcher's shops and offered special deals at exotic restaurants.<sup>3</sup> There was even penmanship lessons.<sup>4</sup>

In 1869, the hotel was being run by "Mr. S. B. Turner, late of the Central, Kansas City, for a term of five years. The house has undergone very thorough repairs and will be kept as a first class house. We know Mr. Turner and his estimable lady, and say to all our friends who may visit Lexington, that they cannot do better than to stop at the Virginia, as we shall most certainly do should we visit that delightful city."<sup>5</sup> Then, disaster struck. On 14 July 1869, a terrible hurricane hit the city causing widespread damage. "The Arcana Hall is unroofed," a local newspaper reported. "Mr. Easter's residence unroofed; Catholic church partially unroofed and walls injured; the south wall of the Virginia Hotel was blown down and the roof torn completely off."<sup>6</sup>

Miraculously, the hotel was restored and continued to welcome visitors until 1876 when it was "sold under the hammer to Mr. Thos. Graves for \$950." Time had evidently taken its toll; "We hope he will either tear the old rookery down or put it in good repair and rent to respectable and orderly tenants."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the task was too great for within weeks the hotel had been condemned as unfit for human habitation and sold to Mr. Hoffman who planned to tear the building down and use the material in building the new brewery on Franklin street.<sup>8</sup>

Still the story was not over and it seemed as though the hotel might once again be saved. On 21 April 1877 the Lexington Weekly Intelligencer announced that Mr. Hagan had purchased the old Virginia Hotel and "intends remodelling and repainting that portion which fronts the street, for tenant houses. It will be a considerable improvement to that part of town." However, it was not to be and by 1879 the resilient Virginia hotel had been torn down and replaced by a brand new Opera House.

By 1912, the theatre was owned by C. C. Wright who, five years later, sold his share to business partner, John C. Young who, in turn, sold out to the Hotsetter Amusement Co. of Omaha in 1921. The opera house burned down in 1924.<sup>9</sup> MP

1. St Louis Republican, 27 April 1882.
  2. Appleton's Handbook of American Travel – The Northern Tour, by Edwards H. Hall, 1867, p204.
  3. Lexington Weekly Register, 8 October 1868. Lexington Weekly Intelligencer, 4 September 1872 - "Mr. D. H. McCracken has opened a restaurant in the old Virginia Hotel on Laurel street." Lexington Weekly Caucasian, 31 October 1874 – "R. H. Minnis has opened a new butcher's shop in the Virginia Hotel, opposite the post office, on Laurel street."
  4. The Lexington Weekly Register, 17 June 1869.
  5. Sedalia Democrat, 3 June 1869.
  6. Hon, William Young, *Young's History of Lafayette County Vol. 1*, B. F. Bowen and Co. Indiana, 1910, p323.
  7. The Lexington Weekly, 15 April 1876.
  8. The Lexington Weekly Caucasian, 22 July 1876; Lexington Weekly Intelligencer, 5 August 1876. "The Old Virginia Hotel on Laurel Street, has been condemned as unfit for human habitation, and will soon be torn down."
  9. "Grand Opera House built in 1879 by Henry Hagan. Hagan built the structure at the cost of \$5,000 and the price of the lot. It was 40' by 100' and seated 800 people. It's opening in 1885 featured 'Othello'. The opera house was later known as Wright's Theatre until it's destruction by fire in August of 1924. It was located at the corner of what is now 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Franklin Avenue." – Historic Missouri Theatres online dnr.mo.gov. Lexington Weekly Intelligencer, 20 September 1912; Motography, Vol 18, 5-13 August 1917; Lexington Weekly Intelligencer, 15 April 1921.
- With thanks to Gay Mathis.*

**Virginia Hotel,**  
Laurel street, Lexington, Mo.  
**G. W. EDWARDS : : Proprietor.**

HAVING thoroughly refitted and furnished this house, in a manner unsurpassed, I am now prepared to accommodate all who favor me with their patronage. Give me a call and I will please you.  
For Coaches run to and from the boats to this house. Excellent stabling convenient.  
ap 4 ly. **G. W. EDWARDS.**

Missouri Valley Register, 7 March 1867.

**VIRGINIA HOTEL.**  
Corner Franklin and Laurel Sts.,  
(Opp. Postoffice.) LEXINGTON, MO.

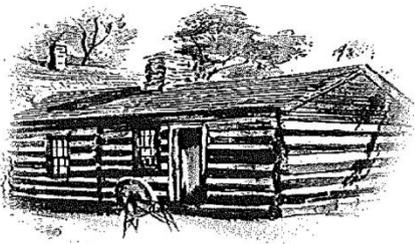
—o—  
**S. B. TURNER, - Proprietor.**  
—o—

**T**his house has been entirely refitted, and is now opened for the accommodation of the public.  
may 27th

Sedalia Democrat, 3 June 1869.

**Friends of the James Farm**

c/o Jesse James Birthplace  
21216 Jesse James Farm Road  
Kearney, MO 64060  
www.jessejames.org  
816.736.8500



James homestead cabin —  
Original art by Jim Hamil

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please mail membership form and payment to:*

**Friends of the James Farm**  
c/o Jesse James Birthplace  
21216 Jesse James Farm Road  
Kearney, MO 64060



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QR Code to visit our  
website.  
www.jessejames.org

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*(Mark One)*

- Bushwhacker . . . . . \$25
- Clay County Irregular . . . . \$50
- Road Agent . . . . . \$100
- Long Rider . . . . . \$250
- Home Guard . . . . . \$500

Is this a renewal?  Yes  No

Outside the continental U.S.,  
please add \$5 to your membership  
contribution.