



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A couple of years ago, Martin McGrane signed the copyright to his excellent book about the James farm and family history to the Friends of the James Farm. The pandemic halted our efforts to get it back into publication but Liz Johnson worked hard to get it ready for these up-to-date printers and put it on a thumb drive. Possibly because of her location far from the competitiveness of the city, Liz was not able to find a reasonably priced printer.

With the restrictions brought on by the pandemic now lifted, we renewed our efforts and have been able to find a good source for the printing and will get it done with an even higher quality binding at a good price. Beth Beckett and Bryan Shibley are upgrading the cover photos. We should have a thousand printed by the end of November and on sale for \$20.00.

I have heard that many people would like to have more than three shoots per year. With our new shoot location, it should be possible to add a rifle component also. With three shoot-centered board members, that should be a definite possibility in 2023.

The Farm has added a new feature! Richard Gooch, who looks like a pioneer, sits on the porch in a rocking chair and tells visitors stories about the farm and its inhabitants. That is a great feature!

Angie Borgedalen recently celebrated her 80th birthday with her husband and friends. Angie was the editor of the Liberty Tribune and, in my opinion, the most powerful person in Clay County. When she spoke, the politicians listened. Angie promoted the raffling of the Friends sponsored and designed Clay county rifle. We wish Angie and her husband many more happy birthdays. **Bryan Ivlow**



BY BRYAN IVLOW



Richard Gooch, telling tales on the side porch at the James Farm.

This Issue

- Page 1 – President's Message
- Page 2 – Birthday Celebrations
- Page 4 – Shoot Report
- Page 5 – The Massacre at Centralia, Missouri – What Really Happened There?
- Page 10 – Preserving the Old Homestead
- Page 14 – The Fate of the Famous Coffee Bean Tree
- Page 15 – The Clay County Rifle

The Friends of the James Farm

Executive Officers

President
Bryan Ivlow

Vice President
Kevin Makel

Secretary
Vivie Tison

Treasurer
Vivie Tison

Website Management
Kevin Makel

Newsletter Editor
Michelle Pollard

Board Members

Pam Banner
Gary Blackwell
Paul Carrington
Laura Ganschow
Caleb Pooker

Ex-Officio

Beth Beckett

Honorary Board Members

Betty Barr
Michelle Pollard
David Smith

www.jessejames.org

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

Newsletter Proof Reading
Elizabeth Rains Johnson

Additional Research
Linda Gay Mathis

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS!

In October, Betty Barr, great granddaughter of Jesse James, celebrated her 85th birthday! The photo below shows Betty on one of her many visits to the home of her ancestors and in the very room in which her grandfather was born. We all wish Betty a very Happy Birthday!



Also celebrating a birthday in October, as already mentioned by our President, was Angie Anaya Borgedalen, long-time FOTJF board member. Angie celebrated her 80th birthday and we thought this would be an ideal opportunity to share a few of our memories.

Angie was always an advocate of the Clay County Historic Sites outdoor theater production, The Life & Times of Jesse James, which ran from 1985 through 1994 at the James Farm. She was a vital member of The Desperate Drama Society, a group of volunteers dedicated to the promotion of the play.

As editor of The Liberty Tribune, she never missed a chance to publicize the play and the history of Clay County and promoted the Jesse James Birthplace as much as she could. She is responsible for the FOTJF having four bank savings accounts and was relentless in selling lottery tickets for the Clay county rifle series that the FOTJF sponsored several years ago. She was one of the true movers and shakers in Clay County and a very powerful board member.

Angie, along with Jeanne Ralston, were instrumental in furnishing the slave cabin at the James/Samuel family farm and invited descendants of Perry Samuel for the dedication of the cabin.

Angie has written many great articles about the history of the farm and served as the Clay County mural committee chair, organizing the large mural depicting the history of Clay County in the county administration building, along with several others. When Angie asked the artist, David McClain, how much he would charge to paint the mural, he said he'd do it for \$7,500. The Fine Arts Council had agreed to pay only \$2,500. "I don't know where I came up with the idea but it was brilliant," Angie told a reporter. "I said, 'How about if I sell faces?'" So Angie offered local residents a deal - for \$250, they could have their faces included in the artwork. "I wrote 25 letters to people that I thought might give us some money and I said, 'We're doing this mural and your face will only be about the size of a quarter!'" And I got 24 yeses." Pretty soon, members of the public were offering to pay more to have larger images painted of themselves, their loved ones who had passed, or cherished pets. It is just one example of Angie's extraordinary character and determination!

We wish Angie all the very best and hope she had a wonderful birthday.



Clockwise: Angie Borgedalen at a Friends gathering here on the right; Angie with artist David McClain and part of his Clay County Mural; Angie winning a FOTJF Award.

Sources: Jeanne Ralston, Bryan Ivlow, Beth Beckett, article After Twenty-Five Years, Painter Reveals The Small Acts of Rebellion In His Clay County Murals by Danny Wood for KCUR 89.3, 12 January 2018



The Liberty Tribune, a great source of information for any historian researching the area around the Jesse James Birthplace, was founded in 1846 by nineteen-year-old, Robert Hugh Miller. Originally named the Weekly Tribune, the newspaper changed its name to the Liberty Weekly Tribune in 1852 and was then The Liberty Tribune from 1860 until it merged with The Kearney Courier and The Smithville Herald to create the Courier-Tribune in 2017. At that time, it was the longest serving weekly newspaper running under the same name.

FRIENDS OF THE JAMES FARM SHOOT

3 SEPTEMBER 2022

Our third and final shoot of the year on September third was hot but not as bad as the last shoot. Fortunately, we had cloud cover part of the day and a pair of tent type covers to provide shade; one furnished by the Friends and the other kindly brought along by board member, Caleb Pooker. We discussed buying a second one.

This year marks nearly 42 years of absolute safety in our shoots. For this we have local officials on hand to keep everyone safe. Sometimes this role was provided by the Clay county park rangers, sometimes by the Clay county sheriff's deputies and the last couple of years it has been our police board members Gary Blackwell and Paul Carrington. We thank them all.

Our Special Target was Allan Pinkerton this time!

One of the shoot highlights was firing a S&W number 2 in 32 rimfire caliber. This gun, owned by Caleb Blackwell, looks nearly new even though it is about 150 years old and cartridges for it have to be made by hand. It was a good day. **Bryan Ivlow**



BY BRYAN IVLOW

THE ANNA JAMES WINNER OF GENERAL SHOOT:

First place: Bonnie Pooker

THE ANNA JAMES WINNER OF THE SPECIAL TARGET SHOOT:

First place: Bonnie Pooker

THE CARTRIDGE REVOLVER WINNERS OF THE SPECIAL TARGET:

First place: Caleb Blackwell
Tied Second place: Gary Blackwell
Third place: Derrick Graham

THE CAP & BALL WINNERS OF GENERAL SHOOT

First place: Caleb Blackwell
Second place: Gary Blackwell
Third place: Derrick Graham

THE CAP & BALL WINNERS OF THE SPECIAL TARGET:

Tied first place: Caleb Blackwell
Gary Blackwell
Second place: Derrick Graham

THE CARTRIDGE REVOLVER WINNERS OF THE GENERAL SHOOT:

First place: Caleb Blackwell
Second place: Gary Blackwell
Third place: Del Warren

Photos courtesy of Bonnie Pooker



THE MASSACRE AT CENTRALIA, MISSOURI

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED THERE?

Imagine standing in the sunshine looking out over a vast field of prairie grass, yellow and purple wildflowers visible as far as the eye can see. Goldenrod and ragweed grow as tall as a man in their attempt to reach the sun. The wind blows, and it all undulates like waves on the ocean.

Then imagine what happened in that same field one hundred and fifty-eight years ago when Federal troops and Confederate guerrillas met there, three miles from Centralia, Missouri. Where over one hundred Federal soldiers were killed. Was it a massacre? Or a brilliant maneuver by men known as bushwhackers and guerrillas?

September 27, 1864 is a date that lives in the minds of many. That morning, one of the most horrific battles in Civil War history occurred. According to some accountings, and there are several, Jesse and Frank James were both involved, along with “Bloody” Bill Anderson and his company of eighty guerrillas. However, in his accounting in a *Magazine* article in the *Saint Louis Republican*, dated August 5, 1900, Frank James states there were only thirty. Frank also claimed he did not go into town with Anderson’s men, but remained in camp with the rest of the guerrillas. Therefore, which, and how many, guerrillas participated in the morning massacre at Centralia? It is a question that may never be answered.

From the book: *History of Centralia, Missouri* by Edgar T. Rodemyre, printed by the Centralia Historical Society and Walsworth Publishing Company, Jesse and Frank (?) rode into town that morning with Bloody Bill Anderson and his company. The men got drunk and terrorized the citizenry until a stage rolled up with delegates from Columbia on their way to attend the Democratic Convention being held not far away in Mexico, Missouri. The guerrillas, allegedly including Jesse, were in the process of robbing these men and confirming their identities (several of whom had lied about who they were), when the train from St. Louis rolled in.

The stagecoach was forgotten, the train stopped and surrounded.

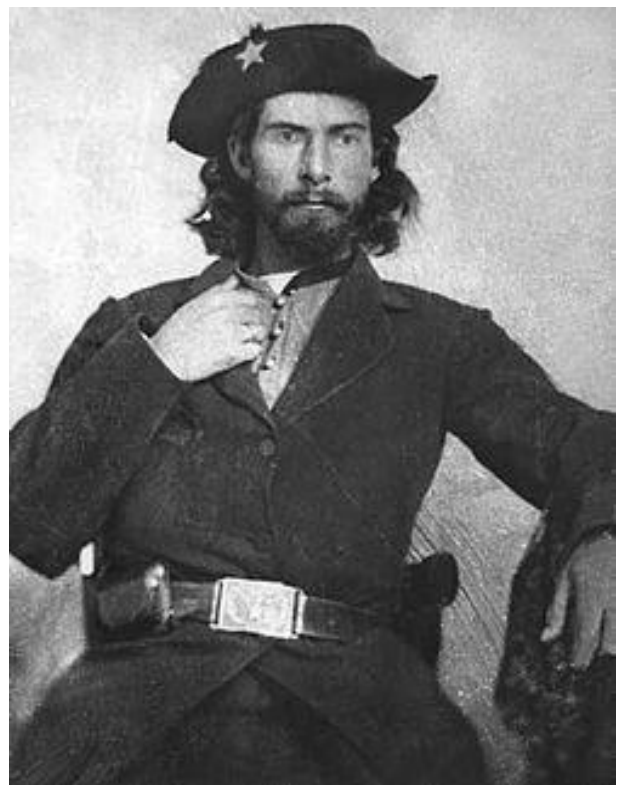
Aboard the train were as many as one hundred and twenty-five civilian passengers—and two dozen (the number varies between twenty-one and twenty-four), reportedly unarmed Union soldiers on furlough headed back to their homes in Missouri and Iowa.

The guerrillas, Jesse, Bloody Bill, and in some accounts Frank, boarded the train and terrorized the passengers as they worked their way through the cars to the rear of the train where the soldiers were located. Once inside the soldiers’ car, Anderson instructed the men to remove their uniforms, which were gathered to be used later by the guerrillas. The stripped soldiers were then removed from the train and told to stand on the side of the tracks in full view of the citizens of Centralia.

Naked (or in their underwear), the soldiers were asked by Bill if there was a sergeant among them. No one volunteered, certainly afraid they’d be murdered on the spot. Anderson asked again. Sergeant Thomas M. Goodman stepped forward. He was pulled from the line.



BY D. L. ROGERS



William “Bloody Bill” Anderson

Bill told two of his men to take Goodman to a safe place and to “protect him,” it is presumed, to use as an exchange for Cave Wyatt, one of Bill’s sergeants who had been wounded in a prior engagement, taken captive, and was being held in Columbia.

Once Goodman had been taken away, the Federal soldiers were murdered, scalped and mutilated in horrific ways. One of the Federals, a big man, charged the guerrillas, knocking five of them down. He was shot five times before crawling under the depot. He was dragged out and shot in the head.

The killing over, Anderson and his men left Centralia. Rendezvousing with the guerrillas in camp, a detachment was sent out to reconnoiter the area. On their return they reported a troop of Yankees had arrived in town. A plan was formulated to take care of them.

A small contingent of riders, including Jesse and Frank James, was sent out to lure the newly arrived soldiers into their trap. When the soldiers pursued them into a field of tall grass and weeds three miles southeast of Centralia, the trap was sprung.

The commander that charged into the trap was Major Andrew Vern Emen (A.V.E.) Johnston. Upon arriving on the field of battle, he gave the order to dismount. Why? Because his men were infantry **not** cavalry. Apparently, the horses that had been commandeered for the chase were farm/plow horses, unused to musket fire. He gave the order for the men to dismount, afraid the horses couldn’t be controlled in battle.

From *History*, Major Johnston was in camp in Paris, Missouri, on September 26th (the day prior to the massacre) when a rider came in with a note from Colonel Forbes of Macon [City] that read: “Bill Anderson is near Santa Fe, going toward Boonville. Meet me at Renick tomorrow and we will try and intercept him.” At approximately ten o’clock that night, Johnston set out to find the guerrillas. His men were green recruits with no previous military experience, armed with single-shot, Enfield muskets.

When they arrived in Centralia the following afternoon, they found the carnage of what had been left by Anderson’s men. The town physician, Dr. Sneed, took Johnston to the attic of the hotel for a better view of the surrounding area. In the distance, Johnston spotted the decoy riders sent to lure him out.

Johnston asked Dr. Sneed how many guerrillas he supposed there were. Sneed told Johnston there were said to be four hundred in total, which greatly outnumbered the Federals. Johnston countered that he’d been told there were only eighty guerillas in town that morning. Dr. Sneed informed him that the remainder of their men had stayed in camp. He also told Johnston that they carried revolvers.

According to *History*, Johnston responded, “They may have the advantage of me in numbers, but I will have the advantage of them in arms. My guns are of long range and I can fight them from a distance.”

Dr. Sneed protested that the guerrillas were well-trained and desperate and told Johnston it was folly to attack them.

Johnston pondered the situation a moment then said, “I will fight them anyhow.”

It is stated in *History* that Johnston had orders from General C.B. Fisk to “exterminate the murderous thieving bushwhackers” in this part of Missouri. Apparently, that was what he intended to do—despite the overwhelming odds.



Major A.V.E Johnston

Well aware his (infantry) troops were riding farm horses unused to battle, Johnston decided to follow the taunting guerrillas on horseback, then dismount and fight afoot, thus taking the skittish horses from the equation. This also meant his men would be able to reload their muskets easier on foot as opposed to on the backs of unruly mounts. Every “fifth man” was designated to handle the horses.

Johnston left thirty-five men in Centralia and, with his infantrymen on untested horses, raced out of town in pursuit of the guerrilla decoy.

The guerrillas, with Anderson at the front, awaited the arrival of the Federals from strategic locations around the field. When the Union troops arrived, much to the surprise of the guerrillas, they dismounted. The guerrillas had no idea why such a foolish thing was being done. They (the guerrillas) were well known for their excellent riding skills, as well as their unerring marksmanship.

Seeing only Anderson’s men, and unaware of the bushwhackers hidden around the fringes of the field, Major Johnston called out, “We are ready, come on!”

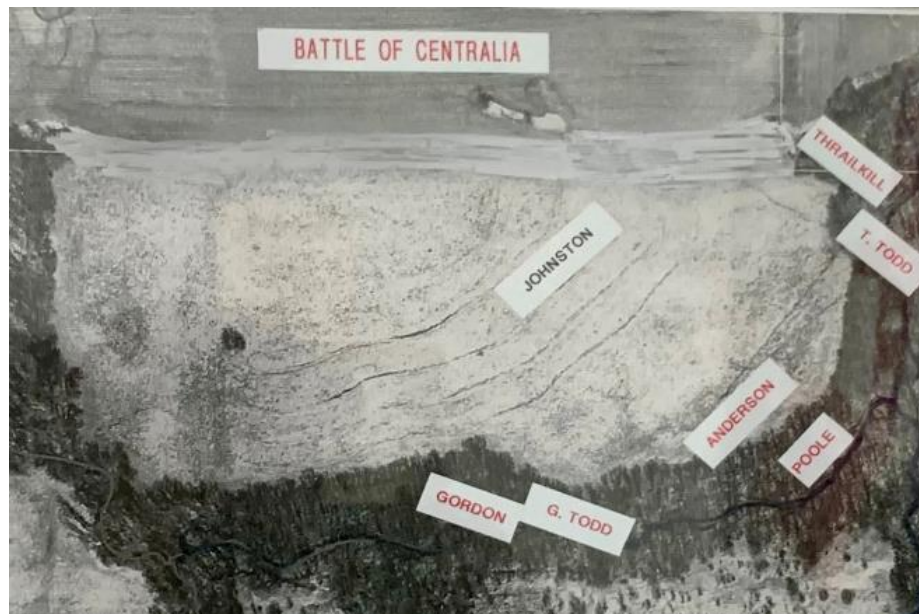
The guerrillas held.

Johnston then shouted, “Wait for us, you damned cowards.”

Set to lead the attack, Anderson gave the following order. “Boys, when we charge, break through the line and keep straight on for their horses. Keep straight on for their horses.” He rode to the end of the line and “lifted his hat with a flourish,” the signal to attack.

Anderson’s men, including Jesse James, closed the gap at a gallop. Most of the green recruits fired high, but several hit their mark. Two guerrillas were killed and one wounded, dying “three or four” days later, according to Frank. However, before the Federals could reload, Anderson’s men were on them. Racing from their hiding places, the rest of the guerrillas, commanded by Thrailkill, the Todds, Pool and Gordon, joined the attack (see map below), surrounding the defenseless Federals.

The battle was reportedly over in three minutes



Aerial view showing the positions of Johnston and the guerrillas.

Johnston believed he was only fighting Anderson’s band. He was unaware of the large group that waited in the trees.

In *History*, Jesse is credited with killing Major Johnston; “as Todd’s company charged the line. There was only one bullet hole found in the body and it was in Johnston’s temple. Jesse James’ brother saw Johnston fall and later when the guerrillas were summing up the fight Jesse admitted to shooting the major, but said that he did not go to the body and did not rifle Johnston’s pockets after he was dead.”

In Frank James’ *Magazine* interview he said:

I don't care what your histories say, they [the Federals] carried a black flag. It was apparently a black apron tied to a stick. We captured it in the battle that followed." He also said: "It has been reported that my brother, Jesse James, was not at the Centralia fight; that he was sick in Carroll County at the time. This is a mistake. Jesse was here. He it was who killed the commander of the Federal troops, Major Johnston.

Frank gave explicit details of the battle while visiting the site during his interview for *Magazine*. He is quoted as saying: "When great, big, grown men, with full possession of all their faculties, refer to that battle as 'the Centralia Massacre,' I think they are pleading the baby act. We did not seek the fight. Johnston foolishly came out to hunt us, and he found us. Then we killed him and his men. Wouldn't he have killed every one of us if he had had a chance? What is war for if it isn't to kill people for a principle? The Yankee soldiers tried to kill every one of the Southern soldiers, and the soldiers from the South tried to kill all the Yanks, and that's all there is of it." In that same interview, Frank also said "Pool reported to us that there were 350 [soldiers] and he was usually very accurate."

After the battle, Dave Pool (allegedly) counted the number of Union dead by hopping on their bodies. From *History*, the accounting is as follows: "When Pool had finished his count he announced that there were 130 bodies lying almost within the space of one city block. The others were strewn along the prairie for a distance of about ten miles or more." These "others" would have been the horse handlers, every "fifth man," who were chased down and killed.

As mentioned earlier, Frank James also stated in the *Magazine* article that only *thirty* Anderson men were in town that morning. It's interesting how the numbers differ, depending upon who does the telling. I've come to believe very strongly that the victors, do, indeed write the history.

When asked in the *Magazine* interview if Jesse was the man who had killed Major Johnston, Frank replied that it was "likely." Did Jesse, in fact, kill Major Johnston? Or is it part of his legend that has grown through the years?

In a report by a Union militia captain after the massacre, he stated that he was "certain" both the James boys had taken part in the Centralia massacre *and* the battle that followed. Frank admitted to being a part of the battle/massacre on the field, but says he was **not** in town that morning. Who do we believe?

Sergeant Goodman, the only Federal survivor that day, published a book about the massacre and in it said that the deaths at Centralia were the "most monstrous and inhuman atrocities ever perpetuated by beings wearing the form of man."

The Centralia Battlefield Site



The Centralia Museum



Top to bottom – ‘Bloody Bill Anderson’; a replica of the rope he wore showing how many men he had killed; the memorial on the battlefield site; the Centralia Memorial wall in the town of Centralia.

Photos by Linda Brookshier

For the full Centralia effect, visit the battlefield three miles southeast of town, then the historical society at 319 E. Sneed Street. (Check their website at centraliamuseum.org for days and hours of operation.) At the museum you’ll meet Marjorie, eighty-two years young. She is a wealth of information on the Victorian/Queen Anne style house built in 1904 by a pharmacist named R.L. Hope that was sold in 1908, then sold again in 1923 to the A.B. Chance family. Mr. Chance was an entrepreneur who, in 1907 founded the A.B. Chance company. He is credited with inventing the “earth anchor” which (initially) kept telephone poles in place. When purchased in 1994 by Hubbell Inc., the Chance Co. (still in existence) made “electric utility transmission and distribution products for the telecommunications, construction, pipeline, and consumer markets.” (From Wikipedia)

While at the museum, don’t miss the garden across the street filled with many different varieties of roses. Or the amazing gardens behind the house, where brightly colored Koi swim the length of the ponds between flower beds. Don’t miss the “Civil War” room, complete with a life-sized “Bloody” Bill Anderson, his guns, and a miniature train.

Marjorie will happily tell you all she knows about the house, the town—and what happened that day in September of 1864.

History is not an exact science. A hundred and fifty-eight years later, no one can be sure what happened on that day, but we can make our own decisions on what we think *did* happen—according to the facts we *do* have. Careful, logistic study is necessary.

What happened that day is one of the many unsolved mysteries in history. The how and why of what happened will never be known entirely. There are too many variables. Untested horses rearing and breaking from their handlers with the first shots fired. Green, untried men thrust into an unwinnable situation. There were too many participants. Each with a different tale of what happened—according to what they saw. Many dependent upon their own prejudices.

You decide. **DLR**

Be sure to check out Diane’s website, www.dlrogersbooks.com and her Amazon Author Page for more information, or to purchase one of Diane’s books.

PRESERVING THE OLD HOMESTEAD

Since the county acquired the Jesse James Birthplace in 1978, work has been ongoing to maintain the old homestead for future generations. Extensive work was done in those early days as visitors noticed not only the sagging roof and tired logs but also the tree growing through the building!

One such early visitor was James historian, Chuck Rabas, who remembered that the southwest corner “was being held up by a cable running from a tree.”

In his soon to be reprinted book, *The James Farm – It’s People, Their Lives, Their Times*, Marty McGrane wrote about those early restoration efforts. “Using all the old materials they could salvage, in combination with tools and building techniques that hadn’t changed much since the earliest part of the house was built in 1822, carpenters worked a near-miracle.”

Soon, visitors were able to walk inside the restored home again, instead of peering through distorted windows into rooms filled with significance but threatened by age. The very first edition of the James Farm Journal, published in September 1982, included an update on the continued restoration work.



The 1822 cabin as it was when acquired by the county.

This year the restoration of the James Farm has proceeded according to plan. The old smokehouse and board fence around the house have been completed. Old photos show the white picket front gate, which we found in the smokehouse. It has been restored and installed. Copies will be placed on the side entrances.

The smokehouse was originally a story and a half building. However, before the turn of the century it acquired its present configuration. Last summer, an archaeological dig around the foundation was conducted.

To the rear of the lot is the old ‘slave quarter’ which was later used as a grainery and storage shed. It, too, is being restored to its original appearance. Sometime in the early 20th century. It was coated with clapboards, which helped preserve the original board and batten exterior, together with traces of red paint.

Regular maintenance continued until a more robust approach was once again required in 1984 when the later additions – Zerelda’s Eastlake cottage and Robert James’ kitchen - were restored. In 1993, a report was presented to the Clay County Commission outlining a local architect’s suggestions for restoration work to be carried out once again on the old cabin section of the house, part of an ongoing battle to maintain the near two hundred year old walls and the memories they hold.

More recent visitors to the Jesse James Birthplace will have noticed that, since 2019, the house has been undoing further restoration work. At certain points, the logs were entirely exposed, allowing visitors a rare glimpse of the cabin’s construction. The work has taken longer than expected due to the pandemic but that did not stop the local media from covering the historic event. Back in 2019, Mike Davis, of 102.7FM, interviewed Brad Garrett, overseeing the restoration work, and asked if any of the logs were original to 1822. The 1993 report had shown that most of the wall logs were original, while much of the supporting logs were replaced. In this latest inspection, all the logs were checked for insect damage to see if they could be reused. If not, they were replaced. “The county bought a lot of logs about ten years ago,” Garrett explained, “and they have had them under shelter, naturally dry aging. The ones that were not salvageable we did pull out and replaced with those logs.” A couple of logs needing to be replaced were headers and footers and they were longer than the logs acquired by the county.

"We had to search around the whole mid-west and all the way up to Colorado and found some logs that met the length requirement and we had those shipped in from Colorado," Garrett explained. "They were already aged."

Garrett noted that a variety of woods had been used in the original cabin, as would be expected – they used what was growing nearby. When asked why the restoration was needed at this time, Garrett said that the building was naturally deteriorating and the current commission saw the need to preserve and invest in the building. To that end, the chinking was all removed and replaced. The rocks were removed too, cleaned and put back into the walls. A new daubing mix was used, made "from clay that was here on site along with some shavings and some quick lime mixed together and that mixture will expand and contract," Garrett explained.

The roof, which had moss and algae growing on it, was leaking and so was removed, restored and replaced. As can be expected, a camera was never far away to capture the work being undertaken.



Replacing the chinking and daubing between the logs.
Pishny Restoration Services
facebook page



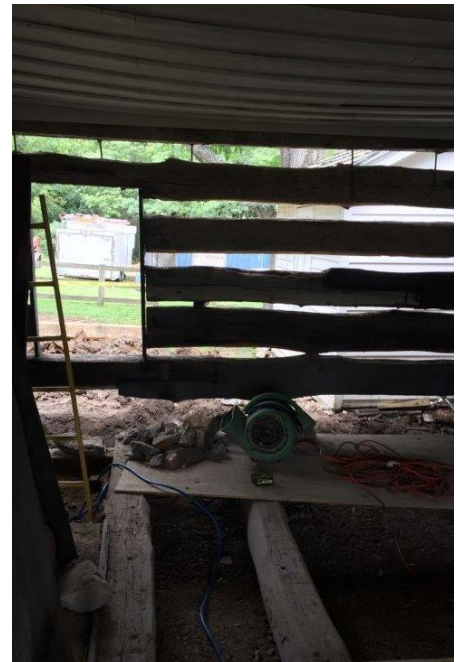
June 27 – foundation on the north side exposed and windows removed



July 3 – log preparation



5 May – work progresses in Zerelda's bedroom



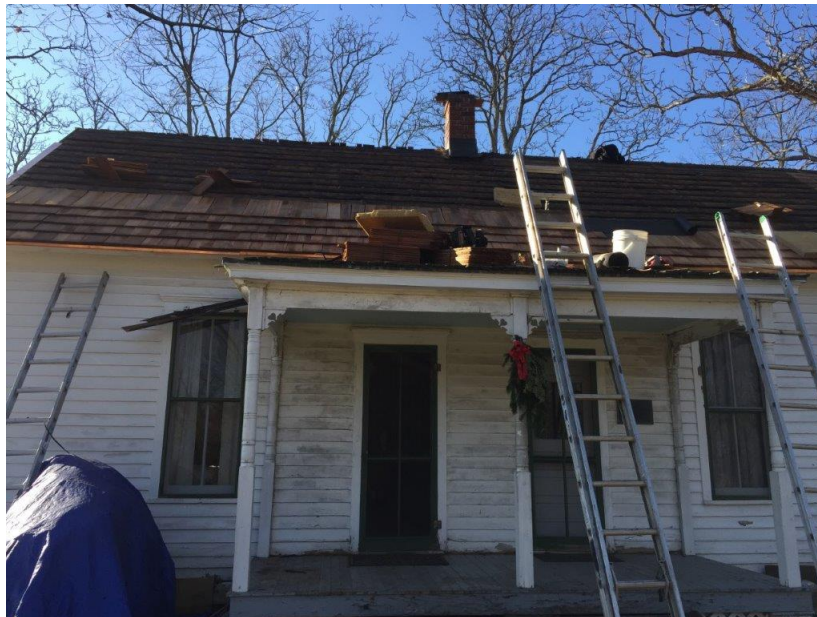
August 15 – the north wall logs exposed



August 30 – with the south porch logs exposed and restored, new chinking was added.



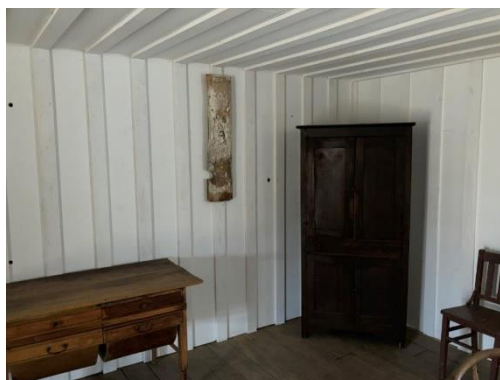
An exposed beam in the kitchen shows damage from the bombing.



August 30, dry stack stone on the south porch and the completed windows.



James Farm Journal



Completed interior in Zerelda's bedroom (far left) and the original kitchen (left).

One person, viewing the Birthplace after the work had been completed, expressed the views of many when they said, "In my opinion, the James Farm is one of the best examples of excellence in historical preservation."

In fact, the work had been completed to such a high standard that, on April 19, the Jesse James Birthplace proudly received the 2022 Preserve Missouri Award.

The James family log house, birthplace of outlaw Jesse James, was originally built in 1822 in the saddlebag style. An addition was added to the east side of the home in the 1890s and in 1938, a kitchen was added off of that. The home passed through the James family until it was purchased by Clay County in 1978, complete with original furnishings. The county began working shortly after purchasing the property, starting with the reconstruction of several outbuildings, including a smoke house and slave cabin. A study completed in 2017 identified a number of areas needing repairs and improvement to ensure the longevity of the cabin. Restoration work started with site draining. The perimeter of the 1822 cabin was excavated to stabilize the foundation. Ventilation was added around this perimeter along with a mesh barrier to prevent animals from penetrating the foundation. Floorboards were also pulled from the 1822 portion, the crawl space leveled out, and a vapor barrier installed. New shingles were installed on all three portions of the cabin. Logs were inspected and salvageable logs were treated with Bora-care and consolidant. Any logs that were identified as too deteriorated were replaced with new logs. All chinking and daubing was removed and replaced with a historically appropriate mix of lime, clay and hemp fibers. Siding on both the exterior and interior was removed, some of it salvaged and reused, and the rest replaced with a new matching siding. All of the windows from the 1822 and 1890s addition were removed and restored as well. With work completed, Clay County Historic Sites has ensured that the Jesse James Birthplace will remain as a historic destination for years to come.

PRESERVATION COMPLETE



THE FATE OF THE FAMOUS COFFEE BEAN TREE

The great coffee bean tree, that once stood approximately fifty feet from the corner of the old Jacob Groomer cabin, could have told a few stories. It literally witnessed the birth of a Legend and watched as it grew. Often cited as the place from which local militia chose to repeatedly hang Dr. Samuel in May 1863, those same branches sheltered Jesse's grave before his move to Kearney. The tree heard his mother, then his brother, then his nephew enthral visitors with their stories and it gave shelter to them and to the numerous animals and birds that frequented the land.

The tree stood ninety feet tall, sixteen and a half feet in circumference and, in 1939, Robert James believed it to be 152 years old.

Wind had damaged the tree in July 1936 and the following February, a "heavy snowfall did further injury, leaving only a third of the original tree standing."

The final blow was caste in late June 1939, when a great storm bent the tree "so that it leaned precariously toward the house." Slowly, the tree was removed until now there are just memories of its existence.

Be sure to ask a tour guide to show you where it was the next time you visit.



Betty Barr with a piece of the famous coffee bean tree.
Pineville Democrat, from the Clinton County Democrat, July 6, 1939.

FAMOUS TREE FALLS

A widely known Missouri landmark, the big coffee tree on the James farm near Kearney, under which Jesse James was buried for several years before the body was removed to Kearney, was blown down in the wind storm recently.

The storm Friday night bent the tree so that it leaned precariously toward the house where Robert James and his wife and mother continue to live.

Robert James, son of Jesse's brother, Frank James, said the tree was 152 years old. It was 90 feet high, and 16 1-2 feet in circumference. The house was built in 1822 by Jacob Gromer. Wind damaged the tree in July of 1936. Last February a heavy snowfall did further injury, leaving only about a third of the original tree standing.

The tree stood about 50 feet from the corner of the house. A quail's nest with 14 eggs was found about ten feet from the base of the tree after the storm.

It was beneath this tree that Mrs. Zerelda Samuels buried the body of her son, Jesse James. For a number of years he rested beneath the spreading branches of the great tree, but was later moved to Mt. Olive cemetery in Kearney.

It was in its friendly shade that Frank and Jesse James played with the little Negro children and enjoyed many a romp before they took to the trail of banditry. In later years it served as a canopy and reception hall for the many visitors who flocked to the James farm to listen to the family relate the history of the farm and the stories of the two members of the family who blazed their way thru the middle west with fast horses and smoking guns.—Clinton County Democrat.

THE CLAY COUNTY RIFLE

As mentioned in my President's Message, the Friends of the James Farm were heavily involved in the design and sale of the specially made, Clay County Rifle.

Sometime around the year 2000 or earlier, a company here decided to customize Winchester model 94 rifles and sell them throughout the midwest. They chose the popular AE (angle eject) which allowed spent cartridges to be ejected sideways instead of straight up. This allowed Winchester to compete with the Marlin lever action with its flat top that allowed the mounting of a scope. They also included a large loop lever popularized by John Wayne who spun the rifle like a revolver when working the action. They gold plated the whole gun except for some moving parts like the hammer and bolt which they jeweled. The company then went to leading county organizers to suggest historic items and events exclusive to that county to embellish on the rifle with laser engraving.

Clay county has a rich history and scenes depicting the Morman jail, a riverboat and a horse drawn plow, were all suggested and approved for the design. Also present is a picture of William Jewell college, one of whose founders was the Rev. Robert James. There is also a representation of the county courthouse, a map of the county showing its larger cities and towns, the civil war era armory and depictions of Alexander Doniphan, who led the Mexican/American war. Of course, there is also a picture of Jesse James.

The company then made a proof rifle to use in selling ten copies to collectors in the county. After all ten were sold the sponsoring organization was given the proof rifle and the ten \$2000.00 rifles numbered one of ten to ten of ten were shipped to the buyers. My rifle is number ten of ten. Those numbers are engraved on the tang along with a pair of crossed revolvers. **BI**

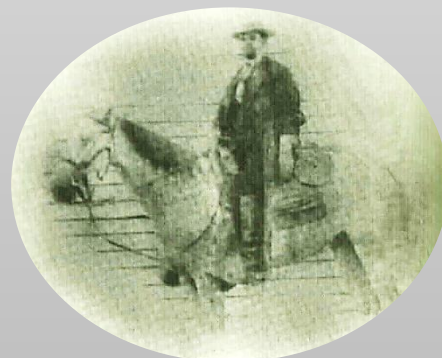


The Clay County Rifle.

Photos courtesy of
Bryan Ivlow.

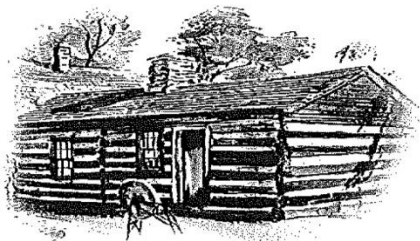
NEXT ISSUE

Discover more about where this
photo of Jesse James was made.



Friends of the James Farm

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



James homestead cabin —
 Original art by Jim Hamill

Return Service Requested

YES, I want to renew my membership with the Friends of the James Farm or begin a new membership. I have checked my level of membership in the box and enclosed a check or money order for the amount indicated.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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



You can also scan
 QR Code to visit our
 website.
 www.jessejames.org

Membership Levels (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.