

Other Clay County Historic Sites to learn about and explore:

Jesse James Birthplace	Jesse James Bank Museum
The Jesse James Birthplace	103 N. Water
21216 James Farm Rd.	Liberty, MO 64068
Kearney, Missouri 64060	816-736-8510
816-736-8500	
Mt. Gilead Church & School	Historic Pharis Farm
15918 Plattsburg Rd.	20611 EE Highway
Kearney, Missouri 64060	Liberty, Missouri 64068
816-736-8500	816-736-8500

JESSE JAMES BIRTHPLACE

FOR STUDENTS

Revised June 2023

Jesse James Birthplace Self-Guided Tour

As you exit the third gallery, the sidewalk will lead you to the birthplace of Jesse James. Along the path, are memorial trees dedicated to those who have contributed to preserving the birthplace and family history. The creek running adjacent to the sidewalk is where Jesse and Frank played as young boys.

Jesse and Frank's parents, Robert & Zerelda, moved to Clay County in the 1840s and purchased the farm. Frank was born in 1843 at his grandparent's home about a mile north of this farm. The rest of the children were born here. Zerelda was a domineering woman, outspoken, and protective of her family. She outlived three husbands and four of her eight children (Frank, Robert, Jesse, Susan, Sarah, John, Fannie, and Archie). Jesse married his first cousin, Zee Mimms. Jesse and Zee had four children; Jesse Edwards, Mary Susan, and twins, Gould and Montgomery. The twins died in infancy.

There are three sections to the house. Jacob Groomer built the log cabin circa 1822. Zerelda added the Eastlake Cottage addition in the 1890s, and Frank's son, Robert, added the modern kitchen in 1938.

East Porch / South Door

Zerelda left the house to Frank after her death in 1911. Through this doorway is Frank and Annie's bedroom. Annie graduated from a ladies' college in Independence with degrees in science and literature. A passion for literature was something Annie and Frank shared. Below the south window is a footlocker, in which Frank carried his treasured books when he traveled. He enjoyed Shakespearean literature. Frank died in 1915 at the age of 72. Annie continued to live here until her passing in 1944 at 91 years of age. Frank and Annie are buried in Independence, Missouri, at Hill Park Cemetery.

Frank and Annie's only child, Robert, graduated from business college in St. Louis. He was the last person to live in the house. He died in 1959. Though married twice, he had no children. Therefore, Frank James had no heirs. After Robert passed, the property went to Jesse's grandsons. In 1978, they sold the farm to Clay County with the original furnishings.

East Porch / North Door

This is the parlor, the door through which company entered. This room has two rocking chairs, a small round table with two chairs, a daybed, tobacco cabinet, desk and wood stove.

Answers - page 1 - Treasure Hunt

Museum:

1. Zerelda's sewing machine.
2. Jesse's handkerchief.
3. Spurs.
4. Casket or coffin handles.
5. Feather duster
6. Handcuffs.
7. Pinkerton bomb.
8. Dan's headstone or gravestone.
9. Family Bible.
10. Annie's tatted lace.
11. Monopoly.
12. Frank's Opera Glasses.
13. Bank Robbers in Diorama.

Outside:

1. Gravesite.
2. Water pump or well.
3. Outhouse.
4. Sharpening wheel
5. Lightning rods
6. Footstone on grave.

Answers - page 5 - Crossword

Down:

1. Zerelda
2. Preacher
3. Annie
5. Outhouse
8. Arm
11. Doctor
12. Bob
14. Woodson

Across:

4. Zee
6. Cabin
7. Yard
9. Archie
10. Robber
13. Stonewall
15. Cole
16. Dan

South Porch / East Door

Jesse Woodson James was born in this room. The fireplace is a saddleback fireplace. The fireplace in this room backs to the fireplace in the kitchen and they share the same chimney.

Jesse and his family were living in St. Joseph, Missouri when fellow gang member, Bob Ford, made arrangements with the governor for the \$5000 reward to capture Jesse. Bob Ford shot Jesse in the back of the head while staying in Jesse's home in St. Joseph, with Jesse's wife and children in the next room. Zerelda would later refer to Bob Ford as "the coward whose name is not worthy to mention". During this period in history, grave robbing was a problem. Jesse's remains were brought to the farm and buried in the yard. This is the room, where Zerelda sat in her rocking chair and kept a watchful eye on her son's grave.

South Porch / West Door

This is the original cabin kitchen and the other side of the saddleback fireplace. The Pinkerton raid took place in this room. The Pinkerton's were a detective agency from Chicago hired by the railroad to capture the James-Younger gang. It was just after midnight on January 25, 1875, when detectives tossed a round, flaming object through the north window. Dr. Reuben Samuel (Zerelda's third husband) kicked it into the fireplace where it exploded. Jesse and Frank's half-brother, 8-year-old Archie, died as a result of the explosion, and Zerelda's right arm was amputated. As for Jesse and Frank, it was never determined that they were even home that night.

Grounds

Reconstructed outbuildings on the property include the smokehouse, slave quarters, outhouse and the carriage house. The original gravesite is located in the southwest corner of the yard. Jesse's body was moved to Mt. Olivet Cemetery in 1902 so he could be buried next to his wife.

Zerelda was a shrewd businesswoman. Soon after Jesse's death, tourists flocked to the farm and she sold rocks off his grave for 25 cents. When she ran out of rocks, she replenished her stock from the creek. After Zerelda passed, Frank and his son, Robert, continued the tradition of tours and selling rocks as souvenirs. Jesse's grandsons took up the mantle, and now we continue the tradition today – take a rock from the bucket and leave a quarter.

THANK YOU FOR VISITING.

A public restroom is located on the north side of the cabin.



Treasure Hunt

(See last page for answers.)

Directions: Find and name the objects by following the clues.

In the Museum

1. It helped Zerelda make blankets and clothing for the family.
2. Jesse used this to wipe his nose. Hint: It's in a place for safekeeping.
3. You wear these on your boots for the purpose of directing your horse to move.
4. Three handles that are all the same.
5. Something for cleaning. Hint: especially a certain picture frame.
6. Something worn by a prisoner.
7. A piece of something that exploded.
8. A stone with three letters on it.
9. Where births were written down.
10. Fancy decoration for clothing, made of thread by Frank's wife.
11. An old version of a famous board game.
12. Helps to see things that are far away.
13. Tiny men and their horses.

Outside

1. Where Jesse's body once lay.
2. The water source closest to the house.
3. The old bathroom.
4. Used to make the axe and other blades work better.
5. These protect the house from nature's electricity.
6. Jesse's initials are here.



And Now for a Short History Lesson

Childhood Days

Frank James was born at his grandmother's house in 1843. Shortly thereafter, his parents, Zerelda and Robert James, bought this farm, which had a log cabin on it. Jesse was born here in 1847, and two years later their sister Susan was born.

Their father, Reverend Robert James was a Baptist preacher at New Hope church located a few miles north of the farm. He was a founding member of William Jewell College. In 1850, he left his family for the gold mines in California. He felt a calling to preach to the miners, but died shortly after his arrival in California.

Frank was seven and Jesse three when their father died. They probably did not remember much about him, but he taught Frank to read. Their father left them a large collection of books. Frank loved to read Shakespeare. Jesse enjoyed reading the Bible and went to church every Sunday. His father probably influenced his strong faith.

When they were young, a cousin, called Wild Bill Thomason, taught them to ride and shoot guns. Both boys went to school until the eighth grade. Frank continued to learn through his love of reading. As an adult, he was thought to be well educated and was known for quoting Shakespeare.

Zerelda's third husband was Dr. Reuben Samuel. Frank, Jesse and Susan all loved him like a father and called him Pappy. The three James children also had four half brothers and sisters – Sallie, John, Fanny and Archie.



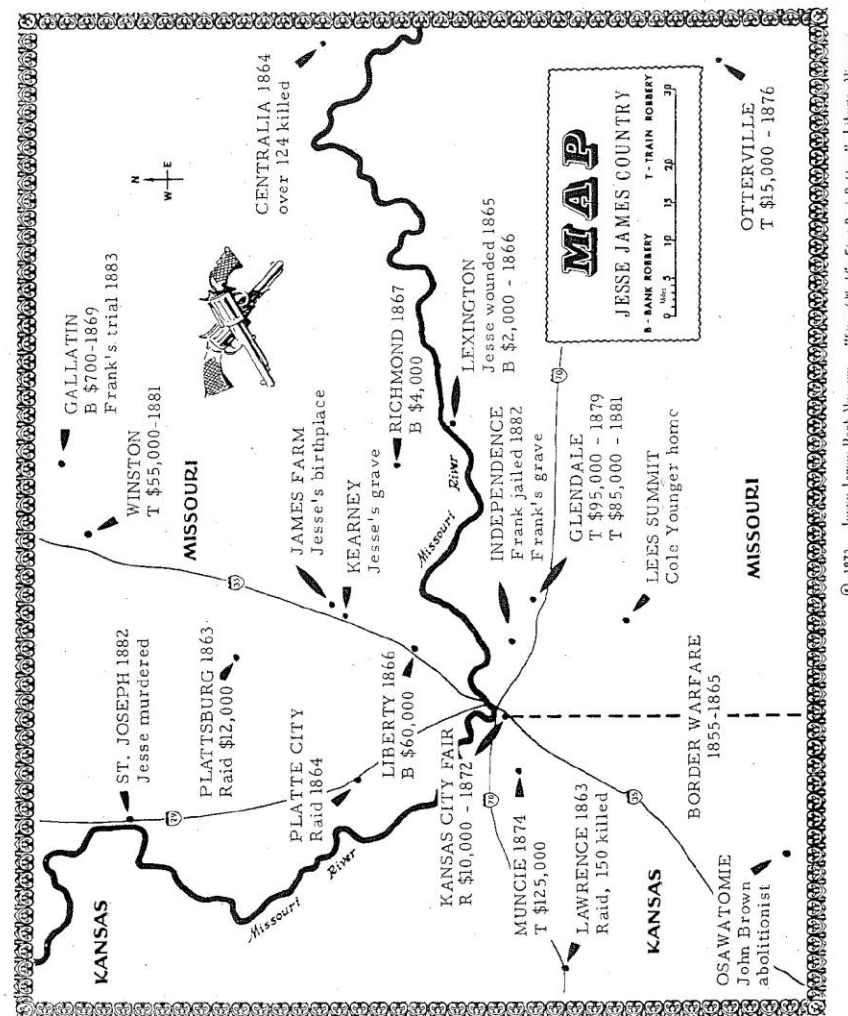
Civil War Days

Like many residents of Clay County, the James family supported the Southern, pro-slavery, Confederate states during the war because many of their relatives still lived in those states.

Kansas supported the Northern Unionists who wanted to abolish slavery, and Missouri was a divided state. A large portion of Missouri supported the Southern Confederates who wanted to keep slavery legal. Missouri shares its western border with Kansas. There was a lot of fighting between towns along the border of both states. This was known as the Kansas and Missouri "Border Wars." Jayhawkers from Kansas would sneak into Missouri to raid and burn towns and Bushwhackers from Missouri would sneak into Kansas to do the same. Today, the Border War continues through college sports team rivalries.

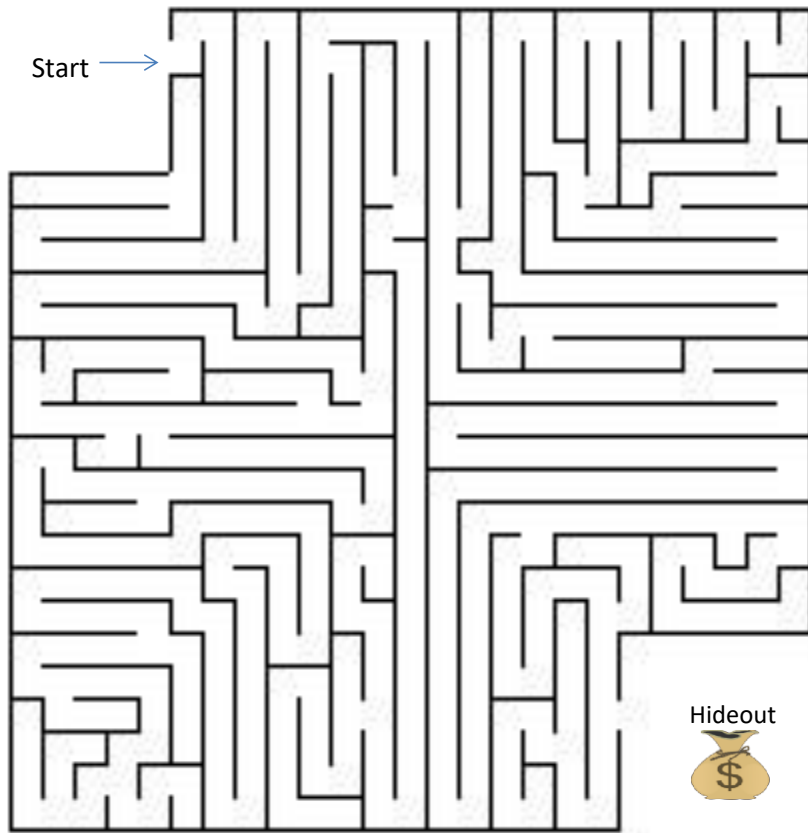
Frank James rode with a local Confederate group at the beginning of the war. He was caught by the Unionists and forced to take an oath. He promised not to fight against the Union. Later, when local Union troops found out that Frank had been spotted in a battle they knew he had broken his oath. A group of militiamen went to the family farm hoping to find out where Frank and the raiders were camped. They beat Jesse and tortured Dr. Samuel, who suffered brain damage as a result.

When he was old enough, Jesse joined Bloody Bill Anderson's guerillas. When Bloody Bill and his men would raid a town, they robbed the banks and used the money for food, supplies and uniforms. At the end of the war, Jesse was shot in the chest. He recuperated at his aunt and uncle's house in Kansas City, where his cousin, Zee, took care of him. Her real name was Zerelda. She was named after Jesse's mother. Later, Zee and Jesse were married.



Jesse James Birthplace & Museum

The Hideout



After The War

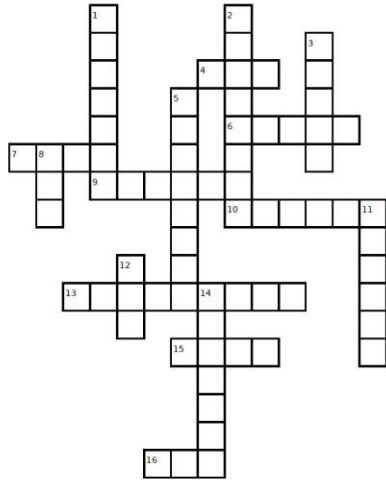
Many of the men that fought with Bloody Bill Anderson and William Quantrill, including Frank and Jesse and some of their friends, began robbing banks and trains after the war. Supporters of the Confederate side were bitter about losing the war. Banks and railroads were often run by companies in the Northern, or Unionist, states. The people that robbed them believed that they were getting back at the Unionists.

It wasn't just the robbers that believed this. Some of the townsfolk believed it too. Newspaper stories compared Frank and Jesse to Robin Hood even though there was no proof they ever gave money to the needy. Today there are still many legends about Frank and Jesse.

Jesse and his gang robbed banks and trains for years, but after a while Frank grew tired of it and moved away to escape the outlaw lifestyle. On April 3, 1882, Bob Ford, a new member of Jesse's gang, shot Jesse while he was dusting a picture on the wall at his home in St. Joseph, Missouri. His wife Zee, and children, Jesse Jr. and Mary, were in the kitchen at the time. Bob struck a deal with the Governor of Missouri. He was to collect the reward when he delivered Jesse to the Governor, but Bob killed Jesse instead. He received only a small portion of the reward.

Jesse's mother, Zerelda, buried her son in the yard near the house. Because Jesse was a famous outlaw, she was afraid that people would rob his grave. By burying him in the yard, she could watch over the grave and make sure that no one disturbed it. After his wife, Zee, died in 1900, Jesse's body was moved to Mt. Olivet cemetery in Kearney so that he could be buried beside his wife.

Jesse James Birthplace & Museum



Down:

1. Frank & Jesse's mother
2. Jesse's father's profession
3. Frank's wife
5. 1800s bathroom
8. Zerelda's _____ was injured by the Pinkerton bomb.
11. Jesse's step-father's profession
12. The Ford that shot Jesse
14. Jesse's middle name

Across:

4. Jesse's wife
6. The house was once a log _____.
7. Place where Zerelda buried Jesse
9. Boy killed in Pinkerton raid
10. The James gang _____ banks & trains
13. Jesse's favorite horse
15. The Younger that Frank toured the country with
16. Frank's favorite horse

Jesse James Birthplace & Museum Word Search

B S A L D R A W E R R E G E R
 W O T D D M V T Q A V I A S M
 O B M O L K G Q I M F H N S M
 X U Y B N E N L Y C X C G E R
 Y S T I D E R A O F I R T J U
 I U B L J O W E R R U A E C P
 T G G G A V E A Z F R B H Y S
 E P H D V W F G L E T R A V U
 S R E B B O R S D L P O B M H
 H O R S E S A E U U I T O X S
 B A N K R D F A D M S H R P L
 R Y D S D N V L A P T E U K L
 M P I L O D O F H F O R X T I
 I D E C U H H K O X L S D Q R
 J P I N K E R T O N S L T H R

ARCHIE	BANK	GANG
CONFEDERATE	FRANK	OUTLAW
HORSES	JESSE	REWARD
PISTOL	RAILROAD	SPUR
STONEWALL	SADDLE	BOMB
BROTHERS	ROBBERS	HOLDUP
ZERELDA	PINKERTONS	VAULT

Hint: words are forward, backward, upside-down, or diagonal.