

## The History of The Mystery

Betty Dorsett Duke is today's most renowned claimant according to "Stray Leaves" a Genealogy Surname Data Base and official web site for the James Family In America Since 1650, sponsored by Eric James.

Mrs. Duke sticks with her story that her Great Grandfather James L Courtney could be the real Jesse Woodson James who may have faked his death in 1882 in St. Joseph Missouri. So much new evidence has been found since the first book Mrs. Duke published "Jesse James Lived and Died in Texas." Betty Duke's research provides new evidence, which will have the reader stop and think how the history of Jesse James remained a mystery for the past one hundred and twenty three years. Who all were involved and just who was behind the hidden history that will be revealed in this chapter.

Tracking back twenty years ago, hours, weeks and months were spent at local libraries and archives trying to trace the family of Jesse Woodson James. Today...the Internet has paved the highway full of data that ever genealogist dream's of. From pension records to war records, birth, marriages and death records the data we can find now is endless. More information can be obtained in one week as compared to endless hours of research when many of us first started our quest back in 1992 and beyond.

The James L Courtney Controversy caught my attention shortly after the Granbury Exhumation of J Frank Dalton in the year 2000. Dalton had been a hobby of mine for the past 20 years and I was almost convinced that he was the "Jesse James." With J Frank Dalton there are a lot of pros and cons to consider.

Impostors are usually aware of not being who they say they are; they are not the proverbial lunatics who think they are Napoleon. However there are borderline cases that may have ended up believing their own tall tales.

The year was 1914 in the city of Memphis, Tennessee. A clever novel about William Clark Quantrill would unravel by no other than one, "Captain "Kit" Dalton." A story that would be called "Under The Black Flag." Kit Dalton would tell a story about himself as a Guerrilla Captain, under the fearless leader William Clark Quantrill.

Kit Dalton, who strikes a remarkable resemblance to J Frank Dalton of Granbury, Texas fame, wrote hair raising accounts of the sack on Lawrence, Kansas, Baxter Springs and the Kansas City Massacres of 1863.

Kit Dalton said that he enlisted in Company G., 7<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry, under a Captain "Aiden." Military records of the 7<sup>th</sup> would reveal two Dalton's in Company G. John W Dalton and C.F. Dalton formerly enlisted in Humphreys County, Tennessee on September 25, 1863 by Captain Aden. Both men named Dalton took "French leave" in

the spring of 1874 and were reported as deserters in Calloway County, Kentucky through the end of the war. 1850 census shows a John W Dalton, age 3 at that time, the son of Caswell Dalton of Calloway County.

One will find on Kit Dalton's 1920 death certificate that his place of birth was Kentucky and his father was listed as Caswell Dalton. Had Kit Dalton of been at Baxter Springs on October 6, 1863 would have meant that he was all of 13 years of age. Kit Dalton turned to J Frank Dalton to help him write the book "Under The Black Flag." If Frank Dalton was born April 17, 1844 or 45 he would have been 19 or 20 years old at the time the battle of Baxter Springs took place.

It would appear that some of Kit Dalton's writings about Quantrill were taken from William F Connelley's Quantrill and the Border Wars published in 1910.

Was the purpose for Kit Dalton to publish his book, "Under The Black Flag" a means to secure a Confederate Pension who would have been ineligible as deserter under the name John W Dalton, who was his true identity.

Although the ties of Kit Dalton to the James Gang and Quantrill are questionable, he did appear to have known Frank James, brother of the famous outlaw, Jesse James in the early 1900's.

Kit Dalton would die on April 3, 1920. If I did not know better, I would think Kit Dalton and J Frank Dalton who died in 1951 in Granbury, Texas were one and the same.

1926 rolls by and another imposter crawls out of the closet. This time it would be a Frank James imposter. The case of a Newton County, Arkansas man by the name of Joe Vaughn would come to surface. He would go on to write a book "The Only True Story of the Life Of Frank James," published by the Norton Printing Company of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Joe Vaughn claimed shortly before his death that he was the real Frank James. Frank James of Missouri was known to have died in February of 1915 at the James farm outside Kearney, Missouri. An interesting book but like that of Kit Dalton's "Under the Black Flag" it fiction than fact.

A Joe Vaughn did serve with Quantrill and his raiders but he was not the Frank James.

1935 Frank Dalton of Gladwater, Texas would write a pamphlet, "Quantrill in the Civil War Reminiscences of Civil War Days." Another pamphlet would appear around the same time, "The Men of Quantrill," written by Frank Dalton. Both of these pamphlets would have shades of accounts with Quantrill that would correspond with the book written by Kit Dalton in 1914 called "Under The Black Flag." Which makes one wonder, "Who helped who?"

Years later Frank Dalton would add the J to the front of his name and claim to be the famous outlaw "Jesse Woodson James." However, in 1935 he was Frank Dalton, posing as a former member of William Clark Quantrill's band.

Frank Dalton would write in one of his pamphlets an unusual statement about Jesse James. Dalton writes: "Jesse James was killed by Robert Ford in St. Joseph, Missouri, April 3, 1882. There can be no doubt of his death, for there were too many people from all walks of life who had known him since early childhood, and who had flocked to St. Joe to identify him, for there to be any doubt about it." Perhaps he knew the History of the Mystery before it was discovered.

In Crittenden Memoirs, Dalton was asked to write twelve chapters, which was edited by HH Crittenden, son of Thomas Crittenden, Governor of Missouri at the time of the death of Jesse Woodson James. Frank Dalton stated in Crittenden's Memoirs that he helped identify the body in St. Joseph and later worked in St. Louis with Frank James at the Standard Theatre.

J. Frank Dalton writes about his adventures with Jesse James in "The Crittenden Memoirs" with fascinating detail. He lays it on the line that Quantrell and his men was a secretive bunch, that they were necessarily silent and for obvious reasons.

Dalton admits that he was among those who knew the truth all the while others of that time took the few facts they could muster and let their imaginations run wild in telling the story of Quantrell and the famous outlaws of Missouri, Jesse James.

Dalton tells his story about who Quantrell was asking questions of why Jesse James was killed. Why it was thought that the man killed by Bob Ford was not Jesse James and so on and so on. He refers to Jesse's mother as his own Aunt Zerelda asking why she at first denied that the murdered boy was her son. Dalton said that things have never been told at all, or grossly misrepresented in the telling.

Quantrell he would say was really Charley Hart, and taught school in Lawrence Kansas, when the war started. The same town he would later sack killing 182 men and male children.

After being tied to a tree and horsewhipped for being a rebel sympathizer and within inches of being hung, made his escape to Missouri where he organized the "Quantrell Militia." Dalton claimed he was 15 years old when he enlisted in Blackwell, Missouri. March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1863. Dalton claims to be one of the ones who rode into the town of Lawrence, Kansas and burned the town but left Bowerstock's Mill standing assuming General Price might capture Kansas and a good grist mill might come in handy.

Dalton makes the statement that he didn't know why the real reason for the killing of Jesse James was never made public, but that Bob Ford told it to the Sheriff and others, including Frank Dalton who was in the room the day of Jesse James died. Dalton claimed to have been in the same room where Jesse James laid dead. Dalton said that he was sent, among others to identify Jesse but the facts were never told about his death.

Dalton takes a twist on the story telling about Jesse James aka Thomas Howard the horse racer. Jesse had Bob Ford riding for him until he got too heavy, then he had Bob taking care of the horses while his brother Charley, who was the younger of the two and lighter took over as a jockey. Bob Ford knew Thomas Howard was the real Jesse James. Dalton talks about Jesse aka Thomas Howard's two children, Johnny age 7 (or Young Jesse) and Mary age 5. There was to be a race meeting from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of April that year, 1882. Jesse told Bob Ford that he was going to take four of his horses and go and for Bob

to get them ready. Jesse and Bob would ride one and lead another according to Dalton's story. That way they would reach Excelsior Springs where the race was to be held with fresh and well conditioned horses, which would not be the case if they shipped them by train.

Bob Ford tells Dalton in the house where Jesse lay dead on the floor. Yes, Dalton said he was at the house the day Bob Ford shot and killed Jesse James. The reason for the killing as told by Bob Ford in front of Frank Dalton was that Bob knew if he started on that 70 mile trip with Jesse James that he would never get there; that Jesse intended to kill him on the way. Bob explained that Jesse James suspected him of intending to betray him, so the first chance he got he shot and killed him, because according to Bob Ford, it was either Jesse or him." On April 3, 1882, which falls on a Monday by the way, Bob, Charley and Jesse were in the barn currying and watering the horses and returned to the house. Jesse took off his coat (A Prince Albert) after complaining about what a warm day it was, and unbuckled his belt with two pistols and laid them on the bed. Bob and Jesse had taken a seat on the bed and Charley Ford went and set a chair near the door. Looks like ole Charley wasn't taking any chances. Mary (he has to be talking about Jesse's wife who must have used the alias of Mary, as I don't think he is talking about Jesse's five year old daughter Mary), had been scrubbing and cleaning the house the day before, and in hanging the pictures back on the wall, had hung one of them, a cheap chromo, in a gilt frame, a little crooked. Jesse noticed the picture was hanging crooked and got up on a chair to straighten it. Bob Ford had been waiting for that chance for many months now and the opportunity finally came.

Dalton described Bob Ford as picking up one of Jesse's heavy pistols, he fired twice. Either shot would have been fatal. Why did Dalton change the story about the pistol? Did he mean to say that he picked up the pistol that Jesse had given him as a gift or that he picked up one of the pistol's Jesse had just set on the bed? Was Dalton more or less saying that the Fords were not armed the morning Bob Ford shot and killed Jesse? Dalton describes the shooting that Jesse took one bullet at the base of the brain and the other near the shoulder blade and through the lung. There had to be some importance of his two bullet story. Fifteen years later Dalton would come out of hiding and the two bullet theory would play into place for his own role as Jesse Woodson James. The lung wound would be Dalton's proof that he was Jesse James who was said to have died in 1852.

Dalton goes on to tell the tale of the body having to be identified. They sent for Aunt Zerelda (mother of Jesse James who lived on the old homestead in Kearney, Mo.) to come and identify her son. What does Aunt Zerelda do? She turns to the Sheriff and the others in the room and said: "Gentlemen, you have made a mistake; that is not my son." Dalton covers it up by saying Zerelda finally realized it was her son and broke down crying with bitter tears of anguish. Although she had been expecting it for years, when the final blow came, it was more than she could bear.

Dalton tells of Jesse James being seen alive time to time by cheap notoriety seekers of which he would soon become one of.

Once, Dalton said, a cowboy came up from Argentine and said that Jesse was ranching and doing well down there. A story Dalton would fit into his own saga along with his side kick, Orvus Lee Howk aka Jesse James III. Who would also claim to be Dalton's grandson during Dalton's stay are Meramac Caverns in Missouri as Jesse W James.

Another story would crop up in the Crittenden Memoirs by Dalton that a banker in West Texas who had died was said to be Jesse James. That West Texas Banker would be Henry Ford whom Dalton would also write about in a book called, "Jesse James and the Lost Cause." More recently Dalton wrote, a fellow popped up claiming to be Jesse! How the heck do they get away with that, loco weed or what? Explained Dalton. Was that not the pot calling the kettle black?

Dalton says, "Jesse James was killed by Bob Ford on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, 1882, in St. Joseph, Mo., there were too many people who knew him well and came to identify him for there to be any possible doubt, so that is that.

So there you have it. Frank James who was known as J. Frank Dalton, adding the J in front of his name after the Crittenden Memoirs was written, says Jesse James did die in 1882.

To quote Frank Dalton one last time: "No difference HOW I know, that I DO KNOW is sufficient.

In 1948, this same Frank Dalton now with the J in front of his name revealed to the world that he was really Jesse James. A new pamphlet written by Frank C Hall and Lindsay H Whitten "Jesse James Rides Again," would shed light on the J Frank Dalton story giving Dalton claim to fame.

J Frank Dalton picked the time to come out with the death of another Jesse James imposter by the name of John James who recently died in an Arkansas State Mental Hospital in 1947. John James had been touring with Rev. Robert E Highley out in California for years as Jesse James. Many years would come to pass before I would realize that Rev.Highley and J Frank Dalton knew one another and that they would play a role in each other's life.

Rev. Robert E Highley I would discover was the grandson of Louis Porter Highley married Mary Jane Brookings daughter of Abraham and Martha Patsey Poor. Robert E Highley's father was Edward Louis "Eddie" Highley.

Not much is known about Mary Jane Brookings and how she is the daughter of Abraham and Martha Patsey Poor.

Note: Jesse James book says "Brooking". See "Stray Leaves: A James Family in America Since 1650," at <http://www.ericjames.org/html/fam/fam44585.htm>

The story of Jesse Woodson James would change once J Frank Dalton came on the scene. A new character would be added to the cast. A stand in by the name of Charlie Bigelow would become the man killed in the place of Jesse James that fateful day of April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1882.

Over the next couple of years Dalton would create a great sensation with the press. He made an attempt to have his name legally changed to "Jesse James," in the courts at Union, Missouri in March 1950. It backfired on him.

He hooked up with Lester Dill at Meramec Caverns in Stanton, Missouri posing as the famous outlaw "Jesse James." By September of 1951 Lester Dill sent Dalton on his way to Austin, Texas to the home of Ola Everhard. J Frank Dalton soon found himself abandoned by his promoters. J Frank Dalton would die in Texas on August 15, 1951 in the care of Orvus Lee Howk aka Jesse James III.

You would think the J Frank Dalton Story would die back in 1951, but it didn't.

In 1953, Phyllis Argall wrote a small book, 28 pages long titled, "The Truth About Jesse James."

In 1961 Henry J Walker would write a book titled, "Jesse James, The Outlaw." Walker would write a story that would have many people wondering about this mystical character known as J Frank Dalton aka Jesse James. Walker would give detail in his book a brief account of Dalton's activities from 1948 until his death. Walker include many affidavits in his book but one in particular was that of John Trammell which Carl Breiham tells was given as a bribe by one of Dalton's many promoters.

Carl Breihan would write a letter dated April 4, 1950 to the State Of Texas Confederate Penions Fund Division of Austin, Texas in which he wrote:

Gentleman,

For some time now I have been endeavoring to compile enough data to present to J Frank Dalton, who claims to be the real Jesse James that will prove him to be what I think he is... a fraud. Would it be possible to obtain a photo-static copy of L.L. Gamble's affidavit on March 10, 1947, wherein he states this Dalton assisted in the evacuation of his family from the Jenkin's Ferry battleground? This would help us well as any other records you may have on this Dalton. Perhaps you have a photo on hand that I could use.

I have learned that this Dalton is a member of the Daltons of Arkansas, and was supposed to have used the sobriquet of "Arkansas Tom", and also that of Roy Daugherty of Dalton Doolin fame, is this same Dalton. Some claim this Dalton is a member of the outlaw band of Dalton's of Coffeyville, Kansas bank robbery fame. But I am not sure of this yet. If I can establish his identity as that of the Arkansas Dalton then it will put an end to the other supposition. It is also reported that this Dalton's stepfather was named Mr. Parsons, and that he was a brother of Andy Parsons, living somewhere in Oklahoma. At any rate, any information you may render to assist me in this matter will be more than appreciated, I can assure you.

Thanks and kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

Carl W. Breihan

Later Carl Breihan would list J Frank Dalton among the list of Quantrill's Raiders.

May I also make a note that the name Parson can be found in connection with the diary of James L Courtney.

Many of Dalton's accounts can be blown out of the water. For instance, the Gads Hill Train Robbery. Dalton claims the posse trailed the gang to Meramec Cavern. The posse never caught up with the gang who headed west not north following the 1874 hold-up. Henry J Walker got taken into Dalton's fantasy world of Jesse James. He became fascinated by the tales of Dalton that in Walker's mind at the time, would make the best sellers list.

<sup>1</sup> [The Crittenden Memoirs \(comp. by H. H. Crittenden, 1936\).](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Truth about Jesse James By Phillis Argall Published 1953 by Lester B Dill and Rudy Turilli Sullivan, Missouri](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Jesse James "The Outlaw" by Henry J Walker Published 1961 by Henry J Walker](#)

Then there was "Jesse James and the Lost Cause," by Jesse Lee James III aka Orvus Lee Howk. His book appeared in 1961. Jesse James III would put a new spin on the Dalton story that other writers of the time have not embellished on. The so called Confederate Underground. The plotting of a second Civil War was to be led by none other than Jesse James himself. The Grand Ole Ophry in Nashville, Tennessee would serve as headquarters for this secret organization that built a network of secret tunnels under such cities as St. Louis, Nashville, Kansas City, St. Joseph and Lawrence Kansas without the knowledge of local authorities.

I believe that J Frank Dalton was a part of the KGC organization and that he did know Frank and Jesse James. While in Texas Dalton filed a letter with the state of Texas to Mr. George Sheppard dated June 7, 1847.

Dear Sir.

Please tell me how many ex-confederate soldiers are now on the Pension Rolls of Texas and oblige.

Signed: John Dalton

Note: This letter was written by Dalton when he was living at the residence of Ola Everhard in Austin, Texas.

George Sheppard writes back:

Dear sir:

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of June 7 and wish to advise that on May 31, 1847 there were 13 Confederate Veterans receiving pension payments from the State of Texas.

Signed: George Sheppard

For some reason or another, J. Frank Dalton needed to know who those last remaining 13 Confederate Veterans were.

<sup>1</sup>Jesse James and the Lost Cause by Jesse Lee James

Twenty years of researching Dalton, good leads, bad leads, I always found myself back at square one and to this day, I still don't know Dalton's true identity. One thing I do know for sure, all the key players in the Dalton story fit into the story of James Lafayette Courtney.

J Frank Dalton will always remain a mystery to me, but no research has captured my attention like that of James L Courtney, who I strongly suspect to be "The Jesse Woodson James of Clay County, Missouri." I may be wrong to assume so, but regardless of if he is or if he isn't, "James L Courtney's" family, without a shadow of a doubt has ties to William and Mary Hines James of the famous outlaw brothers, "Frank and Jesse James."

When I first met Betty Duke, I must admit that I was skeptical of her claim. I read her book "Jesse James Lived and Died In Texas" but at the time, I wasn't picking up what the diary was telling me. It was as if I was reading this diary of the day to day life of a farmer in Blevins, Texas back in 1871. When it did start to sink in it hit me like a ton of bricks. Those names in that diary were the mysteries that lie before me.

Anderson, Austin, Baker, Bancrof, Bell, Blackwell, Bloomfield, Bolton, Brewer, Bull, Cage, Canterbury, Campbell, Clark, Coal, Cox, Crawfield, Crow, Cunningham, Davis, Densmore, Drake, Edwards, Erven, Estep, Gallaway, Gardner, Gipson, George, Gordon, Griggs, Hatter, Hays, Hugh, Huse, Hunt, Jackson, Mixen, Moore, Morgan, Morrison, Nolan, Painter, Powels, Patterson, Reed, Roberts, Robinson, Ross, Singleton, Stewart, Smith, Stone, Taylor, Vestal, Walls, Walker, Williams, Wilkerson, White This is a list of many of the names in the diary.

List of some of the men who rode with Quantrill:

Anderson, Austin, Baker, Bell, Broomfield, Campbell, Cox, Caldwell, Clark Cravens, Crawford, Crow, Cunningham, Davis, Devers, Edwards, Ervin, Evans, George, Gipson, Gordon, Gregg, Hall, Hardin, Harris, Hunt, Hays, Hudspeth, Hulse, Jackson, Maxwell, Morgan, Morris, Noland, Patterson, Reed, Roberts, Ross, Scott, Southerland, Stewart, Smith, Sunderland, Stone, Taylor, Thrailkill, Tucker, Vestal Walker, Williams, Wilkerson, White.

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<sup>5</sup> Jesse James Lived and Died in Texas by Betty Dorsett Duke © 1998 Eakin Press

What is being shown here are names James Lafayette Courtney associated with in his diary which seems odd that many of the last names in the diary appear with some of the last names on Quantrill's list of raiders? This is not to say that they are the same men but what are the odds of so many of the names in James L Courtney's diary that appear on the list of Quantrill's Raiders.

Andrew Barbee the hidden key to the mystery

Andrew Barbee of Stafford County, Virginia is the first verified ancestor of the Barbee Family of "Oakland," Danville Kentucky.

Andrew Barbee died in Stafford County before September 11, 1699.

Following Andrew's death in 1699, Sarah Barbee had married Thomas James.

When I first started my research on the Barbee family, I didn't understand why she married Thomas James as soon as she did. Was it pre-arranged?

The Andrew Barbee who married Sarah Elizabeth Mason is not to be confused with the Andrew Barbee, born in 1767 who married Rebecca Margaret Bradford. This Andrew Barbee is the son of John Barbee and Elizabeth Welch.

Rebecca Margaret Bradford is the daughter of John 'Old Wisdom' Bradford of Fauquier County, Virginia and Elizabeth 'Eliza' James. Rebecca Bradford married the grandson of Andrew Barbee and Sarah Mason.

Elizabeth 'Eliza' Bradford who married Andrew Barbee is the daughter of John James and Diana Allen.

Diana Allen is the daughter of William Allen and Margaret Withers.

John James, father of Elizabeth 'Eliza' James is the son of Thomas James and Sarah E. Mason. Elizabeth 'Eliza' James was the half sister of Thomas Barbee, son of Andrew Barbee.

As anyone can see, the James Lafayette Courtney line intermingles with that of the Thomas James line. There is a lot of truth and fact in Mrs. Dukes story and the genealogy backs up what she has been saying all this time. When you grow up hearing the stories, at one point and time in your life, you have to start putting the pieces of the puzzle together. Mrs. Duke took a chance with her first book in trying to get the truth out but found herself battling her own Civil War of non-believers. There were those who just wanted her to shut up and others who set out to destroy her claim. Mrs. Duke was determined to continue her struggle with the truth. It took some years to pull it all together, and I have to admit, if she hadn't mentioned the name Barbee, James L Courtney would remain a mystery to this day.

A year ago, I couldn't have told anyone how James Lafayette Courtney fit into the Jesse James Saga. He was just a name back then. It's come the time to set the History of the Mystery straight. Working with Mrs. Duke on her compelling new book was like opening

a Christmas present everyday. For weeks on end, new evidence would turn up. New leads and names associated with research by other researchers, which would all fit into the James L Courtney puzzle. Names such as Mary Plina James, Calvin James, J Frank Dalton, Solomon Bedford Stickland, The Laffoon Family, Sheriff Timberlake, Daniel Askew, Governor Crittenden the list was endless. The mystery all started to unfold before our eyes.

When writing the genealogy chapter the information just seemed to pour out from all directions as if we were being led by some kind of cosmic force.

It's important that we view the story of Jesse Woodson James from outside the box as well as inside the box.

Come on people, let's wake up and smell the cover-up!

To think inside the box means accepting things as they are. In-the-box thinkers might find it difficult to recognize the possibility of what lies ahead of the facts. An idea is an idea. A solution is a solution. In fact, they can be quite pigheaded when it comes to valuing an idea. They rarely invest time to travel outside the box to see if there is more to the story, therefore putting history on hold till someone from outside of the box shows them the way. More importantly, in-the-box thinkers are skillful at killing the story as history left it.

Out-of-the box thinking requires openness to new ways of seeing the world and a willingness to explore. Out-of-the box thinkers know that new ideas need nurturing and support. They also know that having an idea is good but acting on it is more important. Results are what counts. Once you go outside the box, all the puzzle pieces start to fit together. What seemed impossible becomes possible.

To quote Phil Stewart, a former research historian for the Jesse James Farm in Kearney, Missouri, "The lives of Frank and Jesse James are mixed with as many rumors and speculations as it is facts." When I stumbled across the connections you will read about in this part of the chapter "Thinking Outside The Box," I thought I was the first to make the discovery of some hidden agenda involving the law and the family of Jesse Woodson James. Mrs. Duke scanned me an article by Phil Stewart and to my surprise his article that first appeared in "The Friends Of The James Farm Journal," spring 1999, contained some of the research I had recently discovered. Although Mr. Stewart covered a small part of my research, I have to wonder why those searching the family of Jesse James did not make the connections. Mr. Stewart's article laid out the relationship of those involved with the law and how they seemed to be kin to the James family. It is quite obvious that this was the greatest cover up in American History.

Mr. Stewart was so right when he said, "We have to allow for a certain amount of investigative 'guess work' in order to form a more complete picture of these famous outlaws. We take the known information; piece it together like a jigsaw puzzle, then fill in the missing pieces with some well-educated and informed speculation. That's fine as

long as it is identified and considered as much. It is also common for a small bit of factual information to produce all sorts of possibilities.”

After extensive research on the family of Jesse James, I would soon discover how the Frank and Jesse James family ties to the Governor, the Sheriff, Neighbors, those who were said to be friends of the James family, many turned out to be related. The Clay County Courtney's were related to the Reuben Samuel family. Reuben and Zerelda Cole James, Sims, Samuel's, daughter Sarah Samuel would marry a man by the name of William A Nicholson of Clay County. William Nicholson was the son of James C Nicholson and Mary Brockman of Garrard Co. Kentucky. James C Nicholson was the son of Arthur M Nicholson and Lucinda Courtney who was the daughter of John Courtney and Lucy Johnston and sister of Archibald Clinton Courtney. Connecting the Clay County Courtney family, although in-laws, to Zerelda Cole and Reuben Samuels daughter, Sarah Samuel.

Mr. Philip Stewart has done some great research covering some of the relations to Jesse James but I have discovered many more. “Mr. Stewart uncovers in his article spring of 1999, a story about Deputy John S Thomason who was attempting to capture the James boys. A few days after the robbery and murder at Gallatin, two men from Daviess County arrived at Liberty with hopes of catching the James brothers. They would enlist the help of Deputy John S Thomason along with his son Oscar, set out for the Samuel Farm near Kearney. Upon their arrival, the two Gallatin men took positions in the woods north of the house while the Thomason's simply rode up to the front porch.

Suddenly, black servant boys ran past them and to the barn where he threw open the doors. Frank and Jesse, already mounted on fine horses, bolted from the barn at a dead run. A few shots were fired at the brothers as their mounts easily jumped the barnyard fence. The Thomason's and the men from Daviess County quickly mounted to take chase, but Thomason's horse was the only one who would, or could, take the fence. The others had to stop and remove a top rail as Thomason and the two James's raced toward the top of the hill. The Deputy must have been on a fine horse himself, because he was beginning to gain on the outlaws when he decided to dismount to take a careful aim. As he fired, and missed... his horse jerked free and ran at top speed to catch the other horses being ridden by Frank and Jesse. As the riderless horse was about to catch up with the others, one of the brothers (probably Jesse) reached out and shot the horse dead in its tracks.

The two outlaws made their escape while Thomason was forced to return and borrow another horse from the mother of the men he was trying to capture. “

I would like to add that Zerelda Samuels was not the kind of woman that would hand over one of her own horses to the law to aid in capturing her own sons. Zerelda was protective of her sons and a woman of her means would be the last person anyone in Clay County or any other county would want to have to deal with.

Mr. Phil Stewart fills in a few little details for us that might explain John S Thomason's behavior for that time period concerning the 1869 attempt to capture Frank and Jesse by the local law enforcement officials.

“First of all, Mr. Stewart writes, why was Deputy Thomason selected to accompany the Daviess County duo? Would the Sheriff of Clay County have been too busy to assist in the capture of at least one who was capture of at least one who was suspected as a murderer and bank robber? What could he have been doing that was more important than that? If you were going out with two men whom you did not know, trying to catch a couple of wanted men, wouldn't you take more of your own men? And would you take your son? Many of the older biographies on Jesse James described Oscar was born in 1848, which made him 21 years old at the time of the incident. But still, who would willfully subject their son to the possibility of gunfire.” Mr. Stewart brings up some very valid points here. And the only logical answer would be, “Blood Tells The Tale.” Family takes care of their own.

“The answer to some of the questions, according to Mr. Stewart's finds, was the fact that Thomason was not really worried about a confrontation with Frank and Jesse, because Deputy John S Thomason and the James boys were related, at least by marriage. The family connection is really not even that obscure. Frank and Jesse's grandmother, Sarah Cole (Zerelda's mother) had remarried a few years after the death of her first husband. She married Robert Thomason, who became Zerelda's stepfather. Robert and Sarah Thomason moved to Clay County where they were joined in the years that followed by not only the newlyweds, Robert and Zerelda James, but by several of Thomason's relatives. Among the Thomason clan were two of Robert's younger brothers. William Thomason and his wife Susan lived near Greenville, just east of what would become the James/Samuel farm and raised several children, including John, who was born in 1818. This would make Frank and Jesse's step-grandfather the uncle of Deputy John S Thomason. John Thomason and Jesse James were second cousins by marriage. These implications may be totally unfair to Mr. Thomason and his dedication to his job, but it sure makes you wonder how hard he was really trying to catch the James boys. The families knew each other, they lived only a few miles from one another, they went to the same church, and most of them would be buried in the same country graveyard. Oscar was less than two years younger than Jesse, and the two had more than likely spent some time together. The connection also answers a few of the questions. If the intent was to afford Frank and Jesse an opportunity to escape; a larger posse would have just gotten in the way. It would also explain why Thomason and his son elected to ride right up to the front door. Reports of the incident stated that several shots were fired; from both sides, yet the only casualty was Thomason's horse. Perhaps Jesse felt that killing Thomason's horse and ending the chase would be a lot better for family relations than killing Thomason.”

“The incident would not be the last where Thomason was connected with Frank and Jesse. When Pinkerton Detective James Whicher arrived in Liberty on March 10, 1874, who did he contact and brief on his plan? The current Sheriff George Patton and the former Sheriff, O.P. Moss. Moss had been the first to hire Thomason as a Deputy. Whicher had hoped to gain a job as a hired hand from Zerelda herself so he could keep an eye out on her sons. He was warned that the plan would never work and that he would probably not even get to the farm before being killed. The warning proved accurate, for his bullet riddled body was found the next day in Jackson County, just across the river from Clay.”

I did some checking on Sheriff O. P. Moss. Oliver Perry Moss, according to Rootsweb, was the son of James Winn Moss and Mary Woodson. Oliver died June 7, 1881 in Missouri. One year before the death of Jesse James. Oliver's sister Elizabeth Moss married John J Crittenden, uncle of Thomas T Crittenden who was the Governor of Missouri at the time of the murder of someone said to be Jesse Woodson James. Elizabeth Woodson's line connects back to Robert Sallee James and Zerelda Cole. Mr. Stewart was on the right track that should have uncovered more than a handful of people who could be traced back to the James family one way or the other. Mr. Stewart reveals more connections to the Thomason line. "Oscar Thomason picked up the law enforcement torch after his father retired and was a constable for Fishing River Township in Clay County from 1878 till 1884. Fishing River Township was, and is, directly adjacent to the James Farm. Although the office of constable was a minor one in the law enforcement field, it was still an official position and there is no known documentation that Oscar Thomason ever participated in an official attempt to capture Frank and Jesse James." "The James brothers had other, though less significant connections with the law in Clay County, during the 1870's and 1880's. From 1872 to 1874, the Sheriff was one George E Patton. Sheriff Patton had a brother named Thomas who, on October 28, 1860, married Sarah Elizabeth Thomason. Sarah was Zerelda Samuel's half-sister. Jesse's Aunt Sarah was now the sister-in-law of the new Sheriff Patton. Pretty Handy, don't you think? "

The law officer most associated with Frank and Jesse was of course, Sheriff James H Timberlake. Sheriff James H Timberlake, who is credited (or blamed, depending upon who's perspective) with helping to bring an end to Jesse James and the James Gang. But even this dedicated officer had a family connection, and again it was through the Thomason's. James Timberlake's wife, Elizabeth, was the daughter of Grafton Thomason and the niece of Robert Thomason who was also the stepfather of Zerelda James Samuel. Timberlake's wife was Jesse's step-second cousin. Although this is a remote connection, it sure must have made for some interesting discussions around the Thomason family dinner tables."

Blood is thicker than water, it would appear by all indications that Frank and Jesse James were protected by many individuals, both relatives and law enforcement officers and the government which makes one have to ask, "Who was the man shot and killed in Missouri back in 1882?"

This brings me to the next round of little tidbits of information I refer to as "Thinking Outside the box?"

One hundred and twenty three years has come to pass since Bob Ford shot and killed Jesse Woodson James on that fatal 3<sup>rd</sup> day back in April of 1882. For one hundred and twenty three years, researchers, authors and journalists dared not to step outside the box for the truth until Betty Dorsett Duke took it upon herself to do so. For years on end, no one seemed to make the family connections of all those involved with the death of someone who would be passed off as the dead outlaw, Jesse Woodson James.

Staying inside the box is to believe that Jesse Woodson James died on April 3, 1882 and that all those involved were not a part of the cover up. Going outside the box reveals that Jesse Woodson James did not die as history states and that those involved were a part of the plot to cover up the greatest hoax ever pulled in American History. As long as the cover up stayed inside the box, there was no threat of the truth ever being found out. All those involved in the cover up would be long dead and gone. It is now safe to venture outside the box, as this chapter will tell the tale that no other researchers have dared to reveal. The family ties of those involved are in the hidden agenda that would take years to solve.

#### Inside The Box:

Daniel Askew: Many historians considered Daniel H Askew a whistle blower on the James Gang. Allan Pinkerton placed one of his agents, Jack Ladd at Daniel Askew's farm in an attempt to spy on the Samuel Farm and the coming and goings of the James Gang. Ladd spent one year on Daniel Askew's farm and not even the James's suspected he was a Pinkerton man. Ladd worked for Askew as a hired hand. Ladd was in the perfect situation to spy on the Samuels household and could report on the arrivals and departures of Frank and Jesse to Pinkerton.

The Life, Times and Treacherous Death of Jesse James by Frank Triplett pg. 106-108 Triplett states in his book that after the shooting of Daniel Askew, Frank and Jesse both said: "If I had known or very strongly believed that it was he who led the party to my mother's, I would have killed him in a moment; but I never believed he could be such a fool, so I laid all of that work on to Ladd, his hired man."

#### Outside The Box:

Daniel Askew married Adeline Harris, daughter of James Harris and Nancy Groomer. Nancy Groomer is the daughter of William Groomer and Elizabeth Burton. Nancy Groomer's brother, Garrett Montgomery Groomer married Sarah Sally Pence, daughter of Adam Pence and Anna Elizabeth Snell. Adam Pence is the father of William Pence who married Denita Estes and Robert 'Bob' Snell Pence who married Margaret's sister, Louisa Maret, daughter of Alvah Maret and Permelia Hubbard. Margaret's sister Louisa Maret married Jesse Richard Cole, brother of Zerelda Cole James Sims Samuels. Another daughter of Garrett Montgomery Groomer's was Sarah Sally Pence. She married James Willis Corum. James's brother Alfred Corum married Mary Ann 'Sis' Murkins. Alfred was a member of William C Quantrill's Guerrill's as in the border wars between Kansas and Missouri before and during the Civil War.

I find it hard to believe that Jack Ladd lived on the Askew farm and wasn't aware Askew's connections to the Pence family who also had ties into the James and Samuel Family. Not to mention he was dealing with men who rode with Quantrill.

Liberty Tribune  
January 29, 1875

Andrew Askew had been one of the parties of neighbors who came to assist and provide medical treatment for the Samuel Family on the night of the raid. Daniel Askew was the brother-in-law of Garrett Montgomery Groomer Sr. Garrett's uncle Jacob Frederick Groomer Jr. sold land in Kentucky in May 1818. Jacob then settled in Clay County, Missouri. There he and his brother Isaac built a log cabin, which later was sold to Rev. Robert Sallee James. This would be the cabin where the James children were born. The old home is now a Jesse James Museum.

So one could only draw the conclusion that Daniel Askew was murdered to keep from talking about who was really involved in the raid on the Samuel Farm that cold morning of January 26, 1875.

#### Inside The Box:

Thomas T Crittenden

The Life, Times and Treacherous

Death Of Jesse James

By Frank Triplett

With Notes by Joseph Snell

Some stories in Missouri during 1882 claimed that Governor Crittenden helped arrange Jesse's assassination and that knowledge of the arrangement had leaked out prior to Ford's deed.

Apparently, Missouri Governor Thomas T Crittenden did not become aware of Triplett's book for several months after its publication. When the Governor found out about the book, he caused all copies he could lay his hand on to be destroyed. It is said in Triplett's book that it is thought Frank James joined forces with Governor Thomas T Crittenden to destroy the books. What was in the book at the time that Frank James and Governor Crittenden didn't want made public? The odd thing I find about the destruction of the books is the length of time that Thomas T Crittenden took to discover the book had already been out and had sold at least 4,500 copies by the time he made the decision to destroy the books. Frank James had to of known his mother and sister-in-laws involvement with the book Mr. Triplett was writing.

#### Outside The Box

Thomas T Crittenden can be linked to the James Family of Clay County Missouri through his father's brother, John Jordan Crittenden who married into the Woodson, Moss, Royal, Tarleton, Ferris, Mimms and Poor line. Thomas Theodore Crittenden is the son of Henry Crittenden. Henry's father was Major John Crittenden who married Alice Obedience Turpin. Alice is the daughter of Lt. Colonel Thomas Turpin and Mary Jefferson (Aunt of President Thomas Jefferson).

Mary Jefferson, aunt of President Thomas Jefferson is the daughter of Thomas Jefferson Jr. and Mary Field. John Jordan Crittenden is the uncle of Thomas Theodore Crittenden and it is through John Jordan Crittenden marriage to Elizabeth Moss that ties the Crittenden family to the James family of Clay County, Missouri.

Elizabeth Moss is the daughter of Dr. James Wayne Moss and Mary Woodson. It is her mothers Woodson Line that connects the Crittenden's to the James, Mimms, Poor families.

### Inside The Box

#### The Pence Brothers

Of the entire Pence's, the most written about were Bud and Donnie. The reason? Because they once rode with the James gang! These two Clay County natives grew up as neighbors of Frank and Jesse James, with the Pence farm being located across the highway, which runs past the James farm. Some James historians say the Pence's and James were related, but from the known genealogies of the two families, no connection can be found. As related in a news story, the connection may have been through the James' stepfather, Dr. Reuben Samuel.

However, T. William Samuels Jr., a cousin of the wives of Bud and Donnie, says his extensive research of the Samuels family shows no connection between the Samuels family of Nelson County and Reuben Samuel. But, he says, he has a letter from Frank James to the wife of Donnie Pence, which confirms that when Quantrill's raiders moved from Missouri into Kentucky in January of 1865, they went directly to the home of Wilson Samuels, the father of both Donnie and Bud's wives-to-be.

### Outside The Box

The Pence families of Clay County Missouri are related to F. Archibald Clinton Courtney and Ely Ann Estes. Ely Ann Estes is the sister of Dinita Estes who married William Henry Pence. Archibald Clinton Courtney would have been a brother-in-law to the children of Adam Pence and Elizabeth Anna Snell. Adam Pence was County Judge in California for two years during the Gold Rush. It would appear that Robert Sallee James had more than a brother out in California when he went to preach the Gospel during the 1850 Gold Rush.

A.C. Courtney was father-in-law to America Lurania Pence who married his son, Clinton Courtney. Another daughter of his, Annie Jane Lucinda Courtney married John M Maret, son of Alvah Maret and Permelia Hubbard. Making the connection of A.C. Courtney to the Maret-James family. A.C. Courtney's brother-in-law Robert Snell "Bob" Pence married Margaret Elizabeth Maret, daughter of Alvah Maret and Elizabeth Snell. Margaret Elizabeth Maret is the sister of Louisa G Maret who married Jesse Richard Cole, brother of Zerelda Cole, James, Sims, Samuel.

Another sister-in-law of A.C. Courtney's was Sarah "Sally" Pence who married 1. James Willis Corum 2. Garrett Montgomery Groomer. Garrett Montgomery's sister, Mary Elizabeth Groomer was the mother-in-law of Daniel Askew, who married her daughter Adeline "Addie" Harris.

Garrett Montgomery Groomer's brother, Jacob F Groomer would build the log cabin which would later be sold to Reverend Robert Sallee James which would become the JESSE JAMES MUSEUM and has been moved to and renovated in St. Joseph, Mo. (Patee House) 1977.

### Inside The Box

Jesse James Pall Bearers 1882

The Coffin is next raised from its support by the pallbearers and gently carried to the spring wagon which is to act as hearse, and is drawn thence to the church in the older portion of the town, the site of old Centerville. In this church had Jesse James been converted in 1866, and many a fervent prayer of his had gone up from before its humble altar.

Pall bearers for Jesse James in 1882 were John R Timberlake, James F Reed, Charley H Scott, Ben Flanders, James B Henderson and James H Ford.<sup>2</sup>

Who were these men and why would Zerelda permit Timberlake and a man named Ford carry her son to his grave. Ben Flanders would surprise me as well. It was Jesse who shot Ike Flanders for his inheritance, so it was reported.

#### Outside The Box

When I checked out the pallbearers at the funeral of Jesse James in 1882, the one I found of interest was James French Reed born April 11, 1852 in Liberty County, Missouri who was a Circuit Clerk. James French Reed was the son of Allen Griegsby Reed and Missouri America Bevins. James married Fannie G Wymore. The name Wymore rings a bell because it was George C (Jolly) Wymore that was shot and killed during a bank robbery at Liberty Missouri involving the James boys. George C (Jolly) Wymore was the brother of Fannie G Wymore who married James French Reed.

Could this James French Reed be the same man known to be one of Jesse's pallbearer's at the James farm back in 1882? And if he were, one would have to wonder why the Uncle of George C Wymore would be one of the six pallbearers walking Jesse to his grave. Pallbearer J.F. Reed of Clay County Missouri could be someone other than James French Reed who married the sister of George C (Jolly) Wymore. Even if this turns out to not be true, it makes for an interesting story of those involved with Jesse Woodson James. As Robertus Love wrote: "We leave the mystery veiled."

#### A Loaded Question With Many Answers:

Mrs. Duke ask me what convinced me that Jesse James did not die as history reported him dying back in 1882. That was a question with many answers I told her. First of all, the fact that the incident occurred on a Monday at nine in the morning, two days after April Fools Day. Little does that have anything to do with him being shot, but one must keep in mind that the first death hoax of Jesse James occurred on Short Creek near Joplin, Missouri in 1879. A failed attempt by George Shephard and Jesse James, who plotted out the first death hoax with intentions of splitting the reward money, backfired when George couldn't present a body. Most of all, I find it hard to see Jesse letting his guard down by

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<sup>2</sup> *Stray Leaves, A James Family in America Since 1650, Eric James, www.ericjames.org Danville, Ky. 2004*

Visit STRAY LEAVES, A JAMES FAMILY IN AMERICA SINCE 1650 [www.ericjames.org](http://www.ericjames.org)  
Official web site for the family of Frank & Jesse James

taking his gun belt off and tossing it on the bed, which I feel is not in character with Jesse James.

Another interesting tidbit, which I found in Frank Triplett's book, "The Life and Tragic Death Of Jesse James" that has me convinced, was the letter written by Frank James on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1882. One day after the murder of his brother Jesse Woodson James. Frank writes this letter to make the statement that he will leave on the night of April 4, 1882 for parts unknown. Frank denies he and Jesse ever robbed a southerner. Says he and Jesse have a little revenge and he expects to have a little more. A message Frank writes in the letter dated April 4, 1882 makes me wonder who was really writing the letter. Frank writes: "Just think how many poor fathers were killed by the damned devils, and how they came in the field where I was plowing and took the lines off my horses and hung me to my own plow: but for Jesse, I would have died." Frank tells in the letter about joining Quantrill and at the time he joined up Quantrill's band was made up of thirty-two men. Frank says he has traveled all over since the war, where Jesse stayed close to home.

Another article I ran across was the newspaper article about Wood Hite, dispatched April 6, 1882. St. Louis. "The Body of Wood Hite Found Dead In The Woods." The body of Wood Hite, brother of Clarence Hite, now in the penitentiary for participation in the Winston Train Robbery, has been found near Richmond, and an inquest is now being held, it being said that Dick Little killed Hite, but it is believed that Bob Ford was also concerned in the murder. Hite was shot through the head and buried by Dick Little and Bob Ford.

Why did the body of Wood Hite turn up around the time Jesse was shot and killed? I have a theory about that, which I might be wrong, but one has to wonder if it could be possible. Did Wood Hite surface for the sole purpose to be used for burial at the James farm. Someone's body did lie in state, as Jesse Woodson James in 1882 but I have to wonder if it could be that of Jesse James. Was Frank James in on the plot to arrange to have Wood Hite's body buried at the James Farm and the body that was said to be Jesse James buried in a coffin on top of Wood Hite's body.

More interesting facts would surface about Wood Hite as our research would unravel another mystery.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Wood Hite leave many doors open as to what did happen back in 1882. Sometimes the passage of time is all a cold case – one that has gone unsolved for years – just needs to generate heat to get it open again.

The Wood Hite case has remained cold since the said killing December 4, 1881 to the day his body was discovered April 6, 1882 just 3 days after Bob Ford shot and killed Jesse James, a cousin of Wood Hite's.

Dick Liddel who was involved in the shooting of Wood Hite but did not shoot the bullet that killed him had this to say. I arrived at Mrs. Bolton's Sunday night Dec. 3, 1881. The next morning "I came down for breakfast and Wood Hite had come from Kentucky three or four days earlier. Bob Ford came down stairs a few minutes afterwards. When Wood first came in he spoke to me, and I told him I didn't want him to speak to me.

Then Wood accused me of stealing a hundred dollars at the divide in the Blue Cut Robbery. I called Wood a liar. Wood said he could prove his accusations by Mrs. Bolton

so I wanted him to prove it. Then he denied ever saying anything of the kind. I told him he did to say it. Then we drew our pistols.

We fired about the same time. Wood shot me through the right leg between the knee and the hip and I shot him through the right arm. Wood fired four more times at me and I five more times at him, and then I snapped another barrel at him. I drew my other pistol at him when he started falling.

Bob Ford fired one shot at Wood Hite. The wound that killed Hite was through the head. It struck him about two inches above the right eye and came out in front of and a little behind the left ear. Bob Ford claimed that his shot was the fatal blow that killed Wood. Wood lived about 15 to 20 minutes but did not speak.

We carried him upstairs that night on Dec. 4, 1881. Cap and Bob Ford dug a grave in the woods about ½ mile from the house and buried him. My leg was too sore to help. We did not use a coffin.

Weeks later, the body of Wood Hite would be found, wrapped in a filthy old horse blanket. Unwashed, clad in Woods blood stained clothing and wrapped in the stinking stable rag.

Dick Liddel would also confess: "On the night of Thursday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1881, Jesse James and Charles Ford came down to Mrs. Bolton's where I had been since being wounded, and tried to get me to go with them. They claimed they just come from Nebraska. I turned them down. I mistrusted Jesse wanted to kill me, so I left. This was on Saturday night, Dec. 31, 1881. Jesse and Charley left the next day for the Old ladies.

Dick Liddel confesses just five days prior to the death of Jesse James about the incident at Martha Bolton's house regarding the death of Wood Hite.

Does it not seem odd to the reader that Charley and Bob Ford were at the home of Jesse James on April 2, 1882? Which was a Sunday night and the fact that Jesse was killed by Bob Ford on a Monday morning between nine and ten in the morning. Wood Hite was at Martha Bolton's on a Sunday night and was killed on a Monday morning between the hours of nine and ten. Both Jesse and Wood were shot in the head by Bob Ford, both men ended up in the same morgue but killed four months apart? Jesse was murdered by Bob Ford April 3, 1882 on a Monday and Wood Hite was killed by Bob Ford on Monday December 4<sup>th</sup> 1881.

Robertus Love who wrote "The Rise and Fall of Jesse James," writes about letter signed, "Original Jesse James." There were those according to Love, who did not believe that the man lying on the wooden slab in Clay County was that of the famous outlaw Jesse Woodson James. A postal card turned up in the town of Kearney during the commotion of Jesse James being displayed in town. A postal card delivered to a city marshal, whom my all means, furnished new proof, but to the rest it was a ghastly joke. It was mailed in a Kansas town. The letter said, and I quote Robertus Love:

"I will not be buried in Carny next Sunday. I am not dead. I was not shot by Bobbie Ford. Tom Howard was shot by Bobbie Ford, but I wasn't there, so you can't bury me."

Robertus Love is stating this post card was sent during the time period that Jesse James was on display in 1882. Who really wrote that postcard and what were their intentions of doing so? If this card arrived in Kearney sometime after Jesse James was shot and killed, how did that person know what day Jesse was going to be buried on at the James Farm?

Which brings me to the 1902 Exhumation of Jesse Woodson James when his body was moved from the James farm to Mt. Olivet Cemetery? Why did they choose to go dig up his body at five in the morning in pouring down rain? Newspapers in 1902 carried a story of Jesse's exhumation, the title was, "His Bones Are Dust". The story said: "Only the clothes, hair and badly deteriorated skull, in pieces, was intact".

Robertus Love however, paints a different picture of the 1902 Exhumation of Jesse Woodson James. Jesse James was buried deep, Love said. Zerelda had the grave dug seven feet deep for fear that someone was going to steal her son's body. Which makes no difference, six-foot, seven foot, if someone was going to steal the body; they're going to steal it. The coffin that Zip Pollock and Zach Laffoon dug up that morning was a metal casket, which fell apart when they lifted it up. The top and sides of the metal casket came up leaving the bottom to fall back into the grave with the remains of Jesse James lying thereon. Love did not state if the remains were dust or not. The men stepped back down in the grave and lifted the casket to the top. The foot came up first, and from the other end the skull rolled off into the grave. Zack Laffoon picked up the skull and replaced it. As the coffin bottom was being turned around above the ground, the skull again fell off and dropped to the bottom of the grave. I have to wonder if they even saw the humor in this, that ole Jesse or who ever he was, were playing hard to get. Zip Pollock jumped down and placed the skull once more upon the old coffin. At that point, John Samuel picked up the skull and began to examine it. They were looking for the bullet hole, which was a clue it was the skull of Jesse James and most important, the gold fillings in the teeth. Which were there and verified to Jesse Edwards James that the marks from the bullet of the skull and the gold fillings proved to him that the body of Jesse James had never been stolen?

I have to wonder what made the family think it had been. This brings to mind the 1995 exhumation. How is it that they found a corpse intact in 1995, and if there was basically no body in 1902, why did Stars dig up a viewing glass in 1995. The coffin used in 1902 for reburial should not have had a viewing glass. Even more convincing Jesse James didn't die in 1882 was how they found the remains of Jesse James in 1995.

For family to have cared about their son enough to exhume and rebury him in 1902, I find it difficult to believe they cared very much for him. Whose idea was in 1902 to toss Jesse James back in his coffin up side down? The only conclusion to draw to that is someone else besides Jesse James was buried in 1902. But who was buried in 1902 remains the question? And what ever became of the gold fillings in the skull that was buried with the body in 1902 that was found by John Samuels and Jesse Edwards James? No mentions of the gold fillings were ever made of the 1995 exhumation.

Another example that had me wondering if Jesse James was the man shot and killed in Missouri on April 3, 1882, was a newspaper article I found in the St. John, New Brunswick, Canada Daily Sun dated April 6, 1882

“Jesse James Shot”

The veritable terror of the west at last meets his fate at the hands of two of his old pals.

The actual Jesse James was killed this morning at the corner of thirteenth and Lafayette Street at about 10 o'clock by two brothers named Charles and Robert Ford. Robert was in the Winston train robbery; Charles was in the Blue Cut Robbery.

What did the reporter of this article mean when he made the statement "The Actual Jesse James was killed?"

Page 285 of Frank Triplett's book, "The Life and Tragic Death of Jesse James" leaves us with another mysterious clue. Zerelda Samuel, mother of the famous outlaw Jesse James made the statement at her son's funeral, "Last week," she continued, "he (meaning Jesse) was at my house. He said to me when he was going away: "Mother, you may never see me again, but I am not as bad as they would make me out to be." In reality, was Jesse telling his mother of the plan of his departure that would take place the following week of April 3, 1882. With the assassination already planned out by the Ford Boys who would take credit for killing the most notorious outlaw in American history and the help of Law and Government officials. Did Zerelda pull off the greatest one act play along with her daughter-in-law to help convince the public that her son was indeed dead?

Another strange incident that occurred which I found on the same page of Triplett's book, was where Zerelda and Zee wanted the glass lid removed from the coffin. At first, Triplett said, it appeared that they wanted a lock of Jesse's hair, but what they really wanted was to see if Jesse was missing his arms and legs, and see if they had been substituted with wax ones. What did Zee and Zerelda know and why would they assume such an act had occurred? Sheriff Timberlake offered to go back to the farm to get a

larger screwdriver to open the glass lid, but all of a sudden the women calmed down and the body was committed to the grave in the yard. There had to be more to why they had to see inside that coffin that day.

The autopsy on Jesse James, [page 293 of Triplett's book], made by Dr. Catlett and Coroner Heddens uncovers some interesting facts. They find that the reports about the shooting were all wrong. They found that the bullet, that killed the man, did not go clear through the head. "The boys must have clubbed the man with their revolvers, after the ball went into the head, for the cut on the side of his head was made with the trigger of a revolver and not by the bullet.

Now my question to this statement is how did they find the time to club the man said to be Jesse James? Zee was in the next room and only steps away from where the shooting took place. As soon as she heard the shots, she would have been in the living room and would have to have witnessed the Ford boys whacking the man known as her husband in the head with the revolver. I have to say I don't think they had time to club Jesse in the head with the revolver if the gunshot killed him before he hit the floor.

Triplett states: "All the officers thought the bullet must have gone clear through his head into the wall or ceiling of the room. "It never went there at all, and they need not look for it. We have it all safe and sound, and took it out of his head. I will tell you now how it

was. When Jesse James was shot, he was partially turned away from the boys, and the ball went in sideways, at one side of the head, back of the right ear, and then lodged just under the skin behind the left, and that is where we found it. "The skull was badly shattered; more so than of any I have seen for years. It was torn to pieces, the bullet passing through the brain."

Too many writers of the time leave clues behind.

Triplett in his book ( pages 293-294 ) has the following:

" . . . Quite a sensation was caused in St. Joseph by the report that Dr. Catlett, superintendent of the lunatic asylum at St. Joseph, and Coroner Heddens had, during Monday night succeeding the killing, made a post mortem examination of the remains of the dead man, and ascertained much of interest. The fact had been kept a secret for some time, but Dr. Catlett admitted that the rumor was true, and that such an examination had been made. . . . [Dr. Catlett said]: 'The skull was badly shattered: more so than any I have seen for years. It was all torn to pieces, the bullet passing through the brain.'"

An account of this supposed autopsy appeared in the "Kansas City Daily Journal" ( April 7, 1882 issue ).

"The Life, Times and Treacherous Death of Jesse James" ) By Frank Triplett states there was a glass plate on the coffin, through which the corpse could be viewed. This is what **Triplett** says about it:

( from the Konecky & Konecky 1992 Reprint edition, pages 284-285 ):

[Scene at the Grave]: " . . . The coffin was placed upon chairs in the yard, and the lid was opened. . . . She [Mrs. James] clung to the coffin, bowing her head upon the glass. . . . Becoming calm, both Mrs. Samuel and Mrs. James wanted the glass lid removed. At first Mrs. James pretended that she wanted a lock of Jesse's hair, but it was finally developed that she had come to the conclusion that his arms and legs had been taken off, and wax ones substituted for them. Sheriff Timberlake, having no screw driver large enough to turn the screws, offered to go to a farm house and borrow one, but the women were finally satisfied, and the body was committed to the grave in the yard, while they stood and watched the fresh earth thrown upon the board box, seemingly inconsolable."

Note the term "board box" used here. The casket was reportedly made of "metallic imitation rosewood," not of actual metal.

In Jesse James Jr.'s description ( in his book published in 1899 ) of the 1902 disinterment at the James Farm, I don't recall him mentioning the glass plate which was screwed onto the top of the casket. I find this to be a rather odd omission on his part.

Ted P. Yeatman, in his "**Frank** and Jesse James - The Story Behind the Legend" ( 2000 ), on page 444, reprints part of the article "Jesse James' Brain" from the James Farm Journal, vol. 12, no. 1 ( April 1995 ). According to this article, Jesse James' brain was

removed and preserved in a glass jar during the night of the autopsy ( Monday, April 3, 1882 ).

Another clue about the real facts of the matter, along this same line of speculation, is provided by J. W. Buel in his book "The Border Bandits. An Authentic and Thrilling History of the Noted Outlaws, Jesse and **Frank** James, and their Bands of Highwaymen."

( in the 1994 Reprint edition, page 469 ):

" . . . Mrs. Samuels and Mrs. James being apprehensive of an attempt to resurrect the body, decided to bury it in a side yard of the Samuels residence and have the grave watched for at least a period of three months, until decomposition might make its removal for exhibition purposes impossible; after this period shall elapse the body will be disinterred and permanently buried in the cemetery adjoining Mt. Olivet Baptist church."

"Jesse James - Though Officially Dead Lived On for 65 Years" ( 1981 ): written by Rev. Robert E Highley

( from pages 34-35 ):

" . . . Meanwhile the 'forlorn mother'[Zerelda Samuel] had sat on a chair, down at the railroad station, and sympathetic people had come by to cheer her up and to toss money into her ready apron. When it had added up to five hundred dollars, she had enough to pay for embalming and a fine casket of 'enduring metal.' It was then that she was ready to identify the body and to show some vigilance in making sure that this same body was actually still in the wooden box used for shipment of the laden coffin to Kearney. ( There seemed good reason for some caution on her part. Someone had tried to buy the body from her so it could be put on display before gawking crowds in the eastern cities. One 'guesstimate' had been that P. T. Barnum would surely be willing to pay the possessor at least twenty-five thousand dollars for it. ) . . .

. . . It could not be said that the officially designated corpse of Jesse James had been hidden from the critical eyes of many hundreds of just-folks viewers. It also could not be said that any of them had an opportunity for a careful look at the exposed face in the casket; the line of viewers was 'hurried' past the glass-shielded bier."

Other facts surface:

Page 296 of Triplett's book. Triplet writes about the horses of Jesse James. Triplet states that the horses found in Jesse James's stable at the time of his death were not his horses, but were horses stolen by the Fords and brought there. If this was the case, why weren't horse theft charges added to their murder charge. And even stranger to the fact was that Jesse's horses were in the stables of his mother in Clay County. How handy was that? Why did the horses disappear out of Zerelda Samuels stable on the night of April 4<sup>th</sup>, the day succeeding the one on which Jesse James was killed. Frank James, who by the way

was said not to be in the Clay county area, for purposes that can readily be conceived, removed them.

Page 313 of Triplett's book. Jesse's present to Ford. "By a singular fatality Jesse James was killed with a pistol that had been his own. It was presented to Bob Ford by Jesse, but a few days before his death. In an affidavit printed in the Kansas City Times, May 6, 1882, Bob Ford stated the murder weapon was a .45 Colt's revolver, serial number 50432. I came across an article by Greg Hardesty of the Gun that Killed Jesse James to be auctioned. This gun was described as a Smith and Wesson, nickel finish on a single-action revolver, made around 1875 and was a .44 caliber pistol purportedly used to kill none other than the outlaw Jesse James. So if this gun, as a .44 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol went on the auction block in 2003 as the gun that killed the famous outlaw Jesse

James, what happened to the .45 Colt Revolver Bob Ford was said to have used and the same gun Bob Ford went on tour with after the death of Jesse James. Did Bob Ford lie about the gun used to kill Jesse James? Another thing I have to wonder about is why the gun was turned over to Bob Ford after the shooting. How did Bob Ford end up with the murder weapon? Even back then, the gun would have been of historic interest.

Sheriff Timberlake, whom I discovered was related to Frank and Jesse James, denied that Frank James was present at Jesse's funeral. So why was it so important to Sheriff Timberlake to cover up for Frank James? Two men who knew the outlaw personally saw Frank James in St. Joe, Missouri. Sheriff Timberlake claims he would not know Frank if he saw him. Timberlake's wife Elizabeth was the niece of Robert Thomason and Sarah Sallie Lindsey, mother of Zerelda Cole James. Zerelda Cole James would have been a cousin to the wife of Sheriff Timberlake.

Draw your own conclusion. So much evidence surrounding the death of Jesse Woodson James leaves the reader to question the facts. How did Frank Triplett write a book seven weeks after the death of Jesse James and get it to press so quickly? Why was it so important for Frank James and Governor Crittenden to put the book out of circulation? Triplett states: "Apparently, Missouri Governor Thomas T. Crittenden did not become aware of the book for several months after it's publication, but when he did, he caused all copies he could lay his hands on to be destroyed." Why did Zee James and Zerelda Samuel contribute stories to Triplett book? Letters signed by Mrs. James authorizing the edition and acknowledging assistance in its preparation along with both women signing a receipt for royalty advances, would disrupt the publication of Triplett's book when they denied that they were a party to such authorization and assistance. Questions are, why would Zee James and Zerelda be a part of a book written so soon after the death of their beloved Jesse.

Wright Howes states that Triplett's book was issued in three editions, the first in May of 1882. This would have put the book coming out one month after the death of Jesse James. The second edition was to come out between June and November, and the third in November.

Of the author Frank Triplett, little is known about the man whose book is as much a mystery as Jesse James himself. Personally I had to wonder if Triplett wasn't someone very close to the James family to have such an inside scoop as he did.

So when ask what makes me believe that Jesse James faked his death in 1882 is quite obvious. The Hidden Agenda in the death of Jesse James had been in front of our eyes all along. Stories buried over a hundred years waiting to be unearthed.