

Jesse W. James Handwriting Comparisons

© Betty Dorsett Duke August 2012

Pictured below are three pages from my great-grandfather's original 1871 diary, which is now part of my copyrighted (C) Betty Dorsett Duke Collection. He signed his diary "J. James" and "James L. Courtney". Jesse W. James was his real name and James L. Courtney was his alias.

He wrote the entire diary in pencil, just as he did in a six page letter he wrote to Dr. Reuben Samuel, his step-father. I wasn't aware of this letter until Michigander, Matt Hamlin, sent the following link to me:

http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4467782

The letter, along with its complete transcription, may also be viewed at this site:

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/Zeke1/messages?msg=926.13>

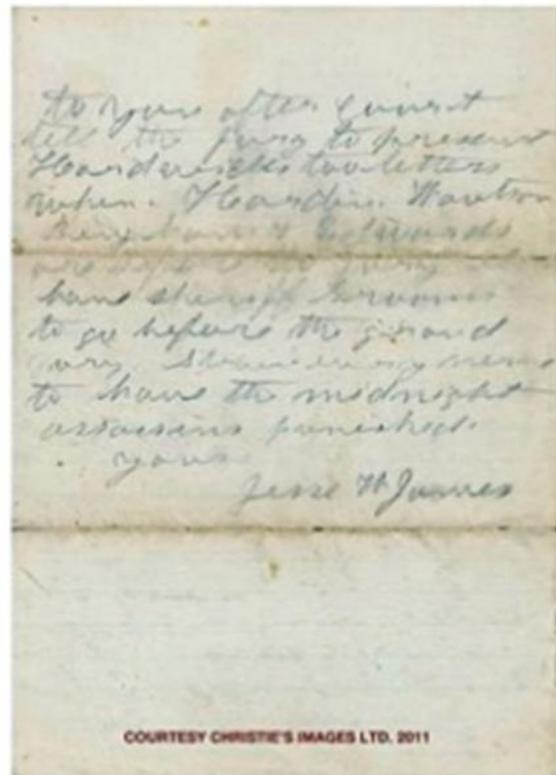
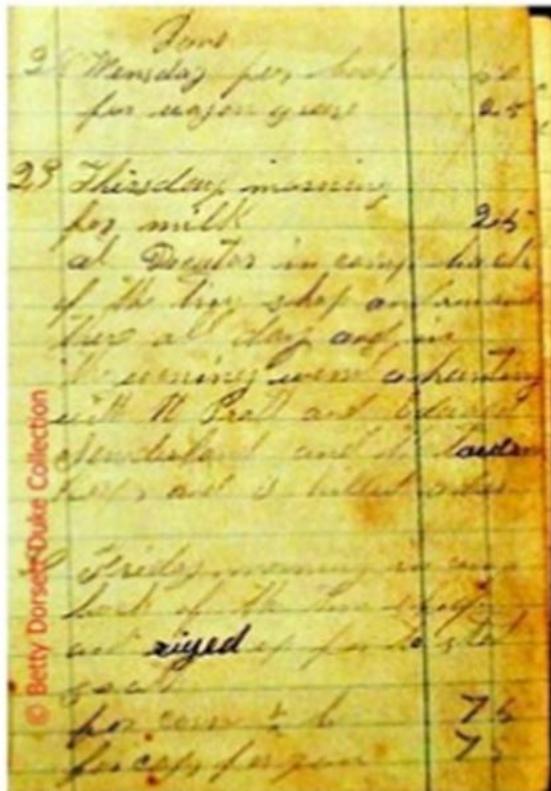
Both Jesse James and Dr. Reuben Samuel are pictured in the eBay photo of the James and Jackson families (with friends) at <http://www.jessejamesintexas.com/>.

Matt Hamlin pointed out that the T's in both samples are identical. The same applies for some of the other letters of the alphabet. While reading his diary I noticed that he sometimes made his J's fancy like this:



Jesse James AKA James L. Courtney signed his 1871 diary "J. James".

And other times he made his J's plain – like he did in his signature on the Christie's letter pictured on the right below. The slant, writing style, and spelling is also the same in both handwriting samples.



A page from Jesse W. James AKA James L. Courtney's original 1871 diary (June 28, 29, & 30) is on the left, and the last page of the six page letter signed Jesse W. James, which was auctioned by Christies for \$175, 000, is on the right. Transcription follows:

June

28 Wensday for book .50

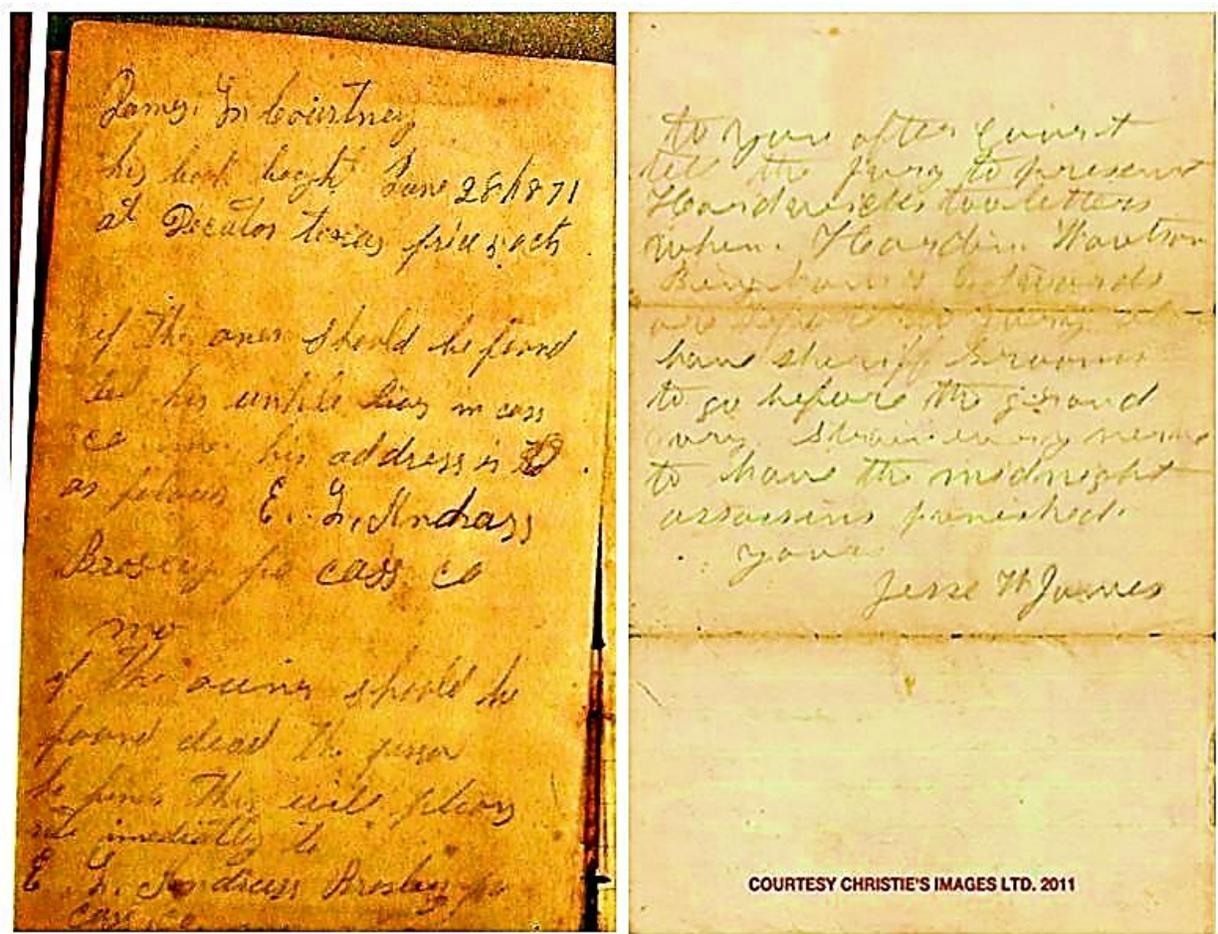
for wagon grease .25

29 Thursday morning

for milk .25

at Decatur in camp back of the tin shop and remained there all day and in the evening went
ahunting with H Pratt and Edward Sunderland and the tavern keep, and I killed a deer.

30 Friday morning in camp back of the tin shop and rized up for to start



Another page from Jesse W. James AKA James L. Courtney's original 1871 diary is pictured on the left. The last page of the letter auctioned by Christies is pictured on the right. Transcription follows:

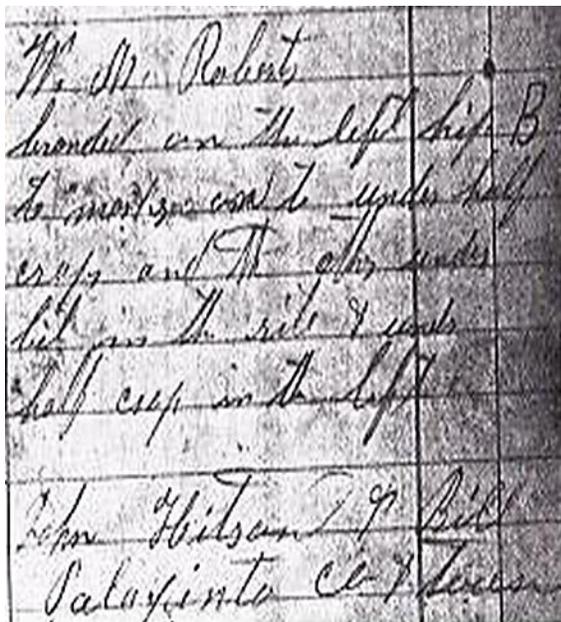
“James L. Courtney

his book bought June 28/ 1871

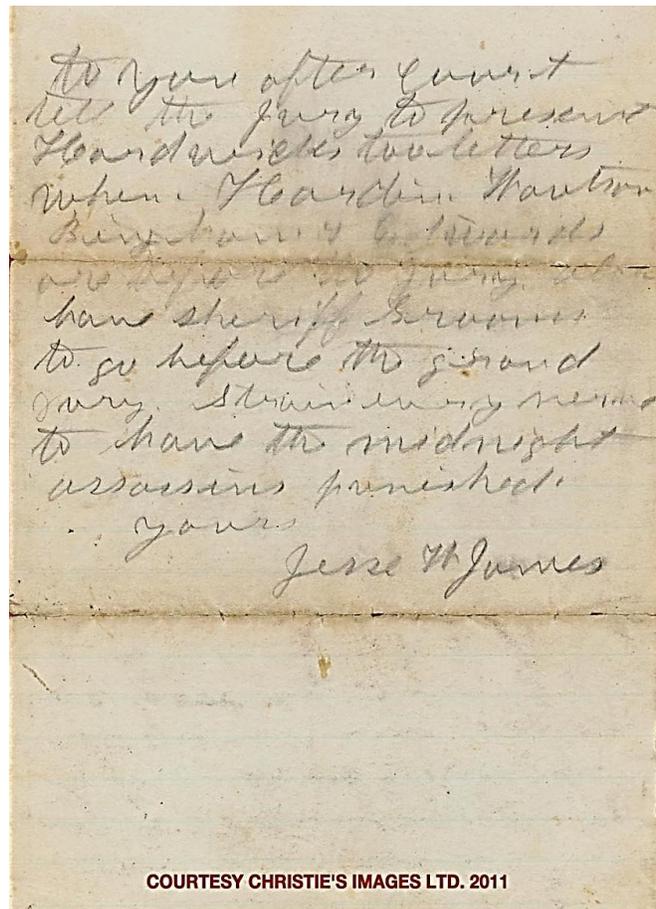
at Decatur Texas price 50 cts

if the oner should be found ded his uncle lives in cass co mo. his address is as folows E. L. Andrass Brosley po cass co mo

if the oner should be found dead the person he [maybe who?] finds this will please rite immediately to E. L. Andrass Brosley po cass co mo”



The Mr. Robert
 brandel on the left hip B
 to mark you can't under half
 crop and the other under
 left in the side & under
 half crop in the left
 John Wilson & Bill
 Saloy into C. & Texas



To you after court
 tell the jury to present
 Hardwick, two letters
 when Hardin Hanton
 Bingham & Co. records
 are before the jury. I
 have sheriff Brown
 to go before the grand
 jury. Strain my name
 to have the midnight
 assassins punished.
 yours
 Jesse W. James

COURTESY CHRISTIE'S IMAGES LTD. 2011

Another page (cropped) from Jesse W. James AKA James L. Courtney's original 1871 diary (scanned in black and white) is pictured above left. The same last page of the letter signed Jesse W. James (auctioned by Christie's) is pictured again above right for comparison purposes.

Transcription of the diary page follows:

“W. M. Roberts

branded on the left hip B

to [two?] marks [?] [illegible] [illegible] to under half crop

and the other under cut [?] in the rite & and [illegible] half crop in the left.

John Hitson & Bill [John & Bill Hittson]

Palapinto co & Teresa [?]”

For more information on E. L. Andruss and a robbery attributed to the James Gang in Coldwater, Brosley County, Missouri click on the following links:

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/Zeke1/messages?msg=926.26>

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/Zeke1/messages?msg=926.24>

More information about the Brosley, Cass Co., MO robberies - courtesy of Daniel Duke.

National Republican article:

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053573/1873-12-12/ed-1/seq-1/;words=county+Cass+Missouri?date1=1873&rows=20&searchType=basic&state=&date2=1873&proxtext=cass+county+missouri&y=15&x=15&dateFilterType=yearRange&index=1>

The State Journal article (Jefferson City, MO):

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87052128/1873-12-12/ed-1/seq-2/;words=county+Cass+Missouri?date1=1873&rows=20&searchType=basic&state=&date2=1873&proxtext=cass+county+missouri&y=15&x=15&dateFilterType=yearRange&index=2>