

# WOODS Theater

CORDELE *Ga.*

## WEDNESDAY, APR. 13

UNBELIEVABLE ..... BUT TRUE

# JESSE JAMES

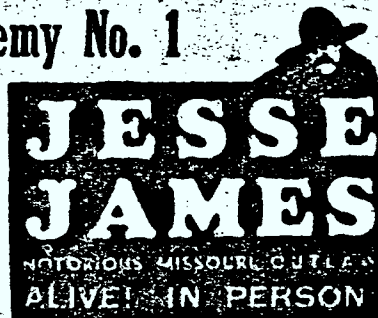
NOTORIOUS MISSOURI OUTLAW

# IS ALIVE!

Jesse James who claims to be the noted Clay County, Missouri, bandit, supposedly shot by Bob Ford on April 3, 1882, (for \$10,000 reward), has re-appeared after 51 years of hiding and is rapidly establishing his identity to a disbelieving world.

America's Original Public Enemy No. 1

Returns to tell the True  
Story of his Early Life  
of Banditry!



Hear Jesse James tell the hair-raising story of how he and Bob Ford planned his own murder. Hear how Jesse changed clothes with the Slain Charles Bigelow (also a wanted man) and made his escape only to return the next day to attend his own funeral and act as one of his own pall-bearers. Hear Jesse James tell how he helped bury himself outside his own mother's window! Hear him tell many other thrilling tales of his own exploits as America's Original Public

Enemy No. 1.

## No Longer a Price on His Head

Accompanied by a delegation of old-timers, who had positively indentified him, Jesse James called on the Governor of Missouri and was assured that—when the \$10,000 reward was paid to Bob Ford for shooting the man whom the coroner's inquest declared to be Jesse James—the case was officially closed as far as the State of Missouri was concerned.

**EXTRA!**  
ON OUR STAGE

**HANK  
FARRIS**

and

**ANN  
ALEXANDER**

Western Picture Stars  
in

The Most Sensational Trick  
and Fancy Roping Performance  
Ever Seen on the  
American Stage.

COMEDY



**JESSE JAMES**  
As he Appears Today  
Age 90  
To See Him is to Believe Him



RFG:PED  
62-26471-7

April 12, 1938.

RECORDED

[REDACTED]  
Cordele, Georgia.

b6

Dear [REDACTED]

I went to acknowledge your letter of April 4, 1938, with which you enclosed a flyer announcing the appearance of Jesse James at the Woods Theater in Cordele.

In response to your inquiry, it has always been my understanding that the infamous bandit Jesse James died several years ago.

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed copy of the booklet entitled "The Federal Bureau of Investigation" which deals with the work and functions of this Bureau. A copy of my address "Public Duty in Law Enforcement" is also enclosed.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover,  
Director.

- Mr. Nathan .....
- Mr. Tolson .....
- Mr. Baughman .....
- Mr. Clegg .....
- Mr. Coffey .....
- Mr. Crowl .....
- Mr. Egan .....
- Mr. Foxworth .....
- Mr. Glavin .....
- Mr. Harbo .....
- Mr. Hottel .....
- Mr. Lester .....
- Mr. McIntire .....
- Mr. Naughton .....
- Mr. Nichols .....
- Mr. Pennington .....
- Mr. Schilder .....
- Mr. Tamm .....
- Mr. Tracy .....
- Miss Gandy .....

Enclosure

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
APR 13 1938  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DIRECTOR

RECEIVED

*W*

*[Handwritten signature]*

ag

The University of Tennessee  
-Knoxville, Tennessee  
Box 401

J. Edgar Hoover, Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

A man is appearing in our theaters here under the name of the notorious outlaw, Jesse James. He claims he is the original, and that the fellow who was killed was only mistaken for the original.

He is to appear at the Dayton, Tennessee, theater the latter part of this week.

I should like very much to have any data, or information, you might have concerning the facts of the Jesse James murder. Is the original outlaw, Jesse James dead?

Very sincerely yours,

[Redacted signature]

b6

JAK-hw

ackd  
5/23/38  
jeh

RECORDED  
&  
INDEXED

62-26471-8	
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	
MAY 18 1938 P. M.	
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
RES. DIV. ONE	FILE

Jesse James



JET:JDIF  
62-26471-8

RECORDED

May 23, 1938.

[Redacted]

The University of Tennessee, Box 401  
Knoxville, Tennessee

Dear [Redacted]

Your letter was received in this Bureau on May 18, 1938, in which you made inquiry concerning an individual known as Jessie James.

For your information it was reported that Jessie James, the original outlaw, has been dead many years. I have no data regarding the individual you advise is to appear at the theatre in Dayton, Tennessee. I am taking the liberty of forwarding to you several publications of the FBI which it is believed will be of interest to you.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover,  
Director.

Enclosure

- Mr. Nathan
- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. Baughman
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Coffey
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Miss Gandy

- FBI
- Crim Ident
- Youth and Crime
- Youth's Duty to the Future
- Coop Agst Crime
- True Costs of Crime
- Crime and your home

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
MAY 23 1938  
P. M.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*ZBryan*  
*12*

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA  
August 10, 1938

Special Agent in Charge,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Sir:

[REDACTED], a writer affiliated with the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio in Culver City, California, has recently advised me that he has been doing some research work for the Studio concerning JESSE JAMES, the old notorious outlaw. [REDACTED] has said that so far as he can determine, JAMES is supposed to be dead at this time.

You may recall that it was reported that JAMES was assassinated by one of his companions. However, according to [REDACTED] from time to time reports have emanated that the real JESSE JAMES was not killed but that he is still in existence. If the latter is true, JESSE JAMES would be in his nineties.

[REDACTED] said that some time during the past year there was an individual who either surrendered or was taken into custody by the Chicago, Illinois Police Department, who claimed to be the real JESSE JAMES. [REDACTED] also said that it is his understanding that the Chicago Police Department arranged for the detention of this individual, perhaps in some institution in Joliet, Illinois, until the veracity of his allegations could be checked. b6

As a matter of cooperation with [REDACTED] who is in a position to be of help to the Los Angeles office, and who, in the past, has indicated his interest in this Bureau by assisting it, it would be appreciated if you could arrange for an immediate check at the Chicago, Illinois, Police Department to determine if there is any information available at that place concerning the individual who was investigated recently. If photographs of this individual are available, it would be appreciated if you would obtain one for this office. Also obtain a complete description of him if possible. If he was fingerprinted, please advise if he had a known criminal record and the details thereof. A

INDEXED

62-26471-8  
~~62-38875-7X~~  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

AUG 16 1938 A. M.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ONE [initials]  
FILE



S.A.C., Chicago

-2-

August 10, 1938

The real JESSE JAMES was supposed to have some bullet wound scars on his chest, possibly on the right side. The complete description might indicate if the individual in Chicago had such scars and if there is any data available concerning the affidavits or papers which the individual is supposed to have had indicating that he was the real JESSE JAMES, it would be appreciated if you could furnish a summary of them.

Very truly yours,

JHH:MO  
cc: Bureau

J. H. HANSON,  
Special Agent in Charge.

AMSD

oef J. Edgar Hoover  
Chief of Man  
Dept. of Justice  
Wash., D.C.

Stafford, Va  
June 17-38

Dear Sir:

I read in a pamphlet not  
so long ago that Jessie James  
is still living. Enclosed you will  
find an addressed post card  
that I would like for you to  
answer this question: Is Jessie  
James alive now or is he dead and  
if he is dead was he killed  
as the songs and stories say  
April 3, 1882?

Thank you

Numbers Marked  
6/21/58  
bb

[Redacted signature area]

I ENCL W

oef

ack  
6-23-38  
MB

RECORDED  
&  
INDEXED

62-26471-9	
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	
JUN 20 1938 A. M.	
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
SEE PAGE ONE	FILE

Mal  
AMW



RECORDED

June 23, 1938

[Redacted address line]

Stafford, Virginia

b6

Dear [Redacted name]

Your communication of June 17, 1938, has been received, in which you have made inquiry concerning the famous bandit, Jesse James."

Pursuant to your inquiry may I advise that it has been reported that the original Jesse James has been dead for many years. It has occurred to me that you might like to have several booklets dealing with the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and I am pleased indeed to send you pamphlets and copies of my addresses for your perusal.

The self-addressed postal card which you enclosed with your letter is being returned herewith.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure

FBI

- Mr. Tolson.....
- Mr. Nathan.....
- Mr. Tamm.....
- Mr. Clegg.....
- Mr. Coffey.....
- Mr. Crowl.....
- Mr. Dawsey.....
- Mr. Egan.....
- Mr. Foxworth.....
- Mr. Glavin.....
- Mr. Harbo.....
- Mr. Lester.....
- Mr. McIntire.....
- Mr. Nichols.....
- Mr. Tracy.....
- Miss Gandy.....

Crim Ident  
 MCR Vol 9 #1  
 Crime & Yr Home  
 Pion in Honesty  
 Public Duty

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
 MAILED  
 JUN 23 1938  
 P. M.  
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

W

M

119

Mr. Tolson	✓
Mr. Nathan	
Mr. Tamm	
Mr. Clegg	
Mr. Coffey	
Mr. Crowl	
Mr. Dawsey	
Mr. Egan	
Mr. Foxworth	
Mr. Glavin	
Mr. Harbo	
Mr. Lester	
Mr. Melville	✓
Mr. Mohr	✓
Mr. Tracy	
Miss Gandy	

## Flash to J. Edgar Hoover: Jesse James Ain't in Grave

BY ROBERT J. CASEY.  
Special Dispatch from a Staff Correspondent.  
Ashland, Ky., June 16.—Somebody called up the office of the United States marshal last night and reported that Jesse James, alive and in excellent health, was in town.

"Who?" inquired the marshal, and he found out that he had heard right the first time.

"Report him to J. Edgar Hoover," he suggested. And he hung up the receiver, leaving an indignant populace to seethe and boil. Why couldn't somebody with brains answer the telephone at the Federal Building? What had become of the law—the bad-mann act or whatever it was called, that forbade the transport of outlaws in interstate commerce? There didn't seem to be any answer, and Jesse James, unopposed, checked in at a local hotel.

He was wearing a black slouch hat, a neat white shirt, a black frock coat of the type popular in Congress in the '40s (around the time he was shot and killed by Bob Ford) and black breeches stuffed into tight-fitting black boots. He is tall, thin as a gas pipe, and 91 years old, as

by right Jesse James ought to be. His baggage consisted of a tin suitcase and a hamper full of affidavits. "Jesse James," read the clerk as the old man laid down the pen. He seemed interested.

"What about it?" inquired Jesse James, sticking out his pointed chin.

"Nothing except that they generally sign their names John Jones," said the clerk.

"I'm appearing at the Grand Theater," said Mr. James. "If there are any calls for me have them transferred."

"I'll tell the United States marshal that you are here," promised the clerk—and presumably he did. A bellboy picked up the baggage and started for the elevator crooning an old song:

*Jesse left a wife, to mourn him all her life.  
Three little children, they were brave  
When the dirty little coward he shot Mr. Howard  
And laid Jesse James in his grave.*

It is significant of important and adventurous figures in the United States that they are never allowed to die. John Brown's body was

(Continued on Fourth Page.)

M

a

62-26471-A

CHICAGO DAILY NEWS  
6-16-38



# Flash to J. Edgar Hoover: Jesse James Ain't in Grave

(Continued from First Page.)

taken from the gallows at Harper's Ferry and revived by physicians in the employ of his wife. Booth escaped from the burning barn after the murder of Lincoln and at his death many years later came to be a sideshow mummy and educational exhibit with a fine boxoffice lure. Al Capone isn't in Alcatraz—it's somebody who looks like him. John Dillinger is alive in South America. Ask anybody.

And so with Jesse James it is no surprise to discover that he has been alive all these years and is still alive. Nobody, apparently, had ever suspected he was dead.

## Jesse's Manners Improved.

There was a cop standing at the hotel entrance when Jesse strode out. He was annoyed because somebody had parked too close to a fire plug.

"Good morning, officer," said Jesse James cheerfully.

"Good morning to yourself, sir," answered the cop. And the day was brighter for witnesses who remembered that in the old days Jesse had wasted no time being pleasant to cops and very few cops had been pleasant to Jesse. It is nice to consider that in a matter of almost 60 years the manners of the rough old world have improved.

The statute of limitations on murder does not exist and when Bob Ford shot Jesse loose from a stepladder in St. Joe, Mo., several murder indictments were outstanding against him. Many of the populace—those who were not trying to call the United States marshal—wondered that the resurrected Mr. James should call attention to them. But, come to think about it, Jesse was in no danger. Most of the witnesses are dead and without wit-

nesses almost anybody could be Jesse James in safety.

## The Miraculous Escape.

Four times a day Mr. James told the audience of the Grand Theater all about himself and his miraculous escape. It seems there was another lad named Jesse James—a second cousin or something. This fellow got in with the James gang and deceived all the members, including the treacherous Bob Ford.

The impersonation was a silly performance because Mr. Ford's eyesight seems to have been failing at the time and so he failed to notice little characteristics that would have made him suspicious. Or maybe Mr. Ford's judgment was dulled by his vision of reward. At any rate the bogus Jesse did well enough. Ford shot him in the back. The body was turned over to the mourning family and that was the end of the James saga save for the present engagement at the Grand theater. . . . Next week, Huntington, W. Va.).

Mr. James has numerous affida-

vits to support his claim to the name of the supposedly dead outlaw. They are signed by friends and neighbors of Missouri, Montana and other states and set forth the deponents belief that Jesse James was and is Jesse James. No one has ever attempted to prove that the makers of the affidavits lacked sincerity. Even the United States marshal found no reason to quarrel with the affidavits. He was quite willing to stipulate that Jesse James was Jesse James or Christopher Columbus. His position was that he didn't care.

## "Robbery," Jesse Complains.

Mr. James came back to the hotel after his first hard day at the theater and discovered that he was being charged \$4 for a room. He said it was highway robbery and the clerk said he didn't know what he was talking about—which is where the matter rests at present. The "he-is-Jesse-James" faction is getting plenty of support in Ashland.

If local folk-song societies can revive Queen Elizabeth as they have done so successfully in their recent choral offerings there seems to be no good reason why a commercial theater shouldn't resurrect Jesse James.

With Jesse on the Grand Theater program is a double feature bill,

one-half of which is episode No. 7 of "Buck Rogers' Trip to Mars." Some of the critics didn't like the Buck Rogers' part of it. They said it was too implausible.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

August 10, 1938.

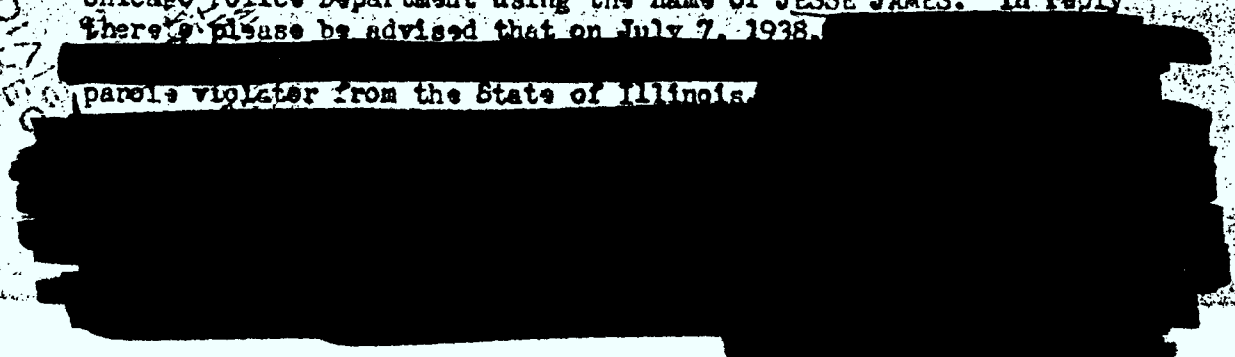


Special Agent in Charge,  
Los Angeles, California.

Dear Sir:

Reference is made to your letter of August 10, 1938, wherein you request certain information as to the identity and other information concerning the individual who was arrested recently by the Chicago Police Department using the name of JESSE JAMES. In reply thereto please be advised that on July 7, 1938,

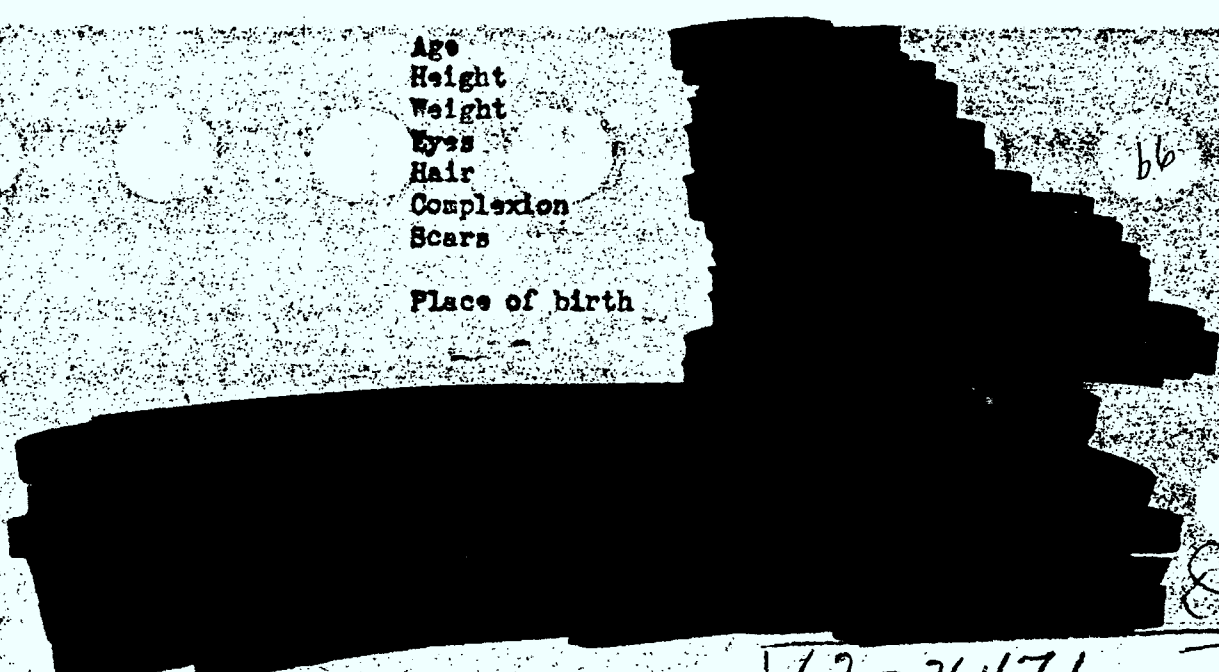
RECEIVED  
AUG 11 1938



parole violator from the State of Illinois.

and his description is as follows:

- Age
- Height
- Weight
- Eyes
- Hair
- Complexion
- Scars
  
- Place of birth



b6

62-26471-

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

AUG 31 1938 A. M.

ONE IDENT UNIT

UNIT OF POLICE



[REDACTED]

7

66

Very truly yours,

D. M. LADD,  
Special Agent in Charge.

TFM:MC

Enc.

cc-Bureau ✓

62-2483

Lake View College Of Commerce

INCORPORATED

BROADWAY AT MARKET

ALTON, ILL.

September 21, 1938

Honorable J. Edgar Hoover,  
Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

It may not be within the field of your authority to investigate, but I am calling your attention to the filming of a picture at Pineville, Missouri, that is to re-enact the outlaw career of Jesse James, and it is to be call "Jesse James."

This picture may be wholly "within the law" but I do believe it is going to be a "splendid" lesson in out lawry that our young people do not need.

Too many of the Pictures of today portray lessons to the young that tend to start them on the "trigger figure road."

The Silver Screen has such great possibilities for good, that it is a pity that very opposite is so often shown. We have too many outlaws, even with every agency for good working to make the world better. Why show a picture of crime? No doubt the evil of such a life will be presented in the picture--but too many of the young will never get that part of the picture. They will see the glamour and dash--the easy money--the escape--and try to get by where "The James Gang" got caught.

What can be done about it! Producers may say that the Public demands it!!!

Respectfully

[Redacted signature block]

b6

See 67-38875

\*Motion picture

RENOLL

mg

99

✓

ack  
9-28-38  
BMS

Raw  
man

ack in  
the above  
will be called  
to be called

RECORDED  
&  
INDEXED

62-26471-10

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

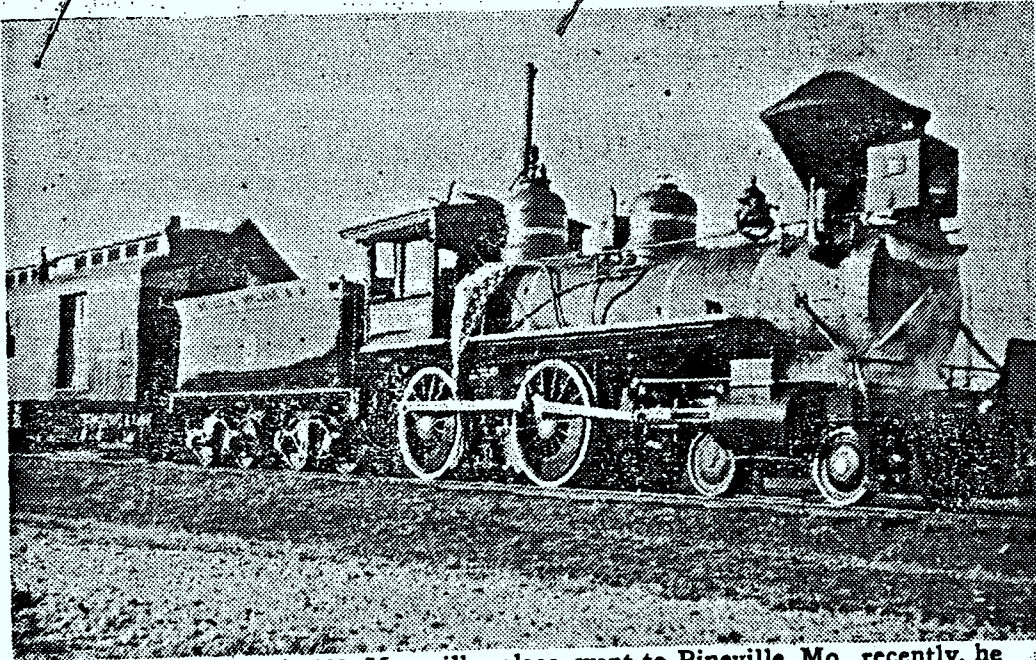
SEP 24 1938

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ONE  
24



## A Train for 'Jesse James' to Rob



When John Noll, 939 Maryville place, went to Pineville, Mo., recently, he made these pictures of the movie company making the motion picture "Jesse James." This is the train the company used in the "train robbery" scenes of the picture.



Tyrone Power, who plays Jesse James, walking around between scenes.

*From St. Louis Star-Times  
Sept 20, 1938*

62-26471-10

RECORDED BMS:AEM  
62-26471-10

September 28, 1938

[Redacted]

Lake View College of Commerce, Inc.  
Broadway at Market  
Alton, Illinois

Dear [Redacted]

In Mr. Hoover's absence from the city, I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of September 21, 1938, advising of the contemplated showing of the motion picture entitled "Jesse James."

On behalf of Mr. Hoover I want to thank you for making known your views, and you may be sure that your letter will be called to the Director's attention upon his return to Washington.

Sincerely yours,  
For the Director,

Harold Nathan  
Assistant Director

- Mr. Tolson.....
- Mr. Nathan.....
- Mr. E. A. Tamm.....
- Mr. Clegg.....
- Mr. Coffey.....
- Mr. Crowl.....
- Mr. Dawson.....
- Mr. Egan.....
- Mr. Foxworth.....
- Mr. Glavin.....
- Mr. Harbo.....
- Mr. Lester.....
- Mr. McIntire.....
- Mr. Nichols.....
- Mr. Quinn Tamm.....
- Mr. Tracy.....
- Miss Gandy.....

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
SEP 28 1938  
P. M.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

SEP 30 1938  
[Handwritten initials]



Springfield, Ohio.  
Feb. 8, 1939.

Federal Bureau of Investigation:-

Dear Sirs:-

I do not know if I am writing to the right department for this information, But, I thought probably you would tell me.

Is there a monument to Jesse James, the great, so called, outlaw, as brought out in the picture. If there is where is it located at.

I will appreciate this information very much.

Thank You Very Much

bb

Springfield, Ohio.

Ack  
2/23/39  
T.B.H.

RECORDED  
&  
INDEXED

62-26471-11
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FEB 13 1939
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

JBH/bw  
62-26471-11

RECORDED

February 23, 1939

[REDACTED]  
Springfield, Ohio

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

Reference is made to your letter dated February 8, 1939.

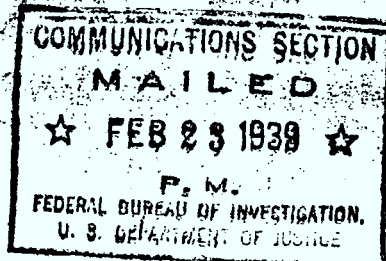
Please be advised that the information that you request is not available in the files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

cc-Cincinnati

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nathan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Crowl \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Foxworth \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Harbo \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Lester \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. McIntyre \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. G. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_



*[Handwritten signature and initials]*



# X WASHINGTON CITY NEWS SERVICE

- Mr. Nathan \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Crowl \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Foxworth \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Harbo \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Lester \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Malone \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Quinn Tamm \_\_\_\_\_
- Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_
- Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVED  
FEB 11 1939  
U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

FEB 11 9 42 PM '39

RECEIVED  
F B I  
COMMUNICATIONS

FEB 11 1939

*Handwritten notes on the left margin, including a large checkmark and some illegible scribbles.*

OKLAHOMA CITY--BECAUSE HIS 3 1/2 YEAR-OLD SON SUGGESTED THAT THEY ROB A BANK "LIKE JESSE JAMES," STATE REP. CHARLES FLANAGAN OF WALTERS INTRODUCED A BILL IN THE LEGISLATURE TO CENSOR ALL OKLAHOMA MOVIES AND CLOSE THEATERS ON SUNDAY. THE BILL WOULD SET UP A STATE BOARD OF CENSORS COMPOSED OF THREE MINISTERS AND TWO LAYMEN.

THE REPRESENTATIVE SAID THAT WHEN HE TOLD HIS SON, ANDY, THAT HE LACKED MONEY, THE CHILD SUGGESTED:

"THEN WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A GUN LIKE JESSE JAMES AND GO TO A BANK AND GET SOME?"

2/11 ON829P

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FEB 15 1939  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
TOLSON  
LADD  
TRACY

U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE  
RECEIVED  
INDEXED  
FILED  
Place  
in Jesse James file  
over

NOT RECORDED

62-26471-11X

February 10, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. NICHOLS.

In accordance with instructions, the writer has attended the moving picture of "Jesse James" several times in order to become thoroughly acquainted with the story and characters as portrayed therein, and has then consulted available books at the Congressional Library in order to obtain the historical facts of the life of Jesse James and of his brother, Frank James.

The moving picture of "Jesse James" presents the James brothers as daring, adventurous men, more the victim of circumstances than should be admired for their courage and pitied for their misfortunes, rather than the heartless and desperate persons history shows them to have been. Throughout the picture, the sympathy of the audience is with Jesse and Frank.

The picture opens with a scene in which Barcee, a representative of the St. Louis-Midland Railroad, and three of his assistants are going around the countryside using intimidation, threats and physical force to make the farmers sell their land to the railroad for a mere pittance. When these men reach the farm of the widow, Mrs. James, she refuses to sign the deed and Frank and Jesse become involved in a fight with the strangers. When Barcee grabs a scythe with which to strike Frank, Jesse shoots the hand of Barcee, and the enraged men go hurriedly back to town to swear out a warrant for Jesse's arrest. Jesse and Frank call a meeting of all the farmers in the neighborhood and they agree to each one put in as much money as he can afford so that they might engage a lawyer to advise them what can be done to save their lands, homes and crops from the railroad. While the meeting

is in progress, a friend comes to warn Frank and Jesse that Barcee with the Sheriff and his men is on his way to arrest them. In order to avoid trouble, the boys flee to the hills. When Barcee arrives, he is told the boys have gone and Mrs. James is very ill. Not believing this, he throws a bomb into the house, setting fire to the house and killing Mrs. James. When Jesse and Frank hear of this outrage, Jesse comes into town and shoots Barcee. The audience is made to feel that, the law of the West at that time being the pistol, this was the natural and even the right thing for Jesse to do. He gives Barcee a fair chance to defend himself, but of course Jesse is quicker on the draw and gets away to the hills again after avenging his mother's death. The railroads being in control of the state at that time, however, a reward is offered for Jesse's capture, and thus he is forced into his career of plundering and robbing.

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. Nathan
- Mr. E. A. Tamm
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Coffey
- Mr. Crowl
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Foxworth
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Lester
- Mr. McIntire
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Mr. Tracy
- Miss Gandy

RECORDED

62-26471-12  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

APR 27 1939

TOLSON  
TAMM  
CARR  
NICHOLS  
DEPT. OF JUSTICE



February 10, 1939

According to history, the advance of the railroads into the West had nothing to do with the criminal careers of the James boys. During the childhood of Jesse and Frank, they had little home discipline. Their father died when the children were quite young, and several years later Mrs. James remarried, becoming Mrs. Samuels. The children are described even by their friends as "a little wild," and they were always the leaders of the boys in the neighborhood. They loved firearms, and early became expert shots. When the Civil War opened, Frank joined the Guerrilla Chieftain, Quantrell, fighting for the South. Later, after the Union militiamen had arrested his mother and sister and placed them in jail because they were giving assistance and information to the Guerrilla soldiers, Jesse also joined Quantrell. The James brothers even during the war were particularly savage and bloodthirsty. They showed no mercy to Union sympathizers and often stooped to trickery, gaining the confidence of farmers and then shooting them at the first opportunity. When the war ended and the guerrilla band surrendered, the James boys refused to surrender and go back to an ordinary peaceful life. With a few friends and war-time comrades, they continued to rob, plunder, murder and terrorize the country.

It was noted that the picture never showed the James brothers kill anyone. According to the picture, when the railroad was opened between St. Louis and Liberty, Missouri, the gang held up the train and took all the money of the passengers, but took no jewelry and injured no one. According to the historical facts, however, when they held up their first train, 28 soldiers and 4 citizens wearing blue blouses, were lined up and shot. One hundred Iowa cavalymen who happened to come along just after the robbery were massacred by the two hundred members of the guerrilla band.

In the picture Zee, the girl whom Jesse loves, at length persuades him that if he continues to fight the railroads, he will eventually change inside until robbing and killing become a part of his blood and he will never stop. She arranges through the United States Marshal for Jesse to give himself up, and the President of the railroad gives a written promise that he will not prosecute for more than the minimum the law would allow, which would be no more than five years in prison. With this written agreement, Jesse gives up and goes to prison. As soon as he is behind bars, the railroad President, who is portrayed in the picture as a very disagreeable person, has the town put under martial law, brings in many United States soldiers and an outside judge, and prepares to prosecute to the fullest and have Jesse hanged. The citizens of the town consider this treachery and appear to openly sympathize with Jesse. When Frank hears what has happened, he comes into town and by a bit of strategy succeeds in releasing Jesse. Thus again the audience is made to feel that Jesse played fair with "the law" but was betrayed; whereas Jesse James never gave himself up at any time. After a bank robbery at Gallatin, of which the James boys were accused, Jesse did write a letter offering

February 10, 1939

to surrender, with his brother Frank, and submit to trial if the Governor would guarantee them safety against the chances of mob violence and lynch law in Daviess County. After examining the papers in the case, the Governor declared he did not believe the boys had anything to do with the robbery, and the matter quieted down. Many people, however, continued to believe that Jesse had instigated the robbery. And the James gang continued to rob one bank after another and hold up trains, often killing people.

After the James gang had gone on their murderous way for some ten years and all efforts to capture them had failed, Allan Pinkerton was employed by the Express Company to hunt them. Three detectives were killed by the gang, and it was decided to make an attack on the boys at home. After much careful planning and preparation, the attack was made but the boys had escaped that afternoon. An eight year old brother of Frank and Jesse was killed, Mrs. Samuels lost an arm, and the step-father was injured. This was of course a most regrettable incident, and one which caused a great deal of sympathy for the James boys to be aroused, but far from starting the boys on their career of crime, as such an incident was used in the picture, it happened long after they had become the greatest outlaws of America and was a direct result of their depredations.

Several interesting incidents occurred in the picture which seem to have no counterpart in history. On one occasion, Jesse had come into town to see Zee. While talking with her in her home, the United States Marshal chanced to come in. Zee introduced Jesse as Thomas Howard, and the Marshal, although he immediately recognized the outlaw, calmly talked with them a few moments, mentioned that he was looking for Jesse James and would not spare him should he meet him in the right place, and then left, allowing Jesse to get safely out of town, thus sparing him because of the girl.

On another occasion, before Jesse gives up to the officers, he and Zee, together with some members of the gang, go to a small country church to be married. When they enter the church a service is going on. They interrupt the service and ask to be married. When Jesse James gives his name, the preacher welcomes him as a hero, stating that the railroads had ruined him, taken his farm which produced 900 bushels of corn, his home and barns, and forced him to go back to preaching. Members of the congregation said "Amen" now and then, and all present treated the outlaws as heroes.

Quite often in the picture a subtle emphasis is placed on the fact that the main reason for people trying to capture Jesse and Frank is to receive the large rewards offered by the railroad. When Frank releases Jesse from prison, they succeed in escaping from the posse pursuing them by scattering money behind them. All members of the pursuing party stop to pick up the money and allow the criminals to escape.



February 10, 1939

The robbery of the bank at Northfield, Minnesota, was the first undertaking of this kind in which the James gang failed completely and which caused the capture or death of all the old members of the gang except Frank and Jesse James. However, the picture puts a different light on the affair from that given by history. In the movie a member of the gang, on learning that the Governor of the State has offered to give a full pardon, in addition to the rewards, to any member of the gang who will kill Jesse, contacts a detective working on the case and informs him of the coming raid on the Northfield bank. The detective, who has a moustache, wears a derby, carries a little satchel with him always, and walks around with a very self-important and mysterious air, immediately contacts the president of the bank in Northfield, and preparations are made to trap the gang. The plans work well, and all members of the gang are killed or captured except Frank and Jesse who have a very narrow escape, Jesse being seriously wounded. Historically, however, there is no treachery on the part of any of the members of the gang in connection with the Northfield robbery, and no amnesty offer had been made by the Governor at this time. The robbers, on entering the town of Northfield, did so with loud yells and much firing of guns and pistols, thinking to frighten the people. The citizens, however, were not so easily frightened. On the contrary they realized what was happening and while most of the outlaws were inside the bank, the people of the town began to get their guns and prepare to stop the raid. The outlaws were forced to leave the bank without obtaining any money, and only Jesse and Frank managed to escape and they did so only with great difficulty. They proceeded to Texas, where Frank recuperated from his injury, and for several more years they continued their depredations.

According to the picture, Jesse joined his wife at St. Joseph, Missouri, after the disastrous Northfield raid, where she nursed him back to health after a very serious wound. Zee persuaded him to give up his career of crime, and he agreed to reform and to take her and their son to California where they would live a normal life. Before they could make arrangements to leave, however, Bob Ford, a member of the gang who said he escaped from the Northfield authorities, and his brother Charlie came to see Jesse. They said they had seen Frank, and they wanted Jesse to join them and Frank in a raid on the Platte City bank. Jesse refused, saying he was through with that kind of life. He told Bob and Charlie goodbye, told his wife to pack and they would leave that afternoon for California, and Jesse himself started taking down a motto on the wall saying "God Bless Our Home." As he was doing this, Bob Ford opened the door again and shot him in the back.

Jesse James was in reality shot in the back in much the same manner, although he had not reformed at the time. When Governor Crittenden came into office as Governor of Missouri on January 1, 1881, he determined to rid Missouri of train robbers and outlaws, and particularly of the James gang. As the State could only offer a reward

February 10, 1939

of \$300 for the apprehension of a criminal, Governor Crittenden planned to have the railroad companies traversing Missouri put up the money for a reward, as they were the greatest sufferers. The railroads agreed to put up the reward money, and \$5000 was offered for the capture of the James brothers, and an additional \$5000 for their conviction. The proclamation issued by the Governor did not say "dead or alive." After the proclamation, Bob and Charles Ford made an agreement with the Governor that they would bring in Jesse James, alive if they could but dead if necessary, since it would be their lives or his. It was agreed that they would receive a pardon from the Governor if they did this.

There seems to be some disagreement as to whether Bob Ford, who was but twenty years old at the time he killed Jesse James, had ever actually been a member of the gang or not. Charles had been with Jesse for about six months, and both Bob and Charles had known him for some time. Jesse was planning to rob the Platte City bank, and needing another man, Charles sent for Bob to join them to assist in the raid. According to Bob Ford's own account of the matter, Jesse was suspicious of him from the time he came to St. Joseph to join the gang. Bob and Charles watched every opportunity to kill Jesse, but the latter also watched them carefully and never took off his pistols. On the day of the proposed Platte City robbery, the newspapers carried the story of the surrender of Dick Liddle, a member of the gang. Jesse became more than ever suspicious of Bob, and according to Bob's story, Jesse no doubt would have shot him that night on the way to Platte City. However, for some reason, probably to allay Bob Ford's fears, Jesse took off his pistols that morning in Bob's presence and got up on a chair to dust off a picture. Seizing the opportunity, Bob shot him in the back of the head immediately. Some time later, Frank James surrendered to Governor Crittenden, was tried for murder, acquitted, and lived quietly thereafter.

The final scene in the moving picture of Jesse James shows a crowd gathered around his grave, where his old friend, the uncle of his wife, is unveiling a monument. The following are not the exact words used in the picture, but are very close to it:

"Jesse was a criminal and an outlaw. Even those who loved him cannot get around that fact. But we are not ashamed of him. Somehow I don't believe even America is ashamed of Jesse James. I don't know why. Maybe it was because he was bold and lawless as all of us would like to be sometimes. Maybe it's because for ten years he licked the tar out of five states. Maybe it's because he wasn't altogether to blame for what the times made of him. Maybe it's because he was so good at what he did. I don't know." The monument which he unveiled had the following inscription: "In loving remembrance, Jesse Woodson James, Died April 3, 1882, Aged 34 years, 6 months, 28 days. Murdered by a traitor and a coward whose name is not worthy to appear here."



Memo for Mr. Nichols

-6-

February 10, 1939

Note: Information concerning the lives of the James Brothers was obtained chiefly from the book, "Illustrated Lives and Adventures of Frank and Jesse James," written by J. A. Dacus, Ph. D., formerly of the Editorial Staff of the St. Louis Republican and Member of the Missouri Legislature. This book was published in 1881, before the death of Jesse James. The Preface to the book states that the information contained therein was obtained chiefly from original sources, the author having made many visits to the home and neighborhood of Mrs. Samuels, mother of Frank and Jesse James.

Information concerning the killing of Jesse James and the circumstances surrounding it was obtained from the book, "The Crittenden Memoirs," compiled by Henry Huston, Crittenden, 1936. Much of this material was taken from the Autobiography of Thomas T. Crittenden, Governor of Missouri at the time of the killing of Jesse James and the surrender of Frank. Other books on the life of Jesse James, listed in the catalogue of the Congressional Library, were not available at this time.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

bb