

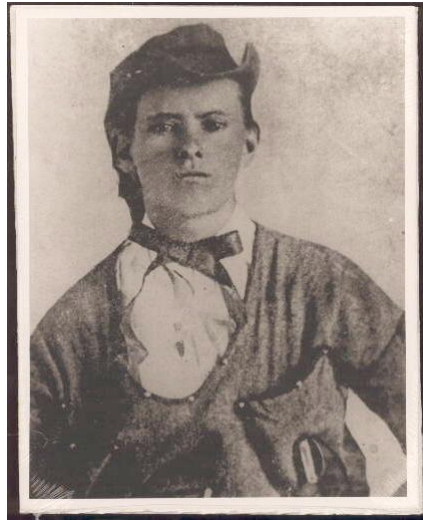
# HISTORY OF THE JAMES FARM

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## BIRTHPLACE



## OF A LEGEND

The story of what is now known as the James Farm begins in 1822 when two brothers, Jacob and David Groomer, came to the newly formed state of Missouri and acquired a tract of land in the rolling hills of northern Clay County. As was required with a Federal Land Grant, improvements were made and a three room log cabin was built. In 1827, Jacob Groomer sold the property to his nephew, Garrett Groomer, who later sold it to a Liberty businessman named Robert Gilmer. Gilmer added a two story addition to the east side of the cabin. In 1845, there was a young Baptist minister in Clay County who was looking for a farm and home for his growing family. Robert James had established himself with the New Hope Baptist Church in northern Clay County, and the old "Groomer Place" was perfect for him. It was just a few miles south of his church, less than a mile from his wife's mother and step-father, and it had a good, solid house in which to raise his family. Robert James and Robert Gilmer signed the transfer of ownership papers on the property on October 13, 1845. Sale price: \$1,640 for the house and 205 acres of good farm ground. It would forever after be known as The James Farm. Contrary to the believe of many, and many early books, Frank James was not born at the James Farm. But, on September 5th, 1847, the man who would become the most famous outlaw in the world was born in the log cabin portion of the house at the James Farm. No place on God's green earth has closer ties to Jesse James than does the James Farm and the house that is still its centerpiece. He was born here, and it remained a safe haven

and place of comfort throughout his life. His body would be brought here after his death in 1882, and it was here that he was laid to rest in the corner of the yard where he had played as a boy. Few houses in America have seen more history, drama and tragedy as has the old log house at the James Farm. It was here that a group of Federal soldiers lynched Frank and Jesse's step-father, Doctor Reuben Samuel, in an attempt to gain information on the activities of the Confederate guerrillas. It was here that Jesse James swore vengeance against the Union, and it was here that he carried on his personal war against society, long after the end of the "Lost Cause".

Robberies were planned here. Poses and detectives lurked in the trees north of the house. And it was here that history was made. The old house has seen more than its share of tragedy and sorrow. On January 26th 1875, men under the direction of the Pinkerton Detective Agency conducted a "raid" on this house and its occupants. Shortly after midnight, the family was awakened by the sound of breaking glass coming from the kitchen. As several members of the family ran into the room, a flaming ball of cotton and cloth was thrown in through the broken window. It was pushed into the fireplace where it harmlessly burned. A second object came through the window...again smoking and belching flames. This, too, was shoveled into the fireplace. But this was something different. A thunderous explosion ripped through the old log cabin. Smoke, ash and debris filled the room. Although the exact nature of the "device" is still debated, its effects were quite clear. Frank and Jesse's eight-year-old step-brother, Archie Samuel, lay mortally wounded and their mother's right arm was so terribly mangled that it would have to be amputated near the elbow. The old fireplace in the kitchen still stands, just as it did in 1875. It remains a visual reminder that not ALL the story is of glamour and glory. The old place looks pretty much as it did more than 100 years ago. Oh, Zerelda had the two story eastern addition replaced a few years after Jesse's death, but the visitor can easily lose themselves in the history of the time and place. This was the home of the James and Samuel families for more than 130 years. Jesse James was born here. Frank James died here. It is, and will probably forever be, "The James Farm".

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