Jesse James- FBI File part one

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/PRIVACY ACTS SECTION

COVER SHEET

SUBJECT: JESSE JAMES
THE BEST COPY OBTAINABLE IS INCLUDED IN THE REPRODUCTION OF THESE DOCUMENTS. PAGES INCLUDED THAT ARE BLURRED, LIGHT, OR OTHERWISE DIFFICULT TO READ ARE THE RESULT OF THE CONDITION OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT. NO BETTER COPY CAN BE REPRODUCED.
Mr. J. Edgar Hoover,
Director of Bureau of Investigation,
Washington, D.C.

My Dear Mr. Hoover,

I am enclosing herewith the photograph of the supposed Jesse James, the noted bandit.

No doubt, you have read the recent stories in the newspapers of this man. I was called in on this case and was asked if I could identify this man. They know that I am a fingerprint expert, but they tied my hands right on the start. They will not let this man’s fingerprints be taken, that
is, his Chief Council, criminal lawyer here and the city manager, who is of the Elm Hotel. This man resides at the Elm Hotel. You know it is difficult to identify a man without his fingerprints. This man was supposed to have served a term at the penitentiary at Chester, Ill. for murder, but it is my understanding that he was paroled about the year of 1926, however, I have no positive proof of this. It occurs to me that if this man has a recent criminal record, probably you will have his fingerprints. He states that he entered the prison under the name of William Jesse James.
I am enclosing these photographs because of your experience and knowledge along this line, you will probably render your opinion as to the likeness of these photographs. I am aware of the fact that no one can positively identify a person by photographs for the fact that so many people look alike.

Trusting that I am asking nothing out of the ordinary and that I will hear from you in the near future,

Yours very truly,

Residence

Excelsior Springs, Mo.
Please refer to the letter I have prepared addressed to Excelsior Springs, Missouri, concerning the claims of an individual now residing in that city, to the effect that he is the original Jesse James.

Of course, Jesse James' fingerprints never were taken. It follows that any identification would have to be made upon the basis of physical characteristics and photographs. The photograph of the younger person transmitted by no doubt is a wood cut of the original Jesse James. After examining this photo, or cut, it is the opinion of , who has specialized somewhat in Portrait Parle, and the undersigned, that the person now claiming to be Jesse James is an imposter. It is realized, of course, that the wood cut may not have been a perfect likeness. It is realized further that the facial appearance of any individual changes with age, but we base our conclusion upon the following:

There is a marked dis-similarity in the appearance of the ears, particularly in the outer depression. In the case of the original Jesse James, this is very wide at the top, with the result that the inner depression is narrow. In the case of the person claiming to be James, both depressions are elongated. Other dis-similarities are that the original Jesse James seems to have an elevation over the eyes not noticeable in the photographs of the later James; that the nose of the individual claiming to be James is elongated and inclined to be humped, whereas the nose of the original James seems to be somewhat short and uplifted on the end giving a retrousse aspect; that the jaw of the original James is much squarer than that of the present claimant and that the bald spot on the head of the original Jesse James recedes to a point now covered by the hair of the present claimant. It is noticed also, that the claimant's eyes are crossed.
I am attaching a photostatic copy of the fingerprints and photograph of John James, alias John J. James, alias Jesse James, showing his receipt at the Southern Illinois Penitentiary, at Menard, Illinois, on June 9, 1926, to serve a term of one year to life for the crime of manslaughter. It will be observed that he gave his age as 83, and his birthplace as Missouri.

This memorandum is being sent you merely for completion of the file, and possibly for future reference in connection with this case.

Respectfully,

L. C. Schilder
Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

☑ Deleted under exemption(s) 5(b)(3) Title 28, United States Code, with no segregable material available for release to you.

☐ Information pertained only to a third party with no reference to you or the subject of your request.

☐ Information pertained only to a third party. Your name is listed in the title only.

☐ Document(s) originating with the following government agency(ies) ______________________, was/were forwarded to them for direct response to you.

Page(s) referred for consultation to the following government agency(ies); ______________________ as the information originated with them. You will be advised of availability upon return of the material to the FBI.

Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):

☐ For your information:

☑ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:

62-26471-1
Dear Sir:

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of January 15, 1932, concerning an individual claiming to be the so-called original Jesse James.

I am, of course, interested in this matter from an identification standpoint and appreciate your communicating with me relative thereto. I regret, however, that I am unable to furnish you with any advice concerning this case, since, under Congressional legislation the Bureau is restricted, in the exchange of criminal identifying data and information, to cooperation with officially constituted law enforcement officers and agencies only.

Any request from a law enforcement officer for fingerprints or other data in connection with this matter will be given appropriate consideration.

Very truly yours,

Director,
Black Joe Ky  
Feb 23 1935

Department Of Justice,  
Washington, D.C.  

Gentlemen,  
I am writing you to get the picture of Jesse James, are any of his men are gang,  
I think I have one of his men spotted he is around 97 years of age and is in hiding here are near here  
and any information what you might give me regarding him will be appreciated,  
thank you very much for this Information, am yours very truly  

Black Joe Ky  

Department Of Justice,  
Washington, D.C.  

Feb 25 1935  

M  

U.S. Department of Justice  

MAR 9, 1935  

MAR 12, 1935
DIVISION OF INVESTIGATION

From: IDENTIFICATION UNIT

3/4 1935

To: Director

- Mr. Nathan
- Mr. Tolison
- Mr. Clegg
- Miss Gandy
- Chief, Unit
- Chief Clerk
- Printing Section
- Files
- Mr.

ATT. Mr. Berens

No record in Ident Unit

L. C. Schilder.
March 8, 1935

Blackjoe, Kentucky.

Dear Sir:

Reference is made to your communication of February 23, 1935, advising that you have information relative to Jessie James or some of his men.

Please be advised that the files of this Bureau contain no information or photographs of this individual or any of his associates, although it is a matter of general knowledge that an outlaw by such name was killed many years ago. I am, accordingly, unable to furnish you with any additional information which might assist you in further identifying the subject of your communication.

I suggest that in the event you have information pertaining to the whereabouts of any criminals you communicate direct with Mr. E. J. Connelley, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Department of Justice, 426 U. S. Custom House and Post Office Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover,
Director.
On January 28, 1936, the fingerprints of one Jesse Woodson James were received in the Identification Division from the Dallas, Texas Police Department, which contained the following notation:

"Was brought to this bureau by local business man, claimed to be the original Jesse James, Missouri outlaw; recorded for identification purposes and released."

According to the information appearing on this fingerprint card this individual is at present 88 years old.

Respectfully,

L. C. Schilder.

NOTE: The record of this individual, in duplicate, as contained in the files of the Identification Division, is attached hereto.

JDR
Page(s) withheld entirely at this location in the file. One or more of the following statements, where indicated, explain this deletion.

☐ Deleted under exemption(s) (b)(3) Title 28, United States Code, Sections 534 and (b)(6)

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Page(s) withheld for the following reason(s):

_______________________________________________________________________________________

☐ For your information:

_______________________________________________________________________________________

☑ The following number is to be used for reference regarding these pages:

62-26471-2
Dallas Texas.

April 2nd 1937

Secret Service Department.
Washington D C

Gentlemen.

We have a man appearing in person around through the country Pictures Shows & Says he is the real old time Jessie James & offers $5,000. Reward to anyone that proves that he is not The outlaw Off old days.
I would like to know if he is or not.

Awaiting your Reply.

Yours Very Truly.

[Redacted]

RECORDED & INDEXED.

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April 12, 1937

Dallas, Texas,

Dear [Redacted],

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated April 2, 1937, requesting information concerning a person named Jessie James.

Please be advised that the files of this Bureau do not contain any information relative to the "real old time Jessie James" and, therefore, I am unable to furnish you with the information requested.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover,
Director.
Dear Sir:

I am writing you in regards to an affair that came to Paris with some time ago and my Brother was in from Little Rock, Ark., and he said the same affair was there. It is this a Party of three I believe, with a sleeping trailer to their car seem to be touring the State of Ark. Claiming to be Jessie James and cause quite a confusion while in town and people put me up a hot argument about it. When I told them that it was not the original Jessie James so please let me hear from you.

Yours Truly,

Justice of the Peace
Mr. Edgar J. Hoover
Dept. of Investigation
Washington D.C.
UNBELIEVABLE BUT TRUE!

JESSE JAMES

NOTORIOUS MISSOURI OUTLAW

IS ALIVE!

Jesse James, the noted Clay County, Missouri, bandit, supposedly shot by Bob Ford on April 3, 1882, (for $10,000 reward), has reappeared 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.

$5000 REWARD!

JESSE JAMES WILL PAY $5000 REWARD TO ANY Man, woman or child who can
prove that is not the original Missouri Outlaw. He has been positively identified by hundreds of early settlers everywhere, and cordially invites all old-time residents to meet him personally and discuss old times.

EXTRA!!
ON OUR STAGE
HANK FARRIS
Former Double for
KEN MAYNARD
IN PERSON

and
Ann Alexander
Cowgirl Screen Star
in
The Most Sensational Australian Whip-Cracking and Fancy Roping Performance Ever Seen on the American Stage.

COMEDY! THRILLS!

THE OLD WEST BLENDS WITH THE NEW WEST AS THE MISSOURI BAD MAN MATCHES YARNS WITH THE HOLLYWOOD DAREDEVIL.

JESSE JAMES
As He Appears Today
Age 89
To See Him Is to Believe Him!

PLUS: EPISODE No. 10, "THE LOST CITY" and NEWS
In Addition to Regular Screen Program!
July 10, 1937

Magazine, Arkansas.

Dear [Name]

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter together with enclosures regarding an individual named Jesse James.

Please be informed that the files of this Bureau do not contain any information relative to the original Jesse James. Therefore, I am unable to furnish you with the information requested.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover,
Director.

CC LITTLE ROCK

[Signature]
August 10 1937

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D.C.

Dear sirs:-

Several days ago an aged man was in this locality who said that he was Jesse James. He said that he had recently reported to one of the U.S. law enforcement agencies and had been given a full pardon.

Now I have no personal interest in this case except that this man says he is getting theatre booking thru this territory, and I believe that he is a full-fledged liar as to his identity. Some friends have asked me to write you and see if you could give us some information as to whether this man is on the level.

Yours truly

Earlington, Ky.

[Handwritten note: "Confidential"]
August 18, 1937.

Larlington, Kentucky.

Dear Mrs. Cox:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated August 10, 1937, in which you request information as to whether an individual named Jessie James referred to in your letter is "on the level."

Kindly be informed that the files of this Bureau contain no information relative to the original Jesse James and, accordingly, I am unable to furnish you with the information requested.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover,
Director.

CC Louisville
Dept. of Justice
Washington D.C.

Dear Sir,

Will you please inform me about Jesse James whether he is dead or alive. In one of our Movie Moving Picture Houses. It was advertised "The famous Jesse James here in person." I am a school girl 11 years old and know what you write me will be true.

Yours Truly,

Oct. 22, 1937

62-26471-6

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
NOV 1 1937 A.M.
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FILE

and 11-4-37
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