

VIGILANTE VIOLENCE

FRANK AND JESSE JAMES

Brothers Frank and Jesse James, from Clay County, Missouri, were Confederate guerrillas during the Civil War. Frank rode with the notorious bushwhacker William C. Quantrill and is believed to have participated in the 1863 raid on the abolitionist stronghold of Lawrence, Kansas, in which as many as 200 men and boys were killed. Both brothers are believed to have belonged to a band of bushwhackers led by Bloody Bill Anderson and are credited with participating in the ambush and massacre of Union soldiers in Centralia, Missouri in 1864. After the war, the James brothers became infamous outlaws. Because many of their crimes were directed against supporters of the Union and Radical Republicans, the James boys became folk heroes in the hearts and minds of many of Missouri's defeated Confederates.

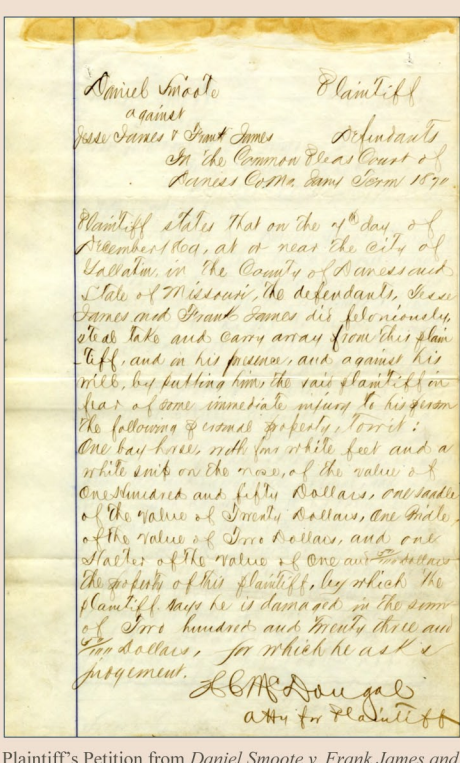
ROBBERY ...

One of the first court cases against Frank and Jesse James was a civil case filed in the Common Pleas Court of Daviess County in 1870. In this recently discovered case, Daniel Smoote sought \$223.50 from the James brothers for a horse, saddle, and bridle allegedly stolen by the brothers as they fled the robbery of the Daviess County Savings Association in Gallatin on December 7, 1869. While the holdup netted the James brothers little money, it earned them a place on the front page of the nation's newspapers. During the holdup, Jesse shot John Sheets, the bank owner and cashier, whom he mistook for Samuel P. Cox, the man responsible for the death of Bloody Bill Anderson.

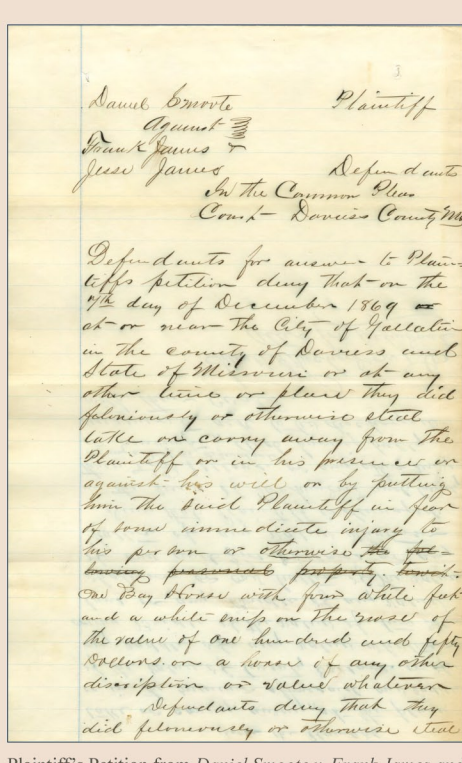
Frank and Jesse denied Smoote's charge, claiming they were not in Daviess County on the day of the robbery, but, when the brothers failed to appear in court, Smoote won his case of attachment against them. Nevertheless, there is no surviving documentation among the records of the Daviess County Circuit Court that indicates Smoote ever received payment from the James brothers for his lost property.



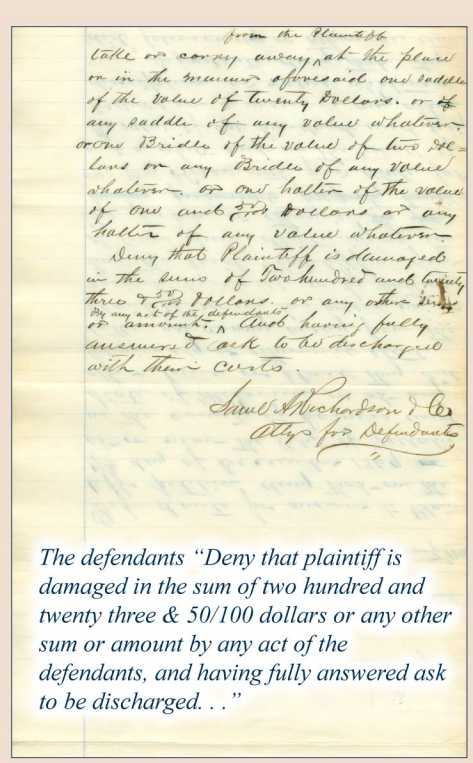
Jesse James, 1864. Library of Congress



"The defendants, Jesse James and Frank James did feloniously take, steal, and carry away . . . one bay horse with four white feet and snip on the nose, of the value of one hundred and fifty dollars, one saddle of the value of twenty dollars, one bridle of the value of one and 50/dollars."



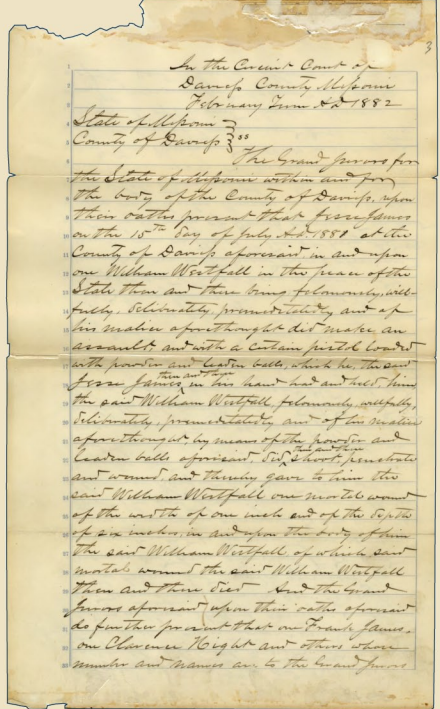
Plaintiff's Petition from Daniel Smoote v. Frank James and Jesse James, Daviess County Circuit Court, January 1870. Missouri State Archives



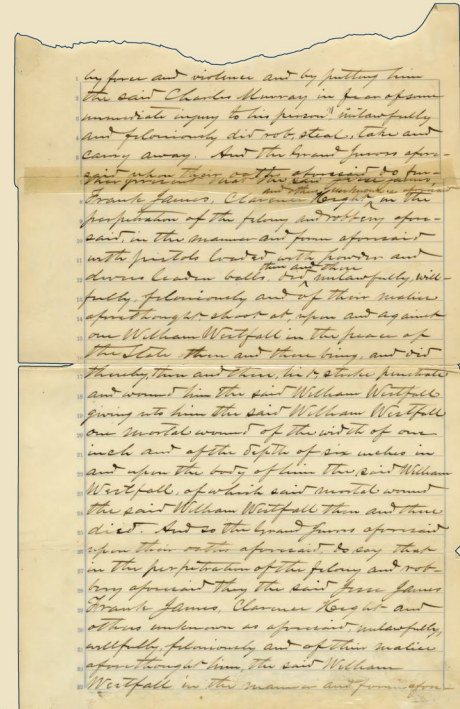
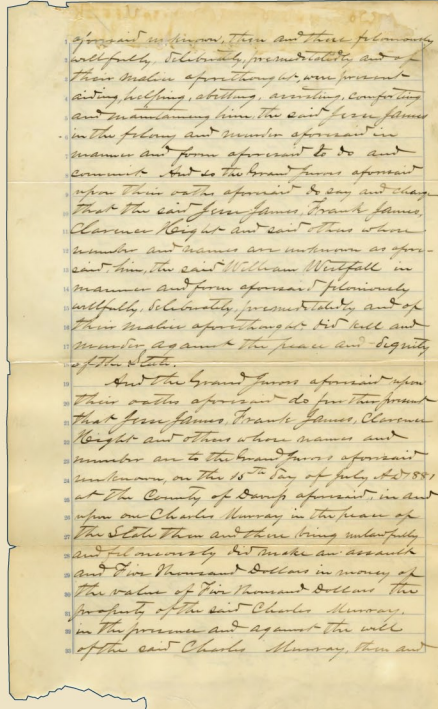
The defendants "Deny that plaintiff is damaged in the sum of two hundred and twenty three & 50/100 dollars or any other sum or amount by any act of the defendants, and having fully answered ask to be discharged. . ."

...AND MURDER

"Jesse James on the 15th day of July A. D. 1881 . . . feloniously, willfully, deliberately, premeditatedly and of his malice aforethought, by means of the powder and leaden balls aforesaid, did then and there shoot, penetrate and wound and thereby gave to him the said William Westfall one mortal wound . . ."



Indictment for Murder, from State of Missouri v. Jesse James et. al, Daviess County Circuit Court, February 1882. Missouri State Archives



"James Boys"

Detail of A Social History of the State of Missouri, by Thomas Hart Benton, 1936, Missouri State Capitol Mural, Missouri State Archives

1870 & 1882