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00:00:00,932 --> 00:00:10,931

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

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00:00:10,931 --> 00:00:17,610

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations, but not necessarily

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00:00:17,610 --> 00:00:20,930

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

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00:00:21,930 --> 00:00:25,929

Quantrill's Raiders, The Hole in the Wall Gang.

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00:00:25,929 --> 00:00:30,929

Colorful names for bands of outlaws that roamed the West during and after the Civil War.

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00:00:30,929 --> 00:00:37,928

No one earned more fame, however, than Jesse James, the Robin Hood of Western Outlaws.

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00:00:37,928 --> 00:00:53,926

Most historians maintain that Jesse was killed six years after his doomed Northfield, Minnesota raid.

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00:00:53,926 --> 00:00:58,926

Yet in 1948, J. Frank Dalton claimed he was Jesse James.

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00:00:58,926 --> 00:01:06,925

Is it possible that Jesse James could have perpetrated a hoax on the entire country for over 60 years?

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00:01:28,923 --> 00:01:43,921

Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life, two children they were brave.

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00:01:43,921 --> 00:01:55,920

But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard laid Jesse James in his grave.

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00:01:55,920 --> 00:02:03,919

It was on a Saturday night Jesse was alone talking to his family so brave.

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00:02:03,919 --> 00:02:13,918

Robert Ford came along like a thief in the night and laid poor Jesse in his grave.

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00:02:13,918 --> 00:02:22,917

Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life, two children they were brave.

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00:02:22,917 --> 00:02:42,915

But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard laid Jesse James in his grave.

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00:02:42,915 --> 00:02:49,914

On April 3, 1882, Jesse James was straightening a picture when suddenly a gunshot was fired.

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00:02:49,914 --> 00:02:52,914

Reports said that Jesse James was dead.

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00:02:52,914 --> 00:02:56,913

Was it really Jesse James who was shot on the head that day in Kearney, Missouri?

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00:02:56,913 --> 00:03:08,912

By examining his life, we will perhaps find an answer to the question of his death.

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00:03:08,912 --> 00:03:14,911

Jesse James is the only outlaw whose birthplace has been immortalized as a state monument.

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00:03:14,911 --> 00:03:18,911

The house's curator is Dr. Milton Perry.

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00:03:18,911 --> 00:03:24,910

Jesse James is America's Robin Hood in legend. I don't think there's any question about that.

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00:03:24,910 --> 00:03:30,910

The famous Robin Hood story is the one in which Frank and Jesse were returning from a robbery.

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00:03:30,910 --> 00:03:36,909

And depending upon where you've heard it, it could have taken place in Missouri, or Arkansas, or Kentucky, or wherever.

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00:03:36,909 --> 00:03:40,909

And they stopped at a farmhouse and asked for lunch.

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00:03:40,909 --> 00:03:45,908

The farm lady, and there was a customer at the time, consented and was fixing their meal.

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00:03:45,908 --> 00:03:48,908

And while she was doing this, they noticed she was crying.

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00:03:48,908 --> 00:03:50,908

And they asked her the reason why.

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00:03:50,908 --> 00:04:00,907

She said that she was a widow with two young children and that the house was a mortgage and the mortgage would be foreclosed that afternoon.

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00:04:00,907 --> 00:04:07,906

So Frank or Jesse supposedly tell her that they are Frank and Jesse and they would like to help her pay off the mortgage.

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00:04:07,906 --> 00:04:09,906

And they asked her how much it was.

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00:04:09,906 --> 00:04:12,905

She named the sum. They gave her the money.

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00:04:12,905 --> 00:04:16,905

When she left, the banker came, the mortgage was paid, it was burned.

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00:04:16,905 --> 00:04:22,904

But strangely on the way back, the banker was ambushed by two masked men who stole all the money he had.

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00:04:22,904 --> 00:04:27,904

John Quantrill led a group of ex-Confederate Raiders of which Frank and Jesse were members.

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00:04:27,904 --> 00:04:34,903

Frank and Jesse both joined Quantrill Raiders during the Civil War because they were a very popular unit from this area.

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00:04:34,903 --> 00:04:38,903

And they were directly associated with a number of Quantrill's men.

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00:04:38,903 --> 00:04:49,901

During that period of their career, as a part of the operation of the guerrillas, they would capture towns and, of course, among the towns, in the town of their banks.

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00:04:49,901 --> 00:04:54,901

And so they had perpetrated daylight bank hold-ups as a part of their military actions.

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00:04:54,901 --> 00:04:59,900

But strangely enough, it had never been done in peacetime until it happened here in Liberty.

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00:05:01,900 --> 00:05:07,899

The Liberty Bank raid recreated from eyewitness accounts established a method of operation for Jesse and Frank.

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00:05:07,899 --> 00:05:13,899

Jesse, the more aggressive, would charge forward while Frank held bank personnel at bay.

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00:05:17,898 --> 00:05:24,898

On their very first hold-up, they managed to secure more than \$70,000, a small fortune at that time.

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00:05:27,897 --> 00:05:34,897

The gang was probably originated with Frank and probably at Frank's instigation along with other people.

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00:05:34,897 --> 00:05:38,896

Jesse seems to have joined the gang more as an afterthought than anything else.

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00:05:38,896 --> 00:05:47,895

But he gradually became the leader of the gang, probably because he was more of a team person and was probably a more popular person and convinced people to his ways.

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00:05:47,895 --> 00:05:50,895

Jesse was much more outgoing than Frank.

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00:05:50,895 --> 00:05:58,894

He was very friendly, had a very strong sense of humor, and was a very easygoing person and had a lot of friends and knew a lot of people.

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00:05:58,894 --> 00:06:11,893

Frank was just the opposite. Frank was very quiet, very do-or, great haste to turn, probably never told a joke in his life, liked to read, could quote Shakespeare, and was a very, very private person.

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00:06:11,893 --> 00:06:18,892

It's an interesting story that they managed to stay in business for 16 years and they were never

caught.

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00:06:18,892 --> 00:06:27,891

Jesse, of course, was killed and Frank surrendered, partially because of the fact that they were very popular in the way they operated.

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00:06:27,891 --> 00:06:34,890

You have to remember that they concentrated on banks and railroads. They didn't hold up the corner grocery store.

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00:06:34,890 --> 00:06:39,890

They didn't mug people for the milk money and they didn't burglar people's homes.

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00:06:39,890 --> 00:06:47,889

They became very popular in that banks and railroads were among the most hated institutions by the average people in the country.

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00:06:47,889 --> 00:06:51,888

So they had lots of friends and these friends would hide them out.

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00:06:51,888 --> 00:07:05,887

By 1876, the strain of outlaw life was taking a toll on Jesse and the gang. Jesse was forced to tour saloons looking for members who had been drinking.

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00:07:05,887 --> 00:07:27,885

The risk of being seen in town before a job cut the odds of getting away. Jesse was afraid that someone might recognize them and set up an ambush.

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00:07:27,885 --> 00:07:46,883

September 7, 1876. Jesse and his seven followers carefully prepared for their raid. No pistol or horse went unchecked.

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00:07:46,883 --> 00:07:53,882

The gang had established a reputation for being nearly fanatical in the way they readied themselves for holdups.

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00:07:54,882 --> 00:08:02,881

Little did anyone know that this would be the last raid for the entire gang. They donned their infamous white dusters for the holdup.

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00:08:02,881 --> 00:08:08,880

By now, after so many successful bank raids, they were almost arrogant in their approach.

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00:08:08,880 --> 00:08:14,880

Some two miles out of Northfield, they set their plan in motion. Now they were ready.

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00:08:15,880 --> 00:08:22,879

Jesse had decided that they would split into two groups, each entering town from opposite directions.

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00:08:23,879 --> 00:08:38,877

Northfield was a small community of 500 people. It was a center for agriculture, industry and banking trade.

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00:08:38,877 --> 00:08:43,877

Their target bank was in fact the point of deposit for a number of smaller area banks.

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00:08:43,877 --> 00:09:11,874

While Jesse was not known to the Northfield people, the gang came under instant suspicion because of extremely fine horses they were riding,

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00:09:11,874 --> 00:09:14,873

and the startling appearance of their linen dusters.

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00:09:29,872 --> 00:09:35,871

As the group rode in, they warily inspected the town, looking for anyone who would spell trouble.

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00:09:35,871 --> 00:09:41,870

Little did they know that this raid would be the end of their long string of successful bank robberies.

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00:10:36,865 --> 00:10:45,864

As always, Jesse James leaped over the counter, demanding that the money be handed over.

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00:10:45,864 --> 00:11:06,861

Several of the bank employees grappled with the bandits. In the confusion, one of the tellers escaped, yelling, murder, murder.

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00:11:06,861 --> 00:11:10,861

Jesse fired at the fleeing man, but missed.

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00:11:15,860 --> 00:11:33,859

At the town been warned, it seemed so. Within minutes, armed townspeople began shooting at the gang.

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00:12:16,854 --> 00:12:31,852

Killed instantly were Clee Miller, Charlie Pitts and another member of the gang, Bill Edgewood. Jim Younger and his brothers Bob and Cole Younger were wounded. Only the James boys escaped unharmed.

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00:12:31,852 --> 00:12:44,851

There were falling outs between Frank and Jesse, and as a matter of fact, after Northfield, the rift became very, very great, and at the time Jesse was killed, it's very possible that Frank and Jesse weren't even communicating.

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00:12:44,851 --> 00:12:57,850

After the Northfield raid, the prices on Jesse and Frank's heads continued to grow. Bounty hunters and adventurers began tracking the brothers in order to earn the ever-increasing reward.

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00:12:58,850 --> 00:13:04,849

No longer were the James boys protected by the friendship of numerous people.

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00:13:11,848 --> 00:13:16,848

Bob Ford is the man most historians claim killed Jesse James.

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00:13:17,848 --> 00:13:27,846

There are, however, conflicting stories about Jesse's death. Jesse was planning the robbery of the Platt City Bank with Charlie and Bob Ford.

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00:13:30,846 --> 00:13:37,845

Zarelda James, Jesse's wife, was working in the kitchen, while Jesse laid out his ideas for a successful raid.

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00:13:38,845 --> 00:13:44,845

Uncharacteristically, Jesse took off his gun so that he could more easily straighten a picture.

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00:13:51,844 --> 00:14:02,843

Charlie Ford, motioned to his brother to stand. Bob, being the more accurate of the two men, stood, took careful aim, and shot Jesse in the head.

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00:14:08,842 --> 00:14:15,841

Both Ford brothers claimed that was an accident. Could it be, however, part of a plot to end the pursuit of Jesse?

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00:14:18,841 --> 00:14:25,840

It is known that Jesse's mother refused to identify the body. Some have said that the man shot was not Jesse James.

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00:14:25,840 --> 00:14:31,840

Others have said that James lived incognito for the next 60 years under an assumed name.

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00:14:32,840 --> 00:14:39,839

In 1948, a man by the name of J. Frank Dalton came forward, claiming that he was the real Jesse James.

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00:14:41,839 --> 00:14:46,838

Dalton went so far as signing an affidavit to the effect that he was Jesse James.

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00:14:49,838 --> 00:15:00,837

According to newspaper clippings of the time, some 25,000 people turned out for a parade in Lawton, Oklahoma, showing off Dalton as the real Jesse James.

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00:15:02,836 --> 00:15:08,836

It seems almost inconceivable that an imposter could have been in Jesse's place.

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00:15:08,836 --> 00:15:14,835

Yet only a few relatives had pictures of Jesse, which is one of the reasons he had eluded capture.

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00:15:15,835 --> 00:15:21,834

Carl Brean, a respected historian of the James robberies and author of the Escapades of Frank and Jesse James.

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00:15:22,834 --> 00:15:29,834

The statement that Mrs. Zarella James stated the body was not bad of her son Jesse James is not too hard to understand.

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00:15:29,834 --> 00:15:38,833

Because during the western days, there was a lot of people who would not identify outlaws and so on, in order that the reward would not be paid.

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00:15:39,832 --> 00:15:45,832

But later on she says it was and Zarella James did admit that it was her son and there's no question that it was.

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00:15:48,832 --> 00:15:53,831

After being on public display, Jesse was buried at his mother's home.

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00:15:54,831 --> 00:15:59,830

Interestingly enough, he was later moved to a public cemetery.

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00:16:07,830 --> 00:16:11,829

There's absolutely no question but Bob Ford killed Jesse James.

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00:16:12,829 --> 00:16:18,828

I don't think there's any question that Bob Ford killed Jesse James on that day, as he says he did.

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00:16:18,828 --> 00:16:23,828

Dalton maintained that it wasn't Jesse who was shot, but a man named Charlie Bigelow.

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00:16:24,828 --> 00:16:30,827

No one has ever been able to identify who Charlie Bigelow was. There was no gang member ever named Charlie Bigelow.

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00:16:30,827 --> 00:16:37,826

And as far as we've been able to find, we've never found any instance of anyone that they associated with named Charlie Bigelow.

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00:16:38,826 --> 00:16:48,825

Ironically, however, John Nicholson, Jesse James' grand-nephew, was able to lead in search of cameras to the very site where two Bigelow brothers were buried.

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00:16:50,825 --> 00:16:53,825

Nicholson explains what he knows about their mysterious deaths.

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00:16:55,824 --> 00:16:58,824

The Bigelow was buried on the Old Hainesville Cemetery.

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00:17:00,824 --> 00:17:02,824

All are readied by Hope, Missouri.

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00:17:03,824 --> 00:17:08,823

Their gravestones have fell over and very hard to find.

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00:17:11,823 --> 00:17:19,822

And I've heard my grandfather say that they was hauled up there in an old spring wagon.

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00:17:20,822 --> 00:17:29,821

And that the blood was running out into the spring wagon on the ground when they was hauled up there because there was no embalming.

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00:17:29,821 --> 00:17:36,820

As far as I know, I've heard that Jesse and Frank killed them, but as far as I couldn't say for sure.

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00:17:38,820 --> 00:17:46,819

Both grave markers bear the year 1884. If John Nicholson's story is correct, the Bigelows would have been buried two years after Jesse's death in 1882.

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00:17:49,819 --> 00:17:56,818

John James, the man who was buried in the spring wagon, was also buried in the spring wagon.

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00:17:57,818 --> 00:18:04,817

John James was in the picture in 1935. He came forward and said that he was Jesse James.

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00:18:05,817 --> 00:18:14,816

He had the same name, but no relation. And there was a famous trial in Excelsior Springs at that particular time for disproving or proving that he was Jesse James.

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00:18:15,816 --> 00:18:18,816

And he could not even name his half-brother's name.

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00:18:19,816 --> 00:18:30,814

And it found out that he was using the same story that Dalton used, that Bigelow was transferred to be Jesse James, and he was killed so Jesse could get away.

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00:18:31,814 --> 00:18:41,813

And of course, Jesse James was such a family-loving man that even if this story had been true, he would have never left his family, Jesse, to like they were for many years after his death.

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00:18:41,813 --> 00:18:58,811

Jesse James was a lad who killed many men. He robbed the Glendale train, and he stole from the ridge to give to the poor. Everyone learned of his name.

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00:18:58,811 --> 00:19:17,809

Jesse had a wife two more for his life, two children they were brave. But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard laid for Jesse in his grave.

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00:19:17,809 --> 00:19:28,808

It was a Saturday night and Jesse was alone talking to his family so brave.

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00:19:29,808 --> 00:19:38,807

Robert Ford came along like a thief in the night and laid for Jesse in his grave.

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00:19:38,807 --> 00:19:56,805

Jesse had a wife two more for his life, two children they were brave. But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard laid Jesse James in his grave.

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00:19:56,805 --> 00:20:16,803

Jesse James, both in this country and abroad, is one of the best known Americans, of all Americans, who ever lived at any time and in a period.

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00:20:16,803 --> 00:20:31,802

And he's also the Robin Hood, the romantic figure in our folklore and legend in history. And I think it's because Jesse James had style, I think he had mystique, he was daring, he was a cavalier type person.

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00:20:32,801 --> 00:20:43,800

And I think it captured the public imagination then, and I think it still captures the public imagination because of the very romantic time. I maintain that if it wasn't for Jesse James, he would have been invented.

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00:20:43,800 --> 00:20:59,799

As far as I know they never robbed an individual, the only thing they robbed is banks and trains. I've never been ashamed to be in Kendo, as far as that goes.

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00:20:59,799 --> 00:21:14,797

Well it seems to me that anyone like Jesse James or the younger brothers or Dillinger, the more time that passes, they become more folk heroes and people like to talk about them, especially in Missouri and the board of states where all this happened during the Civil War.

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00:21:15,797 --> 00:21:19,796

And I think that Jesse James, to become a legend died at the right time.

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00:21:19,796 --> 00:21:27,796

Both men are now dead. Who knows if the true Jesse James is buried in the plot in Kearney, Missouri.

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00:21:28,796 --> 00:21:43,794

Coming up next in search of investigates the claim that Butch Cassidy was not killed with the Sundance kid in Bolivia and lived until 1937.

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00:21:43,794 --> 00:21:59,792

Then agents confront a Chicago madame on FBI, the untold stories, and later tonight on Histories Lost and Found, Louis Armstrong's personal recordings and George Washington's school books, eddies here on the History Channel where the past comes alive.