

THE JOURNEY OF JESSE AND FRANK JAMES THROUGH RIVERVIEW CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

On September 7, 1876, Jesse and Frank James, along with the Younger Brothers and a gang of friends, robbed First National Bank in Northfield, MN. For 14 days, they fought their way southwest towards South Dakota, hungry, wet and cold. At some point, the James Brothers separated from the Younger Brothers and the rest of the gang. On September 21, 1876, the Younger Brothers and their gang were cornered outside Madelia, MN, where Charlie Pits was killed and the Younger Brothers were captured.

As the Younger Brothers were captured, Jesse and Frank were making their way to Garretson, SD. This is where Jesse James made the famed leap across Devil's Gulch to escape capture. Eluding yet another posse, Jesse and Frank continued south down the Sioux River Valley. The next record of them being sighted was one mile north of the current location of Riverview Christmas Tree Farm. There, they found food and warm beds in the home of Ole Rongstad, who gave them quarter because he believed they were sheriffs chasing horse thieves. When Ole awoke in the morning, he found that breakfast was gone and so were his two house guests. They had left their weary horses and headed out on foot, carrying their saddles.

Jesse and Frank's next stop would be the Fowler Homestead, the present day location of Riverview Christmas Tree Farm. Here, they would "borrow" mules and continue south across the road to the Carl Anderson Farm. They stole horses at gunpoint from Charlie Fountain and Jon and Peter Wahl. Then, they crossed the river into Iowa. At this point, Peter Wahl and Ole Rongstad were in hot pursuit. As they neared the James Brothers, Jesse took a shot at Peter, who dodged a bullet which then struck Ole's horse in the neck. The two men backed off their chase and the James Brothers disappeared into the trees. A short time later, a newly formed posse from Canton was back on their trail.

Jesse and Frank eluded capture until Jesse was shot in the back by one of his own gang members, Robert Ford, on April 3, 1882. Ford had hopes of collecting the reward money being offered. After Jesse's murder, Frank turned himself in. He served three weeks in jail before being acquitted. He died in 1915 at the age of 72.



1 September 1876: James Brothers pose as sheriffs hunting horse thieves and receive quarter from Ole Rongstad. In the morning, they wake early take breakfast and head out on foot carrying their saddles.

2 James Brothers stop at the Fowler Farm, which is the location of Riverview Christmas Tree Farm. Here they take mules and cross the road continuing south.

3 James Brothers steal horses at gunpoint on the Carl Anderson Farm and make their escape east across the Big Sioux River into Iowa.