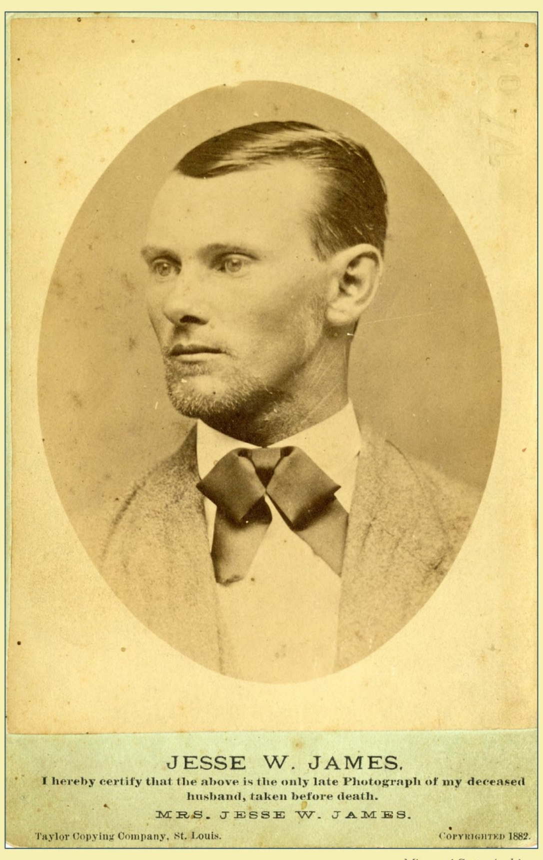
DIVIDED LOYALTIES
CIVIL WAR DOCUMENTS FROM THE
MISSOURI STATE ARCHIVES

VIGILANTE VIOLENCE

THE END OF THE JAMES GANG

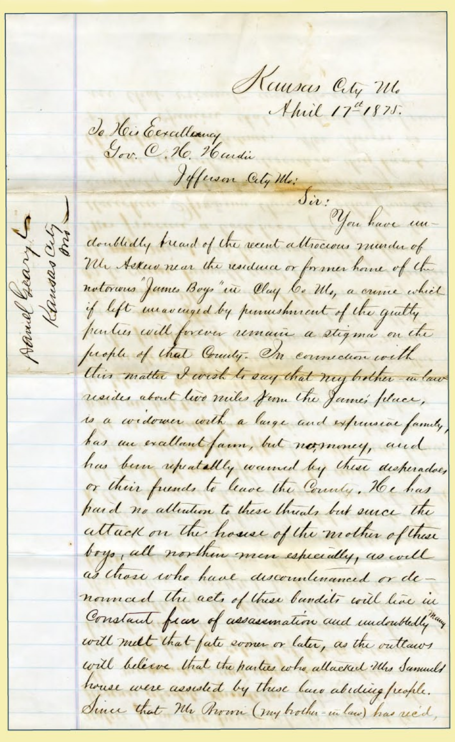
As the number of robberies and murders committed by the James Gang increased, so did calls for the State of Missouri to put a stop to the brothers' crime spree. On July 28, 1881, Missouri Governor Thomas Crittenden offered a reward of $5,000 for the arrest and delivery of Frank and Jesse James and the arrest and conviction of each member of their gang that had participated in a robbery and murder that had taken place in Daviess County 13 days earlier. On April 3, 1882, Bob Ford, an acquaintance of Jesse's who was eager to collect the reward money, murdered Jesse in his home in St. Joseph, Missouri. On April 17th, Governor Crittenden granted Bob Ford a pardon.

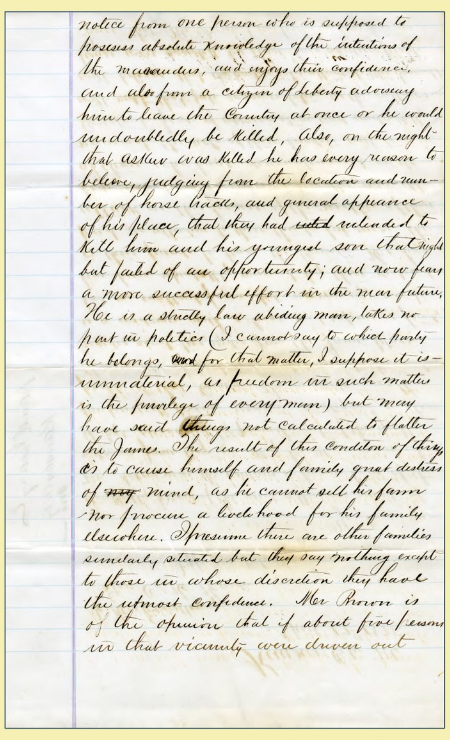
A year later, Frank James surrendered to Governor Crittenden. Frank was subsequently tried in Daviess and Jackson Counties and arraigned on murder charges, as well as for train robberies executed by the James Gang. The strategy of Frank's defense was to gain sympathy by recalling the circumstances of the Civil War in Missouri and, in so doing, he found a receptive audience. Frank James was acquitted of all charges. He lived until 1915 and in old age enjoyed his status as the celebrated former outlaw.



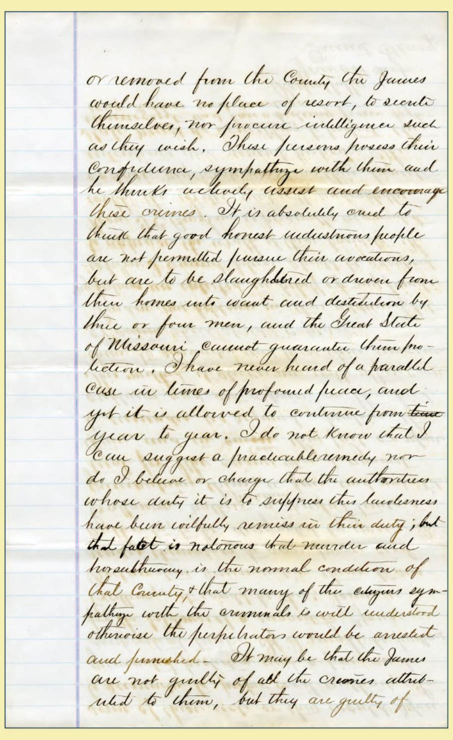
Missouri State Archives

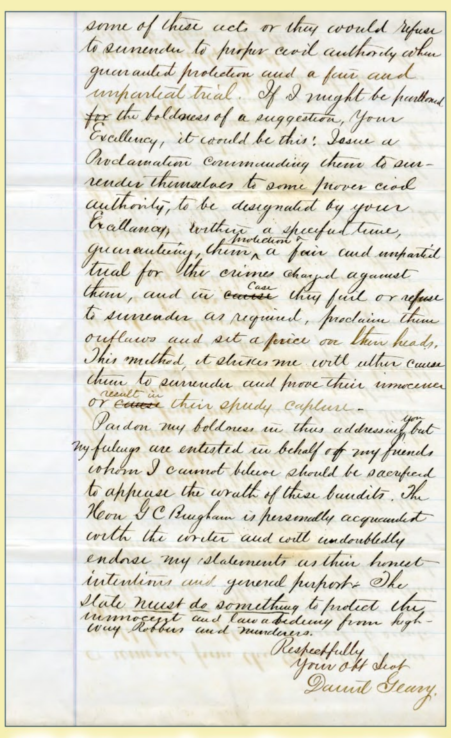
"Since the attack on the house of the mother of [the James] boys, all northern men especially, as well as those who have discountenanced or denounced the acts of these bandits will live in constant fear of assassination and undoubtedly many will meet that fate sooner or later."



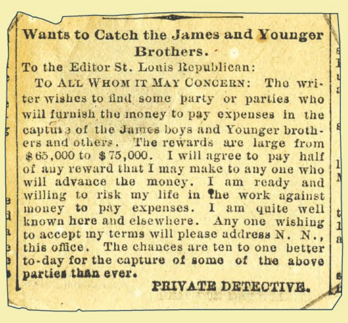


David Geary to Missouri Governor Charles Hardin, April 17, 1875.
Missouri State Archives





"The State must do something to protect the innocent and law abiding from highway robbers and murderers."

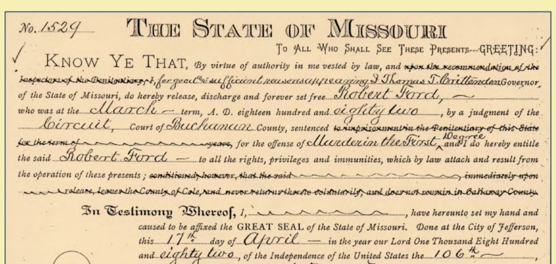

Wants to Catch the James and Younger Brothers.

To the Editor St. Louis Republican:

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The writer wishes to find some party or parties who will furnish the money to pay expenses in the capture of the James boys and Younger brothers and others. The rewards are large from $65,000 to $75,000. I will agree to pay half of any reward that I may make to any one who will advance the money. I am ready and willing to risk my life in the work against money to pay expenses. I am quite well known here and elsewhere. Any one wishing to accept my terms will please address N. N., this office. The chances are ten to one better to-day for the capture of some of the above parties than ever.

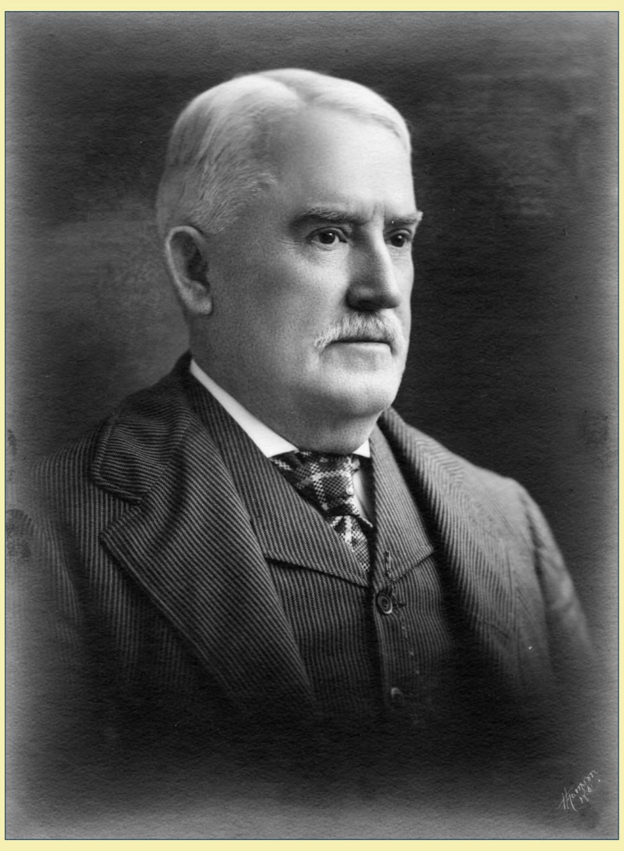
PRIVATE DETECTIVE.

Above: Clipping from *The St. Louis Republican*, May 1875.
Below: Governor Thomas Crittenden's pardon of Bob Ford, April 17, 1882.
Missouri State Archives

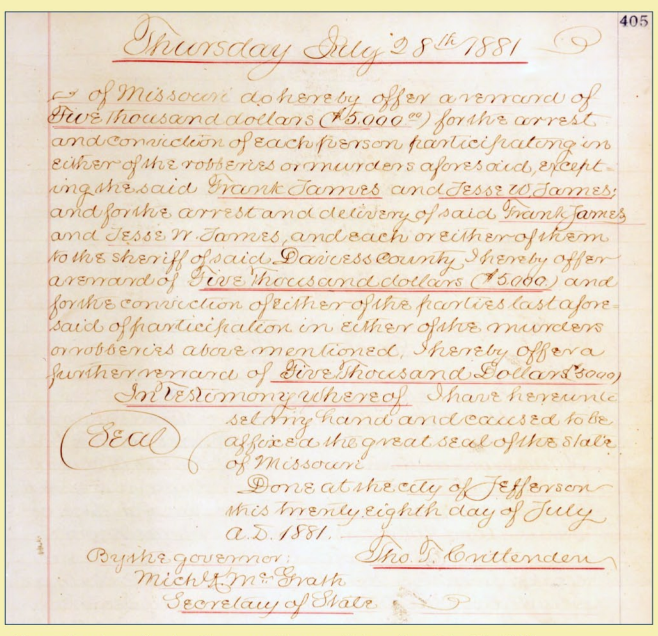

THE STATE OF MISSOURI

To All Who Shall See These Presents---Greeting

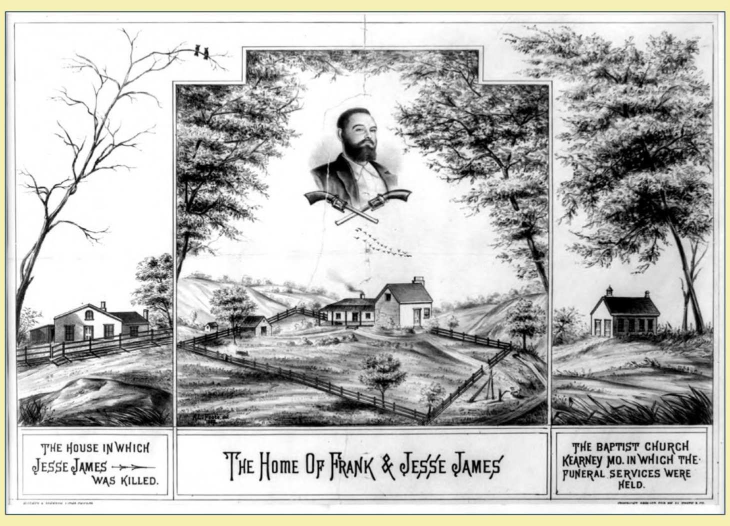
KNOW YE THAT, By virtue of authority in me vested by law, and ... for good and sufficient reasons appearing I Thomas T. Crittenden ... of Missouri, do hereby release, discharge and forever set free Robert Ford, ... the March term, A. D. eighteen hundred and eighty two, by a judgment ... Circuit, Court of Buchanan County, sentenced ... for the offense of Murder in the First Degree and I do hereby ... Robert Ford to all the rights, privileges and immunities, which by law attach and ...

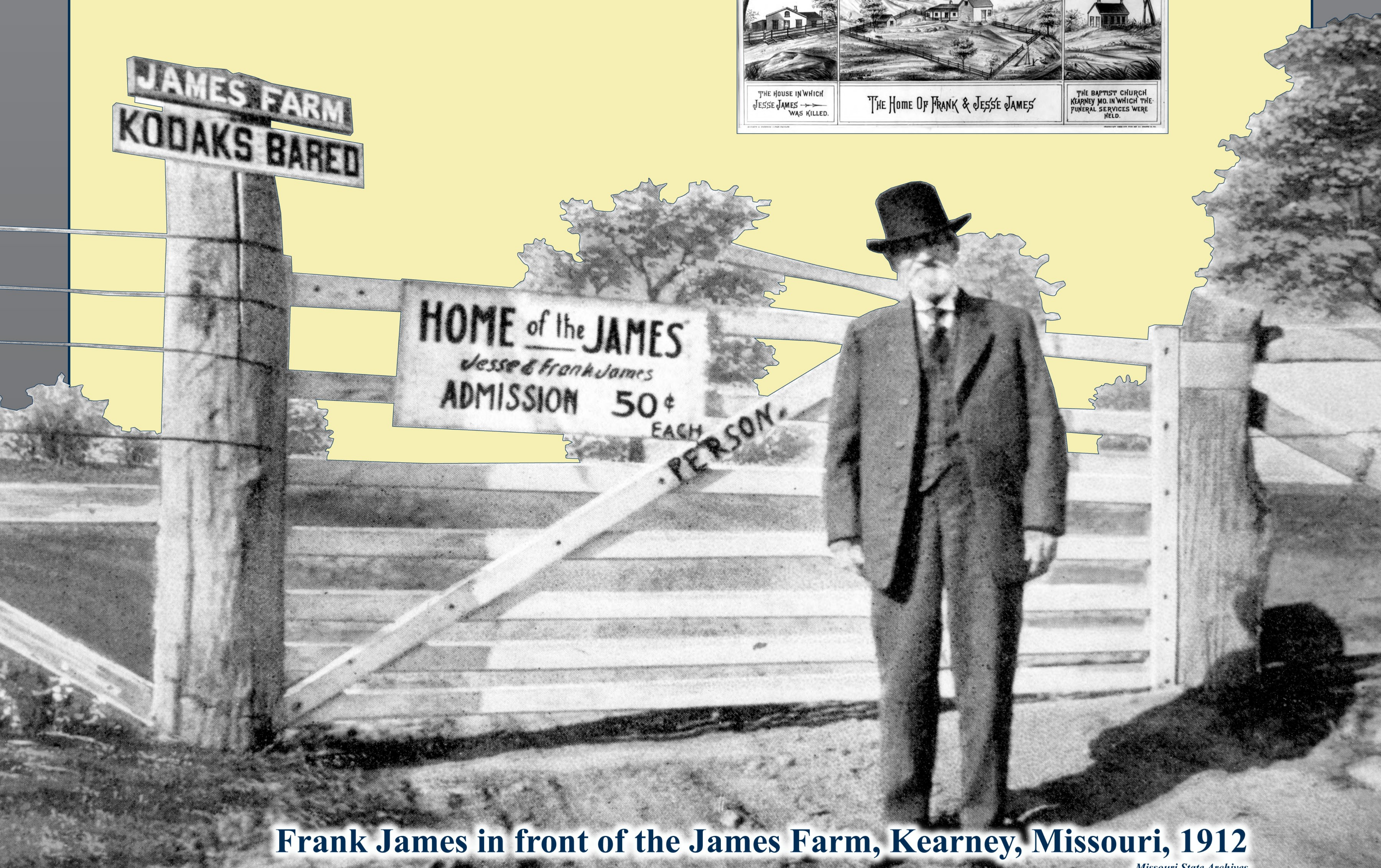


Missouri Governor Thomas Crittenden.
Missouri State Archives



Above: Proclamation by Governor Thomas Crittenden, July 28, 1881.
Missouri State Archives
Below: "The Home of Frank and Jesse James."
Library of Congress





Frank James in front of the James Farm, Kearney, Missouri, 1912
Missouri State Archives

1882