



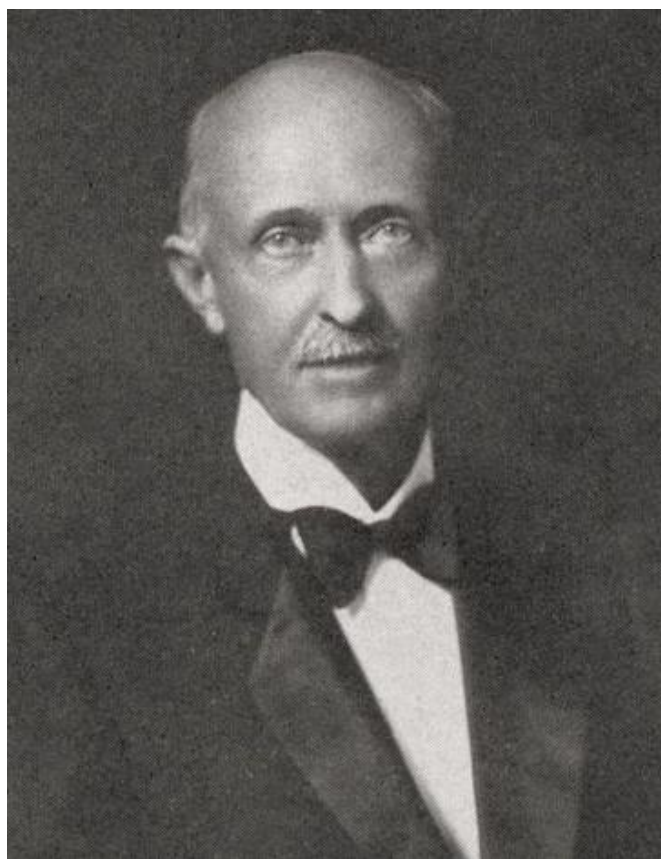
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BY PACKET BOAT TO SEE TEXAS JACK

By Rand McKinney



When I mention that my grandfather was born the year after the American Civil War ended, people are often incredulous. But, indeed, Malvern Hill (M.H.) Omohundro, Sr., was born on Dec. 17, 1866, the youngest of John Burwell Omohundro's children who survived to adulthood and my mother, Virginia Van Lew Omohundro, was M.H.'s youngest child. Most readers will be familiar with M.H., Sr., as Texas Jack's brother and the author of the *Omohundro Genealogical Record*. M.H. was almost twenty years younger than his brother, Texas Jack, and grew up during the height of his fame and renown on the stage. I suspect that having so many older siblings, especially a famous one such as Texas Jack, helped to ignite his interest in family history and genealogy, which would occupy decades of his later life.

Malvern Hill (M.H.) Omohundro, Sr.
FindAGrave.com

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The Texas Jack Scout



from the Editor's Desk...



It was my privilege to once again act as Guest Editor for *The Scout*. This issue offers several interesting articles that I hope you'll enjoy.

You'll be reading this well after the aftermath of the highly contentious 2024 election, but as I write, it is days away. Sometimes, when I wonder if our republic can stand much more division and vitriol, I think back on Texas Jack's era when the country was also deeply divided and convulsed by a horribly bloody civil war where "brother fought brother," figuratively and sometimes even literally. However tragic that war was, in the end it resulted in the emancipation of millions of enslaved people, and eventually Americans were able to come together and move forward. I'm inspired by the example of Texas Jack, who befriended Bill Cody, J.B. Hickok, and many other men on the Union side. I hope after this fractious period, we can all follow their examples and come together similarly with grace, understanding, and generosity of spirit.

Rand McKinney, Guest Editor

The Texas Jack Scout

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The Texas Jack Association was founded in 1980 by Frank Sullivan to commemorate John Baker Omohundro, prairie scout, western hunting guide, and Wild West showman.

The Texas Jack Scout publishes articles about John B. "Texas Jack" Omohundro, the times and places in which he lived, and individuals who have contributed substantially to maintaining his memory.

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Continued from page 1

I came across an interesting passage in the *Omohundro Genealogical Record* that recounts the first and possibly only time that M.H. saw Texas Jack perform (if there was another, I haven't found a record of it). In it, M.H. recounts a trip he made in 1873 at the age of six to see Texas Jack perform in Richmond, Virginia, along with his parents and possibly his brother Woodville, known as "Wood." They traveled from the Omohundro home, "Pleasure Hill," near Palmyra to Richmond, taking a packet boat on the James River and Kanawha Canal.

M.H. places "Pleasure Hill" at the very center of colonial America, both geographically and historically:

"Down in Old Virginia, the Mother of States, the Mother of Presidents, the seat of the first permanent English settlement, and the beginning of English civilization in America, near the center of said State, in Fluvanna County, [...] about the center of said county, one mile west of the county seat Palmyra, on a big farm, in a large bend of Big Cunningham Creek, amidst broad fields in a clump of tall sturdy oaks stood a large house, about one mile from the highway."

He also places the James River and Kanawha Canal prominently in Virginian and thus American history:

"While this book is an historical genealogical record of the Omohundros and their descendants and connections, which families are 9/10 Virginians, and as the James River and this canal traversed the center of Virginia and so many of these families were connected with,

traveled on, and thought so much of this canal, I feel that this work would hardly be complete without a few words concerning it.

In the beginning of the English colony in Virginia, our first settlement was at Jamestown on the James River, 1607. From that time on civilization advanced up the river, and until about 1835, when the railroads first began to appear in this wilderness country, James River was about the main source of public conveyance."

The Kanawha Canal ran alongside the James River upstream from its head of navigation in Richmond. George Washington and other Founding Fathers promoted it as a potential connection between the Atlantic coast and James River to the Ohio River (via its tributary, the Kanawha River). In 1790 it became the first commercial canal in the United States, and eventually extended up the James almost 200 miles to Buchanan, Virginia, near Roanoke.

Initially, cargo such as tobacco was transported down the canal in bateaux, flat-bottomed boats pushed by men (often slaves) using long poles, returning from Richmond with French and English imports, furniture, dishes, and clothing. Later, bateaux were mostly replaced by larger packet boats pulled by mules and horses along the towpath next to the canal. During the first half of the 19th century the canal was a major transportation artery in Virginia. However, by the 1880s, the canal was replaced by the railroad, which was constructed along the old towpath.

So in 1873, when M.H. took a packet boat to see Texas Jack perform on stage in

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Richmond, the canal was already in its last days. His narrative provides a charming snapshot of a bygone era and of Texas Jack from his younger brother's perspective,

recalled many years later and recorded in the *Omohundro Genealogical Record* (pages 544-6).



*Passenger and cargo boats on the James River and Kanawha Canal in Richmond, VA
Library of Congress, Harper's Weekly (October 1865).*

[...] The packet boat [...] was a beautiful little boat that carried the mail and about 40 or 50 passengers at most. These boats were pulled by a tow line hitched to three horses generally the same color-white, black, gray, sorrel, or bay. These horses generally traveled in a fox trot with the driver on the rear horse and a small horn around his shoulder. This horn he blew for each set of locks to be ready by the time he got there, which of course was not long. These horses were generally changed about every 10 or 15 miles. The boat generally traveled at the rate of 10 miles an hour and ran day and night. On this boat the wealth, culture, and refinement of the James River section could be found going to and

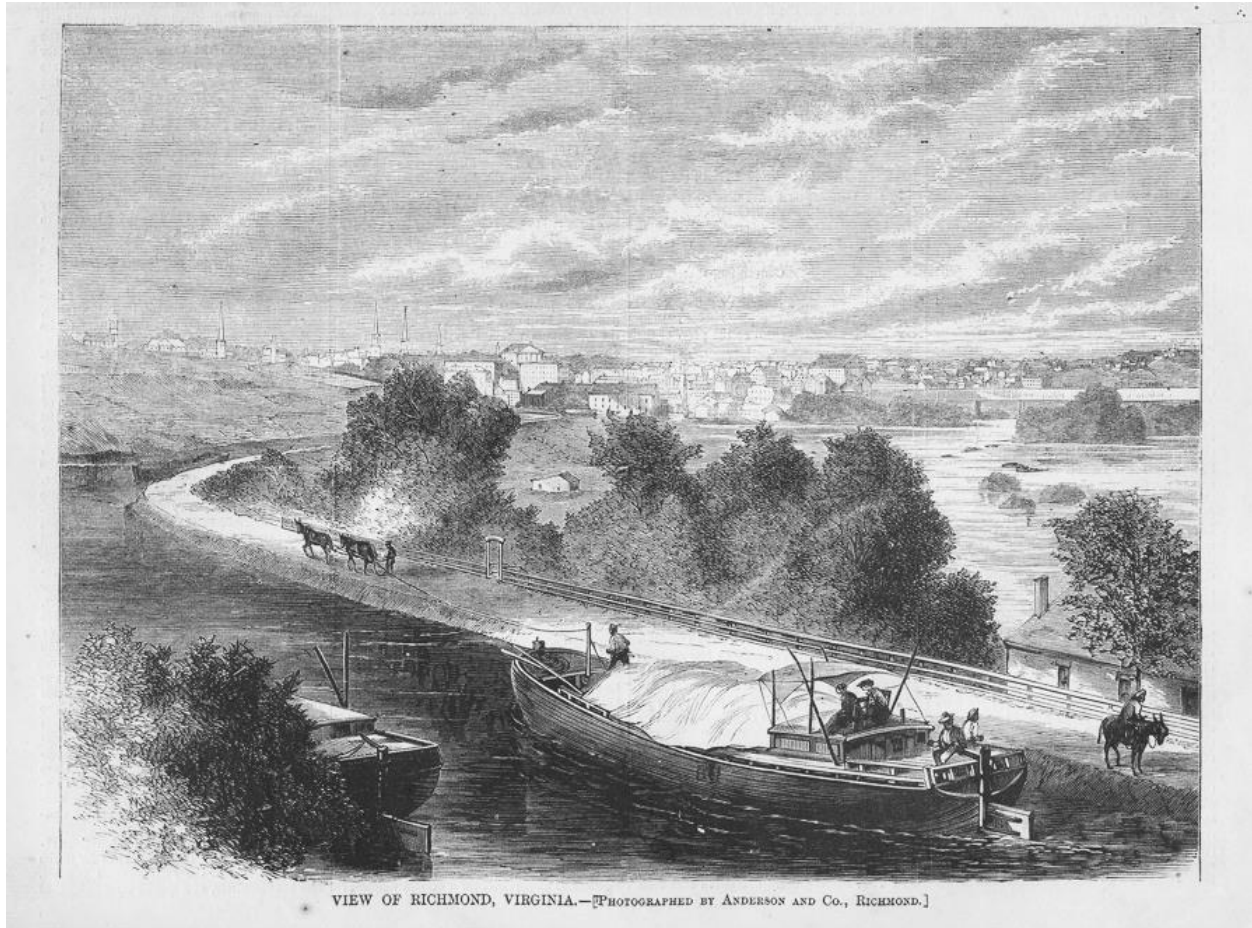
from Richmond. Many big planters as well as members of the professions generally had a good time meeting their friends, sitting on the deck at night, drinking mint juleps fresh from the bar and telling big jokes, playing cards and other games. The food and drinks on these packet boats were the best this country could afford. This was a part of the high life of old Virginia at that time and the people learned to love and talk about that canal like a dear member of the family. My big brother "Wood" used to say he loved it like a woman.

...When they got within half a mile of the locks, the steersman would blow his tin horn and holler, "Locks

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ready!" The horn was about 8 feet long, about one foot or more in diameter at the far end and less than one inch in diameter at the mouth,

and could be heard for a long distance, at times for miles. To hear this horn blowing late in the night was certainly a lonesome sound.



The James River and Kanawha Canal entered Richmond from the West, bringing business from the Piedmont and even west of the Blue Ridge to the Fall Line. Harper's Weekly (May 14, 1870).

...All this is only a slight touch of the easygoing business and social life up and down the old canal, and no wonder that the people along the line did not want to give it up. But progress must go forward, and in June 1879, the canal passed from under the old management, and the Richmond and Alleghany R. R. Co. (now C. & O.) [Chesapeake and Ohio] started laying its tracks up the

towpath. The job was completed in 1881.

My first trip from my old home in Fluvanna County to Richmond was on one of these boats with my mother and father in April 1873, to see "Texas Jack" (J. B. Omohundro) and "Buffalo Bill," who showed in Richmond in the old Broad Street Theatre at 7th and Broad for 3 days and nights to an overcrowded house.

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I was then a little over six years old. We stopped at the Old Exchange Hotel, then the finest in the city, on the north side of East Franklin between 13th and 14th Street, with a bridge across the street to the Ballard House.

...The boat landed at Richmond at 5:00 a.m., and it was a pill for me to have to get up at that time; however, when I finally got my eyes open and stepped ashore among the big crowd and the roar of the hotel runners, about the first thing I saw was my Brother John, who clasped us with open arms and led us to a hack, now "taxi." [...]

That evening we went to the theater and met Col. Cody and also Ned Buntline, who wrote the play, and many others, as well as Dove Eye and Hazel Eye, two leading ladies of the show. It seemed to me they danced on the end of their toes. Also I remember the Indians, who traced the white men's steps by picking up every little scrap and smelling it, just as a dog would do. Then my brother would run out and lasso the Indian and drag him in, and the crowd would roar.

Elsewhere in the *Omohundro Genealogical Record* (page 521), M.H. relates that when Texas Jack came to Richmond, "... Jack's parents and brothers, as well as many other kin and acquaintances, went to see him. All expenses of his guests were paid by Jack.... Many acquaintances called to see him at the Old Exchange Hotel on East Franklin Street, ... to congratulate him, and large crowds

assembled to see the one-time Virginian as a cowboy. Newspapers gave glowing accounts, and the old Richmond Theater, S. E. Corner of 7th and Broad Streets, was crowded to capacity day and night."

On page 552, he also waxes philosophical on the differences between the "good old days" of the canal and 1950, when the *Omohundro Genealogical Record* was published:

This was great life in the country in old Virginia on the farm in those days, but now times have changed; yes, changed, but have they changed for the better and more enjoyment of life? Do we enjoy ourselves more today than then? We now ride in the automobile, look at the movies and hear the radio, rush through life in search of fame and fortune, but does that give us any more pleasure in life than when we used to hunt, fish, run horse races, fox hunt, ride in tournaments, visit friends, talk, and tell tales, laugh, dance, eat heartily, sleep sound, and enjoy ourselves to the greatest extent?

It's a sentiment that has been common throughout time and can often ring true today in its essence. Instead of "...ride in the automobile, etc.," in today's world one might substitute "fly across the world in jets, communicate via email, apps, and text messages on our cell phones, converse with AI chatbots, and rush through life in search of fame ('likes' or 'follows' on social media) and fortune" and ask the same question: "...does that give us any more pleasure in life than before?" I expect my grandfather would think not. ¶

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Texas Jack's Smith & Wesson New Model No. 3

An Antique Gun, a Forgotten Cowboy, and the Unwritten Start of the Wild West

by Matthew Kerns

It was a December day in 2023 like any other for Jim Perrin, a seasoned collector of antique firearms. Though the room at Rock Island Auctions was full of bidders eagerly vying for their chosen pieces, Jim wasn't physically there—he'd submitted his maximum bid remotely beforehand. For that auction, Jim had his eye on a few fine examples of early Smith & Wesson revolvers. As the auctioneer rattled off prices and descriptions, driving up the bids on each rifle, revolver, or piece of firearms history, none of the bidders had any idea that the next revolver to come under the gavel was a piece of Wild West history.



Auction listing for S&W New Model No. 3, Serial #96

When the virtual gavel finally came down, Jim's bid secured the revolver. It was an early model, serial number 96, one of the first hundred New Model No. 3 revolvers ever produced by Smith &

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Wesson. At the time, Jim had no idea he had just purchased a remarkable piece of American history.

A Collector's Curiosity: From Serial Numbers to Storylines

Jim Perrin had always been fascinated by early Smith & Wesson revolvers. The craftsmanship, engineering, and their place in American history captivated him. When this particular revolver came up for auction, it was the serial number that caught his eye. A low number like 96 meant it was one of the first hundred examples of this model to leave Smith & Wesson's Springfield, Massachusetts factory, a fact that would make any serious collector pay attention.

After winning the revolver, Jim did what any collector would—he began researching its origins. He contacted Smith & Wesson's historical department to get more information on the gun's provenance. When the letter arrived, Jim learned the revolver had been part of a matching pair, serial numbers 96 and 78, shipped on November 5, 1878, to Eufala, Alabama. At the receiving end was none other than Texas Jack Omohundro.

Texas Jack in 1878: A Cowboy at the Crossroads of Legend

In 1878, Texas Jack was a man of many talents—cowboy, scout, stage performer, and marksman. That year, Jack was traveling through the South with Doctor William Frank Carver, a renowned trickshot with his own claim to fame as the greatest sharpshooting rifleman of his generation. Their exhibition tour was one of skill and bravado, with Carver shooting glass balls out of the air with his rifle and Jack demonstrating his prowess with his revolvers. It was likely



during this tour that Texas Jack wielded the revolver Jim now owned, thrilling audiences with his accuracy and showmanship.

*<Texas Jack
Omohundro
and Doctor
William F.
Carver*

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Springfield Mass

Mr. James Perrin
2314 W. Lonesome Dove Dr.
Deer Park, TX 77536

February 29, 2024

Dear Mr. Perrin,

The New Model No. 3 Single Action was introduced by the factory in 1878. It was manufactured until 1898. However, they continued to be sold until 1912. A total of 35,796 revolvers were produced in either blue or nickel finish with barrel lengths of 3 1/2", 4", 5", 6", 6 1/2", 7", 7 1/2" and 8". Both fixed and target sights were available. The original grips were checked walnut or checked black hard rubber round butt on a round butt frame. This revolver was generally chambered for the .44 S&W Russian ammunition. During the thirty-four years the revolver was produced, it was manufactured in both target and fixed sights variations in the following calibers: .32 S&W, .32-44 S&W, .320 S&W Revolving Rifle, .38 S&W, .38-44 S&W, .41 S&W, .44 Henry Rim Fire, .44 S&W American, .44 S&W Russian, .45 S&W Schofield, .450 Revolver, .45 Webley, .455 Mark I, and .455 Mark II.

Many other countries purchased the New Model No. 3, but significant orders were received from Japan and Turkey. The Japanese government through their agent, Takata & Company, purchased approximately one third of the total production, and the revolver was so popular with the Japanese that in 1902, Smith & Wesson featured an advertisement showing the New Model No. 3 as the choice of the Japanese Navy.

We have researched your Smith & Wesson New Model No. 3, Early Production, caliber 44 S&W Russian in company records. They indicate that your revolver, with butt serial number 96, was shipped from our Stockbridge Street factory on November 5, 1878. It was delivered to John B. Omohundro, "Texas Jack" address unreadable. The records indicate your revolver was shipped with a blue finish, a 6.5-inch barrel with a pinned round blade front sight, fixed rear sights, and walnut round butt stocks. There were two New Model #3's in the order, both in the same configuration. The second revolver was serial number 78. I've included a copy of the page from the shipping book showing the two entries for 78 & 96.

We hope this information is helpful to you.

Yours truly,

Smith & Wesson Historical Foundation

Don Mundell
Historian



Letter from S&W's historian to Mr. Perrin about the revolver

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No. of Pistol	No. of Case	Remarks	No. of Pistol	No. of Case	Remarks
1			51		
2			52	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
3			53	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
4			54		
5	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		55		
6			56		
7			57	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
8			58	1.10.1881. HARTLEY & GRAHAM	
9			59	1.10.1881. HARTLEY & GRAHAM	
10	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		60	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
11	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		61	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
12			62	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
13			63		
14	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		64	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
15			65	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
16			66		
17			67		
18			68	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
19			69		
20			70	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
21			71		
22			72		
23	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		73	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
24			74		
25			75		
26	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		76		
27			77		
28	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		78	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
29			79	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
30	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		80	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
31			81	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
32			82		
33			83		
34			84	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
35			85		
36			86		
37	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		87		
38			88	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
39			89	1.10.1881. HARTLEY & GRAHAM	
40			90	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
41			91	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
42			92		
43			93	1.10.1881. HARTLEY & GRAHAM	
44	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		94		
45	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		95		
46			96		
47	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		97	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
48	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		98	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	
49	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		99	1.10.1881. HARTLEY & GRAHAM	
50	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA		100	9.22.80. DON. JOSE VALERO. CUBA	

Serial page from S&W archives, showing serials 78 and 96 shipping on November 5, 1878 to Texas Jack in Alabama

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Jack's life was as dynamic as it was dangerous. He had spent years scouting for the U.S. Army, hunting buffalo, and leading expeditions for European aristocrats eager to see the untamed West. But by 1878, he had shifted from the open plains to the performance stage, first with his friend Buffalo Bill Cody, and later with famous gunslinger Wild Bill Hickok. After their tour in 1876, Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill had split up their shows, with Texas Jack launching a solo tour with his wife, "the Peerless" Giuseppina Morlacchi, in 1877.

After nearly a year of touring, Jack found himself dissatisfied with both the demands of and the financial rewards for maintaining such a grueling stage schedule. He reconnected with Carver, and the pair decided to partner for a series of shooting exhibitions in the fall of 1878. Their partnership had been an uneasy one, born out of both necessity and rivalry—both men had once courted the same woman, Ena Palmer. But by the time they took to the road together, the competition was forgotten, and the two became an attraction in their own right, pioneers of the spectacle that would eventually become the Wild West Show.



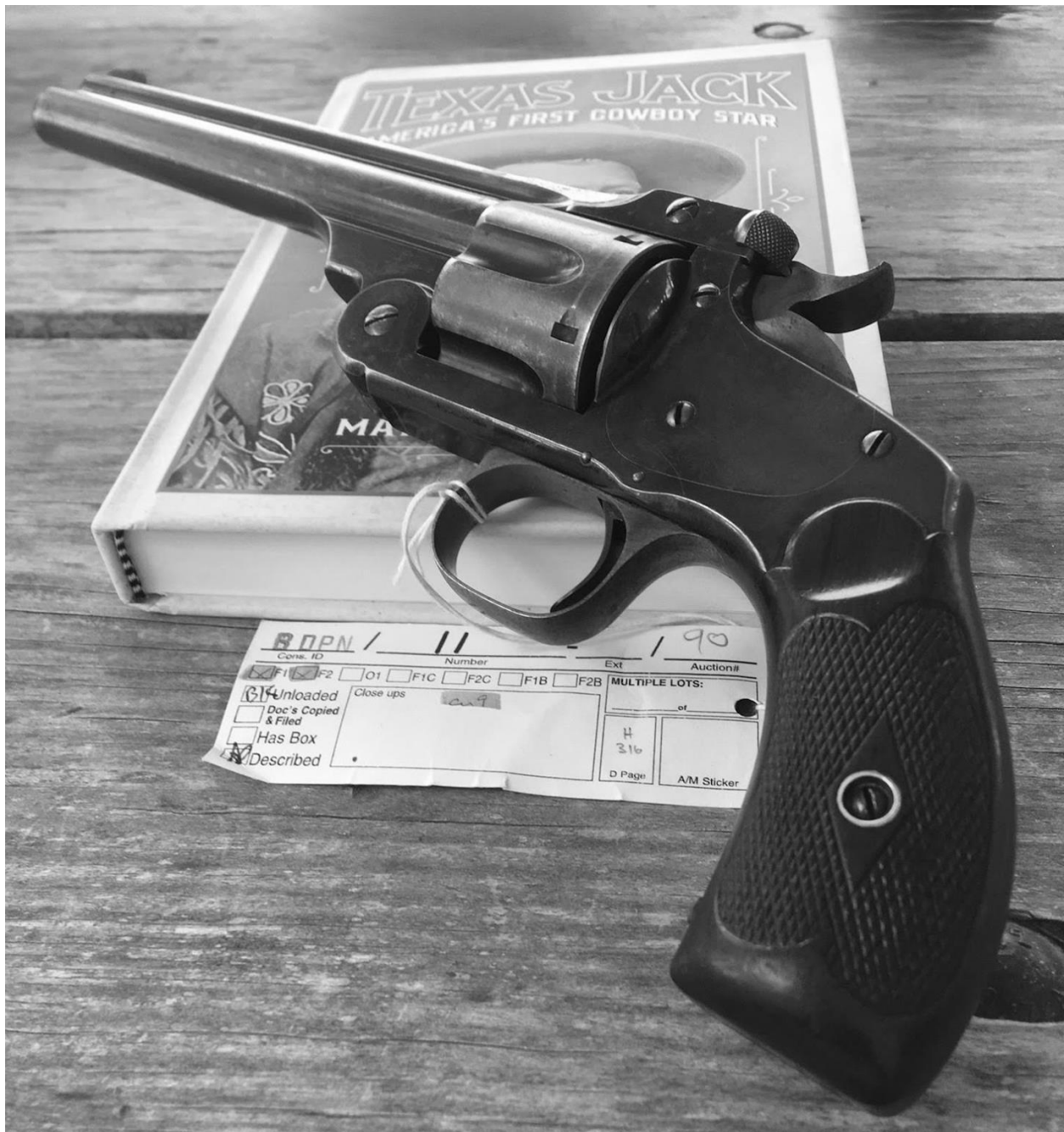
Ena Palmer and Texas Jack

Piecing Together History: From Alabama to Texas (Jack)

As Jim learned more about his revolver's past, he wanted to know more about Texas Jack. He did a little research online, which pointed him to a recent book on Jack's life. After showing off the revolver to a few friends at a gathering in Texas, one of those friends posted a photo of the gun and the book to an online forum, which is where it popped up in my recurring search for "Texas Jack."

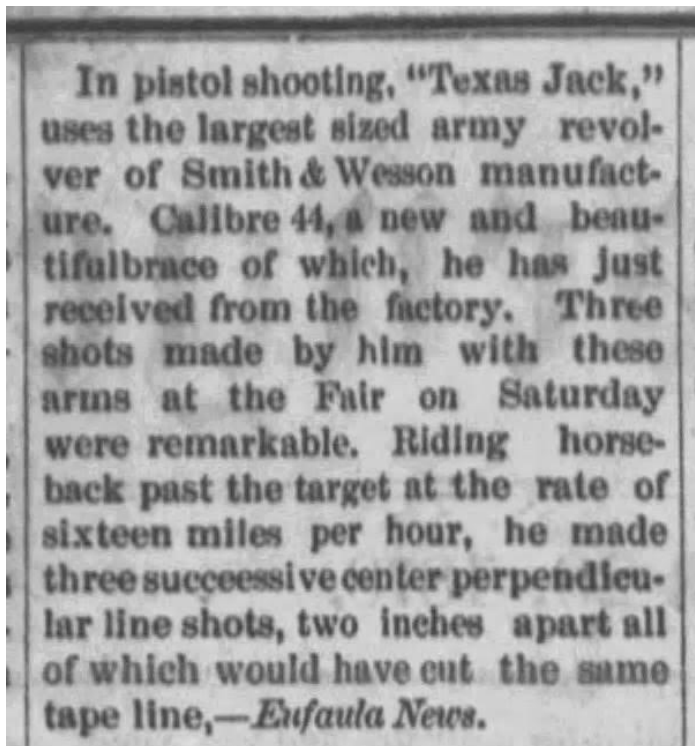
Cautiously excited about the prospect that this might actually be one of Texas Jack Omohundro's personally owned firearms, I signed up for the forum and replied, "I wrote the book [shown in the photo] under the gun, and would love to talk to you about it. Drop me a line." A day later, I got an email from the poster, who cc'd the gun's purchaser, Jim Perrin.

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Talking with Jim, I began piecing together more of the story. He sent me the letter from Smith & Wesson verifying this gun was ordered by and shipped to Texas Jack Omohundro. He also had verification that it was shipped to Alabama on November 5, 1878. I already had come across an old newspaper clipping from Eufaula, Alabama, dated November 28, 1878, while researching my book. The clipping detailed a performance by Texas Jack and Doctor Carver, mentioning Jack's use of a pair of revolvers during his impressive shooting demonstrations. Could this revolver have been one of those mentioned in the article? With the dates lining up, it seemed likely. These revolvers were the tools of Texas Jack's trade, just as important to his craft as a showman as his

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lasso and horse had been when he was a cowboy, and central to the performances that captivated audiences across the country. And this particular gun was one of two that Jack hand selected when he first started showing off his skill with the revolver to outdoor audiences, a step removed from firing blanks on stage.

The revolver, serial number 96, was there during the birth of what would later become known as the Wild West Show. It was part of the formative years, when Jack, Carver, and Buffalo Bill were pioneering the very idea of the cowboy as both a real-life figure and an entertainment spectacle. Though Jack would pass away from pneumonia in 1880, his legacy continued, particularly through the Wild West Show that Buffalo Bill would develop into a

worldwide phenomenon.

The Forgotten Cowboy: Texas Jack's Enduring Legacy

Though Texas Jack's name may not be as prominent today as that of his best friend and partner, Buffalo Bill Cody, his role in shaping the early Wild West performances is undeniable. Six years before Buffalo Bill and Doctor Carver would officially launch their inaugural Wild West Shows, Texas Jack was already blazing the trail. Throughout 1878, Jack and Carver toured the South, performing at state fairs and outdoor exhibitions that would lay the groundwork for what would later become the global phenomenon of the Wild West Show.

While these performances never quite reached the heights of Buffalo Bill's later spectacles, they contained many of the elements that would become synonymous with the Wild West: Carver's rifle-shooting, Jack's daring displays of shooting from horseback, his skill with the lasso, his wrangling of a herd of elk, and even his quick-firing with a bow and arrow—all of this was part of the act. These shows blended the theater that Jack had perfected on stage with Buffalo Bill, since they launched their show together in 1872, with the raw athleticism and frontier skills that captivated audiences. In many ways, this was the genesis of what the Wild West Show would eventually become.

It's not hard to imagine that had Jack not died tragically young in 1880, he would have been right there alongside Buffalo Bill and Doctor Carver when they officially launched the Wild West Show in 1884. He was, after all, one of its earliest pioneers, weaving together the mythos of the cowboy and the spectacle of the American frontier.

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The revolver Jim now owned was not just an artifact. It was a piece of this larger story, a symbol of the Wild West's early days and Texas Jack's role in shaping it. Jim was coming to understand that he wasn't just holding a valuable firearm; he was holding a piece of American history.



Buffalo Bill Cody at the grave of Texas Jack in Leadville, Colorado

Texas Jack's Relationship with Smith & Wesson

Though Texas Jack had relationships with many firearms manufacturers during his lifetime, none stood out as strongly as his long-standing preference for Smith & Wesson revolvers. He hunted with Elijah P. Greene, nephew of the founder of Remington, and even wrote fondly about his favorite Remington rifle. Jack also offered glowing endorsements for the Evans Repeating Rifle, noting its value for anyone traveling through the frontier. But when it came to revolvers, Jack's loyalty was unmistakably tied to Smith & Wesson.

One of the most famous revolvers Jack ever owned was the Model 3 American, presented to him at Fort McPherson, Nebraska. This very gun would later be immortalized in Herschel Logan's biography of Texas Jack, *Buckskin and Satin*. Today, the revolver holds a prominent place in

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Mike Harvey's collection at Cimarron Firearms, a testament to Jack's ongoing influence in the world of antique firearms.

Jack's connection to Smith & Wesson wasn't limited to this single revolver. He ordered multiple guns from the company, often presenting them as gifts to friends and associates. His affinity for their craftsmanship is documented in a letter that remains in the Smith & Wesson archives. Dated January 13th, 1874, and written from the Billerica, Massachusetts, home he shared with his wife, Giuseppina Morlacchi, the letter reflects Jack's professional relationship with the company:

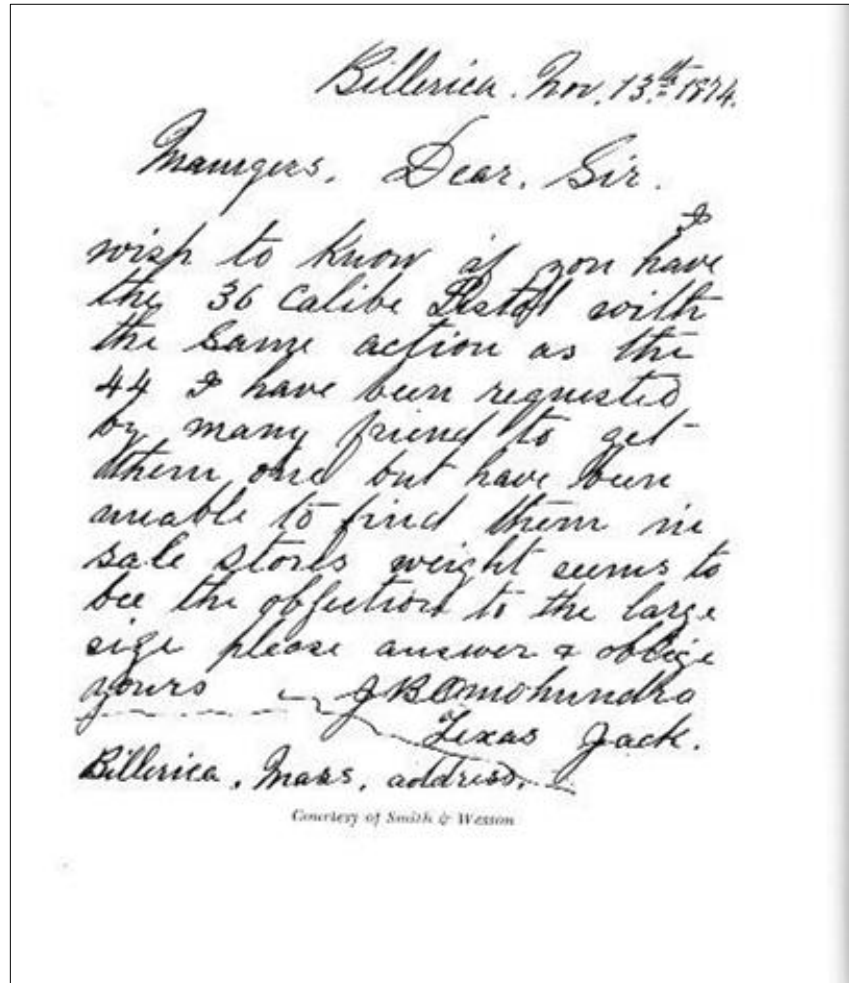
Billerica, Nov. 13th, 1874

Managers, Dear Sir:

I wish to know if you have the 36 Caliber Pistol with the same action as the 44. I have been requested by many friends to get them, but have been unable to find them in sale stores. Weight seems to be the objection to the large size. Please answer and oblige. Yours

*J.B. Omohundro
Texas Jack
Billerica, Mass, address*

*Letter from Texas Jack to
Smith & Wesson >*



This brief correspondence offers a glimpse into Jack's influence in the firearm world, where he acted not only as a buyer but also as a connector, facilitating interest and requests from those in his wide circle. His dedication to Smith & Wesson revolvers highlights the trusted relationship he had with the brand, even as he maintained ties with other manufacturers.

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Epilogue: The Forgotten Legends in the Hands of History

When Jim Perrin placed his bid at Rock Island Auctions, he thought he was simply acquiring an early Smith & Wesson with an interesting serial number. What he didn't realize was that this seemingly ordinary revolver was a key to further unlocking the forgotten story of Texas Jack Omohundro—a man whose legend shaped the very fabric of the Wild West. In the moment Jim discovered the revolver's true origins, he became part of something larger: the ongoing rediscovery of history through the objects left behind, a reminder that every piece of the past holds a story waiting to be uncovered.



Texas Jack's Smith & Wesson New Model No. 3, Serial Number 96, is not just a firearm; it's a link to the birth of the cowboy mythos and the rise of the American frontier as legend. As Jim delves deeper into the gun's past, he finds himself intertwined with that legend, understanding that this revolver—once gripped by Texas Jack as he thrilled audiences with his marksmanship—carries the weight of history itself.

Jim is planning to publish an article about the revolver in Texas Gun Collector Magazine. "I'll hold on to the pistol until I get my article published," Jim says. "Then I will likely pass it on. If it gains a little favorable attention, it doesn't make sense for it to languish in my gun safe." Soon, the revolver may return to the auction block, but this time, it won't be just another antique. It will stand as a piece of living history, its provenance fully revealed, connected to the man who helped spark the idea of the American cowboy. And yet, this isn't the end of the story—it's a reminder that history never fully reveals itself all at once.

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Because somewhere, the matching revolver—serial number 78—remains out there. Maybe tucked away in a private collection, maybe buried in an attic, or hidden in a landfill. Or perhaps it's waiting to resurface at another auction, where its true significance has yet to be discovered. The search for lost pieces of history, like Texas Jack's revolver, continues—a thrilling journey where every object carries within it the potential to rewrite legends.

Each forgotten relic, like this revolver, is a key to the past, a chance to rediscover the stories of those who lived on the frontier of myth and reality. All it takes is someone like Jim to find them, to see beyond the object, and to realize that legends, once lost, can always be found again. ¶



The Texas Jack Scout



The Grave of Texas Jack ©...June 2021

By: Driftin' AaronG

*To think of anyone's grave one must think of death and someone gone from this Earth
We all die from one thing or another and it is written from the time of our birth*

*So it was with Texas Jack Omohundro and his life of adventures and great deeds
And through all of his days and great accomplishments he sowed many seeds*

*Having served proudly and with distinction in that long divided Civil War
He went on to early cattle drives, being a frontier scout, with fame and fortune where his life did
soar*

*John B. Omohundro was his given name
And Texas Jack his well-earned fame*

*Riding across the prairie with such gallant delight
Friends with most tribes, and would fight, only when he was in the right*

*All the tales I'd heard of Texas Jack in all my growing up time
Always encouraged me to know all the distant cousins that would someday make me shine*

*I had the honor of meeting them some years back
At a Texas Jack Roundup, and what a warm welcome I had from the family of Jack*

*And so now, so many many years later, I proudly stand at his grave
Remembering again all the tales of how he was so adventuresome and brave*

*I came to visit not only Jack's grave, but to say a little prayer for the man he became
And for all the family that knew of his bravery and honorable deeds, there was no shame*

*I wanted to say to Jack how I would have loved to ride at his side back in the Old West
And to have known this man who offered so much to so many, and to have earned his peaceful
rest*

*As I look upon this quiet peaceful graveside with a proud tear in my eye
I can almost envision a smiling Texas Jack riding his great steed across the eternal heavenly sky*

*I stopped before leaving the grave for just a moment to give a faithful salute and warm smile
To this brave frontiersman, who gave to so many so much, as he rides away mile after mile*

*As I rode away on my own steed, my Harley, Ol'-Giddy-Up-Git, I thought about this man and the
family name*

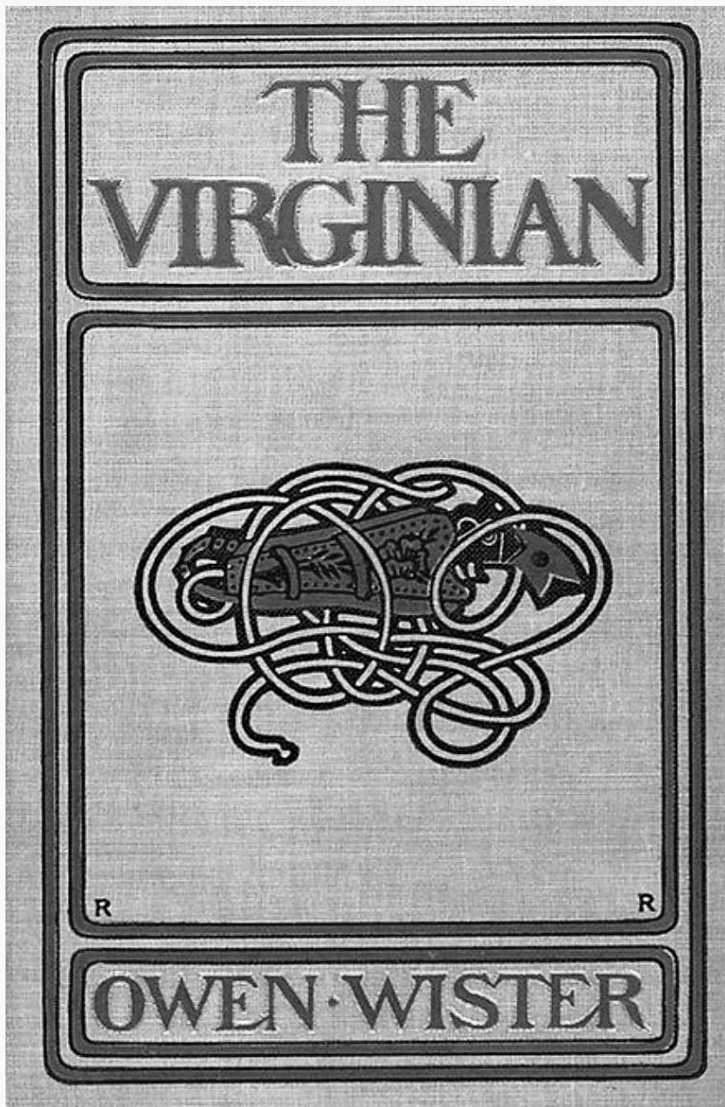
And I thought about a future heavenly time, with Texas Jack, this man of great fame



My Virginian

The novel reported by John T. Omohundro

Besides our Virginian, John B. “Texas Jack” Omohundro, born and raised in Fluvanna County in piedmont Virginia and heading out to make his fortune soon after the Civil War, there is another famous native who went west, although he is a fictional fellow. Like Texas Jack’s, this other fellow’s life also came to define the Western Cowboy and do much to create the thirst for Western novels. He had no name except “the Virginian,” and he was the protagonist of Owen Wister’s novel of that title.



The cover of the first printing of Owen Wister’s novel, The Virginian. Wikipedia

Matt Kerns, our Vice President and Texas Jack’s biographer, proposed in his recent volume (*Texas Jack: America’s First Cowboy Star*) that Jack, despite his short life, became the cowboy ideal celebrated in later decades in books and films. His adventures were glorified and largely fictionalized in his lifetime by dime novel writers like Ned Buntline, who knew him well and wrote a play starring him. Jack cemented that image with his highly successful career as a cowboy hero on the stage. Wister’s Virginian never signed an autograph or told tales to newspaper reporters as did Texas Jack, but his character is considered the first serious novelistic presentation of a Westerner. The fictional Virginian motivated plays, five films based on the novel, and influenced countless other artistic productions.

Why? And who is Wister, his creator? My re-read of the book recently, after a 65-year hiatus, raised these questions. I thought the answers I found would be interesting to Jack’s fans.

The Texas Jack Scout



The Novel, in Short

The novel begins through the eyes of a tenderfoot aristocratic Easterner who arrives in Wyoming and watches the Virginian exercise skill in taming horses. He also observes a poker game in which the Virginian, after an insult from an evil card opponent, silences everyone with a stern look, a revolver, and a calm “When you call me that, *smile.*”



< Our cowboy and his future wife first meet when he rescues her from a swamped stagecoach. Painting in the original publication.

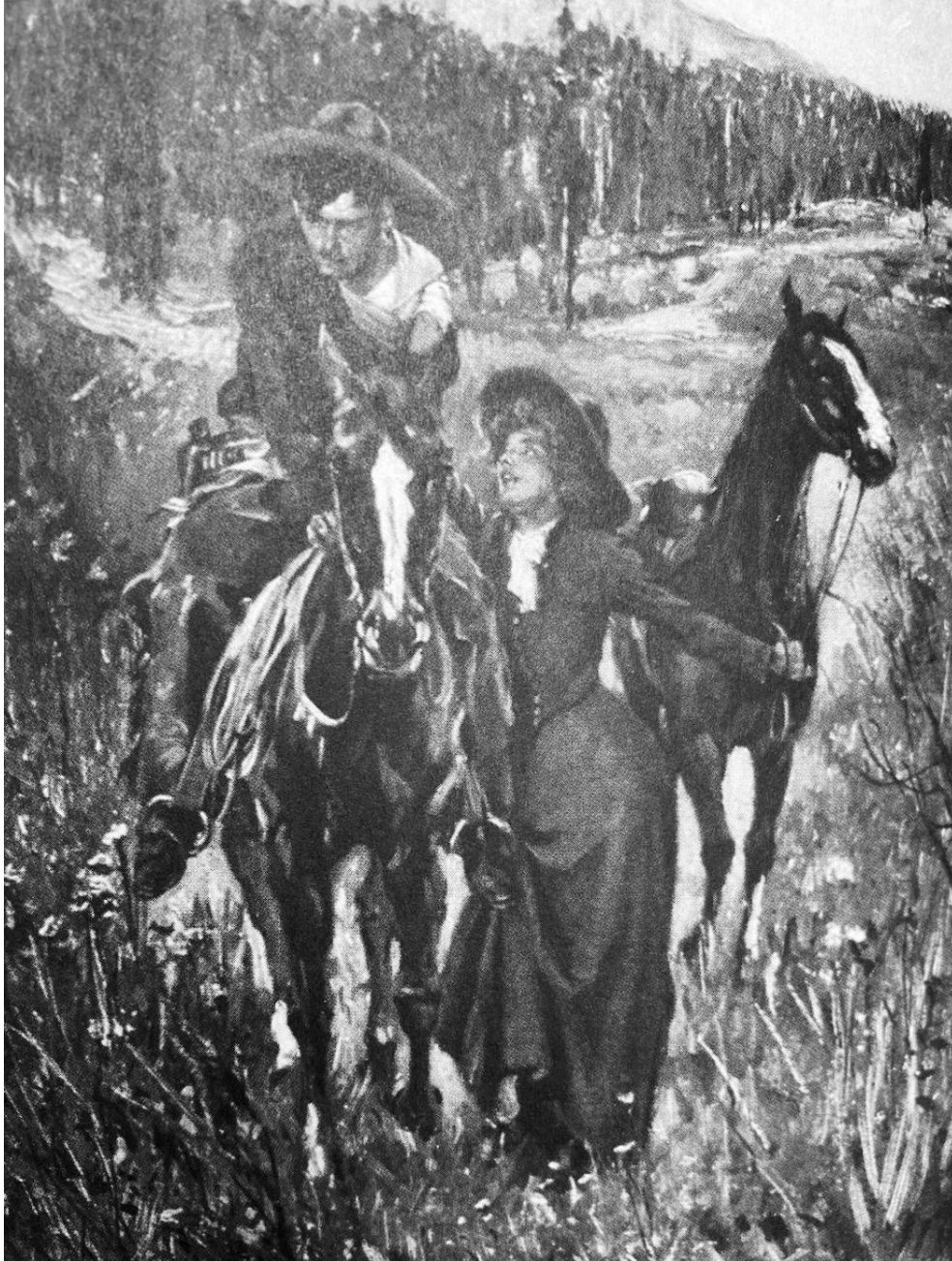
Eventually the cowboy is put in charge of ushering the tenderfoot around the Sunk Creek Ranch where he works. The Virginian also meets the new school teacher, a young beauty from Vermont, and is immediately smitten. The bulk of the novel is really a love story, over three years, of the cowboy courting the lady, trying to convince her that the gap between their two worlds can be bridged.

In the meantime, the Virginian drives cattle, chases rustlers, gets promoted to foreman, shoots rattlesnakes, engages in thoughtful discussion around the

campfire about Western morals and what a man should be, welcomes the tenderfoot back from the East (by which time the latter has honed some of his Western skills and can travel better with him now), gets shot by Indians and nursed back to health by his school mistress, and wins a

The Texas Jack Scout

showdown in the street against the evil fellow he threatened in the card game at the beginning of the story.



<The schoolmarm finds our cowboy badly injured by gunshot and manages to bring him back to safety. Painting in the original publication.

In a short last chapter, the Tenderfoot reports that the Virginian and his love marry, visit her people in Vermont to convince them he's not a barbarian, he becomes partner of the Sunk Creek cattle ranch, and they raise a family.

This synopsis of the story sounds a bit dismissive, but that's not my intention. To be more appreciative, I should say that I

found the descriptions of Wyoming's landscape to be vivid and the cowboys' life is depicted with all the ethnographic accuracy of a Frederick Remington painting. So I recommend the novel; now it's your turn to read it. What I can add here is a bit more context, which increased my enjoyment and I hope will do the same for you.

The Texas Jack Scout



The Author and the Making of the Novel

Who is Owen Wister? He was beginning to practice law and impress the music world in Philadelphia when he fell ill in 1885 and departed for the West to recover. Over five years of hanging out with real Westerners, and other veteran sojourners like Theodore Roosevelt, who also wrote favorably about the locals, Wister began writing short stories about the West for *Harper's Magazine* and *Saturday Evening Post*. His first was published in 1891. By 1902 he had reassembled some of them into his novel, *The Virginian*, which was an immediate best-seller, going through many printings in its first two years. A Broadway play of the novel was staged in 1904. Although encouraged by editors, Wister wrote no more cowboy novels. But his work had whet the public's appetite for Western stories. The infant movie industry also thrived on this interest in cowboys.

The Virginian displays high levels of skill in the rough occupation of cow punching, but also speaks softly and thinks deeply. Drawing in the original publication.>

It has been claimed that Wister's was the first legitimate novel about the Western cowboy, more than a fanciful dime novel.

Scholars have discovered that Emma Ghent Curtis's cowboy novel, *The Administratrix*, was published over ten years earlier, but Wister's novel was the first blockbuster. (Emma's novel, published only a few years after Texas Jack's death, deserves some attention in a future article...)

Who is the Virginian? He never was mentioned by name in the story. Various persons put themselves forward, or their descendants nominated them, and they may all be correct, because Wister said that his protagonist was a composite, as were some of the landscapes, ranches, and events he described in the novel.



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The man is meant to be the Archetypal Cowboy. His dress, mannerisms, speech, and philosophy, particularly about what it takes to be a man, are presented as the best the West has to teach Americans. I have read that throughout the English-speaking world at the time of the novel's publication, many writers criticized their fellow citizens for becoming weak, un-self-reliant ciphers in an urban crowd. The manly man, the muscular Christian, should be the ideal. Baden Powell thought so, hence the Boy Scouts. Many Americans looked West for their model, to the plainsman and cowboy.

I was amused to learn that after the novel was published, many more young Eastern women applied for school teacher positions out West.

So many classic cowboy plot elements were launched by this novel: the love interest in the school marm, the bad guy's black hat, the sidekicks, the rattlesnake shootings, and the showdown in town. To the contemporary reader, much of that now looks like cliché. But Wister was among the first; he set the pattern for writers like Zane Grey and Louis L'Amour.

Afterword

The Virginian is arguably a serious novel in its quality of writing, and it was a big seller, and I did enjoy it. (I visualized Gary Cooper as I read, but the book's illustrations made him look more like Keanu Reeves with a mustache). During the scenes when the cowboy argues with his beloved, I thought I heard the smart, fast exchanges of the best rom-com films of the 1930s.

Critics, however, have been less impressed. They have noted that the work was stitched together from four or more short stories Wister had published before. They claim to still see the seams of the work. They say it would have been a better book, for example, if the *Virginian* were more ambivalent about the rustlers he helped hang. But one of the rustlers was his good friend, so I thought there was plenty of ambivalence about what he felt he had to do.

The novel doesn't seem to be too hokey for moderns: a play based on the novel was staged for five weeks in Chicago in 2022. And it's ironic that although the novel rises above dime novel ambitions, a *Classics Illustrated* comic version has been published. From literature back to kid's lit!

Wister's fictional cowboy adventures are slightly later than our real Texas Jack's, who thrived twenty years earlier on the plains during the Indian Wars and the end of the great free-ranging buffalo herds. The *Virginian* of fiction is set in the world that replaced it: he works on a big ranch punching free-ranging cattle. The Indians are now all on reservations, although some small groups slip out and "cause trouble," which nearly kills him. The cattle wars of the *Virginian*'s Wyoming territory were hastening the end of his era, too, shifting to the barbed-wire fence era. Jack's—our real *Virginian*'s—portrayal of the plainsman on the Eastern stage in the 1870s, and Buffalo Bill's live arena shows in the 1880s, surely prepared the East for Wister's Great American Cowboy novel. ¶

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A New Biography of Wild Bill Hickok

Review of *The Wanderer: James Butler Hickok and the American West*
by Craig Crease; Caxton Press, 2024.

by Chuck Parsons

There have been twenty-one previous biographies of James Butler “Wild Bill” Hickok, so when presented with the latest one by Craig Crease, you might wonder: “What more could be said about Hickok?” The definitive work is generally considered *They Called Him Wild Bill: The Life and Adventures of James Butler Hickok*, by Joseph G. Rosa (1964) as well as *Wild Bill Hickok: The Man and His Myth* (1996). So the real question is “What more could one say about Hickok that Joseph G. Rosa hasn’t already said?”

Craig Crease is a relative newcomer to the “gunfighter genre”, but he discovered extensive new material that William E. Connelley gathered but never used for his book *Wild Bill and His Era* (1933). This cache of letters, interviews, and other documents were preserved at Connelley’s death in 1930 and donated to the Denver Public Library, just waiting for someone to come along and find them. Much of Crease’s new material came from this untapped collection. The result is an excellent biography of Hickok.



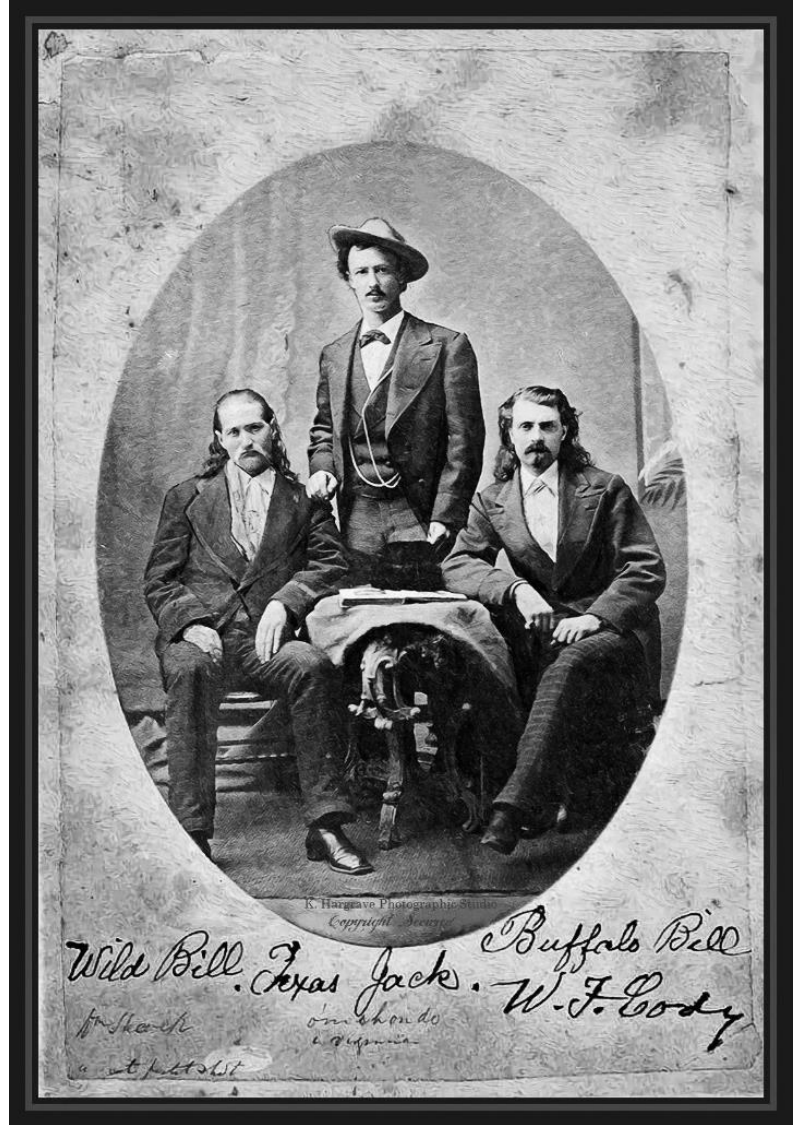
The Texas Jack Scout

Crease makes a point of identifying the numerous myths surrounding the life of Hickok. The reading public of today certainly does not accept the myths “whole cloth” and is much more skeptical than in previous years. During Hickok’s lifetime the dime novel and newspapers were the main forms of communication, both for factual news and fiction. Misinformation and disinformation are not new concepts, but are simply new words to describe old ideas. Crease convinces the reader that what may have been considered factual when first printed is indeed a myth or legend today.

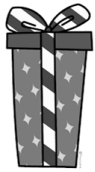
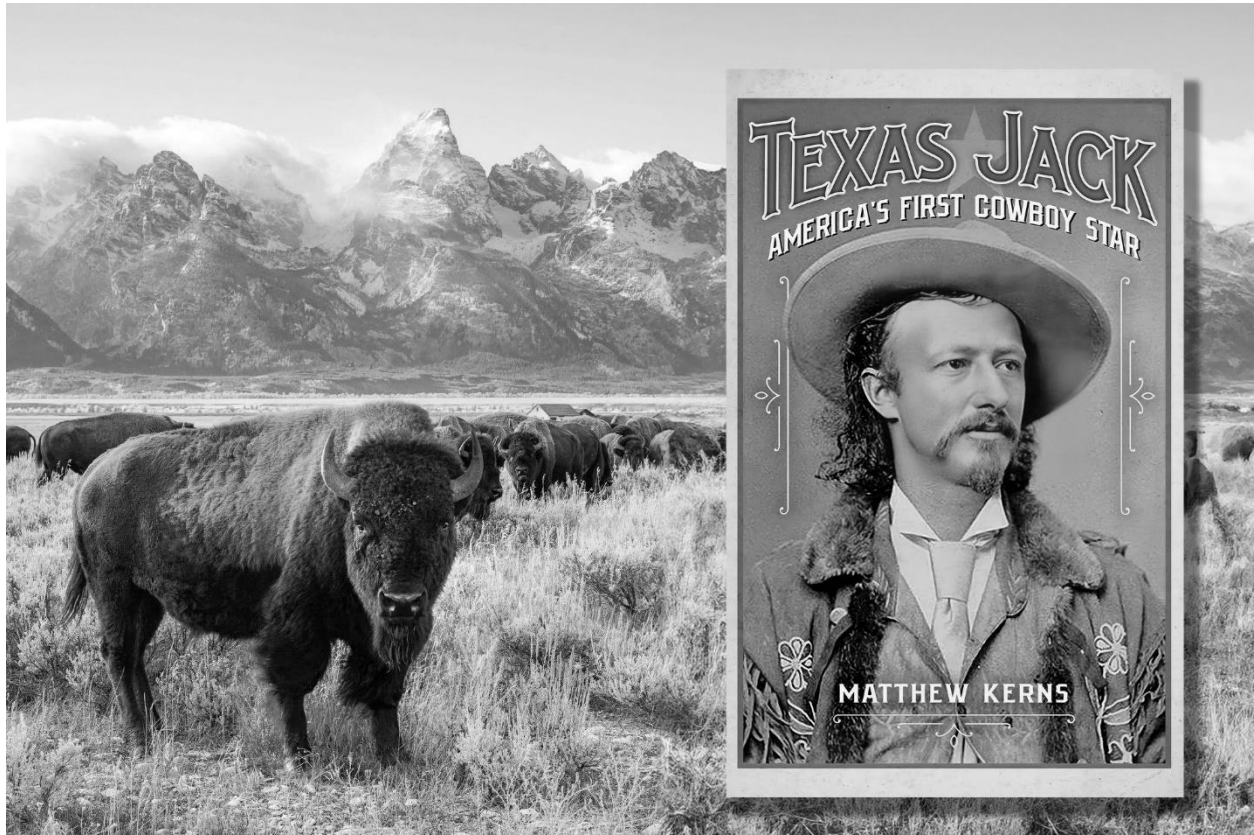
Although many might consider Texas Jack equally important to Hickok and William F. Cody, he receives less attention here than we would like. This raises a question that Crease does not address: what elevates an individual from an average Joe to an unforgettable prince? George Ward Nichols—a journalist known as the creator of Hickok’s fame—and author James W. Buel recognized something in Hickok to make him an unforgettable person. Why not John Baker Omohundro?

We appreciate the use of the two famous photographs of the “Scouts of the Plains” – the one of Hickok, Cody, Omohundro along with Elisha Greene and Eugene Overton with buckskin fringe and weapons galore (see above), as well as the photograph of Hickok, Omohundro, and Cody in Syracuse, New York, in 1874 – dressed fashionably. >

The jacket of Crease’s book states that it is “the most important factual and revealing biography of Wild Bill Hickok in the last fifty years.” This may be true, and in fact parallels the time span between the first biography of Texas Jack in 1954, *Buckskin and Satin* by Herschel C. Logan the recent publication of *Texas Jack: America’s First Cowboy Star* by TJA member Matthew Kerns. Crease’s book is also worth a look for those interested in the period and the Texas Jack’s compatriots. ¶



The Texas Jack Scout



Texas Jack Omohundro

<https://www.facebook.com/jbomohundro>



Are you struggling to find the perfect gift for the dads, uncles, or grandfathers in your life who seem to have everything? Look no further—this Holiday season, give the gift of a true American adventure with a personal touch that can't be found on any store shelf. Here's why you should consider buying a copy of *Texas Jack: America's First Cowboy Star*, signed and personally inscribed by Western Heritage and Spur Award-winning author Matthew Kerns.

A Slice of American History

Texas Jack: America's First Cowboy Star isn't just a book; it's a ticket to the thrilling days of yesteryear. The story brings to life the adventures of a real American icon whose exploits paved the way for the cowboy stars of cinema and literature that followed. Your loved one will be transported to the dusty trails and wild frontiers that helped shape the American West.

The Texas Jack Scout



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Books are the gifts that keep on giving. Long after the holidays are over, *Texas Jack: America's First Cowboy Star* will remain on the shelf as a fond reminder of a thoughtful gift, ready to be revisited again and again. It's an heirloom that can be passed down, sharing the legacy of the American cowboy with future generations.

How to Order Your Signed Copy

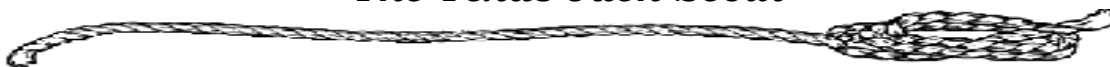
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<https://www.dimelibrary.com/bookstore>



The Texas Jack Scout



I hope this message greeting finds each of you doing well.

The calendar has turned to fall faster than the weatherman has. For Texas Jack, fall usually meant going hunting. To be fair, anytime was a great time for Jack to go hunting! A friend of mine always goes to Idaho to hunt for the elk, but sometimes he hunts grouse or deer. And some hunt for their friends in local corn mazes, while kids create ghoulish faces in carved pumpkin places! (So much for trying to write in rhyme.)

Yes, the seasons roll on as the year rolls out, yet part of that pattern is the next *TJA Scout*. (Oh no, I'm rhyming again!) I've got multiple hedges and plants to trim back for the winter. The leaves aren't falling yet, but I know I should start looking for my rake—I didn't want to lose it again, so last year I put it in a safe place, now I just have to remember where—nuts!

As the days get shorter, I hope that you all find time to take a break to read the latest great articles that our guest editor Rand McKinney has amassed for your enjoyment.

Robert Omohundro, President TJA

NEXT SCOUT ISSUE INFORMATION

The deadline for the March 2025 issue of *The Scout* is March 1, 2025.

Please send ideas and materials to our Guest Editor:

Larry Tyree

lttyree5353@gmail.com

Thank you, Larry!





TEXAS JACK

GIFT IDEAS *For the Holidays!*



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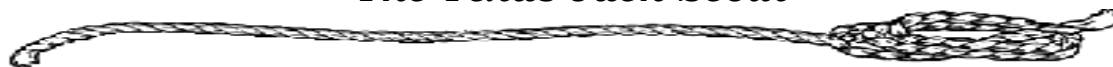
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VIRGINIA

BUCKSKIN
BUTLER
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GIUSEPPINA
JACK
MORLACCHI
REVOLVER
TENDERFOOT
WEST

The Texas Jack Scout



For your reading enjoyment, two tidbits from our favorite wild westerners:

From *The Spirit of the Times*, March 24, 1877. Written by Texas Jack Omohundro, this piece was included in the show programs for Buffalo Bill's Wild West as an introduction to the cowboy.

The cow-boy! How often spoken of, how falsely imagined, how greatly despised (where not known), how little understood? I've been there considerable. How sneeringly referred to, and how little appreciated, though a title gained only by the possession of many of the noblest qualities that go to form the more admired, romantic hero of the poet, novelist, and historian: the plainsman and the scout. What a school it has been for the latter? As "tall oaks from little acorns grow," and tragedians from supers come, you know, the cow-boy serves a purpose, and often develops into the more celebrated ranchman, guide, cattle king, Indian fighter, and dashing ranger. How old Sam Houston loved them, how the Mexicans hated them, how Davy Crockett admired them, how the Comanche feared them, and how much you "beef-eaters" of the rest of the country owe to them, is such a large-sized conundrum that even Charley Backus and Billy Birch would both have to give it up. Composed of many "to the manner born," but recruited largely from Eastern young men, taught at school to admire the deceased little Georgie in his exploring adventures, and though not equaling him in the "cherry-tree goodness," more disposed to kick against the bulldozing of teachers, parents, and guardians.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=N31QrvevnU8>



"Here's something that happened to me in Chicago a long time ago," said Buffalo Bill Cody. "I was with 'Texas Jack' and a horseman. We went to a hotel and started a dice game at \$100 a corner. Along came a one-armed man."

"'Col. Cody,' he says to me, 'let me buy you a bottle of wine.'"

"'Buy nothing,' I says to him, 'we've got wine here to throw away.'"

"'Well, colonel,' he comes back at me, 'I just came in from the west and I've sold all my cows and I'm feeling pretty fine. I'd like to sit in the game with you.'"

"So in he sits. Well, do you know, no matter what we threw he would top it. Throw five aces and he'd top it every time. We didn't know who he was or what he was doing then, but we did later. He was palming the dice, of course—and he had only one hand, mind you, but he clicked his teeth so that you thought you heard them rattle. When we counted up in our rooms later we had lost \$2,000 apiece to that fellow."

"'Texas Jack says to me, 'Just look what he'd a done if he'd had two arms instead of one.' We later found out he was a crook with a reputation from New York to Denver."

From the *Chicago News*, March 1913

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TO