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[www.texasjack.org](http://www.texasjack.org)

March 2007



## A Trip to Leadville By Jack M. Omohundro Las Vegas, NV

The July weekend promised to be more than 110 degrees in the Las Vegas valley as I finished loading up the last of my supplies onto my trusty steed. My 21st century version of the trusty steed happens to be a bright yellow Italian borne 2001 Ducati ST2 Sport Touring motorcycle, complete with saddlebags, GPS, and my 60-gigabyte iPod. My trip from the high desert to my great, great, great, great uncle's final resting place promised to be a technology enhanced speed-fest that would take me through the curvier stretches of Utah and Colorado.

The curves would have to wait about eight hours though as I got outta Dodge up Interstate 15 through the flatter, hotter parts of the Silver State, then into Utah. Stopping short of Salt Lake City, I cut through Utah's midsection and made a B-line for Grand Junction, Colorado, where I would spend the first night, just short of the Colorado Rockies' western slopes. I'm not sure if Texas Jack ever made it to Grand Junction, but Nevada Jack (that would be me) has been through there numerous times when I flew with the Navy. It was a popular stop for us during the winter as we'd load up our skiing gear and fly the mighty E-6 (military variant of the venerable Boeing 707) during the cross-country portion of our deployments.

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from the Editor's Desk...



My name is Jack H. Omohundro, Jr. My wife, Judy, and I have been involved with the Texas Jack Association since 1990 when my father Jack H. Omohundro, Sr. signed us up. Our first Roundup was 1990 in Leadville, Colorado, the site of Texas Jack's final resting place.

Fittingly, ten years later we signed our son, Jack M. Omohundro, up for membership, and he attended the 2006 Roundup in Cody, Wyoming. After that Cody Roundup, he said after seeing all the people, young and old, involved with the TJA and the history of the family, he was prompted to make a solo motorcycle trip to Leadville. He chronicled his trip in words and some striking pictures and has submitted it for publication in this issue of *The Scout*. My son's mode of transportation was very much different from most, and he expressed a feeling of freedom and adventure riding in the mountains that must have paralleled Texas Jack's enthusiasm while exploring the west.

My daughter, Mary J. Omohundro, has also made a trip to Leadville and has several pictures that I will submit to a future edition of *The Scout*.

My point in this letter is to say that the TJA has a duty to pass along to all of the younger family members the history, not only of the name of "Texas Jack", but the history of our nation while it was still developing. Texas Jack was just one of scores of adventurers that went West and provided the rest of the country with visions of a free and wonderful land. While he may have been only a small part of the development of the west, he was "A Part," and we as members of the TJA have both the right and obligation to stand up and be proud of our heritage. It is that pride that we must pass on to our children.

I want thank you all for giving me this opportunity to be a guest editor, and I hope to continue as a TJA member for a long time to come.

**Jack H. Omohundro**

*The Texas Jack Scout*

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The Texas Jack Association  
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18329 Loxahatchee River Road  
Jupiter, FL 33458

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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This time, instead of buying 60,000 pounds of jet fuel from the airport, I could only manage 4.5 gallons into the Ducati.

After spending a couple of hours in the local micro-brewery plotting the next day's route....and liberating a few pints of their Indian pale ale, I returned to the hotel and wondered how this trip out west compared with the many jaunts taken by Texas Jack. First, the similarities: There was the thrill of the open west and what lay ahead; granted his concerns may have been more of the "save my scalp" variety, while mine dealt with issues like where the next highway patrolman was hidden, waiting to keep fellow travelers safe from a galloping yellow motorcycle. More on that later. I suppose we both had access to beef jerky. Difference being, he probably made his himself, while my version included swiping my debit card at the 7-11 for the Slim Jim and pina-colada slurpee. As far as lodging goes, I imagine Texas Jack did a fair amount of sleeping under the stars, with maybe an animal hide or tarp of sorts for protection against the elements. I too was prepared for sleeping under the stars with my one man, Mountain Hardware tent and sleeping bag strapped to the back seat. We both had to deal with hours in the saddle. Back then I'm sure that what they called it was being saddle sore but today there is a more graphic description used by modern day motorcyclists, not really printable here, of course. However it is usually kept in check with copious amounts of Johnson & Johnson's baby powder.

Day two was where the fun really began. You see, traveling on a motorcycle is not unlike a flying a fighter; just take away one dimension, and regarding speed, slide a decimal point to the left. The fun lies where the "yanking and banking" start. In motorcycle parlance, we're talking "twisties". Twisties are popular ways for us

to climb over mountain passes while avoiding 35% grades, and are quite thrilling. Moseying along at 60 mph in these twisties is more fun than droning along the straight, flat freeway at, er, let's just say a speed greater than the speed limit. I would imagine Texas Jack would concur with me on this, though I suppose when not performing his wild west shows with Buffalo Bill, navigating his steed through the rough western terrain might also have had something to do with saving a scalp. Talk about your motivation!

So after six hours of racing through some of Colorado's best curves and a visit to the stunning Turquoise Lake, I pulled into Leadville. Following the left turn into town on highway US-24, I came across the Texas Jack sign that my Dad told me to look for. It's just kind of neat to see the name "Omohundro" posted for all to see. I show this picture to friends and co-workers who have to sit through my story. I was thirsty, so I quickly found a saloon, and pulled the Yellow Duc up alongside a bunch of loud chrome pieces assembled on pairs of wheels. I found a group of Harley riders and had a beer with them and asked the bartender if she had heard of Texas Jack, and where I might find his gravesite. Not only did she know, but two other folks at the bar knew as well and they proceeded to debate the best way to send me there.

I then headed out to the cemetery to pay my respects. Once there, it was pretty easy to find Texas Jack's burial site, since in addition to the plaque at the cemetery's entrance telling the story of TJ, there were several other signs pointing me to his grave. Then I saw it; well marked and taken care of, no doubt by some of you folks reading this. I was extremely proud to be standing there, looking at Texas Jack's name on the headstone.

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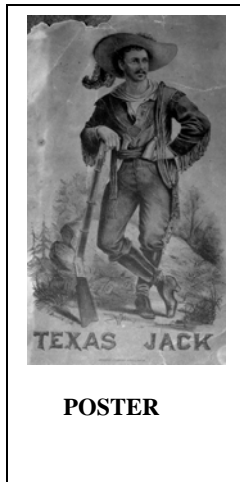
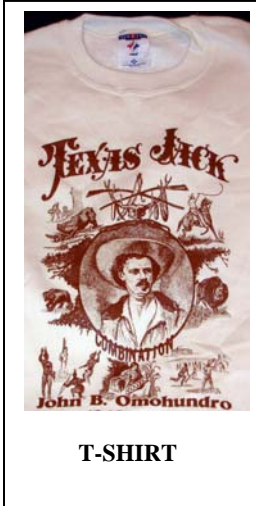
This was just two weeks after the Texas Jack Roundup in Cody, WY, where I brushed up on Texas Jack lore. I tried to picture what the cemetery, and town of Leadville looked like back in 1880, when Texas Jack was laid to rest. Seeing the gravesite and feeling the history as I stood there was well worth the hours spent in the saddle.

The visit was inspiring and humbling. Thinking about what men and women went through back in those days just for survival. It helped me put perspective on my life today, and how minute today's problems are. Maybe I should make this trip every year to enjoy the outdoors, clear my mind of "problems" and respect a relative who really "lived" life! Oh, and by the way, there's a particular Colorado Highway Patrolman around the Montrose area who doesn't seem to appreciate the capabilities of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century, yellow, Italian-borne trusty steed.

Photos by  
Jack M. Omohundro  
Las Vegas, NV



# “Texas Jack” MUST HAVES



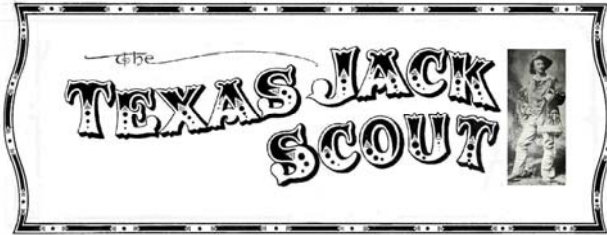
Sweatshirts \$20  
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Please make check payable to the **Texas Jack Association** and mail to:

The Texas Jack Association  
% Rene Tyree, Treasurer  
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Lee's Summit, MO 64081

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*Note: It is often interesting to include a variety of histories of Texas Jack. Each has its own variation and slant on the "facts", as is apparent in the following two articles:*



### TEXAS JACK RIDES AGAIN

By Bill Jones

"Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,  
Where the deer and the antelope play  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word  
And the skies are not cloudy all day"  
"Home on the Range"

Remember the Saturday matinees where Roy and Gene rode across the silver screen? Our heroes have always been cowboys. How many of you know that Fluvanna County, VA, produced a cowboy hero? His name was Texas Jack Omohundro. He was born in Fluvanna County in 1846. There is a marker on Route 15 that memorializes this famous son of our county. As with so many other central Virginians, his ancestors migrated here from Westmoreland County in Virginia. A Richard Omohundro moved to Fluvanna circa 1775.

Texas Jack was born John Baker Omohundro, the fourth of ten children born to John Burwell Omohundro and Catherine S. Baker. He was born at Pleasure Hill, the family plantation. The younger John did not care much for school but rather preferred to go fishing and hunting. In 1860, at the age of 14, he set out for Texas, where he learned the art of cowpunching. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 brought him back to Virginia to serve the Confederacy. At first he was rejected for service because of his age but eventually he served under J.E.B. Stuart as a courier and scout. Because of his age he was called the "boy scout".

After Lee's surrender at Appomattox, young John surrendered to the lure of the West and headed back to Texas. He again made his living as a cowboy, but on one of the cattle drives, he met up with another legend of the West, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Jack and Cody became army scouts at Fort McPherson. They also hunted buffalo together and eventually conducted hunting trips for visiting European royalty, including the crown prince of Russia and the Earl of Dunraven.

Their rise to national fame began when they teamed up with Col. E.Z.C. Judson better known as Ned Buntline. Together with Buntline they went to Chicago and began their acting careers in a show called "The Scouts of the Prairie". The play was a melodrama about the Wild West and featured beautiful maidens, rampaging Indians, and dangerous renegades. Of course, Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill saved the maidens and shot the Indians and renegades. One of the beautiful maidens was the famous ballerina Josephine Morlacchi, with whom Texas Jack fell in love.

Josephine had been born in Milan, Italy in 1846 and had pursued a successful career in the theatre. She and Texas Jack were married in Rochester, NY in 1873. Jack and Buffalo Bill dissolved their partnership with Buntline and continued their show together and, for a brief time, got their old pal Wild Bill Hickok to join them. Even though he was enjoying a successful career in the theater and the joys of married life, the lure of the West was too strong, and he would return to take visiting dignitaries on hunting trips. In 1876, General Custer and his troops were massacred at the Little Big Horn and Texas Jack once again served

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as an army scout, as well as a news dispatcher for the *New York Herald*. His untimely death came in 1880, when he died of consumption in Leadville, Colorado, at the age of 33.

However, his fame lived on as he was immortalized in the "dime novels" written by men like Ned Buntline. Eventually he fell into obscurity, but he is remembered today both in Fluvanna, his home county, and by the Texas Jack Association. This Association has over 200 members from all over the U.S. and several foreign countries. It held its annual roundup from July 14 to 17, 2004 in Charlottesville, VA. On July 16 they came to Fluvanna to visit Texas Jack's origins.

On that day they had a dedication ceremony at the Pleasure Hill cemetery, visited the highway marker and toured a Texas Jack exhibit at the Old Stone Jail Museum. This exhibit consisted of memorabilia temporarily donated to the museum. This temporary exhibit was maintained at Maggie's House for the remainder of the weekend and the public was invited to view it. Many came out for this opportunity to honor one of Fluvanna's famous sons and a real Western hero. Ellen Miyagawa of the Historical Society said of this event, "It is heartwarming to see so many people from all over the United States coming to Fluvanna County to honor one of our most colorful and famous sons".

*(Much of the information in this article was found in Fluvanna County Historical Society Bulletin #44. This Bulletin is available at the bookstore at Maggie's house).*



### FROM THE HANDBOOK OF TEXAS ONLINE

*\* Ed. Note: Texas Jack's middle name is Baker, not Burwell.*

**OMOHUNDRO, JOHN BURWELL\*, JR.** (1846-1880). John Burwell\* (Texas Jack) Omohundro, Jr., frontier scout, actor, and cowboy, was born on July 26, 1846, to J. B. and Catherine (Baker) Omohundro at Pleasure Hill, near Palmyra, Virginia, the fourth of twelve children. He received some formal elementary education. In his early teens he left home, made his way alone to Texas, and became a skilled cowboy. Unable to join the Confederate Army in 1861 because of his youth, he nevertheless entered Confederate service as a courier and scout. In 1864 he enlisted in Gen. J. E. B. Stuart's command as a runner, scout, and spy. After the Civil War he spent several months in Florida and worked briefly as a schoolteacher. In 1866 Omohundro resumed his life as a Texas cowboy. He participated in several early cattle drives, including a drive across Arkansas to meat-short Tennessee. Grateful citizens of Tennessee nicknamed him "Texas Jack." On one of his drives he rescued a small boy whose parents had been killed in an Indian raid. The boy took the name Texas Jack, Jr., and went on to lead Texas Jack's Wild West Show and Circus in 1903. Omohundro may also have served for a time as a Texas Ranger. In 1869 he moved to Cottonwood Springs, Nebraska, near Fort McPherson and became a scout and buffalo hunter. Here he met William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody. Together they participated in Indian skirmishes and buffalo hunts, including acting as guides in the royal hunt of 1872, a highly publicized excursion with Russian grand duke Alexis and a group of

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prominent American military figures. Omohundro and Cody traveled to Chicago in December 1872 to debut in *The Scouts of the Prairie*, one of the original Wild West shows. Critics described him as physically impressive and magnetic in personality. He was credited with introducing roping acts to the American stage. During the 1870s Texas Jack divided his time between the Eastern stage circuit and the hunting ranges of the Great Plains.

He guided hunting parties that included European nobility. He headed his own acting troupe in St. Louis in 1877. That year he also wrote articles about his hunting experiences, published in the *Spirit of the Times*, a popular magazine. The Texas Jack legend grew in many "dime novels," particularly those written by Col. Prentiss Ingraham. In 1900 Joel Chandler Harris featured Texas Jack in a series of fictional accounts of the Confederacy for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Thereafter, the legend faded. On August 31, 1873, Omohundro married Giuseppina Morlacchi, a dancer-actress from Milan, Italy, who starred with him in *The Scouts of the Prairie* and other shows. Texas Jack died on June 28, 1880, of pneumonia, in Leadville, Colorado, and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in that town.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** J. C. Dykes, "Dime Novel Texas; or the Sub-Literature of the Lone Star State," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 49 (January 1946). Joel Chandler Harris, *On the Wing of Occasions* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1900). Prentiss Ingraham, *Texas Jack, the Mustang King* (New York: Ivers, 1899). Herschel C. Logan, *Buckskin and Satin: The Life of Texas Jack and His Wife* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole, 1954). *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Texas Collection, October 1958. Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quinn, Earl of Dunraven, *Hunting in the Yellowstone* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

The following, adapted from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, is the preferred citation for this article. *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v., <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/OO/fom1.html> (accessed February 24, 2007).

### NEXT SCOUT ISSUE INFORMATION

We have two guest editors for the July issue of *The Scout*—Margaret Jones and Peggy Greene. The deadline for the July issue is June 15. Please send your ideas, articles, and materials to Peggy:

Peggy Greene  
18329 Loxahatchee River Road  
Jupiter, FL 33458  
[mgreene39@hotmail.com](mailto:mgreene39@hotmail.com)



## FROM THE MAIL BAG

Date: Mon, 15 Jan 2007 21:21:15 -0800  
From: "Texas Jack" <texasjack@alloftexas.com>  
To: <info@texasjack.org>  
Subject: how to join and next roundup

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Hello! I am so glad to have found your website! I am wanting to join the association and want to know the exact dates of next roundup, I think it is in Ft. Worth next year, am I correct? My name is Jack Payne, and I have been going by the handle "Texasjack" for many years now. My dad's ancestors came from Bibb County Georgia back in early 1800s and my great great grandfather was on the Texas legislature as well as a participant in the Seige of Bexar in 1835, which was just prior to Battle of Alamo. His son Epperson Duke Payne was also there as well as at San Jacinto which defeated Santa Annas army. Needless to say I am very much a history buff due to the efforts of my niece who has traced our line of descent. I would also like to know a little more about Texas Jacks ancestors from Virginia. In my brief examination of the website I thought it mentioned something about the Gooch family, is that correct? I am wanting to know if there is a connection as some of my ancestors were married to the Gooch family. Please offer any info as you can and ASAP. I would really like to hear from you and any updates about the association as well. Thanking you in advance I remain your friend,  
Jack "Texasjack" Payne.

Date: Tue, 27 Mar 2007 12:11:42 -0700 (PDT) Subject: Gooch information  
Hi Jack,

I have the OMOHUNDRO GENEALOGICAL RECORD by Malvern Omohundro, published in 1955, and looked up Gooch in the index. The following is what I learned:  
Texas Jack's brother Orville's granddaughter Mary married John B. Gooch in 1922. He was the son of George W. Gooch and wife Mary Low MacLaughlin of Smyrna, TN. Mary and John had 3 children, John, Beverley, and Mary Gooch. TJ's g'father, Richard's brother Thomas's daughter, Julila's son Thomas Vincent Phillips married twice. His 2nd wife's grandmother was Martha Gooch from Goochland, VA. TJ's g'father's sister, Sallie's gg'son's mother-in-law was Mary Gooch. There are also W.D. and Nannie Gooch more distantly related by marriage, but I haven't figured out how yet.

The lady who does the [omohundros.com](http://omohundros.com) website has had to take down the site. Evidently she had to spend a major amount of time giving people access in order to protect the site from people who would get on with bad intentions.

Linda Omohundro

**MAILBAG CONTINUED:**

Date: Tue, 6 Dec 2005 16:05:30 -0800 (PST) From: Lorrie T <tenosl@yahoo.com> Subject: Omo cemeteries in Westmoreland county To: Larry Tyree <LarryT5353@hotmail.com>,

This is an email from omohundros.com web site, very interesting:

Thank you for e-mailing me back in reference to this research.

I work for Sunbelt Select Properties, LLC in Montross, we just recently sold a piece of property located near Montross, Virginia. This property is slated for low density, high-end home development. I have to apologize for not responding to you sooner but we have recently moved our office to a different location within Montross. Based on information from long term residents and local historians there is One or more graveyards of historical significance on the property, one is for the Omohundro family, the other for the Moxley family. In order to properly preserve and honor these cemeteries, we and the proposed developers of the property are attempting to determine the history, location and the identity of those interred in these graveyards. We have tracked it down to the original 23 acres deeded to William Omohundro by Henry Lee (Lighthorse Harry Lee) and his wife Ann Carter Lee in 1796. We have compiled a list of 12 Omohundros that we believe to be interred there. We would be most happy to provide you with the information that we have found so far. You also might have some information in your archives that we have not been privy to. If you will provide your phone number we can compare notes.

Regards,

Sarah Davis

Date: Thu, 8 Dec 2005 17:56:44 -0800 (PST) From: Lorrie T <tenosl@yahoo.com>

To: Larry Tyree <LarryT5353@hotmail.com>

Hello all again,

I just got off the phone with Sarah Davis of Montross Virginia. Among other things, she communicated to me that the developers who purchased this property are committed to preserving these 2 cemeteries (the Moxley and Omohundro cemeteries). They are looking for suggestions on how to do this - a fence, a wall around it, a plaque listing who is buried there, they are open to ideas on how to do this. Since I'm not an expert in this, I thought I'd throw it there. Among the people buried there, according to Sarah, are William 3D and his wife Nancy Marmaduke, and several of their children. William's grandfather, John 213, was the father of the "Northern" branch of Omohundros. According to the research Sarah has done so far, the Moxleys came from Lancashire, England. She traced the Moxleys back to 1639, when a William Moxley bought land in Westmoreland County. She didn't have her notes with her, but she thought our Richard 1A was a grandson of this William Moxley, and that he (Richard 1A) married his cousin Ann. She has not found any marriage certificate so she thinks they married before they came to this country. She has found records indicating that William M. granted 70 acres of land to Richard 1 A. I have a standing &nbsp; invitation to go down there - it's probably 3 hours from where I'm living now, in Columbia, Maryland. I'm sure if anyone would care to join me who could meet me there, we would be more than welcome. In return it seems the developers want suggestions on how to preserve these 2 cemeteries. I would like to go during the week so we could go to the courthouse and see the documents Sarah has found. I

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would probably not be able to go until early next year (weather permitting, at that time) because of the holidays and work etc. Sarah sounds very gracious and helpful, so anything we could all do to help them out, I think we should do. She does not work for the developers who bought the land, but they asked her to research it and find out as much as she could. So that's her connection to all this. She sounds like a true history/genealogy buff, and a skilled researcher as well. Take care, Lorrie

*The following is the research done by Sarah Davis on the Omohundro/Moxley Cemetery:*

The Omohundro/Moxley Cemeteries  
Located at  
5200 Stratford Hall Rd.  
Montross, VA. 22520



### Background

Based on information from long term residents and local historians there is at least one graveyard, possibly two, of historical significance on the property located at 5200 Stratford Hall Rd. Members of two prominent Westmoreland County families, the Omohundros and the Moxleys, are said to be interred in these cemeteries. In order to properly preserve and honor these cemeteries, the proposed developers of the property have attempted to determine the history, location, and who may be interred in these graveyards.

In making these determinations, information was gathered from numerous sources including the Westmoreland County Museum, the Virginia State Historical Society, the Internet, interviews with possible descendants, and other published and unpublished historical sources. A bibliography is attached as Appendix A; a list of historians and possible family members contacted are contained in Appendix B.

### Summary of Findings

Based on available information the following appears to be true. During most of the period of the late 1700's through the late 1900's, as identified by recorded deeds in the Westmoreland County Courthouse, the property was directly owned by the Omohundro family or their heirs. The relationship of the Moxley family to the property or to adjacent properties is less well documented, but there are deeds of gift transferring adjacent acreage to Moxley descendants among the Omohundros. There were also brief periods of ownership of this and adjacent properties by the Lee's, who were major landowners in the area. Attached as Appendix C, is a chronological history of the ownership of the property.

Information, other than local legend and word of mouth, to confirm that there are actually cemeteries located on the subject property was not found; however, circumstantial evidence is

strong. First, it is clear from documented information that a number of the Omohundro family and probably some of the Moxley family are buried somewhere on or near the property. Secondly, there is a location which appears to be a cemetery site, as such sites were often

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created in the 1600 and 1700's. Third, nearby residents are believed to know the cemeteries' location, based on their ancestral information. That ancestral information further states that the two cemeteries are side by side in this single location.

A local historian who is currently researching Westmoreland County cemeteries has provided a list of twelve people, all of whom lived on the land at one time, as most probably being in the Omohundro Cemetery. This list, which is consistent with our independent research, follows:

- William Omohundro- son of Thomas Omohundro and Martha Crask  
Born: 1769 Died: 1847
- Nancy Ann Marmaduke- wife of William Omohundro  
Born: unknown Died: 1829
- John Richard Omohundro- son of William and Nancy Omohundro  
Born: March 10, 1817 Died: January 28, 1847
- Elizabeth Crask Omohundro- wife of John R. Omohundro  
Born: December 20, 1820 Died: October 1870
- Edward Bruce Omohundro- son of John R. and Elizabeth Crask Omohundro  
Born: September 3, 1838 Died: 1841
- 5 children, from the marriage of William Henry and Mary Elizabeth Sanford Omohundro, who died at or shortly after birth. William Henry is the son of John R. and Elizabeth Omohundro.
- Laura May Omohundro- daughter of William Henry and Mary Elizabeth  
Born: May 25, 1883 Died: April 10, 1884
- Esau - Ex-Servant of the family who "Served them well through the years"

The Moxley site, as reported by members of the Westmoreland County Historical Society, may have been the earliest of the two. Based on various deeds that have been located, the Moxley's owned a number of acres at any given time around and adjacent to the subject property. The records show that the Omohundro's and the Moxley's were intermarried; which may help to explain the apparent side by side cemeteries. Unfortunately, information as to whom or how many people are buried in the Moxley Cemetery is quite limited. The only documented information indicates the possibility of. –

- Ann Moxley- with no dates
- Augustine Moxley- with no dates I tax collector in Cople Parish at the time }

Some historians believe that a signer of the Leedstown Resolutions {Alvin Moxley} the brother of Augustine, may also be buried there. Three different Moxley family deeds mention a graveyard on the "Moxley tract".

Since the only grave markers were pieces of shale, which appear to have come from a nearby creek, there is no longer any way to identify the occupants or even the exact location of individual graves. There is also no way to know if these stones mark more than one grave or if some have been removed or displaced over the years.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Based on documented research with a liberal sprinkling of local individual information the following conclusions are reached:

1. There are two adjacent cemeteries on the 5200 Stratford Hall Rd. property. The location of these cemeteries has been identified.
2. The most probable names of the individuals interred in these cemeteries have been identified.
3. The cemeteries, while badly in need of restoration, have not been physically violated.


Accordingly, the following recommendations are made:

1. Disseminate these findings and conclusions to local residents and appropriate historians to determine if additional or conflicting information may exist.
2. Properly protect the existing cemetery location from further damage or desecration by providing proper barriers and signage.
3. Provide means for long-term preservation of this local historical site.

*Note: the Appendices A, B, and C are not available.*

Sarah Davis is updating the information on the current status of the Omohundro/Moxley Cemetery. It will be in the next issue of *The Scout*. Meanwhile, if any of our readers would like to visit the cemetery or conduct more research, the TJA would love to hear from you.

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*The following article is a very interesting and informative documented history of the life and times of Texas Jack Omohundro's grandparents. Attendees at the Charlottesville Roundup will recognize some of the places and names. It was Ginny Davis' MA thesis in History at the University of Pennsylvania.*

**A Social History of the  
Richard and Elizabeth  
Omohundro Family**

**Middle Class Farm Life in Virginia's Piedmont, 1772-1810**

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Ginny Lee Davis

Descendants of the Omohundro family have resided in Virginia for more than three centuries. Each generation of the family has witnessed different chapters of the history of the United States. A study of the lives of family members Richard Omohundro IV and his wife Elizabeth adds depth to the known social history of Virginia's eighteenth century Piedmont colonists. The Piedmont is a region which has, in terms of historical scholarship, been left in the shadows of other regions of Virginia such as Middlesex County along the Chesapeake Bay and Lunenburg County in Virginia's Southside. (1, 2) The goal of this paper's research is to learn more about the Omohundros' lifestyle, and then determine if it is representative of other middle class Virginians of the eighteenth century from this region of Virginia. Richard and Elizabeth's migration to the central Piedmont frontier, their establishment of a small farm, and their participation in the formation of their new country, community, and nation may very well exemplify the lives of other similar middling families from this time period and region.

**The Omohundros' Tidewater Origins and Early Migrations**

In 1670 the earliest known Omohundro family member in America, Richard Omohundro's IV's great grandfather, Richard I, settled on a farm near Nomini, in Westmoreland County. (3) Here in the Tidewater country of Virginia,

Richard met and married Ann Moxley, daughter of William Moxley. Richard's farm adjoined the property of Edward and Lawrence Washington. The names of Edward and Lawrence Washington appear on documents belonging to Richard Omohundro I as witnesses to his legal transactions. (4) Ann Omohundro bore Richard six children, one of whom, Richard II, was born about 1684.

Richard I died around 1698. In another, more recent genealogical work on the family, a copy of the 1698 will of Richard I appears. According to this document Richard I bequeathed his plantation to sons Richard II and Thomas and gave another son, John, 3,000 pounds of tobacco "when he comes of age." A daughter, Ann, was given "one feather bed after the decease of my wife." Richard I's wife, Ann, and her six children had to equally divide amongst them "nine pewter dishes and twelve plates," son William received his father's gun, and daughter Elizabeth received "one Flax bed." He bequeathed the "rest of my estate to my wife Ann." (5) Their special mention in Richard's will demonstrates that although household articles like dishes, plates, and beds are commonplace today, in the late 1600s they were considered part of a family's cherished possessions.

Richard II became a farmer like his father, and probably raised tobacco; in the early 1700s

Westmoreland County and the other Tidewater counties of Virginia were a fertile tobacco growing area. (6) Richard II married Mary Browning circa 1708, and she bore him six children. About 1709 Mary delivered a boy-a son named Richard III.

As a young man Richard III remained in his native Westmoreland County. Sometime before 1733 he married (his wife's name is unknown) and the two had a son around 1733 whom they christened Richard IV. In approximately 1740 Richard III moved with his father and stepmother to Fairfax County, Virginia, and there the father and son jointly owned a farm. (7) A few years after the death of his father, Richard II, and the birth of his second son, Thomas, Richard III moved again to the northern neck of Virginia, to King and Queen County, between the York and Rappahannock Rivers. A few years after the birth of his son Thomas, about 1754, Richard III died.

In genealogical work on his family, Malvern Hill Omohundro claimed that "of course [Richard III] was a farmer, and probably a successful one, as his children were well educated for their day." Although Omohundro did not provide evidence in support of the assertion that Richard III's sons had received schooling, he did include the following anecdote which testifies to son Richard IV's mathematical ability: "He was said to be the only man in the county, at that time, who could gauge a barrel of rum; that is, by measuring the length and diameter to tell how many gallons the barrel contained." (8) This suggests that Richard IV could compute liquid measurements. As an adult, he would assume additional responsibilities besides managing the family farm that required honed judgment skills, but no records have been found which indicate how much education he received as a child.

In Fairfax County Richard IV met Elizabeth

Muse whom he married about 1763. Richard was almost 30, while Elizabeth's age is unknown. (9) Malvern Hill Omohundro's genealogical research suggested that Elizabeth may have been a niece of Colonel George Muse. Muse served in the British army and left the service "about the same time as Lawrence Washington," settling in the colony. Lawrence Washington served as a witness to Richard Omohundro I's will and settled in Virginia. (10) It is thus possible that these two families, the Muses and Omohundros, were at one time neighbors. Consequently, the marriage of Elizabeth and Richard IV may have been the union of two families who had known one another for many years.

Richard IV and Elizabeth lived in Fairfax County for nine years. Elizabeth bore five children over a six-year period: Mary in 1765, William in 1766, John in about 1768, Thomas in 1769, and Sallie in 1771. These Omohundro children all survived infancy and would be joined by five more siblings in the coming years. During their time in Fairfax County, the Omohundros probably farmed, for Richard was skilled in this occupation. Areas in the eastern part of the county contained many settlers from "people farther south in the Tidewater who transplanted the tobacco plantation society with them." (11) The Omohundro family fits this description of the 'transplanted' Tidewater farmer; they most likely moved from Westmoreland County to Fairfax County to find fresh land in order to grow tobacco.

### **The Move to the Piedmont**

When the Omohundros moved to the Piedmont area of Central Virginia in 1772, large areas of land were available for purchase in Goochland and Albemarle counties. Small tobacco farmers would have been attracted by the prospects of new land, as the cultivation of tobacco quickly leached the soil of its nutrients and necessitated crop rotation and resoiling. (12) The land sale lured many Virginians to move away from the

Tidewater region to the Piedmont region in the eighteenth century. (13) Small tobacco farmers like the Omohundros saw the opportunity to acquire new land on the Piedmont frontier, and were willing to move across the colony to find it.

The region's climate was another attractive feature and may have been another motivation for the Omohundros' move. David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly note in their work on Virginia migration that "the Piedmont was attractive to settlement in many ways, of which not the least important was its salubrity in contrast to the Tidewater." (14) Its location in the colony's interior, far away from the warmer, saltwater areas along the coast, probably made this region far less prone to outbreaks of deadly illnesses like malaria. During this time health was seriously threatened by even slight illnesses, many of which could turn deadly without proper medicine or a known cure. This motivated many colonists to traverse long distances in search of a healthier environment in which to live. By the 1750s, the Piedmont region emerged as "the dominant region of Virginia-larger, more dynamic, more prosperous, and more healthy than the Tidewater." (15) Overall the Piedmont region appeared attractive in the eighteenth century to colonial families - it contained available virgin land for growing tobacco, and was a healthy environment in which to raise a family.

The Omohundros also had the financial means to move to the Piedmont. Richard and Elizabeth used an inheritance from Richard's family to purchase new land. (16) It is also possible that they may have had proceeds from the sale of land they owned in Fairfax County. In the Piedmont's Goochland County, the family purchased 150 acres of land near Woodson's Ferry (present day Pemberton), located on the James River near Cartersville. (17) This land adjoined the land of a Colonel Cocke; the Cocke family would again be neighbors of the

Omohundros when they later bought land in and moved to Fluvanna County. (18) Perhaps a friendship was established between the neighbors in Goochland County, and this friendship influencing the Omohundros to purchase another farm in 1775 in Albemarle County and "bounded, Beginning next to Benjamin and Richard Cokes [*sic*] line." The Albemarle County Richard "Coke" neighbor of the Omohundros may have either been the same Colonel Cocke that lived near them in Goochland County, or he may have been one of Colonel Cocke's close relatives.

Besides the importance of fresh soil for planting tobacco, eighteenth century Virginia tobacco farmers also required proximity to a waterway in order to transport their product to market. Tobacco was loaded on ships that sailed on Virginia's larger navigable rivers, like the James and the Potomac. Tobacco was also loaded on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay; ships transported the tobacco from Virginia to Great Britain, where it was sold. The Omohundros twice bought land in the Piedmont that was located near the James River. Land located alongside a river was considered more valuable and was therefore more expensive. (19) The high price probably prevented small farmers like the Omohundros from purchasing land immediately adjacent to a river. However, they were able to buy land that was nearby the water.

Farmers packed their yield into hogsheads, the unit of measurement used in the tobacco trade. These heavy wooden containers were either rolled or drawn by horse to the water's edge. One hogshead weighed approximately 1,000-1,300 pounds when packed with cured tobacco. (20) At this point, these containers could either be placed on board larger sailing ships for transport, or on board bateaux, small boats used for transporting goods in shallow water. It was more practical to use bateaux in the upper James River areas of Goochland and Fluvanna County due to the shallow and rocky nature of

the river. (21) Despite the Goochland property's seemingly advantageous location near the James River, the Omohundro family sought a new place to farm further west along the James River close to Bremono Bluff, Virginia.

### **Albemarle County**

In May of 1775 the Omohundros moved westward to the county adjacent to Goochland, Albemarle County. According to the deed, Richard and Elizabeth purchased two hundred acres from William and Sarah Sorrow for "35 pounds current money." The property "lying in the Fork of James River on Branches of Spring Garden Creek," was not located on the James River but situated about 2 miles east of its banks between Bremono Bluff and Fork Union and contained improved farmland. (22)

The deed recorded that the land contained "gardens, orchards, and fences" implying that the land may have been farmed prior to the Omohundro's purchase. (23) An improved property featuring such assets would have been quite desirable. Despite their recent arrival, Richard and Elizabeth would have had fruit to preserve for their family's winter consumption. "Gardens" in this deed denote land that had been cleared and its soil previously tilled. These garden areas were ready to receive seeds for planting without much additional work by the Omohundros that spring. Fences had been constructed and were in place to enclose the Omohundros' livestock. Records indicate the frontier area of Albemarle County contained predatory animals such as wolves, for bounties were paid for killing wolves as late as 1789 in the region. (24) Because of the threat of wild animals, plus the need to contain their most important asset, fences were necessary. These established improvements endowed the property with a "move-in condition." As a result, the Omohundros were spared backbreaking chores like making fences, clearing land, and planting fruit trees. Eighteenth century Piedmont farmers needed to perform these tasks in order to protect

their animals and grow food for themselves and their livestock.

The deed for the Omohundro land purchase does not mention if the Sorrow property included a house. Records dating from around 1920 mention that according to family history Richard "built a fine house for that time" and that it was "in good presentation and known by the oldest inhabitants as the Old Omohundro home." (25) It is possible that the property already contained a small house for the Omohundros to live in; as their family grew to include ten children, they may have built a new house to accommodate the twelve members of their family, or enlarged the house that they acquired in 1775.

### **Archaeological Excavations at the Omohundro Homestead**

In the summer of 1991 and 1992 two archaeological excavations took place at the site of the Omohundro's Bremono Bluff property. These digs, conducted by students from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam, were supervised by anthropology professors Steven J. Marqusee and John T. Omohundro, a descendant of the family. Marqusee describes the excavated house as "large and homey." (26) The wood house contained two fireplaces and a roof made from local slate. (27) Professor Marqusee believes that this excavation site might not have contained Richard and Elizabeth's earliest house. He explains that it was customary for families to build "something temporary, a log structure, to live in as they built a more substantial structure." Marqusee adds that "We are certain, however, that this is the site of the house—we're not sure if where we were digging is the original structure." (28) The dig did not uncover many artifacts dating from the latter part of the 18th century but several items that date from the first part of the 19th century were found. Whether these artifacts were former items from Richard and Elizabeth's household is

difficult to determine. Both Omohundros died in the first decade of the nineteenth century. It may be more accurate to suggest that the recovered dig items were more closely linked by their estimated age to the lives of Richard and Omohundro descendants.

The excavations uncovered items compatible with the Omohundros' middle class stature, according to the anthropologists who conducted the dig. For example, Professors Marqusee and Omohundro explain that the largest amount of pottery shards found at the site came from inexpensive pottery made in Staffordshire, England. This pottery was exported to America in the 1700s before the local manufacturing of stoneware began in the 1800s. They described the shards' origin as "shell-edged pearl ware" and noted that upper class people would have used a different kind of pottery. (29) Colonists of the middle and lower classes did not have the financial resources to purchase the more expensive and decorative pottery. Their resources dictated the type of pottery used in their households.

It is Professor Marqusee's opinion that the contents of the artifact collection "was unsurprising" and represented "lower middle or upper lower class rural Virginians." Professor Omohundro concurs with Marqusee, and adds that Richard Omohundro was "a good burgher." He listed characteristics of Richard's life which place him as a member of the middle class in eighteenth century rural Virginia: Richard's participation in founding the Lyles Baptist Church, his ownership of land away from the first rank of the James River, his appointments to perform tasks in the community, and the size of his house.

### **1777**

In 1777 two significant events took place in the Omohundro family. First, Elizabeth gave birth to another child. This son was named Richard, after his father. Richard and Elizabeth now had

seven children under the age of ten years old and in later years would have three more children: James, Nancy, and Ellis. (30) Second, the family sold their land in Goochland County to David Garratt for "one hundred and sixty pounds Lawfull Money of Virginia." (31) The farm along Spring Garden Creek became the permanent homestead of Richard and Elizabeth Omohundro for the remainder of their lives. They established themselves as members of their rural eighteenth century Piedmont community by participating in a number of activities that involved the formation of their county, community, and nation.

In May 1777, two years after his arrival in Albemarle County, Richard Omohundro IV began to take action to improve his community. He, along with one hundred and thirty-two men from the southeastern part of Albemarle County, petitioned the General Assembly to form a new county, citing the long distance to the Albemarle County courthouse, in faraway Charlottesville. (32) Traveling to the courthouse was inconvenient for people living in their part of Albemarle County, taking a few days to travel the great distance to attend court and return home again. These petitioners also claimed the journey was unsafe due to the horrible conditions of the roads. (33)

The petitioners were led by a group of justices who desired a new courthouse because they had "tired of the trip to court and of complaints made by their neighbors." (34) The inconvenience of travelling to court was experienced by all in the area, regardless of social position. The justices circulated the petition among the rural residents of Albemarle County and in the end, the petition contained a representative sampling of the "area's freeholders." (35) By enlisting the help of all of their neighbors in signing the petition, the justices united the middling and lower classes, and together they made a change that improved

their rural community.

The cumbersome distance to the county courthouse was significant because of the courthouse's importance in the farmers' quotidian lives. While today rural Virginians may only visit their county courthouse occasionally, perhaps to serve as jurors, obtain passports, or renew their driving licenses, in colonial times it was different-the county courthouse played a more important role in the lives of its citizens. One of the few sites that provided for "communal assembly," the courthouse was important in bringing Virginians together from their "dispersed plantations." (36) Rural areas contained very few public structures, other than church buildings and taverns, where people could meet to conduct business and learn news. During the American Revolution the courthouse served as an important place to disseminate news. (37) Citizens could meet here and plan their strategy against the British. Court days at the courthouses were well attended by residents because of the importance of the business that was conducted there; a wide range of discussions took place regarding legal and property matters on court days. (38) Courthouses also served as the polling places in electing representatives to the General Assembly. (39) Given these multiple and important civic functions, the petition to incorporate a new and smaller county comes as no surprise.

The justices had a plan to help ensure the petition's success. Prior to beginning the petition drive, they enlisted the help of the burgesses of Albemarle County. (40) Thomas Jefferson, one of the two elected county representatives, helped by drawing a map regarding the formation of the new county. (41)

On May 12, 1777, the House of Delegates received the petition from either Jefferson or John Harvie, Albemarle County's other

delegate. The next day it received approval from the House of Delegates who proposed a resolution that it be accepted. After the resolution passed, the upper house approved the resolution and it passed on June 3, 1777. As a result of this legislative action, Fluvanna County was formed from Albemarle County, and Fluvanna parish was formed from the Albemarle parish of St. Anne. (42) Residents living in the southeastern part of Albemarle County gained access to a new courthouse closer to their community, as well as a new parish for those who attended the Anglican Church. Richard Omohundro and the other men from his region who rallied in support of this common cause gained their own county as well as better access to the regional locus of Virginia government, the county courthouse. No longer would the frontier men have to leave their homes and work for two or three days in order to attend court days in Charlottesville, thirty-five miles away. Thanks to the petition they could attend court days locally, within their new county, at the temporary courthouse established at the home of Thomas Napier. (44) The county would not build the present day courthouse until 1830.



*Inside present day courthouse*

Not everyone supported Fluvanna County's break from Albemarle County, however. After the new county formed in 1777 a group of men in Fluvanna County petitioned the House of

Delegates to dissolve the new county. (44) Approximately 170 men from Fluvanna County signed this petition, but Richard Omohundro was not one of them. One of their complaints was that the new county's boundaries were incorrect, and thus had created a county too small to support its own tax burden. They claimed that "we cannot bear the Burden of the public Taxes, & the County and Parish charges, without Want and Ruin." (45) And so these men requested that Fluvanna County be added to parts of neighboring Albemarle, Louisa, and Goochland counties.

Richard Omohundro did not want Fluvanna County dissolved, and so he and approximately 175 other men created their own petition to the House of Delegates. These petitioners believed the formation of Fluvanna County would alleviate the past problems associated with traveling to Charlottesville:

Now in very respect answer'd  
our expectations by Obviating  
the hardships and  
inconveniences in Travelling to  
courts, Musters, etc., which  
Expense was annually, equal to  
that of the Publick Buildings and  
should our county be added to  
any Other the evils would be still  
greater than when join'd to  
Albemarle as the distance to  
Either Louisa or Goochland is  
greater. (46)

The House of Delegates sympathized with Omohundro and his co-petitioners, and did not grant the dissolution request-Fluvanna remains its own county today.

Fluvanna County residents had other conflicts to occupy themselves besides the dissolution of their county. In 1777, Virginia and the other colonies were fully engaged in a war with Great Britain. In 1781 the war moved to Virginia and

the British invaded Fluvanna County.

### **The Revolutionary War**

Richard Omohundro served as an ensign in the local branch of the Virginia Militia under Captain Richard Napier. (47) The county records describe Richard as a "proper person to act as Ensign in the militia." (48) Strong Patriot support was evident in the new county. Fluvanna residents formed companies of militia during the first county court sessions held in 1777. (49) "Gentlemen Justices" administered the "Test Oath" to county men; this oath required them to renounce their allegiance to George III, declaring allegiance instead to the Commonwealth of Virginia. (50)

In addition to serving in the militia during the war, Richard furnished beef for the army. Public claim records compiled after the war show that the Omohundros donated beef in April and November, 1781, that totaled 329 pounds. (51) John Pettuck, Richard Perkins, and William Payne also contributed beef for the militia, and William Priddy contributed corn. (52) In June of 1781 the British invaded Fluvanna County; led by Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and under the orders of Cornwallis, they pillaged farms near the Omohundro farm at Carysbrook Plantation. (53) A few days later the British left the county for Yorktown. (54) By October of that year, the war was over with the British surrender at Yorktown. The Omohundros and other Virginians could now turn their attention to other matters relating to the newly-gained freedom. Richard directed his attention to his community.

### **Lyles Baptist Church**

Richard Omohundro became active in his community's religious life, joining with others in his community to create the first Baptist church of Fluvanna County, the Lyles Baptist Church, located near Wilmington, Virginia. The church's formation began in 1774 and by the time Fluvanna County was created in 1777,

Lyles functioned as an alternative house of worship for the colonists who had attended the Anglican church, the established church of the Virginia colony. Richard Omohundro's name appears on a plaque listing the names of the founding members of the Lyles church. (55)

According to Baptist church records, Richard Omohundro worked to help establish another Baptist Church in Fork Union, Fluvanna County. In April 1796 Richard Omohundro made a motion at a meeting of the Lyles Baptist Church that Lyles "should take under consideration the standing of the 'Fork Brethren for their not attending the church meetings.'" (56) Lyles Baptist discussed this issue and then appointed Richard to be a messenger for his church. Richard carried an invitation to the brethren at Fork Union to attend the next monthly meeting at Lyles in June of 1796. In October of 1798, the Fork brethren petitioned Lyles Baptist to form their own "arm" and Lyles granted this request the following month. (57) Richard's help aided the people of Fork Union to establish a Baptist church located closer to their community.

Of the twenty names listed on the plaque as founders of the Lyles Baptist Church, seven are women. (58) Curiously Elizabeth Omohundro's name does not appear on the founding member list of Lyles. However, church records that list members from "August 2, 1799 to June 1815" include her name along with Richard's. (59)

### **Richard's Public Service to the Community**

Shortly after Fluvanna County was formed in 1777, Richard served as a jurist for a grand jury convened there. (60) His stint as a juryman was one the first public services he performed for his community. Later, in October 1781, the Fluvanna County Court continued his appointment as road surveyor for the road from Bryants Road to Cannon's Ferry. (61) In March of 1798 he received an appointment from Fluvanna County to supervise the opening of a

road that began at the Ferry at New Canton and ran to the Seats. (62) He received another appointment as road surveyor from Cannon's Ferry to Bremono Road in 1801. (63) These jobs required that he and other property owners listed in the court's record care for the roads. (64, 65) Surveyors had to inspect and ensure that roads remained clear and passable; this was an important duty because few roads existed at the time, and travelers needed a safe path to complete their journeys. In 1795 the court appointed Richard as processioner in the place of Stephen Seay who was "unable to perform the duties of the said office." (66) The job of a processioner in colonial Virginia required that Richard walk with the other settlers in their area and check the "boundaries of their estates." (67) After they completed this task, processioners checked new results against the records from the last procession performed on the property. (68) Processioners needed to have good "people skills," as this type of land survey likely incited disagreements among neighbors.

The Fluvanna County court order books show numerous individuals received appointments for tasks like road surveyor and processioner. Mary Gwaltney Vaz's research about Piedmont government at this time stressed that it was the "secondary leaders, positioned below the ranks of the county elite" who received these appointments from the courts. (69) Colonists like Richard Omohundro could expect to be appointed to perform these tasks in their community in the late 1700s.

Another public service that Richard performed for his community was the registration of stray animals that were lost and had wandered onto his property, thereby adding to the public record of lost and valuable property. The estray books which listed stray animals in Fluvanna County contain the names of many other farmers from the county who, like Omohundro, found cattle and horses and gave notice to their community that the animals had been found. In 1779

Richard Omohundro placed an estray notice in the November 27th issue of the 1779 Virginia Gazette describing a lost black steer found on their property on Spring Garden. (70) The book itself and Omohundro's listing in it are evidence of the contributing role he played in a tight-knit community.

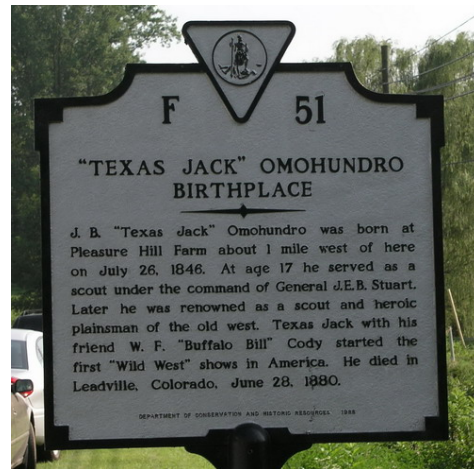
### The Omohundro's farm

It is difficult to determine for certain what crops the Omohundros grew, but it is likely that they planted tobacco and corn. During colonial times, these crops were considered "the twin staffs of life. Corn pone was bread, and tobacco was literally money." (71) Both crops had great utility. After corn was harvested, it could be used to feed livestock, as well as provide nourishment for the family as meal. Colonial farmers grew tobacco as their most valuable export crop, and it was also used as currency. (72) This crop's dual role as both a commodity and a means of exchange, to pay taxes, or to buy land made it a popular crop for colonial Virginia farmers. The Omohundros were probably not the exception to this practice.

Richard and Elizabeth's farm increased in size over the years. According to the 1800 Fluvanna County land tax list, the Omohundro farm totaled 300 acres. (73) Sometime between 1775 and 1800, it increased in its original size by 100 acres (there are no available details of this second purchase).

Between 1803 and 1804, the Omohundros land holdings changed. The farm was reduced by 50 acres on October 24, 1803, when Richard and Elizabeth sold a parcel of land to their son, Thomas W. Omohundro. Thomas purchased this land for "fifty pounds of current money of Virginia." (74) His motivation for purchasing this land is not clear. The size of the parcel seems too small for a Piedmont tobacco farm- why did Thomas Omohundro purchase land from his parents that year?

Thomas Omohundro's purchase of this parcel may have been an acceptable way in which he could financially help his elderly parents. By 1803, Richard and Elizabeth were in their late sixties. They had not had an easy life as small farmers raising a large family on their own in the Piedmont frontier. Their vitality was probably depleted and they may have been ill. Thomas' purchase must have helped for it provided an infusion of fifty pounds of current money to their income in 1803. Fluvanna County historian Ellen Miyagawa suggests in an article about "Texas Jack" Omohundro, Richard and Elizabeth's great grandson, that the elder Omohundros experienced financial problems in the first years of the century. She notes that Richard "had lost most of his property by signing security for others' debts." (75) (No records were found to support this statement.)



Highway marker near Pleasure Hill

Virginia's tithable lists contain information about the size of farms in the eighteenth century. These records, found in the *Personal*

*Property Tax Books for Fluvanna County, 1782-1826*, list information about farmers' assets liable to taxation. (76) In 1782 a farmer received an assessment for the number of cattle, horses, Negroes, and tithable white males above the age of sixteen that his family's farm

possessed. A small portion of the 1782 list of taxable articles and tithables appears in the table below. By comparing the number of tithable items for the Omohundro family to the figures assigned to other Fluvanna County families, one can place the Omohundros within the context of other Piedmont farmers from this area. The Omohundro farm's taxable assets are comparable to those of the other Fluvanna County families whose farm assets appear on this same list.

Table of 1782 Tithable Items

1782 List	Tithables	# of Negroes	# of Horses	# of Cattle
Richard Omohundro	1	1	3	11
John Hunt	1	0	2	3
Thomas Cawthorn	0	0	2	3
William Bogg	1	2	4	13
Frances Kirby	1	0	2	0

Note: This list of 1782 recorded that only 18 out of a total of forty two families owned Negroes as part of their property. From this group of slaveholders, 14 had 3 slaves or less. A majority of the Fluvanna County households owned three slaves or less in 1782.

Changes occurred at the Omohundro farm over a ten-year period. Beginning in 1788, Richard had only one white male above the age of 21, one tithable white male above the age of 16 and under the age of 21, no blacks, 8 horses, and no cattle. (77) Between the years between 1788 and 1793, the Omohundros did not own slaves or cattle but horses are listed in their assets. (78) In 1794, Richard owned one black above the age of 16 and only 4 horses. (79) The records for 1795 and 1796 are illegible. By 1797 and 1798, the family had three whites males above

the age of 16, six black males above the age of 16, one black male between the ages of 12 and 16, and three horses. No cattle were listed that year. In 1799, change came again to the Omohundro farm; only two whites above the age of 16 appear on the list with one black male above the age of 16, one black male between the ages of 12 and 16 and three horses.

The number of slaves owned by Richard and Elizabeth Omohundro declined; perhaps one of the slaves was sold to raise money. Enslaved blacks were considered a valuable asset to colonial Virginians who owned them; their labor helped increase a farm's productivity. The size of the Omohundro's farm did not change until 1803, so a change in the farm's work load does not seem likely as an explanation for a reduction in the Omohundro's need for the slaves. (80)

**The Deaths of Richard and Elizabeth**

Today, a small brick cemetery located a few hundred yards from the site of their homestead contains the unmarked graves of Richard and Elizabeth Omohundro. Elizabeth passed away in 1806 and Richard died in 1811. Other gravestones in the cemetery mark the resting places of members of the Melton family. Elizabeth Omohundro, a granddaughter of Richard IV and Elizabeth, married into the Melton family. Her descendants are the current owners of the property. (81)



Marker near Omohundro homestead and cemetery

## THE TEXAS JACK SCOUT

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Richard's estate received an appraisal on February 16, 1811 by his neighbors who were appointed by the county court, a custom of that time. (82, 83) The appraisal totaled \$178.44. This estate inventory listed everything owned by Richard at the time of his death. No will is listed for him in the county record books, so it cannot be determined what became of his land, farm, and house after his death. The items included in this list seem ordinary-plates, cups, and saucers appear alongside furniture and tools. The family owned twenty books, an extensive library at a time when books were prohibitively expensive. The most valuable items were three sets of bed furniture, assigned values of \$33, \$25, and \$35 respectively. The next most valuable item was Richard's shotgun, appraised at \$6.50. The dollar amounts assigned to these appraised items reveal their relative values in a rural, middle class colonial setting.

When Malvern Hill Omohundro completed a genealogy section devoted to Richard Omohundro IV's life, he concluded it with this description: "So you can see he was good in peace as well as in war, a citizen who contributed to the welfare of his community in

many walks of life." (84) Richard and his wife, Elizabeth, moved to the Piedmont like so many other Virginian colonists to raise their family and own a small farm. Elizabeth's life was home-centered. She bore ten children and raised them while managing the work of her household without the help of female slaves. Richard Omohundro became involved in his frontier community by joining with other Piedmont settlers to make changes for the better, petitioning to form a still extant county, establishing the Lyles Baptist Church, and fighting the British in the Revolutionary War by both defending their land in the Piedmont and supporting the Patriot cause.

The Omohundros' lives are indeed representative of those of other middle class

farmers on the Virginia Piedmont frontier during the eighteenth century. The Omohundros joined with many of other like-minded Virginians from this region that wanted to improve their lot and participate in the fledgling democracy. These decisions concerned such major issues as who should govern them and where they worshipped as well as more minor issues related to the care and maintenance of the roads in their local community. The Omohundros effected changes in their community despite their lack of great wealth and power because they seized a share of the decision making process of government and refused to let go. From their rural Piedmont farm near Bremo Bluff, Virginia, they witnessed the formation of a community, state, and country, defining by example and from the outset the behaviors that sustained the nation in its infancy.

*Photos by Jack Omohundro and Larry Tyree*



Bremo Bluff

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