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BUFFALO BILL & TEXAS JACK

The First Stage Performance

By Larry Tyree



Commencing on page 3

from the Editor's Desk...



In 1888, Buffalo Bill authored a book entitled *Story of the Wild West and Camp-fire Chats* in which he wrote biographically about the Lives of Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, and himself, Buffalo Bill. The book is filled with many illustrations, too. The excerpt that we are printing in this issue is from Chapter 20 in the autobiography of Buffalo Bill. I have retained all the type and words and punctuation from the original so that you can get a feel for the real thing. This particular chapter is very appropriate because it has everything to do with the very first stage performances of Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack, and Mlle Morlacchi. And it was in Chicago!

Also in this edition of the *Scout*, John Omohundro presents an interesting look at the origins of “Texas” in Texas Jack. He assembles for us a litany of historical bits and pieces, since very little is really known about Jack’s Texas days. And from Matthew Kerns’ blog is an actual poem by Texas Jack, Jr.

Finally, the minutes of the June 20th TJA Biennial Meeting are included for your perusal!

All in all, I know you will enjoy the ride!

Larry Tyree

Guest Editor, President

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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CHAPTER XX.

AN ACTOR.



URING the summer and fall of 1872, I received numerous letters from Ned Buntline, urging me to come East and go upon the stage to represent my own character. "There's money in it," he wrote, "and you will prove a big card, as your character is a novelty on the stage."

At times I almost determined to make the venture; but the recollection of that night when I stood on the stage of the Bowery Theater and was unable to utter a word above a whisper, would cause me to stop and think and become irresolute. I feared that I would be a total failure, and wrote Buntline to that effect. But he insisted that I would soon get over all that embarrassment, and become accustomed to the stage, so that I would think no more of appearing before five thousand people than I would before half a dozen. He proposed to organize a good company, and wished me to meet him in Chicago, where the opening performance would be given.

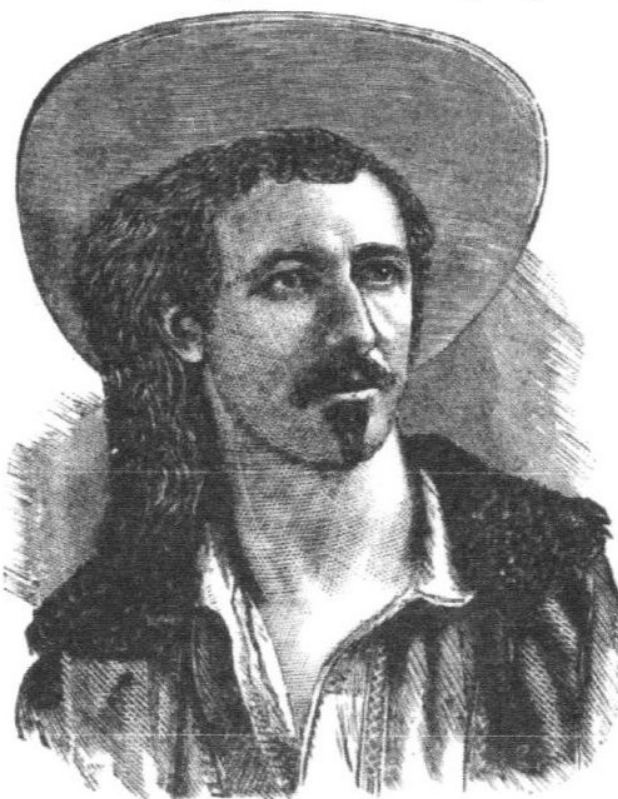
I remained undecided as to what I ought to do. The officers at the fort, as well as my family and friends to whom I had mentioned the matter, laughed at the idea of my ever becoming an actor. That I, an old scout who had never seen more than twenty or thirty theatrical performances in my life, should think of going upon the stage, was ridiculous in the extreme — so they all said.

A few days after my election to the Legislature a happy event occurred in my family circle, in the birth of a daughter whom we named Ora; about the same time I received another letter from Buntline, in which he requested me to appear on the stage for a few months as an experiment; and he said that if I made

a failure or did not like the business, I could easily return to my old life.

My two sisters who had been living with us had married — Nellie, to A. C. Jester, a cattle man, and May, to Ed. Bradford, a railroad engineer — and consequently left us; and my wife had been wishing for a long time to visit her parents in St. Louis. Taking these and other things into consideration I finally resolved to resign my seat in the Legislature and try my luck behind the foot-lights.

I informed General Reynolds of my determination, telling him at the same time that at the end of the month, November, I would resign my position under him. The General regretted to hear this, and advised me not to take the step, for I was leaving a comfortable little home, where I was sure of making a good living for my family; while, on the other hand, I was embarking upon a sea of uncertainty. Having once made up my mind, however, nothing could change it.



TEXAS JACK (J. B. OMOHUNDRO).

ARRANGING THE PRELIMINARIES.

While I was selling my horses and other effects, preparatory to leaving the fort, one of my brother scouts, Texas Jack, said he would like to accompany me. Now as Jack had also appeared as the hero in one of Ned Buntline's stories, I thought that he would make as good a "star" as myself, and it was accordingly arranged that Jack should go with me. On our way east we

stopped in Omaha a day or two to visit General Augur and other officers, and also the gentlemen who were out on the Judge Dundy Hunt. Judge Dundy and his friends gave a dinner party in my honor at the leading restaurant and entertained me very handsomely during my stay in the city.

At Omaha I parted with my family, who went to St. Louis, while Jack and myself proceeded to Chicago. Ned Buntline and Mr. Milligan, having been apprised of our coming by a telegram, met us at the depot. Mr. Milligan accompanied us to the Sherman house, where he had made arrangements for us to be his guests while we remained in the city. I didn't see much of Buntline that evening, as he hurried off to deliver a temperance lecture in one of the public halls. The next day we met him by appointment, and the first thing he said, was: —

“Boys, are you ready for business?”

“I can't answer that,” replied I, “for we don't know what we are going to do.”

“It's all arranged,” said he, “and you'll have no trouble whatever. Come with me. We'll go and see Nixon, manager of the Amphitheater. That's the place where we are to play. We'll open there next Monday night.” Jack and myself accordingly accompanied him to Manager Nixon's office without saying a word, as we didn't know what to say.

“Here we are, Mr. Nixon,” said Buntline; “here are the stars for you. Here are the boys; and they are a fine pair to draw to. Now, Nixon, I am prepared for business.”

Nixon and Buntline had evidently had a talk about the terms of our engagement. Buntline, it seems, was to furnish the company, the drama, and the pictorial printing, and was to receive sixty per cent. of the gross receipts for his share; while Nixon was to furnish the theater, the *attaches*, the orchestra, and the local printing, and receive forty per cent. of the gross receipts.

NOW, HERE'S A HOW D'DO.

“I am ready for you, Buntline. Have you got your company yet?” asked Nixon.

"No, sir; but there are plenty of idle theatrical people in town, and I can raise a company in two hours," was his reply.

"You haven't much time to spare, if you open on Monday night," said Nixon. "If you will allow me to look at your drama, to see what kind of people you want, I'll assist you in organizing your company."

"I have not yet written the drama," said Buntline.

"What the deuce do you mean? This is Wednesday, and you propose to open on next Monday night. The idea is ridiculous. Here you are at this late hour without a company and without a drama. This will never do, Buntline. I shall have to break my contract with you, for you can't possibly write a drama, cast it, and rehearse it properly for Monday night. Furthermore, you have no pictorial printing as yet. These two gentlemen, whom you have with you, have never been on the stage, and they certainly must have time to study their parts. It is preposterous to think of opening on Monday night, and I'll cancel the engagement."

This little speech was delivered in rather an excited manner by Mr. Nixon. Buntline said that he would write the drama that day and also select his company and have them at the theater for rehearsal next morning. Nixon laughed at him, and said there was no use of trying to undertake anything of the kind in so short a time—it was utterly impossible to do it. Buntline, whose ire was rising, said to Nixon: "What rent will you ask for your theater for next week?"

"Six hundred dollars," was the reply.

"Well, sir, I'll take your theater for next week at that price, and here is half the amount in advance," said Buntline, as he threw down three hundred dollars on the stand. Nixon took the money, gave a receipt for it, and had nothing more to say.

"Now, come with me boys," said Buntline, and away we went to the hotel. Buntline immediately obtained a supply of pens, ink and paper, and then engaged all the hotel clerks as penmen. In less than an hour after he had rented the theater, he was dashing off page after page of his proposed drama—the work being

done in his room at the hotel. He then set his clerks at copying for him, and at the end of four hours he jumped up from the table, and enthusiastically shouted; "Hurrah for 'The Scouts of the Plains!' That's the name of the play. The work is done. Hurrah!"

The parts were then copied off separately by the clerks, and handing us our respective portions Buntline said: "Now, boys, go to work, and do your level best to have this dead-letter perfect for the rehearsal, which takes place to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, prompt. I want to show Nixon that we'll be ready on time."



STUDYING THE PARTS.

commenced studying. I thought it was the hardest work I had ever done.

"This is dry business," finally remarked Jack.

"That's just what it is," I answered; "jerk the bell, Jack." The bell-boy soon appeared. We ordered refreshments; after partaking thereof we resumed our task. We studied hard for an hour or two, but finally gave it up as a bad job, although we had succeeded in committing a small portion to memory. Bunt-

line now came into the room and said: "Boys, how are you getting along?"

"I guess we'll have to go back on this studying business as it isn't our *forte*," said I.

"Don't weaken now, Bill; you'll come out on the top of the heap yet. Let me hear you recite your part," said Buntline. I began "spouting" what I had learned, but was interrupted by Buntline: "Tut! tut! you're not saying it right. You must stop at the cue."

"Cue! What the mischief do you mean by the cue? I never saw any cue except in a billiard room," said I. Buntline thereupon explained it to me, as well as to Jack, who was ignorant as myself concerning the "cue" business.

"Jack, I think we had better back out and go to hunting again," said I.

THE TIDE TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

"See here, boys; it won't do to go back on me at this stage of the game. Stick to it, and it may be the turning point in your lives and lead you on to fortune and to fame."

"A fortune is what we are after, and we'll at least give the wheel a turn or two to see what luck we have," said I. This satisfied Buntline, but we didn't study any more after he left us. The next morning we appeared at rehearsal and was introduced to the company. The first rehearsal was hardly a success; and the succeeding ones were not much better. The stage manager did his best to teach Jack and myself what to do, but when Monday night come we didn't know much more about it than when we began.

The clock struck seven, and then we put on our buckskin suits, which were the costumes we were to appear in. The theater was being rapidly filled, and it was evident that we were going to make our *début* before a packed house. As the minutes passed by, Jack and I became more and more nervous. We occasionally looked through the holes in the curtain, and saw that the people were continuing to crowd into the theater; our nervousness increased to an uncomfortable degree.

When at length the curtain arose, our courage had returned, so that we thought we could face the immense crowd ; yet when the time came for us to go on, we were rather slow in making our appearance. As we stepped forth we were received with a storm of applause, which we acknowledged with a bow.

Buntline, who was taking the part of "Cale Durg," appeared, and gave me the "cue" to speak "my little piece," but for the life of me I could not remember a single word. Buntline saw I



BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS.

was "stuck," and a happy thought occurred to him. He said, as if it were in the play :

A LITTLE FUNNY BUSINESS.

"Where have you been, Bill? What has kept you so long?"

Just then my eye happened to fall on Mr. Milligan, who was surrounded by his friends, the newspaper reporters, and several military officers, all of whom had heard of his hunt and "Indian fight" — he being a very popular man, and widely known in Chicago. So I said: —

"I have been out on a hunt with Milligan."

This proved to be a big hit. The audience cheered and applauded, which gave me greater confidence in my ability to get through the performance all right. Buntline, who was a very versatile man, saw that it would be a good plan to follow this up and said: "Well, Bill, tell us all about the hunt." I thereupon proceeded to relate in detail the particulars of the affair. I succeeded in making it rather funny, and I was frequently interrupted by rounds of applause. Whenever I began to "weaken," Buntline would give me a fresh start, by asking some question. In this way I took up fifteen minutes, without once speaking a word of my part; nor did I speak a word of it during the whole evening. The prompter, who was standing between the wings, attempted to prompt me, but it did no good; for while I was on the stage I "chipped in" anything I thought of.

The "Scouts of the Plains" was an Indian drama, of course; and there were between forty and fifty "supers" dressed as Indians. In the fight with them, Jack and I were at home. We blazed away at each other with blank cartridges; and when the scene ended in a hand-to-hand encounter—a general knock-down and drag-out—the way Jack and I killed Indians was "a caution." We would kill them all off in one act, but they would come up again ready for business in the next. Finally the curtain dropped, the play was ended, and I congratulated Jack and myself on having made such a brilliant and successful *début*. There was no backing out after that.

CRITICISMS OF THE PRESS.

The next morning there appeared in the Chicago papers some funny criticisms on our first performance. The papers gave us a better send-off than I expected, for they did not criticise us as actors. The *Chicago Times* said that if Buntline had actually spent four hours in writing that play, it was difficult for any one to see what he had been doing all the time. Buntline, as "Cale Durg," was killed in the second act, after a long temperance speech; and the *Inter-Ocean* said that it was to be regretted that he had not been killed in the first act. The company, how-

ever, was very good, and M'dlle. Morlacchi, as "Pale Dove," particularly fine; while Miss Cafarno "spouted" a poem of some seven hundred and three verses, more or less, of which the reader will be glad to know that I only recall the words "I was born in March."

Our engagement proved a decided success financially, if not artistically. Nixon was greatly surprised at the result, and at the end of the week he induced Buntline to take him in as a partner in the company.

The next week we played at DeBar's Opera House, in St. Louis, doing an immense business. The following week we were at Cincinnati, where the theater was so crowded every night that hundreds were unable to obtain admission. We met with equal success all over the country. Theatrical managers, upon hearing of this new and novel combination, which was drawing such tremendous houses, were all anxious to secure us; and we received offers of engagements at all the leading theaters. We played one week at the Boston Theater, and the gross receipts amounted to \$16,200. We also appeared at Niblo's Garden, New York, the theater being crowded to its utmost capacity every night of the engagement. At the Arch Street Theater, Philadelphia, it was the same way. There was not a single city where we did not have crowded houses.

We closed our tour on the 16th of June, 1873, at Port Jervis, New York, and when I counted up my share of the profits I found that I was only about \$6,000 ahead. I was somewhat disappointed, for, judging from our large business, I certainly had expected a greater sum.

Texas Jack and myself longed for a hunt on the Western prairies once more; and on meeting in New York a party of gentlemen who were desirous of going with us, we all started westward, and after a pleasant trip arrived at Fort McPherson.

LIVELY EXPERIENCES OF WILD BILL.

Texas Jack and I spent several weeks hunting in the western part of Nebraska, and after this pleasant recreation we went to

New York and organized a theatrical company for the season of 1873-74. Among the people we engaged for our next tour was Wild Bill, whose name, we knew, would be a drawing card. Bill did not think well of our enterprise on account of our unfamiliarity with the stage, but a large salary forced him to forego his diffidence before the public, and he accordingly made his *début* as an actor. He remained with us during a greater part of the season, much to our advantage, and would have continued but for a demoralizing habit that compelled us to part with



WILD BILL'S IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCE.

him. The habit to which I refer was that of firing blank cartridges at the legs of the supers, often burning them severely and at times almost bringing our performance to a ridiculous close. I remonstrated with him time and again, but all to no purpose, and at last, worn out with expostulations, I reluctantly told him he must either quit shooting the supers or leave the company. Without making any reply he retired to the dressing room and there changing his clothes he elbowed his way out through the audience, leaving word with the stage-carpenter that I could go

to thunder with my show. I met him later in the evening and tried to persuade him to remain with me, but to no avail, and finding him determined Jack and I paid him his wages and gave him an extra purse of \$1,000, with which he bade us good-bye.

The next I heard of Wild Bill was as a star at the head of a would-be rival organization that soon went to pieces. Bill left the troupe under the belief that it had disbanded, but he directly after learned that the company had reorganized and were presenting the same play with an actor personating him. When Bill ascertained this fact he sent a letter to the manager demanding that the name of Wild Bill be stricken from the advertisements, but no attention was paid to his objections. Determined to stop the bogus exhibition Bill went to a town where the company was announced to appear and, purchasing a ticket, took a seat near the orchestra, ready for business. When the bogus character at length appeared Bill jumped over the footlights and seizing his personator, threw him through one of the scenes, and then knocked down the manager, who was dressed in the disguise of an Indian, and kicked him over the lights and onto the fellow who was blowing a big horn in the orchestra. The excitement broke up the performance and Bill was arrested, but was let off with a fine of three dollars, which he cheerfully paid for so happy a privilege, after which he went West and participated in several adventures of a thrilling character, a description of which, however, does not properly belong here.

A HUNT WITH MR. MEDLEY.

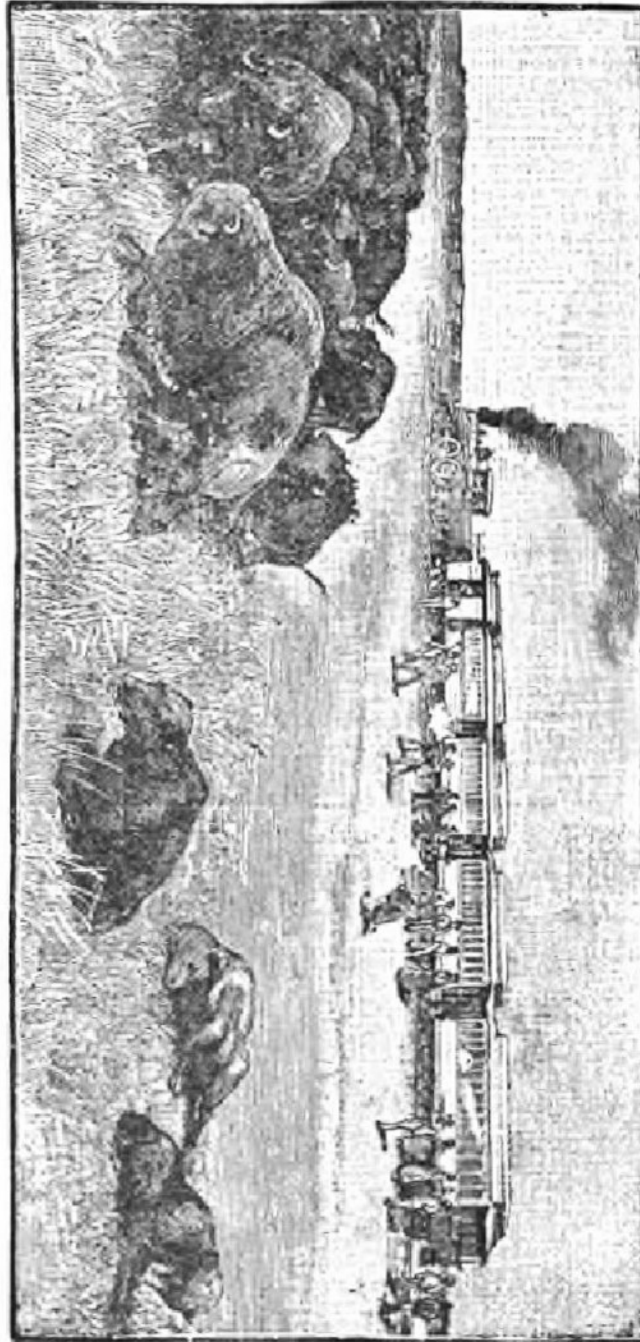
Jack and I played a very successful season, closing at Boston on the 13th of May, 1874. Business called me to New York, and while attending to several matters preparatory to returning to the West, I met an English gentleman, Thomas P. Medley, of London, who had come to America for a hunt on the plains. He had often heard of me and was anxious to engage me as his guide and companion, and he offered to pay the liberal salary of one thousand dollars a month while I was with him. He was a

very wealthy man, as I learned upon inquiry, and was a relative of Mr. Lord, of the firm of Lord & Taylor, of New York. Of course I accepted his offer.

When we reached the hunting ground in Nebraska, he informed me, somewhat to my surprise, that he did not want to go out as Alexis did, with carriages, servants, and other luxuries, but that he wished to rough it just as I would do — to sleep on the ground in the open air, and kill and cook his own meat. We started out from North Platte, and spent several weeks in hunting all over the country.

Mr. Medley proved to be a very agreeable gentleman and an excellent hunter. While in camp he busied himself carrying wood and water, attending to the fire, and preparing and cooking the meals, never asking me to do a thing. He did not perform these menial services to save expenses, but because he wanted to do as the other hunters in the party

WHY THE BUFFALO QUICKLY DISAPPEARED.



were doing. After spending as much time as he wished, we returned to the railroad, and he took the train for the East. Everything that was required on this hunt was paid for in a most liberal manner by Mr. Medley, who also gave the members of the party several handsome presents.

About this time an expedition consisting of seven companies of cavalry and two companies of infantry, to be commanded by Colonel Mills of the Third Cavalry, was being organized to scout the Powder river and Big Horn country, and I was employed as guide for the command. Proceeding to Rawlins, Wyoming, we "outfitted," and other guides were engaged — among them Tom Sun and Bony Erres', two noted Rocky mountain scouts. We there left the railroad, and passing through the Seminole range of the Rocky mountains we established our supply camp at the foot of Independence Rock on the Sweet Water. I was now on my old familiar stamping ground, and it seemed like home to me. Fifteen years before, I had ridden the pony express and driven the overland stages through this region, and the command was going into the same section of country where Wild Bill's expedition of stage-drivers and express-riders had recaptured from the Indians a large number of stolen stage-horses, as previously related.

Leaving the infantry to guard the supply camp, Colonel Mills struck out for the north with the seven companies of cavalry, and in a few days surprised Little Wolf's band of Arapahoes and drove them into the agencies. We then scouted the Powder river, Crazy Woman's fork, and Clear fork, and then pushed westward through the mountains to the Wind river. After having been out for a month or two we were ordered to return.

I immediately went East and organized another dramatic company for the season of 1874-75, Texas Jack being absent in the Yellowstone country hunting with the Earl of Dunraven. I played my company in all the principal cities of the country, doing a good business wherever I went. The summer of 1875 I spent at Rochester with my family.

DEATH OF MY ONLY LITTLE BOY.

For the season of 1875-76, Texas Jack and I reorganized our old combination, and made a very successful tour. While we were playing at Springfield, Massachusetts, April 20th and 21st, 1876, a telegram was handed me just as I was going on the stage. I opened it and found it to be from Colonel G. W. Torrence, of Rochester, an intimate friend of the family, who stated that my little boy Kit was dangerously ill with the scarlet fever. This was indeed sad news, for little Kit had always been my greatest pride. I sent for John Burke, our business manager, and showing him the telegram, told him that I would play the first act, and making a proper excuse to the audience, I would then take the nine o'clock train that same evening for Rochester, leaving him to play out my part. This I did, and at ten o'clock the next morning I arrived in Rochester, and was met at the depot by my intimate friend Moses Kerngood who at once drove me to my home. I found my little boy unable to speak but he seemed to recognize me and putting his little arms around my neck he tried to kiss me. We did everything in our power to save him, but it was of no avail. The Lord claimed his own, and that evening at six o'clock my beloved little Kit died in my arms. We laid him away to rest in the beautiful cemetery of Mount Hope amid sorrow and tears.



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Texas Jack and the Johnsons

By John T. Omohundro

The Texas in Texas Jack

What was Texas Jack doing in Texas?

Herschel Logan, John “Texas Jack” Omohundro’s best-known biographer (*Buckskin and Satin*), doesn’t explain why Jack went to Texas at first. Major John M. Burke, Buffalo Bill Cody’s longtime publicist, in his memoir *Buffalo Bill From Prairie to Palace* (1893), does have a story: “[While serving in Virginia in the Civil War, Jack became] connected with the headquarters of a Texas general ... he was made a scout... Allied with Texans he went with them to Texas at the close of the war, going to the frontier...” (p. 163). Burke does not specify who the Texan general was; Jack spent most of the war working under Gen. Lunsford L. Lomax, a Virginian. It is possible, of course, that Jack connected with a group of war veterans interested in pioneering in Texas.

According to Logan, Jack’s progress west by sea was interrupted by storms in the Gulf. After a year’s hiatus in Florida, Jack again headed to Texas, this time by land, arriving in late 1866 or early 1867. He was based on that frontier for about three years. Logan admits that “... to pin the happenings down in black and white or to find actual records has been an all but impossible task.” (p 20). Most of what we know about those Texas years was reported later by Jack or his friends—none of whom were with him in Texas, so they must be remembering what Jack told them.

Jack hired on as a Texas ranch hand, although no one knows where. Herschel Logan reports that one early-day writer (never identified) claimed Jack was based in the Texas Panhandle. Omohundro drove cattle long distances on the Chisholm trail,

north across Oklahoma through hostile native territory to the Kansas-Pacific rail head at Abilene. No doubt his horsemanship and gun skills were honed in this work, and probably his lariat tricks as well.

Years later, Jack reflected back on the cattle drive for a newspaper reporter:

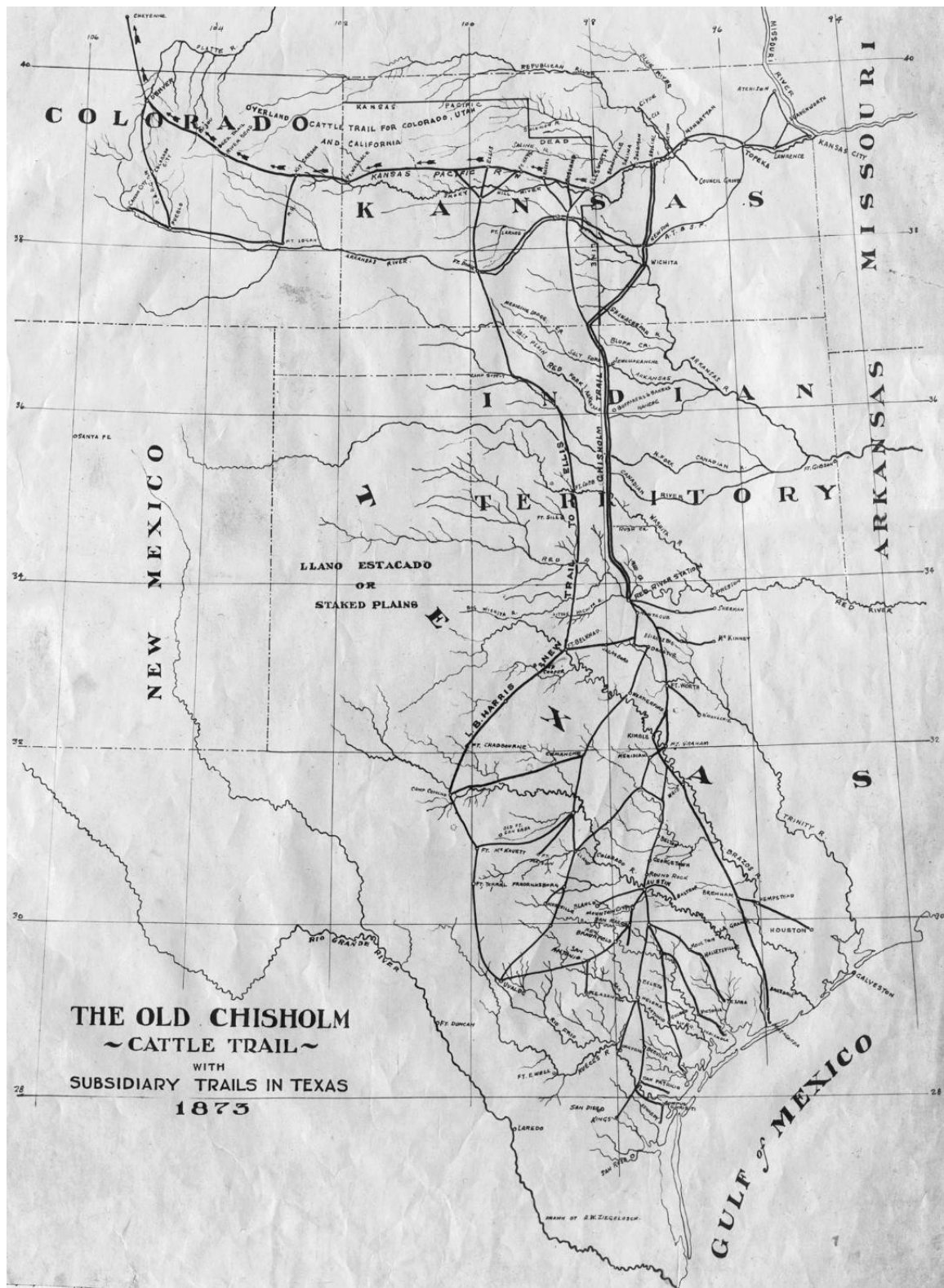
“Immense herds, as high as thirty thousand or more, are moved by single owners, but are driven in bands of one to three thousand, which, when under way, are designated ‘herds.’ Each of these have from ten to fifteen men, with a wagon driver and cook, and the “king-pin of the outfit,” the boss, with a supply of two or three ponies to a man, an ox team, and blankets, also jerked beef and corn meal—the staple food; also supplied with mavericks or “doubtless-owned” yearlings for fresh meat supply. After getting fully under way, and the cattle broke in, from ten to fifteen miles a day is the average... in fair weather. As night comes on, the cattle are rounded up in a small compass, and held until they lie down, when two men are left on watch, riding round and round them in opposite directions, singing or whistling all the time, for two hours, that being the length of each watch...”

Besides Indian raids, cowboys on the drive feared thunderstorms, which stampeded the herd, and crossing wide and rapid streams, which cows don’t like to do.

Logan also quotes Kansas State Historical Society’s Charles Harger on what the Chisholm trail was like:

“From two hundred to four hundred yards wide, beaten into the bare earth, it reached over hill and through valley for over six hundred miles, a chocolate band amid the green prairies.... As the marching hoofs wore it down and the wind blew and the

THE TEXAS JACK SCOUT



An 1873 map of the Chisholm Trail and subsidiaries. Texas Historical Association

waters washed the earth away, it became lower than the surrounding territory, and was flanked by little banks of sand, drifted there by the wind...[S]potting the emerald reaches on either side were the barren circle-like “bedding-grounds,” each a record that a great herd had there spent a night.” (31).

Major Burke also recalls that Jack was more than a cowboy. “From ranger, in which capacity he saw much service against the Indians, he turned to cattle-herding, becoming first a cowboy and afterward a rancher.” Ranching would mean owning real estate, which seems unlikely; Jack never mentioned owning a spread. More likely he was an entrepreneur, as on the Tennessee drive, risking his own and others’ money moving cattle long distances. In any case, the big money Jack may have made in the Texas cattle business didn’t last, because he ended up in Nebraska on wages again as a scout.

How Does Jack Become “Texas Jack”?

John B. Omohundro took the nickname “Texas Jack” soon after the Civil War, while working as a cowboy in Texas. Why acquire *any* nickname, and that one in particular? It was fashionable then for western men on the make to adopt nicknames based on some personal trait or western accomplishment, such as “Buffalo Bill” Cody or “Wild Bill” Hickok. In retrospect, it would have been reasonable for John B. to take the moniker “Yellowstone Jack,” when you consider his fame as a big game guide in the wilderness for the likes of Irish Earl of Dunraven in the late ‘60s. One reasonable explanation for choosing Texas is because that is where Jack first acquired a reputation, as a young cowboy in his early 20s.

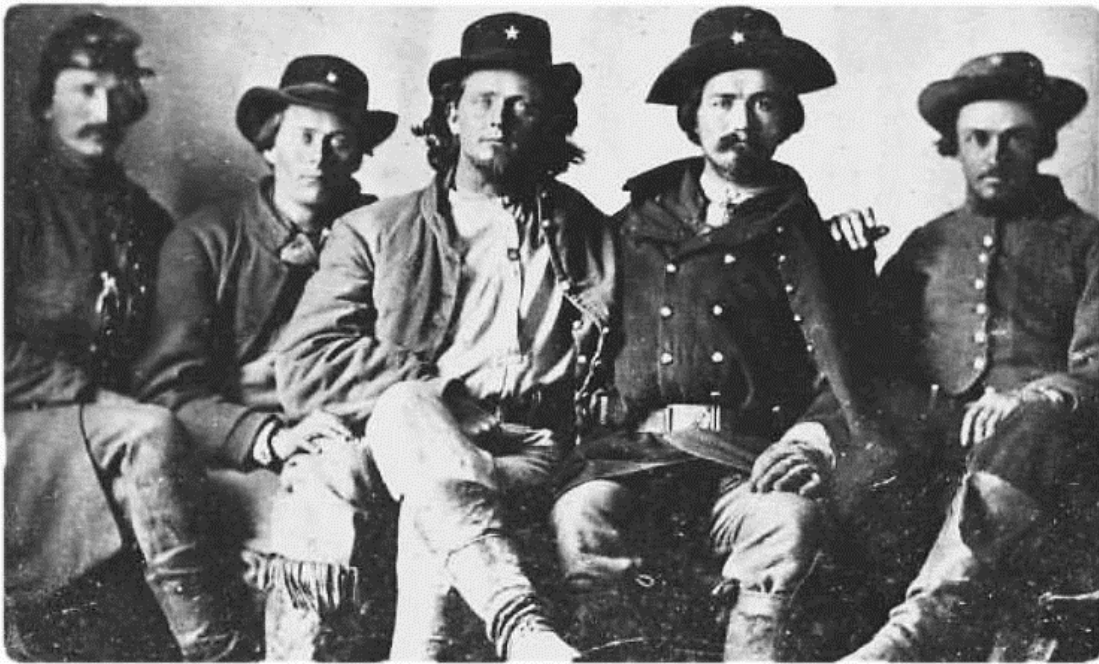
Jack claims he got his nickname from a cattle drive to Tennessee. Logan quotes an

1880 Leadville newspaper interview with Jack in which he says he was an employee on a cattle ranch in 1867 or so when he learned of a meat shortage in Tennessee. He must have left his job at that ranch, because the article reports that he hired a crew and bought a herd to drive to Tennessee. After hundreds of miles of difficult travel and several weeks later, the article reports, he brought his herd into a small town where the welcoming crowds assigned him the title, “Texas Jack.”

I doubt Jack bankrolled the Tennessee drive from his cowboy wages, so perhaps he found a backer to finance this risky trip. He must not have made a fortune on the trip, since he returned to Texas as a cowboy for a couple more years. Or perhaps he bossed this Tennessee drive while in the employ of the rancher who owned the cattle.

Jack told the Tennessee cattle-driving story to a newspaper 13 years after the event, at the peak of his show business career. No one has corroborated it. Showmen were their own best publicists (although Buffalo Bill, no slouch at publicity himself, hired the highly effective Col. Burke as his promoter). So Jack’s story, while possible, may be just good press. If Tennesseans named him “Texas Jack” in 1867, that name wouldn’t do him much good for his next two years among all the other Texans. The name works best when it tells where you came *from*.

There’s another story about the origin of the name “Texas Jack.” In his 1893 memoir Major Burke recalls that when Jack made friends in Nebraska, he acquired his nickname for his earlier service in the Texas Rangers. Although he was a master of the business of dressing up the truth, Burke had no motive to make up a story for Jack, because Jack had been a colleague not a client. So can we confirm that Jack was a Texas Ranger?



Rusty added in his note to me:

“Part of the problem is that the

“The short answer is that we too

So the jury remains out on Major

Here's my theory. Omohundro still

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cattle-driving trips. By 1869 at Fort Hayes he had become friends with General Custer's guide, "California Joe" Milner, and the marshal of Hayes, "Wild Bill" Hickok. In 1869, also, he drove a herd further north near Cottonwood Springs, Nebraska, where Fort McPherson had been established a few years earlier and the Union Pacific Railroad had just been laid. The Indian Wars were intensifying and scouting opportunities abounded. Jack the cowboy met "Doc" Carver and "Buffalo Bill" Cody in Cottonwood Springs. The action now seemed to be in the plains, so he shifted his base of operations to Nebraska. I speculate that hanging out among these new pards with their western nicknames, Jack the cattle driver from Texas followed suit and took the handle "Texas Jack"—or accepted it, since his plains pards could have called him that, for his origins to the south.

The Texas Johnsons

Do you suppose John B. in his Texas cattle-driving days came across another pair of cattle drivers in the region: Lyndon Baines Johnson's grandfather and grandmother? Here's what Robert Caro, author of *The Years of Lyndon Baines Johnson*, vol. 1, reports. Reading Caro inspired me to compose this essay.

Young brothers Tom and Sam Johnson, pioneering west out of Alabama, ventured into the new Blanco County that was formed along the Blanco and Pedernales rivers, in Texas Hill country in 1858. They both returned east to fight in the Civil War. Upon their return, they found that the small herd of cattle they'll left behind had grown, by reproduction and by attracting unbranded loose animals abandoned by other ranchers. The market for beef had greatly improved as a result of the war, and moving cattle to market had improved as the railroads advanced west. The rail head in Abilene, Kansas, was created in 1867. While the

price of a cow in Texas was only about four dollars (or the trouble to catch an unattached one), the same longhorn in Abilene was selling for between forty and fifty dollars. Tom and Sam bought a ranch in 1867. They collected cattle on the southern plains, fed them well on Hill Country grass, then drove them east past Austin to the Chisholm Trail and up to Abilene for big profits. By 1870 they were perhaps the largest drivers in Blanco and surrounding counties. That year Tom drove 7,000 head to Abilene and returned with saddlebags bulging with \$100,000. (p 20).

When Sam Johnson drove cattle, he was accompanied by his wife, Eliza Bunton, the daughter of another successful rancher. She may have been the only Hill Country wife who went on drives. She rode ahead of the herd on her sleek Kentucky-bred mare to scout the route. She was clearly a remarkable frontierswoman, because she shared with her husband "the months of grinding 18-hour days in the saddle, the misery of rainstorms and endless dust clouds, the fright of [Comanche] or rustler attack, the sheer terror of a night stampede when lightning sparked across the plains." (Caro, p 20). Another danger of the thousand-mile Chisholm Trail that Caro adds was the hysterical Kansas mobs afraid the longhorn cattle were carrying "Texas Fever"—a disease of the spleen carried by the longhorns that ravaged local cattle and led to the end of the Texas cattle drives in 1885.


Sam and Eliza bore Sam Johnson, Jr., who in turn sired Lyndon Baines Johnson. Had Texas Jack been raising cattle in the lush Hill Country, or passing through it to the Chisholm Trail, he may have at least heard of Sam, Sr., or he may have run across him coming and going on the Trail. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that most drivers, being good businessmen, knew most

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A Texas longhorn steer. The species is now listed as endangered. Wikipedia.

of the other drivers, either in person or by reputation.

Ah...so many holes in the short tale of Jack in Texas, some never to be filled in. Too bad John B. didn't keep a journal. 

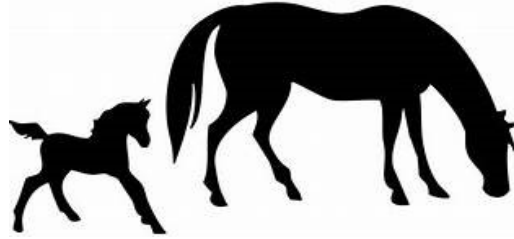
A WILD MUSTANG CALLED DUSTY...July2010

By: Driftin' AaronG

*Out in the wilds it's spring an' they're a callin'
The little colts an' fillies a runnin' aroun' jus' a squallin'*

*Often seen a gallupin' o'er a high windy hill
Headin' for some little valley all quiet an' still*

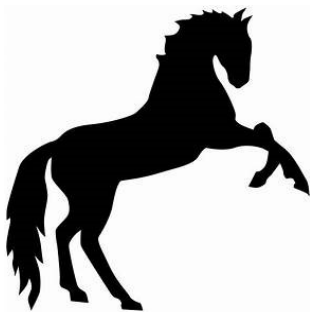
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*Among the wild herd is Dusty a new born colt
Runnin' beside his mare he could spring out like a lightnin' bolt*

*Dusty is the youngest but bravest of all the stud colts born
An' one day will be a king the old stallion will scorn*

*Dusty has a lot to learn in this new life that is a treasured gift
To grow an' become strong an' be forever swift*



*He grows powerful an' cunning in his fight to be
free
To accept an' win all challenges is what is written
an' must be*

*In the far range of the distant hills Dusty has won
ever' match*

An' from the wranglers after him they could never catch

*An' on that fateful day Dusty arrives to meet the challenge of the old
King*

Knowin' full well that all the mares will happily sing

*They both reared an' pawed, snorted an' stammered
Old dad stood proud but knowin' this day he'd probably be hammered*

Dusty reared an' made the charge toward his old dad

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Then suddenly stopped an' smiled, turned an' galloped off glad

*Old Dad seen that Dusty would not fight his favorite loved one
He watched him reach the top of the hill his very own favored son*

*Dusty stopped and took one last look with a smile at his big old dad
jus' a prancing there*

*Then turned an' proudly raced away searchin' for his own herd without
any worrisome care*

*He was as free as the wind and just as proud as the stallion that
fathered him*

He was a mustang called Dusty an' life for old dad would soon dim



Texas Jack Vermilion's Ride with the Earps

Recommended reading by Larry Tyree

Hell's Comin' With Me! A blow-by-blow account of what really went down.


By Bob Boze Bell

March 27, 2018 *True West Magazine*

Over the years, I have heard about Texas Jack Vermilion as people have sent in photos of him, thinking he was the same as Texas Jack Omohundro. Here is an interesting account of the revenge posse ride with Wyatt Earp and some of his friends, including Texas Jack Vermilion, as they took out revenge on Ike Clanton, Frank Stillwell, and others who participated in the murder of his brother Morgan Earp.

If you would like to read the article, it is available online at True West Magazine's link that is provided:

https://truewestmagazine.com/hells-comin-vendetta-ride/?fbclid=IwAR0ZQZeobzI72mJBDC_CEXZk6vFR3Jd-9QTDRLjuBYprKv8gxn02PsU0QN5

In a future edition of the *Scout*, I think it would be appropriate to present some research into the life of Texas Jack Vermilion, just so that more is available to distinguish him from John Baker Omohundro (Texas Jack). More to come in next issue! 

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Saturday June 20, 2020 the Texas Jack Association held its regularly scheduled biennial Business Meeting, despite not being at a Roundup due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. It was held by participants logging in together by computer and phone. The platform that was used is called Zoom and members could hear and see each other in real time. We were not in a real room, but we were together in a virtual room.

Among the decisions that were made: a new internet webpage was displayed with the ability now for members to renew annually by credit card, and PayPal. It will be up and running soon! Members can also have access to every digitized version of the *Scout* since 2005. They can also choose to receive a digitized version of each *Scout* if they don't want the printed paper version—just by downloading it to their computer. The new changes to the website have been made by Matthew Kerns, himself a professional webpage designer. He was also selected to be our new Webmaster.

Because the normally scheduled Roundup has been postponed until 2021, it was decided to modify the bylaws of the Association to allow an extension to

be made to the length of service for officers given the special circumstances. Our current officers will continue serving until 2021. Also, an amendment was made to make the interval between Roundups go from every two years, to every three years as well as the length of service for future officers. Thus, the 2021 Roundup will be our first with a three-year interval since the previous one. The next one will be in 2024. At the Roundup next year in 2021, elections will be held for the officers for 2021 through 2024.

There were many other items discussed, and those can be found in the minutes that are a part of this issue of the *Scout*. I am honored to continue to serve the Texas Jack Association with such a high quality group of individuals on our team with Rob Omohundro—Vice President (President Elect), Rick Omohundro—Treasurer, Melisa Brown—Secretary, and Carole Brown—Director.

By the way, the newly designed and updated website is now active as of July 1, 2020, at: www.texasjack.org.

Larry Tyree
President TJA

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Texas Jack Association Minutes of the Biennial Meeting

June 20, 2020

8:00 AM PDT

Location of Meeting: Zoom Video Communications

Present at Meeting: Peggy Greene, Matthew Kerns, Melisa Brown, Carole Brown, Dick Omohundro, Larry Tyree, Linda Omohundro, Candice McKinney, Rene Tyree, John Omohundro, Susan Omohundro, Rick Omohundro, Rob Omohundro.

The meeting of the Texas Jack Association was called to order at 8:08 AM PDT on June 20, 2020, and recorded on Zoom Video Communications by Larry Tyree.

I. Welcome

Larry Tyree opened the agenda for the meeting by recalling to the members the historic circumstances calling us together in a virtual TJA Zoom Business Meeting rather than in person as has heretofore been the case on the Saturday of Roundup.

II. 2021 Roundup in Chicago

Because the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the postponing of the 2020 Roundup until July 2021, Larry thought it would be a good opportunity to give a brief overview of next year's plans to the meeting. He called on Candice McKinney, co-director of the Roundup, to present highlights of the 2021 Roundup with an overview of the venues that we plan to visit next year. (See November 2019 *Scout* for itinerary schedule.) After her report, Larry showed photos of our hotel with commentary.

III. After Chicago, the Next Roundup: 2022, or 2024?

Since the postponed Roundup will be in 2021, it was discussed whether we should continue with Roundups in even years and schedule 2022 for the following Roundup, or whether the 2022 Roundup would be too soon, being an odd year, and only one year after 2021. It was unanimously approved that the postponed Roundup would be in 2021. We would then possibly have Roundups every three years, although this would be determined at the 2021 Roundup. (See *follow-up discussion below in Current Committees, Roundup Frequency Committee.*)

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IV. The Next Roundup Options

Rob Omohundro had heard of an enticing new option for Roundups and researched it. A cruise down the Mississippi River on the Paddlewheeler America was discussed. It would be for four days starting at New Orleans, although there would be a hotel stay the night before near the dock. The cost would be about \$2375 per person before possible discounts of as much as \$600.

It was also discussed revisiting a location of a previously attended Roundup such as Leadville, or Golden, Colorado. These options will be brought up for discussion at the next Roundup in 2021 with a more detailed description of the cruise.

V. TJA Website New Features

Larry stated that the TJA website is being updated by Matthew Kerns with new pictures, a new platform, and is now more user friendly. Matthew indicated that one will be able to pay dues and donate easier through the website and also be able join the association. Members will have private access to view past *Scouts*. The website will be linked to Facebook. Merchandise also can be added. Rene Tyree moved that Matthew's improvements to the website be implemented. Linda Omohundro seconded. There was unanimous approval.

Larry nominated Matthew as the next Webmaster, Candice seconded, all approved.

Matthew is writing a book about Texas Jack, which he discussed. He is filling in many missing parts of Texas Jack's life. He is using TwoDot publishers <http://www.twodotbooks.com/>, which specializes in books of the West. The projected title will be-- *Texas Jack, America's First Cowboy Star*, to be out April 1, 2021.

Rene commented that there were 1608 likes on the TJA Facebook site.

VI. Financial Report

Rick Omohundro was called on to present the Financial Report:

In 2018: we began with \$8,582.36 and ended with \$10,640.14

In 2019: we began with \$10,640.14 and ended with \$9,829.36

In 2020: we began with \$9,829.36 and currently have \$10,489.94 at the close of business on 6-19-2020.

Numbers have gotten low, so it was decided to reach out to those that have been inactive to regain more members. Larry moved and Dick Omohundro seconded to approve the Financial Report. All gave it unanimous approval.

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VII. Scout Guest Editors

Volunteers were sought for Guest Editor and the following individuals responded:

Nov 2020: John & Susan Omohundro
Mar 2021: Larry Tyree & Candice McKinney
July 2021: Peggy Greene
Nov 2021: Rob Omohundro
Mar 2022: Larry Tyree
July 2022: Matthew Kerns

VIII. Current Committees

Larry mentioned the names of current committees of the TJA as: Membership & Nominations, Finance & Legal, Communications (including the *Scout* and the Website), Cemetery & Archaeology, Special Projects. In the case of Special Projects, they arise and end when new interests emerge in the membership.

Roundup Frequency Committee. Peggy Greene was asked to give her report from the Roundup Frequency Committee as it had direct bearing on this and the previous discussion items. Her committee had discussed multiple issues and ended up recommending that we opt for a new frequency of three years between Roundups. Larry mentioned that this would require that we adopt modifications to the bylaws of the TJA to:

- 1) Allow for modifications by membership Business Meetings to extend or shorten both terms of office for officers, as well as frequency of Roundups.
- 2) Change the term of office for officers from two to three years, and
- 3) Modify the frequency of membership Business Meetings at the Roundups from biennially to triennially.

These modifications to the Bylaws were moved and seconded and approved unanimously. Because the terms of office for TJA officers were extended by a year, the next election of officers will take place at the 2021 Roundup membership business meeting.

New Committee. A New Special Project was suggested by Rob Omohundro regarding the “Mlle. Morlacchi Scrapbook. Rob brought up the scrapbook, which has been written about in the *Scout* and could be a valuable asset to the TJA. It has photos of Mlle. Guiseppina Morlacchi, many newspaper articles, and much other memorabilia. Matthew had a lot of information about it. The scrapbook is now in the possession of David Gindy. A resolution was moved and seconded that we create the Mlle Morlacchi Scrapbook Committee. It was approved unanimously.

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The Mlle Morlacchi Scrapbook Committee is to be composed of: Matthew Kerns, Rob Omohundro, and Larry Tyree with Rob as chair. The committee will research the feasibility of purchasing the scrapbook, raising money, and choosing where it will reside.

V. Agenda and Time of Next Meeting

The next membership business meeting of the TJA will be held on Saturday morning of the next Roundup on June 19, 2021.

The agenda for the next business meeting will include:

- Possibility of annual “non-business” Zoom meetings to check in with each other.
- Livestreaming Roundups for those who cannot make it.
- Update from Committees.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 AM PDT by Larry Tyree.

Respectfully submitted by: Melisa Brown and Larry Tyree

Next *Texas Jack Scout* Information

The deadline for the November 2020 issue of the *Scout* is November 1, 2020. Please send ideas and materials to our Guest Editors:

John and Susan Omohundro
163 Riverside Dr.
Saranac Lake NY 12983

omohunjt@northnet.org

Thank you, John and Susan!

Poem by Texas Jack, Jr. from
<https://www.dimelibrary.com/post/texas-jack-junior>

By Matthew Kerns

Later in his life, as part of his traveling show, Texas Jack Junior wrote this poem about his life, including a verse about his capture by the Indians and rescue by Texas Jack Omohundro:

Come, give me your attention,
And see the right and wrong,
It is a simple story
And won't detain you long;

I'll try to tell the reason
Why we are bound to roam
And why we are so friendless
And never have a home

My home is in the saddle,
Upon a pony's back,
I am a roving Cow-boy
And find the hostile track;

They say I am a sure shot,
And danger, I never knew;
But I have often heard the story,
That now I'll tell to you

In eighteen hundred and sixty-three,
A little emigrant band
Was massacred by Indians,
Bound West by overland;

They scalped our noble soldiers,
And the emigrants had to die,
And the only living captives
Were two small girls and I.

I was rescued from the Indians
By a brave and noble man,
Who trailed the thieving Indians,
And fought them hand to hand;

He was noted for his bravery
While on an enemy's track;
He has a noble history
And his name is Texas Jack.

Old Jack could tell a story
If he was only here,
Of the trouble and the hardships
Of the western pioneer;

He would tell you how the mothers
And comrades lost their lives,
And how the noble fathers
Were scalped before our eyes.


I was raised among the Cow-boys,
My saddle is my home,
And I'll always be a Cow-boy
No difference where I roam;

And like that noble hero
My help I volunteer,
And try to be of service
To the Western pioneer.

I am a roving Cow-boy,
I've worked upon the trail,
I've shot the shaggy buffalo
And heard the coyote's wail;

I've slept upon my saddle.
And covered by the moon;
I expect to keep it up, dear friends,
Until I meet my doom.

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The year stated in the poem of 1863 is incorrect. On his passport application forms, Jack Junior stated that he was born in either 1866 or 1867, but that he did not know the particular date of his own birth: 

[REMARKS OF VISA]

NATIVE

Fee for Passport, . . . \$1.00
 Fee for filling out application in duplicate,50
 Fee for administering oath in duplicate,50

No. 384 Here Jack DEWEED, Berlin, August 14, 1894.
 I, Jack, a native and loyal citizen of the United States, hereby apply to the Embassy of the United States at Berlin for a passport for myself, accompanied by my wife Hazel Jack, born at Chicago, Ill., on the 22 day of November, 1892, and

I solemnly swear that I was born ~~in the United States~~ on or about the year 1866 or 1867; that my father is a ~~citizen of the United States~~; that I am domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at my place in the State of Texas, where I follow the occupation of showman; that I left the United States on the day of December 1892, and am now temporarily sojourning at Berlin; that I am the holder of Passport No. 15, issued by on the day of 18; that I intend to return to the United States within a year or two with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein; and that I desire the passport for the purpose of satisfying the local authorities.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: SO HELP ME GOD.

Texas Jack

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES AT BERLIN.

Sworn to before me, this 14th day of August, 1894.

C. Hoffman
Charge d'Affaires

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT

Age: <u>27</u> years.	Mouth: <u>medium</u>
Stature: <u>5 feet 9 1/2 inches</u> , Eng.	Chin: <u>do.</u>
Forehead: <u>low</u>	Hair: <u>dark brown</u>
Eyes: <u>blue grey</u>	Complexion: <u>dark</u>
Nose: <u>medium</u>	Face: <u>full</u>

IDENTIFICATION.

, 18

I hereby certify that I know the above-named personally, and know him to be a native-born citizen of the United States, and that the facts stated in his affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(ADDRESS OF WITNESS)

NOTE. - This form is to be filled out in duplicate, one copy being retained on the files of the Embassy and the other forwarded with the quarterly returns to the Department of State. It may be so filled out by the applicant, in which case no fee therefor is chargeable.

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The Texas Jack Scout
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TO: