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www.texasjack.org

March 2022



ROUNDUP POSTPONED UNTIL 2023



On Sunday February 27, 2022, the Board of Directors of the Texas Jack Association considered giving the final “go ahead” to holding the 2022 Roundup in June of 2022, as had been hoped for since last year in 2021. After some discussion, the members were asked for their vote so that they could provide final pieces of information that would appear in the March issue of *The Scout* (this issue) in preparation for the Roundup. The vote was unanimous to proceed forward with June 2022 for the Chicago Roundup. The Board then continued to discuss other circumstances that are involved in holding a Roundup in 2022. Full disclosure: one vote had been hesitant (50-50) about it. By the end of the meeting, the Board had reversed its decision.

Some of the initial discussion included data that had been circulated officially by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC recommendation is a more relaxed approach to the need for masking due to current drops in rates. They gave guidance on how populations could respond based on local infectivity levels. The chart gives varying responses based on those data and are categorized as either “High”, “Medium” or “Low” local infection rates by county. Despite that official stance, some epidemiologists interviewed in the media believe that individual decisions still need to account for other factors.

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The Texas Jack Scout

from the Editor's Desk...



The March 2022 issue of *The Texas Jack Scout* begins with the news that unfortunately the Roundup that had been rescheduled for this year will need to be moved to June 14-18, 2023. Three articles in this issue have themes related to postponing the Roundup: The cover story, an article about the next Texas Jack ZOOM Party, and the President's Message.

John Omohundro presents yet another amazing view of the talents of Texas Jack's beautiful bride Guiseppina Morlacchi and the dance she brought to America.

Robert Omohundro found an amazing artifact from Texas Jack and Guiseppina Morlacchi's history.

Kevin Cody is President of the Buffalo Bill Association and presents an introduction to his organization. I look forward to getting to know more about them! We had been planning to meet them in Le Claire, Iowa during the Roundup but will not be able to do so because of the postponement. Perhaps there will be another occasion in future years...

Matthew Kerns writes about an article that he wrote on Texas Jack that appears in *Wild West* magazine. He says that they will "run it as the cover story for the April issue".

Larry Tyree, Guest Editor

The Texas Jack Scout

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The Texas Jack Association
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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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Mrs. Nellie Snyder Yost, North Platte, NE

Historian of the Plains

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What Prevention Steps Should You Take Based on Your COVID-19 Community Level?

Community Burden Levels		
Low	Medium	High
Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms	If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms	Wear a mask indoors in public Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines Get tested if you have symptoms Additional precautions may be needed

Research is showing that despite a more relaxed move around the US regarding mask use—at the end of February 2022—actual hospitalization rates of COVID-19, death rates, and infectivity rates are higher than they were in the summer of 2021 during two spikes in the infection, hospitalization, and death rates.

Covid-19 Comparisons—Then and Now

Date	Daily New Cases	Daily Deaths	Note
2021 (July 1)	15,044	331	Beginning of 1 st summer spike
2022 (March 4)	50,699	1,778	

When we compare the current level of new cases with the beginning of the summer spike in 2021, we see that there is still a very high level of transmission.

Recent High Spikes in the Omicron Variant

Date	Daily New Cases	Daily Deaths	Note
2021 High Point (End of August)	198,196	2,729	During 2 nd summer spike
2022 High Point (Mid-January)	904,534	3,694	During January spike

Just weeks ago in mid-January 2022, the Omicron rates were higher than at the 2nd spike at the end of summer 2021.

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By the end of February 2022, as the Board was meeting to discuss the advisability of holding the Roundup in 2022... there were 26,185,399 current infections. In other words, over **26 million people in the US have current infections.**

As discussions continued, one Board member shared concern about personal co-morbidity risks that were in the background of their vote, but which had not been shared earlier. (The fact is that most members of the Association are beyond retirement age and at their most susceptible to be infected.) Discussion held by the Board then centered around the desire to allow time for the pandemic to finally decline for good—without new spikes—and let the cumulative effect of vaccinations in the population allow social interaction on a larger scale to be safe again.

The Board really had wanted to go ahead with holding the Roundup this year...but could live with being safest for everyone. And so, out of caution, the **Board of the Texas Jack Association postponed the next Roundup to June 14-18, 2023.** In its place we will hold **Zoom Party #2** to see each other, and have some fun! (Details in this issue).

Extra time will allow us to know for sure what will happen: Will rates continue to go down? Will they spike back up again? Time will allow us to know for sure by exercising caution. 🦾

References

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/02/health/children-parents-cdc-mask-guidelines-wellness/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/us/>

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>

The Texas Jack Scout – An Urgent Need

The *Scout* is totally comprised of member donated articles. Our membership has been wonderful in writing and sourcing articles about Texas Jack, his friends and peers, and about the Wild West of the 19th century. The Guest Editor of each issue is in charge of writing and/or finding one or more articles for the issue they volunteered for. The problem is sometimes the Guest Editor is not able to do that when their time comes, but it leaves a problem for the other editors.

There is so much information out there about Texas Jack's era. Many of you have been very helpful in supplying us with wonderful, informative, and entertaining articles. Many of you we haven't heard from in a while. Please think about what you could contribute. Many of our members have said in their articles how much they enjoyed finding material and writing about it. Wouldn't you all like to have that same pleasure—and give other members the pleasure of reading and learning more about Texas Jack and his times?

TJA Members, let's refill our "bank" with great articles to share. Send them to [<omohndro@sbcglobal.net>](mailto:omohndro@sbcglobal.net). Thank you!

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Texas Jack ZOOM Party 2.0!

Saturday—June 18, 2022

Due to postponement of the Roundup, let's get together online and have party!!

Come one, come all to the 2nd Texas Jack Association Wild West Themed **ZOOM Party!!**

- We will hold a Meet-n-Greet cocktail hour--BYOB...as we all gather.
- The TRIVIA GAME is back—with a new twist: Research and **bring your own piece** of trivia from either Matthew Kerns' new book *Texas Jack, America's First Cowboy Star*, or *Buckskin and Satin* by Herschel Logan. During the game, you will be called on for your piece of trivia!!
- CHILD'S PLAY—A Memory Game: will test your grey matter, and it won't matter how gray your hair is!
- My WILD WEST WISH—If you could see, or hold, or have anything out of wild west history, what would it be? Tell us, or bring a picture of it, or maybe if you already own it, bring it to show us!
- Create a new Zoom background. It could be a virtual background, or actually surrounding you and your chair! (Texas Jack or wild west related).
- There will be *break-out* rooms of up to **four** persons-- to visit and catch up...and to answer a question...

Prizes for:

- Winners of the Trivia Game!
- Winners of Child's Play Game!
- Best NEW wild west-related Zoom background

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday June 18, 2022

- Make sure we have your current email on record with us, so that we may keep you updated on our PARTY. --Contact Rick Omohundro at: rickwo@gmail.com

All you need is either a computer, phone, or tablet that can you can use with your internet browser to connect. Depending on your time zone here are the times:

Eastern Time Zone: 6:00 pm

Central Time Zone: 5:00 pm

Pacific Time Zone: 3:00 pm

Here is the link to join the Zoom Party:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83883795807?pwd=T3VncWphZ243RGZLbXBXUUdKcDAvQT09>

Or type in the following to your Zoom App:

Meeting ID: 838 8379 5807

Passcode: 433279

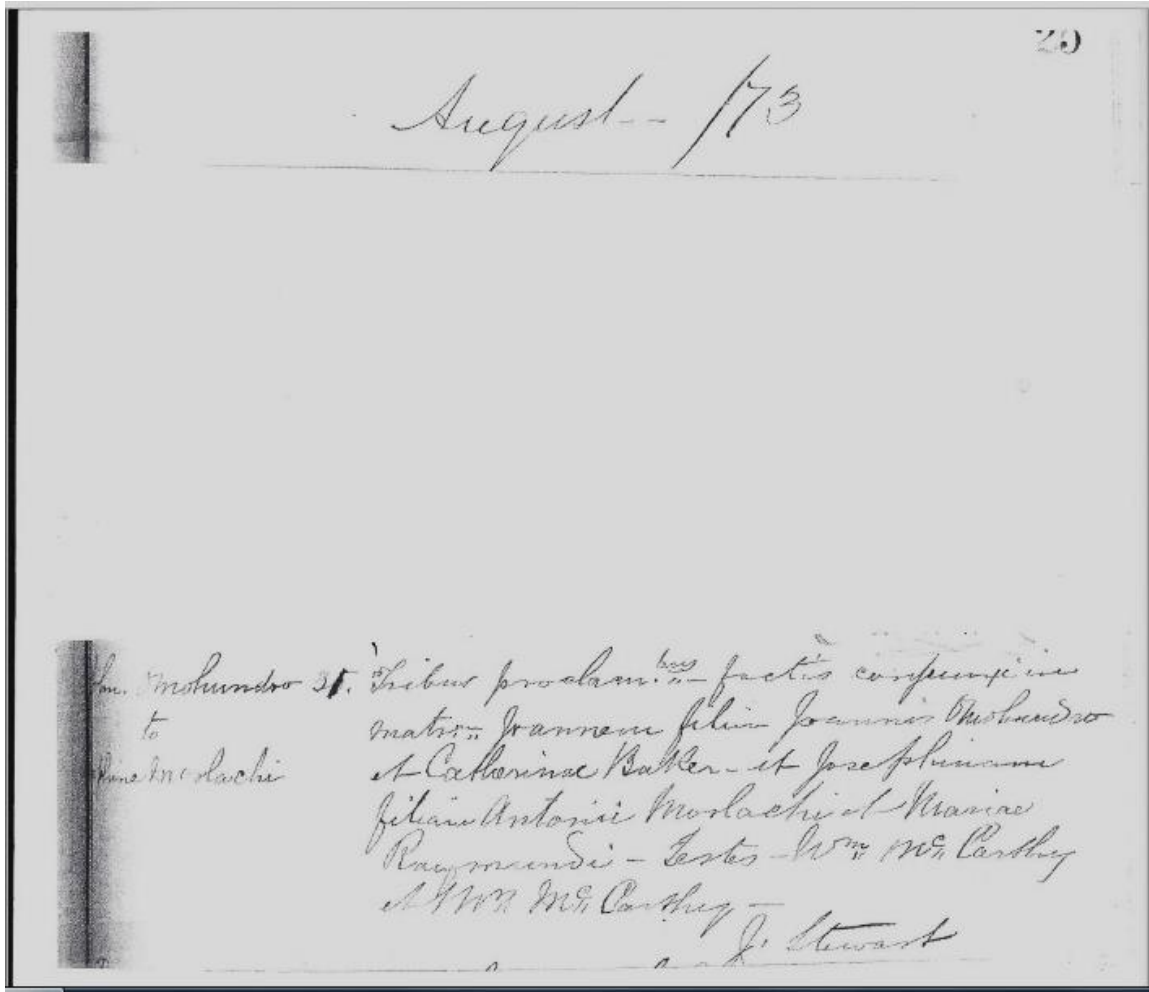
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Follow-up to The Marriage of Texas Jack Omohundro to Giuseppina Morlacchi

by Robert A. Omohundro

November 2021 *Scout*

J. Omohundro and G. Morrlachi marriage record from St. Mary's Church



Tribus proclaim factis conjunxi.. matr... Joannem filium Joannis Omohundro et Catherine Baker
it Josephinam filiam Antomi Morlachi it Mariae Raymundi testes Wm McCarthy J Stewart

This appears to be stating that the group/congregation/tribe (tribus) is extolling/praising (proclaim) the facts of the confirmation/truth of the union (factis conferensius). It then seems to name the particular people involved. Jack, his family - father and ([et] is and) mother (John [Joannis] Omohundro and Catherine Baker, his mother) and it speaks of Josephina's sister and friend - Antonia and (et) Mariae Raymundi. William McCarthy was a member of the church and a friend. Rev. J. Stewart was the rector of the church.

Thank you to Kathy Meagher (Local History Specialist, Billerica Public Library, MA) and Matthew Kerns. 

A Foot-note on the Can-can

John Thomas Omohundro



A sketch of Can-can dancers. Easyguide.biz

When we read that the “peerless Morlacchi” introduced the Can-can into the United States, we struggle to match up the demure artist with the hi-jinks of this dancehall entertainment. We all have a pretty clear image of the Can-can, seen on screen or still performed today at tourist locales in Alaska. But we only know its recent manifestation. In fact, the dance evolved through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

For readers who are familiar with Mlle. Morlacchi as the wife of Texas Jack and partner in his Wild West shows, it helps to be reminded that she had become renowned in Europe before she even arrived in America. She organized and toured classical dance troupes in the 1860s before she met John B. Omohundro. And she made and retained money from her art, which is more than we can say for Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack. She was one of the pioneers of classical ballet in America, and the worthy subject of an admiring book (*Ballet or Ballyhoo*, by Barbara M. Barker, reported by Susan Omohundro in *Scout* XXIV no. 2, July 2009).

Guisseppina Morlacchi premiered the Can-can dance in the United States, in either December 1867 or January 1868, as a part of her show *The Devil’s Auction*, at the Theatre Comique in Boston (Wikipedia). The dance was then called the “Grand Galop Can-Can,” as it was in France. Morlacchi was joined by her troupe dancers Blasina, Diani, Ricci, and Baretta, and accompanied by cymbals and triangles played by the company’s *corps de ballet*. Morlacchi’s troupe continued to perform the Can-can throughout her touring career, which ended at Texas Jack’s death in 1880.



Morlacchi's Can-can on the cover of what looks like a program or score. Wikipedia.

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The ballet was well received by Boston audiences; there doesn't appear to have been a flare-up of moral outrage at its friskiness. One reason Morlacchi's Can-can (French slang for "scandal") did not elicit much criticism was because the dance started out a good deal more dignified in France, in ballrooms in the 1830s, and Mademoiselle was adhering to that form. The dancers were dressed as classical dancers, the action was partly *en pointe*, and the dancers didn't whoop and scream as if they were doing something titillating. Furthermore, the dance began in France with both men and women performing. No black stockings, no petticoats, no kicking line... at first.

The Can-can in America spread like wildfire, east and west, in all manner of dance hall and saloon. It developed tightly choreographed lines of women flashing their legs in black stockings, swinging petticoats, and squealing. In 1871 the dance picked up Jacques Offenbach's tune from *The Tales of Hoffman* and became permanently associated with that music. This new version of the Can-can, though more rambunctious, still called for skill by the dancers: the high kick or *battement*, the circling knee or *rond de jambe*, and the jump splits or *grand écart*.

Dance historians note that this Can-can was intended to shock the bourgeoisie, and it succeeded. They further claim that it was part of the first wave of feminism in the United States: if a woman can dance freely, she should be allowed to vote. (By that reckoning, however, since many men are atrocious dancers, they shouldn't be allowed to vote. Amen.)



A tin of French Can-can Candy showing a dancer of the more flamboyant version. Wikipedia

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The Can-can began to lose luster in the 1890s when the hoochie-coochie became popular. (Didn't I do some of that in junior high school conga lines?) But the Can-can didn't die: it was re-imported into France in the Roaring Twenties in its wild Yankee form and proved a great tourist attraction at the Moulin Rouge and other hot spots. This is the dance we see in the dance halls and saloons of cowboy movies, as well. 🤠

In Memoriam



Richard Bond Omohundro 1934-2022

Richard Bond Omohundro, age 87, of Goodlettsville, TN went to be with the Lord on Tuesday January 11, 2022, at Vanco Manor, Goodlettsville, TN.

Born in Nashville, TN on March 6, 1934, Richard was a life-long resident of Davidson, Tennessee. Having been educated in the county public schools, he graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree from Vanderbilt University in June 1956. Subsequent to graduation, he attended the Y.M.C.A. Law School (now

Nashville Law School) and later attended the University of Tennessee at Nashville, pursuing graduate engineering courses. He was a licensed Professional Engineer and Registered Land Surveyor. Since graduation from Vanderbilt, except for interruption while serving in the U. S. Navy, he had been employed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation for 30 years and retired on June 30, 1992. He held various engineering positions and was Director of Construction.

Richard was preceded in death by his son, Randall Omohundro and three siblings. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Joyce Omohundro, son Rick (Marsha) Omohundro, and also is survived by six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Richard was a long-time member of the Texas Jack Association and attended many Roundups.



**Julie Johnson Omohundro
(1951-2022)**

Julie Johnson Omohundro succumbed to cancer in Durham, North Carolina, on January 28, 2022. She was 70.

With her mother, Julie became an early member of the Texas Jack Association. She attended several biennial Roundups, beginning in the 1980s and was an officer in the early 2000s.

Julie was reared in Winter Haven, Florida, by her parents, Charles and Sara Elizabeth ("Betty") Johnson. She flourished in school, earning high honors in high school and entering the experimental New College, of Sarasota, Florida, where she earned a BA in psychology in 1975. When publishing research articles with her professor there she changed her name from Johnson to Omohundro, her mother's maiden name through the Spotswood branch of the Virginia Omohundros.

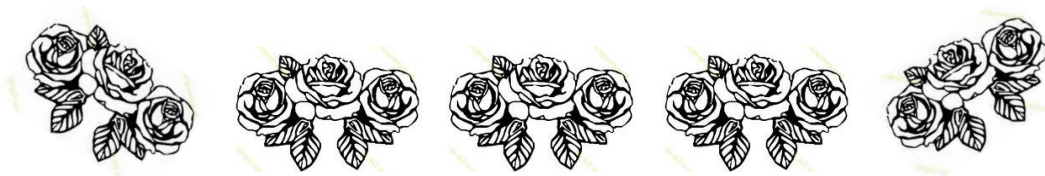
For a time after graduation Julie operated a farm in northern Arkansas, the region where her maternal grandparents Tipton Turner and Mary Finley Omohundro maintained an apple farm.

Julie earned an MBA in 1996 and became certified in the medical regulatory profession, serving as consultant to a number of companies assisting developers to win pre-market FDA approval of the safety and effectiveness of Class III medical devices, which include risky but critical innovations like heart stents.

She lived for a time in Nashville, Tennessee, partly influenced by what she saw at the Roundup there in 1996, but the Durham, North Carolina, area was her home base for most of her adult life.

Julie also collected family history, for which she organized two cousin reunions, in McClure, Illinois, and Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to share stories and memories with kinsmen of her maternal grandmother Mary Finley Omohundro.

In 2000 she was elected Vice President of the Texas Jack Association, and she served as President from 2002 to 2004, when the Roundup was held in Virginia. She then served two years on the board as trustee. She compiled the first index of *Scout* content, covering 1985 to 2000 (*Scout* XVI no. 3 September 2001).



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Ghosts of The Prairie ©...January 2021

By: Driftin' AaronG



*I often think back to the old days of wagon trains, cowboys an' every
western wild tale
Great wonders of adventure go through my mind as I think about ever'
cowboy that did prevail*

*I think of the wild an' great adventures of made-up stories and those that were true
The made-up stories bring about joy in fiction, an' the real stories of old and new*

*The true stories of Texas Jack Omohundro, Buffalo Bill Cody an' Wild Bill Hickock, a few of the
many
And of course all the true tales, an' not so true of Jesse James, an' the wild bunch, an' those are
plenty*

*From the rising sun to the western frontier is ever' kind of wild folklore
Lay the graves of many wild adventures of the greatest heroes an' outlaws you cannot ignore*

*When you ride across the wide prairie to search for adventure an' fun
Look out for what you might find, cause history in the making might
find you overheated by the sun*

*To find your way back from where you might go
You may find yourself returning very tired and oh so very slow*

*The many ghosts of the prairie lay out there an' should never be found
Cause when you disrupt their quiet sleep, you might always hear some
strange distant sound*



*Yes, they're all asleep now, but just waiting for someone to raise them from the dead
Western history an' folklore show us the ghosts are alive an' well in our hearts an' minds instead*

*All the great men an' women who rode to fame an' glory throughout all the West
Became ghosts of the prairie an' have been laid to their final rest*

* * *

*Driftin' AaronG
poff41@yahoo.com
(406) 291-0361*

The Buffalo Bill Legacy Gallery

By William “Kevin” Cody

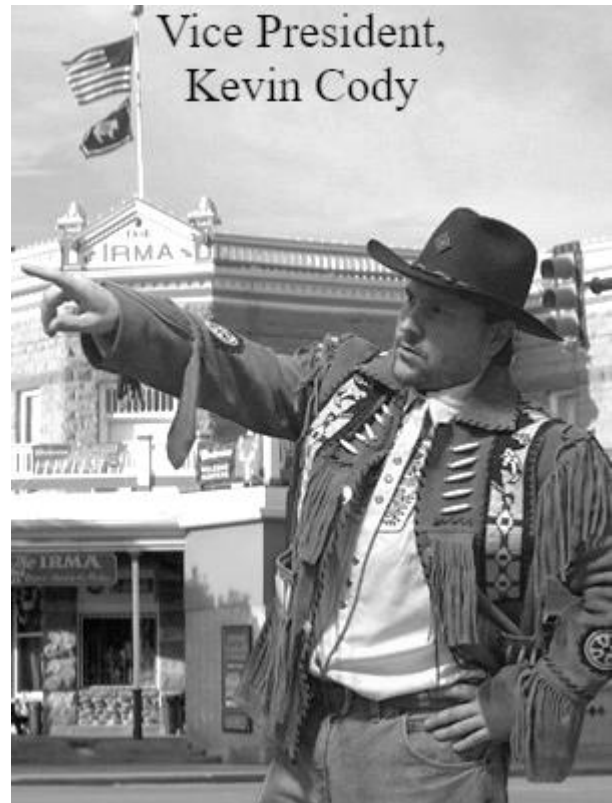
The Buffalo Bill Legacy Gallery (BBLG) was founded in 2014. After 3 years of planning and development, we launched our online experience in 2017. The BBLG is a special committee operating under the guidelines and supervision of the International Cody Family Association (ICFA).

All of our artifacts are physically owned by the Cody family and the majority of the photos represent the actual items within the collection. We offer free online access to the entire gallery collection to the public and we plan on opening a brick & mortar experience in the future.

The BBLG is unlike any other historical museum you've ever encountered. This unique and interactive online experience is truly the first of its kind and is pioneering a new way to capture the legacy of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and spirit of the Wild West.

Please take advantage of your free online museum pass to tour and explore the ever-growing, photo gallery collection of historical artifacts, videos, events, attractions & landmarks to visit, related websites, news, research, and store.

Our virtual gallery allows visitors a chance to examine the history and culture of Buffalo Bill in a different light. It's often said that a picture is worth a thousand words, so with over 2,150 artifact photos, we offer quite the literary canvas of poetic



and philosophical consciousness, imagination and even enlightenment.

We present a large variety of Buffalo Bill related artifacts ranging from the year of his birth in 1846 to the present. Not only does this massive collection of artifacts display how much this man was loved and admired, but also how much he enriched our souls and influenced our culture even long after his death.

Each and every artifact gives you a unique glimpse into his life and character; who he was, what he stood for, and what he was trying to accomplish. If you look ever so carefully, you just might find a whole lot more. Not only do these artifacts teach us about Buffalo Bill, but they also teach us

We invite all of you to take a journey to explore this website and all that it has to offer at www.BuffaloBillLegacy.org

Please share this online experience with everyone so that our past will not be forgotten, but forever remembered, honored, and even celebrated! Also, please consider supporting the BBLG by making a

Authored by: William “Kevin” Cody
 (Great, Great Grandson of Buffalo Bill -
 Direct Descendant - Generation X – Cody
 ID# 145/44332)

Founder, Chairman, Webmaster & Director
of Artifact Acquisitions for the BBLG.
Founder & Administrator of the Official
Buffalo Bill Cody Facebook Page 🖱️



International Cody Family Association

By Allan Cody

The International Cody Family Association is a non-profit charity which promotes the general welfare through educational services focusing on history and genealogy. To that end, we publish books, newsletters and websites that tell the story of our Cody Family and periodically host family reunions and other events.

Additionally, we answer the public's questions in the course of maintaining our collection of 25,000 records of the births, deaths and marriages of the descendants of our Philip and Martha.

We believe that our Philip and Martha were the founders of our Cody Family who adopted the surname after they immigrated to North America in colonial times.

The Cody Family Association was formed in 1925 when 18 strangers met at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, inspired by our famous cousin, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody's, frequent remark that "I never knew I had so many cousins."



There, these charter members became acquainted and agreed on "The Cody Family" with the subtitle, "Descendants of Philip Cody, at Beverly Massachusetts 1695" as the name of their new organization and stated their mission as "To preserve the records, relics and family identity of this old Colonial American Family, and to promote their unity and friendly relationship."

Then they took up a collection to help fund a museum honoring their famous cousin, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Working together with the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association, they started the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, which opened with Mary Jester Allen as Director in 1927.

The Buffalo Bill Memorial Association was formed by residents of Cody and was funded by a \$5,000 grant from the State of Wyoming. Enthusiasm was high and with annual reunions, membership grew to include many genealogical branches of the family.

Our Cody Crest insignia was designed and our Officers planned for incorporation. President-Treasurer Ernest Adams William Cody and his wife published the Handbook-Directory and led the membership to the site of Philip Cody's Beverly Homestead for the Salem Reunion of 1941. The Depression and World War II interrupted the growth of the CFA, which resurged in the late

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1940s and into the 1950s. In 1954, Lydia S. Cody published her "The Cody Family in North America 1698," a genealogy which included many biographical sketches of our Cody ancestors. This masterwork is the source for much of our family history.

That same year, Ernest Adams William Cody, with the help of his half-brother Henry John Cody, found the European roots of our Cody family on the Channel Island of Jersey, UK, and published his findings in "The Piercing of the Veil", a tract presented and ratified at our 1954 Reunion in Cody, Wyoming.

In 1962, President Aldus M. Cody, added "International" to our name to account for its many Canadian members and invented the Cody ID, which we use to identify individual members. Aldus was a party in the founding of our Association and guided it into the 1980s. Together with his brother Bob, they replaced the "Cody Bulletin" with the "Genealogical and Historical Review of the International Cody Family Association" which today, we shorten to "The Review".

In 1964, Past President Richard Aldus Cody, with his son Richard Stanley Cody hosted a Reunion at Hopkinton Massachusetts where Philip Cody established himself and his posterity after they left Beverly. The brothers Gerald and Terry Cody managed the ICFA through the 1980s and were succeeded by Presidents Harold Thornton, Kit Cody and Suzanna Cody. They all re-vitalized our Association and the torch passed to a new generation of Codys.

To keep up with the times, Terry and Richard Grosenbaugh created our Cody family website, www.cody-family.org at the turn of the 21st century. Nowadays, Richard is retired, but Gerald and Terry, together with Suzanna and her husband Ron and Harold Thornton serve on our Advisory Board. The Cody family website was expanded by Allan Cody to include fill-in forms in 2010, and beginning in 2013, Kevin Cody launched the on-line Buffalo Bill Legacy Gallery, the ICFA's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages and a Buffalo Bill Facebook page.

Also in 2013, the ICFA was incorporated in Wyoming and then granted tax-exempt status by the IRS in 2014 through Suzanna Cody's leadership. Our current Officers, Allan, Kevin and Dwight Cody administer our ICFA's operations with monthly meetings and continue to publish the Review as our family newsletter, as well as our Genealogy and Directory books. They also produce our biennial Reunions and welcome new members.

Today, we have about 2,000 members in the USA, Canada and other countries all over the world! 🦮

NEXT SCOUT ISSUE INFORMATION

The deadline for the March 2022 issue of *The Scout* is July 1, 2022. Please send ideas and materials to our Guest Editor:

Matthew Kerns

matthewrkerns@gmail.com

Thank you, Matt!



By Larry Tyree, President

The Texas Jack Association values knowledge gained from history. And history from our past has a lot that it can teach us about worldwide epidemics. I am reminded of a parallel that took place during the global Influenza Epidemic of 1918 (a.k.a. the Spanish Flu), a global pandemic that took 50 million lives worldwide and lasted three years. Estimates state that one in every three people alive at that time were infected.¹



Makeshift Spanish Flu hospital²

At that time of history, they did not have the luxury of the medical science that we have today. They couldn't develop vaccines with the rapid turnaround that is possible in our century. They did not even know what caused "influenza". That was not discovered until the 1930s. They did know that they should "mask up". Many did. But by the end of 1919, everyone got so tired of wearing them that many finally refused to wear them.

Most public health restrictions were lifted. Then followed a big increase in infections and deaths.³

Spanish Flu Timeline:

- **March 1918**—Influenza first detected, becoming a large wave
- August 1918—2nd wave emerged
- November 1918—End of World War 1. **People tired of wearing masks**
- **January 1919**—3rd deadly wave started up
- Summer 1919—Third wave subsides
- Winter 1919-1920—**Return to pre-pandemic routines**
- **January 1920**—4th wave starts up
- March 1921—End of 4th wave and the pandemic

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html>

² Spanish Flu image—ArtNews.com

<https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/spanish-influenza-pandemic-art-history-1202686702/>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/02/06/1918-flu-fourth-wave/>

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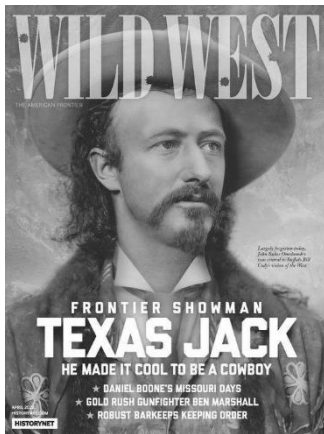
In recent weeks, local and national voices have clamored for re-opening social interactions to pre-pandemic levels. There is a big rush to do so. Many in my age category wonder if it is too soon.

My family has been seriously affected by COVID - just recently. At the end of February 2022, the Omicron variant struck multiple members of my extended family. My brother-in-law was unresponsive to phone calls by another brother-in-law and his wife. Fearing the worst, they drove to his house, rang the doorbell and banged on the door for some time. When he finally stumbled to the door, he was delirious and in trouble. They called 911. He was hospitalized and diagnosed with COVID and pneumonia. Within a few days, he was transferred to the ICU and put on breathing apparatus. Three days later, the second brother-in-law and his wife tested positive for COVID-19 and are now quite ill.

A look at the past to the 1918 Pandemic is useful for us. We can learn from it. We are also living in a time that has been called “unprecedented” so many times that the term has become meaningless. Our hearts have been broken too many times by terrible losses because of this virus and its variants. While we hope to return to normal, history tells us to be cautious.

From a Revelation to a Cover Story

By Matthew Kerns



I had been researching and writing my book on Texas Jack for around 8 months when I struck on a realization that caused me to reframe everything I had already done.

The first chapter was moved to the middle, a late chapter was moved to the beginning, and I started focusing my research and my writing to tell not just the story of Texas Jack's life, but a bigger, and maybe even more important story.

The realization I had was this—without Texas Jack, cowboys would never have

become the heroes of America's favorite fictional genre, the Western.

Cowboys were unlikely heroes. The actual work of a cowboy during the golden age of the American West wasn't filled with high-noon shootouts and battles with Sioux warriors, but with trail-dust and tedium. Like I say in the book, a cowboy was more likely to get shot by a landowner who was upset that cattle were grazing and trampling his land than by a Comanche brave, and more likely to take a shot at a coyote than a desperado. "Cowboys and Indians" is an enduring piece of American popular culture, but it lacks a firm foundation in historical truth.

The moment it became clear to me was when I found evidence linking Texas Jack to an event that happened in Nebraska in April of 1872. The short version is that Buffalo


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Bill and Texas Jack set out as scouts at the head of a military detachment to retrieve some horses stolen from McPherson Station by Miniconjou warriors. They had been hired for this kind of scout before, but this time they saw a little action, with both Cody and Omohundro killing a warrior, and Buffalo Bill and three soldiers being awarded the Medal of Honor. But the moment that the western is built on was the moment that Bill Cody was wounded by a bullet fired from one of those warriors. In his own account of the altercation, he writes that “two mounted warriors closed in on me and were shooting at short range. I returned their fire and had the satisfaction of seeing one of them fall from his horse. At this moment I felt blood trickling down my forehead, and hastily running my hand through my hair I discovered that I had received a scalp wound.” A newspaper reporting on the event elaborated that “to [Texas Jack] was Buffalo Bill indebted for his life...The thieves were pursued and overtaken by Bill and Jack...[an Indian] had just drawn a bead on Bill, when Jack’s quick eye caught the gleam of the shining barrel, and the next instant ‘the noble red’ was on his way to the happy hunting ground, his passage from the sublunary sphere being expedited by a bullet from Jack’s rifle at a distance of one hundred and twenty-five yards.”

And that's it. That's the moment. You all know what happens next. Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack become stars on the stage and spend the next four seasons acting together. They split up their show and establish solo shows, and within a few years, Texas Jack is dead at the young age of 33. Three years later, Cody starts his Wild West show, which would go on to become the premier entertainment of the 19th and early 20th

centuries, equal parts circus, carnival, exhibition, education, and sporting event. Many scholars agree that if Buffalo Bill hadn't chosen to salute the American flag during the show to the strains of The Star-Spangled Banner, it wouldn't have been adopted as the national anthem in 1931. That was the cultural impact of Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Cody surrounds himself in the Wild West not with soldiers or scouts, but with cowboys. In 1908, now the most famous American in the world, Cody assembles the cast of his show at the grave of his cowboy friend Texas Jack, paying homage to the original man that all of the others would be based on. Cowboys didn't fight Indians, but Texas Jack had and saved Buffalo Bill's life in the process. Cowboys didn't marry the beautiful girl, but of course, Texas Jack had married the stunning and acclaimed ballerina Giuseppina Morlacchi. Cowboys didn't lead lives filled with adventure, but Texas Jack had spent his spare time leading expeditions into the wildest parts of the American West, with eastern papers keeping readers up to date with his every adventure. It seems natural that when Buffalo Bill needed a heroic figure to stand next to him in his Wild West shows, he cast men that reminded him most of his best friend.

The article I wrote for Wild West Magazine is kind of a distillation of that idea. I think that readers of my book will get that, but I wanted to make sure that a wide audience is exposed to Texas Jack and just how foundational and fundamental he is to the mythologized version of the American West. Texas Jack Omohundro deserves to be remembered, and I'm very glad I get to continue telling his story. 

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