The Texas Jack Scout

Volume XII, Number 2 Spring 1997

A Visit to Texas Jack's Grave Site

by Richard W. Omohundro

Texas Jack grave site, Leadville, September, 1996. Left to right: Edna Nees, Rick Omohundro, Isabella Willard, Harvey Willard, Michael Omohundro.

During our visit to Leadville in September 1996, Edna Nees and I made an early morning visit to Texas Jack's grave site. The air was cool and crisp and the mountains, with snow in the higher altitudes, were filled with aspens in the peak of their golden fall color. A beautiful site all in all until we reached the grave site itself. Some of the white rock remained from the 1990 Roundup but weeds were sprouting through at several locations and tree limbs were overhanging to the point that walking around the headstone was difficult at best.

Edna suggested that we borrow a ladder and hand saw and remove some of the limbs overhanging Texas Jack's lot. We made a visit to the

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Dear Fellow TJA Members:

I would like to welcome each of our new members and encourage each of you to take an active role in our organization. An organization of this type is only as good as the members wish to make it. There is much that can be learned about the Old West, Texas Jack, and the Omohundro family in general through this Association.

Dennis Greene volunteered during the Nashville Roundup to start a Texas Jack homepage on the Internet. Dennis has, at this time, sent to Dick Omohundro, our Vice President, some very nice photos and a video to be used. Dick has reported that, although the site is still in its infancy, a preliminary layout has been done and that the scanning of the photos has started. I will continue to update the progress in the next issue and report the web site address when it becomes available.

Several members still have not sent in their 1997 dues. Please do so if you are one who has not. The date shown on your mailing label is the date our records show in which you last paid dues. This will be the last issue for those that show a 1995 or earlier date. Terry Omohundro (a new member in 1996), Edna Nees, and I have been working on a new database containing member names, addresses, phone numbers, and the year dues were last paid. Should any of the information shown on your mailing label be incorrect, please contact me so our records can be corrected.

My mailing address is as follows:

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You can also e-mail this information to me at:
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Richard W. Omohundro
President , TJA

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A Visit to Texas Jack's Grave Site

(continued from page 1)

Chamber of Commerce to inquire about the tools we would need. A phone call was made to Kathy Patti at City Hall and she in turn sent a crew to the grave site where the weeds were pulled and the limbs removed and carried away. Edna searched several stores in Leadville until she found some flowers to put on the head stone. The site looked somewhat better but still not as good as some of the other sites in the cemetery (see photograph on page 1). For those of you who have never visited this cemetery, it is one that contains many evergreen trees, thus its name Evergreen Cemetery. There are lots of pine needles, rock, and undergrowth. This is not a cemetery that is maintained by cutting grass as we may be accustomed to seeing. Therefore, other measures must be taken in order to maintain an aesthetically pleasing lot. There was one lot in particular that Harvey Willard and I looked at that had some sort of fine red rock placed over the entire lot. This not only was preventing the growth of weeds but with a black wrought iron fence outlining the rock, the lot had a very pleasing appearance.

Members of the TJA at the Nashville Roundup, expressed a desire to have a fence constructed around Texas Jack's lot. Harvey Willard, Edna Nees, and I entered into a contract on behalf of the TJA to have this fence constructed. Winter, however, was coming on rather quickly and actual construction will not take place until June of this year. We plan to obtain a picture to publish in an upcoming issue of the *Scout* after the work is finished. When complete Texas Jack's grave site will be one we all can be proud of and a step closer to looking as good as the surroundings in which we find it. The Texas Jack Association would appreciate donations to help fund this worthy project.

It seems appropriate to append to this article the obituary for Texas Jack that appeared June 29, 1880 in the *Leadville Herald Democrat*:

"Death of Texas Jack"

"John Baker Omohundro, popularly known as "Texas Jack," departed this life at the residence of Major Howard yesterday morning at an early hour. In the death of Texas Jack there ends the life of a man whose career has been filled with the most wonderful vicissitudes, and the last of a man who at all times was surrounded by a host of genial, warm, and staunch companions. His wife, M'lle Morlacchi, is inconsolable, and is at present unconscious. The funeral will take place this afternoon at two o'clock. M'lle Morlacchi has the sympathy of the entire city in this great sorrow of her life. The body will lie in state at the opera house and will be interred with military honors."

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Welcome!

We are most pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined during 1997:

1. William Bailey - Leadville, CO
2. Marshall Brown - Marina, CA
3. Melisa Brown - Marina, CA
4. Jerry Martin - Danville, IL
5. John Crane Mollis - Titusville, NJ
6. Rachel Crane Mollis - Titusville, NJ
7. Daniel Omohundro - Lexington, KY
8. John (Jack) R. Omohundro - Salt Lick, KY
9. Carolyn Omohundro - Salt Lick, KY
10. Rolfe Beverly Omohundro, Jr. - Winchester, KY
11. John David Omohundro - Winchester, KY
12. Debbie Omohundro - Winchester, KY
13. Jack Wesley Omohundro - Winchester, KY
14. Amanda Marie Omohundro - Winchester, KY
15. Virginia O. Purcell - Louisa, VA

Wild Bill
The Reluctant Thespian

by Julie Greene

Much has been written - many stories told - about the exploits of James B. Hickok, better known as Wild Bill. Indeed, the very title, "Wild Bill," smacks of tempestuous undertakings, of daring deeds, of fearsome conflicts in the untamed reaches of the plains. After all, he was a famous lawman, gunslinger, scout, hunter...his very name was synonymous with the opening of the great American western frontier. But this illustrious scout had another title, too: actor!

Like his compadres, Buffalo Bill Cody and Texas Jack Omohundro, Hickok tried his hand at "the show business." His first venture was in 1870 - two years before Cody and Omohundro opened in their stage play "The Scouts of the Prairie" in Chicago - and it was his own idea! As western frontier life was the subject of much curiosity and glorification to easterners, Hickok figured he'd give them a taste of the real thing.

He put together the men and horses necessary for his scheme, and set about to capture some buffalo. He thought it would be a fairly simple exercise, but soon found that it was far easier to kill the animals than lasso them, as they ran with heads so low that a lariat-loop would not settle over them. At last, after much effort, the men managed to subdue six frightened buffaloes, which were shipped, along with a few painted and blanketed Comanche Indians, to Niagara Falls, where Hickok had rented a tract of land on the Canadian shore and built a board corral.

Wild Bill Hickok. Engraving first published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, *February, 1867*

The widely advertised "Great Buffalo Chase" attracted a huge audience, but most onlookers simply appeared at the site, which was open for all to see over the low fence enclosure, and did not pay. Hickok was forced to pass the hat for the few receipts he collected.

The buffalo, having been confined to cages, when turned loose tore around the enclosure, and the Indians, in gloriously colorful paint and feathers, pursued on their ponies. It was a large noisy affair, enjoyed by all those present except Wild Bill and the buffaloes! He found himself broke at the end of the performance, and then and there went out of business. He sold the buffalo for enough money to get himself and the Indians to Kansas City, and went back to the West.

It was two years later in 1872 that Ned Buntline enticed Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack to Chicago to star in his play, "Scouts of the Prairie." The show

immediately became wildly popular in every city where it played, in spite of the decidedly amateurish performance of its stars.

So...when his two friends approached Wild Bill with stories of the substantial money they were earning, he was tempted to again give show business a try. "You won't need to do much acting," Buffalo Bill wrote to him, "you will only have to shoot and pose around." "The only thing is," Wild Bill was told, "you will have to quit killing people while you are with the show." Hickok unsmilingly agreed to this, so Buffalo Bill sent him money and instructions on what to do.

"I am staying at the Brevoort Hotel," he said, "and you will land in New York at the 42nd St. Depot. To avoid getting lost in the big city, take a cab at the depot and you will be driven to the hotel in a few minutes. Pay the cabman two dollars. These New York cabmen are regular hold-up men, and your driver may want to charge you more, but do not pay more than two dollars under any circumstances."

Wild Bill obeyed Cody's instruction to the letter. When the cab got to the hotel, he offered the driver two dollars.

"My charge is five dollars," said the cabman.

"Well, two dollars is all you're going to get," said Bill.

"I'll just take the rest out of your hide," said the irate cabman, and took off his coat preparing for a fight.

His quiet grave-faced passenger instantly became a tornado of action. When the dust of the fray settled, the driver found himself in the gutter under his horse, being jeered by amused spectators. Wild Bill flicked the dust from his clothes and walked into the lobby of the hotel to commence his new career.

There were two or three rehearsals before Wild Bill made his initial appearance in the show, and even then he was required to say only a few words.

On his first night, the stage was set to represent a campfire, around which the three scouts were grouped. They were to then tell stories of Indians and buffalo hunts. To add to the realism, whiskey was supposed to circulate freely. In his autobiography, Buffalo Bill tells the following:

"The first scene in which Wild Bill was cast represented a campfire around which he, Texas Jack, and myself were sitting telling stories. In order to carry out the scene so that it should be a faithful counterfeit of the reality, we had a whiskey-bottle filled with cold tea which we passed from one to another at the conclusion of each story. When it came Bill's turn to relate an adventure I passed him the bottle and taking it in the way with which he was so familiar, he commenced draining the contents. I say commenced, because he stopped very suddenly and spurted the tea right out on the stage, at the same time saying in a voice loud enough for the audience to hear him: 'You must think I'm the worst fool east of the Rockies that I can't tell whiskey from cold tea!' I tried to remonstrate with him, while the audience shook down the galleries with their cheers. At first I was greatly mortified, but it did not take long to convince me that Wild Bill had unconsciously made a big hit. I therefore sent out for some whiskey, which Bill drank and then told his story with excellent effect."

Another of Cody's recollections, which took place in Titusville, Pennsylvania is as follows:

"We were met (when we arrived) by the landlord at the hotel who stopped me and said that there was a party of roughs from the lower oil regions who were spreeing and had boasted that they were staying in town to meet the Buffalo Bill gang and clean them out. The landlord begged me not to allow members of the troupe to enter the billiard room as he did not wish any fight in his house. To please him, I called the boys up into the parlor and explained to them the situation. Wild Bill wanted to go at once and fight the whole mob, but I persuaded him to keep away from them during the day.

"Later, the landlord came rushing up (to me) and said that Wild Bill was having a fight with the roughs in the bar-room. It seemed that Bill had not been able to resist the temptation of going to see what kind of a mob wanted to test the pluck of the Buffalo Bill party, and just as he stepped into the room, one of the bruisers put his hand on Bill's shoulder and said,

'Hello, Buffalo Bill. We have been looking for you all day.'

'My name is not Buffalo Bill - you are mistaken

in the name,' was the reply.

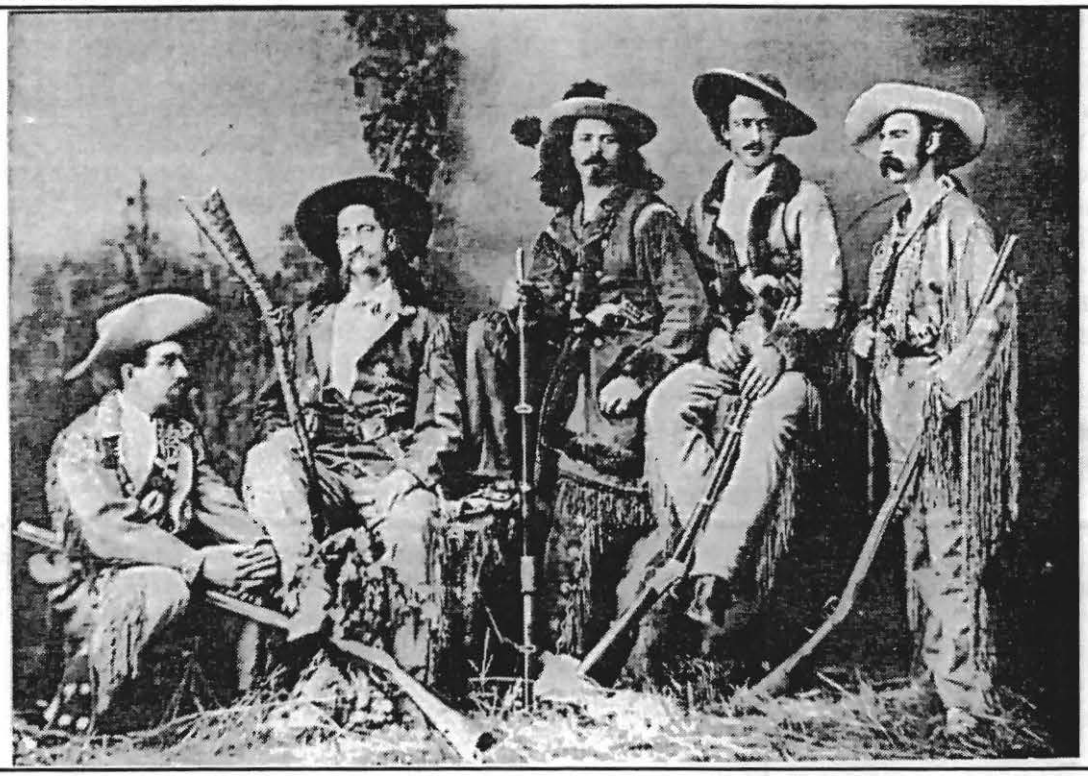
'You're a liar!' said the bruiser.

"Bill instantly knocked him down, and then seizing a chair, he laid out four, or five of the crowd on the floor, and then drove the rest out of the room. All this was done in a minute or two, and by the time I got downstairs, Bill was coming out of the bar-room, whistling a lively tune.

'Well!' said he, 'I have been interviewing that party that wanted to clean us out.'

tobacco smoke, and inside he found a number of city businessmen sitting around a table playing poker. One of them invited him to sit in - it was a friendly game, he said. Wild Bill sat down and declared that as they didn't want him to sleep, he would join in, but first they must show him the rudiments of the game.

Four hours later, after making a few carefully chosen blunders, Wild Bill arose from the table, having cleaned them all out. Open-mouthed, they sat and stared at him as he turned from the door



Famous Scouts, 1873. Left to right: Elisha Greene, Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill Cody, Texas Jack Omohundro, Eugene Overton. [Corrected from Buffalo Bill Museum postcard on which the photo is printed in reverse].

"We heard no more of them after that."

Gambling also was a big part of Hickok's life - although it was said he strongly advised Cody against the perils of the game - which was an incredible bit of irony!

One night in Portland, Maine, Wild Bill had difficulty getting to sleep. As he tossed and turned he heard an unholy row coming from the next room. The clink of glasses and shouts annoyed him. Jumping out of bed, he dressed and went to see what all the fuss was about.

He was met at the door by a thick cloud of

and said "Adios m'friends. Better think twice after this before waking a man up and inviting him to play poker."

This neat trick did not stop the men from enjoying the show the next evening!

Wild Bill was not a good actor. Nevertheless, audiences loved him - applauding and cheering the man - not the performer. He did not like acting, and made no bones about it. He was overhead to say that they were all making fools of themselves, and that they were the laughingstock of the people. He began to seriously want out of the show.

To show his disdain, he assumed the trick of shooting the supers (extras) at close range (disconcerting even with blanks), and did other things to disrupt the performance. The rest of the cast began to dread each show. It was said that he, in fact, employed all the tactics of a mischievous small boy who desires his liberty.

Talking to him did no good. He said, "I never hurt those fellows, and if they object to me, of course they are free to leave."

Finally, one day, Wild Bill changed his buckskins for his scarcely less picturesque everyday attire, and quietly walked away from the show forever.

Two reasons for Wild Bill's leaving the show have been told. One version was that one night he became so mightily drunk that Cody and Texas Jack shipped him home and replaced him in the cast with Kit Carson, Jr. The second was that Hickok received an urgent message from General Sheridan, asking him to drop everything and join the troops at Fort Laramie.

Whatever the reason, Wild Bill departed on good terms with his fellow "stars." Before he left, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack between them put together one thousand dollars and gave it to him as an evidence of their continued friendship.

References:

1. William Elsey Connelley, *Wild Bill and His Era*, Copper Square Publishers, Inc. (1933).

2. Joseph G. Rosa, *They Called Him Wild Bill*, University of Oklahoma Press (1964).

3. William F. Cody, *An Autobiography of Buffalo Bill*, Farrar and Rinehart, New York (1920), reprinted by Indian Head Books, New York (1991).

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(M. H. Omohundro, continued)
A later member of the family, John Burwell Omohundro, became famous, under the name Texas Jack, as Buffalo Bill Cody's right-hand man.

"Omohundro was instrumental in founding the Texas Jack Association, which meets every two years to honor the real-life Western character."

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M. H. Omohundro's Gifts to Historical Organizations: An Update

by Susan Omohundro

Gloria O. Palmer sent us a page from the Virginia Historical Society's *History Notes* which reports on that organization's fund-raising campaign. M.H. has contributed generously to the Society's $30-million dollar capital campaign, and the director, Charles F. Bryan, Jr. writes in his column:

"One of [our] devoted friends deserves special recognition - Malvern H. Omohundro, a retired businessman from Richmond. I met M. H. and his wife, Libby, shortly after my arrival at the historical society eight years ago. These longtime members of the Society greeted me with a warmth and graciousness that made me feel welcome in my new job. It was not difficult to develop a friendship with the Omohundros, and it did not take me long to realize M.H.'s deep and abiding love of history. Here was a man who was proud of his historic alma mater, the College of William and Mary, and who was a generous supporter of a number of historical institutions, including the Society. The Omohundros demonstrated their support of this institution in our last campaign with a major gift that we recognized by naming a changing exhibit gallery in their honor. Earlier this year, M.H. informed us of another gift, one so remarkably generous that the name of the grand gallery in the new wing we are constructing will also bear the Omohundro name."

And R. C. Omohundro gave us an article from the *Times-Dispatch* of Richmond reporting on M.H's multi-million dollar gift to William and Mary's Institute of Early American History and Culture. The organization, jointly founded by the college and the Colonial Willliamsburg Foundation in 1943, will be renamed the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture. The institute engages in a variety of scholarly activities, including publication of books and a journal, sponsorship of academic conferences, and the annual award of a two-year postdoctoral fellowship. The article goes on to say:

"Part of Omohundro's historical bent came from his father, a lawyer who compiled a 1,200-page family genealogy tracing Omohundros back to a single ancestor who arrived in Virginia in 1670.
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Things I Remember

by Sallie Salder Cleveland
excerpt submitted by Bill Perkins

Bill's note: Sallie Sadler Cleveland was born in December 1855 in Fluvanna County, Virginia, not far from the birthplace of John Baker Omohundro. She was ten years younger than Texas Jack but had similar childhood experiences. Like him, she was well educated: her father, Samuel Sadler, had run a school and been a hired teacher for some of the Fluvanna families. In her 1948 memoir, Things I Remember, *Sallie recalled her early years. Her recollections of the Civil War are especially poignant because she was only nine years old when the War ended. The War hadn't come close to her home until it was almost over.*

These were halcyon days; evil deeds were few and far apart. The big outside world was space a long way from our little favored section of the globe. Men lived in faith and with a high sense of responsibility toward each other. A man's word was his bond. Plenty and contentment ruled supreme--no restlessness or urge to seek new worlds. Life was easy and satisfying. But life is made up of cycles of duration of time and in its natural order must needs change at the end of an ordained period. The study of the cycles is interesting and important, as they affect the future of nations. This one is especially so, as it presaged a great climax in the history of the slaves.

I clearly recall the day of the slaves' departure towards the end of the War. They gathered in front of the house to say good bye. Each adult and child had a tightly tied bundle on his back. They were laughing and saying "I'm free and don't have to work any more." The old ones were weeping and so were we. Polly hugged and kissed me, she had tears in her eyes; I clung to her and begged her to stay with me. I watched them go up the long hill through the woods gate and out of sight, leaving their cabins of plenty and going they knew not where, but happy and full of trust. These children of destiny were both pitiful and fortunate.

How still everywhere was. I wandered to the cabins--not a sound of life--the doors shut tight. I went to the barn and spring; only silence and sadness were there. The little play-houses under the trees, the clotheslines, the big tubs and pots seemed to say, "They are all gone for good."

How lonesome I felt. No consolation anywhere in our once happy play grounds. Where were my laughing playmates? And why had they gone away? No answer but loneliness and wonder. The sheep and cows and horses stood and looked at me as if saying, Where is everybody gone?

The next morning when I woke Polly was not there. I had never combed my hair or put on my shoes and stockings. What a hard job! I could not get them to pull on straight, and my hair would do nothing but fly about and get tangled.

My mother had no time to help me. She had to go to the kitchen in the yard to get breakfast over a big fireplace with heavy pokers and skillets and ovens. That was a painful job. The War was still going on. Only my three brothers were at home. They had to learn to do all the stable and barn work, cut the wood and bring water from the spring. They thought it was hard work.

Some Yankee stragglers had come to the farm and carried off some horses, cattle and sheep before the slaves left. This I did not see, but I do remember later my brothers and the slaves taking the horses to the woods every day to hide them from raiders. The neighbors were all in a stir expecting the raiders any day. They were busy trying to hide away small valuables and food.

News was scarce and depressing. Scouts went to the nearest towns to try to hear the Yankee movements and watch for the raiders, then gallop back to notify watching families. Only fear and dread filled every home. The Yankees were coming

now in companies of fifty and a hundred, led by their officers bent on stealing and destroying everything they saw, galloping across the fields and crops, jumping and knocking down fences and gates--even yard fences.

They clattered all over the house in their spurs and swords, into the private bedrooms, opening bureau drawers, trunks and closets, taking anything they wanted; into the pantry, opening barrels of flour, filling sacks, carrying them off; into the smoke house, taking all the meat and other supplies like regular rogues. I ran into the bedroom, hid behind a door that had dresses hanging on it. An officer looked behind the door, saw me, and said, "Sissy, are you scared?" I said, "Yes, sir," in a weak voice. He said, "We won't hurt you." But I did not trust him. I never moved till they galloped away.

That was lawless, savage warfare. In the homes of the wealthy the soldiers destroyed costly draperies and curtains and cushions by slashing them with their swords. They were rude and impudent to the ladies of the families, attempting to jerk off their earrings and neck chains. They carried off quantities of valuables and burned any private papers they came across. They raided court houses, burning records and papers. The South had a lot to forgive in these our outnumbering conquerors whose minds were filled with bitter hatred.

I seemed to feel more and more lonely as the stillness lay over every familiar playground, the barn yard with the hay wagons, plows, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, shovels, hoes and axes. There were no games you could play by yourself. There was no fun left in the world, only sadness. I wanted to ask Polly when this sadness would end, but I could not find her. She was gone. I could not go to my Aunt Betty's any more to play with Clara, Lucius and Marion as I could not go and come the mile alone.

These were the days that tried men's hearts. There had been happy marriages between the North and the South, so brother was forced to stand against brother by compelling circumstances. There were many touching scenes where in line of duty they must take part in this carnage while their hearts bled with grief. No conscientious objectors were tolerated even though it were the firesides of their own childhoods they were against. A Civil War must needs be a cruel war.

The War had been brought now to Virginian soil. Money had long been depreciating. Supplies of food and clothing to be sent to the soldiers were getting exhausted. All the yarn had been knitted into socks for them. Only straw hats could be furnished by the women. We children were taught to plait the straw into braid for the hats. Many families cut their handsome floor rugs into blankets for the soldiers; every sacrifice was made at home for them.

Raiding was done now on a big scale. The aim of the Yankees now was to put the South in a starving condition and force a surrender. Even in their rags our soldiers' spirits were brave and surrender was a bitter pill to them.

Following behind a squad of raiders one day on the highway, my brother Granville saw an object sticking in the mud. He found it to be a large ham which he joyfully brought home. It was all the meat we had and was doled out for at least a month.

From the battles near Richmond and Petersburg we could often hear the mournful boom of cannon. The air was murky with powder smoke. Gloom and anxiety hung over every home. News would drift in that a friend or relative was killed.

A big reinforcement was sent down by the Yankees to the scene of action. Lee realized his men were outnumbered ten to one and it was folly to try to carry on longer. The meeting was held at Appomattox, Virginia, I think, April 9, 1865. It was a surprise to his men; they wept like children from disappointment. It was comparatively a handful of ragged, hungry Southerners--only a few thousand against many thousands. They had fought valiantly for what they believed to be a just cause. The slaves were private property purchased from the seafaring Northern states who found it a lucrative business for many years. We believed States Rights had been violated.

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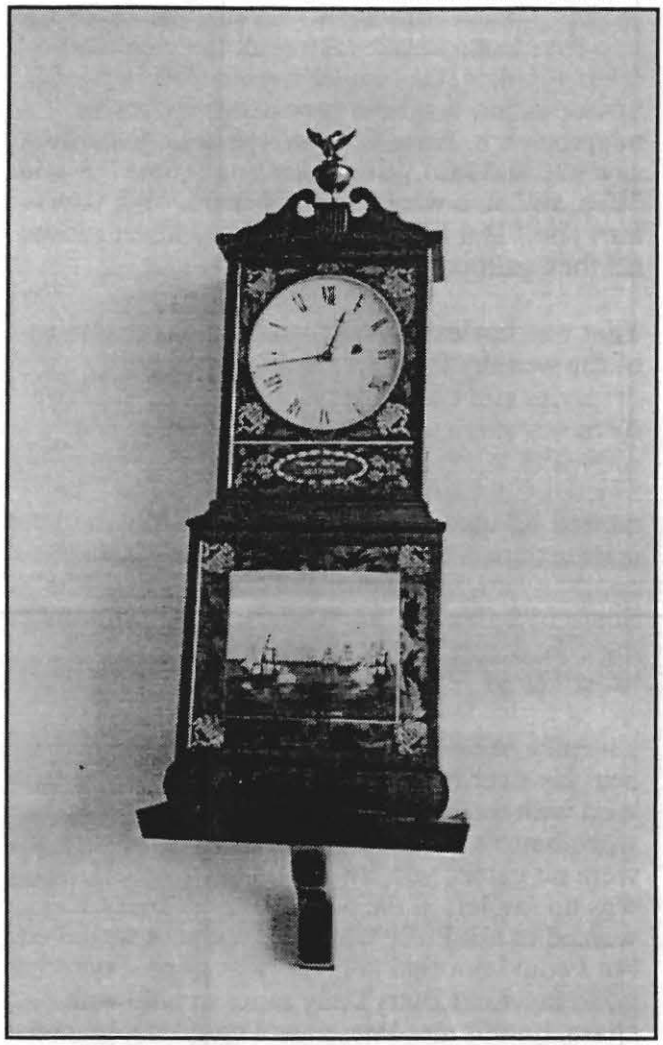
Willard Clocks

by Harvey Willard

Texas Jack's sister, Arabella Omohundro, married as her first husband, Theodor C. Wohlbruck. Their granddaughter, Virginia Wohlbruck, my mother, married George Willard, my father. These unions brought whole new family lines into the Omohundro clan. It might be of some interest to other TJA members to trace a branch of the Willard line which was involved in the business of making clocks in the early American period. (In what follows the superscript number following the given name refers to the generation number in America).

George^{9} Willard and I are direct descendants of Simon^{1} Willard, who in 1634 at age 29 emigrated to America from Horsmonden, Co. Kent, England with his first wife, Mary (Sharpe), age 20, and their baby daughter Mary. A military commander, Indian trader and fighter, Major Willard was one of the founders of Concord, MA, and a highly respected deputy and magistrate in the affairs of Concord, Lancaster, Groton, and Massachusetts Bay Colony. Major Simon Willard was married three times and had seventeen children, nine sons and eight daughters! His interesting life is another story by itself.

It was from Major Simon Willard in the fifth generation that the American clock-maker brothers Benjamin^{5}, Simon^{5}, Aaron^{5}, and Ephraim^{5} Willard of Grafton, MA and Roxbury, MA were also descended. Of the four brothers, Simon (1753-1848), became one of the most distinguished early American clock-makers. His clocks are now prized masterpieces of American craftsmanship and collected by antique con-noisseurs and museums alike. Simon Willard clocks in mint condition demand prices of $50,000 to $250,000 and up. Younger brother Aaron Willard (1757-1844), also had a very fine reputation, particularly for his shelf clocks. Today one can buy the best of the Aaron Willard shelf clocks for considerably less than Simon's timepieces. I was fortunate enough to obtain one several years ago (shown in the photograph above). Older brother Benjamin (1743-1803) was noted for his tall case, or grandfather clocks. The youngest brother, Ephraim Willard (1755-????), seems to have been in the clock-making business for over twenty years, but only a few examples of his work have survived. Several of these brothers had sons and grandsons who were also clock-makers of repute.



Aaron Willard shelf clock, ca. 1820. Original, now owned by the author.

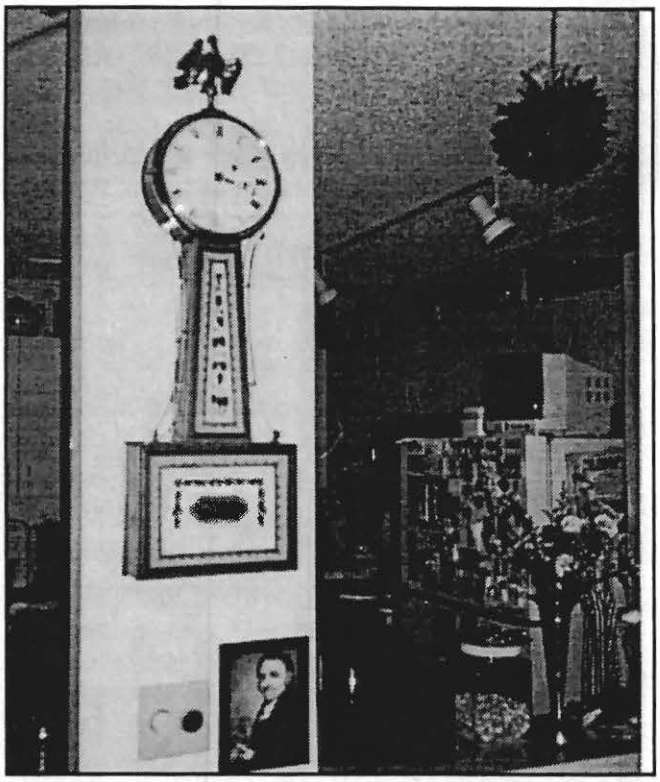
Simon[5] Willard was born at Grafton, MA April 3, 1753 and died at Boston, MA August 30, 1848, age 95. He showed an early aptitude for mechanical things and at the age of 12 his father apprenticed him to an Englishman, Mr. Morris, said to be engaged in the manufacture of clocks in Grafton. Simon was later reported to have said that the man to whom he was apprenticed knew little, or nothing, of the art himself, and that his teacher was his brother, Benjamin. Simon found himself in his natural element, and before the end of the first year he had made with his own hands a clock that was superior to those produced by his master. He probably worked for a while in his brother Benjamin's shop, but he must have soon set up in business for himself, since clocks marked "Simon Willard, Grafton" are occasionally found. He made all his clocks by hand, using only the simplest of tools: hammer, drill, files, etc.

Simon Willard moved from Grafton to Roxbury, MA around 1777-80, where he set up his own shop at 2196 Roxbury Street, (now Washington Street). He remained in this one location for about 60 years, until he retired from the clock business in 1839, at age 86! After moving to Roxbury Simon Willard devoted himself initially to the making of hall clocks, church, or turret (steeple) clocks, gallery clocks and general repair work.

Simon Willard invented a clock jack, for which he was granted an exclusive patent on July 2, 1784 by the General Court of Massachusetts, approved by John Hancock. Simon Willard's improvement consisted in making the whole assembly lighter and more compact than earlier versions imported from England. The Willard device was actuated by a spring and lever on the principle of the verge escapement of a watch.

In 1801 Simon Willard made a large clock for the United States Senate Building in Washington. He was invited there to set it up and show the people how to run it. While in Washington he was introduced to President Thomas Jefferson and the meeting developed into a very strong friendship. In fact, there is a family tradition that Simon did not realize the value of his new timepiece invention (see below), until on this visit Thomas Jefferson, pointing out the importance of the invention, urged Simon to take out a patent. Later Simon Willard visited Thomas Jefferson several times at his home, Monticello, in Virginia, and had many anecdotes to tell about their conversations. On one visit Mr. Jefferson took Simon out to cut a sapling, which he had made into a cane, silver mounted, with the inscription "Thomas Jefferson to Simon Willard, Monticello."

Simon Willard applied November 25, 1801 for a patent on his new timepiece. The patent was granted and issued to him by the U. S. Patent Office on 8 February 1802, signed by President Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State James Madison, and Attorney General Levi Lincoln. This Willard Patent Timepiece, now known to clock fanciers more familiarly as the "banjo clock," was a great improvement over tall case, or grandfather clocks. It was more compact, more easily set up and handled, and much cheaper to make than the older style clocks. Designed to be fastened to the wall, it was not always getting knocked off and smashed like the half, or shelf clocks. The graceful shape of the Willard Patent Timepiece made it very popular (see accompanying photograph).



Simon Willard Patent Timepiece ("banjo clock"), ca. 1805. Replica owned by the author.

After his 1802 patent was granted, Simon Willard devoted himself almost exclusively to making timepieces and very large clocks, producing tall case clocks only on special order. When a daughter of the Boston elite married, it was considered

appropriate to give her a Willard Timepiece, elaborately finished and decorated. These "presentation clocks" were placed in the dining rooms.

In 1819 Simon Willard applied for and obtained another patent, signed by then President James Monroe, this time for an alarm clock. The idea was copied by all the other clock-makers of the period, but Simon did not promote it himself. He also designed and made the mechanisms for the early revolving lights in sea coast lighthouses.

Some of Simon Willard's best work was done in making church and turret clocks. In 1826 he made a turret clock for the rotunda at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville. The clock was ordered by Thomas Jefferson, who drew the plans and made out the specifications. Simon was often heard to say that these were the only properly made plans and specifications he ever received while in business! The measurements were so accurately given that when he installed the clock, everything fitted to the sixteenth of an inch! Mr. Jefferson never lived to see the clock - he died July 4, 1826. In 1895 the building and clock were destroyed by fire.

Simon Willard also visited President Madison at his home, Ash Lawn in Virginia, probably while he was installing the turret clock at nearby Charlottesville. Mr. Madison treated Simon with the greatest respect, and presented him with a cane, silver mounted, with the inscription, "Presented by James Madison, Ex-President of the United States, to Simon Willard, May 29, 1827." The two "Presidential" canes were Simon Willard's most treasured possessions. He always used one or the other when he went for a walk. They are on display at the Willard House and Clock Museum at Grafton, MA.

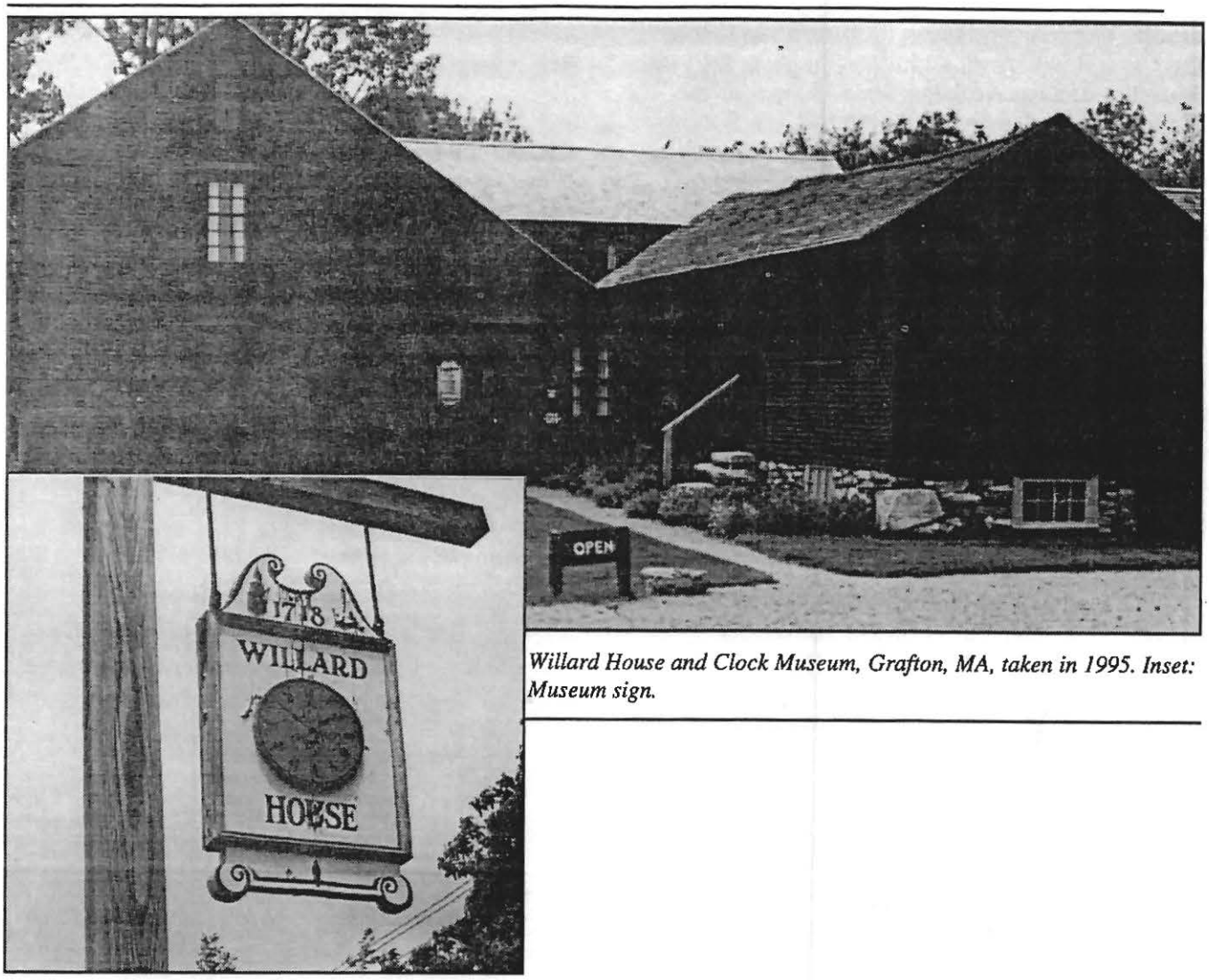
For over fifty years Simon Willard had a very close connection with Harvard College, where he had the sole responsibility for the general care and superintendence of the institution's clocks. Simon presented two clocks to Harvard: a tall case clock, which stood for many years in the faculty room, and a regulator clock, which hung for many years in room 4 of University Hall.

At Harvard College a Mr. Joseph Pope had devoted several months trying to correct an error in his Great Orrery (a mechanical device that models the motion of the planets and their moons around the sun). This particular orrery would work properly up to a certain point, when suddenly the whole solar system would give a tremendous jump, ("big bang"!), to the despair of the inventor, Mr. Pope. Many skillful craftsmen were called in to remedy the defect, but all gave up. Finally, Simon Willard was called in with the offer of untold sums of money, if he could make the orrery run smoothly. Simon looked it over very carefully for quite a long time, took out his drill, drilled a hole in the critical spot, put in a rivet, and the orrery worked perfectly, the whole operation not taking over an hour. The authorities were delighted. "Now, Mr. Willard," they said, "how much do we owe you?" "Oh," said Mr. Willard, with a twinkle in his eye, "about ninepence will do, I guess!"

In 1837 at age 84 Simon Willard was engaged by the U. S. government to make two clocks for the Capitol Building. He went again to Washington to install them. One clock ordered by Associate Justice Story was placed in the Senate Chamber, afterwards in the Supreme Court. The other clock was a specially constructed movement designed to fit in the case of the clock in Statuary Hall, the famous allegorical clock case, Clio, the Muse of History, designed and executed by the famous sculptor, Carlo Franzoni in 1819. These two clocks were the last important works of Simon Willard and are still working today!

It has been estimated that during his lifetime Simon Willard made about 1200 eight-day tall case clocks, 4000 timepieces, and a goodly number of regulator, gallery, and turret clocks. He ranks near the top of American clock-makers, and he left as his monument a clock design, the Willard Patent Timepiece, that no person has ever improved! Unfortunately, Simon was a very poor business man and had less than $500 to his name when he retired. He died a poor man. He allowed his apprentices, his brothers, and all the other clock-makers of his time, to copy his patented timepiece, and everything else he invented, without demanding the royalties that were rightfully his. If he had done so, he would surely have become a very wealthy man.

Aaron Willard also moved to Roxbury and set up his own shop near his brother Simon at 2224 Washington Street. Aaron made the tall case clock, the half, or shelf clock, the Willard Patent Timepiece, the gallery clock and the regulator clock. His shelf clocks, made with painted glass panels, became his trademark and are now sought after by collectors. Aaron Willard did a prosperous business employing as many as 20 to 30



Willard House and Clock Museum, Grafton, MA, taken in 1995. Inset: Museum sign.

workers at his peak. He copied the Willard Patent Timepiece from brother Simon, including the glass style front. Unlike Simon, Aaron invari-ably put his name on the dials or glass panels.

Many Willard clocks are on exhibit in museums and public buildings throughout the United States. The **Willard House and Clock Museum** located at 11 Willard Street, Grafton, MA is the original site and structure of the one room house built in 1718 by the grandfather of the clock makers, Joseph[3] Willard. The house was enlarged over the years and is where the four Willard clock-maker brothers were born and learned their craft. The homestead is nicely furnished with period furniture, Willard portraits, memorabilia and over 68 Willard clocks on display. There is a clock shop with many of the tools used to make clocks. This museum is a priority visit for all devotees of Willard clocks (see accompanying photographs).

J. Cheney Wells Clock Gallery located at Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA provides visi-tors with a broad overview of the products of the very best American clock-makers over the period from 1725 to 1825. This collection of over 122 clocks contains 20 by Simon Willard, 12 by Aaron Willard, one by Benjamin Willard, four by Aaron Willard, Jr., one by Benjamin Franklin[6] Willard and two by Alexander Tarbell[6] Willard. There are also three clocks by Simon's apprentice Elnathan Taber.

The Watch & Clock Museum of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors located at 14 Poplar Street, Columbia, PA pres-ents an excellent survey of American watches and clocks.

Willard clocks may also be seen at the White

House, Dumbarton House, Smithsonian Institute, the Capitol Building, all in Washington, DC; the Museum of Fine Arts, the State House (turret clock) and the Bostonian Society & the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, all in Boston, MA; the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Saugus Iron Works, Saugus, MA; Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; the Peabody Museum of Salem, Salem, MA; the Wright House, Silver Shop, and the Asa Stebbins House, Deerfield, MA; Greenfield Village, Dearborn, MI; and the Adams House, Adams St., Quincy, MA.

References:

1. John Ware Willard, *A History of Simon Willard, Inventor and Clock-Maker* (1911), reprinted under the new title, *Simon Willard and His Clocks,* Dover Publications, New York (1968).

2. R. W. Husher and W. W. Welch, *A Study of Simon Willard's Clocks,* Addison C. Gretchell & Sons, Boston (1980).

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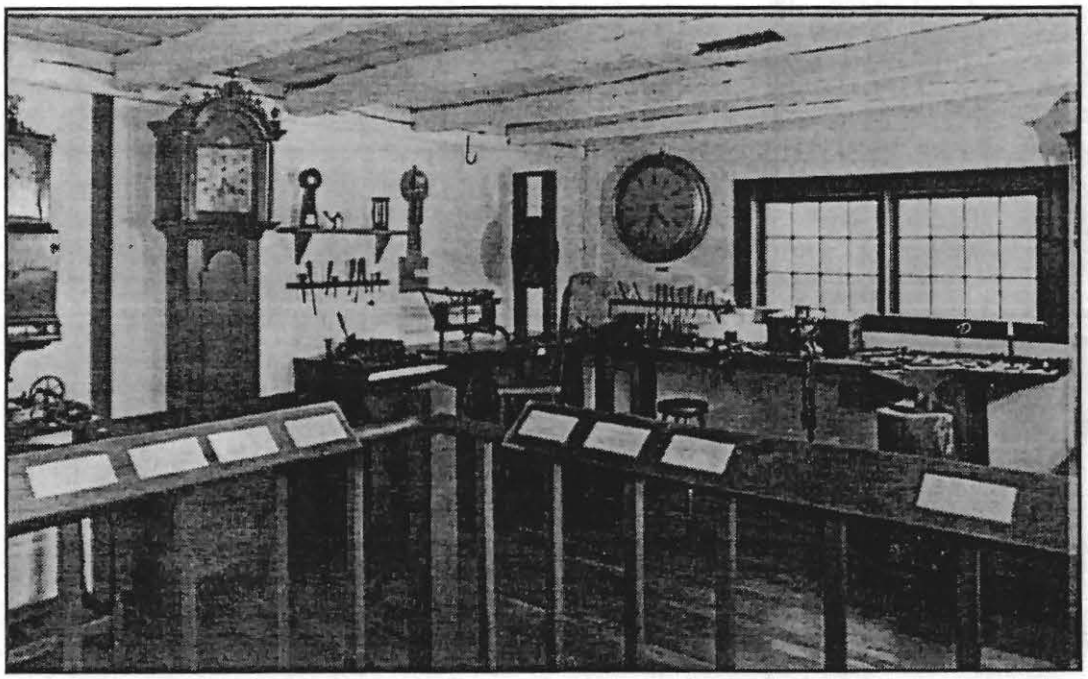

Willard House and Clock Museum, Grafton, MA. Interior showing clockshop.

From the Mail Pouch . . .

Gloria O. Palmer, Grass Valley, CA writes:

I have had an abiding interest in genealogy and our nationality.

The fall 1996 issue of *The Texas Jack Scout* mentions "crests." I am not a devoted student of heraldry, but as a long-time genealogist I have read some on the subject. I would like to suggest that I am concerned about a "crest" when we really do not know our nationality. I know ideas have changed over the years but I would hope the Association would proceed in a proper manner.

I am a member of Virginia Historical Society [as is M. H. Omohundro and perhaps others] and feel they could be helpful to the Association concerning "crests."

Editor's comment: The excellent point made in this letter should be carefully heeded.

Jim Omohundro, Lexington, KY proposes:

In reading Julie's feature article about Jack Omohundro's war experiences I got to wondering about the whereabouts of "the Belle of the Bayous." I'll bet you a dollar to a donut that she is sitting out in the desert somewhere and could be located without too much difficulty.

Suggest we drop an inquiry to the Air Force and the Confederate Air Force in Harlingen, Texas. Between the two I'll bet we get an answer.

If we locate her perhaps a TJA member who lives nearby could drop by and take a few photos of her. Then maybe we can twist a few arms here and there and convince someone that it would be a good idea to save her for posterity... She could be purchased (or donated) from the Air Force...perhaps by/to the TJA. We could then donate her to the Confederate Air Force in Harlingen, TX, whose members have the wherewithal, as well as the love of aviation, to restore her. (There are other groups and museums as well).

I'll bet this would thrill Jack as well as most of the clan. Plus, we'd be preserving an elegant lady for all time. She brought Jack back home from harm's way... therefore I think every effort should be made to save her from the scrap heap since she deserves better.

What think you?

P.S. Assuming she is still in existence I'll bet we can pull this off with just a few well placed phone calls and letters. Let's do it!

Editor's note: Volunteers for this intriguing project should contact Jim.

• • •

Condolences

Condolences to go out to the families of:

1. Minor W. Omohundro, who died February 24, 1997, at Charlottesville, VA

2. Donald Chilcutt, who died January 6, 1997, at Murray, KY

From the Editor's Desk

by Harvey Willard

NEW EDITOR!

The next edition of the *Scout* will have a new editor.

She is:

Kitty Wyche Pelkan
6021 37th Avenue West
Seattle, WA 98126

Submission Deadline: August 15, 1997

Mark your calendars...
For the next

Texas Jack Roundup

Cody, Wyoming, late June-July, 1998

Texas Jack Scout
Harvey Willard
875 Waterside Lane
Bradenton, FL 34209

To:

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1997

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