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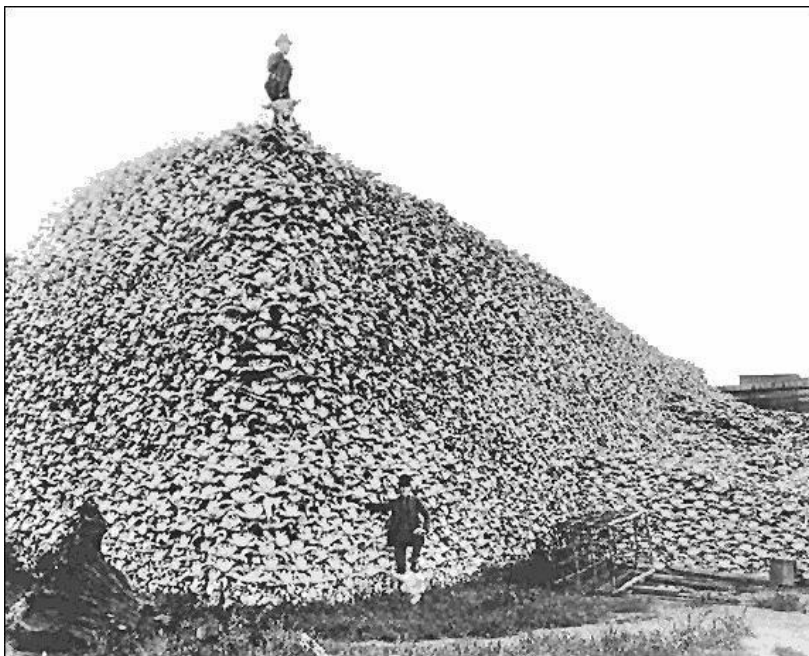
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July 2024

## Texas Jack and the Pawnee Buffalo Hunt

By Thomas Michael Foster

**F**ew men of his young age, 26 years old, had experienced as many adventures and seen as much change in the country as Texas Jack. 1872 was a year that would set his career, heretofore that of a cowboy, on a different course. It featured buffalo and Plains Indians.



### Before the Prairie

At the end of the Civil War Jack, a battle-tested survivor at 19 years old, left Virginia and went first south to Florida, where he stayed briefly, teaching school for a short stint. Then his wandering nature took him west to Texas, and there he became an accomplished cowboy by working on ranches and driving cattle up the Chisholm Trail to regions of the Midwest, and there he was given the nickname "Texas Jack."

*Commercial hunters devastated the buffalo population for hides and bones to send East for shoe leather and fertilizer. Buffalo skulls at Michigan Carbon Works, Rougeville, 1892*

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# The Texas Jack Scout



from the Editor's Desk...



The 1870's was a period of rapid change in the West. Within a few years of being investigated the first time by survey parties from the East, Yellowstone was declared a National Park (1872). The railroad and telegraph tied the prairie to the coast by cutting communication and travel time. Now Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill could spend the summer in Ft. McPherson or Yellowstone as guides or hunters (see Michael's and Matt's articles), and then return to eastern cities in time for winter stage shows. The buffalo herds were commercialized and devastated, because the rails provided easy freight to the East. That speeded up the Indians' loss of the Plains Wars. Paleontologists Marsh and Cope could accompany a troop of green college boys to digs in Kansas and Colorado (see my article), and be back east in time for the academic season. Chicago, the hub of the railroad, transformed the beef industry, so Teddy Blue's cattle drives (see my brother Tipton's article) became the stuff of memoir. The speed of change in the "wild" West was every bit as hectic as that in the East. So the moment in time celebrated in Jack's stage shows and Bill's arena shows was in fact quite brief.

*John T. Omohundro, Guest Editor*

*The Texas Jack Scout*

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

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

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*Continued from page 1*

The cattle drives were not without their risks from rustlers, horse thieves, and hostile Indians. Jack's service in war and his native intelligence had aided him in acquiring the skills that made him an exceptional cowboy, a standout at his work on the ranches and a reliable source of support when threats arose.

By 1869 Jack had moved on from the Texas cattle ranches, this time to Ft. Hays, Kansas, where he met and became friends with Wild Bill Hickok, already an iconic figure as a fearless gun fighter. Hickok was then working in Ft. Hays as a sheriff. Later that year Jack had the good fortune to meet a man who would become his friend and would change his life in many ways. William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, a Union army veteran of the Civil War, was then serving as a scout for the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry at Ft. McPherson in the Nebraska Territory. Jack sought to join Cody in that work but was barred by federal law because of his service in the Confederate army. Cody intervened to get the exclusion waived so Jack could join him as a scout for the army. The friendship between the two men would be a close and lifelong one.

### **The Changing Prairie**

By the time Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack met, the American West was already undergoing rapid changes that were affecting the whole country, and particularly the Native American tribes who relied on the buffalo prairie so coveted by white settlers. Since the end of the Civil War Americans settlers from both North and the South had gone West to start new lives. In 1869 the transcontinental railroad was completed, opening the West to more rapid development. At the same time, traditional rivalries among the tribes who lived on the plains had affected their futures almost as much as the influx of settlers. For example, a large part of the Pawnee tribe lived in the region administered by the government at Ft. McPherson. They had cooperated with the government's agents and had sought to preserve their way of life while maintaining peaceful relations with the settlers. The U.S. Army had even recruited Pawnee braves to create a force to protect the Union Pacific Railroad workers as they laid their track across the region. Buffalo Bill was employed at one time to kill buffalo to supply the meat needed to feed the crews laying the rails. The many settlers invading the Pawnee's tribal lands and competing pressure for bison hides and meat from both settlers and their traditional enemies, the Sioux, made the Pawnee's task difficult and put their way of life and their very lives at risk.

The Pawnee were a mostly sedentary tribe, living in villages with sturdy lodges made of timber and buffalo hides. They cultivated gardens in their villages and grew crops nearby, but they also depended on the buffalo for both sustenance and shelter. After crops were in the ground and needing less attention, the Pawnee would devote almost half of their year to long and wide-ranging buffalo hunts, one in the spring and one in winter. Through his work as a scout Texas Jack became familiar with the Pawnees and would come to respect them and admire them. They, in turn, trusted Jack, building a relationship with him that few white men enjoyed.

The fertile Nebraska plains under the authority of Ft. McPherson experienced a massive influx of settlers, and the tribal lands were often the settlers' target. Not only was the forest, relied on by the tribes for fuel and timbers for building lodges, depleted by the settlers, the greatest loss of all was the wholesale slaughter of the buffalo by settlers for hides and meat and by market hunters for hides to sell in the East, with the meat left to rot on the prairie. The buffalo's numbers shrank to near extinction and forced the displaced Indians dependent on the

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animal to go farther and farther across the prairies in search of herds, frequently putting the tribes into the territories of traditional enemies, assuring confrontation and costly battles.

### **The Year of Change**

In 1872 when the Pawnee near Ft. McPherson sought government permission to go on the traditional summer hunt for buffalo to sustain them through the next season, Texas Jack was appointed the government's trail agent to accompany them. The agent's job was to prevent violent encounters with other tribes and to keep white buffalo hunters from harassing the Indians to drive them away from the herds so the white hunters could slaughter them solely for hides. Jack proved his mettle in the hunt itself, bringing down a buffalo and recovering horses taken from the Pawnees by thieves. He also learned the lengths the braves went to in the hunt, the endurance it required, the dangers they encountered, and the tenacity it took for them to bring the massive animals down and to prepare the hides and meat for return to the tribal home.



*A group of Pawnee pose with Buffalo Bill at Fort McPherson.*

A Pawnee buffalo hunt was no small affair. Almost the whole village would accompany the braves on their search for the herds. Women went along to prepare the meat for transporting back to the village to preserve it for the coming season, and children would be with the women for the care they needed. All were dressed in their colorful traditional garb, including feathered headdresses, beads and warpaint. The group would travel many days in search of the herds. When they found them, the braves would attack with a ritual and fervor that impressed Jack and gave him a new respect for their courage and tenacity. The Pawnee gained a new affection and respect for Jack as well, giving him the name "Whirling Rope" for his prowess with a lasso, and adding a new word to their vocabulary for any man who works with cattle, "teksis."

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*The hunt was a crucial food quest but also a major annual event for the Pawnee.*

Jack's life in the west had already begun to change by 1872, and those changes were attributable to his friendship with Buffalo Bill and with another man he'd met during his many adventures around Ft. McPherson. That man, Ned Buntline, was one of the most prolific writers of the so-called "dime novels" of the era, fictional accounts of western adventures among cowboys and Indians, often featuring Buffalo Bill, and by then also including his partner, Texas Jack. Buntline was hugely popular in his time, especially among eastern readers first learning about life in the American West, at least as described in Buntline's fictional accounts of it. He is reported to be the second most widely read writer of the era, surpassed only by Mark Twain.

The year before, Buffalo Bill had recruited Texas Jack to help lead the much-heralded hunting visit of Russian royalty, the Grand Duke Alexis, the son of Russian Tsar Alexander II, and his party into areas around Yellowstone. The hunt with Grand Duke Alexis proved successful



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and led to a demand for Jack's services as a scout by royals, nobles, and others with the time and money for such exciting adventures.

By late 1872 the major change in Texas Jack's life was well under way. He was persuaded to go east with Buffalo Bill to join a stage production conceived by Ned Buntline entitled "The Scouts of the Prairies." There he would meet the woman who would become his wife, Giuseppina Morlacchi, the La Scala-trained ballerina who would portray an Indian maiden in the productions dreamt up by Buntline. Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack were hugely popular with eastern audiences, but often the productions themselves were not reviewed favorably by the newspaper critics.

### Next Hunt Goes Badly

By early 1873 Jack was himself the subject of a Buntline fictional piece, "Texas Jack, The White King of the Pawnees," a story that drew heavily from Jack's factual description of the 1872 summer buffalo hunt where he had accompanied the tribe as the government agent.

When the 1873 Pawnee summer hunt occurred, Jack's life had moved into headier realms. He was now appearing before the footlights in eastern theaters, and he was perhaps not as aware of the new pressures on the tribe as he had been while at Ft. McPherson. The government had assigned members of the Quaker faith to work with the Indians to bring them into the white man's world and to protect them from being taken advantage of by unscrupulous government Indian agents. Jack is reported to have applied to be the Pawnees' trail agent but was not chosen. Later that decision was reconsidered, but by then he was not available. An inexperienced Quaker agent was assigned to the job. As the 1873 hunt began, the bison herds were substantially thinner and more widely dispersed than on previous hunts, so the Pawnees entered areas that put them at risk of running into Sioux braves. As the tribe searched for buffalo the hunters encountered three white men who warned them that a large war party of Sioux was not far off in the direction they were headed. The Pawnee chief thought the men were lying to keep the Indians away from the herd so white hunters could kill the buffalo themselves and take the hides. He vowed to go forward. The government agent counseled against it, but the chief scoffed and called the agent a "squaw." The agent, offended, replied that he'd go as far as the chief would go.

*In 1870 The U. S. Grant government assigned the Quakers responsibility as Indian Agent for the Pawnees. >*

The Pawnee hunters went forward with their women and children in tow, ultimately into a canyon now appropriately named Massacre Canyon, and there they were ambushed by the Sioux war party. Greatly outnumbered, the Pawnee were slaughtered. The Pawnee warriors fought bravely but were slain, and the survivors retreated, leaving behind dead men, women and children, and the accumulated supplies they had planned to take back to their village. The dead were butchered by the Sioux and left to rot in the canyon, often dismembered, a Sioux practice.



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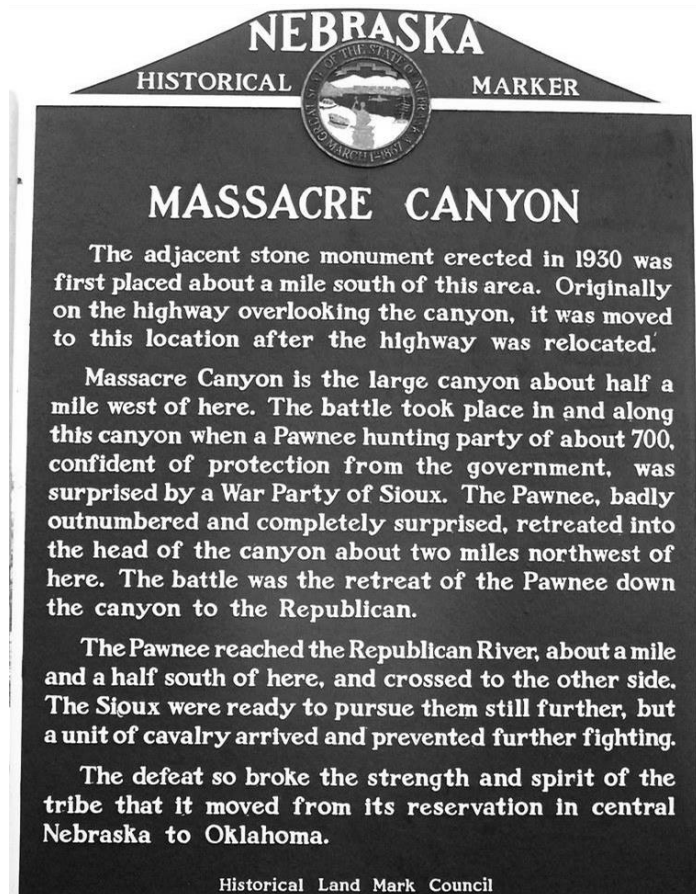
The Massacre Canyon defeat was a turning point in the fate of the Pawnee, who soon afterwards began to move off their shrinking tribal lands to reservations in Oklahoma Indian territory, far from their ancestral home, where the tribe fared poorly, shrinking in number and becoming dependent on aid from the federal government for its survival.

When Texas Jack learned of the massacre he wondered if he could have prevented it had he been the agent, experienced with the tribe and respected by them, rather than an inexperienced agent who carried little credibility with the hunters and thus could not prevent them from walking into an ambush they were sure to lose. But Jack's life had moved on. He had no responsibility for the tragedy at Massacre Canyon, and no one blamed him. It was one of many tragedies that occurred across the American West in the years before the white man arrived and before the tribal rivalries were subdued as the tribes were forced into reservations. Texas Jack's role was but one small part of a much larger trend that was unfolding in the American West. The loss of the buffalo herds to both settlers and hide hunters forced the traditional hunts to new regions, often into areas other tribes saw as their own, prompting costly battles and unproductive hunts.

### A Scout and Guide

Jack returned to the West many times after the Pawnee slaughter. When he was not performing in either Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, or later with his own troupe, he would hire out as a scout for wealthy adventurers who wanted to see the Wild West. He was recruited to lead the Earl of Dunraven and British royalty, among others, on hunts in the remote country around Yellowstone. At times the treks were wild, with attacks by Indians and encounters with dangerous animals, including grizzly bears. Then he would go back east and join his wife for another tour of shows, always popular with the crowds, who were living the cowboy life in the West through the Buntline dime novels and the performances of Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack.

The Sioux and Cheyenne tribes continued to fight the army and settlers rather than give up their land. Jack was in the East when the news of the Little Bighorn massacre of General Custer and his 260 troops shocked the country in 1876. He and Buffalo Bill felt it was their duty to return to work as scouts for the army in avenging the slaughter and subduing the tribes, and so took part in many of the skirmishes that followed. The Great Sioux War, as it became known,



*Highway memorial raised to remember the massacre of Pawnee by the Sioux war party.*

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continued into 1877, until Chief Crazy Horse surrendered, and Chief Sitting Bull escaped to Canada. The Sioux were ultimately forced to relinquish their claim to the Black Hills to the federal government.

### **The Frontier and its Creatures**

It could not have been lost on either Texas Jack or Buffalo Bill that the West was rapidly changing. Jack's death in 1880 in Leadville prevented him from seeing some of the most dramatic changes, like the Wounded Knee massacre of defeated remnants of the Lakota Sioux tribe by government troops in 1890, or the declaration the same year by the federal Bureau of the Census that the frontier had closed, that there was no longer a discernible line denoting the settlements in the west and what had been called a "frontier." Nor did Jack live to see another indication of the changes: an article in 1883, entitled, "The Buffalo Slowly Disappearing" that notes:

"A stray buffalo was killed near Yorktown in Northern Dakota last week. The appearance of a buffalo in Dakota is now an exceedingly rare occurrence, but 10 years ago they were as numerous in the western portion of our Territory as the heads of the domestic beef cattle are now. Twenty years ago the buffalo was not a rare object in the vicinity of Sioux Falls, but, like the Indians, he had to go before the army of civilization, until now he is cooped into a contracted region of Northwestern Montana, and will become extinct, if not protected by law, within a few decades." (*New York Times* September 10, reprinted from the *Fargo Argus*).

Some who encountered the Indians in the westward expansion of the country felt the only way to get control over them was to kill off all the buffalo. They very nearly succeeded. Others tried to prevent the mindless slaughter. Markets for hides and bones in the east drove the carnage to greater limits. The efforts to save the buffalo did come, but almost too late, and the nature of the west had changed too much for coexistence between the vast bison herds that once roamed the west and the beef cattle, which created a demand for land that had belonged to the buffalo and Indian tribes. The people of the plains, the Indian tribes who included the buffalo so essentially in both their lives and their traditions, were as doomed as the animal itself, as a look back into their history from our perspective today so amply demonstrates.

But the west and the buffalo hadn't yet lost their appeal to hunters and those seeking adventure. An article in the December 19, 1883, issue of the *New York Times* described such a group of young adventurers:

"To Hunt Buffaloes.

Philadelphia, Dec. 18. – A dozen young men, some of them in loud check suits of English cut and nearly all of them smoking briar pipes, have a special Pullman car on the Chicago limited bound for the West this morning. Eight of them are the sons of English capitalists. The other four are New-Yorkers. They were en route for the far West, where they are going to hunt buffaloes. They had any quantity of guns in leather cases, half a baggage car full of luggage, and about 25 boxes of champagne. They are going to visit the Yellowstone Park and the Yosemite Valley, and will return to New-York when the flowers have begun to bloom."

Jack's early death from pneumonia in Leadville came at a time that coincided with the end of the American frontier as he knew it. His grave in Leadville was initially marked by a simple wooden marker. It bore in Italian an inscription that translated reads beneath his name "God guard my dear soul" and after the date of death, June 28, 1880, "I'll see you soon Texas Jack" and the name of Giuseppina Morlacchi, his beloved wife. That wooden marker was



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eventually stolen by a souvenir hunter, but in 1908 Buffalo Bill and the entire cast of his Wild West Show would assemble at Jack's graveside and dedicate a new stone marker to him, the one still on his grave. It read: "Sacred to the Memory of TEXAS JACK (J.B. OMOHUNDRO) Died June 28, 1880 [Age] 39, Pneumonia."

Jack's age at death was wrong by six years—he was only 33—but the intent of his old friend was to honor the man, and he accomplished that goal. Buffalo Bill died in 1917, one of the last of the prized and precious remnants of the Old West, alive now, like Texas Jack, in history books and in the imaginations of those who crave to know what life was like for those who lived in the Old West. ¶



*Buffalo Bill at Texas Jack's new stone marker in the cemetery of Leadville, Colorado.*

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## The Most Important Buffalo Hunt in American History

By Matthew Kerns

In the annals of American history, the Pawnee summer buffalo hunt of 1872 stands out as a defining event, with an outsized impact that rippled through the cultural and ecological landscape of the time, resonating into the future of conservation and the ethos of the American West. The experiences of three men—Texas Jack Omohundro, George Bird Grinnell, and Luther "Lute" North—provide a panoramic view of this monumental hunt, each narrative layering over the other to form a comprehensive account of its significance.

### The Dramatic

Texas Jack's account of the Pawnee buffalo hunt is a vivid tapestry of movement and color, rich with the awe of a man witnessing the raw ferocity and grace of a culture's communion with nature. Jack, weighed down under the burdens of his own culture—bridle, saddle, lariat, rifle, and more—marveled at the Pawnee's minimalism: "I had started fully equipped—bridle, saddle, lariat, rifle, pistol, belt, etc.—and astride of my pony. They, with as near nothing in garments as Adam and Eve, only breechcloth and moccasins, no saddle, no blanket, not even a bridle, only a

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small mouth rope, light bow, and a few arrows in hand—in fact, not an ounce of weight more than necessary, and, unlike myself, all scudding along at a marvelous rate, leading their fiery ponies, so as to reserve every energy for the grand event in prospect.” His recognition of the Pawnee’s efficient simplicity speaks to a deeper understanding, a realization that there is a profound wisdom in their adherence to tradition and their respectful approach to the hunt.

The culmination of the hunt, with its cacophony of sounds and flurry of activity, is where Omohundro's narrative crescendos. He paints a chaotic yet majestic picture of the hunt's climax: "With a roar like Niagara, the speed of a whirlwind, like the sweep of a tornado, the rush of a snow-slide, the suddenness of a water-spout, the rumbling of Vesuvius, with the fire of death in their souls, they pounce on their prey". Through his words, one can almost feel the ground tremble and hear the collective heartbeat of hunters and hunted alike. This visceral depiction conveys not only the physicality of the hunt but also the spiritual and cultural significance it held for the Pawnee—a rite that was as much about sustenance as it was about identity and continuity.

Texas Jack’s vivid narrative of the Pawnee buffalo hunt was included by his friend Buffalo Bill Cody in the programs of his later Wild West shows, bringing to life the intricate hunting methods and rich cultural tapestry of the Pawnee people for audiences who were acutely conscious of the bison's near extinction. At a time when the thundering herds had been replaced by deafening silence on the Great Plains, Omohundro’s detailed descriptions served as a poignant reminder of what had been lost. His portrayal of the Pawnee, with their deep understanding of the bison's behaviors and movements, their strategic prowess, and the sounds and sights of the hunt, offered a window into a world of respect and balance between humans and nature. For many show-goers, this account would have been a revelation, contrasting starkly with the wanton destruction that had been common knowledge for decades, like the photos of bison skulls at the Michigan Carbon Works on page 1. Jack’s account was a narrative that honored the Pawnee's legacy and underscored the tragic consequences of the bison's disappearance, evoking a sense of nostalgia and loss for a once majestic feature of the American landscape.

### The Environmental

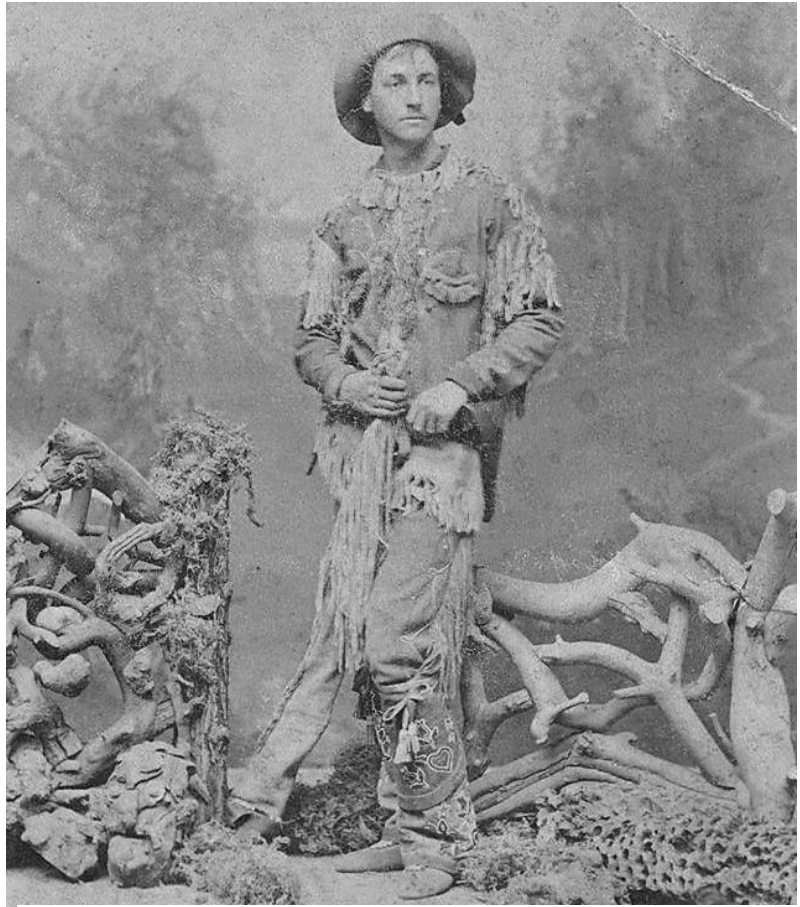
George Bird Grinnell, 22 years old when he joined the Pawnee buffalo hunt in the summer of 1872, was not yet the distinguished figure in American conservation history that he would become. A recent Yale graduate at the time of the hunt, Grinnell would eventually go on to earn a Ph.D. in zoology from Columbia University. Grinnell was not just an academic but a passionate naturalist and writer. He would go on to have a close friendship with Theodore Roosevelt, and their shared interests in conservation would play a pivotal role in his environmental advocacy. Because of his experience on the Pawnee summer hunt, Grinnell would go on to make significant contributions to the preservation of the American bison and the establishment of Glacier National Park. Deeply respectful of Native American cultures, particularly the Pawnee, his work was greatly influenced by their sustainable practices and harmonious relationship with nature. Grinnell's efforts in conservation and his commitment to indigenous rights mark him as a key

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figure in the narrative of American environmental history, bridging the gap between academic study and practical conservation efforts.

Grinnell, in his depiction of the Pawnee buffalo hunt, brings forth the serene beauty of the prairie dawn with a naturalist's precision and a conservationist's concern. His language is evocative, painting the landscape with a romantic brush: "The sun pushing aside the rosy curtains of the east commences to renew his daily course, bringing again light and life to all animated nature," and "The waters of the Republican, dark and turbid as they always are, seem to become purer as they are touched by his beams". Grinnell's narrative goes beyond mere observation; it is an emotional response to the grandeur of the prairie and its inhabitants, a world he saw teetering on the edge of irreversible change.



*George Bird Grinnell in San Francisco in 1870, two years before his hunt with Texas Jack, Luther North, and the Pawnee.*

Grinnell's account is not just a record of the hunt but also a lament for an era that he sensed was passing. He describes the buffalo in their natural habitat: "Among the numberless bluffs that rise one after another like the waves of a tossing sea, the buffaloes can be seen by thousands," and speaks of the prairie's other residents with a naturalist's eye for detail: "The mellow whistle of the meadowlark is heard from the prairie... and amid the topmost branches of some lofty cottonwood, the white-headed eagle rears her gigantic brood". Through Grinnell's eyes, we witness the interconnectedness of the prairie ecosystem, a balance that the Pawnee had mastered but which was endangered by the encroachment of Western expansion.

The significance of the hunt, as seen by Grinnell, was manifold. It was a testament to the Pawnee's sustainable practices, a celebration of the prairie's bounty, and a forewarning of the decline that unchecked hunting would bring about. He notes, "But their days are numbered, and unless some action on this subject is speedily taken... these shaggy brown beasts... will ere long be among the things of the past". This prophetic statement underlines Grinnell's forward-

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thinking attitude towards wildlife conservation, an ethos that was informed by his deep respect for the Pawnee way of life and his profound understanding of the natural world he so cherished.



*Luther Hedden North in uniform with the 2nd Nebraska Volunteer Cavalry, 1862*

Luther "Lute" North offered a unique vantage point as both participant and chronicler, detailing the intricate communal dynamics of the Pawnee buffalo hunt. His account underscores the strategic and egalitarian nature of the hunt, a testament to the Pawnee's complex societal structures and profound respect for the natural world. North describes the role of the hunt leaders with a sense of reverence for their authority: "When the Pawnees were about to start on one of their hunts, the chiefs of the different bands had a meeting and agreed on four men, one from each band, who were to be leaders of the hunt, and these four men had absolute command." This selection process ensured a

democratic approach to the hunt, with each band represented and a fair distribution of the game's bounty guaranteed.

North further illustrates the meticulous planning and respect for hierarchy within the tribe, as the leaders would "ride ahead of the tribe on the march and pick out the camping grounds; they carried a staff or pole... to the end of which was fastened a strip of cloth, and the feathers of a hawk or an eagle, and the skin of some animal or bird that was the medicine of the beaver". This description paints a picture of a people deeply in tune with their surroundings, following a ritual that ensured the well-being and unity of the tribe.

The communal aspect of the hunt was paramount, ensuring that no individual could prematurely disrupt the buffalo, thereby safeguarding the group's collective interest. "The reason for this was

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that, if individual hunting was permitted... those people who had slower horses would kill nothing and get no meat," North explains. His account reveals a community working in harmony, with a system that provided for all, regardless of status or wealth. The Pawnee's methods were not only about sustenance but also about maintaining the delicate balance of their ecosystem, a lesson in sustainability and foresight.

. . .

The convergence of these three perspectives frames the Pawnee buffalo hunt as not merely a chase for sustenance but as a complex social and ecological event. The hunt symbolized the intersection of different worlds—the Native American and the Euro-American, the past and the emerging future, the wild and the cultivated. It stood as a testament to the Pawnee's deep understanding of their environment, a stark contrast to the more exploitative approaches that would follow with the expansion of the American frontier.

This buffalo hunt also marked a turning point in the relationship between humans and the environment in the American West. The Pawnee's sustainable practices highlighted in these accounts reflect a starkly different attitude toward nature compared to the Euro-American settlers, who often hunted buffalo to near extinction for sport or profit. The hunt's aftermath thus served as a poignant reminder of the consequences of unchecked exploitation of natural resources.

The Pawnee buffalo hunt of 1872 as a formative experience for George Bird Grinnell, who would become one of America's pioneering conservationists. The lessons he absorbed from the Pawnee—respect for the natural world, sustainable use of resources, and the intricate balance of ecosystems—would resonate throughout his career. Grinnell's first-hand observation of the Pawnees' sustainable hunting practices, which emphasized an equitable distribution of resources and a deep connection to the land, shaped his understanding of environmental stewardship. This encounter with the Pawnee not only enriched his cultural perspective but also catalyzed his lifelong dedication to conservation and the protection of natural habitats.

### The Impact on Grinnell

In the following years, Grinnell's career would be marked by his efforts to document Native customs and ways of life that were inextricably linked to the American landscape. His anthropological work, deeply informed by his experiences with the Pawnee and other tribes, sought to preserve the rich cultural heritage of Native Americans, which he saw as being threatened by the relentless westward expansion of European settlers. Grinnell recognized that the loss of Native American cultures was akin to the loss of biodiversity; both were integral threads in the fabric of American identity, and both required urgent protection.

Grinnell's passion for conservation led him to champion the cause of America's natural beauty, contributing to the establishment of Glacier National Park and advocating for the protection of Yellowstone. However, his most enduring legacy may be his work with the bison. Disturbed by the reckless slaughter of bison he witnessed moving westward, Grinnell was among the earliest



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and most vocal advocates for their conservation. He used his influence as editor of *Forest and Stream* magazine to raise awareness about the plight of the bison and lobbied for legislation to prevent their extinction. His efforts were crucial in the development of the American Bison Society in 1905, which played a significant role in the bison's reintroduction to protected areas. Grinnell's vision of a restored bison population roaming the American plains once more was a testament to the profound impact the Pawnee buffalo hunt had on him—a young man who saw the harmony with which the Pawnee lived with the bison and sought to ensure that future generations would not be deprived of this majestic symbol of the American West.



< Luther North (L) and George Bird Grinnell  
in 1926

Though Grinnell doesn't mention Texas Jack in his account of the Pawnee summer buffalo hunt of 1872, we know that the two men were well acquainted. Grinnell's *Forest & Stream* magazine occasionally published letters and accounts of western adventure written by Texas Jack in the 1870s, and connected Jack with Otto Franc and Amandus Ferber, who he escorted on an 1878 expedition in Wyoming. Grinnell would go on to write a series of children's books about a character named Jack.

Titles in the series include, *Jack, the Young Explorer*, *Jack the Young Cowboy*, and *Jack Among the Indians; Or, A Boy's Summer on the Buffalo Plains*.

. . .

In the broader tapestry of American history, the 1872 Pawnee buffalo hunt is a thread that weaves together themes of cultural dignity, environmental stewardship, and the onset of the conservation movement. The detailed accounts of Omohundro, Grinnell, and North are more than mere historical records; they are narratives that challenged the prevailing ethos of their time, narratives that continue to inspire and instruct. The hunt was a display of harmony between humans and nature, a fleeting moment of balance before the pendulum swung towards the ecological upheaval that characterized the latter part of the 19th century.

Ultimately, the importance of this hunt extends beyond the number of buffalo taken or the immediate needs it met for the Pawnee people. It encapsulates a critical juncture in American history, one where the ethos of conservation began to bud against the backdrop of a rapidly transforming continent. Through the lens of this buffalo hunt, we are offered a profound lesson: that respect for the land and its creatures is an essential component of our shared history and a crucial consideration for our future. **tj**

## The Texas Jack Scout



### TAKE ANOTHER CHANCE ©...February 2011

By: Driftin' AaronG

*I was born an' raised on a small ranch in West Texas back around 1868  
The war between the states was over an' I wasn't there cause I was born a little too late*

*But let me tell y'all I came from good stock, my pa an' ma, an' brother an' me  
O' course pa an' my brother was lost in the war an' I had to take charge cause it was meant to be*

*I stayed on the ranch takin' care of ma an' doin' all the chores on our land  
Always watchin' for Comanches who might come ridin' in with a small or large band  
Since during the war they'd been on the prod burnin' ranches an' lot's o' folks had cried  
The very next year we were hit by them Comanches an' my poor ol' ma she died*

*I was left alone to try an' decide what to do  
It was tough for me bein' alone for the very first time, let me give you a clue*

*I sold off the stock an' closed up the ranch an' rode off to see the land so vast  
To ride across the plains an' meet lot's o' folks I could see there was so much to grasp*

*But the sights I seen an' the special folks I met gave me memories of time  
Seein' all the plains an' the grand mountains of the west while still in my prime*

*Ridin' farther west an' along the western sea shore  
Feelin' the peace in my soul an' of this land only wantin' to see much more*

*Through the valleys an' across the Sierra's I rode seein' it all as I made my way  
Stoppin' at night to have some bacon 'n' beans a hearty treat I have to say*

*Across the Arizona desert an' into New Mexico I rode my friendly ol' roan  
Takin' it all in to remember forever, jus' me an' my horse travelin' all alone*



*The Comanches were all quiet an' still now, an' no more  
war it was said*

*So on to the state line I road headin' home back to  
where I'd been born an' bred*

*I arrived back in Texas at the ol' homestead we called  
our ranch*

*With my soul all healed it was time for this young  
cowboy to take another chance*

## *The Texas Jack Scout*



### **Memories of Another Texas Cowpuncher**

Book Review by Tipton T. Omohundro

We know that John B. Omohundro, in about 1870, ran cattle drives from Texas to Kansas. His moniker “Texas Jack” was acquired from that work. His writing about the cattle punching days made it sound like an extreme life. Another cowpuncher of that time reported on the life in great depth, and he’s the subject of this book review.



*E. C. Abbott, aka “Teddy Blue”. Image from Wikipedia*

In Lewistown, Montana, during the summer of 1937 Helena H. Smith had a rare opportunity to meet and interview the famous “Mr. Teddy Blue,” one of the last surviving cowboys from the “Great Days” of the 1870’s, who followed what was called the Texas Trail with vast herds of cattle to stock the northern territories. As a freelance journalist Ms. Smith knew a good story when she heard one. She found the elderly man to possess a keen memory and willingness to tell of his experiences, which she transcribed nearly verbatim at the time.

The result is *We Pointed Them North (Recollections of a Cow Puncher)*, by E.C. Abbott and Helena Huntington Smith, 1939, republished in 1954 but out of print again and a challenge to lay hands on. I am grateful to

my county library system for finding a copy in Oklahoma.

Smith and Abbott struck up a lasting friendship and, after a series of meetings and review of his handwritten notes, a partnership developed that led to the publication of his memoir. The content is the recollections of a professional drover in the Old West between 1871 and 1886, as told in his own words, without much editing. \*

Similar, in some ways, to John B.’s acquiring the name “Texas Jack,” Abbott picked up the name “Teddy Blue” early in the course of his adventures—he did have another name, previously. It is

## The Texas Jack Scout



likewise true that he was not always a top-hand cowboy—he did have a childhood, briefly. Also, Teddy wasn't always a Westerner—in fact, he wasn't even an American at the outset.

Records confirm that he was born in December, 1860, to an Episcopal family and was christened E. C. Abbott in the County of Norfolk, England, almost half a world away from a cowboy's life on the Texas Trail where he would, eventually, be handed a new name and a new and different family—one not nearly as Christian.

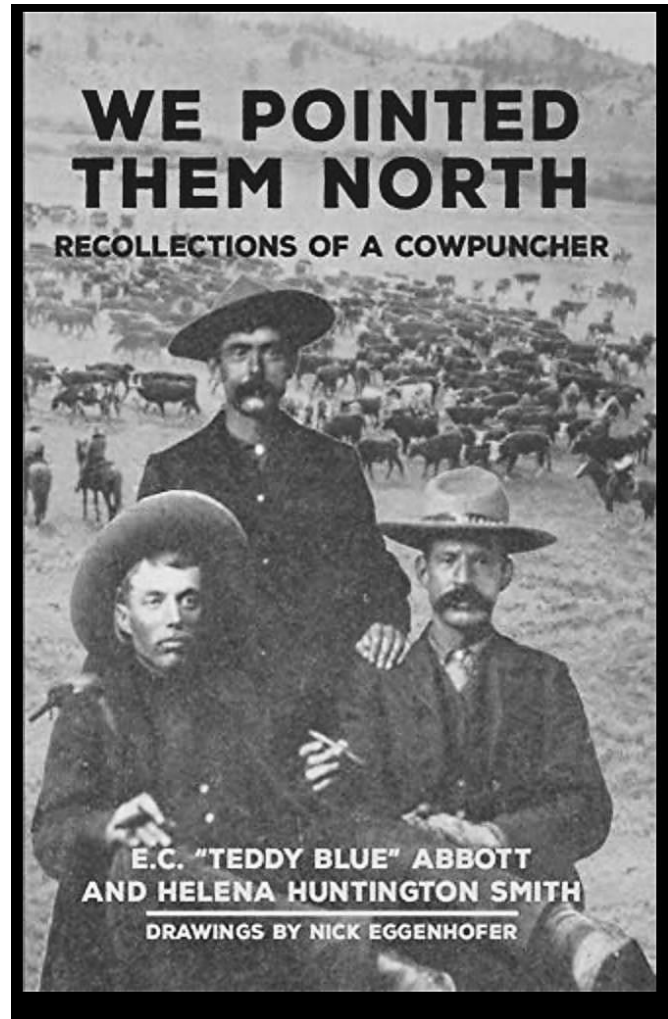
The Abbott family immigrated to the United States and eventually settled on a small farm near Lincoln, Nebraska. As a young child E.C. liked the out-of-doors much better than any schooling, which his parents would have preferred. Instead, he spent as much time as he could with activities like hunting, fishing, and exploring his new territory.

He became adept at taking care of the farm animals. He learned also to be a capable horseman. At a young age, he was taking care of some of the neighbors' stock as well.

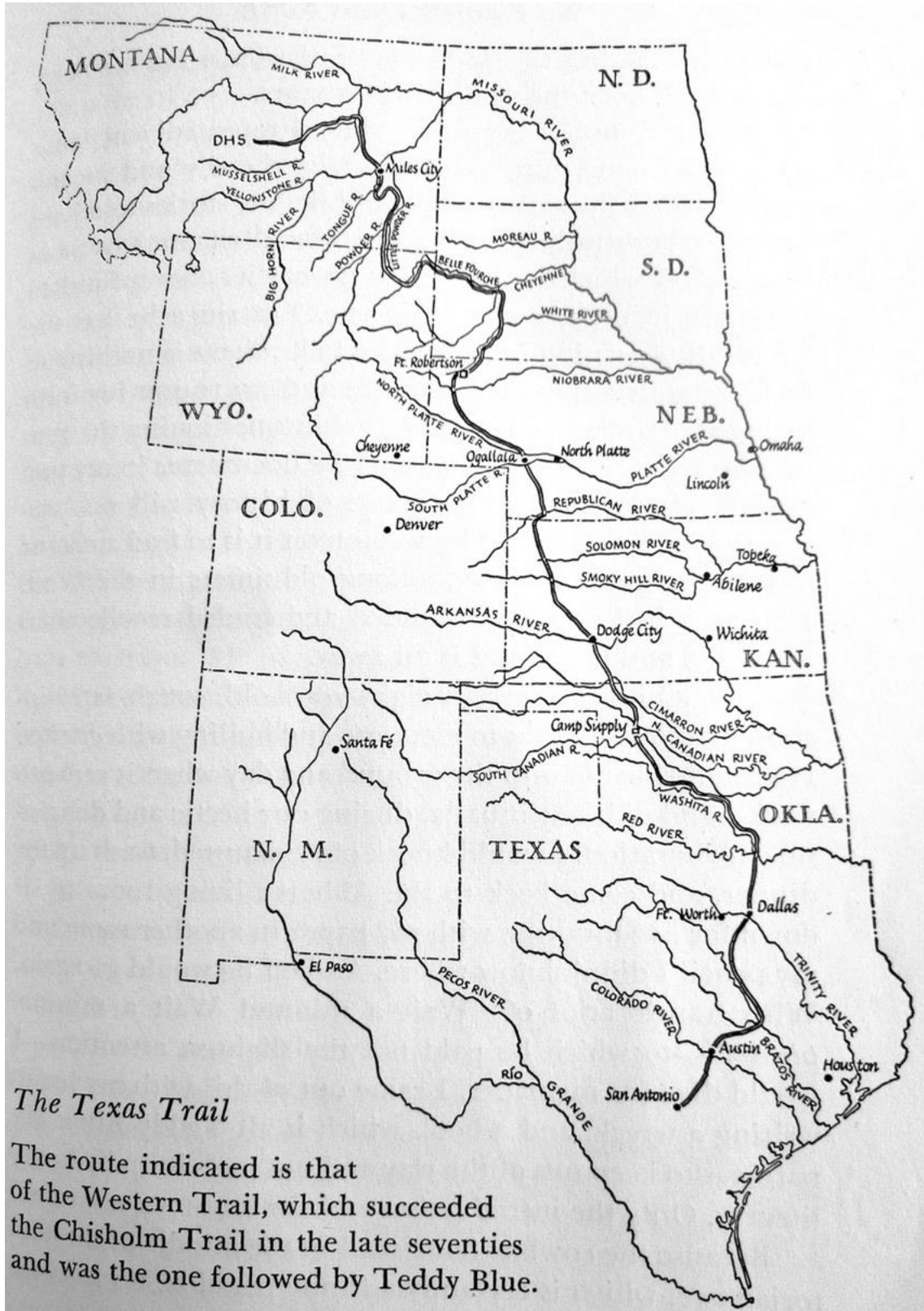
At times he was away overnight looking after livestock. The absences from home grew more frequent. He often slept rough or in a barn.

Unlike his family, who remained mostly English in habit, dress, and tradition, E.C. was growing up as a Western American. He knew of his father's intention that his older brother, Harry, should inherit the farm and all other assets of the family, as was traditional in England. But, as the second son, E.C.'s future had to be elsewhere and his fortunes, such as they might be, would be self-made.

In 1871, E.C.'s father purchased a small herd of long-horned cattle in Southern Texas and hired some men to bring them back to Lincoln. Although he was not yet eleven years old, E.C. begged to go along with the hired men on the journey. His acquired skills in animal husbandry and horsemanship, he thought, argued in his favor. His father eventually consented. They would be taking the Texas Trail south to the herd. It was the first such journey for E.C., though he would make many others.



# The Texas Jack Scout



## The Texas Trail

The route indicated is that of the Western Trail, which succeeded the Chisholm Trail in the late seventies and was the one followed by Teddy Blue.

*The route of the Texas Trail, from Abbott's memoirs.*



## The Texas Jack Scout

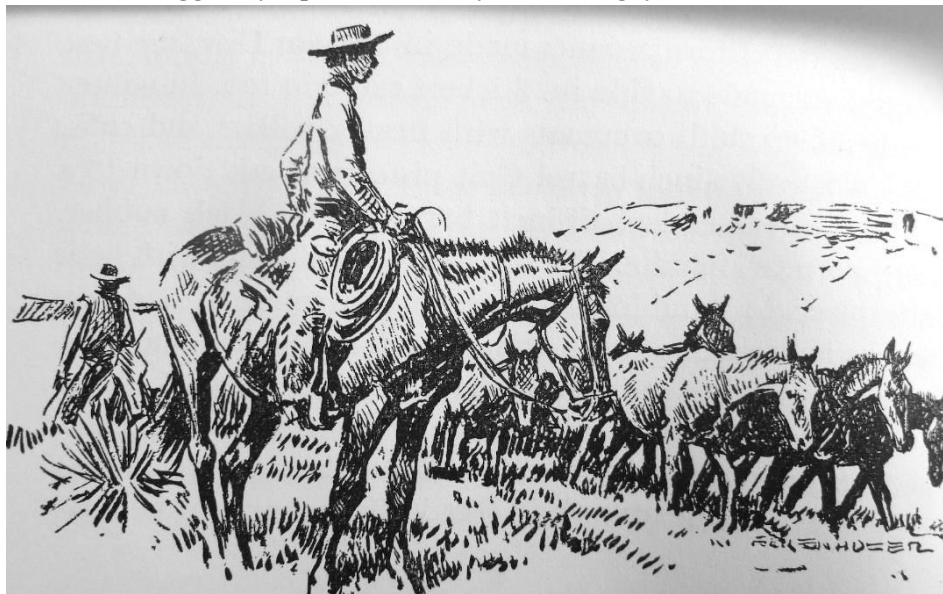


Thus began a journey of some 2,000 miles. He quickly learned that his woolen clothing, although warm, fared poorly in wet weather. He changed them out at the first opportunity and bought a slicker like the other riders used in bad weather. He learned the value of leather leggings, or “chaps,” for protection from stickers which could shred a man in brush country. He learned to use a lariat and a pistol, too. He bought a string of ponies because one horse was inadequate for the job. He learned how to be a skilled drover in quick order. The hired-men were intolerant of any mishap. Along the way he learned fast how to survive the many ways a man could die on the trail.

Upon his return to the family farm in Lincoln, E.C. began to look for more exciting work. He did not wish to stay at home. He sought out the toughest outfits and those with the meanest reputations because he wanted to be known as a tough guy, and he wanted to be a part of the best drovers in the land. From 1871 to 1886 E.C. would ride the length of the Texas Trail at least four more times.

The days in the saddle chasing the herd were long and hard. But they were not the only troubles. There were rustlers to contend with and occasionally hostile Indians. Bad weather, blizzards, and hail were not uncommon. When it rained, swollen streams and fast rivers were always dangerous crossings. Flies, heat, thick dust, times of no water (or bad water), prairie dog holes (which could cripple a horse and leave a rider stranded), hunger, and lack of sleep were routine hazards. Death, it was said, rode along with the drovers.

*< Artist Nick Eggenhofer provided these fine drawings for Abbott's memoirs.*



One night a nearby lightning strike triggered a stampede of some 2000 head of cattle resulting in the loss of a rider and his horse. He was discovered the next morning. The only recognizable item in the trampled ground was the handle of the rider's pistol.

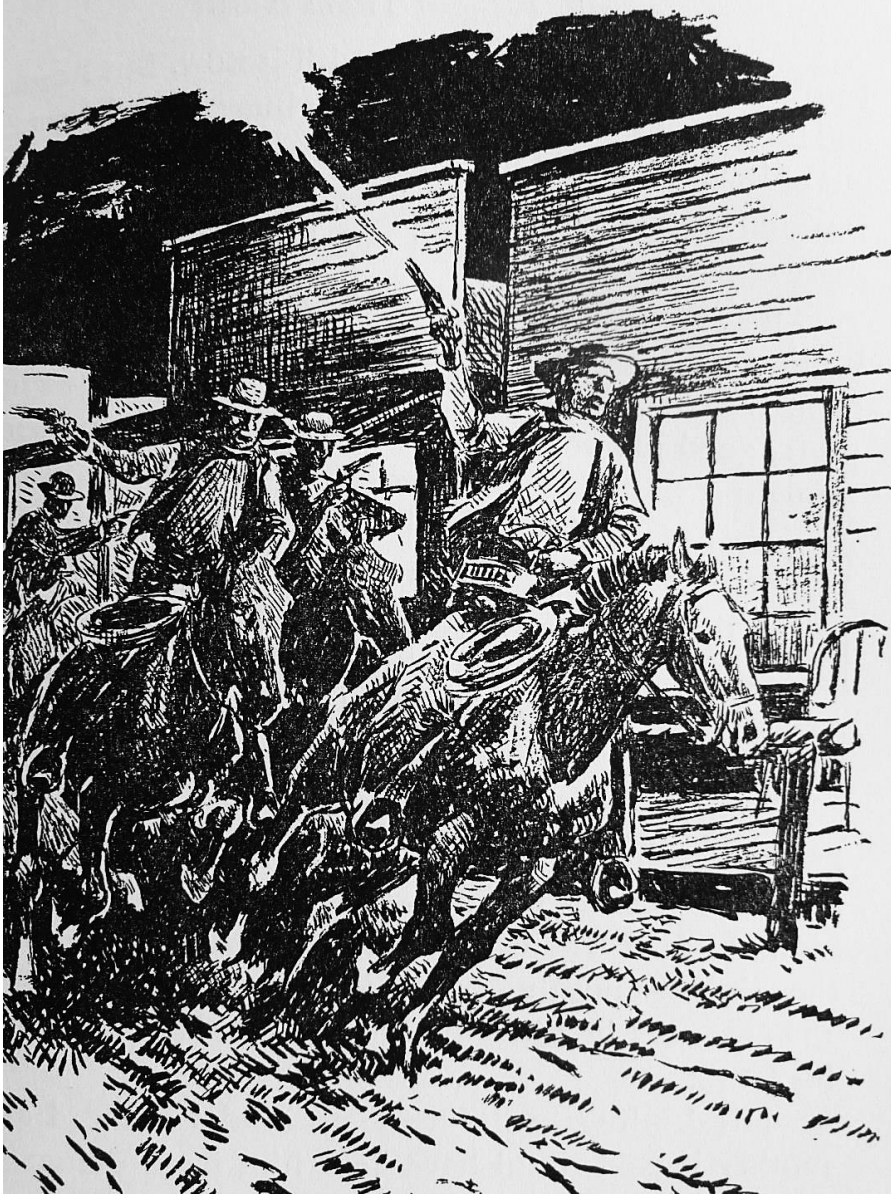
For E.C., of all the dangers of the job and the rough

country, the sleep deprivation was the worst. Rising at dawn and bedding down the herd at dusk was routine. However, in addition each drover was required to ride “nighthawk” with the herd for four-hour shifts. This left precious little time for eating or sleeping. There were a few occasions when it was necessary to seek provisions from one of the nearby settlements or small

## The Texas Jack Scout



towns. Two riders would get a brief respite from their herd duties to make the trip. It was not uncommon that a saloon and the accompanying “gentlemen hospitality” services would be visited.



*< Did townspeople grimace when the cowpunchers roared into town for a wild night? Or did they oil their cash registers?*

On one such break E.C. (who was called Ted by his companion) apparently got enough whisky in him that he saddled a chair backwards and rode it around the barroom shouting, “Whoa Blue!... Whoa Blue!!” Finally, the proprietor of the place came to end it all with some comment like, “OK, OK, enough Xxxx Xxxx from you, Teddy Blue.” The name would stick with him for the rest of his days.

The years on the trail took their toll and had to end sooner or later. The career of a drover was limited by the hardship endured. Most were

done, or done in, by about 30 years of age. Teddy Blue had fallen in love with the Montana Territory, where he delivered many a herd. The beautiful and unpopulated country suited him perfectly. So he acquired a ranch near Fergus County called the Three Deuces. In 1889 he married one of the daughters of an important neighbor, Granville Stuart, who first discovered gold in Montana in 1857. Stuart had married a Shoshone woman at a time when there were few other women in the region. Teddy Blue and his bride raised nine children. He lived another fifty years on his ranch. He raised cattle and wrote his stories of his life on the trail. He said those

## **The Texas Jack Scout**



years made him the man, and the cowboy that he was. He wrote, “Nothing could have changed me after that.”

Teddy Blue died in April 1939, only a few days after the release of the initial publication of his collaboration with Helen Smith.

*\*Readers be warned: Teddy Blue’s story is a transcription as told directly by the cowboy and in his own voice. While it contains many fascinating recollections of the people and the times of the Old West, it also features some very colorful language and a disturbing racial bias, as was common at the time.*

*About the author: Helena Huntington Smith wrote many western-themed articles for the New Yorker Magazine. Examples of her other books include The War on Powder River (1967) and A Bride Goes West, co-authored with N. T. Anderson. ¶*



## **The Other Plains Wars**

by

John Thomas Omohundro

Readers of the *Scout* are familiar with the Plains Wars in the 1870s, when settlers and the U. S. Army were moving into the western plains, leading to conflict and violence with the Sioux, Crow, and other native peoples there. In this Plains War Texas Jack and Buffalo Bill were involved as Army scouts and guides. Jack also worked with the Indians, accompanying the Pawnee on a buffalo hunt (see T. Michael Foster’s and Matt Kerns’ articles in this issue).

But there was a second Plains War, if not as violent then at least as acrimonious and long-lasting, and certainly history-making. That was the competition between two eastern paleontologists, Edward Cope and Othniel Marsh, both searching for fossils in the plains and vying for the top spot as America’s most successful fossil finder. As a dinosaur buff since boyhood, I’ve been amused and dismayed by these two and awed by their collective success. Much of this report comes from Mark Jaffe’s *Gilded Dinosaur, The Fossil War Between E D Cope and O C Marsh and the Rise of American Science* (2000).

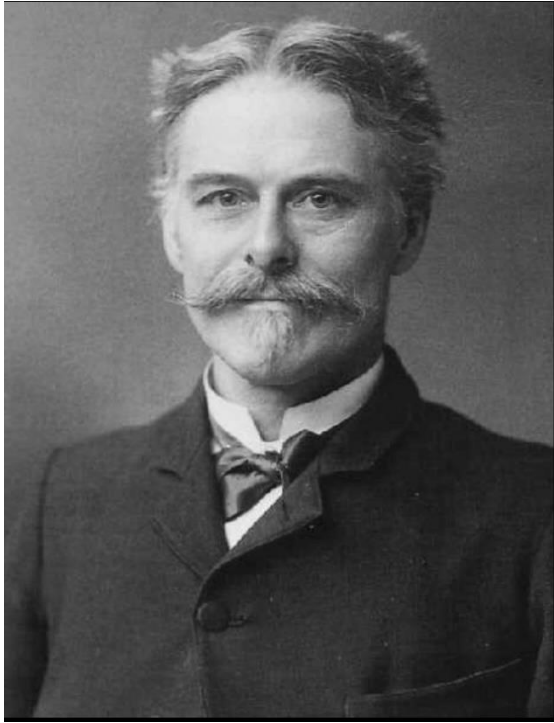
### **The Protagonists**

Fossil hunting started in the 1850s when some dinosaurs were found by western geologists and other professionals working more or less alone. But the activity skyrocketed when Cope and Marsh began competing in the late ‘60s. Darwin had published his theory of evolution in 1859 and it inspired much fieldwork. By the time the two died in the ‘90s, both the hot and the cold Prairie Wars were over: the Plains Indians were more or less pacified and Western paleontology had been institutionalized and also more pacified. Edward Cope, of Philadelphia, was a member of the Academy of Natural Science there, but he worked independently for most of his career. Othniel Marsh, nine years Cope’s senior, was head of the Peabody Museum at Yale and so had access to more money and staff. Cope was handsome, sociable, a family man, a hard worker but

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hasty, prone to many mistakes in analyzing and publishing his fossils. Marsh was fastidious, cranky, calculating, and a bachelor.



*Edward Cope, independent paleontologist,  
Philadelphia, 1840-1897*



*Othniel Marsh, paleontologist at Yale,  
1831-1899. berkeley.edu*

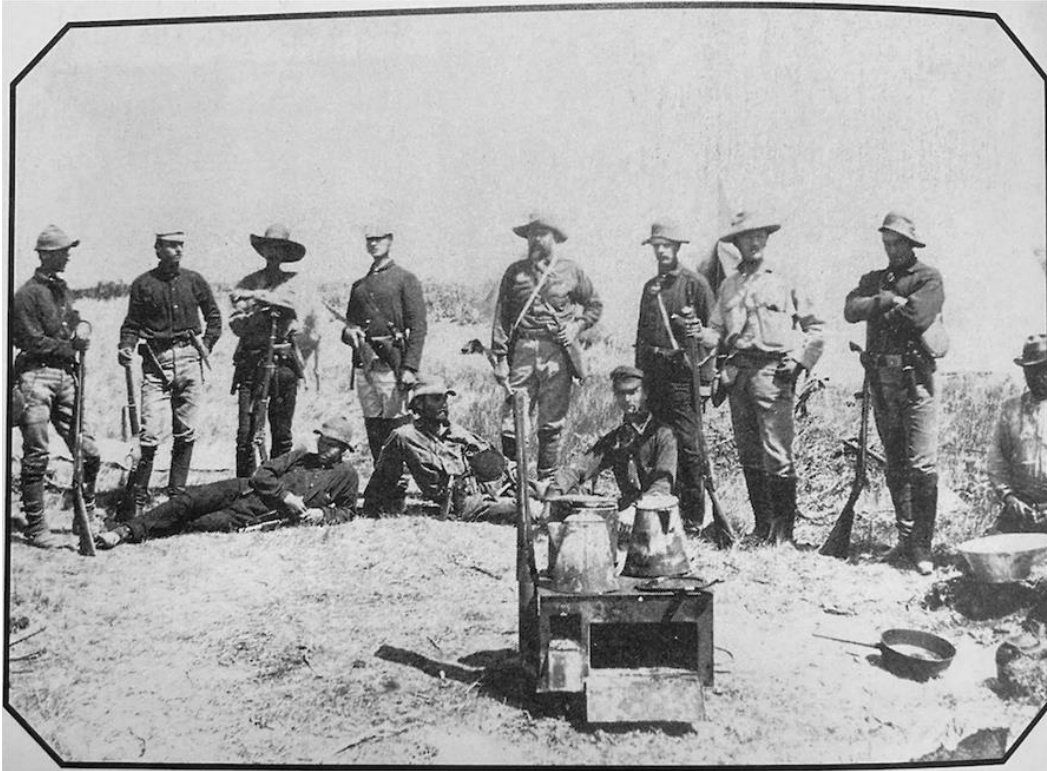
The two scientists sniped at each other in professional journals, worked the back channels to undermine each other, spied on each other's field sites, lured away each other's field assistants, and sometimes horned in on each others "territory." The war wasn't physical, but while intending to beat the other to the fossil hot spots, each ran real dangers of getting his scalp lifted by hostile Cheyenne or Apache, on whose land they searched.

### Early Trips West

Marsh, age 37, went west the first time in 1868 with a crew of a dozen Yale undergraduates. He enlisted the support of Generals Sherman and Sheridan, in part because they encouraged encroachment of easterners into Indian land. Marsh's best find was a small horse the size of a fox, dated 50 million years ago.

Indian unrest was so great in 1869 that Marsh postponed returning until 1870, where he was based out of Fort McPherson, on the Platte River in Nebraska. He was assisted by more Yalies, including a young George Bird Grinnell (see *Scout*, March 2020 and this *Scout*). Also present were Buffalo Bill's scouting partner Major Frank North, two Pawnee scouts, a company of Fifth Cavalry, and six army wagons. Cody himself joined the party for a segment of their travels.

## *The Texas Jack Scout*



*Marsh's field crews were mostly Yale undergraduates, but they hardened rapidly into western roughnecks.*

Cody wrote, “The professor told the [Yale] boys some pretty tall yarns today, but he topped me a wink as much to say, ‘you know how it is yourself, Bill.’”

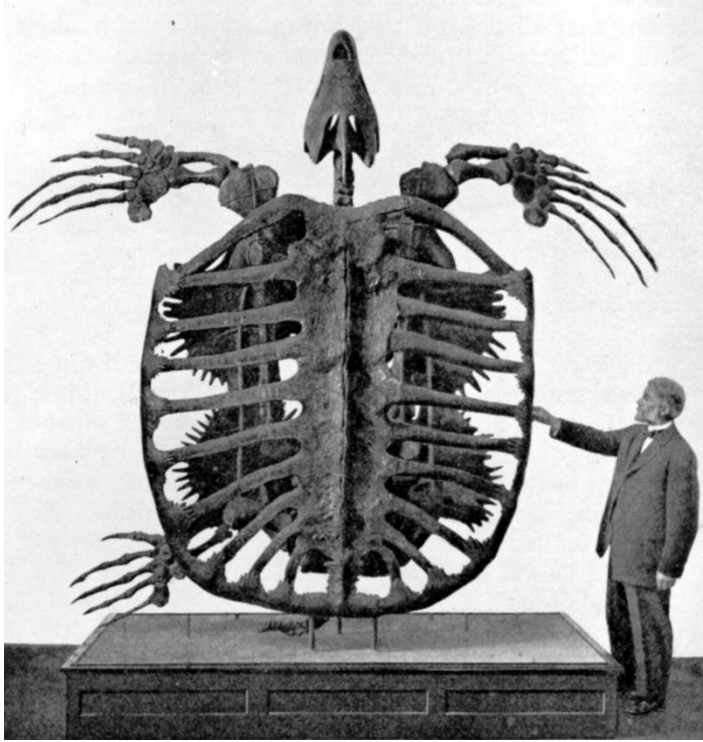
Marsh's party pushed into Wyoming and swung back to Fort Wallace, Kansas, in the middle of hostile territory of the Cheyenne and Arapaho but also Cope's prior field site. Here Marsh found a large marine reptile called a Mosasaur, 65-100 million years old.

In 1871, while John B. Omohundro was serving as Army scout in Nebraska after his stint in Texas cattle drives, Cope, age 31, arrived at Kansas' Fort Wallace and traveled to Hayes, whose sheriff had recently been Wild Bill Hickok (now gone under a cloud). Cope hired a wagon with teamsters and a guide and set off for the Saline River, where he encountered Cheyenne warriors. To defuse the tension, he invited the party back to Hayes, shared food and the peace pipe, and went back into the field unmolested.

Meanwhile, Marsh arrived at Fort Wallace, recruited a military escort and five wagons, and took off into the Kansas plains right after Red Cloud's Sioux buffalo hunting party had passed through the area. His best find was a pterodactyl, a soaring dinosaur.



## The Texas Jack Scout



< A fossil of an extinct sea turtle Marsh found in the Badlands in the early 1870s.

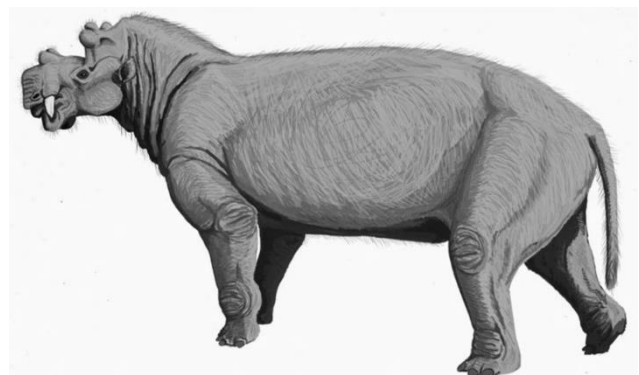
As Texas Jack was guiding Pawnee on buffalo hunts and on the verge of his unanticipated show business career (1872), Marsh shifted to work out of Fort Bridger, in Wyoming, where there were no Indian hostilities, and found many ancient rhinos, elephants, tapirs and horses, but his season was cut short by the vast fires the Indians were setting to replace the forest with grassland. Cope was also working out of Fort Bridger, as scientist in Hayden's famous geological survey into Yellowstone. He found the bones of a six-ton plant-eating dinosaur. While Marsh was exploring the Wasatch Basin, Copes spied on him, entering his dig at night and removing some

bones— which Marsh, aware of Copes, had planted to confuse him, because they were from different animals.

What's known in paleontological history as the Battle of Bridger Basin involves Cope and Marsh each publishing 16 papers on one Eocene (50-million-year-old) rhino-like giant called the Uintathere. Each ignored the other and the result was a chaos of names and terms that took others some time to sort out.

*The innocent object of the Battle of Bridger Basin: Marsh and Cope grappled over who this beast is related to and what he should be called. >*

In the winter of 1873 Texas Jack was acting in Chicago with Buffalo Bill in the premier of "Scouts of the Plains." That summer Cope and a small party, skirting the angry Sioux in the Dakota badlands, set up base in eastern Colorado. The Northern Pacific Railroad these fieldworkers were riding west was infuriating Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, in part for disrupting bison herds. Another impediment to research was the Bank Panic of 1873, which made money harder to get for the rest of the decade.



## ***The Texas Jack Scout***



That autumn, Texas Jack and Bill Cody's Wild West show toured New Haven, when Bill sent Marsh a ticket to the show and an invitation to visit him and Major North in North Platte. Apparently the Professor didn't use the ticket.

The Plains Wars with the natives increased in intensity. Marsh's protégé, George Bird Grinnell, served as scientist in General Custer's expedition into the Black Hills in 1874, where the recent discovery of gold provoked a breach of the Treaty of 1868. Marsh was planning to work the Dakota Badlands that summer, but the Sioux refused him entrance. He went anyway. The Badlands were a fossil paradise, but Marsh had to escape early to avoid early winter snows and an advancing war party of Miniconjou Sioux.

Marsh was cognizant of the problems faced by the Sioux. In winter 1875 he lobbied, unsuccessfully, in Washington, DC against agents' mistreatment of natives on the Red Cloud reservation, displaying samples of inferior flour, tobacco, and sugar. Coincidentally, Cody and Kit Carson were playing "Life on the Border" at Ford's Theater that winter.

Cope led a fossil-hunting party into the Dakota Badlands in the summer of 1876, practically on the coattails of the U.S. Cavalry pursuing Sitting Bull's forces after the Massacre at Little Big Horn. He also risked trouble with the Crow during a grueling stage journey into Montana to search for fossils. However, he sought out the Crow and won permission to explore. By October, he had packed up his sizable dinosaur haul and was steaming east on the Missouri River when twice his steamer was commandeered by the U. S. Army to move soldiers and supplies further west toward the battles with Sitting Bull.

Cope's and Marsh's war of the dinosaur hunters operated in 1877 on two fronts. Each had parties looking on the front range of the Rockies for dinosaurs and in the Kansas/Nebraska prairie for early mammals. Besides jockeying for position with each other, the teams endured curious cowpunchers, quicksand, tornadoes, early snowstorms, and cave-ins at the dig. The competition drove both sides to keep field crews into the winter, living in dugout huts. Each tried with limited success to keep any finds secret from the other.

By 1880, the year Texas Jack succumbed to pneumonia in Leadville, Colorado, the word was out among scientists that the West was a fossil-hunter's dream; several other institutions began sending crews.

Cope's fossil career hit a snag in 1881, when his limited personal finances ran out. He had maintained two townhouses in Philadelphia, one for his wife and one for his fossil collection. He began selling his massive collection and speculated in silver mines. Marsh, with his old adversary out of the field for the moment, continued his field work until 1890, but by then he was so overwhelmed with fossils and institutional duties that he couldn't keep up with analysis and publishing. The Bank Crisis of 1892 made money tight again, so he wasn't able to send any more crews to the prairie.

Cope got a new lease on life briefly in 1892, when he took over paleontology at the University of Pennsylvania. With a grant and the proceeds from selling fossil collections, he returned to the

## The Texas Jack Scout



Badlands and Texas for the first time in ten years. The Sioux were still dangerous because Wounded Knee Massacre was just the year before, and natives were angry at the many trespassing settlers. But this time Cope worked with Sioux support, perhaps because he showed an interest in learning their origin myths, which included stories of great beasts once walking the land.

In 1896 Cope died at age 57. Marsh died in 1899 at age 68. The prairie war of these two paleontologists had wound down fifteen years earlier, in part because the center for such research was shifting from Pennsylvania and New Haven to New York's American Museum, Chicago's Field Museum, and the Smithsonian. All lovers of ancient beasts like *T. rex*, *cohippus*, and *brontosaurus* can thank these two belligerent, but productive, gentlemen for the output of their prairie war. ¶



Summer vacation time, when families often hit the road in the RV or, in my day, in the station wagon. The search for rest and recreation is a tradition that is still going strong. It's when school is out, the harvest is in the future, and when the temperatures soar. The beaches, the theme parks, and the national parks get crowded. And so here, as the summer rolls at *The Texas Jack Scout*, the question arises, what did Texas Jack do for recreation?

Lucky for me, all I had to do was refer to Matthew Kerns' book. As found on page 222: In 1877, when Jack and his wife had been waiting in Philadelphia, "expecting the company of the Grand Duke Alexis on a return trip to the Western hunting grounds." The trip didn't come together, as the duke got promoted, and the Russo-Turkish War began in April. "The frustrated cowboy set off to hunt and returned with several antelopes, throwing a feast for the members of the Philadelphia press."

And on page 170-171, when weather challenged Jack's tour group in Yellowstone Park, the party, rain-soaked, took what shelter as they had under an elk skin. Our hero, ever the entertainer, regaled the group with a made-up on-the-spot song about their trip with all its turns. Matthew allows us some perspective, mentioning that he learned this talent early in his cowboying days.

That same day, Indians had run the groups' ponies off for their own gain, but Jack kept and aggressively rode his horse to recapture the steeds. His cowboy skills enabled his returning with all the party's horses, and low-and-behold, an extra horse from the Indians!

From these tidbits, anything outdoors, especially if it involved hunting, was in the realm of recreation for Texas Jack. And we are lucky, as this edition has multiple stories collected from our guest editor John T. Omohundro that involve hunts! So, kick back in air-conditioned comfort with a cool drink and come along for some fun.

Best regards, *Rob Omohundro, President*

## *The Texas Jack Scout*



### **NEXT SCOUT ISSUE INFORMATION**

The deadline for the November 2024 issue of *The Scout* is  
October 1, 2024.

Please send ideas and materials to our Guest Editor:

Rand McKinney  
*crandmck@gmail.com*

Thank you, Rand!

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# The Texas Jack Scout



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*The Texas Jack Scout*  
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**TO**