



Texas Jack: Famous Scout, Cowboy, Guide, and Hunter of the Plains

E. G. Cattermole

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John Baker Omohundro (1846 – 1880), also known as "Texas Jack," was a frontier scout, actor, and cowboy.

He was born at Pleasure Hill, near Palmyra, Virginia. In his early teens, he left home, made his way alone to Texas, and became a cowboy. He was unable to join the Confederate Army in 1861 because of his youth but, in 1864, he enlisted in Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's command as a courier and scout.

After the American Civil War, Omohundro resumed his life as a Texas cowboy. He participated in early cattle drives, notably on the Chisholm Trail. On one drive across Arkansas to meat-short Tennessee, grateful citizens nicknamed him "Texas Jack."

In 1869, he moved to Cottonwood Springs, Nebraska, near Fort McPherson and became a scout and buffalo hunter. There he met William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Together, they participated in Indian skirmishes and buffalo hunts, acted as guides for notables such as the Earl of Dunraven, and led the highly publicized royal hunt of 1872 with Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich of Russia and a group of prominent American military figures.

Omohundro and Cody traveled to Chicago in December 1872 to debut in *The Scouts of the Prairie*, one of the original Wild West shows produced by Ned Buntline. Critics described Omohundro as physically impressive and magnetic in personality. He was the first performer to introduce roping acts to the American stage. During the 1873-74 season, Omohundro and Cody invited their friend James Butler Wild Bill Hickok to join them in a new play called *Scouts of the Plains*.

Ned Buntline, Buffalo Bill Cody, Giuseppina Morlacchi, Texas Jack Omohundro

During the 1870s, Texas Jack divided his time between the Eastern stage circuit and the hunting ranges of the Great Plains. He guided hunting parties that included European nobility. On August 31, 1873, Omohundro married Giuseppina Morlacchi, a dancer and actress from Milan, Italy, who starred with him in the *Scouts of the Prairie* and other shows.

He headed his own acting troupe in St. Louis in 1877. He also wrote articles about his hunting and scouting experiences, published in eastern newspapers and popular magazines. The Texas Jack legend grew in many dime novels, particularly those written by Col. Prentiss Ingraham. In 1900, Joel Chandler Harris featured Texas Jack in a series of fictional accounts of the Confederacy for the *Saturday Evening Post*. [6] Texas Jack died in 1880, of pneumonia, in Leadville, Colorado, and was buried in Evergreen Cemetery there.

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