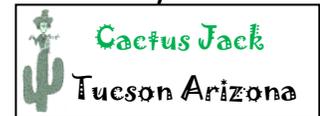


The Legend of Cactus Jack

*Excerpts from the San Francisco & Tucson research & writings of the Great Great Grand Daughter of John Cacti, Jacquelyn Cacti (Cacti Jacki) (1986).

The Old West was never short of unique characters and **Cactus Jack** was one of the most mysterious. Was he a vigilante? Con man? Scout? Gambler? Highwayman? Probably. Soldier? Spy? Bank Robber? Possibly. Ladies man? Definitely! Some swore he was a well respected San Franciscan AKA John (Jack) Cacti who lived high on the hog at the Fairmont Hotel but was seldom seen in public which lent credence to his alter identity. All who thought they knew John Cacti expressed widely differing impressions and from the multiple and varied sightings he was often in two places at once. He was credited with deeds both good and bad, daring and deceitful, saint to some, sinner to others, whatever the opinion it was a strong one. Everyone clearly agreed, however, that John Cacti, or whoever he really was, had money to burn. He was generous to those in need and had plenty more to lavish on the ladies, Often giving ladies he had never before met a Single Red Rose and telling her "I am so glad we are NOT in Tucson". That comment giving credence to those, who claimed his riches came from ill gotten means and it was even suggested he closely resembled the Tucson Area Highwayman **Cactus Jack** who brazenly handed out business cards to those he robbed.



Yet, wherever justice was challenged in San Francisco, he was there, his prickly nature quick to right a wrong but not necessarily to everyone's liking. A damsel in distress? John was there, the hero on the spot that saved her day although distress soon became epidemic once any female with a beating heart got a look at him. John was undisputedly a crackerjack square dance caller, was at many a Hoedown giving free rein to his Wild West nature on and off the dance floor. There wasn't a call he didn't know nor a tune he couldn't croon. It's been claimed that thanks to **Cactus Jack**'s many close escapes from the law - or possibly disgruntled spouses - we dance to the calls originally named **Peel and Run for Your Life, Walk and Dodge then Keep Goin'**, **Pass Through the Closest Door, Chase and Skidaddle** as well as the always popular **Scoot Back - Zoom Outta Here and Wheel Around and Get'im**. Even though callers nowadays use the shortened versions, they do keep **Cactus Jack**'s presence alive and strong in spirit. He is, after all, a man for the ages so one can never be sure if he's not actually on the dance floor with us possibly wearing his Signature **Green** Cowboy Hat. There is no record of the death of either John Cacti or **Cactus Jack** and some folks still give credit or blame for things good and bad to **Cactus Jack**. Like The Highwayman the song says "I am still Alive!"