

MIKE FINK

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

There are hundreds of stories and legends about the legendary and sometimes authentic American folk-heroes; Casey Jones, Davey Crockett, Johnny Appleseed, Paul Bunyan and the like, and in that list the name of Mike Fink should be prominent. And there are so many legends attributed to Fink that it is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff; the truth from fiction. Mike Fink, albeit almost legendary, was an actual character, born of Scotch-Irish parents at old Fort Pitt in 1770. Mike in his youth acquired a reputation as an Indian scout and the best shot in Pittsburgh; beyond that he soon distinguished himself as a riverboatman and was known as the king of the keelboatmen, the snag on the Mississippi, and the Snapping Turtle of the Ohio. He was a mean man. His shooting match with Davey Crockett bears mention. He was described to Crockett as a "helliferocious fellow", and on this occasion Crockett lost the match by default, with good reason. First, Crockett aimed at a cat sitting on the top rail of Mike's potato patch, about a hundred and fifty yards away, and Davey's musket ball cut off the old tom cat's ears close to his head and shaved the hair off clean across the skull, as slick as if it'd been done with a razor, and the critter never moved, nor knew he'd lost his ears till he tried to scratch 'em. Then Mike aimed at a sow with a litter of pigs around her--across the hill nearly to the end of the world, and kept loading and firing till he hadn't left one of them

pigs enough tail to make a toothpick out of. Then Crockett mended Mike's shot which had left just one of those pigs about an inch of tail, and cut it off as if it had been driven in by a hammer. That got Mike Fink a bit riled, so he sends a musket ball after his wife as she was going toward the spring to fetch a pail of water and knocked about half the comb out of her head without stirring even one hair. He turns to Crockett, a most gallant man, and says to him--"okay, Davey, now knock the rest of the comb outa my wife's head". Mrs. Fink stood still because she was used to these shenanigans from her husband--and she waited for Crockett to shoot. "No, no, Mike", said Davey--"Old Crockett's hand would be sure to shake if his iron were pointed within a hundred mile of a she-male". And he continued--"I give up, Mike Fink, beat". So Mike Fink beat out Davey Crockett of Tennessee or Texas or whatever, as the best shot in the wilderness and on the river--only because he knew Davey wouldn't shoot at a lady. Which, along with other episodes of the king of the boatmen only proves--"once a fink, always a fink"--some say we got the word from Mike Fink, although it's never been proven.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.