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TOM QUICK

Blood Brother

One more killing has been almost conclusively ascribed to Quick. It was the death of Muskwink, the Lenape who had been, according to legend, Quick's blood brother as a child.

In comparison to the mass murder at Butler's Drift — horrific enough to chill even Quick's most sycophantic followers — the death of Muskwink is almost vulgar and prosaic. It sounds more like a bad night at a biker bar than the stuff of legend.

The encounter is generally believed to have begun almost accidentally. According to the most reliable accounts available, the French and Indian War had been over for about two years and Quick had been traveling on the New Jersey side of the Delaware when he stopped in at a tavern run by an old family friend, by the name of Decker.

There, having far too many drinks, was the Lenape brave, Muskwink.

It is unclear whether Quick recognized Muskwink at first. Perhaps time and the ravages of war had changed him, or maybe Quick and the Lenape boy who was said to have been his blood brother were never really as close as the legend maintains. Whatever happened, Quick recognized Muskwink soon enough.

Historical documents indicate that the Lenape man was bragging boisterously about his exploits, and that for reasons that remain murky, he decided to recount — in a tavern full of white people — how he had gleefully participated in the slaughter of Tom Quick's father. Quick exploded. He grabbed a musket — checked to see that it was primed and loaded, cocked the hammer back — and went after Muskwink.

He did not kill him at first. He kidnapped him and marched the Indian to secluded field where he then pulled the trigger, sending a sortie of iron pellets into his back. There were no witnesses to the actual killing, and no one knows for certain what happened next. But legend has it that Quick grabbed his hunting knife, sharpened a pike, hacked off Muskwink's head and stuck it on the pike to rot.



Quick, with Mushwink's head

By all accounts, the killing was not without controversy. By 1765, when the slaying occurred, the frontier ethos was starting to wither, at least on the easternmost edges of the frontier, supplanted by a more delicate, European sensibility, and some among the planters and preachers felt that Quick had exceeded the bounds of propriety with the murder of Muskink. Others, however — perhaps the same people who would later help spin the Tom Quick legend — felt that Muskink got what was coming to him.



Indian with knife in woods

Whatever the thoughts of the good people who lived at the edge of the frontier, this much is clear. No effort was ever made to bring Tom Quick to justice for the murder. And that was why he was free to make his way to Butler's Rift, where, a short time later, he hid himself in the reeds and watched as an Indian man, his wife and children, including an infant, paddled towards him.