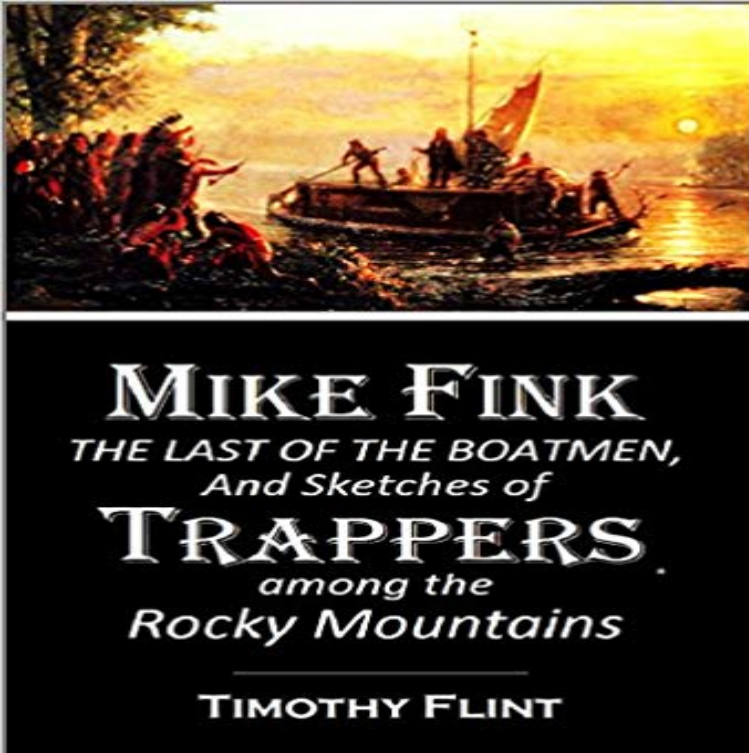


Mike Fink, the Last of the Boatmen, and Sketches of Trappers among the Rocky Mountains (1830)



Timothy Flint (1780-1840) was a pioneer, missionary, teacher, author. First he served in New England, his native land. For the major portion of his active years he became a resident of several places in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. His residence in these regions and his acquaintance with them was unusually extended and intimate. To speak of him only as a minister it seems fair to say that there was no more significant man who crossed into the great western valleys in the first quarter of the nineteenth century or who lived there, than Timothy Flint. Among all the western ministers and missionaries of the period Timothy Flint was the one who, while a part of the life, was best able to rise above it and view it with a critical yet kindly eye. Added to this power was the ability and will to record what he saw, as did none among his contemporaries. There is also a magnetism and charm in the character of Mr. Flint which strongly attracts all who come into touch with him through his writings. Mike Fink (c. 1770/1780 c. 1823), called king of the keelboaters, was a semi-legendary brawler and river boatman who exemplified the tough and hard-drinking men who ran keelboats up and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Timothy Flint in this sketch of Fink's time as a boatman and trapper on the upper Missouri made famous the frontier keelman, the self-named Kaintuck war-horse, the snappin turtle, and Massassip alligator. Mike Fink was born at Fort Pitt in present-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and served as an Indian scout in his teens. Even as a teen, he was an unbeatable marksman, and he earned the name Bangall among militiamen at Fort Pitt. When the Indian wars of the region ended in the early 1790s, Fink, like many other scouts, spurned a sedentary life as a farmer. Instead, he drifted into the transport business on the Ohio and Mississippi and quickly picked up a new nickname: the

Snapping Turtle. When he began his career in navigation, he became notorious, both for his practical jokes, and for his willingness to fight anyone who was not amused. His 180-pound frame stretched 59 in height, and the muscles required to force a keelboat upstream would have made him a formidable opponent to most. Fink himself proclaimed on every possible occasion that he could out-run, out-hop, out-jump, throw-down, drag out, any man in the country.

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