

Smouse in the House



I've uncovered another family story, reportedly based on an eyewitness account of an event that took place in the early 1800s.

Jacob Smouse, born 1795, was the grand-uncle of the wife of my great-grandfather, and has been described as a "Hercules of his day." The following account of a bar fight was discovered within the pages of "The History of the Smouse Family of America" by Jacob Warren Smouse.

It happened that Charles Mench, a teamster, and a pugilist or slugger, so called in those days, was at the bar when Smouse and his friend entered the door. He said to them, "Stranger, you can come in, but that young snot, (meaning Jacob Smouse), cannot enter or be in here while I am here." Smouse says to Mench, "I am in, and it will take a better man than you, or any other one here to put me out, and more than that, you called me a name for which you must apologize. I never had a quarrel or fight in my life, and you are a man and fighter, and I am a mere boy in years, but your superior in manners, in strength, and in behavior, and you must apologize or I will compel you to do so."

Mench laid off his coat and vest, and said to those in the room: "Form a ring and I will show that young jack-a-napes that Charles Mench is the best man between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh." Smouse buttoned his coat, walked into the ring, and the contest began. The writer of this sketch has it from an eye witness, who said that when Smouse struck his first blow, he took his antagonist clean off his feet, and that the blood flew to the ceiling of the room. The fight lasted forty-five minutes and during all this time Mr. Mench never reached Mr. Smouse to give him a scratch. Mr. Mench not only apologized for his rudeness, but declared that Smouse was the best man in America.

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