

## John Pinkney Calhoun "Pink" Higgins

Birth: Mar. 28, 1851 - Macon, Bibb County, Georgia, USA

Death: Dec. 18, 1913 - Kent County, Texas, USA

John Pinkney Calhoun Higgins. Nick name: "Pink Higgins."

Grave stone shows the date of his burial (December 21, 1913) however he actually passed away on December 18, 1913.

John Holcomb Higgins and Hester West produced their first child, Mary, in 1847. Two years later another daughter, Julia, was born. Their first son came along on Friday, March 28, 1851, in Macon, Georgia. Following a custom of the day, John and Hester named their son after important public figures: John C. Calhoun, from South Carolina, who had died a year earlier after a notable career as a U.S. congressman and senator, cabinet member, and vice-president; and the Pinckney family from South Carolina, who had produced soldiers and governors and statesmen of national prominence. The infant boy's father and grandfather both were named John. So the newest Higgins baby was named: John Calhoun Pinckney Higgins. The trio of surnames was commonplace for the times, but it all added up to an overwhelming label for a little boy. He would be known simply as "Pink".

Pink's grandmother: Mary Higgins was the daughter of a Cherokee Chief in Georgia. Pink married (Jan 1, 1875) his first wife: Betty Mitchell May (birth name: Delilah Elizabeth Mitchell). This marriage produced children; Cullen C. Higgins (born: Dec 1, 1875), John Thomas Higgins (born: Jan 2, 1880) and Malinda Caledonia Higgins (born: Sept 17, 1877). Pink divorced Betty on May 24, 1882. Pink would later marry Lena Rivers Sweet on June 8, 1883. He was thirty-two and she was fifteen at the time. Lena and Pink had six children of their own.

Pink Higgins was a rugged Texan who lived a life of classic Western adventure. He was a cowboy, Indian fighter, trail driver, stock detective, rancher, and deadly shootist who killed more adversaries than did such renowned gunfighters as Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and Bat Masterson. Pink battled Comanches and rustlers, and led a faction in the murderous Horrell-Higgins feud of Lampassas County, Texas. Yet he was a hard working family man, devoted to his nine children. His son, Cullen Higgins, as a lawyer and judge, would become entangled in a series of bloody events involving a powerful cattle baron and the legendary Texas Ranger Frank Hamer. (1)

By all rights, John "Pink" Higgins should have died an unnatural death. He fought Comanches, hunted cattle rustlers, punched wild-eyed Longhorns, had a running gunfight with Mexican bandits and was the center of a bitter, three-year South Texas feud. Death came quickly and quietly to Higgins on a blustery winter's morning, December 18, 1913, as he built a wood fire in the rock fireplace in his weather-beaten ranchhouse, thirteen miles south of Spur, Texas. He died of a heart attack.

He killed from fourteen to eighteen men in gunfights, and once said there might have been

others. Higgins wasn't a gunfighter in the accepted sense. His gun wasn't for hire. He was more accurate than fast with the pistol he carried, a .44 in a .45 caliber frame. His favorite weapon was a Winchester 30-30, and his speed and accuracy with it were legendary.

When Higgins was asked about the number of men he killed he replied, "I didn't kill all them men--but then again, I got some that wasn't on the bill, so I guess it just about evens up."

The last man Higgins killed was in a rifle duel at sixty paces in circumstances suggestive of knights-of-old riding pell-mell at each other with lances pointed. The losers name was Billy Standifer and the date on his grave marker says October 1, 1902.

One thing everyone knew about Higgins. He was a man of unusual nerve. His moves were deliberate, his demeanor cold. He'd been smoking a pipe when he rode out to do combat with Billy Standifer, and when his horse was hit and had gone down, Higgins calmly put his pipe on the ground before reaching for his rifle--this while Standifer was shooting away. After shooting Standifer, Higgins said "I was afraid to go to him, fearing he was playing possum after being shot, so I got on my horse and started home. I got another horse and rode to a telephone and told the sheriff at Clairemont I thought I had killed Standifer. He said if I wasn't sure I had better go back and finish it." (2)

The Standifer shooting site, located on the edge of Pink's land, became known as "Standifers Thicket." Standifer was buried nearby. When Pink was asked if the grave was located where he fell, an unsympathetic Pink exclaimed, "Damn him, no! Do you think I'd let him stay on my place?" (1)

One account has the shooting site occuring in Crosby county, Texas however the burial location is in Kent county. (CF)

Pink Higgins was really an O'Higgins. His father moved from Ireland to the east coast of the United Staes, dropped the O' from the family name and settled finally near Atlanta, Georgia. Pink was three months old when his father packed the family into a cumbersome prarie schooner in 1848 and joined with 35 other wagons heading west. More than one hundred slaves went along, walking the entire distance.

The wagon train stopped near Austin, Texas, and the Higgins family stayed there until 1857, then moved to the head of the Beehouse Creek near Lampasas. Higgins Gap nearby was named for Pinks father. Pink grew into quite a man--six feet two inches tall, 190 pounds, muscular and straight as an arrow. His eyes were greyish green with brown spots in them, and some folks called them "tiger eyes." He was quick, alert and active.

Higgins fought Indians all over the western part of Texas. He was wounded twice, once in the leg and once in the foot. On one occasion some friendly Tonkawas were helping a Higgins group trail some raiding Indians. The Tonks in his opinion, were worthless as fighters, but unsurpassed in trailing. They caught up with the marauders. After the fight, Higgins was broiling a piece of buffalo meat over the coals of his campfire. One of the Tonks came up with meat on the end of a

stick and squatted before the campfire. Higgins yelled at him to quit letting that greasy beef drip on his buffalo, and the Indian said: "Him no beef, Him Comanche." The Tonkawas, hated by other Indians because of their cannibalistic practices, believed that eating an adversary transferred whatever bravery the dead man possessed to the victor. Higgins comments weren't fit to print.

Higgins was an officer in the post-bellum Ku Klux Klan in south Texas, but devoted his life to raising cattle. Higgins knew only one way to do business, and that was the honest, honorable way. At Spur, they still say he was "as honest as the day is long". He was slow to anger and had an unusual amount of patience, but there was a point beyond which he couldn't be pushed.

When it came to his family, Pink knew no bounds. He was a strict disciplinarian, and any infringement of the Higgins house rules resulted in quick, hard-handed justice. His daughters recall that they had their place, and he made sure they stayed in it. His generosity was unlimited. Anyone visiting Higgins stayed for dinner, and if it was late, stayed the night. He made sure they had a meal and food to carry with them when they left the next morning. He treated all visitors that way, and expected the same treatment in return--and got it.

Higgins always did what he felt he had to do. He never indicated that he regretted the killings. He probably felt justified, and according to his code of honesty and right, he had no cause to be sorry for what he had done. He was, according to his friends, a good badman. (2)

(1) "The Bloody Legacy of Pink Higgins" by: Bill O'neal.

(2) "Pink Higgins The Reluctant Gunfighter" by: Jerry Sinise.

Pink's grandson: Marshall Cullen Higgins died in El Paso, Texas in 1975.

Additional info not confirmed:

John Calhoun Pinckney Higgins' father was John Holcomb Higgins, born in DeKalb County, GA. John Holcomb Higgins is buried in Rock Church Cemetery, Lampasas, TX. Census records in TX (Bell Co., 1860; Lampasas 1870 and 1900) clearly show his birthplace. Pink Higgins grandmother, Mary (maiden name unknown) is shown in the Lampasas Co. 1870 Census as being born in South Carolina. She is buried in the Higgins Family Cemetery in Lampasas. Her husband was another John Higgins. She must have moved to Texas with J H and his family, perhaps as a widow.

No documentation about the O'Higgins rumor, or the Cherokee grandfather. The Higgins' were most likely Scots-Irish who gradually migrated south and then to Texas.