Journal #9

This week our class was instructed to read 2 articles: Cecilia Morgan’s, “In Search of the Phantom Misnamed Honour”: Dueling in Upper Canada”, and Stephen Brown’s, “Pistols at Six O’Clock”. Both of which focus on the history of dueling in Canada.

I found Morgan’s paper, “In Search of the Phantom Misnamed Honour” informative, although far to long and dragged out. Her paper mainly focused on the history of dueling and the laws and regulations (no matter how senseless they may have been) behind dueling, as well as many stories focused around duels. Stephen Browns paper, “Pistols at Six O’Clock”, while still focusing on the matters of dueling, was more centralized on a particular duel act that occurred in 1833. The last duel act in Canada.

The last duel act in Canada was on June 13th, 1833 between Robert Lyon and John Wilson in Perth, Ontario. The 2 men were both students of law, and had both taken a love interest in one Elizabeth Hughes. A quarrel eventually became between the two men. Wilson however wrote a letter that evidently embarrassed Lyon which ultimately lead to the final duel. The act of a duel had many rules, one rule imparticular was for one to protect ones honour, especially in a sense of ridicule. And so, on a dreary afternoon in June of 1833, a group of 4 men made their way to the outskirts of the town Pirth (the 2 men participating in the duel and 2 men as a witness for each). Shots were fired, but the 2 duelers still stood (according to dueling code at least 2 shots had to be fired to fully satisfy a tarnished honour.) Another round of shots were fired. This time however only one man stood. Lyon lay on the wet ground gasping for air. He had been shot through the lung eventually leading to his death.

In the time to come a trial would happen, and Wilson would be declared innocent on all charges of murder and manslaughter or any other crime. The jury found that Wilson and Lyon had probable cause for their duel especially considering the love interest they had both taken in Miss. Hughes. A judge had this to say about the duel… “Such are the effects of indulging the pride of the human, and a false sense of honour…” Dueling, it seems, gave a man a certain sense of honour, entitlement, and if won it probably was a huge ego boost for the individual.

Just as the colony experienced a major influx of British immigrants during the 1830’s and 1840’s dueling began to fall out of favour in both England and Upper Canada (2).

[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. All the information I used came from one paper: Unfortunately I could not re-locate the article to cite it correctly. So I did my best…

   Stephen Brown *Pistols at Six O’Clock*: Upper Canada’s Last Deadly Duel.

   Cecilia Morgan *In Search of the Phantom Misnamed Honour*: Dueling in Upper Canada (Toronto, University of Toronto) The Canadian Historical Review, Volume 76, Number 4, December 1995, pp.529-562. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)