

## Reading Log #9 "In Search of the Phantom Misnamed Honour" and "Pistols at Six O'Clock"

"In Search of the Phantom Misnamed Honour" examines the dueling culture in early Upper Canada and the reasons for the development of this culture. Dueling was a practice that was taken part in by men of many different socioeconomic, ethnic and racial backgrounds, however dueling was generally kept within similar groups of people.<sup>1</sup> Upper and middle class, white men were the most common demographic of duelers.<sup>2</sup> Duels were most often called because of perceived slights on the honour of at least one of the parties involved or when a woman, perhaps a wife or family member had been disparaged, and were generally seen as a way for men to regain their honour after having lost it for some reason.<sup>3</sup> Political figures and lawyers were often involved in duels, and there is even a case of the Attorney General and lawyer dueling because of an offence perceived in the courtroom.<sup>4</sup> Many writers from the press and commentators from the public were disdainful of dueling and felt that dueling was a custom linked to "excessive drinking; the temptations of luxury; and the dangers or uncurbed and vicious, rather than honourable, masculinity."<sup>5</sup> The religious community also looked down upon dueling, and claimed that dueling "offended divine law and was a remnant of ignorance and feudal barbarity."<sup>6</sup>

"Pistols at Six O'Clock" gives an interesting perspective into a real life duel and the circumstances surrounding it. From the evidence given in this document, ranging from the reason for the duel to the actual nature of the duel, it is clear that the circumstances laid out in "In Search of the Phantom Misnamed Honour" accurately represent the circumstances of duels in Upper Canada.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "In search of the phantom misnamed honour': Duelling in Upper Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 76:4 (1995), 530-531

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 531

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 536

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. 545-547

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. 554

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. 555