

# Dismemberment at Windmill Point Violence, Manliness, and The Irish in Upper Canada

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Article abstract

*Drawing on personal letters, published memoirs, and court martial records, this article investigates the gendered and ethnic implications of the Battle of the Windmill in November 1838. While this invasion of Upper Canada by the Hunter Patriots has often been seen as the final chapter of the 1837 Canadian Rebellions, it was also an episode imbued with Irish fraternal societies, Irish politics, notions of Irish manliness, and the attempts of Irish settlers to earn their place within “respectable” Upper Canadian society. The scandalous castration of an Irish officer and the mistreatment of dead soldiers’ bodies stood in direct contrast to the value each force placed on heroic martial manliness. Despite the relatively small size of the battlefield, the legacy of the battle itself significantly impacted how Irish settlers were treated in Upper Canadian society at the end of the 1830s.*

# Dismemberment at Windmill Point

## Violence, Manliness, and The Irish in Upper Canada

by Jane McGaughey

In mid-November 1838, Windmill Point in Upper Canada became the focus of much attention in British North America and the United States. An invading force of some 250 men landed just outside the hamlet of New Wexford, about two kilometres east of the town of Prescott. The Hunter Patriots were a group of American, European, and Canadian republican invaders who crossed the narrows of the St. Lawrence intent on liberating Upper Canada from British rule. Meetings held in New York State immediately prior to the invasion described their actions as an attempt to relieve “the suffering Canadian Patriots.”<sup>1</sup>

In the space of less than a week, four distinct strains of the Irish Diaspora were

brought together in one of the more violent episodes of nineteenth-century Canada. Orangemen fought alongside Irish Catholic settlers and descendants of Irish United Empire Loyalists who were, in turn, supported by the regulars of the 83rd (Dublin) Regiment of Foot against the American invaders.<sup>2</sup> This very Canadian affair was imbued with Irish fraternal societies, Irish politics, notions of Irish manliness, and the attempts of Irish settlers to earn their place at last in respectable society through that most Irish of tactics: violent force of arms.

The traditional interpretation of the Battle of the Windmill can seem more foolish than fraught. Led by Nils von Schoultz, a brave yet doomed Polish aristocrat, the Hunters crossed the river in

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<sup>1</sup> Archives of Ontario (AO), F 37, Mackenzie-Lindsey Family Fonds, “Public Meeting In Favor of the Suffering Canadian Patriots,” 10 November 1838.

<sup>2</sup> While there were men of Irish birth and extraction amongst the Hunter Patriots who attacked Windmill Point, only one secondary source directly cites the nascent cause of the Irish Repeal movement, which sought to overturn the 1801 Act of Union that had made Ireland part of the United Kingdom, as a factor influencing the Hunters’ decision to attack Upper Canada. See, Oscar A. Kinchen, *The Rise and Fall of the Patriot Hunters* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956), 112. While the exact nature of the Hunter Patriots’ alignment with the Irish Repeal movement is worthy of further scholarly attention, the following argument will focus only on the Upper Canadian Irish elements at the Battle of the Windmill.

## Abstract

*Drawing on personal letters, published memoirs, and court martial records, this article investigates the gendered and ethnic implications of the Battle of the Windmill in November 1838. While this invasion of Upper Canada by the Hunter Patriots has often been seen as the final chapter of the 1837 Canadian Rebellions, it was also an episode imbued with Irish fraternal societies, Irish politics, notions of Irish manliness, and the attempts of Irish settlers to earn their place within “respectable” Upper Canadian society. The scandalous castration of an Irish officer and the mistreatment of dead soldiers’ bodies stood in direct contrast to the value each force placed on heroic martial manliness. Despite the relatively small size of the battlefield, the legacy of the battle itself significantly impacted how Irish settlers were treated in Upper Canadian society at the end of the 1830s.*

**Résumé:** *En nous inspirant de lettres personnelles, de mémoires publiés et de dossiers de cour martiale, nous examinerons les implications ethniques et sexospécifiques de la bataille du Moulin-à-Vent en novembre 1838. Cette invasion du Haut-Canada par les Frères-Chasseurs est souvent considérée comme le dernier chapitre des rébellions canadiennes de 1837, mais c’est aussi un épisode rempli de mouvements fraternalistes irlandais, de politique irlandaise, de notions de virilité et masculinité irlandaise, et de tentatives des colonisateurs irlandais à être admis aux rangs « respectables » de la société du Haut-Canada. La castration scandaleuse d’un officier irlandais et la profanation des corps de soldats défunts ont fait vivement contraste avec l’importance placée par les deux côtés sur la virilité martiale héroïque. Malgré la taille relativement petite du champ de bataille, l’héritage de la bataille elle-même aura un impact important sur la façon dont les colonisateurs irlandais seront traités dans le Haut-Canada vers la fin des années 1830.*

the dead of night only to be quickly surrounded by imperial troops and the colonial militia. For five days, the two groups

fought, with British forces laying siege to the stone windmill where the Americans had taken shelter from both their enemies and the cold November temperatures. British naval ships bombarded the windmill from the river. Once they realized they had been sorely mistaken about Canadians’ desire to be free of British control, the Hunters surrendered. Von Schoultz was hanged—after having been defended by a young John A. Macdonald—as were nine others; the rest were either deported back to America or transported to a penal colony in Van Dieman’s Land (modern Tasmania).<sup>3</sup>

The tale bears startling similarities to various Irish escapades throughout the nineteenth century. Like Emmett’s Rebellion in 1803, the Hunter Patriots were attempting to provoke a rising in the aftermath of a previously failed insurrection. Like the Young Irelanders a decade later in 1848, the Hunters believed they were deliverers of liberty to a people too oppressed by the British yoke to fight for themselves.

Like the Fenians in the 1860s, they created a vast network of fraternal societies, clubs, and information on either side of

<sup>3</sup> Library Archives Canada (LAC), Registry Files, RG 22 A 1, Volume 1394, File Part 1, “Battle of the Windmill, Prescott, Ont.” 2. For a traditional military account of the battle, please see G.F. Stanley, “The Battle of the Windmill,” *Historic Kingston* 3 (1954), 41-56.

the border that believed the loss of Canada would be a mighty blow against the British Empire and, like all of the others, the Hunter Patriots found out too late that their plan would never succeed. Some have claimed that, had it not been for the tragic loss of life during those five bloody days in November 1838, the entire scene would have made for a delightful comic opera; the exact same sentiment has been applied to the Fenian invasions of 1866 and 1870.<sup>4</sup>



*Nils von Schoultz* <<http://pithandsubstance.blogspot.ca/2006/08/finnish-revolutionary-and-father-of.html>>

But there are also things that do not get mentioned in the brief summaries that the Battle of the Windmill often receives. This was the bloodiest episode of the rebellions in Upper Canada, and was surpassed in Lower Canada only by what the townships surrounding Montreal endured in the winter of 1837 and again in 1838 at the hands of government troops. Lieutenant William Johnson from Co. Wicklow, Ireland, served in the 83rd Regiment in the battle; not only was he killed in action, but his body was horrifically mutilated in full view of his men. Colonel von Schultz was not the romantic hero he made himself out

to be, but much more of a charlatan, while Ogle Gowan, the leader of Upper Canadian Orangism, was blooded in his first military engagement, but perhaps not quite in the glorious way he had imagined.

The Battle of the Windmill encapsulated a host of vibrant, yet problematic images about Irishmen in the Canadas at the end of the colonial rebellions. This article explores how masculine imagery informed the manner in which these Irishmen were perceived by their peers, by their enemies, and amongst themselves.

It pays particular attention to the local Orangemen who fought in the battle and how this hyper-masculinised and often-times violent Irish fraternity positioned itself within the frameworks of loyalism, martial respectability, and imperial defence. The contemporary depictions of the men who fought at Windmill Point carried heavy assumptions about Irish manliness and an Irish predilection for violence. In trying to prove their loyalty and gain social respectability within the colony, many of the Irishmen fighting at the windmill ended up reinforcing some

<sup>4</sup> Donald E. Graves, *Guns Across the River: The Battle of the Windmill, 1838* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2001), 11; Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), 336.



*Ogle Gowan from Robertson's Landmarks of Toronto, 1913.*

manliness to analyze the events at Windmill Point and their legacies. It has long been doctrinaire in gender studies to define masculinities as being both multiple and fluid. Created in specific temporal and spatial settings, they are identifiers of social status and privilege that are forever changing, needing to be tested, demonstrated, and proved in order to carry cultural influence in a given society or community.<sup>5</sup> While Irish women have received some attention from a Canadian perspective, gendered histories of Irish masculinities in Canada are virtually non-existent.<sup>6</sup> In the nineteenth-century British world, a heroic form of manliness was central to the image of an ideal man, incorporating es-

of the most basic and base stereotypes about their ethnicity and gender.

The following argument uses social constructions of masculinities and

sentialed qualities of physical courage, chivalric ideals, spiritual strength, and virtues rooted in martial, nationalistic, and imperial images.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Sonya Rose, *What is Gender History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 57-58; David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 17.

<sup>6</sup> For key texts on Irish women in Canada, see Sheelah Conway, *The Faraway Hills Are Green: voices of Irish women in Canada* (1992); Kevin James, "Sources for Further Research: Irish Female Domestic in Canada: Evidence from the 1901 Census Sample," *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 31:1 (2005), 86-89; Willeen Keough, "The Riddle of Peggy Mountain: Regulation of Irish Women's Sexuality on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860," *Acadiensis* 31:2 (2002), 38-70; D. A. J. MacPherson, "Irish Protestant women and diaspora: Orangewomen in Canada during the twentieth century", in D. A. J. MacPherson and Mary J. Hickman (eds), *Women and Irish Diaspora Identities: Theories, Concepts and New Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 168-85.

<sup>7</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 11; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle*

“Manliness” in this context refers not only to a maturation process wherein boys attained adult status amongst their peers, but also stands as a socio-cultural marker that denoted which men were valued most within the British North Atlantic—defined here as Britain, Ireland, and the Canadian colonies. Within this transatlantic phenomenon, manliness acted as a philosophy and performed aspiration visible in social interactions, literature, education, and politics on both sides of the ocean.<sup>8</sup> It could, at times, form a distinctive and powerful moral code, offering sets of values that individual men and collective fraternities could apply to themselves and each other, affecting virtually every facet of personal and communal experience.<sup>9</sup> Manliness, therefore, was not just a middle-class pursuit of ambitious colonial intellectuals and entrepreneurs, but also a performed identity adopted by Irish labourers, lumberjacks, and farmers in Upper Canada in order to further their own standing in their new community. Using manliness as a paradigm to deconstruct more familiar colonial themes of race, class, social

status, and acculturation allows for the fracturing and reconceptualizing of myriad notions attached to lived public and private experiences of migration, settlement, acculturation, and social mobility. Gendered identities were very much part of the baggage that accompanied developing Irish societies in Upper Canada.

The “manly arts” in Upper Canada incorporated physical deeds as well as intellectual philosophies.<sup>10</sup> Men evaluated each other upon their actions, beliefs, and the slippage between lived realities and popular stereotypes. For the Irish in Upper Canada, the rough caricatures so often associated with their ethnicity often were rooted in preconceived notions held by other colonials about Irish violence, helped in no small part by stories of the 1798 Irish Rebellion, tales of Irish troops from the Napoleonic Wars, and local examples of ethnic rivalries in the Canadas, such as the Ballygiblin Riots in the 1820s and the Shiners’ Wars in the 1830s.<sup>11</sup> Irish manliness in early nineteenth-century Upper Canada was a combination of dominant and demeaning cultural representations that were not

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*Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 189. For more on notions of British chivalry in the nineteenth century, see Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Jessica Harland-Jacobs, “‘Hands across the Sea’: The Masonic Network, British Imperialism, and the North Atlantic World,” *Geographical Review* 89:2, Oceans Connect (1999), 244-45.

<sup>9</sup> Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 54; J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Catharine Anne Wilson, “A Manly Art: Plowing, Plowing Matches, and Rural Masculinity in Ontario, 1800-1930,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 95:2 (2014), 157-186.

<sup>11</sup> Laura J. Smith, “The Ballygiblin: British emigration policy, Irish violence, and immigrant reception in Upper Canada,” *Ontario History* 108:1 (2016), 1-23; Michael S. Cross, “The Shiners’ War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s,” *Ontario History* 54:1 (1973), 1-26.

only the product of lived experience, but also of fantasy.<sup>12</sup> The “wild Irish” image already had followed United Irishmen to the United States in the 1790s, politicizing a crude cultural stereotype.<sup>13</sup> Decades later, this same concept of unruly Irishmen was equally powerful in the Canadas, making settlers from Belfast, Wexford, and Cork a strategic asset for colonial authorities keen to increase the population, but also a potentially violent and uncontrollable “other” in their midst.

The presumed violence and bellicosity of the Irish was enhanced by the fact that they lived along the edge of the colonial frontier, where stereotypes of the “wild Irish” encountered the supposedly untameable savagery of the forest. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Upper Canadian frontier was a transitory space for masculine definition, with new arrivals and established settler families pitting themselves against both the elements and each other as a way of es-

tablishing their own sense of worth and achievement. As Robert McClory wrote to his parents in Co. Londonderry in 1819, “This is a good country for a sober and industrious young man, but for a family it requires a great deal of toil and trouble, before they are settled.”<sup>14</sup> Manliness was inextricably linked to the land: a connotation only increased by government documents listing men according to their roles as farmers, labourers, and lumberers.<sup>15</sup> The land that was available to both Irish Catholics and Protestants often was poor and situated well back from the established road concessions near the St. Lawrence River. However, as Glenn J. Lockwood has shown, once the Irish had established themselves in a given locality or township, they were persistent in staying put, giving various areas of eastern Upper Canada a predominantly Irish character. The pre-famine Irish adapted to a frontier farming lifestyle with a minimum degree of difficulty.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For more on the role of fantasy in the shaping of imperial masculinities, see Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 27-52.

<sup>13</sup> David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 47.

<sup>14</sup> LAC, MG40 R93, Collection relating to Irish emigration, military, political, exploration and travel matters, Letter from Robert McClory to his parents, 16 November 1819.

<sup>15</sup> The Canadian censuses from 1831, 1842 and 1851 corroborate these titles. Interestingly, the Canadian censuses are the only North American population surveys to list inhabitants according to religion alongside place of birth and/or ethnicity. This is crucial information in piecing together the Canadas as a post-1798 destination for veterans of the Rising and their descendants, as it undermines notions that Catholic men stayed mainly in urban centres rather than achieving success along the Canadian frontier and in rural farming settings. See, Donald H. Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History*, first published 1984 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 344-53. For more information about historical Canadian census records, please see Collections Canada, <<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx>>.

<sup>16</sup> Glenn J. Lockwood, “Irish Immigrants and the ‘Critical Years’ in Eastern Ontario: The Case of Montague Township, 1821-1881,” in James Keith Johnson and Bruce G. Wilson (eds.), *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989, reprinted 2000), 213-17.

As a gendered case study, we know very little about rural masculinities and the creation of frontier identities. What is discernible is that the Orangemen living in eastern Upper Canada at the time of the Battle of the Windmill were aware of this Canadian ‘frontier spirit’ and felt that their actions suited it, to the detriment of their wider social standing. For instance, the Catholic inhabitants of Perth, Upper Canada, were shocked in the spring of 1830 by the behaviour of their Orange neighbours and made a complaint to His Grace, Bishop Alexander Macdonell. Benjamin Delisle and John Doran were concerned that the Orangemen’s “rancour [became] more rigorous” as the spring marching season approached; a Perth Catholic was attacked with rocks the night of a local fair and left with such severe head trauma “that his life was despaired of for more than a week by the physician.” The following night, the Orangemen paraded down the street with clubs and made an attempt to force their way into the local Catholic church. “We fear these repeated insults will stimulate the energy of the human mind,” they wrote, “and sooner or later turn to an explosion which will have bad effect. We see little prospect of

an amendment without the aid of our superiors.”<sup>17</sup> Such local incidents of Orange mayhem were emblematic of similar concerns throughout Upper Canada about Orangemen and their apparent predilection for violence as a tool for gaining local and colonial power.<sup>18</sup>

Don MacRaild has argued convincingly that Orangeism and its corresponding violent ethos stands as one of the early nineteenth century’s best examples of the “British world” phenomenon, facilitating cultural transfer through migration and the imperial network. Orangeism encapsulated the loyalty to the Crown that was so prized in much of Upper Canada—though certainly not universally—and which helped migrants to negotiate the assimilation and acculturation processes through male camaraderie.<sup>19</sup> This ascendance of Orangeism in Upper Canada also coincided with the rise of the cult of manliness, a nineteenth-century trend that combined a new appreciation for “the working man” or the man of trade with more traditionally chivalrous elements of moral courage, sexual purity, stoicism, and—when called for—physical prowess. Thomas Carlyle’s famous phrase invoking modern men as ‘Captains of Industry’ fits the

<sup>17</sup> AO, F 971, Alexander Macdonell Fonds, Letter from Benjamin Delisle and John Doran to Macdonell, 3 June 1830.

<sup>18</sup> For a small sample of similar complaints about Orange violence from the pre-rebellion period, please see: AO, F 971, Alexander Macdonell Fonds, Letter from Macdonell to his parishioners regarding Orangeism, 4 March 1828; LAC RG 9 I B 1, Volume 19, Adjutant General Files for Grenville, Leeds & Misc., Letter from Charles Jones to Adjutant General Talbot, 26 April 1833; AO F 533-2, Rogers Family Correspondence, Mary Rogers Cassidy to her brother, James, 17 July 1826; *The Vindicator*, 21 July 1837, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Donald MacRaild, “The Orange Atlantic,” in David Gleeson (ed.), *The Irish in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 309.



colonial framework, with Irish migrants who chose to be entrepreneurs or ‘career men’ becoming soldiers of the new age, replacing a more chivalric, knightly, and intangible ethos. As Carlyle wrote,

Captains of Industry are the true Fighters, henceforth recognizable as the only true ones: Fighters against Chaos, Necessity and the Devils and Jotuns; and lead on Mankind in that great, and alone true, universal warfare; the stars in their courses fighting for them, and all Heaven and all Earth saying audibly, Well done!<sup>20</sup>

Numerous Irish fraternities, from the Orangemen, the Shiners, and non-denominational St. Patrick’s Societies stood as all-male organizations that worked as sites of masculine performance, with the expected Irish traits of physical belligerence, schism, sectarianism, and martial skill coming to the fore in many of them. Contemporary sociologists have explored the intersection of violence and masculinities, highlighting the historical roots of imperialism as an avenue for the exportation of manliness and perceived brutality.<sup>21</sup> The irony in accounts of Irish bellicosity is the fact that what many aggressive Irish migrants—Orange or otherwise—most desired in the Canadas was the aura of respectability. What others saw as savage, unprovoked actions in rural or urban settings were, from a different

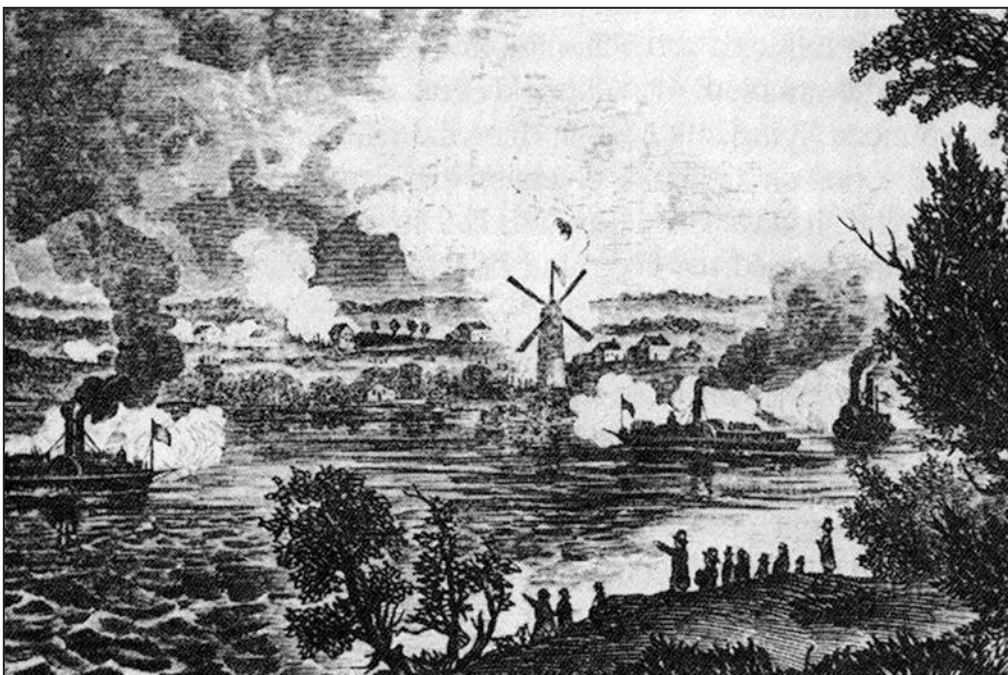
point of view, performed demonstrations of self-assertion, physical dominance, and manly honour. By 1838, Orangemen’s quest for respectability needed a more traditional channel to gain true social acceptance. The Battle of the Windmill, coming at the end of the rebellion period, offered them exactly that.

Leading the Hunter Patriots in their attack against the Canadian and Irish element at Prescott was an unlikely officer: Nils von Schoultz, a charismatic scoundrel who made a remarkable impression on the Canadian population in only a few hours’ time.<sup>22</sup> Born in Finland, von Schoultz was a Polish freedom-fighter against the Russians, who then joined the French Legion and had served in Africa long before he ever dreamed of invading British North America. His interest in salt works took him to Syracuse, New York, where he settled while awaiting a patent on his process of extracting salt from brine. He was a dashing, romantic figure who fell prey to the Hunter Patriots’ rhetoric of liberating Canada from British oppression. Recruited in the fall of 1838, von Schoultz landed in a schooner just east of Prescott with some 200 men. As the rest of the American party failed to materialize—whether through poor strategy or last minute chicanery—von Schoultz suddenly found himself in charge as the highest-ranking officer. In this, von Schoultz became one

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), 363; see also Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Raewyn Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 46-50.

<sup>22</sup> Ronald J. Stagg, “Schoultz, Nils von,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, <[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/schoultz\\_nils\\_von\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/schoultz_nils_von_7E.html)>.



*Battle of Windmill Point* <[www.canadashistory.ca](http://www.canadashistory.ca)>

of the key individuals remembered for fighting at Windmill Point, in contrast to the monolithic presentations of official British regiments, Canadian militiamen, or Orange recruits. Memorialized in later historical accounts as something of a romantic hero and real life Don Quixote,<sup>23</sup> von Schoultz soon found himself holed up in a windmill rather than tilting at one himself.

Compared to the shenanigans that had occurred in Toronto nearly a year earlier in 1837, the Battle of the Windmill was a lengthy five-day affair. The militia at Prescott had at best only 200 men to fight the Hunters, though they were soon joined by the Royal Navy from Kingston

and a detachment of the Glengarry Highlanders, along with several hundred more militiamen, including those commanded by Ogle Gowan. Prescott had been chosen as a desirable point for the invasion for a number of reasons including its status as a busy government port and its proximity to Fort Wellington. However, the most probable factor in attacking Windmill Point was that this stretch of the St. Lawrence between Upper Canada and New York State was less than a mile wide, seeming to ensure that the Hunters would have the element of surprise on their side. Ogle Gowan and the Orangemen of Brockville were alerted to the invasion by Robert Blakey—Prescott's own

<sup>23</sup> Henry Archacki, "America's Polish Gifts to Canada," *Polish American Studies* 25:2 (1968), 76.

version of Paul Revere—riding into town to spread the news. By 1pm on the 12th of November, Gowan and his 9th Provisional Borderers were on the road, taking nearly five hours to cover the distance between Brockville and the site of the McQueen Brothers' windmill.

This was a significant opportunity for Ogle Gowan to accentuate his popular interpretations of Irish loyalty, manliness, and martial skill, which had previously found an outlet in the fraternal rites of the Orange Order and electoral violence at the polls.<sup>24</sup> Only six hours before the Hunters invaded, he had penned a missive to Colonel Bullock that “the notorious William Johnston has assembled with a force of some 150 to 200 armed men on the opposite frontier” and that “little doubt could be entertained that this desperate Brigand meditated an attack immediately.” Gowan’s orders for preparation in Brockville had been obeyed “with great alacrity” and a large number of the townspeople as well as the militia had “evinced the finest spirit of devoted loyalty.”<sup>25</sup> The Battle of the Windmill was Gowan’s first major military engagement, following a minor skirmish earlier in the year at Hickory Island.<sup>26</sup> Forty years earlier, his father, Hunter

Gowan, had led the infamous Wingfield Yeomanry in Wexford against the United Irishmen during the 1798 Rebellion. This battle against American invaders in 1838 created an opportunity for Gowan and his men—many of whom were Irish immigrants—to prove that the Orange principles of imperial loyalty could combine with a more discernible incarnation of martial heroic manliness. As Gowan himself wrote, “We are told that we Irish are a restless and turbulent people.... The time has come when we must assume a more manly front.”<sup>27</sup>

The actual Orange element present at the Windmill is difficult to ascertain. Gowan personally estimated that half of the 9th Provisional Battalion were Orangemen; however, cross-referencing the list of 1830s members from Loyal Orange Lodge (LOL) #1 with veterans’ pensions from the battle reveals a different story. In terms of members from Gowan’s own lodge, eighty-one men joined Gowan’s personal branch of the Orange Order between its inception in 1830 and 1836;<sup>28</sup> out of these, only twelve appear as veterans of the Windmill on the official government militia payroll, and only four of these men—Gowan, John Stewart, James R. Willson and David Mair—were enlist-

<sup>24</sup> Elva M. Richards, “The Joneses of Brockville and the Family Compact,” *Ontario History* 60 (1968), 169-84; Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario*, 174.

<sup>25</sup> LAC, RG 9 I B 1, Volume 23, Adjutant General Files, Miscellaneous 1838, Letter from Ogle Gowan to Colonel Bullock re: preparations against attack from America, 12 November 1838.

<sup>26</sup> Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario*, 194.

<sup>27</sup> Gowan as “Hibernicus” in *The Antidote*, 29 January 1833 quoted in Hereward Senior, “Ogle Gowan, Orangeism, and the Immigrant Question 1830-33,” *Ontario History* 66 (1974), 208.

<sup>28</sup> For an unknown reason, LOL #1 records stop in 1836 before resuming the early 1840s, obscuring the exact number of members in that branch during the rebellion years of 1837-38. “Membership Roll, 1830-36,” Loyal Orange Lodge #1 (private archive), Rocksprings, Ontario.

ed in the 9th Battalion. The other men—Robert Edmundson, John Gillespie, James Hall, Thomas Johnston, John Johnston, William H. Johnston, Adam Reilly, Alexander Smyth, and William Sellar—were in the Brockville Independent Company, the 1st or 2nd Grenville Militia Regiments, or Hamilton Jessup's Prescott Volunteers.<sup>29</sup> By this calculation, the Orange presence at Windmill Point was minimal, even with Gowan, the Grand Master of the Orange Lodge of British America, serving as a lieutenant colonel. However, it should be noted that a vast number of lodges had sprung up in the wake of LOL #1 with recruits, according to Gowan, numbering over 13,000 by 1834; therefore, it is quite possible that members of other local lodges were present at Windmill Point.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, many of these early membership rolls from the Orange Order's first decades in Upper Canada have been lost, making any complete roster of all Orangemen by name throughout the colony from its inception nigh on impossible.

Orange or not, the men at Windmill Point found that the fighting truly turned nasty on 13 November. The Americans were no longer able to return to Ogdensburg because Captain Sandom's naval fleet from Kingston had blocked the route across the river. The Dublin

83rd Regiment and the Royal Marines had also arrived in force and plans were quickly drawn up to attack the windmill itself. Von Schoultz increasingly realized that no reinforcements would be coming from America; there was no sign of Bill Johnston, the Pirate of the Thousand Islands who had promised to appear, but who was, in fact, taking his ease in Ogdensburg throughout the battle.<sup>31</sup>

The martial manliness of the soldiers on either side of the entanglement soon came under severe questioning with the first casualties of 13 November. Mrs. Belden Taylor, who lived near the battle site, attempted to escape the onslaught of armed men along with her teenage daughter when she unfortunately ran straight into an advance party of Ogle Gowan's 9th Provisional Battalion. They fired at the pair, killing Mrs. Taylor instantly and severely wounding her daughter in the jaw. Hunter Captain Daniel Heustis' memoir of the attack recalled the shock felt amongst the Americans who witnessed the Canadians' mistake: "This unprovoked and barbarous act of cruelty would have disgraced a band of savages." Through this racist language comparing the Irish Canadians with natives, Heustis denied Gowan's recruits any sense of heroic chivalry or martial prowess, both of which were integral in defining nine-

<sup>29</sup> For more information, see Graves, *Guns Across the River*, Appendix C (Arthur J. Robinson), 218-226; LAC, RG 9 II A 1, Volume 353, File 21643, Secretary of State – Order of the House of Commons for a Return showing names of parties who took part in the Battle of the Windmill near Prescott, and who have since received pensions, 30 April 1902.

<sup>30</sup> Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada*, first published 1980 (Toronto: Global 1999), 111.

<sup>31</sup> AO, F 37, Mackenzie-Lindsey Family Fonds, Letter from Hiram Denio to his wife re: Windmill Point, 14 November 1838.

teenth-century manliness on the battle-field.<sup>32</sup> Miss Taylor later visited Heustis while he was held as a prisoner at Fort Henry, where he noted that her face was “still bandaged up, in consequence of the wound she had received.”<sup>33</sup>

November 13th proved to be a costly day for more families than just the Taylors. The death of Lieutenant John Dulmage illustrated Gowan’s success at convincing United Empire Loyalist Irishmen in the region to join the Orange Order, even without the immediacy of the Wexford migrant connection, which had been at the heart of Gowan’s initial success in public life after his arrival in Upper Canada.<sup>34</sup> John Dulmage, the grandson of an Irish-born United Empire Loyalist, was killed during the advance of the 2nd Grenville Regiment. His death soon became a matter of public record beyond the casualty lists when Gowan acted as a champion of sorts for the Dulmages in the aftermath of the battle. This revealed Gowan’s connections to the Dulmage family and his efficacy at creating social relationships within the broader Irish community outside those who had known his family in Co. Wexford before emigrating to Upper Canada.

John Dulmage was part of an Irish Palatine family of United Empire Loyal-

ists that had left America after 1776 as part of Edward Jessup’s Loyal Rangers. The Dulmages’ Irish connections began in 1709, when they had arrived in Ireland as refugees from the wars of religion in the German principalities; Irish Palatines had been offered sanctuary in Ireland by Queen Anne. Lieutenant Dulmage’s grandfather had been born in Co. Limerick; he, along with dozens of other families, had moved to New York State in the mid-eighteenth century, only to be uprooted again by the American Revolution.<sup>35</sup> This group of Irish Loyalists fought alongside Sir John Johnson—son of the famed Irish colonial administrator, Sir William Johnson—and Mohawk leader Joseph Brant before being granted land in Grenville County in what was then the province of Quebec in the 1780s. Since coming to Upper Canada, the Dulmages—along with dozens of other Irish Palatine families, including the Hecks, Shiers, Ruckles, and Switzers—had been local Irish United Empire Loyalists who seemed to distance themselves from the newly-arriving Orangemen, aligning themselves instead as Tory supporters of the Family Compact.<sup>36</sup>

However, an exchange of letters between Ogle Gowan and his cousin, James, suggests something different. In

<sup>32</sup>Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 1-2.

<sup>33</sup>Daniel Heustis, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of Captain Daniel D. Heustis and His Companions in Canada and Van Dieman’s Land during a long captivity* (Boston: S. W. Wilder, 1848), 47.

<sup>34</sup>Bruce Elliott, “Emigration from South Leinster to Eastern Upper Canada,” in *Wexford: History and Society*, ed. Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1987), 438.

<sup>35</sup>AO, F 485, Edward Jessup Papers, Jessup’s Loyal Rangers Company Book, 1782.

<sup>36</sup>Denis Jones and Howard Lawrence, “Ontario Descendants of Irish Palatines – 300th Anniversary of 1709 Palatine Emigration,” *Loyalist Trails – UELAC Newsletter*, 30 (24 August, 2008), <<http://www.uelac.org/Loyalist-Trails/2008/Loyalist-Trails-2008.php?issue=200830>>.

the aftermath of the battle, James wrote from Toronto lamenting, “Alas the unfortunate Major Dulmage, whose melancholy death we heard of here—the same you once introduced at the Edenborough [sic] Castle.”<sup>37</sup> James had met Dulmage at the Edinburgh Castle, an Orange-friendly tavern in Toronto. However, this turns out to have been John’s father, Lieutenant Colonel Philip Dulmage, a well-known and respected officer from the War of 1812. Ogle corroborated this by correcting his cousin in one of his rare direct references to the Battle of the Windmill, in a letter dated December 15th, 1838, roughly one month after the attack. “Mr Dulmage, who was killed,” he wrote, “was Son to the Gentleman I introduced at the Edinburgh Castle.”<sup>38</sup>

There is no further elaboration in the Gowan papers regarding this meeting or to explain what precisely an Irish-Canadian United Empire Loyalist farmer from north of Prescott was doing in Toronto with the Gowans. What is known is that five years later, Philip Dulmage—then in his seventies—was arrested and fined for “improper conduct” during Prescott’s Twelfth of July parade in 1843. A petition from George Nichols, a Dubliner living in Prescott, cited that Dulmage had been “in a great measure the cause of a riot in

Prescott on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne” through his insistence on decorating “his person with orange and purple” and parading through the streets in direct violation of an order against Orange parades from Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur.<sup>39</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Philip Dulmage was a respectable veteran of 1812; for him not only to disregard a direct order from the lieutenant governor, but apparently to disrespect the governor’s authority in public demonstrates just how fervently Dulmage had melded his United Empire Loyalist background with the more inclusive principles of Orange fidelity to the Crown.<sup>40</sup>

Frances Dulmage, John’s widow, also had public dealings with Ogle Gowan, which made the Orange Grand Master appear to be her social patron and a personal friend. In late February of 1839, three months after the battle, Gowan went before the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada to petition in favour of Frances receiving her late husband’s military pension.<sup>41</sup> There was never any real question that Frances would not receive the settlement from the government, but as the only widow of a Canadian officer killed at Windmill Point, her petition in the public records of the Upper Canadian Assembly conferred a courtly image on Gowan as

<sup>37</sup> AO, F 28, Gowan Family Fonds, Letter from James R. Gowan to Ogle R. Gowan, undated.

<sup>38</sup> AO, F 28, Gowan Family Fonds, Letter from Ogle R. Gowan to James R. Gowan, 15 December 1838.

<sup>39</sup> “Petition of George Nichols of Prescott, in the Johnstown District to His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir Charles Metcalfe, 16 September 1843” (copy) in *Journals of the Legislative Council of the Province of Canada*, Volume 16, Issue 7 (Toronto: 1858), Appendix No. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Hereward Senior, “The Genesis of Canadian Orangeism,” *Ontario History* 60, 2 (1968), 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> “Petition of Frances Dulmage,” in *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada*, 28 February 1839, 7; see also petitions made on her behalf on 2 March 1839 and 18 March 1839.

her personal defender and champion.

A later petition to the United Province of Canada complicated the exact nature of Frances Dulmage's friendship with Gowan. In 1858, the same George Nichols sued Ogle Gowan for libel, claiming that he, Nichols, had been falsely accused of attempting to assassinate Gowan. The ensuing case before the judiciary involved mutual claims of perjury; Frances Dulmage was called upon to act as a witness in Gowan's favour to the effect that Nichols had been a tailor in Prescott in the early 1840s, rather than a school teacher as he claimed in court. Nichols was surprised at Frances' testimony, wherein she declared that she had brought her son to his shop to be measured for clothes. He swore that her evidence was "new and unexpected; fresh from Gowan's witness factory in Leeds." Nichols believed that Frances testified out of spite, in retaliation for his claims against her father-in-law, Philip, regarding the 1843 Orange parade. "I have a clear recollection," he testified,

of the witness Dulmage coming to my shop in the fall of 1843, in company with her father, the said Philip Dulmage; they had with them a copy of the complaint alluded to above... but instead of patronage in the way of business, I got nothing but abuse, and threats of vengeance. I most solemnly declare

that was the only time I ever saw the woman till she gave her evidence for Gowan. Her general character is that of a woman of ill-fame, living evidence of which exists in her illegitimate offspring.<sup>42</sup>

Given that Frances Dulmage was the only female witness for either the prosecution or the defence, it is hardly surprising that Nichols attempted to destroy her testimony by besmirching her personal character as a woman of "ill-fame" and low sexual morality as the mother of illegitimate children (the children, Samuel Coates Dulmage and Ann Elizabeth Dulmage, were both the legitimate offspring of the late Lieutenant John Dulmage). The public sphere of Upper Canada was decidedly masculine and it was easy to cast doubt on a woman's testimony in the Canadian courts of law by questioning her sexual mores.<sup>43</sup> However, the fact that Gowan asked Frances Dulmage to testify on his behalf, along with his championing of her financial remuneration after her husband's death, and Philip Dulmage's pro-Orange public displays underscores the association—however personal or professional—that existed between the Dulmage and Gowan families. It appears that by the late 1830s and early 1840s, Ogle Gowan had been successful in uniting some, if not all, Irish Protestants near Prescott and Brockville

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<sup>42</sup> "Petition of George Nichols of Toronto, 10 June 1858," in *Journals of the Legislative Council of the Province of Canada; Being the First Session of the Sixth Parliament 1858*, Volume 16, Issue 7, Appendix 39. George Nichols was found guilty of perjury and sentenced to three months imprisonment and a fine of £150.

<sup>43</sup> Cecilia Morgan, "When Bad Men Conspire, Good Men Must Unite!": Gender and Political Discourses in Upper Canada, 1820s-1830s," in Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 12-13.

under the Orange banner, regardless of when they had come to the Canadas.

The loss of Lieutenant John Dulmage was not the only blow Gowan faced on November 13th: during a bayonet charge to clear out any remaining invaders from open ground, Gowan overreached himself, leapt over a wall and found himself surrounded by Hunters. Trying to back up, he impaled himself on the bayonet of one of his own men. In a letter to his cousin James, Ogle described this as a “slight” wound “a little below the hip.” In fact, he had been stabbed in the buttocks and had to withdraw from the rest of the fighting.<sup>44</sup> As he himself noted, “One inch further to the right would probably have finished me.”<sup>45</sup> This was hardly the type of wound that heralded a man as a valiant soldier of the queen. It is rather ironic, therefore, that he was afterwards cited for bravery, despite the rather inglorious nature of his wound in the backside.<sup>46</sup> Gowan’s impaled bottom, and the ignoble status that accompanied such an injury, is a somewhat frivolous example of the violation of men’s bodies at Windmill Point. Far more unfortunate displays of corporeal desecration, and its inherent loss of manhood,

occurred before the battle was over.

When news of the death of Lieutenant William Stafford Johnson began to be whispered throughout the area on the night of November 16th, the Battle of the Windmill took on a far more scandalous tone. Official records from the Lieutenant Governor’s Office noted the severe loss of life at Windmill Point and that a lieutenant of the 83rd was killed along with “several of the respectable inhabitants of the country”<sup>47</sup>—giving John Dulmage the mark of social acceptance from the Upper Canadian establishment that Ogle Gowan had desired so much for himself. However, the reality of Johnson’s demise was much more sordid.

Born in Co. Wicklow, Johnson had joined the army as an ensign in 1815 and served in Ceylon before coming to North America. At age 39, he was a trifle old still to be a lieutenant and, perhaps, wanted to prove himself in this battle where he at last had the opportunity for advancement.<sup>48</sup> A chivalrous aura already surrounded the 83rd Regiment: at their customary billet in Kingston they were thought of as “gallant regulars who were supposed to be invincible.”<sup>49</sup> Whatever

<sup>44</sup> Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario*, 196.

<sup>45</sup> AO, F 28, Gowan Family Fonds, Letter from Ogle R. Gowan to James R. Gowan, 15 December 1838.

<sup>46</sup> LAC, MG 27 I E 30, Ferguson Family Fonds, Volume 7, Miscellaneous.

<sup>47</sup> National Archives Kew (NA), PRO 30/9/6/13, Charles Abbot, First Baron Colchester Papers, Correspondence, memoranda, etc. relating to American military activities on the Canadian border, *Upper Canada Gazette Extraordinary*, 16 November 1838.

<sup>48</sup> *Memoirs and Services of the Eighty-Third Regiment, County of Dublin, from 1793 to 1907, including the campaigns of the Regiment in the West Indies, Africa, The Peninsula, Ceylon, Canada, and India* (London: Hugh Rees, 1908), 46-47.

<sup>49</sup> William John Macdonell, *Reminiscences of the Late Hon. and Right Rev. Alexander Macdonell, First Catholic Bishop of Upper Canada and (incidentally) of Other Old Residents of the Province* (Toronto: Williamson and Co., 1888), 32.



his reason, Johnson attempted to capture what looked like an abandoned cannon in the road near the windmill; coming under fire from the Hunters above, he was knocked to the ground and then taken prisoner behind enemy lines. When the fighting ended on 13 November, Johnson was dead—whether from the shot fired that afternoon by eighteen year-old Syvanus Swete from Jefferson County or from being assaulted with rifle butts that evening remains unclear.<sup>50</sup> Swine began to eat his corpse; the Americans then took the body and strung it by its heels from a nearby tree. At this point, some of von Schoultz's men decided to mutilate the body with their new Bowie knives—a recent fashion trend carried by many American men as a tribute to the fallen of the Alamo two years earlier. The Hunters cut off Johnson's penis, in full view of his men.

A variety of medical and political discourses in the first half of the nineteenth century centred in different ways on how a man's fundamental identity resided in the sex of his body. According to gender historian Sonya O. Rose, a man's "sexual capacity and practice were continuing issues of public concern."<sup>51</sup> Intellectually, this anxiety eventually manifested itself in apprehensions about sexual degeneration within the empire, resulting in scan-

dalous court cases like the trials of Oscar Wilde and the arrest and execution of Roger Casement; the same heightened concerns about young boys' masculine fitness also were behind Lord Baden-Powell's creation of the Boy Scouts following the Second South African War.<sup>52</sup> Men's bodies mattered in Upper Canada and throughout the British Atlantic world, particularly when they were bound up in the machinery of empire and, even more so, when located within the spatial confines of a battlefield, with its manifold gendered connotations of honour, fear, death, and blood sacrifice.<sup>53</sup>

The vulnerability of a body—its fleshiness and fragility—overwhelmed the discourse of heroic manliness that later became emblematic of the language used to describe the Battle of the Windmill in primary sources. Johnson's mutilation was certainly an attempt by the Americans to shock their enemies; however, their actions also worked, consciously or otherwise, as a means of embodied dialogue. Johnson's corpse became a text to be read and feared by his fellow soldiers. In her study of wartime sexual violence, Miranda Alison has argued that sexual violence "can function as a form of communication between hegemonic and subordinate masculinities" as well as between men and women along

<sup>50</sup> Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 118.

<sup>51</sup> Rose, *What is Gender History?*, 64. See also Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>52</sup> Ari Adut, "A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde," *American Journal of Sociology* 111:1 (2005), 213-48; Brian Lewis, "The Queer Life and Afterlife of Roger Casement," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14:4 (2005), 363-82; Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys* (London: Horace Cox, 1908).

<sup>53</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 2005), 7-8.

the masculine/feminine binary. Male to male sexual violence during war or battle is “both gendered and ethnicised, acting to feminise its victims...while masculinising perpetrators.”<sup>54</sup> While extremely shocking in the moment, cutting off Johnson’s penis was also an action loaded with figurative meaning.

The discourse of sexual violence and violation in the early 1800s was recorded by men for men, to the point where historian Sharon Block has described this era as a time of “rape without women.”<sup>55</sup> Given this state of affairs, it should be no surprise that the most famous assault of the 1837-38 Rebellion period was not a rape: it was a castration. The sudden defeminization of Johnson’s body was as much an attack on British authority in the Canadas as it was a personal attack on an enemy officer. The defilement of his corpse refashioned his body into a performative text that underscored the Hunters’ lack of masculine honour in the minds of the Irish and Canadian soldiers. Castration and penile dismemberment were weighted actions. The sexual mutilation “of a single man of the ethnically defined enemy is symbolic appropriation of the masculinity of the whole group.” It was not only proof that the victim “is a lesser man, but that his ethnicity is also a lesser ethnicity.”<sup>56</sup> Real men looked like

men—Johnson no longer numbered among such fellows. Following the surrender of the Hunters, this violation became one of the more infamous rumours about the battle, particularly after Johnson’s body was brought back to Prescott.

Gossip certainly held sway as citizens on both the American and Upper Canadian side of the border sought information about what had happened during the battle. A townsman of Prescott felt that “our Ogdensburg neighbours of that day were not what they should have been. I am sure the present generation would not encourage a lot of cutthroats from Watertown, Oswego and other places to come over and murder us.”<sup>57</sup> Hiram Denio wrote to his wife from the steamboat *US Ogdensburg* on the 14th of November that it was evident the Patriots had been beaten and that “the orders of the British are to give no quarter, but to slay every man found in arms. The probability, I think, is that the poor fellows are, or will be, principally cut to pieces.”<sup>58</sup> This was exactly what the Orangemen and Canadian militia wanted to do—not only as vengeance for Johnson’s gruesome treatment, but also for the act of invasion itself. Conflicting reports appeared in the American newspapers—some claiming that the Hunters had all been speared to death as they left the windmill; others

<sup>54</sup> Miranda Alison, “Wartime Sexual Violence: Women’s Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity,” *Review of International Studies* 33:1 (2007), 85-86.

<sup>55</sup> Sharon Block, “Rape without Women: Print Culture and the Politicization of Rape, 1765-1815,” *Journal of American History* 89:3 (2002), 849-68.

<sup>56</sup> Alison, “Wartime Sexual Violence,” 87.

<sup>57</sup> AO, F485, Jessup Family Fonds, Battle of the Windmill – “Recollections!!”, 4.

<sup>58</sup> AO, F37, Mackenzie-Lindsey Family Fonds, Letter from Hiram Denio to his wife, 14 November 1838.

suggested that von Schoultz had killed himself rather than be taken alive.<sup>59</sup>

The actual condition of the living and the dead was different, but still dire. Almost all of the Canadian and Irish dead had been “stripped to their underclothes” by the Hunters and wild hogs “had nearly eaten some of them up.” Lieutenant Johnson’s body was cut down from its humiliating display and it was felt that few, if any, of the Crown’s forces would respect the Americans’ eventual white flag of surrender. Officers repeatedly ordered their men to “give no quarter and take no prisoners” while the stone houses once occupied by the Hunters were burned to the ground.<sup>60</sup> The butcher’s bill was over 80 killed and wounded for British and Canadian units, while as many as 50 of the Hunters were dead, along with 160 captured. Compared to the casualties a year earlier in Toronto, this was a truly costly affair.

In an ironic twist on Irish soldiers’ presumed bellicosity and aggressiveness, Hunter Patriot Stephen S. Wright wrote in his memoirs that he was grateful during the surrender to have filed out of the windmill alongside Dubliners from the 83rd Regiment, for “I verily believe the ferocious militia would have torn us to pieces, had it not been for their timely protection.”<sup>61</sup> The captured Hunters were tied separately to a long rope and marched to Prescott, where they were so

abused by the loyalist crowds that many of the men broke down in hysterics. Wright described it as a time when he and the other men endured the “inclemency of a Canadian autumn amid jeers, scoffs, insults and reproaches almost beyond description. The militia resembled ravenous fiends more than decent Christian men” while he, personally, was “buffeted and spit upon by the Prescott mob.”<sup>62</sup>

The language used to describe both the victors and the vanquished at the Battle of the Windmill highlighted how much manliness and visions of loyalty were intertwined in the rebellion period. Reading the official dispatches and commendations from a gendered perspective highlights specific terms and phrases that emphasize the value British colonial authorities put on masculine strength and imperial fidelity. The official Militia General Order from Adjutant General Colonel Richard Bullock noted that both the Lieutenant Governor and the Major General Commanding felt “much pride in congratulating the brave and gallant Militia of Upper Canada, upon the distinguished conduct of the Officers and Men engaged in the destruction and capture of the Piratical Force” near Prescott. In particular, Bullock highlighted the men’s “zeal, devotion and bravery” and rejoiced that they had immediately volunteered for active service when the

<sup>59</sup> *Niles National Register*, 24 November 1838, 200.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*; NA, PRO 30/9/6/13, Charles Abbot, First Baron Colchester Papers, Correspondence, memoranda etc. relating to American military activities on the Canadian border, copy of a letter from Colonel Dundas to Captain Goldie, 16 November 1838.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen S. Wright, *Narrative and Recollections of Van Dieman’s Land, During a Three Years’ Captivity of Stephen S. Wright, together with an Account of the Battle of Prescott* (New York: J. Winchester, 1844), 11.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

need arose. The dispatch chronicled the “loyal exertions” of the militia and bolstered the notion that the combined efforts of the regulars and militiamen had made them “brothers in Arms—they have *once more* fought side by side—they have bled and died together.”<sup>63</sup> While many might surmise that the phrase “once more” fighting together implied the efforts of the regulars and volunteers in 1837, the Battle of the Windmill also had brought together those with memories of the 1798 Irish Rising and the role that volunteer militias and regular troops had played in defeating the United Irishmen.<sup>64</sup> The fallen lieutenant of the 83rd Regiment had been a Wicklow man, while sons of 1798 Wexford veterans had been in nearly all of the militias present at the battle; furthermore, the presence of the Glengarry Highlanders in the latter stages of the battle also had echoes of the ’98, as that rising had been the Glengarrys’ first military encounter after their creation in Scotland;<sup>65</sup> now, the next generation of Highlanders were making a name for themselves in both Upper and Lower Canada as the “shock troops” of the post-rebellion period.<sup>66</sup>

By comparison, the words used to describe the Hunters were a romantic-yet-derogatory blend of synonyms: “gang of desperadoes,” “pirates,” “brigands,” “piratical force” and, in the American papers, “deluded countrymen” full of “wickedness and folly.”<sup>67</sup> In dismissing the Hunters as misguided adventurers and cocksure scoundrels, the Upper Canadian military establishment defused the republican threat of invasion while simultaneously making their own soldiers appear as valiant heroes, whereas the Hunters were, at best, impressionable children playacting at war.<sup>68</sup>

The court martial for the Hunter Patriots began at Fort Henry in Kingston on 26 November 1838. Colonial court proceedings are a valuable way of ascertaining early Victorian social and cultural constructions of masculinity and manliness. The discourse of a courtroom—the questions posed by the attorneys and officials, the responses of the accused, the coverage in the press and in private memoirs, the legends that can arise from the outcome—are all cultural texts with potentially revealing gendered results. Conceptions of violence, and the

<sup>63</sup> AO, F 485, Jessup Family Fonds, Militia General Order, Adjutant General’s Office, 24 November 1838. Emphasis as in original.

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Gahan, *The People’s Rising: Wexford, 1798* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995), 299.

<sup>65</sup> National Archives, Kew (NA), CO 295/6, Letter from Alexander Macdonell to The Right Honourable Henry Addington, 1 January 1803.

<sup>66</sup> Elinor Kyte Senior, *Redcoats and Patriots: The Rebellions in Lower Canada, 1837-38* (Ottawa: Canadian War Museum Historical Publication No. 20), 1985, 187-189.

<sup>67</sup> LAC, MG 27 I E 30, Ferguson Family Fonds, Volume 7, Colonel C. Foster, After District General Order, 19 November 1838; *Ibid.*, “Return of Killed and Wounded in action with the Brigands near Prescott on the 13th of November 1838”; *Ibid.*, “Extract from ‘Militia General Orders’ promulgating the above”, 24 November 1838; *Niles National Register*, 8 December 1838.

<sup>68</sup> “Home Intelligence,” *The Advocate of Peace* (1837-1845), 5, 2 (1843), 21.

impressions of manliness that accompanied them, are historical constructs and imaginings prone to contestation and change. Social expectations and the cultural context of trials are integral to any history of violence, as the courtroom can illuminate not only the force used or the injuries inflicted upon the victim, but also any sense of intentional violation that accompanied them.<sup>69</sup> Courts martial that carried with them the prospect of a hanging were even more filled with moral dilemma and, simultaneously, the blood lust of the mob.

During the trial, it became clear that von Schoultz was being held directly responsible for the mutilation of Johnson's body. Surgeon William Gardener of the 83rd Regiment was called as a key witness. He testified that the cause of death was most likely several gun-shot wounds to Johnson's hip that had passed through his body; however, Gardner also pointed out that there had been "a mutilation, which I perceive to have been performed by a sharp instrument, the excision of the penis."<sup>70</sup> This news apparently was a shock to von Schoultz, although considering the blatant manner in which Johnson's body had been displayed, and given the relatively small size of the battlefield around the windmill, it seems hardly credible that von Schoultz was not aware

of what had happened to the Irishman. Perhaps von Schoultz's discomfort with this public recitation of Johnson's grim fate had more to do with the destruction of his own carefully constructed persona as a gallant romantic and misguided adventurer, rather than as the defiler of corpses. Whatever the colonel's feelings, the implication was obvious that he, as commanding officer of the Hunters, was responsible for the actions of his subordinates.<sup>71</sup>

After taking an evening to contemplate his next move, von Schoultz asked to address the court when proceedings resumed on 30 November. Reading from a prepared statement, he swore that "[a]s regards the treatment of Captain Johnson's body—I tried to get the body away but the fire was such that I could not. Two men were wounded in the attempt. I put a sentinel to shoot the hogs that might approach the body and he fired to keep them off. This may show that I had no concern in mutilating his body."<sup>72</sup> Von Schoultz was not a sadist; however, Gardner's testimony that the penis had been cut off with a sharp instrument rather than nibbled or gnawed exonerated the hogs and condemned the colonel. Immediately following this statement, the court rendered its verdict: Nils von Schoultz was to be hanged by the neck

<sup>69</sup> Martin J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 7-10.

<sup>70</sup> LAC, RG 5 B 40, Civil Secretary, Records relating to the Rebellions, Upper Canada: Fort Henry, Militia General Court Martial of Nils Szolteocky von Schoultz, 1838.

<sup>71</sup> Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 175.

<sup>72</sup> LAC, RG 5 B 40, Civil Secretary, records relating to the Rebellions, Upper Canada: Fort Henry, Militia General Court Martial of Nils Szolteocky von Schoultz, 1838.

until dead.

Lieutenant Johnson's pubic mutilation was the most infamous aspect of the battle and its aftermath in the popular consciousness; however, this instance of sexual violence was more or less expunged from any later commemoration of the invasion. A plaque located within the windmill lists Lieutenant William S. Johnson first on its tribute to the dead and wounded; nearly all contemporary and historical accounts of the event mention his death, but with little or no elaboration about what specifically occurred. The entry for Nils von Schoultz in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* notes his employment of a young John A. Macdonald as his counsel at the trial, but it highlights the colonel's insistence on pleading guilty, not the gory details revealed in the courtroom.<sup>73</sup> Physical violence was an expected, if not necessarily acceptable, aspect of life in the Canadian colonies; sexual violence was something else.<sup>74</sup> The masculine arena of social and cultural respectability, which some Irishmen sought to attain through their actions during the rebellions, was at its most powerful in omitting any history of rape or sexual defilement in the Cana-

das. Such violence simply did not happen here: not with British troops as the perpetrators, and certainly not with British officers as the victims.

Nils von Schoultz's execution took place on the 8th of December on the grounds of Fort Henry; his body was later buried in Kingston's Roman Catholic cemetery. Nine other men also met with the hangman's rope for their actions at Windmill Point, while dozens of others were sent to a penal colony in Van Dieman's Land. After the Upper and Lower Canadian Rebellions in 1837, Lord Durham had sought a compromise in how prisoners were punished. According to Jean-Philippe Warren, Durham embraced a more nuanced liberal attitude that attempted to balance the severity of rebellion against the Crown with leniency towards political prisoners.<sup>75</sup> The 1830s were a time of new legal rights for those accused of political crimes, as well as institutional changes from punitive punishments to sheltered rehabilitation.<sup>76</sup> Durham devised a system of banishment to non-penal colonies, such as Bermuda, following 1837 in order to deter opponents from future protests and risings without invoking the stigma

<sup>73</sup> Stagg, "von Schoultz, Nils," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

<sup>74</sup> Elsbeth Heaman, "Constructing Innocence: Representations of Sexual Violence in Upper Canada's War of 1812," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 24:2 (2013), 114-155; Sandy Ramos, "A Most Detestable Crime": Gender Identities and Sexual Violence in the District of Montreal, 1803-1843," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 12:1 (2001), 27-48.

<sup>75</sup> Jean-Philippe Warren, "Detention and punishment in a time of legal reform: Lord Durham and the question of Lower Canadian political prisoners," in Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally (eds.), *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), 64-65.

<sup>76</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, first published 1975 (London: Pantheon Books, 1977).

of arriving in Botany Bay. The year 1798 was given as a direct example of what was no longer permissible under a more enlightened form of imperialism.<sup>77</sup> Durham's idea of transportation to a non-penal colony was meant to be emblematic of a less brutal age; however, by the time of the Battle of the Windmill, Durham had already returned to Britain, and the prisoners in both Upper and Lower Canada at the end of 1838 faced a much harsher reality.<sup>78</sup> Executions, banishment to the Antipodes, and being treated like common criminals were the order of the day. In this, the sentences passed at the end of 1838 followed the well-worn pattern already set by the defeated United Irishmen of 1798, as opposed to what the rebels of only a year before in 1837 had faced with deportation to Bermuda. Of the men whose sentences were commuted from death to exile in Australia, only three were Irish-born: John Bradley, Hugh Calhoun, and Patrick White; the others were merely treated as if they were the equivalent of Irish rebels. The one-time Hunter Patriots arrived at Hobart in February 1840 and served four years of their sentence before receiving pardons.<sup>79</sup>

The Canadian government's official report on the battle concluded that "while this military action was not of major proportions, the Battle of the Wind-

mill itself was important within the Rebellion context."<sup>80</sup> So, what exactly was the Battle of the Windmill? How can it qualify as a particularly Irish event during the Canadian rebellions? How does it add to our understanding of Irish migrants' representations of violence and manliness?

Certainly the fact that so many strains of the Irish Diaspora—Wexford migrants, Orangemen, the 83rd (Dublin) Regiment, Irish Palatine United Empire Loyalists—came together in one relatively tiny peninsula of land along the St. Lawrence makes it a microcosm of the various Irish communities that had found a new home in Upper Canada prior to the 1840s. The battle also stands as a singularly bloody event, not only in the heat of the fighting or with the dismemberment of Lieutenant Johnson, but also in the number of casualties, prisoners, exiles and hangings that it produced. That said, this was Irish violence in a theoretically acceptable place: on a battlefield against an invading American force. Unlike the troublesome Shiners' Wars and the Ballygiblin Riots or Ogle Gowan's use of electoral intimidation and violence in the 1830s, the Battle of the Windmill's type of Irish-related mayhem was respectable to Upper Canadian gentlemen.<sup>81</sup> The numerous references in the military dispatches to "zeal," "gallantry," "devotion,"

<sup>77</sup> Warren, "Detention and punishment," 67.

<sup>78</sup> Warren, "Detention and punishment," 71-73.

<sup>79</sup> LAC, MG 24 B 162, Notebook of Aaron Dresser.

<sup>80</sup> LAC, Registry Files, RG 22 A 1, Volume 1394, File Part 1, "Battle of the Windmill, Prescott, Ont.," 13.

<sup>81</sup> Richards, "The Joneses of Brockville and the Family Compact," 169-84.

and “duty” echo down through the rest of the nineteenth century as hallmarks of British imperial heroic masculinities; what was different in this case was that the accolades of manly action and comportment came at the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign rather than at its end, when the apogee of the Second Empire created a more jingoistic and patriotic era. Orange “respectability” was not only attainable at the end of the 1800s, but was one of the prevailing power blocs of Ontario politics that lasted well into the twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> The 1830s, however, were a different time and place for Orangeism in Upper Canada. Their violent defence of the colony only bought a certain measure of toleration, not full acceptance into the social hierarchy of the Loyalist establishment. The Irishmen in the Canadas who fought for the Crown during the rebellions found themselves in a period of masculine and martial rhetoric that bridged the time of the Duke of Wellington and Waterloo to that of Sir Henry Havelock, the Siege of Lucknow, and even the Great War. This socially constructed language of manliness—informed by local events, but carrying universal tones of conquest and stoicism—changed the Irish immigrants into Canadians through their perceived loyalty to a grander imperial design. So long as violence was confined to an un-

derstandable context, such as a battlefield with recognizable soldier heroes forming line and square, the Irish in the Canadas were acceptable, if not yet perhaps entirely respectable. The wildness of the Irish, however, was not wanted among the good people of the Johnstown District anymore than it had been desired in the back concessions of Kitley and Elizabethtown when they arrived in the early 1820s, or on the edges of the frontier in Bytown’s Irish ghettos or the darker corners of Irish Montreal’s Griffintown. The question going forward into the 1840s was whether or not the likes of Ogle Gowan and his Orangemen could convincingly transform their “wild Irish” heritage into something more agreeable to the colonial Canadian establishment, which still retained much of its small-‘c’ conservative insular attitude, even in the wake of the 1837-38 risings.<sup>83</sup>

A telling portent of the difficulty of this endeavour came in 1840, when Colonel Richard Fraser of the 2nd Grenville Militia and Ogle Gowan had a very public falling out. Despite their one-time status as allies and colleagues against the Family Compact, Fraser now accused Gowan of being both a coward and a fool. In the wake of these insults, Gowan demanded satisfaction; however, his challenge of a duel was rejected. Despite Gowan’s official accolades from the

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<sup>82</sup> William J. Smyth, *Toronto, The Belfast of Canada: The Orange Order and the Shaping of Municipal Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 23.

<sup>83</sup> For more on the character of conservatism in Upper Canada, see S. F. Wise, *God’s Peculiar Peoples: Essays on Political Culture in Nineteenth Century Canada*, eds. A. B. McKillop and Paul Romney (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993), 169-84; see also Akenson’s critique of Wise in *The Irish in Ontario*, 173-4, fn 48 and his analysis of the term “family compact”, 191, fn 108.



Battle of the Windmill, Fraser refused to fight him because the colonel felt that the Wexford Irishman “was beneath the station of a gentleman and not a worthy opponent.”<sup>84</sup> Respectability continued to elude Gowan just as much after the battle as it had beforehand.

The heroic aura surrounding the Battle of the Windmill seemed to offer Canadian Irishmen the chance to mollify their supposed coarseness and lack of gentility through the nobility of active military

service in defence of the young Queen Victoria and her territories. However, to make the effect permanent, they had to take their newfound status as successful defenders of the country and begin to navigate the intricacies of public life in the new United Province of Canada in the 1840s. They could not have known as that decade began that, within ten years, the horrors of the Irish Famine would change everything about the image of Irishmen in the Canadas.



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<sup>84</sup> Colonel Richard Fraser quoted in Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 203.