

# PISTOL PROVENANCE

## Weapons of the Last Fatal Duel

Matheson House Museum in Perth boasts a large and varied collection of artifacts drawn from more than two centuries of local history, all housed in a facility that itself is a designated national historic site, but the crown jewel of the collection are the pistols used in Upper Canada's last fatal duel.

In a late afternoon rainstorm on June 13, 1833, law students John Wilson (1807-1869) and Robert Lyon (1812-1833) met in a muddy field on the bank of the Tay River southeast of Perth to settle an 'affair of honor'.<sup>1</sup> Having agreed upon pistols as the weapons of choice, their first round of fire proved harmless, but on the second exchange, Wilson put a .62 caliber ball through Lyon's chest from armpit to armpit. One hundred and twenty-eight years later the pistols wielded that day went on display at the Perth Museum and have proven to be its most popular exhibit ever since.

Not every step of the pistols' long journey over time and distance from gunsmith's bench to museum display cabinet is fully known, but even where mystery prevails, the clues alone are intriguing.

The weapons make their first appearance in the documentary record in 1833 when multiple witnesses gave sworn testimony in court that pistols were seen and heard in the hands of Lyon and Wilson. The chain of possession from that moment onward, while perhaps not perfectly documented, demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that the weapons used that day are indeed the same pistols exhibited today at the Perth Museum.

As Lyon's body was carried from the field of combat, John Wilson and his second, fellow law student Simon Fraser Robertson (1806-1847)<sup>2</sup>, immediately surrendered to the local magistrates at Perth, while Lyon's second, Henri LeLièvre (1802-1882), hastened off on an unscheduled visit to relatives at Bytown (Ottawa). Meanwhile, the weapons were retrieved from the scene by Bathurst District Deputy Sheriff Alexander William Powell (1815-1882)<sup>3</sup>. Powell had watched the duel from a nearby barn and testified at the Wilson-Robertson trial that he

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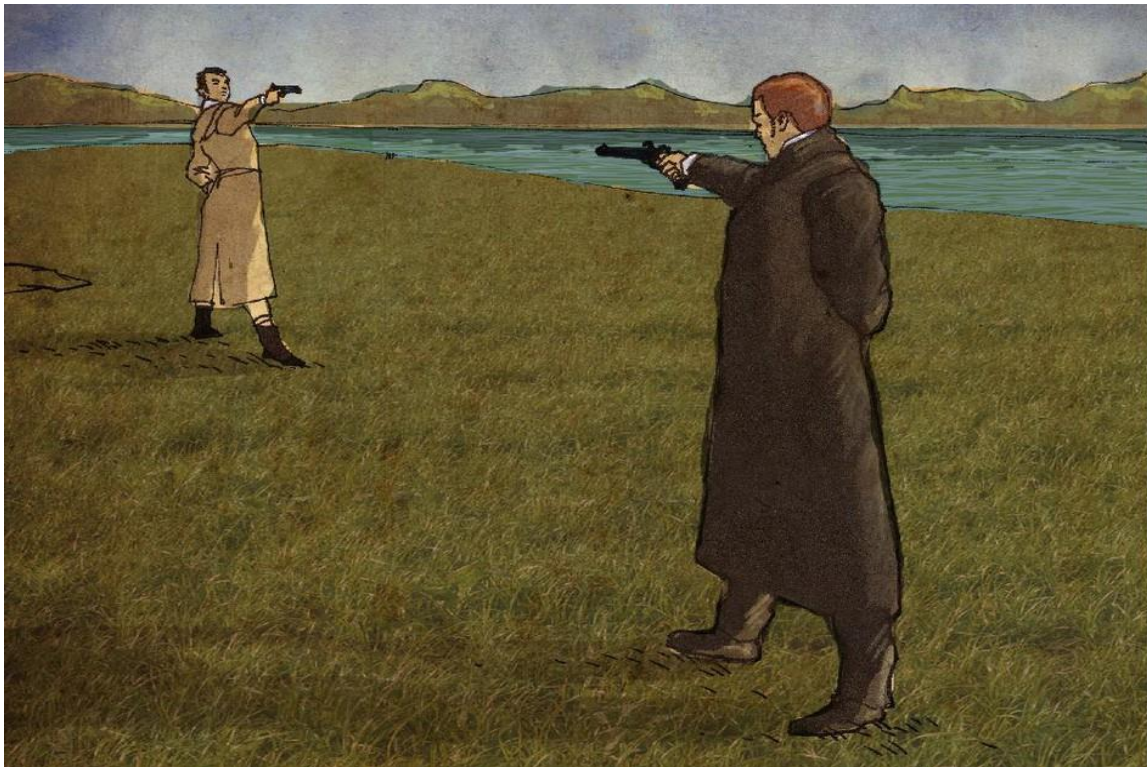
<sup>1</sup> In a heated argument on the courthouse steps, during which Lyon called Wilson "*a damned lying scoundrel*", for having accused Lyon of falsely casting doubt upon the honor of schoolteacher Elizabeth Joanna Hughes (1812-1904), Lyon had bloodied Wilson's nose, and then refused to apologize, thus forcing Wilson to defend his own honor by demanding 'satisfaction'.

<sup>2</sup> When called to the Bar, Simon Fraser Robertson practiced as an attorney at Perth 1836-1840 until he was appointed Clerk of the Court of Requests. He died at Woodstock, Oxford County.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander William Powell was Deputy to his brother, Sheriff John Ambrose Powell (c1802-1843). Both men were the sons of James Hamilton Powell (1773-1831), former Major of the 103rd Foot, who had served as the first Sheriff of the Bathurst District 1822-1831. The duel was fought a farm owned by Sheriff John Ambrose Powell.

... took both of the pistols into my possession, putting them in a hat; I afterwards concealed them in the town till the next morning when I examined them and found both discharged. I do not know who owned the pistols; I afterwards delivered them to Mr. Morris and Mr. Burford, Magistrates for the District of Johnstown, at the inquest".<sup>4</sup>

Sheriff Powell made a minor slip in that statement.<sup>5</sup> William Morris (1786-1858) and William Rutherford Fitzwilliam Berford (1801-1871) were District Magistrates for Bathurst, not Johnstown.<sup>6</sup> Morris was Perth's first merchant, an elected member of the Upper Canada Legislature from 1821 through 1836 and was appointed to the Legislative Council when the United Province of Canada was created in 1841. Berford was a Perth lawyer who would later serve as County Clerk of the Peace and as Clerk-Treasurer of the United Counties of Lanark and Renfrew. Although the North Elmsley Township farm field where Lyon died lay in Johnstown District<sup>7</sup>, a few steps across the administrative line separating Johnstown and Bathurst Districts<sup>8</sup>, by crossing South Street back into Perth, Wilson and Robertson had re-entered Bathurst District and were thus arrested by the Bathurst magistrates, to whom Sheriff Powell handed the pistols as material evidence.



**The Last Fatal Duel, June 13, 1833**  
(Image by Andrew King)

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in *The Memorable Duel At Perth*, by Judge Edward Shortt (1970).

<sup>5</sup> Or the *Brockville Recorder* newspaper did so in reporting the trial. Testimony quoted here is drawn from *Recorder* reports, as cited in *The Memorable Duel At Perth*, by Judge Edward Shortt (1970).

<sup>6</sup> They were among the 25 men appointed as magistrates for Bathurst District when it had been carved out of Johnstown District in 1822.

<sup>7</sup> See *Field of Blood: Locating the Site of the Last Fatal Duel*, by Shaw/Spence/Taylor/Crampton (2016)  
<https://www.perthhs.org/documents/last-duel-location-shaw.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The site of the duel had been intentionally chosen so that the Sheriff and Magistrates of Bathurst District would be less likely to interfere and prevent it.

Magistrates Morris and Berford and Coroner George Hume Reade (1793-1854)<sup>9</sup> convened an inquest on the evening of the same day, June 13th. It was completed the following morning and the jury returned a verdict of 'wilful murder' against all participant survivors (Wilson, Robertson and LeLièvre). Wilson and Robertson were incarcerated in the local jail pending trial, but no serious attempt was made to apprehend LeLièvre.

As Lyon had been killed in the District of Johnstown, the August 1833 trial of Wilson and Robertson took place at Brockville, seat of the Johnstown District Courts.<sup>10</sup> In preparation for the proceedings, the Bathurst magistrates reportedly turned the pistols over to Johnstown District Sheriff Adiel Sherwood (1779-1874). In her book *The Wilsons of North Sherbrooke*, Barbara Griffith wrote that, in a 1949 interview, descendants of John Wilson's family said the pistols were,

*... taken to court at Brockville for the trial which ensued, and were in the possession of the then-Sheriff Sherwood, and were finally placed as 'souvenirs' with the Sherwood sisters ...*



**Sheriff Adiel Sherwood  
(1779-1874)**

Hearsay and oral tradition are not always completely accurate in their detail, but usually contain the kernel of truth. Following the trial, the weapons could have been kept by Sheriff Sherwood for some time, as the Wilson account recalls, even regarded as "*souvenirs*" by his seven daughters,<sup>11</sup> but other evidence suggests the weapons were only in the Sherwood home for a few months at most. By January 1834, the pistols seem to re-appear in Perth. In his account of the duel, Judge Edward McLeod Shortt (1915-1978) wrote,

*It may be no coincidence that the ledger of a local blacksmith contains, under the name of Thomas Radenhurst, an entry for 1834, 'omitted Jany. 9, cleaning two pistols 2/6'".<sup>12</sup>*

Although the blacksmith had forgotten to make the account entry at the time, he corrected his ledger to include the January 9, 1834 cleaning of two pistols brought to him by Perth lawyer Thomas Mabon Radenhurst (1803-1854)<sup>13</sup>. Seven months after the duel and five months after the trial the pistols were apparently back in Perth.

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<sup>9</sup> Reade styled himself a 'doctor' but had never actually studied medicine; he was a former British Army Apothecary. Nevertheless, he practiced medicine at Perth 1817-1837.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson and Robertson were both acquitted at trial on August 9, 1833. Most histories credit the verdict to the skill of Wilson's self defense, but Rev. William Bell thought the young men escaped conviction because "... *the jury were Irish, who consider fighting commendable, rather than a crime*". Wilson left Perth in February 1834. He became the first Warden of London District in 1841, was elected to Parliament in 1847 and was appointed a County Court Judge in 1863.

<sup>11</sup> Adiel Sherwood and his wife Mary Baldwin (1782-1854) had eight daughters (seven surviving infancy) and two sons (one surviving infancy); Charlotte (1800-1850), Julia (1802-1842), Maria (1806-1890), Matthew (1807-????), Sophia (1809-1896), Caroline (1812-1879), Amelia (1815-1893), Mary (1819-????), Harriet (1822-????) and William (1825-1893).

<sup>12</sup> *The Memorable Duel At Perth* (1970), by Judge Edward Shortt. Regrettably Shortt does not record the location of the blacksmith's ledger. The implication is that c1970 it was in the collection of the Perth Matheson House Museum, but a search in 2021 could not locate it (and the search goes on). Nevertheless, that Shortt had examined and accurately quoted from the ledger cannot be doubted.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to his law practice Radenhurst represented Bathurst District in the Legislative Assembly 1828-1830 and was regarded as the "*father and champion of Reform in Lanark County*". He served as Bathurst District Treasurer from 1840 and was named Queen's Council in 1850.

In 1833 John Wilson was a law student articling in the Perth law office of James Boulton (1801-1878), as was his second at the duel, Simon Fraser Robertson.

At the same time, Robert Lyon (1812-1833) and George Byron Lyon (1815-1876) were studying law in the office of Thomas Radenhurst. Robert was the much younger brother<sup>14</sup> of Captain George Lyon (1790-1851), a half-pay officer<sup>15</sup>, army pension agent, magistrate, mill owner and distiller at the Richmond settlement (later elected to the Upper Canada Legislature 1844-1847). George Byron Lyon was the son of Captain George Lyon and his wife Catherine Radenhurst (1793-1857), the sister of Thomas Mabon Radenhurst; thus, the nephew of both Thomas Radenhurst and Robert Lyon.

According to Judge Edward Shortt, the pistols next passed to George Byron Lyon who, "... as a lad of sixteen witnessed the death of his uncle and presumably acquired the pistols as a melancholy souvenir of the event".<sup>16</sup>



*John Wilson (1807-1869) in later life as a Middlesex County Judge.*

George Byron Lyon left Perth at about the time he was called to the bar in 1839. He may have taken the pistols with him at that time or may have taken possession at a somewhat later date. In 1844, he married Mary Matilda Ottley Fellowes (1822-1912)<sup>17</sup> at Montreal and in 1856 changed his surname to 'Fellowes' to ensure that his wife could keep her maiden name and thus keep her substantial inheritance, a requirement of her father's will.<sup>18</sup> He was a lawyer and politician, represented the riding of Russell in the Legislative Assembly of Canada 1848-1861, from 1866 served as the first president of the Ottawa Street Passenger Railway (OCPR), a company formed to provide the first public transportation system for the city, and was elected Mayor of Ottawa in 1876<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Captain George Lyon and Robert Lyon were the children of George Lyon (1776-1837) and Elsbet Philips (1768-1845). Captain George Lyon, their eldest child, was 22 years older than Robert Lyon, their youngest child. George Lyon Sr. had been Bailie (Mayor & Magistrate) of Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

<sup>15</sup> 100th (99th) Regiment of Foot.

<sup>16</sup> *The Memorable Duel At Perth*, by Judge Edward Shortt (1970).

<sup>17</sup> Mary Fellowes had been born at sea off Africa in 1822, was baptized in 1826 at Gravesend, Kent, England, died at Toronto.

<sup>18</sup> Private Bill, No. 141, April 1856 – "*An Act to Change the Name of George Byron Lyons, and His Family, by Adding the Name Fellows* [provided that] *by the adoption and addition of the name Fellowes ... himself, his wife and children ... shall respectively recover, have, hold and possess and be capable of inheriting all real and personal property, and rights, interests, credits, monies and securities of any nature or kind whatsoever*". Also see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, George Lyon (1790-1851) [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lyon\\_george\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lyon_george_8E.html)

<sup>19</sup> George Byron-Fellowes was accused of voter fraud in connection with his 1846 run for a seat in the provincial legislature, was jailed for ballot stuffing when he won a provincial seat in 1857 and was charged with 11 counts of electoral fraud in connection with his election as Mayor of Ottawa, but died shortly after taking up that post and before the case could be heard. His brother, Robert Lyon (1828–1888), served as Ottawa Mayor in 1867.



**George Byron Lyon-Fellowes (1815-1876)**  
(Photo courtesy of Bruce Gordon)

From George Byron Lyon-Fellowes the pistols passed down to the eldest of his seven children, George Rockcliffe Lyon-Fellowes (1845-1905). George Rockcliffe had been born at Bytown (Ottawa) in 1845, became a civil engineer and in 1876 married Julia Isabella Ashworth (1853-1941)<sup>20</sup>. He died at Ottawa in 1905.

George Rockcliffe and Julia Lyon-Fellowes were the parents of three sons and a daughter<sup>21</sup> and the pistols found their way into the possession of their youngest son, Kenyon Fellowes. He was born at Ottawa in 1889 and in 1914 married Marjorie Copeland Monk (1890-1977). Kenyon Fellowes was a federal civil servant and Canada's first 'Collector of Income Tax', a post he held from 1916 through 1954. He died at Hull, Quebec in 1960, as did his wife in 1977.

During the 1925 Perth Old Home Week celebration, the Last Duel Pistols made a brief public re-appearance, their first since 1833. On loan from the Fellowes family, they were exhibited as part of an 'Art Show' "... in the McCrae<sup>22</sup> residence under the auspices of the Perth Historical Society".<sup>23</sup> Following the event, Historical Society Secretary Charles Cyril Inderwick (1894-1962) wrote to Kenyon and Marjorie Fellowes.

*Just a line to tell you how we appreciated your kindness in loaning us the pistols which were so admired and looked on with not a little awe as everyone here knows all about the duel. I myself live in the old Radenhurst house where Robert Lyon died<sup>24</sup>. Although the pistols did not spend a night in this house, it seems odd that they should come back to Perth after so many years.<sup>25</sup>*

For the next 36 years the Last Duel Pistols remained with the Fellowes family and out of public view until, as the Perth Museum prepared to open for its 1961 summer season<sup>26</sup>, the museum board announced that the exhibits would,

*... feature the actual pistols used in Perth's famous duel of 1833 ... recently donated to the museum by benefactors who have asked to remain anonymous".<sup>27</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> Julia Ashworth was born at Quebec City in 1853 and died at Hull, Quebec, in 1941.

<sup>21</sup> One of their sons was silent movie star Rockcliffe Fellowes (1883-1950) who appeared in nearly 50 Hollywood films between 1915 and 1929.

<sup>22</sup> W. R. McCrae - 107 Gore Street East, a house adjoining the McCrae grocery store (now Butcher's Edge), 109 Gore Street East (corner of Gore and Harvey Streets). The house was vacant in 1925 and was rented by the Perth & Lanark Historical Society as a temporary gallery.

<sup>23</sup> *Perth Courier*, July 10, 1925.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Lyon died instantly in the North Elmsley Township farm field where he was shot, but his body was carried back to the Radenhurst home at 66 Craig Street from where the funeral took place (the Inderwick home in 1925 and the Ontario Heritage Trust owned Inge-Va today).

<sup>25</sup> Inderwick to Fellowes, July 8, 1925.

<sup>26</sup> In 1961 the Perth Museum was housed on the third floor of the Public Library, 77 Gore Street East, now the McMillan Building. It moved up the street to Matheson House in 1966.

<sup>27</sup> *Perth Courier*, June 29, 1961.



The identity of the donors was a short-lived secret. When the museum published Judge Edward Shortt's book, *The Memorable Duel At Perth*, in 1970, it acknowledged that in 1960 the pistols,

*... were presented by Mrs. Kenyon Fellowes of Ottawa, whose husband was a grandson of George Byron Lyon Fellowes, Q.C.*"<sup>28</sup>

Although falling short of the perfectly unbroken chain of primary documentary support one would prefer, the provenance of the Last Duel Pistols, from the day they were dropped on the field of combat in 1833, until they were placed on display at the Perth museum in 1960, is reasonably well established.

- Seized by Bathurst Deputy Sherriff Alexander Powell (June 1834),
- Surrendered to Magistrates William Morris and W. R. F. Berford, Perth (June 1834),
- Passed to Johnstown District Sheriff Ariel Sherwood, Brockville (August 1834),
- Sent to Thomas Mabon Radenhurst, Perth (1834),
- Passed to George Byron Lyon-Fellowes, Bytown<sup>29</sup> (c1840-1850),
- Inherited by George Rockcliffe Lyon-Fellowes, Ottawa (c1876),
- Inherited by Kenyon Fellowes, Ottawa (c1905),
- Donated to Matheson House Museum, Perth (1960).



*Kenyon Fellowes (1889-1960)*

But what of the pistols before June 1833? Who was their original owner? Where did they come from? By what route did they reach Perth? How did they come into the hands of Robert Lyon and John Wilson on that fateful day in June 1833?

The famous weapons are a matched set of saw-handle, muzzle-loading, smooth bore, 62.5 caliber (1587.5 mm or 0.625 inch)<sup>30</sup>, percussion cap, dueling pistols. The barrels are octagonal, equipped with sighting guides and mounted on walnut stocks with ramrods in a holder beneath the barrel. The hammer, lock-plate and 'D' shaped trigger guard are all engraved. The pistols are stored in their original purpose-built cherrywood case, lined with green baize, that also provides space for necessary accessories, although only the barrel brush survives, the powder flask, ball-mold, etc. are missing. The upper tips of both hammers are broken off and the metal and woodwork are heavily scratched. The pistols were manufactured at some date in the 1820s when percussion cap technology replaced flintlock firing mechanisms. The country of origin and gunsmith are unknown. When examined at the Canadian Museum of History in 1996 their place

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<sup>28</sup> *The Memorable Duel At Perth*, by Judge Edward Shortt (1970), Endnote-22, Page-64.

<sup>29</sup> Bytown was re-named Ottawa in 1855.

<sup>30</sup> An unusually large caliber.

of manufacture was reported to be Spain, but there are no visible marks of any kind on the weapons, and no proof or explanation of that conclusion was offered in the Canadian Museum report.



*The pistols of the 'Last Fatal Duel In Upper Canada' June 13, 1833*

In his testimony at the Wilson-Robertson trial of August 1833, Bathurst Deputy Sheriff Powell, told the court that he did “*not know who owned the pistols*”.<sup>31</sup> Powell’s claim that he did not know (or could not have easily established) who owned the weapons lacks credibility, however. One can only suspect that he was protecting someone, no doubt someone of status and influence. As trial judge Justice James Buchanan Macaulay (1793-1859) made clear in his charge to the Wilson-Robertson jury, “*aiders and abettors were equally guilty*”<sup>32</sup> with those actually perpetrating a crime. Therefore, whoever furnished the pistols to Lyon and Wilson was subject to a charge of second degree murder if identified. In a community as small and insular as Perth, Deputy Sheriff Powell, investigating magistrates Morris and Berford, Coroner Reade, the Coroner’s jury, and any number of other leading citizens would surely have known who owned the pistols, but they seem to have closed ranks to protect that person.

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<sup>31</sup> As quoted in *The Memorable Duel At Perth*, by Judge Edward Shortt (1970).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

One account, published by the *Perth Courier* in 1948, states that the pistols were “*purchased, it is said, from a store in town and returned after the deadly issue*”.<sup>33</sup> Although that article offered no proof or further detail, it is possible that one of the more substantial local merchant firms of the day, such as W. & J. Bell, William Morris, or Benjamin DeLisle, could have imported the pistols. Even if that were the case, however, it seems most likely they would only have done so to fill a specific buyer’s order. Stocking expensive handguns in the tiny pioneer village of Perth would not be a sound business proposition. It would be more likely that the owner of 1833 had purchased the weapons in Montreal or the United States. The *Courier* article also contradicts itself regarding the “*purchase*”, by saying that the pistols were “*returned*” to the store following the duel, which suggests they had only been borrowed. The pistols could have been purchased from a local merchant but, as we have seen, they most certainly were not “*returned*”.

Although it was John Wilson who offered the challenge and thus set events in motion, as the son of a back-township pioneer farmer, he was clearly too poor to have owned anything like the pistol with which he killed Lyon. There is also no evidence that Wilson’s second, Simon Fraser Robertson, was any more capable of owning such expensive hardware. Public opinion generally blamed Lyon’s second, steamboat captain Henri LeLièvre, for promoting the duel. He was a francophone, the son of a French navy deserter, and the target of prior prejudice and no one showed any inclination to protect his reputation. Moreover, if the weapons had been his, surely some serious attempt would have been made to arrest him.

As none of the four principals could have afforded to own such expensive weapons themselves, they could only have borrowed the pistols (with or without permission) from their owner, whose identity has remained such a well-kept secret.

In a settlement so heavily populated by retired army officers there would have been no lack of pistols available. British Army officers of the early 19th century purchased their own side-arms, and many brought pistols with them when they retired on half-pay to Perth. Military pistols of the day, however, are very unlike the duelling pistols in the museum collection. Most importantly, the retired officers at Perth were veterans of the Napoleonic Wars and the American War of 1812-1814 when pistols used flint-lock firing mechanisms, not percussion caps.

A leading suspect for ownership of the pistols must be Captain George Lyon. While his brother Robert, age 21, and his son George Byron, age 18, surely lacked the resources to own something as expensive as a matched set of engraved dueling pistols, Captain Lyon, leading citizen of the Richmond Military Settlement, certainly could have owned them. Might Robert or George Byron Lyon have brought Captain George Lyon’s pistols with them when they came to study with Thomas Radenhurst at Perth? Or might Radenhurst have borrowed them from his brother-in-law, perhaps to fight a duel of his own (see below)? We know that, prior to the duel, Robert Lyon was seen at Perth with a pistol or pistols of some sort because, at the Wilson-Robertson trial, Deputy Sheriff Powell testified that “... *Lyon had practised at pistol shots. I had seen him and other young men coming from practising, as they stated to me*”<sup>34</sup>. George Byron Lyon must have been a participant in these practice sessions as he told Sheriff Powell that his uncle was “*a crack shot*”.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Perth Courier*, June 24, 1948.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in *The Memorable Duel At Perth* (1970), by Judge Edward Shortt.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



Before drawing any firm conclusions about Captain George Lyon however, it is useful to consider the Wilson-Lyon confrontation as just one of three duels fought by Perth men over the first 36 months of the 1830s.

On June 11, 1830, three years before the Lyon-Wilson duel, Perth lawyers Thomas Mabon Radenhurst<sup>36</sup> and James Boulton<sup>37</sup> faced each other at pistol point “*on one of the islands opposite this place [Brockville]... [but] after exchanging shots without effect ... an amicable arrangement took place through the interference of the seconds*”.<sup>38</sup>

Three years later, on January 11, 1833, another duel was fought, this one involving Perth's Government Land Agent, Alexander McMillan (1783-1850)<sup>39</sup> and his doctor, Alexander Thom (1775-1845)<sup>40</sup>. They chose to exchange pistol fire on the Brockville road south of town but “... *after exchange of shots, the seconds interfered and on mutual explanations being made, the matter was terminated amicably. Dr. Thom received a contusion on the leg.*”<sup>41</sup> The ‘seconds’ at that duel were Francis Henry Cummings<sup>42</sup> (1786-1834) representing Dr. Thom, and Thomas Mabon Radenhurst representing McMillan.

Then, six months later, on June 13, 1833, John Wilson felled Robert Lyon in what would prove to be the last fatal duel fought in Upper Canada.<sup>43</sup> As we have seen, in 1833 Wilson was a student in the law office James Boulton, while Lyon was a studying law under Thomas Radenhurst and living in the Radenhurst home at 66 Craig Street. Their patrons, Radenhurst and Boulton, detested each other and their duel of June 1830 was just one incident in a long running dispute that may well have contributed to the duel between their protégé's Robert Lyon and John Wilson in 1833.

It may not be coincidental that Thomas Mabon Radenhurst, whom we know from the blacksmith's ledger owned, or at least possessed a set of two pistols, emerges as a common denominator to all the three duels of 1830-1833: a principle in June 1830, a second in January 1833, and both relative and employer of the victim of June 1833.

One additional piece of evidence, from the diary of Reverend William Bell (1780-1857), must be considered, however. On learning of Robert Lyon's death, for which he held James Boulton's alleged encouragement of Wilson responsible, “... *Mr. Radenhurst, mad with liquor, had been running about the streets and through all the rooms of Mr. Boulton's house, with a pistol in his hand, seeking Mr. Boulton to shoot him*”. The pistols used by Lyon and Wilson had by then been seized by Deputy Sheriff Powell, so Radenhurst apparently still had at least one pistol with which to go hunting Boulton, i.e., a pistol not part of the duelling set and thus one that could have

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<sup>36</sup> Radenhurst's ‘second’, was named in the newspaper report only as Mr. M\_\_\_\_\_. We might speculate however that as Thomas Mabon Radenhurst served as second to Alexander McMillan in 1833, McMillan may have been Radenhurst's second in 1830.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Seconded’ by Henry Graham (1794-1846).

<sup>38</sup> *Brockville Gazette*, June 1830.

<sup>39</sup> McMillan was a former Captain of the Glengarry Light Infantry and later appointed County Registrar.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Thom had been Surgeon of the 42nd Foot and later Staff Surgeon.

<sup>41</sup> *Brockville Antidote*, V.1, No.7 January 1833 and *British Constitution* (Perth) January 14, 1833.

<sup>42</sup> Cummings, was a former Lieutenant of the 104th Foot, a Captain in the 1st Regiment of Lanark Militia, a local Magistrate, the founding editor of the *Brockville Gazette* and in 1830-1832 published the *Bathurst Independent Examiner* at Perth.

<sup>43</sup> Subsequent to the Wilson-Lyon duel of 1833 there were several non-lethal contests in Upper Canada (Ontario). The last fatal duel in what is now Canada was fought at Verdun, Quebec (Lower Canada) in 1838.

been used by Robert Lyon on his target shooting afternoons and could have been one of those cleaned in January 1834.



*The Thomas Radenhurst home at 33 Craig Street, Perth*

Circumstantial as it may be, however, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the weapons used on June 13, 1833, those now on display at the Perth Museum, were taken that fateful afternoon from the home of Thomas Mabon Radenhurst. They may have been the property of Captain George Lyon, brought into the Radenhurst household by the Captain's brother or son, or they may have been Radenhurst's own property, but it is easy to imagine Radenhurst's nephew and house-guest, Robert Lyon, 'borrowing' the pistols and thus furnishing the means of his own destruction.

That Thomas Mabon Radenhurst possessed duelling pistols in 1834, his own or those of Captain George Lyon, and was closely associated with all three duels ... Radenhurst-Boulton (1830), McMillan-Thom (1833), and Lyon-Wilson (1833) ... also presents the intriguing possibility that the same pistols, those now on display at the Perth Museum, could have been used in all three duels.

George Byron Lyon appears to have inherited the pistol set when his father died in 1851 or when Radenhurst died in 1854, but which one bequeathed him the "*melancholy souvenir of the event*" as Judge Shortt put it? Until more evidence comes to light, we do not know.

Even assuming that Thomas Radenhurst or Captain George Lyon were indeed owners of the pistols in 1833, we are still left with outstanding questions of provenance. Where did the pistols originate and where did Radenhurst or Lyon obtain them? Regrettably, as the weapons carry no gunsmith or other markings<sup>44</sup>, those questions must also go unanswered.

The travels of the last fatal duel artifacts did not entirely end when they were placed in their museum display case, however. On the night of September 24-25, 1974 thieves broke into the Perth Matheson House Museum and stole the pistols<sup>45</sup>. Fortunately, a week later, local police found them, "*buried in the back yard of a town-owned Basin Street property*".<sup>46</sup> Although four men were later charged in connection with a rash of other burglaries committed in the same timeframe as the museum break-in, no one was ever charged with theft of the pistols, probably because Museum Board President Peter Code had issued a statement promising that,

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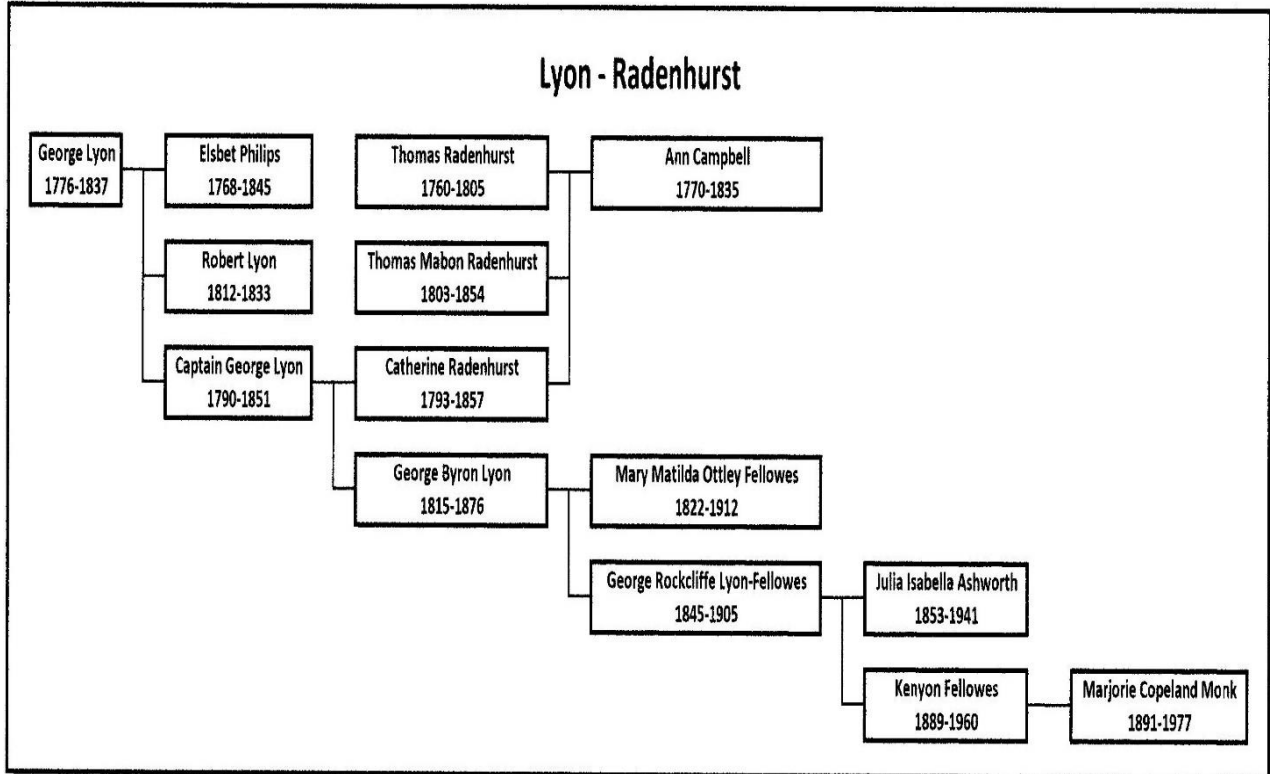
<sup>44</sup> One must doubt that the pistols are of Spanish origin as claimed by the Canadian Museum of History. There are thousands of images of antique duelling pistols on-line and the pistols in the Perth Museum collection look nothing like any other duelling pistol made in Spain in the same period or ever. They do however share almost exactly the same design, style, shape, technical and other characteristics of pistols made in the 1820s and 1830s by English gunsmiths such as B. Richardson of London & Manchester, T. J. Mortimer of London, H. Nock of London, or by John Mullin of New York, Richard Constable of Philadelphia, and others. (Although the pistols carry no exterior marking, the gunsmith could have placed his marks on the underside of the side plates).

<sup>45</sup> Along with some antique jewelry and a small amount of cash.

<sup>46</sup> *Perth Courier*, October 3, 1974.

... if the persons responsible for stealing two antique pistols .... return them, [authorities would] keep their identities secret ... As pistols, they are of poor value. They have value above price in one place and one place only – the Town of Perth.<sup>47</sup>

Three months later, on December 27th, the museum was burglarized yet again and, once more, the thieves stole antique firearms (three military automatic pistols and five revolvers)<sup>48</sup>. The 'Last Duel Pistols' were left untouched, however, probably because they had received so much publicity when stolen in September that it had become impossible to sell them.



- Ron W. Shaw 2021

<sup>47</sup> Code was not telling the whole truth. Although being in rather poor condition, on the collectors' market, even without their connection to the 'last fatal duel', the pistol set is today (2021) worth in excess of \$10,000 Cdn.

<sup>48</sup> All of which were subsequently recovered.