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NEWS OF A DUEL IN 1805



year after one of the most famous duels in American history between Vice President Aaron Burr and Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, a duel took place in Wood County between two prominent citizens: Stephen R. Wilson and Alexander Henderson. It was the only duel ever recorded north of the Ohio River.

Alexander Henderson was the father of George Washington Henderson who later established Henderson Hall in what is now Boaz, West Virginia. Stephen R. Wilson was married to Sarah Spencer Wilson, the daughter of Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr.

A letter from William Howe Cuyler to Jock B. Henderson (Alexander's brother) tells a detailed account of the events leading up to the duel. The letter states that there was a disagreement between Wilson and Henderson that took place when a group of gentlemen were having drinks at an inn. This resulted in name-calling and an accusation that Henderson had spoken disrespectfully of one of Sarah's sisters, which resulted in Wilson challenging Henderson to a duel. The account says the duel took place on October 8, 1805 on a bluff overlooking Blennerhassett's estate in Ohio. Henderson was wounded in the thigh and Wilson was wounded in the knee. Dr. Jewett and Dr. Joseph Spencer Jr. were called to attend to the wounded men.

News of the duel was reported in the *Ohio Gazette*:

"We understand that a Duel was fought on the 8th (of October, 1805) in the settlement of Belpre, Ohio, by Stephen R. Wilson and Alexander Henderson both of Wood County, Virginia. The distance agreed upon was fifteen steps, and to wheel and fire; when the word was given, they both advanced, the one in a deliberate walk, the other at full speed, till when within an arm's length of each other, when they both fired and fell side by side. Mr. Wilson received a ball in his knee which shattered it to pieces. Mr. Henderson a ball in his thigh near the upper joint, which it was feared would deprive him of his life; but we understand that they both are in a fair way of recovery."

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DUELLING.

This abominable practice, which has now become an accomplishment, appears by our fathers to have been execrated as it deserves. The following account is copied from a periodical work published in the year 1753, and is worthy of the attention of the tribunals of the present day.

"They write from Boston in New-England of the 8th of February, that on the Tuesday preceding, at the supreme court of judicature, assize, &c. held at Charlestown, for the county of Middlesex, John Cook, of Evesham in Great-Britain, was indicted for challenging Thomas Pellat of Corydon in Great-Britain, to fight a duel and the said Pellat being also indicted for accepting the challenge, they severally pleaded guilty, and were each of them sentenced to be carried with a rope about their necks to the gallows in a cart, and to sit on the gallows with the rope about their necks for the space of an hour, and afterwards to be committed to jail, there to remain without bail or mainprize for twelve months, and at the expiration of that time, to find security for their good behavior for twelve months more."

(Above) News of the duel also appeared in the Virginia Argus newspaper in Richmond, Virginia.

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