

“Flogging in Pictou”

Flogging, (or Latin Flagellum, meaning “whip,”) was a common form of public punishment used in Great Britain and Europe from as early as the Middle Ages. In the 16th and 17th Centuries, the punishment was embraced by the British and used against the Scottish people of Scotland during the years of the Scottish Rebellion. Several accounts of floggings to Scottish men were recorded being used to set an example of the punishment due to those who disrespected the English crown. It might have also been used to instill fear in the Scottish people and to ensure that no one try to fight back the invasions of the British.

Flogging was not only embraced by the English as a good form of punishment, but also the Scottish clansmen themselves used it within clan lines as punishment. However, there was a distinct difference in how it was used by both Scottish and British people. As previously mentioned, the British used it against the Scottish as a threat, using brutal and inhumane weapons such as metal-piked lashes, cat o’ nine tails, and sharpened switches. The Scottish clansmen never used Flogging as a form of merciless beating that marked the punished with any real damage, instead simply using thin leather whips.

The tradition of the more humane version of flogging was carried over to Pictou by the Scots and was used in Pictou as common punishment until the last legal flogging in 1822.

Floggings and other public punishments commenced in Pictou’s own Market Square on Water Street.

While fortunately public flogging ceased as a legal form of punishment in the late 19th century in both Great Britain and North America, flogging unfortunately remains a court imposed punishment in a number of third-world countries in the present day.