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Subject: Pigeon's Of Silver and Gold

Posted by [Jay](#) on Sat, 27 Jan 2024 18:30:59 GMT

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I was looking through some old historical events and ran across a curious Court Case in 1597 of two gentlemen were to compeer before the court, the charge cleaning out and disposing of pigeon droppings in his field in violation of the Pigeon Act. The gentlemen explained he recently coming of age and his inheritance of a derelict property with house and an empty pigeon house in disrepair. That he did indeed cleaned out said pigeon house disposing of the waste in his own fields. He professed he would never willing knowingly violate the law.

At this point I'm saying to myself, WTF. What so important about pigeon poop that it's regulated by the Crown and punishable by forfeiture and imprisonment. So I did a little digging and couldn't believe what I found. in the late 1500s to the late 1800s a pigeon was worth its weight in silver. A thrifty man could turn pigeon poop into gold was such the demand, why you ask? Saltpeter, there are no natural sources in the whole of Britain and bird poop has the highest concentrations of the salt and pigeon's poop became the best source therefore the birds became regulated for the defence of the country. Saltpeter is the third element required to make gunpowder along with carbon/charcoal and sulfur. Now I understood why, gunpowder was power and that aspect was severely regulated with overseers and inspectors.

The young gentleman confessed his ignorance to the law paid the fines, the messengers and was ordered to restore the bird house with fresh approved loom and stock and secure the pigeon house to production levels of its size.

At the time they were worried of outbreaks that could decimate the bird population putting an end to saltpeter production.

This was a huge income generator for well managed brood houses, turning pigeon poop into gold.

Here you can find King George I order:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ShhDAAAACAAJ&dq=pigeon%20manure%20%26%20King%20George%20I%20of%20England&pg=PA491#v=onepage&q=pigeon%20manure%20&f=false>

QUOTETH: In the 17th century, a vital ingredient in gunpowder was saltpeter, which could be extracted from pigeon manure. The compound was so important that King George I of England declared that all droppings were the property of the crown. Strict regulations were placed on dovecotes to ensure that each building contained the correct type of earthen floor.

True story.

Here in the USA: Passed in 1918, a U.S. federal law (40 Stat. 533) prohibited entrapping and

killing any homing pigeon owned by the U.S. This policy remained on the books in a few different forms until it was finally repealed in 1990.

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