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During the late 1800s, many range wars erupted between ranchers over water rights, grazing rights, or property and border disagreements.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE [[edit](#)]

- Interpret the significance of range wars in late nineteenth century
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KEY POINTS [[edit](#)]

- Until the invention of barbed wire in the 1870s, ranchers let their livestock graze on open-range public land.
 - Unbranded cattle were known as "mavericks" and could become the property of anyone able to capture and brand the unmarked animals.
 - The cowboy tradition grew out of the established Hispanic system of hacendados and vaqueros in the Southwest.
 - The Homestead Act of 1862 brought in an increased number of ranchers.
 - The earliest cowboys traveled on the Santa Fe Trail.
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TERMS [[edit](#)]

- vaqueros

The vaquero (Spanish pronunciation: [ba'keɾo], Portuguese: vaqueiro [va'kejɾu]) is a horse-mounted livestock herder of a tradition that originated on the Iberian Peninsula. Today the vaquero is still a part of the doma vaquera, the Spanish tradition of working riding. The vaquero traditions developed in Mexico from methodology brought to Mesoamerica from Spain, and also became the foundation for the North American cowboy.

- Santa Fe Trail

The Santa Fe Trail was a 19th-century transportation route through central North America that connected Franklin, Missouri with Santa Fe, New Mexico. Pioneered in 1821 by William Becknell, it served as a vital commercial and military highway until the introduction of the railroad to Santa Fe in 1880.

- Homestead Act of 1862

The Homestead Act of 1862 was one of three United States federal laws that gave an applicant ownership at no cost of farmland called a "homestead" – typically 160 acres (65 hectares or one-fourth section) of undeveloped federal land west of the Mississippi River.

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FULL TEXT [[edit](#)]

Range Wars

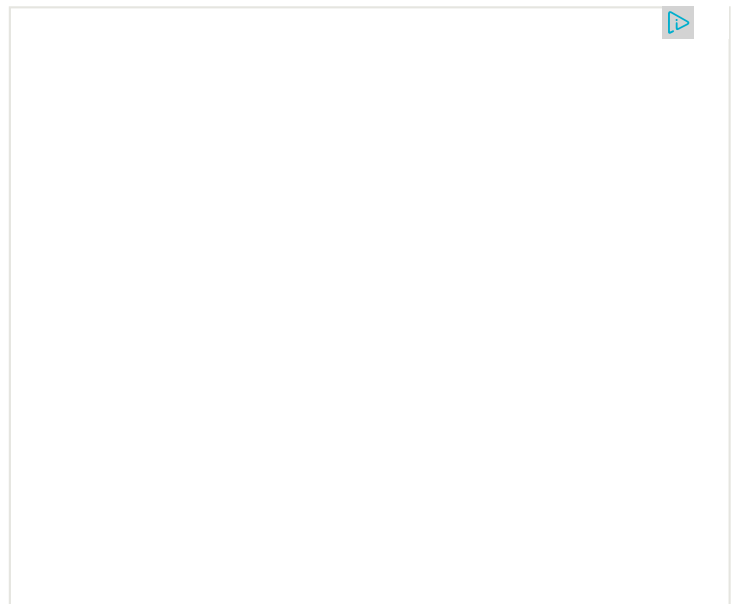
A range war is a type of armed conflict, typically undeclared, which occurs within agrarian or stock-rearing societies. The subject of these conflicts is the control of "open range" (or range land freely used for cattle grazing).

Typically triggered by disputes over water rights or grazing rights for this land, they often involve farmers and ranchers. Formal military involvement, other than to separate warring parties, is rare. Range wars were known to

occur in the American West. Famous range wars included the Lincoln County War, the Pleasant Valley War, the Mason County War, and the Johnson County Range War, sometimes fought between local residents and gunmen hired by absentee landowners.

1882 - 1885

During the late 1880s, a number of range wars erupted between cattlemen and sheepmen over water rights, grazing rights, and property and border disagreements. There had been quarrels between the work hands of both factions as far back as 1882, stemming from accusations of cattle and horse rustling leveled at both parties; as a result, some Tewksburys and Grahams were arrested on charges made by another rancher, Jim Stinson, that they all had taken part in rustling cattle from Stinson's ranch. There was also an undercurrent of racial prejudice against the Tewksburys, who were half-Indian, and referred to as "damn blacks" by the Grahams and by Stinson. Stinson made a deal with the Grahams to pay them each fifty head of cattle and see that they never served jail time if they would turn the state's evidence against the Tewksbury brothers. The Grahams took the deal and went to work for Stinson with the expressed vow to drive the Tewksburys out of Pleasant Valley. The case against the Tewksburys was thrown out of court for lack of evidence. The notion that this was a sheep v. cattle range war came about in part because the first killing in the feud was the murder of a Basque sheep herder who worked for the Daggs Brothers sheep



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ranch in northern Arizona. In 1885, the Tewksbury brothers leased some sheep from Daggs, and they sent the sheep to Pleasant Valley with the Basque sheep herder. The Basque sheep herder was murdered and robbed by Andy Cooper, who was one of the Graham faction. Overall, between twenty to thirty-four deaths resulted directly from the feud.

The Wells Outfit

A local cattleman, Fred Wells, had borrowed a lot of money in Globe, Arizona to build back his cattle herd. The Wells clan had no stake in the feud, but his creditors did. Wells was told to join their forces in driving off the opposition's cattle or forfeit his own stock. When Wells refused, his creditors demanded immediate payment of the loans and sent two deputies to attach his cattle. Wells gathered his clan and cattle together along with a young ranch hand and began driving his herd into the mountains, hotly pursued by the deputies. Thus Burnham was drawn into the conflict in 1884, and subsequently marked for death.

1886 - 1887

Shootout at Tewksbury's Ranch

In September, 1887, a grisly incident occurred which has been the basis of many stories about the feud, and which sparked a deadly chain of events. The Graham faction surrounded a Tewksbury cabin in the early morning hours and coolly shot down John Tewksbury and William Jacobs as they started out for horses. The Grahams continued firing at the cabin for hours, with fire returned from within. As the battle continued, a drove of hogs began devouring the bodies of Tewksbury and Jacobs. Although the Grahams did not offer a truce, John Tewksbury's wife came out of the cabin with a shovel. The firing stopped while she scooped out shallow graves for her husband and his companion. Firing on both sides resumed once she was back inside, but no further deaths occurred that day, and after a few hours the Grahams rode away.

1888 - 1892

Over the next few years, several lynchings and unsolved murders of members of both factions took place, often committed by masked men. Both the Tewksburys and the Grahams continued fighting, until only two were left. In 1892, Tom Graham, the last of the Graham faction involved in the feud, was murdered in Tempe, Arizona. Edwin Tewksbury, the last of the faction involved in the feud, was accused of the murder. Defended by well-known Arizona attorney Thomas Fitch, the first trial ended in a mistrial due to a legal

technicality. The jury in the second trial was dead-locked seven to five for acquittal. Edwin Tewksbury died in Globe, Arizona in April, 1904. By the time of his release, none of the Grahams remained to retaliate against him, nor was there anyone on the Tewksbury side to have avenged his death had anyone killed him.



Johnson County War Invaders, 1892

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