The Hatfield and McCoy Feud  
By Joyce Furstenau

1  The picture shows some members of the Hatfield family, taken about 1888. Anderson "Devil Anse" Hatfield is the second from left, seated and holding a gun.

2  Have you ever played the circle game Gossip? The first person whispers a message to someone sitting next to him or her and the message is repeated around the entire circle. The last one to receive it repeats the message aloud. Most of the time, the final message doesn't sound anything like the original.

3  So many tales have been told about the Hatfield and McCoy feud that no one will ever know the true story. The story has been told so many times that it has become a metaphor for family feuds. The story involves two West Virginia and Kentucky back-country families. The McCoy clan lived mostly on the Kentucky side of the Tug Fork River. The Hatfield clan lived on the West Virginia side. Both families were some of the first settlers in the area.

4  When the American Civil War broke out, most of the Hatfields sided with the Confederacy. Anderson "Devil Anse" Hatfield led the Hatfield clan when it came to confrontations. The McCoys sided with the North. Several McCoy family members went off to fight for the Union Army.

5  In the Hatfield-McCoy area, the local Homeguard were ex-confederates called the "Logan Wildcats" including Devil Anse Hatfield. The Homeguard was loosely connected to the Confederate Army. It was their job to be the last defense against any invading Union forces. There was no one around to see to it that they did not take their "defense" too far.

6  It is thought that the first real violence occurred sometime in 1865. It was a feud over the murder of returning Union soldier, Asa Harman McCoy. Harman had been discharged from the Union army early because of a broken leg. A few days after he returned home, he was murdered. The Logan Wildcats took the blame. As a result, Devil Anse Hatfield was one of the first suspects. It turned out later that he was actually at home sick at the time of the murder. There was a brief investigation, but no one was ever held accountable for the murder.

7  The second incident occurred in 1878 over the ownership of a hog. Floyd Hatfield had it and Randolph McCoy said it was his. The Hatfields thought since the pig was on their land, it was theirs. The McCoys said they knew the pig belonged to them because of the identifying "notches" in the pig's ears. The two families faced off in court. Ironically, Preacher Anse Hatfield, a Baptist minister and justice of the peace, presided over the case of the six McCoys involved in the dispute.

8  Bill Staton, a relative of both families, swore to Floyd Hatfield's ownership. This caused the McCoys to lose. Within months of the trial, Bill Staton was dead, murdered by Sam and Paris McCoy.

9  Although Sam was tried for the shooting, it was useless. The McCoys were enraged that Sam had stood trial at all. Instead of gratitude, they felt an even greater hatred for the Hatfield clan. It wouldn't take much for the seething frustrations of both families to burst into all-out
The next incident was a romance that blossomed between Roseanna McCoy, daughter of Randolph Hatfield, and Johnse Hatfield, son of Devil Anse Hatfield. They met at a social event after the election of 1880. The attraction was instant and mutual. Later in the day they snuck away from the festivities to be alone. When they returned, Roseanna realized her brother had gone home without her. She did not want to reveal her new love to her family. She was afraid to return home. Johnse suggested Roseanna come home with him to the Hatfield cabin. She ended up staying several months, all the while begging for her father's permission to marry Johnse Hatfield.

Devil Anse would not hear of it. He finally sent his wife and daughter to bring Roseanna home. But Roseanna did not forget Johnse. She tried to meet him secretly in the woods. Unfortunately for Roseanna, the McCoys followed her and took Johnse prisoner. They told Roseanna they were taking him off to jail in Pikeville. Roseanna knew the McCoys would kill him before he ever saw Pikeville. She rode off to tell Devil Anse about what had happened. He quickly rounded up his sons and rode off to reclaim his son. He cut off the McCoys en route and rescued Johnse without a scratch.

Tempers were fired up by now. It didn't take much to ignite an all out war. That's exactly what happened when Roseanna's brothers, Tolbert, Pharmer, and Bud, stabbed Devil Anse's brother, Ellison Hatfield, twenty-six times on Election Day in 1882. The McCoys finished him off with a shot in the back. Three days later, the three McCoy brothers paid with their own lives. They had been tied to pawpaw bushes and shot several times.

The feud was red-hot by now. It reached its peak with a New Year's massacre in 1888. Several of the Hatfields surrounded the McCoy cabin and opened fire. The cabin was also set on fire. Two of Randall McCoy's children were murdered and his wife was beaten and left for dead. The feud continued until more than a dozen members of the two families were dead. The governors of both Virginia and Kentucky had to call up the state militia to bring back order. Newspapers wanted to know "What in the Sam Hill is going on up there?"

Later that year, Wall Hatfield and eight others were arrested and brought to trial. The men were all found guilty. Seven of them received life imprisonment while one was executed by hanging.

The families finally agreed to stop the fighting in 1891. The descendants of both men have gone on to honor their states and nation as governors, educators, and physicians.

~Trying to squash a rumor is like trying to unring a bell. ~Shana Alexander~
# The Hatfield and McCoy Feud

1. In which state did the McCoy clan live?

   ____________________________________________

2. In which state did the Hatfield clan live?

   ____________________________________________

3. What did the Hatfield Homeguard call themselves?
   - [A] Yellow Cougars
   - [B] Patriots
   - [C] Red Devils
   - [D] Logan Wildcats

4. The Hatfield-McCoy incident in 1878 was over what?
   - [A] An escaped cow
   - [B] Water rights
   - [C] A logging road
   - [D] The ownership of a pig

5. What was the third incident that caused a problem between the Hatfields and McCoys?

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6. In what year did the McCoys and Hatfields agree to stop fighting?
   - [A] 1991
   - [B] 1901
   - [C] 1888
   - [D] 1891