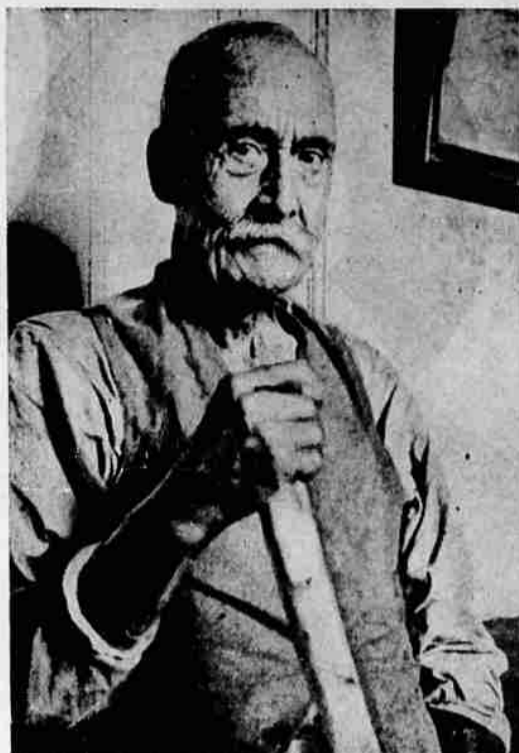


Graham-Tewksbury Clans Wage Grim War



Dan O'Carroll, Now Dead, Was a Participant in the Bloody Pleasant Valley War Between Sheep Owners and Cattlemen.



Old Rock Store in Pleasant Valley Where Feudists Fought Is Still Standing. Left: Rev. Hamilar Pool, Going Into Action.



Edward Tewksbury, Who Escaped Punishment in the Murder Trial, Was the Last Man Left Alive in Long Feud.

One Family Raised Cattle, The Other Brought In Sheep, And Because The Tewksburys Were Partly Indian, The Feud Ended When Only One Man Lived

THIS is the second and final chapter in the vindictive "Vengeance Valley" feud, fought between cattlemen and sheep owners—two families sworn to destroy each other, and who succeeded so well that only one member was left alive. Mr. Arnold tells the story in full detail for the first time.—Editor's note.

Part 2.

By Oren Arnold

UP TO this point in the Pleasant Valley War, the Graham and the Tewksbury families had been fighting each other for four or five years, engaged in the bloodiest, most vindictive feud western America ever knew. There was an enmity so fierce that the law itself could not halt the fighting, and vivid recollections of it are still heard about northern Arizona, scene of the trouble, to this day. This despite the fact that "the last man" of the losing side was killed more than 30 years ago.

The trouble started, as I have told, in an argument over rich green pasturage in Pleasant Valley. Cattlemen who first settled there claimed a monopoly, and established the picturesque Mogollon Rim, a cliff formation 150 miles long, as the "dead line" below which sheep raisers might not bring their animals. When sheep herds did come down, the fighting began.

The Grahams were cattlemen, the Tewksburys were defending sheep. Actually there was grass in abundance for all, but the "principle" of the thing (as in most fights!) caused the trouble. Big Tom Graham, leader of his family and their friends, was a hard and vindictive man. And the Tewksburys were half Indian by breeding, which made them a fierce group, too.

After the horrible incident in which the hogs partly devoured two human bodies, under cover of rifle fire, and widows of the slain men braved bullets to bury their dead, a lull came in the fighting. This cessation of hostilities extended over several months. Then some foolish Tewksbury partisan again brought a herd of sheep below the Rim.

IN THE dead of night, while the woolies were all bedded down in tranquil sleep, several Graham horsemen rode up.

"Whoo-o-o-p eeya-a-a-ah!" they shouted and screamed, and so stampeded the animals with their noise. They had planned it so as to drive the valuable beasts toward a rock cliff some 600 feet high.

There in the dead of night they drove the sheep right to this cliff rim (not Mogollon Rim, which was much higher and longer) with such stampeding speed and fright that the animals just plunged over by the hundreds and piled up dead below. Then the horsemen concealed themselves to wait.

In a short time the expected happened. Two of the Tewksburys, awakened by the stampede, had grabbed their rifles and followed the herd. They easily tracked the beasts right to the cliff.

"By God, I believe they went over!" one of the men exclaimed, cursing in anger.

Together the two Tewksburys went to the rim and peered down, leaning away out over the edge in their anger and anxiety, to see their sheep.

Crack! Crack! From the darkness came two quick rifle shots. And the two Tewksburys joined their sheep in death below!

NEWS of this dramatic and tragic event spread like a forest fire and in a day or two all of Pleasant Valley was in arms again, swearing to kill enemies on sight. In spite of themselves, many disinterested persons were drawn into the family feud. That was the tragedy of this war in isolated Pleasant Valley, away up in the mountains of northern Arizona. The Grahams and the Tewksburys might have fought it out in a few months and been done with it, but all their friends and many casual acquaintances were dragged into it as well.

A Tewksbury was accused of poisoning some of the Graham cattle one day, and forthwith a search was started for him. The man was cut off from his friends by some ruse, and had to

flee alone with a half dozen or so mounted Grahamites pursuing.

But, as we know, the Tewksburys were half Indian of blood, and had been reared in the wilds anyway. They were therefore skilled trappers, and skilled at concealing their own trails when necessity arose. This fellow led his pursuers a merry chase, knowing that his life depended on it, but he was on foot and the Grahamites were on horses.

John Henry Blevins, so I was told, headed this pursuing party, but I am not sure. I talked with Mr. Blevins and photographed him a short time ago, for he is one of the few living men who were actually combatants in that feud, but he is a fierce and stern old man and I learned nothing from him direct. I was a little bit awed by his manner, and other residents in Pleasant Valley warned me that he was a dangerous man even today.

AT ANY rate, the fleeing Tewksbury was brought home by a horse, a few hours later, or a part of him was! The horse was tied to one end of a rope, and the man's body to the other! Yes, it's a gruesome picture, but this was a terrible feud.

Still the Tewksburys got even, got revenge. They did so not by a counter-attack themselves, but by a peculiar and bloody circumstance which they themselves did not control, but which must have given them immense satisfaction. The law, in the person of Sheriff Commodore Owens, one of their faction, stepped in dramatically to set another high mark in western violence.

A tough member of the Graham army named Andy Cooper had been stealing, and people complained to the sheriff about it. This sheriff Owens had headquarters at Holbrook, in Apache County, Arizona. He was a strong and fearless man, with a certain sense of justice, even if he were allied with the Tewksburys.

Owens' plan, as he himself explained it later, was to "lay low" for a time until he could actually get evidence of Cooper's thievery, then pounce onto him for the arrest. As matters stood at first, he had a warrant but no proof of guilt, and it was likely that any jury would free him. Sure of his guilt, Sheriff Owens did not want him to go free.

And so Owens waited, and watched. He appeared to be disinterested. So much so, in fact, that loafers and hangers-on about the saloons in Holbrook began to taunt him and bait him unmercifully.

"Wa'al, too bad we got a sheriff who's ascairt of a rustler," one loafer would remark to another, in the sheriff's hearing.

"Ya'ap, too bad. Reckon's he's been milk fed. He'd oughter have raw meat fed to him, haw-haw-haw!" was the answer, usually.

One rough wag even composed a little ditty which he sang to music:

"We got a sheriff with plenty of brains,
But he ain't got nerve to back 'em;
We got rustlers on our plains,
But sheriff's afeared to track 'em!"

SHERIFF OWENS heard several of the other insults and was aloof and contemptuous of them. But after awhile a man's pride will weaken in the face of ridicule, deserved or not. When Owens first heard that silly little ditty, he saw red.

"By th' eternal I'll show you scum who's afraid!" he roared at the men baiting him, with an oath. They laughed, as he mounted his horse and rode away.

Andy Cooper, the outlaw in question, was known to be staying in a cabin with his mother, Mrs. John Blevins (a relative of the John Henry Blevins now living, mentioned herein), located a short distance from the village of Holbrook. Sheriff Owens didn't know whether anybody else would be in the cabin or not, and didn't care. He just rode out.

In the front yard he dismounted, dropped his horse's reins, and took his repeating rifle from its saddle holster. Nobody was in sight. He went to the front door and knocked. Presently Cooper himself stuck his head out the door. "Whatta you want here?" Cooper snarled.

"I've got a warrant for your arrest," said Mr. Owens. "You'll have to come with me." Cooper glared at him a moment, then finally said, "All right, let me get my hat."

He went back inside and closed the door. After a few seconds Owens backed away, holding his rifle at his hip.

In a flash the door was jerked open and a pistol shot fired from within. Owens safely ducked, and the bullet killed his horse behind him.

But in the same breath he also fired his own gun, striking his would-be assassin in the chest, causing a mortal wound.

A moment later, so Owens told, his alert eye caught slight motion of a curtain or something at a window to the left. Instantly the rifle swung over and put a bullet just below the window sill, through the cabin boards. That shot struck Andy Cooper himself in the abdomen and killed him.

BEFORE the clock could have ticked twice more, a man named Mose Roberts suddenly appeared around an outside corner of the cabin, to Owens' right. Roberts carried a big pistol, already leveled and drawing a bead on the sheriff's head.

Roberts never pulled his pistol trigger. With his rifle still at his hip, Owens shot through the man's brain.

Thus were three attackers slain in almost a few seconds. Sheriff Owens had no idea how many others were in the cabin. He could hear sundry wails and groaning and a commotion of some sort. Then the front door popped open again and a boy ran out. Clinging to him and pleading tearfully was Mrs. Blevins, the boy's mother.

The lad was not more than 16 years of age. He had seen the other three men shot down when they would have killed the sheriff. He was a Blevin, and his family was allied with the Grahams, whereas the sheriff was a Tewksbury partisan. He was blind with fury.

Mrs. Blevins evidently knew that death threatened her son, so she begged him and tried to hold him in. He carried a pistol, and he fought to free his arm.

This little drama continued there for almost a minute, with Sheriff Owens tense and alert, holding his rifle in readiness for anything. Suddenly he fired, again from the hip position.

"I shore hated to kill that boy, he was such a youngster," the sheriff told later. "But still it was my life or his'n. With a pistol he could shoot like a man. He jerked away from his mammy and aimed at me. There wasn't nothing else I could do."

NBODY else came out, and after a bit Mr. Owens backed away then walked on back to town.

"Wa'al, sheriff, whar's yore prisoner? Did he scare you off ag'in? Haw-haw-haw!" the loafers resumed their taunts.

The sheriff remained calm.

"Some of you men better go out there and

clean up" he suggested. "It's a mite messy in that cabin."

And messy it was!

The place was a shambles. Four dead and bloody men, blood on the bed, the floor, the walls, even on the ceiling, the worst sight ever they had beheld, said those townsmen—with the woman squatting in the midst of it, hysterical and practically insane, crying and sobbing wildly.

Loss of those four men weakened the Graham forces materially. All had been desperate fighters, thus valuable partisans in any feud. Tom Graham, their leader, was naturally infuriated, but there seemed little he could do. He dared not ride in and shoot down the sheriff. First of all, the sheriff had demonstrated an uncanny ability to protect his own life, and certainly Tom Graham could not hope to catch him napping now. Second, he was the sheriff, an authorized arm of the law, and to murder him would bring more than normal resentment, probably outside militia and so great trouble indeed. Tom therefore bided his time.

TOM didn't have long to lay his plans for revenge, however. News of this and other exciting and bloody episodes of the feud had spread, and there was a growing demand for putting a stop to it. The reader will understand, of course, that these events occurred in the 1890's, when very few white people lived in all of Arizona, and the established courts and machinery of civilization were only in their infancy. Distances were very great, communication was limited to horse travel, and Pleasant Valley, scene of the feud, was very isolated anyway. In fact it still is far from anywhere, so to speak. The postoffice there, now called Young, is 75 miles from any railroad. The villagers around it get snowed in each winter—snow blocking the trails and roads and breaking telephone lines—so that they are cut off from the rest of the world, save for radio reception, for weeks at a time. About them is a beautiful, wild, virgin forest, little changed, like the people themselves, since the days of the feud.

Nevertheless, resentment against so much bloodshed was spreading. Hence Sheriff William Mulvern of Yavapai County, Arizona, one week led a posse of determined men across the mountain trails into Pleasant Valley to bring whatever force was necessary into play to stop the feud.

Sheriff Mulvern learned that two Grahams, Charlie Blevins and John Graham himself, were hiding from the posse in a cabin. The cabin was situated near a store. So the sheriff concocted a little ruse.

OSTENTATIOUSLY he and his posse galloped up to the store, inquired loudly for Blevins and Graham. Told that the two men were not there, the horsemen rode noisily away.

But instead of riding off, they halted a short distance down the trail and all crept back.



The Old Tewksbury Cabin Is Little Changed Since the Day It Was Attacked by the Grahams, and Hogs Partly Devoured the Bodies of 2 Men Killed in Gun Battle.

very quietly. Each man concealed himself behind a rock, part of an old wall, or other convenient breastwork, and settled down to wait. The trickery worked. Presently Graham and Blevins came from their cabin, mounted and rode out to the store. Each was heavily armed, but evidently suspicious of no immediate danger. They rode right into the line of the possemen's fire.

In a flash each man ducked low on his horse, drew his pistol and fired in the direction from which the sheriff's command had come, and spurred their mounts into a dash meanwhile.

But it didn't save them. A number of rifles barked, and both Graham and Blevins toppled off dead. Quietly the posse returned to its horses and rode away, leaving the dead where they lay.

Nor did the sheriff and his men accomplish anything more. After a few days of hunting around, they went on back to Prescott, whence they had come. The feud then settled into another spell of ambushing and sniping and murdering and such, until only two Grahams were left alive. One of these, James, died from natural causes.

That left only big Tom, the leader, who miraculously had been through most of the fighting and had escaped any injury at all.

But he was licked, now. Fed up with scrapping. Disgusted at the terrible toll. Getting along in years also. Therefore, he announced publicly that he was done—that he would give up the feuding and hating and lay down his guns. He swore he would never go armed again. And he kept his word.

HE MARRIED a young woman, and moved entirely away from the Pleasant Valley community, dropped his old profession of cattle raising and settled 175 miles to the southwest near the town of Tempe, Arizona, 10 miles from the present state capital city of Phoenix. There he began farming. He lived peacefully for almost a year, and Arizona citizens thought the old blood feud was ended for good. But Fate decreed that it must thrust its ugly head up one more time.

Tom Graham was riding on a wagon of hay one morning, from his farm toward the market in Phoenix. He was nearing the Twin Buttes school, when a shot from ambush suddenly struck him between the shoulders, and he fell backward, dead.

Two little school children had witnessed the dastardly act. They said that John Rhodes and Edward Tewksbury had been hiding in the bushes whence the fatal shot had come, and they believed Rhodes did the actual firing.

Horsemen formed a posse, and in a few hours both men were in custody. They were hailed before a justice, and the sobbing young widow of Tom Graham faced them there at the official hearing.

Testimony was being taken, and the justice was making a little talk on the legal procedure. Nobody observed Mrs. Graham as she quietly edged over toward Rhodes.

Suddenly she jerked a pistol from her shawl, stuck its muzzle in Rhodes' ribs and pulled the trigger.

SOME sort of a miracle must have saved him. Some spectators to that event declare that the pistol hammer was fouled in the woman's shawl. Others insist that the cartridge just didn't fire.

At any rate Rhodes' life was saved, and Mrs. Graham was taken away, hysterical.

Excitement about this murder and about the episode in the justice's room spread all over the southwest. Nobody wanted to see the old Graham-Tewksbury feud revived, but everybody wanted to see justice done. Rhodes and Tewksbury were tried, then giving a change of venue for a second trial. A prolonged legal battle ensued, ending finally with both men going scot free. Rhodes died later of tuberculosis.

Thus, with Tom Graham murdered, the Graham family was wiped out. Some of their benchmen remained, among them John Henry Blevins who still lives, but no actual member of the family.

And it happened also that Edward Tewksbury, who escaped punishment in these last trials, was the last of his family clan.

The last man—therefore victorious! If victory can be called such, at so tremendous a price.