

KEVIN  
COSTNER

BILL  
PAXTON

# HATFIELDS & MCCOYS™

## CLASSROOM GUIDE

### Terms To Define

Before or after watching these programs, ask students to define the following terms. Students can also write down their own list of terms to define as they watch.

Amend

Feud

Habeas Corpus

Hostility

Industrialization

Jurisdiction

Siege

Vendetta

Vengeance

### Introduction

The Hatfields and the McCoys – their names evoke images of a bitter feud between two American families. But many people may be unfamiliar with the story behind this legendary conflict. HISTORY® presents an all-new dramatic series entitled *Hatfields & McCoys™* and a companion documentary, *America's Greatest Feud: The History of the Hatfields and McCoys*, to examine this infamous rivalry and its lasting imprint as part of American folklore and history. *Hatfields & McCoys* is a powerful three-part series which captures the drama of the feud with a stellar cast including Kevin Costner as Hatfield patriarch Devil Anse Hatfield and Bill Paxton as McCoy family leader Randall McCoy. *America's Feud* provides an in-depth exploration of the historic broil, revealing new evidence historians have uncovered to explain the roots of the conflict.

The battle between the Hatfields and the McCoys took place in the wake of the Civil War along the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River, bordering Kentucky and West Virginia. The feud spanned decades, claiming the lives of dozens of family members and inciting deep disputes between the two states. At stake was the reputation of the region and the honor of both families as the story made national headlines. These programs provide an excellent opportunity for students to explore the contours of Appalachian life after the Civil War, and to discover how and why the legal system intervened. Students will also learn about the development of the timber and coal industries, and the growth of the U.S. economy as the nation reunited after the war.

### Curriculum Links

The *Hatfields & McCoys* and *America's Feud: Hatfields & McCoys* would be useful for American History, Media Studies and American Culture courses. **Due to violence and the intensity of the subject matter, we recommend these programs for mature high school students and college students only.**





SOURCE: FEUD: HATFIELDS, MCCOYS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN APPALACHIA, 1860-1900 BY ALTINA L. WALLER



## Key Events

- 1865 - Asa Harmon McCoy, who fought on the Union side in the Civil War, is murdered. The Logan Wildcats, a local militia group which includes Hatfield family members, are suspected of the crime.
- 1878 - Floyd Hatfield is accused by Randall McCoy of stealing one of his pigs. A jury consisting of family members from both sides finds Hatfield not guilty. McCoy is furious. The key witness, Bill Staton, a McCoy who sided with the Hatfields, was later murdered by McCoy family members.
- 1880 - Johnse Hatfield, son of family leader Devil Anse Hatfield has a romance with Randall McCoy's daughter Roseanna. Reportedly Roseanna becomes pregnant with Johnse's child, but he leaves her before the baby is born. The next year, he marries her cousin, Nancy McCoy.
- 1882 - A fight at a local election between Ellison Hatfield and three McCoys erupts into major violence. Ellison is stabbed multiple times and dies shortly thereafter. The Hatfields seek revenge, murdering the three McCoy brothers. Despite warrants being issued for their arrest, no one is apprehended.
- 1887 - Perry Cline, a Pikeville, Kentucky lawyer who once lost a land dispute with Devil Anse Hatfield, asks for Kentucky authorities to reinstate the indictments against the Hatfields. He enlists the assistance of "Bad" Frank Phillips, a volatile local detective, to track down the Hatfields in West Virginia.
- 1888 - Hatfield family members attack Randall McCoy and his family at their home on New Year's Day. Two of Randall's children, Alifair and Calvin, are left dead, and his wife Sally is severely beaten. Randall escapes, but the house is burned to the ground.
- 1888 - Several Hatfield family members are arrested for their crimes and are held in Pike County; Kentucky and West Virginia courts debate about whether or not the Hatfields were legally detained. Governors of both states get involved, followed by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ultimately rules that the Hatfields can be tried in Kentucky.
- 1890 - Ellison "Cottontop" Mounts receives the death penalty for his role in the McCoy murders; several other members of the Hatfield family receive life sentences.
- 1890s-1900s - Railroad lines are completed throughout the Tug Valley, making it possible to transport coal and timber from the region. By the 1920s, many coal miners joined the United Mine Workers of America and were pitted against mining companies.





## Activities

**1. Mapping Appalachia.** The Hatfield/McCoy feud took place in the southern Appalachian region along the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River. Most of the Hatfields lived on the West Virginia side of the river, while most of the McCoy's lived on the Kentucky side. Ask students to locate the Tug Fork on a map and also to define and discuss the term "Appalachia." Working in groups, students can draw their own maps of the Appalachian region, focusing on the area in which the feud took place. Advanced students can write short essays about Appalachia and how the feud fit into the history of the region.

**2. Hatfield/McCoy Headlines.** As the feud gained momentum in the 1880s, newspaper reporters from throughout the country arrived in Kentucky and West Virginia to cover the story. Ask students to write newspaper headlines or photo captions about the Hatfield/McCoy feud. Students can search online or at the library for images of people related to the feud. In small groups, students can also analyze these photos and images: what do they reveal about the ways Appalachians were represented? (The National Archives' photo analysis worksheet will be helpful for this assignment: [www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf))

**3. Supreme Court Intervention.** In 1888, the U.S. Supreme Court intervened in the Hatfield/McCoy case. Ask students to locate the text of this case online: *Mahon v. Justice*, 127 U.S. 700 (1888). The key issues at stake in the case were whether or not the defendant was legally taken to Kentucky to stand trial, and whether his arrest and extradition to Kentucky was a violation of due process. Students can read sections of this case, define the following terms and discuss their meaning: habeas corpus, indictment, due process and jurisdiction. Advanced students can read the entire case and discuss the arguments of the Supreme Court. Do they agree with the final decision?

## Books

Evans, Mari-Lynn (Ed.), et al. *The Appalachians: America's First and Last Frontier*. (Random House, 2004). [Hardcover]

Waller, Altina L. *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

Williams, John Alexander. *Appalachia, A History*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

## Additional Websites

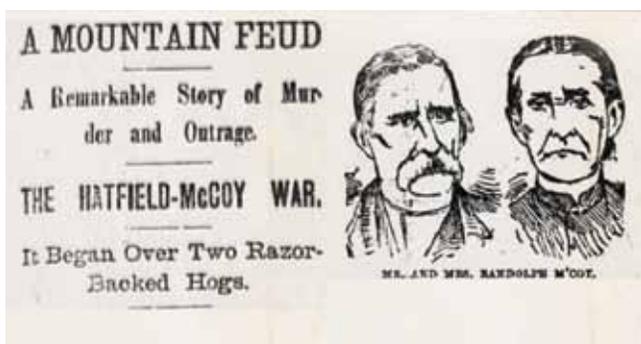
Learn more on History.com:

[www.history.com/hatfields-and-mccoys](http://www.history.com/hatfields-and-mccoys)

West Virginia Division of Culture and History:

[www.wvculture.org/viewer.aspx?GalleryId=43](http://www.wvculture.org/viewer.aspx?GalleryId=43)

Text of the U.S. Supreme Court case related to the feud: [caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=127&invol=700](http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=127&invol=700)



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

