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David A. Wolff
Arizona State University

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Wolff, David A., "Review of *A Vast Amount of Trouble: A History of the Spring Creek Raid* By John W. Davis" (1995). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1077.

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A Vast Amount of Trouble: A History of the Spring Creek Raid. By John W. Davis. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993. Preface, maps, photographs, illustrations, epilogue, appendix, directory of names, bibliography, index. x + 291 pp. \$22.50

T. A. Larson states in his *History of Wyoming* that the sheepman-cattleman conflict over the range became so violent in Wyoming that it "must be rated as a major theme of the state's history" (p. 369). In the years around the turn of the century, at least fifteen people were killed and thousands of sheep were slaughtered. Despite this, most Wyoming range war literature deals only with the feud between

the large cattlemen and the small ranchers, such as in the 1892 Johnson County War. In *A Vast Amount of Trouble: A History of the Spring Creek Raid*, John W. Davis has begun to correct that imbalance.

The Spring Creek raid involved the killing of three sheepmen and a number of sheep by seven cowboys in 1909. The sheepmen had driven their animals across a "deadline"—an invisible boundary that cattlemen would not allow sheep to cross—and the raid resulted. Such raids were not unusual, so what makes the Spring Creek raid special? For the first time in Wyoming history, cattlemen involved in a sheep raid were convicted and sent to jail. This slowed the range raids and ended the killings.

To examine the raid, Davis uses an interesting tactic; trained as an attorney, he explores the prosecution of the case. Instead of building up to the raid, Davis starts with it as the crime scene. He then follows the sheriff and the county attorney as they piece the case together. The investigation, the grand jury hearing, the trial, the incarceration of the guilty, and their ultimate release are all covered. These events are so much the Spring Creek raid to Davis that when the last two men were paroled in 1914, he states that the "raid was finally over."

What of the wider significance? Here Davis only meekly treads. The convictions seemingly changed the dynamics on the range, with the cattlemen subdued. But the trial did not do this alone. The changing power relationship had been a long time coming. Sheep had dominated the range for years before the raid, and in 1905 the Wyoming Wool Growers Association organized as an effective political agent. Davis touches on these points but does not stress them as vital to the success of the prosecution. At times, the sheriff and the county attorney seem to be battling everyone else in the county. Why did they persevere? What was their motivation? In the end, the sheriff becomes the warden of the state penitentiary and the county attorney gains a judgeship. Were there more political maneuvers

involved than apparent? Tying the trial more emphatically to the wider political scene may have answered some of these questions, and would have placed the Spring Creek raid in a larger context. Nonetheless, Davis has written a very interesting and readable account of the raid, one that should appeal to Wyoming historians and those interested in Western legal history. But there is still room for more books on the sheepman-cattlemen conflict.

DAVID A. WOLFF
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
Arizona State University