

We Found Them: The Strangest Wars In Human History

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We Found Them: The Strangest Wars In Human History

By Stacie Hougland



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You mean a bird started all this? These hilariously odd battleground scenarios are straight out of a Mel Brooks movie. Read on for all the strangest wars they never taught you about in history class!

The War of the Whiskers (1152)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Eleanor of Aquitaine was already not happy when her husband, France's King Louis VII, refused to regrow his shaven beard. With no male heir, their troubled union was annulled. Eleanor then married the future King Henry II of England and gave him FIVE sons.

Now hairless *and* heirless, Louis VII started an equally impotent war against Henry that he lost badly. Humiliated, Louis VII went back to France to marry another woman who also didn't bear him sons.

The Transnistria War (1992)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

This four-month war sounds like something out of a Mel Brooks movie: Opponents Russia and Moldova fought during the day, then partied at night after evening cease-fires. Perhaps not surprisingly, it finally ended in a truce. Who's ready for happy hour?

Three Hundred and Thirty-Five Years' War (1651-1986)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

This war lasted so long, the countries fighting it (Netherlands and the Isles of Scilly off Britain) forgot they were even involved, or why. Since nobody could remember why it started, or if war was even officially declared, a peace treaty was signed in 1986.

The Emu War (1932)



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

This week-long war was for the birds. Australian soldiers were sent to control emus who were destroying farmers' crops. The soldiers even joked they were doing battle with the giant birds.

The emus were having none of the military's nonsense, and were able to mostly elude the soldiers' buckshot. Finally the task force's commander gave up in disgust. Emus: 1, soldiers: 0.

The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Conflict between Britain and Spain had been brewing for a few years before a British mariner named Robert Jenkins claimed a Spanish pirate sliced his ear off in peacetime.

Enraged, the Brits declared war on Spain, but eventually lost. The stories of Jenkins showing his severed ear to Parliament are probably fake.

The Lijar-French War (1883-1981)



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Castell_de_Sant_Pedre_de_Ribera.jpg)

This war was as one-sided as it gets. Rumor around the tiny town of Lijar, Spain was that their king had been disrespected on a visit to Paris. All 300 Lijarians promptly declared war upon the country of France, which would have just patted the town on the head if it could.

When King Juan-Carlos of Spain visited Paris many years later, he was treated so respectfully the Lijar town council declared peace. Of course, no fighting ever took place.

Pork and Beans War (1838-1839)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

This border conflict that started between British and American lumberjacks in Maine got its nickname when American troops were sent more pork and beans than they could possibly eat. With no actual battles ever fought, we're guessing they put the munitions down for a knife and fork.

The War of the Golden Stool (1900)



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Golden_Stool.jpg)

When a British governor visited the Ashanti people in Africa to calm their rebellion against the Empire, he demanded to sit on the Ashanti queen's Golden Stool. Furious, the Ashanti declared war. The Golden Stool was hidden in the forest until 1920; the British searched but never found it.

The Pig War (1859)



SIMPLE.WIKIPEDIA.ORG

This boar-der conflict near Vancouver was caused by a British-owned pig who trespassed into an American farmer's crops. American and British troops quickly occupied San Juan island in a stalemate that lasted several weeks. After no actual fighting occurred, both sides agreed to jointly occupy the island.

The Football War (1969)



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After beating Honduras in a FIFA qualifier (a match that had fans duking it out in the stands), El Salvador launched an offensive against Honduras over its treatment of Salvadoran immigrants. After four days El Salvador withdrew at the threat of sanctions, but the countries remain at odds to this day.

The Watermelon War (April 15, 1856)



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While visiting Panama, a drunk American refused to pay a vendor for a piece of watermelon. The argument escalated into a full-scale riot. Demands to "occupy the isthmus" resulted in American troops unlawfully invading Panama five months later.

The U.S. used the conflict as an excuse to demand territory and money as compensation, but in the end only got \$400,000 out of the tiny country.

The War of the Oaken Bucket (1325-1329)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Soldiers from Modena crept into Bologna one night and stole the bucket filled with loot from the town square, which they refused to give back after being asked nicely. The Bolognese declared war, of course. To this day the bucket, which hangs in the Cathedral of Modena to this day.

The Pastry War (Nov. 1838-Mar. 1839)



SHUTTERSTOCKE/WIKIPEDIA

In 1828, a mob of Mexican rioters looted an expat French chef's cafe. The pastry maker requested compensation from the French government, but the letter sat unnoticed until 1838, when it crossed King Louis-Philippe's desk. Already furious at Mexico for defaulting on millions in loans, he demanded they pay the chef 600,000 pesos.

Mexico didn't want to shell out that kind of money, so instead they got shelled ON, by the battalion Louis-Philippe sent to Veracruz. After a year of battles (even famous Mexican general Santa Anna came out of retirement to fight the French; he lost a leg), the countries came to an agreement. In the end, Mexico paid up.

The Toledo War (1835-1836) -- a.k.a. Michigan vs. Ohio



Because nobody could figure out the geography of the Great Lakes, a thin strip of land became a disputed territory claimed by both Ohio and Michigan. Hundreds of armed men lined up on both sides to do battle. But despite all the saber-rattling, the only blood shed in the entire year was when a sheriff's deputy got stuck with a pocketknife.

When Michigan ceded the strip, a newfound Ohioan was said to have remarked, "Thank the Lord, I never did like that Michigan weather anyway." Today, you can trace the rivalry between the Detroit Tigers and Cleveland Indians, as well as some other sports teams, back to the Toledo War.

The Anglo-Zanzibar War (Aug. 27, 1896) -- History's shortest war



[IT.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://it.wikipedia.org)

At 38-45 minutes, this is the shortest war in history. When a sultan not favored by the British barricaded himself in the royal palace, hoping to ascend to Zanzibar's throne, the Brits declared it was go time.

The sultan refused demands to leave, so the Brits assembled their forces in the area for a skirmish that lasted under an hour. The sultan's side suffered 500 casualties, and he had to escape the country, while only one British soldier was hurt. Guess who got their way?

War of the Stray Dog (Oct. 18-23, 1925)



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Like the Pig War, an animal nearly caused an international catastrophe. Tensions had been high between Greece and Bulgaria for years. When a Greek soldier crossed the border chasing after his dog, shots were fired. (Another version has the Bulgarians crossing the border, but that's *so* not as interesting.)

The furious Greeks quickly invaded Bulgaria and were about to advance on a major city when the League of Nations stepped in to settle matters. Some 50 people lost their lives in the five-day skirmish.

The Nika Riot (one week in 532 A.D.)



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hippodrome_of_Constantinople.jpg)

In ancient times, Roman fans of chariot racing were as rowdy as modern-day soccer fans. The Blues and the Greens were zealous fans of opposing teams who temporarily united in their week-long uprising against Emperor Justinian. Why?

Two hooligans from each team had escaped after being taken in for rioting, and the Blues and Greens demanded they be pardoned. When they were not, the teams united in a massive riot. Justinian was quickly faced with a full-scale revolt, which he put down by bribing the Blues and taking the lives of the rest.

The Paraguayan War (1864-1870)



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](#)

In the 1800s, South America was plagued with territorial disputes. President Francisco Solano Lopez fancied himself as Paraguay's version of Napoleon Bonaparte, and declared war on Argentina, Uruguay and the Empire of Brazil. You can guess how that went.

Yeah, not so well. Paraguay suffered massive loss of life (70% of its adult men) in Latin America's most deadly conflict in history. The country was forced to cede territory, and it took decades for the population to recover. (Lopez perished during an 1870 skirmish.)

Battle on the Ice (Sept. 21-22, 1788)



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russia_50k_1992_Battle_of_Lake_Peipus.jpg)

Like something straight out of *Game of Thrones*, this battle between the Teutonic Knights of Estonia and Russia was waged on TOP of the frozen Lake Peipus.

Whoever thought starting a war on ice was a good idea should have been pilloried, or joined the L.A. Kings. The outnumbered knights retreated to a far end of the lake, which collapsed under the weight of their armor. Most lost their lives. To this day, Lake Peipus serves as a border separating Western Catholicism from Eastern Orthodoxy.

Battle of the Conch Republic (April 23, 1982)



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Key_West_International_Airport_Terminal_Building.jpg)

People in the Florida Keys jokingly refer to themselves as part of the Conch Republic, but they weren't joking when city-island Key West announced it was seceding from the Union. Why? They were upset over a U.S. Border Patrol roadblock and inspection point set up in front of Skeeter's Last Chance Saloon.

The Toledo War (1835-1836) -- a.k.a. Michigan vs. Ohio



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toledo_Strip.jpg)

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