Barbed Wire

Thomas Froreich

The primary author is the individual who drafted the first version of this section; a section that could have been modified since it was originally published.

When/Why It Was Made

The solution for fencing in the west came in 1874 with Joseph F. Glidden's perfected version of barbed wire. Before Glidden's invention the West was looking for a new type of fence, the timber supply was low and was too expensive to get imported to the treeless Plains. All the types of fences tried failed, from live plants, hedges, mud, and even smooth wire, none of these proving satisfactory.

Uses on Farms

Barbed wire was used as for fencing in livestock on farms in the West, and really farms everywhere after word got out about its effectiveness. Barbed wire was far cheaper and easier to supply in the West than timber or stones and actually seemed to be just as if not even more effective than timber or stones.

Uses in War

After it was introduced barbed wire was used in almost every war, from the Spanish American War to the Russo-Japanese War. Barbed wire was used to fortify soldier's positions and as means of setting up a perimeter. Barbed Wire is most commonly seen in No Man's Land, most of the barbed wire belts being a little over knee-high to trip up and other soldiers stuck, these lines of barbed wire could extend up to 300 feet into No Man's Land.

Fences it Replaced

Barbed wire replaced many different fences, from live plant fences, such as osage orange, to stone. The major fence barbed wire replaced was the timber fence. Timber supply was diminishing in the East and was far too expensive to get out to the West.
**Ranchers vs Farmers**

When barbed wire was brought to the west farmers started throwing it up all over their land, or what they felt was their land, this didn’t go over so well with ranchers who were letting their cattle graze on some of that land that is now fenced off. This led to what we call range wars. There were many wars between the ranchers and farmers, the Pleasant Valley War is a famous range war that took place between two feuding families the Grahams and Tewksburys, in Gila County, Arizona.

**Works Consulted**


