



# **Billy the Kid: The Endless Ride**

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## **Billy the Kid: The Endless Ride** Michael Wallis

Award-winning historian Michael Wallis has spent several years re-creating the rich, anecdotal saga of Billy the Kid (1859–1881), a deeply mythologized young man who became a legend in his own time and yet remains an enigma to this day. With the Gilded Age in full swing and the Industrial Revolution reshaping the American landscape, “the Kid,” who was gunned down by Sheriff Pat Garrett in the New Mexico Territory at the age of twenty-one, became a new breed of celebrity outlaw. He arose amid the mystery and myth of the swiftly vanishing frontier and, sensationalized beyond recognition by the tabloids and dime-store romances of the day, emerged as one of the most enduring icons of the American West—not to mention one of Hollywood’s most misrepresented characters. This new biography, filled with dozens of rare images and period photographs, separates myth from reality and presents an unforgettable portrait of this brief and violent life.

## **Billy the Kid: The Endless Ride Details**

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# **From Reader Review Billy the Kid: The Endless Ride for online ebook**

## **Paul Pessolano says**

“Billy the Kid” by Michael Wallis, published by W. W. Norton & Company.

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The exploits of Billy the Kid have been told over the years. The vast majority of these stories paint Billy as a ruthless psychopathic killer. He has been labeled with killing over twenty people, but is this the true Billy the Kid.

Michael Wallis in his book puts together a much different story of Billy the Kid. Maybe the Kid was a much maligned individual and did not deserve the negative notoriety he received. Many people believed that he was a modern day Robin Hood of his time.

Wallis, through exhaustive research is able to disclaim many of the tales attributed to Billy, in fact, Billy may have been only responsible for four killings and one could say that they were in self-defensive. It is without a doubt that atrocities took place in the New Mexico Territory that were far more horrible than what Billy is accused of that never were brought to trial or were dismissed for one reason or another.

Wallis also portrays Billy as a young vibrant fun loving individual who was no worse than any young man of the time. He also proposes that Billy may have been the scapegoat to prove that law had finally come to the New Mexico Territory.

“Billy the Kid” is not just about Billy, but a history of the Wild West, in fact, most of the book concerns itself with not only the perceived Indian problem but also the perceived Mexican problem. It also shows the transition of a totally lawless society to an almost lawful society, and one wonders how much of this was due to the total exaggeration of the life of “Billy the Kid”.

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## **Jeff says**

Lot of fun. Much isn't known about the guy, but it's amazing how much is, and what an interesting character he was.

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## **Cal Clift says**

Lots of information, and I did learn something about Billy the Kid, but it is more of a book about New Mexico in the late 1800's.

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## **Carole says**

When Pat Garrett shot and killed Billy the Kid on July 14th 1881 in New Mexico Territory a legend was born.

From the corrupt streets of New York to the corrupt towns of the Wild West, Billy the Kid's 21 short years are brought vividly to life by this fascinating biography.

So few actual facts are known about him that historians do not even agree about his birthplace or even his real name. Michael Wallis has painstakingly sifted through all the exaggerated stories and outright lies that have surrounded him over the years and through a mixture of anecdotes from people who knew him, reliable sources, historical documents, and his own meticulous research, he has debunked many of the myths of his murderous ways and discovered that

"the truth of the young man was neatly covered up through sleight of hand with historical facts by a host of dime novelists, journalists, and hacks.....he was then and forever a mirage."

Until his mother's death in 1874 when Billy was only 14, he was a normal mischievous boy. Afterwards he became a young man who had to fend for himself and grow up very quickly by living on his wits and eventually turning to horse stealing and gambling to live.

This is not just a history of Billy the Kid, but also a history of the Old West during the late 19th century, of the lawlessness and corruption during his short life, including the infamous Lincoln County War.

I particularly enjoyed the photographs dotted around the book, which included many of the characters and places mentioned, and the cover of the book shows the only documented photographic image of him, taken in late 1879 or early 1880. Paulita Maxwell, one of Billy's lady friends, said in later years, "I never liked the picture, I don't think it does Billy justice". The young man's image is forever frozen in time - just like his myth.

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## **Terry Bonner says**

This thoroughly, even painstakingly, researched biography was very frustrating. On the one hand, Wallis provided incisive, comprehensive context, both historical and cultural, for the phenomenon of Billy the Kid. In this regard, the book was exceptional. On the other hand, the almost total lack of reliable records and contemporaneous accounts of William Bonney, aka Henry Atrim, made this biography almost worthless in offering insights into the character or motives of this folk hero. The book explained how Billy the Kid captured the American imagination, but it offered little about who he was.

I do not fault Wallis for this. It is a quixotic task to uncover facts about William Bonney. Historians have spent lifetimes pouring over census records, ships' manifests, country records offices and court transcripts attempting to discover some objective truth about an otherwise unremarkable bastard child of Irish immigrants from a time when he was merely one among millions. If nothing else, Wallis is successful in explaining just how little is reliably known about someone so familiar in American pop culture.

One thing Wallis does exceptionally well is setting the legend of Billy the Kid in the political context of Lincoln County, NW in the second decade of the post-Civil War era, where Republicans and Democrats waged a perpetual recapitulation of that conflict by proxy. Ironically, the peripheral characters of the Kid saga left a big footprint in history, so that Wallis is able to flesh out the particulars of The Lincoln County War in surprising detail. Bit players like Tunstall, McSween, Chisum and Dolan are presented in vivid, almost exhaustive detail, which makes the dearth of fact about William Bonney all the more irritating.

Finally, Wallis devotes significant time to presenting an overview of American popular culture, along with a precis of the apparatus which spawned and propagated the myth of Billy the Kid. Again, his scholarship here is first-rate but highly readable. The reader is left with an appreciation of the mechanism by which celebrities become icons in America.

Still, I wish I had closed this book feeling like I understood just a little bit more about who William Bonney, aka William McCarty, aka Henry Atrim, aka The Kid, aka Billy the Kid, actually was. As I finished the book, I could not help speculating about a similar reaction in some second century Roman as he pondered the most recent biography of a Palestinian folk hero from 120-years past whose personality lay lost in the legend.

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### **Todd Stockslager says**

Henry McCarty/Billy Antrim/William Bonney/Billy the Kid is biographized here, in an OK attempt to weed out the myth surrounding this very young man's very violent life.

Wallis spends much time talking about what isn't likely to be true and bemoaning the lack of verifiable information about the life and actions of his subject, and not enough time talking about those verifiable facts.

Wallis does place The Kid in the context of his place (a fluent Spanish-speaker who loved and was well loved by the Hispanics of his stomping grounds, Wallis mentions but is ambivalent about recent research that suggests that The Kid may have been part-Hispanic) and time (in the Lincoln County War in which he was just one participant of hundreds but the only one convicted, Wallis believes The Kid was--intentionally or otherwise--made the fall guy for the political and business interests who "won" the "war"). However, the last two years of The Kid's life, when Wallis says "William Bonney's activities can be documented week by week and sometimes daily," are accorded a bare 30 pages out of a 250-page book with lots of images and white space.

So, Mr. Wallis, if you can document your subject's activities on a daily basis, in a biography in which you claim to separate the fact from the myth and constantly bemoan the lack of fact, one not use the ones you have to the fullest?

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### **Heather says**

This was definitely interesting and well done. It was more scholarly in tone than I expected, but that isn't a bad thing. I thought he did a good job of not painting him as a villain or a hero, just telling his life story, and leaving it to you to make up your mind about him.

I was listening to this, rather than reading it, and I was sometimes a bit distracted during the historical background sections, so I ended up not quite following exactly what he was doing. Anyway, that sentence wasn't a very good one. The point is, I still don't know what I think about whether he was more good or bad. Very interesting character, though, and I think a good book for anyone interested in learning more about him and this time in American History.

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### **Laura Jean ♥Miller...♥ ~ says**

This book was fascinating, interesting. I have always loved western history.

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### **Louise says**

I like a book with focus, and this book truly has focus. The author gives enough western history so that you can understand the circumstances of the story and doesn't take the reader down side angles (and there are plenty of possibilities for this.) The writer separates fact from fiction explaining the conflicting information and crediting the reliability of the sources.

Billy is an exceptional yet troubled teen. Today we'd call him a youth at risk. He was born into difficult times and taken into a violent environment where he had to fend for himself. Wallis cites the compelling nature of his character, surprisingly literate, fluently bilingual and physically agile. For his young years he made a difference in his small world and should have taken the advice to flee to Mexico or South America.

The book is very nicely laid out. The paper and type that were selected are easy on the eyes. The pictures that introduce each chapter give a feel for the landscape which forms the backdrop of the story. It is not only a violent culture, but a harsh and dry country.

There was a lot new to me and of interest in this book. Most surprising was the passing mention of a meeting of 50 Billy the Kid historians. Henry Antrim (or whatever his name was) would have been totally astounded!

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### **Cindy says**

Very informative. I learned so much about Henry McLarty, alias "Billy the Kid".....much of which astonished me.

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### **Scott says**

This book does not describe the legend of Billy the Kid. Instead it creates a portrait of Billy by revealing the details of his life: what the people who knew Billy said about him, what were his known personal tastes, what was his mother like, what was his step father like, where did he live, what was the nature of the places he lived. As I read this book an authentic portrait of Billy the Kid began to emerge in my mind, painted by each fact revealed, not a portrait built on imaginative fiction, but one drawn from the documented details of his life.

Billy the Kid, like most people, was a mixture of both good and bad. He died at an early age, and by that time he had killed several men, but Billy also was a very likable young man. He was a great dancer, popular among the women folk, loved to sing, play cards, read dime novels, tell funny stories, and he did not drink alcohol. But what stood out the most about him, the thing that most people remembered about Billy, was his politeness. Billy was polite to women, to children, to the elderly, and a well-mannered young man. This is the one thing that I take away from this book, the power of politeness. Never underestimate the power of good manners. Who knows ? Start being polite today, and maybe you too will someday become legendary.

Armed with a six-shooter or a Winchester rifle each man was empowered to enforce his own brand of justice on the American western frontier. This book's narrative acknowledges the brutality, violence, corruption, and unwholesome of the western migration. With a panorama of murder, theft, rape, bloodshed, slaughter, prostitution, alcoholism, prejudice, and pain our nation forged a uniquely American heritage, and ever since then we have been both enamored and entertained by the Old West and its wild legends. Billy the Kid had the misfortune of leading a life that would make him one of those western legends.

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### **Nate says**

The author of this book is the voice of "Sheriff" from the movie Cars (and has some of the best lines in the movie), and apparently he has also written a very good book on the history of Route 66. He obviously loves and knows the West, and tries hard to write a good book here, but unfortunately there is just far too little real information about this elusive figure and far too much myth. He spends most of the book deconstructing the myths, but can't replace them with many hard facts because they just aren't out there to be found.

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### **Kevin Lucia says**

Absolutely excellent. Very readable, and this paints the best picture of the Kid so far. Also nails down some really nice historical points for my project...

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### **Melea says**

Mr. Wallis has written a well-researched book. Despite the fact that there are tons of endnotes (and I mean tons -- at least 2 superscripts in most paragraphs), the superscripts do not interrupt the flow of the narrative. Billy the Kid is shown as a human being with all the flaws that humans have. He also is shown to have loyalty, love, attractiveness. He is usually portrayed either as a hero or a villain. This portrayal shows that he may have been a bit of both, and traces those characteristics.

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## **Sherry says**

This author attempts to piece together the life of Billy the Kid in an unbiased manner. He clearly read many of the books already out there about the Kid, interviewed anyone who might have information and then wrote this book. He also provides an historical overview of the period of history in which Billy the Kid lived so that he could be judged in light of the times. Overall it was a good book except that it could have been much shorter given that much of the information was repeated sometimes several times. The book also jumps back and forth in time which made it a little difficult to follow.

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