



The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert Nicolls Jr.

Nancy Bartley

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert Niccols Jr.

Nancy Bartley

The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert Niccols Jr. Nancy Bartley

In 1931, a 12-year-old boy shot and killed the sheriff of Asotin, Washington. The incident stunned the small town and a mob threatened to hang him. Both the crime and Herbert Niccols's eventual sentence of life imprisonment at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla drew national attention, only to be buried later in local archives. Journalist Nancy Bartley has conducted extensive research to construct a compelling narrative of the events and characters that make this a unique episode in the history of criminal justice in the United States. Niccols became a cause for Father Flanagan of Boys Town, who took to the airwaves, imploring listeners to write Governor Hartley on the boy's behalf. The bitter campaign put Hartley in such a negative light that he lost his bid for reelection. Under a new and progressive warden, Niccols thrived in prison. Inmates like physician Peter Miller and literary agent James Ashe became his tutors, finding that Niccols had an insatiable appetite for knowledge. During the deadly 1934 prison riot at Walla Walla, several prisoners kept him from harm.

Niccols was finally released from prison in his early twenties. He went to work at 20th Century Fox in Hollywood, where he kept his secret for the rest of his long life. "The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff" explores this little-known story of a young boy's fate in the juvenile justice system during the bloodiest years in the nation's penitentiaries.

Journalist and writer Nancy Bartley has published in the "Seattle Times, Washington Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Toronto Star, Houston Chronicle," and "Home Magazine." She lives in Seattle, Washington.

" is the result of some very impressive research by an author obviously engaged with the subject. And it tells an important story few of us know." -Joann Byrd, author of "Calamity: The Heppner Flood of 1903"

The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert Niccols Jr. Details

Date : Published January 14th 2013 by University of Washington Press

ISBN : 9780295992457

Author : Nancy Bartley

Format : Paperback 284 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Mystery, Crime, Biography, True Crime

 [Download The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbe ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert Niccols Jr. Nancy Bartley

From Reader Review The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff: The Redemption of Herbert Nicolls Jr. for online ebook

Maria Kiguthi says

This book is a true story about a boy (Herber Nicolls Jr) who committed a crime when 12 and the fight for a Juvenile Justice System. Very well researched and well written.

Stop reading here for SPOILERS.

In 1931, 12-year-old Herbert Nicolls shot and killed the sheriff in his town of Asotin, Washington. His had a difficult childhood and was a proficient liar. The book chronicles his trial and those involved.

After he is sent to prison - since there is no system to handle violent juvenile offender - the book focuses on those attempting to get Nicolls released on parole. Father Flanagan the founder of Boys Town plays a large roll. At times the book becomes bogged down in all the details.

The book also details the changes in the prison over time. Nicolls was only in prison for 9 years, yet lots of changes and reforms were made in that time. He was kept separate and able to get an education and form friendships with the governor and local school teacher.

After he is paroled it chronicles his life. He adapts very well and holds down a great job and has a family. The most surprising part is that the author is the one who revealed to his adult son that his father was convicted of murder at the age of 12.

I received a copy through Goodreads First Reads

Marie says

Very easy read. Contains a lot of interesting information about mid 1900s in Washington State and the evolution of Juvenile laws in the State of Washington. Definitely made me question the efficacy of the death penalty.

Annie says

It was interesting and a very engaging case however it heavily focused on the battle between a Priest and a Governor for a good portion of the book instead of the boy's story. It left out a lot of his story for the adults who surrounded him instead.

Linda says

Reviewed for Publishers Weekly

John E says

A well written and easy read. Tells the story of one boy's life of abuse, prison, and politics in the mid-1900s. It shows the various ways that people tried to do "what's best" for a young killer. There is no way that satisfies everyone, but it seems that it worked pretty well for Herbert Nicolls.

Rrshively says

Such a sad story of poverty, hunger, beatings, and neglect of a young boy that led to his shooting and killing a sheriff when feeling cornered. One can only hope that the treatment of juvenile offenders has improved in the last 60 years. I am afraid the root causes which Father Flanagan and others were hoping to diminish are still here with us in the 21st Century. I skimmed through the part about what people said about Herbert and the trial, as it made me extremely incensed. Having spent much of my childhood in Omaha, I was especially interested in Father Flanagan's efforts. It was interesting to read why the governor's continued to keep him in prison. Herbert was lucky to have been protected from the rest of the prison population and to have some mentors from the prison population and outside the prison population. The argument of nature vs. nurture was also touched on in the book. As the author concludes, child abuse from generation to generation can lead to the symptoms of mental disorder. I closed the book at the end with several things to ponder about child crime and imprisonment.

Gail says

I couldn't decide between one star or two stars for this book but finally settled on the latter. It's a strange story and I don't think it would appeal to that many people. Herbert Nicolls Jr. shot a sheriff at the age of twelve and then spent the next eight years of his life in the penitentiary. Father Flanagan of Boys Town tried to save him (most of the book deals with this) to no avail. When Herbert finally got out, he went to Hollywood.

The book suffers from very poor editing: missing words, punctuation problems, etc. What bothered me the most is the amount of similes used (on one page, alone, there was one in every paragraph). This is just mindless filler that is not needed.

So, it's mediocre, at best.

Holly says

I just finished this book and loved her writing and the story. Since working with the Department of Corrections, this personal history shows a lot of heart of what is still faced in today's day and age. I would recommend this book for anyone, but it especially hit home seeing things at Washington State Penitentiary as they are today. This woman sure did her research, and I love the insight into the lives of the real people involved.

Jaime K says

I won this in a Goodreads giveaway.

This isn't a book I'd normally read but the story caught my eye. What a different look (for me) into the past, into a historical blurb of the U.S. prison system.

In 1931, 12-year-old Herber Niccolls shot and killed the sheriff in his town of Asotin, Washington. Bartley catalogues his life there, showing his mental and physical growth as well as changes around him. readers witness the beginnings of juvenile reform, the birth of the radio, the development of Boys Town (which I had never heard of but now know is famous), and even bound books! Niccolls' father's family had some major mental and psychological issues, but the sins and problems of the father [parents] don't always predict how a boy will turn out.

And how a boy behaves at 12 doesn't predict who he will grow to be as an adult.

Bartley keeps half of the focus on Father Flanagan, the man who began Boys Town. He was a good man, a priest who kept his head out of the clouds and on the teachings of Jesus. He (and even Niccolls) had no care for race or religion, but only wanted to care for troubled boys. He put all of his efforts into helping them, fighting for them.

Fighting for Herbert Niccolls.

I don't know if Bartley did this purposely or not, but she shows what love and faith and trust in God can do to a person's soul, and the change one can bring if they just fight hard enough. And if a person knows someone is fighting for them, it makes all the difference in the world.

It was very awesome to see that AP was around then. It's one of those things that you know but is still fun to read.

It was chilling to read about prison riots. Bartley wrote everything in a matter-of-fact way, devoid of emotion. I calmly read as hell broke loose, feeling detached and uneasy afterwards.

I also felt uneasy when I read that in the year 1935, 199 people were put to death in the US. I don't believe in the death penalty and would like to know there were less, but...199? Not 200? The odd, PRIME number is making me itchy.

Being able to live with a heinous crime constantly on your mind is a true punishment. And yet, in my mind, it is justice - even if you are a child when you commit the crime.

Carolyn says

A good read about the juvenile justice system prior to the welfare system, child assistance, unemployment insurance and social agencies. Written about what happened to a young child when he commits a capital

crime prior to the development of the juvenile justice system. A historical book about an incident that occurred in Washington state.

Lawana says

A compelling story, well written.

Ann Hill says

Fascinating! Great research of the people and the times in Washington State.

Steven Howes says

On August 5, 1931, 12-year old Herbert Nicolls Jr. shot and killed Asotin County Sheriff John Wormell during a burglary at the local dry goods store. Given Wormell's status in the community, there was an initial cry of "string him up" but cooler heads eventually prevailed. Herbert was a likeable and intelligent kid who came from extreme poverty and a home life that would make growing up difficult for anyone. His family had a history of mental illness and his caretaker grandmother was a religious zealot who beat him senseless if he strayed from the straight and narrow.

Herbert was tried, convicted of murder, and sentenced to life in prison at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla. Prison officials didn't quite know how to deal with Herbert and he was kept separate from the general population. Herbert eventually became the centerpiece in a nation-wide struggle between Washington Governor Roland Hartley and Father Flanagan of Boys Town. It eventually cost Hartley his job. After about eight years in prison, Herbert was eventually absorbed back into society and led a fairly normal life. It appeared to me that, in the end, Herbert was never a hardened criminal. As he matured, he never could seem to shake his sense of guilt over the whole affair.

The book had some excellent descriptions of prison conditions and rural life in Depression-era Washington State.

Anne says

When Herbert Nicholls Jr was 12 years old, he shot the sheriff of his town. The year was 1931; it was the midst of the Depression. People were increasingly concerned about youth violence. Herbert was sentenced to life imprisonment in the state penitentiary in Walla Walla, WA. National attention was drawn to the case. Fascinating read.

Denise says

This is an amazing book! I was enthralled with the story of Herbert Nicholls Jr. and had a very difficult time putting the book down. From the start, Nancy Bartley had me wide eyed describing this poor boy's wayward mistake that led to his incarceration at the Walla Walla state penitentiary and then described the fight that went on behind the scenes seemingly for the boy's very soul by Father Flanagan of "Boy's Town" fame. Anyone interested in Washington state history should read this book.
