



# Legends of the West: The Life and Legacy of Billy the Kid

*Charles River Editors*

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\*Includes pictures of Billy the Kid and important people and places in his life.

\*Includes some of Billy the Kid's most colorful quotes.

\*Discusses common myths and legends about Billy the Kid, separating fact from fiction.

\*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

"I'm not afraid to die like a man fighting, but I would not like to be killed like a dog unarmed." – Billy the Kid

Space may be the final frontier, but no frontier has ever captured the American imagination like the “Wild West”, which still evokes images of dusty cowboys, outlaws, gunfights, gamblers, and barroom brawls over 100 years after the West was settled. A constant fixture in American pop culture, the 19th century American West continues to be vividly and colorful portrayed not just as a place but as a state of mind. In Charles River Editors’ Legends of the West series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America’s most famous frontier figures in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

In many ways, the narrative of the Wild West has endured more as legend than reality, and a perfect example of that can be found in the legend of William Henry McCarty Jr., better known as William H. Bonney or “Billy the Kid”. Indeed, separating fact from fiction when it comes to the life of the West’s most famous outlaw is nearly impossible, due in great measure to the fact that the young man himself cultivated the image of a deadly outlaw and legendary gunman himself. Though Billy the Kid may have killed anywhere from 4-9 men in his short life, he was often credited for killing more than 20.

With a wit as quick as his trigger, Billy the Kid had a bullet and a wisecrack for every man he killed, and his notoriety only grew when exaggerated accounts of his actions in Lincoln County eventually earned The Kid a bounty on his head. In December 1880, an ambitious buffalo hunter (and future Sheriff), Pat Garrett, helped track down and capture the famous outlaw, only for Billy the Kid to somehow escape jail shortly before his scheduled execution.

There was plenty of gunplay in the outlaw’s life to help him become a well known if not celebrated figure in the West, but the legendary and controversial nature of his death has also helped him endure. A few months after his escape from jail, Billy the Kid was hunted down by Garrett in New Mexico once again, and it’s still not completely clear whether The Kid was killed by Garrett in self-defense or simply murdered outright.

Legends of the West: The Life and Legacy of Billy the Kid chronicles The Kid’s life, while also analyzing his legacy and the mythology that has enveloped his story, attempting to separate fact from fiction to determine what the frontier legend was really like. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events in his life, you will learn about Billy the Kid like you never have before, in no time at all.

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