

Billy The Kid!

Billy the Kid was one of the most notorious outlaws of the American West. According to legend, he killed at least 21 men, one for every year of his young life, before he was gunned down in the Chihuahuan Desert by New Mexico Sheriff Pat Garrett. While fact and myth are often difficult to separate, it seems Billy the Kid earned his reputation as one of the the Desert Southwest's most prolific killers. History records that in a period of just 4 years, he fought in at least 16 shootouts, killed at least 4 men himself, and assisted in the murder of at least 5 others.

Also known as William Bonney, Kid Antrim, and William Antrim, Billy was born Henry McCarty on New York City's east side November 23, 1859. His father soon died, and his mother eventually married Bill Antrim. The family moved on to Wichita Kansas, then to Santa Fe and, finally, Silver City, New Mexico by 1873. In Silver City, Kid Antrim, as he was then called, was arrested for theft but escaped jail and began wandering the Desert Southwest and northern Mexico. In Arizona, he took up horse rustling, and on August 17, 1877, shot and killed his first man, a blacksmith, F.P. Cahill, in a Camp Grant Saloon. Billy fled, eventually arriving in New Mexico. Billy soon worked for English rancher John Tunstall. When Tunstall was murdered in 1878, Billy joined the "Regulators," led by Tunstall's foreman Dick Brewer, who vowed vengeance and loyalty to partner McSween. The Regulators embarked on a killing spree of those suspected of involvement in the assassination. On April 1, Billy and the Regulators murdered Sheriff Brady and his deputy George Hindman as they strolled through the town of Lincoln. Billy escaped unhurt, but with a price on his head, he surrendered in exchange for amnesty. But Billy soon formed another gang and took up cattle rustling throughout the county again. In December 1880, Billy was captured at Stinking Springs by Sheriff Pat Garrett. After standing trial for murder in Mesilla, New Mexico in April 1881, he and was found guilty and sentenced to hang. On April 28, Billy escaped jail once again, killing two deputies in the process. On July 14, Pat Garrett, together with two deputies, sat in a darkened bedroom at the Fort Sumner ranch home of Billy's friend, Pete Maxwell. Billy unexpectedly entered and Garret pumped two shots from his revolver, one of which went straight into Billy's heart. [from <http://www.desertusa.com/mag98/oct/papr/billykid.html>]

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