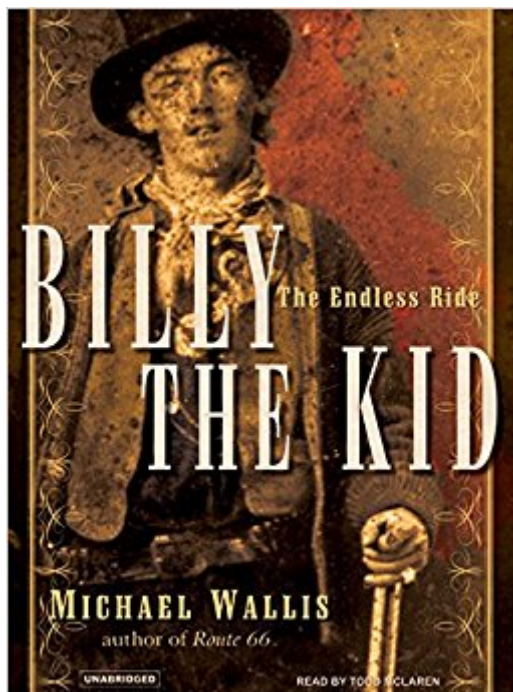


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# Billy The Kid: The Endless Ride



## Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *Route 66* comes this long-awaited biography of one of America's most legendary folk heroes. 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 separates myth from reality and presents an unforgettable portrait of this brief and violent life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The boy who would become Billy the Kid (1859–1881) was born Henry McCarty, perhaps in the Irish immigrant wards of New York City. Not much is known about his parents, and it's difficult to trace his whereabouts until his family turned up in Silver City, Colo., in the early 1870s. Both the facts and the legend pick up in 1877, when Henry—already known to some under the alias Kid—shot a man who was bullying him and began a life on the run. Wallis's reconstruction of the Kid's exploits is engrossing. But even more, Wallis (*Route 66*) shows Billy the Kid as a product of his era, one of profound social dislocation. Billy the Kid was, indeed, only the most legendary of a

generation of "desperate men" who knew how to handle a gun. At the same time, a new kind of sensationalist journalism was being created, and reporters were more than happy to contribute to the creation of a myth. Wallis, the host of PBS's new American Roads, writes clean prose, occasionally enlivened by a particularly lovely turn of phrase ("the liquid rustle of cottonwood leaves"). Over the decades, countless books have been written about the infamous outlaw, and this is surely one of the best. 60 illus. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Wallis writes clean prose, occasionally enlivened by a particularly lovely turn of phrase. Countless books have been written about the infamous outlaw, and this is surely one of the best."  
---Publishers Weekly Starred Review

As a history buff, and a man with an interest in the Wild West I thoroughly enjoyed this book about Henry Antrim a.k.a. Billy the Kid. I've read through several of the other reviews written on this book, and I'm surprised at many of the negative reviews. As the author points out, and as I well know, valid and legit documentation on Billy the Kid is very hard to come by. I thought the author did an excellent job explaining the scene in the New Mexico and Arizona territories (and Lincoln County in particular) where Billy spent most of his time. This was necessary for the reader to understand how the legend of Billy the Kid arose. It was a wild area, and extremely lawless. Much of what was controlled was controlled by crooked judges, sheriffs, and politicians who were happy to line their own pockets. Often times at the expense of the common man who often times had his land and / or livestock taken from him. Billy the Kid came about because of the feud, which literally became a war, between Murphy and his men, and Tunstall and his men. Both men were greedy and wanted to control the cattle market in Lincoln County. I would argue that Tunstall was the lesser of two evils, but that's debatable. Billy actually rode for Murphy for a brief period, but eventually ended up with Tunstall. No one really thought much about the Kid until he eventually made a name for himself as this war raged on. It is fact that Billy was a good marksman with both rifle and pistol, he obtained good horsemanship, and was fit and fast. This is well documented, coming from several reliable resources. Billy the Kid became a living legend both as the epitomy of evil for some as they saw him as a psychopathic killer and livestock thief, and hero to others as they saw him as a voice for the little man who wasn't afraid to stand up to the establishment dominated by rich men and big time landowners. Billy performed a lot of wild feets; confirmed kills, jail escapes, gambling with some of

the biggest names in old West history, he was also quite the ladies man. He spoke fluent Spanish, many said he spoke it as well as a native, and was extremely popular with the Spanish population. He was also very popular with the Spanish senioritas. The author didn't try to paint Billy into something he wasn't, as most books on Billy the Kid do. I thought he did a great job presenting the known facts about the Kid, and pieced the rest together the best he could through diligent research. The last fifty pages or so of the book are the author's notes and references. There are a few spots in the book that are a little dry, but that's to be expected. One's life can't be constant excitement, and there are many things about Billy the Kid that are interesting to know, but aren't that out of the ordinary. This is by far the best book I've read on Billy the Kid and if you're interested in knowing more about him, then I highly recommend this book.

A fascinating story. Only a few small apocryphal details here and there. Such as the story told by the person who describes Billy The Kid's proficiency with a revolver. According to that tale, someone would throw a tin can into the air. Billy would draw his revolver, spin it around his finger before shooting, and then hit the tin can twice before it hit the ground. Michael Wallis should have realized - and mentioned - that no one can do that with a revolver, and that this anecdote is another of the many that have been invented about Billy the Kid. Otherwise, this biography seems to adhere strictly to the facts and is an engrossing and entertaining book, which I highly recommend to anyone interested in stories from the era of the Wild West.

A very good book as introduction to the Billy the Kid. Of course I had heard about him many times before, but never read a book about Kid Antrim. Wallis' book has a good length and is much very readable. Flaws are that some topics are very stretched and others very briefly. There seems to be even more description of the city of Denver than the actual killing of Billy the Kid in 1881. But overall I very much enjoyed the book and recommend it for reading.

Several efforts have been made in an attempt to untangle the short and controversial life of Billy the Kid. I would suggest that this book by Michael Wallis is probably the best since he acknowledges when little is known about his subject, and speculates about what may have happened when information is lacking. That may not satisfy some people, but that is the best he can do. Billy the Kid actually did not pick up his charismatic title until the last year of his life. He initially went by the unlikely name of Henry McCarty, then changed it to Henry Antrim when his mother remarried, William H. Bonney, and finally Billy the Kid. Where he pulled out the name of Bonney is unknown.

He was a very literate person, enjoyed music, and considered Turkey in the Straw and Silver Threads Among the Gold as his favorite songs. His tubercular mother moved the family from the eastern part of the country (New York City) to Indiana, Wichita, Kansas, and then to the southwest into New Mexico territory in hopes of improving her health. Following her death Billy was left to shift for himself. Kid was a common nickname for juveniles at that time, and wirey would probably be the best term to describe his short and slight frame. When the book got around to describing the Lincoln County war between competing factions involving horse thieves I had difficulty keeping track of all the individuals involved. The Kid sided with an Englishman named John Tunstall who ended up getting murdered. Billy became somewhat of an anti-hero with his dramatic escape from jail in which he killed two guards after being sentenced to death. Kit Carson comes off as a villain with he and his men laying waste to Navajo Indians, their homes, food, horses, and other animals. The remaining Navajos began a 450 mile journey to join the Apaches. This became known as the Long Walk. This brought up reminders of the Cherokee Indians in 1839 under the regime of Andrew Jackson. I believe you will find the book to be enjoyable. The author has done a commendable job based on the information available on his subject.

The book separates myth from what few facts are known about Billy the Kid. A more clear picture of who he was; a young man who was a good singer, popular with young ladies because of his dancing skills, charming and charismatic, with a teens propensity to get into trouble. He did not kill as many men as dime novelists would have us believe, but still could be brutal as his killings during his famous jail escape indicate. Well researched and written, Wallis presents an enjoyable read that makes you want to learn more about Billy the Kid. But as the author states, as have many before him, the Kid remains elusive to researchers, but Wallis may have come as close as we can get.

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