

(Introduction continued from front panel)

the prosperous Three Rivers Ranch, and became the "Cattle Queen of the Pecos." She retired to White Oaks and died there in 1931-- long enough to see King Vidor's 1930 Hollywood film, *Billy the Kid*, before storming out of the movie theater, disgusted, halfway through the film.

Not reelected, Garrett returned to ranching northwest of the village of Ruidoso in 1884, then went back to hunting outlaws, this time in Texas. After selling his New Mexico ranches, he moved his family to Uvalde, Tex., in 1891 and raised race horses. Returning to New Mexico, Garrett was elected Dona Ana County Sheriff in 1896. He was the U. S. Customs Collector in El Paso (1901-05), before returning to ranching near San Agustin Pass in Dona Ana County. Garrett was murdered six miles northeast of downtown Las Cruces on Feb. 29, 1908.

Annual Events

Seven Days, Late April, the **Last Trail Ride of Billy the Kid** retraces the route of Billy's daring 1881 escape from the Lincoln jail to Fort Sumner, a 125-mile horse-back ride from north of the Capitan Mountains across several ranches, with overnight campfire cookouts, Western songs, and Kid lore. Started in 2002 (575/653-4676).

First Saturday in June, **White Oaks Miners Day**. Started in 1996 (575/354-7021 or 575/354-5802).

First Weekend in August, **Old Lincoln Days** hosts the popular outdoor pageant, The Last Days of Billy the Kid, a two-overnight Pony Express-style trail ride from the ghost town of White Oaks, and a Western arts & crafts fair, in the historic town of Lincoln. Started in 1969 (575/653-4025 or 800/253-2255).

Second Weekend in August, **Fort Stanton Days**. Started in 2000 (575/354-2573). Second Weekend in October, the Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium hosts 40 Western cooking crews competing in the world's richest chuckwagon cookoff for \$10,000 worth of prizes; trick roping and horsemanship demonstrations; mock gunfights; a kids' rodeo, Western music concerts & dances; and a Western arts & crafts fair, at Ruidoso Downs. Started in 1991 (575/653-4025 or 800/253-2255).

Local Information

Billy the Kid National Scenic Byway

Visitor Center
Highway 70 West
Ruidoso Downs NM 88346
(575/378-5318)

Billy the Kid Outlaw Gang

PO Box 1881
Capitan NM 88316
(575/354-2380)
billythekid_outlawgang@yahoo.com

Capitan Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 441
Capitan NM 88315
(575/354-2273)
capitancoc@aol.com

Lincoln County Historical Society

711 Calle la Placita
Lincoln NM 88338
(575/653-4952)
lchs@pvtn.net

Lincoln State Monument

PO Box 36
Lincoln NM 88338
(575/653-4372)

Ruidoso Valley Chamber of Commerce

720 Sudderth Drive
Ruidoso NM 88345
(575/257-7395 or 800/253-2255)
info@ruidosonow.com
Statewide Information
New Mexico Tourism Department

491 Old Santa Fe Trail

Santa Fe NM 87504
(800/733-6396)
enchantment@newmexico.org

*Text & Lincoln County Map
by Michael E. Pitel, 2007*

Billy the Kid's Lincoln County



Hispanic villagers built Lincoln's torreon (circular stone tower) circa 1850. During the seige of the Alexander McSween Home in July, 1878, the Murphy-Dolan guns held this vantage point. They burned down the home and killed McSween, ending the Lincoln County War. Courtesy of Michael E. Pitel

Lincoln County was carved out of Socorro County in 1869. Already enormous, it got even bigger in Feb., 1878, growing to about one-fourth the size of Territorial New Mexico. The town of Lincoln became its county seat in 1869. By then, there were U. S. government troops at nearby Fort Stanton; an Indian agency at Blazer's Mill on what would become in 1873 the Mes-calero Apache Indian Reservation; and thousands of cattle grazing in the lush, public-domain grasslands of the Pecos Valley to the east.

The county had only one Sheriff, elected or re-elected every two years in Nov., and who took office in Jan. Often those elected were locals who had little to no experience or stomach for the job, but needed the money. As a result, they could be bought, influenced,

or intimidated. The judges, lawyers, and juries who peopled the 3rd District Court in Lincoln every spring and fall, could be bought or threatened, too.

Once the Lincoln County War erupted, it ushered the county's lawlessness and corruption to center stage, the county seat, where the Territorial and U. S. governments could ignore it no longer. President Rutherford Hayes appointed a no-nonsense Civil War hero, Lew Wallace, as Governor in Sept., 1878. By then, although the war was over and the competing merchants were either dead or bankrupt, many of the hired guns continued to commit acts of violence until they'd settled scores and drifted away, or realized they needed to go straight.

In 1879, when gold was discovered in the hills above the nearby town of White Oaks, Lincoln went into slow decline. By 1890s, the public-domain grasslands were gone and the railroads came. In 1909, the county seat shifted to the new railroad town of Carrizozo.

Lincoln County was also where Billy the Kid rose from obscurity into a national icon and enduring folk figure. Although wanted for the April, 1878, killing of Sheriff William Brady in Lincoln, he still roamed far and wide after the war, stealing horses and cattle, and thumbing his nose at the law. That changed when Roswell's Pat Garrett was elected Sheriff in Nov., 1880.

No longer feeling safe and welcome in Lincoln County, Billy shifted to the remote environs of lawless Fort Sumner. But Garrett, fearless and unrelenting, tracked him down, captured him in Dec., 1880, and hauled him off to jail. Three months later, Garrett and his guards took him to La Mesilla, where, in April, 1881, the Kid stood trial for the murder of Brady, was found guilty, and taken back to the Lincoln jail for his May 13 hanging.

After his daring April 28, 1881, jailbreak, Billy drifted back to Fort Sumner, where Pat Garrett pursued him, and on July 14, 1881, shot and killed him. Many historians regard that as a seminal moment, when law and order finally took root in the Old West.

After the Kid's death, many of the principals who had survived the Lincoln County War moved onward. Many of Billy's pals had already gone straight. James Dolan, whose Lincoln mercantile went bankrupt in 1878, married shrewdly, rebounded and soon bought the late John Tunstall's Lincoln mercantile and Rio Feliz Ranch. Intemperate Susan McSween acquired and sold Dick Brewer's ranch near Glencoe, established

(continued, back panel)

Billy the Kid Points of Interest

In the year-round resort village of Ruidoso is **Paul Dowlin's Mill (1)**, built circa 1850. The ex-officer and former Fort Stanton post trader's flour mill on the Rio Ruidoso eventually prompted the settlement to change its name to Ruidoso in 1882. Billy the Kid supposedly hid in a flour barrel here once to elude authorities.

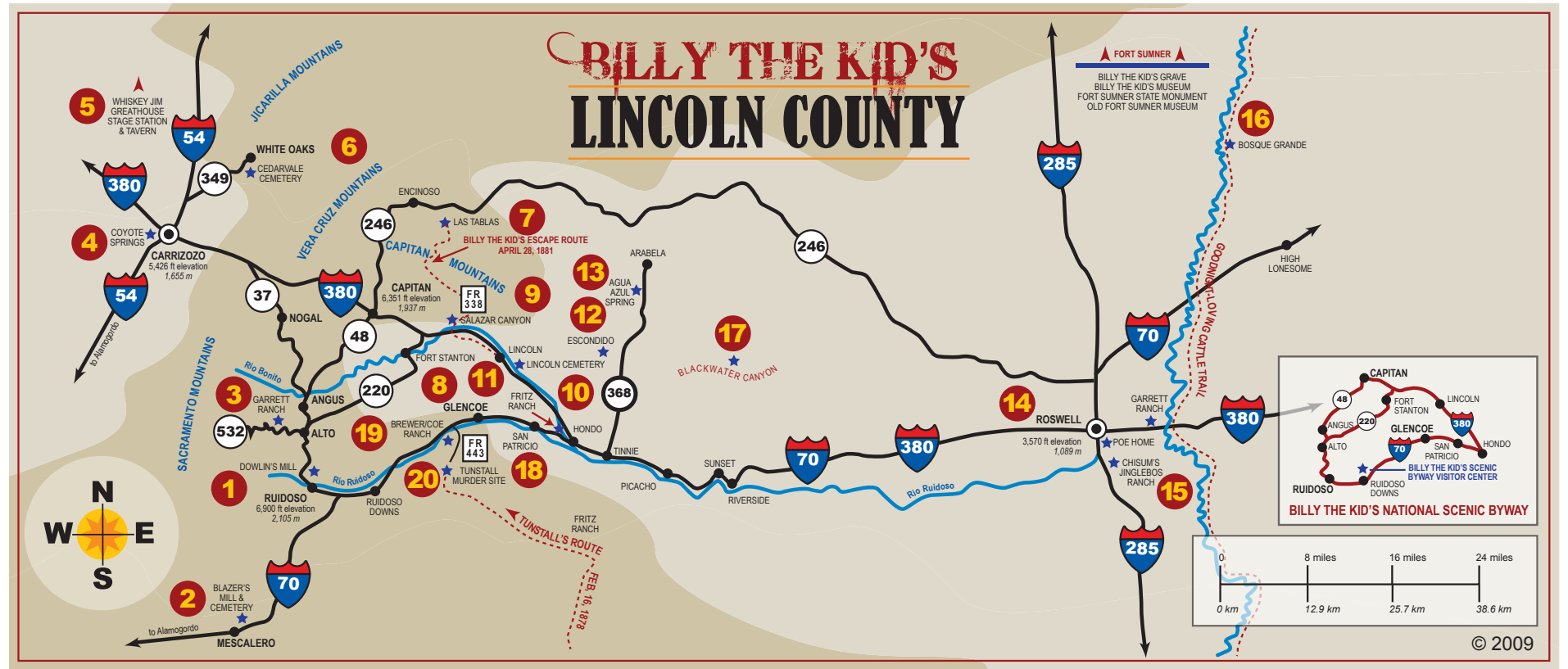
Sixteen miles (25.7 km) southwest of Ruidoso, above the adobe ruins of **Blazer's Mill (2)** and the vacant Joseph H. Blazer family home, is a hillside cemetery holding the marked graves of Andrew "Buck-shot" Roberts and Kid pal Dick Brewer. The mortally wounded Robertshot and killed Brewer here in an epic gun battle on April 4, 1878. Roberts, who rode with the posse that had shot and killed Lincoln merchant John H. Tunstall, wounded Billy and three other Regulators in the fight.

In 1885, at Pat Garrett's **Little Creek Canyon Ranch (3)**, five miles (8 km) west of Alto, Garrett's favorite of eight children, Elizabeth, was born. Though blind, she became an accomplished singer, songwriter, musician, and close associate of Helen Keller. She wrote "O Fair New Mexico", which became the official state song in 1916.

Three miles (4.8 km) west of Carrizozo is **Coyote Springs (4)**, where a White Oaks posse almost captured the Kid's gang in Nov., 1880. Although his horse was killed here, Billy fled on foot north about 40 miles (64.4 km) to "Whiskey" **Jim Greathouse's Stage Station & Tavern (5)**. There, five days later, a second White Oaks posse surrounded the Kid's gang. After deputized blacksmith James Carlyle was shot and killed, the posse withdrew and Billy and his gang escaped. A quarter-mile (0.4 km) before the ghost town of **White Oaks (6)**, **Cedarvale Cemetery** holds the marked graves of Deputy Sheriff James W. Belland Susan McSween Barber. The Kid shot and killed Bell while escaping the Lincoln jail in April, 1881; Barber was the widow of slain Lincoln lawyer Alexander McSween.

On the Block Ranch is the town site of **Las Tablas (7)** where Billy hid for three or four days after his escaping the Lincoln jail. The Kid's pal, Ygenio Salazar, fed him and urged him to flee to Mexico.

Secluded **Fort Stanton (8)**, was the military post (1855-96) that was the U. S. government-funded cash cow of young Lincoln County. The intervention of Lt. Col. Nathan M. Dudley in Lincoln in July, 1878, enabled the Murphy-Dolan hired guns to burn the McSween home and shoot to death McSween and three others.



Eight miles (12.9 km) east of Capitan is the road into **Salazar Canyon (9)**, where Billy rode after escaping the Lincoln jail. At the homes of Ataviano Salas and Jose Cordova, he was fed and had his leg irons removed.

A quarter-mile (0.4 km) east of Lincoln's Ellis Store, the **Lincoln Cemetery (10)** holds the graves of Kid pal Salazar, George W. Peppin (the Sheriff during most of the Lincoln County War), Kid pal Jose Montano, and Kid foe Saturnino Baca, who had persuaded Lt. Col. Dudley to send troops into Lincoln in July, 1878. At the old Charles **Fritz Spring Ranch (11)** on April 29, 1878, 20 Murphy-Dolan hired guns ambushed and mortally wounded Kid pal Frank MacNab, captured Kid pal George Coe; and killed Coe's nephew, Ab Saunders.

The site of the abandoned village of **Escondido (12)** is where Billy supposedly rescued the young daughter of a Hispanic family he'd just befriended from the unwanted advances of a Mexican bandit named Ruiz. After leaving Las Tablas in early May, 1881, the Kid camped at **Agua Azul (Blue Water) Spring (13)**,

before heading south to pal John Middleton's Rio Penasco ranch.

In the city of **Roswell (14)**, are Pat Garrett's Home (built in 1880), and John Poe's Home (1895). The Garrett homestead was on 1,800 acres he sold in 1891. Poe, a Deputy Sheriff, was on Pete Maxwell's porch in Fort Sumner when Garrett shot and killed the Kid; Poe lived at his 311 West 7th Street home until shortly before his 1923 death. Four miles (6.4 km) southeast is the 1875-84 headquarters of **John S. Chisum's Jinglebob Ranch (15)**. Chisum, the President of Tunstall's Lincoln bank, was absent for some of the Lincoln County War. The **Bosque Grande (16)**, a cow camp on the Goodnight-Loving Trail, was Chisum's 1868-75 ranch headquarters after he drove his first cattle herd there in the summer of 1867. After the Kid's pal, Dan Dedrick, moved there, it soon attracted horse thieves and cattle rustlers. Garrett's posse raided it in June, 1881, looking for Billy. Somewhere in remote **Blackwater Canyon (17)**, the Kid and the Regulators murdered Billy Morton, Frank Baker, and Bill McCloskey on

March 10, 1878. The trio had ridden in the posse that had slain Tunstall two weeks earlier. The Regulators had insisted they were taking their prisoners to the Lincoln jail. In and near the village of **San Patricio (18)**, settled in the 1850s, Billy and the Regulators fought Sheriff Peppin's posses in June and July, 1878. St. Patrick Church, built in 1875, once towered above the village's 15 flat-roofed homes.

In Glencoe, behind a row of Lombardy poplars, is the old Brewer/Frank **Coe Ranch (19)**. Brewer bought the 640-acre place in 1876. Tunstall, the Kid, and Tunstall's ranch hands were trying to reach the ranch by nightfall on Feb. 18, 1878, when Tunstall was murdered. Coe, who'd left the Kid's gang in Aug., 1878, bought the place in 1883. Four miles (6.4 km) south of Glencoe, high above the Rio Ruidoso, is a makeshift monument to the **Tunstall Murder Site (20)**, where a Morton-led posse, after scattering the Kid and three others, overtook and murdered the armed Tunstall at dusk, igniting the Lincoln County War.