

(Introduction continued from front panel)

he could head northeast, back up to remote Tascosa, Tex.

He could ride east along the Fort Sumner-to-Texas Road or double back to the towns of Lincoln or White Oaks; or to the ranches along the Rio Ruidoso or Rio Penasco. Billy could ride along the Fort Sumner-to-Fort Stanton Road, or approximate it, hidden in the welcome folds of open country, or he could stay put.

Flight to Colorado or Mexico -- or anywhere beyond the tireless Garrett's reach -- could wait. Once it was safe, once Garrett had finally given up, Billy figured, he could slip into Fort Sumner, whisk away young Paulita Maxwell, and marry her. They'd start a family, maybe homestead a ranch somewhere, and begin anew, just like the Kid's pals, Doc Scurlock and cousins Frank and George Coe, had done. But whatever hopes and dreams the Kid may have had, ended abruptly in Pete Maxwell's bedroom on the night of July 14, 1881.

Today the village of Fort Sumner, the De Baca County seat since the county's creation in 1917, has three daytime drives into cattle country, past scores of private ranches on whose land lurk several Kid camp sites that the unrelenting Garrett searched during the last frenetic months of the Kid's life.



Alexander Grzelachowski's Mercantile & Home, built in 1874, is where a shackled Billy the Kid enjoyed a last Christmas Day dinner in 1880. The historic site, in the village of Puerta de Luna, is 47 miles northwest of the village of Fort Sumner.

Annual Events

Second Weekend in June, **Old Fort Days**, featuring the Billy the Kid Tombstone Race, parade, and an arts & crafts fair, all in Fort Sumner (575/355-7705).

Second or Third Weekend in July, the **Death, Funeral & Burial of Billy the Kid**, a reenactment of the Kid's July, 1881, shooting death by Sheriff Pat Garrett, near the site of the Maxwell House, and his funeral and burial in the former post cemetery nearby (575/355-7705).

Local Information

Bosque Redondo Memorial at Fort Sumner State Monument

PO Box 356
Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-2573)
hweeldi@plateautel.net

Billy the Kid Museum

1435 East Sumner Ave.
Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-2380)
btkmuseum@plateautel.net

Billy the Kid Outlaw Gang

PO Box 1881
Capitan NM 88316
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Fort Sumner-De Baca County

Chamber of Commerce
707 North 4th
Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-7705)
ftsumnercoc@plateautel.net

Old Fort Sumner Museum

PO Box 566
Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-2942)

Statewide Information

New Mexico Tourism Department

491 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe NM 87504
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*Text & Lincoln County Map
by Michael E. Pitel, 2007*

Billy the Kid's De Baca County



Billy the Kid Outlaw Gang members inspect the foundation of Alejandro Perea's rock cabin at Stinking Springs, where Pat Garrett's posse captured the Kid in Dec., 1880. Found on a local ranch, it's one of several Kid sites in De Baca County. Courtesy of Michael E. Pitel

Back when Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett rode across Territorial New Mexico in 1877-81, there was no De Baca County. Instead, the settlement known as Old Fort Sumner, which the wealthy Lucien Maxwell had bought in 1870 and fixed up, lay just across the Lincoln County line in San Miguel County. The nearest lawmen were about a day's ride away.

Garrett, his buffalo-hunting days in West Texas behind him, arrived there in Feb., 1878, and soon got a job as a ranch hand working for Lucien's son, Pete. He also bartended there for awhile before moving south to Roswell in April, 1880, 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.

After the Lincoln County War ended in July, 1878, Billy, no longer an employed ranch hand, took to horse thievery and cattle rustling not only in Lincoln and San Miguel Counties but in the raw Texas Panhandle as well. He stole them from one place and drove them to another, then sold them. Between these continuing escapades, he'd often drop by the sheep camps of Hispanics he'd befriended, or slip into one of Old Fort Sumner's saloons for games of poker and monte or a night of dancing and flirting with some of his queridas (sweethearts).

As his Lincoln County stomping grounds of Lincoln and nearby White Oaks became too uncomfortable for the Kid, the wide, open spaces of cattle country grew in appeal. There were 80,000 of John S. Chisum's Jinglebob cattle fattening up in the belly-high, public domain grasslands of the Pecos River Valley. There were several ranchers who welcomed Billy, and plenty of places to hole up. Old Fort Sumner became a second home. There he felt he belonged. He was always welcome somewhere in the old post. There he was relatively safe. Throughout much of what eventually became De Baca County -- especially after his daring escape from the Lincoln jail in April, 1881, brought a determined Garrett and his posse riding hard -- Billy felt he still had a chance.

The Kid had an abundance of Hispanic friends scattered far and wide, especially around Pete's place. Sheep herder pals Paco Anaya, Francisco Zamora, and Jesus Silva were his always willing to feed him and put him up. He spoke Spanish fluently and knew the countryside well. For years he'd frequented its campsites and springs; its roads, trails, and back roads; and its ranches, farms, and roadhouses.

He could ride up the Pecos River on or near the Fort Sumner-to-Fort Union Road and stop in the village of Los Ojitos or physician John Gerhardt's nearby ranch; or the villages of Puerto de Luna or Anton Chico; or the booming railroad town of Las Vegas. Or

(continued, back panel)

Billy the Kid Points of Interest

First, visit the Sweet family's **Billy the Kid Museum (1)**, at 1435 East Sumner Ave., in the village of Ft. Sumner. Its centerpiece exhibit has Billy's rifle, chaps, one of his spurs, and locks of his hair, plus Kid pal Jesus Silva's cast-iron cook pot and utensils. Don's late father, Ed, began acquiring Billy artifacts in the late 1930s. The museum/gift shop, which opened in 1953, operates daily from mid-May through Sept. The rest of the year it's closed on Sundays; admission charged. At 514 Avenue C is the **De Baca County Court House (2)**, built in 1930. On the second floor is WPA artist Russell Vernon Hunter's 1934 murals entitled "The Last Frontier." The Kid, Garrett, Maxwell and other notables appear in them.

Drive three miles (4.8 km) east on U.S. Highway 60/84 to Billy the Kid Road; turn right (south) and go 3½ miles (5.6 km) to the **Old Fort Sumner Complex (3)**.

Most of **Fort Sumner State Monument**, an 1862-69 army post that guarded up to 8,600 relocated Navajos and Mescalero Apaches in the Bosque Redondo, is gone, due to several Pecos River floods from 1889 to 1941. Only the partially replicated walls of one cavalry barracks remain. A stone tablet 100 yards west identifies the site where Garrett shot and killed the Kid on July 14, 1881. The fort grounds became a state monument in 1968. One-third mile (0.5 km) east of the old parade ground is the Old Ft. Sumner Museum. Its archival photos, letters and memorabilia retrace the history of the place that Billy called home. Originally a 1932 curio shop/museum, the museum/gift shop is closed on major holidays; admission charged. Behind the **Old Fort Sumner Museum** is the **Post Cemetery**, containing the Kid's grave (alongside those of pals Tom O'Folliard and Charlie Bowdre). Nearby are Lucien and Pete Maxwell's graves. Entry via an outside gate is free. Behind the cemetery is the post's access, the **Bosque Redondo Memorial** at Fort Sumner State Monument. Open daily, May-Sept. 30; closed Tues., Oct.-April 30; closed major holidays; admission charged.

Drive 14 miles (22.5 km) east on U.S. Highway 60/84 of Fort Sumner to the hamlet of Taiban. En route, you'll pass (9½ miles or 15.3 km east; on the south) the site of one of **Maxwell's Ranch Camps (4)**. Three miles (4.8 km) east of that, you'll pass (on the south) the site of the **Thomas Wilcox-Manuel Brazil Ranch**

(5). As Garrett and his posse approached Fort Sumner in late Dec., 1880, Billy and his gang slipped away to Wilcox and Brazil's roadhouse. A way station on the Fort Sumner-to-Texas Road, it quartered the Kid's gang and Garrett's posse before and after O'Folliard's and Bowdre's deaths and Garrett's capture of the Kid and his gang at nearby Stinking Spring. From there, an old road heads 10 miles (16 km) northeast to the **Thomas G. Yerby Ranch (6)**, which Billy visited when Bowdre was the foreman.

Two miles (3.2 km) farther east of Taiban (on the south) is the site of **Stinking Springs (7)**. In moonlit snow, Garrett's posse tracked the Kid's gang from the nearby Wilcox-Brazil Ranch to an abandoned rock cabin, surrounded it, and waited. They shot and

killed Bowdre at daybreak, thinking he was the Kid. Billy's gang surrendered after the aroma of cooking meat from Garrett's late-afternoon campfire tempted the three hungry outlaws.

Twenty-two miles (35.4 km) east of Taiban on U.S. Highway 60/84 is the village of Melrose. Eight miles (12.9 km) southwest is **Canada del Tules (8)**, another Maxwell Ranch Camp the Kid visited. Fifty miles (80.5 km) distant southeast of Melrose, on the far side of the city of Portales, is another Billy hideout, **Los Portales (9)**. Drive 47 miles (75.6 km) northwest of Fort Sumner via U.S. Highway 84 to the hamlet of Puerto de Luna and the **Alexander Grzelachowski Mercantile & Home (10)**. There on Dec. 25, 1880, the merchant invited Garrett's posse and the shackled,

jail-bound Kid to a turkey dinner.

Drive 24 miles (38.6 km) southwest of Fort Sumner on State Road 20. Six miles south, look east (left). Above the west side of the Pecos River was **Paco Anaya's Camp (11)**, where the Kid stayed for much of June and July, 1881. Seven miles (11.3 km) farther south, where State Road 20 curves southwest, look southeast (left). Four miles (6.4 km) east, near the Pecos River was **Jesus Anaya's Ranch (12)** on Arroyo Cibola. There at his father's ranch, Paco, age 16, first met Billy in Aug., 1878. Eleven miles (17.7 km) farther south is Conejos Creek. The Kid camped five miles (8 km) upstream (west) at **Conejo Spring (13)**, Fort Sumner-bound after his Lincoln jailbreak.

