

(Introduction continued from front panel)

gunfire and escaped. The unarmed McSween and four others were shot and killed.

But the moment for which Lincoln is best remembered today is the Kid's daring escape from the second-floor Lincoln County Courthouse jail on the afternoon of April 28, 1881, killing the two Deputies who guarded him. A bullet hole in the wall at the bottom of the interior stairs underscores the incident, which inscribed Billy's name in the annals of Old West.

Were the Kid and Garrett to return to Lincoln today, they'd recognize several homes and buildings from when they once strode its dirt street. They'd realize the old Murphy-Dolan Store no longer has the only pitched roof in town. They'd note that the Wortley Hotel and Tunstall Store have front porches, and that there are fewer residents today (about 70) than back then (about 400). The state monument's five attractions (among them the Lincoln County Courthouse and the Tunstall Store) are open daily; closed major winter holidays; admission charged. Lincoln became a state monument in 1979..

Annual Events

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

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 October, the **Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium** hosts 40 Western cooking crews competing in the world's richest chuckwagon cookoff for prizes worth \$10,000; plus trick roping and horsemanship demonstrations; mock gunfights; Western music concerts & dances; a kids' rodeo; and a Western arts & crafts fair, at Ruidoso Downs. Started in 1991 (575/378-7262).

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@pvt.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



Looking west at the Lincoln County Courthouse, the second-floor jail from which Billy the Kid escaped is in the near corner. Also shown are the jail window (upper left) from which the Kid shot and killed Deputy Sheriff Bob Olinger, and the white tablet (lower left) where Olinger fell. Courtesy of Michael E. Pitel

Billy the Kid began his rise to notoriety during the bloody Lincoln County War of 1878, a feud that began soon after a wealthy young Englishman, John H. Tunstall, and his equally ambitious partner, lawyer Alexander McSween, tried to oust the established monopoly of L. G. Murphy & Company in the town of Lincoln. By the time Pat Garrett became a presence in Lincoln in late 1880, he had been elected Sheriff and vowed to bring the Kid to justice. With his wife safe at his ranch near Roswell, Garrett often used his living quarters and office in the Lincoln County Courthouse for weeks at a time during his two-year term.

Settled by Hispanics circa 1849, La Placita del Rio Bonito (the town of the pretty river) had been a collec-

tion of poor farms and ranches that didn't take until 1855. That's when nearby Fort Stanton was built and the Mescalero Apache raids subsided.

Trouble began in 1866, when ex-officers Murphy and Emil Fritz formed L. G. Murphy & Co. and opened a trading post and saloon near Fort Stanton. In the Pecos River Valley, 50 miles (80.5 km) east, meanwhile, Texas cattlemen Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving had introduced beef cattle (in 1866), and by 1868 cattle baron John S. Chisum had established his Jinglebob Ranch at the Bosque Grande, 25 miles (40.2 km) north of Roswell. Chisum's cattle roamed the public-domain grasslands along a 150-mile (241.3 km) stretch of the Pecos. Booted off the post in 1873 for unscrupulous business practices, Murphy and Fritz quickly built an enormous mercantile store in Lincoln and continued profiteering from its lucrative beef contracts with Fort Stanton.

After Fritz died unexpectedly in Germany in 1874, the ailing Murphy's ambitious junior partner, James J. Dolan, bought out Murphy's interests in March, 1877, and renamed the firm J. J. Dolan & Co. With junior partner John J. Riley, he continued to fix prices, intimidate ranchers and farmers, and deal in stolen cattle.

The Bible-toting McSween and his strong-willed wife, Susan, arrived in Lincoln in March, 1875, and the bachelor Tunstall in Nov., 1876. Originally Murphy had hired McSween to be his attorney. But once Tunstall and McSween opened a competing mercantile and bank in Oct., 1877, their intentions were clear: to win the lucrative beef contracts to feed the Fort Stanton garrison and the nearby Indian Agency's Apaches.

When the unarmed Tunstall was tracked down, shot and killed in Feb., 1878, the five-month-long Lincoln County War erupted. There are two important dates to remember about the war. On April 1 that year, Billy and five pals ambushed and killed Sheriff William J. Brady and Deputy George Hindman as Brady and four Deputies walked past the Tunstall Store. The Kid was indicted for this crime; eventually captured, tried and convicted; and returned to Lincoln for his May 13 hanging. On July 15-19, the Five-Day Battle was the climax of the Lincoln County War. When the latter began, McSween had 60 hired guns, the Murphy-Dolan faction 40. When Ft. Stanton's Lt. Col. Nathan Dudley and his men -- with a 12-pound howitzer and Gatling gun in tow -- intervened on July 19, most of McSween's forces fled. That's when the Murphy-Dolan men torched the McSween home.

During that incident, known as the Big Killing, Billy and three pals fled the home at nightfall in a hale of

(continued, back panel)

Billy the Kid Points of Interest

Begin at Lincoln State Monument's **Anderson-Free-man Museum & Visitor Center (1)**. It lays out the history of the county, Ft. Stanton and its Buffalo Soldiers, the Mescalero Apaches, the Lincoln County War, and Billy the Kid. Its 35-seat theater continually plays a 10-minute introductory film and occasionally one of its several Billy the Kid Westerns. Built in 1981, it has drinking fountains, public restrooms, and a gift shop.

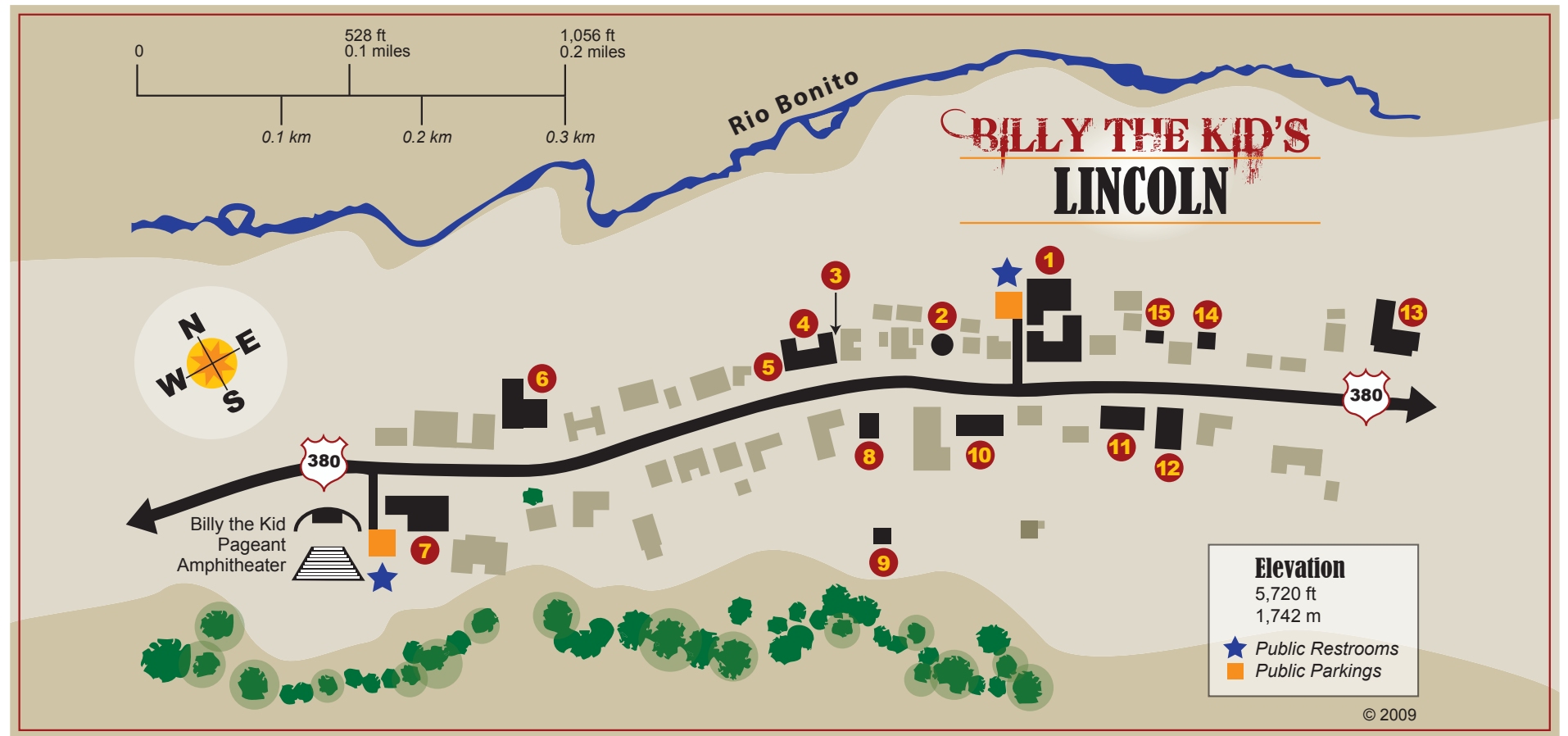
Walk west; note on the right the round stone tower, the **torreon (2)**. Built circa 1849 to defend the earliest settlers against Apache raids, it was held by the Dolan-Riley faction during the Five-Day Battle.

The **alley (3)** between the Penfield House and the Tunstall Store leads past the site of the gate of the Tunstall corral, where Billy and five pals opened fire on Brady and Hindman; to the marked graves of Tunstall and McSween, and the unmarked graves of two others killed during the escape from the McSween home.

Visit the **Tunstall Store (4)**, too. Its opening in Oct., 1877, set the stage for the Lincoln County War and made Tunstall and McSween marked men. They must have anticipated trouble; its shutters are lined with steel. McSween's 420-volume law office was in the west end, and Tunstall's living quarters in the east end, behind the Post Office. After Dudley's intervention, Dolan-Riley men scrambled to its roof and took up firing positions on the adjacent McSween home.

Buried beneath the vacant lot next door and the adjoining Fresquez House is the foundation of the lavish, nine-room **McSween House (5)**, the focal point of the Five-Day Battle. A two-room building built before 1868, it was expanded for a pre-1873 branch of L. G. Murphy & Co. In Feb., 1877, Murphy sold it to the McSweens, who spent \$1,900 on the place. They carpeted the floors, curtained the windows, bought stuffed chairs, lamps, clocks, a sewing machine, an organ, and a piano, and moved in that summer. Tunstall's wake was held here. A 1986 archaeological dig unearthed burned wood, melted glass, and spent cartridge shells.

Although vagrants torched it in 1936, the eight bedroom **Wortley Hotel (6)** was rebuilt on its original 1874 foundation in 1960. It was the Dolan-Riley command post during the Five-Day Battle. On April 28, 1881, Deputy Bob Olinger was dining here on pot roast and mashed potatoes when two shots rang out across the street. As Olinger raced back to the jail, the Kid shot and killed him with Olinger's 12-gauge shotgun. Garrett



briefly owned the hotel in mid-1881.

Cross the street and visit the massive **Murphy-Dolan Store (7)**, built in 1873-74. It became the Lincoln County Courthouse (1881-1913). The first floor had a store, bar, and post office, Murphy's office, a bunkhouse, and a billiard room. The second floor had Murphy's bedroom (which became the jail), a spare room (Garrett's office), a storeroom (Garrett's living quarters), the Dolan-Riley quarters (the armory), Murphy's housekeeper's room, and a Masonic Room. Stone tablets outside mark where Billy's guards, Deputies Olinger and James W. Bell, died.

Walk east; note on the right (just past the Tunstall Store), a private residence. It was built in the 1920s on what is believed the foundation of the **Lupe Cisneros House (8)**, from which Deputy Billy Mathews shot and wounded the Kid and Jim French as they ran out to Brady's body to retrieve Billy's confiscated rifle. Behind

the Cisneros house and San Juan Church is the unexcavated site of **Squire John B. Wilson's House (9)**. Here the local Justice of the Peace deputized the Tunstall-avenging Regulators in Feb., 1878, and was hoeing in his garden on April 1, 1878, when a stray bullet wounded him. Billy secretly met with Gov. Lew Wallace here in March, 1879, to talk of a pardon in exchange for the Kid's eyewitness testimony in the Feb., 1879, murder of lawyer Huston Chapman in Lincoln.

Known today as the **Convento (10)**, this was the first Lincoln County Courthouse (1869-80), where the annual Spring session of the 3rd District Court indicted Billy for the murder of Brady 17 days earlier. The **Jose Montano Store (11)** was a McSween stronghold during the Five-Day Battle. The Kid holed up here on July 15, then moved to the McSween home later that day. Gov. Wallace stayed here in 1879 while arranging his secret meeting with Billy. Built before 1868, **Juan**

Patron's Store & Saloon (12) was another McSween stronghold during the Five-Day Battle. Here Hispanic musicians serenaded the Kid while he was under month-long protective custody after his meeting with Gov. Wallace.

Cross the street to the wood shingle-roofed **Isaac Ellis Store & House (13)**, also a McSween stronghold during the Five-Day Battle. Built before 1861, Ellis bought it in 1877. A stray bullet wounded Ben Ellis here on July 17, 1878, while tending horses in his father's corral. Walk west; note on the right the site of Lincoln's **underground pit carcel (14)**, where Brady jailed the Kid in Feb., 1878, keeping him from Tunstall's wake and burial. Farther west is the July 19-20, 1878, site of **Lt. Col. Nathan Dudley's Camp (15)**. Dudley chose it because he knew its exposure to fire would deter McSween's men from aiding the surrounded and besieged McSween home.