Author's Note

This novel is the culmination of a youthful ambition. It pays homage of the many sagas of the old West I devoured as a young reader, the countless B Westerns I watched on Saturday morning TV, the yards of paperback Westerns I burned through as an adolescent, and as a young adult, the prime-time horse operas available to me almost nightly in the late fifties and sixties. I was smitten with Western lore and wanted to contribute to it. It was a subject that always caught my attention as was the case when I came upon Leon Metz's biography of Patrick F. Garrett known the world over as the man who shot Billy, The Kid. Professor Metz's thorough account presented Garrett as the quintessential lawman of the old West. One of the gems uncovered in my reading of the biography was that Garrett and his friend, Ashton Upson, had written and self-published a version of that crucial event entitled *The Authentic Life of Billy, The Kid*, with Upson, an ex-newspaper man, providing 'biographical' information and Garrett, the uncluttered directness of a police report in his pursuit of Bonney. As a result, some three decades ago, I sat down at my typewriter and set out to write a novel based on the life of a legendary lawman, a life overshadowed by one significant incident, the killing of William Bonney.

Over the years numerous version of my manuscript, mostly typewritten, have languished in a drawer or gathered dust on my desk and to which I was drawn, on occasion, to reread and rethink the presentation of the material. In the process, a novel took shape, one that began as a bare bones cinematic adaptation of a biography and emerged as something more meaningful: the story of the relationship between two men, one garrulous, the other taciturn, the Mutt and Jeff of the old Southwest, and the tradition of storytelling and authoring of 'true' accounts. The life of this legendary lawman encompassed more than just that one episode, however. Garrett's own violent death in the early years of the Twentieth Century seemed to punctuate the passing of an era. There is a resonance to the other particulars of his life as a lawman that belong to the saga of the Southwest.

On The Road To Las Cruces is a work of fiction tethered loosely to historical fact as any Western history buff will be quick to discern. The detail and color of the late Nineteenth Century Southwest presented here is due largely to the intrepid historians, both amateur and professional, whose bailiwick is that particular era. An author can feel comfortable writing about his contemporaries, but to travel to the past takes the expertise of those for whom the diligent tracking of detail is all consuming and, in many cases, just and only reward. I am fortunate to benefit from such carefully researched knowledge. The quasi-fictional landscape that came into being in my imagination

would have been noticeably paler had it not been for the writing of such excellent authors, storytellers, and historians as Mari Sandoz, J. Frank Dobie, Leon Metz, Owen Wister, Charlie Siringo, Jon Tuska, and Colin Rickards, to name only a few. It goes without saying that Garrett and Upson's collaboration was invaluable.

In this work of fact-based fiction, I have allowed myself license to rename, upend, and fabricate certain details to hurry the flow of the story. The inaccuracies, the anachronisms, the inventions are entirely mine. What is related on the road to Las Cruces is as much a retelling of some history as it is how such a retelling might come about, and is represented in the manner of a tall tale, the deadpan details of a crime story, melodrama, and the makings of a conspiracy to murder. The subtle hyperbole of the Western storyteller is a joy to hear, masking in understatement devilish wit and intelligence. It was my intention to evoke that tradition.

Pat Nolan, Monte Rio, 2011