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Dramatic Publishing

Peck's Bad Boy

**By
Aurand Harris**

Peck's Bad Boy

First produced by the Harwich Junior Theatre
at West Harwich, Mass.

Comedy. Adapted by Aurand Harris. Based on stories from Peck's Bad Boy by George W. Peck. Cast: 4m., 3w. This play is a popular American classic of fun for all audiences. It is a "laugh-along" comedy of the funny antics of a boy named Henry. Ever inventive and imaginative, Henry keeps his family in an uproar with his comic escapades. Set at the turn of the 20th century, the play has the charm of nostalgia combined with the broad humor of a comic strip. Ultimately, Henry's hilarious shenanigans build to a suspenseful climax which results in the exposure of a swindler-villain. *One set. Turn-of-the-20th-century costumes. Approximate running time: 65 minutes. Code: PD9.*

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Peck's Bad Boy



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By

AURAND HARRIS



Dramatic Publishing Company

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

KATIE, THE HIRED GIRL

HENRY, THE "BAD BOY"

MOTHER, HIS MA

MAJOR, HIS PA

POLICEMAN, KATIE'S STEADY BEAU

MRS. LANGFORD, THE DEACON'S WIFE

HORACE Q. WINTHROP WELLINGTON, THE CITY CROOK

The scene is a small town in the midwest, 1890.

All three acts take place in the front parlor.

The premiere performance of PECK'S BAD BOY was presented by the Harwich Junior Theatre, at West Harwich, Massachusetts, on 24 July, 1973.

Following is a copy of the programme used on this occasion :

PECK'S BAD BOY

By

AURAND HARRIS

Directed by Aurand Harris

CAST

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| KATIE, THE HIRED GIRL | Mimi Brock |
| HENRY, THE YOUNG HERO | Chris Francis Fehrstrom |
| MOTHER, HIS MA | May Clark |
| MAJOR, HIS PA | Herbert Douglas |
| POLICEMAN, KATIE'S STEADY BEAU | Peter Berinato |
| MRS. LANGFORD, THE DEACON'S WIFE | Ellen Clark |
| HORACE Q. WINTHROP WELLINGTON, THE CITY CROOK | Henry Korman |

The scene is a small town in the midwest, 1890.

All three scenes take place in the front parlor of a respectable house.

The time covers six months in the year 1890.

Suggested by scenes from "PECK'S BAD BOY" by George W. Peck

MUSIC

"Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay" by Henry J. Sayer

"Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" by Theo A. Metz

"Home Sweet Home"

"Little Brown Church in the Dale"

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Technical Director | ROBERT QUINN |
| Assistant Director | GWENN MARCELLINE |
| Set and Costume Designs | ROBERT QUINN |
| Costume Co-Ordinator | SALLY ELLIOTT |
| Costume Construction | HOPE STUBBS BROWN |
| Producer | SARA LOVE MAXWELL |

*To Coleman and Lola Jennings
and their children,
Adrienne and Coleman*

PECK'S BAD BOY

ACT ONE

(SCENE: A parlor. At back is a large center door. Behind it is an entrance hall, leading to the front door, unseen, off R., and to other rooms off L. A smaller door is D. R. A bay window is at L. with open French windows. A table and chair are at L. A sofa is at R. The room has a formal and proper, a quaint and caricature-Victorian look. There is curtain music, "Home Sweet Home". Curtain rises. Katie, a spirited young girl, enters at back with a small feather duster. She hums and sings as she quickly dusts the table. She stops, smells flowers in vase, dusts the chair, stops, sniffs flowers again, looks about, then quickly plucks a daisy from the vase.)

KATIE: Patrick Michael O'Reilly. (She pulls petals.) He loves me . . . he loves me not . . . he loves me . . .

POLLY: (Parrot in a cage at L. squawks in a loud voice off L.) Silly girl. Silly girl. Silly girl. (In panic Katie puts flower in her mouth, stuffs her cheeks, and stares straight ahead.) Pretty Polly. Pretty Polly. Pretty Polly.

KATIE: (Looks at cage. Relieved, takes flower out of her mouth.) Oh, you naughty, naughty bird. You gave me such a fright.

POLLY: Tickle, tickle, eat a pickle. Tickle, tickle, eat a pickle.

KATIE: Quiet, Polly. (Dusting again.) So much to do. Company coming to tea and the Major and the Mrs. not home yet. And Henry—goodness knows where that boy is or what he is up to. (At footlights, to audience) Henry isn't a bad boy, he is just too full of fun, and always playing jokes. Last night he put bits of rubber in the macaroni — (Laughs). Yesterday he tied his Pa's false teeth onto a toothless dog. (Laughs) And Sunday he put a homeless skunk in the cellar, and the preacher came! Phew! Whew! (Off R. the barking of many dogs is heard. Katie runs to hall) Here he comes. That's Henry, with every dog in the neighborhood barking at his heels. Listen—he'll slam the front door. (Door slams, off) Watch—he'll come in with some new trick. But he won't fool me — not this time. (Henry enters at back, whistling loudly and happily. He is a young teenager with an engaging grin, a sunny disposition and an overflowing sense of humor. He carries a hornet's nest swinging on the end of a pole. Katie politely ignores him) 'Afternoon, Henry.

HENRY: Afternoon, Katie.

KATIE: That's a happy whistle.

HENRY: Oh, I'm working. I'm going into the whistling business.

KATIE: Whistling business?

HENRY: I'm going to hire an office and put out a sign. "Boy—to whistle for lost dogs." Think of how many dogs are lost every day! I'll whistle for them, enjoy myself, and make a million dollars. (*Whistles*)

KATIE: (*Not looking at him*) You'd scare them all away.

HENRY: (*Looks at her and at nest*) Scare? I would scare who?

KATIE: Not me. Not this time. (*Henry tip-toes up behind her*) I'm on to all your pranks. You can't trick me. No sirree. (*Henry carefully holds pole over her head, dropping the nest in front of her face. Katie screams*)

HENRY: Don't be afraid. It's just a hornet's nest.

KATIE: Hornets! (*Screams again and runs*)

HENRY: It's a present for Pa. He said the postman was so slow he wished he had a hornet's nest to drop in his britches. (*Pantomimes dropping it in place*)

KATIE: Give it to me. (*Takes pole, fearfully*) Mrs. Langford is coming. We're having tea in the parlor. (*Goes toward hall*)

HENRY: Be careful.

KATIE: I'll put it on the porch.

HENRY: Don't shimmy them up.

KATIE: Shimmy who up?

HENRY: The hornets!

KATIE: Are there hornets INSIDE! (*Screams and runs, exiting at back*)

POLLY: Polly wants a pickle. Polly wants a pickle.

HENRY: Hello, Polly. Pretty Polly. Pretty Polly.

POLLY: Pretty Polly. Pretty Polly. Pretty Polly.

HENRY: I've got a new word for you—Desperado. Can you squawk that, Polly? Desperado. (*Takes tabloid newspaper from pocket*) Jessie James was a desperado. Here's all about him in the Police Reporter. (*Shows paper to parrot and pronounces word slowly*) See Des-per-a-do. Come on, increase your vocabulary, Polly. Des-per-a-do. (*He waits hopefully. Polly is silent*) Think about it. (*Turns to back page of paper*) And this is a LIVE criminal. "Wanted in five states." Look at his picture! He's a crook.

POLLY: He's a crook. He's a crook. He's a crook.

HENRY: That's a girl. Come on,—desperado.

POLLY: He's a crook. He's a crook. He's a crook.

HENRY: (*Holds up his hand*) Class dismissed.

POLLY: He's a crook. He's a crook. He's a crook.

HENRY: (*Waves hand*) School is over! I brought you something—something to play with. (*Puts newspaper in one pocket, takes articles from another pocket and puts them on table*) Now where did I put it? (*Holds up small shaker*) No. That's a shaker of sneezing powder. (*To audience, innocently*) You never know when someone wants to sneeze awful bad, and this powder helps them sneeze real loud. (*Sneezes as he puts shaker on table, holds up glass bottle*) And this is Pa's old medicine bottle—full—of red ants! Look at them all running around. Little red ants crawling all over each other.

KATIE: (*Enters at back with tray on which is a cookie jar, tea cups, saucers, and plate of cookies*) What are you putting on your Ma's best table spread?

HENRY: A bottle of my best red ants.

KATIE: Ants! Take them away.

HENRY: (*Suddenly feels his pocket and starts wiggling*) Here's what I brought for Polyl. I brought her—a little green play fellow. (*Holds up small snake*)

KATIE: (*Her back to him, goes to sofa and fluffs pillow*) No, Henry. Give it to me.

HENRY: Give it to you?

KATIE: Give it to me.

HENRY: You want it?

KATIE: That's what I said.

HENRY: (*Grins to audience*) She wants it. Then I'll have to give it to her. Where? (*Katie holds out hand without looking*) I do hereby give you—one wiggly green snake.

KATIE: Snake! (*Sees it, screams, and runs, hides behind chair*)

HENRY: (*Chases her*) Take him. He's yours.

KATIE: (*Rises from behind chair*) Oh, St. Peter and St. Paul, help me! (*Crosses herself and disappears behind chair again. Doorbell rings*)

HENRY: Someone's at the door..

KATIE: (*Rises*) It's your Ma and Pa. (*Doorbell rings again*) Oh, St. Peter, thank you. (*Runs to hall*) And St. Paul. (*Crosses herself and exits*)

HENRY: (*To snake*) You're a lively little fellow. Look at him, wiggling like green spaghetti. He's sticking his tongue out. He's saying "hello". Hello to you. (*Sticks his tongue out at snake*) He's thin in the middle. I think he's hungry. Well, spaghetti-spagoty, by golly you're in luck. Katie brought in a whole jar of cookies. (*Lifts lid of a cookie jar*) Go ahead. Eat up. Have a cookie. (*Drops snake into cookie jar and puts lid on*)

MOTHER: (*Enters at back in hallway. She is sweet and attractive and wears a loosely fitting maternity dress. She looks back off R and calls*) Hurry, dear. Mrs. Langford will be here at four. She is very punctual. (*Calls to L*) Katie, the Major and I are back. (*Sees Henry. She is near-sighted*) Oh, Henry, I'm so glad you're home. Mrs. Langford is coming to tea. (*Goes to hall and calls*) What is keeping your father? He saw a nest on the porch and went to investigate.

HENRY: A nest?

MOTHER: (*Hurries to Henry*) Oh, such a happy day. Your father—I was so proud of him. He didn't mention the Civil War, and he didn't lose his temper. He and the preacher shook hands.

HENRY: You mean Pa has joined the church!

MOTHER: He is on probation.

HENRY: (*To audience*) That means Pa's got one foot in the church door.

MOTHER: The preacher said, father must prove he is sincere. And if he resists all worldly temptations, he will be—taken into the fold.

HENRY: Then Pa can go to heaven—with you and me.

MOTHER: I wouldn't think of going to heaven without your father!

HENRY: We'll get him there. Don't you worry.

MOTHER: Unfortunately he has—two weaknesses.

HENRY: Pa swears a lot and Pa drinks a little.

MOTHER: But he has promised to stop. We must help him.

HENRY: I will do anything for Pa. (*To audience*) I'll even give him a boost through the pearly gates. (*Hand over heart*) I solemnly swear before I am through, Pa will swear off the bottle and Pa will swear off swearing.

MAJOR: (*Off R, shouts angrily*) Damn it! Damn it! Oh, damn!
Shoo. Go away. Damnation!

HENRY: It's Pa. And he's swearing!

MOTHER: No, Hubert. Probation! (*Looks up*) Someone is listening.

MAJOR: (*Enters at C, swatting his face*) Damn it! Damn it!
Damn it!

MOTHER: No, Hubert, don't swear. Say—say fudge. Fudge!

MAJOR: Fudge! Fudge! Fudge!

HENRY: Is anything wrong, Pa.

MAJOR: Wrong! I'm bitten—I'm blood sucked by a hive of damn —

MOTHER: Fudge!

MAJOR: —bees! (*Slaps his face*)

MOTHER: (*Rushes to back*) Katie.

KATIE: (*Off, loudly*) I'm polishing the furniture.

MOTHER: Bring the liniment.

MAJOR: A million bees came buzz-zz-zzing out of a nest — and thought I was a sweet pea.

HENRY: A nest? Hornets?

MAJOR: Beess-ss-ss! Where is the damn—the liniment?

HENRY: I did it, Pa.

MAJOR: Did what?

HENRY: I did it for you.

MAJOR: What for me?

HENRY: The nest. I brought you a hornet's nest.

MAJOR: You!

HENRY: For the postman! You said you wanted a hornet's nest to drop inside of his—fudge—britches.

MAJOR: Oh, dam—(*Mother and Henry motion for him to stop. He tries to control himself*) Marshmallows! Caramel! Taffy! Sourballs! Peppermint sticks! FUDGE!

KATIE: (*Breathless, enters at back with bottle in each hand and a cloth*) Here's the liniment. Who's dying?

HENRY: Let me help. (*Takes bottle and cloth which is saturated with brown liquid and rushes to Major who sits*)

MAJOR: Quick! Oh--Oh! I feel like I have been charged by the cavalry! (*Yells and kicks as Henry smears Major's face with cloth*) This is worse—worse than the war!

MOTHER: The bumps are turning dark.

HENRY: It's working!

MAJOR: Then put on more. More!

HENRY: (*Grins at the audience*) MORE! (*Covers Major's face with cloth*)

MAJOR: Help! Stop! Stop! I'm drowning! (*Spits and splutters*) What kind of liniment is this? It tastes like—(*Spits*) it tastes like—like polish. (*Looks at cloth*) It looks like polish. (*Grabs bottle*) It is! You've covered me with furniture polish! (*Rises*)

KATIE: Furniture polish? (*Looks at bottle she is holding*) The liniment!

MAJOR: Furniture polish! Furniture polish! Look at me! What do you think I am, the dining room table? How do I get this off?

KATIE: (*Major points at Henry. Henry points to Mother. She points to Katie*) You don't, sir.

MAJOR: Don't! What do you mean, don't?

KATIE: It has to wear off. (*Turns and clasps her hands in prayer, looking up*)

MAJOR: Wear off! WEAR OFF! Oh, damn.

HENRY: (*He and Mother speak together, motioning for Major to stop*) No, Pa.

MOTHER: No, Hubert, don't swear.

MAJOR: (*Controlling himself*) Henry! HEN-R--Y!

HENRY: Yes, Pa.

MAJOR: After I sop up this mess, I shall be back. And—you and I are going to have the HARDEST talk we've ever had—with a leather strap!

HENRY: But, Pa—

MAJOR: Not a word! Not a sound! Wear off! Oh, dam—

MOTHER AND HENRY: Fudge.

MAJOR: (*Marches center*) Fudge the hornets! Fudge the furniture polish. (*Stops in doorway, turns and shouts*) And damn the fudge! (*Exits L in hall*)

MOTHER: He broke his pledge.

HENRY: I just heard the pearly gates swinging shut. (*Looks up*)

KATIE: (*Hiccups*) I've got the hiccups. (*Hiccups and starts to cry*) I've got the hic-cups.

HENRY: Close your eyes, Katie. (*She does*) Hold your breath. (*She does*) Count to seven. (*Katie nods her head on each count, as Mother says, "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven."* Henry slips behind Katie and on the seventh count, shouts) Boo-oo-oo-oo!

KATIE: (*Screams, jumps, then smiles*) They're gone. You scared them out of me.

MOTHER: Scared them away.

HENRY: Scared them out of you—(*Beams with a brilliant idea*) That's it! That's what we'll do for Pa. We will SCARE the swearing out of Pa!

MOTHER: You can't say Boo to father.

HENRY: Not a little Boo, but a thunder of a noise. A bang that will send him to heaven. I've got it! And this will help in two ways. It will save Pa from going to (*To audience*) . . . you know where. And will save me from getting strapped on (*To audience*) . . . the you know what. Quick, Katie, look under my bed until you find an old—pig's bladder.

KATIE: A pig's bladder?

HENRY: I've been saving it for something worthy. And what's more worthy of a pig's bladder than Pa. Hurry. (*Katie runs out at back*) It's hid under a sling shot that's hid under a dead pigeon that's hid under the feather bed.

MOTHER: Henry, what are you going to do?

HENRY: (*Innocently*) Me? Nothing. (*Grins to audience*) But Pa — Pa's going to BANG his way to the Promised Land! First, I'll blow up the bladder. (*Pantomimes comically*) Then I'll put the bladder where Pa will hit it instead of me. You know the madder Pa is the harder he hits and I figure Pa's mad enough this time to hit hard enough to BUST the bladder—Boom! I'll act like I am dying, and you start crying. Pa will think he's killed me this time. And with my dying breath I'll make him promise never to swear again. Then we've got him—signed, sealed and delivered to the preacher.

MOTHER: That is deceiving.

HENRY: No, Ma, it's only a little fooling on the way for the big reward at the end.

KATIE: (*Rushes in at the center, holding out pig's bladder*) Here is the bladder---ugh!

HENRY: Let me have it.

KATIE: What are you going to do with a bladder?

HENRY: Huff and puff and blow it up (*Blows up bladder*)

MAJOR: (*Off, shouts*) Henry! Hen--r--y!

HENRY: Yes, Pa.

MAJOR: Are you ready?

HENRY: Ready to bust. (*Ties off balloon concealed in covering*)

MOTHER: (*Nervous*) Finish your work, Katie.

KATIE: (*Holds out bottle*) There's no polish left.

MOTHER: Use liniment. (*Katie exits quickly at back*)

HENRY: Remember, Ma, you do your part. I'll do mine. (*Puts bladder in seat of pants*) And Pa---will knock on the pearly gates. (*Bends over chair, back to audience*)

MAJOR: (*Enters at back, face cleaner, and carries conspicuously a leather razor strap. He marches to C, clicks his heels in military fashion*) Attention! (*Henry stands at attention*) About face. Forward march. To the sofa. (*Henry marches to sofa*) As I said to General Grant, an undisciplined soldier must be punished. Hornets, furniture polish, (*Henry grins and nods his head on each accusation*) tripped into the fish pond, the yard dug full of rabbit traps, a skunk in the cellar, fire crackers in my cigar---Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! The time has come to face the music. (*Henry vocally, "um-pa's" a march, shifting his feet in rhythm*) Halt! (*Henry salutes*) Prepare to receive your proper punishment. Forward. (*Henry turns to arm of sofa*) Bend. (*Henry puts head over sofa, with bent knees*) Extend! (*Henry straightens his knees, which causes his hips to extend*)

MOTHER: Hubert, boys will be boys.

MAJOR: (*Removes coat and hands it to Mother who puts it on chair back*) A better book says: spare the rod and spoil the child.

HENRY: (*Straightens up*) Oh, don't spoil me, Pa. Lay on the strap. (*Bends over again*)

MAJOR: This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.

HENRY: (*To audience*) Truer words were never spoken.

MAJOR: For the unmanly behavior, for the tricks you have played, the embarrassment you have perpetrated ---

HENRY: For heaven's sake, let her rip!

MAJOR: This I do for the good of all bad boys. Ready — aim — fire! (*Major swings a mighty blow with the strap on Henry's backside. A deafening crash is heard—drums offstage. Major is startled, Henry, comically, moans and groans and kicks, rolls on his back, etc.*)

HENRY: Oh, Pa. Oh, Pa! Oh-oh-oh, Pa!

MAJOR: What happened?

MOTHER: Something broke!

HENRY: My back! My back!

MAJOR: His back! I broke his back! (*Henry continuing to have a hilarious time, falls, leaps, hops over sofa, etc., moans and groans, etc., during Katie's and Policeman's entrance and speeches*)

KATIE: (*Rushes in at center as doorbell rings.*) What went off? It sounded like the Fourth of July!

POLICEMAN: (*Enters at C, from L*) What's wrong? I heard the explosion half way down the block!

HENRY: (*Gives a final dramatic moan and flop*) Pa—Pa—

MAJOR: (*Kneels by Henry*) Yes, Henry.

HENRY: If I die—

POLICEMAN: Die!

HENRY: Promise me, Pa—promise me one thing.

MAJOR: Anything.

HENRY: Promise me you will never swear again.

MAJOR: I promise.

HENRY: Then I can depart in peace.

MOTHER: (*Crying*) Oh, Henry.

KATIE: (*Puckers her face, starts crying*) Oh-oh-oh-oh.

MOTHER: (*Henry slowly rises, with a vacant stare*) Henry—what is it, Henry?

HENRY: (*Waves his arms slowly*) I . . . I feel like a bird . . . like I am going to fly . . . away.

KATIE: An angel.

HENRY: Goodby, Pa. Remember your promise—with witnesses.

MAJOR: I swear, I will never swear again!

HENRY: Amen. (*Sinks on sofa*)

MOTHER: Henry! Henry!

KATIE: (*Cries loudly. Policeman removes his hat and holds it over his heart*) Oh-oh-oh-oh.

HENRY: Where am I (*Sits up*) What's happened?

MOTHER: Oh, Henry, you're all right!

MAJOR: All right?

KATIE: All right?

HENRY: What happened?

POLICEMAN: That's what I'd like to know! What is happening here?

MAJOR: That's what I want to know! Hen-r-y! Explain your sudden recovery.

MOTHER: Don't you see, dear, by TAKING the pledge, you have GIVEN him back his life.

KATIE: A miracle! In the front parlor. (*Katie crosses herself. Policeman removes his hat again*)

MOTHER: Come, dear, let me wash your face. (*Leads Major to back*) Oh, Hubert, you have made me so happy, so happy. You know, I always knew you were a saint. (*She extends her hand. Major smiles at her, then looks about doubtful and dazed. They exit*)

HENRY: Excuse me. (*Rises and walks, squatting with legs apart*) I have things to remove.

POLICEMAN: Why are you walking so funny?

HENRY: Because—it tickles! (*Wiggles, giggles and exits R*)

KATIE: (*Flirts, shyly*) Hello, Patrick.

POLICEMAN: (*In love*) Hello, Katie.

KATIE: I didn't expect to see you until tonight.

POLICEMAN: I was passing by—and I heard the explosion. Is everything all right?

KATIE: Oh, yes. In fact, it's been one of our quiet days.

POLICEMAN: (*Looks around*) Katie, we're all alone. (*She nods*) No one—but you and me. (*She nods. He takes a step with eager anticipation*) Do you think—I could steal just one?

KATIE: (*Looks around, then nods impishly, walks to table*) All right, but just one. (*He moves to her as she picks up cake. He puckers his mouth. She puts cookie in it*)