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# The Totally True Tall Tales of PECOS BILL

a new musical with traditional cowboy songs for a cast of 12-40  
adapted for the stage by Brian Dale Guehring

After a group of confident, young cowboys brag to impress two trail-weary cowgirls, the two unimpressed travellers sit the greenhorn cowboys down to tell them the story of the best cowpuncher ever known on either side of the Rockies, Pecos Bill. Pecos Bill was born in Texas, raised by coyotes and wrestled mountain lions. As a cowboy, Pecos invents the lariat, cow-herding, the barb-wired fence, the tumbleweed, and the rodeo. Pecos also teaches the cowpokes to laugh at themselves and have a good time. Slue-Foot Sue, a catfish-riding cowgirl, steals his heart, and Pecos eventually convinces her to get married. Unfortunately, Pecos laughs at her when she gets bucked from his bronco and she leaves him. When the greenhorn cowboys return to their camp (taking themselves considerably less seriously), Slue Foot Sue and her granny (the two travellers) continue their journey to find Pecos Bill and win him back.

This adaptation uses traditional cowboy songs to help tell the story. The production is envisioned to have the two narrator/travellers also act as the guitar players for the music. The greenhorn cowboys can also join in on other instruments to create a storytelling band. (The music can also be prerecorded if necessary). This play can easily be expanded for a large cast of performers.

The accompanying cd includes recordings of the songs from the show (and a couple of silly sound effects) to give the reader a taste of the music. Obviously this play is still being developed, so the cd is mostly the songs recorded by other artists. We are hoping to have a demonstration cd of guitar players and actors singing soon that will better reflect the style of the show.

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# The Totally True Tall Tales of PECOS BILL

a musical play for a cast of thousands (or 12-40)

## Characters( in order of appearance)

TRAVELLER #1 Pecos Bill	a wise, strong woman who knows all about
TRAVELLER #2 Pecos Bill, too	an older, wiser woman who knows all about
JOHNSON ears	Young Confident greenhorn cowboy with big
MALONE	Young, short serious greenhorn cowboy
FISHER	Young talkative serious greenhorn cowboy
PECOS BILL ( Young Bill & Pecos Bill)	the best cowboy ever
OLE MAN & OLE WOMAN	Bill's parents
TRAPPER	a fur trapper
SNAKE	rattler
WOUSER	half-mountain lion/half panther
COLT	A cowboy who wears 4 six shooters
MUSHMOUTH understood	A cowboy who plays a harmonica and can't be
PRETTY PETE	The dirtiest cowboy
CURLY JOE	A bald cowboy (or with long straight hair)
BOWLEG	A cowboy who walks real bowlegged
BULLFROG	A cowboy who dances like a bullfrog <sup>1</sup>
HIGH POCKETS	A cowboy who wears pants real high
SLUE FOOT SUE	the love of Bill's life
MR. & MRS DORFLINGER	Sue's East Coast parents
HOT FOOT GRANNY	Sue's dancing grandmother
JUSTICE	a square dance calling justice of the peace

Other chorus parts:

17 Brothers and Sisters, Mosquitos, Coyotes, Cattle, Cowboys, Other Animals

## Settings

a cowboy camp  
the wild West

The settings should be exaggerated and ridiculous within the Traveller's story. This musical highlights the TALL tale storytelling and complete silliness of these exaggerated stories

## Time

100 years ago

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<sup>1</sup> For a small cast, Bullfrog 's lines can be absorbed by other cowboys

**The Totally True Tall Tales of**  
**PECOS BILL**

a musical play for a cast of thousands (or 16-50)

The Totally True Tall Tales of PECOS BILL was first developed at the University of Texas at Austin as part of a musical theater adaptation course taught by Rod Caspers.

The Totally True Tall Tales of PECOS BILL was first produced by the Papillion (NE) Summer Arts Camp in the summer of 2000 with a cast of 63 students from Kindergarten through 9th grade with the following production team:

Director: Brian Guehring                      Producer/Tech Director: Debbie Kippley  
Music Director: Jackie Fowler              Choreographer: Donna Marceaux

The Totally True Tall Tales of PECOS BILL was subsequently produced at the Omaha Theater Company for Young People in the summer of 2003 as a youth production with a cast of 16 students from 3rd grade 7th grade with the following production team and cast:

Director: Brian Guehring                      Music Director: Amber D'Amato  
Choreographer:                                      Light Design: Andy Vance

*(The Greenhorn Cowboys doubled as the chorus and Pecos Bill's cowboys)*

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The Totally True Tall Tales of  
**PECOS BILL**

*act i, scene 1: the Travellers*

(lights come up revealing two road weary  
TRAVELLERS sitting at a campfire down stage  
right. TRAVELLER #1 plays her guitar and  
sings a wistful **COWGIRL's LAMENT** .  
TRAVELLER #2 joins in)

TRAVELLER #1

MY HOME'S IN MONTANA, I WEAR A BANDANA,  
MY SPURS ARE OF SILVER, MY HORSE IS A BAY

TRAVELLER #2

OH, ONCE IN THE SADDLE, HOW SHE WOULD GO DASHIN  
YES, ONCE IN THE SADDLE THEN SHE WAS SO GAY

TRAVELLER #1

GO GATHER AROUND YOU A CROWD OF YOUNG COWBOYS  
AND TELL THEM THE STORY OF THIS MY SAD FATE

TRAVELLER #1 and 2

TELL ONE AND THE OTHER, LEST THEY SHOULD GO FURTHER  
TO STOP THEIR WILD ROVING, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

(Her song is interrupted by the arrival of a group  
of the most confident, serious cowboys in the  
west. They sing **OLD CHISHOLM** . These  
young cowboys set up camp for the night as  
they do their song.)

COWOYS:

COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA, YIPPEA YEA,  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA!

WELL COME ALONG BOYS AND LISTEN TO MY TALE  
I'LL TELL YOU OF MY SUCCESS ON THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA, YIPPEA YEA,  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA!

COWBOY 1

Make sure the steeds are tied up.

COWOYS:

I'M UP THE MORNING BEFORE DAYLIGHT  
AND BEFORE I SLEEP THE MOON SHINES BRIGHT  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA, YIPPEA YEA,  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA!

COWBOY 2

Hey Cookie, is the grub ready?

COWOYS:

WITH MY SEAT IN THE SADDLE AND MY HAND ON THE HORN  
I'M THE BEST DANG COWBOY THAT EVER WAS BORN  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA, YIPPEA YEA,  
COMA TI-YI-YIPPEE, YIPPEE YEA!

COWBOY 3

Don't let the bed bugs bite.

Lookit, fellas. We got company.

FISHER

(three of the Greenhorn Cowboys notice the TRAVELLERS as the other cowboys exit. THEY serenade the women)

JOHNSON, FISHER, MALONE  
 WITH MY SEAT IN THE SADDLE AND MY HAND ON THE HORN  
 WE'RE THE BEST DANG COWBOYS THAT EVER WERE BORN  
 JOHNSON

Howdy, Stranger!

TRAVELLERS

Howdy.

FISHER

Have you ever heard better singing cowboys?

TRAVELLERS

Yes.

FISHER

I told them they were off-key!

MALONE

You surely haven't met any stronger cowpokes?

TRAVELLERS

Yes.

MALONE

They're lying.

JOHNSON

I know you've never seen such a handsome cowboy as me?  
 (TRAVELLERS pause then laugh at the conceited cowboy.)

JOHNSON

What?

MALONE

You ladies travellin' alone?

TRAVELLER #1

Yep.

JOHNSON

If you're looking for a strong cowboy to keep you safe, I'll gladly volunteer.

FISHER

We're from the Bar None ranch, because we are the best cowboys in the West, bar none!

MALONE

We win the rodeo every year, hands down.

FISHER

We bring in the more cattle to Kansas City than any other outfit.

JOHNSON

All the girls swoon when they meet me.

FISHER

We're the best cowboys ever.

TRAVELLER #2

Let me guess, they must call you Bass Mouth, you Shorty, and you Big Ears.  
 (TRAVELLER #1 laughs)

MALONE

No, this is Fisher, I'm Malone, and that's Johnson. And I'm not short!

TRAVELLER #2

Easy there, we meant no offense.  
 FISHER  
 Actually you are a shrimp.  
 MALONE  
 Them's fighting words, big mouth.  
 (MALONE grabs FISHER)  
 JOHNSON  
 Don't be stupid.  
 (JOHNSON tries to break them up)  
 FISHER  
 Who are you callin stupid, Dumbo?  
 (FISHER pushes JOHNSON down)  
 JOHNSON  
 MY EARS ARE NOT BIG!  
 MALONE  
 You couldn't protect these two ladies from a mosquito!  
 (JOHNSON picks up a log for a club and  
 COWBOYS get into a free-for-all as  
 TRAVELLERS just shake their heads.  
 TRAVELLER #1 takes out gun and shoots.  
 COWBOYS stop and watch as bullet ricochets  
 3 times and then knocks JOHNSON's club out of  
 his hand in one quick shot )  
 TRAVELLER #1  
 First off, I can take care of myself. Thanks.  
 JOHNSON  
 Sorry.  
 TRAVELLER #2  
 Secondly, y'all take yourselves way too seriously. Most cowboys have nicknames.  
 MALONE  
 Oh.  
 TRAVELLER #1  
 Finally, you might be good cowboys, but you're not the best.  
 COWBOYS  
 What?  
 TRAVELLER #2  
 Everybody who knows anything, knows Pecos Bill is the best cowboy to ever live.  
 FISHER  
 Pecos Bill?  
 MALONE  
 Who's that?  
 TRAVELLER #1  
 You never heard of Pecos Bill?  
 (COWBOYS all reply in the negative)  
 TRAVELLER #2  
 How can you call yerselfs cowboys then? Pecos Bill invented everything about the  
 cowboy life.  
 JOHNSON  
 I perfected it.  
 TRAVELLER #1  
 You couldn't hold Pecos Bill's six shooter.  
 (COWBOYS all laugh a little)

TRAVELLER #2

Sit down, greenhorns. Somebody's gotta educate ya'll to the story of Pecos Bill. Then you can judge for yourself.

TRAVELLER #1

So gather around and listen closely to the totally true tale of Pecos Bill.

*act i, scene 2: The Family*

TRAVELLER #1

His story starts, as all stories start, with his folks.

(OLE MAN and OLE WOMAN enter behind TRAVELLER. OLE WOMAN is carrying baby. OLE MAN is carrying a musket)

TRAVELLER #1

Now nobody knows their real names.

MALONE

Why didn't they just ask them?

TRAVELLER #2

In Texas, it isn't healthy to go up and ask a stranger his name, as many a tenderfoot like you learned to his sorrow. Everybody just called them Ole Man and Ole Woman.

TRAVELLER #1

Ole Man had just returned from the Texas Revolution.

OLE MAN

Well, I'm back.

OLE WOMAN

You won the war?

OLE MAN

Yep.

OLE WOMAN

You were only gone a day.

OLE MAN

How long did you think it would take me to shoot down the whole Mexican army?

OLE WOMAN

C'mere, Ole Man, I got something to show ya.

OLE MAN

Who are you talking to? Ole Man? I'm not old. I'm still a young man of 75.

OLE WOMAN

Would you get your stubborn self over here?

OLE MAN

If I'm an Old Man, then you're an old woman.

OLE WOMAN

C'mere and meet your new son.

OLE MAN

Oh, yeah, you do look different. Thinner.

OLE WOMAN

Ole Man, say hello to Bill.

OLE MAN

Welcome, son. You've got the honor of being the first boy born a Texan. We'll call you Pecos Bill.

OLE WOMAN

Because Pecos means plenty good and plenty tough?

OLE MAN

No. Cus we're near the Pecos River. We done good, Ole Woman.

TRAVELLER #1

As far as its known, there wasn't anything out of the ordinary about this family.

TRAVELLER #2

They had the usual things people had in Texas in those days-a rifle, a chopping-ax, and an iron kettle. And they had seventeen children, all of them sons or daughters.

TRAVELLER #1

Even early in his life, Bill was living up to the responsibility of being the first Texan born boy.

(CHILDREN and BABY BILL enter.  
DAUGHTER #1 is carrying an axe. BABY  
BILL is carrying a huge kettle. )

OLE MAN

C'mon, now, bring my supplies into the house.

OLE WOMAN

Wait a minute! What is my new baby carryin'?

DAUGHTER #1

The kettle.

OLE WOMAN

What are you thinkin' You'd let a two year old carry an kettle while you're just carrying a axe?

DAUGHTER #1

Sorry Ole Woman.

(DAUGHTER #1 goes to BABY BILL and  
hands him the axe, too)

OLE WOMAN

That's better. How do you expect a boy to get stronger?

DAUGHTER #2

Ole Man, what's that black cloud?

OLE MAN

Its a black cloud, daughter.

DAUGHTER #2

Why is it buzzin'?

OLE WOMAN

Because its a cloud of Texas Gallinippers!

TRAVELLER #1

Gallinippers happen to be the Texas sized mosquitos. Which means they are the size of Elephants.

OLE MAN

Quick, everybody in the house!

(CHILDREN all run into the house as a swarm of  
TEXAS sized Mosquitos swarm on stage  
{maybe kids in mosquito costumes or an  
umbrella with hanging big mosquitos} buzzing  
loudly)

DAUGHTER #3

C'mon, Bill!

DAUGHTER #4

Ole Woman, the skeeters caught baby Bill!

DAUGHTER #5

I can't see! Where's Bill?

OLE WOMAN

He went under the kettle.

DAUGHTER# 6

The Gallinippers are swooping down to the kettle.

OLE WOMAN

That thick ole iron kettle won't stop Texas 'squitos.



DAUGHTER #7  
 They're ramming their bills into the pot.  
 OLE MAN  
 I'm afraid our Bill is as good as gone.  
 (The sound of pinging metal)  
 DAUGHTER #8  
 What's that sound?  
 DAUGHTER #9  
 Lil Bill must be hitting their bills with the axe.  
 DAUGHTER #10  
 The mosquitos are caught in the kettle!  
 OLE MAN  
 Well, I'll be.  
 (The MOSQUITOS carry off kettle. BILL starts sucking his thumb)  
 BABY BILL  
 Goo-goo.  
 OLE WOMAN  
 I'm sure sorry to lose that good kettle. But when a baby's as clever as Bill there is, I guess it makes sense to keep him around.  
 TRAVELLER #2  
 A while later, Ole Man decided to move.  
 OLE MAN  
 C'mon, lets load up the buggy.  
 OLE WOMAN  
 Ole Man, why are we movin?  
 OLE MAN  
 Some neighbors moved in fifty miles away.  
 DAUGHTER #11  
 Fifty miles!  
 OLE MAN  
 Yep, its getting too crowded here. Time to move along.  
 (CHILDREN start to cross stage carrying dogs, horses, computer boxes, tvs, etc. A big cardboard cutout of a buggy is stage right.  
 DAUGHTER #12 runs up to OLE MAN)  
 DAUGHTER #12  
 Ole Man, there's a panther just went into the cabin where Bill is, and Bill's alone with that varmit.  
 OLE MAN  
 Well, that fool panther doesn't need to expect any help from me.  
 (BABY BILL enters carrying a plate of panther steaks)  
 DAUGHTER #13  
 He'd better share those panther steaks!  
 OLE WOMAN  
 We're all here. Lets' get a move on. We need a home with lots of room.  
 (Buggy starts to move and SONG begins)  
 OLE MAN  
 O GIVE ME A HOME WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM,  
 WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE PLAY  
 OLE WOMAN  
 WHERE SELDOM IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING WORD  
 AND THE SKIES ARE NOT CLOUDY ALL DAY

FAMILY  
HOME, HOME ON THE RANGE,  
WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE PLAY  
WHERE SELDOM IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING WORD  
AND THE SKIES ARE NOT CLOUDY ALL DAY

( BABY BILL falls out the back of the buggy as  
it moves offstage.)

TRAVELLER #1

Now when Baby Bill fell out of the buggy, he had the wind knocked out of him, so he  
couldn't yell.

TRAVELLER #2

Luckily for him the first critter to find him was a coyote.

(GRANNY COYOTE sniffs him and then takes  
him off stage)

TRAVELLER #1

His parents didn't realize he was gone, until 3 days later.

TRAVELLER #2

When you got 17 kids, its not easy to keep up with all of them.

(Buggy comes on stage again continuing the  
journey as FAMILY continues song)

FAMILY

WHERE THE AIR IS SO PURE, THE ZEPHYRS ARE FREE  
AND THE BREEZES SO BALMY AND LIGHT.  
THEN I WOULD NOT EXCHANGE MY HOME ON THE RANGE  
FOR ALL OF YOUR CITIES SO BRIGHT

OLE WOMAN

Wait a minute. Count off.

(CHILDREN count off 1-16)

OLE MAN

Aren't we missing one?

OLE WOMAN

Yes, I'm afraid the new baby, must have fallen out. What was his name?

DAUGHTER #1

Bill. Pecos Bill.

OLE MAN

Has anyone seen the baby in the last few days?

KIDS

No.

OLE MAN

Its a shame that our young baby is out there alone among those poisonous rattlesnakes.

OLE WOMAN

Well, there's nothing we can do now. He's miles away.

OLE MAN

Those poor snakes will have to fend for themselves.

OLE WOMAN

Too bad. I kind of liked the little shaver.

(FAMILY continues song and exits)

FAMILY

HOME, HOME ON THE RANGE,  
WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE PLAY  
WHERE SELDOM IS HEARD A DISCOURAGING WORD  
AND THE SKIES ARE NOT CLOUDY ALL DAY