

Pedro “Pied” Piper



Flute virtuoso Pedro “Pied” Piper always had a love-hate relationship with his hometown of Hamelin, Arizona. Because his idiosyncratic playing attracted rats by the hundreds, sometimes thousands, the town counsel branded him a public nuisance, often vilifying him in the *Hamelin Herald*. But *also* because he attracted these legions of rats, he was considered a valuable municipal asset in the pest control arena, and he had a handsome, suitable-for-framing certificate to prove it. That all changed one day when Pied waltzed into town followed by twenty of the biggest rats the Hamelinians had ever seen. He claimed that he’d intended to take them to the zoo, but just as he passed the livery, he slipped on a cowpie and dropped his flute. No longer mesmerized by Pied’s piping, the rats reverted to their intrinsic rodentine natures, turning ruthlessly polygynandrous, spreading the plague, then informing upon each other. The town sheriff harbored a chronic fear of rats, so he sent a posse to round up and arrest the rampaging rodents while he nabbed the piper himself. After a one-sided trial (Pied was represented by one of the rats who, although naturally wily, had no formal legal training), they all were found guilty of disorderly conduct and sentenced to ten days of incarcerated hard labor. But Pied played a tune that rechanneled the rats’ energies into gnawing a piper-sized hole in the jail wall through which he and the rats promptly escaped. To spite the town, Pied considered absconding with the town’s children, too. But then he recalled the many unpleasant dealings with his nettlesome nephews and their confrontational daycare providers, and decided he’d much prefer the company of rats. To this day, he’s never regretted his decision.