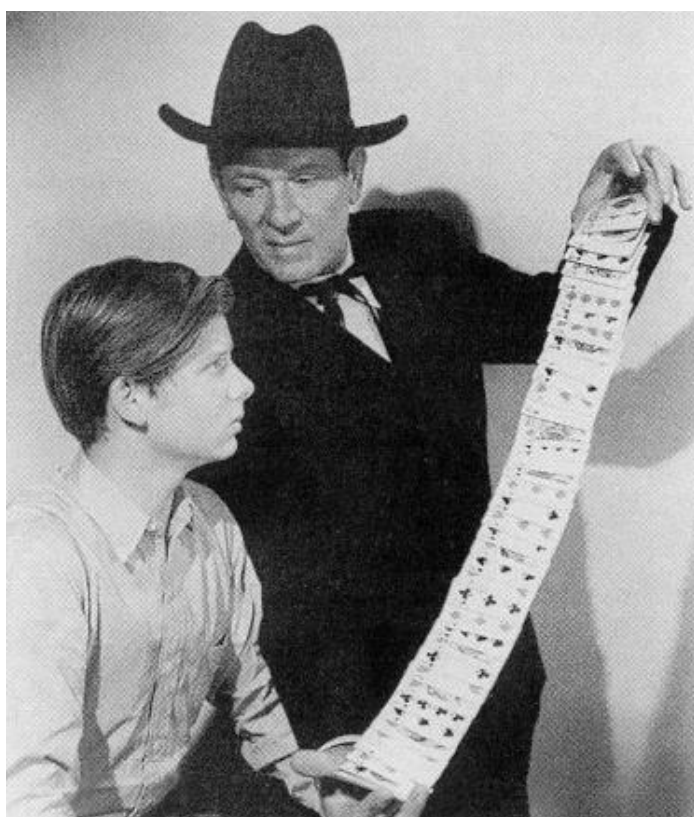


Alias the Deacon

US : 1940 : dir. Christy Cabanne : Universal : 74 min
 prod: Ben Pivar : scr: Nat Perrin & Charles Grayson : dir.ph.:
Bennie (Benny) Bartlett
 Bob Burns; Mischa Auer; Guinn Williams; Edward Brophy; Thurston Hall; Spencer Charters;
 Jack Carson; Peggy Moran; Dennis O'Keefe

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Bennie Bartlett remembers his mother's warnings about quick-fingered deacons. "How can I pick a card?" he mutters, "They're all stuck together at the back, aren't they."

Source: The Universal Story

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A sentimental card-sharp is mistaken by small-town folk for their new deacon. Modest rural comedy from a well-worn play. Remake of "HALF A SINNER".

The Universal Story review:

"First seen as a silent comedy in 1927 with Jean Hersholt in the lead, then as "HALF A SINNER" in 1934 with Berton Churchill (who also played the role on stage), "ALIAS THE

DEACON" surfaced for a third airing with comic Bob Burns as the film's *raison d'être*. Based on a play by John B Hymer and LeRoy Clemens, it was the simple story of a card shark who invades a small town and, posing as a deacon, cleans up as a gambler. With a screenplay (by Nat Perrin and Charles Grayson) custom-made for Burns' personality, and with showy bits in it too for Mischa Auer (as a barber), Guinn Williams (a punch-drunk pug), as well as Edward Brophy, Thurston Hall, Benny Bartlett, Spencer Charters, Jack Carson and – as the young lovers – Peggy Moran and Dennis O'Keefe, a good time was had by the

undemanding. Christy Cabanne's direction could certainly not be accused of subtlety; neither could Ben Pivar's raucous production."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Bartlett:

"Not many Hollywood kids came from Kansas, but red-haired Bennie Bartlett did. His parents (Floyd and Nina) were vaudeville people, and he was born on tour, making his debut at 10 days, though it's not known what he sang. At the age of three he learnt the trumpet, and at four was running his own dance band, with himself as vocal and trumpet soloist. It must have been terrible.

Bennie (or Benny) now learnt piano and drums, and began writing his own songs. Soon he was singing them, and trumpeting, on the local radio station. At this point, whether by request of the Kansans or in search of higher things, the Bartlett family upped stakes and moved to California, where father Floyd got work as a dance music arranger. The boy became a public figure, in a small but noisy way, and by the time he was nine had had 15 of his songs published. He had also landed a Paramount contract.

Music apart, there was clearly some intention to set up the rowdy redhead as a new Rooney. He had that sort of pudgy truculence. But it didn't quite happen. Behind the brass there was an anxious streak that showed, an earnestness that was actually rather redeeming. He made a nice foil for Dickie Moore, Virginia Weidler or Shirley Temple.

Bennie was in six 1943 films, including **"HE HIRED THE BOSS"**, **"NEXT OF KIN"** and **"THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS"**, and in many more over the next two decades, such as **"CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN"** (50), **"REAR WINDOW"** (54), **"HIGH SOCIETY"** (55) and **"THE SCAPEGOAT"** (59)."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. [Bennie Bartlett](#) was 13, and despite his musical pedigree few of his films seem to have been musicals. There was, however, **"BENNIE BARTLETT'S BAND"** in 1938, which must count as something of an accolade for an 11-year old. His many other titles were B pictures such as **"PENROD AND HIS TWIN BROTHER"** in 38 with the Mauches, **"SONS OF THE LEGION"** (38) with a fistful of other boy actors, and **"OUR NEIGHBOURS THE CARTERS"** (39) with Scotty Beckett.

See subject index under **COMEDY** and **RELIGION**. Impostors and mistaken identities would be a contender for another subject index category, but few of the films that would belong in it have any relevance to this archive.