

## Paul Bunyon

By C. W. Martin

The hush of evening quieted the restless waters of Pelican lake. The sweetly melancholy song of the Hermit Thrush far away in the deep green of pine and balsam, drifted faintly across the rice covered bay announcing the angelus hour of the forest. I ceased my paddling and sat in silent reverence gazing on the flaming crimson of the western sky which silhouetted the slender cathedral spires of the spruces. Suddenly a loud halloo disturbed my reverie and turning quickly I saw a grizzled man of enormous stature standing on the rocky shore.

I paddled swiftly to where he stood and, leaping out, I prepared to beach the canoe. Before I could do this the stranger picked up the canoe and set it down on the beach. Then seeing my evident consternation at this feat of strength he laughed heartily showing a set of white teeth beneath a heavy, wiry, moustache which resembled two gray whisk brooms set handle to handle. "Don't you know me?" he said. "I am Paul Bunyon." Shades of Baron Munchausen! So this huge man with the kindly blue eyes and weather-beaten face was the great Paul Bunyon. I meekly introduced myself and asked him to share my cabin with me.

I led the way and Paul crawled through the door and sat down before the fireplace while I cooked dinner. When dinner was ready I asked Paul to dine, but he refused, saying that he had some food with him. Then reaching in his pocket, he pulled out a prune about the size of a Hubbard squash.

"This is my meal," he said. "I produced this by crossing a California prune with a native son. As a result this prune is as full of energy as a native son is full of wind. So you see I am always well supplied with energy."

After the meal Paul stowed away 4 plugs of Peerless in his cheek and we started in to discuss Paul's work and his associates.

"Where's Brimstone Bill and the blue ox Babe?"

"Oh, they are down in Virginia, Minnesota. You see Prout has opened up another iron mine there and we're hoping there will be enough ore to make the old Babe a complete set of shoes. The last one only had enough ore for three shoes."

To me this seemed a bit incredulous but noting the honest look in Paul's eyes, I had no other alternative than to believe him.

Suddenly a terrible noise supplemented by a terrific blast of wind caused me to leap to my feet.

"What was that?"

"That's Bill, friend, and he blew his horn to let me know that he is on his way. I am sorry to have to leave you so quickly but I must be up in Alaska tomorrow morning to supervise the cutting of a crop of totem poles. We're logging them up where the Little Gumboot flows into the Big Gosh." "

In vain I protested Paul's early departure.

"No, I must go, but there is a little biography that a fella writ for me. It is accurate and fairly up to date."

Paul reached in his vest pocket and pulled out a book which was slightly larger than a Webster dictionary. Putting this on the table he opened the door and disappeared into the night leaving me staring after him. The last glimpse of him showed him headed towards the north where frequent flashes like northern lights illuminating the sky showed that Bill was swinging along with his lantern and the old blue ox.

I closed the door, threw a big log on the fire and set down to read the biography. I opened the book and there in bold type was the author's name—Dr. Frank Hough B. V. D. Q. E. D.

Here are a few extracts from that notable biography.

Until this biography was written the antecedents and personal history of Paul Bunyon has been shrouded in mystery except for a few incidents of common knowledge such as the logging off of North Dakota by Paul and the seven axemen of the Red River. This was known not only from the lack of trees there at present, but from the personal testimony of old timers who were there and saw it done.

Paul Bunyon was born in northern Maine in February, 1732. His father, Joe Bunyon, was a direct descendent of the Bunyon who forested the garden of Eden in the year one and who latter logged off the garden for lumber for Noah's ark. Paul also had an uncle John who wrote "Pilgrims Progress," Paul did not think much of John, however, because of the latter's prison record.

When Paul was able to play about, his father brought him a blue calf which Paul named Babe. The two grew up together and when at the age of 18 Paul set out to make his mark, his father gave him the now full grown ox.

Babe was Paul's assets and liabilities. He could pull anything that had two ends. Babe at the time of his maturity was seven axe handles and a plug of Peerless between the eyes and stronger than a totemaster's breath. He could pull a section of timber into the mill without any noticeable effort, and to pull the kinks out of crooked log roads afforded him mild

amusement. Such prodigious strength was necessarily accompanied by a great appetite. Babe would eat a mere fifty bales of hay at each meal and he was not particular about eating it wire and all. Paul used to keep four men with pickaroons to pick the wire out of the ox's teeth.

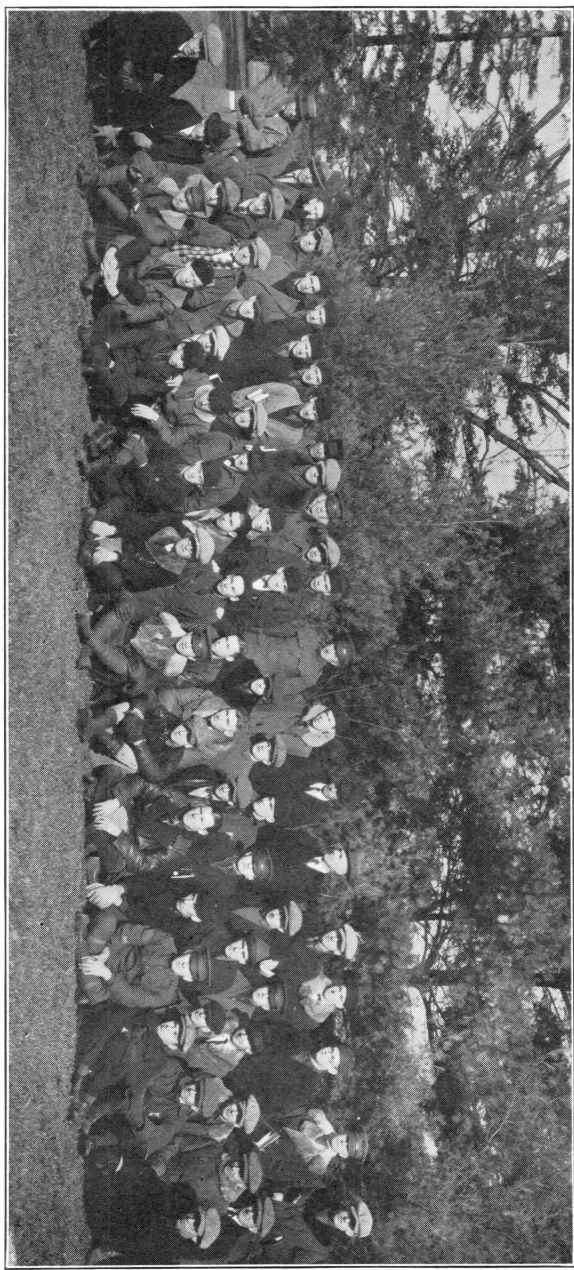
When Paul's business grew so large that he could no longer take care of Babe and his numerous other duties, he turned him over to the care of Brimstone Bill. Bill was the man that wrote the skinner's dictionary, a sort of hand book for teamsters. The book is a standard in all schools that appreciate Bill's mastery of forceful English. Bill's early religious training explains the many references made of religious names and places.

Babe used to be a source of continual worry to Bill because of his playful nature. Old Babe liked to sneak off and roam around by himself for a day or two. Sometimes he used to ramble up into Minnesota where the soft ground caused him to sink in up to his stomach. This left very deep holes in the ground. Just how deep these holes were is immaterial, suffice it to say that a settler fell into one with his wife and baby boy. Forty nine years yater the "boy" managed to get out and report the happenings. Fortunately most of these holes have filled up with water and this particular region is known as the "land of the sky blue waters" or "the thousand lakes country."

The author of this biography thinks that it would be an injustice to Paul to leave out some incidents as to how Paul ran his camps. The first item of importance was the way the men were cared for.

Paul had an excellent cook called "Sourdough" Pete. He made everything but coffee out of sourdough. Sourdough had only one leg and one arm, the other leg and arm having been blown off in an explosion of the sourdough barrel. Pete was unusually skillful at making pan cakes of which the lumberjakes were very fond. To fry his sourdough pancakes in sufficient quantities to satisfy the crew, Pete had big Ole the blacksmith make him a griddle. This griddle was so large that Pete had two colored boys with hams on their feet to roller skate around the griddle and keep it greased.

Space does not permit the publishing of the many other feats of Paul Bunyon and his crew. The facts about big Ole's dinner horn, Babe's buckskin harness, the doings of Pawl's squirrel, axehandleson, etc. will probably be published in some future edition of the Ames Forester.



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