

**PAUL BUNYAN: AN AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF HIS
PREHISTORIC ACTIVITIES**

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Paul Bunyan is as old as the earth itself. His activities on this terrestrial ball antedate those of any other living being. Bunyan's life has been an open book to foresters and woodsmen since the dawn of history. It was generally believed that Paul, his blue ox Babe, and his faithful crew, roamed the earth long ages before the usual run of mankind, commonly known as the public, had lost their tails and had a lick of sense, but it could not be definitely proved. It had almost been proved on many occasions, but there was always that something about the story which savored of fiction which finally carried it out of the realm of absolute fact.

Recently, however, there has been unearthed a perfectly authentic account of Bunyan's life which sheds much light on his prehistoric activities. Paul was a great traveler. Since he could not himself write, he dictaphoned extended accounts of his doings during the early period of his life. Centuries later the wax records were dug up by the Egyptians, who, fearing that the precious words might eventually become lost, had them carved on wooden paddles which were carefully hidden away in the dry, among the dead ones in the pyramids.

When the Indians decided to cast their lot on American shores they took many of the wooden pages of this great literary effort with them, using them for propelling their canoes across the great Atlantic. In the course of time the paddles became widely scattered, and soon all were lost, hence the early doings of Paul Bunyan have until now been a closed book.

Last year "Doc" Hough, a forestry student of archeologic proclivities, discovered near the site of our forestry summer camp at Pelican Lake, Minnesota, during one of his probing sessions, probably the only one of these historic paddles in existence. Fortunately, it was a "summary" paddle and in order that no harm might come to it, though all the others be destroyed, this one was well preserved by soaking in the blood of 13 mosquitoes which inhabited the country in those early days, and whose juice was highly antiseptic.

The paddle showed evidences of great age. Upon it was packed very closely wierd symbols in an unknown tongue. For a long time the hieroglyphics remained the mysterious sensation of the lumbering world. Councils were held, and grave and learned heads pored over the unusual writings, but to no avail.

Finally when hope was all but abandoned it was suggested by one, Martin, well known among Ames foresters as the living embodiment of the three wise men, that a thorough search be made of the vicinity where the board was found, for clues which might lead to the solution of the mystery. Foresters pawed the earth, pulled up trees by main strength, overturned rocks, split the air with ill-smelling phrases, and tore their hair in their frantic efforts to discover something tangible which might aid in the translation of the mystic characters. Other foresters set themselves apart and waited for divine revelation of the strange writing, but none came.

After many days of strenuous work, their labors were rewarded. A diligent searcher after truth and knowledge, one Trenk, discovered a circular crystal-like object, thick at the center and tapering at the edges, which upon cleaning and polishing proved to be the base of a bottle very common in the days B. P. but now almost extinct. When held just the right distance from the paddle, the "mystery words" were instantly transformed into the language of the realm. Careful peering through the glass by one, Pickford, of good eyesight, has resulted in a very accurate translation, which proved to be nothing less than an authentic account of Paul Bunyan's origin and his activities upon the earth when it was yet young. Attesting the correctness of the manuscript is Paul's right thumb print with its hard lines which mark the character of a true woodsman.

The entire autobiography cannot be set down here; only the principal events in a busy life will be related, and these in an impersonal way.

Paul Bunyan was, is, and ever more shall be. He was the Creator's messenger at the time the earth was built. After about the third day of the creation there appeared in the great sea patches of land; some large, some small, scattered promiscuously about, without order or sequence. Later some were made to rise and spread out, joining with others to form the great continents. The Creator was pleased with His work so far, but in a day or two He became weary of looking down across great areas of trackless wastes. In spite of the rain which fell in abundance nothing grew, and the land remained desolate and displeasing to the eye.

There was really small wonder for this condition, for how could anything grow without first being planted? So the Creator called to Paul and bade him forest the waste places with every manner and kind of tree until the earth should present a canopy of green beneath which the ground could

not be seen. This was Paul Bunyan's first great lumbering job, for doesn't one have to plant trees before one can log them, in regions where there were no trees before? Most assuredly. So Paul entered upon the great task laid out for him. Filling a number of sacks with miscellaneous tree seeds from the great storehouses, he descended to earth to begin his operations. Paul landed in the spot now known as the Garden of Eden. He tarried here for some time, resting from the long journey through space which he had just completed. He lunched upon the fruits brought with him, scattering the inedible portions here and there indiscriminately, as men in playful moods are sometimes wont to do. Presently he picked up his sacks and began his labors.

Paul started eastward scattering seeds broadcast as he went. To the north and to the south flew the light seeds, carried to the remotest parts by the gentle breezes sent to aid in their dissemination. The heavy seeds did not carry so far, hence we have through Asia the coniferous forests in the north and the south fringed by the oaks and other deciduous trees of the heavy seeded varieties. When the Pacific had been reached and the job finished in this direction, Paul retraced his steps to the Garden and, taking a fresh lot of seeds, set out to plant Europe. The method pursued was as before, and we have the central forests of hardwoods, flanked on either side by vast coniferous woods. Reaching the Atlantic, Paul again returned for more seed to seed up areas to the south and the islands of the sea. When this job was completed Paul tarried again to rest in the Garden before returning to his accustomed place. To his surprise there were no forest trees to be seen in the whole region, but rather a great variety of fruit trees laden with luscious fruit of every description. While Paul outwardly admired and loved the fruit dearly, yet inwardly he was greatly peeved at making the colossal blunder of having accidentally broadcasted the seeds of fruit trees, where seeds of forest trees should have been sown.

Looking down again upon the earth Paul noticed land across the sea, heretofore unknown to him, and upon examining it closely found it to be as bleak and barren as the eastern continent had been, so he again took up his sacks of seeds and descended to earth to finish the job. Landing upon the shores of Virginia he travelled westward scattering seeds as before, the light seeds being carried north and south, the heavier seeds falling nearer; hence we have the great northern coniferous forest, and the great southern pine woods with the magnificent hardwoods of oaks, walnut, hickory and other deciduous species occupying the space between.

When Paul arrived at the Mississippi he was about out of seeds, and the remaining few were scattered far and wide to the right, the left, and in front; hence the origin of the fringe forests of the midwestern states.

Bunyan's job was not yet finished. He returned again with seeds, but on account of the great bulk and weight of the heavy acorns, walnuts, hickory nuts and the like he took with him on his last journey only the lighter varieties. In due time he arrived at the Mississippi and crossed it going westward. Here Paul pulled his first real blunder. He sadly miscalculated the distance he had broadcasted from his station east of the river, and didn't begin to sow until he had traversed a considerable distance. The result is the great treeless plains. Paul has never recovered entirely from the remembrance of this error of judgment.

Continuing westward, he scattered seeds far and wide in every direction, being rather careful however that the supply should last out the job. Consequently the Rockies were seeded at the rate of one pound per acre. When Paul arrived at the top of the Cascades of Oregon, he was surprised at seeing stretching before him the great Pacific in all its majesty. Having but a few miles farther to go, and with an abundance of seed remaining, Paul scattered his treasure with a lavish hand. You know the result. The Pacific Coast forests are the finest in the world.

Paul Bunyan's first great job was finished. Traveling leisurely back across America he was greatly struck with the beauty of the new found land and longed to take up his residence here, but duty called him home. Upon returning to the Garden from which he usually ascended, Paul debated long and hard upon the proposition as to whether or not he should return. He finally decided that the earth was a pleasant place to live, and since the forests were now about grown there would be need for his services in transforming the great trees into commodities useful in the building of the great civilization which was soon to appear upon the earth.

Paul was decidedly lonesome during the first 300,000 years, for there were in all this time no human beings upon the earth to enjoy the blessings which were being stored up in abundance for the use of man. The first 300,000 years are always the hardest. Life for Bunyan was just one thing after another, though it was made somewhat easier through his close association with the old blue ox which he captured when very young, and which he trained into a very useful adjunct in his subsequent logging operations.

Once upon returning to the Garden of Eden, after a long trip of inspection through his Asiatic woodlots, Paul noticed

forms of life closely resembling himself, scampering about among the vines and the fig trees. Coming closer they proved to be men like himself, only of course of much smaller stature. Paul was greatly delighted at his discovery, and made haste to inquire who they were and from whence they came, and if they knew anything about logging.

Paul picked out 23 Abel-bodied men discarding the Cane-bearers since logging is not a gentleman's game, but rather one where brawn counts, though it is true brains are sometimes useful in the industry. Not one of the bunch had ever logged. By consistent and persistent training Bunyan soon had a crew that knew the top end of a log when both ends were in sight. Also by scientific feeding the majority were brought to a size Paul thought necessary to logging in those primal days. Every man was 9 axe handles tall and 2 axe handles between the eyes.

Bunyan was now ready to take on any logging job which presented itself. At first business was dull and Paul, his blue ox and his 23 immortals simply lay around waiting for the world to grow up, and populate itself. This was a slow and tedious task as so many people died in those days. Paul became wearied and his crew impatient.

After thousands of years of waiting, people began to see joy in the world and demanded things even beyond Paul Bunyan's power to supply. Joy rides on great prehistoric animals, jazz music and riotous living, together with the general disregard of God's laws, brought the people of the earth into great disfavor of the Almighty. Noah and his immediate relatives were the only ordinary mortals spared in the great catastrophe which overwhelmed the earth as a punishment for man's disobedience.

Noah was directed to build an ark and come in out of the rain which was to follow, and take with him fair samples of all the living things which roamed the earth in order that life might again function when the waters ceased. Noah needed timber, and that badly. Also men who could build the ship. After considerable discussion as to the price, Paul Bunyan landed the job on a cost-plus basis, since it was the first work of the kind ever done, and labor conditions were so very unstable, since steamfitters and plumbers were even then on strike for higher pay and better working conditions.

Paul built the ark. His blue ox and 23 immortals worked hard and long, bringing logs from the ends of the earth, hewing them and laying them in position in the great ship with infinite care. Paul had one great advantage on this particular work. Had he not planted the trees with his own

hand? He had, and therefore he knew where every one was, its kind, diameter breast high and its clear length. By referring to his card index he could locate kinds and dimensions precisely. The blue ox and "Lightning Bill" did the rest, and soon there was assembled just the proper amount of material of the right sizes to complete the job. Paul and the immortals and the blue ox then retired to the high mountains and tall timber until the shower passed over, and travelling was again safe upon the earth.

Paul was out of his element somewhat when he built the "Hanging Gardens" for the King of Babylon, but the job was everlastingly good, and the remains of the great structure are to be seen to this day.

The masterpiece of his early work was Solomon's temple. Long years did he labor on the plans for the great structure, and long years did he and his faithful crew work in its construction. The great cedars of Lebanon were brought down on an ice road to Jerusalem, the blue ox bringing 32 at a time, making two trips daily.

When the temple was finished Solomon looked it over and remarked in a rather casual way that it was about the most beautiful piece of work he had ever observed, and he was some observer and a good judge of beauty, as history attests. Not one of his 600 wives disagreed with him on the three general propositions stated above.

Paul and the blue ox Babe were impatient at the enforced idleness due to a general business depression which followed the completion of the temple, but the twenty-three immortals were glad to get a chance to rest. Life had been strenuous with them and they greatly enjoyed the few days' vacation which was given them by their magnanimous lord and masters. Paul had plenty of time to think over matters which interested him, and many times swore loudly when he recalled turning down the contract to build the pyramids. Paul had no use for labor unions, and expected his men to do a day's work for a day's pay. Six hours a day and 100 twenty by thirty by eight feet blocks of stone per man wouldn't go with Paul—not while the sun shone 18 hours out of the twenty-four. No, sir, and Paul told them so in emphatic language; so they hired local labor, and see what they have. After only 4,000 years the pyramids actually show traces of wear.

While resting on the upper slopes of Mount Lebanon one beautiful spring day, Paul observed smoke in the distance to the westward. Pointing the telescope of his hand compass in that direction his sharp eye detected men busily engaged in clearing land. Bunyan saw a chance to get out from under the idleness he so greatly detested. Calling his trusty crew

from the various pleasures and games in which they are wont to engage when not at their usual labors, to-wit: poker, cooties, etc., Paul set forth on a long journey. After two days of incessant traveling, the Bunyanites arrived at their destination, and what do you suppose they found? The "Twins" clearing away the trees and brush in order that Rome might be invented. Being nourished by a wolf, they believed themselves possessed of unlimited power and strength. Paul showed them up quickly and they cowered under his native sarcasm.

The job interested Bunyan, and since he and his stalwart mates were itching to work, not forgetting, of course, Babe, Paul made the wolfish pair a proposition, that he would take over the job of logging the site of Rome, if they would populate the land as fast as it was cleared. Paul worked slowly and carefully, while the twins at top speed "Shanghied" every human being they could locate and brought him to Rome. The population grew—doubled, trebled, quadrupled and chin doubled, but there was always room for more. Two million people inhabited Rome, yet the suburbs could accommodate twice the number; and then the twins gave it up.

Not so with Paul, however. Having caused the building of a great city, he saw great profit in supplying it with wood. Paul dug his bean hole on the island of Sicily, and set his range and hot water barrel south of Naples. From this headquarters camp he logged all Italy. Did he do a good job? He always does. Italy looked like a well-shined boot when Paul finished and it remains exactly so today.

When logging was completed the crew moved on. Paul did not take his "bean hole" with him as was his usual custom, since he was going to make a long journey, and it would be difficult to carry. Likewise he left his range and hot water barrel behind, for the crew travelled light. Paul is usually a good woodsman, but in his haste he forgot to extinguish his fires, and the bean hole burned, and the cook stove smouldered, in spite of the strenuous efforts of the local inhabitants to extinguish the flames.

Finally in desperation, the great Roman legions were called out to quell the fires. Armed with shovels the thousand piled loads upon loads of earth upon the offending utensils, but to no avail. Messengers were sent to implore Paul Bunyan to return and help them out, but he and his immortal 23 and Babe, the blue ox, were already in America, the land of their dreams, and could not be induced to again cross the seas. Meanwhile earth was piled higher and higher upon

the great flaming mass, in a mad effort to stem the conflagration. After many days of almost superhuman effort the fires were subdued. They were not fully quenched however, and to this day Mounts Vesuvius and Etna remain as monuments to Paul Bunyan's disregard for the first principles of good logging,—be careful with fires in the forest.

