



Surge tanks and power plant building at the modern hydro-electric installation at Grandfather Falls.

Versatile Pioneer Lumberjack Was Colorful Figure

By Charles McCord

When time shall have granted him the justice of perspective, we shall know the colorful and versatile pioneer lumberjack as one of the most interesting and picturesque of history's many personalities. Resourceful, self-reliant, bold; adapting himself with fluidity to diverse circumstances and often suddenly changing conditions; meeting with cheerfulness both known and unknown dangers and perils, he presented to the world a picture of complete adequacy to meet and overcome whatever necessary of ill fortune that might confront him. He was a strong man, with a strong man's virtues and a strong man's vices.

When recalled to memory we seem to visualize that swaggering, black-hair-clad, cocky figure; hear his ringing axe biting into the majestic pine, and that thrilling word "Timber!" as the forest giant plunges to earth and to its death. He ran to wild excesses of drinking, fighting and carousing; and felt that tranquility of spirit, contentment and happiness only when he had reached his fond anticipating and much longed for objective—the joyous respiration of his hard-earned winter's wages. Not a laudable ambition, but eminently and essentially satisfactory.

He loved to tell or listen to the camp stories and songs—often ribald and gloriously colorful, but to him delightful. Mythical characters like Paul Bunyan and Jo Fairway were endorsed in the mind of the lumberjack with miraculous and fantastic powers.

Paul Bunyan was born "but two weeks behind," Quebec, Canada; and came to the pines of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota to show all and sundry just what a real, honest-to-goodness logger could and should do in the way of logging. He was a veritable giant of a man and stronger than sixteen oxen.

Paul was the legendary hero that ruled the world of the lumberjack from the Winter of the Big Snow to the Spring That the Rain Came Up from China. He brought with him his much loved ox, Babe, who measured 40 axe handles plus a chew of tobacco between the horns. The end

of the Babe came when he broke through the ice of a small lake and drowned while hauling a sled load of a million feet of logs. No, not quite the end. That came after Paul built immense fires on and around the lake, and turned Babe into boiled beef and soup with which he fed his crew for the rest of the winter.

Paul gave a grand ball to all the lumberjacks within a radius of 200 miles. They raised such a commotion that an earthquake resulted, and the Big Onion River was shoved three counties to the East. Once, initiated by a rainy July 4th, Paul swam up a pillar of water to the sky and turned off the rain.

The Winter of the Blue Snow the Pacific Ocean froze over, and Paul freighted white snow across from China to the United States. It was impossible to log on Blue Snow because it had all the qualities of sand.

Paul's cook camp had a stove 100 feet long, and to facilitate the frying of panakes, he fastened big chunks of fat to the feet of two little colored boys and had them skate over the top of the stove.

The ultimate finish came to Paul one day after he, on a bet, had drunk seven barrels of 200 proof alcohol.

The credit for the development of the pine-populated wilderness of Northern Wisconsin must perforce, be equally divided between the pioneer business man and the lumberjack. They were both equally necessary to such development. Without the business man there could be no lumberjack—and, as corollary, without the lumberjack there could be no business man.

There soon followed a third element, a supplement, necessary to the success of the two primary elements, as well as itself. That third element was the farmer, possessed of that primordial and instinctive urge, inherited from his primitive ancestry, which impelled him to resort to the soil for a necessary part of his subsistence.

The Old Tramways

Looking out of our office window, we can recall so vividly the old Scott Sawmill and Planing Mill and the saws of lumber piles extending all the way down to our old home at the foot of Nast street.

Two long tram-ways ran from the mill at the foot of Mill street, the full length of the lumber yard, a distance of approximately a quarter of a mile.

T. B. Scott was the first mayor of Merrill.

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