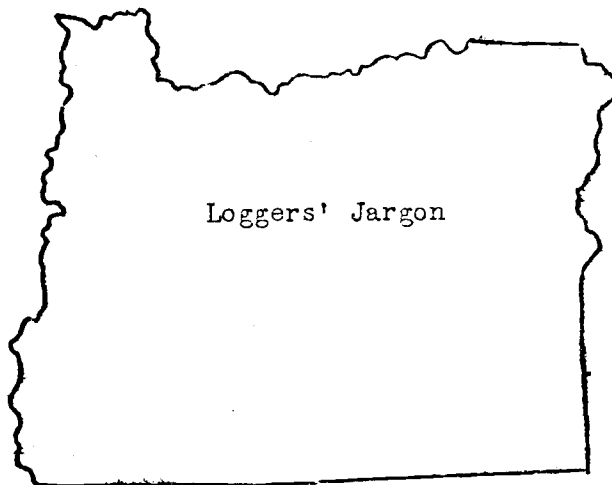


OREGON ODDITIES  
AND  
ITEMS OF INTEREST



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The items in this bulletin, selected from the material compiled by the Writers' Project and the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, are representative of the significant collections being made by these nation-wide programs.

The Historical Records Survey is inventorying all sources of early Oregon history, including county and state records, town and church archives, historic cemeteries, old manuscripts and imprints, old printing presses, monuments and relics, private diaries, letters, and memoirs, historic buildings, and Indian records and lore.

The chief undertaking of the Works Progress Administration Writers' Project has been the American Guide Series of Books. In Oregon as in all other states the work includes the state Guide, designed to acquaint Americans with America and to present to the visitor the history, industry, recreational advantages and scenic attractions of the state. The Oregon Guide, now in the final stages of editing will soon be added to the list of those already published which includes Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture; Maine: A Guide "Down East"; Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People; New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State; Washington: City and Capital; Philadelphia: A Guide to the Birthplace of a Nation; Delaware: A Guide to the First State; Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State; Rhode Island: A Guide to the Smallest State; South Dakota: A South Dakota Guide; North Dakota: A Guide to the Northern Prairie State; Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State.

In addition to all the state guides, interesting publications now available include American Stuff; Cape Cod Pilot; Hoosier Tall Stories; The Hopi; Italians of New York; New Orleans City Guide; Whaling Masters; Who's Who in the Zoo; and Wisconsin Indian Lore.

Publications now in preparation by the Oregon Writers' Project include the Oregon Guide, an Oregon Almanac for 1939, Old Towns of Oregon, and Fire Prevention in Portland.

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## LOGGERS' JARGON

Seasoned with the flavor of the big woods, the working talk of Oregon loggers is as picturesque as sunlight filtered through towering firs, and as biting as a double-bit ax. Of all American vernacular speech, the jargon of men in big timber is most noted for its sardonic twist and pithy humor.

Springing spontaneously from the mouths of men engaged in hard and dangerous work, the lingo of the Oregon logger traces its origin to the trees themselves. It is a kind of talk that can never be divorced from the smell of sweat and campfire smoke.

When a Columbia River logger talks of "Big Eddy", he is not discussing one of his friends or "sidekicks"; he is speaking of Portland's Third Avenue, known to loggers throughout the west as a rendezvous where fallers, buckers, high-climbers, donkey-punchers, rigging-slingers, and hook-tenders can find a kindred soul.

That part of Third Avenue between West Burnside Street and the Steel bridge was christened "Big Eddy" because of the way the river in the old days cast up flotsam and jetsam near the foot of West Burnside.

West of the Cascades, when a logger quits his job he says, "Hit me with a time-check, I'm goin' to float. Mix me a dose o' kikem. Write 34 out!"

Falling limbs, a constant peril in the big woods, have been called "widow-makers" by the West Coast loggers.

Indian words adopted from Chinook jargon by Pacific Coast loggers include "potlatch" for social gatherings; "tillicum", friend; and "akookum", strong.

Although the plain but hearty fare of the Oregon lumber camp is noted for its wholesomeness and quantity, the loggers' pithy humor has developed a camp-table talk as pungent as white pine and as dry as a whining cross-cut saw.

In loggers' jargon, the camp cook is a "gut-robber", or a "meat-burner". He is also called a "mulligan mixer", a "kitchen king", a "pie artist", a "boiler", a "slumgullion fixer", a "can opener", a "stomach robber", a "sizzler", a "victual burner", and a "stew-builder". His chore-boy is a "bull-cook", and his dish-washer a "pearl-

diver." But when a logger talks of the camp "butcher", he is speaking of the camp surgeon.

Loggers do not flatter their cook, if one can believe the descriptive names of items on their menus. Thus, in logging camps, butter is "salve", sugar is "sand", and hot cakes are "monkey-blankets."

When loggers say that their "bellies rise and fall with the tide", they mean that hard times are upon them. This descriptive phrase, still heard in camps, became popular in the woods many years ago when times were so bad in the State of Washington that loggers claimed that they had to eat clams to keep alive.

Apt and descriptive names for the tools of their trade have been coined by loggers in the Oregon woods. The cross-cut saw, whose monotonous whine has sounded the death-knell for many a stately Oregon fir, is a "misery-whip" to the two burly buckos who lash their way with it into the hearts of the big trees. Sometimes the men call a saw their "briar", or their "Swede fiddle." The lowly shovel in the big woods is a "clam gun", an "idiot stick", or a "ukolele."

The Oregon logger, whose talent for description is shown in every word of his "long-log" jargon, has coined several names for himself. To another logger he is a "jungle-buzzard", a "timberbeast", "timberhound", "woods savage", "brushcat" or "lumber-jack."

Although the Oregon logger once considered a broken arm or leg a minor accident, and a thing to be expected in the course of everyday work, the most common malady affecting "brushcats" in the old days was a purely imaginary ailment called "cabin-fever", which is still prevalent in camps off the beaten path.

When two loggers were bunked together for months at a time a case of "nerves" was often the result. While their daily savings mounted, a feeling of caged frustration increased likewise, until one of the men finally came down with "cabin-fever". His cabin mate might be a pal of years' standing, yet he would suddenly seem obnoxious: his laugh would seem intolerable, and even the color of his

eyes, or the part in his hair appear distinctly repulsive.

When the logger with "cabin-fever" drew his pay, he usually set out for the nearest town to blow in his savings on a wild and hectic spree. Generally, he returned with empty pockets and a hangover--to find his partner a congenial soul once more.

With the modernization of logging equipment in recent years, the "bull-cook" has come into his own in Oregon logging camps. In the old days, when oxen were used to haul the logs through the woods, it was the duty of the "bull-cook" to feed the bulls, split kindling, make fires, and perform other menial tasks about the camp. Today the "bull-cook" is the camp's second cook, the unofficial major-domo of the bunk-houses.

As closely associated with the logging industry as the "thar she blows!" of the whaler's lookout is with whaling, the clarion cry of the head faller before a forest giant crashes to the ground is: "TIM-BER-RA!" It is the call of men cutting down trees, warning anyone within hearing to be on hand and to look out for crashing trunks and limbs. It is the signal for loggers to run for cover.

Loggers who journey from camp to camp, ostensibly in search of a job, but always afraid that they might find one, are called "camp inspectors" in the jargon of the Oregon woods. Carrying their bedrolls with them, they are accustomed to stay in one camp just long enough to "cadge" a few free meals, a handout of tobacco, and a drink or two before suddenly departing for the next camp, where they may have an opportunity to "mooch" again.

Seldom seen in a West Coast logging camp these days is the "dogger-up." Years ago, the "dogs" and "grabs", metal hooks used to snag and drag down the "chute" or "skidroad", were hauled through the woods in a hollow log called the "pig." It was the duty of the "dogger-up" to gather the tools used in falling operations, heave them into the "pig", attach it to the last log in line, and follow along behind.

In loggers' jargon west of the Cascades,

a snipe is a common railroad laborer. A "snipe-cage" is a bunkhouse for a section gang, and a "snipe-queen" is the wife of a railroad foreman.

The "whistle-punk", in Oregon lumber camps, is the youngster or the old man who gives logging signals by jerking the whistle cord of the donkey engine when the hook-tender shouts his commands.

A "speeder" or "galloping goose" is the gasoline-engined, three or four wheel vehicle used by timbermen for emergency or inspection trips on logging railroads.

One of the first anecdotes concerning a logging operation in Oregon is the story of the historic "maypole" prank of Alexander McKay, who figured prominently in the northwest as an Indian trader.

In accordance with the custom of the Indians, who occasionally to commemorate some particular event festooned a "signal" tree with banners, McKay hung appropriate decorations on a "maypole" he had selected. After a clearing had been cut around its base, McKay ordered one of the men to scale the tree; then, for sheer deviltry, while the man was aloft McKay lit a fire at the base of the trunk. Enveloped in a cloud of smoke, the man attempted to leap to safety, but caught in the branches of a nearby tree and hung there until rescued.

McKay, who accompanied Sir Alexander McKenzie to the North Polar Sea in 1789 and who explored the Pacific with him in 1793, was one of the leading figures in the life of the Pacific Fur Co., founded by John Jacob Astor. He was killed when Indians attacked the ship Tonquin in 1812, on its return voyage after he had journeyed in the vessel around the Horn to the Pacific Coast via the Hawaiian Islands.

A logger came into a restaurant about midnight and ordered a steak and potatoes. When the waitress brought him his meal, the potato ordered was a large baked potato with the jacket on. The logger gazed at it in amazement, and shouted:

"Huh! That thing's neither barked, nor sniped, nor on the ride. Has the crew

quit?"  
 The waitress looked at him disdainfully.  
 "I want you to understand, big fellow,  
 that we have manners here!"  
 "Lazzo?" growled the logger. "Well,  
 bring me some of 'em. I'll try anything  
 once!"

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 In the logging industry, a "side" is as  
 many members of a camp or logging opera-  
 tion as are necessary to fall, buck, yard,  
 load and transport logs. One "side" is  
 usually a crew of 40 men, including  
 kitchen help.

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 While waiting at a camp on Tongue Point  
 for Captain Lewis' return from exploring  
 the south side of the point in search of  
 a likely spot for a winter camp. Captain  
 William Clark made the following note in  
 his journal of the historic Lewis and  
 Clark expedition:  
 "I marked my name, and the day of the  
 month and the year, on a large pino tree  
 on this peninsula: Cap't William Clark,  
 December 3rd, 1805."  
 This was the first account of a tree in  
 Oregon being carved by a white man.

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 The following is an example of the de-  
 scriptive wealth of loggers' jargon.  
 Words in capitals are explained in the  
 glossary below.

Mike Hogan was one of the best SIDERODS  
 who ever wore CORK SHOES or TIN PANTS.  
 Even the HEADPUSH grudgingly admitted  
 that. Mike had started working in the  
 WOODS away back around 1908, and carried  
 a WOBBLY CARD. His worst fault, perhaps,  
 was his dislike for STUMPJUMPERS and HOME-  
 GUARDS. He started in camp as a BULLCOOK  
 and never quite lived it down. Being a  
 lad full of promise, it was not long be-  
 fore he had left the MULLIGAN SHACK and  
 had taken a job as WHISTLE PUNK on the  
 YARDER. In those days, besides acting as  
 PUNK, he also helped the POWDER MONKEY  
 shoot CHOKER HOLES, and was able when oc-  
 casion demanded to SET A CHOKER himself.  
 Having a fiery temper, he got into quite  
 a few JAMS with the HEADRIGGER and the  
 HOOKTENDER. However, these little alter-  
 cations were forgotten when quitting time  
 came and they took the CRUMMY back to  
 camp. Once back in the BUNKHOUSE, Mike  
 seldom left it except when the GUTHAMMER  
 rang. As he was no SUNSHINE LOGGER, it  
 was not many weeks before he was PULLING

RIGGING, and when the EAGLE SCREAMED he  
 noted a sizable increase in his paycheck.  
 When the FOURTH OF JULY SHUTDOWN came, his  
 one thought was to head for town and the  
 SKIDROAD. He was usually pretty STAKEY,  
 and when he hit the skidroad, immedi-  
 ately began to look over the JOINTS. Al-  
 though he was no CANNED HEATER, he spent  
 his money freely for moonshine and other  
 poison. When the time came for his re-  
 turn to camp he was usually broke and  
 had to borrow fare back. On the job  
 he would take a little SWEDISH CONDITION  
 POWDER and FLY AT HER with his usual vigor.

Being pretty CATTY, Mike seldom received  
 any bad injuries. Once he was hit on  
 the head by a TORPEDO, but the results  
 were not serious, leaving only a bump  
 about the size of a SNOOSE CAN. His am-  
 bition to TEND HOOK became a reality, and  
 he worked as such on the RIGUP and the  
 COLD DECK for several seasons. His pro-  
 motion to SIDEPUSH came as a natural con-  
 sequence. When he disliked how things  
 were going he would shout, "SHE'S HEMLOCK."

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- CORK SHOES: Heavy leather shoes with sharp spikes (caulks) on the soles and heels to prevent slipping on logs.
  - SIDEROD: Foreman on a single logging operation or "side."
  - TIN PANTS: Trousers made of heavy, waterproofed duck.
  - HEADPUSH: Superintendent of the camp.
  - WOODS: A logging camp.
  - WOBBLY CARD: A membership card in the I. W. W.
  - STUMPJUMPERS: Farmers who work as loggers at intervals.
  - HOMEGUARDS: Men who make their homes in the vicinity of the camp.
  - BULLCOOK: Man of all work around the kitchen and bunkhouse.
  - MULLIGAN SHACK: Mess hall.
  - WHISTLE PUNK: Young man who gives signals to the donkey engineer by means of a wire attached to the whistle of the engine.
  - YARDER: A donkey engine used to haul in logs.
  - PUNK: Same as WHISTLE PUNK.
  - POWDER MONKEY: Man who handles blasting powder.
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**CHOKER HOLES:** Holes dug or blasted under a log to permit passage of the choker.

**SETTING CHOKER:** Putting a short cable, 20 to 30 feet long, around the end of the log so that it may be hauled to the yarder.

**JAMS:** Fights, altercations.

**HEADRIGGER:** Man who takes care of any rigging.

**HOOKTENDER:** Same as **SIDEROD**.

**BUNKHOUSE:** Place where men sleep.

**GUTHAMMER:** An iron triangle on which the cook calls the men to meals.

**SUNSHINE LOGGER:** A logger who does not like to work during bad weather.

**PULLING RIGGING:** Same as **HEADRIGGER**.

**EAGLE SCREAMED:** Payday.

**FOURTH OF JULY SHUTDOWN:** Most camps shut down for a period of about two weeks on the 4th of July to make repairs on equipment.

**SKIDROAD:** A street in town where loggers congregate; in Portland it is Burnside Street.

**STAKEY:** Having quite a bit of money.

**JOINTS:** Bars.

**CANNED HEATER:** A man who drinks canned heat.

**SWEDISH CONDITION POWDER:** Snuff.

**FLY AT HER:** Start to work with vim, vigor and vitality.

**CATTY:** Nimble footed.

**TORPEDO:** A torpedo-shaped drum for transporting oil to the donkey engines.

**SNOOSE CAN:** A snuff can.

**TEND HOOK:** Same as **HOOKTENDER**.

**RIG-UP:** To make a logging side ready for operation.

**COLD DECK:** To haul logs to a huge pile.

**SIDEPUSH:** Same as **SIDEROD**.

**SHE'S HEMLOCK:** Since hemlock trees have fewer uses than fir, an expression of contempt.

there were few strikes and no goon terrorism during the last half of the nineteenth century to put sawmills out of commission, but at least one mill was closed down at frequent intervals, because of the idiosyncrasies of wooden cogs and green hide belts.

In McLaughlin's mill on Mill Creek, Union County, the wooden cogs were out within a week, and a raw cowhide belting stretched so much it was necessary to cut out several lengths a day. One forty-foot piece of belting stretched so much that four one-foot sections had to be removed the first afternoon. By the time it wore out at the end of the week, fifty surplus feet had been removed, yet forty feet of the belt remained.

At this same mill a three-foot cottonwood log yielded seven thin boards and a wagon load of sawdust. The boards, stacked to be sun-dried, disappeared. In drying they had warped, moving themselves out of the lumber yard and down the valley. Within three days they were found a mile down the creek, in a neighbor's corral. Whether or not the sawdust remained intact or combusted itself in another neighbor's stove was not stated.

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Cedar shakes, described as "shingles that are the same thickness at both ends", covered the log cabins of early Oregon. When Paul Bunyan's loggers roofed an Oregon bunkhouse with shakes, fog was so thick that they shingled forty feet into space before discovering they had passed the last rafter.

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Attributed to Joe Gervais, descendant of an Astor boatman, is a Bunyanesque feat, the building of the Coast Range. Gervais gravely explained the job, saying the Clatsops and Nehalems, tired of their constant warfare, asked him to keep peace between them.

"I put the Clatsops to work on their side", he said, "and the Nehalems to work on the south, moving rocks and dirt. That required patience to fit the rocks together so that water forced by the ocean waves would surge up through it and trickle down the mountains to irrigate the trees we planned to plant. It was slow work, because we had to have a solid rock foundation."

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An interesting tall tale of the Oregon big woods was found in T.T. Geer's "Fifty years in Oregon." According to the tale,