

LEVELED Book • O

Paul Bunyan

and Babe the Blue Ox



Retold by Carol Shank • Illustrated by Amy Huntington

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Paul Bunyan was a giant **lumberjack**. He stood sixty-three axe handles high, give or take a handle. When Paul shouted “Timber!” and swung his axe, a hundred trees would fall.

Back in Paul’s day, America was growing fast, and people needed wood to build houses and towns. Farmers needed wild land cleared so they could grow crops.

Paul showed an early **talent** for knocking down trees. As a baby, he rolled over in his sleep one night and knocked down a mile of Maine forest. He always knew he'd be a lumberjack, and soon it was time to follow his dream.

"I'm off to log the North Woods," he told his parents.

"Good luck, son," they said. "Watch where you step!"





Paul got a job at a **logging camp**. Chopping down trees was easy, but he wished he had someone to help him haul the logs to the river.

Then came the Winter of the Blue Snow. Beautiful blue snow fell for days. Paul came across a snowdrift as big as a house with two hairy blue ears sticking out of it. “Moo!” it softly bellowed. Paul lifted those ears, and out came a sickly baby ox that had been stuck in the snow. The ox was blue all over from the cold.



Paul brought the ox back to camp and cared for him all night. In the morning, the ox was feeling better, but he stayed blue. He licked Paul on the neck. Paul laughed. "I'll call you Babe," he said.

They went off to Michigan, where Paul set up his own logging camp. Babe grew like crazy and soon was so big that folks could hardly see him end to end. None of the local watering holes were big enough for Babe to drink from. Paul solved that problem by using his axe to dig the Great Lakes.

Paul's logging camp was filled with hundreds of lumberjacks. They were a hungry bunch, and their favorite food was pancakes.

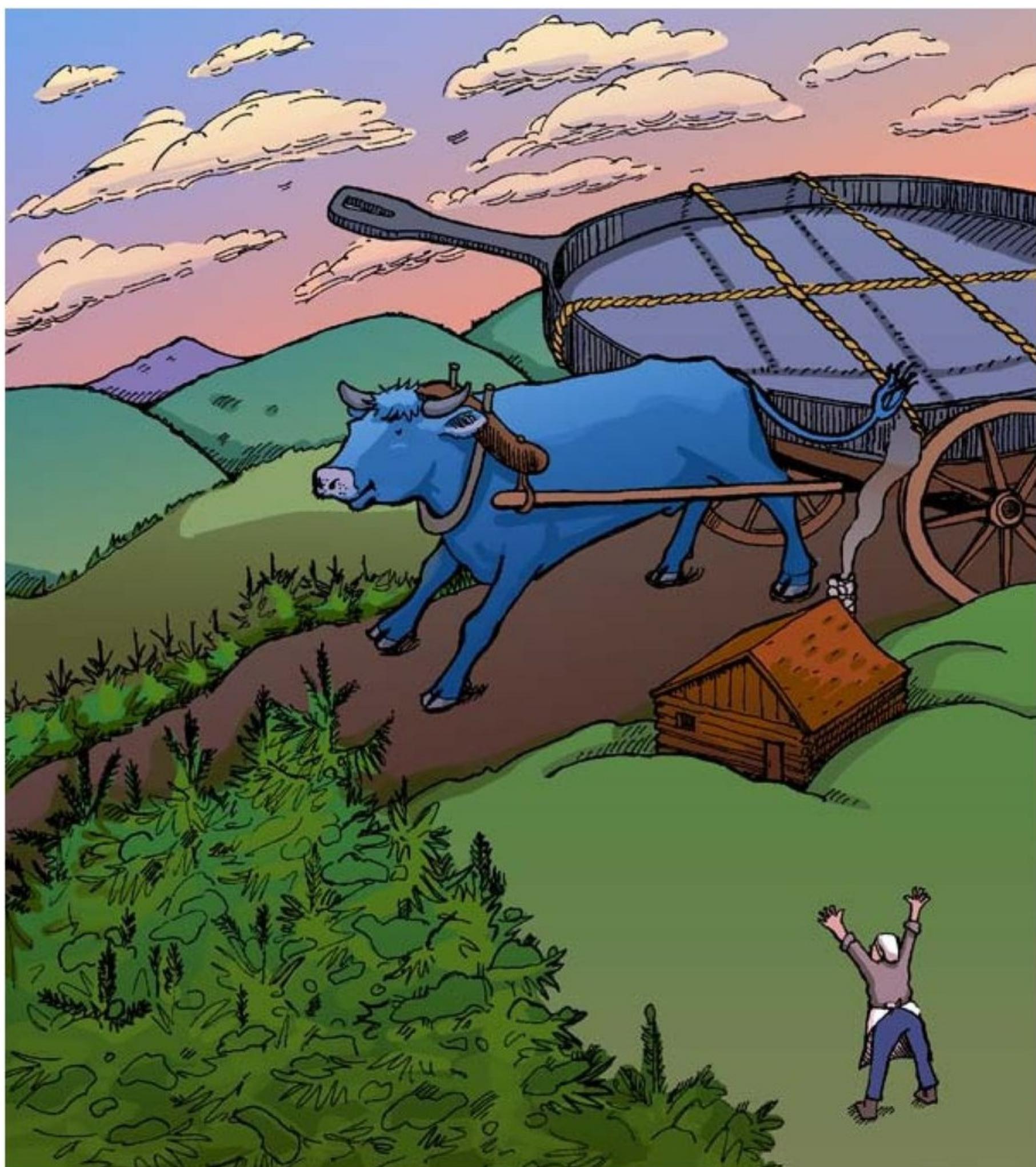
"More pancakes!" they'd call, but the cooks couldn't make enough. Sourdough Sam, the chief cook, feared that the men would quit if they didn't get more pancakes.

"Don't worry, Sam. I'll solve this," Paul said. Paul sat and thought about the problem awhile. Then he and Babe disappeared.



About a week later, Babe returned to camp pulling an iron **griddle**. That griddle was a mile wide if it was an inch! Paul had it built in the big city.

When Sam saw the griddle, his eyes nearly popped out of his head. “Now we’re cooking!” he cried.





Paul ordered a fire built under the griddle. Babe, eager to help, drank all the water out of a lake. The cooks used the empty lake bed as a bowl to mix the **batter** in. Men strapped slabs of bacon onto their boots and skated around on the griddle. When it was all greased up, the cooks poured their batter.



Soon, half a million pancakes were bubbling on the griddle. There was even a pipeline of **syrup** going straight to the tables. The lumberjacks were finally happy, and no one ever quit Paul's camp. Those pancakes were too good!

When the logging was done in one spot, Paul simply lifted the camp onto wheels, and Babe pulled it to a new place. One time, they set down their camp next to a twisty river in Wisconsin. That river was so crooked that the logs the lumberjacks sent floating down would end up in an awful jam. For weeks at a time, the sawmills downriver were waiting for logs that never came.



Paul sat picking his teeth with a pine tree while he thought about the problem.

Paul had Ole, his blacksmith, **forge** a giant chain. He hooked one end of the chain to Babe's **harness** and the other end to a twist in the river.

"Pull, Babe!" he commanded, and Babe pulled.





Sweat poured off Babe, but the river wouldn't budge. "Harder!" Paul said.

Babe grunted and pulled harder. The muscles on his neck stood out like tree roots. His legs dug in the earth, and his belly nearly touched the ground, but that old river was as crooked as ever.



Then Paul saw the bend in the river give a shiver. “It’s working!” he cried.

Babe let out a bellow that was heard all the way to Kansas. He gave a mighty tug, causing the river to snap like a whip. Then, with a *CRACK!* it lay straight as a flagpole. Everyone cheered. Paul stuck out his chest with pride so much that his buttons popped off his shirt.

Paul and Babe went on to do many more great things. They were last seen working in the vast wilderness of Alaska. Folks up there say they still sometimes hear a mighty voice in the woods calling out “Timber!” followed by a rumbling “Moo!”



Glossary

batter (<i>n.</i>)	a thick liquid mixture used to make cakes and other foods (p. 9)
forge (<i>v.</i>)	to heat and hammer metal into a desired shape (p. 12)
griddle (<i>n.</i>)	a heavy, flat plate made of iron that is heated and used to cook food (p. 8)
harness (<i>n.</i>)	a set of straps used to hitch an animal to something (p. 12)
logging camp (<i>n.</i>)	a temporary living and working area for lumberjacks (p. 5)
lumberjack (<i>n.</i>)	a person who works in the logging industry, often cutting down trees (p. 3)
syrup (<i>n.</i>)	a thick liquid that is sweet and sticky (p. 10)
talent (<i>n.</i>)	a natural ability or skill (p. 4)

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