



AN EARLY DAY LOGGER

My father, Fred Barr, was born of Canadian-French parents in Otter Lake, Michigan. He moved with his parents to Thorpe, Wisconsin, when he was two years old. His father, Abraham Barr, was the son of an immigrant cobbler from Edinburgh, Scotland and his mother was a stylish and vivacious French lady.

As a boy, my father worked in his father's blacksmith shop, running errands and learning the trade. This caused him to be often absent from school, and he did not complete the eighth grade.

At age fourteen, in 1891, he went to work in a logging camp near Cherry, Wisconsin, as an oxen-boy and later as a chain-tender. The camp operated with three-men crews: a swamper, a chain-tender and an oxen-boy, or driver. The only horses in the camp was the driving team of the superintendent. Part of his pay each month was sent to help out at home, which was expected in pioneer times.

The summer of 1894 he came to Minnesota with a threshing crew. That winter he stayed at the Walker Hotel and worked as a woodcutter, or small-time logger, and did not make much money. The following winter he and Billy Des Moines became partners in cutting cordwood for one dollar a cord. They lived in a tent, and the evening hours were used to hone up on their math skills, especially long division. This knowledge came into good use in later years. Part of his earnings for this winter's work was used to pay up his Walker Hotel bill of the previous winter.

The following winter he and John Burton, a Canadian logger from Sydney, Nova Scotia, secured a contract to log a school section of cedar on Spur 69 between the present sites of Benedict and Laporte, Minnesota. They operated a sizable logging camp, employing between fifty-five and sixty men. Horses were used rather than oxen. The contract was let by Crow Wing County Attorney Polk. The operation lasted three years, following which John Burton returned to his home in Canada.

John Burton did not return for the following winter and my father sold the operation to John Row of Minneapolis, who bought more timber holdings of Crow Wing County. My father operated the camp for Mr. Row that winter. The following year he became cedar inspector for the cedar yards which he and John Burton had previously operated. The Deal Lumber Company of Des Moines, Iowa, bought the entire outfit from John Row and my father worked as inspector for this company from 1900 to 1903.

At the same time, in 1900, he filed a homestead claim for 160 acres on Garfield Lake, across the lake from Laporte. He gradually logged this off but did not prove up on the claim.

On completion of his work with the Deal Lumber Company he went to Northome as traveling cedar inspector for Naugle Pole and Tie Company, a Chicago firm operating between Northome and Rhinelander, Wisconsin. During this time he carried a snub-nosed automatic Savage pistol to fire warning shots. Inspectors were not always popular as it was part of their duties to determine if any logs were being stolen.

In Northome he became close friends with Jack Jinkinson, an enterprising Canadian who, along with a Mr. Speelman, operated a combination grocery store and rooming house in Northome. My father was there the night it burned. Mr. Jinkinson, although not a lawyer, was well read in the law and was a persuasive speaker. The two men were associated together in many business ventures and several lawsuits. They were in the Woodmen and Odd Fellows Lodges together, and my father was at Mr. Jinkinson's bedside when he died in May 1934, at the Jinkinson farm home

near Becida. His widow stayed at the Barr home the following winter, then moved to Los Angeles, California where she passed away in 1939.

The old Bannon Hotel was the second hotel to burn at Northome. This time, Dad jumped out of a rear window and landed in the sawdust of a roofless icehouse. The only injured person was a man who jumped out of another window with no cushioned landing.

Upon completion of his work with the Naugle Pole and Tie Company, he operated a camp at Northome for the Wilcox Logging Company from Minneapolis. He also ran camps at Nebish and Kelliher for St. Croix Pine and Cedar Company, a Stillwater firm.

In 1910 he married Anna Haugan, a waitress in one of the camp's cookhouses. Her parents were Norwegian immigrants. The newly married couple lived at the Nebish camp site.

Following his marriage, he was walking boss for the American Cedar Company at Kelliher. The company had six camps and there was a foreman under him in each camp. Again he carried his Savage automatic.

The big logging companies were beginning to move from Minnesota to the West Coast and when these camps shut down he and his wife bought a farm at Becida from Lars Lind, one of the first settlers in the area. The farm was bought on February 18, 1911. They settled at Becida because my mother wanted to be near her three aunts and their families, with whom she had been raised.

Regarding my mother's family: My greatgrandparents, Engebret Haugan and Sigrid Pettersdatter, and their daughters Anne aged seventeen, Christi age thirteen and Julia age six, emigrated from Norway to Faribault in 1881, then moved to Henning, Minnesota. My grandparents, Anders Thorsten Hauganlokka and Boel Engebretsdatter, came in 1882 with one infant. Their one-year-old son died on shipboard. My grandfather nearly died also from the disease that swept the ship. His health was permanently damaged by this. His impairment and inability to adjust to the hardships of the new country caused the family to live in constant poverty, but were helped by the relatives.

There were eight children in my mother's family; her mother died in childbirth at Henning. My greatgrandmother, Sigrid Haugan, also died at Henning.

My mother's aunts, Anne, Christi and Julia, each married Norwegian men born in this country near Faribault. All three families moved to Becida and bought adjoining farms. Engebret Haugan also moved to Becida and lived with his daughter Julia and her family. He died in 1905 and is buried in the Becida cemetery.

Anne Haugan married Even Nyhus and they had nine children. Christi Haugan married Christ Olson and they had twelve children. Julia Haugan married Louis Hanson and they had three children. Two of my mother's brothers and the youngest sister were adopted by Christ Olson's sister when their mother died and did not come to Becida. These twenty-four cousins and my mother's brothers and sisters were very close.

Julia Hanson died in 1908 at age 33 and my mother worked for her uncle as housekeeper, taking care of the two young daughters. The third child had died in infancy.

That fall there was a typhoid epidemic and my mother and her brother Christian moved into the Olson home next door where the family was severely stricken with the disease. Three sons died, Oscar, Anton and Herman. I recently visited with a younger brother in Phoenix. He remembered my mother and uncle as being Godsenders to them during that heart-breaking time. He said my mother and uncle sang to them a lot and, "It sounded so reassuring." I also remember my mother always singing as she did her housework; she loved to sing and to tell funny stories, and was forever entertaining someone. Both she and my uncle had lovely voices.

My mother's two surviving aunts were tall women and wore their blond hair in braids wound around their heads. They used to walk to our place about a mile from their farms, wearing black silk taffeta dresses.

Aunt Christi's husband, Christ Olson, ran the Becida store and post office. She always brought us

small sack of candy. My youngest brother, Frank, and I would run down the road to meet them when we saw them coming up over the hill. They would pat us on the head and speak to us in a mixture of English and Norwegian. My mother and her aunts would speak Norwegian as they drank coffee. Toward sundown they would start for home to prepare the evening meal.

Christ Olson ran the Becida store for years. My brother Frank and I carried crates of eggs to the store to trade for groceries. Mother allowed us five cents each for Cracker Jacks; we felt well rewarded. Christ always added stick candy. We were fascinated by the barrels of white sugar, brown sugar, crackers and cookies which were weighed out by the pound. Some of the coffee was hand-ground. We used to wonder if the summer sausage that hung from the ceiling was ever sold or if it just hung there from year to year. We never bought any.

The Sunday afternoon baseball games were held in front of the store and we could buy soda pop for five cents a bottle. The country communities in the 1930's did not earlier had a league of baseball teams with uniforms and the games were an exciting Sunday afternoon event.

Although now a farmer, my dad maintained an active interest in logging and continued to operate all logging camps in the surrounding area: the Schoolcraft River, Guthrie, Nary, Lake George, etc. The men often worked on the farm and in the logging camps. There was usually a hired girl to help in the farm house.

I remember a lot of horses on the farm during the summer months and these were probably used for the winter logging camps. My mother was really the farmer; she raised and sold Clydesdale horses during the 1930's when times were so difficult.

In 1928 my dad leased logging rights from the Indian Agency and established two separate camps on the Blue Earth Indian Reservation for two years, the first one near Roy Lake. At both camps trucks were used as well as horses. It was a fairly large operation, but banks were beginning to falter and prices dropped. He was nearly wiped out financially and mortgaged the farm to meet his last payroll. This

was his last logging operation.

In 1930, at age fifty-three, he secured a contract to haul cattle to South St. Paul. His oldest son, George, drove the truck. The second son, Clifford, worked on a neighboring farm and later went to Washington to find work. The third son, Raymond, worked the farm with his father. The younger children, Eloise, Verna and Frank, were still in school.

Farm prices were rock bottom; the outlook was bleak. During this time he was active in forming a local Becida Farm Bureau unit, and Becida 4-H Club.

The Civilian Conservation Corps came into existence, and with it, employment. Along with many other loggers, my dad went to work in the CCC's as a foreman, many times working in the same areas he had logged. He worked for the Federal Forestry for fourteen years.

With the advent of World War II and the closing of CCC camps, my dad's active work in the Minnesota forests ceased. He stayed on with the Army and was in charge of dismantling and the sale of a large CCC camp near Orr, Minnesota. His son Clifford returned from Washington and together they began sheep farming.

When he was seventy-four years old he undertook a task that he was to call the most satisfying of his life's achievements. He became chairman of the building committee for the Becida Lutheran Church congregation. This small community had talked about a church building for nearly fifty years but continued to meet in the town hall.

The town hall was the heart of the close-knit community. Here the people gathered for Fourth of July celebrations, Memorial Day pot-luck meals after decorating the nearby cemetery; 4-H activities, Saturday night dances with music furnished by the local farmers; elections, wedding showers and, with black crepe-draped windows, the funerals for local people. The entire community poured out for these gatherings.

The desire for a church building persisted but there was never total agreement on type of structure, cost, or location.

A formal building fund was started by one of the pioneer Lutheran settlers, Jacob Malterud, when his wife, Anna, died in 1938. By 1951 there was a sizable

amount in this fund. The committee asked Fred to bid on a one-room country school that was for sale. His \$150.00 bid was accepted and the bill of sale was sealed with a \$5.00 down payment. There were many offers of free land and the site selected was part of the Louis Hanson farm near the Becida store and post office. The building was quickly moved to its present site before it could be delayed by further discussion.

Enthusiasm for the new church was unbounded. Work and material were donated and soon a beautiful little country church was completed, mortgage free. It was later enlarged. A Hammond electric organ was donated from Chicago. Gifts came in from all over the country from former members of the town hall church. Many rejoined the church. Fred joined the church after its completion and he was later named deacon at the age of eighty.

In 1951 I moved with my husband and son to Rockford, Illinois and my parents spent several winters with us. My father learned that the Swedish-American Hospital was looking for a reliable person to deliver the linens to the rooms. He applied and received the job. He worked at it for two years.

After the two years he returned to the farm at Becida. The farm house had been empty during this time although the farm land had been rented out. The house was in need of repairs. He returned in June and once again became active in local Becida church affairs, and it was then he was named deacon.

They stayed on the farm after that but spent the winters of 1965-1966 and 1966-1967 with me. They sold the farm in 1967 and lived in a mobile home by the Becida post office and store which was then operated by Richard Schlee.

In 1970 my mother and father entered the Blackduck Nursing Home. My father died there on New Year's Day 1971. My mother died on her birthday, December 14, 1972.

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My recollections have been blended with factual information from a historical paper prepared by my son, Thomas W. Haines, as a freshman at Lincoln College, Lincoln, Illinois, 1965-1966.

Verna Barr Haines.