

A Logger's Dictionary

from *Rhymes of a Western Logger* by Robert E. Swanson

A

ape (usually 'tame-ape'): a rigging man.

ass: the back end of anything.

B

bag boom: logs in water surrounded by boom sticks in circle.

"big holed the air": put air brakes on in emergency.

bight: to be inside the angle of a line or block.

bitch: a tough anything (a bitch of a day); skidder hook

blew the lid: to get out with gusto; to quit in a hurry.

board hole: a hole cut by fallers in a stump for spring boards

boom: logs rafted in water ready to tow.

bone yard: place for worn-out machines.

boxing gloves: counterweights on a Climax locomotive.

brains: the headmen, bosses, owners, etc.

bucker: a man who cuts logs once felled in the woods.

bull: conversation as a pastime.

Bull of the woods: the superintendent, foreman, etc.

bull block: a large open-mouthed pulley block.

bull bucker: the boss of the fallers and buckers.

bull cook: man who puts in wood, makes beds, etc. in camp

bull moose: a large anything.

bull pen: second class steerage on a northern boat.

bunk: a rude form of bed; anything but the truth.

bunk house: the residence of anything but a happily married man.

C

cat: a caterpillar tractor.

cat-skinner: a caterpillar tractor operator.

cat-tracks: the tread of a cat tractor.

caulked boots: spiked boots for walking on logs.

cherry-picker: machine for picking up lost logs on a railway.

"chicken-crap show": miserable outfit.

chin-whiskered: poor show, haywire, lousy.

choker: steel cable with hood end to put on logs.

chokerman: man who puts on chokers (setting chokers).

chuck: Chinook word for salt water; the sea; food.

chunk: a log not bucked off at both ends; usually left in the woods.

claim: timbered country surveyed to be logged by a company.

Climax: a breed of geared locomotive.

complaining: something a hooker does a lot of.
crock: a bottle of liquor.
cross cuts: cross cut saws for cutting logs.
crown: the top branches of a standing tree.
crummie: a closed boxcar for hauling loggers.

D

dame: a female person aged from 9 to 90.
dangle: to move fast.
diesel yarder: diesel powered yarding donkey.
dive: a place not so good.
dolly: a roller for timber.
donkey: a logging engine with drums.
donkey puncher: donkey engineer.
dozer: bulldozer.
droop: stoop-shouldered person.
duplex: a loading donkey with double engines.

E

eagle eye: sharp eye; loco engineer.
eye: a loop splice in end of cable.

F

fake: a gas donkey.
falling and bucking: falling trees and cutting them up into logs.
fir: a coniferous tree of the west coast.
flicker: a woodpecker, bird of the northwest.
flunkey: a table waiter or a dishwasher.
fog: steam.

G

galloping goose: a locomotive that runs with a galloping motion.
gear-stripper: truck driver, sometimes 'gear jammer'.
goat: a rig-up donkey.
good-head: a good fellow to work with.
"guthammer": dinner gong.
guy: a male person aged from 9 to 90.
gyppo: a small log contractor (poor, haywire).

H

haulback: line which pulls rigging back in yarding.
hay burner: a horse.
haywire: inclined to be not up to standard (broken).
head-tree: spar-tree next to the railway.
heart: centre growth rings of a tree.
heel-line: line for tightening skyline.

hi-ball: go ahead fast; fast outfit; fast.
high-lead: system of logging using spar-tree.
hiring board: blackboard upon which jobs are written in a hiring office.
hitting-the-ball: working very fast.
hog: locomotive; also known as a “locie”.
hogger: locomotive engineer.
home guard: a man who works for the same company and never quits his job.
hooker: hooktender; boss of yarding crew.

I

inkslinger: time-keeper or office man.

J

jack: money.
jack-pot: a hell of a mess.
jagger: sharp strands on a worn cable.
jewellery: rigging, hooks, knobs, etc.
J.P.: Justice of the Peace.
jug: jail.
jungle: a name for logging camps and the woods.

K

king pin: part of a log car; the main person.
kink: a twist in a cable.
knit: to splice a cable.
knoll: a rounded timbered ridge.

L

lead: to hang a block.
line: “line” is said when enough slack has been pulled out by hand, also the name for any rope.
loaders: the men who load logs onto railway cars or trucks.
locie: a logging locomotive, also known as ‘a hog’.
log dump: end of railroad where logs are put in water.

M

mainline: the main hauling line in yarding.
main-line: the main railway.
mill: sawmill.
mug up: cup of coffee, not at mealtime.

N

nose: front end of a machine (or front of anything).
nose bag show: had to pack a lunch bucket to work.
notch: a groove in a stump for a guy line.

O

open face: a wide drum donkey.

P.

panicky: always in trouble, or excitable.

pencil pusher: time-keeper.

pension: an easy job.

percolate: to make a machine run well.

pig: sled used in skid road to bring hooks back.

powder-monkey: man who uses explosive powder in the woods.

“pull the pin”: to quit the job and go to town.

punk (whistle punk): signal man on yarding crew.

purchase: a good steady pull (using blocks).

Q

quirk: an artful trick.

R

raft (Davis raft): invented by Davis at Port Renfrew, BC; a boom of logs capable of being towed in heavy seas, bound up with cables.

“raise hell”: to do anything in a boisterous manner.

rat: a no-good person, an informer.

rigging: lines, hooks, etc.

rigger (high rigger): a man who tops trees and rigs same.

rip-wrap: cable spiked crossways on a blank road for traction.

rob: to steal parts of one machine for another.

S

scaler: man who measures and calculates logs.

scissor-bill: a stupid person.

section crew: a railroad track repair man.

setting (“a setting”): a piece of country to be logged off to one spar tree.

“shanty queen”: logger’s wife living in a shack in camp.

shay: a geared locomotive; sidewinder.

show: conditions governing output of logs.

side-swipe: to hit sideways.

side winder: a tree knocked sideways by another tree.

skidder: a skyline system to drag (skid) logs over rough ground.

skid road: road on which logs are dragged.

“skidroad”: a street in town which loggers frequent.

skyline: 1 ¾ to 2 ¼ inch steel cable, three thousand feet long, to haul logs through the air in rough country.

slash: logged-off country.

sled: sled on which donkey sits.

soup: superintendent.

spar-tree: tree topped and rigged in high lead system.

stake: wages saved up to spend on a spree in town.

stand: a good “stand” of timber.

stanfield suits: long woolly underwear.

straw line: small line to pull the haulback line.

stump: what is left in the ground when tree is felled.

suckhole: a tale packer to the boss.

swedish fiddle: a bucking saw.

T

tame ape: a *real* logger. (There was much good-natured ribbing among the western loggers. The trees on the BC Coast were monstrous compared to those in the interior of the province. The coastal loggers and high riggers referred to themselves as “real” loggers and said that the loggers of the interior “logged telephone poles”.)

timber: logs and trees fit to be logged.

Timber-r-r-r!: signal call, “Keep clear, tree is going to fall”.

tongs: tongs used to load logs onto railway car.

“top a tree”: rigger climbs and cuts off top.

tycoon: a big boss logger.

U

undercut: the notch cut determining which way a tree will fall.

unit: a combined yarding and loading donkey on railway wheels.

V

virgin forest: forest not yet opened up for logging.

W

whistle: a signal (on a whistle) in yarding logs.

widow-maker: a loose limb hanging high in a tree.

wrench: to repair a machine.

Y

Y: a track for turning a locomotive around.

yarding: hauling logs from the stump into a pile at the track.