



# Beaver Bob

## Memoirs of a mis-spent life

(The Biography of Beaver Bob)

**Editor's Note** — After protracted and arduous negotiations and not inconsiderable expenditure, the Castor Review is proud to announce it has obtained exclusive rights to Beaver Bob's reminiscences. These will appear from time to time, depending on the willingness of the old gentleman to put quill to paper.

I was born in a log cabin not far from here, on the banks of a winding river whose name is well known to most of my readers.

The river in those days was lined with alders and willows which budded out in the spring and served as nourishment and building materials for the beavers whose dams were a feature of the pleasant landscape.

I was the only child in a family which consisted, appropriately enough of my mother, an accomplished lady from a well to do family in Schenectady; our faithful Indian friend and neighbour, William Two Deer Running, whose wickiup was a short distance from our home; my faithful hound, Bugle, part deer hound and part bloodhound and our pony, Victoria, named after the reigning Queen. My father, long gone, had stepped out of the shack one day, looked up at the sky where the wild geese were heading north and announced his departure for the West; we never saw him again; we heard he had settled briefly in Westboro.

Our cabin stood on a slight eminence overlooking the river, where ducks came in in flocks in spring and fall. I can see my mother in her long dress in the doorway, the wind whipping her

skirts, as I brought round the pony for the four-mile ride to school. Riding double behind the teacher who was also my mother, was an experience to put the iron in a boy's soul.

To get back to the ducks. The old Indian, William Two Deer, had taught me a trick of swimming under water, seizing the ducks by the legs and so capturing them for the pot. Many a pleasant hour we spent in this fashion. Finally, by the time I reached sixteen, I had trained myself to stay under for seven or eight minutes at a time.

I left school early and went to work in the brick works, where brick dust, heat and noise were my constant companions. While others were busy around the lime kiln I stood, Tom Sawyer in hand, my eyes glued to the printed page. Frequently, I would look up and say, "Remember men, you cannot make bricks without straw." In this way, I endeared myself to my companions and progressed in wisdom and knowledge.

Having no other profession open to me, I decided to become a newspaperman and became a copy boy on a major paper in the city of Ottawa, through the good offices of a distant relative who owned a dry goods store in the city.

I interviewed among others the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Sir Franklin, Ned Buntline and Sun Yat-sen. The way in which I managed to obtain an interview with Pancho Villa, the noted Mexican bandit, is rather interesting. I was perched on my usual bar stool

indulging in a sarsaparilla frappe on the rocks when I noted in the lobby, with its potted palms, brass cuspidors and upholstered leather chairs a gentleman in a tall, wide-brimmed hat with little red balls dangling from the brim. The fact that he was wrapped in a Mexican blanket or serape did not escape my attention. His cowhide, high-heeled boots were polished to silver lustre and his silver mounted pistols hung low; when he moved (which he did from time to time) I caught the jingle of silver spurs.

Scenting a story, I rushed forward with a wild cry. "You must be Sir John Franklin?"

He denied this in a rather huffy tone. Something about his accent caught my attention.

"Scott of the Antarctic?"

"No senor, I regret I am none of these gentlemen?"

"Then, who the hell are you, man?"

The answer I was already beginning to suspect came out.

"Pancho Villa, senor, at your service." Here I was confronted by the greatest Mexican bandit of all times; and me with no pencil. Pancho obligingly lent me a lead bullet and with this I managed to take a few notes as we sat in the bar, he over a tequila neat and I with my favourite lemon sarsaparilla. My story, when it came out was a corker, occupying nearly two columns on page one. I received a bonus from my editor and an invitation to visit Pancho in Acapulco.

NEXT: I interview Sir Rider Haggard. Watch for this gripping instalment.

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