

# INJUN DEVIL COUNTRY

Account given me by Seward Coombs, of Moose Hill, Milton, N.S., April 1st, 1945. Coombs is an old-time lumberman and millwright, born 1876. He is highly respected in Milton, has a good memory, is blunt and plain-spoken, a huge man physically, at 69 still doing millwright work for Mersey Paper Company.

" About the year 1894 Robert Lloyd, Will Freeman and I went moose-hunting in the vicinity of Long Lake and Eagle Lake. The Indians had always said the region around those lakes and Kempton Lake was haunted, and they wouldn't stay in it overnight. We didn't think much of those old yarns. Lloyd and I were lumbermen, Freeman was a ~~hunter~~ hunter who sometimes worked in the lumber camps.

We carried a small tent and some provisions in our knapsacks, and walked up the river road to Third Stillwater Falls. There were lots of partridge, those days, and Bob Lloyd shot several along the road with his .44 rifle. He was a crack shot and used to hit them in the head while they were sitting. We forded the Mersey river at Third Stillwater Falls and struck up through the woods for Long Lake.

Just east of Long Lake is a ~~long~~ bog which runs north to Eagle Lake, a good place to call moose, and we made camp on a sort of island in the bog near the Eagle Lake end, a strip of low dry land covered with pines. In the morning Will ~~Freeman~~ <sup>FREEMAN</sup> began to call moose. There was no answer. We could see very clearly for some distance over the bog, and we kept a good watch in case a bull should sneak out. We saw nothing. At last a little breeze sprang up and it was no good for calling, so Will said we'd better give it up for the day.

Just then Bob Lloyd said " Look there ! ". And there was a bull moose in the middle of the bog, ~~walking away from us~~. How he got there I don't know. Lloyd always maintained afterwards that the moose rose up out of the bog. Will and I were too astonished to shoot for a moment or two. Lloyd put up his .44 and fired three shots. None of them touched the moose, at least he gave no sign of it. He walked into a clump of hackmatacks and disappeared. That seemed to put bad luck on our whole trip. We didn't see another moose that trip.

In September 1896 or thereabouts ( it was the same year that Ed Mills and Will Dexter were hunting at Indian Gardens, and Will shot and killed himself accidentally with an old muzzle-loader. You can check on that.) I went moose-hunting again with Will Freeman, just the two of us, ~~to the falls~~. We went the same way and camped on the same spot in Eagle Lake bog.

We got there in the afternoon and gathered a little firewood and set up our canvas lean-to. I woke up in the night and heard a moose "speaking" on the west edge of the bog, towards Long Lake. There was a big windfall near our camp, a long spruce or pine with its top in the edge of the bog. I got up on the windfall to hear the moose better, and when I did so there was a terrible wild screech. It seemed to come from under the top of the fallen tree, about 40 feet from me.

Will woke at the sound and came running out of the tent with his rifle, crying "What was that ? " I thought it was a bear but Will said "No, a bear doesn't make any sound like that. I never heard that sound before, all the years I've been in the woods." Presently we heard it again, and this time it seemed to move off at a great rate, faster than any animal could move, and finally it died away towards Eagle Lake.

I still thought it was a bear, and in the morning I looked for tracks in the bog, but there were no bear tracks or any other kind of tracks, except an old bear track away up at the north end of the knoll, by the shore of Eagle Lake. During the day we talked a good deal about that sound, and how it rolled off so fast to Eagle Lake. You might think it was a bird. The woods around that bog were a great place for hawks and owls, and I remember loons hollering in Eagle Lake, and there were three crane nests in a pine on a rock in Long Lake, but Will and I had heard all those birds many times -- all our lives, you might say -- and this screech was something different.

Will got a mite uneasy. Next day we tramped to the north-west, crossed the brook between Long & Eagle Lakes, and went on to Kempton Lake. We camped for the night by the outlet of Kempton Lake, by the strip of meadow there, and called there in the morning. Heard nothing. In the afternoon we returned towards Eagle Lake bog but Will said there were no moose there, so we kept on through the woods to Jimmie Kempton bog. We slept that night at the calling place on Jimmie Kempton bog. Will called that night and in the morning, but we heard nothing.

All that day we still hunted around Jimmie Kempton bog. No luck. All this took place the year after the forest fire burned the country between Long Lake and Big Falls. The next morning we packed up and started for ~~the~~ Big Falls through the burn, and we came on a fine bull moose crossing the burn and shot him not far from the river. Will went to Milton for an ox wagon and was back that night, fording the river at Big Falls and coming up the tote road towards Eagle Lake. In the meantime I had gutted the moose and cut up the meat. We didn't have to carry it far to the wagon. The ground was thick with ashes of the forest fire and we were pretty black.

The next year ( say 1897) I spent one day at Eagle Lake bog with Will Freeman and we slept at our old camping place. We heard nothing, and the next day a storm began to come up so we returned home.

By this time we were calling Eagle Lake bog " the haunted bog ". The next fall (say 1898) Will Freeman said " Let's go moose-hunting at the Haunted Bog", so Peter Starrett and I went with him. We pitched our tent at the old spot and at dusk Will called for moose. Two bulls answered, one from each side of the bog, but they wouldn't come out till after dark. The bog was pretty wet that fall and we could hear one of them walking about on the <sup>South</sup> east edge of the bog, amongst the swamp maples there, and his feet splashing.

Next morning at daybreak I went down into the maple swamp, S.E. of the knoll, before Will began to call. I thought I might get a shot at that moose if he moved around very much. Will began to call, and I heard the bull speak, not far from me. Then I heard a loud long moan; not a screech, not at all like that sound we heard in '94. It was just such a sound as You'd expect to hear if a calf found itself grabbed by a bear.

But at first I thought it was the moose. I thought maybe a bear had grabbed him. But the sound moved off up the bog, faster than a bear or a moose could travel, fast as the wind, and died away towards Eagle Lake. Will and Peter had heard it, and Will stopped calling. Then it began again, the loud moaning blatting sound, close to us, the same as before, and dying away very swiftly towards the lake.

##### It did that three times, and after the third time, I shouted to Will, and he and Peter answered. I walked up to them, they were standing on the knoll by the camp. They were scared, I tell you. I wasn't scared but I was puzzled. I don't believe in ghosts and such-like nonsense -- Peter was going on about how the Indians always said this part of the river country was haunted by ##### the Indian devil, and even Will Freeman, who was in the habit of hunting and sleeping alone all over the woods, insisted we should get out of there. So we packed up and left. After that we did our hunting elsewhere.

Two or three years after that, Will Freeman went up into the Long Lake-Eagle Lake country trapping and hunting. He had got over his scare and he stopped one night at our camping place on the Haunted Bog. He told me about it. It shook him up. That awful racket began in the night and kept up till high morning, just like before -- first near and loud, then going off very fast towards Eagle Lake. Then a long silence. Then the same thing again. In the morning he left the Haunted Bog for ever -- never went back for his traps or anything. He told me it was the only thing that ever scared him in the woods. He never forgot it.

About the year 1908 I went up into that country logging for Harlow & Kempton. They had a camp at the north end of Eagle Lake, a few hundred yards east of the

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brook. Parker Minard had a logging camp on the <sup>NORTH</sup> ~~west~~ bank of Eagle Brook, <sup>near the lake</sup> H & K had two other camps <sup>near</sup> Eagle Lake. One was by the south-east cove, right next to the Haunted Bog. It was built by one of their foremen, John Crowley, a man from Port Medway. The other was on the east shore of Long Lake about half way up, on a narrow ridge that runs between the Haunted Bog and Long Lake; this camp was built by a H & K foreman named Arthur Robart, of Greenfield.

H & K sent Robart to build a new camp on the west side of Long Lake near the narrows, and put me in charge of logging down the ~~max~~ east side of Eagle Lake; that is, between the lake and the burnt woods that we called the Big Burn. I used the H & K camp at the north end of the lake, and I also used the one Crowley had built at the south-east cove.

During the time I was logging there I was often on the edge of the Haunted Bog, and from the Crowley camp you could almost see the old camping place where we'd heard the "devil"; but not I nor any man in my crew heard any strange sound.

Will Freeman came in to the Crowley camp two or three times that winter. He was teaming supplies for H & K, and used to bring in our mail. Every time he came to the Crowley camp he would look across the Haunted Bog and ask if I'd heard any more of that queer sound. I'd say No, and he'd shake his head. We talked about it for years afterwards, but never could figure it out.

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Note by THR:- In September 1945 Austin Parker, Brenton Smith and I, all of Liverpool, took Seward Coombs to our hunting camp at the north tip of Eagle Lake, where we ~~spunk~~ spent the night talking over the legend of Haunted Bog. In the morning we went by canoe to the south end of Eagle Lake, and landed on the edge of the Haunted Bog. It is shaped like a ~~Y~~ <sup>Y</sup>. The two <sup>little water brooks that drain it</sup> ~~branches~~ come out on Eagle Lake, leaving a small triangle of dry land between them, covered with pine and spruce, and tangles of huckleberry bushes. Just beyond the tip of this triangle you cross a patch of bog, and then find yourself on a narrow "island" covered with the same sort of growth, and extending some distance southward into the stem of the Y.

The forest around the Haunted Bog had been logged, and logged again, since



Coombs first saw it in the 1890's, and now it was once more a thick growth of tall hemlock and pine. Bogs do not change their appearance with the passing years, and undoubtedly the Haunted Bog looks the same today as it did centuries ago.

Coombs led us confidently up the triangle of the Y, across the patch of bog, and then along the bushy little "island". At its southern tip he paused and looked carefully at the ground, at the swamp opening before us and on both sides, and at the timbered ridges that surround the bog. He said, "This is where we camped and heard that thing, whatever it was."

I dug into the mould of rotten leaves and fallen pine and spruce needles at the spot he pointed out; and there, sure enough, after 40 or 50 years, was the small ring of fire-reddened stones which marked their fireplace, hastily gathered for what was intended to be a night's bivouac, all that time ago. Parker took a photograph of Seward Coombs and me, standing on the very spot.

