

TOPICAL TIDBITS



September/October 2013

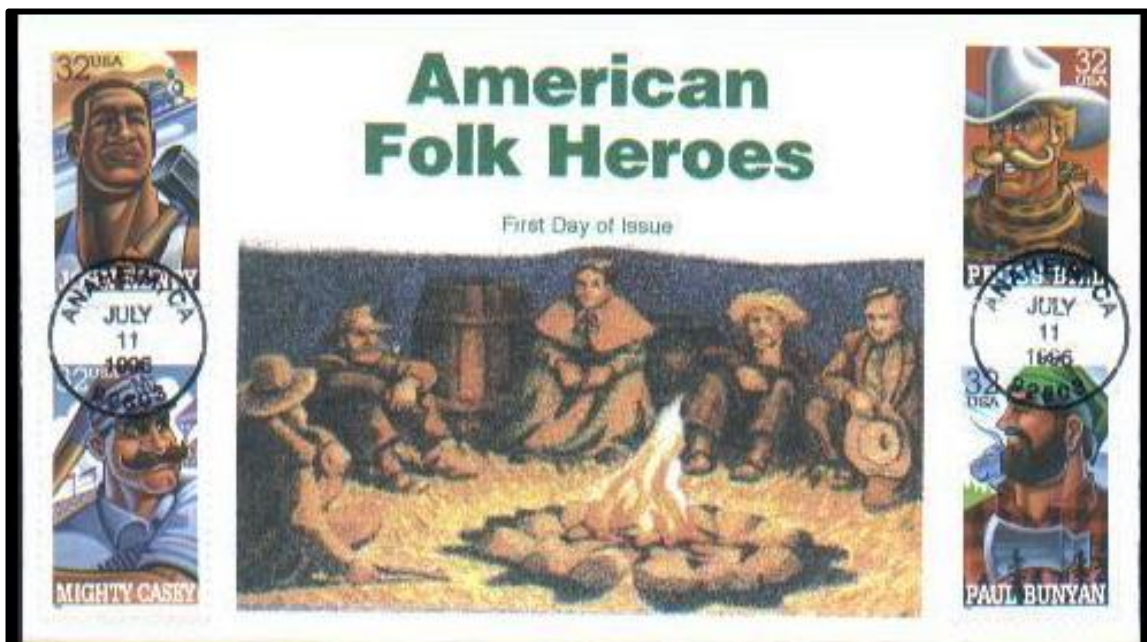
Volume 2 Issue 5

FOLK HEROES

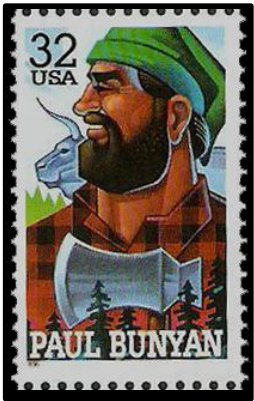
Tall tales began in the 1800s as a way for pioneers to understand the greatness of the American west. With wild animals, huge forests, deserts, and mountains to conquer, the pioneers spun these tales around the campfires to help overcome their fears. By making the heroes in the tall tales larger than life, the pioneers felt they were making the taming of America a little easier.

Some of the heroes in tall tales are real people like Davy Crockett and Johnny Appleseed. Their stories have been exaggerated a lot, though. Other tall tale characters were not real people. Story tellers combined information about what was really happening at that time with pure fantasy to come up with some pretty amazing stories.

Be sure to read the contest information on page 7. You have the chance to design your own folk hero stamp. Entries are due November 15, 2013.



PAUL BUNYAN



Paul Bunyan is a larger-than-life folk hero who was a lumberman in the northeastern part of the United States and Canada. It was evident when he was born that Paul was not a normal baby; he was a giant. One time, he rocked his cradle so hard, huge waves formed and flooded the town. When he grew older, Paul became interested in his family's logging business. After several mishaps, though, he decided to travel across America. On his journey, he drastically changed the American landscape. The Great Lakes were formed because Paul needed to make a watering hole large enough for his huge blue ox, Babe, to drink from. He created the Grand Canyon by dragging his ax along the ground. He has many more wild adventures during his journey and you can read all about them at your local library.

Paul Bunyan Math Fun

See how many problems you can solve.
Use scrap paper to do your figuring.
Answers can be found on page 7.



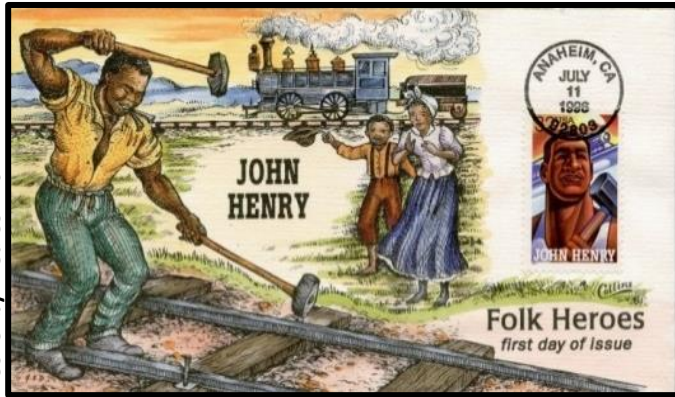
- Paul Bunyan was 63 ax handles tall. His ox, Babe, was 42 ax handles wide from the tip of one horn to the tip of the other horn. The average ax handle is about 18 inches long.
 - About how tall was Paul? _____ inches tall
 - How wide were Babe's horns? _____ inches wide
- Babe could eat 30 bales of hay, wires and all, in a day.
 - How many bales would he eat in August? ____ days X ____ bales = ____ bales
 - How many bales would he eat in September? ____ days X ____ bales = ____ bales
- Paul's dinner menu is listed below. Use it to answer the questions below.

70 pounds of fried potatoes
45 pounds of T-bone steak
60 pounds of ham
16 large loaves of bread
13 dozen eggs
672 pancakes with 2 gallons of maple syrup
10 gallons of strong black coffee



- How many pounds of potatoes, steak, and ham did Paul eat? _____
- How many eggs did Paul eat? _____
- How many gallons of syrup and coffee did Paul consume? _____
- If a loaf of bread is \$2.20, how much would Paul's bread cost? _____
- Paul's pancakes are 64 calories each. How many calories did Paul eat just in pancakes? _____

JOHN HENRY



cover by Fred Collins

People knew John Henry was special from the day he was born. The first thing he reached for was a hammer that hung on the cabin wall. Then he jumped right out of his mother's arms and grew so fast that his head and shoulders poked through the porch roof. He knew from the time he was a little boy that he was going to be a steel-driving man when he grew up. He even had a dream that a new railroad, the C & O, was going to be the end of him and that he would die with a hammer in his hand.

Later on, John Henry got a job working for the railroad. Driving steel spikes down into the cross ties to hold the rails in place was tough work. Normally, it took three men, each in turn, swinging their hammers to drive the spike into place. John Henry was so strong, he was able to do it by himself with just two swings of the hammer. People came from miles around to watch him work. Several years later, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad needed men to drive a tunnel through a mountain. John Henry volunteered to go. He worked so fast at the job, that buckets of water had to be kept nearby so his hammers wouldn't catch on fire.

One day, a stranger appeared and challenged John Henry. He thought his steam engine could drill through the rock faster than John Henry could. The challenge was accepted and John Henry won, but he paid a steep price. Right after he was declared the winner, he died with his hammer in his hand, just like he had dreamt about years ago. People still talk about John Henry and how he beat that steam engine. They say that if he was still alive, he could beat any other machine that was put up against him.

Railroad Vocabulary

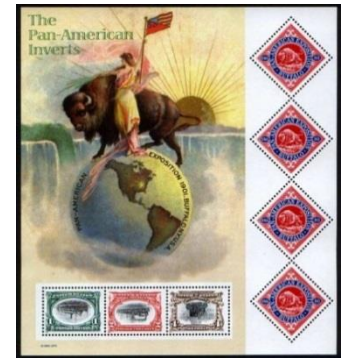
How many railroad words can you match?

Answers are on page 7.

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| A. coach | E. engine |
| B. conductor | F. freight |
| C. crossbuck | G. switch |
| D. engineer | |

1. _____ the car that pulls the train
2. _____ a rail car that carries a large number of people
3. _____ the "X"-shaped sign that notifies motorists of a railroad crossing
4. _____ goods that are moved from one place to another
5. _____ the person in charge of the train
6. _____ a device that allows trains to move from one track to another
7. _____ the person who operates and "runs" the locomotive

An Inverted Train



In 1901, the United States Post Office Department issued a set of six transportation stamps as part of the Pan-American Exposition. The stamps had ornate colored frames and a black picture of a vehicle in the center. Three of the designs were accidentally inverted, including the train stamp pictured above. In 2001, the USPS issued a souvenir sheet with reproductions of the three inverts. These can be found for a reasonable price. The original inverts sell for many thousands of dollars.

CASEY AT THE BAT

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play,
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought, "If only Casey could but get a whack at that--
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat."

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a hoodoo, while the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped--
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted some one on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two!"

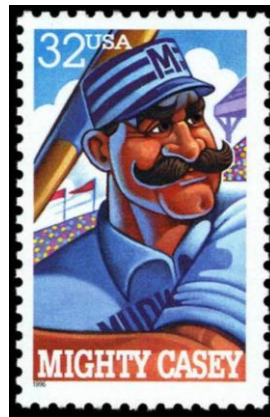
"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer has fled from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate;
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go.
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

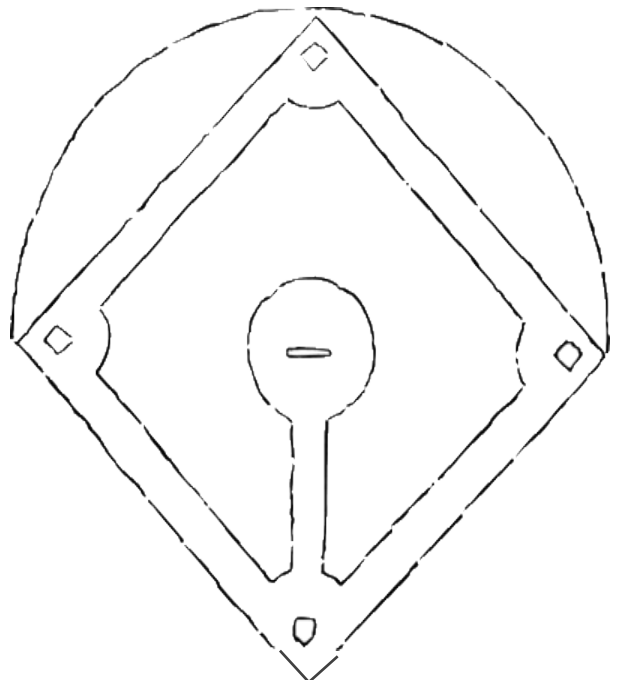
Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and little children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville--great Casey has struck out.

-Ernest Lawrence Thayer

Who's on First?



Using clues from the poem, label the baseball diamond below to show where the players are when Casey steps up to bat. Hint: One base will be empty. Answers are on page 7.



JOHNNY APPLESEED



One of America's fondest legends is that of Johnny Appleseed, a folk hero and pioneer apple farmer in the 1800s. There really was a Johnny Appleseed and his real name was John Chapman. He was born in Massachusetts in 1774. His dream was to produce so many apples that no one would ever go hungry. Although legend paints a picture of Johnny as a dreamy wanderer planting apple seeds throughout the countryside, research reveals him to be a careful, organized businessman, who over a period of nearly fifty years, bought and sold tracts of land and developed thousands of productive apple trees.

-bestapples.com



--Apple Taste Test--



Next time you're at the grocery store, pick out three different varieties of apples. Keep a record in the boxes below of the name and how they taste. Color the apples to match the ones you bought.

Apple Variety

Sweet
 Sour

Like
 Dislike

Apple Variety

Sweet
 Sour

Like
 Dislike

Apple Variety

Sweet
 Sour

Like
 Dislike

DAVY CROCKETT

Davy Crockett was born in a cabin in Tennessee in 1786. As a young boy, he became skilled at trapping bear and raccoon. He would later become famous for wearing a coon-skin cap (you can see it in the stamp below).

In 1813, Crockett joined the U.S. Army and served under Andrew Jackson for three years. Around this time, Crockett's wife died, and he married a widow with two young children. Colonel Crockett served in the Tennessee legislature and then represented Tennessee in Congress for several years. In 1834, Crockett wrote his autobiography that became extremely popular.

When his political career ended, Crockett moved his family to Texas which had recently declared its independence from Mexico. Crockett immediately volunteered to help fight against the Mexicans. For 13 days Crockett and other Texan volunteers tried to hold out against General Santa Anna and an army of thousands of Mexican soldiers at the Alamo, a mission in San Antonio. They were unsuccessful and almost 200 people died, including Crockett.

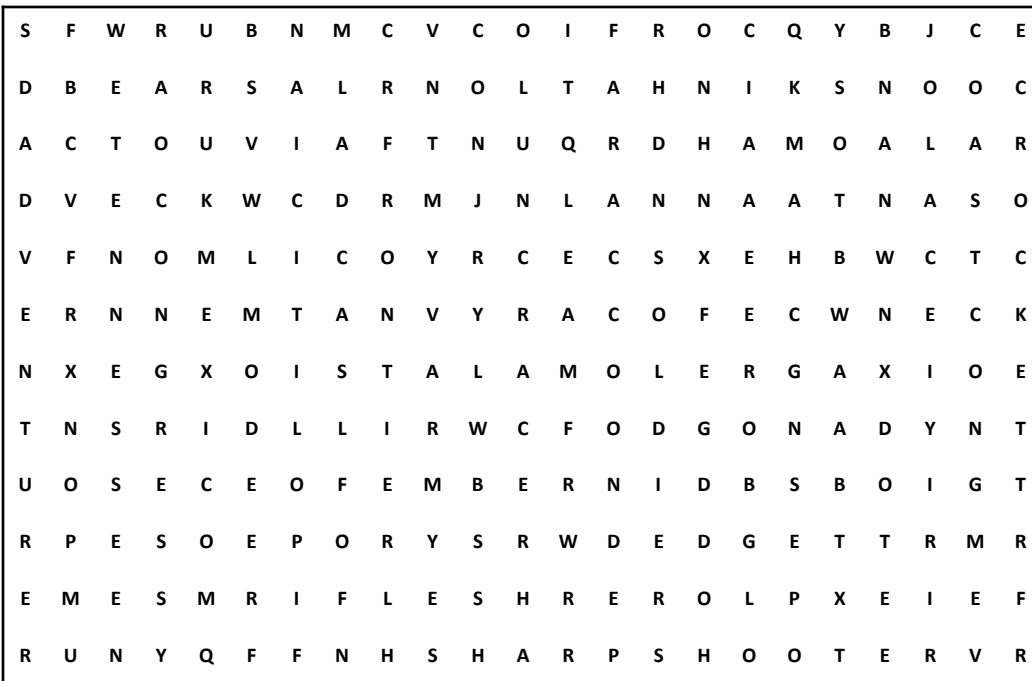
The phrase, "Remember the Alamo!" soon became the battle cry that was used by Sam Houston when he defeated Gen. Santa Anna a few weeks later winning independence for Texas. Texas then became a Republic (led by Sam Houston), and Texas became a U.S. state on December 29, 1845.

Crockett, the frontier explorer, adventurer, politician, and soldier, has not been forgotten. His adventures have been turned into stories that are often exaggerated into tall tales. As long as these are told, the "King of the Wild Frontier" will live on for future generations to enjoy.



Davy Crockett Word Search

See how many words related to Davy Crockett you can find below. Words can be forwards, backwards, or diagonal.



Alamo
 Adventurer
 Army
 Bear
 Congress
 Coon skin hat
 Crockett
 Explorer
 Freedom
 Frontier
 Politician
 Raccoon
 Rifles
 Mexico
 Santa Anna
 Sharpshooter
 Soldier
 Tennessee
 Texas

ANSWER KEY

Paul Bunyan, page 2:

- 1a. 1,134 inches tall
(about 95 feet tall!)
1b. 756 inches wide
2a. 930 bales
2b. 900 bales
- 3a. 175 lbs.
3b. 156 eggs
3c. 12 gallons
3d. \$35.20
3e. 43,008 calories

John Henry, page 3

1. E, 2. A, 3. C, 4. F, 5. B, 6. G, 7. D

Casey At the Bat, page 4

Casey is at the plate
no one is on first
Blake is on second base
Flynn is on third base

CONTEST FORM

Your challenge is to design a stamp for either Slue Foot Sue or Old Stormalong. Below is a short story about each. Your stamp can be either vertical or horizontal. Cut on the dotted line, fill in your information, and send it to the address below.

Slue Foot Sue

Sue was Pecos Bill's first wife. He fell in love with her when he saw her riding a giant catfish down the Rio Grande. She was riding standing up and holding on with only one hand. With her other hand she was taking pot-shots at the clouds with her six-shooter.

Old Stormalong

Old Stormalong was the captain of the huge ship, the Courser, which was so tall the mast was hinged in the middle so it could be taken down to avoid hitting the sun and the moon. The deck of the Courser was so long, the sailors had to ride horses from bow to stern.

Folk Hero Stamp Design Contest

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip Code _____ Grade _____

I chose: Slue Foot Sue

Old Stormalong

Collecting Interests _____

Mail to:

MaryAnn Bowman

P.O. Box 1451

Waukesha, WI 53187

Entries due by November 15, 2013

Folk Heroes

