

SILVER JACK

BY JOHN I. BELLAIRE

Manistique

THE Michigan logging woods never produced a character more unique than "Silver Jack" John Driscoll, nor a person destined to be more maligned and misunderstood. Old timers who knew him on the Muskegon and Tittabawassee rivers in the Lower Peninsula have clamored for someone to vindicate "Silver Jack"; friends in the Upper Peninsula have repeatedly asserted that he was victimized by enemies and his character assassinated by those who feared and hated the two-fisted lumberjack who never lost a fight when he was sober.

It seems now that "Silver Jack", the original and real "Silver Jack" and not the counterfeits who took his nickname in order to glorify themselves—is at last going to get a square deal.

Material has been gathered for the past few years on "Silver Jack" which reveals indisputable proof that the hard-boiled character of the early logging woods was not the criminal his prison record paints him, nor the booze-drinking brawler that his enemies tried to make him out. It is expected this research will produce evidence which will clarify the misunderstanding that has shrouded his name, and portray him as he really was—a rugged, lovable man, a friend of the weak, generous to his last penny, and a dashing figure with the women.

"Silver Jack" John Driscoll was born in Peterboro, Ontario, Canada, and attended the schools of that city. When he was about eighteen years old he left home and started for Michigan where the glamour of Michigan white pine had cast its spell over thousands of Canadian youths. Arriving in the Saginaw valley, then the heart of the pine industry, he became a lumberjack. He studied his new job carefully and ultimately became one of the best woodsmen in the state. He later worked in the Muskegon district and when the pine became exhausted in the northern part of the lower peninsula, he moved north

and worked in the camps around Seney, Michigan. Later he was employed in West Superior, Wisconsin, and Duluth, Minnesota, and finally wound up in L'Anse, Michigan, where a lumber firm hired him to oversee the spring drive on the Yellow Dog River in Marquette County.

His chief weakness was liquor, and it was then that his enemies gathered around to beat him up. Ninety per cent of his fights were in defense of some weaker person who was being bullied.

Despite statements to the contrary, "Silver Jack" never toted a gun, and his fights were always with the weapons nature gave him—his fists, his feet and his teeth. These, however, he used with a ferociousness seldom equalled, biting, kicking and punching in the good old rough-and-tumble style of the lumbercamps.

According to those who knew him well, "Silver Jack" was popular with the ladies, and he took great delight in going to dances and stealing the other fellow's girl—which usually resulted in a fight. Unlike others who used the name of "Silver Jack" the original "Silver Jack" never was found in the company of women of ill repute.

Several lumberjacks have been called "Silver Jack". One of them at one time worked for the late Frank Cookson. Another was generally known as a bad number, a gambler and crook who toted two pistols and wore a broad sash around his neck. This one was shot in a gambling room in Ewen. His escapades helped greatly in blackening the character of the original "Silver Jack" who was given this name in Saginaw, by a man named Daly, because of his silvery hair. Another story I unearthed was the claim made by some who knew him, that he was called "Silver Jack" because it was said his hair had turned almost prematurely white in his youth. Others claim that it was because he used to carry around in his pockets pure silver nuggets, but would never tell where he had found them.

The biggest blemish on "Silver Jack's" character was a five-