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## Joe Ball And His "Baby" Moose

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Photo courtesy of Sault College Historical Photo Collection

North of Michipicoten River lies the crumbling remains of the Norwalk or Manxman Mine. Although this mine, operated between 1901 and 1910, only yielded 60 oz. of gold, its caretaker, Joe Ball, continued to live there until the 1930's. One day in the 1920's, Joe Ball found a two to three day old baby moose calf near his isolated log cabin. Joe's warm heart compelled him to feed and raise his helpless protege with great devotion, forcing a long necked milk bottle down its throat. Soon the calf turned to more nourishing fare; milk and oatmeal, and managed to learn the secret of opening the front door to help itself.

As the calf grew, Joe and his moose became fast friends, regularly rubbing noses, and nuzzling each other while communicating in 'moose' and human talk. Whenever 'Baby' moose was moved out to the woodshed, he invariably came over to Joe's cabin, peered mournfully through the window, then tried to obtain entrance by turning the door knob with his teeth. Once inside, everything was knocked over, while the two held long conversations.

When Joe prospected or wandered about, the calf followed, faithful as a dog, always staying within voice call, and running at the sound of a meal. Baby's favourite trick, put on for visitors, was placing his two front feet on Joe's shoulders and staring thoughtfully into Joe's eyes. What would have happened after Baby grew into a one ton bull is difficult to imagine. Unfortunately, Baby never reached full size. It's kindly and trusty nature made the moose an easy shot by some unknown hunter the following spring.

Today, long after Joe's death, numerous photographs of Joe and his moose yet survive. Ironically, like Grey Owl and his beaver, Joe and his moose have obtained a more enduring fame, than many of his more successful counterparts. Perhaps now, Joe is feeding some new 'Baby' in that place where all good prospectors end.