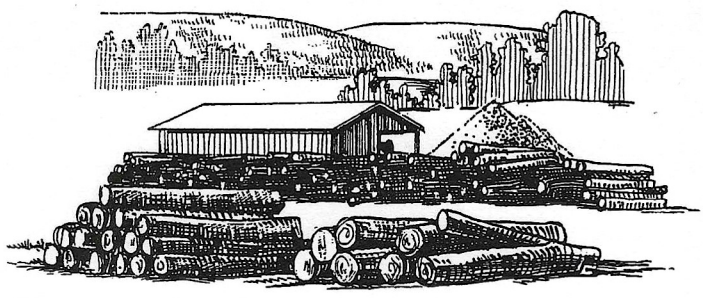
Baseball Bats

Baseball bats are made from straight white ash trees. White ash wood, which is shock resistant, strong, and relatively light, is perfect for the demands made on a good baseball bat. Some of the best white ash for bats is grown in the forests of northern Pennsylvania. Bats made from Pennsylvania white ash are used by little leaguers and major leaguers alike. When you watch a major league baseball game, it is likely that many of the bats being used came from Pennsylvania-grown trees!

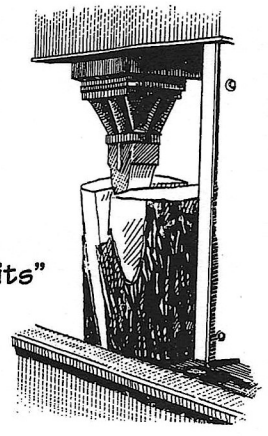
Only the straightest ash, free of knots, can be used for baseball bats. After the trees have been felled, the logs are hauled to the mill. There, they are cut into 39-inch lengths and split with a hydraulic wood splitter. Sometimes a landowner will cut and split his or her own logs and haul the splits to the mill. The splits then are placed on a lathe, where large knife blades quickly turn the split into a 39-inch-long "round." The rounds then are graded for defects such as knots, cracks, grain, and color. Bats for the professional baseball leagues must be free of defect, white in color, and have from 4 to 17 growth rings per inch. Rounds that don't meet these specifications are made into little league, softball, and store bats.

After grading, the rounds are placed into kilns where they are dried to the correct moisture content. Next, the rounds are placed on a "tracer" lathe. Computers contain all the dimensions for each bat model. This information then is transferred to the lathe where the round is spun and the knives form the bat to the required specifications for that particular model.

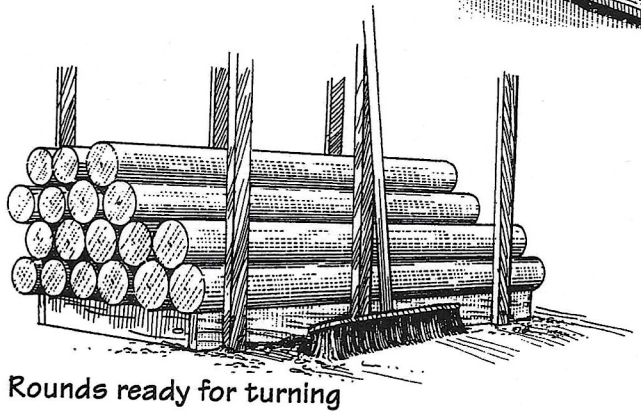
After a light sanding, the trademark is burned in and the bat is finished with a coat of paint or clear lacquer. The bat then is ready for you to hit that home run.



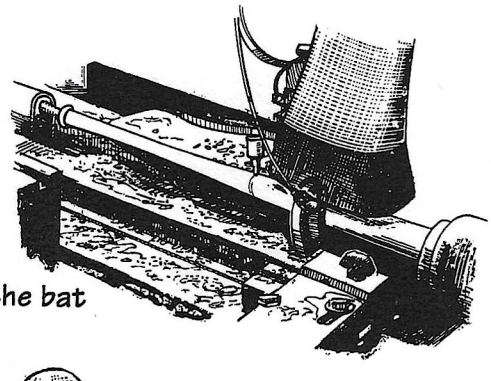
Starting in the log yard



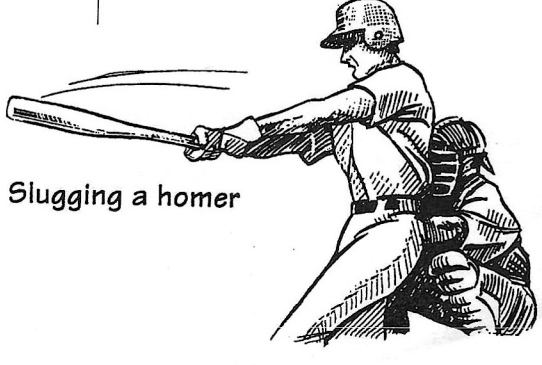
Making ash "splits"



Rounds ready for turning



"Turning" the bat



Slugging a homer