

# *The Tale of Brownie Beaver*

## CHAPTER 3: STICKS AND MUD

*by Arthur Scott Bailey*




Like the dam that held back the water to form the pond where Brownie Beaver lived, Brownie's house was made of sticks and mud. He cut the sticks himself, from trees that grew near the bank of the pond; and after dragging and pushing them to the water's edge he swam with them, without much trouble, to the center of the pond, where he wished to build his house. Of course, the sticks floated in the water; so Brownie found that part of his work to be quite easy.

He had chosen that spot in the center of the pond because there was something a good deal like an island there—only it did not rise quite out of the water. A good, firm place on which to set his house—Brownie Beaver considered it.

While he was building his house Brownie gathered his winter's food at the same time. Anyone might think he would have found it difficult to do two things at once like that. But while he was cutting sticks to build his new house it was no great trouble to peel the bark off them. The bark, you know, was what Brownie Beaver always ate. And when he cut sticks for his house there was only one thing about which he had to be careful; he had to be particular to use only certain kinds of wood. Poplar, cottonwood, or willow; birch, elm, box elder or aspen—those were the trees which bore bark that he liked. But if he had cut down a hickory or an ash or an oak tree he wouldn't have been able to get any food from them at all because the bark was not the sort he cared for. That was lucky, in a way, because the wood of those trees was very hard and Brownie would have had much more work cutting them down.

A good many of Brownie Beaver's neighbors thought he was foolish to go to the trouble of building a new house, when there were old ones to be had. And there was a lazy fellow called Tired Tim who laughed openly at Brownie.



“When you’re older you’ll know better than to work like that,” Tired Tim told him. “Why don’t you do the way I did?” he asked. “I dug a tunnel in the bank of the pond; and it’s a good enough house for anybody. It’s much easier than building a house of sticks and mud.”

But Brownie told Tired Tim that he didn’t care to live in a hole in the bank.

“Nobody but a very lazy person would be willing to have a house like that,” Brownie said.


Tired Tim only laughed all the harder.

“Old Granddaddy Beaver has been talking to you,” he remarked. “I saw him taking you over to the dam day before yesterday and telling you where to work on it. Of course, that’s all right if you’re willing to work for the whole village. But I say, let others do the work! As for me, I’ve never put a single stick nor a single armful of mud on that dam; and what’s more, I never intend to, either.

“My tunnel in the bank suits me very well. Of course, it may not be so airy in summer as a house such as you’re making for yourself. But I don’t live in my house in summer. So what’s the difference to me? In summer I go up the stream, or down—just as it suits me—and I see something of the world and have a fine time. There’s nothing like travel, you know, to broaden one,” said Tired Tim.

Brownie Beaver stopped just a moment and looked at the lazy fellow. He was certainly broad enough, Brownie thought. He was so fat that his sides stuck far out. But it was no wonder—for he never did any work.

“You’d better take my advice,” Tired Tim told Brownie.



But Brownie Beaver had returned to his wood-cutting. He didn't even stop to answer. To him, working was just fun. And building a fine house was as good as any game.