



# An Old Secret



## Chapter Six - by Russ and Kay Hively

The following morning everything at the Porter farm was normal. The truck did not move by itself and there were no other surprises while they were doing chores.

Joe climbed onto the bed of the blue Dodge truck while Daddy and Grant rode inside. Joe took one last deep breath of fresh morning air before Daddy started the engine. Joe knew that in a few minutes he would be breathing clouds of dust as they drove across the melon patch.

The truck started up and began to pull forward. Suddenly, everything stopped. Daddy got out the truck, removed the gas cap and looked in the gas tank. Joe asked Grant what was going on. Grant said when Daddy started the truck the gauge showed the gas tank was full.

Grant saw the blank look on Joe's face. Then Grant said that last night the truck had only about a quarter of a tank of gas. Daddy looked up from the gas tank and shook his head. He told the boys the tank really was full. Joe sat back down on the truck bed for the ride to the melon patch.

During the ride and for the rest of the day Joe puzzled over and over about the strange things that had been happening.

While picking melons, Daddy and Grant listed all the people they thought might be doing all the good deeds. The Porters had plenty of friends, and they knew their friends had helped on the farm when Mamma was gone for medical treatment. But they could not figure out who was helping this time.

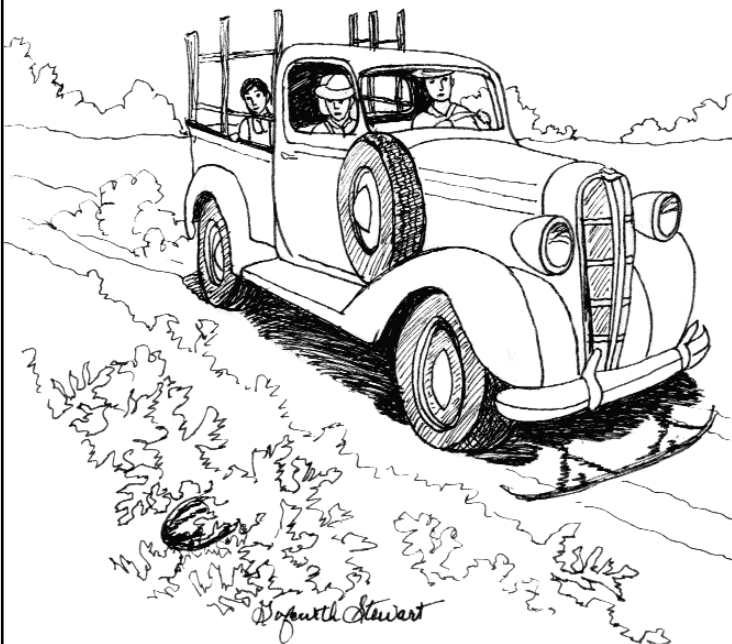
Joe was pretty quiet during this discussion. He had come up with his own idea while riding on the back of the truck that morning. Mr. Wardlaw had the only grocery store in town. The groceries they found on the back porch had most likely come from his store. Maybe Mr. Wardlaw would know who bought them.

Several times that day Joe almost told Daddy about his idea, but he kept quiet. He wanted to see if he could figure out the mystery for himself. Joe knew he would see Mr. Wardlaw at church on Sunday, but he wondered how he would be able to talk to him in private.

After supper that night, Deputy Sheriff Falconer's black and white sedan turned off the road and rolled up the driveway to the house. He said there was going to be a baseball game and picnic after church tomorrow. The minister had asked him to spread the word as he made his rounds through the countryside.

Daddy and the deputy talked for a few minutes. Then the officer left to tell the next family down the road. As Deputy Falconer drove away from the house, Joe was smiling to himself. He now knew he would have a chance to talk to Mr. Wardlaw. Joe was excited. Tomorrow he planned to get to the bottom of all the strange things that had been happening on the farm.

*Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Mo. Russ Hively lives in Newtonia, Mo. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2006.*



## Things to Think About and Do

- Someone was doing strange things on the farm, and Joe had an idea how to figure out who it was. List the things that occurred and all the clues Joe had to solve the mystery.
- Officer Falconer is a Deputy Sheriff. What other kinds of law enforcement officers are there? List four other law enforcement officers and find out what their specific duties are.

STANDARDS – G3:4; M:3; G4:8; SS:3

**Next Week: Chapter Seven – The big question.**