

# THE RIVER SPEAKS

## CHAPTER 6 - BY KAY HIVELY

**T**oby could have listened to the gambler's stories all night, but his father soon ushered him off to bed. Toby didn't go to sleep right away. He lay in his bed and listened to the river, but he fell asleep before he heard the river speak.

Early the next morning, Toby's father called for him to get up and dress.

Quickly, Toby stuffed his nightshirt into their satchel and put on his clothes. Then he and his father had a big breakfast at the long table again.

There were platters filled with bacon and eggs, biscuits, gravy, grits, jams and jellies, and even blackberries and apples.

Everyone at the table was happy that morning. The captain had said the *Arabia* was going to stop in the City of Kansas, and there would

be time to go ashore.

One man had been there before. He said the town was filled with stores that sold supply goods to the mountain men, and Indians sometimes came there to shop.

After breakfast, Toby worked extra hard to get wood up to the boiler. But soon after he and his father went to work, the engineer said no more wood was needed because they would be landing soon. Toby stood on deck as a busy little town came into sight. Carefully, the boat nosed up to a dock where a sign read "Westport Landing."

After two members of the crew laid a little wooden bridge from the deck of the *Arabia* to the riverbank, passengers rushed ashore. Everyone wanted to see the town. As Toby watched the parade of passengers, he saw

Johnny Waters. Spotting Toby and his father, the gambler smiled and waved as he left the boat and started toward the town.

With permission from the engineer, Toby and his father also went ashore, promising to be back within an hour.

Toby had never seen so many buildings in one

place. As he walked down the street, Toby looked in the windows of every store.

At the far end of the street, Toby and his father went into a general store where Mr. LePage bought some candy and a necklace. He gave Toby a piece of the candy. The other candy was for Toby's brothers. The necklace was for his mother.

Still looking in windows as he walked back to the boat, Toby saw Johnny Waters in a saloon, playing cards.

Once again, Toby thought about those gold nuggets. But he didn't have much time

to think, because he had reached the river. He and his father crossed the little bridge and stepped on the deck of the *Arabia*. Back on board, they went to work helping with the firewood. In only a short time, a whistle high up on the boat began to blow.

Toby watched as the passengers hurried back. The last passenger to come running down the street was Johnny Waters. Toby watched as the little bridge was taken up, and the *Arabia* shoved off on its journey upriver.

## NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER 7 - TRAGEDY STRIKES

### Things to Think About and Do

1. What did Mr. LaPage and Johnny Waters mean when they said the river could speak? Do you think things in nature can speak to people? George Washington Carver once talked about nature speaking. Do some research and find out what Dr. Carver said about nature speaking.
2. Toby visited City of Kansas in 1856. Find out the population of the town then. Now the town has a new name. What is the town's new name and what is its population today?
3. If someone spent an hour in your town, what would you want them to see? Using your newspaper for pictures and words, make a brochure you could hand to someone just arriving in town of things to see and do.

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