

the

WAR

that never was

Chapter One by Kay Hively

Ethan Howard swept the ground with his hat. Carefully he cleared a little space, removing the pebbles and twigs. Then he spread his blanket over the bare spot he had made on the forest floor. His bed was ready.

Ethan liked trips into the woods. He felt grown up when he got to go with his father and his uncles on a honey hunt. Sometimes he was scared by the strange cries in the night, but he felt safe with the men around the fire.

Just as it began to get dark, Ethan's father picked up his axe. It was time to cut the honey trees. Ethan shoved his hat back on his head, rolled down the sleeves of his shirt, and buttoned his collar. Silently, he joined the little group of men who were going into the woods. Not far from camp, the men came to a large hollow tree. Uncle Albert tossed his rope over a large branch about 12 feet above the ground.

Uncle Tom and Ethan's father stood beside the tree and swung their axes. Chop! Chop! Chop! The men worked their axes in a rhythm. Ethan stood back and watched the wood fly with each bite of an axe. He also kept an eye on a big hole at the top of the tree. He could see a huge comb of honey spilling out of the hole, clinging to the trunk of the old tree.

The noise and shaking made by the woodcutters stirred the bees inside the tree. Many bees came out of the hole. Their buzzing increased with each swing of an axe.

The men worked quickly. Soon Uncle Albert told the men to stop their chopping. Ethan's father handed him the two axes and told him to move far away. Then all three men tugged on the rope. It took only a few seconds to pull the big tree down. With a loud noise the tree began to fall. The three woodsmen ran to safety.

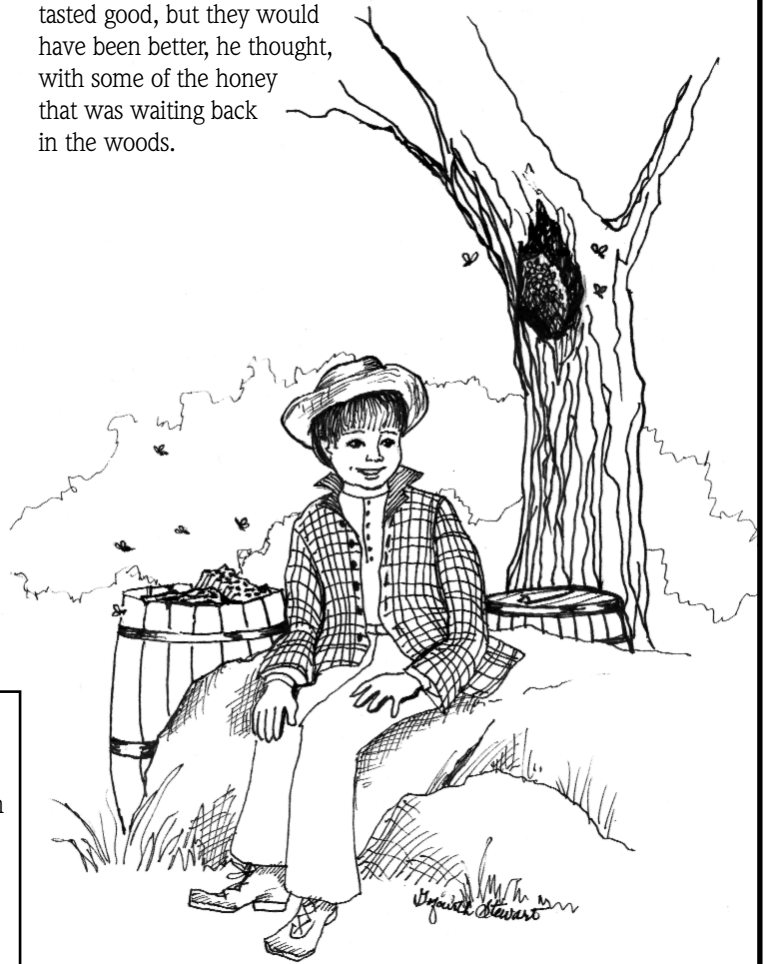
Ethan then followed the men to another honey tree not far away. This time only one branch had to be cut. Soon the branch, bulging with honey, fell to the ground.

Although the bees were angry, no one was stung.

Their work done, the men went to their campsite and made a fire that lit up the darkness around the camp.

In the flickering glow of the campfire, the four hungry honey hunters ate the supper they had brought with them.

Ethan was starved. His two biscuits tasted good, but they would have been better, he thought, with some of the honey that was waiting back in the woods.



Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- Why did Ethan put on his hat, roll down his sleeves, and button his collar when he left camp? Why do you think the men didn't take the honey as soon as the trees fell to the ground?
- Have you ever camped in a forest? What kind of animals do you think might live in the forest? Do you think any animals will come into camp during the night? Draw a picture of an animal that lives in the forest.

Show Me Standards Correlations: G1:2,5 G2:3,5 G3:5 G4:1 CA2

Next Week: Chapter Two – Kegs of Honey

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation with support from Verizon Foundation. Copyright 2002.