

the

WAR

that never was

Chapter Two by Kay Hively

After he had eaten supper, Ethan sat on his blanket and listened to the men talk.

Gathering honey was a sweet, sticky job and Ethan was ready to get started. But honey hunters always waited for the bees to calm down.

Ethan listened to the men tell about their adventures in the woods. He knew that frontier families depended on the woods for many things. It was more than 20 miles to a store, so a shopping trip was a rare thing.

The garden provided the family with vegetables. Chickens gave them eggs and meat, and the cow gave milk, butter and meat. They got pork from the hogs. But the family also needed what they could gather in the woods. Ethan's father hunted for deer, squirrel, rabbit and sometimes even a wild turkey. The forest also gave nuts, firewood, lumber and honey.

Honey was very important to a family like Ethan's. Honey was good to eat, but it was needed in the kitchen. Sugar was hard to get, so honey was used to make cakes, pies and even candy. Ethan knew that was why men went into the woods to search for honey trees.

Just as Ethan was about to drop off to sleep, his father said it was time to go to work. Uncle Albert lit two lanterns he had brought from home. Ethan's father and Uncle Tom picked up four large wooden kegs they would use for the honey. Ethan's job was to carry the smoke torches which would be used to calm the bees.

With Uncle Albert leading the way, the hunters went back into the woods. When the men reached one of the trees they had cut, Uncle Albert lit one of the torches. He put the smokey torch into

the honey hole. The smoke quieted the bees so the men began removing the honey.

Ethan held the lanterns for the men. He watched as large chunks of the comb were pulled out of the tree and pushed into the barrels. When most of the honey was taken from the first tree, the men moved to the second tree. Soon all four kegs were full of honey.

Back at the camp, the men put the kegs of honey in the wagon. Then everyone washed in the little stream nearby and lay down to sleep.

It was dark in the woods as the fire dwindled down to just a glow. As he lay in the darkness, Ethan thought he could hear animals around the camp. He had heard there were bears in the woods. What if a bear smelled the kegs of honey?

Ethan moved closer to his father who was already sound asleep.

Ethan decided to stay awake all night. Then, if a bear came along he could wake everyone up. Every camp needed a sentinel, Ethan thought – as he drifted off to sleep.



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.

Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- In a cookbook, find a cookie recipe that uses honey and have someone help you make a batch. Share the cookies with a friend.
- Frontier families used many things from the forest. Look around the room and make a list of the things that may have come from the forest.

Next Week: Chapter Three – Happy Birthday