

the

WAR

that never was

Chapter Three by Kay Hively

The next morning, the honey hunters got up early. Ethan was glad he had lived through the night and had not been eaten by bears.

The men hitched the mules to the wagon. Uncle Tom drove the wagon. Everyone else sat in the back with the honey and the tools. Following the bee trace, the men made their way out of the woods.

At Ethan's house, the men divided the honey. Uncle Tom and Uncle Albert then left with their shares of the honey.

Everyone was excited about the honey. Ethan's mother called it liquid sunshine and promised something special for supper. Andy and Alice, the seven-year-old twins, dipped their fingers into the honey and licked them like they were candy sticks.

Because Ethan and his father had been gone overnight, they had many chores to do. On the farm was a herd of hogs and fields of corn and oats. The oats were already harvested but it would soon be time to pick the corn. The corn would feed the hogs when winter came.

In summer, the hogs ran free, living off the land and drinking from a little stream near the cabin. But cold weather was coming. Ethan's father said it was time to rebuild the pen where the hogs spent the winter.

Ethan and his father worked all afternoon, splitting logs. By dark they had a big stack of rails piled up in the yard. As they worked, Ethan could smell something wonderful coming from his mother's kitchen.

Finally the twins came outside to say that supper was ready. The twins were giggling because they knew a secret.

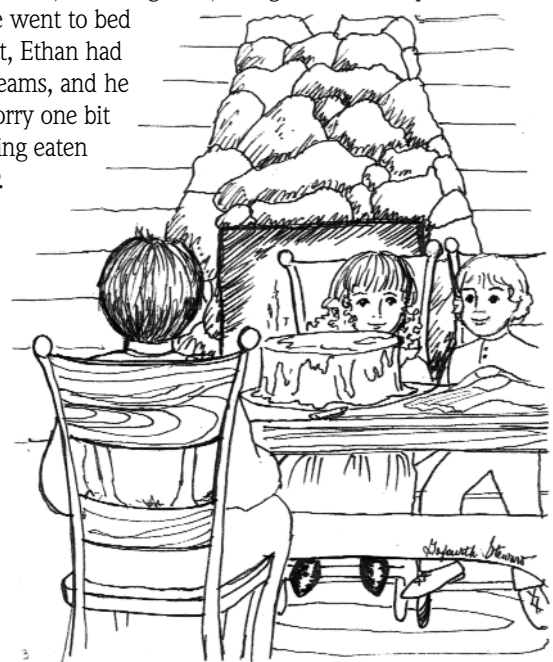
Ethan thought a real home cooked meal tasted much better than what he had eaten on the honey hunt. His mother served ham, boiled potatoes, carrots, hot biscuits with honey and milk. Ethan stuffed himself.

When the plates were nearly empty, Alice and Andy began to giggle once more. Knowing the twins could not keep the secret much longer, Mrs. Howard went to her little kitchen. When she returned, she sat a big cake in the middle of the table.

The cake looked delicious and Ethan was eager for a piece. His mother took a large knife and handed it to Ethan. He was surprised that his mother wanted him to cut the cake. Before he could say anything, everyone began to wish him a happy birthday.

Ethan had been so busy that he had forgotten the date. Sure enough, it was September 15, 1839, and he was 12 years old! He even got presents – a pocket knife from his father and a new pair of socks from Andy and Alice.

It was the best birthday Ethan ever had. He got to go with the honey hunters, had a big cake, and got wonderful presents. When he went to bed that night, Ethan had sweet dreams, and he didn't worry one bit about being eaten by a bear.



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 the wagon, the honey hunters followed the “bee trace.” What is a bee trace?
- What was the secret Andy and Alice were trying to keep? In what year was Ethan born? In what year were the twins born?

**Next Week: Chapter Four –
Trouble in the Woods**