

the

WAR

that never was

Chapter Four by Kay Hively

A few days later, Ethan's father said it was time to build the hog fence. Ethan's father drew a picture of the fence he wanted. It was a stake and rider fence. He said it must be very strong and "pig tight."

Ethan and his father used the rails they had split just a few days before. Ethan liked the fence pattern. As he worked, he looked for the perfect rail to fit in each place. His father said the straightest rails must be closest to the ground. He said if there was any extra space, little pigs could squeeze under the bottom rail.

When the hog pen was finished, it was time to pick corn. The crop had been good so they had much work to do before snow fell. It would take several days to pick the corn.

One afternoon as Ethan and his father worked in the cornfield, they heard a horseman coming. Ethan's father left the cornfield and walked to the cabin. Ethan stayed in the cornfield, but he could see a man ride into the yard. The man talked to Ethan's father for a long time. Then the man got back on his horse and rode away.

When he came back to work, Ethan's father looked worried. He said the man on the horse was the county sheriff. Ethan could not imagine what the sheriff wanted. Then Mr. Howard explained that trouble was brewing along the Des Moines River.

What kind of trouble, Ethan wanted to know.

The governor of Iowa Territory had accused someone in Missouri of cutting honey trees on the Iowa side of the boundary line. The sheriff had told Ethan's father there was talk of a war over the honey trees.

Ethan didn't know much about a war since he had never been to one. But men shooting at each other over a few trees of honey didn't seem like the right thing to do, Ethan thought.

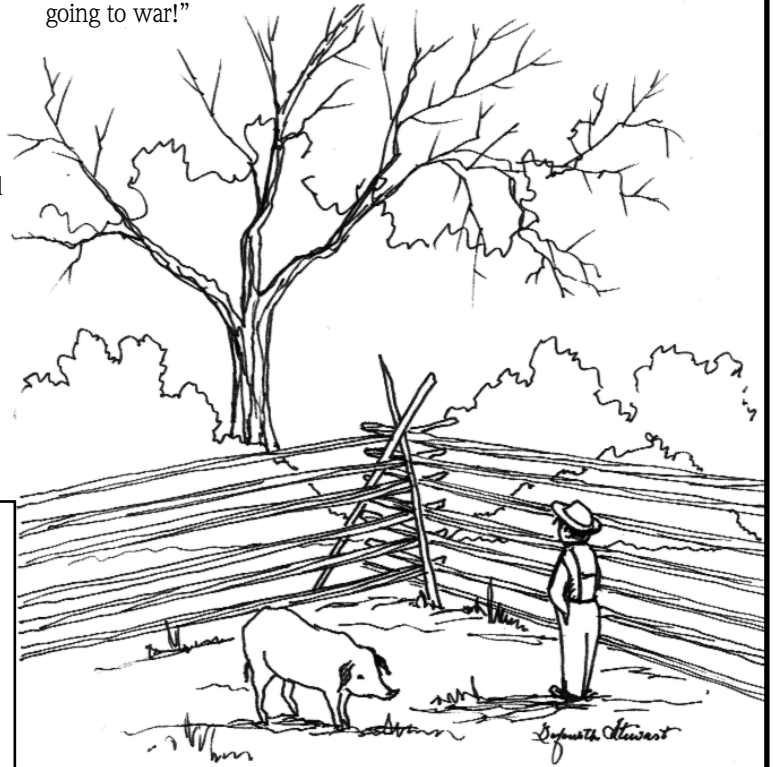
For almost a week, Ethan and his father worked in the cornfield. Each day, the little corn crib looked fuller and fuller.

Finally, Ethan's father said that in just one more day they would finish the job. Early the next morning they headed for the field, eager to get the last of the corn. But just as Ethan and his father went to work, they heard the sound of a horse running at full gallop.

Ethan recognized the rider. It was Uncle Albert.

Then he heard his father say it must be bad news.

Uncle Albert did not stop at the cabin, but came right out to the cornfield. "We're going to war," Uncle Albert shouted from his saddle. "Those Iowa boys have kidnapped the sheriff. We're going to war!"



Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- Ethan helped build a stake and rider fence, but there are many kinds of fences. Draw a picture of four different kinds of fences. What is "pig tight?"
- Why do you think Missouri and Iowa would fight each other over a few old trees? In 1839, Iowa was not a state, but a territory. What is a territory?

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.

Next Week: Chapter Five – Missouri vs Iowa!