

Young Patriots



Chapter Eight - by Kay Hively

After learning about the gunpowder, Ben was eager to see Mr. Adams, but he hadn't come to the livery in three days. Finally, Ben made up his mind to go to the State House and look for him. The building was not far away.

When things were quiet around the livery, Ben left and started toward the big building where the convention was meeting. When Ben got to the State House, the front door was locked. Unsure about what to do, Ben banged on the door as loudly as he could. Immediately the door opened and a man stuck his head out. The man asked what Ben wanted.

Swallowing hard, the young stable boy said that Mr. Ben Collins wanted to see Mr. John Adams. The man looked at Ben and then shut the door. In a few minutes the door opened again and John Adams came out onto the steps and greeted Ben.

As quickly as he could, Ben told Mr. Adams about the mysterious man and the gunpowder. Mr. Adams asked Ben if he knew where the man lived. Ben told about the house the spy catchers had been watching.

Mr. Adams shook hands with Ben and told him to go back to the livery. He said he would have the Safety Committee investigate the man.

For two long days, Ben heard nothing. Then very early one morning as Ben was currying a horse, John Adams came into the livery stable. He walked straight toward Ben. With a big smile, Mr. Adams patted Ben on the back and told him that the spy catchers were right. The mysterious man was indeed a British spy. The man, whose name was Sam Mendenhall, was going to use bombs made out of gunpowder to blow up the State House.

Mr. Adams said the British were afraid of what might happen if the delegates passed the Declaration of Independence. So, to try to stop it, the British were going to blow up the State House and kill as many of the delegates as possible. The British thought that would end the rebellion and England would continue to reign over the American colonies.

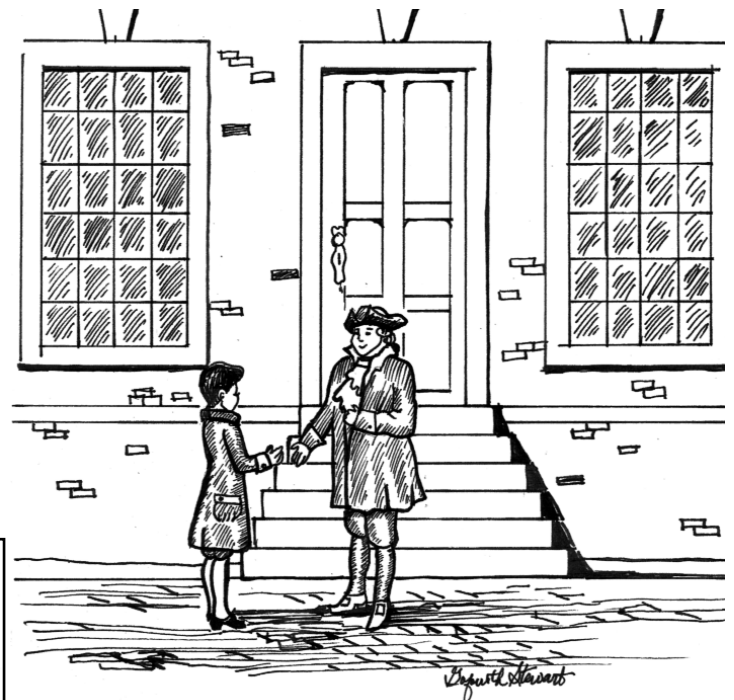
But, thanks to the spy catchers, the man was caught and put in jail. All the gunpowder that had been sneaked into Philadelphia was captured. Mr. Adams said the gunpowder would be sent to General Washington and his soldiers. They would use it to fight the British.

Mr. Adams said that Ben and his friends were American heroes.

Ben could hardly believe all the things Mr. Adams said. And he couldn't think of anything better in the world to be than an American hero. He could not wait to tell Will and Davey.

Before Mr. Adams left the livery, Ben told him that he had decided to go to school. Ben said he wanted to learn to read. Mr. Adams was happy to hear that Ben was going to school. Then he shook Ben's hand again before he left to go back to the State House.

"Today is July 4. We have a big vote in the Convention today," Mr. Adams said. "I don't want to miss that vote."



Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- What day of the week was July 4, 1776? Find a perpetual calendar and figure out what day that was.
- Do you think the spy catchers were heroes? What is a hero? Name five real heroes.

STANDARDS - G1:8; G1:9; G3:3; M6; SS6

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.