

Young Patriots



Chapter Two - by Kay Hively

Ben led Mr. Lee's horse into a stall filled with clean straw. He removed the bridle and latched the stall door. There was still an hour of daylight so Ben took a rake and began cleaning the stable. As he worked, he could hear the sounds of laughter coming up the street. He knew it was his friends, Will and Davey.

When the two boys came into the stable, they were excited. Ben laid down his rake so he could talk to his friends. He asked what the excitement was about. They made Ben promise not to tell.

Then Davey told Ben that he and Will had become spy catchers.

Davey said that the British were all over town, spying on the convention.

People were saying that the men meeting in the State House were rebels who would run the British soldiers back to England. The British were trying to find out what the delegates were up to.

Ben asked his friends what they did as spy catchers. They said it was a secret. But they told him they were going to meet behind the old church at 9 o'clock that night. If Ben wanted to join the spy catchers, they said he should come to the church.

As the three boys stood whispering in the stable, they heard someone clearing his throat. Ben looked up and saw a tall stranger standing in the stable door. Before Ben could say anything, his grandfather stepped up and asked the stranger what he wanted. The man said he had come to rent a horse and saddle. He said he needed it overnight.

Grandfather told Ben to go to the corral and bring Ginger for the man to see. Will and Davey stepped aside while their friend went after the horse.

Soon Ben led a little brown and white mare into the stable. The stranger said the horse would do fine, so Ben and his grandfather put a saddle on Ginger's back.

The man handed Grandfather some money, mounted the little mare, and rode off down the street.

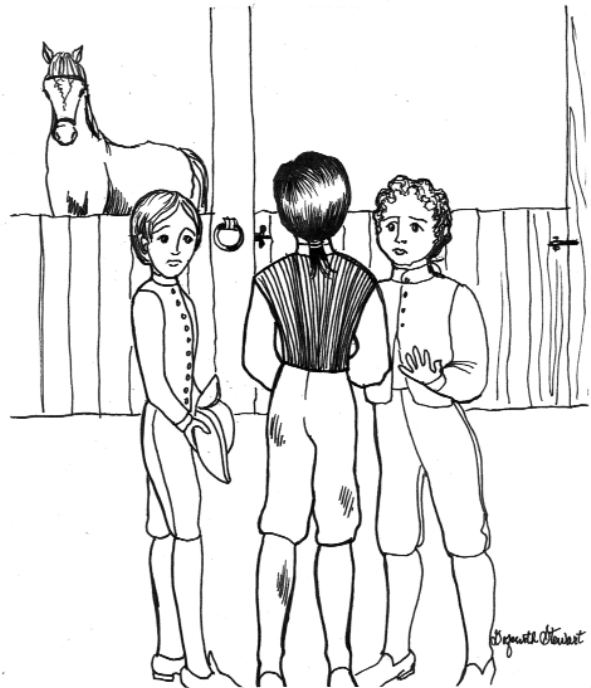
When the man was gone, Grandfather told Ben to finish his raking and then go on home for supper. Grandfather said he would finish his chores in the blacksmith shop before he quit for the day.

After his grandfather returned to the blacksmith shop, Ben huddled with his friends again. Will said he thought the man who had rented the horse was a spy. He was afraid the man had heard them talking about being spy catchers.

Even Davey believed the man looked suspicious.

Ben didn't know what to think about this spy business. He knew the men who were meeting in the State House were keeping secrets, but he didn't know the secrets were so important.

As Ben picked up his rake and went back to work, Davey and Will turned to leave. Before they left, they reminded Ben to be at the old church at 9 o'clock if he wanted to be a spy catcher.



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 -

- A. Why did people think the men meeting in the Philadelphia State House were rebels? What is a rebel? Is a rebel good or bad?
- B. Do you have a horse? Do you have a friend who has a horse? There are two pieces of equipment for horses mentioned in this chapter. What are they? What is a tack room?

Next Week: Chapter Three – Trapped in the Alley