

Young Patriots



Chapter Seven - by Kay Hively

The weather turned hot in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776. Ben and his friends were not having much luck catching spies. Then one morning Ben spotted the stranger who had rented Ginger and nearly run him down in the alley. The man came out of a house not far from the stable.

After that, the spy catchers began watching the house. They were sure the man was a spy, but they could never catch him doing spy work.

Every time John Adams came to the stable, Ben talked to him about spies and other important things. Mr. Adams said the delegates meeting in the State House were writing a new document. He said the document would declare a new country. It would be called the United States of America. He said the delegates were also raising money to help General Washington fight the British army.

Mr. Adams said the new Declaration of Independence was being written by Thomas Jefferson. Mr. Adams was sure Mr. Jefferson's words would be inspiring. He said when the Declaration of Independence was adopted, all the 13 colonies would rise up and beat the British.

When Ben heard Mr. Adams talk about the Declaration of Independence, he could hardly wait to hear what it said. Ben now knew that he should go to school so he would be able to read the declaration all by himself. He decided to tell his grandmother that he would start to school when summer ended.

It was already late in the month of June. Things were busy at Grandfather's stable. Ben worked hard to keep things clean and help with the horses. One afternoon as he was putting clean straw in a stall, Ben heard someone call out. Stepping out of the stall, he was surprised to see the mysterious stranger.

The man asked for Grandfather, but Ben said that his grandfather was on an errand across town. The man wanted to rent a wagon and a team of horses for two days. Ben said he could take care of that.

As his grandfather had taught him, Ben found two good horses and hitched them to a small wagon. Then he collected the proper amount of money and the man drove away. Ben wished he could follow because he just knew the man was going on a spy mission.

When his grandfather returned, Ben told about renting the wagon and team. Grandfather said Ben had done a good job.

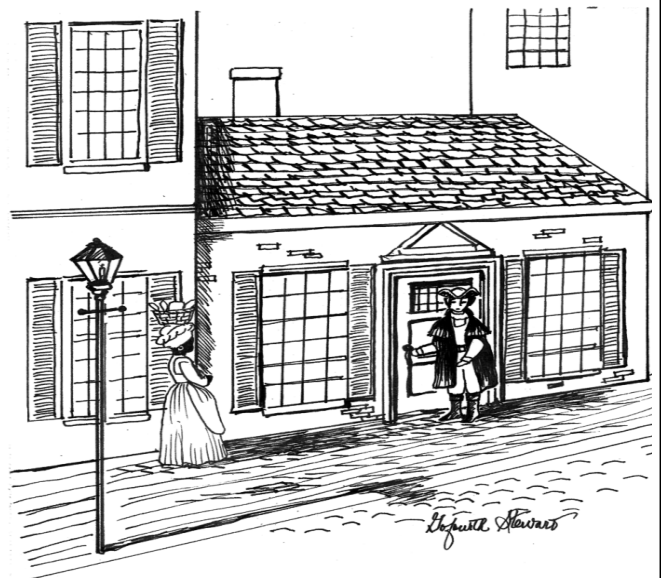
That night the spy catchers met. Ben reported on the man who rented the horses and wagon. The spy catchers decided everyone should look out for the man in the wagon.

But they had no luck.

Two days later the man returned the wagon and horses. As Ben helped push the wagon back in its place, he smelled a strange odor. He asked his grandfather about it. Grandfather went to the wagon and sniffed.

"It's gunpowder," Grandfather said. "This wagon has been hauling gunpowder."

Ben finally had something important to report. That night he told Davey and Will about the gunpowder. The boys decided that Ben should tell everything to Mr. Adams.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- Read the Declaration of Independence. How many people signed it? Do you recognize any of the names?
- Why did Ben decide to go to school? What do you think the man plans to do with gunpowder?

Next Week: Chapter Eight – American Heroes