

Silver and Gold



Chapter Five – by Kay Hively

While Molly was at school, her father spent part of the morning working on their living quarters. The new logs had changed over the summer. They did not fit tightly together any more. That allowed snow and cold wind to drift into the rooms.

Captain Hankins was not the only one working on the buildings. All around the fort, soldiers were preparing for winter. When the men were not on patrol or training for duty, they worked to make the fort better and stronger. Now that the rail line passed nearby, life was easier for the soldiers and their families. If they needed to go back east, they could ride the train. But one of the best things about having the railroad was getting supplies and sending messages. A train with supplies could leave Omaha, Nebraska, and reach Cheyenne in just one day.

Now the soldiers and their families had more household goods and better food. New soldiers who were sent to frontier posts in the west could travel by train. The railroad companies used the trains to bring supplies for building the tracks. Steel rails, cross ties, hammers, shovels, food and clothing were all needed in the railroad camps. And one thing everyone liked was having newspapers that were only three or four days old.

At school, Mrs. Nelson often talked about the railroad. She said the tracks that were laid near Fort Russell were part of the Union Pacific Railroad. The Union Pacific started building tracks in Nebraska, laying the lines westward.

Another railroad, the Central Pacific, started in California and was building toward the east. When the two railroads finally come together, Mrs. Nelson said a person could ride by train from New York or Boston all the way to California.

Molly wanted very much to ride on the Union Pacific. But winter was coming and the railroad camp would close until spring. Many of the railroad workers would go back to their homes in the east or in California. Some would stay and spend the winter in Cheyenne, waiting for nice weather to start the work again. Trains would not run very often in winter.

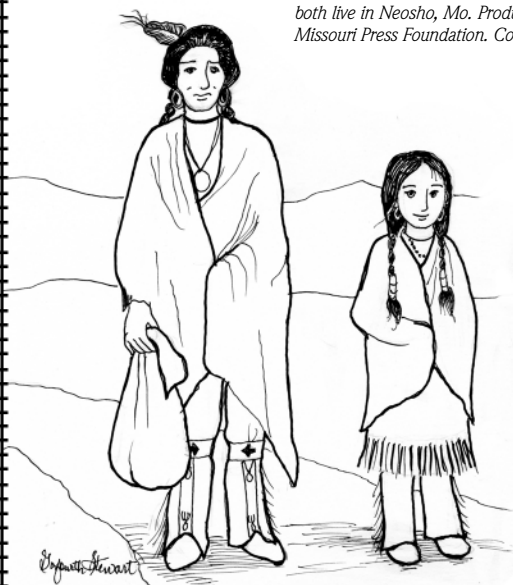
At noon, the army children went home to eat. Those who did not live at the fort stayed in school and ate the lunch they had carried to school. As Molly left the schoolhouse and started home, she saw an Indian coming toward her, walking in the same path she was using. A little girl was with him. Molly could see that it was the man who had wanted to buy Lulu. The man was carrying a large sack.

Molly's heart sank, thinking what might be in the sack.

Looking across the parade ground, she searched the porch where she and her family lived. Lulu always slept there even on cold days.

Lulu was not in sight.

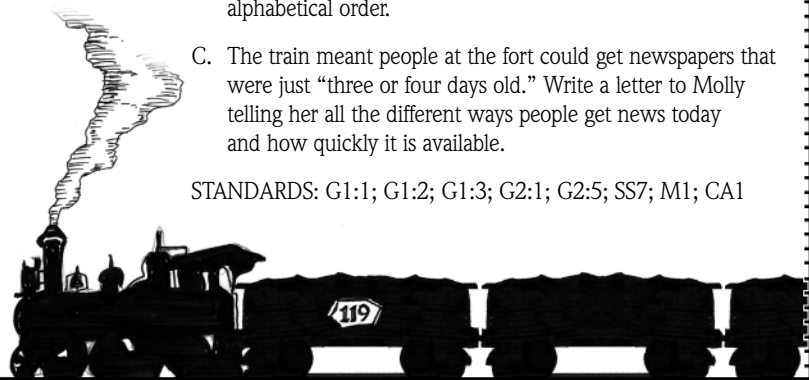
*Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart
both live in Neosho, Mo. Produced by the
Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2007.*



Things to Think About and Do

- Why did the logs in the buildings not fit tightly any more? Using small sticks and glue, make a log cabin. Work on this project with a friend.
- Find a map of the Union Pacific Railroad line. Make a list of the biggest towns along the track. Put the towns in alphabetical order.
- The train meant people at the fort could get newspapers that were just "three or four days old." Write a letter to Molly telling her all the different ways people get news today and how quickly it is available.

STANDARDS: G1:1; G1:2; G1:3; G2:1; G2:5; SS7; M1; CA1



Next Week: Chapter Six – New neighbors