

Tales of Marvelous Missouri

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Chapter 6: A Day with Birdle

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Birdle Mannon, 1921, the inside cover read.

Molly sat on the floor of the log cabin at Silver Dollar City, holding the old, dusty diary in her lap. Quietly, Elsie sat down beside her.

“Look what I found!” Molly exclaimed, showing Elsie the book. Elsie took it from her and turned it over in her hands.

“Why, this looks like Birdle’s diary!”

“Who is Birdle?” Molly asked.

“This is Birdle’s cabin!” Elsie told her. “The Mannon family built it in 1916, and Birdle lived here until she was 90 years old.”

“Well, how old was she in 1921 then?” Molly asked.

Elsie thought a moment.

“About twelve.”

Molly never really liked math, but she sat quietly for a bit and crunched the numbers.

“Wait a minute, so, if Birdle lived here until she was 90, then she was still living here in the late 1990’s, right?” she asked Elsie. Molly looked around the one-room homestead. “I mean, I know

the nineties were a long time ago but, come on, TV was at least invented by then?!?”

Elsie laughed.

“Yes, Birdle was a remarkable woman. She lived exactly as the early Ozark pioneers lived for her entire life, never really updating her ways as technology developed. But look,” she said, sweeping her arm around the cabin, “now we get a window into her world.”

Elsie’s wrinkled hand opened the diary, and Molly, with her chipped neon, green nail polish, turned a page.

September 15, 1921

Elnora and I walked to the spring this morning to get water for the day, and Mama made us bring the clothes along for washing. Washing clothes is not such an unfortunate chore on a lovely, late summer day, and Elnora and I had time to get to chatting. When we’d hung the laundry to dry, we worked with Mama to can summer fruits to put into the root cellar for this winter. It’s a lovely day, but the cold will be here in just a few short weeks, so we’re all getting ready. With that in mind, I helped Pa split wood in the afternoon before he settled down to work on his poetry this evening after supper. I like sitting at the table with Pa in the candlelight. He’s writing his poems, and I’m working on my diary. Tired though, so must get to bed soon. Mama and Elnora are already sleeping, and I know there’s lots to do tomorrow.

Newspaper Connections:

Many newspapers have articles about the history of the area. Look through your local newspaper to see what life was like in your area a hundred or so years ago.

