

Young Patriots



Chapter Six - by Kay Hively

With their mission decided, the spy catchers ended their meeting. Will locked the church and hung the key on a secret hook. Then he led Ben and Davey to another gate and each boy headed home. The rain had stopped but Ben's clothes were still wet.

Back in his room, Ben hung his clothes on a chair and climbed into bed. The next thing he heard was his grandmother's knock on his door. She told him to take his dirty clothes to the wash house. It was wash day. What luck! Quickly Ben dressed in fresh clothes. Grandmother was upstairs so he hurried to the wash house and threw all his wet clothes into a tub of water. His problem was solved.

Grandfather was already at work so Ben had a biscuit and a cup of milk and headed for the livery stable. As he rounded the corner by the corral, Ben spotted Ginger. He was disappointed because he wanted to be in the stable when the stranger returned Ginger.

Ben asked his grandfather about the stranger. Grandfather said he was just an ordinary man. The man told Grandfather his name was Smith. Fearing his grandfather was suspicious about the questions, Ben went to work feeding the horses.

Just before noon, Mr. John Adams came into the livery. Mr. Adams often came to visit with Grandfather about breaking away from England and having a new country. Mr. Adams was a short, blustery man who could out talk anybody in Philadelphia. Ben liked John Adams.

Ben didn't usually talk to Mr. Adams, but now that he was a spy catcher he had to be brave and do more things. Bucking up his courage, Ben spoke to the little man he admired so much. Mr. Adams was surprised to hear Ben speak, but he seemed happy to talk to the stable boy. He said he had a son about the same age. His son's name was John Quincy Adams.

Mr. Adams asked Ben where he went to school. Ben hung his

head and admitted that he didn't go to school. Mr. Adams knelt on one knee in front of Ben and told him that getting an education was very important. He said one day there would be a new nation and that new nation would need smart and educated men. He said that a good American boy needed to be able to read.

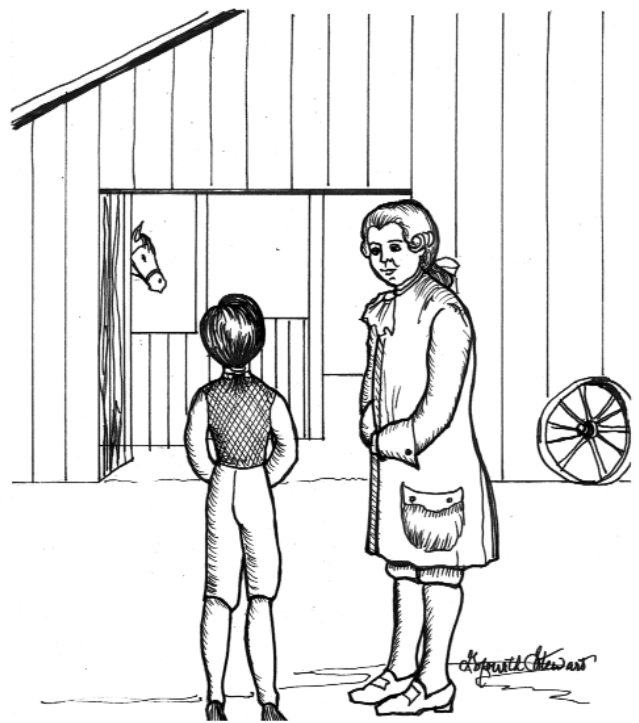
Ben had never heard the word "American," but it sounded very good to him.

It would be a fine thing to be an American, he thought.

As Mr. Adams rose to his feet, he said he would like to bring John Quincy to Philadelphia some time so the two boys could meet.

Before Mr. Adams left, Ben got up the courage to ask a question. "Mr. Adams, are there spies in Philadelphia?"

Mr. Adams looked surprised, but said there were spies who needed to be captured. If they weren't captured, the fight for freedom would be lost, he said - and there would be no Americans.



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 -

- Find a list of all the presidents. How many presidents have there been? Make your own list of presidents who have the same last name.
- What is unique about John Adams and John Quincy Adams? One other father and son have done the same thing. Who were they?

Next Week:

Chapter Seven - The Smell of Gunpowder