

Silver and Gold



Chapter One – by Kay Hively

Molly Hankins shaded her eyes and looked out across the plains, hoping to see a big dust cloud. But the landscape was still. Only the call of a hawk disturbed the solitude. Even inside the fort, everything was calm. A pair of horses, saddled and tied nearby, did occasionally stamp the ground or shake their harnesses.

Sunday at Fort Russell was a time for rest. But Molly had hoped her father would return today. He and his men had been on patrol since Thursday and their supplies would be running low. Molly's father was a captain in the United States Army. Last year, 1867, he had come west to help build Fort Russell. The fort was needed to protect settlers in the area and defend the men who were building a railroad not far away.

As Molly looked for her father, Lulu arched her back against the little girl's leg. Molly picked up her old cat and hugged it tightly. Lulu was the only cat on the post. Molly's friend Robert had a dog named Butch, one of the army cooks had a dog named Buster, and one of the majors had a big hunting dog named General. But no one else had a cat.

When some of the local Cheyenne Indians came to the fort, they were amused by Lulu. The Indians had dogs, but no cats. Not long ago, one of the Indian men wanted to buy Lulu for his daughter. But Lulu was not for sale.

Molly and her cat sat down on the porch of the little cabin where the Hankins family lived. Until she and



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

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her mother came to Fort Russell, Molly had always lived in a city. When her father was away fighting with General Grant, she and her mother lived in Boston. Then, after the Civil War, the family lived in Philadelphia.

Molly, who was 10 years old, liked the West, especially the mountains. Even though it was only October, the high peaks already had snow. Snuggling Lulu in her lap, Molly saw the cabin door open. Mrs. Hankins came out onto the porch and looked to the south. Then Mrs. Hankins stretched out her hand and told Molly to come inside. Supper was ready.

Three plates were on the table. Mrs. Hankins always set a place for her husband when he was away. Molly liked seeing his plate waiting for him. She thought that was a good luck sign.

As Molly and her mother were eating supper, they heard the guards who were on patrol shouting. Then they heard other people running and shouting. Molly dropped her spoon into her plate. Mrs. Hankins jumped from her chair and jerked the door open. Lulu ran under the cook stove.

Through the open door, Molly saw an army scout racing his horse into the fort. Scouts always brought news. But was this news good or bad?

Things to Think About and Do

- The story says Captain Hankins served with General Grant in the Civil War. Was Captain Hankins a Union or a Confederate soldier? What position did General Grant hold in the Civil War? What high position did he hold after the Civil War?
- On a map, find where Fort Russell was located in 1867. For whom was the fort named? What would you find at Fort Russell today?
- There were more dogs than cats at Fort Russell. Look in the Classified section of your newspaper and tally the number of ads for dogs versus those for cats to find out which is the most available in your community.

