

HANNAH'S DIARY

A Tale Of The Pony Express

Chapter One – by Kay Hively



Hannah Evans watched as the big wheels of the wagon began to roll. With tears in her eyes, she waved good-bye to Betsy and Frank, who sat in the back of the wagon. Hannah even blew kisses to Betsy who was sitting with her brother on a big feather bed. Betsy Jenkins waved back with one hand and held her old mama doll with her other hand.

Hannah, who was eleven years old, knew she would not get to play dolls with Betsy any more. She was afraid she might never see Betsy and Frank again. They were going to California with their father and mother and their Uncle Joe.

People in St. Joseph were saying that California was a wonderful place. They said it was summer all the time there. Someone had even said there was never any snow in

California, like there is in Missouri. And everyone said that if you went to California, you would become rich. They said there was gold just lying all around on top of the ground.

California sounded like a wonderful place, but Hannah didn't want to go. She didn't want to leave her friends, her school and her grandparents.

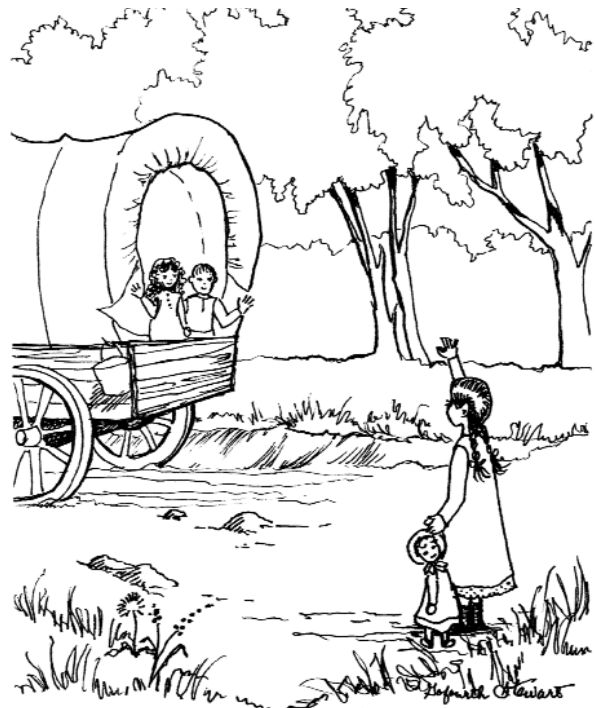
But when Mr. Jenkins heard the wonderful stories about California, he sold his little store and bought a big wagon. Then the Jenkins family packed all their clothes, their furniture and their dishes into the wagon and made ready for the journey to California.

Hannah's father had told her that California was far, far away. He said it would take many weeks for the wagon train to travel all the way from Missouri to California.

As the big covered wagon turned a corner down the street and disappeared behind some trees, Hannah waved one last time to Betsy and Frank.

After supper that night Hannah went to the big trunk under the stairs and got out her diary. The diary had been a Christmas present from her mother. Each night, when the dishes had been washed and put away, Hannah wrote a full page in her diary.

"Dear Diary, I am sad today. Betsy is gone. She is going to California and I will never see her again. I will never know what games she is playing. I will not know where she is going to school. I will not be able to share any secrets with her again. I already miss her. I will never have another friend like Betsy."



Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- What do you think it was like to travel for many weeks in a covered wagon with Betsy? Where would you get food and water? What would happen if you got sick?
- What would you write in your diary if you had one? Make a diary out of a notebook and write something in it every day for a week. Hannah kept her diary in a big trunk. Where would you put your secret diary?

**Next Week: Chapter Two – New neighbors
– and the boy next door.**

Kay Hively of Neosho, Missouri, is a freelance author, songwriter and historian who writes for the Neosho Daily News. Artist Billie Gofourth-Stewart, also of Neosho, has illustrated four book covers, two books and painted a courthouse mural. Produced in cooperation with this newspaper and The Missouri Press Foundation, www.mopress.com.