

Young Patriots



Chapter One - by Kay Hively

Like a flash of lightning, the big horse charged into the livery stable yard. Dirt and dust flew in every direction as the handsome steed came to a stop.

Ben Collins rushed out of the stable to see the action. He knew what all that noise meant. It meant that Mr. Richard Henry Lee was back in Philadelphia.

A well-dressed man leaped out of the saddle and boomed a greeting to the 9-year-old stable boy.

Ben liked having Mr. Lee in town. He rode fine horses and was very generous.

The dashing horseman tossed the reins to Ben, ordering a rubdown, a bag of feed and plenty of water for his horse. As he turned on his heel to leave, Mr. Lee flipped a copper into Ben's hand.

With a smile to his benefactor, Ben stuffed the coin in his pocket. Then he led the frisky animal into the stable and tied its reins to a post.

Stepping up on a stool, Ben loosened the saddle and took it off the animal.

With a stiff brush, he began currying the horse's coat, whisking away dust and sweat. With each stroke of the brush, the horse relaxed and his coat began to shine. Ben could tell that the horse had been on a very long ride.

When Ben finished brushing, he filled a feed bag and poured a pail of water into a trough. While the horse ate and drank, Ben carried Mr. Lee's saddle into a little room near the feed bin. Several saddles were already there. Ben could name the owner of each one.

The little one in the corner belonged to Mr. Caesar Rodney. Mr. John Hancock's big fancy saddle was in the back. It sat where they

used to keep General Washington's saddle. That was before Mr. Washington went off to lead the army. Ben called out the names of men who owned some of the saddles: Jefferson, Dickinson, Sherman, Livingston, Wilson, Adams ...

Ben not only knew every saddle, he could recognize the men who owned them.

If any of the men came to the livery and asked for his horse, Ben could find the right animal and the right saddle. He never missed. Ben was a good businessman.

Some of the men didn't use their saddles very often. They were rich. When they left town, they rode in a carriage and let someone else drive them around. That was all right with Ben because most of those men kept their carriages at his grandfather's stable.

For almost two years, business had been good at the livery. Now it was 1776 and there was a special meeting being held in the State House. Ben heard it was called a convention. The men who were meeting there were called delegates. Ben didn't know what the convention was about, but it brought lots of men with horses to town. He sometimes wondered what the men were doing over in the State House, but he was more curious about the spies.

His friends said Philadelphia was full of spies.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do -

- Look up these words, learn to spell them and write down their definitions: 1. livery 2. copper 3. benefactor 4. curry 5. trough 6. convention
- Do you know what happened in Philadelphia in 1776? In what state is Philadelphia? What is the State House now called?

Next Week: Chapter Two - The Stranger