

They Cried on the Trail

Chapter 7

By Carolyn Estes

At sunrise, the camp woke up with a feeling of excitement. One of the guides rode up to the group of men.

"Today will be the end of your long journey," the guide said. "We will be at Tahlequah by the end of the day."

"What does that mean?" John asked the guide. "What will happen to us then? Will we be locked up again?"

"No, you will be in your new land," he said. He turned his horse away.

John rushed to share the news with Sally. They had been walking for six months. Soon their journey would be complete.

They wrapped their blankets around their shoulders and walked. John noticed the trees leafing out in beautiful shades of green and the birds chirping in the trees. Late in the afternoon, they could see Tahlequah ahead.

A tribe leader met them when they reached the city.

"How old are you and your sister?" he asked.

"I turned 15 years old on the trail," John replied. "Sally is not my sister, she is my friend, she is 14."

"You two come with me," he told them.

Sally turned to John. She looked scared.

"Everything will be okay now that we are here," John said.

"These two need to go to a school," the tribe leader told an officer sitting behind a desk. The officer waved his hand and a woman came to take Sally away.

"Don't worry, Sally. I will see you again soon," John told her. "We will always be friends. When you get lonesome or scared, pull your blanket around you and know that I will find you some day."

She started to walk away, then paused to take a quick look over her shoulder. John waved his blanket in her direction and gave her a smile.

So it was to be. Sally would go to the Dwight Mission School near Sallisaw. John was sent to the Cherokee National Male



Seminary at Tahlequah. They both would study and learn the language and ways of the white man.

John was a good student. The headmaster at his school knew he would make a good teacher.

Sally was also a quick learner. She mastered English while still maintaining her Cherokee language. The school officials decided she would be a good teacher to work with Cherokee children. She could help them understand how to live in their new land.

Each night Sally wrapped up in her blanket and remembered how she and John survived the six-month walk on the trail. They had traveled over 1,000 miles through the cold.

What was John doing? Was he okay?

About the story

This is an eight-chapter fiction story about two Indian children based on the history of the Trail of Tears. The story is not based on a real family. Watch for the final chapter in next week's newspaper.