

They Cried on the Trail

Chapter 4

By Carolyn Estes

John, Sally, and John's father continued to walk the trail for many weeks. Freezing rain and snow made the trail slick under foot.

As each day passed, John's father grew weaker. The three struggled to keep up with the wagons, but they knew if they got left behind they would have to forage for food on their own.

"Look Sally, there are buildings ahead. It must be a town," John said. "Maybe we can get some extra food and something to make my father better."

Sally looked up and gave him a smile, then tucked her face back under her blanket as she struggled ahead.

As they approached the town, the lead guide turned to the north. The people in the city didn't want Cherokees going through town to the river crossing. This forced them to go two miles north to Moccasin Springs. It was much harder to cross the Mississippi River there. When they reached the banks of the river, they made camp for the night.

The next morning they were faced with a long line waiting for a ferry to take them across the river. At least they would not have to cross in the cold water. It took many days for everyone in the group to cross. Camps were set up on both sides of the river.

The morning the group was to set out on the trail again John's father was unable to get on his feet.

"John, you and Sally go on without me," his father said. "I'm just too sick today. I'll catch up with you in a few days."

"No, I will not leave you behind," John cried. "I'll send Sally and I'll stay behind with you."

"I'm not going without you,"



said Sally. "We'll stay and get you better."

Several days passed. John's father got worse each day. The pneumonia finally won. John and Sally buried him near a big tree a short distance from the river.

"Sally, you can't get sick. We are on our own now. Let's try to catch up with the wagons," John said.

"I'll run ahead and see if I can see them. If I do, I will signal you with my blanket. If I don't wave my blanket you will know I can't see them, but you keep coming toward me."

John was known for his running ability. He ran as fast as he could for what felt like most of the day. He came to a hill and climbed to the top. He stopped to look for the wagons, but there were none in sight. He looked back for Sally. In the distance he saw her walking toward him. He didn't wave his blanket.

They made camp that night on the top of the hill.

About the story

This is an eight-chapter fiction story about two Indian children. It is based on the history of the Trail of Tears. The names of the children are made up. The story is not based on any real family. Watch for another chapter in next week's newspaper.