

there, and then we'll get off. I'm Charles Jackson." He turned around and showed off his three tall boys and wife standing silently while he talked. "I'm John Hale, and Fannie, my wife. This here is Claude and Annie and Melinda." Melinda held up her one bundle. "I have one bundle." "It is a lot of walking ahead for little kids. We should find a horse and hay wagon, if we can find one cheap enough. It can be sold when we get to Saint Paul." John and Charles walked up the dirt road.

A child called out hidden behind a tree. "Darkies, Mama! They want something." They bought an old horse with a sagging back, but still able to clomp his way along and pull a small wagon. They paid for an old flat bed wagon that had four wheels and no sides. "We will take anything that moves along." The farmer found a chance to get rid of an old horse and half a wagon. John and Charles paid the man. Together they had enough money.

John and Charles, with help from the boys, loaded the household goods and placed the children safely in among the soft bundles of clothing. The two families found their way out of Buxton, Iowa to the Minnesota border. The weather was cold at night; snow still had not disappeared from the ground in some places. Night watches were set up to keep track of any noise near the wagons, or trouble from wild dogs or bandits. The boys wrapped up in the homemade quilts and kept their eyes and ears open. They did not want to be responsible for anything attacking them and be caught sleeping. The three boys stared at the dark bushes and jumped at a rabbit snapping a twig near the ditch in the road. Three days they traveled, finding water and food where they could. Charles had a gun and he shot a rabbit. The fireside camp that night had roast meat under the stars. The farms along the way helped supply their needs.

John called from the road to a farmer plowing his field. "Got any vegetables you don't want? Enough for a stew?" The farmer gave the group a once over. "Kids hungry?" "A good night meal would help." "Take a look at the vegetable bin.

I haven't taken it to the hogs yet." The women washed the vegetables under the water pump and put them in a draw string bag. There was no place to start a fire or clean vegetables. The children and wagon, with its load of bundles, moved along — not at a fast pace. The dirt road disappeared and the farm houses became few in number. The road was a little harder on the horse and wagon with just an animal trail. They followed a river, and small rock mountains began to appear. Some had cave size openings. They passed by one rock jutting out like an overhanging shelf of rock, as if it might fall. Inside the opening was a flat surface and enough of the rock carved out to make a good shelter for the night. "Let me check it out for sleeping animals. They might not be happy being disturbed."

Water from a mountain lake ran down a hill of rock

and filled a narrow strip of land for a cool stream bed near the cave entrance.

The children found the water delightful; they drank and waded. Warnings went unheard about getting dresses and pants wet. Fannie and Mabel worked to prepare the vegetables. The cooking fire was heating up the water, and camping-out with a hot meal and safe cave to sleep in, made everyone relax a little. Night came on too soon for the children. "Can we sleep in the cave like a bear?" Claude found the new life style to his liking. The stars came out and night became much colder. The boys took their turn sitting by the cave door with a gun. They stood the early watches, waking up John and Charles as the night wore on. Several unseen night visitors, animals that liked the darkness and time for finding food, watched the people in the cave. Fannie slept, but jumped every time they changed watch.

Morning light streaked in the cave and woke Mabel and Fannie. She whispered to Fannie, "Let's fix flapjacks. I have some flour." Fannie got the fire going, put water in a kettle, and set it on the coals for coffee. Before the men or children stirred, the skillet was hot with fat for frying flapjacks. The smell drifted into the cave, and several occupants sat up and tried to shake off the night sleep from their bodies. "Can we stay here a long time?", Melinda asked her father. "I like living in a cave." "I thought you wanted to go on a train all the way to Washington?" "Oh ya, I forgot." Melinda went back to playing with the pile of bright river rock she planned on taking with her.

The wagon pulled up to the hitching post in Saint Paul. The Northern Pacific Railroad yard was quiet in the early morning. A few trains were waiting on the sidings. The Oregon-Washington Improvement Company that owned the coal mines in Washington hired fifty Pinkerton guards in Saint Louis. John and Charles watched them board the ten car sleeper train. "I wonder what that is all about?" The Pinkerton Agency was formed primarily as a police service to railroads, but handled private detective work as well. The Allen Pinkerton men scattered and disappeared in the ten coach sleeping cars, not yet ready for passengers. The daylight made the preparation of activities easier for the gathering families of Negro miners going north to Washington. They found each other, and a common bond sprung up. The weather was good in Saint Paul for the month of May. The railroads had recovered from the icy grip of the Minnesota winter. No thunder showers were forming, and the children played tag by the wagons. They climbed up and jumped off the railroad platform. A church group had supplied some of its parishioners going north with extra supplies. They distributed it among the people — enough to keep the stomachs from being hungry. There were tears for the departing, and prayers said for protection.

Charles sold the wagon and horse to a church member