

Independence was full of travelers passing through. Some, like Sam's family, were making the trip to the Oregon Territory for better farmland. Others were going to California to search for gold. When some of them heard stories about disease, starvation, and snowstorms along the route, they decided they weren't up for the trip after all. Then they started auctioning off their mules to the highest bidders.

Sam sat down on a heap of sacks and watched. He wondered what it would be like to set off on his own to find gold in a mountain stream.

"Sam!" Pa called from the wagon. "We can't eat your daydreams out on the trail. Load the rest of that bacon!"

Sam stood up and sighed. He shoved a hand into his pocket and felt the folded-up friendship quilt squares his cousins had made. They hadn't finished in time to include them in the

big quilt that Aunt Cecelia put together for their family, but they gave them to Sam anyway. He was glad. He liked having three small squares of home in his pocket. One had a picture of Scout, carefully outlined in thread. Another square showed the crooked apple tree by the fence. The third showed the Abbotts' farmhouse and barn, pieced together with colorful scraps of fabric. Sam already missed home so much.

Pa said it was all right to be sad. "But your heart has room to love more than one place," he'd promised. Pa said the Oregon Territory was a land of milk and honey. He said it would be one of those places to love for sure. Still, Sam couldn't help worrying it would be like Independence — a land of dust, smelly animals, and stale bread.

At least they'd have bacon. He hugged another sack to his chest.

“Amelia!” Sam’s mother called out. She was searching around the wagon frantically. “Amelia!” Her eyes landed on Sam. “Where is she?”

“I was watching her, but . . .” Sam ran to where his sister had been. Her doll lay in the dirt next to the chicken coop. Sam picked it up and looked around.

Amelia was gone.