

# Just a Little Wagon Ride

Author:Lily Winsor

The date April 9th, 1866, was a year since the war ended, almost four years since our mother died, about three years since we got the news of our father's death in the war, and our sister still hasn't come back for us. Sarah said that once her husband came back from the war she would take us to live with her. In a month I'll be old enough to leave but it might not be soon enough. Typhus has taken over the orphanage and I have to get my three-year-old brother, Tommy, out before he dies.

We crept into the storage room to search for the files with our names. After finding the file, Tommy and I snuck into the woods through an open window. On the front of the file, it said James Henry Clark, DOB 5/17/1852 and Thomas Charles Clark, DOB 4/29/1862. Inside I found a sheet of paper that said, Sarah Clark Wilson, DOB 7/14/1846. It also had an address that said, 509, Sixth St., Jackson, Michigan. Custody requested of her brothers James and Thomas. I gasped and stated, "I didn't know Sarah wanted us." But Tommy didn't reply because he hadn't talked since he contracted Typhus.

I quickly collected our belongings and picked up Tommy to head to the train station. But soon after I found out that we needed a lot more than 25 cents to travel by train. Then I heard an old man speaking, "Yeah I'm heading to Michigan today." So I picked up Tommy and hopped in the back of the wagon just as he was pulling away. After a few hours, the wagon came to a halt and the old man opened the canvas and told us, "You two better get off before I come back there." I quickly scooped up Tommy and jumped out of the back of the wagon and we hit the ground, rolled off the road and went down a small hill. After the old man drove off, I began walking again cradling Tommy very gently.

Hours of walking went by so I checked on Tommy and felt his forehead and I realized that he was burning up with a fever. I needed to get him some help. Just then I saw small farmhouse down the road. So I went up to the door and knocked. A man came out in his robe and questioned, "What are you doing out here at night in this cold?" I answered telling, "Tommy needs help, he has Typhus." He quickly let

us in his house. He shouted, "Beth, I need some help out here!" Beth, his wife, came out of the room and replied, "What's wrong George?" George, the man, responded, "It's Typhus." Beth ran to get the doctor while George brought Tommy into another room and laid him on a bed. George asked, "How long has he had symptoms?" I stated, "Two days." When the doctor came he inquired, "Where are you two from?" I answered, "The Orphanage," he responded, "That explains why he is so sick." The doctor treated Tommy and stayed right by him all night. I waited in a chair in the other room, but that's the last thing I remember from that disorderly night.

When I woke up the next morning it was to the smell of pancakes, bacon, and eggs. I stood up and walked into the kitchen to see Beth at the stove. She remarked, "Tommy's fever broke early this morning and he's doing very well," I requested, "May I go in to see him?" She replied, "Yes but you need to let him rest." I walked into the room very excited but also very quiet. When I saw him on the bed he looked very worn and tired so I gave him a hug and a kiss on the cheek and walked out of the room. I ate breakfast while Beth told me about their daughter that died from typhus a year before and how she prayed for Tommy to live and recover.

On April 20th, 1866 George and Beth drove us to Jackson, Michigan. Most of the ride there I thought about how much I was going to miss them because over the ten days spent with them it finally felt like Tommy and I had a family. But I knew that Sarah still wanted us so I had to see her. When we arrived in front of the tiny house I hoped that Sarah was doing alright. All four of us went up to the door and George knocked. Sarah opened the door and she was holding a sleeping baby girl. Sarah asked, "How may I help you?" I stepped up and told her, "I'm James and this is Thomas," as I pointed at Tommy. Sarah sprung herself forward making sure not to hurt the baby and embraced Tommy and me in an enormous hug crying, "You two look so different, I'm sorry that I didn't come back for you," I looked around with tears in my eyes while asking, "Where is John at?" Her

expression turned solemn instantly as she replied, "He died in the war." She invited us into the small but tidy house.

While we talked I found out that my niece's name was Clara Rose Wilson and she was born November 6th, 1865. We spent hours talking and spending time together that day. I think Beth and George started to enjoy being around Sarah because Beth abruptly said, "Sarah, would you like to bring Clara and the boys to come to live with us?" Sarah said, "Well I don't want to be a burden." George jumped in to say, "You, Clara, James, and Tommy could never be a burden to us." I suddenly bounced up and hugged George and Beth saying, "I would love to stay with you," for the first time since Tommy got Typhus he stood up very proud and said, "I love all of you." Then all of us gathered into an even bigger group hug. Sarah was squished in the group as she stated, "I would enjoy it very much to live with all of you."

It was April 29th, 1866 Tommy's 4th birthday, the day all of us officially lived together as a family, and on sad terms, four years since our mother's death. All of us were riding in the wagon on our way back home from picking up Sarah and Baby Clara when we passed an old man, in fact, that same old man that Tommy and I hitched a ride with. The man stared closely at us and I stared at him. As we made eye contact I mouthed, "thank you," and I saw some confusion on his face. I thanked him because he kicked us out of his wagon and if he didn't do that we would have never found our family.