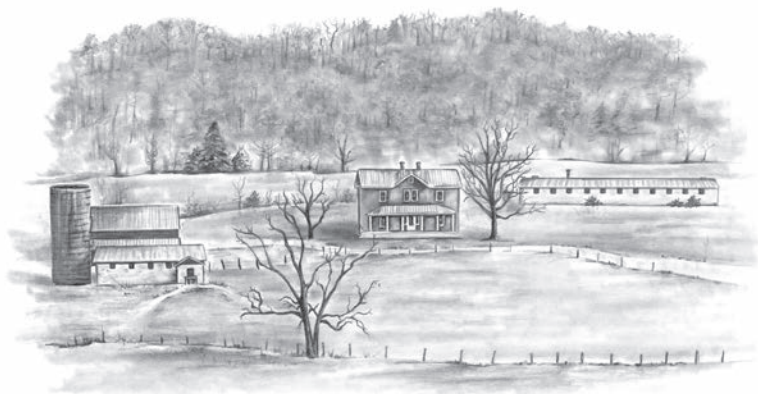


CONTENTS

Dedication	iii
Maps	viii
Acknowledgments	xi
Prologue	xv
1. At Opposite Ends	1
2. Chicken Plans	11
3. First Sunday	23
4. Six Hundred to Play	31
5. Blocks on the Road	41
6. Farming the Virginia Way	51
7. Chicken Trouble	63
8. Another Eli	77
9. Dairy Farm in the Sticks	89
10. Where There's a Will, There's a Way	95
11. Hay the Old-Fashioned Way	105
12. Alone at Last!	115
13. Lopsided Dairy Barn	127
14. King of the Herd	135
15. White Gold	139
16. Oat Harvest	145
17. The Amazing Silo	153
18. A Troubled Heart	161
19. A Brother's Choice	169
20. Apple Boys After School	179
21. A Date for Lovina	187
22. House Ablaze!	199

23. First Milk Check	207
24. Cousins From the West	217
25. Death in the Feed Room	227
26. The Beautiful Lamp	235
27. Wedding Secrets	245
28. New Year's Eve	253
29. Baby in a Blizzard	261
30. The Long Walk	273
31. Oh, Come, Spring!	283
32. Visitor in the Orchard	289
33. Two Heads for One Machine	295
34. Borrowing From Brothers	305
35. Caught at a Gallop	317
36. "No One Cares!"	325
37. Woodcutter	335
38. Man Teacher	339
39. First Bride in the Family	349
40. A Different Way of Singing	355
41. Finding the Way	365
42. The Christmas Truce	373
43. "Disappointed in You"	379
44. Arm of a Farmer	385
45. The Amazing Mechanical Milker	391
46. Still a Yoder	397
47. A Way With Horses	401
48. "My Dad Saw Buffalo Bill"	409
49. No Latch on the Screen Door	417
50. A Sack for Skunks	429
51. An Art to Stacking	441
52. Concealed in a Crate	449

53. Kerosene Heater Delivery	455
54. Death on a Bus	465
55. Surprise in the Night	473
56. A New Way of Baling	481
57. Unto Thee, O God	491
58. A True Harvest Boy	501
Glossary of Pennsylvania Dutch Terms	513
Photos	514
Amish Families of Stuarts Draft Named in This Book	521
Ben Yoder's Family Tree	527



1. *At Opposite Ends*

March 5, 1946

Below the long shadow of White Hill at the end of a long lane stood the farmhouse. Tall and white, with many windows and an expansive roof, it stood surrounded by wide, empty fields covered in moonlight. Inside its tall glowing windows, the house was divided in two by a spacious hallway containing a wide staircase and five doors, each leading to a different room. As the moon lifted above the trees, two families sat at opposite ends of the house, each crowded around their own table, eating a late supper.

Eli's family had just moved that morning into one side of the house, stacking boxes, crates, and furniture into the front room and kitchen until they could hold no more. The rest of their belongings were crowded on the side porch or carried upstairs. The dining and living room doors remained firmly shut. They were reserved for the Howell family.

When the procession drove in the long icy lane that morning, the front door had opened, and a man in short sleeves



and blue overalls had stepped out onto the porch. Eli, squeezed between several pieces of furniture on the wagon, felt his cheeks flush and a lump rise in his throat. Behind Sanford, driving the tractor and wagon, came Dad, Mom, and Harvey in the buggy. The girls followed in the surrey. The breeze came keenly over the fields, and the horses breathed hard as the buggy wheels rattled over the gravel.

Mr. Howell followed them around the side of the house as Sanford brought the tractor to a stop by the closed-in porch. Eli took off his hat and held it awkwardly at his side. He had twice plastered down his hair with water that morning. Was it still in place? But the man's pale eyes ignored Eli and settled on Dad, who was stepping down from the buggy.

"I hope we're not too early," Dad said, extending a hand. "We'd like to get moved in today if we could." Dad's faded black coat and hat held mildly by his side contrasted sharply with Mr. Howell's crossed arms and shirt open at the neck.

Mr. Howell shook Dad's hand and scrutinized the heavy load. He said, "We've stacked all our belongings into two rooms and piled everything else in the hall and front porch. I hope you can find places for your things elsewhere." He hooked his thumbs in his overalls. "I'm out to hitch up my horses. Was going to finish plowing the garden spot. Didn't know you'd be getting here so soon."

He opened the door behind him. "Mabel? Mabel! They're here. You ready to leave for school?"

There were footsteps, and Mrs. Howell came through the porch door, her green dress half hidden by the long coat she was pulling on. A necklace dangled from her neck and her lips were red. Her heels clicked on the porch floor. "Well..." She sought for words. "So you're here." Her dark eyes traveled over them, and her thin lips compressed. Two teenage sons and a daughter peered around her with curious faces and then disappeared.



Mrs. Howell straightened her rounded shoulders. Her auburn hair waved slightly over a wide forehead. "I assume you know how to keep the door shut in between unloading things," she said. "This house takes quite a bit to heat." She touched her fingers to her mouth. "The children and I need to leave now for school. I sure hope this works." She forced a smile.

Eli wilted under her gaze, but Dad remained smiling and at ease. He bowed over their handshake before she turned, hurrying back inside. Dad, still smiling, turned toward the family. "Okay, children, let's see what we can do!" And the unloading began.

Eli walked as fast as he could past Mr. Howell's pale eyes, past the memory of Mrs. Howell's stiff smile. The joy of gaining a farm was not starting out as he had expected. He grabbed a box of girls' things, walking sideways until he stepped from the side porch through the narrow green door into the front hall. There he stopped. This must be the room Dad had spoken of—the entrance hall of many doors! Eli could still see Dad leaning over the table back home in Kansas, sketching the layout of the new home he had found in Virginia.

The ceiling stretched high above him into airy spaciousness. To his left, the stair rails formed an elegant row of polished wood and painted molding all the way down to the floor. Faded, dusty walls were crowded higher than his head with the Howells' belongings—wardrobes, bed rails, and boxes of papers and books—until there was hardly a path left in between. Along the corners of the smooth hardwood floor, dust balls had gathered. Eli gazed at each of the five doors. All were identical except for the narrow green one he had just passed through under the stairs. Dad had said that under no circumstances were they to open the doors to the dining room or living room.



Eli gingerly felt his way to the staircase and climbed one step at a time. *I think...* He set the box inside the room that was to be the girls.' *I think the Howells don't want us here.* He descended the steps, running his hand lightly over the banister. *I wonder how long we'll have to live together like this?* His heart hammered in his ears.



Through the closed living room door came the sound of a child's arguing and a woman's sharp reply. Eli felt like an eavesdropper. He hurried back outside through the side porch, almost stumbling over the last step. It was a relief when the front door slammed and the Howells' black Model A rattled out the lane.

The unloading took all day. There was much cleaning to be done before each room was ready. The kitchen walls and cupboards were washed and the floor scoured with soap and water. Lovina and Esther used a broom and a mop on the upstairs floors while Lucy and Fannie Mae washed the windows and scrubbed the stairway. Mom kept heating water on the stove, and nine-year-old Maggie¹ had her head thrust into the kitchen cupboards, wiping out hard-to-reach corners.

They all stopped for sandwiches at noon. Then the girls brought in the pots and kettles and pans and filled the cupboards while Dad and Sanford maneuvered the bed frames up the stairs and assembled them. From the crates that had been nailed shut for the train trip, the girls lifted out sheets and blankets, flopping them out and smoothing them across the beds and plumping up the pillows.

It was Harvey's job to move each box or trunk or sack to the end of the wagon where the next person could pick it up. The sky remained clear except for a few wispy clouds hurrying past. Eli's eyes kept gazing over the fields. These wide open fields belonged to the farm!

Halfway through the afternoon, the back door opened and Lucy came to the wagon with a covered pan, reaching in to give Eli and Harvey each a wedge of cornbread fresh from the oven and a cup of water from the springhouse. Eli took one swallow and stopped. The water was cold and sweet and good. "Thank you," he told Lucy, grinning at her happy face.

1 In the first two books of the Little Eli series, Eli's little sister Magdalena went by the nickname Lena. As she grew older, she asked to be called Maggie.