

# BEHIND THE HIGH BOARD FENCE

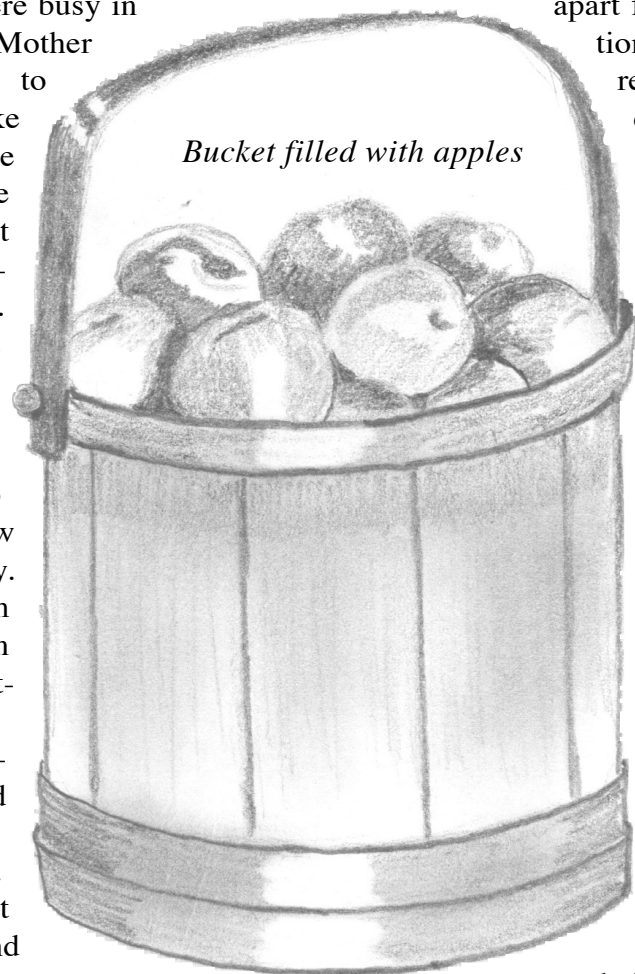
## Chapter 9 — Girls fill bucket

WINSTON, N.C., the house was built. 1909—The day for a picnic arrived, and Mabel and Mother were busy in the kitchen. Mother was anxious to hurry and bake the pies while the cook stove was still hot from the breakfast biscuits. Mabel was more concerned that the pies turn out perfectly to impress her new friend, Bradley. She invited him to go along on the family outing.

“Moddy, Libby,” Mabel said to her little sisters underfoot. “You two, get the bucket, and go with Helen to gather some apples for the pies. Mother and I will roll out the dough for the crusts.” She shook her rolling pin toward the door to get them moving.

As the girls headed down the back steps, Helen looked at the old tree that was full of apples. It grew close to the porch where its buds and flowers were protected from the cold in the spring. Helen had been told that Mother had saved the tree from cutting, when

Its knobby lower limbs were perfect for swinging



*Bucket filled with apples*

and climbing, a favorite with the boys. But it was the higher branches that Helen loved. They hung over the back porch roof where she would sometimes climb from the stairway window and hide. The branches sheltered her when she was tucked away in her secret place. She sat among the white blossoms in the spring and the cooling leaves in the heat of the summer.

In the tree, Helen was out of the house, yet not away from it. She was apart from the commotion, but she was not really alone. She could see out to the blue sky and the world behind the high board fence, yet she was close to the place where she felt secure. She was still home.

Libby dropped the empty bucket with a clang that brought Helen’s mind back to gathering apples. Under the tree, the apples cluttered the ground where they had fallen. Many had split, and their sweet juice had seeped out making them sticky and attracting the bees. “Don’t forget to give them a push with the toe of your shoe before you touch them,” Helen warned. “Sometimes a bee hides inside.”

The girls carefully filled the bucket with the golden ripe apples. Now that the bucket was heavy, Helen and Libby shared the job of carrying it inside.

Back in the kitchen, the sisters found three

pie pans placed on the table, each one draped with pastry. Beside them on the breadboard, were long strips of dough. Mabel and Mother worked quickly to get the fruit peeled and cut into quarters. After the piecrusts were filled with sugared and spiced apples, Mabel skillfully laced the strips of dough into a top crust. Between the strips, she left spaces where the juice could bubble as the pies baked. “Surely, Bradley will be impressed,” she said as she put them in the oven and closed the door behind them.

As Mabel began to clear the table of the baking utensils, Mother put a heavy iron skillet of lard on the stove to heat. The girls were happy to help with the next chore as the newfangled potato chips were their favorite. They formed a chain to do their

work. Moddy took the potatoes from the box, Helen washed them and Libby dried. Mother stood at the table and pushed the potatoes again and again over the sharp blade of the slaw cutter, making a round thin slice with every pass. When enough slices had accumulated on the plate, Mabel carefully slid them into the hot grease to fry. Then with a big spoon, she lifted them onto a piece of brown paper, hot and crispy and ready for a sifting of salt.

When the food for the picnic was finished, everyone gathered for the excursion. Harry and Alan led the group up Spruce Street. They carried the trunk with the picnic dinner inside. They rolled up their shirt-sleeves, and Harry tilted his hat to one side. Mother looked happy and re-

laxed, wearing a becoming white summer blouse and a big straw hat. Even with Jack riding on his shoulders, Papa looked as he always did, in perfect order.

The Sharps stepped excitedly toward Fourth Street where they would catch the streetcar.

### next chapter—Sharps ride streetcar

*Adapted and reprinted with permission. Written by Helen Marley based on her mother’s stories; illustrated by Thorne Worley. Provided by the N.C. Press Foundation, Newspapers in Education.*

**ACTIVITY:** The chapter tells how to prepare some of the girls’ favorite foods, apple pies and potato chips. Write down each step. Then write down how you prepare a favorite snack, step by step.

Select recipes for favorite dishes from print and online newspapers.

**HISTORY:** Almost every city with 10,000 people or more acquired a streetcar system operated by electric utility companies from the 1890s to 1920s, according to historian Walter Turner. Conduct research to find out if the city where you live or another city in your region operated streetcars during the late 1800s and early 1900s.