THIRTEEN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Pee Tabor and Dee Tabor of the Pee Dee Valley

The Little Boy and Girl of Pee Dee Valley and Their Adventures

Based on the original story by Nathan Tabor

Expanded manuscript

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Where Two Creeks Meet

Pee Tabor found a turtle in the shallows. Dee Tabor found the tracks it had left behind.

“How do you know those belong to this turtle?” Pee asked.

“Let’s wait and see where it goes.”

Waiting was easy for Dee. She could sit so still a bug would land on her knee. Waiting was hard for Pee. He put one foot in the water, then the other. The turtle disappeared into the creek.

“You scared it,” Dee said.

“I wanted a better look.”

Pee and Dee were first cousins and best friends. Each had a house to go home to. Most days, when supper was ready in one of them, somebody had to go to the other house to see if both cousins were there.

That morning they were meant to meet Grandmother with her basket. They went upstream, one on each bank, and found her where two creeks came together. The basket was full of greens. Pee reached for it, but Grandmother walked right past him to a tree with roots as wide as Dee’s outstretched arms.

“Find me a way home from here,” she said.

Pee pointed to the stones they usually crossed on. Grandmother asked him to find a way home with the stones covered. He tried a narrow path beside the bank. It went down, then down a little more, until he had to come back.

Dee went the other way. Between the roots, she found a strip of ground that rose toward the houses. She could see supper smoke through the branches.

“Would you have found that path without the smoke?” Grandmother asked.

Dee looked back. From that side, the biggest root stuck out like an elbow. She put her hand on it, faced uphill, and tried to remember what she could see.

“Tree first. Then dry ground.”

Pee had already started walking. He waited at the bend this time, long enough for Dee to catch up with the basket. Between them they carried it without spilling anything. Grandmother let them do the last stretch by themselves.

On the way home they found another set of turtle tracks. Pee crouched on a dry patch. A small head came out of the water. It turned one way, then the other, and climbed onto a log in the sun.

“There he is,” Pee whispered.

“See the little notch in his shell?” Dee asked. “Now we can look for that next time.”

A leaf drifted past. The turtle stayed put. Pee tried being still enough for a bug to land on him and was disappointed when one did.

“He’s Pee and I’m Dee,” Dee whispered, as if the turtle had asked.

“We’re cousins,” Pee added. “You can tell your cousins about us.”

The turtle shut its eyes. Pee and Dee went home to supper, with a new way home to tell their families about and one very small bite on Pee’s knee.

The Best Ear of Corn

Pee found the fattest ear of corn in the basket. He put it aside for supper. Dee found it later and set it aside for planting.

“I had plans for that,” Pee said.

“So did I,” said Dee.

Grandmother put two baskets on the floor. One was for food. One was for seed. So far the seed basket had only three ears.

Pee pointed at a bruised ear. “Why can’t we plant that one and eat this one?”

“You can try planting both,” Grandmother said.

They waited for planting time. On the first warm day, Pee went out with his best stick. The ground was so wet that his feet brought half the field back to the house. Grandmother sent him to clean the doorway. When the soil warmed and dried a little, she went out with them.

Dee counted equal handfuls of kernels from both ears. They planted in two rows beside each other. Pee stuck a twig at one end of the first row and at both ends of the second. After a bird took one twig for its nest, Dee fetched stones. They made a little pile of one stone and a little pile of two.

Pee checked the dirt every morning. On the fourth morning he put his finger into a small hole to see what the seed was doing. Dee made him promise to give the other seeds some peace.

Some kernels from the bruised ear sprouted. Nearly all the kernels from the plump ear came up. Then a branch fell on one row, and Pee had to count again. He wanted the first count to be the one they kept.

“The branch fell after the plants came up,” Dee said. “We can remember both things.”

By harvest there were more ears than the cousins could carry in one trip. Pee chose the fullest ones. Auntie laughed when he reached past two small ears for an especially fat one.

“Hungry?” she asked.

“Always. But this one goes in the seed basket.”

At supper Grandmother gave him a share from the other basket. He helped Dee carry bowls to the smallest children first. When it was his turn, he ate one helping and then another.

Afterward they found a few ripe ears left on the drying mat. Dee set one aside for their neighbor, who had lent them a basket at harvest. Pee picked one up and asked what they should do with it.

“Your choice,” Dee said.

He laid it with the seed. Then he took it out, looked at it, and carried it across the path to a family whose patch had grown poorly that year. They could choose what to do with it themselves.

Grandmother watched him come back with his hands empty. She held the seed basket open for Dee, who tucked the last ear snugly into a corner.

Dee’s Crooked Bowl

Dee wanted to make a bowl Grandmother could use every day. Auntie set a bit of prepared clay in front of her and showed her how to make a flat bottom. Dee rolled another piece into a long coil and lifted it into place.

Pee leaned over to look. His elbow caught the rim.

Now the bowl had a kink in one side.

“I can fix it,” he said.

“Move your other elbow first.”

Auntie was working on a taller pot nearby. She showed Dee how to smooth the clay where the coils met. At first Dee pressed so hard the wall slumped. Next she went so lightly the seam stayed open. She tried again with her other hand against the inside of the bowl.

The seam closed. The crooked place stayed crooked.

“Start over?” Pee asked.

Dee held the bowl at eye level. The bottom sat flat. The dip in the rim was just wide enough for her thumb. She looked from her bowl to the cup Auntie used to pour water into a narrow jar. Its rim was round. When Auntie poured too fast, water ran down the jar.

“Can we try mine first?”

Auntie turned it round on the mat. “Give it time to dry. If it cracks, you can make another.”

Now it was Dee who found waiting hard. Every morning she came to look. Pee made a great show of keeping his elbows where she could see them.

The adults fired the bowl with the rest of the pots. After it had cooled, Dee carried it to Grandmother in both hands.

Grandmother set it to work before Dee could explain. It was supper time and a smaller child wanted more corn stew. Grandmother dipped the bowl into the pot, tipped it toward the child’s dish, and sent a little stream through the dip in the rim.

“Look at that,” said Pee. “I invented a spout.”

“You invented an elbow,” Dee told him.

There was a drop on the outside of the bowl. Pee pointed it out. Grandmother said she could live with one drop. Before they ate, she asked Dee to pour a little more into the next dish.

The other pot had a fine pattern on its sides. Dee’s bowl had one place that was rough under her finger and one place she recognized by touch in the dark. Grandmother put it where she kept the things she reached for every day.

Auntie asked Dee to make a second one. This time Dee pinched the clay on purpose. Pee sat across from her with his hands on his knees. When a lump rolled off the mat, he caught it before it hit the ground.

“See?” he said. “I can help.”

Dee gave him back the lump. “You can make one of your own.”

He did. It came out a little crooked on both sides. Grandmother used it to hold the spoon.

A Visitor from Upriver

A visitor came from upriver with two strong poles and a roll of cord. Pee had never seen her before. Auntie knew her right away.

“You used to come with your mother,” Auntie said.

“I did. Now my daughter comes with me.”

The girl was called Reed. At first she and Dee understood only a few of each other’s words. Reed drew a crooked line in the dirt and put a little stone near each end. Then she moved one finger along the line. Dee drew a second line joining it. That was where their creek came in.

Pee set a third stone where the turtle had climbed out of the water. Both girls looked at him.

“A very important turtle,” he explained.

Reed’s mother wanted two clay pots. Auntie wanted the poles and the cord. While the grown-ups inspected the pots, the three children tried to carry both poles. They got around the first turn and wedged themselves across the next one. Reed laughed first. The other two laughed when they realized they all had to back up together.

Dee had left the crooked bowl nearby. Reed picked it up and tapped the dip with her thumb. Dee showed her how it poured. Reed went to her mother, said something quick, and brought back a little shell from her bundle.

Dee liked the shell. She still had to tell Reed that the bowl belonged to Grandmother. Between the pointing, talking, and head-shaking, they understood each other at last.

Reed asked to see how Dee had made the bowl. Dee had no clay ready, so she used a soft piece of mud to show where her thumb went. Reed pressed on the wrong side, then on the right. Her second try looked enough like the bowl to make Pee ask what she planned to serve in it.

“Mud,” Reed said. By then she knew that word.

One of the big pots had a chip. Reed’s mother asked if there was another, and Auntie brought one from inside. Auntie took the poles, tested each against the ground, and chose the stronger one first. They looked through the cord together until they had agreed on the trade.

Before she left, Reed’s mother showed Grandmother how she tied a bundle so the cord could be undone with one pull. Grandmother practiced until she could do it herself. Then she wrapped corn bread for the two travelers to take upriver.

Reed put her shell in Dee’s palm anyway. Dee gave Reed one of the small stones they had used to make the map. Reed walked a little way up the path, came back, and pointed to the bend where a traveler should leave the bank to reach her home.

That evening Dee rebuilt the map with sticks on a dry patch under the eaves. She set the shell where Reed had stood. Pee went to get another stone for the turtle. By the time he got back, Dee had added a place for them to stop if they ever went upriver.

The Morning the Water Rose

Rain fell all night. When Pee woke up, he heard the creek from inside the house. He had never heard it from there before.

By daylight the water covered the path to the low field. An older neighbor stood on the far side of a ditch that was getting deeper. He could see the houses. The way he usually came up was gone.

Pee started running toward him. Dee called his name and pointed at a branch rushing past. It was moving much faster than he could run. He stopped where the grass was dry.

“Where are the roots?” Dee asked.

Pee looked upstream. The great tree still stood above the water. Its roots showed where the ground climbed away from the creek.

Dee stayed where the neighbor could see her. Pee went for the grown-ups, bringing Auntie and another neighbor back with him. Dee pointed uphill and waited for the man to look. Then she pointed again. He moved slowly along his side until he came to a dry way round the ditch. Auntie met him there.

He had left his food basket behind. Pee offered to help him get it when the water went down. The man glanced back at the ditch. “With somebody bigger,” he said.

“With somebody bigger,” Pee agreed.

Up at the houses, Grandmother lifted a mat that had soaked through overnight. Underneath, water had reached the corner of a corn basket. She asked the cousins to bring the basket into the daylight where they could see what was wet.

The rain stopped. The creek kept rising for a while. Pee thought that was unfair. Dee said the rain that had fallen upriver still had to go somewhere.

They opened the corn basket and spread the dry ears on a mat. Grandmother set aside the damp ones to check. A family higher up had wood dry enough to cook with. Another family had a fire going. Auntie went from house to house to find out who needed to eat first.

Pee took hot food to the man from the ditch. The man made room beside him and asked how Dee had known where to point. Pee told him about the tree. Then he admitted he had nearly gone straight into the water.

The man held his bowl in both hands. “I nearly did, too.”

The next day the water left rows of sticks lying across the low field. Some stalks had bent flat. When Dee lifted one, she found green leaves underneath the mud. Auntie told her to leave the strongest plants standing and see how they did.

Pee brought the missing basket home with two adults. It was full of muddy water and had a hole in one side. He offered it back anyway. The old man tipped the water out, ran a finger along the broken edge, and said he had enough dry material at home for a repair.

“Bring Dee,” he told Pee. “I’ll show both of you.”

Who Gets the High Ground

After the flood, two families wanted to plant on the same patch of higher ground. One had already cleared most of it. The other had a big household and almost no seed left.

The grown-ups talked while Pee and Dee carried water. Every time the cousins came back with another pot, somebody was still speaking.

Pee thought the family that cleared the patch should get it. Dee thought about how many bowls the other family had to fill. They argued about it all the way back to the creek.

On their next trip, a neighbor stopped at the narrow part of the path to let them pass. With a pot on her hip, Dee could barely turn. The woman set her bundle down and stepped back into the grass.

At the meeting place both families were still talking. One woman had cleared the ground before the flood. She showed the blisters on her hands. A man from the other house had tried sowing on his own patch. He brought along three wet ears of corn to show what was left of his seed basket.

Pee set down the water and waited. He had expected the people he agreed with to have all the things worth hearing. As the afternoon went on, he kept finding himself looking at those three ears.

“Ask what they decided,” Dee told him when they came back again.

“You ask.”

They both asked at once.

Auntie told them to come walk the patch. The families had found room for two plots if the stony edge was cleared and the path moved a little. The second family would share the clearing. Some neighbors could spare seed. After harvest, the families would refill that supply.

“Why did it take so long?” Pee asked.

“They had to agree where the new path could go,” Auntie said. “People carry a lot through here.”

Dee looked at the steep edge. From one end she could see the field. From the other she could see all the way toward the river landing. She walked the proposed route with an empty basket on her arm and had to turn sideways between two stones.

“Grandmother will tip her basket here,” she told Pee.

Pee tried the corner. He moved one stone farther out. Auntie called over both families to show them why the turn needed the extra space. The people who had cleared the first patch shifted their row by a step. When Grandmother came through, the basket stayed level.

By the end of the afternoon the cousins could stand at the turn and see both new plots. People from each household were already working in the other’s row. Dee fetched the last pot of water. This time Pee carried Grandmother’s basket, and she was the one who came up the path with both hands free.

The Man at the River

Pee and Dee went down to the landing to rinse Grandmother’s basket. The corn had left dry silk caught along its bottom. Dee picked out the longest pieces and set them on a stone to blow away.

Then a horse came through the shallows.

Its rider wore heavy boots and a coat with buttons that caught the sun. He was the first white man either cousin had seen. Behind him came a second traveler on foot. The horse stopped to drink, and the rider had to let it.

The man on foot spoke some words the children knew. “He wants to know who owns the land.”

“We live here,” Dee said. She pointed toward her aunties in the high field.

The rider took out a folded paper. He held it above the water and looked from the river to the hill and down to the paper again. He said something else. The traveler listened, then asked him to repeat it.

“He says God has given this land to his people.”

“Did he ask anybody here?” Pee said.

The rider asked the traveler what Pee had said. When he heard it, he gathered up his reins. Before the horse turned, he pointed up the bank and drew a line in the air with his finger.

Pee knew where that line would go. From the landing it would climb the hill, pass the bend they had widened for Grandmother, and run through both plots in the high field.

The horse was gone before Dee could think of another thing to ask. A tuft of corn silk slid off the stone and blew into the river. The basket was still half in the water. Pee lifted it out and carried it to the field.

Grandmother had just filled a basket of her own. She listened while Dee repeated the words about God and the land.

“Was that what the man beside him said?” Grandmother asked.

“Yes.”

“What did the rider do while he said it?”

Pee showed her the motion of the man’s hand. Then he walked the line in the dirt until he reached the first row of corn. Grandmother followed as far as the turn in the path.

“Did he say he was coming back?” Auntie asked.

“He didn’t tell us,” Dee answered. “He told us the land was his.”

They told the story once more at home. Pee had forgotten the folded paper. Dee had forgotten that the traveler asked the rider to repeat himself. They put both details back in. Grandmother asked each cousin what they had heard and what they had only seen.

Then she sent word to the other houses.

At supper, people began coming up the path from both directions. Pee recognized the sound of their feet around the widened turn. Nobody had drawn that bend on the man’s paper. The people who had made it were coming to hear where else his line might go.

The Stake in the Corn

The white man returned with several others. One carried a bundle of stakes. He drove the first stake straight through a row Dee had planted with Grandmother. The dry stalks on either side shook.

Grandmother pulled it out.

A man behind the rider called her a savage. He told her the settlers were doing the work of Jesus Christ. He said people would learn to thank them when they understood what was being done.

“Show me where you planted corn in this field,” Grandmother said.

He called her a savage again.

Pee stepped forward. Dee caught his wrist. More men had come up from the landing. Auntie was calling the cousins back to the path. As they walked down, Dee heard the stake go into the ground a second time.

That evening the woman who had cleared the high ground brought a partly filled basket. She had gone out while the men were eating and cut what she could from her own row. The man from the second household brought another basket, smaller and chipped on one edge.

“Fill mine too,” he said. “We can carry both.”

At the meeting, some wanted to remain in the field through the night. Others wanted the children and the food moved first. Grandmother asked what they still had time to do before dark. They agreed to bring in whatever corn they could while people were there to watch together.

Pee pulled the ears free. Dee put them in with the husks facing one way so that more would fit. A smaller cousin brought a bundle of cloth and set it where the two paths met, then carried the first filled basket to Auntie.

“Remember what the man said the first time?” Pee asked.

Dee remembered. He had claimed God had given him the land while he was still sitting on his horse. Today she had heard what one of his men called Grandmother for taking a stake out of her own corn.

“Now I know who I saw that morning.”

“Who?”

“The Devil,” Dee said.

Pee looked toward the stake. It leaned a little, like a stick somebody had put down in a hurry. The corn had been growing there for months. He pulled the next ear and handed it to Dee.

By the time the light went, there was one row they had been unable to reach. At home, Grandmother separated the seed corn from the corn for meals. Pee could tell she was tired from the way she rested her forearms against the table between baskets.

“Next time they tell this,” Dee said, “what if they leave out how we planted the field?”

Grandmother handed her an ear to put with the seed. “Then you can tell them when you planted it.”

The Buffalo They Left

Pee heard the shots from the path. Auntie told him to stay on the rise. From there he and Dee could see three buffalo and a calf running along the far bank. By the time the noise stopped, the calf was gone from sight. Two animals lay in the grass.

An older neighbor had shown Pee tracks at that crossing in another season. He had pointed out the difference between the deep print of a large animal and the smaller prints beside it. The cousins had spent the rest of the walk trying to guess where the young one had gone.

Now a man waved a wagon closer. Dee watched the hunters load the hides. When they left, meat still lay in the grass.

The settlers had already blocked access to the high field. A neighbor’s family had begun making a single meal last until morning. Auntie brought food when she could, and they helped her carry water when her back hurt.

“Did those men know people here use the buffalo for food?” Pee asked.

“A trader told them at the landing,” Auntie said.

“Did they say anything?”

“He told me they said they’d been paid for hides.”

Dee looked across the river. The wagon had taken a turn out of sight. From where she stood she could still see the grass bent flat where its wheels had passed.

At home Grandmother measured out the corn and poured it through the dip in the crooked bowl. She could fill one dish after another without losing a kernel if she took her time.

Pee watched her get to her own dish. Her helping was smaller. Dee tipped some of hers in. Pee had his first bite halfway to his mouth. He put it down and tipped in a little of his, too.

Grandmother thanked them and sat down to eat. When the meal was over she asked for the bundle that held the seed. Dee counted the kernels from the ears the family had chosen together. Pee held the cloth open. They had to lean close to see the last few.

“Does it matter if we put all of those in?” Pee asked.

“Ask me after we find a place to plant,” Grandmother said.

Dee tipped them in. Grandmother tied the bundle with the knot she had learned from Reed’s mother. Pee tested it by tugging on the wrong end. Grandmother took hold of the other end and showed him what to pull, then tied it once more.

At bedtime Pee asked whether the calf had made it across the bend. Dee said she had lost sight of it in the trees. She hoped it had gone a long way.

They waited a while for another sound from the river. At last Pee heard the ordinary rush of water over the stones. He had heard it every night of his life. That night he had to listen hard to hear it at all.

What Fit in the Basket

The morning they left the house, Pee put three smooth stones in the carrying basket. Dee put in the seed bundle and Grandmother’s bowl. Then Auntie brought a jar of food and asked where it could go.

Pee took out two of his stones.

“Which one are you keeping?” Dee asked.

“The one that marked the turtle.”

She remembered the map Reed had drawn in the dirt. She remembered how Reed had pointed out the turn to take if they ever came upriver.

“Do you think they’re still there?”

“Somebody went ahead to ask,” Auntie said. She tucked cloth around the jar. “Keep the bundle close.”

Pee wanted to carry the basket himself. At the first hill he had to stop twice. Dee took the heavy side and they lifted it together, the way they had when Grandmother gave them greens to carry home. A younger child walked between them for a while. At the top she asked if they would be coming back by supper.

Auntie said she didn’t know when they would come back. First they needed somewhere to sleep.

The path took them past the high field. The settlers’ fence now ran down the middle of ground two households had cleared together. Grandmother paused at the bend. There was still room for her basket to go around the turn. Below the path somebody else was gathering the last of the corn.

Toward evening Reed’s mother called Auntie by name from ahead on the trail. She had brought food and knew where their family could sleep. Reed came down behind her, running until she got close enough to see how tired Dee was. Then she took a handle of the basket and walked.

Inside, Dee unwrapped the crooked bowl. It had cracked against the jar. The two pieces still fit in her hands. She set them down on a mat the way they would have sat when the bowl was whole.

Pee set the turtle stone beside it. He had been rubbing it in his pocket all day.

“Can you make another one?”

“Yes,” Dee said. She showed Reed where the rim had dipped. “Remember where I put my thumb?”

Reed did. She took them out to show them where her mother got clay. It was too late to fetch any that day. The three stood there a minute, feeling the cool air rising from the water, before Reed showed them the way back inside.

That night Auntie unpacked the seed bundle to make sure nothing had spilled. Grandmother asked where the bowl was. Dee brought her both pieces. Grandmother held the piece with the dip in one hand and ran her thumb along the rim.

“When you make the next one,” she said, “make it big enough to pour supper for the people who came to meet us.”

The Land They Asked For

The people who had lost their houses held a meeting at Reed’s home. They needed room for new houses and ground to plant. They had to decide what their speakers would ask of the colonial officials. Nobody wanted them to come back with a promise that couldn’t be used.

One of the grown-ups said the officials would want the request in writing. Another said paper was easy to lose if a person wanted it lost.

“We can remember what we asked for,” Grandmother said. “Make sure the children hear it, too.”

Pee and Dee brought a pot of water to the meeting. The speakers practiced the request. Dee listened for the part about water. They spoke of house sites and planting grounds. They made it through the whole request without naming the river or a spring.

“Where would we get water?” Dee asked from the doorway.

An older neighbor asked her to say it again.

“If they say we can have the ground, can they put a fence between us and the water?”

Auntie thought of the high field. She asked the speaker to go back over the request. This time the speaker said they needed a way for people to reach water and take it back to their homes. Reed’s mother asked whether the path would be wide enough for someone carrying a heavy jar.

Pee told them about the bend they had widened for Grandmother. The grown-ups asked him to show them how much space the basket had needed.

For days the speakers were away. The family kept the corn seed tied and divided the food they had left. Dee and Reed fetched clay to make another bowl. Pee started a small one of his own, then pressed the rim too far and had to roll it out again.

When the speakers returned, they brought word of land in another river country to the south. Families could live and plant there. Nobody had offered to return their houses or fields.

“How long before we can go?” Pee asked.

“First we have to find the place and see it for ourselves,” Auntie said. “Then we have to get word to the people who are still on the road.”

Grandmother asked the speakers to tell the whole meeting what they had asked for and what had been promised. Someone went to bring in the families who hadn’t heard. Everybody who could carry something was given a bundle for people farther back on the trail.

Pee took bread. Dee took part of the seed. They carried both as far as the bend, where two adults were waiting to go on.

“Keep the path clear if you camp,” Pee told them. He remembered the neighbor who had set down her bundle to let them pass months earlier. One of the adults smiled and said they would.

That evening Reed carried a pot along a little track she had cleared behind the house. Dee took the other handle. At the bend they had room to walk side by side.

News from the Buffalo Country

Generations later, 1874

The girl who heard the story of Pee and Dee had heard it so often that she knew when her grandmother would pause. She paused at the river crossing, at the stake in the corn, and at the place where Reed's mother called Auntie by name.

A folded newspaper came from farther west. It had been passed between several households. Across one side was a picture of hunters taking hides from buffalo lying on the Plains. The girl laid it on the table beside the bowl her grandmother had used to measure flour.

"Is this the river in the story?" she asked.

Her grandmother turned the paper around. "This is buffalo country far west of here. Our story was told about the Carolinas. Look how much open land is in the picture."

At the bottom someone had written a few words in pencil about the price of hides. The girl asked who had paid that price. Her grandmother told her that buyers paid hunters, and that some officials in the United States wanted the buffalo gone because Native nations depended on them. Soldiers had supplied ammunition to hide hunters.

"Did the people out west have buffalo when their grandmothers were little?"

"Yes. Buffalo sustained the Pawnee and other Plains nations. There was meat to eat. Hides could make clothing and shelter. People had learned where the herds went, and when."

The girl looked at the wagons in the picture and tried to see where the meat had gone.

Her grandmother had heard about a meeting in 1833, years before the worst of the slaughter. A United States official had told the Pawnee they would have to change how they lived or starve when the game was gone.

“How did he know it would be gone?” the girl asked.

Her grandmother drew the paper closer. “Find out who was doing the killing. Find out what the people at the meeting said. Keep their answers with his.”

They spent the rest of the evening writing down questions. On another sheet the girl copied the title of the picture and the date. She had written that the people in the picture had lost everything. When Grandmother asked who had told her that, she looked again. The print showed people hunting and stripping hides. It had very little to tell her about the people whose winter food was disappearing.

“I want to hear from the families who lived there,” she said.

Her grandmother put the questions with the clipping. There were letters and stories that belonged to those nations, she told the girl. She hoped they would hear some in words chosen by the people who lived them.

Before bed the girl asked to hear about the cousins again. Grandmother asked where she should begin.

“Before the man on the horse,” the girl said. “Tell me the one where Pee tries to sit still.”

Grandmother laughed. She pulled up another chair and started with the turtle.

The Two Boats

The Pee Dee Valley today

On a summer afternoon in North Carolina, first cousins Collyn and Nathan folded paper boats. They called themselves two peas from two pods. Collyn's boat had a yellow stripe. Nathan drew a green stripe down the middle of the other one.

"He's Pee and I'm Dee," Nathan said.

They set their boats in a shallow trickle beside the path. Collyn's caught on a pebble. Nathan's went round and round in a tiny pool until a bit of water washed it straight. A few steps farther on, both cousins reached down from dry ground and picked their boats up.

At the picnic, an older cousin asked if they wanted to hear a story about the valley. Collyn thought it might be the one about the missing picnic bell. That one had taken a whole afternoon to solve and ended with Pickles the goat.

This story began with two children looking for a turtle.

Nathan liked the part where a girl named Reed drew a river in the dirt. Collyn wanted to know what happened to the bowl Dee made. They both went quiet when they heard about the people who had to leave their homes.

"Where did everybody go?" Collyn asked.

"Families found places to live with help from other Native communities. For the Pee Dee people's own history, there's a place we can look."

The older cousin showed them what the Pee Dee Indian Tribe had published about its government in South Carolina. The cousins could read about its council, the work it did for its people, and the history it shared in its own name.

They took the boats back to the picnic table to dry. On one Nathan wrote the name of the valley. On the other, Collyn wrote down the name of the river.

“You wrote the same thing,” Collyn said, holding the boats together.

“I know,” Nathan said. “That’s somebody’s name, too.”

Nathan had two other place names to add. Owens Cross Roads, Alabama, went inside one fold. Kernersville, North Carolina, went inside the other. Collyn read them aloud, and Nathan gave their shorter names.

“OXRvegas.”

“Kvegas,” said Collyn. Two turns of phrase on two little pieces of paper.

Before they left, their older cousin asked what part of the old story they would tell next time. Collyn chose the bowl with the crooked rim. Nathan chose the meeting about the high ground and the place where the path needed an extra step of room.

“What about the man on the horse?” their cousin asked.

“We’ll get to him,” Nathan said. “We’ve got to get the corn planted first.”

They carried the boats home in the same basket. Before they put them away, Collyn found a flat spot on the porch rail where both could dry in the sun. Nathan put a small stone in each one so the wind wouldn’t take it.

Historical notes

Books 1–6 Life in the valley

The children, their household and village, and their conversations are fictional. Town Creek in present-day North Carolina was a Mississippian center on a tributary of the Great Pee Dee. Archaeologists have documented corn, fired pottery, long-distance trade, and a public plaza. “Pee Dee phase” is an archaeological designation. The state site says the specific Town Creek inhabitants remain culturally unaffiliated. The stories draw on regional evidence without assigning the family to that site or presenting its household customs as tribal practice. [1–4]

Books 7–11 The encounter and its aftermath

The incident marks the two children’s first encounter. The valley narrative gives their story no calendar year. Spanish expeditions entered the wider region in the 1500s, and colonial records describe Pee Dee communities and diplomacy in the 1700s. The encounter, fence, and local buffalo shooting are invented. Historical accounts place buffalo in North Carolina’s Piedmont, with uncertain county-level records. The Pee Dee Indian Tribe records a 1737 land petition. Provincial records document a tract set aside near Four Holes Swamp for Pee Dee and Natchez people in 1738. Book 11 imagines a community working out what to ask for. [4–7]

Books 8 and 12 The record of words and actions

The 1776 Declaration of Independence uses “merciless Indian Savages.” In Johnson v. McIntosh (1823), the Supreme Court discussed European royal commissions that claimed lands unknown to Christian peoples or unpossessed by Christian rulers, despite Indigenous occupation. The Pawnee negotiations cited in Book 12 occurred in 1833. The Great Plains commercial hide slaughter intensified in the nineteenth century. Government officials pursued the destruction of a major Indigenous food source, and the Army supplied ammunition to hide hunters. The 1874 engraving in Book 12 is real. The family reading it is fictional. [8–12]

Book 13 The valley today

The Pee Dee Indian Tribe maintains a government seated in Marlboro County, South Carolina. Collyn and Nathan are the names from the modern picture books. The fictional cousins’ story makes no genealogical claim about their real-life counterparts. [4, 13–14]

Source documents

01 North Carolina Historic Sites — Town Creek and Indian Culture

02 North Carolina Historic Sites — Town Creek Village Archaeology

03 North Carolina Historic Sites — Town Creek Artifacts

04 Pee Dee Indian Tribe — History and the tribal community

05 South Carolina Encyclopedia — Pee Dee River

06 North Carolina State Parks — American Bison historical distribution

07 Charleston County Public Library — Four Holes Swamp and the 1738 tract

08 National Archives — Declaration of Independence transcript

09 Library of Congress — Johnson v. McIntosh, 21 U.S. 543 (1823)

10 National Museum of the American Indian — 1833 Pawnee council record

11 National Park Service — What Happened to the Bison

12 Library of Congress — Slaughtered for the Hide, 1874 engraving

13 Pee Dee Indian Tribe — Tribal Government

14 Pee & Dee — Three earlier picture books

15 King James Version — Genesis 4:8–16 and Genesis 6:1–8

16 King James Version — Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4

The King James Bible

Genesis 4:8–16 describes Cain killing Abel, being cursed, and receiving a mark that protects him from being killed. Genesis 6:1–8 calls the figures “sons of God” and describes the Lord’s grief and regret at making humanity. The original statement reads the figures as angels and their taking of women as rape. Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 describe angels held for judgment. The Gospel of Cain is Nathan Tabor’s interpretation. [15–16]

NATHAN TABOR

Original story statement

Pee Tabor and Dee Tabor of the Pee Dee Valley - the story of their first time seeing a White man aka the Devil

And how they had to watch their entire way of life and civilization be destroyed while being labeled savages

They had to watch the Buffalo be slaughtered, so the people in their tribe would starve while being labeled savages

All done in the name of God and Jesus Christ or some “Deity” of Love

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of Cain - where God marks and protects the murderers and predators and rapists

Like he does and did for His Angels in Genesis 6.

After God’s angels raped women do you know what God said?

HE SAID HE REGRETTED CREATING HUMANITY

LET THAT SINK IN