

Schoolroom in the Parlor

Also by Rebecca Caudill

Happy Little Family

Schoolhouse in the Woods

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Barrie and Daughter

Tree of Freedom (Newbery Honor)

Saturday Cousins

House of the Fifers

Susan Cornish

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Higgins and the Great Big Scare

The Best-Loved Doll

The Far-Off Land

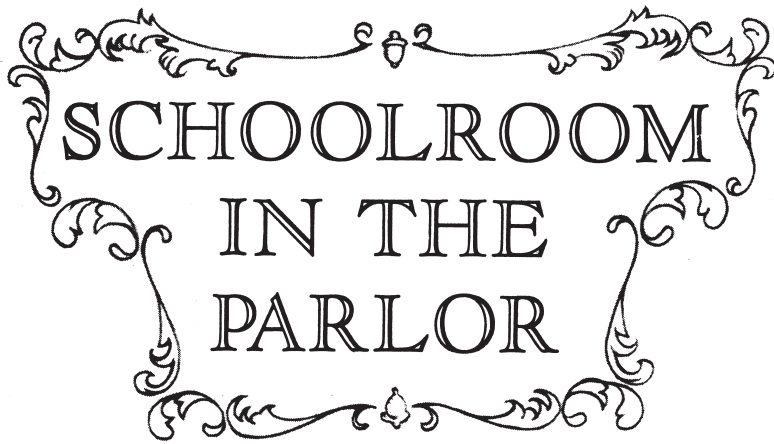
A Pocketful of Cricket (Caldecott Honor)

A Certain Small Shepherd

Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charley?

Contrary Jenkins (with husband, James Ayars)

Somebody Go and Bang a Drum

A decorative floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the title text. The border is symmetrical and has a classic, elegant feel.

SCHOOLROOM
IN THE
PARLOR

by
REBECCA CAUDILL

Pictures by Decie Merwin

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*This book
is especially for
Stella*



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Schoolroom in the Parlor





Schoolroom in the Parlor

On the afternoon of New Year's Day, the long narrow valley where the Fairchilds lived lay gray and frozen and stilled. The trees high on the mountains that hemmed it in were silvered with hoarfrost. Beside the frozen river that ran through the valley, smoke rose in a thin blue spiral from the chimney of the Fairchilds' house.

Inside the house, the Fairchilds sat about the big fireplace in the kitchen. Bonnie was reading the story of "Chicken Licken" in her First Reader. Bonnie was six and about to be seven.

“I put all my books away the day Miss Cora’s school ended,” said Chris. “That was the Friday before Christmas. I’m going to leave them there until school starts again. That won’t be till the first Monday in August.” Chris was twelve.

Miss Cora taught in the schoolhouse in the woods. Her pupils were the five Fairchilds, the four Sawyers, the three Huffs, and the five Wattersons. Every year her school ended on the Friday before Christmas. Soon afterward the snows fell, hiding the mountain paths and drifting waist-deep in the valleys. In March the thaws began, and in April the rains came, swelling the rivers and making them dangerous to cross.

“Know what Andy Watterson told me?” asked Chris. “Andy told me that whatever you do on New Year’s Day, you’ll do every day in the year. So, I’m going skating.”

“Chris!” scolded Debby. “Even if you skated till dark today, you wouldn’t skate in July.” Debby was eight.

“You wouldn’t skate in August, either,” said Emmy,

who was ten.

“You could swim in August,” said Bonnie. “That’s a little bit like skating.”

“Anyway,” said Chris, “I’m going skating. All afternoon.”

“I am, too,” said Emmy.

“I am, too,” said Debby. “And I think I’ll go right now.”

Debby took her warm coat, her long toboggan cap, and her mittens from the next-to-the-lowest hook behind the kitchen stove and began to put them on.

“I’m going right now, too,” said Bonnie.

Bonnie took her coat, her cap, and her mittens from the lowest hook behind the stove and began to put them on.

“Aren’t you going skating, Althy?” she asked her oldest sister. Althy was fourteen. She was the best skater of all the Fairchilds. She could skate fancier than any of the Huffs or the Wattersons or the Sawyers.

“Not this afternoon,” said Althy.

“Why not?” asked Bonnie.

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“Mother is going to help me do something,” said Althy.

“Something you’re going to do every day this year?” asked Debby.

“Well,” said Althy, smiling at Mother, “almost every day until spring, at least.”

“Are you going skating, Father?” asked Bonnie.

“I think I will,” said Father. And he began to put on his coat, his warm cap, and his mittens.

“I’ll bake some potatoes in the ashes for you,” said Mother. “They’ll taste good when you come in cold and hungry.”

Together, Chris and Emmy, Debby and Bonnie,

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and Father walked down to the river. Four of the Sawyers, three of the Huffs, and all five of the Watterson boys and girls were already there.

“Hey, Andy!” shouted Chris. He ran a few steps, set one foot in front of the other, spread his arms, and whizzed across the ice to join Andy.

Emmy and Debby, Bonnie and Father followed. The sharp-toothed air bit at their fingers and toes, and reddened their cheeks and noses as they skimmed over the silver ribbon of ice unwinding through the valley.

All afternoon the skaters slid back and forth on the ice, back and forth, making deep scars with their

heavy hobnailed shoes. They ran races on the ice. They played tag. They played crack-the-whip.

Finally Father looked at the sky. "It's four o'clock," he said, "and time to feed the horses and milk the cows, if we don't want dark to catch us."

"Good-by! Good-by!" called the skaters to one another as they started home. "We'll see you soon!"

"Tomorrow!" called Chris.

The Fairchilds hurried home. They burst through the doorway into the warm kitchen, letting in a wave of wintry air. Andy Watterson was with them. He was only going to warm himself before he went to his house across the mountain, he said. Mother had expected him. She had baked a potato for him, too.

That evening, when the chores were finished and darkness lay on the valley and the mountains, the Fairchilds sat about the long table in the kitchen, eating their supper. Father sat at the head of the table.

"Mother and Althy want me to tell you something," he said to Chris and Emmy, Debby and Bonnie. "Althy's going to teach school."