

Caddie Woodlawn



CAROL
RYRIE BRINK

WINNER OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL

CHAPTER I

Three Adventurers

In 1864 Caddie Woodlawn was eleven, and as wild a little tomboy as ever ran the woods of western Wisconsin. She was the despair of her mother and of her elder sister Clara. But her father watched her with a little shine of pride in his eyes, and her brothers accepted her as one of themselves without a question. Indeed, Tom, who was two years older, and Warren, who was two years younger than Caddie, needed Caddie to link them together into an inseparable trio. Together they got in and out of more scrapes and adventures than any one of them could have imagined alone. And in those pioneer days Wisconsin offered plenty of opportunities for adventure to three wide-eyed, red-headed youngsters.

On a bright Saturday afternoon in the early fall Tom and Caddie and Warren Woodlawn sat on a bank of the Menomonie River, or Red Cedar as they call it now, taking off their clothes. Their red heads shone in the sunlight. Tom's hair was the darkest, Caddie's the nearest golden, and nine-year-old Warren's was plain carrot color. Not one of the three knew

how to swim, but they were going across the river, nevertheless. A thin thread of smoke beyond the bend on the other side of the river told them that the Indians were at work on a birch-bark canoe.

"Do you think the Indians around here would ever get mad and massacre folks like they did up north?" wondered Warren, tying his shirt up in a little bundle.

"No, sir!" said Tom, "not these Indians!"

"Not Indian John, anyhow," said Caddie. She had just unfastened the many troublesome little buttons on the back of her tight-waisted dress, and, before taking it off, she paused a moment to see if she could balance a fresh-water clam shell on her big toe. She found that she could.

"No, not Indian John!" she repeated decidedly, having got the matter of the clam shell off her mind, "even if he does have a scalp belt," she added. The thought of the scalp belt always made her hair prickle delightfully up where her scalp lock grew.

"Naw," said Tom, "the fellows who spread those massacree stories are just big-mouthed scared-cats who don't know the Indians, I guess."

"Big-mouthed scared-cats," repeated Warren, admiring Tom's command of language.

"Big-mouthed scared-cats," echoed a piping voice from the bank above. Seven-year-old Hetty, who fluttered wistfully on the outer

edge of their adventures, filed away Tom's remark in her active brain. It would be useful to tell to Mother, some time when Mother was complaining about Tom's language. The three below her paid no attention to Hetty's intrusion. Their red heads, shining in the sunlight, did not even turn in her direction. Hetty's hair was red, too, like Father's, but somehow, in spite of her hair, she belonged on the dark-haired side of the family where Mother and Clara and all the safe and tidy virtues were. She poised irresolutely on the bank above the three adventurous ones. If they had only turned around and looked at her! But they were enough in themselves. She could not make up her mind what to do. She wanted to go with them, and yet she wanted just as much to run home and tell Mother and Clara what they were about to do. Hetty was the self-appointed newsbearer of the family. Wild horses could not prevent her from being the first to tell, whatever it was that happened.

Tom and Caddie and Warren finished undressing, tied their clothes into tight bundles, and stepped out into the river. The water was low after a long, hot summer, but still it looked cold and deep. Hetty shuddered. She had started to undo one shoe, but now she quickly tied it up again. She had made up her mind. She turned around and flew across the fields to tell Mother.



Caddie Woodlawn

is a real adventurer. She'd rather hunt than sew, plow than bake, and beat her brothers' dares every chance she gets. Caddie is friends with Indians, who scare most of the neighbors—neighbors who, like her mother and sisters, don't understand her at all.

Caddie is brave, and her story is special—because it's true, based on the life and memories of Carol Ryrie Brink's grandmother, the real Caddie Woodlawn. Her spirit and sense of fun have made this book a classic that readers have taken to their hearts for over fifty years.



“You take *Little House on the Prairie*;
I'll take *Caddie Woodlawn*. . . .”

—JIM TRELEASE, AUTHOR OF *THE READ-ALOUD HANDBOOK*

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