

Sara Bonds Ramsey was born in Memphis, TN. She finished her education there and was a commercial artist until she and her husband, with their year old daughter, moved to Ft. Lauderdale, FL. They raised three children, Lee, Clay and Ann, in Ft. Lauderdale and now live in Vero Beach, FL. The story of Hallie Bell is her only book.



Twelve year old Hallie Bell's story opens the day before her family leaves home to journey across the country in a covered wagon. The Bells join two other families and begin the long trek to Texas. Hallie is sad to leave her old home but soon discovers she loves the adventure of the open road. Though Hallie is the central character, the story is also about her family and friends. Excitement, humor, sadness and near tragedy keep the journey lively to the end of the trail.

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Hallie Bell Walks to Texas • Sara B. Ramsey

# Hallie Bell

## Walks to Texas



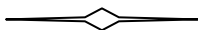
by Sara B. Ramsey

*Hallie Bell Walks to Texas*



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*Walks to Texas*



*by Sara B. Ramsey*



*Fultus™ Books*



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by

*Sara B. Ramsey*

All artwork by Author

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*for my husband Roy  
and our family*

## Chapter 15

# The News Boy

**Y**ESTERDAY Hugh had noticed a sign in the newspaper printer's shop window that hadn't been there before. The sign read 'Help Wanted'.

It was on his mind all day and by this morning he had decided that after they visited pa, he would stop by and ask about that sign.

"I' got some bis'ness t' take care of, so I'll see y'all back at the wagon," Hugh informed Hallie and Joey when they left Doc Hardy's office.

"We'll go with you," Hallie announced.

"I'm goin' by myself! I'll see y'all back at the wagon," her brother declared.

"Oh, all right," Hallie gave in. "We'll go on back. But promise you'll tell us where you went!"

"I can't promise, but y'all might know pretty soon anyhow," Hugh told her. He walked up the street to the printer's shop. The boy stood in front of the window, looking at the sign with last minute doubts.

He opened the door slowly. There was a counter in front and in the back, a man was bending over a printing press.

"Who is it?" he called out sharply.

“My name’s Hugh Bell,” the boy answered, thinking maybe he shouldn’t have bothered the printer. The man stood up and wiping his hands on an oily rag, walked to the counter.

“What can I do for you, Hugh?” he asked gruffly.

“I was just wonderin’, sir, – ‘bout that sign in the window,” Hugh answered.

“Well, what about it? It means I need some help, just like it says,” the man said impatiently. Hugh guessed he had said something foolish.

“Well - uh - I just wondered - .” He stood there a second, and started to turn around and walk out.

“Just a minute now. How about telling me what you wanted to know about that sign,” the man asked in a friendlier manner, since Hugh seemed like an all right boy.

“Well, uh, - would a person be paid for their help?” Hugh asked.

“Yes, the person would be paid, so to speak,” the man said. “But you look a little young for the job.”

“I’ll be ten my next birthday,” Hugh said, “and I’m a hard worker, too.”

“Maybe I could give you a try. I need somebody to sell these newspapers here,” the man said, pointing to a stack on the counter. “I had to let the last boy go because he was a cheat, and lazy to boot.”

“I never sold anything before,” Hugh said, “but I think I could do it, and I’m not a cheat, either.”

“Well now, we’ll see about all that. Here’s the thing, Hugh. You sell each paper for two cents. You bring me all the money you make and the unsold papers,” he explained.

“I count the money and the left over papers then divide the money. You get half and I get half. See, I make most of my money from the advertisements. What did you say your name was?”

“It’s Hugh Harrison Bell, sir,” Hugh answered.

“That’s a fine name, Hugh. My name’s Mr. Bennett. Well now, do you want the job?” he asked. Hugh gulped and thought a second.

“Yes, sir, I do,” he replied.

“All right then, you take these papers and I’ll tell you where to go. It might help if you called out something like, ‘get your news right here, just two cents!’ or ‘news, fresh off the press!’ ” the printer suggested.

After Mr. Bennett finished the directions, Hugh put the newspapers under his arm, slowly walked out to the boardwalk and headed up the street. He was in sort of a daze and couldn’t believe he had taken this job. He wasn’t sure he could do it.

Hugh came to the corner where he was supposed to sell the papers and just stood there, too bashful to call out and wondering how to get started.

He finally decided to hold the paper out and not say anything. Pretty soon a gentleman walked up to him.

“I’ll take one of your newspapers, young man,” he said as he took the paper.

“Well -- maybe you can -- have one,” Hugh stammered. He was too flustered to think.

“That’s good of you, son, but I doubt if you can afford to give them away. How much do I owe you?” the gentleman asked with a smile. Hugh was very embarrassed and could hardly speak.

“Two cents,” He managed to say. The man paid him and walked on. Hugh could have kicked himself for being so dumb. He would have been two cents short if the man hadn’t been honest. He made up his mind to do better.

So he held out a newspaper to people walking by and said, “Paper, sir? two cents,” but couldn’t work up enough nerve to call out yet, like Mister Bennett had suggested.



He was there the rest of the day without any dinner and sold six papers. He felt pretty good about it, too, but when Mr. Bennett counted the papers and divided the money that evening, he commented that Hugh had not sold enough papers.

“I know I can do better, Mr. Bennett,” Hugh said earnestly. “I’d sure like to show you.”

“All right then, you can have another try. I’ll give you a little extra if you want to come in the morning and help me in the shop,” the printer said. Hugh happily agreed. They called goodnight and Hugh lit out the door, running all the way to the wagons.

He had seen Matt and Mr. Alex in town and told them about his job, so his ma and everyone knew about it already. He felt really good when he gave ma the money he had made that day.

“I’m proud of you, son, for wanting to help out and getting a job on your own like that. Your pa will be, too,” his ma told him. “We’ll all help with your chores, of course, but try to be back at the wagon by sundown.

“All right, ma,” Hugh agreed reluctantly. Remembering what Mr. Bennett had said, he thought to himself, ‘I’ll just have to work a whole lot harder tomorrow.’

Hugh liked working in the printer’s office, and he learned he could call out, too. He improved every day and was selling a lot of papers. Mr. Bennett was pleased with his new paperboy.

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Since Mr. Bell was doing so much better now, his wife could spend more time at camp. Today she was helping the girls do the family wash. She asked Hallie to go to the general store the next day and purchase a spool of black thread. Hallie was glad to go. That was a job she really liked.

The store sold so many different things. Coffee and tea, spices, fabric and clothes, candy, books and candles, shoes and saddles and much more.

She loved the smell when she stepped through the door. It seemed to Hallie that most of the good smells in the whole world were in that one place.

When she walked in the store the next day she enjoyed a huge sniff, then looked around. There was no one up front but she could hear a loud and aggravated voice coming from a room in the rear.

“Well I’ve got to get these groceries over there and I am sure not going to send a bleary-eyed drunk to deliver them,” a man was saying. “Guess I’ll just have to do it myself. Don’t know when I’ll get the time, though.”

“‘Deliver’ must mean carryin’ the groceries,’ Hallie thought to herself. ‘I could do that, and maybe he would pay me.’ She wondered if she should offer to do it. When the store owner came up front and was waiting on her, she made up her mind.

“Mister, I’d be glad to deliver those groceries for you,” she said.

“What? You? I don’t think so,” he laughed.

“Well, why can’t I?” just popped out of her mouth.

“Because you’re a little girl,” he answered, “and the basket’s heavy.”

“I happen’ t’ be raised on a farm, and besides, I just walked prac’ly the whole way from South Carolina to Jackson,” she informed him. “I’m much stronger than I look!”

“You’re pretty sassy, too, aren’t you!” he commented.

“I’m sorry if I was sassy, sir. I just wanted you to know,” Hallie apologized.

“Let me look at you,” he said. “What’s your name?”

“Hallie Glen Bell, sir. I’m twelve, an’ goin’ to be thirteen in a few months,” she answered, trying to be extra polite since he thought she was sassy.

“Well now, I don’t know about this. Hmmm.” He rubbed his chin and thought to himself, ‘A little girl? But I do need somebody. Maybe I’ll give her a try.’

“If I let you deliver the groceries, what would you want for doin’ it?” he inquired. “It would have to be somethin’ in trade.”

“What does ‘in trade’ mean?” Hallie asked.

“It means somethin’ from the store,” the grocer said.

“Oh! Good,” she replied, and after giving it some thought, asked, “Well - I saw some nice lookin’ turnip greens over there, could I have a mess of those?”

“Sure you could, but I thought you might want some candy,”

“No sir, I want the greens,” Hallie said. “My mama and papa like greens and us chaps do, too.”

“Well, Hallie Glen Bell, I call that a deal. Let’s shake on it,” and he put out his hand. Hallie solemnly shook hands with him.

“I’ll tell you where to go now. Pay strict attention!” he cautioned. Hallie said she would.

When he finished the instructions he was looking her up and down again.

“I think it would look more fittin’ if you wore this here apron. It’s clean and starched, but may be a little long,” he said as he turned and took the apron off a hook.

Hallie put it on and had to roll the top down and tie it up under her arms, and still it came down to her shoes. But she said the apron would do just fine because she didn't want him to change his mind.

"All right, off you go. And don't forget, go to the back door and say the basket's from Mr. Thompson the grocer," he reminded her. "You seem like a polite girl so just be extra polite today."

"Yes sir, I will," she replied. She put on her bonnet, picked up the basket, which was pretty heavy, and marched out the door and down the boardwalk.



Carrying the load of groceries with one hand as though it was light as anything, she turned the corner,

and then grabbed the basket with both hands. It really needed two hands.

Hallie had to start watching her landmarks, that's what Mr. Thompson had called them, for she didn't want to lose her way. She pushed her bonnet off and let it hang down her back, to have a better view.

She was doing something pretty important and had to do it right. So far everything was going good. At the next corner Hallie would need to turn to the left and cross the road, so she walked on, trying to go as fast as she could.

When she came to the corner, Hallie decided to set the basket down for just a minute to rest her arms. But as soon as her burden hit the boardwalk a boy streaked from out of nowhere, grabbed the basket, and took off running.

Hallie didn't even take time to yell at him. She just yanked her dress and petticoat, apron and all, up to her knees and lit out running fast as she could, knowing she had to get that basket back no matter what.

The boy had long legs and was making good time, even with the heavy basket. Hallie was a very good runner, though. She caught up with the culprit at the end of the block, grabbed the handle of the basket with both hands, and pulled.

"Give me that basket, you!!" she shouted angrily. The boy didn't say a word. He let go of the basket and just kept running.

"You thief! You better run!" Hallie yelled after him. Then she carried the basket over to the edge of the boardwalk and sat down, with both arms through the handle. She had to catch her breath for a bit.

After a few minutes she started back to the corner.

She noticed a man standing in the doorway of a law office, watching her. He stepped out on the boardwalk.

“Excuse me young lady, may I carry your basket for you?” he asked politely. Hallie stopped and looked up at him.

“Well, -- no sir. I guess I better carry it. But thank you anyhow,” she answered, and marched on.

“I saw everything that happened with your basket just now,” he said, walking along beside her. “I assure you I won’t run away with it. I could just give you a helping hand to the corner,” he offered. Hallie stopped and looked up at him again.

“You do look pretty honest, Mister. Maybe I can let you carry it just to the corner,” she said. “That’s where I was supposed to turn left.” She gave him the basket and they started up the boardwalk.

“I happened to be looking out the window upstairs when I saw that young scalawag grab your basket,” he explained to her. “I was very impressed with how you got it back. You’re very fast on your feet.”

“Yes, sir. I can run faster than anybody in my fam’ly.” Hallie told him proudly, “and those are groceries I’m supposed to deliver for Mr. Thompson, so I had to get them back for sure.” They were coming to the corner now.

“How much farther do you have to go?” the man asked.

“Mr. Thompson said between the roads is called a block, so I’ve got two more blocks to go I guess” she explained. “He said it’s a big fine house and I have to

go to the back door. He's paying me a good mess of turnip greens, so I have to do this good as I can."

"I have a feeling you're going to do just fine," the gentleman assured her, "and I'm glad I could help with your delivery."

"But you've been a big help to me, sir, and I sure do thank you for it," Hallie told him. They said good-bye and she crossed the road and trudged on.

# *Acknowledgments*

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