

Emmy's Journey to the 1880 town

Emmy is in the 3rd grade and lives with her family in Watertown, South Dakota. Her mother and father are sitting with her at the kitchen table talking about a trip to the Black Hills. Her Father says he has heard about the 1880 town and would like to tour the town. Emmy asks, "What is it, Dad?" Her father replies, "It is town that has a bunch of old building that were used in the early frontier days. They even have a herd of Texas longhorns!"



"Oh," Emmy says, not very enthusiastically. A bunch of old buildings and cows didn't sound very interesting to Emmy. She saw cows all the time. Emmy would much rather go to a Zoo. Her dad says, "Emmy, why don't you use your new computer and Google the 1880 town?" Emmy is eager to use her new computer. She runs off to Google the 1880 town and comes running back to the table a few minutes later. "Dad, guess what?" she says, "They have a real camel! His name is Otis!"

A couple of weeks later the family left for their trip to the Black Hills. They decided to spend a night in Murdo, SD and the next day they would visit the 1880 town.

As the family approached Murdo, they saw a billboard with a camel and a child asking Otis for the password.



Emmy says “Dad, camels can’t talk!” Her father says, “Well, I, uh...” She says, “Do they?” Dad says, “I guess every animal talks somehow,” and shrugs.

“What is the password for?” Emmy asks. “I don’t know,” says Dad. “I guess we will have to wait and see.”

The family leaves the motel around 8:00 AM the next day. They grab a quick breakfast and head west down Interstate 90 to the 1880 town. Emmy is ecstatic that she will get to see Otis up close and possibly be able to talk with him somehow. She is curious about, “the password.”

As they travel down the interstate, Emmy tells her parents she has a trick question to ask Otis if she can speak to him. Her mother says, “Oh, what is it?” Emmy does not want to tell anyone the trick question. Her mother warns, “Otis is very smart.” That’s why I’m not telling anyone my question Emmy thinks.

As they approach the 1880 town, Emmy hollers, “Look Dad, a dinosaur!” as they pass a metal skeleton of a dinosaur. “A pet dinosaur, looks like,” her dad replies.



Emmy looks off to the west and thinks she sees something moving. She has read about bands of Indians that roamed the prairie in her history class. She has even heard her great grandfather tell stories about the days when Indians still lived in bands that roamed the prairie. Great Grandpa's uncle had lived on farm, but he took off with a band of Lakota when he was just her age. But no, that could not be a band of Indians out there, but maybe Indian spirits? She wonders if there might be any spirits in the 1880 town.

They enter the 1880 town and purchase tickets. The lady gives Emmy a ticket and a business card with Otis's picture on it. A camel with a business card, Emmy laughs to herself. The card is a picture of Otis with his email address. E-mail address? Emmy thinks, how do you email a camel?!

The ticket lady asks, "Do you want to have a video made of your tour?" Emmy says, "Oh, please, please," with excitement as she envisions herself the star of her own movie. Her dad says the usual, "Oh, I **guess** so." The lady laughs. "You will love it! You just need to go to the first car of the 1880 train over there," she says, pointing, "to have your picture taken." Emmy had spied the train as they entered the office area. She wondered what the cars looked like inside. Would she get to see them?

They do to enter the first car, where a young man says, "I get to take your picture." Emmy blushes. She had no idea why. "Ok," she says. She is glad she put on one of her pretty dresses and matching shoes today. The young man tells her where to stand and then tells her parents where to stand beside her. "Good, good, everyone please look at the camera. Now turn your face to the left. Now back to the center, and now to your right. Fantastic! Now, I get to take pictures of just the pretty young lady." Emmy giggles and poses for her pictures.

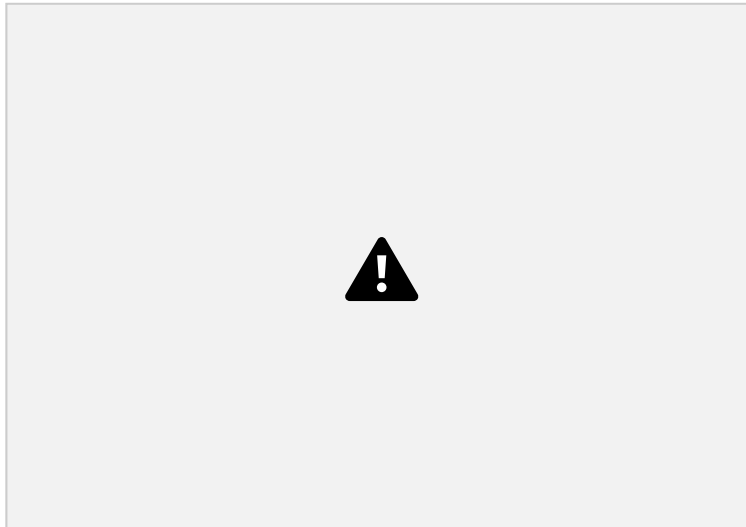
As the family enters the 1880 town, they peer down the path that was once tread by many horses. Emmy hears father gasp and utter, "Oh my God!"



Her dad really likes westerns. Emmy thinks he must feel like he has stepped into one. Emmy notices an old-fashioned church at the end of the path.

Off to her right she sees movement. It's an animal. "No, it isn't," she says right out loud. "Yes, it is! Mom, it's Otis!" she cries.

"Be patient, we will get to Otis," her mother says. "Okay," Emmy says, looking back in Otis's direction. As she catches up with her mother, Emmy sees a sign that says, "Dances with Wolves."



"Wolves dance?" she asks her parents, with an incredulous expression on her face. Her mom laughs, "Well, that was the name of a movie about Indians and a war with the army." Armies do not interest Emmy. The family walks through the

“Dancing with Wolves” exhibit in the hay loft of a barn that had come from the Hullinger farm. Whatever that is, she thinks. But the exhibit is actually pretty interesting. She admires the beautiful headdresses and the exotic dresses that the Indian women wore for dancing. Looking at the Indian arrowhead collection, she remembers her great grandfather talking about finding Indian arrowheads on their farm when he was growing up

They wandered over to view the herd of longhorns. As they approach, she hears a voice say, “Emmy, do not forget to ask Otis for a password”. “Who is that? ‘Who is talking to me?’” she asks her dad. But her dad is gazing at the longhorns. She turns to her mother, “Don’t let me forget the password,” she whispers. Her father pulls her beside him and puts his arm around her, “Wow, aren’t they wonderful, Emmy?” he asks.



Emmy is amazed: the longhorns are beautiful. She looks out at the green pasture behind them that seems to go on and on, with no building in sight, and wonders for the first time what it would have been like to live when great grandfather did, or even when his uncle roamed with the Indians. “Did great grandpa have longhorns at his farm?” she asks. “He may have,” her father answers.

They continued onward to visit the old buildings. In the 1880 house, she is curious about something that is in a tub at one of the houses. She asks her mom, “What is in that tub? What is that kind of rough stuff on it?”



“That is a wash board,” her mother explains. “The pioneer women would rub the clothes on the wash board to get them clean.” Emmy could not picture in her mind how you get clothes clean by rubbing them on something. She thinks maybe her mom is messing with her. She shrewdly eyes her mother and asks, “Then how did they dry their clothes?”

Her mom answers, “They hung their clothes on a clothesline to dry, just like my grandma used to.” Emmy says, “Oh,” wondering what a clothesline is.



Emmy and her father are looking through a widow at an 1880 school building.



Emmy says, “Dad, what are those holes on the desk? See right there at the top of the desk?” Emmy’s father answers, “Uh, ah, I really do not know. We will have to ask at the end of our tour.”

They continue wandering through the other buildings, the covered wagons, and horse carriages. Then Emmy squeals, “Look Mom, donkeys! Let’s go over there. Please?” Her mother laughs, “Ok, Emmy.” As they approach the donkeys, they hear a voice say, “Hi Emmy, we have been waiting for you.”

“ME?” Emmy asks.

“We are Dolly and Daisy,” the voice continues. “Would you like a coloring page of us?” Emmy is excited. The donkeys are talking to her. She throws her arms in the air. “Yes, yes. Please?” she says. Then she hears Dolly’s voice say, “Ok, we have had them emailed.” Emmy turns to her dad and says, “Did you get them dad? Can you see the email on your phone?” Daisy tells Emmy, “You can pet us if you would like.” Oh wow, real donkeys, she thinks, reaching her hand out to pet Dolly’s nose. I am petting real donkeys. You don’t get to pet the animals at the zoo. “Did great grandpa have donkeys on his farm?” she asks her father. “Yes,” he says, “I think they did. But they rode horses to school when they were little.” Emmy thinks how awesome that would be. Living in great granddad’s time wouldn’t have been all bad....

As they leave the donkeys, she hears Daisy say, “Do not forget to ask Otis for a password....” Then she sees Otis in the pasture off to the left. She is so excited. A REAL camel. That I can TALK to! She thinks to herself, I hope I don’t say anything stupid to Otis. The thought makes her anxious, oh no, what if I do, and they catch it in our movie?

As they approach Otis’s viewing area, Emmy can feel her hands getting sweaty. She is nervous excited. She hears a voice say, “Emmy turn around and look at the screen”. She turns and looks at the screen and sees Otis on the left and herself on the right of the screen. She claps her hands in excitement. She and Otis will be together in her movie. Then she thinks, oh my, what should I ask Otis first? She remembers her dad frequently asks people, “What do you think about this weather?” Emmy wipes her sweaty hands on her jeans and blurts out, “How’s the weather?” Otis replies, “The wind is out of the northwest about 12 mph, the temperature is 74 degrees Fahrenheit and it is partly cloudy.” Emmy laughs. She hadn’t expected such a complete weather report.

Emmy thinks, “I must ask Otis my trick question, but I don’t know if I should.” She chews on her lip. Then she says to herself, “I can do this.” She decides to “cowboy up” as her great grandpa had taught her. She says, “Otis what is...” and her voice cracks.



She is so shocked; she runs to her mother. “I blew it,” she tells her mother. “My head was all swooshed and everything. I did not even get the password!” Her mother says she is sure that she can speak to Otis again. “No,” Emmy shakes her head. “He won’t want to talk to me now,” she says and walks away.

They soon leave the 1880 town. As they enter Interstate 90, heading west towards Rapid City, Emmy is still in a funk about Otis. Shortly after they leave the 1880 town she points off to the north, Dad look “a band of Indians”.

They continue to drive forward on their journey west. Emmy is lost in her own thoughts when her dad says, “I am getting a text.” He pulls his phone out, “It’s Otis” her dad says.” Emmy jumps up and leans forward from the back seat. “What did he say? What did he say? Is it anything about me?” Her dad says, “Otis wants to thank us for the time we spent at the 1880 town.” Emmy says excitedly, “Dad, text Otis back and say thank you!” Then she remembers, I have Otis’s email address from his business card. It is, Otis1880town@gmail.com. I can email him and tell him I’m sorry I freaked out, she thinks.

Then Emmy notices Otis’s web site on the business card. Being at the 1880 town with her parents, thinking about her family history and the history of South Dakota, she is totally exhausted. As she thinks about what might be on Otis’ website, she drifts off to sleep with pleasant thoughts of logging on with her new computer when she gets home.

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Email: jerry.dugin1@gmail.com

Otis Email: Otis1880town@gmail.com.

The End

