

*Kathleen Ernst*  
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST



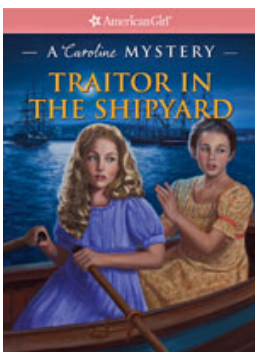
## Preview of *Traitor In The Shipyard*

Caroline Abbott: An American Girl – Book Seven

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When Caroline learns that British spies may be lurking in Sackets Harbor, she is worried. Then, a long lost friend of Papa's shows up in town. Papa is delighted to give him a job at Abbott's Shipyard, but soon, strange things start going wrong. Caroline is sure a spy is making trouble at the yard—but is it one of Abbott's trusted workers, whom she has known all her life, or could it be Papa's dear friend?

An illustrated "Looking Back" section discusses the role of spies in the War of 1812.

### Chapter One – A Stranger Arrives

Caroline Abbott found it hard to keep from humming a cheerful tune, even though she was dusting. *Don't disturb Papa while he's working*, she reminded herself. Her father built ships, and she loved spending time with him in the shipyard office. But today, being here with him seemed especially precious. She was spending much of the summer helping her cousin's family on their distant farm. She'd come home to enjoy yesterday's Independence Day celebration, but soon would return to the farm.

"Caroline," Papa called. "I need you to run an errand for me."

"Of course, Papa!" She dropped her dust cloth and hurried across the room to his big desk.



Papa handed her a folded piece of paper. "Please deliver this progress report to the navy shipyard."

"I will." As Caroline tucked the note into her pocket, she studied his design sketch for a schooner. Ever since the United States had declared war on Great Britain more than a year ago, Abbott's Shipyard had produced gunboats for the navy. Caroline was proud that her family's business helped defend her village of Sackets Harbor, New York—and all of mighty Lake Ontario. The gunboats were heavy, though, with none of the graceful lines of the schooners and sloops her father had designed before the war.

"I'm glad the navy asked you to build a schooner," she told him. She imagined the pretty ship slipping through marshes, hiding behind islands, pouncing on small British ships sailing foolishly close to the American side of the great lake. "It will be lovely!"

"I think so." Papa surveyed the design. "But whether a gunboat or a schooner, what the navy men want most is a speedy ship, quickly built. I wish we weren't short-handed."

Caroline nodded. Two of their workers had recently enlisted in the American navy.

"Run along, now." Papa kissed her forehead. "Deliver my message only to someone you know. There may be spies about."

Caroline hated the idea that any stranger she passed on the street might be a British spy! "I'll be careful," she promised.

Outside, she paused to watch the carpenters who were finishing the skeletal wooden frame for the new schooner. The day was sticky-hot, and the men labored with sleeves rolled up and hats pulled low to shade their eyes.



The yard thrummed with the sounds of saws and axes and mallets, shouts and whistles and snatches of song.

As Caroline headed to the street she jumped on a log and started to walk its length, arms outstretched. She had almost reached the end when someone called, "Miss Caroline!"

Caroline glanced up. "Good day, Hosea!" Hosea Barton was Abbott's sailmaker. He was a tall man with brown skin, a soft voice, and long fingers that worked huge pieces of heavy sailcloth with ease.

He doffed his felt hat. "I didn't mean to interrupt your play."

"You didn't," she assured him. "I'm on my way to the navy yard."

"It's good to see you having fun for once," Hosea said.

His observation made her feel good. Since the war had begun, she'd helped at home, helped at her cousin's farm, helped at the shipyard. She'd even helped defend Abbott's during a British attack!

"I try to be helpful," she said, "but my friend Rhonda and I find time for games, too. We like to play jackstraws or dominoes, and sometimes we race hoops." The two girls had decided to make a quilt, too. Since Caroline loved to sew, she was excited about that project.

Hosea's eyes twinkled. "And now that *Miss Caroline* is seaworthy again, I expect you'll be having fun on the lake."

Caroline grinned. *Miss Caroline* was her skiff. In May she'd sunk the skiff across the mouth of a creek to keep a British ship from catching an American supply boat. She'd thought the skiff was gone for good, but Papa had surprised her by raising it and making repairs. He'd presented her with the skiff just the day before. She could hardly wait to get back out on the lake!



"Papa said Rhonda and I might take the skiff out by ourselves," she told Hosea, "but we need a day when the wind is not too gentle and not too strong."

"I hope that day comes quickly," Hosea said. "Everyone needs to forget about the war from time to time. Especially right now."

Following his gaze, Caroline saw an American warship patrolling in the distance—a reminder that the British colony of Upper Canada was just across the lake. Before the war, Caroline and her family had often gone there to shop or visit relatives. Now, it was enemy territory.

Closer to shore, two almost-finished boats floated in the harbor. Abbott's workers were attaching sails to their latest gunboat. Nearby, workers on the navy's newest warship, *General Pike*, were fitting a mast into place. Guards stood on the deck.

"Have you heard when *General Pike* will be ready?" she asked. Once complete, *Pike* would be the mightiest vessel ever to sail Lake Ontario.

"The sails aren't finished." Hosea glanced over his shoulder, as if making sure that no one else could hear. "The navy is also waiting for a shipment of gunpowder. With twenty-eight cannons aboard, *General Pike* needs ten thousand pounds."

"Gracious!" Caroline was so startled that she lost her balance and had to jump down from the log.

"And until *Pike* launches, the British rule the lake." Hosea looked frustrated. "It's maddening to see our fleet bottled up here to protect *General Pike* while British ships cruise about Lake Ontario at will."

"Papa says the navy's most important job right now is protecting *General Pike*," she said.



Hosea nodded. "Our enemies want desperately to seize or destroy *Pike* before it ever sets sail. If that happens, the war on the Great Lakes will be lost."

Caroline looked back over the harbor. If the Americans didn't get *General Pike* into service soon, they might not be able to defend themselves.

Then she lifted her chin. "Well," she said briskly, "when our gunboat and schooner are finished, the navy will have two more vessels to keep an eye on the British. Are you making the schooner's sails?"

"They are well underway," he assured her. "Have you met Paul, my new apprentice?"

She nodded. "I met him yesterday at the Independence Day picnic. He doesn't look much older than me!"

"I don't think he is," Hosea said. "When I asked your Papa for an apprentice, I knew it might not be easy to find one. With so many men in the army or navy, most families need their boys to help at home. Paul's an orphan, though. He's been on his own for years."

*How dreadful*, Caroline thought. She tried to imagine how she would feel if left to wander and make her way alone. She didn't like that picture, not at all. "I'm glad Paul's found a good place to settle, where he can learn a trade," she told Hosea. "I'm excited about having someone close to my own age working here. I expect we'll become good friends."

Hosea said, "You come by the sail loft and visit, Miss Caroline. Paul is very shy, but he'd probably enjoy the chance to talk with someone his own age." He wiped sweat from his forehead with a kerchief. "I'll let you be on your way."

The navy shipyard was right next to Abbott's, but it took Caroline several minutes to reach the gate. In the past year and a half, thousands of people had moved to Sackets Harbor—shipbuilders, tavernkeepers, merchants, and the



sailors, soldiers, and marines sent to guard the shipyards and fight the British. The streets were always jammed.

After worming her way to the navy yard, she explained her errand to the guards, who knew her and let her pass. Caroline found Mr. Eckford, the master shipbuilder, working in his office with his clerk. Mr. Eckford was a dark-haired man with side whiskers that reached his chin. "I've a report from my father," she said.

Mr. Eckford read the note. "It sounds as if the schooner is coming right along. My compliments to your father."

"I'll tell him, sir," Caroline said.

"Mr. Crowley?" Mr. Eckford handed the note to his clerk. "Please make a copy of this to send to the naval officers. Put the original with the Abbott's contract."

Mr. Crowley was a small man with hunched shoulders, spectacles perched low on his nose, and a constant frown. "Thundering thieves," the clerk grumbled under his breath. "As if I didn't already have ten things to do at once."

Caroline didn't want to linger. "Good day, Mr. Eckford," she said. "And good day to you too, Mr. Crowley." She pronounced the clerk's name carefully, because in her mind she called him "Mr. *Growl-y*." She liked talking with him, though, because his complaints often held phrases—like "thundering thieves"—that made her smile.

Mr. Crowley shrugged and turned back to his work. Caroline turned to go.

"Miss Caroline, there's one more thing." Mr. Eckford's face grew serious. "Please tell your father that we caught a spy in the yard yesterday."

Caroline caught her breath. "*Inside* the yard?"

The shipbuilder pounded a fist against his palm. "The blackheart was looking for weak spots in our defenses."



*Hosea was right*, she thought. *The British desperately want to steal or destroy General Pike.* "Thank goodness the spy was caught," she said.

"Tell your father to be on his guard," Mr. Eckford said. "Someone might try to sneak into Abbott's as well, looking for information about the ships being built there."

Caroline's stomach knotted as she imagined a spy surveying Abbott's Shipyard. *Blast this war!* she thought. *None of us can rest until the British are sent home to Upper Canada for good.*

# # #

When Caroline got back to Abbott's, she spotted Hosea's apprentice, Paul, in the shipyard. He was a skinny boy with curly hair the color of molasses. He walked with hands in his pockets, head down, shoulders hunched. Caroline called, "Good morning, Paul!"

He jerked to a halt, clearly startled. "Why...that is..." His cheeks grew red. "I mean to say, good morning, miss."

Caroline joined him. "I hope you're enjoying your work here," she said with her friendliest smile.

Paul opened his mouth, then closed it again. His gaze flitted from the ground to the workshops to the schooner.

*Gracious!* she thought. *He is shy.* She imagined that a boy who'd been taking care of himself for years didn't have much practice making friends. "I know Hosea is glad to have your help," she added, trying to put him at ease.

"I—I do try to be helpful," Paul stammered. "I'm needed in the loft." With a quick nod he turned away.

Caroline watched him go. Paul might *need* a friend, but he didn't seem to know how to go about making one. Perhaps knowing that she was the Master



Shipbuilder's daughter made Paul feel especially shy. She'd have to think of a way to let Paul know that she truly wanted him to be happy at Abbott's.

She hurried to the office, where she found Mr. Tate, the chief carpenter, huddled with Papa. "...a question about the keel, here," Mr. Tate was saying as he pointed at Papa's sketch. The keel was a long wooden beam at the schooner's bottom.

"Ah." Papa nodded. "That *is* a new design. Let me explain my thinking." He spread a more detailed drawing on the desk, pinning the corners down with stones.

"Pardon me, Papa," Caroline said. "I have news from Mr. Eckford." She quickly told the men about the spy caught in the navy yard.

Papa looked at Mr. Tate. "The workers must be alert while on guard duty, especially at night. No doubt the British would like to steal our designs, or destroy our gunboat and schooner."

"Yes sir," Mr. Tate said. He gave Caroline a quick nod. "Never fear, miss. No one will harm *our* ships if the workers have anything to say about it."

Mr. Tate had worked at Abbott's for many years, and his reassurance made Caroline feel a little better. Even more comforting, though, was hearing Papa's voice as he and Mr. Tate got back to work. The British had captured Papa when the war began and had held him as a prisoner for many long months. She'd missed him terribly! He hadn't been home for long, and it still seemed like a miracle to have him back. But until the war ended, Papa—and the family business—remained in danger.

Someone passed by the front window, throwing a shadow into the room. Caroline hurried to the door and cracked it open.



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The visitor, who was raising his hand to knock, blinked in surprise and snatched the sweat-stained hat from his head. Faded trousers and linen shirt and vest marked him as a civilian, not a military man. He had blue eyes and black hair, and the weathered face of a man who spent time outdoors.

“May I help you?” Caroline asked in a polite but low voice. She didn’t want to disturb her father and Mr. Tate unless it was necessary.

The stranger stared at her. “Bless my soul,” he said. “You’re Caroline!”

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