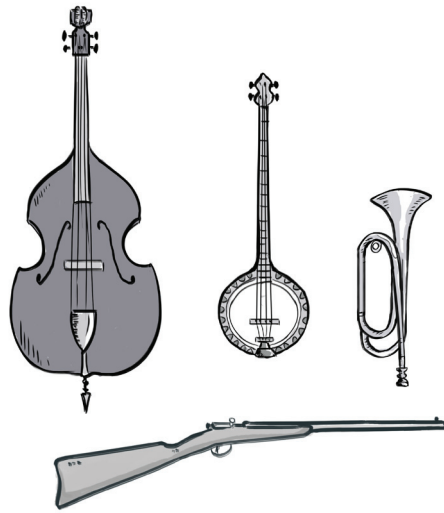


Adventures on the American Frontier

PIONEER SHOW PEOPLE

Part Two

The Chapman Showboat



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York



Other books in this series:
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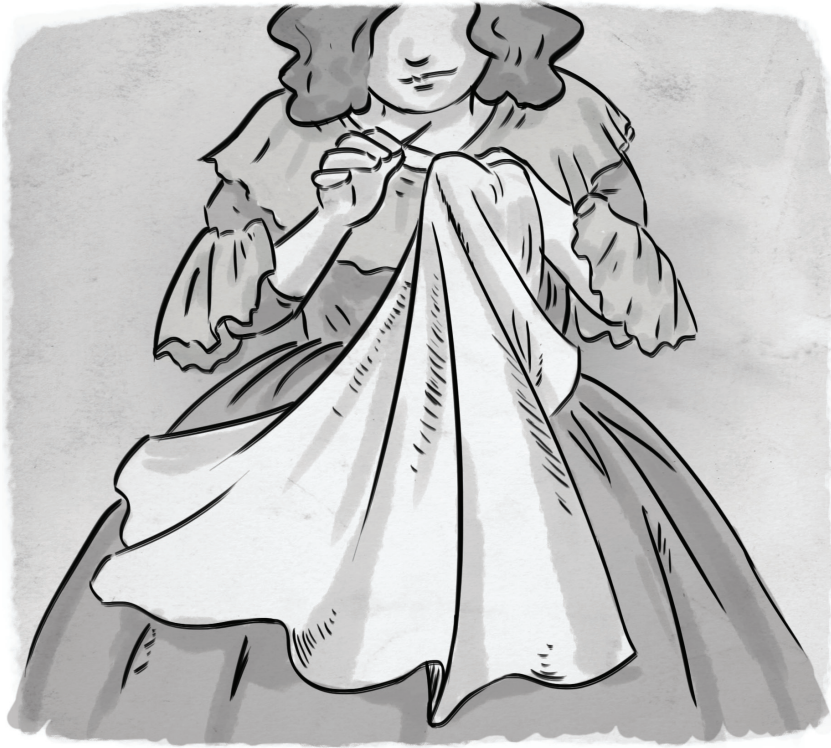
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Mama Chapman bent over her sewing in a room of the stuffy old inn at Pittsburgh. The Chapman Company of actors had been stopped in that city for a long time, but soon they would be moving on.



Mama moved closer to the open windows to catch the afternoon light. She was sewing pieces of red cloth onto a white banner.

“To be, or not to be!” shouted her oldest son, a young man named William Chapman, Jr. Mama didn’t even look up from her work. She was used to hearing William shout out lines from Shakespeare’s plays. An actor had to practice.

“Be Horatio for me, Mama,” William asked her.



Mama sewed on, giving Horatio's lines without looking up. All of the Chapman Company knew *Hamlet* well. They had played in England until 1827, just four years before. Then they had come to America. They played for a short while in the big cities but left to become a boat show.

Mr. Chapman had seen right away that it would save a lot of trouble to have a boat so big that the shows could be given right on it. He was the first person to decide to try it.

William went on with his lines. "Methinks
I see my father."

Mama said her next line. "Oh where,
my lord?"

Just then Mr. Chapman came into the
room. "Right here, coming in the door,"
he laughed. "And I've good news! Our
showboat is ready at last!"

Mama dropped her sewing. William
forgot his lines. The three danced around
the room in joy. Another young man came
in to learn the reason for all the noise.



“The boat is ready, George,” said Mama.

“Tomorrow it goes into the water. On the day after that, we’ll leave this town, where people are so busy making boats that they don’t have time for the theater.”

“Caroline!” George called into the hallway. “Come here! Good news!”

Caroline Chapman, thirteen years old but already a star in the Chapman Company, came in, followed by William’s wife, Phoebe. A few minutes later, two children came in from playing outside.