



Fall 2015

It was finally here! The season has changed to beautiful Fall in Avon and Abigail has been looking forward to a fun event with her friends who lived near her home at the Pine Grove School House. It was an event just for small animals and ones who could swim well. It was the annual Squash Boat Race held on the stream at nearby Beaver Pond!

The idea was that each animal had to make their own squash boat...could be a yellow crookneck squash, or a green zucchini squash, a butternut squash or a small pumpkin (which is also a squash). Each entrant in the race had to design their own boat by chewing the squash to shape it and hollow it out. Then the squash half was left to dry a bit in the sun and a coating of egg white was painted on the 'hull' to make it watertight. The drawing above shows Abigail trying to choose just the right pumpkin.

The big day of the squash boat race arrived and Abigail was all dressed in her red corduroy long skirt, white blouse, and straw bonnet as there was a nip in the air. All the boats were made in the garden at Sunrise Farm across the road from the school house so they would be close to the stream. Each animal had put two twigs under their boats for easy rolling over the land and down to the stream. What a sight to see with all these different kinds of squash boats and their furry 'captains' awaiting the whistle to blow to start the race! Abigail got into her boat with her home-gnawed twig paddle and then.....TWEEEEEEEEET, TWEEEEEEEEET! They were off!

The current of the stream was swift so a racer had to be careful to keep his or her boat from flipping over. The finish line for the end of the race was an old oak tree that had fallen across the stream. First boat to cross under the tree was the winner. So here they all came, paddling as fast as they could, trying to avoid obstacles in the water such as rocks and branches, and trying not to get dumped into the cold water!

Benjamin Bunny was in the lead with his butternut squash boat and Abigail was in second place in her sugar pumpkin boat. They were both furiously paddling and then it happened.... Benjamin's boat got snared on an underwater rock and he was stuck. So Abigail cruised right on by him and was fast approaching the tree! Go Abigail!!!

But there was a problem....how to stop the boat after you crossed the finish line? The animals hadn't thought about that part. So Abigail's pumpkin boat kept heading down the stream going faster and faster all by itself....oh, my! She was headed right for the grain gristmill at Harvey Derrin's mill. She might get pulled into the sluice (a wooden trough that directed water into the mill to turn the shaft of the grinding stones), or she might be dropped into the grain bin and onto the grinding stones and would wind up as pumpkin bread! Oh, my again! Luckily for Abigail, the crisis was averted. Skeeter, a farm cat, was watching the race saw what was about to happen. She hung, using her sharp back claws, off the fallen tree and caught Abigail before she headed to the mill. Abigail's boat was the first to cross the finish line anyway and she got the blue ribbon! How great to have friends always there to help you. Thanks Skeeter!