Freckles

By Gene Stratton-Porter

Reviewed by Connie Bennett, Vinton Public Library Clerk

Freckles, written in 1902, is the first book of the “Limberlost” series, by Gene Stratton-Porter. It is one of my all-time favorites! The Limberlost was a forested swamp in Northern Indiana, and represented a golden opportunity for loggers, since some of the trees were worth thousands of dollars.

When first we meet Freckles, he seems to be a boy to be pitied; he is thin, dressed in rags, under-fed, and exhausted. On top of this, his shirt sleeve hangs empty because he has lost his right hand. Still in his teens, he has no family or friends, no means of support, and nothing to recommend him. The only name he ever knew was given to him in the orphanage in Chicago where he grew up. Now he has “aged out” of the system and has set out on his own. In this condition, Freckles arrives in the logging camp of rich and powerful Mr. McLean, a Scotsman who has purchased a large portion of the Limberlost.

Freckles presents himself in hopes of getting a job, and McLean, while sympathetic, tells the boy that he needs “a good, big fellow with a stout heart and a strong boy…you are too young and hardly strong enough.” Freckles takes that as a challenge and secures the job of Limberlost Guard.

The Reader can immediately tell that the author lived in this area because of the magnificent descriptions of the plants and creatures that are such an important part of the story. As I said, this is one of my favorites, and if you read it, I think it will become one of yours, as well. This book and its companion, Girl of the Limberlost, are available through Libby or Inter-library Loan. Both are worth the effort! Happy reading!