

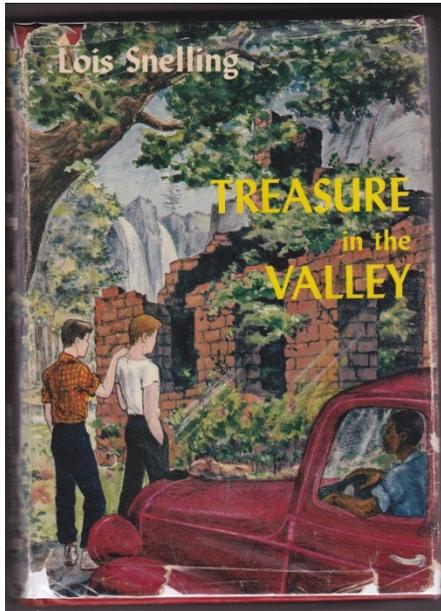
# After Sixty Years, A Book Gets Back to Its Original Owner

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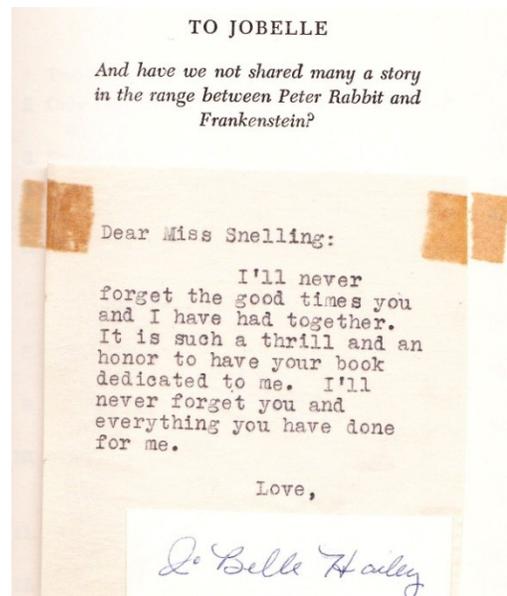
In late 2016, Mark Gibbons, a friend of mine, suggested that I try the juveniles by Lois Snelling, and especially recommended *Treasure in the Valley*. The book was published in 1958. Mark has never recommended a book I didn't like, so I did a search on addall, found a copy in dust jacket, and ordered it. A few days later, the book was in my hand.



As I turned to the title page, imagine my surprise when I discovered that the book had been signed by the author; the online description hadn't mentioned that. Then I turned past the title page and saw that it had also been signed by the dedicatee! The dedication reads, "TO JOBELLE, And have we not shared many a story in the range between Peter Rabbit and Frankenstein?" And taped just below the dedication was a carbon copy of a typewritten note that read, "Dear Miss Snelling: I'll never forget the good times you and I have had together. It is such a thrill and an honor to have your book dedicated to me. I'll never forget you and everything you have done for me. Love, Jo Belle Hailey."

Impressed by what I had, I posted a note about it on the Collecting Vintage Children's Series Books Facebook page and got some good responses. One of them was from James Keeline, who had done a little research, for which he has quite a gift. He had located a person who was most likely Jo Belle Hailey, though she now bears the last name of her husband. I wrote a letter to this individual, telling her of my find.

A month later I had a response. Jo Belle wrote, "My mother loaned my copy to a friend of hers—who never returned it. That is the note I wrote Miss Snelling. I have so many fond memories of her. She was a wonderful lady. She baby sat for my brother and me."



Of course we don't know the book's history after that, but it had another name in it, dated 1961. And obviously after some decades it found its way to a used bookstore from which I bought it in 2016.



I had no doubt that the book needed to be returned to its original owner. I found another copy online for myself, and sent Jo Belle the book that the author had given her back in the late 1950s. I asked her permission to write an article about it, and asked her for photographs of herself at the time she first owned the book, and now. She graciously provided those photographs.

I suspect that many of us fans of series books and classic children's stories have wondered about the books we owned as children that we gave away or were given away for us. This is the first occasion I've heard of when a book that was lost almost sixty years earlier came back to its proper owner. I'm glad that I had a part to play in its return.



And my friend was right: *Treasure in the Valley* was a good story!