

The Adventures of Penny & Paws

"The Past is the Present"



© 2026 Mackinac Center for Public Policy
All rights reserved.

No graphic, visual, electronic, film, microfilm, tape recording, or any other means may be used to reproduce in any form, without prior written permission of the Mackinac Center, except in the case of brief passages embodied in critical reviews and articles.

Author: Mick McArt
Illustrators: Mick McArt & Hannah Golab
The Adventures of Penny & Paws: The Past is the Present

Printed in Midland, Michigan.

The Adventures of
Penny & Paws
"The Past is the Present"

“The birthday is coming! The birthday is coming!” Penny shouted as she rode up on her hobby horse.

“Whoa there, Penny Revere!” Paws said, trying to calm her down. “Hold your horsey! Whose birthday are you talking about?”

“Easy, girl,” Penny said, dismounting from her mighty steed. “It’s America’s birthday! Can you believe it’s been only 250 years?! If you ask me, America doesn’t look a day older than 230!”

“Is there going to be a cake?” Paws said, while his tail started to wag. “Because it’s not a party without my famous homemade kibblecake!”

“Of course,” Penny said cheerfully, gesturing to the sky. “And picture this, lots and lots of colorful fireworks! It will all be held at Liberty Park, with hamburgers, hot dogs, and everything!”

“Well, there’d better be ice-cold lemonade, or hot dogs won’t be the only overheated pets. There’ll be hot cats, birds, and ferrets too!” Paws replied.

“Oh, no,” Penny paused for a moment. “Something just occurred to me. It wouldn’t be a proper birthday party without gifts! What are we going to do?! What do you get for a country that has it all?”

“Chew toys,” Paws said with confidence and a bit of drool. “With squeakers, of course.”

“I love you, Paws,” Penny chuckled. “But that is the silliest thing I’ve ever heard.”



“Maybe I’m barking up the wrong tree,” Paws shrugged. “But whatever we decide on, it will probably cost some money.”

“Do we have any quarters left from our lemonade stand sales?” Penny asked.

Paws dug through his front pockets and pulled out a chewed-up button, an uninflated balloon, and a paperclip. “This is all we have left,” he said sadly. “I wish we hadn’t accepted barter.”

Paws dug around in his sidebag, and the Magic Window controller fell out. “So that’s where that was,” the dog said happily. “I was just looking for that!”

“We don’t have time for an adventure,” Penny said, hopping back on her horse. “We have to find a way to bring a gift to the birthday party. I guess I’ll ride into town and see what I can find. If not, maybe we can draw a nice card with the founding fathers on it.”

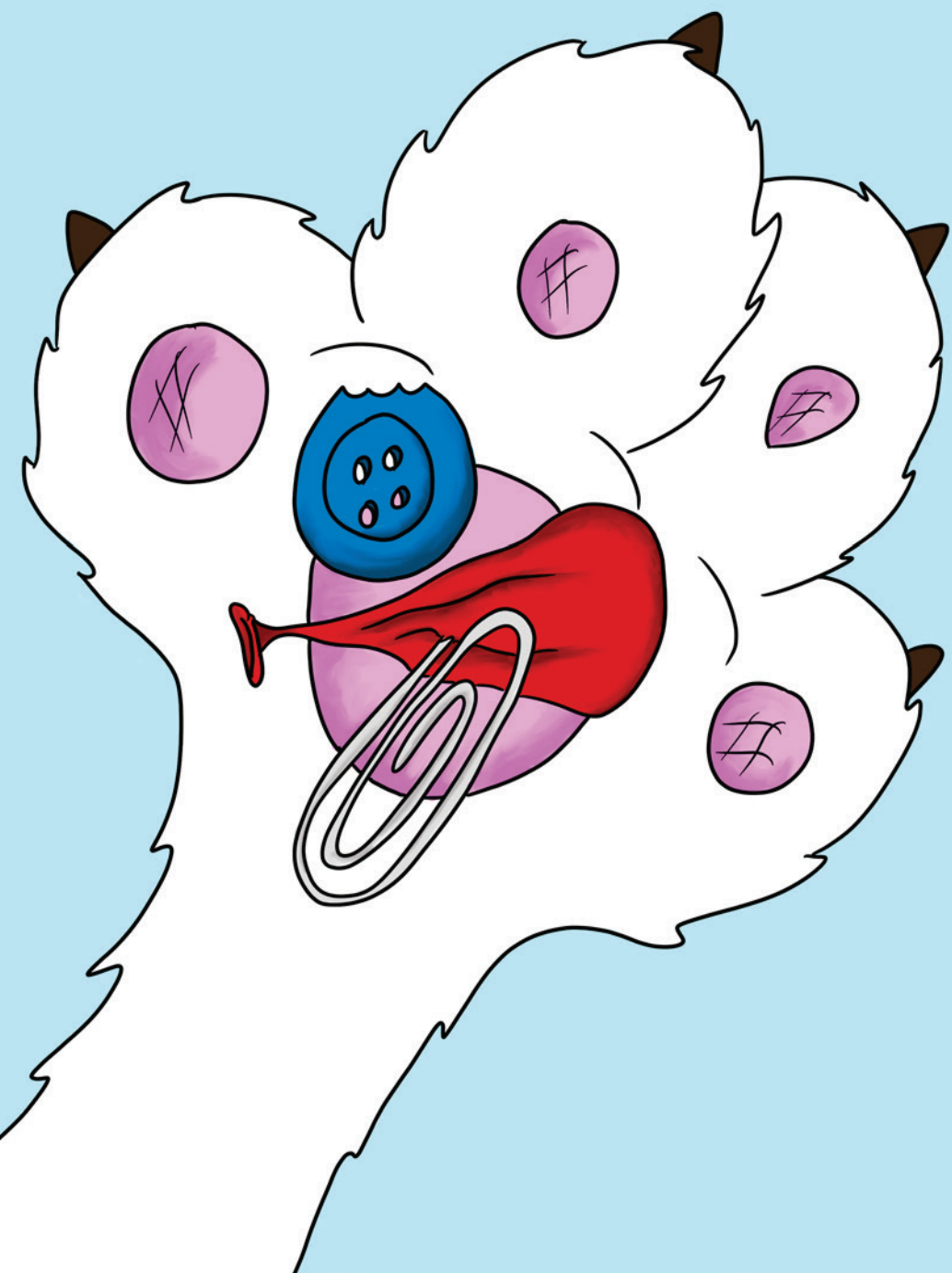
Paw’s eye grew wide, and you could almost see a light bulb appear above his head. “That’s it!” Paws exclaimed. “We can use the Magic Window to go back in time, and invite the founding fathers to the birthday party so they can tell great stories of their contributions to America!”

“You never cease to amaze me, Paws,” Penny said, while her best friend pressed the on button, opening the Magic Window.

“We can actually find out more about what makes America great, like life, liberty, and the pursuit of mailmen!” Paws stated.

“Don’t you mean happiness?” Penny chuckled.

Paws raised an eyebrow, “Well, that is happiness to me.”



Penny set her horse down and walked up to Paws. “Who are we going to see first?”

Paws thought about it for a minute, then turned a knob on the device. The image of a large farm appeared in the middle of the glowing window. “How about George Washington? He is, after all, the father of our country. I suspect he might have a lot to say about it.”

The duo both climbed through the window and stepped onto a farm field. People were tending the crops, and a few animals were going about their day. “This is beautiful,” Penny said. “It’s hard to believe the war for freedom was won in places like this.”

They started toward a large house in the distance. Then they spotted a poodle nearby that was wearing strange-looking goggles and looking up at the sky. “Excuse me, sir,” Penny said. “We’re looking for George Washington.”

“Greetings, travelers,” the poodle said. “My name is Pilot, and I happen to be one of George’s hunting dogs. I’d like to help you, but Mr. Washington isn’t at his house right now. He’s out in the back fields, helping to trim the cherry trees. It’s our busy season, and he doesn’t like to be disturbed.”

“That’s too bad!” Penny said, feeling disappointed. “We’ve come back in time two hundred and fifty years through a magic window to ask President Washington a favor.”

“Wow! That’s nearly 2,000 in dog years! Wait a minute, did you say a magic window?” Pilot asked. “I’ve never heard of one of those before. Is that one of Mr. Franklin’s contraptions?”

“No, sir. I built this one,” Paws said, pulling out a detail-heavy blueprint scroll from his sidebag. “It’s built around a springfold combobulator with coiled adjustors...”



“It’s a time and space portal,” Penny interrupted. “It’s full of doohickeys and thingamajigs. It helps us learn stuff. We were really hoping to talk to America’s first president.”

“But my owner isn’t President anymore, even though many people wanted him to keep that position as long as possible,” Pilot replied.

“I read about that in school,” Penny whispered to Paws. “He voluntarily gave up a lot of political power and fame so the country wouldn’t become ruled by a king who passed the crown down to his heirs. It would be by the people and for the people.”

“From what I learned, George Washington helped create the Constitution, and he took every word very seriously,” Paws said. “He really put his money where his dentures are.”

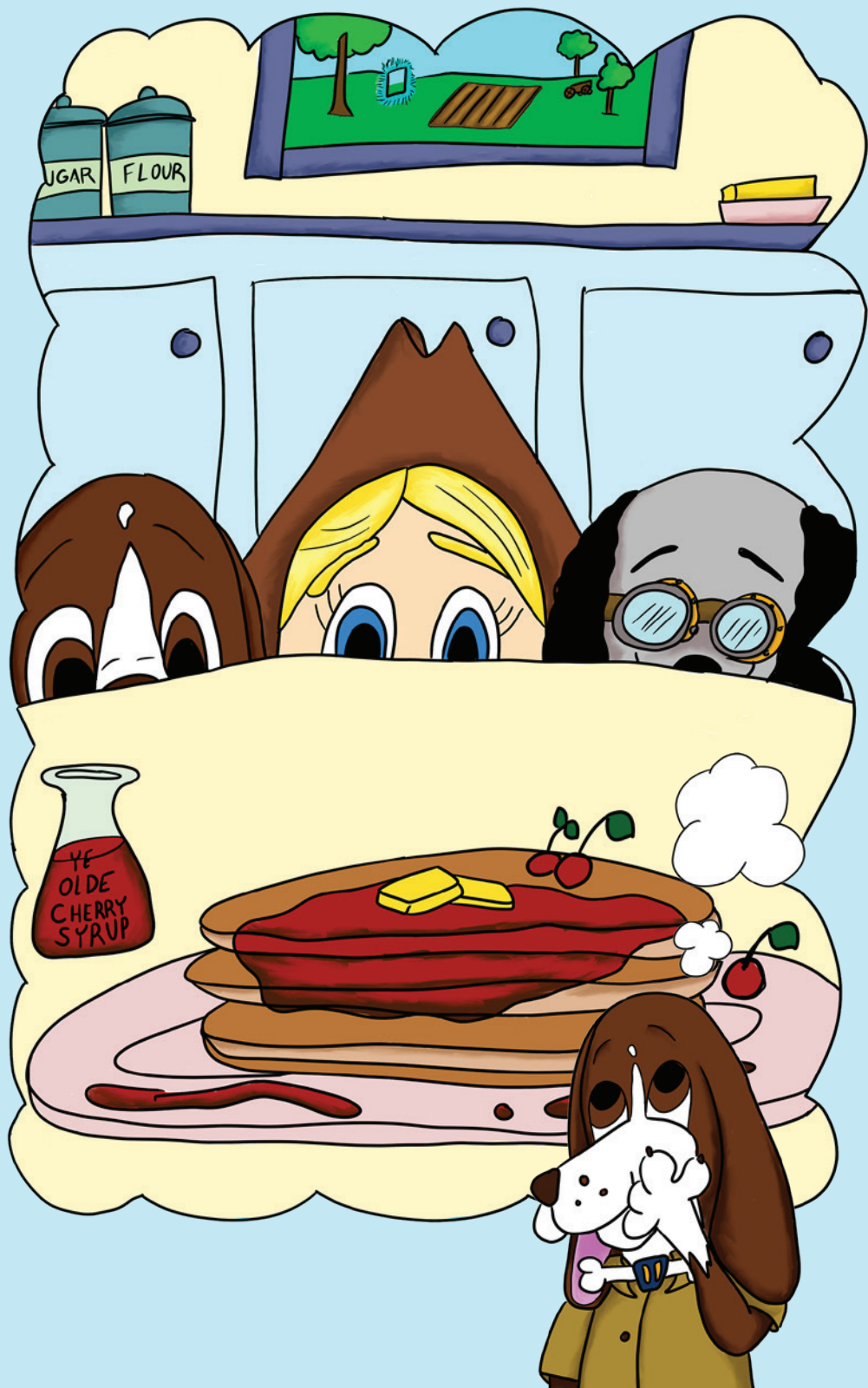
“That’s right,” Pilot agreed. “He wants to make sure others will follow the rule of law. He loves freedom. Oh, and cornbread pancakes too.”

“Who doesn’t?” Paws said, imagining a hot, buttery stack with cherry syrup. “Maybe he snuck back into his house and is eating some right now. Perhaps a begging session by his table is in order.”

“He’s too busy trimming the cherry trees,” Penny said, sounding worried. “What are we going to do?! We needed him to come with us.”

Paws paced back and forth while rubbing his chin, then paused. “I have it!” he shouted gleefully. “We can bring Pilot, and he can tell the audience about what a great man our first President was!”

“That’s a wonderful idea!” Pilot said, adjusting his goggles’ multi-layered lenses. “I always wondered if cake in the future would taste as good as it does now.”



Paws couldn't help but admire the craftsmanship of the goggles. "Those are amazing," complimented Paws. "I wouldn't mind sniffing over the schematics!"

"I need to see ducks from far away," Pilot explained, "So George's friend, Ben Franklin, made them for me. He is an amazing inventor! As a matter of fact, he lent the schematics to Thomas Jefferson, who wants to build his own pair for his pet mockingbird, Richard."

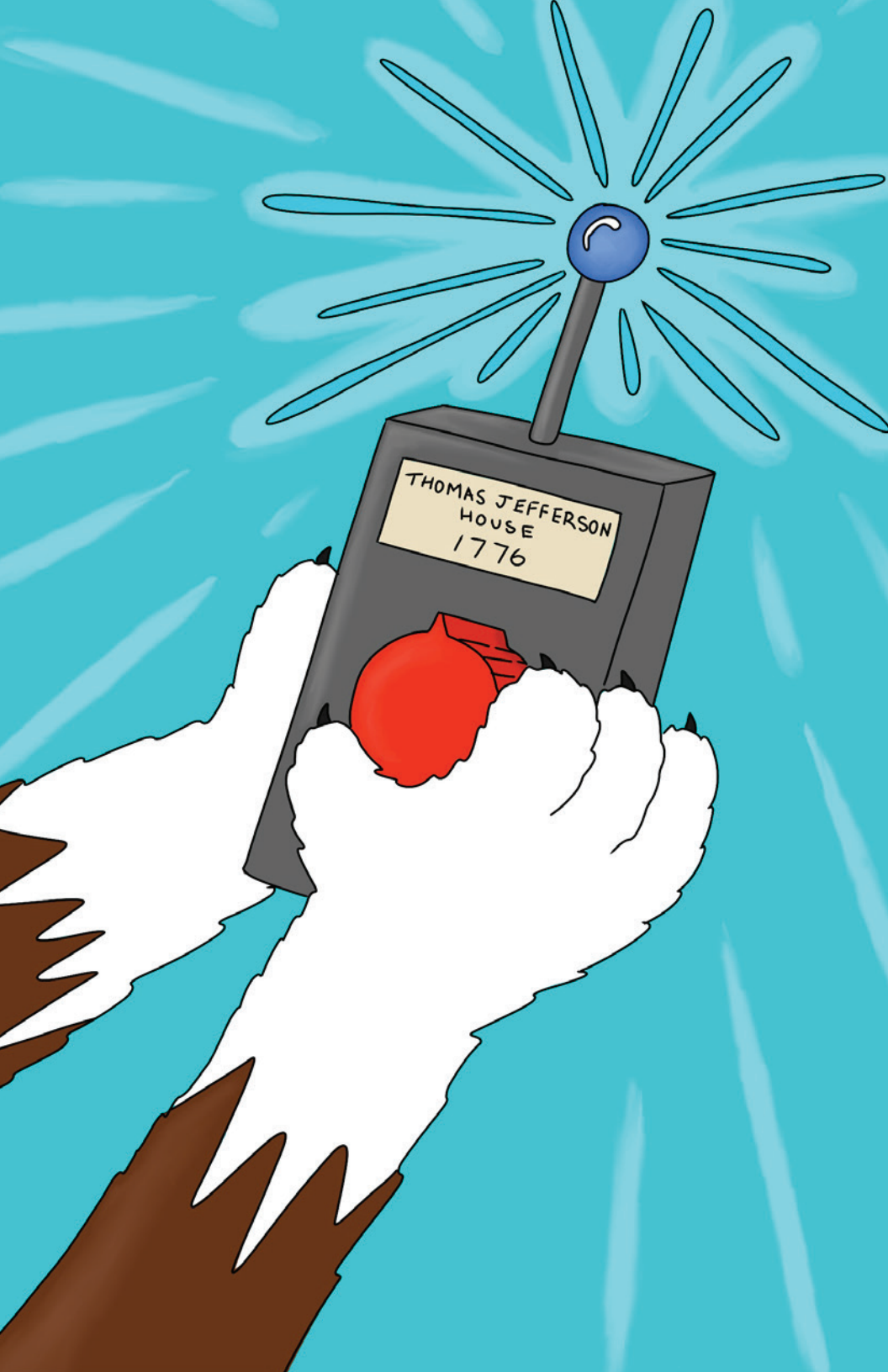
"We're excited to have you come with us," Paws said, while starting the magic window up. "Let's get back to the celebration."

"Wait a minute," Penny said, with a twinkle in her eye. "Why don't we see if President Jefferson's pet can come too? Imagine showing up with more pets from our founding fathers! Not only would that be patriotic, but it would also be super cute!"

"I love a good pet project," Paws said, while turning the date dial on the remote. "Let's go!"

Penny, Paws, and Pilot climbed through the Magic Window and were now standing in front of a large estate. "Well, here we are," Paws said. "I guess we should knock on Mr. Jefferson's door."

As they climbed the staircase to the marble-columned building, they could hear the beautiful sound of a violin playing a melodic version of Yankee Doodle. On top of that was the sweet sound of a bird singing along. They stopped and listened. The music was coming from above their heads. The trio followed the sound to an open window near the side of the house. But the window was too high to reach, and they could not see in. "That's so lovely," Penny stated. "I wish I could get a peek at who is playing it."



THOMAS JEFFERSON
HOUSE
1776

“I have an idea,” Pilot said, cupping his front paws together. “It’s time for an allez-ooop!”

“What does that mean?” Penny asked.

“I read about this in dog school,” Paws replied. “It’s an old french term, meaning ‘up you go’. In our time we say alley-ooop, especially when I want to sneak a scrap off the table.”

Paws did a quick couple of knee bends, then put his foot in Pilot’s paws, before alley-oooping his way up to the other dog’s shoulders. Penny giggled at this and did the same, climbing up onto Paws’ shoulders. “Can you see anything?” Pilot said in a trembling voice.

“I can almost see in,” Penny said, trying to adjust herself. “Can you two use your toes to lift me higher?”

That’s when they all heard a twang, then a snap come from the window. The music and singing stopped. “Oh, fiddlesticks!” they heard a man’s voice say. “Richard, I just broke a string. Do you mind if I pop out to get another? I left a few of them on my desk at the University of Virginia.”

“Sure, thing Mr. Jefferson,” a twittery voice replied. “I wouldn’t mind getting some fresh air myself. Maybe we can have some of that macaroni and cheese you’re always raving about when you come back. You know, ‘Yankie Doodle’ always leaves me craving some. But then I always start to worry about people wanting take my feathers for their caps!”



Penny heard a door close, then pulled her face up to peer into the window. She was now face-to-beak with a mockingbird in a powdered wig. “Um, hello,” Penny said. “We were just hanging around and enjoying your music.”

“That’s kind of you,” the small bird said. “We’re practicing songs from the revolution, plus a few hits we wrote about Mr. Jefferson’s accomplishments like funding the Lewis & Clark Expedition, completing the Louisiana Purchase, and helping to introduce ice cream to America!”

Just the mention of ice cream left Paws weak in the knees, and their makeshift tower collapsed. Luckily, no one was hurt. “I don’t even know what ice cream is yet,” Pilot said, rolling over onto his back. “But it sounds worth fighting a revolution over!”

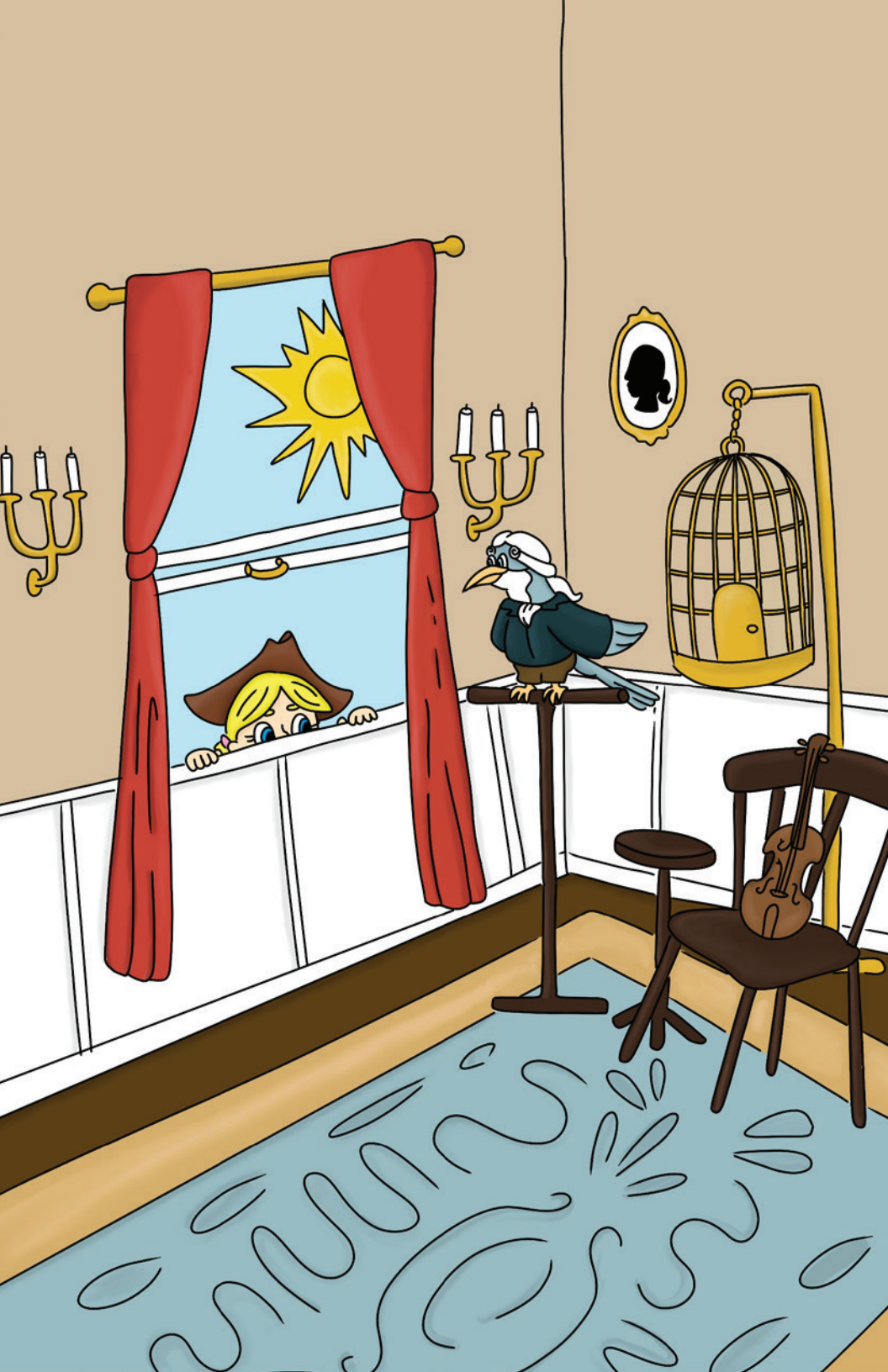
“Oh, yes,” Richard the mockingbird said as he flew down. “Vanilla ice cream is the best in the world.”

“Here’s the scoop,” Paws said, getting up and brushing off some dirt. “In our time, there are hundreds of flavors!”

Richard let out a whistle. “That’s amazing! Perhaps I should visit whenever it is you came from and sample some of these flavors, um, uh, for scientific research, of course.”

Penny took a minute to explain their situation and how Richard could be a big part of the celebration at Liberty Park. The mockingbird agreed to come along and talk about some of the wonderful things Thomas Jefferson did. Richard began to straighten out his tiny wig.

“How does my wig look? I’d be so embarrassed if I were the only one in the future with a crooked powdered wig!” he exclaimed.



“I don’t think he has to worry about that,” Penny whispered to Paws as the dog used the remote to bring up the Magic Window once again.

“I do keep a spare traveling wig at Ben Franklin’s house in case of emergencies,” Richard said. “Would you mind if we stopped there first?”

Paws agreed and turned the knob on the device. “Hmm. It seems there must be some off weather where Mr. Franklin is at, I’m having trouble dialing it in.”

“Let me see if Ben Franklin’s goggles will help,” Pilot said, removing and handing them to Paws.

The dog set them next to the remote and turned the knobs until it made a beeping noise and a light on it flashed green. “Thanks, Pilot,” Paws said. “Your goggles helped the device see clearly!”

When the portal opened, they could see a small building that was lit by lanterns. The sky was gray and lightning flashed. But that didn’t startle the group. What did surprise them, though, was the small brown squirrel holding an umbrella that quickly popped up in front of them! “Hello, Pilot,” the creature said somberly, from the edge of the window.

“Hello, Mungo,” Pilot replied in the same tone.

“You two know each other?!” Penny said with a surprised look.

“Oh, yes,” Pilot said. “This is Ben Franklin’s pet squirrel. He’s the king of acorny jokes.”

Paws, Penny, and Richard groaned at the pun. “That’s right,” Mungo said. “And I’m hoping to branch out!”

“Penny and I are from the future,” Paws said, trying to put an end to all the bad puns. “We’re celebrating America’s 250th



anniversary. We know the founding fathers are busy, so we're hoping to bring their pets with us to tell people in our time what it was like to be there at the founding of freedom."

"It is going to be our gift to America," Penny said. "To show how free speech and patriotism has endured over all this time!"

"I could do that," Mungo replied. "But I'll have to leave Ben a note. I'm sure he won't mind my tagging along. He's always mentioning something or other about a Penny saved. That must be you!"

"So Mr. Franklin isn't here?" Paws asked.

"It's a stormy day, and he always runs out to fly a kite on days like this," Mungo replied. "What is the deal with that?"

"I like Mr. Franklin and all his quirks," Richard said. "Plus, he always has a bit of wisdom to share."

"You just like him because he named his Almanac after you," Pilot laughed.

Just then, a heavier rain started coming down, and a big streak of lightning filled the sky. "Maybe we shouldn't go," Pilot said. "The storm is getting worse; we should wait it out inside Mr. Franklin's house."

"We shouldn't delay our trip to the future," Mungo stated. "I'll add to the note that I just couldn't give up Liberty for safety. He'll understand what I mean. Plus, he knows I'm a squirrel and a bit nutty."

"Do you know what you're going to talk about up on the stage?" Richard chirped. "I know I'm going to talk about Mr. Jefferson's accomplishments, and that he is a skilled architect!"



“People will like that,” Mungo said, with his poofy tail twitching back and forth. “I can’t wait to tell everyone that I got to witness Mr. Franklin help garner French support for the colonies. And you might find this shocking, he invented the lightning rod!”

“I’m sure glad we met all you guys,” Penny said. “Learning about the past makes such a wonderful present!”

With that said, Paws turned the time dial on the remote back to current time and punched in the coordinates to Liberty Park. When the Magic Window popped open, they could see the venue. It was filled with hundreds of people and their pets. They were all standing at attention with their hands, paws, and even wings over their hearts as an orchestra was playing the Star Spangled Banner.

“Hold on,” Mungo cried out, before they went through. “Let’s give them some help!”

The squirrel handed Penny a fife, and a drum to each of the dogs. Once they were ready they climbed through the Magic Window and into Liberty Park.

“I love this song,” Richard said as he flew through the time portal. “Even though I’ve never heard it before. I can’t wait to go back to my time and tell my friend Terra about it.”

“Who is Terra?” Paws asked.

“She’s the horse of a famous lawyer and poet named Francis Scott Key,” Richard replied. “He loves music too.”

“You’ve finally made it!” a familiar voice shouted out from the crowd.

As the crowd parted, they saw a cat dressed up as a revolutionary soldier. All three pets from the past stood straight and saluted. “He’s not a real soldier,” Penny laughed. “Did you bring the cake, Sgt. Purrsnickety?”



“It’s behind the stage,” the cat purred happily. “But the cake makers were all out of tuna or kibble flavor, so I got vanilla.”

Penny, Paws, and the others seemed relieved to hear that. “Maybe next time,” Paws said, shaking his head.

“Penny and Paws are here!” came another familiar voice from the stage. “Let’s get this birthday started!”

“Hi, Cooper,” Paws waved as Penny led the historically famous pets to the stage. “I hope I filled out the forms for this event correctly!”

“Don’t worry,” Cooper replied. “My assistant Dibbley verified all the forms nine times...in triplicate!”

“It’s a fox!” Richard said, looking nervous. “Can we trust him?”

“It’s okay,” Paws said. “Cooper works in the Rules & Regulations Office.”

“You’re not really convincing me here,” Richard replied dryly.

Penny stepped up to the microphone on the stage and introduced their special guests to the audience. Each one bowed as Penny told the crowd that all three were pets of the founding fathers.

Pilot was the first to step up to the microphone. “George Washington was not only the first U.S. President, a skilled soldier, and shaper of policy, but also a graceful dancer.” Pilot explained. “But what I think he’ll be remembered for the most is his love for apple pie and how he liked to share it with his pet dogs!”



The crowd applauded wildly as Pilot left the stage. “They must really like apple pie, too!” he said to Paws.

On Richard’s turn, he flew up to the microphone and said, “Thomas Jefferson is fluent in French, Latin, and Greek, and he also completed the Louisiana Purchase! He sent Lewis and Clark on their famous expedition, and is a champion for religious freedom and education! He also wrote the Declaration of Independence! But most importantly, remember this: He was the President who introduced ice cream to America!”

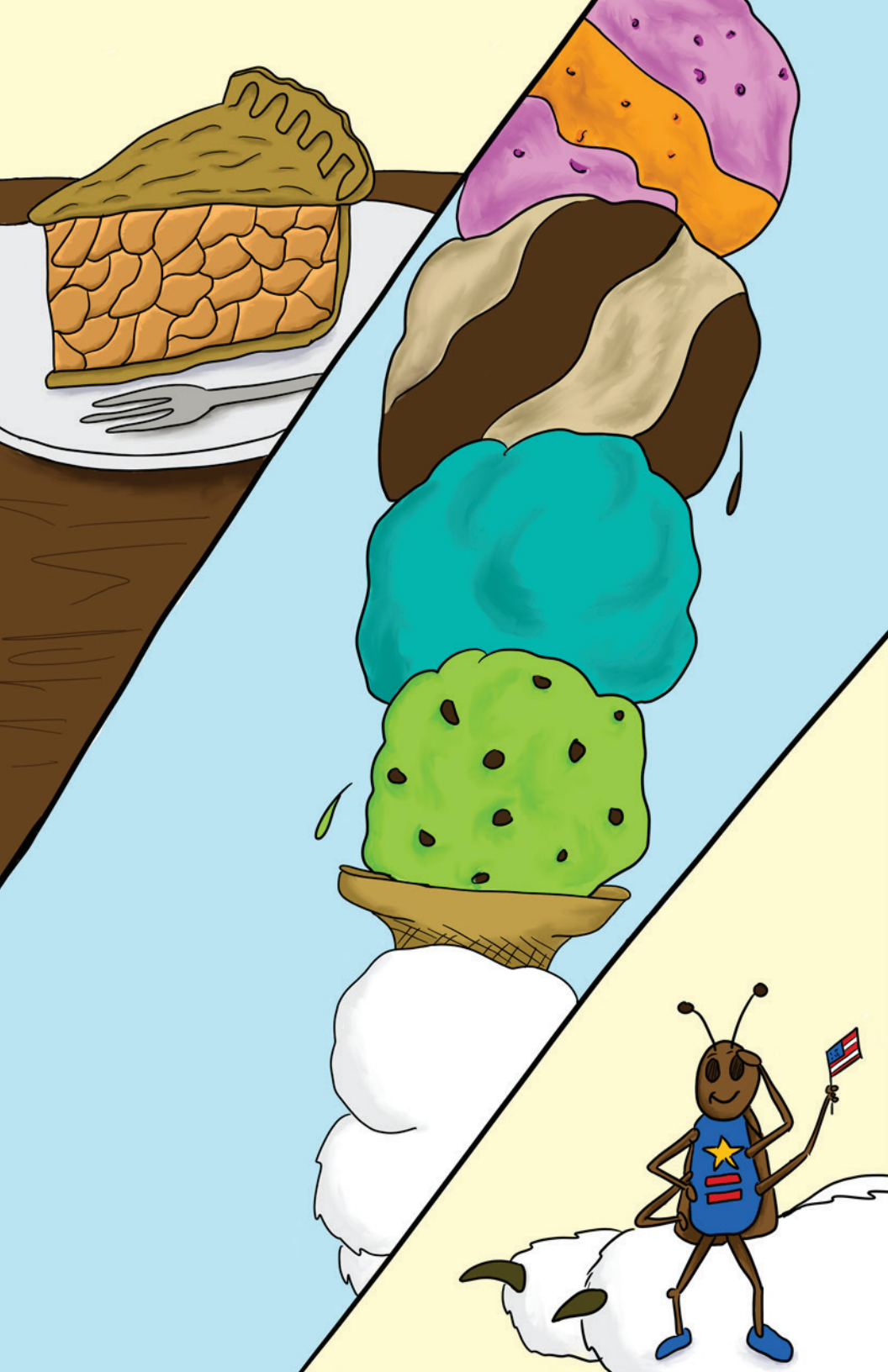
The crowd erupted in ice cream screams of delight, and it was hard to calm them down as the mockingbird flew off the stage, high-fiving Penny on the way out.

When it was Mungo’s turn, he told a few observational jokes about barbershop dentistry, used loom dealers, and the advancement of candle technology. Not understanding his ancient jokes, nobody laughed, so he started quoting Ben Franklin. “Haste makes waste,” he began, before looking at Paws and Pilot. “Mr. Franklin also said, ‘He who lies down with dogs, shall rise up with fleas.’ No offense, guys.”

“Fleas bug me too!” Mr. Purrsnickety added.

“Mr. Franklin helped prepare the Declaration of Independence with Thomas Jefferson. He is also a newspaper editor, a printer, and in my time, is the Postmaster General!”

Paws and Pilot’s ears perked up at the last part of the squirrels statement. But Mungo continued. “And, if you promise not to tell anyone, he likes to fly kites in rainstorms! What’s the deal with that?!”



When Mungo finished, the orchestra started playing Happy Birthday. All the historical pets, along with Penny, Paws, Mr. Purrsnickety, Cooper, and even Dibbley the Mole came out carrying a huge cake, decorated with 250 candles!

Fireworks lit up the sky as everyone sang happy birthday to the greatest country in the world! Everyone cheered, gave thanks, and best of all, ate lots of ice cream and cake!



Paws Joke Kennel

Q: Why did Ben Franklin fly a kite in a storm?

A: Because he wanted to shock the world!

Q: Why did George Washington cross the Delaware River?

A: To get the troops to the other side!

Q: Why didn't Jefferson study more history?

A: He was too busy making it!

Q: Why didn't George Washington take the Declaration of Independence home to work on it?

A: The dogs kept trying to eat it!

Q: Why did Ben Franklin invent bi-focals?

A: He liked to see both sides of everything.

Q: Why didn't George Washington become king?

A: Because he was too busy becoming a legend!

Q: Why was the King of England so furious with Thomas Jefferson?

A: He read the breakup letter he wrote!

Q: Why was Ben Franklin always in a good mood?

A: He claimed he felt like a 100 bucks!

Q: Why was the dog bad at being a historian?

A: He kept trying to bury the evidence.



Founding Fathers Trivia

1: What was George Washington's favorite pie?

- Cherry
- Apple
- Snozzberry

2: What state was Benjamin Franklin governor of?

- Delaware
- Hawaii
- Pennsylvania

3: Who completed the Louisiana Purchase?

- George Washington
- Thomas Jefferson
- Mr. Purrsnickety

4: Who did Thomas Jefferson send on a famous expedition?

- Ben & Jerry
- Lewis & Clark
- Sweet & Lowe

5: Whose face is on the \$100 bill?

- Ben Franklin
- Andrew Jackson
- Abraham Lincoln

6: Who was a trained violinist?

- George Jefferson
- George Washington
- Thomas Jefferson



Mick McArt is the graphic designer and project manager for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Mick has authored many books, including the Tales of Wordishure series and The Unremembered Realms™. Located in Midland, Michigan, and founded in 1987, the Mackinac Center is a nonpartisan research and educational institute that is dedicated to advancing liberty and opportunity for all people through research and education.



Hannah Golab is the graphic design and events associate at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Hannah graduated from Saginaw Valley State University with a Bachelor's in Graphic Design and minor in Marketing.

MACKINAC CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy is dedicated to improving the understanding of economic and political principles among citizens, public officials, policymakers and opinion leaders. The Center has emerged as one of the largest and most prolific of the more than 50 state-based free-market “think tanks” in America. Additional information about the Mackinac Center and its publications can be found at www.mackinac.org.

Additional copies of this booklet are available for order from the Mackinac Center.

For more information, call 989-631-0900, or see our website, www.mackinac.org.

© 2026 Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Midland, Michigan
ISBN: 978-1-968605-05-6 | PP2026-02 | Mackinac.org/PP2026-02
140 West Main Street P.O. Box 568 Midland, Michigan 48640
989.631.0900 Fax 989.631.0964 mackinac.org mcpp@mackinac.org



www.mackinac.org/paws