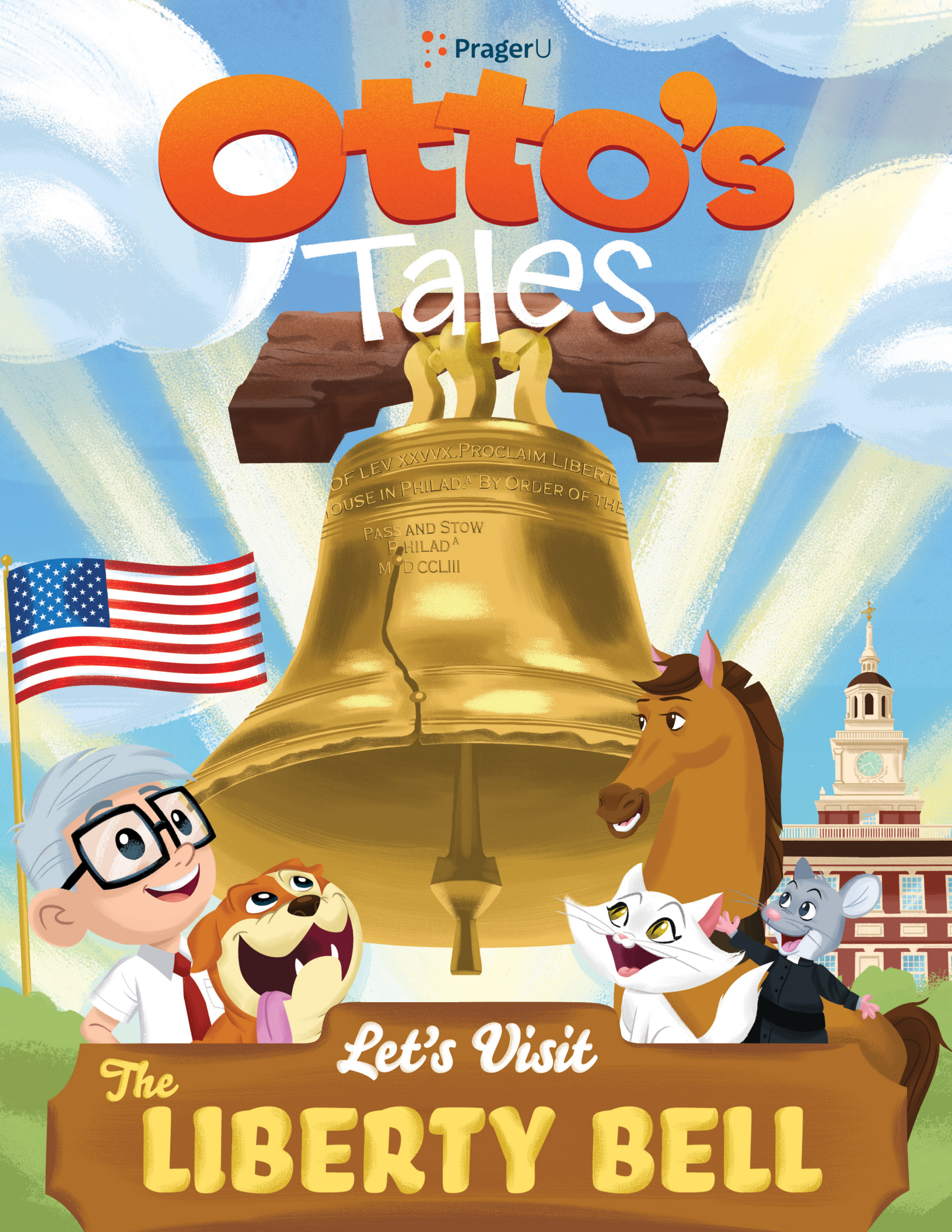


Otto's Tales



Let's Visit

The

LIBERTY BELL

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“**Ruff Ruff!**”

Otto barked, joyfully wagging his tail.
“Smidge is going to love this.”

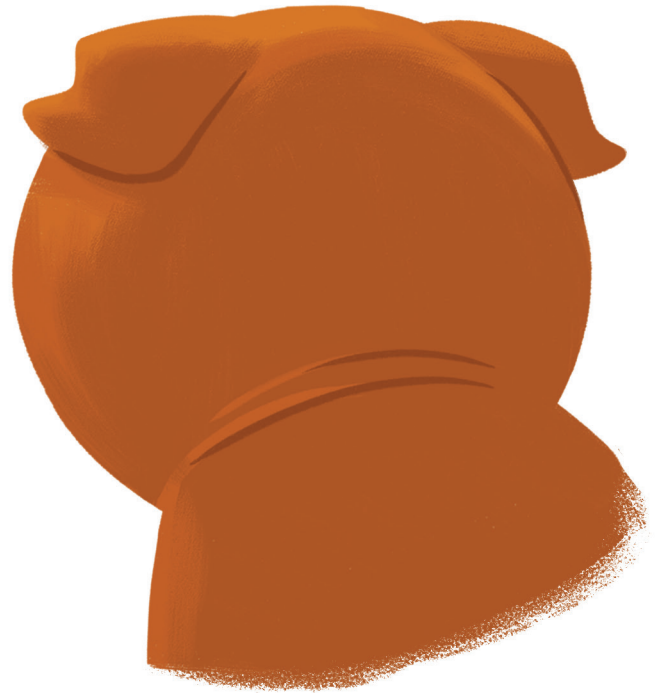
Otto and his best friend Dennis studied a small piece of paper in the kitchen. In bold letters, across the top, it read: **Perfect Birthday Cake Recipe.**

Dennis grinned. “Remember, it’s going to be a surprise.”

“My lips are sealed.” Otto zipped his mouth closed.



Collecting the ingredients, the boy and his bulldog heard the front door open and close, followed by the pitter-patter of little paws. A fluffy, white kitten scampered into the kitchen, with wide eyes and wet, muddy footprints.



“Smidge!” Otto gasped. “You’re supposed to wipe your feet at the door.”

“Sorry, it’s raining.” She shook herself dry. “I don’t think it’s going to stop all week. My birthday plans are ruined!”

“Your birthday?” Otto pretended to be surprised.

The kitten frowned. “Don’t tell me you forgot!”

“We didn’t forget,” Dennis assured her. “We were just making a list of snacks you’d want.”





"You know what I really want?" Smidge smiled. "A big...shiny... golden...bell!" She smoothed down her poofy fur. "My friend Fluffy just got one, and it's so pretty. Everyone tells her how sophisticated she looks."

"I know a place where you can see a really big bell!" Dennis exclaimed. "I've done research on it. It's called the **Liberty Bell!**"



"Come on, Smidge! Let's go find you the best birthday bell ever!" Otto grabbed her paw and they were off...





With a zip of her coat, Smidge peered across the **Delaware River** and up to a dark blue sky. “I can’t believe it’s raining in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** too. What rotten luck!” The two friends made their way towards the city, jumping to avoid the puddles.

Otto held up a giant map. “It looks like the bell is inside a building, so we’ll be okay.”

CLIP, CLOP, CLIP, CLOP! The sound of steady hoofbeats echoed around them. An enormous horse, pulling a covered carriage, approached them on the street.



“Neigh!! I’m Philly. Would you two like a ride?”

“Yes!” The kitten shook water from her coat. “I’m Smidge! My friend Otto and I are trying to find the Liberty Bell.”

Philly flicked her long, chestnut tail. “I know the way. I lead tours through the city every day.”

Otto and Smidge climbed aboard, and Philly set out.

CLIP, CLOP.



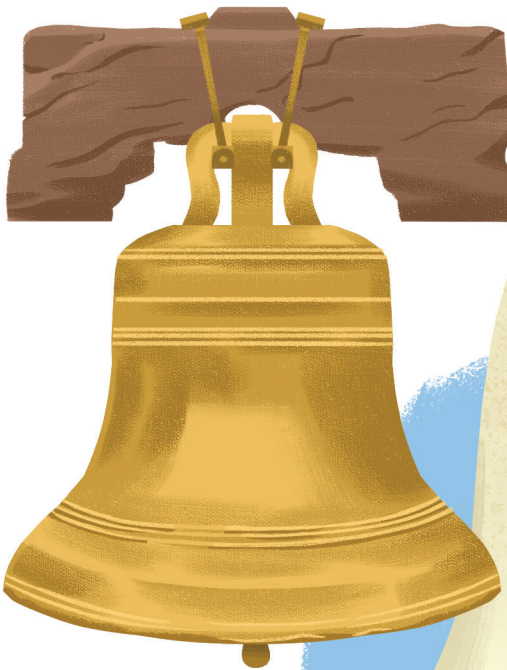


The horse was curious. “What brings you here to visit the bell?”
“My birthday!” Smidge announced. “I want a bell as a gift.”



“Happy birthday! I can’t think of a better gift,” Philly laughed, water shaking down from her mane. “You could say the Liberty Bell was a gift too. It was made in 1751 to mark the 50th anniversary

of **William Penn’s Charter of Privileges**, which was Pennsylvania’s original constitution.”



THE CHARTER
OF
PRIVILEGES

William Penn
Founder of Pennsylvania



“That’s a neat way to celebrate,” Otto chimed in.



“The building coming up on your left is where they first hung the Liberty Bell: the Pennsylvania State House.” Philly continued, “This building is now called **Independence Hall**. It’s where the Founding Fathers signed America’s Declaration of Independence.”

Smidge and Otto squished to one side of the carriage to get a better look at the two-story, red brick building. What history happened there!





“The bell actually changed names too,” Philly shared. “It was originally known as the **‘State House Bell.’** It became known as the Liberty Bell during the anti-slavery movement in the 19th century.”



“Because it symbolized freedom!” Otto burst out.

“Correct!” Philly neighed with glee. “It helped create unity in America after the **Civil War**.”

“So, where is the bell now?” Smidge asked.

Philly nodded her head to the other side of the road. “In the building right across the street. I’ll take you over.”



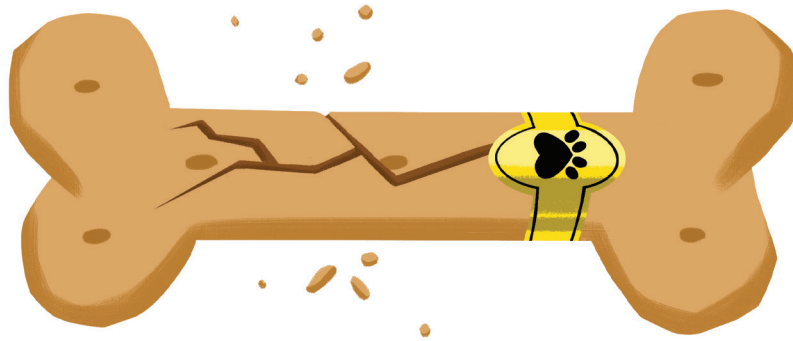
Smidge whispered to Otto, "All this travel is making me hungry."

"Well, I've got something I've been waiting for all day!" Otto reached into his bag and pulled out a bone.

Suddenly, with a big bump, the carriage bounced and the yummy bone flew out of Otto's paws, through the air, and plunked on the street below.



CRACK. The wheels of the carriage ran right over it.
“Oh no! Stop!!” Otto shouted.

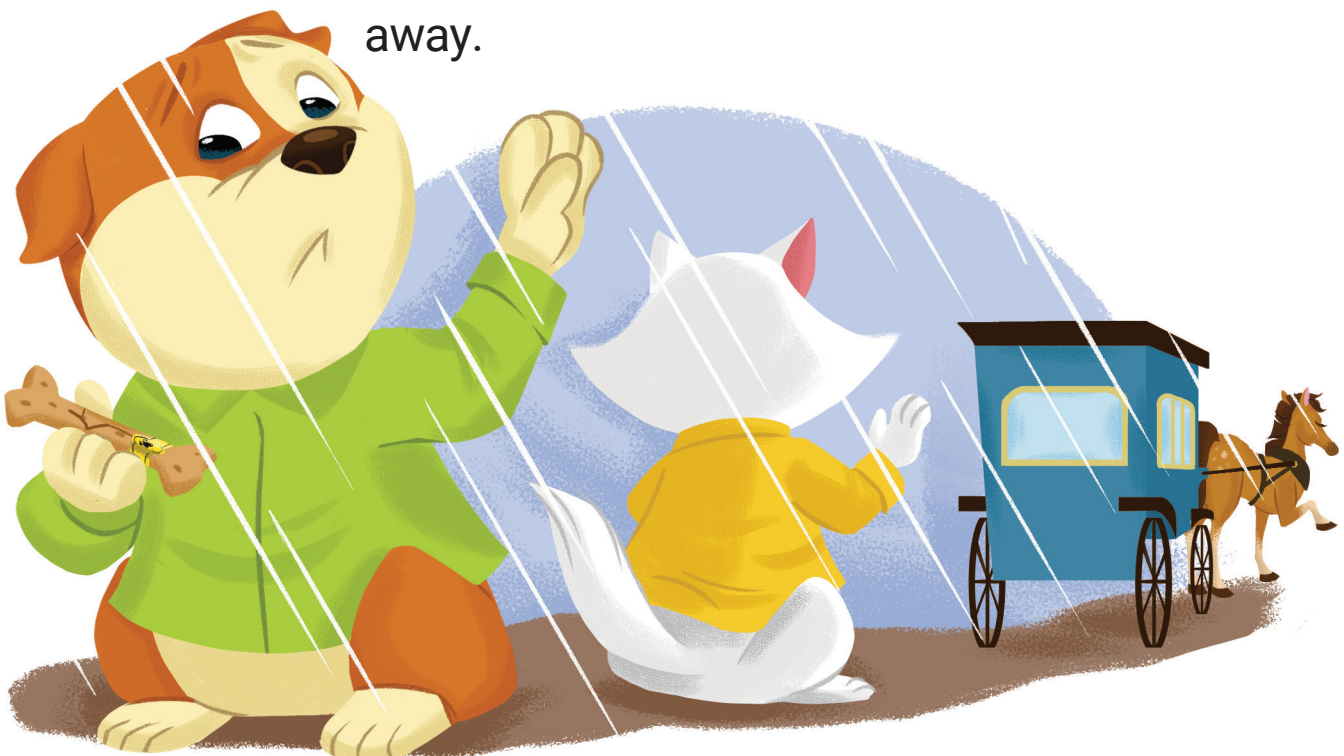


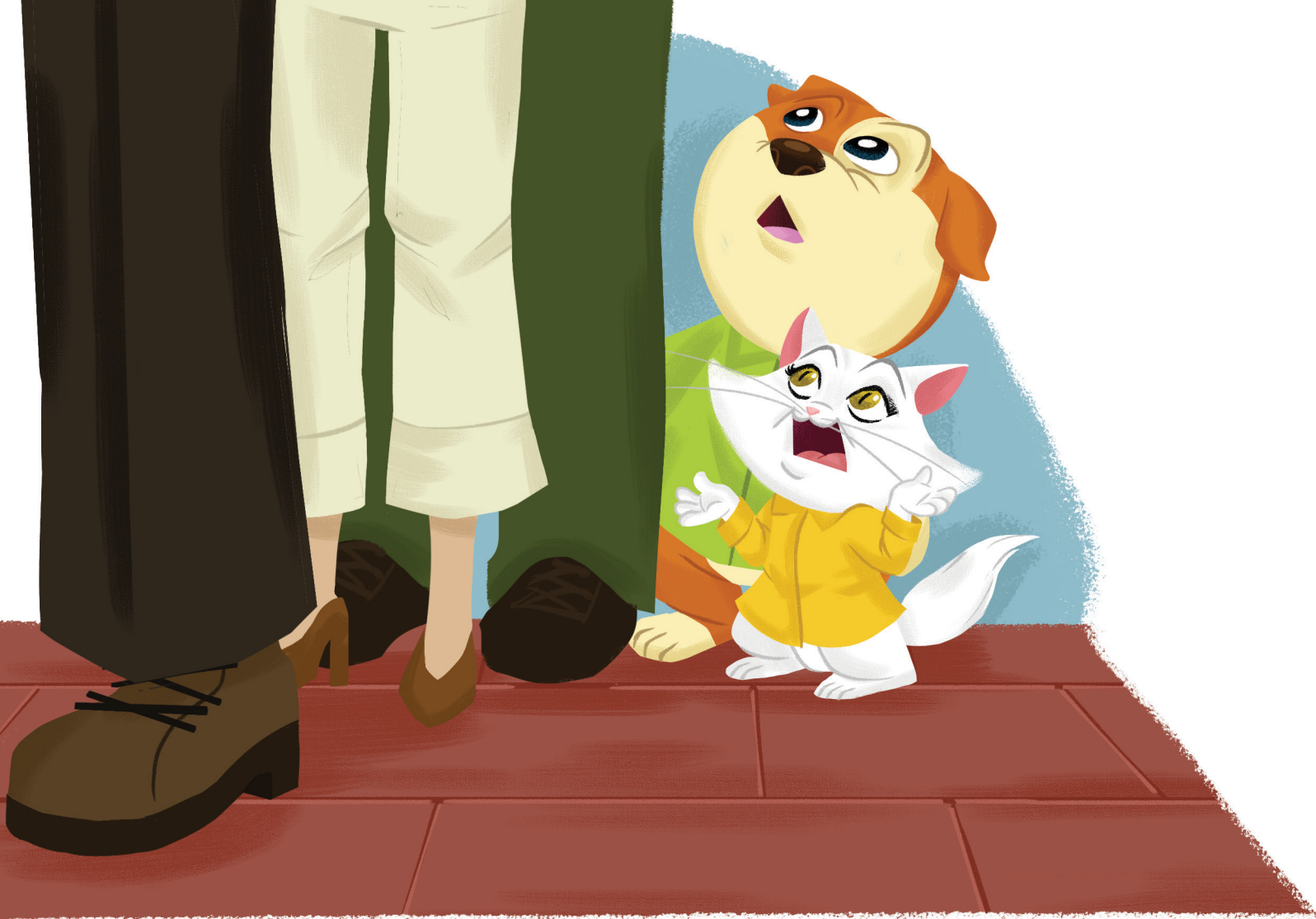
Smidge and Otto leapt out of their seats and onto the road. The bulldog examined his cracked bone and hung his head. “I guess you’re not the only one with bad luck this trip, Smidge.”

“Maybe there’s something we can use to fix it inside the building,” she suggested.

“Sorry about your treat,” Philly sympathized. “I do hope you enjoy the bell. It’s a wonderful piece of our history.”

“Thank you, Philly.” The kitten and bulldog waved goodbye as the horse clip-clopped away.





Inside the building, the two friends squished into a crowd of people waiting to see the Liberty Bell.

“This could take awhile,” Smidge sighed.

Otto looked around. “I don’t spot anything we can use to fix my cracked bone.”

“Me neither.” Smidge shrugged. “What else could go wrong?”

They waited in line, in silence, until it was finally their turn. Just as they approached the copper bell, they noticed a tiny churchmouse – with an even tinier cloth – furiously polishing it!



“Greetings, travelers!” the mouse squeaked. “My name is Father Liber. What do you think of our magnificent Liberty Bell?”



Smidge wriggled her whiskers. “There’s a crack in it! Just like your bone, Otto.”

Otto was confused. “That crack looks old. Why hasn’t anyone tried to fix it, Father Liber?”

The mouse stopped polishing and smiled. “Not everything that’s cracked needs to be fixed. Does the crack change the beauty of the bell or what it stands for?”

Otto paused. “I guess it doesn’t. But wouldn’t a flawless bell be more beautiful?”

Smidge tilted her head, examining the crack further. “I don’t know, Otto, I think it’s kind of unique. It adds a little character! Anything as old as the Liberty Bell is going to have marks to show its story.”



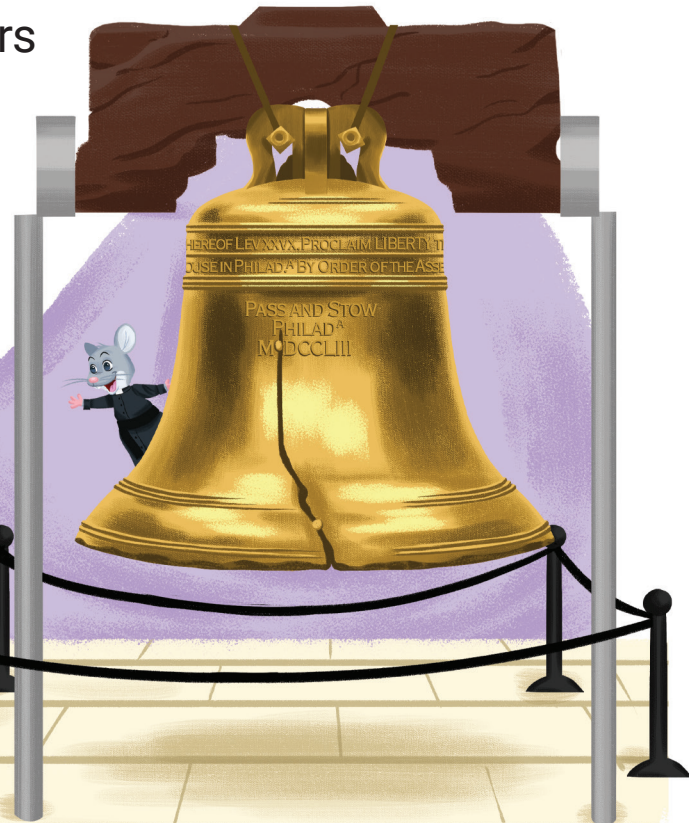
“Exactly!” Father Liber agreed. “Things don’t need to be perfect to have value.”

“I see.” Otto nodded. “So how did it get cracked? Did someone drop it?”

Father Liber’s eyes got wide and his ears perked. “That, my friends, is still a great mystery. The best guess is that the bell cracked in the 1840s after 90 years of being used.”

“We love a good mystery,” the bulldog barked.

“Come closer, and I’ll tell you another interesting story,” the mouse invited.





“This bell represents many different kinds of freedoms we have in this country. Do you see this inscription on the top here?” Father Liber pointed to words circling the top of the bell.

“Is that a Bible verse?” Otto questioned.

“Yes.” The mouse’s claws clinked on the bell. “It’s from the book of Leviticus in the Bible, chapter 25, verse 10, which says, ‘Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.’ What freedom is that referring to?”



Smidge's eyes lit up. "I know!
Freedom from slavery."

"Right, and what's another
freedom we have that the Bible
reminds you of?" the mouse
continued.

"Freedom of religion!"

Otto exclaimed.





“You nailed it,” Father Liber congratulated. “You want to know something else extraordinary? This bell was even hidden in a church during the American Revolution because the patriots feared the British would melt it and use it for cannons.”

“Really?” The kitten flicked her tail. “I’m so glad it was kept safe, and I’m so thankful that we are free to express our thoughts and beliefs here in America.”

“Me too,” Otto agreed. “What do you think, Smidge? Do you still want a bell like this?”

She grinned. “It’s the best birthday gift.”

Father Liber beamed. “You can find one to take home in our gift shop. I hope you enjoyed your visit!”

“We did.” Otto nodded. “Our trip wasn’t perfect, but we learned some very valuable things.”

The bulldog and kitten bid the mouse and bell farewell.



Smidge proudly jingled her new miniature Liberty Bell. “It’s not as big as the real thing, but it sure will make a great necklace.”

“That’s an excellent idea!” The gift shop cashier couldn’t help but overhear them. “We should sell those.” She then offered Smidge some string from behind the counter. “Until then, this can work.”



“Thank you!” the kitten purred. Otto tied the bell around her neck. “Let’s get back and show Dennis.”



By the time they arrived home, the rain had finally stopped. Otto and Smidge ran into the backyard.

"SURPRISE!" Dennis yelled. There were balloons, streamers, presents, and a giant cake on a table surrounded by all their neighborhood friends.

"Happy birthday, Smidge!" Otto howled.

"All this for me?" Smidge's eyes sparkled with happy tears.

"Of course," Dennis said. "I only wish the cake hadn't fallen apart a little in the middle. I wanted it to be perfect."

Smidge and Otto looked at the cake – with a giant crack in it – and burst out laughing.

“It doesn’t have to be perfect. I love it!” Smidge hugged Dennis.

“Great! And, did you two have a fun birthday trip?” he asked.

“Things didn’t go according to plan,” Smidge admitted, “but we learned to appreciate what we have, even if it’s got a little – or big – crack!”



“It was my favorite adventure yet.” Otto winked.

“You say that every time!” Smidge laughed.

“This calls for cake all around!” Dennis announced.

“Ruff Ruff!”

Everyone dug into the sweet treat, and to Smidge’s delight, there was enough to have seconds.



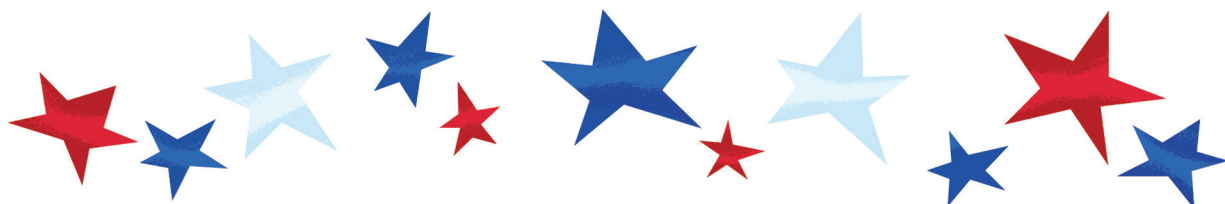
We Love Our History

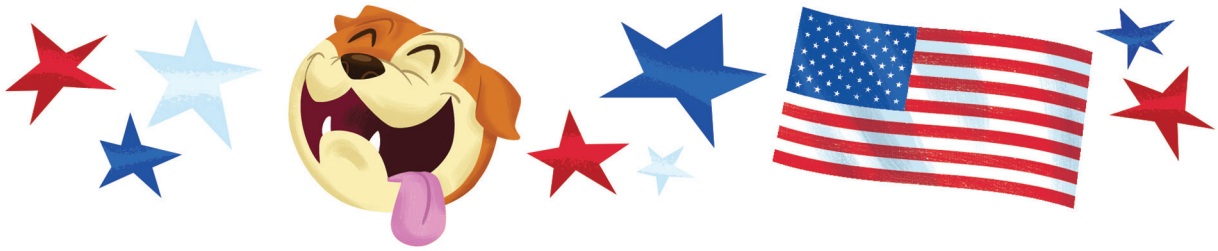
Liberty Bell: The Liberty Bell, previously known as the State House Bell, is a great symbol of freedom and justice in America. The bell was ordered to mark the 50th anniversary of William Penn's 1701 Charter of Privileges, which was Pennsylvania's original constitution. It cracked after it was first rung, and was recast twice since then. There is a crack in the bell to this day, though historians debate when the current crack first appeared. Over a million people visit this iconic piece of history every year.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The largest city in the state of Pennsylvania with a population of over 1.5 million. Commonly referred to as the city of "brotherly love." Philadelphia has many significant historical sites including the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall. It was also the location of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Delaware River: A major river in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. It flows through five states: New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. The river supplies drinking water to over 13 million people.

William Penn's Charter of Privileges: William Penn, an English Quaker, founded Pennsylvania in the 1680s. In 1701, he created a charter that functioned as the colony's constitution until the American Revolution. The charter granted many rights to the people of the colony, including religious freedom and property rights, under the U.S. Constitution.



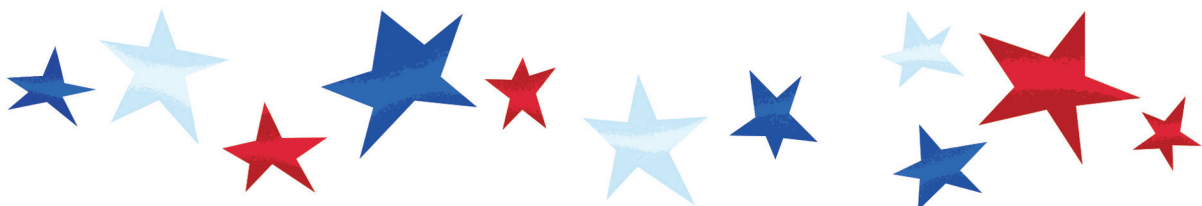


Independence Hall: Originally known as the Pennsylvania State House, Independence Hall is considered the birthplace of the nation. In this building, the Founding Fathers debated and adopted the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

State House Bell: The original name for the Liberty Bell. It was made in the Whitechapel Foundry in London. The bell weighs 2,080 pounds and is made of copper, tin, and traces of lead, zinc, arsenic, gold, and silver.

Civil War: A war in the United States from 1861 to 1865 that erupted due to the controversy over slavery. The 11 Southern states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. At the end of the war, the Confederate States were dissolved and slavery was abolished.

Freedom of Religion: This principle allows for people to observe and practice their religion without government interference. This is one of the first rights guaranteed to Americans under the U.S. Constitution.



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**See you in
our *next* adventure!**

- Dennis, Otto,
and Smidge

ABOUT

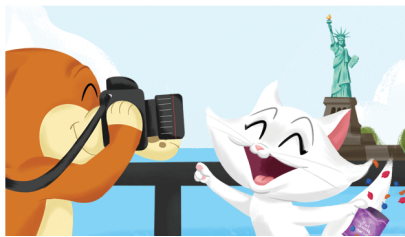
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TODAY IS
Celebrating American
holidays & traditions



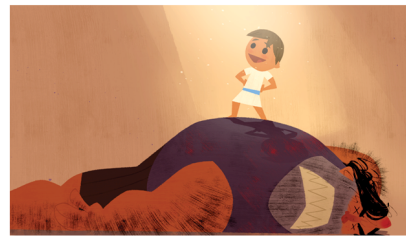
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