

Name: _____

Story of Young Wilbur Chapman and His Pig Pete

This story is about how the very first piggy bank came into being.

In 1913, a young boy named Wilbur Chapman lived in Kansas. Around that time, Kansas was mostly made up of ranches and farms. The people did not have a lot of money. They grew grain and raised pigs, chickens, and cows. They didn't have guests very often—especially not guests who could talk about their travels to exciting countries like Mr. Danner could. Mr. Danner was a missionary. A missionary is someone who goes to other places to do charity work to help people in need.

Mr. Danner spoke of the work he had done with his friends in China, Africa, and India who helped men, women, boys, and girls who had leprosy. He had come to Wilbur's house because he was raising money for the people who suffered from leprosy.

Leprosy is a disease that causes sores all over the body, and these sores usually leave horrible scars. Leprosy was quite common many years ago but not much was known about the disease in those days, and people were very frightened of anyone who had leprosy. As time went on, doctors and missionaries learned more about leprosy and how to help people who had it. These days, we see very few cases of the disease.

All afternoon, Mr. Danner told Wilbur and his family stories of boys and girls who were forced to leave home because they had leprosy. He told them about mothers and fathers who had leprosy so badly that they couldn't work or take care of their children. He asked if they would be able to help. Wilbur's mother and father wanted to help. They said they would talk to some of their friends and see if they could raise enough money to help ten people who had leprosy.

Just before Mr. Danner left Wilbur's house, he pulled three shiny silver dollars out of his pocket. "Here you go, Wilbur," he said as he flipped the coins to Wilbur. "Thanks for being such a wonderful host." When Wilbur went to bed that night he prayed that the children and people

with leprosy would be safe. Before he fell asleep, he tried to think of what he could do with the silver dollars.

What do you think he could do?

The next morning, he ran downstairs and explained to his mom and dad that he was going to buy a pig with his silver dollars. Now you might think that's kind of an odd thing for a boy to buy, but Wilbur knew that if he took good care of the pig and fed it lots of good food and clean water, it would grow big and fat and he could sell it for a lot more money—like an investment. His parents thought that was a pretty good idea, so his dad went with him to buy a small pig.

Wilbur named his pig Pete. Every morning before school and every afternoon before supper, Wilbur gave Pete a special mixture of corn and grain. Sometimes, on special days, Wilbur fed Pete an apple or scraps from the house. Pete grew fat.

In the meantime, Wilbur's mom was asking all of her friends and neighbors if they would help her raise enough money to help ten people who had leprosy. By autumn, she had raised enough money to help nine. She counted her money over and over again, as if she thought that by magic the extra money would appear.

Wilbur knew if he sold Pete, he would have enough money to add to the collection to help ten people. Wilbur couldn't believe it—the money Mr. Danner had given him had multiplied into enough so that he could help one person with leprosy. Wilbur was pretty excited about his contribution. After all, he was just a kid—he still went to school.

Mr. Danner and other workers in the Leprosy Mission were excited about Wilbur and how his pig was able to help someone with leprosy. They decided they would challenge kids all over America to raise money. They made banks in the shape of a pig and gave them to boys and girls from coast to coast.

These were the very first of the piggy banks that we use today.

Source: Adapted from Leprosy Mission Canada. (n.d.). *Pete the Pig*. Accessed at www.leprosy.ca/Document/Du?id=47 on December 9, 2013.

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