

# A Penny Saved

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illustrated by Courtney Smith



## Parent and Teacher Helps

A Penny Saved carries several worthy themes to discuss with your young people:

- Even the most insignificant can have great value (Penny, R.B., Olivia)
- Don't judge someone or something before one truly understands (Grandfather, R.B., Penny)
- The importance of forgiveness (Olivia, R.B., Grandfather)
- The importance of family and ancestors (Parents, Grandfather, Olivia, Mason Elijah)
- The importance of seeking wisdom (Missing Penny, Mystery Solving, Understanding people and situations)

## Historical Background Discussions (Spoiler Alert)

- Mason Michael's ancestor Mason Elijah plays an important role for the future of the Wilson family. Mason Elijah was a recently freed slave living in Georgia shortly after the Civil War. Mason Elijah's life was changed when a Union soldier, Captain Levi Smithers (a fictional character) gives Mason an 1860 Indian Head penny.
- Captain Levi Smithers was loosely based on one of only 50 Black officers in the Union Colored Army during the Civil War.
- Kansas Senator, James Lane believed Black men should be allowed to fight in the Civil War. Based on his recommendation, Kansas formed the 1st and 2nd Colored Volunteer Regiment for the state, which included Lieutenant Patrick H. Minor, the first commissioned Black officer. When the war began, Lincoln refused to recruit Black soldiers into the Union army. He feared the border states would secede and that slaves in Northern states would unite and revolt.
- Once President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Federal troops could also accept Black men as soldiers. Union officials mustered the 1st and 2nd Kansas Colored Volunteer Regiment into the Union army on January 13, 1863, on the parade ground at Fort Scott, Missouri. Although the South ignored the proclamation, freed Black men and former slaves could now participate in their liberation, which boosted their spirits. Prior to that time, Southern laws prevented Black men from owning guns.
- The 1st Kansas Regiment saw its first action at the Battle of Island Mound in Missouri in August 1862. Two hundred and twenty-five Black soldiers ran off more than twice as many Confederate guerillas, proving, of course, that the Black man could fight effectively. Richard Hinton, the 1st Kansas Colored Regiment Adjutant commended the regiment.

Read more about it: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/1stkansas.htm>  
<https://clsimmons.com/first-black-regiment>