



An Old Secret



Chapter One - by Russ and Kay Hively

Joe Porter opened his eyes slowly and realized he ached all over. It was barely light outside, but he had heard his brother Grant and his father up and moving around in the house. A breeze was blowing in the window. Joe knew this would be the coolest part of the day and he wanted to savor it. But he crawled out of bed and dressed in his work clothes.

As he walked down the dimly lit hall to the kitchen, he looked in on Mamma. She had been sick this spring, and the family had spent a lot of money on doctors and medicine. The treatment had worked, and she was getting better, but the medical bills had been hard on the Porter family.

Mamma was sleeping restfully. She would get up later in the morning and work around the house and garden. She would rest in the afternoon, then fix supper for her "boys" before she went back to bed.

The sun was just starting to light the south central Oklahoma sky. Joe looked out at the fields that surrounded their house. "Watermelon," he thought, and another day of picking. The Porters had been picking watermelons for a week, and everyone was tired and sore. Daddy usually hired extra workers to help pick melons, but he just could not afford it this year because of the medical bills.

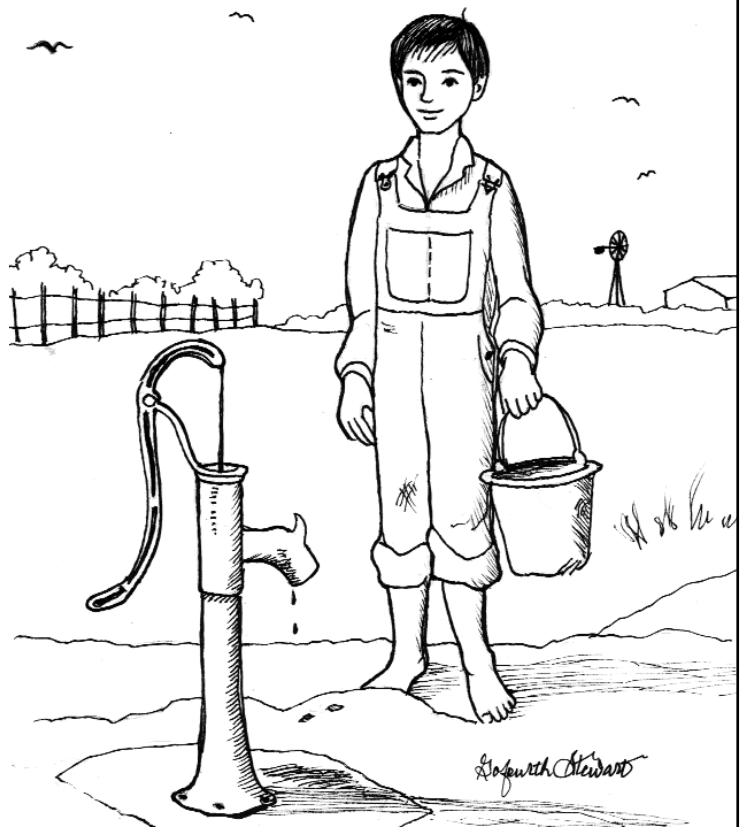
Joe was a tall thin 12-year-old who seemed to outgrow every pair of pants he was ever given. He had brown hair and eyes, and after a few hours in the fields, dust covered his overalls and his skin so he looked like a small brown man.

Grant was 16 and could pitch watermelons as well as anyone in the county. He loved everything about farming and wanted to own a dairy farm some day. Last year, he won the top prize for dairy cattle at the 1951 Grady County Fair. Grant dreamed of building a prime herd, starting with his prize-winning cow.

Before going to the fields, the family had chores to do. Daddy fed and watered the animals and gathered eggs. Grant milked the cow. Joe got water from the pump, lit the stove and cooked breakfast.

Joe picked up the water bucket and walked to the pump in the backyard. He hooked the bucket on the pump head and worked the handle up and down, filling the bucket with cool well water. The sun had risen high enough in the sky for Joe to see some details of the farm. He could see Grant through the door of the barn, and Daddy gathering eggs as the hens pecked their breakfast

from the feeder. Joe lifted the full bucket off the pump and turned to walk back to the house. In the dim light he could see something sitting beside the back door of the house.



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Things to Think About and Do

- The Porters grow watermelons on their farm. On what kind of plant does a watermelon grow: bush, tree or vine? List 10 other vegetables that grow on the same type plant.
- Joe got water from a pump in the backyard. Where do you get water at home? Where are other places you could get water? List them and find out if those sources are safe to drink.

Next Week: Chapter Two – A gift?