

Put Your Money Where Your Mattress Is!



by Kathy Warnes

Francine and Freddy were talking on the way home from school. Francine said, “Granny’s mattress is getting full again.”

“What will we do?” Freddy asked. “Granny keeps cooking those dinners.”

Freddy and Francine lived with their Granny Godfroy in Ecorse, Michigan, while their mere and pere worked in the car factories. A Depression covered the country and no one had any money so every week Granny cooked muskrat dinners and sold them to the Muskrat restaurant at the foot of the Southfield Dock by the Detroit River. People came from all around to eat Granny’s muskrat dinners.

“Euuuweee!” Francine had said the first time Granny had given them a muskrat dinner, but now she gobbled them as quickly as Freddy did. Muskrats ate plants and herbs that grew in the marshes by the river and they tasted clean and tangy. Granny Godfroy also made delicious mashed potatoes and gray to eat along with the muskrat.

When the Depression came the bank closed so Granny Godfroy started putting the pennies she earned under her mattress. Soon Granny Godfroy had stuffed so many pennies in her mattress that they spilled out of it onto her bed. “Help me pick pennies,” she said to Francine and Freddy,

handing each of them a mason jar. By sunset they had lined up thirteen jars of pennies beside the bed.

“What are you going to do with all of those pennies?” Freddy asked.

“We’ll hide them under the bed,” Granny said.

For three months they hid jars of pennies under the bed. Granny Godfroy started coming to the breakfast table every morning yawning and with dark circles under her eyes. “What’s wrong, Granny?” Francine asked.

“My mattress is so lumpy I can’t sleep,” Granny Godfroy complained.

“Let me see how lumpy it is,” Freddy said. He rolled around on Granny’s mattress. “Ow! You try it, Francine.”

Francine rolled around on Granny’s mattress. “It feels like it’s stuffed with the lumps of coal we pick up by the railroad tracks.”

Freddy and Francine peeked under the bed. All they could see were jars and jars of pennies piled so high that they raised the mattress clear off the bedsprings. “You have to find another place to hide your pennies,” they told Granny Godfroy.

“There isn’t any place in the house to hide them,” Granny said.

“But there’s a place in the basement,” Francine said.

“Where?” Granny Godfroy wondered.

“Where?” Freddy wondered.

Francine led them downstairs. Shivering she pulled open the fruit cellar door and pointed to the shelves filled with jars of food that Granny Godfroy had canned. “Nobody would imagine looking for pennies here and it’s too cold to hunt too long,” Francine said.

From that day on, Freddy, Francine and Granny Godfroy took all of the jars of pennies that Granny Godfroy earned from her muskrat dinners and put them behind the jars of canned food in the fruit cellar.

Granny Godfroy called them her muskrat cash stash!