



*by Jamie Aramini*

ILLUSTRATED BY  
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*The Adventures of Munford*  
**MUNFORD MEETS ROBERT FULTON**

Written by Jamie Aramini

Illustrated by Emily Lefferts

Munford character and concepts created by George Wiggers

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## DEDICATION

For Joey and James

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I couldn't believe I was here. This wasn't a part of the plan. It was July 4th, 1778. Two years ago today some brave men signed the Declaration of Independence. This important document said that the colonies in North America would be free from the rule of Great Britain. The colonists were still fighting for their freedom. Even so, people all over would be celebrating the anniversary of this important day. I had hoped to join in the festivities, but it wasn't looking promising.

My adventure began at a powder mill a few weeks ago. This is a place where the colonists made black powder. Black powder is another name for gunpowder and is mainly used to fire bullets from guns. I had arrived in a barrel of water.

I had hoped to escape, and I did manage to do that... as the barrel was dumped into the mill to make the black powder! As the gears turned, I became a part of the powder. I wasn't sure what it was going to be used for, perhaps in the guns that were fighting the American Revolution.

Powder seems very dry, doesn't it? It is hard to imagine that there might be any water in it, but there is. In fact, nearly everything around you has small amounts of water molecules.

Boy, was I mad! How would I celebrate Independence Day now? The black powder and I were dumped into another wooden barrel. Then it was sealed up tight. It looked like there was no hope of escaping now.

It was hard to tell what was going on from the inside. I think the powder was loaded up on a carriage. Then I was in a general store in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. (I knew because I could hear people talking—I couldn't see a thing from inside the barrel!) It was the third of July. Even if I made it out today, it looked like I wouldn't get to celebrate the Fourth. I overheard the storeowner talking with some



customers, and the city of Lancaster had made some new rules this year. There was a shortage of candles because of the war. No one was supposed to light theirs, so all the fun would stop at dark. What kind of Fourth of July would that be?

I'm sorry, what was that? You want to know how I could fit inside a barrel? Haven't we met before? Silly me, always forgetting to introduce myself! My name is Munford. I'm just your average, everyday water molecule—one part oxygen, two parts hydrogen. Well... I guess I'm not exactly average. I'm an adventurer who travels the world in search of excitement. That's how I ended up at the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It's also how I ended up here in Lancaster, although I certainly hadn't seen any excitement yet.

Now that we've met, we better get back to the story. I heard the jingle of the door bell, then the voice of a young man. "Good morning, Mr. Fischer," said the boy.

"Hello, young Master Fulton. What mischief are you up to today?"

"Just buying some black powder," he said.



“What on earth for?” asked Mr. Fischer. He must have opened the barrel, because the next thing you know I was being scooped out and put into a powder horn. Luckily, I ended up as a smudge of powder on the outside so I could still see what was going on around me.

Now I could see the boy. He looked to be about eleven or twelve. He had dark hair and eyes and a mischievous grin. “The officials say I can’t light a candle to celebrate the Fourth of July, so I am going to do something even better! I’m going to light up the night with a sky rocket!”

Mr. Fischer looked perplexed. “Light up the night sky? That’s impossible!”

Fulton paid for the powder and headed towards the door. “No sir, there is nothing impossible.”

Why did I suddenly feel like I was in for an adventure? This young boy definitely sounded like my kind of fellow. I couldn’t wait to see what he was up to.

The sky rocket would have to wait, as the boy headed straight to the school house. It was a small wooden building with lots of windows. Inside were desks filled with school children of all ages. A male teacher stood at the front, already started on the day’s lessons.

Robert must have been very excited about his school work. As the teacher talked, he kept wiggling around in his seat. He also drew on a piece of paper as he listened.

“Fulton! Answer the question!” The tall school teacher raised his voice from the front of the classroom.

Robert startled at the sound of his name. I could tell by the look on his face that he didn’t know what the question was. The teacher approached Robert’s desk.

He gave a sharp swat across Robert's hand with a ruler. "You must pay attention to your lessons!"

Robert frowned. "But, sir, you don't understand! My head is so full of ideas that I have no room left for your dusty books!"

The teacher was very angry now. "Out! Out! Out!" he shouted. Young Robert grabbed up his things and headed out the door.

He walked, in bare feet, down the city street. I had a great view from the powder horn that was hanging around his waist. He came to a large building with a sign above the door that read Isch & Messersmith. An illustration of a gun was below the name.

"Well, looky here, it seems we have a visitor," said a burly man standing beside the hot furnace.

"Quicksilver Bob!" said a younger, scrawny man who was mixing something up in the corner. "How did your school lessons go today?"

"The same as always," said Robert. "Gained nothing but bloody knuckles." He held up his hands as proof.

He pulled the piece of paper he had been drawing on from his bag. "Oh, but I did draw this up



while the schoolmaster thought I was practicing my spelling. I thought you might want to see it, Mr. Isch.”

The burly man, who must have been Isch, came and got the paper from Robert. He took it over to his skinny friend, and they looked at it together. The men exchanged excited glances.

“Your eye for drawing is amazing, Robert,” said Isch. “This looks like a working gun.”

Robert jumped up from his seat and came over to the men. He flipped the paper over. “Yes, it is. I wrote the exact dimensions on the back—and the proportions for the powder.”

Isch looked over the measurements carefully.

“That schoolmaster must be a bumbling idiot! You are the most clever boy in all of Lancaster, and all he can see fit to do is rap your knuckles! Ridiculous, I tell you.”

Robert shrugged. “I don’t know about that. He says I will never amount to anything because I hate to read. He is probably right. I do hate reading!”

“Don’t listen to that nonsense. Why don’t you leave this sketch with me? Messersmith and I will look it over and see if maybe we can make this into a real gun.”

“Really?” asked Robert eagerly.

“Really! This looks better than the sketches brought to us by grown men. And I’m positive that your math is exact.” He leaned down and spoke quietly to Robert. “If we make this gun for you, will you tell us your secret?”

“My secret?” he asked.

“You know what I’m talking about. The mercury, or quicksilver as we often call it. Tell us why you are always buying quicksilver.”

“I told you, Mr. Isch. It is for my experiments.”

“What experiments? We want to know what

you have figured out. It must be spectacular since you refuse to tell anyone.”

“I’m sorry, sir, but I’m afraid I must keep that to myself.”

Isch sighed. “Okay, then. I guess all young boys are entitled to their secrets. We will just have to keep calling you ‘Quicksilver Bob’ until you decide to tell us. You are a lot like that quicksilver yourself, moving so fast none of the rest of us can keep up with you! We will still make the gun, though. Come by later in the week, and we will test it out.”

Robert agreed. He gathered up his things and headed out the door. I liked him because he was always on the move to a new adventure.