

Caught In A Florida Sun Shower



A Bonnet House Coloring Book

Introduction

This is the story of a vibrant African American girl who could not wait to experience life. Irene Riley longed to see the Atlantic Ocean and meet her mother's family who lived in Florida. At the age of 13, she left her home in Savannah for a two week visit to Fort Lauderdale. Little did she know ... her two week visit was to become a lifelong stay !

*When Irene arrived in 1937, much of Fort Lauderdale beach was a coastal wilderness. It was here she would spend her adolescent years residing with her aunt, uncle and cousin at **Bonnet House** – the beachfront estate of the Birch-Bartlett family.*

Irene was educated in the colored schools of Fort Lauderdale where she met her future husband, Lafayette Hart. Together they raised a family of five, instilling in their children strong spiritual and family values, the importance of a good education, and the need for community activism.

Today her Fort Lauderdale roots have come full-circle. Irene Riley Hart currently serves on the Bonnet House Board of Directors, helping to insure the preservation of the historic house museum and 35 acre subtropical estate, she knew as home. Her vivid recollections and fond memories were the inspiration of this publication.

Special thanks to the following former employees and their surviving relatives, who worked and/or lived on the Birch-Bartlett properties: Clytimus Austin, Ruby Lee Collins, Calvin Foster, Mary Alice Foster, Irene Riley Hart, Mary Pearl Hines, Mildred Howard, Arlene Jones, Marie Little, Alonzia Nash, Alice Randall, Herbert Royal, Cheryl Rucker, Susie Sallette and Willie Mae Shipman.

**Written by Lisa Bova
Illustrated by JoAnn Schugt**



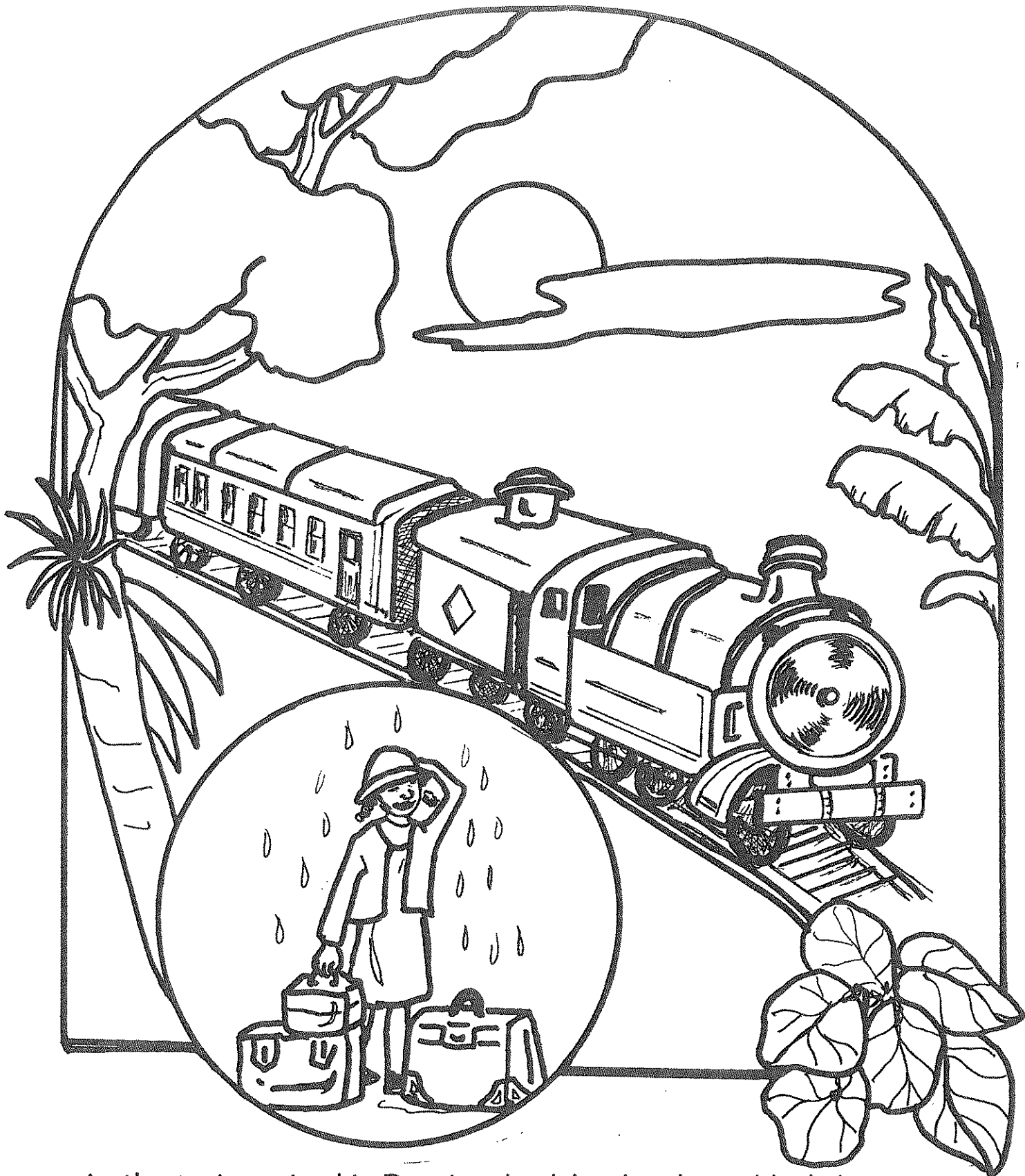
My name is Irene. When I was a little girl, I liked to read. My favorite books were about Florida.



I always wanted to see the Atlantic Ocean. My mother's family lived in Florida, too!



I lived in Georgia with my dad and brothers. My grandmother came to live with us after my mother passed away. One spring day, my Aunt Arneathea came to take me for a visit to Florida.

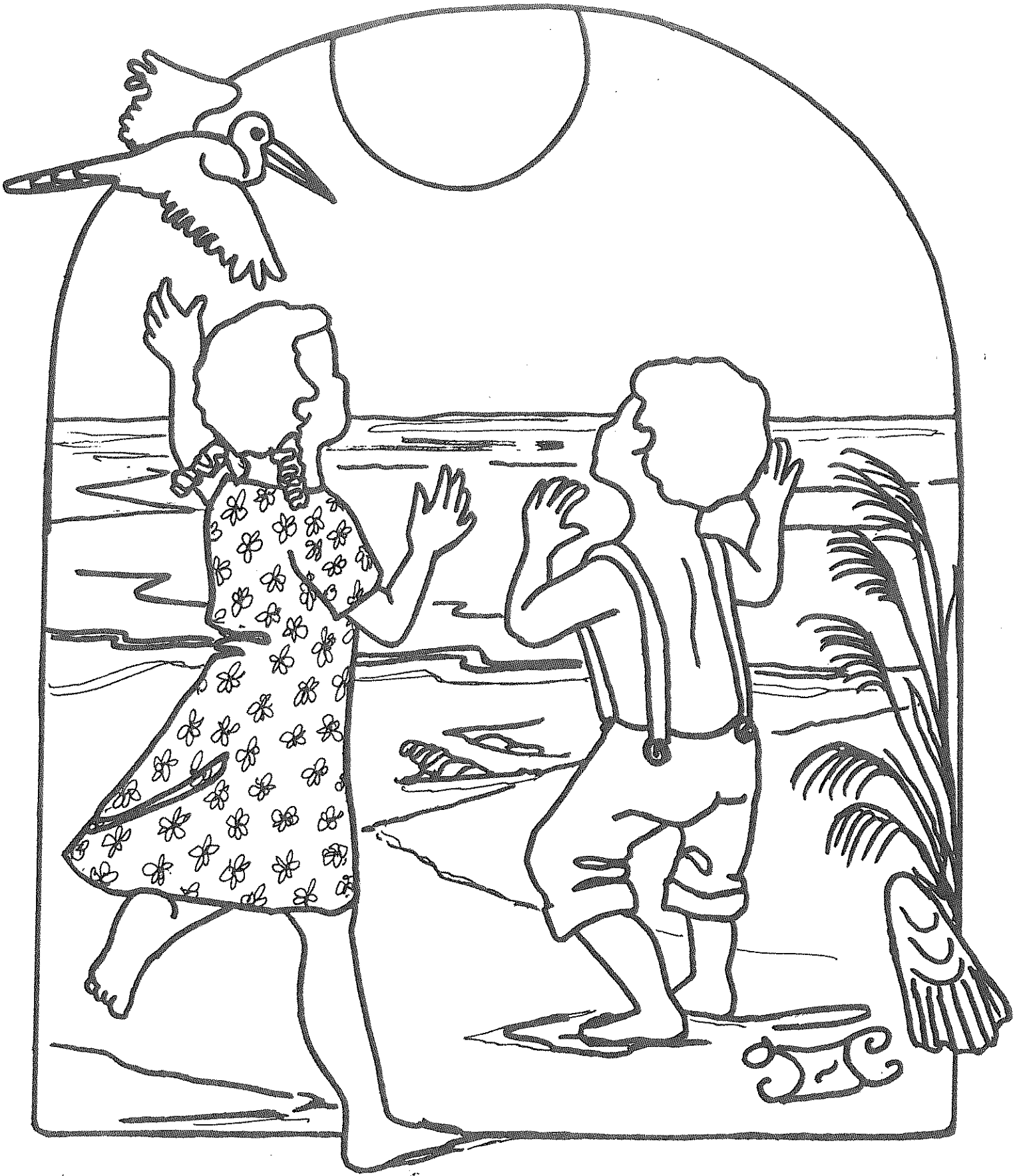


As the train arrived in Fort Lauderdale, the sky suddenly became dark and cloudy. My Aunt said, "If you get caught in the first May sun shower you'll never leave Florida."

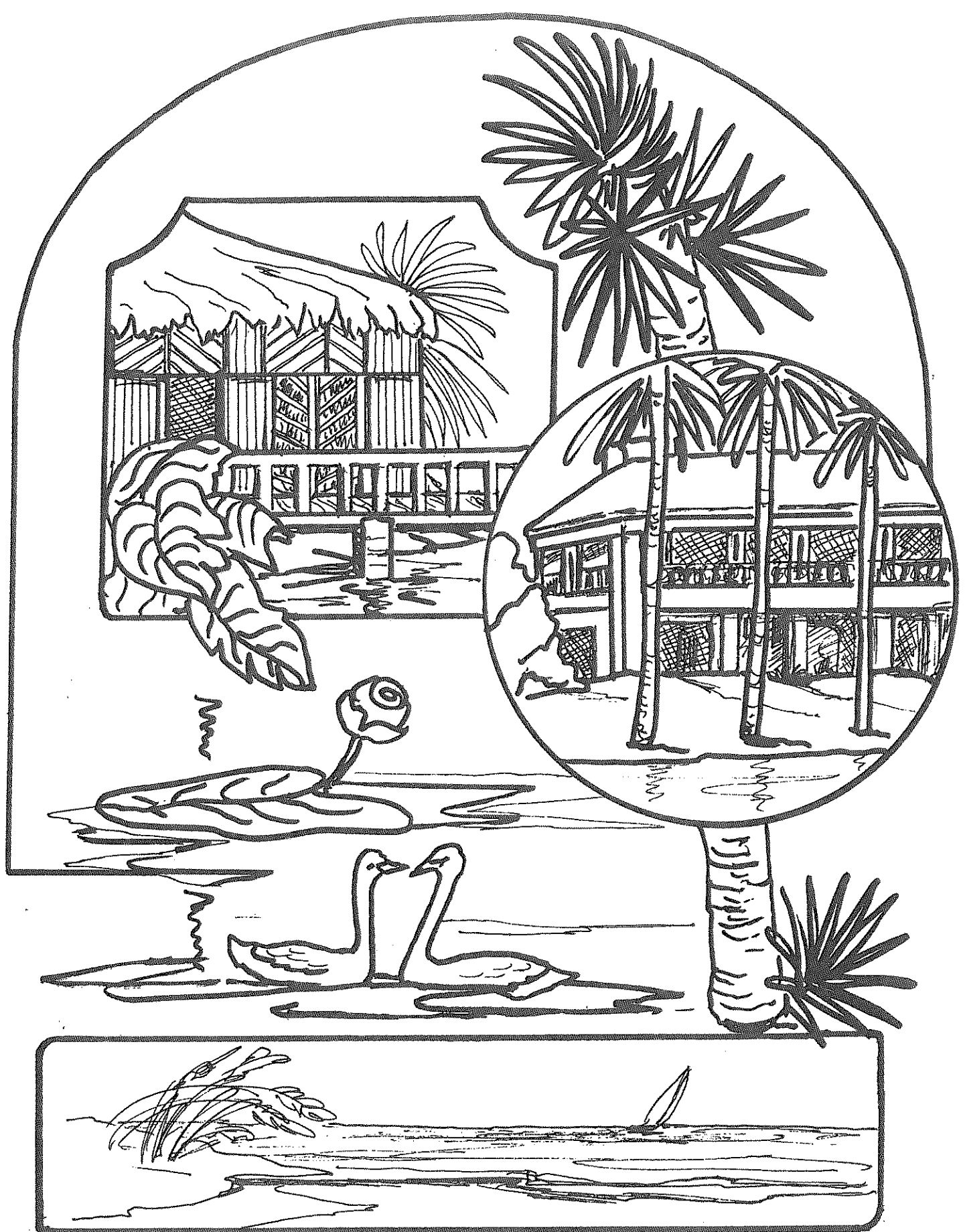




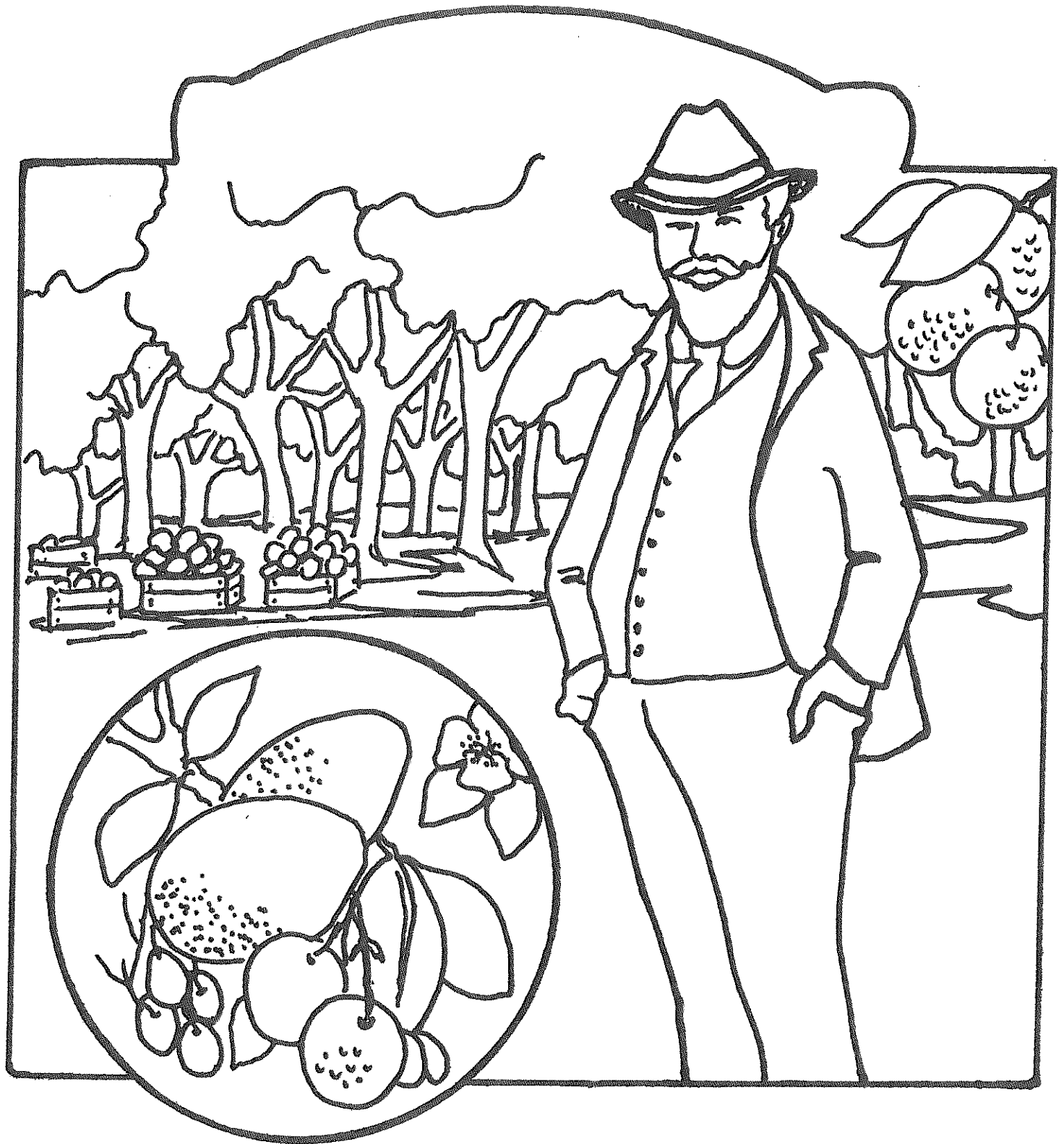
The moment I stepped off the train, the rain came down. A few minutes later the sun came back out again. That day was May 1, 1937 -- I knew I was here to stay!



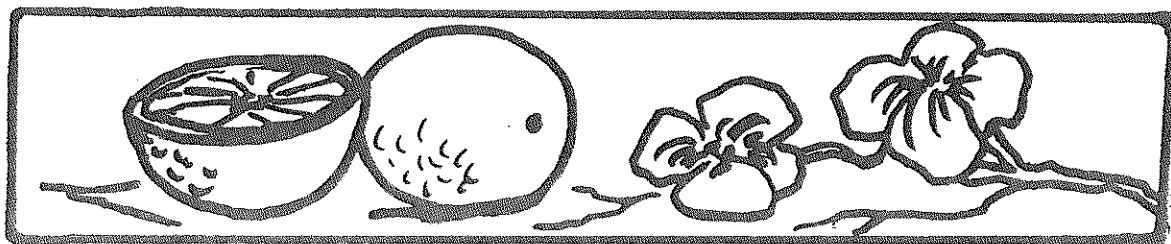
My Uncle Dewey drove us home from the train station. As we pulled up the drive, my little Cousin Alonzia came out to meet me. He took my hand and we ran all the way to Fort Lauderdale beach.



My aunt, uncle, and cousin lived at Bonnet House. It was the beachfront estate of the Birch-Bartlett family.



Mr. Birch was a true nature lover. He came to Fort Lauderdale over 100 years ago and bought miles of native land along the beach.

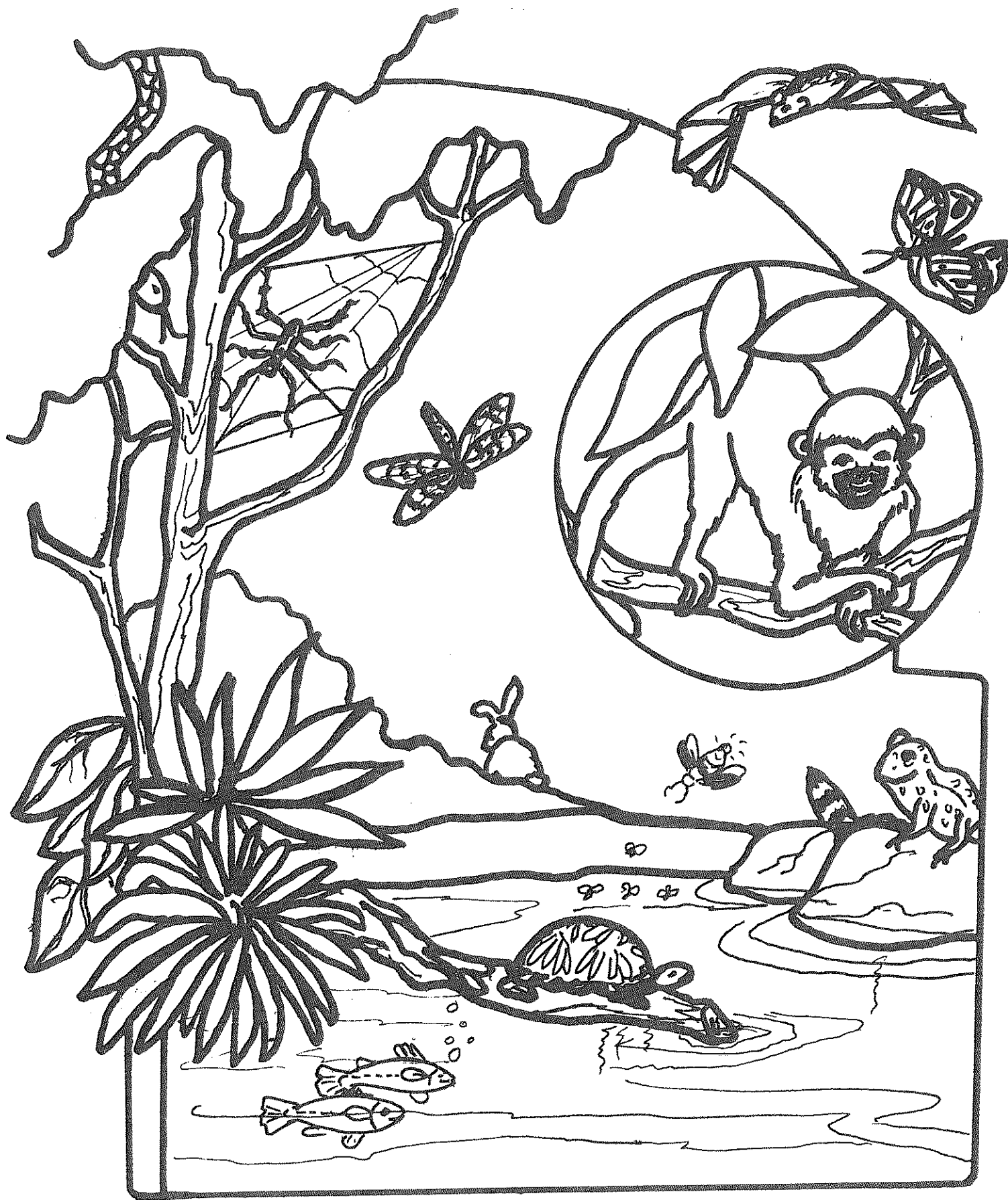




Mr. Bartlett was a fine artist, and the son-in-law of Mr. Birch. He designed Bonnet House as a special place for the family to spend their winters.



Mrs. Bartlett was the wife of Mr. Bartlett. She loved animals and she also liked to paint.



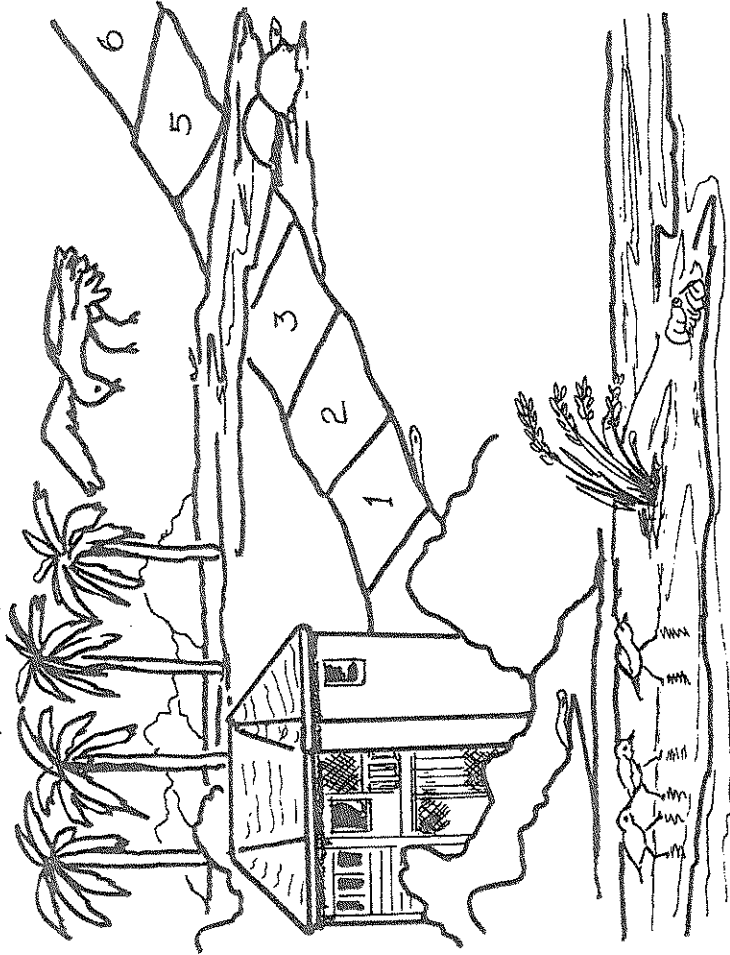
A lot of wild life lived at Bonnet House, too.



Bonnet House was such a beautiful place, and now it would be my home!

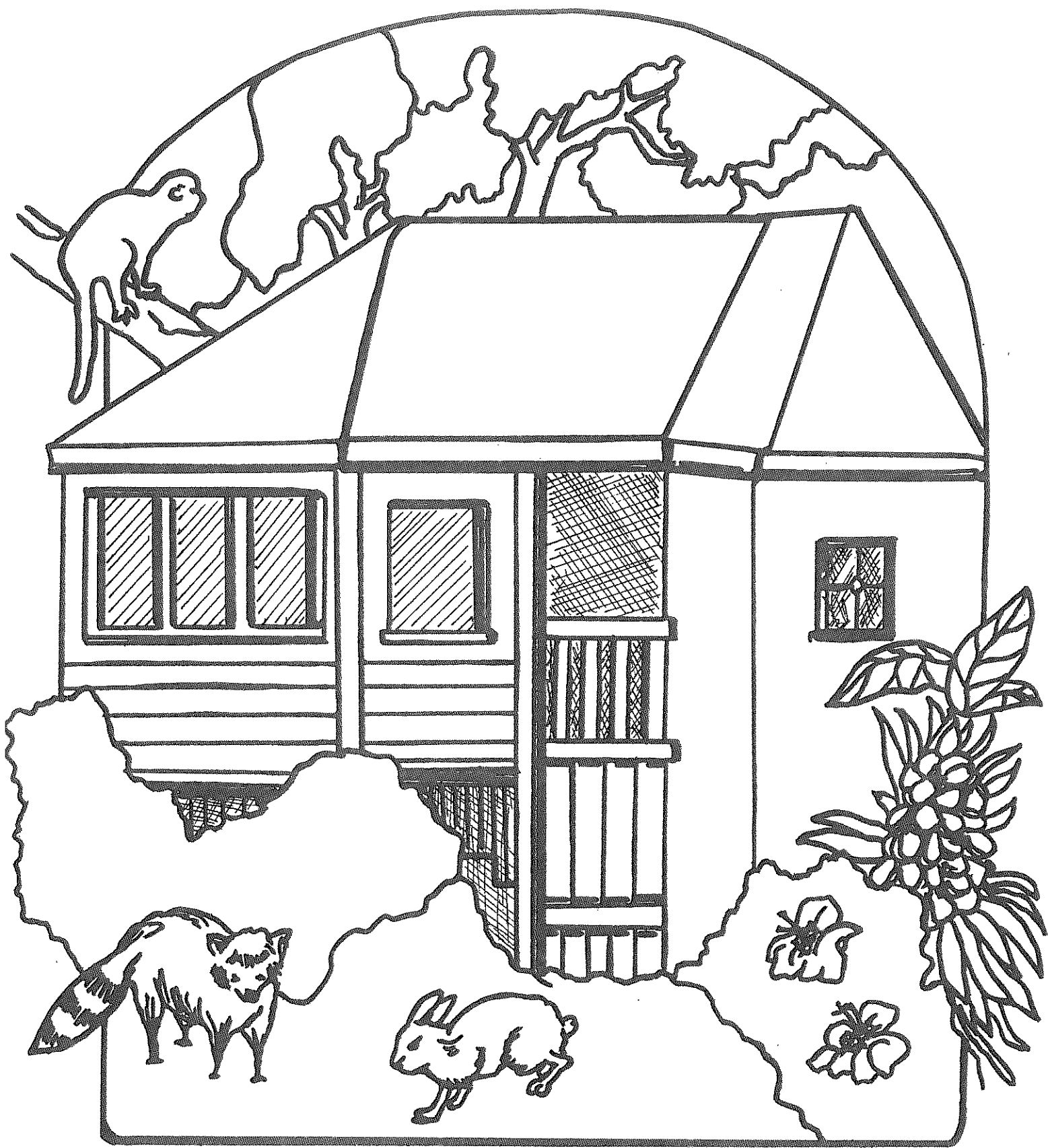


My Cousin and I rode our bikes into town to go to school. The Colored School was very far from the beach. We had to ride on dirt roads, past swamps and over bridges.

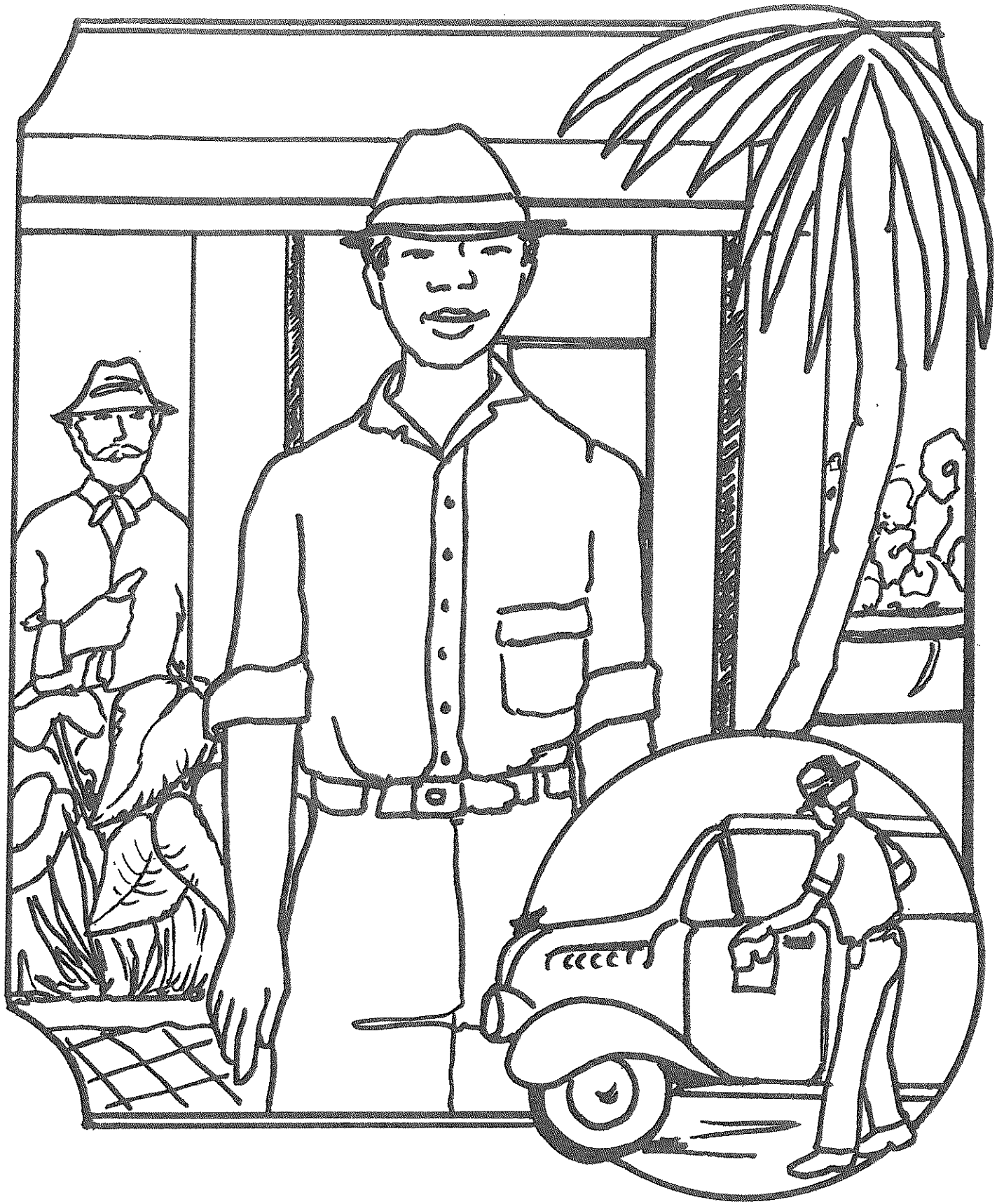


We passed so many rattle snakes along the way, my uncle gave us big sticks to chase them off our path. How many rattlesnakes can you count? *

* Answer: 12



Uncle Dewey, Aunt Arneathea, Cousin Alonzia, Spotty and Me all lived in the Caretaker's Cottage at Bonnet House.



Uncle Dewey was the Caretaker. He looked after the house and grounds of Bonnet House. He was the chauffeur for Mr. Birch, too.



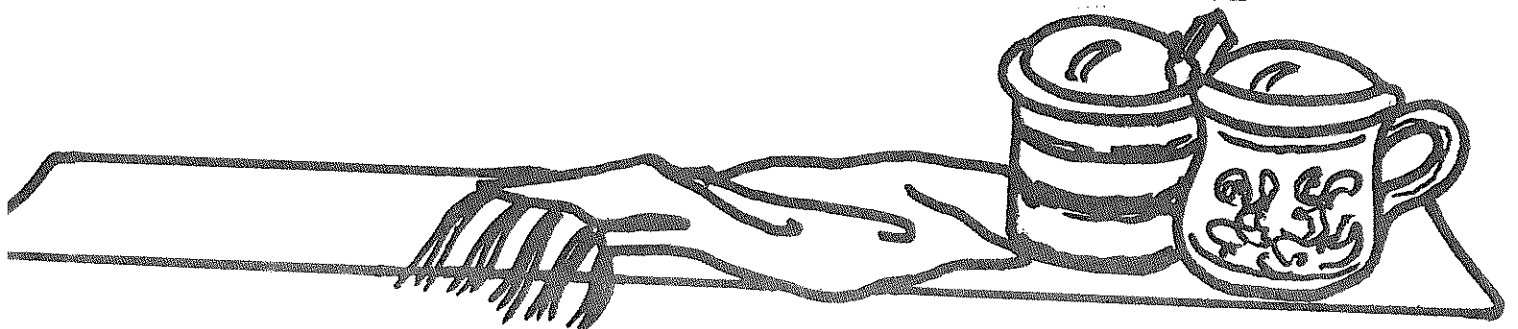
Aunt Arneathea did the laundry. She washed the clothes out back in the boil pot.



Liza and Martha were maids for Mr. Birch.

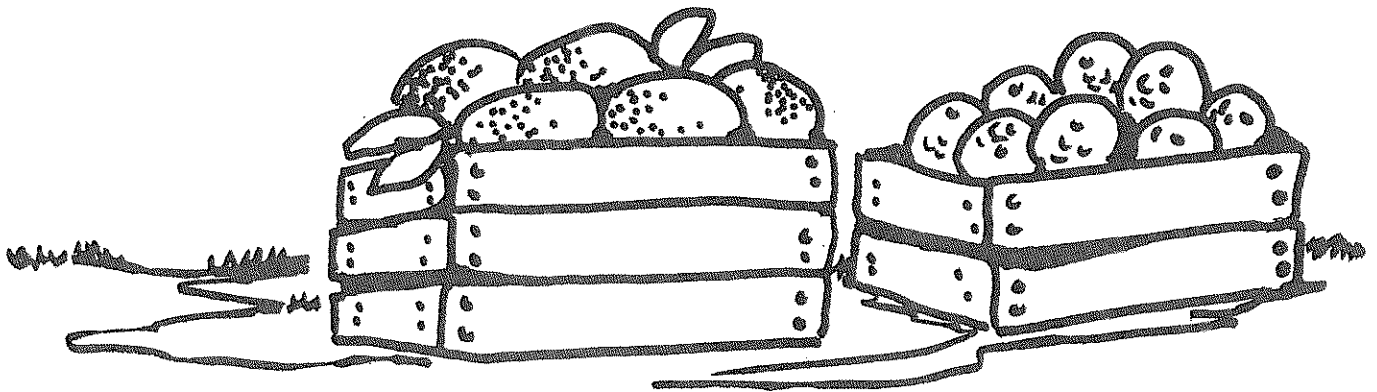
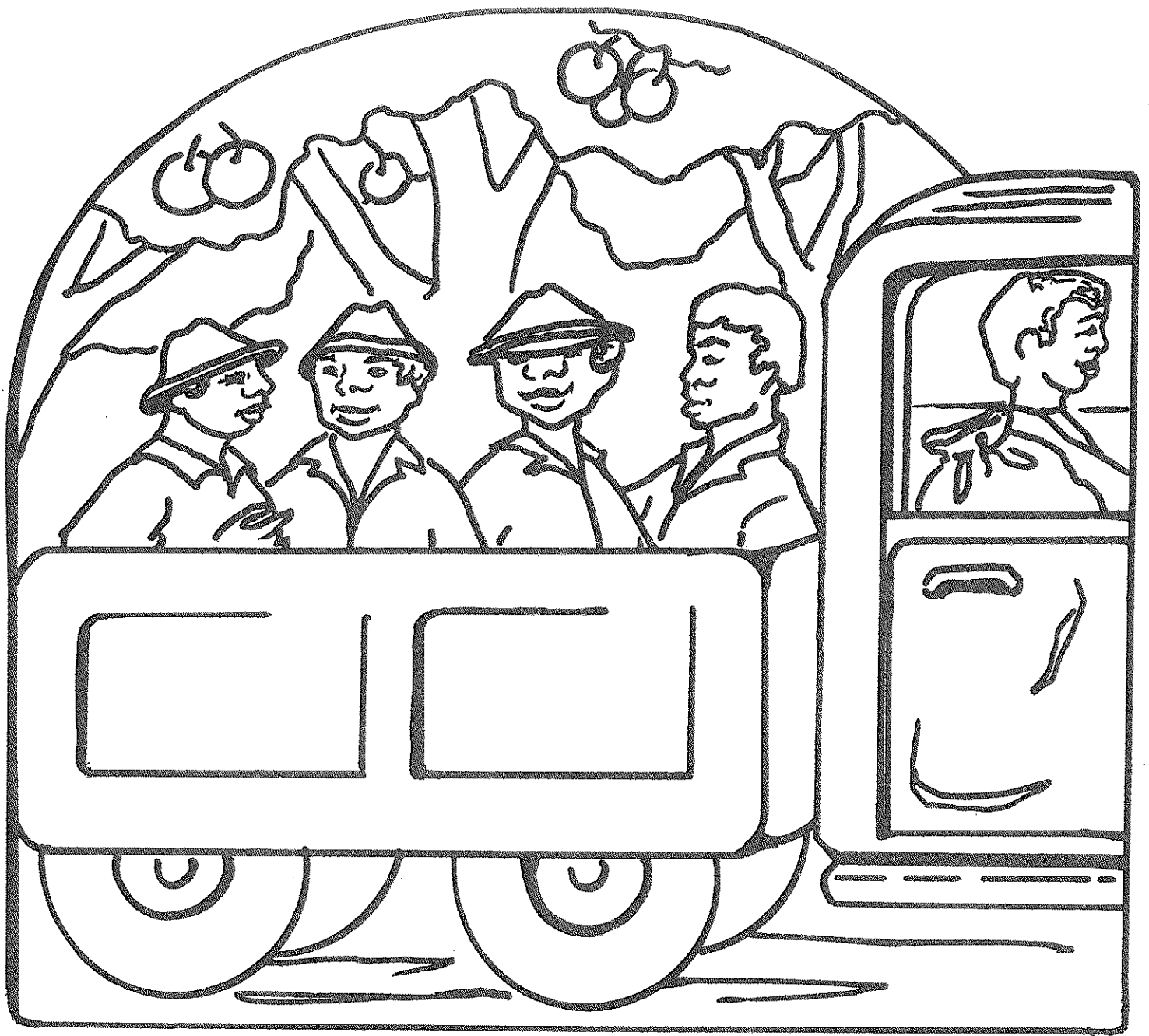


Marie and Gussie were sisters. Marie was the cook at Bonnet House and Gussie was the housekeeper for Mrs. Bartlett.

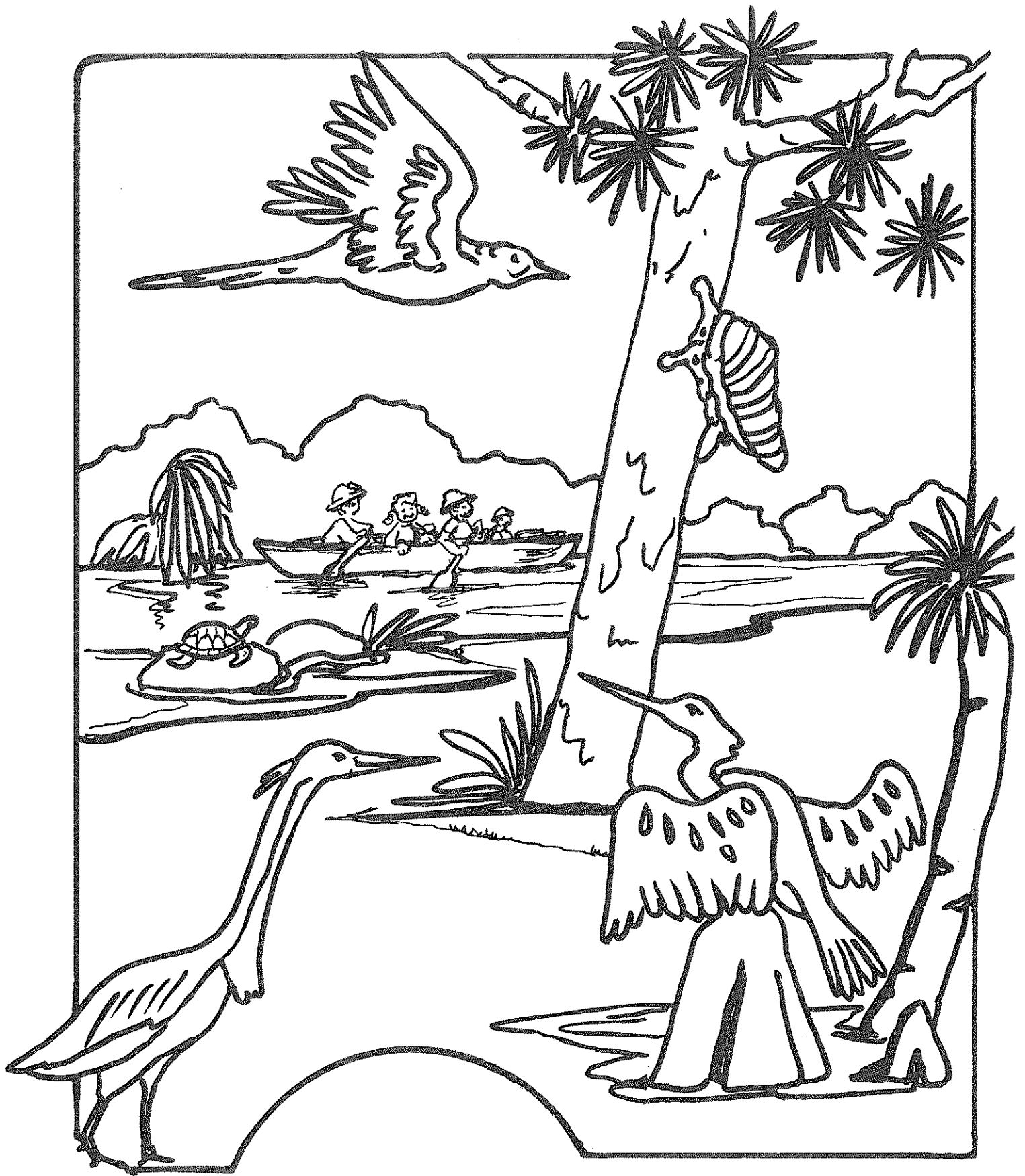




"Pop's" was Uncle Dewey's Dad. He watered the garden and took care of the animals for Mrs. Bartlett.



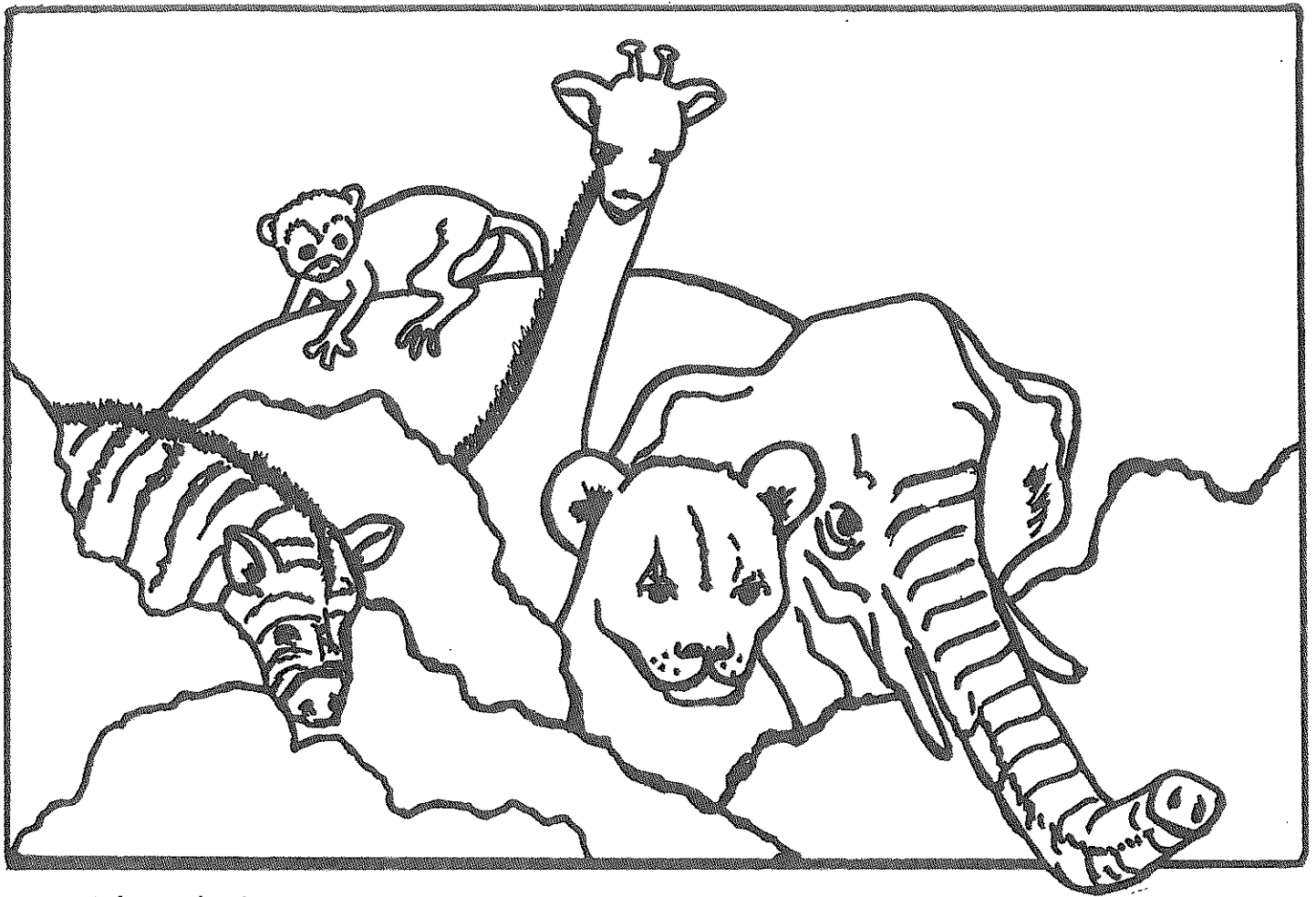
Mr. Birch grew many different kinds of fruit trees. It took a lot of men to take care of all of Mr. Birch's land.



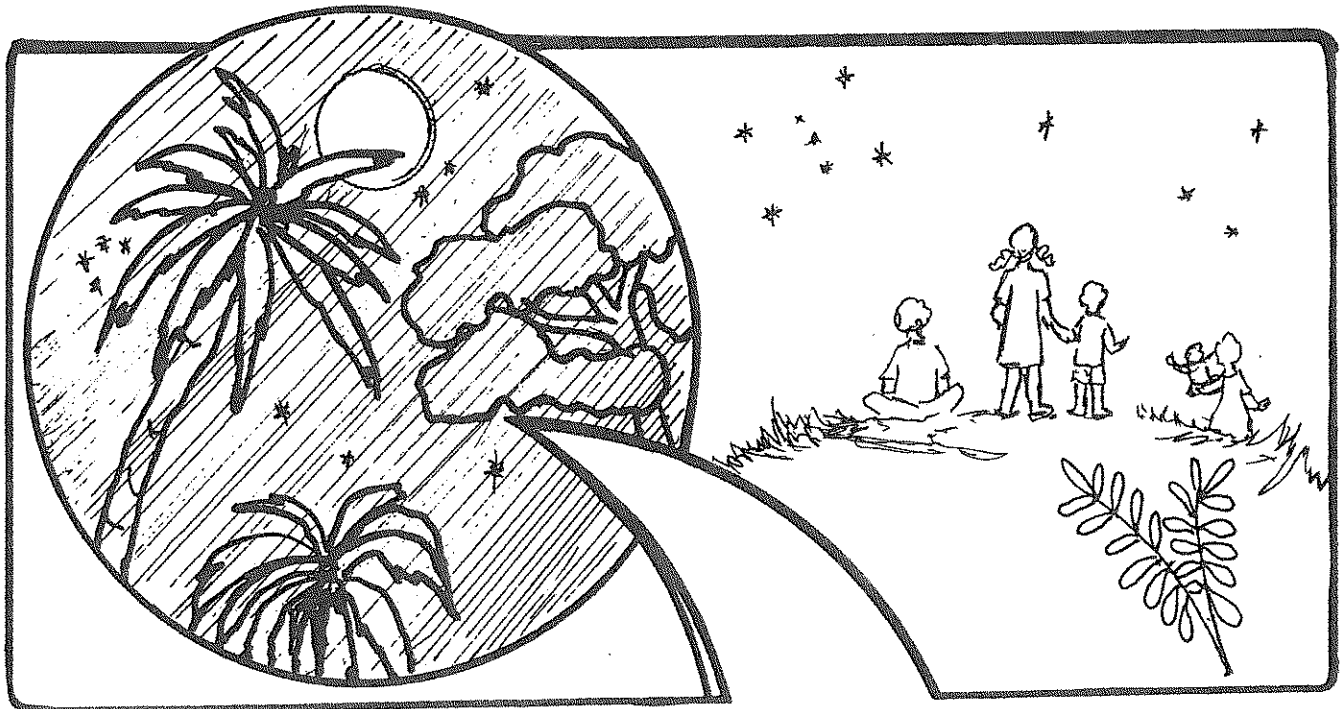
Rivers and waterways cut through Mr. Birch's property. We traveled by boat to visit my Aunt Sarah and Uncle James. They were caretakers for Mr. Birch too, on land he called The Forties.



I had four cousins who lived at The Forties. We'd spend all day playing and fishing.



The Clyde Beatty Circus animals lived across the Middle River, right behind The Forties. All night we could hear the roar of lions and tigers.

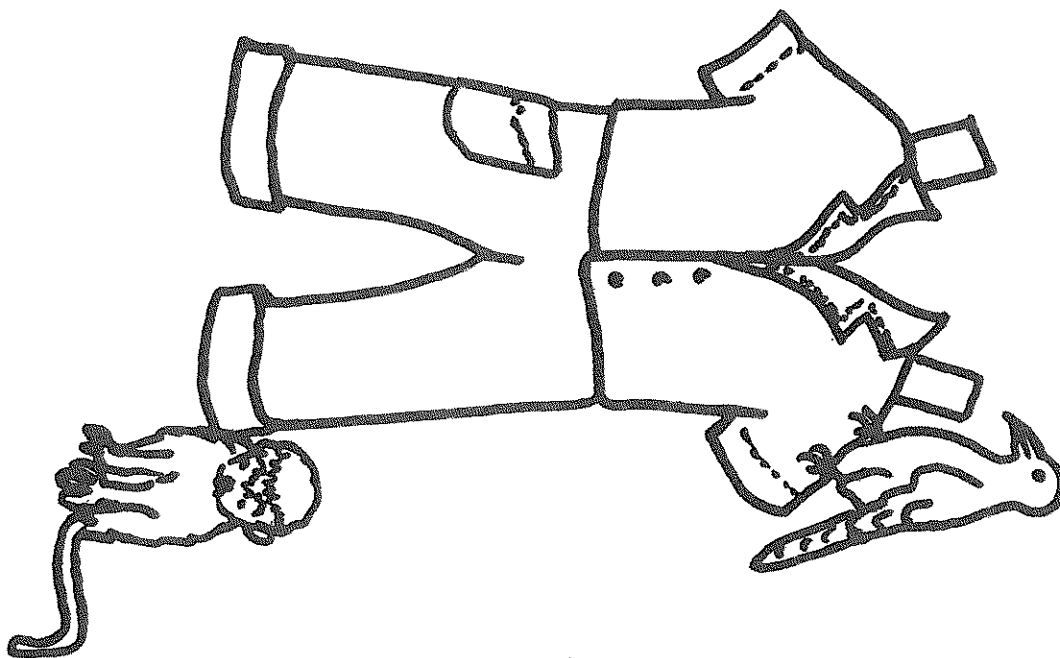
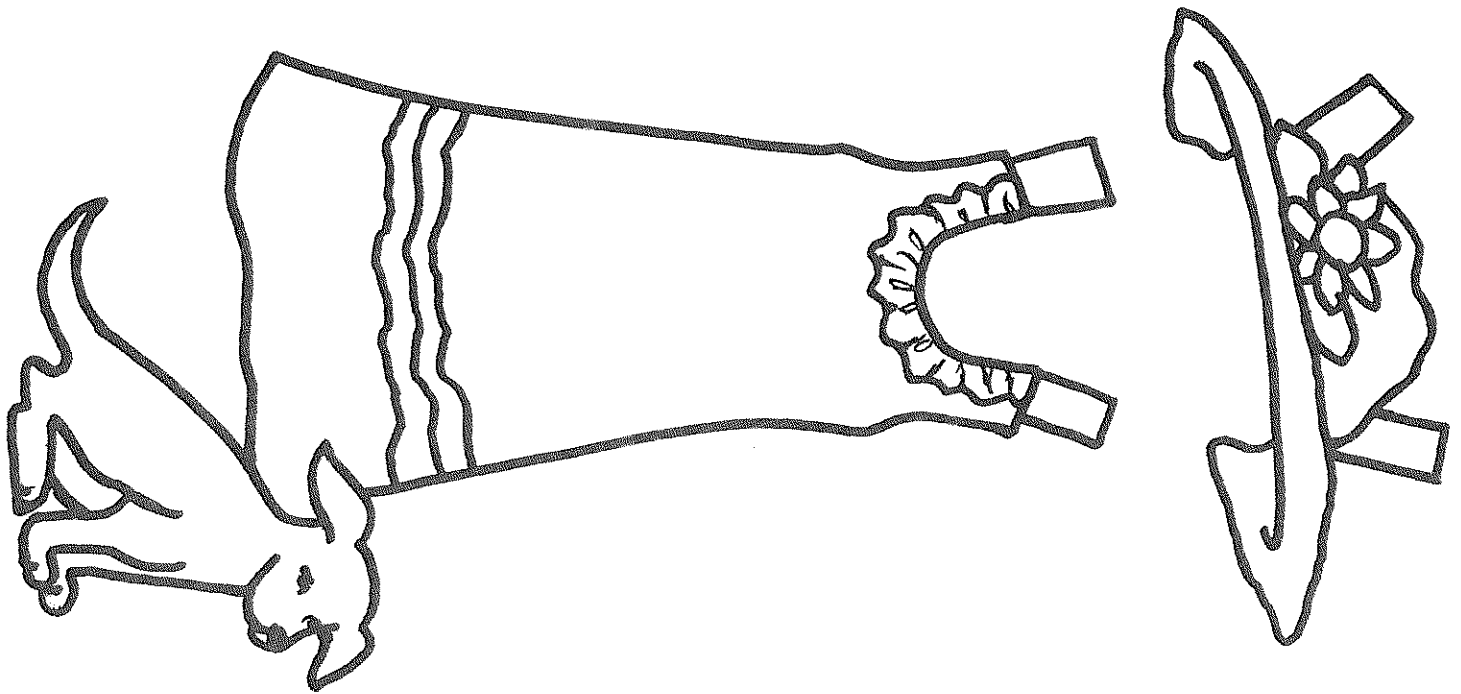




I was sure going to miss my Dad and brothers back in Georgia, but that May shower caught me ... and Florida was where I would stay!

Paper Doll Clothes

To Color & Cut



Paper Dolls
To Color & Cut

