

Diboll Days'

Then and

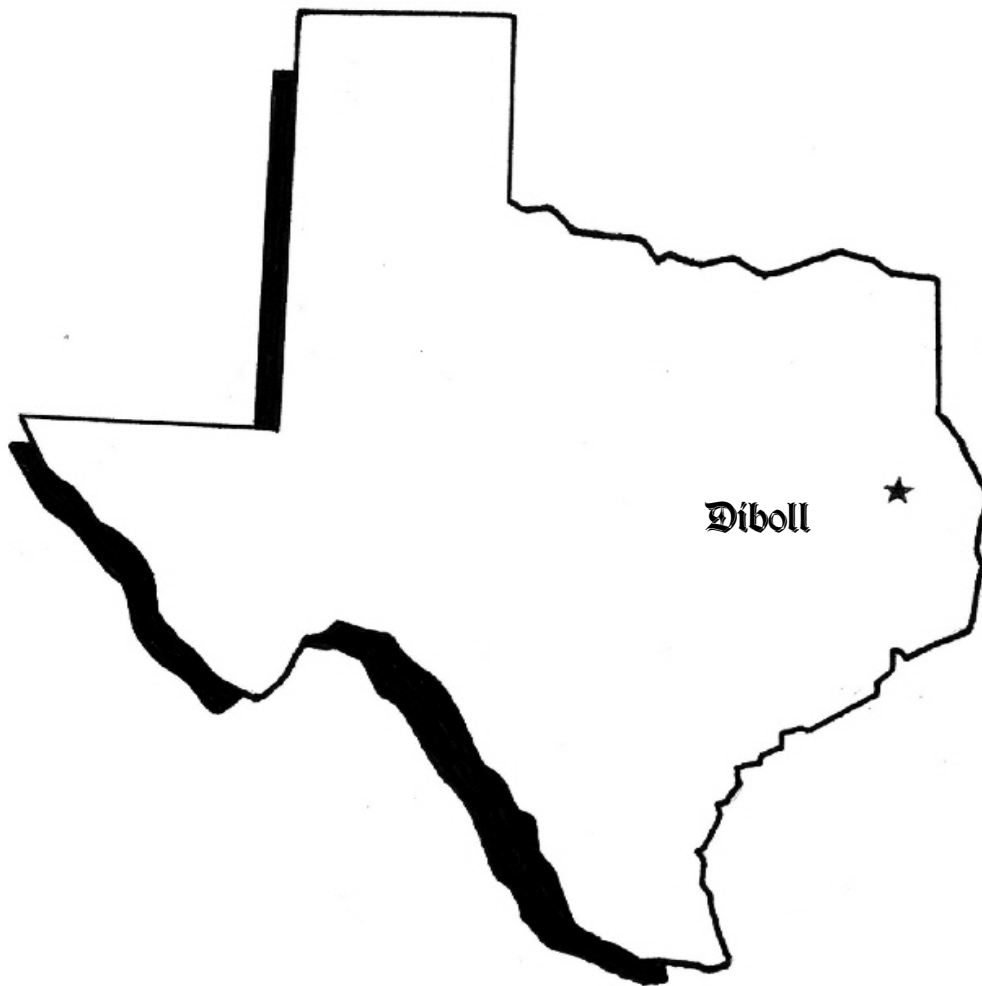
Now

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Illustrated by Raymond Ryan

Diboll Days

Then and now



In the piney woods of East Texas, there is a community named Diboll. This is the story of the town from its beginning.

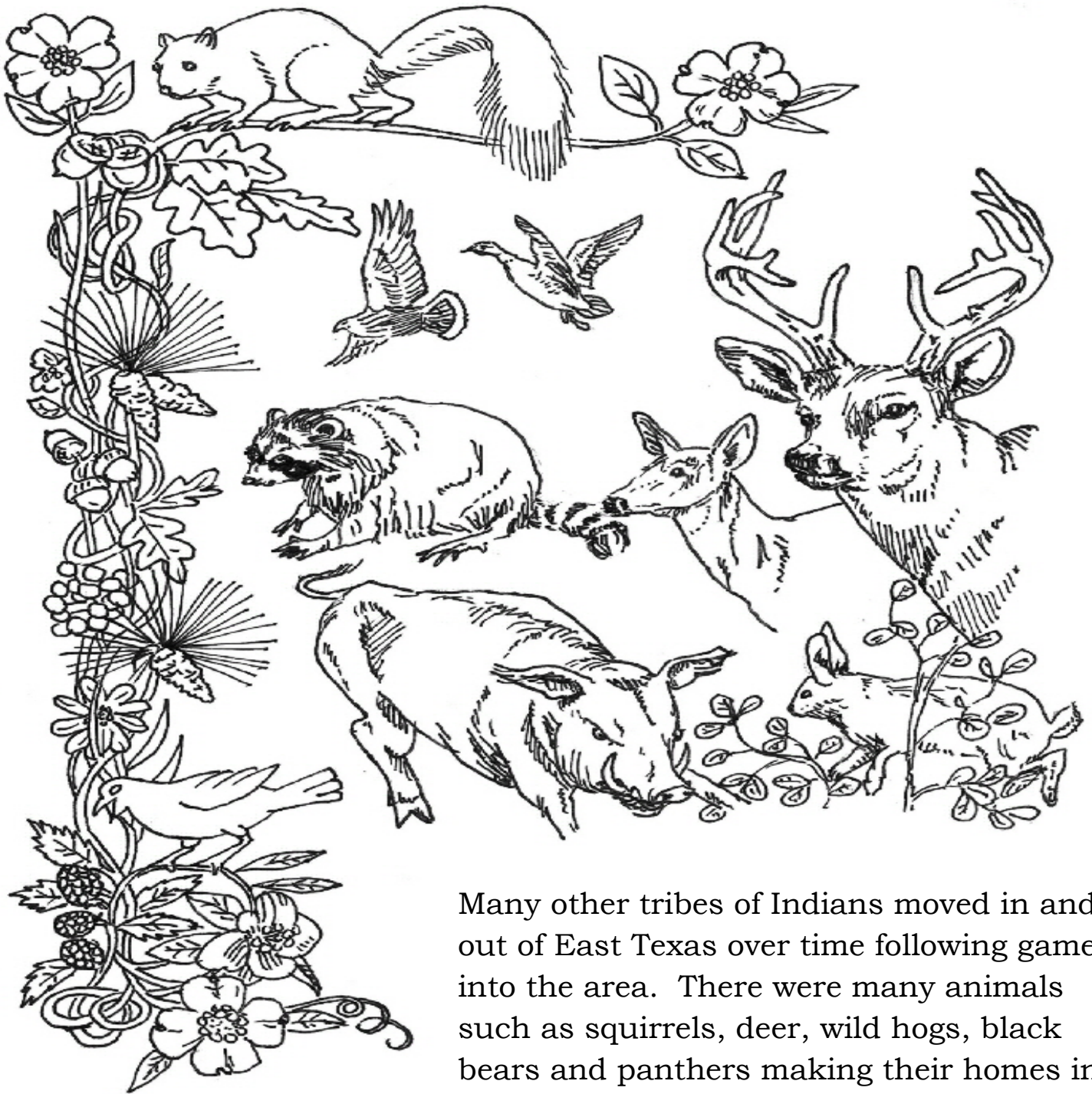


The first people who lived in the area were Indians. These Indians were probably mound builders. Little is known about these very old or “**archaic** people” except for the things that are found buried in their mounds. **Archeologists** still find and study **artifacts** or things left by these Indians in Nacogdoches, Alto and East Texas.



By the late 1600's several tribes known as the Hasinai Confederation of Caddos lived in the East Texas area. Because the tribes were friendly, they called each other "taysha" which meant "*friends or allies.*" The Spaniards who lived in the area probably used the word "tejas" in the same way.

The Spanish and French were the first **European** people to **explore** Texas. When they came into this area, they met a young Hasinai Indian girl named Angelina. They wrote about her in their diaries. She was described as gentle and likable. Even her name meant "*little angel.*" Of the 254 counties in the state of Texas, only Angelina County has a woman's name.



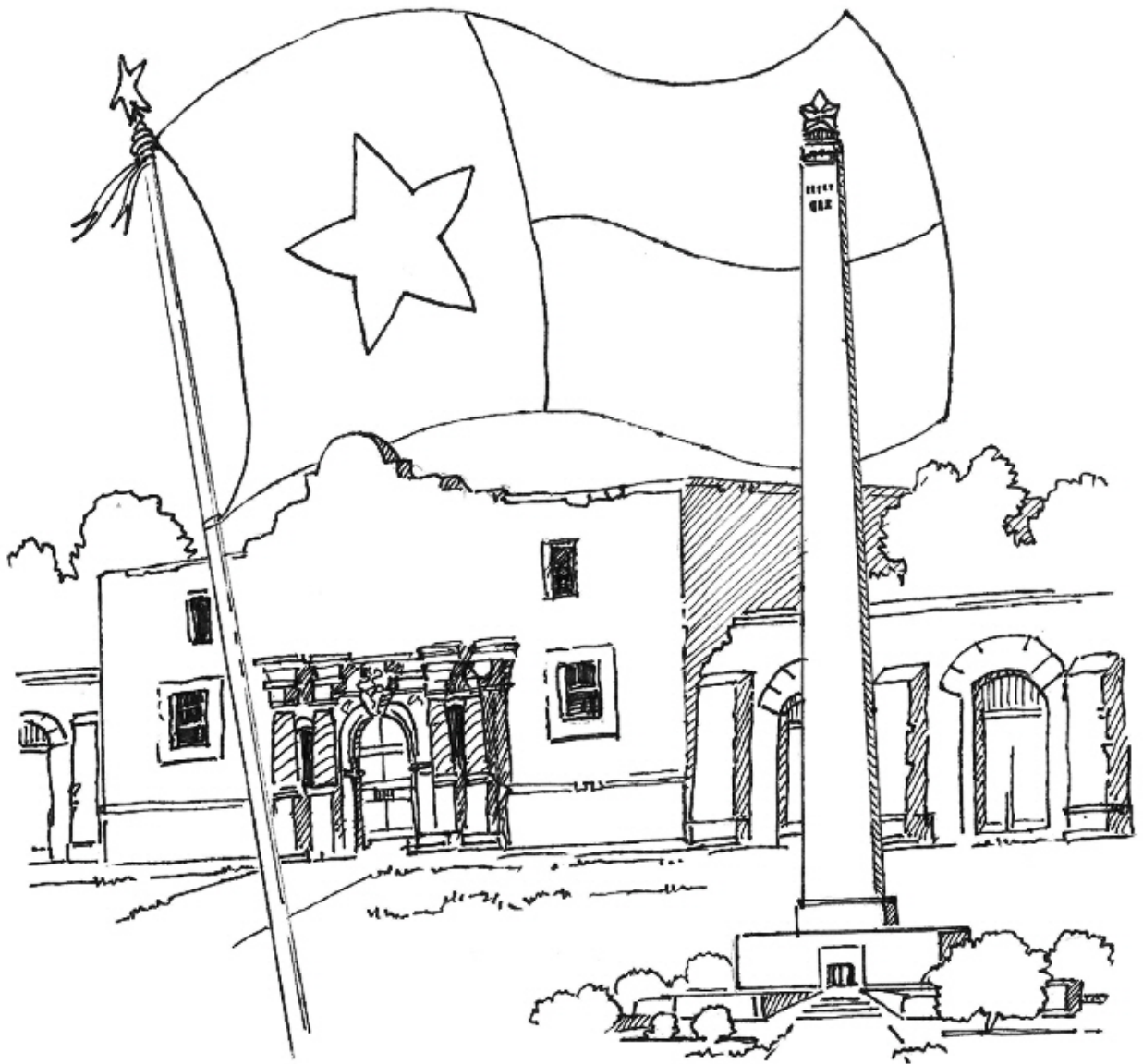
Many other tribes of Indians moved in and out of East Texas over time following game into the area. There were many animals such as squirrels, deer, wild hogs, black bears and panthers making their homes in the forest.

The Alabama and Coushatta tribes especially liked the area of East Texas along the Angelina and Neches Rivers. **Abundant** food was available for hunting or gathering in the woods between the rivers. By 1841, all of the Indian tribes were driven out of the land that is Angelina County.



Over 150 years ago Texas was a part of Mexico. Mexican citizens could come into East Texas to claim land. A **deed**, a piece of paper saying they owned the land, was given to them. Diboll was built on the land that belonged to Antonio Chevano, J. R. Chevano and Anselmo Prado. They surveyed their land in 1834 and 1835. They did not keep the land long. They sold it to other people.

If your family owns a home or land in Diboll, the deed will probably show that one of these men owned the land at one time.

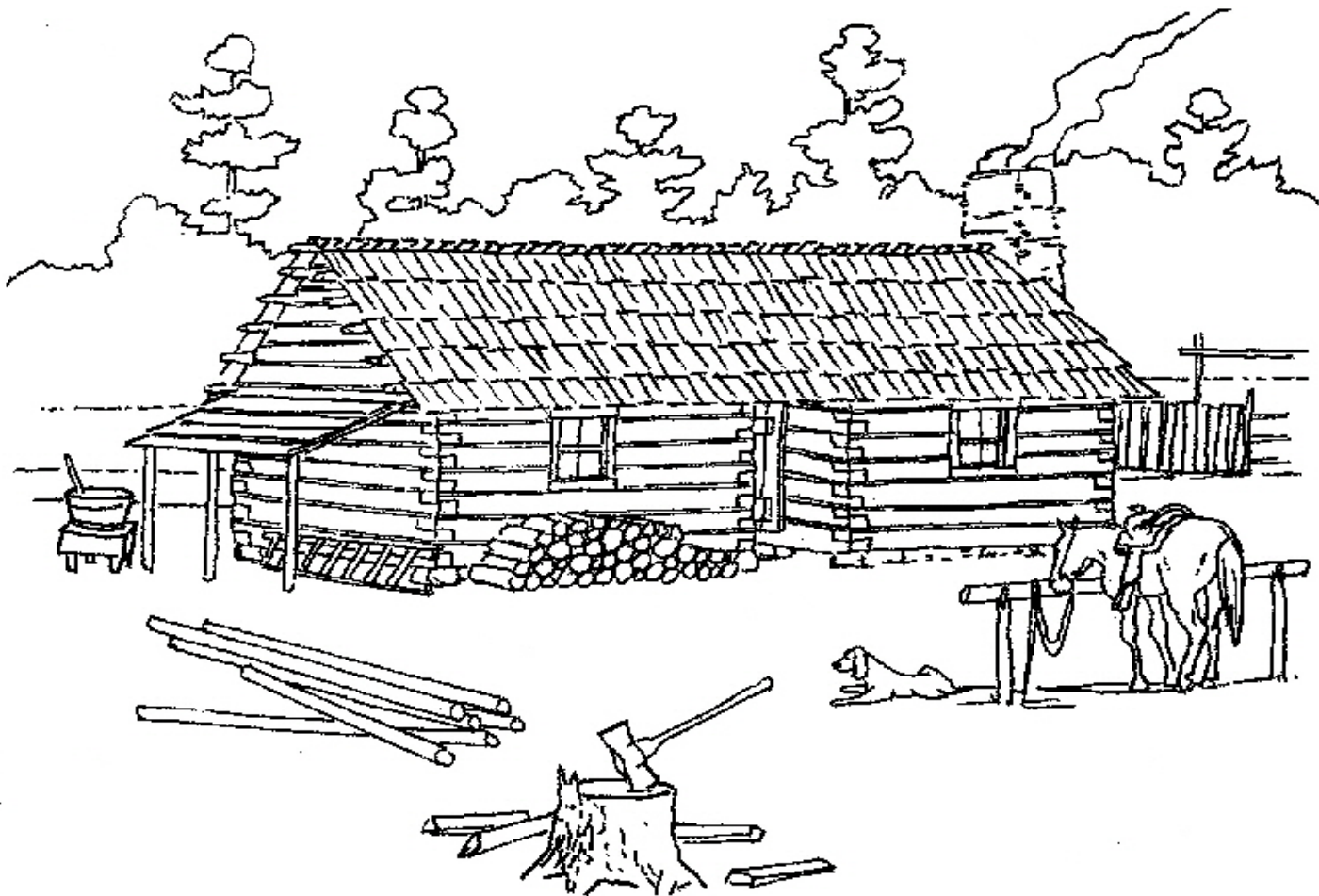


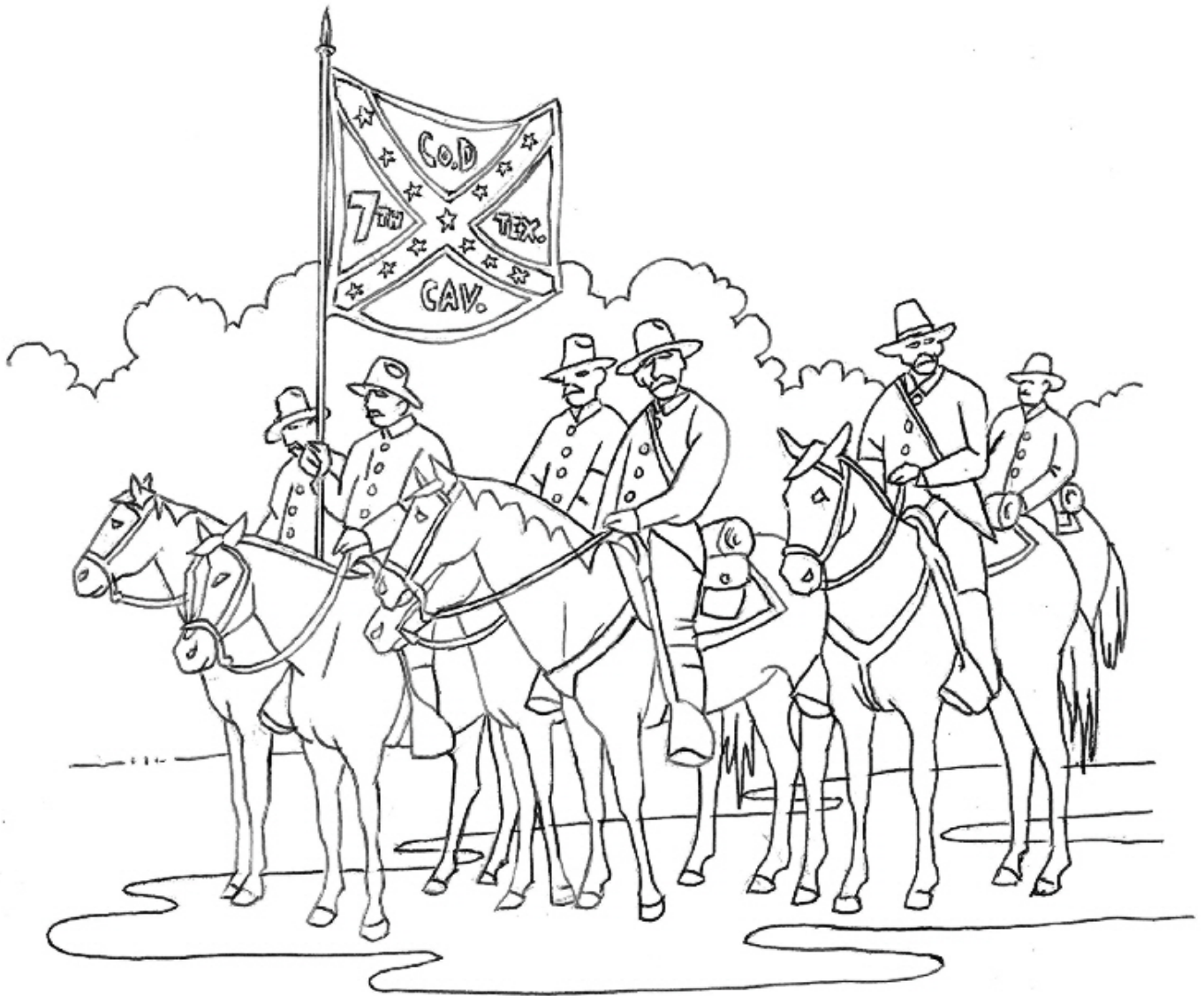
People from the United States moved into Texas which was owned by Mexico. Soon they wanted freedom from Mexico. In 1836, a war for independence was fought. After several battles, such as the Alamo, the **Texicans** won their independence at the Battle of San Jacinto. Texas is the only state that was ever an independent nation. Later in 1845, Texas became part of the United States.

As the early settlers came to this area, they found many trees, so their first homes were log cabins. They tried to build their cabins near a spring or creek so they would have water nearby.

The **pioneers** would pick out very tall trees to use in building their cabins. The spaces between the logs had to be filled with clay or mud. This was called "**chinking**". A single cabin could be built in about eight days. The chimney for the fireplace was made of mud mixed with gray moss known as "**mud cats**". These mud cats were then placed around sticks to form the "**stick and daub**" chimney. If the chimney caught fire, someone would climb up on the roof and push the whole chimney down to save the rest of the house.

For a larger house, two cabins were built close together and connected with a covered porch called a "dog run" or a "dog trot."

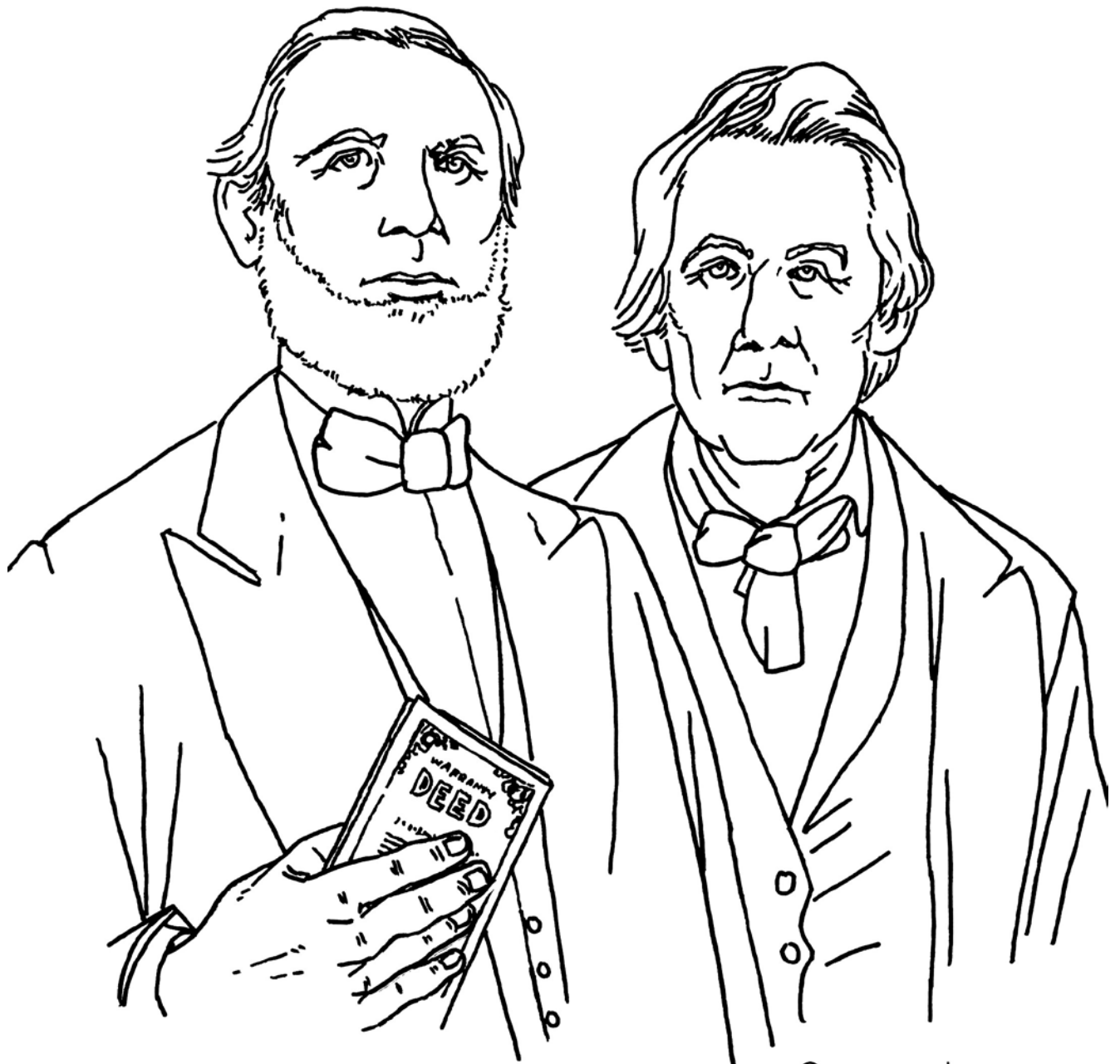




Remember that in 1850 there was no Diboll yet. The entire population of Angelina County was only 1,165.

In 1861 the United States went to war to settle the question of whether the South would be a separate nation. Angelina County voted to remain with the United States. However when Texas did **secede** from the Union, the people in Angelina County supported the Confederacy with soldiers, cotton and food. The South lost the war and Texas stayed part of the United States and the slaves in Angelina County were freed.

It was during this time that Dr. Joseph Copes and Greenwood LeFlore became business partners. Dr. Copes was a medical officer who worked on Choctaw Indian reservations in Mississippi. Greenwood LeFlore was an Indian chief. He was the last great chief of the Choctaw Indians east of the Mississippi River. They bought the land that became Diboll.

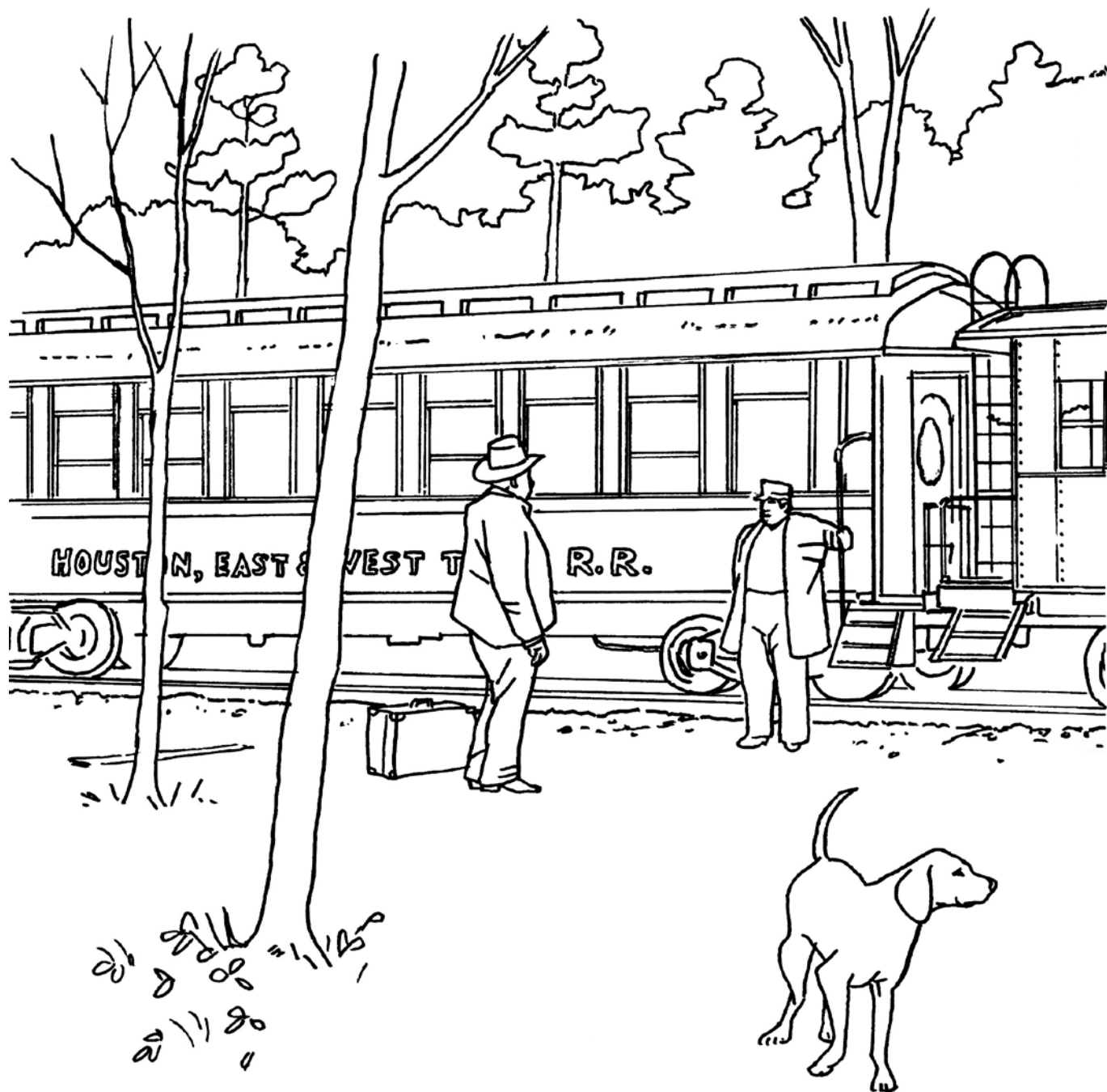


Dr. Joseph Copes

Greenwood
LeFlore

Ryan Chapel was the first church to be built in Angelina County. It was built in 1866. People would walk or ride horseback to attend church. Others would ride in buggies or wagons.

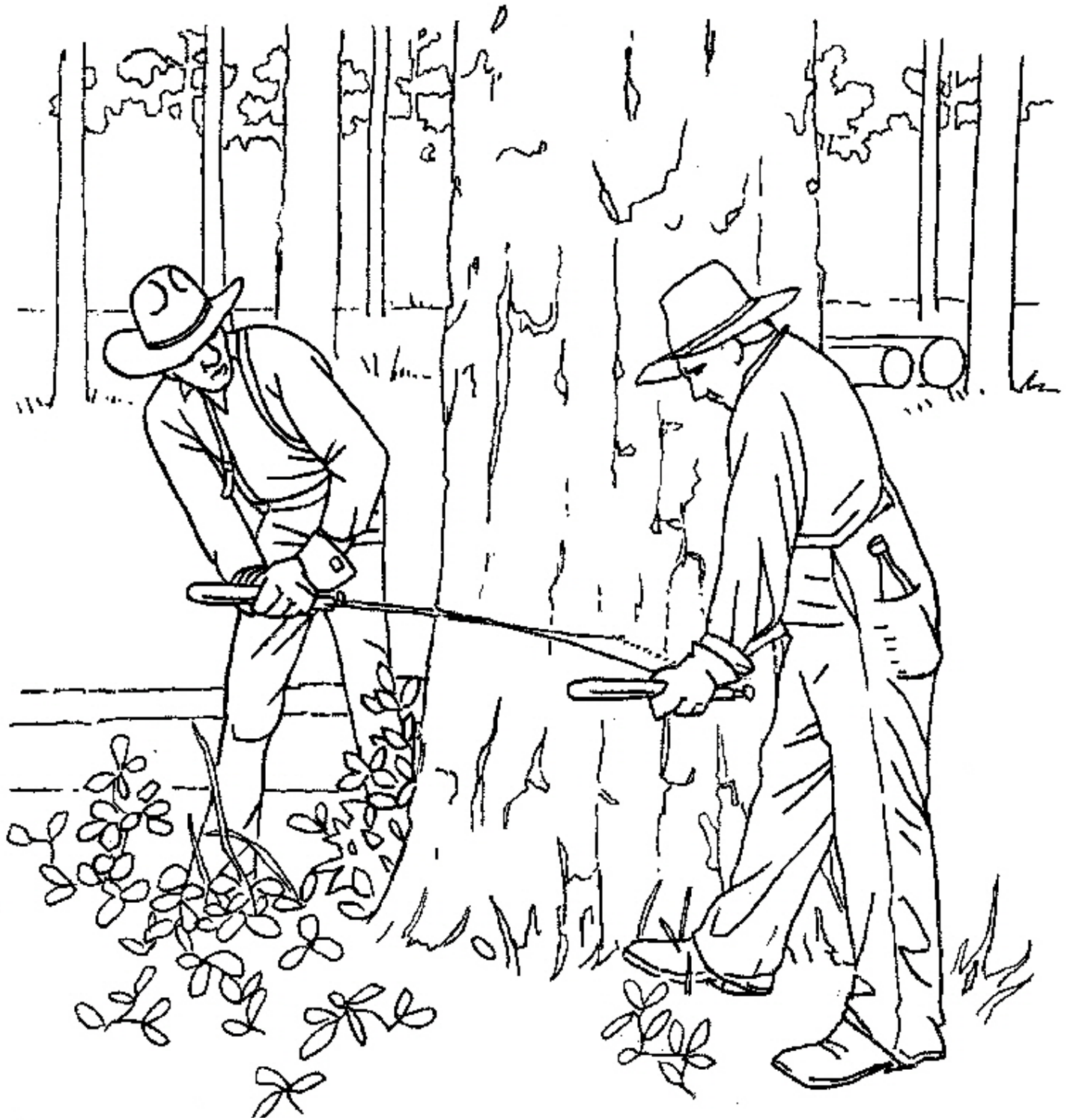




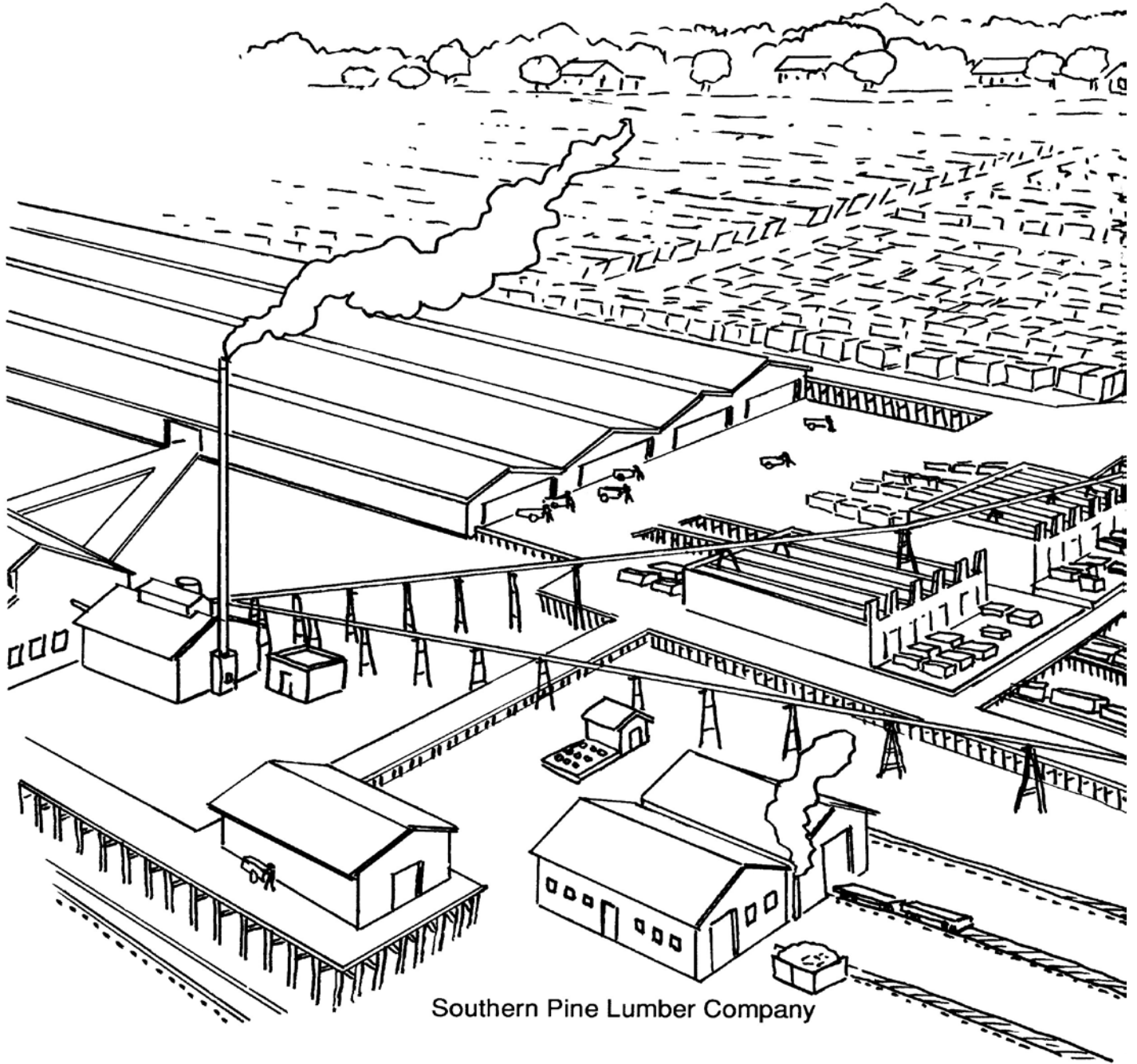
Mr. Thomas Lewis Latane Temple was born in Virginia in 1859. As a young man he worked on a farm in Arkansas. He did not like farming. One day he just left and hiked into town. He got a job in the courthouse. Later he worked in an office and sold lumber. Then he started his own lumber company.



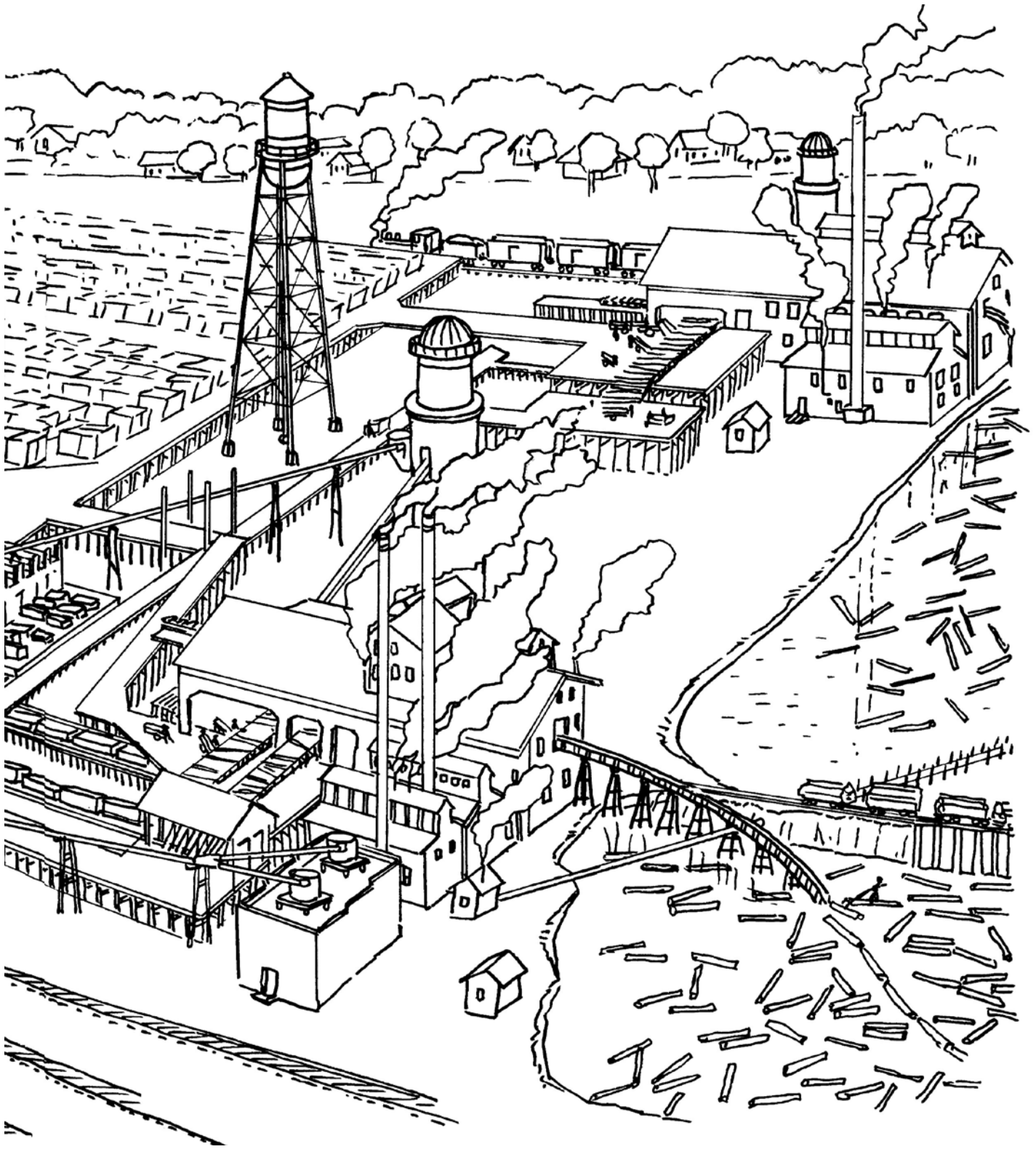
In 1893 he heard of timberland for sale in Texas. He traveled by train to Angelina County. Here he bought some land from Mr. J. C. Diboll (DĒ bōl), a **descendant** of Dr. Joseph Copes. Mr. Temple named the town Diboll.



Men used **crosscut saws** to cut the many large trees. Each crosscut saw required two men to operate. A man took a handle at each end of the saw and pulled back and forth until the tree fell. Notice that the trees were much larger than trees are today.

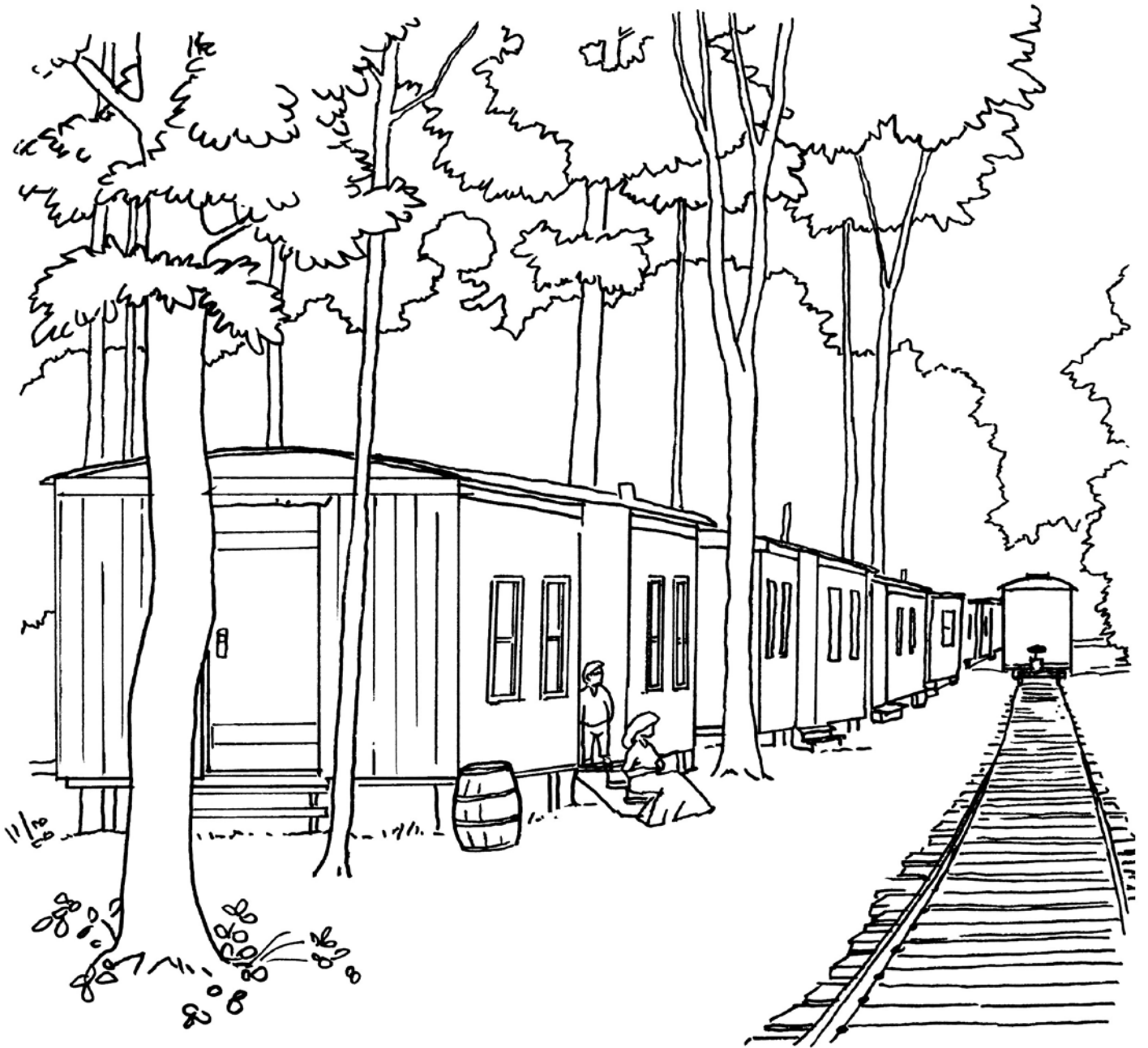


These large trees were used to build the first sawmill. Mr. Temple hired single, young men and **specialists** to build the mill. He also hired local farmers to help.



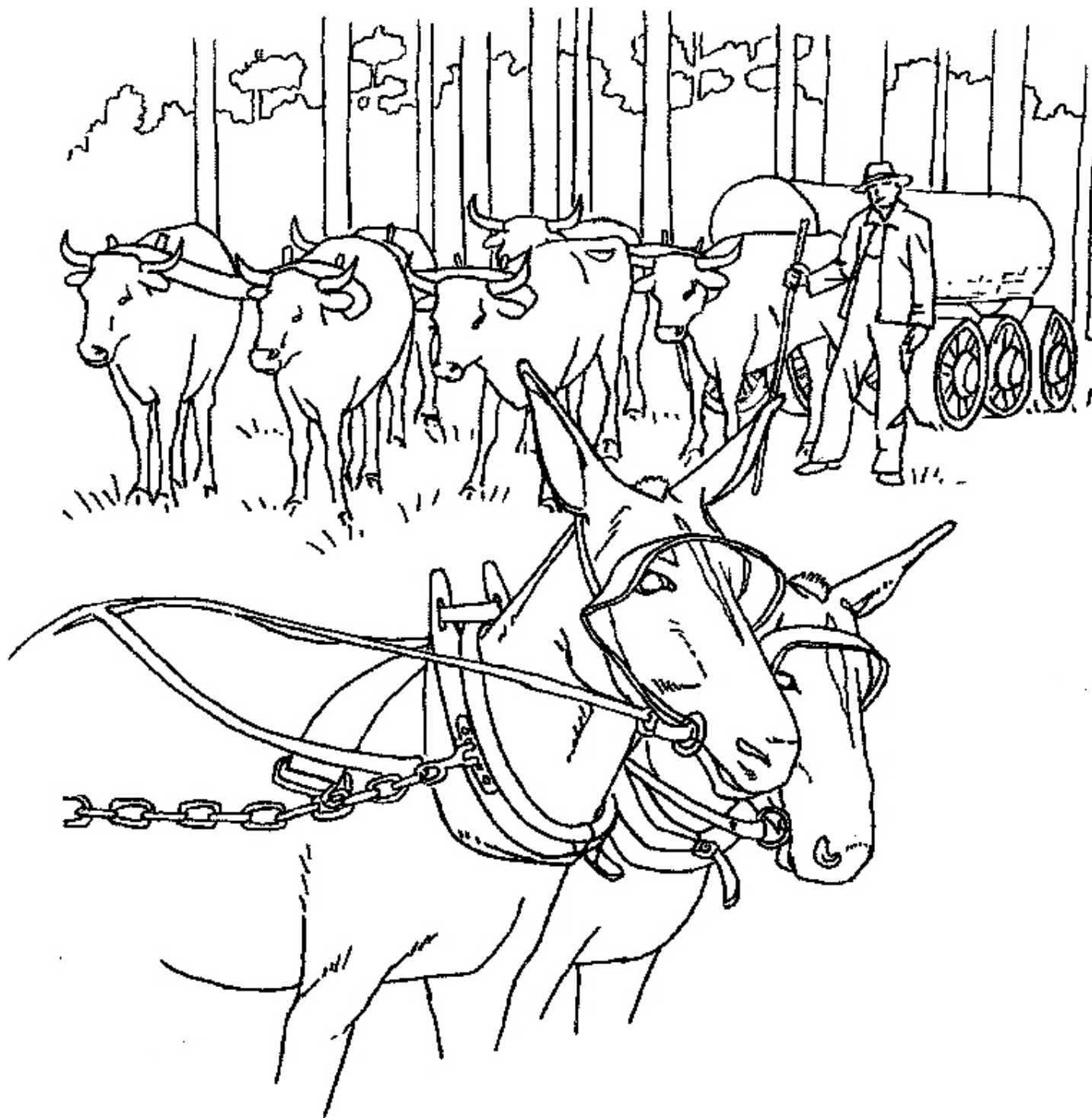
They had to dig the **mill pond** and build the offices, the **planer mill**, the **dolly runs**, and homes for the workers.

As the trees were cut around Diboll, **trams** (railroad tracks) were laid to lumber camps in the forest. At these camps the families lived in **boxcars** that were made into houses. These houses rented for \$4 a month. After the timber around each camp had been cut, the boxcar houses were lifted onto the tracks and moved to another wooded area to make a new camp.



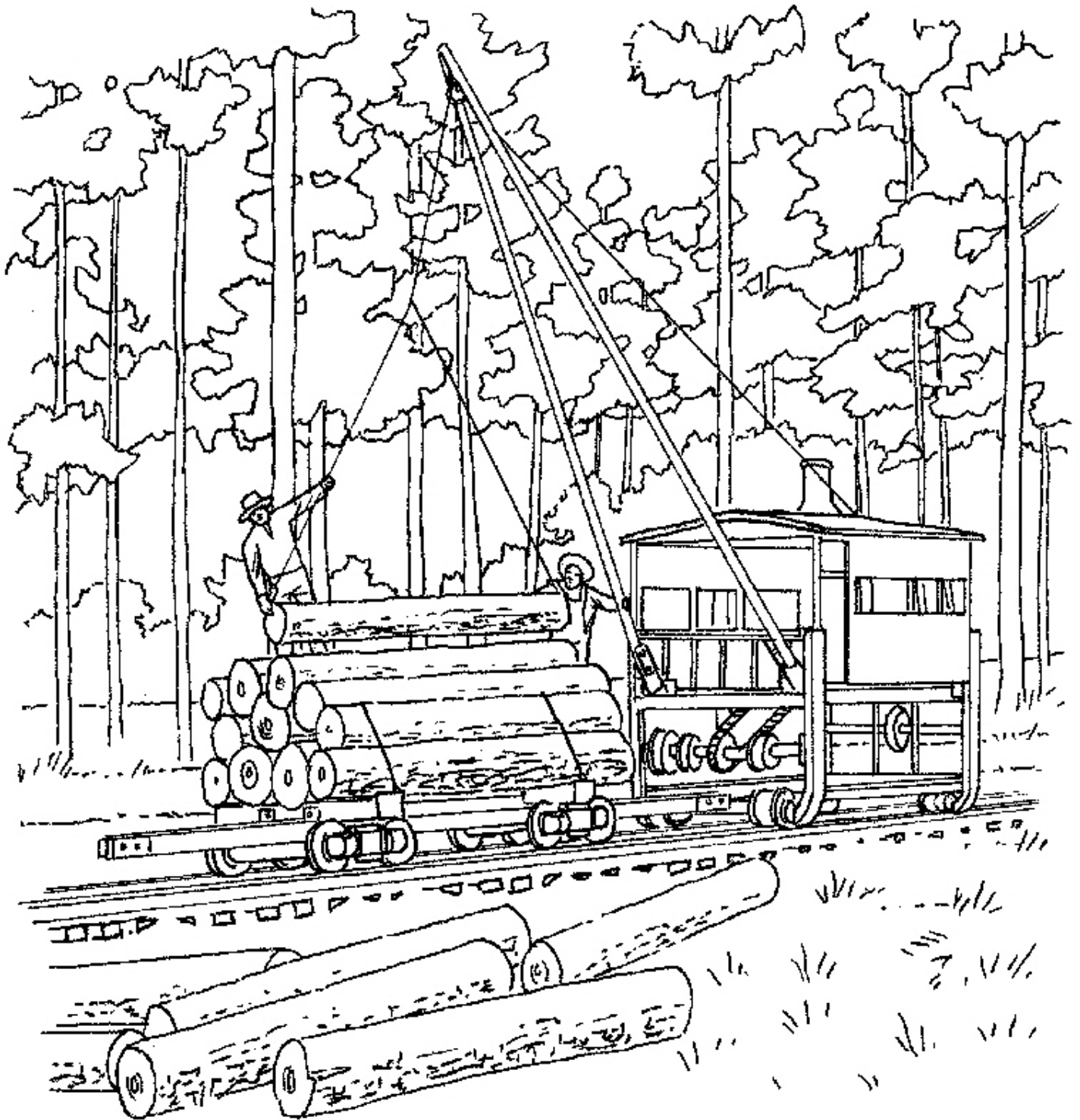


Each camp had a general store that sold groceries and clothing. It had a drug store and a doctor's office. These stores and offices were also in boxcars so they could be moved with the camp.

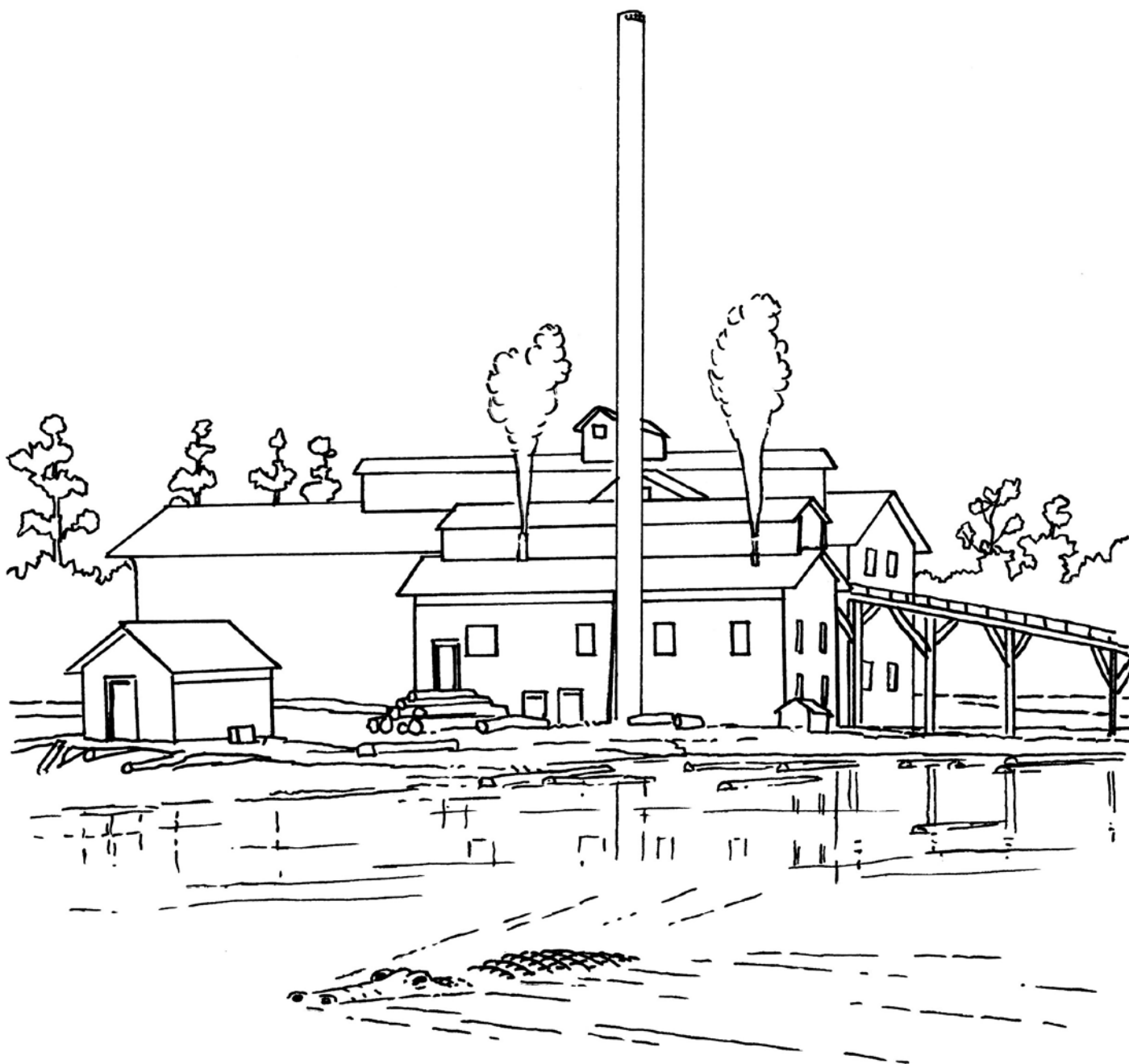


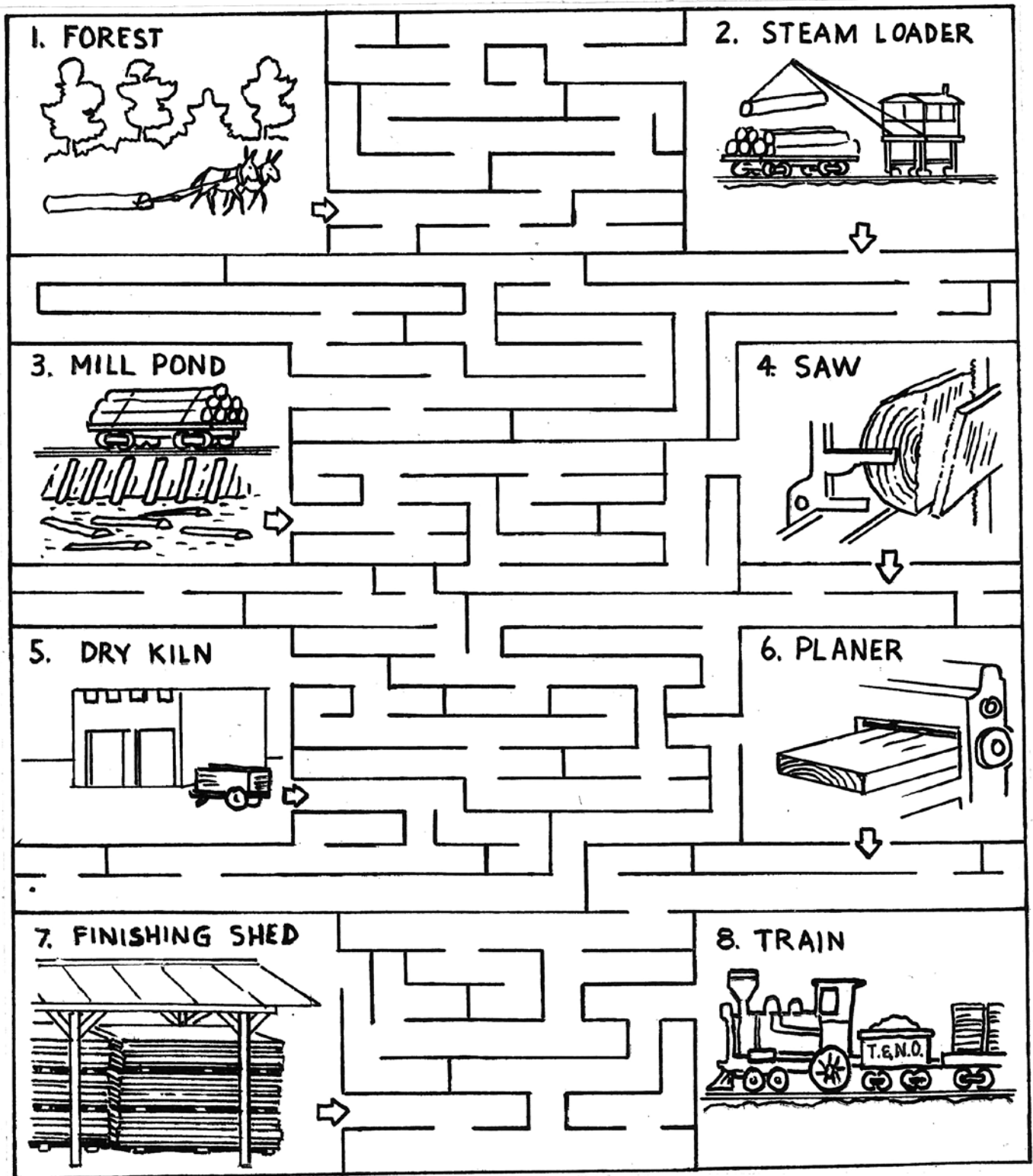
After the trees were cut down, mules and oxen were used to haul the logs to a train or a wagon. The oxen had such names as “Rough” and “Rowdy,” while the mules were given names like “Molly” and “Dolly.”

Logs were put onto railroad cars with the **swing booms** of steam log loaders. These logs were taken to the mills over tram roads. In addition to the logs, the trains often carried passengers and **freight**.



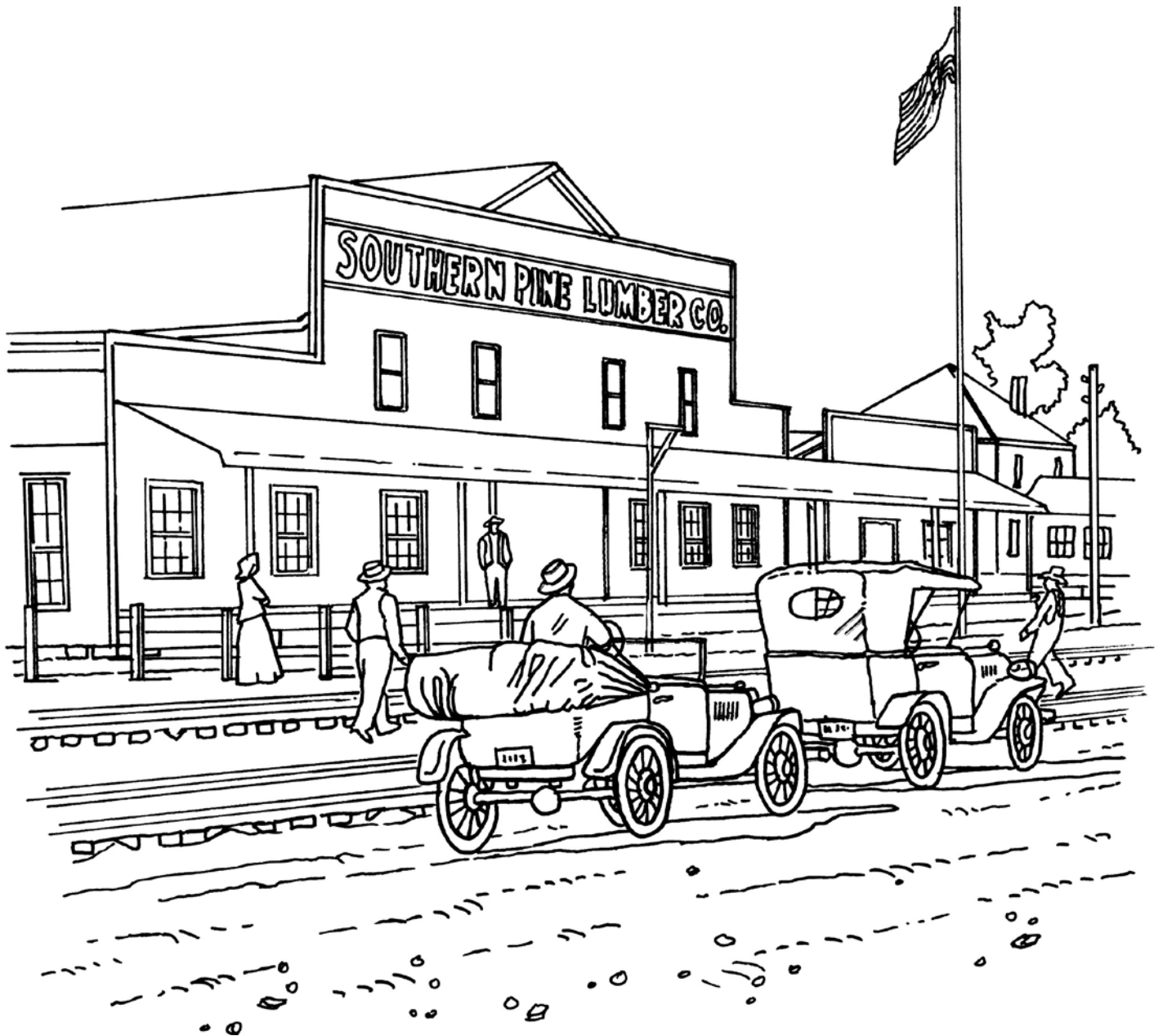
The logs were dumped into the log pond beside the sawmill. The water kept the logs from drying out and made them easier to saw. The log pond was also a favorite place for the boys in town to swim. Alligators were even put into the pond to keep the boys out!





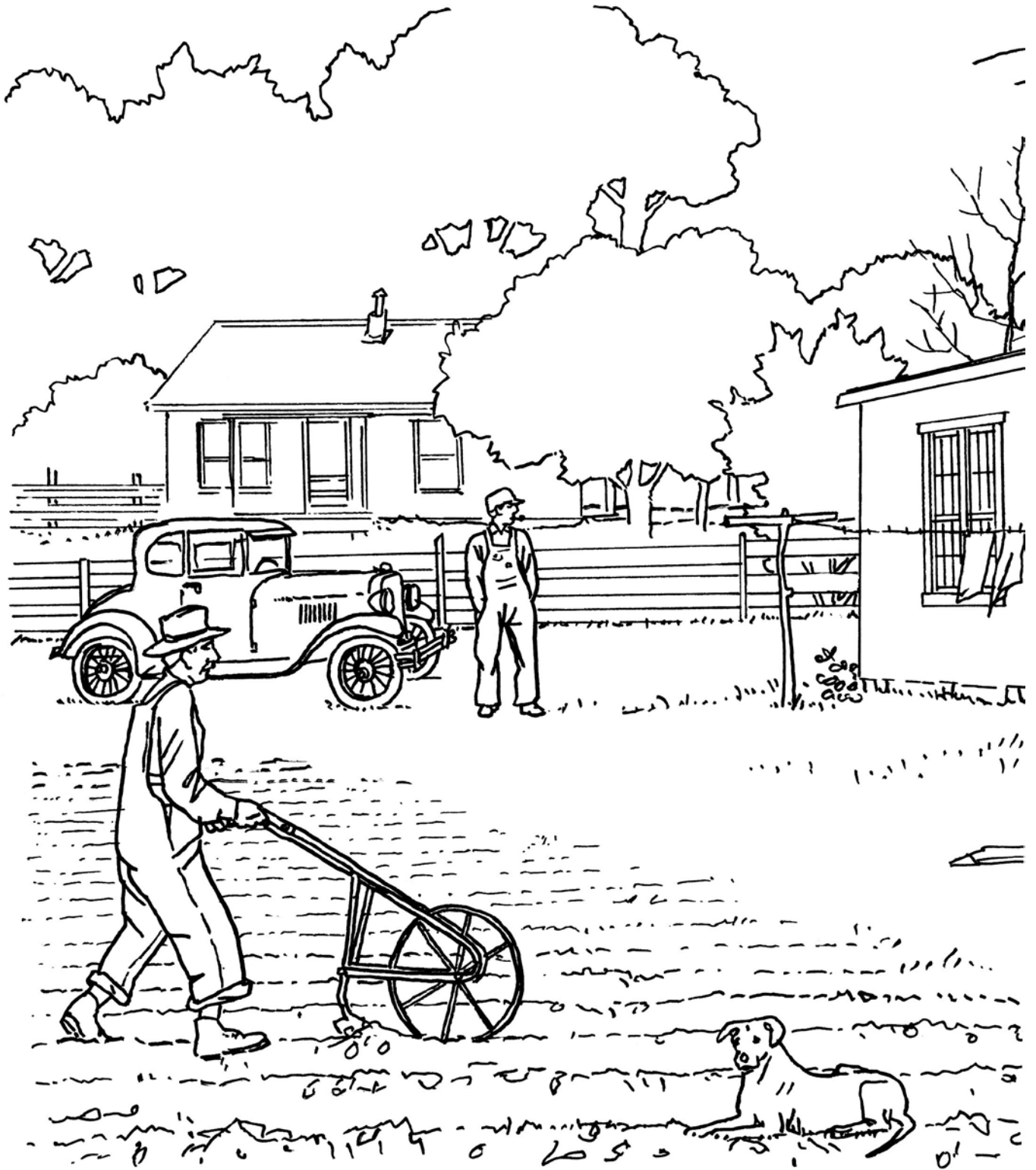
See how long it takes you to send a log through the sawmill. Guide your log through the steps it takes to become a building **product**.

Diboll became a busy town. The first **commissary** was built on First Street in 1901. It was a general store where nearly all the things that a family needed could be purchased. There was a meat market, **ice house**, grocery store, dry goods (clothing) store, and furniture store. The Commissary also had a doctor's office, post office and a barber shop. There was even a drug store with a soda fountain. If you needed to buy a coffin, you could get a wooden one upstairs!





The candy counter in the commissary was a favorite place of all the children in town. They had a favorite clerk, too. Mr. Ed Day would give the children extra candy for a nickel.



The mill whistle was the town clock. It blew when it was time to get up, when it was time to start work, and when it was time to quit work.



A special whistle told the wives when to start cooking lunch. This signal was called the “cornbread” whistle. This whistle is still blown today. Listen for it at 11:15 a.m.

Another gathering place in town was the railroad **depot**. Everyone would come to meet the trains. The boys and girls would gather to buy candy from the railroad **vendors**. Many of the boys would show off for the girls by parading around the station on their “**Tom Walkers**”.



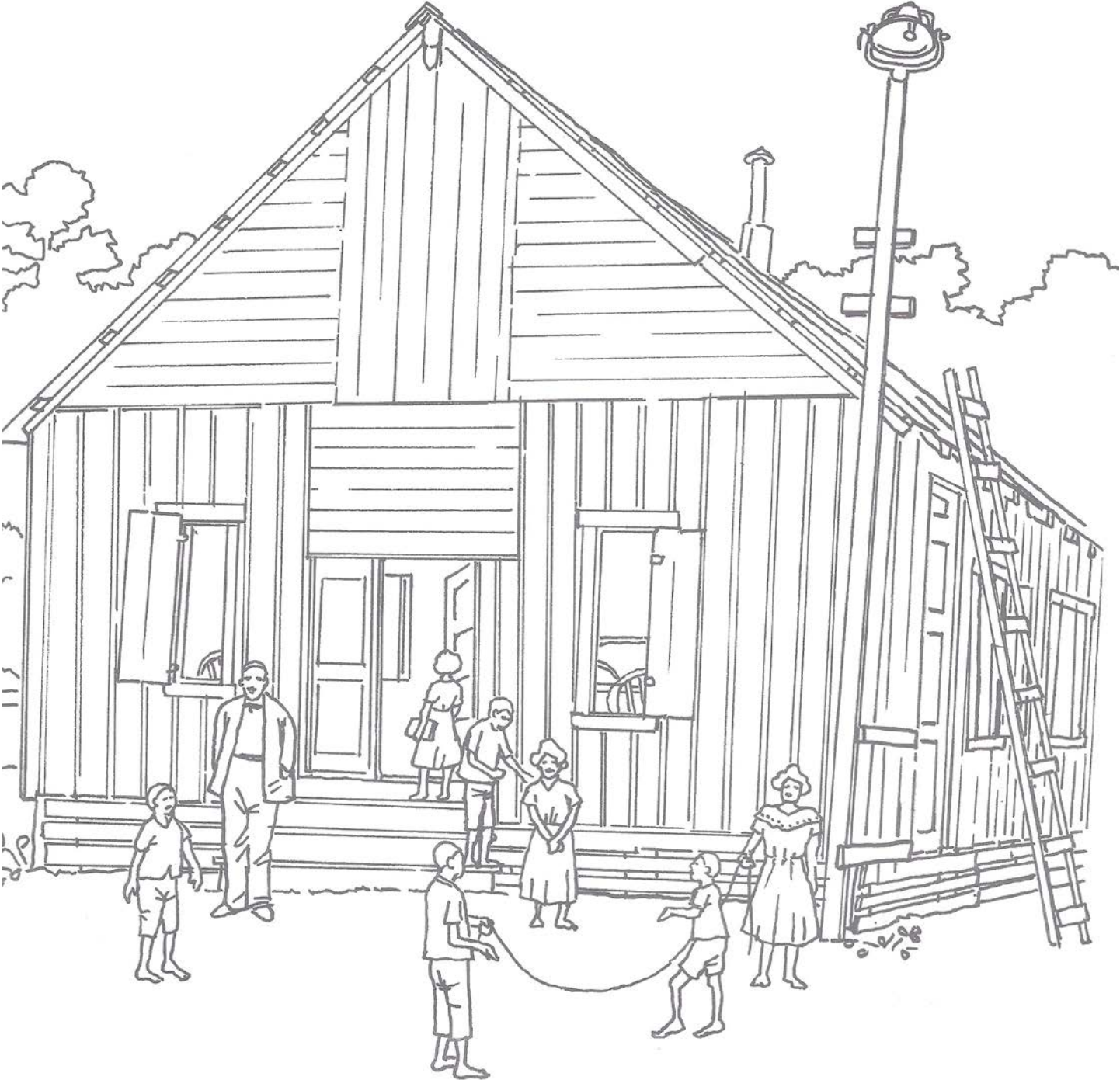
Many single men worked in Diboll. They lived in **boarding houses** such as The Beanery, the Star Hotel, and later Mrs. Hogue's Boarding House. Here they could rent a private room, but they shared a bathroom, living room, and dining room. They all ate their meals together at a long table. The people living here were like a large family.



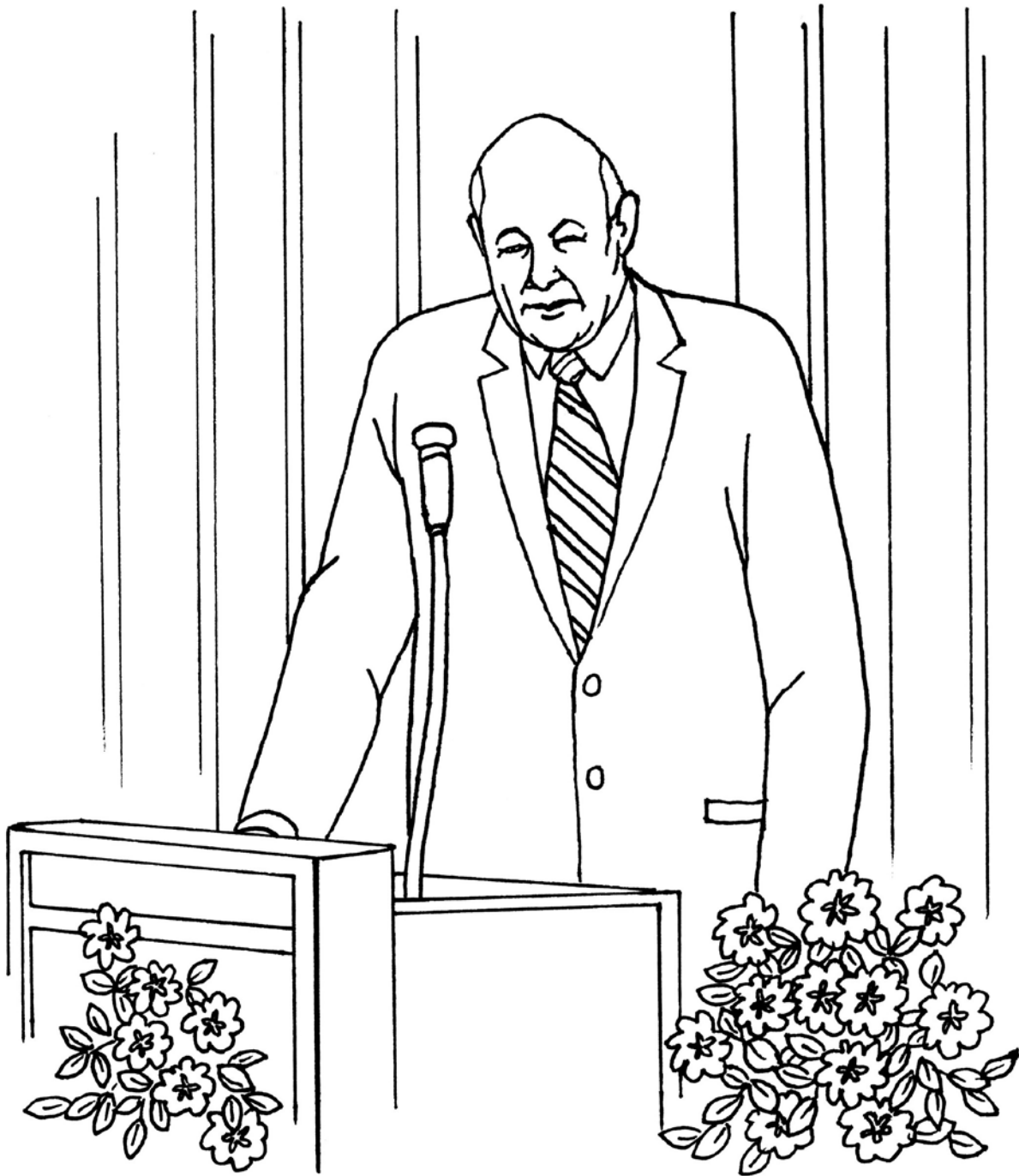
Families lived in “**company houses**”. Southern Pine Lumber Company owned all of the houses in town until the 1950’s. The company allowed the workers to live in these houses for very little rent. Some of the houses were larger than others. The larger houses were built for the managers and supervisors of the mill. Hines Street was known as “**Silk Stocking Row**” by the kids because of the big houses on that street. Even the large houses were all wooden and did not have running water or electricity for many years.



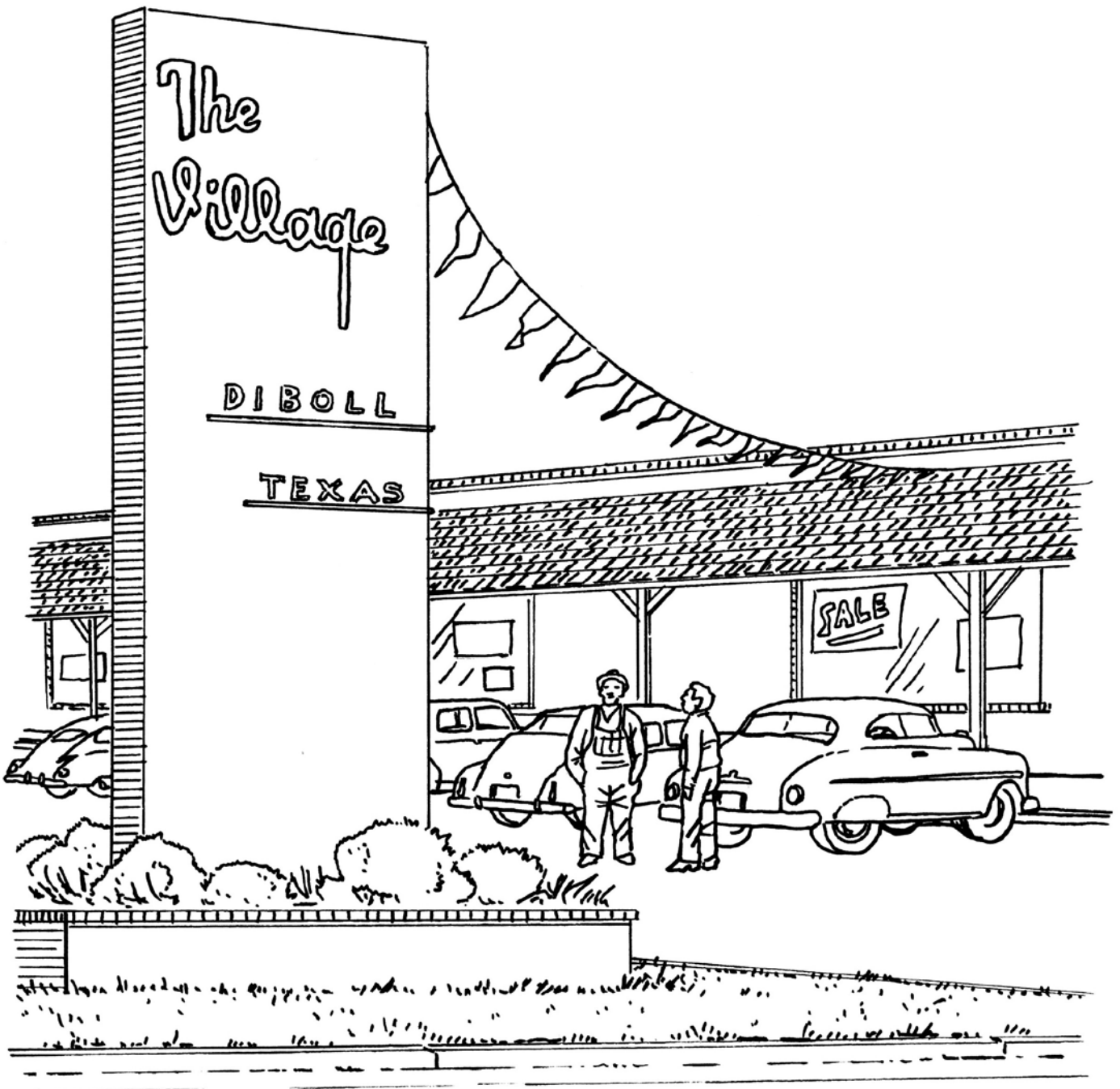
A long time ago, children of different races did not attend the same schools. Diboll's first school for black students was located west of the railroad tracks, close to the mill. The school for white children was near Hendrick Street and Hwy. 59 South.



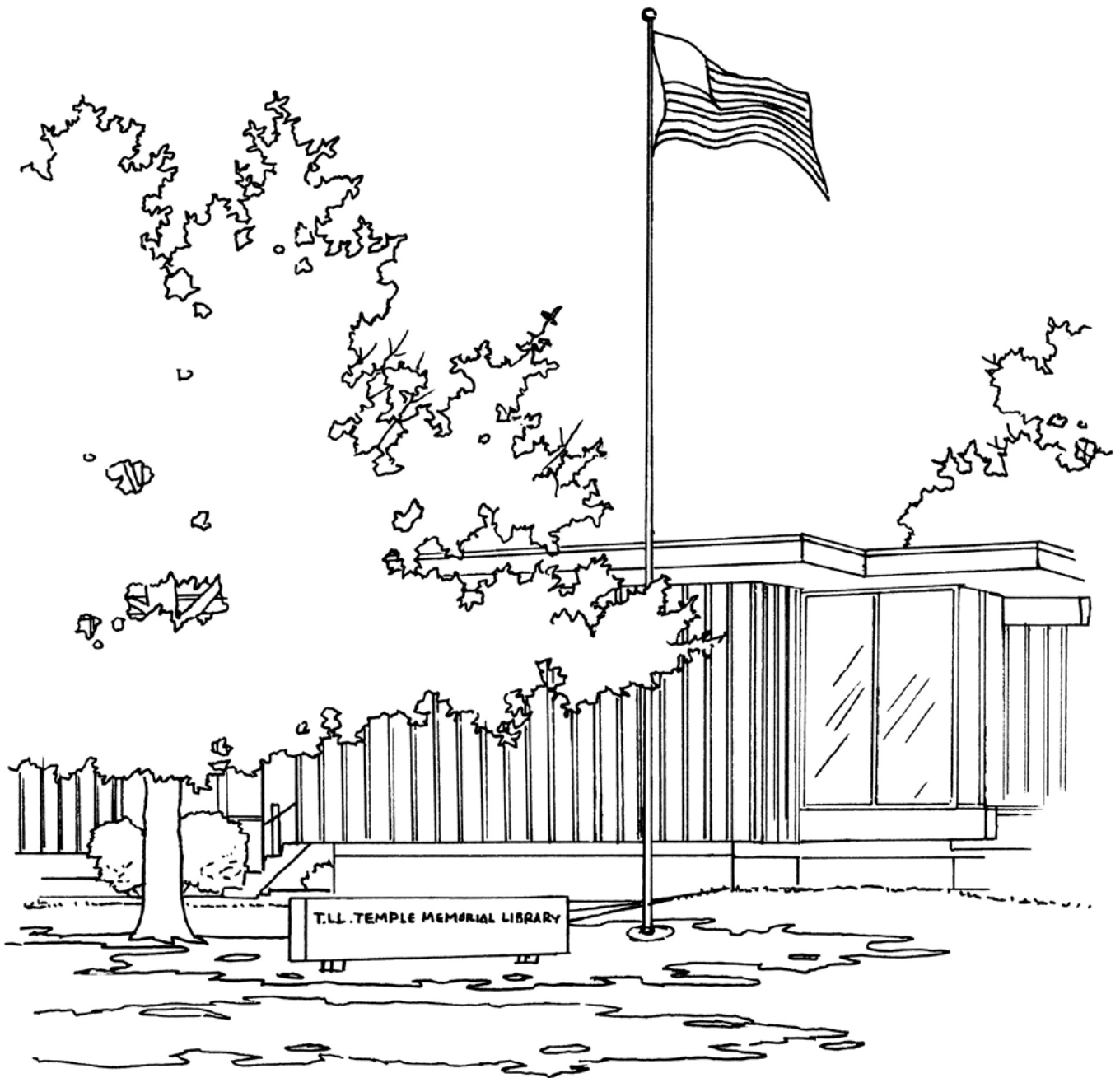
Diboll began to **modernize** after World War II. Southern Pine Lumber Company continued to **prosper**. In 1951, Arthur Temple, Jr., the grandson of T.L.L. Temple, became the president and served the company and community until his death in 2006. Much of what Diboll is today is due to his vision.



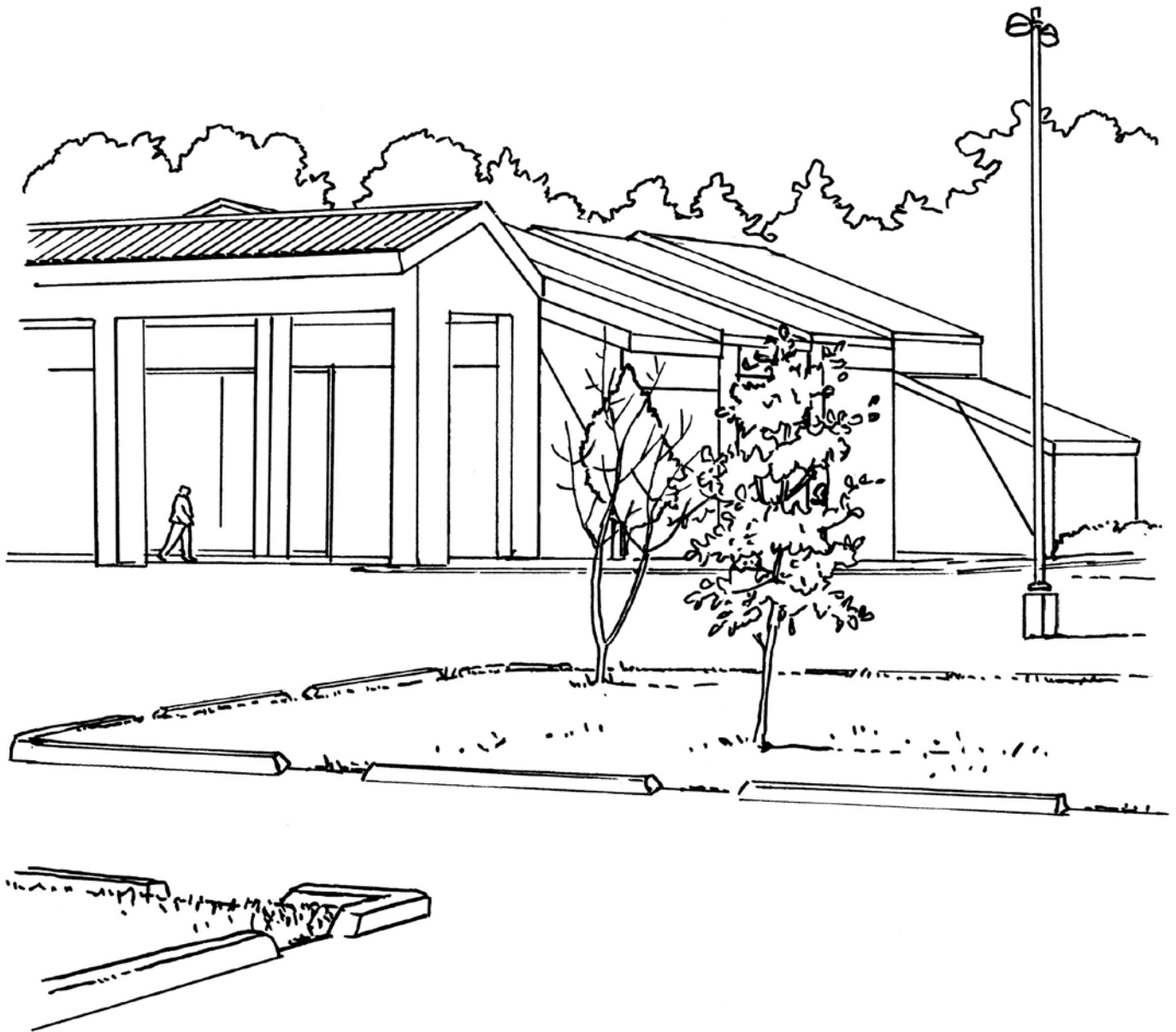
The Village Shopping Center was built in 1951 and the Commissary closed. The following year some of the streets were paved. Diboll began to look like a modern city, and in 1962 it was **incorporated**. Diboll now had a mayor and city council and a population of 2,500 residents.



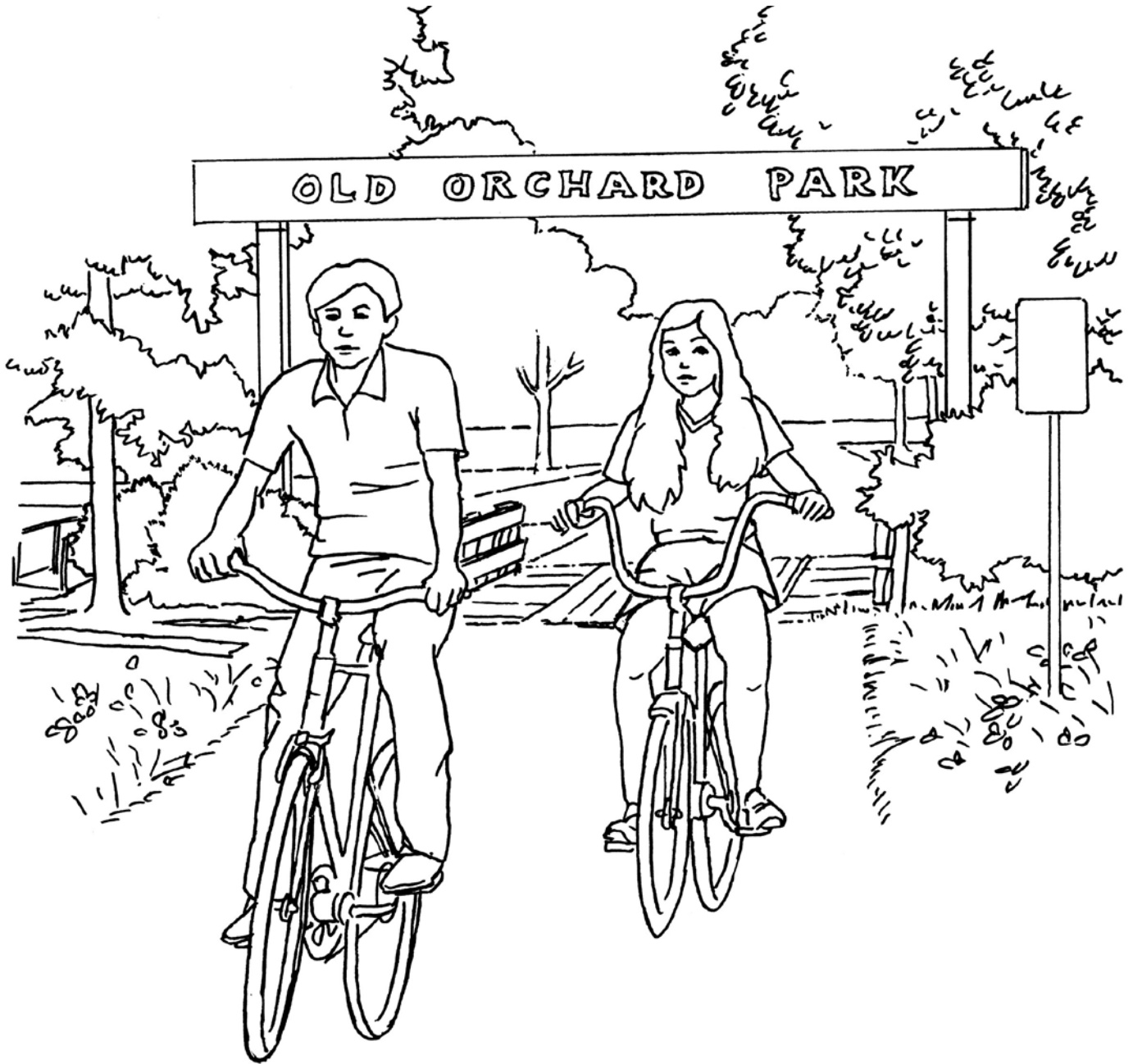
In 1976 the United States was 200 years old. As a part of the **Bicentennial** celebration, the citizens of Diboll planted 200 oak trees called “Liberty Trees”. The first “Liberty Tree” was planted beside the T.L.L. Temple Memorial Library. Diboll has since been recognized as a “Tree City, USA”.



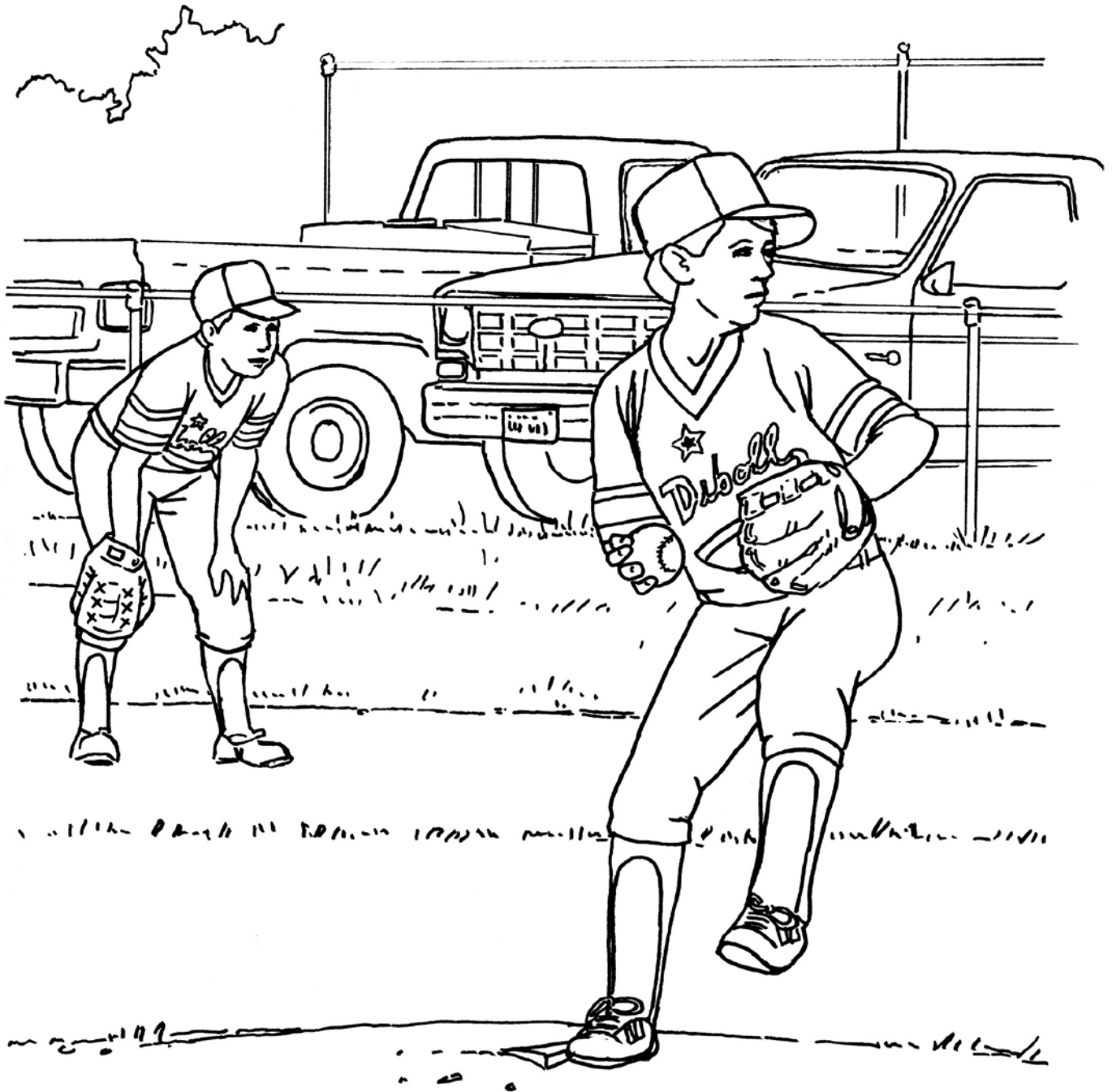
Diboll has continued to grow. Since 1962 it has added a city hall, day care center, scout house, public housing projects and community centers. The Lottie and Arthur Temple Civic Center, built in 1988, is Diboll's largest community building. In 2003 The History Center was built to preserve Diboll's past.



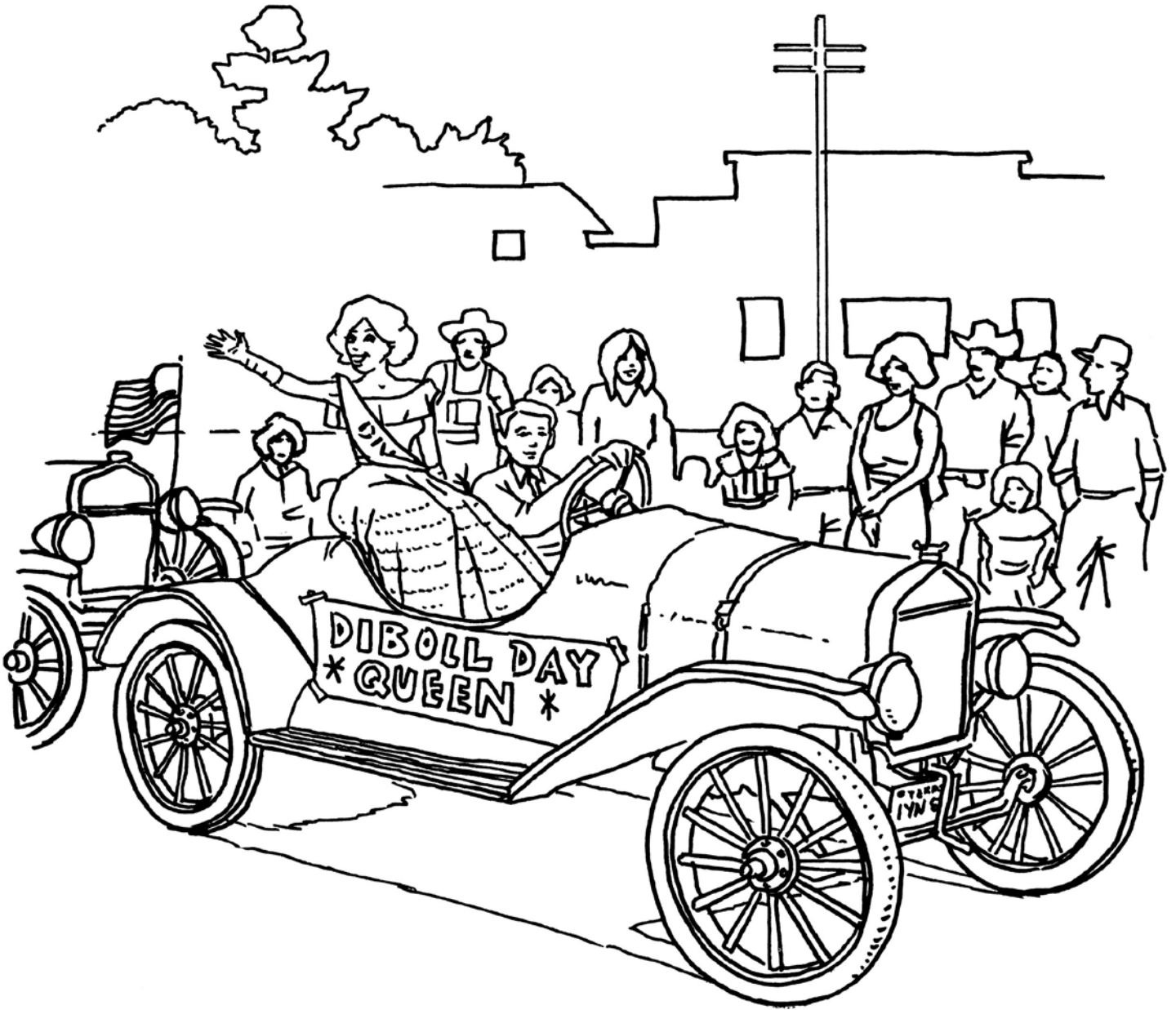
Young people have always been important to the **citizens** of Diboll. A Boy's and Girl's Club was built to provide after school care for children in town. Parks provide many hours of fun for the children. Old Orchard Park has a spray pad, tennis courts, basketball court, biking and jogging paths. Walter Allen Park has a large pool and basketball courts, and both parks have playground equipment.



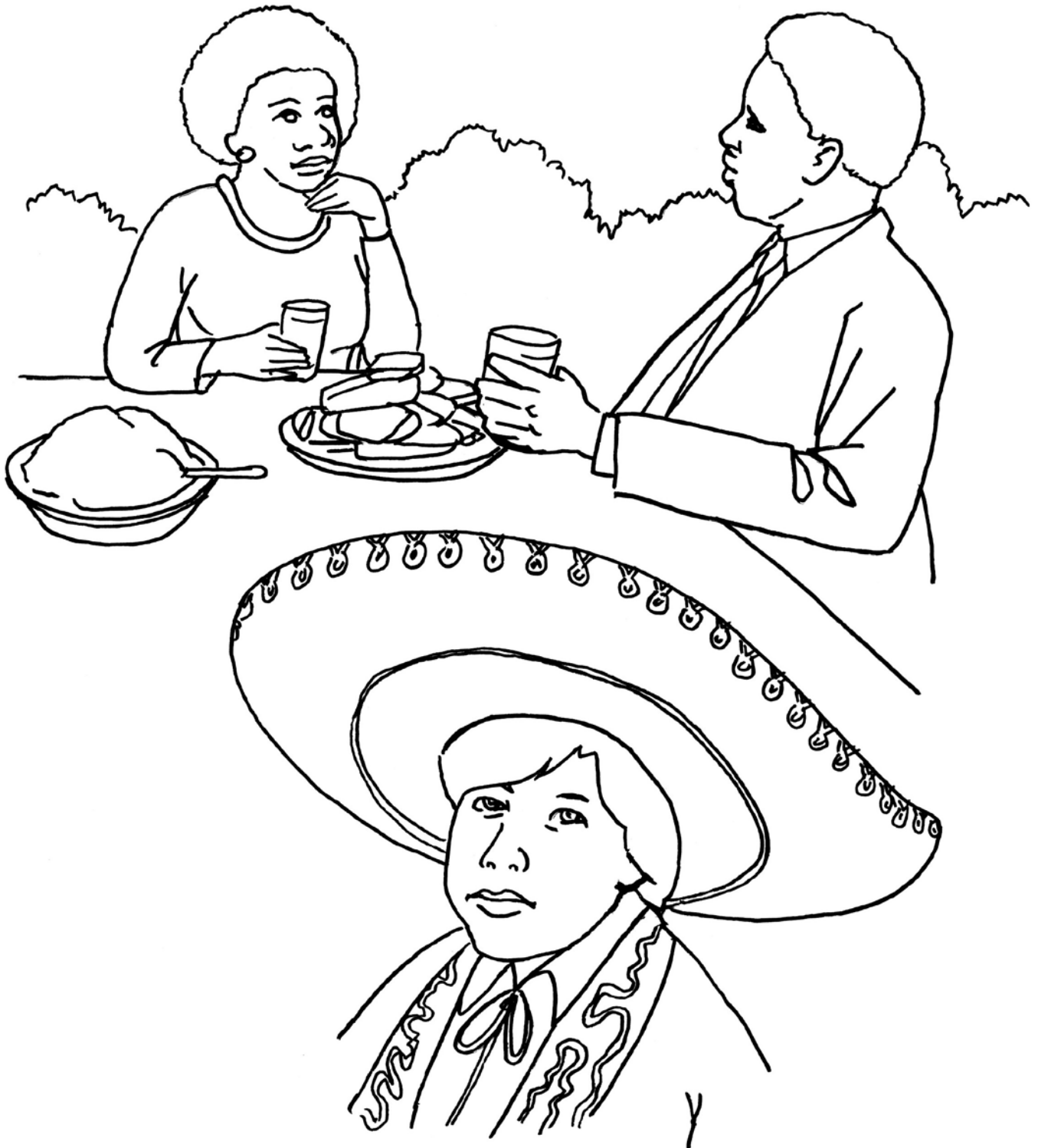
Many years ago there was a **semi-pro** baseball team in Diboll. They were called the “Diboll Millers”. Baseball is still important to the residents of Diboll. In the spring and summer both boys and girls enjoy playing ball at one of the city’s baseball fields. The adults enjoy watching the games and visiting with friends.



Every other year since 1953, Diboll has held a special celebration called “Diboll Day”. Everyone enjoys the fun leading up to the day of the parade and the crowning of the queen. Many events are held to raise money for community projects.



Another celebration held in Diboll is **Juneteenth**. This is a celebration of the end of slavery in Texas. **Cinco de Mayo** is also observed by many people in Diboll.



Today Diboll has five public school campuses. Diboll High School was completed in 1989 for grades 9-12 and Diboll Jr. High is for grades 7 and 8. A beautiful new building was completed in 2012. H. G. Temple Elementary School houses grades K-3. The adjoining H. G. Temple Intermediate School is for grades 4-6. The Primary School contains Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 students.



Through the years, the town of Diboll has grown from a sleepy sawmill community to a small city. The statue of the working man serves as a reminder that all the people of Diboll have had a part in building this community that began as one man's dream.



Glossary

abundant – plenty of something or a great quantity.

archeologists - people who find out about the past by digging up things left by people of long ago.

archaic – very old.

artifacts – things that are left by people of long ago.

Bicentennial – two hundred.

boarding house – a large house where a person can rent a room and buy their meals.

boxcars – railroad cars with a roof and sides.

Cinco de Mayo – a celebration of Mexico’s Independence from France. This is like the United States’ Fourth of July.

chinking – the process of filling the cracks between the logs of a log cabin with clay or mud.

citizen – a person who lives in a city

commissary – a general store operated by a company for their workers.

company houses – houses built by a business and rented to its workers.

crosscut saw - a saw with a handle at both ends and a blade in the middle which is used by two people.

deed - an official paper showing that a person owns a piece of land.

depot – a building in town where the train stopped to take on freight or passengers.

descendant – a person who is related to someone who lived a long time ago.

dolly run – a wooden sidewalk where the lumber was put on small carts to move it to the railroad tracks for shipping.

European – a person from the continent of Europe.

explore - to travel in a new land to find out everything about it.

freight – things being moved from one place to another, usually on a truck, airplane, or train.

ice house – a building used for storing blocks of ice.

incorporate – officially form into a city.

Juneteenth – in Texas the day that celebrates the freeing of the slaves by President Abraham Lincoln. This is the date when word finally reached Texas that the slaves were free.

mill pond – a small body of water in which the logs were placed to keep them from drying out before they entered the sawmill.

modernize – to bring up to date; improve.

mud cats – Spanish moss mixed with clay and used to make chimneys a long time ago.

pioneers – the first people who go into an area or place to live.

planer mill – a place where the rough lumber from the sawmill is made smooth.

product – anything that is made that can be bought or sold.

prosper – to become successful or rich.

secede – to withdraw from.

semi-pro – a person who plays a sport part time for pay.

Silk Stocking Row – a neighborhood where the rich people lived.

specialists – people who know a lot about a certain thing.

stick and daub – a type of chimney made of mud and sticks.

swing boom – a machine used to lift logs or other heavy things.

Texican – what a person was called who lived in Texas when it was a part of Mexico.

Tom Walkers – a pair of poles with blocks of wood fastened to them for footrests used for walking or to make a person taller; stilts.

tram – short railroad lines leading to the main railroad going to a lumber mill.

vendors – people who sell things; salesmen.

References and Acknowledgments

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Donald W. Diboll

Greenwood-Leflore Mississippi Chamber of Commerce

Temple Archives

The Free Press

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