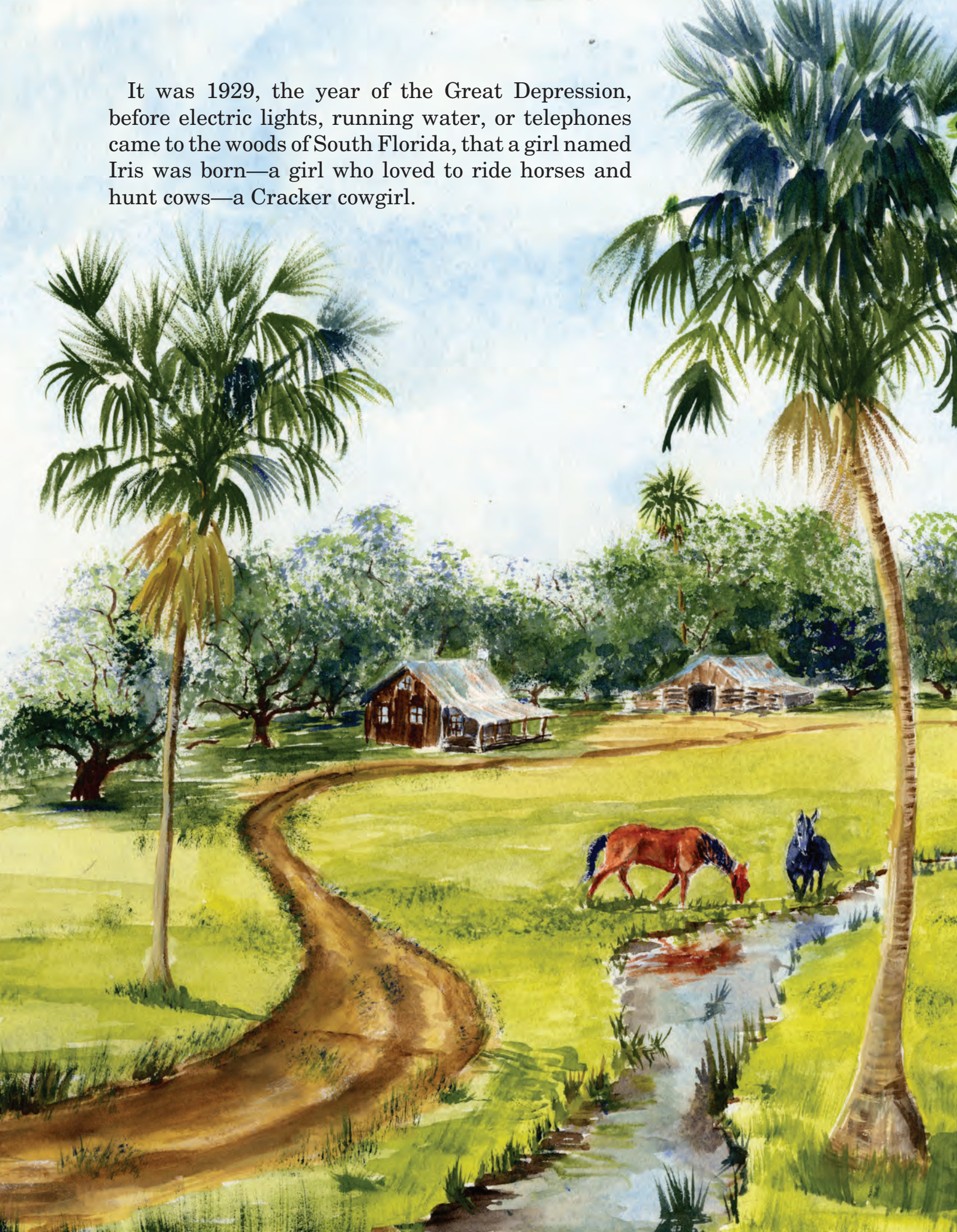
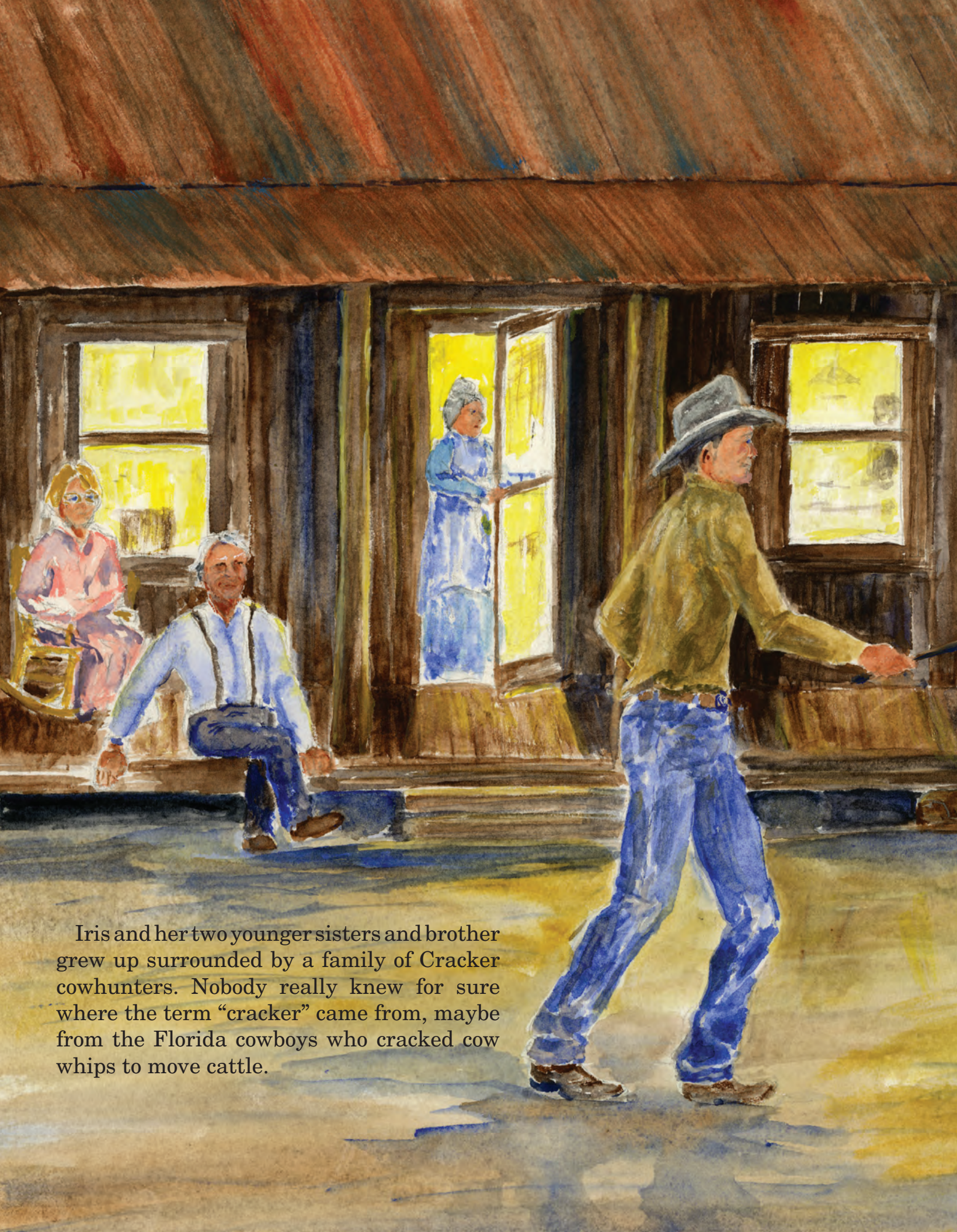


It was 1929, the year of the Great Depression, before electric lights, running water, or telephones came to the woods of South Florida, that a girl named Iris was born—a girl who loved to ride horses and hunt cows—a Cracker cowgirl.

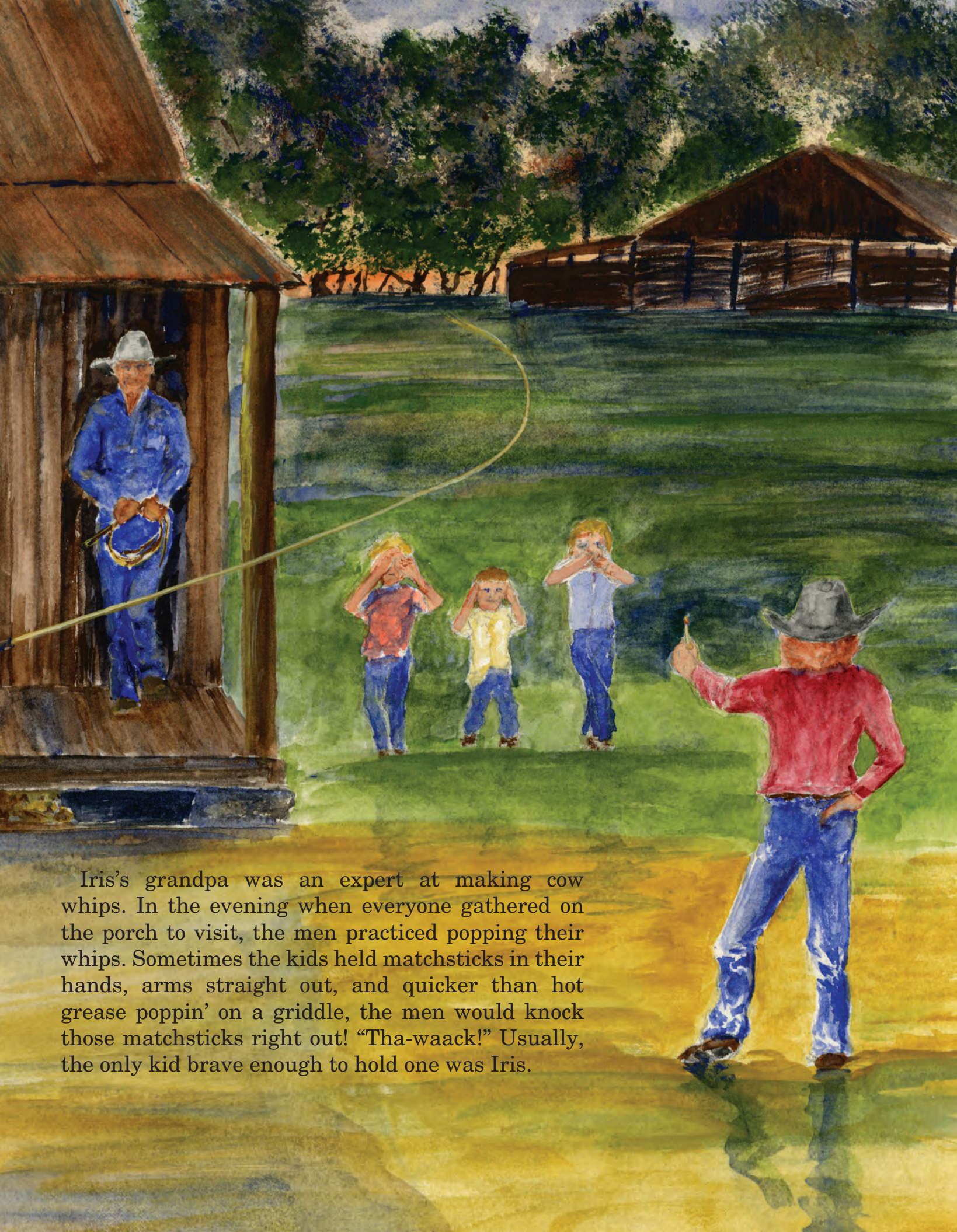






Iris and her two younger sisters and brother grew up surrounded by a family of Cracker cowhunters. Nobody really knew for sure where the term “cracker” came from, maybe from the Florida cowboys who cracked cow whips to move cattle.





Iris's grandpa was an expert at making cow whips. In the evening when everyone gathered on the porch to visit, the men practiced popping their whips. Sometimes the kids held matchsticks in their hands, arms straight out, and quicker than hot grease poppin' on a griddle, the men would knock those matchsticks right out! "Tha-waack!" Usually, the only kid brave enough to hold one was Iris.





When Iris's grandma needed something, all she had to do was go outside and pop the cow whip a couple of times, "Ka-thwaack" "Ka-thwaack," and all her grandkids came running.



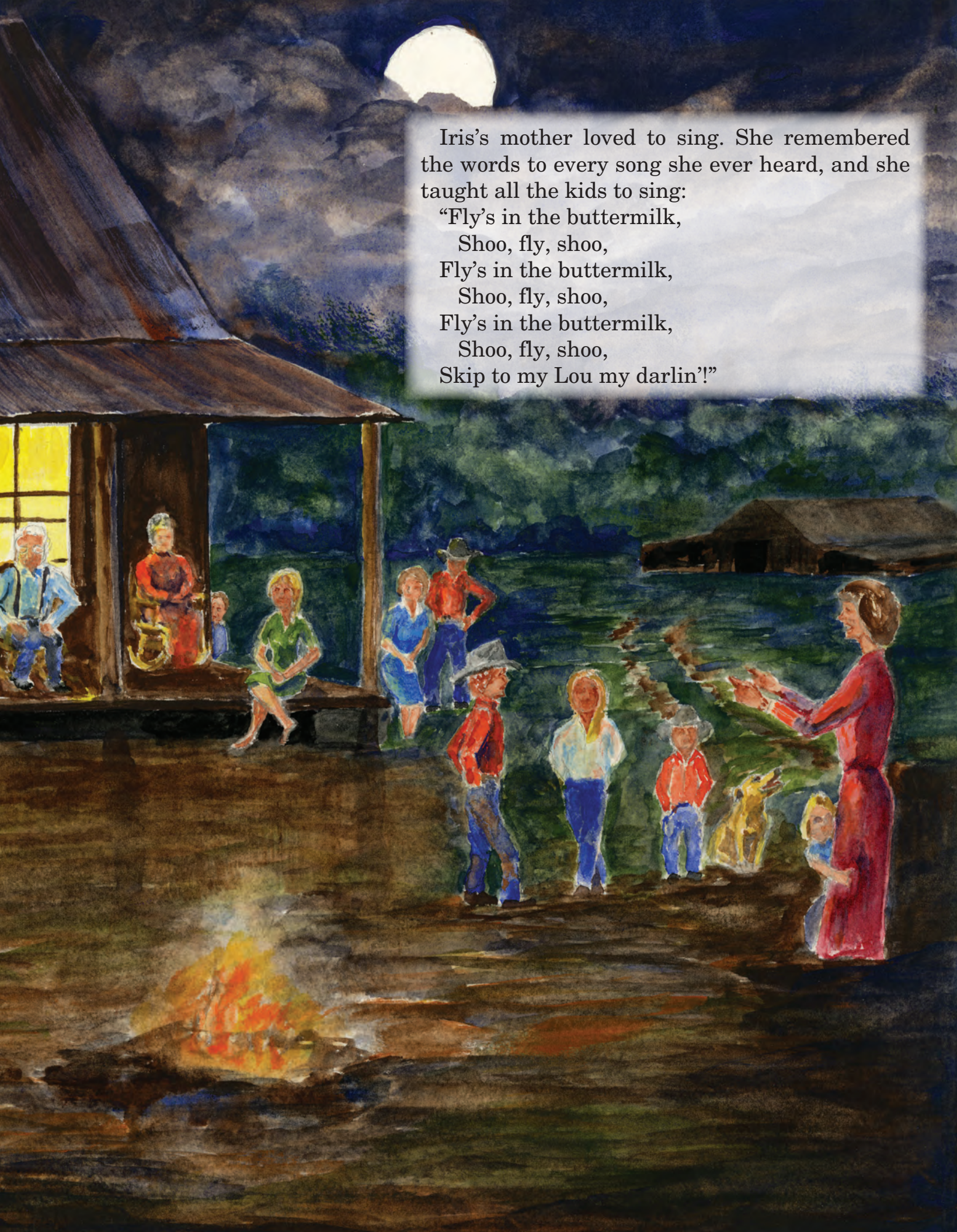






In those days, Iris's family had no television or even a radio for entertainment. But, on Friday nights, no matter where they lived, all of Iris's aunts, uncles, and cousins came home to Indiantown for the weekend and brought their harps, fiddles, guitars, and banjos. When it got dark they built a bonfire in the front yard and played and sang till midnight.



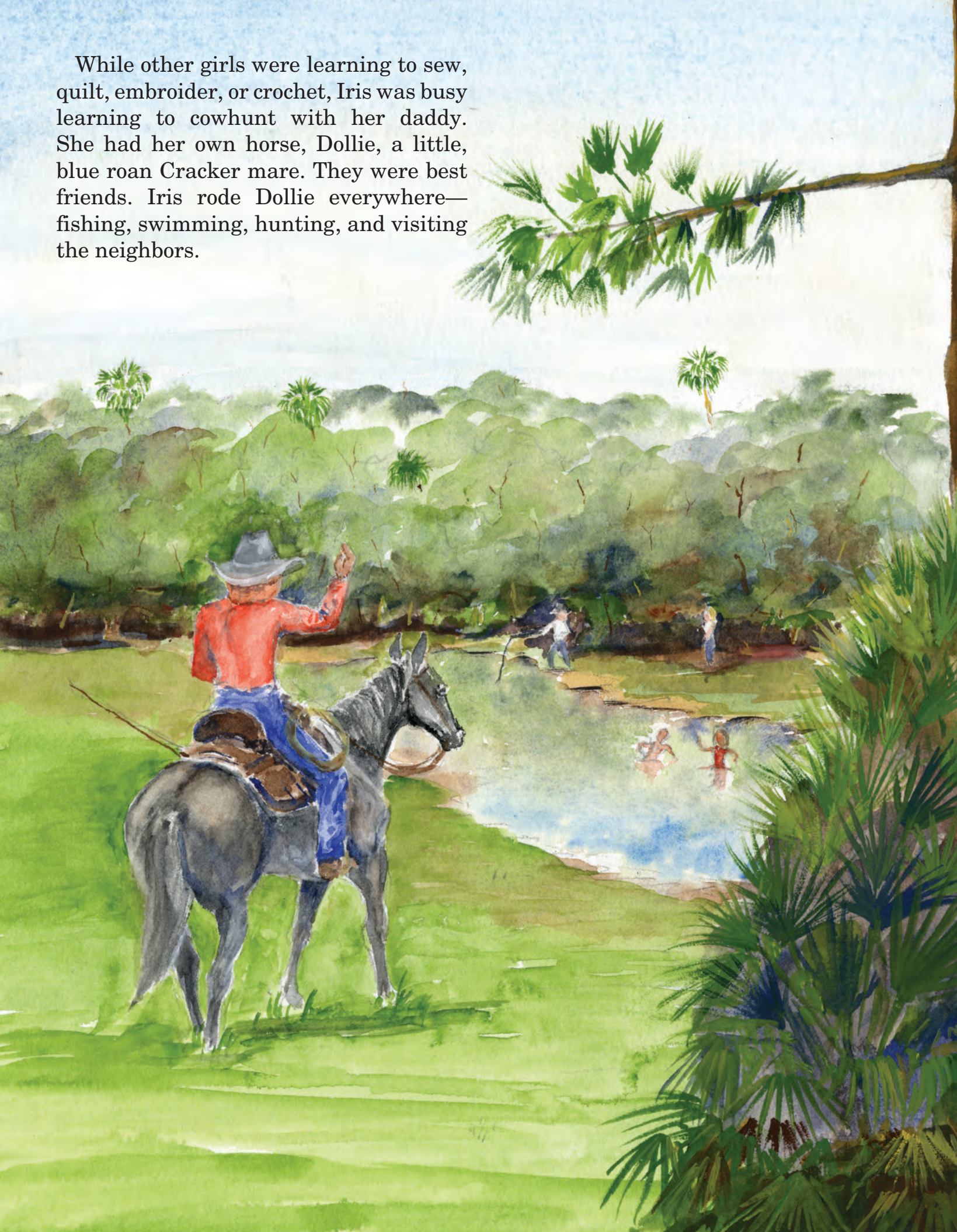


Iris's mother loved to sing. She remembered the words to every song she ever heard, and she taught all the kids to sing:

“Fly’s in the buttermilk,  
Shoo, fly, shoo,  
Fly’s in the buttermilk,  
Shoo, fly, shoo,  
Fly’s in the buttermilk,  
Shoo, fly, shoo,  
Skip to my Lou my darlin’!”



While other girls were learning to sew, quilt, embroider, or crochet, Iris was busy learning to cowhunt with her daddy. She had her own horse, Dollie, a little, blue roan Cracker mare. They were best friends. Iris rode Dollie everywhere—fishing, swimming, hunting, and visiting the neighbors.





But the thing that Iris loved best in the whole world was cowhunting. She'd wake up before dawn, saddle Dollie, whistle for the dogs, and off they'd go.

