



1893—Oklahoma Territory

I am an old warrior who has lived too long.
When I was a young brave, great herds of buffalo
roamed this prairie where the wind blows wild and free.

Now I see homesteaders in wagons, on horses,
in buggies, on foot, or any way they can,
rushing to grab these lands.
They will build their squatty sod houses
and pierce the earth with their plows.
Their crops will cover the earth
where once tall grasses grew.

The buffalo are gone now;
my people are dwindling to a few.
One more time before I die
I will sing a song of sorrow
for the buffalo, for my people,
and for this land I love.



1919—Western Kansas

I am a proud sodbuster
who turned this empty land
into fields of waving gold.
Naysayers called this a semi-arid plain;
the Great American Desert, they said,
a place where a farmer should beware.
But since I've been here
there has been abundant rain.

When the Great War came,
the government asked us to grow wheat
to feed the troops overseas.
The motto of America became
"Wheat will win the war!"

Getting two dollars a bushel
didn't hurt any either.





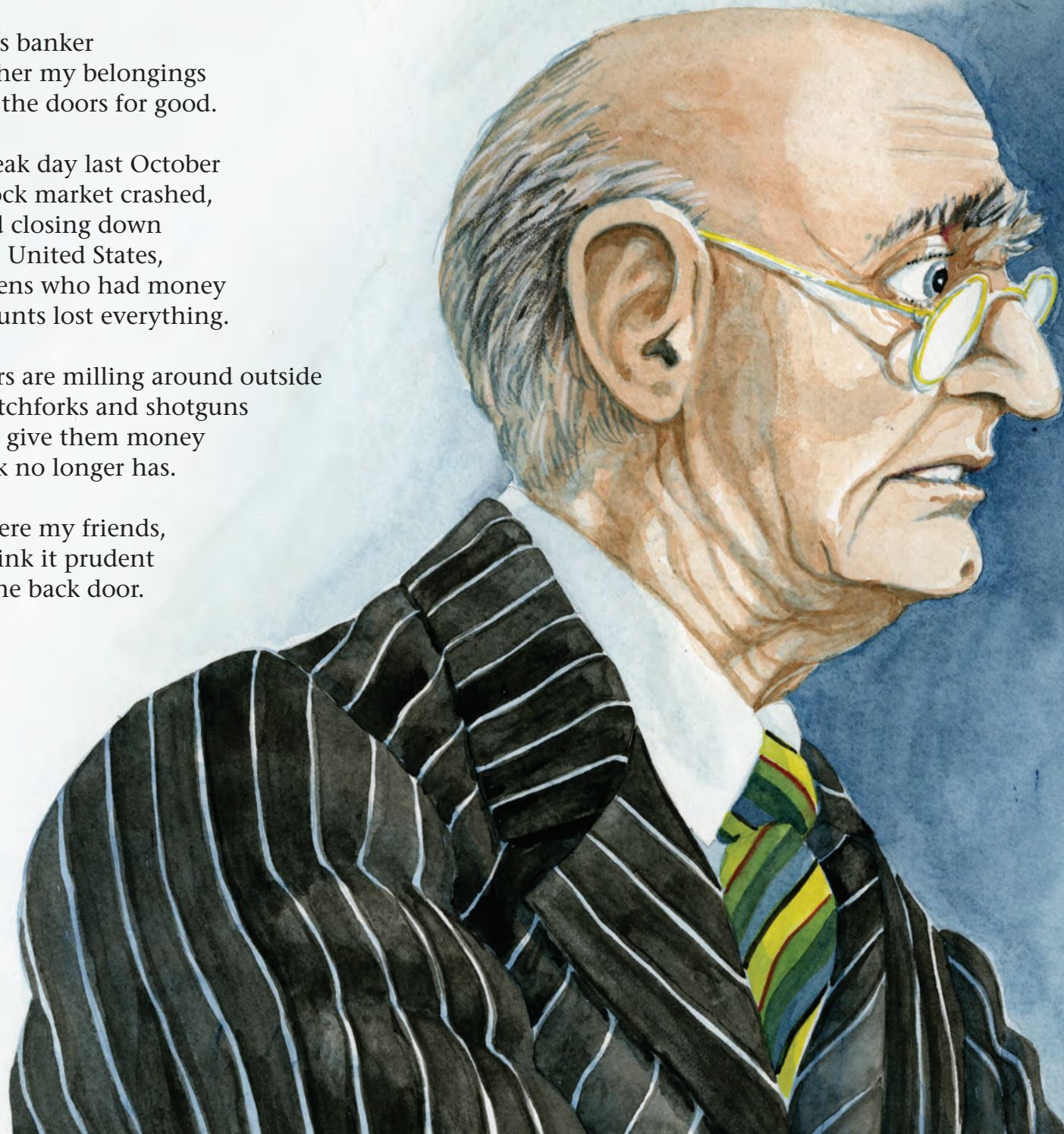
Mid-1930—Oklahoma

I'm a nervous banker
trying to gather my belongings
before I lock the doors for good.

After that bleak day last October
when the stock market crashed,
banks started closing down
all across the United States,
and the citizens who had money
in their accounts lost everything.

Angry farmers are milling around outside
with their pitchforks and shotguns
demanding I give them money
that the bank no longer has.

Once they were my friends,
but now I think it prudent
to leave by the back door.





Fall 1930—Texas Panhandle

I am a cotton picker moving field to field
with my family, trying to earn a wage.

Last spring plenty of rain fell 'round here,
and folks had walloping bumper crops.
Boll weevils weren't too bad;
had fields white as snow come this fall.

We worked day and night for the boss man,
trying to get that first bale to the gin.
But the price of cotton fell to six cents a pound,
so we pickers got paid next to nothing
for all our sweat and toil.

Wheat farmers are hit just as bad—
their price dropped to twenty-four cents a bushel.
Silos are still filled up with last year's unsold grain;
new wheat is dumped on the ground, worthless.

I heard farmers say they will have to plow up more land
'cause they aren't making enough to pay their bills.

Ain't nothing great 'bout this depression.

