Centennial Preserves

During, 1982, Lufkin celebrates the 100th anniversary of its founding as a fledging railroad and lumber community in East Texas.

Tales of Lufkin's pioneers and colorful events paint a heritage as rich as the city's lush pine forest backdrop. Characters like Paul Bremond, the Hoo Hoo Band, the Newsprint Pioneers, Angelina and even Ottie—the faithful town mare—create a lively and intriguing history.

We think these eight historical vignettes by Texas artist and illustrator Larry Patterson capture a bit of hometown history. So, as a birthday gift to you, we offer his work as your "Centennial Preserves."

Happy Birthday, Lufkin.
From the people of St. Regis.

We don't just work here...
we live here.

ST REGIS

How the Courthouse Came to Lufkin

There have been three courthouses in Lufkin during the past century, but it was the first which left the biggest imprint on the town's history.

When the Houston, East and West Texas Railroad arrived in Angelina County in 1882, Lufkin sprouted beside its tracks and began to surpass Homer, the county seat, seven miles away.

By 1887, Lufkin had grown to such an extent that its leaders felt the town should be the county seat. The issue was put to a vote, but Lufkin lost, 532-247.

In 1891, Homer awoke one morning to find its courthouse in ashes. One Homer merchant ran half-clothed to the fire, shouting: "They've done it. I knew they would. This is the work of Lufkin."

Lufkin wasted no time in capitalizing on the fire. The next day, its leaders petitioned the County Commissioners Court for a second election, promising to furnish land and a new courthouse at Lufkin.

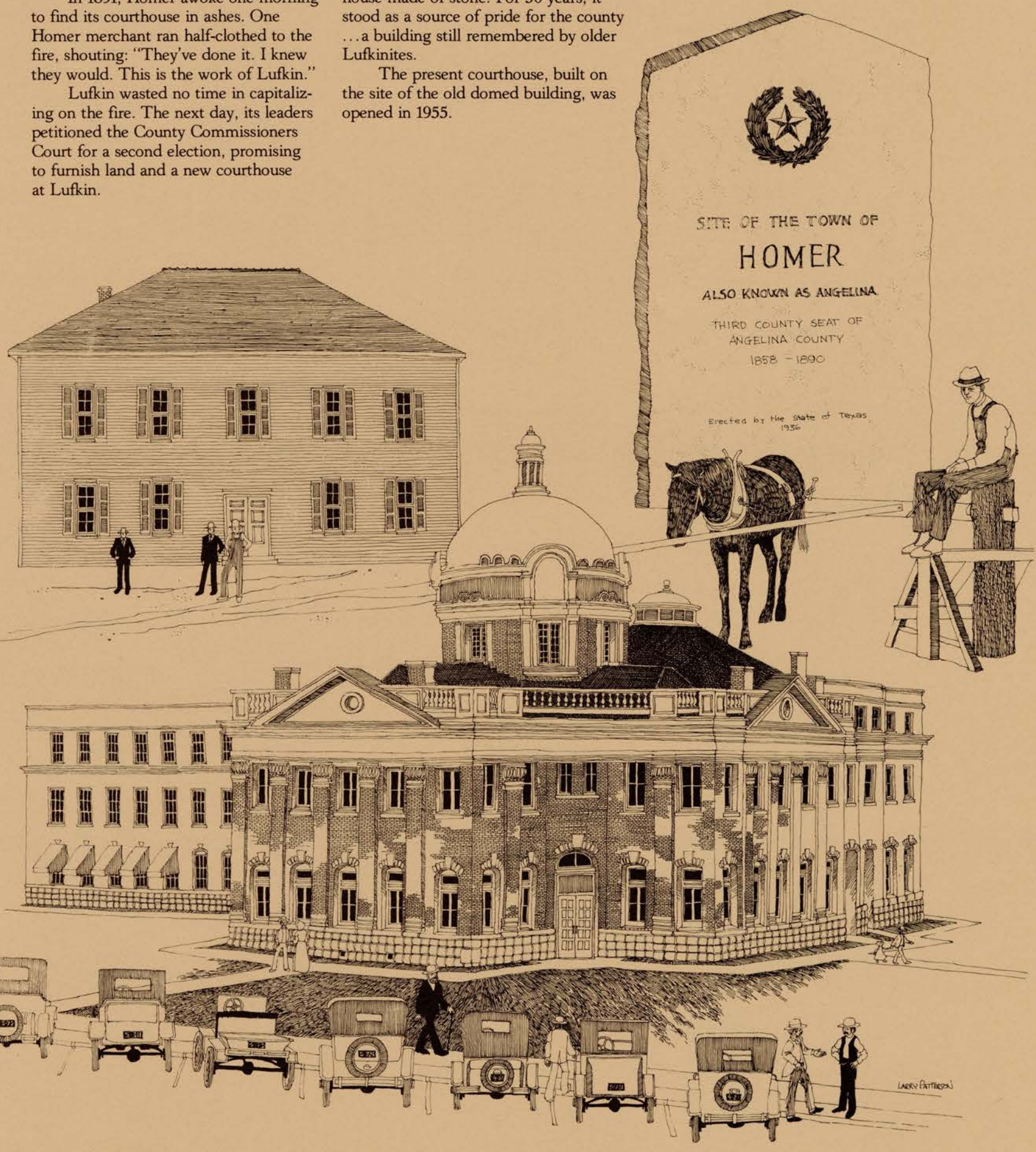
This time, Lufkin won, 1076-436, but Homer was irate, claiming that Lufkin had brought in railroad workers, traveling salesmen, and other out-of-towners to vote. It was a bitter blow for a community which once governed Angelina County.

Lufkin temporarily housed the county government in a Masonic hall until it built a wooden frame courthouse in 1892 for $2,000. The building served until 1903 when the county constructed an elaborate, three-story domed courthouse made of stone. For 50 years, it stood as a source of pride for the county ...a building still remembered by older Lufkinites.

The present courthouse, built on the site of the old domed building, was opened in 1955.

The story of Lufkin's first courthouse and its successors is cherished by Lufkinites, a lasting part of the city's colorful 100-year history.

As a principal contributor to the economic growth of Lufkin and East Texas, we at St. Regis take pride in that history.



Sawyers and Flatheads

In the Northwest they were lumberjacks, but in East Texas they were called "sawyers" or "flatheads."

Using crosscut saws, axes and teams of mules and oxen, they felled the timber which fed hundreds of early sawmills and shaped the future of towns like Lufkin.

A hardy breed with a broad streak of independence, they were as colorful as they were hard-working, and the language they used became a part of East Texas' heritage.

If a sawyer told you he'd "fight a rattlesnake and give it two bites to start", you knew he was a man to avoid. And if he said he felt "like he had pulled a dull saw all day", you knew he was tired.

The logging crews which served Lufkin's early sawmills between 1882 and 1920 rarely stayed long in one place — moving instead from county to county, forest to forest — to cut and haul timber.

Some lumber mills moved entire communities — known as "front camps" — around the East Texas woods, carrying with them the settlement's basic necessities. At Lufkin, Angelina County Lumber Company operated a fleet of boxcar-like buildings mounted on wheels, ready to roll when the latest logging job was finished. The mobile village, named "Acol", became famous for its "wandering post office".

A railroad-building crew usually worked ahead of the logging crews, putting down new tracks on which to transport the loggers, their buildings and machinery. When the logging job was over, the tracks were yanked up and moved to another forest.

The work of East Texas' early sawyers and loggers constitute a unique part of Lufkin's colorful 100-year heritage.

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Pocahontas of East Texas

Of all the historical figures associated with Lufkin, none is more cloaked in romance than Angelina, the Hanina Indian girl.

Some chroniclers say she was a devout Christian, a saint who influenced the establishment of the first Spanish missions. Others paint her life with a stiffer brush, claiming she ruled an Indian tribe and made slaves of men.

Whatever her true character, Angelina stitched her life into the whole fabric of East Texas. Her name was given to a river, a village, a National Forest, and a county — the only one in Texas bearing a woman's name.

Spain's Franciscian Fathers found Angelina around 1690 when they founded Mission San Francisco de los Tejas. The young girl — who had been living with her people — was studious, gentle and affable. The Fathers found in her a strong ally of the Catholic faith.

She moved to the Mission for instruction in the faith and, in 1693, when the priests closed the mission, Angelina accompanied them back to Mexico, where her studies continued.

She eventually returned to East Texas and continued to convert the Indians to Christianity. She also served as an interpreter for several French expeditions and is credited with saving the life of Francois Simars de Bellisle, who lost his way in the East Texas wilds and nearly died at the stake.

The last written record of Angelina was in 1721 when a Spanish marquis visited her village and observed that she seemed to direct most of the tribal functions. Angelina apparently died shortly after that.

The story of Angelina is a cherished part of Lufkin's colorful history.

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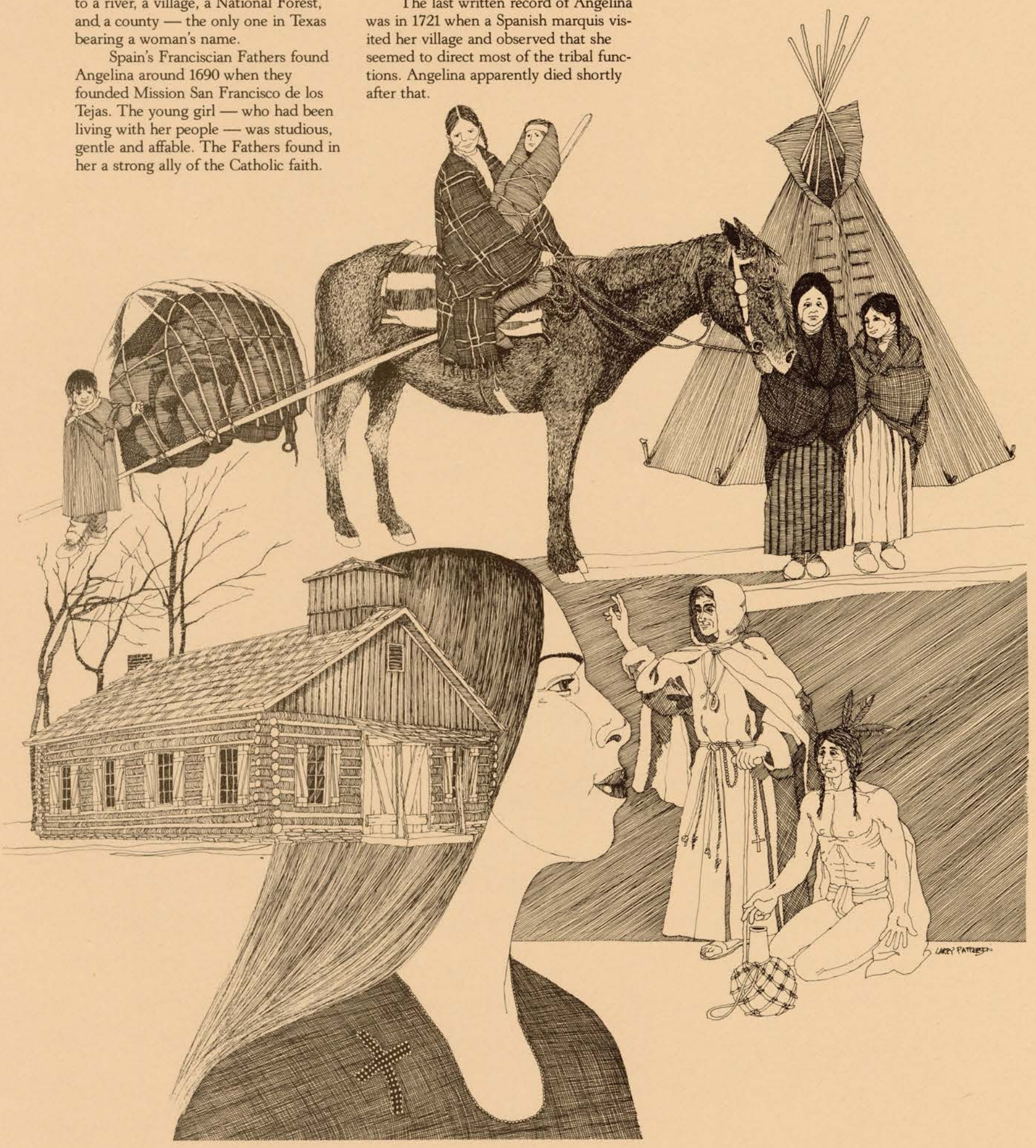

Who? Hoo Hoo, That's Who

Lufkin visitors are often perplexed by a street sign named Hoo Hoo. What they don't know is that the sign is a tribute to a colorful lumberman's group which played a significant role in Lufkin's early history.

The Concatenated Order of the Hoo Hoo — a half-jest, half-serious fraternity — was founded in the early 1890's in Arkansas.

As their symbol, the members chose an Egyptian black cat with its tail curled in the figure 9. The original order was limited to 9,999 members, and each lodge meeting was to begin at nine minutes past nine o'clock on the ninth day of the ninth month.

At Lufkin, a Hoo Hoo chapter put together a band that earned a national reputation, a niche in local history, and a street sign to memoralize its musical abilities.

The Hoo Hoo was strongly anti-superstitious during its early years (one of the reasons it adopted the black cat symbol) but an incident in 1903 shook beliefs of its Lufkin members.

The Lufkin Hoo Hoo band, which had played at a national convention in Milwaukee, decided to return home by train on Friday the 13th. There were 13 band members aboard and the locomotive, No. 913, was pulling 13 coaches.

The train left on schedule at 11:13 a.m. but 13 miles out of Milwaukee, it wrecked.

No one was hurt, and the band boarded another train to return to Milwaukee. But because of the wreck, the train detoured to another track, and on the second attempt to leave Milwaukee, it also crashed — again 13 miles from the station.

The Hoo Hoo bandsmen survived, but not without some mortal wounds to their pride.

The story of the Hoo Hoo and its band is a unique part of Lufkin's colorful 100-year history.

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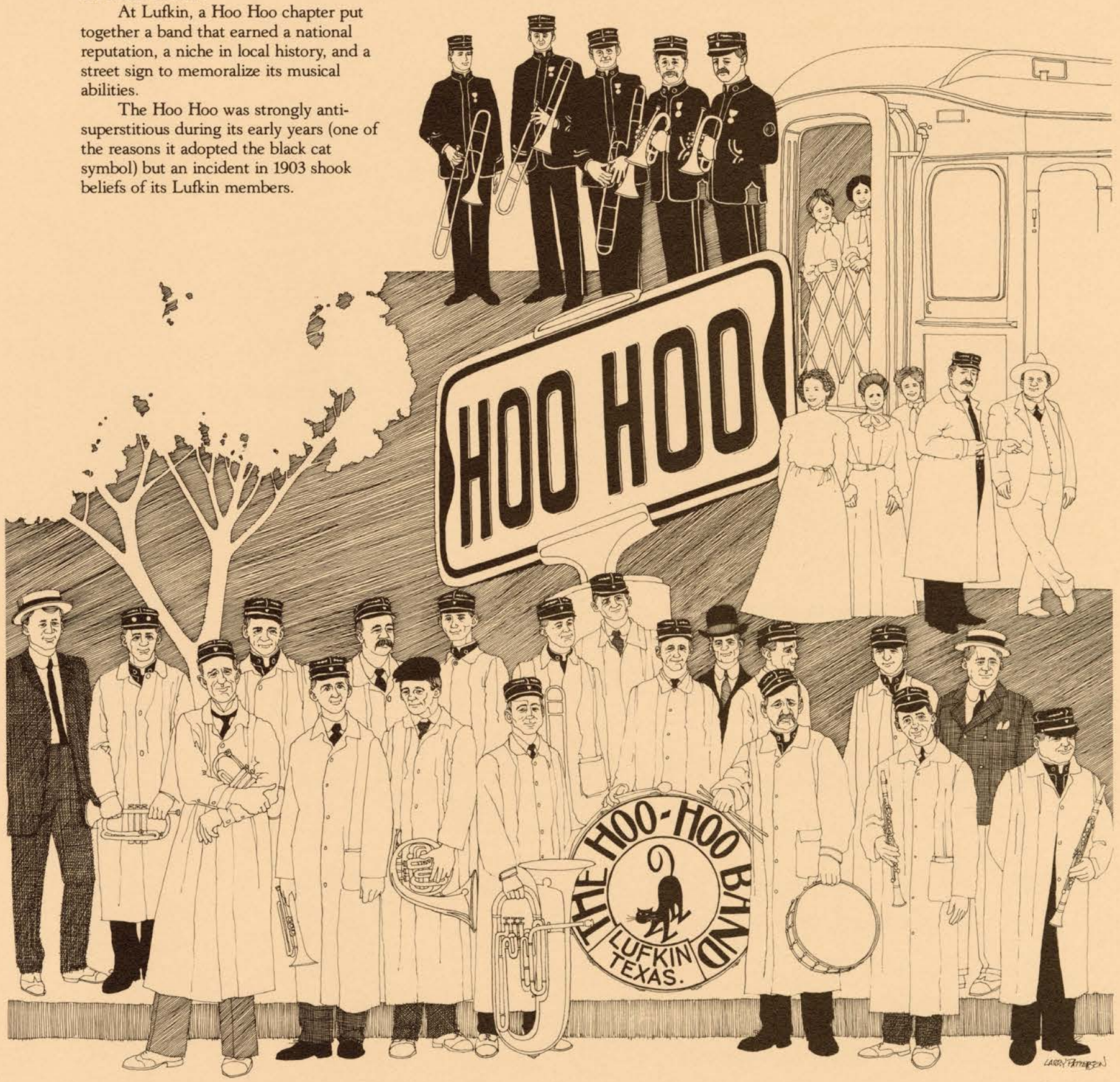

Ottie

The more you think about the grey slab of marble in Glendale Cemetery, the more poignant it becomes.

Ottie had been one of the family, a trusted servant for 32 years and C. N. Humason wanted to give her a decent burial when she died. But it wouldn't have been proper to bury her in the family plot at Glendale Cemetery.

So Ottie was laid to rest in an unmarked grave just beyond the cemetery, a few hundred yards from where the oaks and pines signaled the forest's beginning. But in their family plot, among Lufkin's captains of commerce, the Humasons placed a small marker.

On it, they wrote the inscription: "Ottie . . . a faithful old mare."

Ottie was perhaps Lufkin's most famous horse. She was as much a pioneer as her master, C. N. Humason, an early mayor, fire chief, churchman, and ice cream factory owner. She pulled Lufkin's first ice wagon in 1896, she was at the lead carriages of funerals and parades, and she answered hundreds of fire alarms with her owner.

Humason often said that Ottie wore out 12 buggies, 14 sets of harnesses, and 200 shoes — "but only one ten-cent buggy whip" — during her lifetime.

When she died in 1918 at the age of 44, most of Lufkin shared the Humasons' sorrow. A family friend described her passing: "She was a faithful old mare and member of the family. During her last six months, she was tenderly fed and watered . . . finally, the family doctor was called in to give her chloroform so that she might pass on in a peaceful sleep."

The story of Ottie the mare is a cherished part of Lufkin's colorful 100-year history.

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The Newsprint Pioneers

In early 1940, a stream of newsprint spurted out of a block-long machine in a factory that had risen only months before in a cotton field near Lufkin.

To depression-weary East Texans, it was a bootstrap to economic recovery. To newspaper publishers, it signaled the beginning of independence from foreign newsprint suppliers.

The mill at Lufkin was the first to produce newsprint from southern pines — an achievement once considered impossible — and it stands today as a tribute to hundreds who labored for its creation.

Among them were Dr. Charles Holmes Herty, a mild-mannered Georgia chemist, and Ernest Lynn Kurth, a robust Keltys lumberman with a flair for bringing people together.

Until the 1930's, paper manufacturers had written off the South as a newsprint producing region because they felt the high resin content of the southern pines would gum up their machinery.

But laboratory work by Dr. Herty suggested the obstacle could be overcome. And when Herty met Kurth in Texas, they found they shared a common dream. Fired by the chemist's enthusiasm, Kurth altered his own plans for a kraft mill and began championing the cause of newsprint. Southern newspapers and East Texans joined the chorus.

Overcoming dozens of obstacles, a new company founded in 1938 and construction of a mill began a year later. On a winter morning in January, 1940, the mill turned out its first roll of newsprint.

Ironically, Herty died before the mill opened. Kurth, however, continued to push for the mill's success — as well as the economic improvement of East Texas — until his death in 1960.

The achievements of men like Charles Herty and Ernest Kurth are a unique part of Lufkin's colorful 100-year history.

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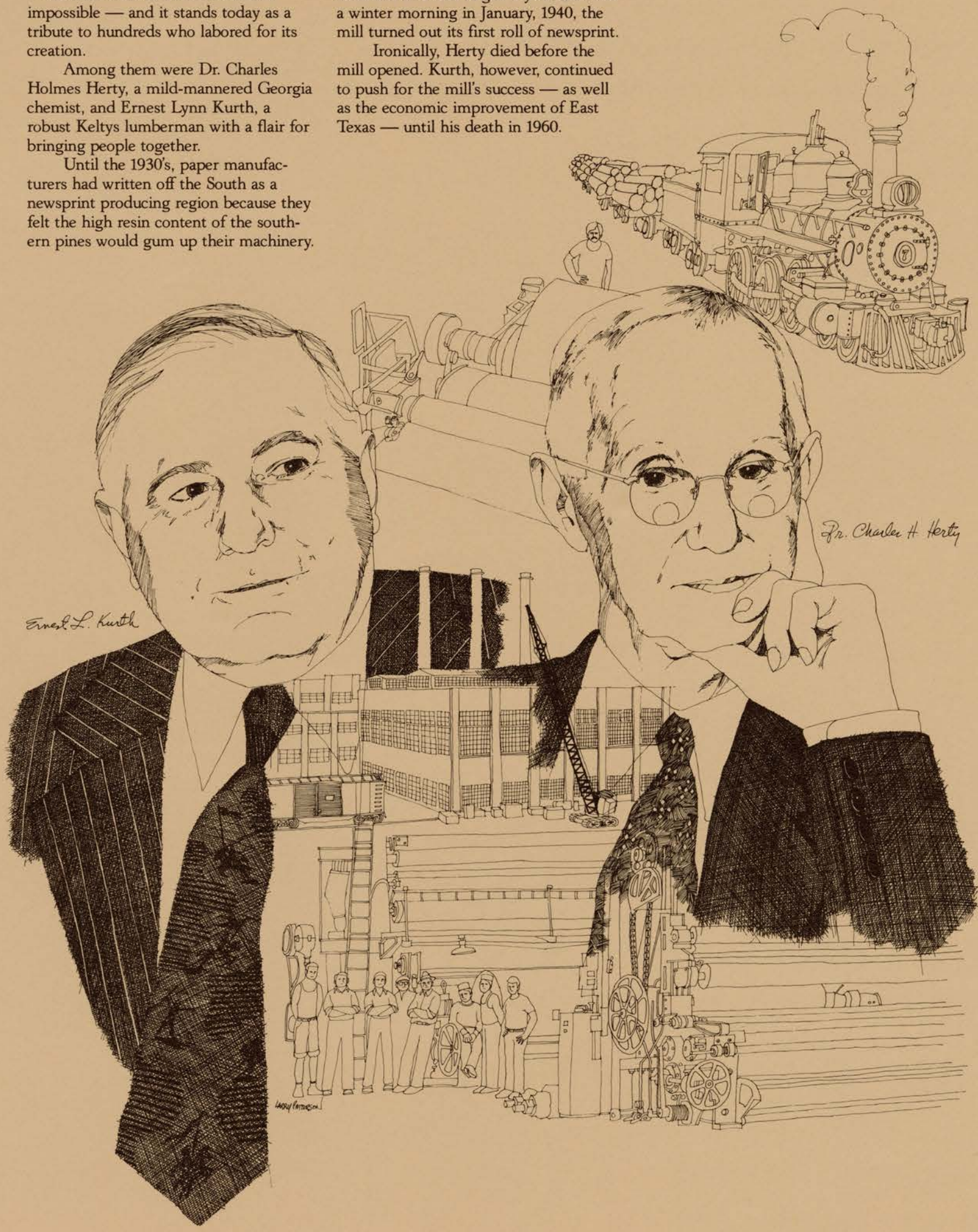

Paul Bremond and the Rabbit Railroad

The steel ribbons started at Houston and stretched northward, slicing through the forested midsection of East Texas. Builder Paul Bremond called the line the Houston, East and West Texas Railroad.

Mindful of its jerks and bumps, HE&WT passengers christened the route "the Rabbit Railroad." Some were less generous, calling it "Hell Either Way Taken."

Despite the siobriquets, Bremond's railroad was a dream come true for East Texas. Its whistle signaled the development of industry and commerce and ended the region's dependence on slow-moving riverboats and horse-drawn wagons.

Were it not for Bremond's determination and tenacity in building the HE&WT, Lufkin might not exist today.

As the line crept into the forestlands in the early 1880's — enroute from Houston to Shreveport — dozens of sawmills and new towns, sprouted beside the tracks.

In 1882, when the line reached Angelina County, legend has it that the route was scheduled to pass through Homer, the county seat. But the town's constable threw the right-of-way crew into jail after a Saturday night celebration, and the HE&WT engineer, infuriated by the treatment of his men, ordered the crew to bypass Homer — resulting in the establishment of Lufkin seven miles to the west.

Angelina County was never the same.

Homer died on the vine, eventually losing most of its population and the county courthouse to the upstart new village.

Lufkin, named by Bremond for a close family friend, blossomed with railroad commerce and lumber production — soon becoming a pivotal city in East Texas.

The achievements of men like Paul Bremond and his HE&WT Railroad will endure forever, a unique beginning to the colorful 100-year history of Lufkin.

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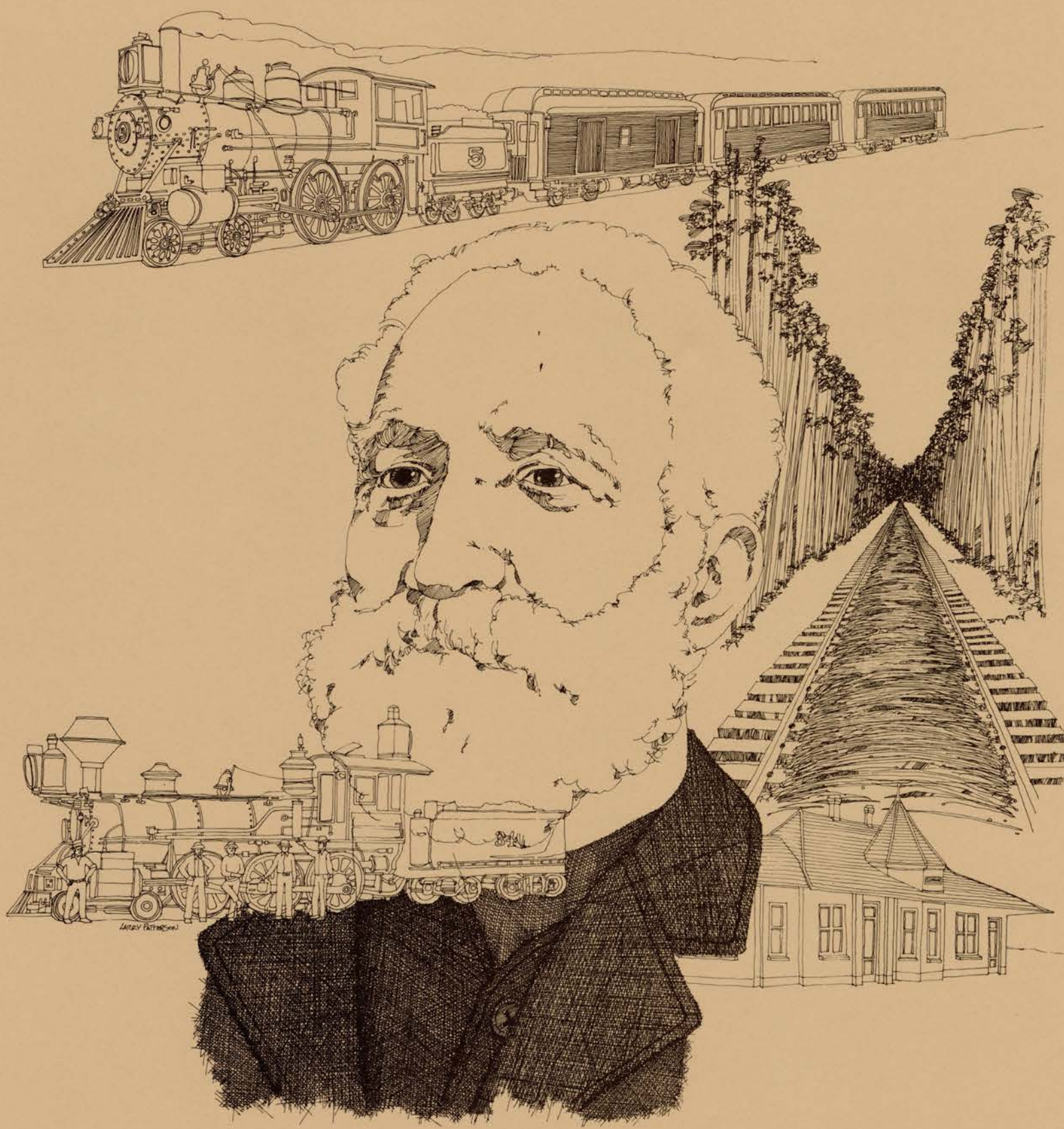

The Mystery of the Depot Explosion

On a Sunday night in 1913, Lufkinites had settled down for a night's sleep when an explosion shook the town.

Racing to the downtown business area, they found their railroad depot in splintered ruins. A dynamite explosion had ripped the building apart.

Only one man, an employee of the railroad, was missing. But it would be three years before Lufkin knew for certain if he was dead or alive.

The depot debris yielded the remains of a body, but investigators said they were those of an animal.

While the employee's fate remained uncertain among Lufkinites, a court ruled that he was legally dead and his stepmother was entitled to collect the insurance benefits.

But in 1916, a telegram sent from California to Lufkin created as much of a shock wave as the depot blast: the man was alive.

E. J. Mantooth — a tenacious attorney who not only represented justice but the insurance company — had been determined since the explosion to solve the mystery.

When Mantooth discovered the depot agent living in California, and confronted him, the former Lufkinite sighed with relief: "I'm glad it's over."

While Mantooth had solved the mystery of the disappearance, the insurance settlement was another matter. The wheels of justice cranked into motion, a trial was set, and the insurance companies tried to recover their losses.

But it was an East Texas jury which wrote the final chapter to one of Lufkin's most bizarre stories. The agent was tried, found innocent, and set free.

The story of the mysterious depot explosion today remains a unique part of the rich history of a community which celebrates its 100th birthday this year.

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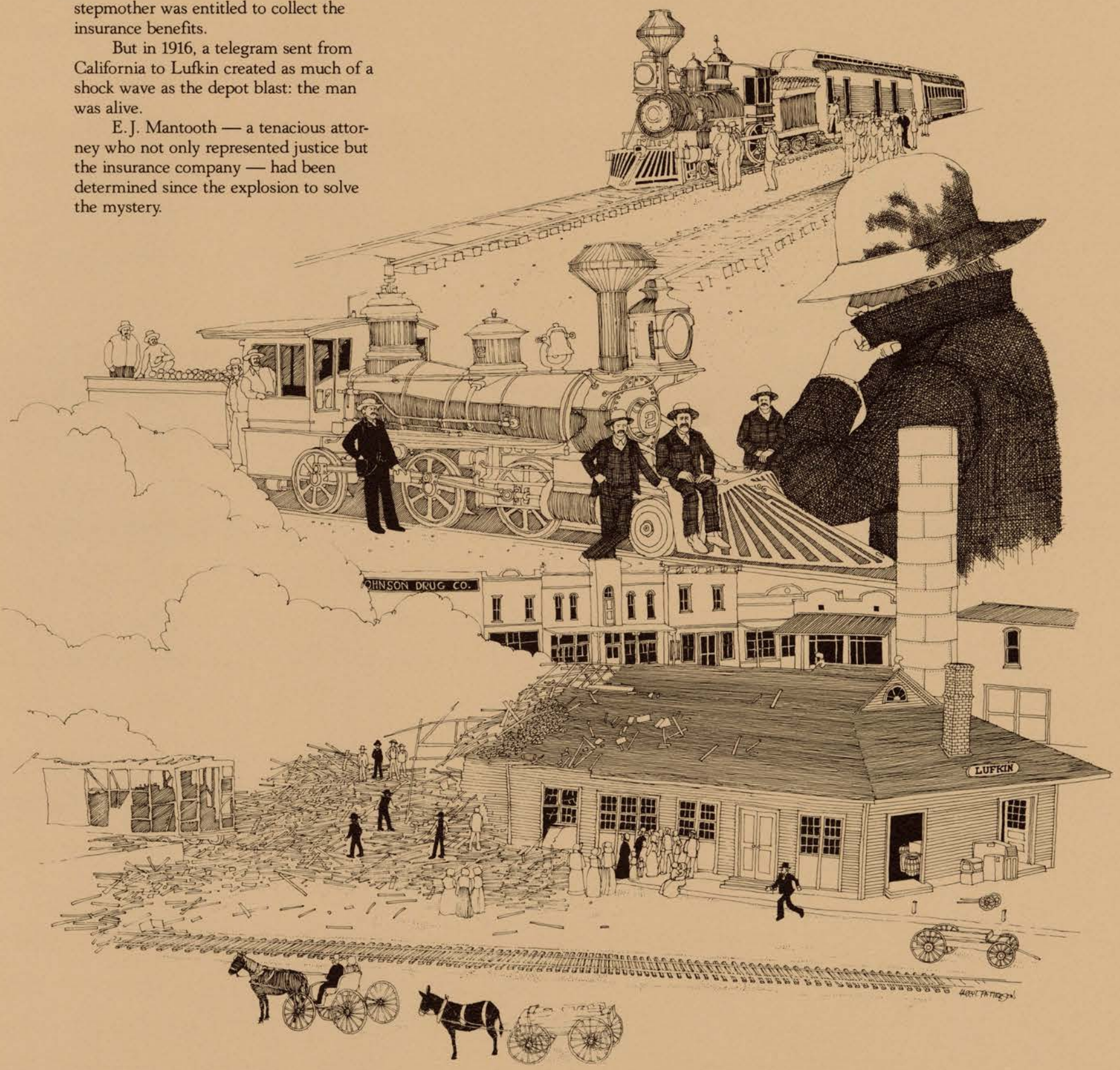

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