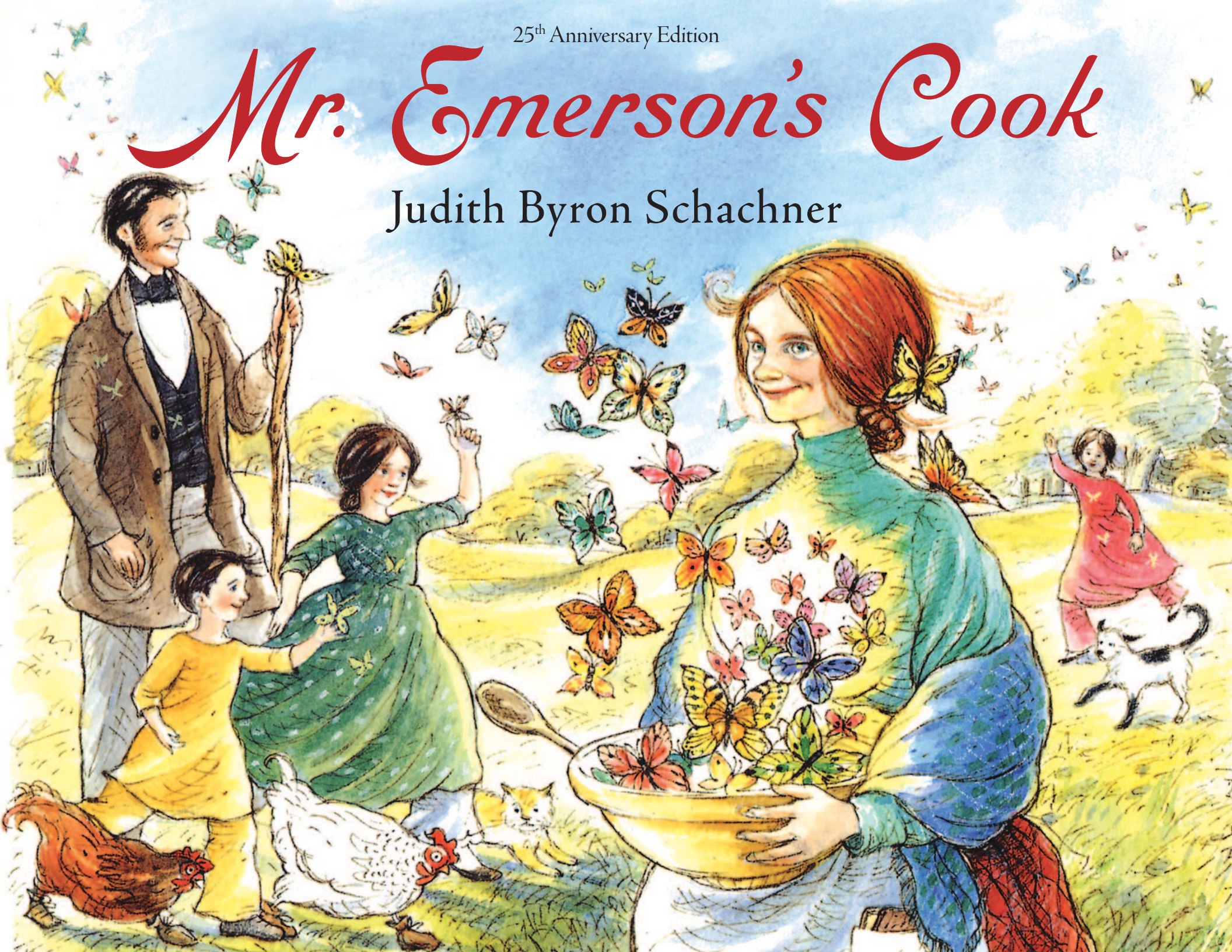


25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

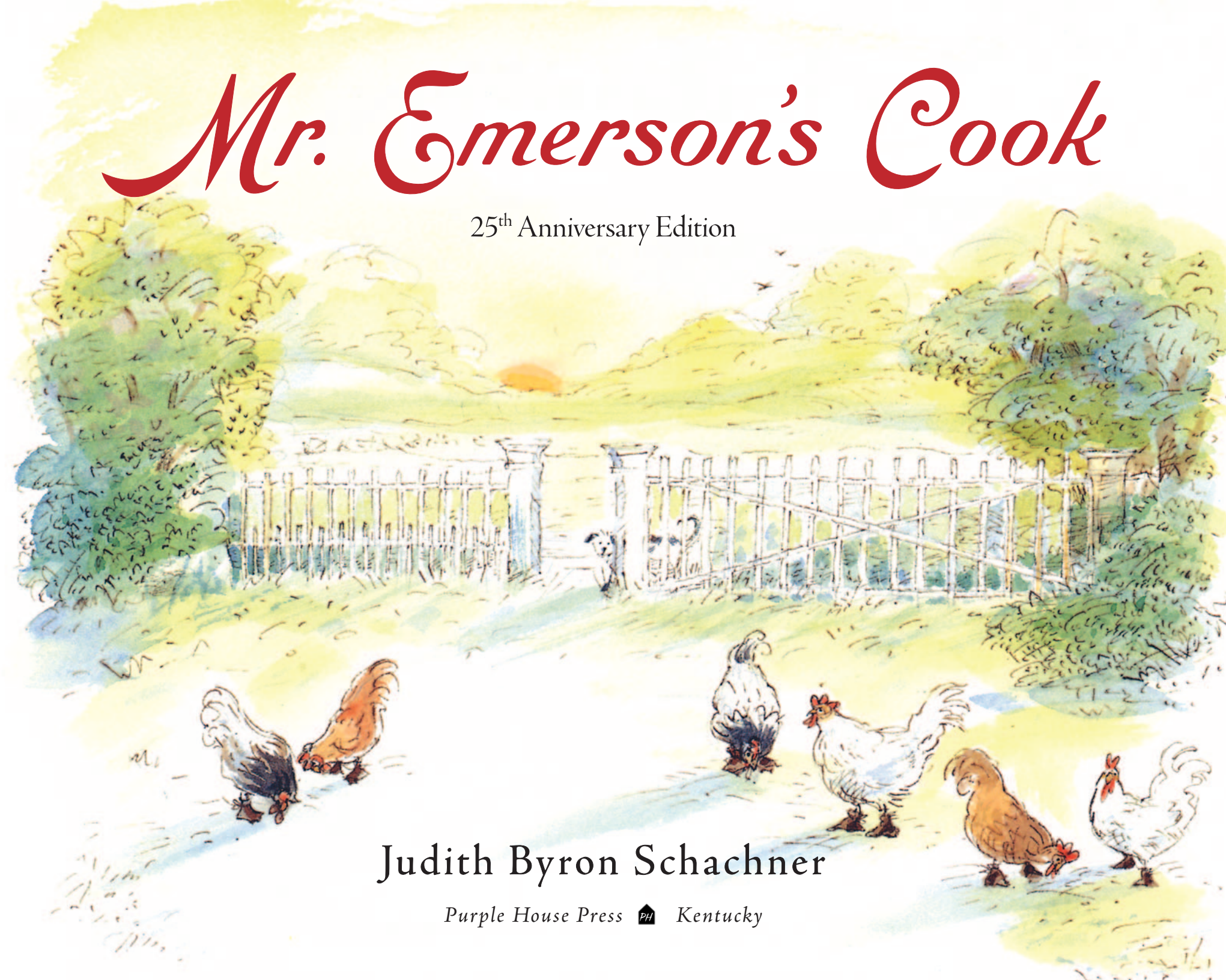
# Mr. Emerson's Cook

Judith Byron Schachner



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Purple House Press  Kentucky

*Your work should be in praise of what you love.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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FOR THE GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTERS OF MR. EMERSON'S COOK,

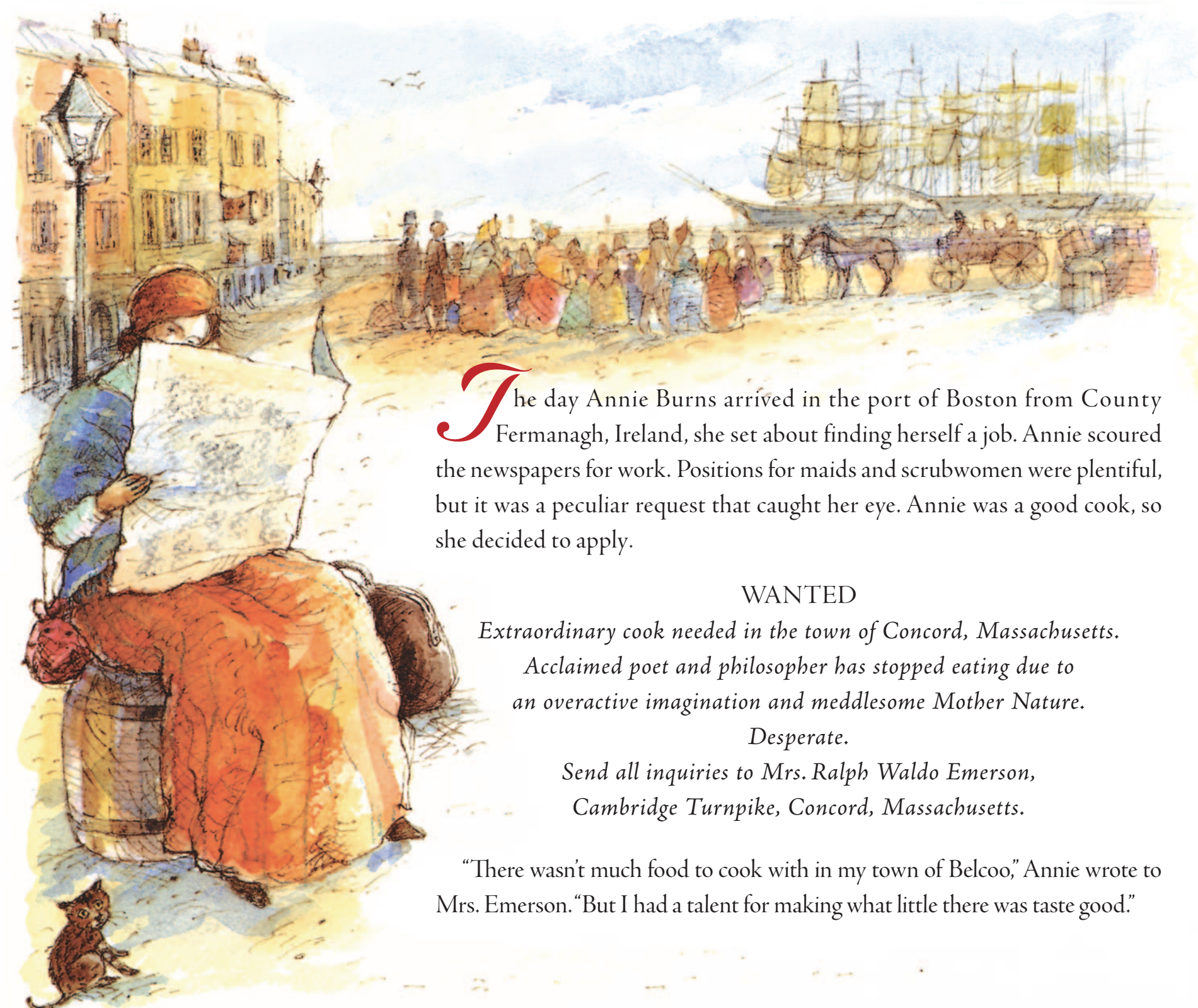
*Emma & Sarah Schachner*

AND FOR

*Lucia Monfried*

WHO TAKES ME BY THE HAND EACH AND EVERY TIME,  
WITH LOVE—J.B.S.





The day Annie Burns arrived in the port of Boston from County Fermanagh, Ireland, she set about finding herself a job. Annie scoured the newspapers for work. Positions for maids and scrubwomen were plentiful, but it was a peculiar request that caught her eye. Annie was a good cook, so she decided to apply.

#### WANTED

*Extraordinary cook needed in the town of Concord, Massachusetts.*

*Acclaimed poet and philosopher has stopped eating due to an overactive imagination and meddlesome Mother Nature.*

*Desperate.*

*Send all inquiries to Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
Cambridge Turnpike, Concord, Massachusetts.*

“There wasn’t much food to cook with in my town of Belcoo,” Annie wrote to Mrs. Emerson. “But I had a talent for making what little there was taste good.”

Annie soon received a reply from Mrs. Emerson and took the next coach to the country town of Concord.

When she arrived at the Emerson home, Annie walked around to the back of the large white house, passing a lovely garden of pinks. She tiptoed around a sleeping dog and shuffled through a small flock of chickens sporting tiny boots on their scratching feet.

“And what manner of humanity might I be cookin’ for today?” she asked the chickens.





“The kind which outfits their pets in the finest of footwear.”

For a moment Annie thought the chickens or the dogs might have spoken to her. Then she looked over her shoulder to see a tall man struggling to lead a calf into the barn.

“Have you come for the cook’s job?” asked the man.

“I have indeed, sir,” answered Annie, falling into step beside him. “I’ve crossed an ocean to cook for a man who won’t eat—or so the advertisement says.”

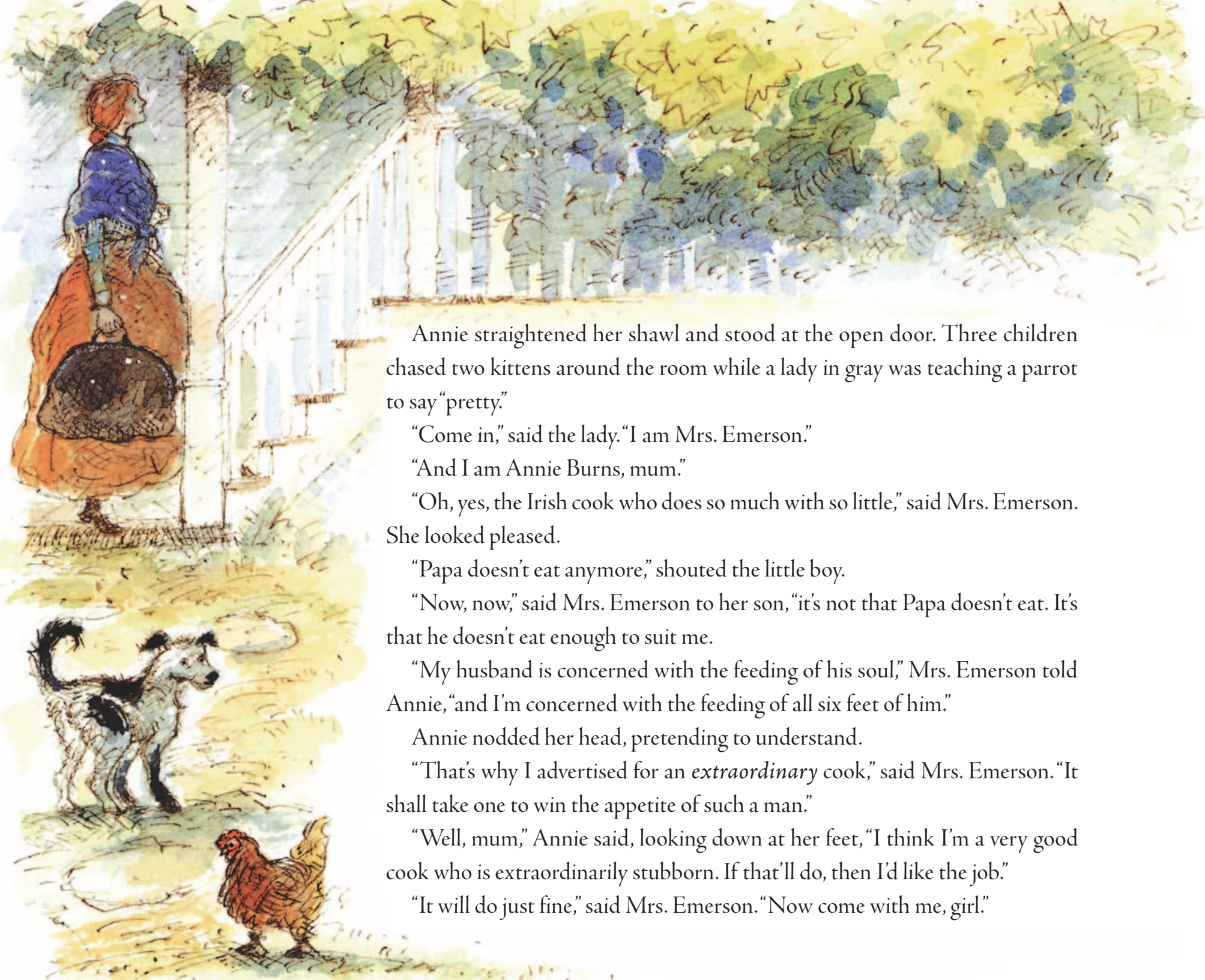
“Oh, don’t trouble yourself over Mr. Emerson,” said the man. “Mother Nature provides all he needs.”

Annie puzzled over this answer as she walked in front of the calf. Then she stuck her fingers into its mouth and led it easily into the barn.

“I like people who can do things,” said the man with a smile.

“Well, I’ve led many a cow to the barn, but never a philosopher to the dinner table,” said Annie as she left him and walked toward the house. “Have yourself a fine day, sir.”





Annie straightened her shawl and stood at the open door. Three children chased two kittens around the room while a lady in gray was teaching a parrot to say "pretty."

"Come in," said the lady. "I am Mrs. Emerson."

"And I am Annie Burns, mum."

"Oh, yes, the Irish cook who does so much with so little," said Mrs. Emerson. She looked pleased.

"Papa doesn't eat anymore," shouted the little boy.

"Now, now," said Mrs. Emerson to her son, "it's not that Papa doesn't eat. It's that he doesn't eat enough to suit me."

"My husband is concerned with the feeding of his soul," Mrs. Emerson told Annie, "and I'm concerned with the feeding of all six feet of him."

Annie nodded her head, pretending to understand.

"That's why I advertised for an *extraordinary* cook," said Mrs. Emerson. "It shall take one to win the appetite of such a man."

"Well, mum," Annie said, looking down at her feet, "I think I'm a very good cook who is extraordinarily stubborn. If that'll do, then I'd like the job."

"It will do just fine," said Mrs. Emerson. "Now come with me, girl."

