

The beacon of the lighthouse was the first thing the Jeep full of friends could see as they drove along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. As they got closer the red bricks glowing warmly in the afternoon sun became clearer and clearer. John could hardly wait to run up the beach to the tower.

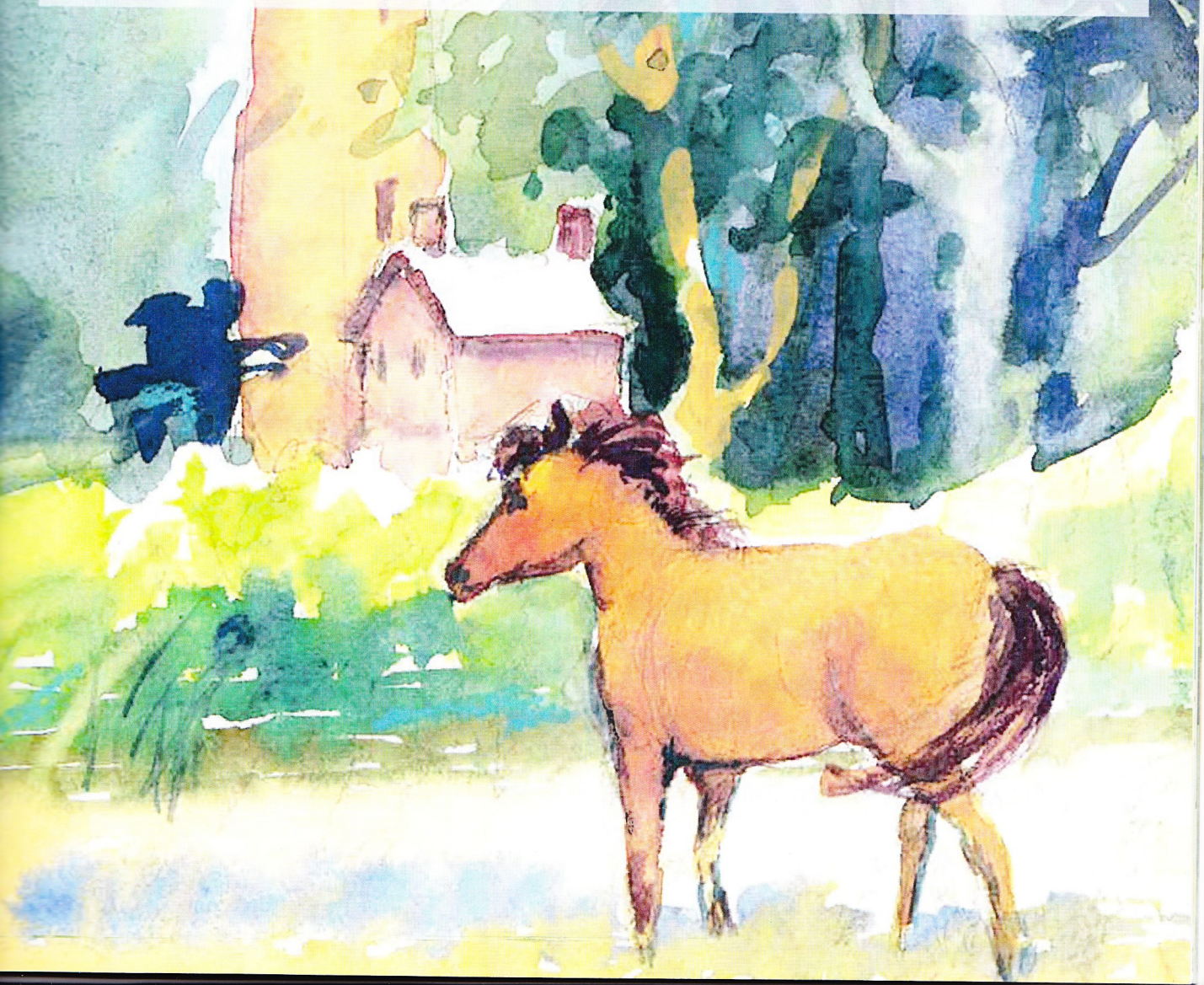
They parked as close as they could get to the Currituck Beach Lighthouse. The sand had grown hot during their drive. Flies swarmed around their heads, and the sun and wind made their skin start to turn red.





Swatting at the flies as he walked onto the beach, John couldn't help but think back to the stories his mother, Estelle, had shared with him about spending her summers at the lighthouse as a young girl. He couldn't wait to see the brick walkway on which she had roller skated, and the blooms of the flowers she described as "the colors of the rainbow".

As John and his friends walked up to the lighthouse, however, they saw none of those. All of those wonderful things Estelle remembered now seemed to be covered up with vines and weeds. The porch where his mother once sat playing paper dolls was now nothing more than sagging boards.







John's heart sank as he walked through the briers and weeds with his best friend, Billy. How could this have happened? What had once been a place where keepers kept the light burning while their families grew up had become an untidy mess of overgrown vegetation and broken down buildings. One thing had stayed the same, the Colonial Spanish Mustangs. They still pranced through the waves just like they have for 400 years.