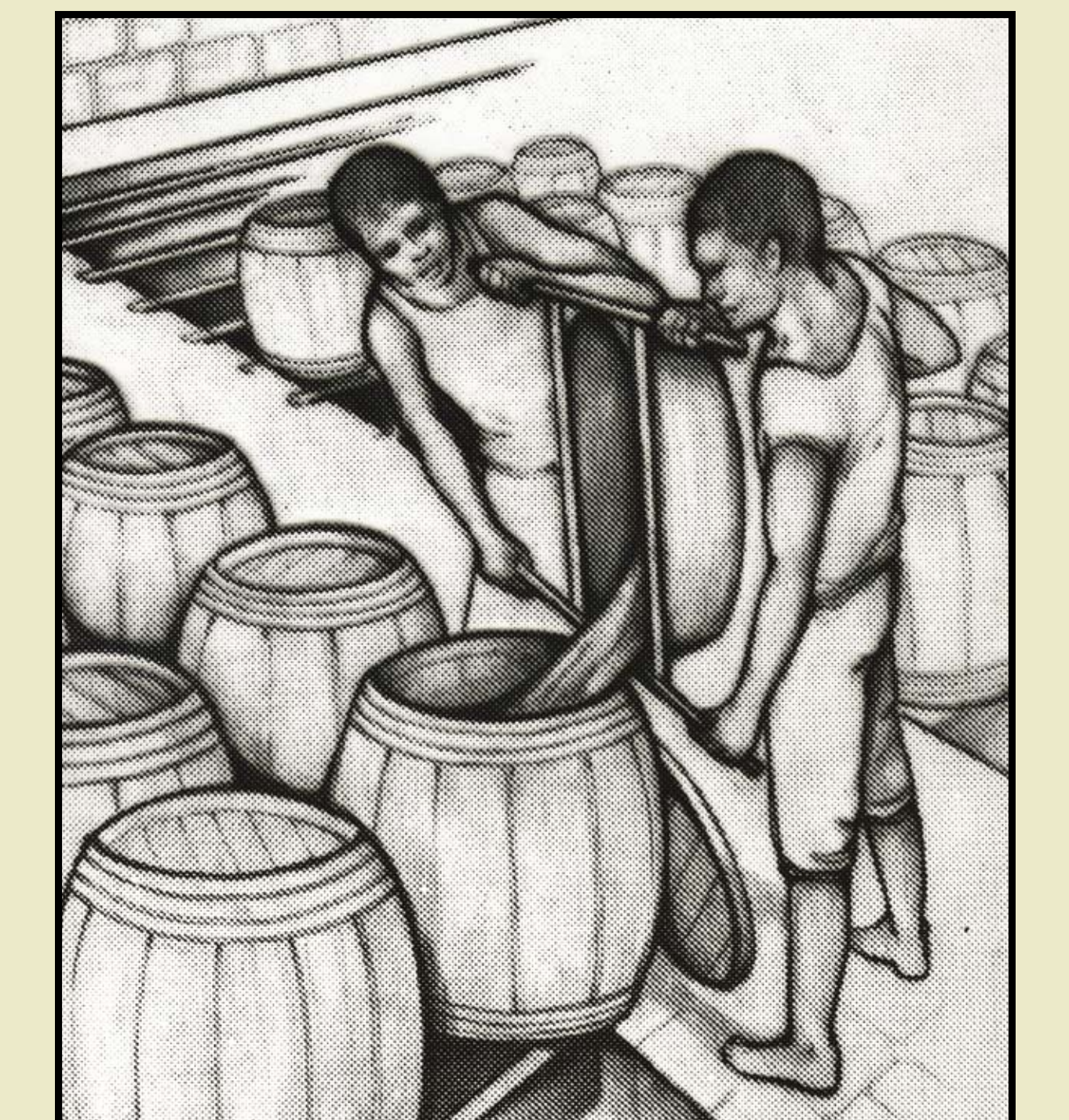
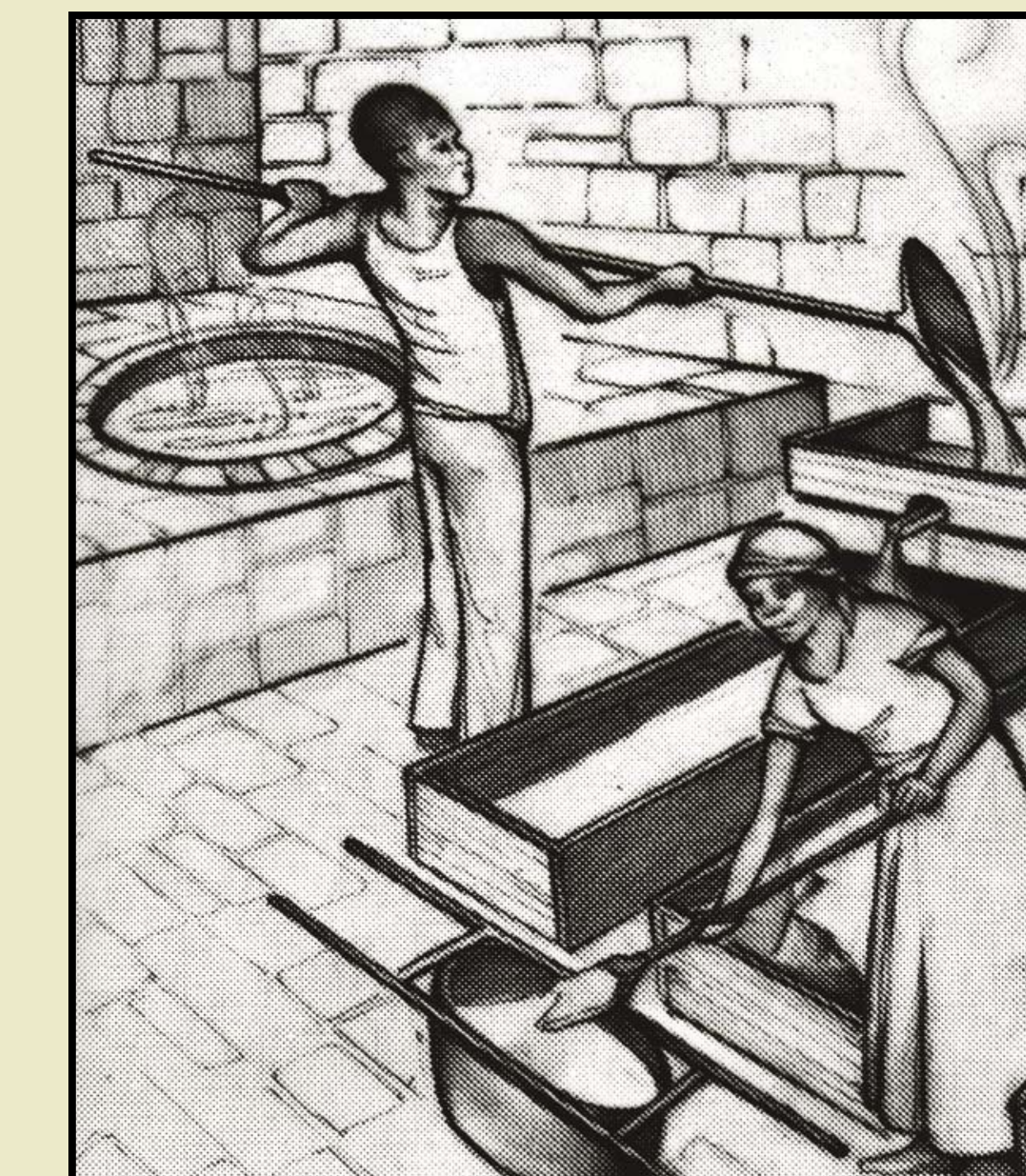
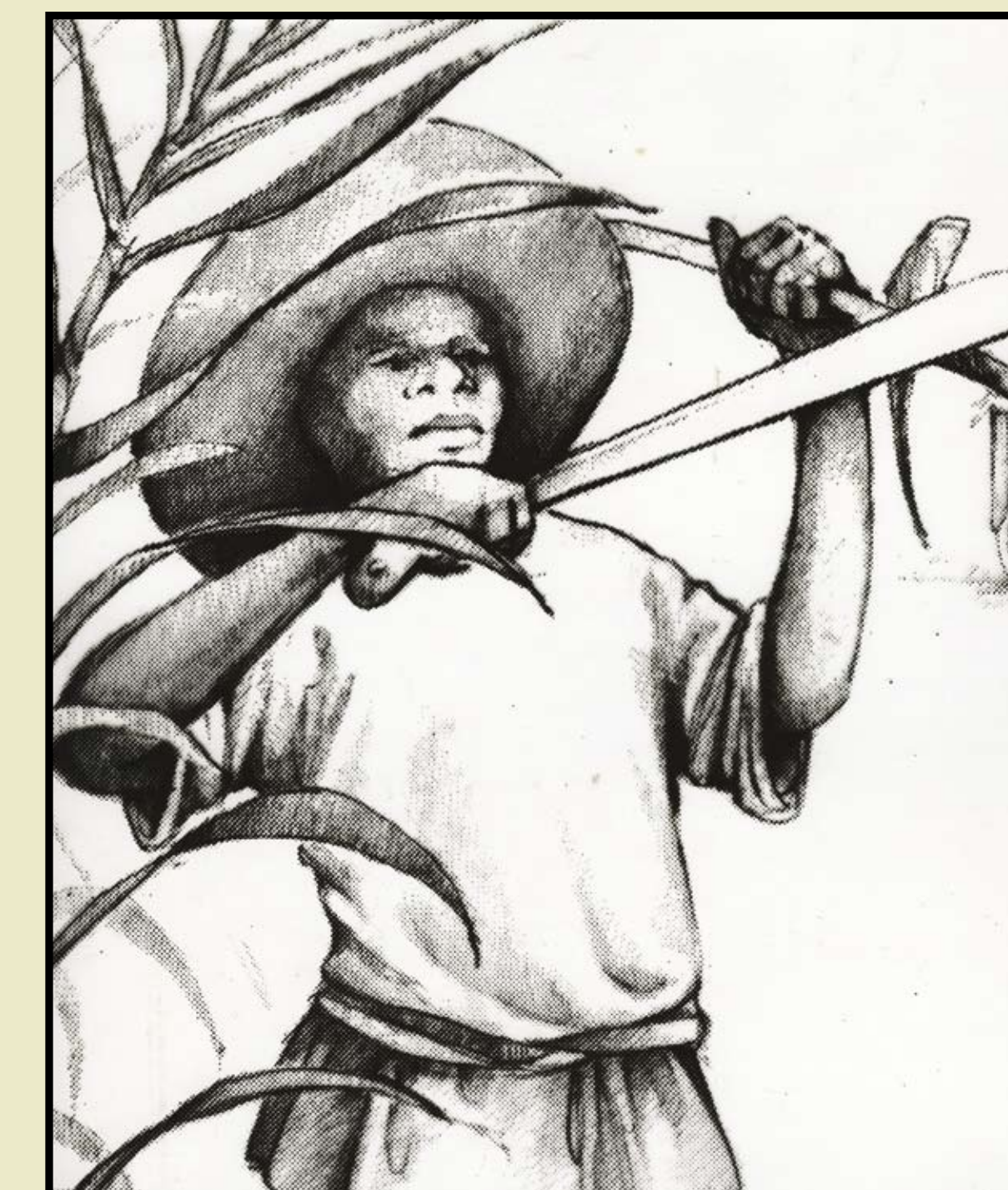


# Sugar Making

In Florida's early days, many investors set their sights on sugar—coarse, brown, and very valuable. To get the most from their sugar cane, some planters had their own crushing and cooking operations. At sugar plantations like Cruger-dePeyster, African-American slaves cleared the land, raised the crop, then cut and processed the cane each winter ...unless hurricanes had smashed the plants.

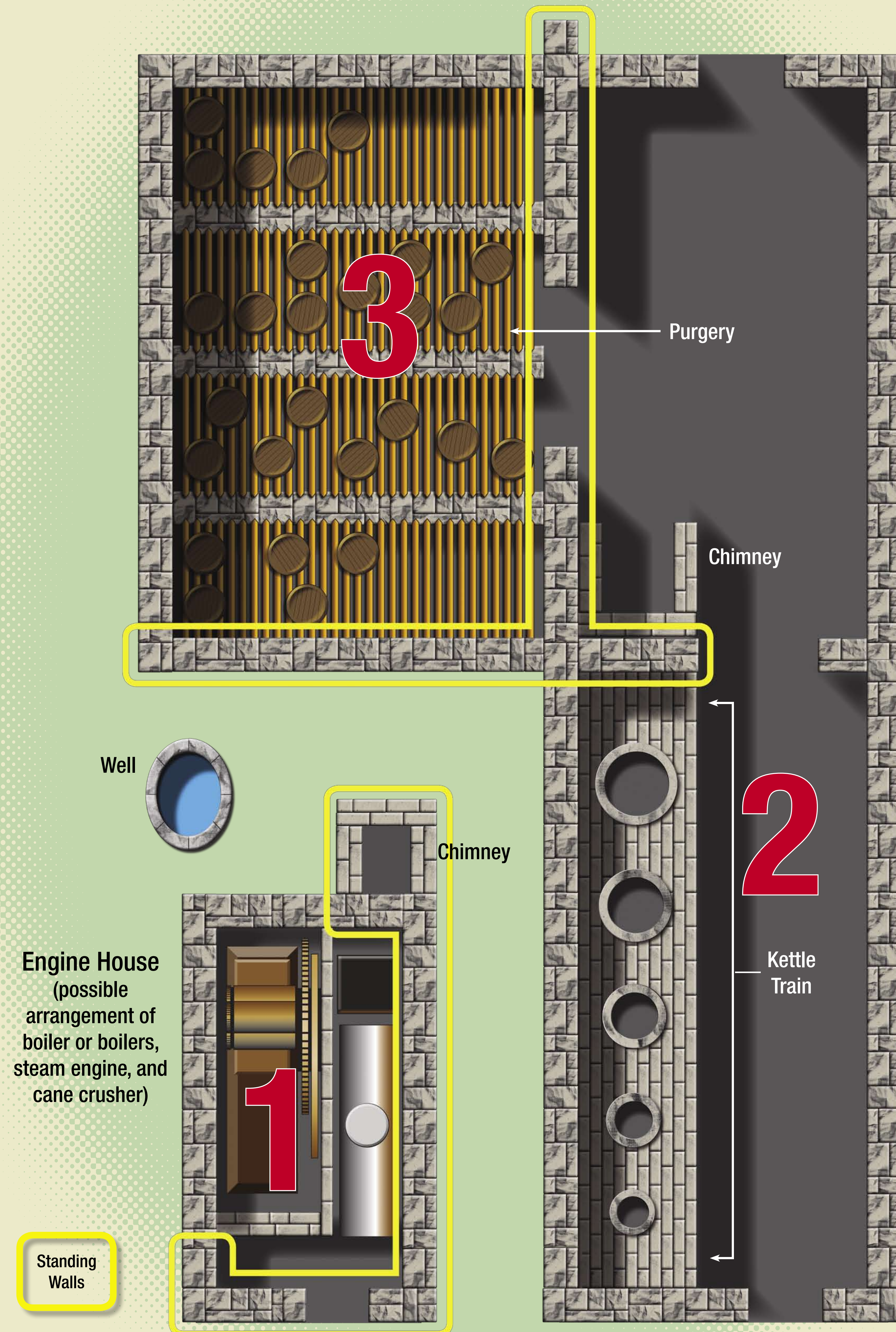
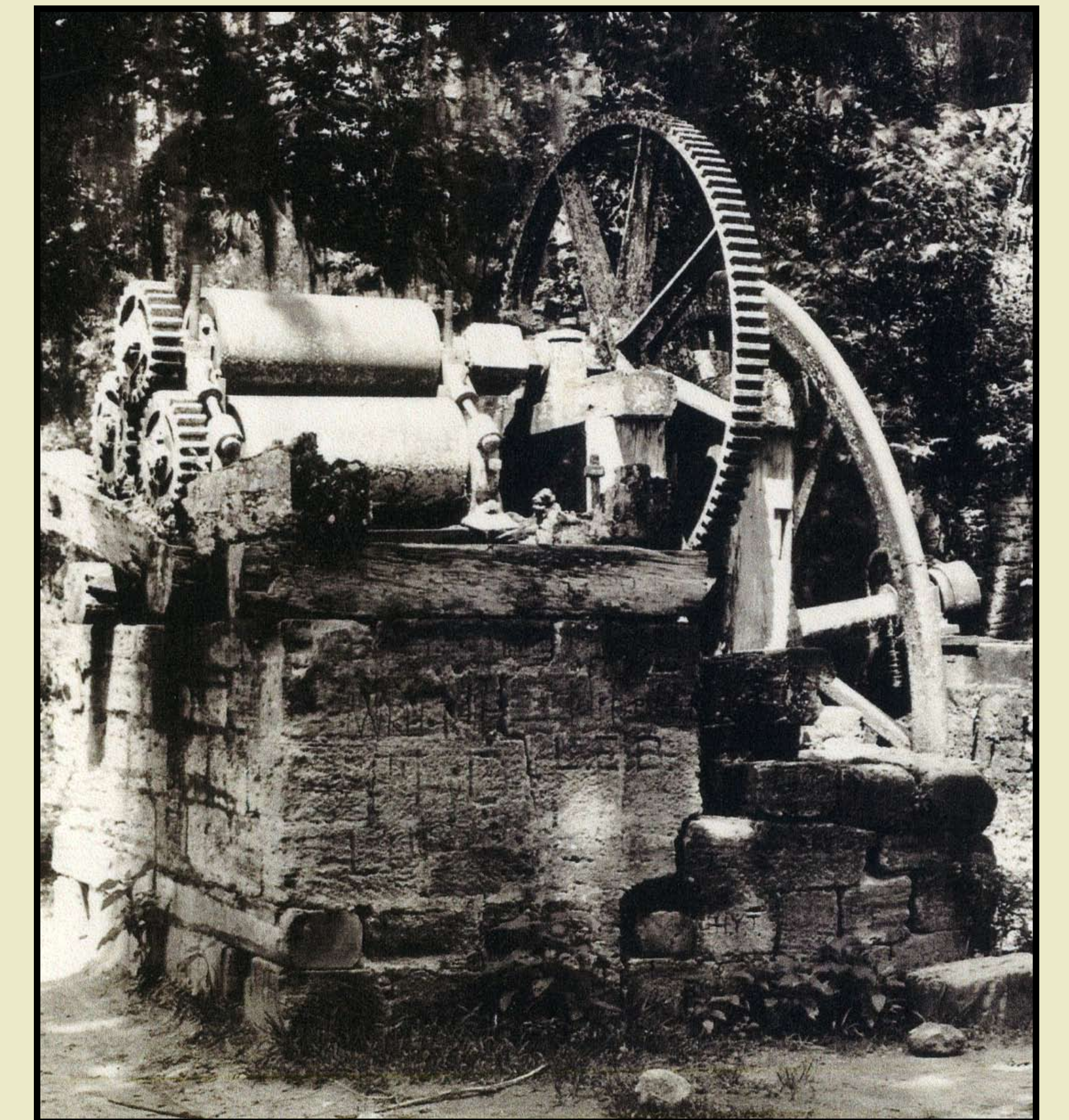
Today, we can still see the outlines of this 1830s factory and its sugar-making process:

- 1 A steam-powered cane crusher extracted the juice.
- 2 The liquid was heated in a series (or *train*) of kettles, gradually thickening until it was ladled into wooden cooling troughs.
- 3 The crystallized sugar was packed in barrels and stored in a drying room called the *purgery*. It drained for several weeks before shipping, and some factories (though not Cruger-dePeyster) made rum from the molasses that dripped out.



Cane crusher from the Cruger-dePeyster sugar factory. This early twentieth-century photo shows the machinery at its second home—the Dunlawton plantation in present-day Port Orange.

Photo courtesy of the Florida Historical Society.  
Original workers' drawings created by Florida State Parks.



Producing sugar was a long, hot, dangerous job – especially near the powerful cane crusher that could snare and smash a tired worker before anyone could shut it down. No wonder sugar was a prized commodity. Like oil today, it came with large financial and human risks.