

Imprint: Fragment from a Childhood

Elegy for Lee Henderson

Nearly three the time the thresher came,
I followed its deep ruts through the gateway,
Watched giant gears churn
To the pull of seven horse-teams:

From my fence post, I pretend
To be the teamster on his platform;
Round and round I pace the teams
In toasting sun. Father pitches bundles.

Through cold days in October
I play in the thresher tracks,
Then they are gone with winter
And I forget them.

One day, not Sunday, we go to church.
Father isn't there; I sit in front with Mama.
I look for him at home, crowded
Among neighbors and people I don't know.

A morning next spring, I walk
Into the gateway streaked with thaw,
And there are the ruts, solid as ever.

I set my foot into a track, step
Carefully to keep the pattern
Until it disappears
Under leftover crusts of snow.

Each day with the thaw
I watch the ruts come back
As if they never went away.

—Dixie Partridge
for my father