

The Age of Wonders

In those days there were marvels and I saw them:
The lombardy poplars along the street
That were even-spaced and all the same size;
The hollyhocks that made into ladies in petal gowns;
The six-sided tiles in the barbershop floor
That lay in straight rows in every direction;
The horse-drawn wagons of gravel that dumped
By turning the floor boards on edge
So the gravel sifted through;
Sam Lee, the blacksmith, who could shape
Red iron on an anvil with a hammer;
The seeds in apricot pits that tasted like almonds;
And baby rabbits were born without hair.

A horse could scratch his back by rolling over
And show he was old enough to ride;
Pine boards had a grain and could be split
Along their length but not across;
A dog's nose was cold, a cow's nose wet,
And a horse's nose was velvet;
Wood shavings curled as they came from the plane;
A bicycle rim without its spokes lost all its strength;
Frost patterns on windows grew like fern leaves;
And I could bend a bar of plumber's lead
With my bare hands;
The striders that skated on the water
Sank when I added soap;
Bert Weight could scribe a line
Across a piece of glass
Then break it absolutely straight;
And old Erb Matson could whistle two notes at once.

And thus I learned how the world was made
In forms and laws, results and beauty
From what the wonders were.

—John Sterling Harris