

# Imprint: Fragment from a Childhood

## Elegy for Lee Henderson

Nearly three the time the thresher came,  
I followed its deep ruts through the gateyard,  
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 gateyard 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