

Witness
Making Hay
Grandfather's Barn
For Deer Waiting
Song of the Prairie Night
Wagon Tale
On the Horizon
Builders of Barns
Unnatural Mark
Sleeping to the Sound of Rain
Barn Remains
Next Five Exits
Buffalo Surprise
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Garden Effort
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Road Through the Trees
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Golden
Evening Meditation
Silo Sentinel
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Fire in Snowlight
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The Flower Dreams
Too Cold
Waiting for Spring
Haunting Hope of Spring
GRANDFATHER'S ROAD

Invisible to the traveler now,
two tracks through the grass,
but the discerning eye
can see two fence rows on each side.

Across the prairie and down
the hill it leads
over a little cement bridge,
with iron rails;

One missing.
Also missing is the house
and barn and windmill.
Not even a line of stones.

His early life,
his boyhood home,

has returned to the prairie
from whence it came.

The earth
reclaimed its own.

But the road remains
to show the way
to the past of my grandfather's life:
he walked this way to school.

CHICKEN CREEK ROAD

No up-scale suburb, this!
“Chicken Creek Road”
named because of – what?

Obviously:
chickens in the creek.
At least
at some memorable moment.

The possibilities
are wild:
chickens everywhere!
up and down the creek!

This is:
local color,
a homespun name,
not to be easily forgotten.

Who could ever forget
an address on –
Chicken Creek Road?

NIGHT NECKLACES

Glittering strings
strewn across hillsides.
Large and small
flaming jewels
form lines and loops
here and there,
up, down, around.
At night the sight
is awesome to behold.
Darkness hides
grass from ash
and contrasts
smoke towering high
lit by flames
illuminating,

reflecting,
necklaces
adorning hillsides
in prairie spring.
THE WIND'S OWN

Wind:
roaring, howling –
wild, screaming
shrieking into every crack –
shrilly, demonically.

Wind:
incessantly calling –
pleading, pulling, prying;
never letting up –
continually, mercilessly.

Alone –
on the hill, the woman stood;
surrounded by the wind
crying though the grasses –
pushing the clouds along.

She tried to see a house,
or person,
but no,
she was alone,
no other human evidence.

Alone –
no one for miles –
Just grass and hills and wind.
her mate away to pay the claim
she joined the wind.
shrieking, howling, crying...
she was sister to the wind.
They ran the hills together:
companions.

The wind had claimed its own.

Up and down, she ran and rolled,
stumbled,
unaware –
and ran again.

Crying, shrieking...
she was found
running with the wind.
No human here,

she fought loving arms around her:

a creature of the wind.

she has her peace now,
The wind does not trouble her
on the Hill of Silence –
caressed
by the breeze.

PLOWING LESSON

I was fourteen
just learning to farm –
my first plowing lesson,
driving a tractor
only the summer before.
Father examined my effort:
“Plow to the edge of the field
then raise the plow to turn.”
So I did
and swiped the only tree –
front axel bent:
tires angled to a V.
Thoughtful, my father looked
and swiped again the tree –
re-bending the axel
straight!
Then he left me
to finish plowing the field!

WITNESS

The abandon building
gray
weathered wood and warped
still
erect, upright and proud
here
on the side of the ridge,
now
prairie all around - lonely,
once
the seat of culture-learning
pride
to become “Americans”
this
was their school and center
when
they knew who they were
becoming.

MAKING HAY

Mornings when the dew had dried
Granpa mowed the field of hay
going round and round and round,
outside to center.

Early after lunch the boy would rake
the now dry hay
once around for Granpa's twice,
outside to center.

Fluffed up windrows snaked along
from sheets of new cut grass
raking opposite the cutting,
outside to center.

Once done, the hay was raked again
merging two windrows to one,
drying all sides of the grass,
outside to center.

Father ran the baler, especially -
if the knotter had a temper,
following the windrow
outside to center

SONG OF THE PRAIRIE NIGHT

Howling, calling,
yipping joy:
coyotes all around
in communion.

Others too
join their songs:
owls in speech,
sleepy birds,
while more
rustle grass
as they pass.

Wind stirs trees –
bending branches
whispering secrets
of the leaves.

Insect chorus
whirrs and chirps
while deer
sleep soundly
hidden safe
in grass and brush.

Clouds slip silent
in and out
while the moon

smiles over all
and stars
move silent by.
BUFFALO SURPRISE

On a lonely country road,
gravel,
winding through hills,
along the creeks;
two friends,
a drive of relaxation:

Where does this road go?
What will we see?

Around a curve
suddenly
in the trees -
a herd of buffalo
standing
but too still to be true:
silhouettes with details
accurately painted,
quickly passed –
wishing they were real.

— Family Plowing and other Prairie Poems (Used by permission of the curator)