2011

Last Resort

Anne Binder

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Last resort

by

Anne Rachel Binder

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Creative Writing and Environment

Program of Study Committee:
Mary Swander, Major Professor
Debra Marquart
Kathleen Hickok
Diane Debinski
Cornelia Mutel

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2011
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Isn’t the imagination a bit of a compromise compared to the authority of nature?

—Maurice Manning
Each Vulnerable Thing
Last Resort

Now you will have to pitch your tent in the dark. This is not your first tent to pitch. Not your first time in the dark. Not the only legs you’ve straightened, nor the first ankles and elbows you’ve grasped and plunged together. You can no longer see your hands. Your hands can no longer feel holes among the folds of nylon. Somewhere—not far—the interstate is lit with burning eyes, crickets hum, and everyone you care about is sleeping toward tomorrow. If you get the tent up, your real problems will appear. All night long, you will fall downward, struggle and strain against the straightjacket of a sleeping bag, the disappointment of gravity.
Mistaking the Yard for My Own

When I slit open his head, a smooth incision
from nostril to mid-neck, I don’t notice.

On the next round, still guiding the lawn mower
I find flesh packed, blood yet unspilled,

both eyes somehow intact across the gash.
Where was he going, from garden to grass,

from hole to heated stepping-stone?
Such a narrow death, this neat severing

that took a glassy, yellow stripe of muscle,
and left a limp bicycle tube suspended on my stick.

Around front, the heaviest peonies blow to pieces:
deep pink mouths, silky white boats cup dew, cup

small ants, pour them gently into clipped grass.
Outside the Herpaquarium

The Galapagos tortoises are wearing masks of mud. Skin wrinkles away from necks in deep folds. They eat like grandfathers, with effort, unhinge jaws for a shred of lettuce, apple, tuck it slowly into shrunken mouths. Green bits hang from beaks. When we scrub scaly legs with water, they rise on elephant toes and drag sagging bodies into the sun. We rub circles of baby oil into their shells until our hands are thick with slick and grit, until each ridged plate shines black.
The Only Horse I Know

Because all girls should love horses, I’m eager to circle the yard, led by harness, to hold tight to saddle horn, tug coarse mane when told the mare won’t mind. My horse is dense muscle and wiry hair, matted on the body, on saddle blanket. Flies land in clumps on places the tail can’t reach, settle on her folding nose, her tired eye.

When I ride without a lead, I’m expected to use my heels harder, to guide with reins, but she can’t feel nine-year-old feet or arms and loosed takes for the barn, for the gate.

Today, I’m still on that horse turning home, the one that forgets and canters beneath low trees.
Conserve and Consume

Wind Cave National Park

Bluestem grows from baked soil
at the top of a slope. Flat-based
ribbons bend to the wind and scrape
bellies of antelope. Grass engulfs
flowers—black sampson and prickly pear.
When bison

graze, they first find the tender shoots—
sprouted hopeful after a burn. The beasts
wallow their way across the plain in herds.
Coats grow shaggy, fall away in great dun
chunks. When the bull grows old, he travels alone.
Park people

watch him from their cars. They drive by slowly
snapping his swaying steps with cameras, pointing
at the bulk of his head, his animal eyes.
Not Far from the Tree

1. Children

Birds picked over this tree, 
left stones hanging, so children 
take turns climbing up 
inner branches, find footing 
on flaking bark and plink 
firm fruits into mixing bowls. 

Get the stems too, the oldest says. 
At the base of the tree, a boy 
pits a cherry, turns it inside out 
on the tip of his tongue, exposes 
veiny yellow flesh. He crouches 
so the coon dog can eat it off.

2. Women

Three of them, a mother and two 
daughters-in-law, crowd a sink 
brimming with bobbing cherries. 

One wears the bow of an apron tied 
at the small of her back. Another 
has pulled a threadbare men’s shirt, 
western-style, plaid and pearl-snapped, 
over her own, rolled the sleeves. 
The third woman, who hasn’t yet learned
to protect herself, won’t notice
guice stains until they dry.

Six arms grow sticky, six feet sore.
They pinch fruit away from pit,
separate useful from useless.
It’s work that forms a family.

3. Men

When the screen door slams, they’re in
from the field, swinging dusty water jugs,
unlacing weed seeds from socks.

Cherry kuchen pulled from the oven
bubbles like pie, thickened to syrup.

When men reach grease-lined palms,
dirt-filled fingernails toward the pan,
no one slaps hands away. When they bite
down on bread and fruit, crumb topping
scatters the swept floor. Cake melts
too quickly, prunes sweet from tart,
reveals the accidental pit.
Sandbar

Here, life pools
past its end:

fish heads swim
finless upstream

into collapsed duff
and scouring rush:

silica stems
that scrape and clack

like clamshells
that speak

hushed histories:
wavering edges

of creek. Hollow,
clam and stalk

and fish
dig back down,

root themselves
in becoming:

shells
crush to sand,

reeds
dry to dust,
and eyes
    watch the sky
so long
    their moons
swallow
    the night.
In the Photo

I, too, tire of this
as a place to start—

forget the photo,
but know that I caught it:

sinking mist, stiff hills,
green taken right

out of bloody *Brigadoon*,
ever mind that it was

Ireland instead
and that he couldn’t sing

and the mist and a girl,
with loose auburn curls

an arm around his back,
a hand on his stomach.

There was more,
but first, disconnect.

Or, rather, connect.
I was her. And he was gone.

No one can call
two countries home
in a single day.
We Went There

No one else knows that the best part
of the drive from my house to the middle
of Missouri is the Mississippi River stretch

of 54 from Pittsfield to Louisiana, little road
twists and towns sprinkled between a lime
green and purple house-front appliance store,

the city hall of Atlas, Illinois, barely bigger
than an outhouse, the boxed-up, yellow drive-in
theater, and a four-way stop where Pappy’s

General Store says, *Eat here, get worms.*
No one knows how the Mississippi barges
catwalk down the country, seductive in a way

that makes two people plan an entire life, two
lives, more, in a whitewashed, green-roofed barn
buried just beyond river town hills.
After Mass, 1965

My father is left behind. In the sacristy, he struggles to lift the altar boy cassock over his head. He scans the empty sanctuary, runs to the rectory, but by now, the others are home: his father fastening overalls, his mother frying eggs. Outside, it’s June in Kansas and the limestone church glows white against ready-to-cut wheat. Even at nine he knows to start the three-mile walk home. He passes Uncle Adolph’s and Uncle Isadore’s but it is Sunday, and no one comes out to visit. It is Sunday, and not even the farm dogs, their tails like flags, meet him at the road. Along the fence lines grow sunflowers and chicory. Bits of quartz flash up from the gravel. He is learning Latin and carries his Missal. Maybe he practices all the way home, scuffing his Sunday shoes, repeating the responses he already knows: mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.
Domestic

A raccoon family lived in my dollhouse, beady eyes set into stiff, fuzzed plastic. They ate broken spaghetti and birdseed at a wood block table, standing, and slept in single-serving cereal boxes. They read from books that would not open and spoke to one another in sounds that were always understood. Striped shelf liner and pictures cut from Better Homes and Gardens papered the walls. In the attic, I stored all the unused scraps: twine, bottle caps, buttons and tiny metal hinges. Makeshift construction was so easy that there were days I wanted less fabrication. Those days I would climb onto the caving roof and lift myself out the bedroom window.
Caging

When he turns ninety, he starts wrapping the yard in wire, keeps rolls of it rusting on the back patio for occasions like these: deer nibbling tender shoots, sparrows nesting in gutters, rabbits in the geraniums.

From the way he guards the greenery, you wouldn’t know that he’s going blind, that dark holes carve each day into shadows, that the worst damage starts from within and can’t be or delayed or contained.

With a pair of pliers and some tin snips he works the fencing, feeds it through sun-spotted hands, clips tines sharp enough to puncture brittle skin, and bends them close to each vulnerable thing.
The Part Missing Is Most Desired

We had glass doorknobs in the old boarding house apartment, that brick building on Turner Ave. One on the inside front door. One on the pantry door. One on the second door that had been sealed shut, the door that led nowhere new. One on the bathroom door, warped wood floor from careless water. One on the linen closet. Someone had whitewashed over it, but I rubbed surfaces with a turpentine-soaked rag til translucent again.

My room had a door but no knob, just a hole in dark brown wood. And on the other side, the same hole recklessly painted white. I pulled it in, fingers hooked through hole, but resented the cut-out door, just a plank on hinges, creaking always ajar, creaking never quite shut.
Aquarium

Let me tell the story once more about how the tank was empty, how we left it rigged up with sand and shells, a little wooden lair-home. And of how everyone would stare and finally ask, *Where is it? What's in there?* This, a sorry sitting room joke, then the truth: *nothing*, no fat-tailed gecko, no sucked-in hermit crab, only this absence. Not funny when, after leaving half a year, he came home and kept looking, not seeing really, the inside out lack of possibility.
Bildungsroman

What were we, maybe ten and twelve, eleven and thirteen, the summer of the snapping turtles, not grown turtles that heave uphill to sun, but tiny replicas in the clear spring rivulet running to the creek, their tails stiff and thin, their backs jagged as black walnuts, and the heads, the heads far too big for silver dollar-sized bodies, eyes bulging and shut, blind little beads. Why not dangle them by the tails, pull paddle-clawed legs from sockets, pry open those eyes. It would not be harmful in the obvious way: dropping bricks from the tree house to smash open shells. What we did—I want so much to remember why—was place a few in the pocket of our shirt hems, held taut so the turtles trampolined as we tripped across the pasture, cut through the yard to the barn. In the back corral, we carefully climbed the fence, one hand on the rungs, the other still forming a cotton basket. That’s where we sat, atop the fence, and there, I hope it wasn’t my idea, we dropped the turtles, one by one, I can still see them disappearing, into the cattle tank, a round steel tub of water, not clear or blue or green, but black from seasons of use. I have to believe that I thought they would grow from the darkness and armored survivors would surface, strong and snapping.
Cooper’s Landing

Drive down Route K far enough and you’ll hit McBaine, population 17, and the Great Bur Oak, too thick for four adult arm spans. Turn left earlier, onto Old Plank Road, and you’ll find Cooper’s Landing instead. During the day, it looks like a washed up marina, just some tent clusters, a camper or two, and three concrete boat ramps, unrolled into the muddy Missouri. You might just keep driving into the bluffs and valleys. But if it’s evening, slow down, talk to people, watch the river. Buy beer in a two-story garage and admire the driftwood deck. Order dinner at a trailer decorated “Thai Food” in multi-color tube lights, then sit on a stump by the fire and listen as water laps rocks, as a bearded man in an open button-down and baseball cap plays bluegrass banjo just north of the Ozarks, and as Chim, a large woman in a white apron, yells, “John! Curry!” Pat the dogs or geese that wander looking for scraps and watch drifting houseboats, named and painted, one with clouds and rainbow hull. See the sun set in the sky and trees and water—golden, black, and blue—until all the world is washed out and dark. Then, turn back to the fire.
Kettlehole Song

Walk, weave, wade
in God’s wallow
ice-melt hollow
healed scar
concentric swallow
of reed and rush.

Slosh and drink
this stagnant sink
sloped bowl
sealed-up hole
wet repository
of vegetable past.
To Know By Name Every Flower of the Field
Bohumil Shimek’s 1920 map of Dickinson County, Iowa, from Okoboji Wetlands by Michael Lanno.
Dry dead fungi are dusty labeled things, as meaningless as the stuffed skin of mammal or bird, or a fossil in a box; better than no exhibit at all, to be sure, but poor indeed as compared with the natural world, where the fungus starts in the forest shade, the wings of bird or insect fan the sunny air, or the fossil speaks its significance from the stony pages of the riven quarry stone.

—Thomas H. Macbride, “The Okoboji Lakeside Laboratory,” 1909
The recorded study of Iowa natural history began with surveyors and geologists, men hired by the state to map and describe the land. Eventually, professors at the State University of Iowa (now University of Iowa) took on the responsibility of studying and documenting Iowa’s much-changed natural environment. These professors traveled the state, gathered specimens for the state museum, taught students, and lectured the public. They worked in the field and encouraged their students to do the same.

In 1909, State University of Iowa professors Samuel Calvin, Thomas H. Macbride, and Bohumil Shimek founded Iowa Lakeside Laboratory on Miller’s Bay along the west shore of Lake Okoboji. In establishing the field station, the professors wished to provide students and educators with an ideal place to “study nature in nature.” Macbride also viewed the laboratory as an opportunity to educate the surrounding community in hopes of preserving the landscape and wildlife of “Iowa’s Great Lakes.”
Complaints to the Board of Regents

I. Charles A. White, 1873

I cannot abide these educational circumstances any longer.

This year, two hundred students passed classes—
elementary science, physiology, zoology, geology, botany—
without suitable instruction. They have not examined a chambered nautilus
nor observed jellyfish pulse through water. Study nature, not books,
Agassiz encourages, but here, students study poorly gathered field grasses,
a few pickled fish. How will I ensure a grasp of fact?

They would learn as much under Barnum’s tent as in our impoverished collections.

In no other respectable institution do fumbling students take instruction
in the cabinet—a room housing valuable specimens, instruments.

My immediate wants are few: an uncluttered room for lessons, a supply of jars
outfitted with thick corks, and a good quantity of the proper kinds of paper
for preserving herbarium specimens.

I am trained as scientist and teacher;
here one can be neither.

At the end of the term, I shall resign from the university and my position
as cabinet curator. I have devoted any time I could spare
to naming and labeling in preparation for a catalogue, but with no assistance
of any kind such a development is unlikely.

I shall take east all personal specimens gathered and private records made.
II. Samuel Calvin, 1875

President Thacher, I’m sure, has called to attention
the frail state of the cabinet. I do not refer to the sturdy
glass cases or well-constructed herbarium drawers,
but simply to the lack of materials gracing the shelves.

Dr. White packed his private cabinet, left only the few
Iowan pieces from early geological surveys.

This will not do. Two words describe my request:
more specimens.

III. Samuel Calvin, 1878

At this time, if I may be so bold, I will make a suggestion.
It has come to my attention that an assistant professor
of natural history may be added to the faculty.
I urge you to consider Thomas H. Macbride
of Lenox College for the position. I have had the fortune
of knowing Prof. Macbride for many years and can assure you
of his good nature, upright character, active pursuit
of truth, and unwavering devotion to the sciences.
First Day of School, 1878

Who saw the other first? Bohumil Shimek, just a freshman in suit and shined-up black shoes waited with a swarm of eager students outside University Chapel to greet Thomas H. Macbride, the new science teacher just arrived to take on Professor Calvin’s botany classes.

Was that when they shook hands, exchanged names? In the next four years, Shimek lost his family—a father, sister, brothers—and spent weekends, vacations in a buggy beside young Macbride and older Calvin, criss-crossing the state, the country, and finding intersections: a thousand introductions to rock, tree, grass, shell, beetle, flower.
Three Photographs

Minnekahta, South Dakota, 1893

*Our life a flash. light
picture. So brief. Our
science makes the time in
cress. Immortality reaches
before and after, in the
light of Modern Science.*
—Thomas H. Macbride, South Dakota field diary, 1893

**Petrified log with portrait of Professor Thomas H. Macbride**

In double-breasted, dress-length coat, banded hat, and thick beard, Macbride might be one of the trees, juniper or ponderosa pine, dark feathering of horizon. In Victorian photographs, cold colors of clouds and sky develop into the same gray-white, the temperament of weather calmed by chemicals.

Macbride comfortably seated on another mineral metamorphosis crosses his legs and smiles at his friend documenting from the camera’s other side. He keeps his own records as well, meticulously marks expenses down, inscribes lists, heads them *Notes by the way*, then wanders between sure hashes:

*Learn native trees along stream east of Arnold*

#

*Clasp for fountain pen for Mary*

#

*Platte River*

*Evans Quarries*

*The Oyster Shell Rim*
Chalk formation on the Cheyenne
Buffalo gap
Bath house at Cascade

Catalogue kodaks

Study cross-sections of Silphium
Something of the sort for thesis

Iowa Collodion paper
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Hotel--$2.50
Meals--$0.75
Cycad--$10

1687 gallons/minute, the geyser spring

The waste of energy and money on these dry plains
Group at residence of Payne and Arnold

Outside a simple cabin, the Payne and Arnold clan gathers, scrutinized on Calvin’s silver-coated glass plate.

They have mismatched hats, short neckties, curled bangs and canvas pants with zipperless flies. These are paleontologists, collectors of petrified pineapples, scarred, Mesozoic tree trunks weathering out of hillsides, decorating front porches. Often, in these images, faces and feet fade under uneven textures of riverbank, of grassland. Even grand buildings shrink beside quartzite boulders, sandstone hills, an uncut oak with splayed branches. Here, however, glare obstructs the cycad fossil, streams over a smooth tangle of deer, elk antlers, leaves a dusting of snow across two wispy-haired girls, the boy who cocks his head and clenches his fist. Do his boots fit?

What grows in the clay pots on the windowsill? With terrain and trees, hot springs and prairie dogs, what kept Calvin close? What geography, topology does he wish us to see in creased brows, mossy shingles, arrangement of height, of age?
Mr. Snyder, typical cowboy

His mustache droops and leather fringe hangs stiff as the lariat coiled near his knee. The holstered gun rests cold, and spurs, only small cogs, seem dusty or tarnished. Even the horse poses rigidly, ears back, no mane, tucked-under tail, its own eye sealed against daylight. Calvin hunted the Hills for fossils and captured this man instead. In each image, he is every bit a cowboy, the weathered one who won’t look into the lens, but angles away, tips hat brim to shade eyes that burn with campfire, sight buffalo. For all his filmic posturing the hand still holds reins with care, and another story gets pinched between gloved thumb and forefinger. Behind him, the landscape sifts, the Black Hills rise, timbered, and boulders surface. In the foreground, strewn wreckage—cracked wagon seat with bent springs, scraps of wood, the broken binding of a barrel—discarded, within the confines of a ranch corral.
Samuel Calvin’s South Dakota field photographs, from the online Calvin Photographic Collection, University of Iowa. From top to bottom: Thomas Macbride on a petrified log, the Payne and Arnold clan, Mr. Snyder.
An Experiment

R. A. Smith, Dickinson County historian, 1901

Here is a movement of great interest to Lake residents and university authorities alike. A correspondent of the Des Moines Capital writes:

At 8:30 o’clock last night a party of students, twenty in number, left Iowa City for Lake Okoboji, headquarters of the summer school, the party having leased cottages in that locality.

I expect them to stay at Smith’s Cottage.

They took with them the finest microscopes, reagents, etc., leaving behind no paraphernalia necessary to fit out a laboratory that would do credit to a university of pretension.

Last year, I do recall, they asked about an east shore permanent camp for their “bug house.”

The school will last two weeks in the charge of Prof. B. Shimek.

He has brought up students for years. You might have seen straggling groups wading in potholes, kneeling in pastures.

Dr. T. H. Macbride

And I’m sure you know of that esteemed geologist. He determined our Dickinson County High Point off Miller’s Bay, we once called the tallest peak between the Alleghenies and Rockies, dwarfed by an Osceola County mound.

will visit the school for a brief time.
What will come of this summer school expedition? It could mean much to our far-flung county.
The Malacologist at Dusk

When the afternoon of fossil hunting,  
of absence from class  
and presence in the field  
deepened, dimmed,  
Shimek placed himself  
by the setting sun and took  
the quickest way back—  
through water.

But first, he secured  
the mollusk shells:

with the heaviest, filled pockets  
then placed the most fragile bits  
in his mouth, mineral  
scallops and coils  
sifted, stolen from silt  
tucked in the bed of tongue,  
raw, lined box of preservation.

They rattled loose against teeth.

He swam across the river  
spit them in a hand  
but the taste, the weight  
of rock stayed and grew.

These are the things, he thought,  
these are the things we do
to stop history—
that part of ourselves
that we must learn
from observation—
to keep it from washing
away entirely.
Habits Known and Unknown

_The botanist tells us what he can see, what his favorites can do, and possibly why they do it._

—Thomas H. Macbride

I did not always know what to look for. I confess I long watched many creatures before I learned their methods. I climbed into the open mouth of woods, let Virginia creeper and stinging nettles, boxelder and locust swallow my small self. I clung to the earth. Like a finch perched on a bulrush reed or a minnow suspended in shallows, I yielded to currents eddying around me. I waited still as a fallen branch and let wisdom grow like bright mold on aging flesh. Sometimes, I spend hours as a creek bank, prostrate against sand: when wet, a pink rock turns red and blue stars vein the gray one. The crayfish forts its hole in dirt clods, and when it swims, carapace caked in mud, a cloud of disorientation billows after. Beneath my weight, dusky clamshells crush to iridescent powder, a bird bone weathers light, and curious crinoid currency, beads formed of stone, rest among ordinary sediment. It is not always our task to decide that which is worthy of study. I wait until the soft, spotted shells of turtles ease out of the depths and necks stretch up for air. When I stand knees and ankles, forearms and elbows remain embossed with tessellation of rocks, coated in dust.
This, Our Undoing

*Bohumil Shimek, ca. 1900*

>Vandal, I called the boy, and it echoes still, my scalpel-sharp intonation, precise incision of one who forgets the shock of blood then, unprepared, turns away. I witnessed the acquisitive student, his fresh pages of yellow lady’s slippers, the waxy organs— curled sepals and collapsed-lung petals—an entire colony blooming between boards and straps. This is not a wound that can press itself together. I wonder at the number of specimens I’ve pulled from the roots, just to take in their measure. For each dried, mounted, and preserved, how many others did I dissect in the field, idly shred to busy hands, or crush underfoot? I cannot recover the stones once thrown from a shore nor can I soon replant a timbered wood. We must revise our methods. Every teacher dreads and desires moments of apprehension, of alarm, of apology. From here on, much of our formative concern must be on weight and counter-weight. Tomorrow, trim a twig to splinters and go to the river gorge. Comb bottomlands until we cross another stand of orchids. There, using the simplest tools, we will communicate pollen to stigma, mend any rifts we’ve made, cross-pollinate, breathe back life.
Etiquette in the Field, 1912

1. Keep with the company; do not walk a rod or so ahead, for this will frighten away the bird before all have seen.
2. Do not ask to borrow a friend’s field glass—it may be the particular moment when he wishes to use it. Every one going into the field should have his own field glass constantly at his service. If a friend is good enough to lend his glass, return it promptly.
3. If your companion stops to listen, stop also; because your steps will make enough noise to interfere with his hearing and might also frighten the bird away.
4. Loud talking, or talking of any kind, is detrimental to efficient bird study, and may annoy your companion who wishes to hear and see.
5. Use care in walking so as to avoid rustling leaves and breaking twigs. Such slight noises will scare away certain kinds of birds.
6. Never tear down a fence to get through. Leave gates as you find them. Be careful about joshing the people you meet in the country.

Storage Receipt

Received of T. H Macbride of Iowa City, IA one launch named Old Gold together with the following equipment: 1 oar and 2 rows, 1 anchor and rope, 1 headlight, 1 tank, 1 funnel, 1 pliers, 3 oil cans, 1 small Trim’s wrench, 2 coils, 1 screwdriver for storage only from July 27, 1913 to Season of 1914 for sum of Eleven dollars.

If you wish this Launch insured write B.B. Van Steenburg of Spirit Lake, Iowa, the Insurance Man.
Independence Days

Do not let anything prevent your most praiseworthy efforts
to keep our people up the proper spirit in winning this war.
We’ve got to win it, and I am rejoicing in you as in a son!
—Macbride to Shimek, May 1918

1870

When father speaks of my mother he smiles slow,
proud of how she birthed sons, a daughter
the way she packed dresses and plum dumplings
in a dented trunk to cross the Atlantic,
stored a family between steerage shelves tight as coffins.
He loved her anger, before America,
hot as the warming oven, when she hid
books and pamphlets, option and thought
beneath a rising round of bread dough
or under my brother’s body, curled and rosy
in the cradle, then opened the door to Austrian agents
and suggested they search the house.

1885

When I speak of my father I look at my feet
remembering shoes shaped the old way,
father at his bench with pincers and awl.
He was a Forty-Eighter, you know,
and cobbled together any strain of freedom.
It meant a life cut short by migration, loss,
and cornmeal dinners, final years spent confined,
beating leather into compliance on a lapstone,
skipping stone, tumbled flat in oceans
far from our Iowa home.

1918

When Masayrk speaks of revolution he leans forward, not a conspirator, but a hopeful in exile with plenty of time to think and lecture the past of people to people who aren’t ready to forget, the Americans with little other influence immigrants, children of immigrants, who always listen to voices that remind them of themselves. When he returns as President, we will be closer in one way: we will both know what it’s like to learn more than one man’s geography, to love more than one country’s land.

Dr. Bohumil Shimek at the old Laboratory pump, 1916 from History of the State University of Iowa: The Iowa Lakeside Laboratory by Elizabeth Nuss.
Early Settlement Plat, 1832-1859

Note:
See Appendix F for charts of county vegetation occurrence.
See Appendix G for area of each vegetation type.
See Appendix H for observations on vegetation.

Create a key near the bottom
and aggregate similar geographies
though they are separate on the map.

Always shade TIM green,
but dot GRO and SCA yellow.
They probably mean savannah,
occasional trees tested by fire.

Color WET, SWA and MAR blue,
but lighter blue than LAK and PON
which will not dry up during drought.

You should not yet need red for CIT,
but perhaps for VIL, those budding
Eastern county communities.

Leave the extensive PRA white.

Do not worry about bleeding colors.
Ecological interfaces are never exact.
Iowa, Most Altered

Settlers harvested
slough hay,
cut and twisted
the winter nights,
knotted together
knife-edged skeins
that sliced open
palms and burned
in heatless stoves—
it was the work
anyone would do
for another day’s
warmth, this work
that takes more
than it returns.
When Place Becomes Space

There was always the Lakeside Question:
what would happen to that camp, teetering
on the edge of the lake, almost sliding
in, nearly washing off the state map,
where would it be if it weren’t studied,
what space would the place become,
whose home, farm, dock, lot would be planted
after the final oaks were cut, sand spit washed up,
how would anyone ever again know
prairie, shore, bay inch by inch?
Letters from The Wilsonian, Seattle

August 5, 1928

Dear Prof. Shimek,

I have received report from Prof. Martin on the present condition of our camp following its twentieth year. He makes light of the situation, I’m sure, humoring an old man with tales of swallows diving through broken windows interrupting Prof. Kelley’s rambling speeches, of students wearing field boots in the cottage after rain, of the farmer daily chasing hogs from our shore. We laugh, but these unsightly patches we fashion only distract from our original purpose. Please report truthfully, spare nothing. Advise me so I may use the little influence I still have to effect change.

Yours faithfully,

T. H. Macbride

P. S.—Martin tells me we must dispose of “Old Gold.” Have we come to that?
September 16, 1928

Dear Professor Shimek,

We must obtain the land! Costs are low, an addition will keep Triboji developers at bay for good! Buy Myerly’s plot at once. We will convince Floete, to lower his price, surely he recognizes our noble aims. We will not subdivide and sell his land for shoddy summer cottages. Intellectual life, the uplift of men! He must realize in some pursuits money is not the issue.

Onward!

Macbride
FIFTEEN THOUSAND CAN BE RAISED BUT NOT OVERNIGHT COST GREATER THAN EXPECTED BUT CAN BE MET I AM SURE

—October 23, 1928 telegram response to Shimek after learning the price of Floete’s 72 acres
My dear Friend, Prof. Shimek,

On the west coast, this winter feels especially gray and the state of our fund-raising does little to improve my spirits. It seems increasingly difficult to wring money from pockets of those who have it, even for education, our most worthy goal. Though no one dares discourage me, I fear that others do not see our lake endeavor lit by the same golden sun as you and I. Perhaps the enthusiasm and discovery of those early summers created an idyll known now by few. I do not wish to impose my old-fashioned purposes upon NW Iowa nor upon natural history people at the university—now or hereafter. I see that we must rebuild or stop! If rebuild, we must do so in such a way that our investment endures. If stop—no, I will not entertain the idea…

Yours truly,

Huston
April 10, 1929

Dear Prof. Shimek,

I received your telegram with great joy last Monday. We shall find plenty of donors to pay off Floete by next spring. I am not too proud to stop you from begging on my behalf, but please, in the laboratory title, omit my name! Please! I'll give you another hundred!—bribe? Oh no!—Boat—one hundred toward buying a launch! Times are hard, but money is plenty if you reach the right people. We’ll try! Now, the final piece—Millers Bay sand spit! We’ll need every bit along the shoreline for conservation.

Yours triumphantly,

T. H. Macbride

--Seek the great thing first, even the ‘kingdom and his righteousness’ is set out on such lines!'--
June 2, 1929

Dear Professor Shimek,

I trust that all is well as the summer season opens at Okoboji. I, better than anyone, know how trying the balance of research and instruction can be, especially as one advances in age, but the vigor of students shall no doubt buoy your more tired moments. If it isn’t too much of an inconvenience, when you and Mrs. Shimek have an opportunity, perhaps a Sunday afternoon, drive north through Spirit Lake, then along the south shore of the lake east until you run into Highway 71. Then, could you please describe (in no more detail than that of your usual notes) the landscape on either side of 71 northeast? It should be a place of elevation, one which I have watched with great interest over the years. I look forward to your reports—both educational and geographical.

Give my best to Mrs. Shimek and the professors,

T. H. Macbride
Schedule of Public Lectures at Lakeside Laboratory, 1929

July 10—Hunting Rubber Plants for Mr. Edison by Professor A. P. Kelley
July 17—The Nervous System of Man and How It Works by Professor O. M. Helff
July 24—Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms by Professor G. W. Martin
July 31—The Spotted Sandpiper by Dr. F. L. R. Roberts
Mrs. Shimek’s Contributions

Of course Mrs. Shimek believed
in her husband’s work,
    the botany of food,
    the geology of tradition

And apple pies were her specialty
    cored apples
    cinnamon dust
    rolled lard crust

Edges fluted the way Bohumil liked best,
boundaries ridged between thumb and forefinger

He took one with him on days in the field
    wiped chlorophyll from his pocketknife
    with a sweat-stained handkerchief

and carved it up
    slivers
    layers of pastry
    flaking from filling

He distributed crumbling earth to students
    soil
    silt
    loess

She knew these were the sediments
that would make them most at home
*  
When the laboratory wanted land, needed money
she typed the letters across the state

    Des Moines, Cedar Rapids
    Davenport, Muscatine

begged for funds on her stationery
creamy sheets of paper

signed her husband’s name

This was not like typing labels for specimens
those plants that could be
    named and grouped
    specific and satisfying

These letters ate ink and repeated lines

She turned her hands black
    for Bohumil
    for the students

the ones from other colleges, lake school tributaries
    whom she might never meet,

but whom she knew
    from botanicals brought home
    insect pinnings, flower presses

for the wetland blackbirds, salamanders, frogs

and mostly for the grand
old man, himself, Macbride
the stories he told and she missed
the fears she knew he had for the future

she kept typing letters
buying and licking stamps
The students all had favorites:
one combed tall grass canopy
for tiny *Hypoxis hirsuta*,
yellow stargrass lily, another
pulled out seeds of *Stipa spartea*,
porcupine grass, sharp corkscrewed
tails to pin through a hat, still
others the citrus of purple prairie clover
or tang of mountain mint, they rubbed
snapped and chewed needle leaves
til the field was fragrant.

But he loved *Penstemon grandiflora*
giant beardtongue, clasping
leaves, rolled-back, lilac petals
and planted it above the fen
on the gravel ridge at the corner
of Lakeside’s North forty
in order to discover it first
the following year.
Suggestions for Students’ Individual Equipment for Use at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory, 1917

I. Bedding and tent or room equipment.

1. Two warm blankets or equivalent.

I bring my sleeping bag and a fleece blanket. I’m indoors most nights and plenty warm, but when we camp in the Badlands the rain and night cause temperature to drop. We bundle in hooded sweatshirts, layers of socks.

2. Half dozen candles.

Or one LED flashlight. Even with light, we must be careful not to trip or slip on the bridge that crosses the stream dividing the cabins and the laboratory buildings.

II. Clothing

1. Comfortable walking shoes—necessity.

Comfortable and waterproof. When it doesn’t rain, the tall grass still holds morning dew until noon. The hydric prairies and some of the more mesic prairies are always a little swampy. We walk a lot during class, and after class walk and run even more. Lakeside students spend free time hiking, biking, swimming, or in a canoe. We can’t help it.

2. Khaki suits—very convenient.

Like safari wear? Coveralls? We wear jeans and t-shirts mostly and do laundry every two weeks. The jeans get wet daily and we dry them from clotheslines or drape them over the mossy cabin roofs. They grow stiff from this routine.

Warmer than expected, the water is perfect for post-class swimming. There’s a little beach, but best is canoeing out to the sand spit, wading on the rocks, then swimming along the shore from there. When we climb back into canoes we towel off vigorously to avoid swimmers itch.

4. Rain coat—very useful.

Yes. Rainy. Wet.

5. Collecting case or bag—very useful.

In the prairies we carry bags with notebooks, pencils, raincoats, water bottles, sunscreen, flower and seedling identification books, cameras.

III. Miscellaneous

1. Mosquito netting—optional; fine meshed only is serviceable

Mosquito coils? We don’t sleep in tents, but inside cottages built in the 1930’s by the Civilian Conservation Corps or in old hotel units transplanted from the Iowa tourism town of Okoboji. At night, mosquitoes do bite, so we light green coils that glow and smoke while we sit on the porch, memorize taxonomies, and drink beer.

2. Alarm clock—some find it necessary.

Most mornings, I wake before breakfast, sometimes to a herd of turkeys gobbling outside my window. They wander the campus during the day and appear in unexpected places: by the dining hall, the dock, in the shade beside the small white library building. Sometimes I sleep later and wake to the sound of the dinner bell, not a bell at all, but a bent-up tire rim hit with a hammer and clanging. It is not a melodious sound. The groundskeeper says there’s a real bell, with a clean ring in the shed, but this rim cannot be replaced. It is tradition.

3. Drawing paper and outfit.
We carry notebooks and write down each scientific name our professor says. Sometimes he spells them for us. First the family, then the genus and species. Some families are common and learned quickly: *Asteraceae, Poaceae*, and *Fabaceae*. Others take longer to remember: *Scrophulariaceae* and *Apocynaceae*. Sometimes we sketch the leaves, the flowers.

4. Hand lens; this is a necessity in many of the courses.

In the prairies, a magnifying glass helps distinguish grasses. Is there a ligule? How big? Papery? Are there tufts of hair? And the leaves?

5. Bottles and other containers suitable for your work

We don’t take much with us. Sometimes our professor will fold a few pieces of grass or an obscure leaf in his weatherproof journal. When he takes them out to identify in the lab they look like a different plant, wilted or dried.

6. Plant press (this may be made at the laboratory).

In prairie ecology we don’t save any of our plants and so we don’t press them. We take pictures with digital cameras and study them later. The plant taxonomy class carries metal boxes with straps to sling over shoulders, made and used long before any of us were born—are they the same ones Macbride and Shimek used?
To Know By Name Every Flower of the Field

Don’t worry about tender beginnings, rounded cotyledons, ambitious stretch of first sprouts. Ignore books of seedling sketches, leaf congruence, hairs and notches. You will never know a plant until it blooms. Overlook dead stalks from last year—spined heads break, dried seeds rattle in silken shells. Uncut stems only bend, pack into tight thatch roof over soil; litter builds. From tiny, too-green shoots and reedy, decayed duff, all you will say is aster, aster, aster. To learn them right, begin with flowers and family names. Rely on color, on probability of growth on north-facing slope or in pooling marsh. Call to them as you pass as if talking to the same friends every day. Soon you will recognize each alone. You will forget that they have stopped blooming. You will learn the pattern of veins, the slow opening of buds, the way broad leaves bear up under weather.
This is what it feels like to wear plaid
Out On the Water

Jumpto see an eagle nest, he said, meaning
do you want to, and Yes, I said, I do
but only if the wind isn’t brushing the lake
into stiff white peaks and if you scoop
the hairlegged spiders out of the canoe
and if we can make it back in time
for dinner because I do love
so love the meatloaf, fried green
beans and chocolate pudding pie.
I take the short paddle and dig in
sand and dig in moss and dig in
dark water. I slap at ducks
and dragspray seagulls, perched
plump sentinels on cautionary boulders.
He steers from the back and laughs
between honeybun bites
that keep his blood sugar somewhere
near normal. Sometimes it’d be easier
to die now than live this way,
he said, but once we round that corner
the one that has hemmed our boat
in the bay, the sun burns a little too close
on the late-afternoon horizon,
the tree line surrenders to monstrous
log cabins, and the eagle’s nest,
just a tinker-toy construction
itself, seems far and full of dingy fluff,
oversized yellow talons.
Soon, we’re all pull and rock,
rock and pull, tacking the worst
kind of seam down the shoreline.
Keeping

Late July afternoons
we’ve shoveled

soiled hay from goat,
donkey and llama pens,

diced bruised grapes,
bananas, rotten melon,

filled bowls with monkey
biscuits, thrown chickens
to the alligator and cut
back trees in the emu
enclosure. That’s when,
thigh deep in the koi pond,

we fish for trash and copper.
On the island, macaws perch

in a maple. They stretch
their wings. Red, blue, green

feathers drift down, land
like promise on the water.
This is what it feels like to wear plaid

This is what it feels like to wear plaid, not Catholic schoolgirl plaid, the wide gray pleats I wore and never will again, the way I won’t wear polo shirts and my brother refuses to try navy pants, but plaid that makes you feel like it’s fall, like sunshine and just enough breeze that pages of newspaper and grocery bags and your hair are a bit afloat and you don’t even care the way you would normally. Or maybe plaid like the flannel you’d wear if you hunted, thick and a bit fuzzy, oversized, maybe it’s not even yours, but you can hunker down in it like a rabbit and wait for something alive to come your way. Isn’t that what we do in plaid or not? Wait, I mean. Or maybe it’s the thinner plaid, the cotton shirts my father wore in the Nineties when he was supposed to be dressed up but didn’t yet belong at a desk or boardroom table. It was a throwback to his youth of pearl snap shirts and bolo ties, leather shoelaces with a horse or buffalo slide, those times of cows and dogs and 4-H fairs. He wears them threadbare.
An Exercise

Do you remember when you were small and would spin tight circles, anywhere, just to get dizzy? Do it again, now, and then if you fall, put your ear to the floor to hear the humming of the house, then beyond that, the earth, they way it turns always toward the next day, the way that it skims just ahead of you into old age or something else, the easy forgetting of entire seasons, hiccups of now. If you’re still on the floor, try to stop the spinning you feel, or slow it just a fraction, try to level with your ceilings, or anchor your thoughts in the corner. This will be the hardest part. Try to fix yourself some space where you can see everything shift a little and where each change becomes a blessing, a small reminder of a more mutable world.
Travels

“Don’t touch. We’re in China,” our mother whispers as we file through department store dinnerware. Scallop-edged plates and crystal goblets shine exotic and clear, unlike the mis-matched cups and bowls we slurp soup from at home, plastic plates blistered in dishwasher heat. I imagine that country as another fragile affair: blue moon bridges, fu-dogs, paintbrush beards spice a white porcelain landscape. But this china is less worldly, printed in roses and tulips, and maybe a foreign place would be too, I tell my sister so we’ll believe we’re walking an Oriental market. We compare silver and set tables for the Emperor, examine fine, gold-plated rims and count bevels, the cut glass that drips in lines. She stops before a bud vase that would fit her palm. I forget, reach out to put a thumbprint there, where stem meets bell on champagne flute—only time enough to mark our journey before something slips.
Church History

Sister Myra enjoyed theater. That year she had us act every possible role, as though we were not already thirteen and confused. Be Saul on the road to Damascus, someone else will play Paul. Or the donkey. Reconvene the Council of Constance, the Council of Trent. Control the Crusades, the Great Schism, Reformation. What happens if you put all three popes in a room? Sign the Concordat of Worms. Stage the Spanish Inquisition. Meet Constantine, Charlemagne, Robespierre. Sell indulgences to classmates; encourage them to confess sins. In America, pretend you’re Irish immigrants. Follow Junipero Serra or Elizabeth Ann Seton. Vote for Al Smith and Kennedy, then interview witnesses of a KKK cross burning.

We planned an elaborate script, practiced at our desks, but at the front of the room, no matter the scene, I could only stammer, I was afraid. I was afraid, as though at any moment I might burst into tears. Who knew fear fit both power and persecution? Sister was pleased. In truth, this was not acting.
Plenty of Time to Take Chances

Young, with nothing else to do, we drove to some casino called Pair-a-dice or Isle of Capri in the middle of Missouri, Boonville, I think, and near a river so it seemed more tropical than the rest of the state. I didn’t know blackjack and the retirees with oxygen tanks crowded the roulette wheels, so we pulled slot machine levers until the pennies were used up, only we didn’t even use pennies, just plastic cards with pictures of parrots. If cherries and flowers and bags of coins aligned, a few more cents added to the card. No flowing coins or tokens—all spinning wheels permutating our high expectations—it was the most painless trial and error.
Creepy Bicycle Man

He surprised us once, at the bottom of Rockhill Park, me, up against a tree, and you, pressed in your hand under my shirt, fingers light across my ribs. Behind us, Hinkson Creek, a frayed-rope tire swing, the unspecific way we’d begun the day.

He belonged on a motorcycle, not a pitiful bike, perched in a jacket like some kind of kid, some kind of monkey, a parade of one.

I’d seen him before, biking. That day, after a rusty chain creak creaked behind me, before I pulled off, hid in bushes, head-rush breathless, looped around so that he’d think I’d disappeared some nine miles from town, I turned and saw the bicycle man boogey-man, the spare frame, even in August, clad in leathers, black and shiny as a beetle’s back, fringed, silver studded, his own body weathered, double-thick skins bearing down an old railroad trail.

What was it for him to find us there, in the woods? He grinned. I was nineteen, we were fused, and it was death pedaling past, brushing against the bushes.
Visitors

Did you know
that if you knock
on my front door,
or my back door too,
I won’t answer it.
I won’t turn on or off
the porch lights.
I won’t think to ask
if it is you.
I’ll tiptoe
to the farthest, darkest
room of the house
where I can wait
without breathing
without breaking
the appearance
of vacancy. Maybe
you’ll hold open
the screen door. Maybe
you’ll knock again.
I will have to think
about leaving
through a window.
You will have to wait
a very long time.
Between Classes

there was frisbee.
First tossing,
hucking, then angry
wrist-flicked backhands
meant to sting palms
meant to bruise
fingertips, nails.

Each wanting to be
something more
than the other
to the other.

That was when it hurt,
so we threw harder
to prove that even pain
would go away.
Tornado Season, 1996

The sky turned yellow
above the basketball hoop

I sometimes lie at the top
of the driveway to see

it as a bowl turned over
spilled out in color

and to feel ants parade
over my elbows

on their way to the next
crack in the concrete

What is happening over there
isn’t happening here
but you don’t see me

One at a time you’re seen by everyone

We waltz through white medical blur

suck and hush of the room
  around us

It’s as though you’ve split the veins
  that can’t be seen
    or sealed

_You’re going to be okay, you’re going to be okay_

I tell you this because

I don’t know
  if you know
    that you are, still are, alive
You come out of a coma and can’t speak, but write

ask your father to wheel the hospital bed down the road
to the bar

celebrate a holiday

It means you’ll be all right
you didn’t mean it,
this suicide mistake-lie

Later, when we talk, when the tubes have left your throat torn, voice raspy

I want to ask where you went

Can you regret a second chance?
What in this world do you love?

We all wait for signals, white flags

Twisted, that even now, I tell myself
there’s time

enough
Of course I don’t believe in ghosts

but when I fall asleep
thinking of a raised eyebrow, the blonde stubble of an upper lip

hands tangling rivers

you come to me
in a dream

Does that count?

We knew you were dead,
you and I

and so it was clear that I should finish

   the books you were reading,
   the tomorrows you were telling me,
   the things we say instead of the truth

And when I wake,
sorry to leave you, leaving me again

the only part left is an unfamiliar
but now comfortable

weight

Please, for me, be a ghost for good
What Is Wrong?

It is me looking into your windows at night.
I love the steady television pulse, blue
so that you are and the room is and such sadness
would expand outward if not stopped by glass.

I don’t wish to come in, and you, dear friend,
have forgotten the reasons that most go out.
Even the usual things—a trip to the store,
a walk for the dog, another person’s voice—
don’t put on clean clothes, comb hair,
and unlock the door anymore.

On nights like this, I check for signs of living,
but there are no stars, the leaves on the trees are still
and round as river stones, and slugs are leaving
sugary trails across the sidewalks. I worry about them
between streetlamps.
Still Life After the Funeral

bed, never made
sheets balled, no blanket
green, white, orange flag
chocolate corduroy blazer
hung as a limp cocoon over a closet door
cigar box of show tickets, boarding passes,
movie stubs, letters (did he keep them?)
a cereal bowl, three-day-old coffee
mostly, though, books
shelves of cracked spines
some banded in yellow USED stickers
some inscribed with love
Waste of Paper

The first time I write a sympathy card
it becomes my confession. I have to start over.
The first time I write a sympathy card
I want to tell your parents everything
they don’t know about the weekend we stayed
in their Chicago suburb house: how I left
for a walk and couldn’t tell your door
from the neighbor’s, how I’d never seen
a father come home and swallow a martini
with a pimentoed olive then offer me one too
like he stepped straight from the movies,
how that night, I felt flat as a paper doll
folded in the flower-ruffled, pillow-plumped
guest room. I snuck back downstairs to share
your bed until I slid with a pillow off the twin mattress
to the floor, which made you collapse
cross-legged on the carpet to tell me something
sleepy about love. We never returned and, today,
with you in a coffin, I shouldn’t either.
Snow Day

I’m always waking up next to walls this time
the paint is white and I can trace horizontal lines
where the mini-blinds let in strands of light
I’m always climbing over you sprawled body pulling
back my hair, on pants coat, shoes but stuffing socks
in pockets When I look for tracks they’ve been erased
when I wait to hear directions home snow gathers
in my hood How could it not?

Later kids frame themselves in icy forts dogs
dig and shit frat boys wheel red wagons
of beer down unplowed streets hand out cans to cars
sleeping in drifts and Silas says there should be
ice cream vanilla and sugar mixed then licked
from the back yard slush sweetened from stillness
It seems clean enough to eat Even today
nothing else wants to stay completely frozen
Hiding

When small, there are good places for it:
curled in the dryer or snake-bellied
beneath the porch. My brother spent

an entire evening crouched in the back
of our little red shed among empty flower pots,
barbed wire, a can of gasoline, listened

to us call his name. Dad walked up
the highway, worrying through
ditches on either side. When the fugitive

reappeared, grease-smudged and grinning,
our parents were relieved enough
to be angry. Now that we’re both too big

to fit and too old to believe it could work,
we’ve learned to conceal most everything
important in plain sight.
Bequest

She said she’d leave me her rosary, translucent blue encapsulations of the Virgin Mary on a chain, decades of prayers smoothed by her hands, her mother’s hands. But what I really want are the two framed illustrations hung in the basement bathroom because I can’t remember a time before they charmed me into storytelling: one, a rosy, sexless child beneath an oak, a hedgehog or guinea pig in its hands, such a small shepherd for the flock of black-faced sheep, and the other, a girl in an eyelet nightgown cross-legged on her bed, on her pink and white double wedding ring quilt, her back turned as she answers the night through open bay windows. When I found Prayers for Children and recognized the shade of green, the diamond border, I pried apart frames to see how she’d razored the pages from the book. On the back of each, throwaway poems of prayer, years unread, unnoticed. How catholic our tricks of comfort suddenly appeared.
Everyone a Small Note, Chicken-Scratched

Now we see the way
everyone can change
from a small note,
chicken-scratched
and floating off
in an oceaned bottle
or bottled ocean
in a sink that can
contain it,
drain it, I mean
let it smash like
light across
cobblestones.
Yes, from thin
malnourished
rhizomes still grow
stems like wire,
wire like echoes,
echoes repeating night-
mares, such horses
only hoofed
sweeps of gray
rain, still beating
arms and legs and ears

still glancing
at and off bodies

still saying: today’s
today, today.
Notes

To the Board of Regents [p. 26]

In a letter to the State University Board of Regents, President Thacher also pleaded with the Board of Regents for support. His concern, however, had as much to do with the appearance of the university as with educational standards:

   The removal of Dr. White's private cabinet has so far diminished our means of illustrating the several branches of science . . . as to give the hall in which they are kept a melancholy look of poverty. To say nothing of the very great need of a large supply of these means for the instruction of our classes, mere respectability demands at least that our now empty showcases be quickly filled again with valuable specimens.

In 1875, Samuel Calvin requested and was given $2,000 to build the natural history cabinet.

Three Photographs [p. 29]

Frustrated with the lack of teaching materials, Calvin and Macbride traveled to collect specimens for the university’s natural history cabinet. Calvin, an early field photographer, also took and developed over 5,000 glass plate negatives to use for his lectures and publications. On this particular trip, the two scientists packed and shipped twenty-five cycad fossils. After the fossils arrived in Iowa City, the Board of Regents refused to pay the railroad costs, and the university president of the time, Charles Schaeffer, paid the cost himself in order to keep the fossils.

   As for the South Dakota cycad fields, in 1922, President Harding created Fossil Cycad National Monument to preserve and showcase the hundreds of Black Hills fossils. Because the superficial fossils were soon collected and others didn’t quickly appear through erosion, the monument was deauthorized in 1957.

   The epigraph preserves Macbride’s original line breaks. The italicized list, also from Macbride’s field notes, has been trimmed down and reordered.
An Experiment [p. 34]
In his 1902 book, *History of Dickinson County, Iowa*, R. A. Smith published a news article and short commentary on the possibility of a field school at Lake Okoboji. Though Smith seems excited by the prospect, other early sources suggest that some residents were baffled by and suspicious of the work done by professors and students.

This, Our Undoing [p. 39]
Shimek, who called Macbride “distinctly the father of conservation in Iowa” and suggested that Macbride’s 1896 paper enumerating the benefits of creating county parks was the basis of the state park system, was certainly no stranger to conservation himself.

Etiquette in the Field [p. 40]
This found piece was lifted straight from the archival Lakeside files. It remains good advice, though it is increasingly unlikely that students meet anyone to “josh” in the “country” or in preservation areas. A similar list from 1945 includes boating etiquette: “Do not go beyond the Bay in rowboats, whether young women alone or with young men. Report to some member of the staff upon return. Do not exchange seats in the water.”

Independence Days [p. 42]
Bohumil Shimek’s parents immigrated to Iowa from Bohemia in 1856 in response to political and religious oppression. Though born in the United States and though he lost both of his parents before completing college, Shimek remained intimately connected to the concerns of his parents’ homeland. In 1914, he spent time teaching at the Charles University of Prague. Upon his return to the States and throughout World War I, Shimek lectured and raised money in support of Czechoslovakian independence. He assisted his exiled friend, Thomas G. Masaryk, in planning Czech liberation and Masryk’s election to presidency. Shimek received a Czech medal of honor in 1927 in recognition of his efforts.

Early Settlement Plat, 1832-1859 [p.44]
A sort of paint by number. Today, less than one tenth of one percent of the original prairie (white) remains.
By 1928, much had changed at the State University and at Lakeside Laboratory. Macbride had served as university president from 1914 to 1916 before retiring to Seattle, Washington. From the west coast, he remained active, publishing in journals, writing a fictionalized pioneer memoir, *In Cabins and Sod Houses*, and traveling to give lectures. His efforts to maintain Lakeside continued, primarily through letters.

Through the 1920s the field station began failing without financial support for upkeep. When, in 1928, Macbride found three pieces of land attached to Lakeside’s property were up for sale, he made it his mission to ensure the station’s future through expansion. The properties were secured by down payment in 1929, but Macbride and Shimek labored through the early years of the Depression to raise money and pay off the investment.

Some material in these poems—the exclamations in particular—is taken from Macbride’s archived letters.

The italicized list is taken from Debby Ziegłowsky’s article, "Thomas Macbride's Dream: Iowa Lakeside Laboratory."
Index of Images

p. 23: Bohumil Shimek’s 1920 map of Dickinson County from *Okoboji Wetlands* by Michael Lannoo.


p. 33: Samuel Calvin’s South Dakota field photographs from the online Calvin Photographic Collection, http://www.uiowa.edu/~calvin.


p. 41: Steamboat Queen from *History of the State University of Iowa: The Iowa Lakeside Laboratory* by Elizabeth Nuss.

p. 43: Dr. Bohumil Shimek at the old Laboratory pump, 1916 from *History of the State University of Iowa: The Iowa Lakeside Laboratory* by Elizabeth Nuss.
Selected Reading


