

The Fencerow

by Phillip Howerton

The history of his farm
is chronicled in this fencerow
where remnants of ancient white oak
posts—posts he split when he
was young and too poor
to afford any other—
hang gray and shrunken,
held by rusted steeples
to brittle two-barbed wire.
Others, added a decade later
and split by a young neighbor
who had a family and needed work,
have also rotted from the ground.
Steel posts mark his mid-life,
when he could afford them
and was thinking ahead to the day
he could no longer walk the line
and drive posts. Five strands
of heavy-gauge barbed wire
were also stretched then
and even now they have the polish
of galvanization upon them;
then came death along the fencerow,
and the sumac returned,
and multi-flora rose, and the cedars,
some of which are now thicker
than his arms when he died.