



HARRY MACPHERSON

Squared Circles and Other Poems

THE COMPLETE 1921 BOOK AND PERIODICAL VERSE

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS: EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS: EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

Squared Circles and Other Poems

Harry MacPherson

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

Critical Reading Edition

Squared Circles and Other Poems

Collected Poems brings together Harry MacPherson's complete 1921 book, six recovered pieces of magazine verse from *Goodwin's Weekly*, and three later poems printed in the *Los Angeles Times*. The edition follows the author's book order, keeps subtitles and visible stanzaic indentation, and distinguishes verse from the prose journalism and fiction located during research.

Series: *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans.

Prepared from public-domain book and newspaper scans, 2026.

Images of Harry MacPherson



Frontispiece portrait from Squared Circles and Other Poems (1921).

Harry MacPherson in 1927



Harry MacPherson is the second man from the right in this group photograph of a Ford air party welcomed to Los Angeles. Los Angeles Times, July 28, 1927, p. 19.

These are the two verified photographic likenesses located in the book, the editor's files, and the present search. The cover art is a supplied graphic composition, not a documentary portrait.

An Archival Image

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U 1899	1. NAME (Print) HARRY (First)	MACPHERSON (Last)	ORDER NUMBER
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 538 No. Wilcox Bldg. Los Angeles Calif. (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)			
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]			
3. MAILING ADDRESS Same			
[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If none insert word none]			
4. TELEPHONE None	5. AGE IN YEARS 49	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Topeka (Town or county) (State)	
DATE OF BIRTH Sept 24 1892 Kansas (Month) (Day) (Year) (State or country)			
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs Jennie M. MacPherson 1258 So. Putnam, Los Angeles Calif.			
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Dana Van Co. (Number and street or P. O. number) (Town) (County) (State)			
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 750 So. Broadway Los Angeles L.A. California (Number and street or P. O. number) (Town) (County) (State)			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
D. S. S. FORM 1 (Revised 1-1-42)	(over)	16-21630-2	Harry MacPherson

MacPherson's World War II registration card records his birth on September 24, 1892, in Topeka, Kansas; his Los Angeles residence; and Juanita MacPherson as his contact.

Contents

Life and Career

Images of Harry MacPherson

Introduction: Four Stages of a Newspaper Poet

Editorial Note

Book I

Squared Circles and Other Poems (1921)

Dedication

Squared Circles

Wild Stuff

Mission Cliff Gardens

Blind?

San Diego

Alumni

Towering

Schoolgirls

Loma

Artistry

La Fiesta

Just Home

Lure o' the Open Road

Scraps

Old Rag Dolls

Green Eyes

September's Lamb

Close Harmony

Mother's Day

Parsnips

Resurrection

Truce

Immortal Riley

Paternal

Soft Shackles

Turkey's H. C. L.

Parting
Mine
Golden Game
New Year
Whistling
Shopping

Magazine Verse

Goodwin's Weekly, 1916–1917
Progression
My Mother Knew
Playing the Motor Game
A Definition
Who Said "Pleasure Car?"
Good-bye, Jawn

Later Newspaper Verse

Los Angeles Times, 1929–1967
Sacrifice
The Steal Problem
Some Trope Dope

Back Matter

Chronology
Sources and Research Record

Introduction

Four Stages of a Newspaper Poet

Stage I | 1892–1912: Kansas, San Francisco, and the beginnings of print

Harry MacPherson was born in Topeka, Kansas, on September 24, 1892. Newspaper notices preserved in the editor's files place the teenage MacPherson in northern California: in 1908 a San Francisco paper named him among University of California runners and identified his earlier affiliation with Mission High School; in 1909 he again appeared in a five-mile race under the university's name. A 1910 Wichita notice lists Harry MacPherson as comic editor on a high-school publication. These fragments outline an unusually mobile adolescence and show that humor, athletics, and print culture entered his life together.

Stage II | 1913–1919: Salt Lake City—journalism, automobiles, and verse

MacPherson married Juanita Weber in Salt Lake City on March 11, 1913; their daughter Bernardine was born about two years later. By 1916 he was connected with a Salt Lake newspaper and contributing illustrated reporting to *New West Magazine*, including an article on the citizens' military training camp at Fort Douglas. His substantial article "The Finest Capitol in the United States" appeared in *New West Magazine* in April 1916. In the same period he wrote automobile journalism, a comic dramatic sketch called "The Suffering Sandwiches," and poems for *Goodwin's Weekly*. The archive search for this edition recovered five complete poems and a verse prelude there between September 1916 and July 1917. The magazine also published his story "What's in a Name" in January 1918.

Stage III | 1920–1928: San Diego, the book, and Southern California publicity

By 1920 MacPherson was living in San Diego and working as automobile editor of the *San Diego Sun*. The newspaper published his only known poetry collection, *Squared Circles and Other Poems*, in 1921. Its prefatory note states that “Squared Circles,” “Blind?” and “Wild Stuff” were new, while the remaining poems had previously appeared across the *San Diego Sun*, *New West Magazine*, the *San Francisco Call*, *Goodwin’s Weekly*, and the *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*. A Riverside paper reprinted “Lure o’ the Open Road” on April 18, 1921. In 1922 a motor-trade report associated him with Pasadena; by 1927 newspapers called him a Los Angeles publicity man. That July he joined the delegation accompanying a Ford aircraft from the East to Los Angeles—the occasion of the photograph reproduced near the front of this volume.

Stage IV | 1929–1968: Los Angeles and the long afterlife of light verse

MacPherson remained in the Los Angeles region for the rest of his life. “Sacrifice,” printed in the *Los Angeles Times* in December 1929, turns a civic road-widening project into an elegy for felled street trees. A 1942 registration card gives his residence as 538 North Serrano Avenue and names Juanita as his contact. The two late *Times* squibs recovered in the folder—“The Steal Problem” (1962) and “Some Trope Dope” (1967)—show that his taste for compressed newspaper wit survived for nearly half a century after the 1921 book. He died in Los Angeles on January 9, 1968, aged seventy-five.

A double career

MacPherson’s poems belong to the same working life as his journalism. Cars, roads, public spectacles, advertising language, civic improvement, and the jokes of the copy desk are not occasional intrusions into a separate lyric vocation; they are its materials. Alongside those topical poems stand family poems, local landscapes, war elegy, and the long title sequence’s distrust of cultural leveling.

Editorial Note

The text of *Squared Circles and Other Poems* follows the 1921 *San Diego Sun* edition. Obvious scan noise has been removed, em dashes have been restored where the printed page shows them, and curly quotation marks are used consistently. The book's spelling and period idiom are otherwise retained. Clear authorial indentation is preserved; page-imposed hanging wraps are not. Every poem begins on a new page, but poems divided only by the source page break are reunited.

The *Goodwin's Weekly* texts were transcribed from Library of Congress page images and checked against the archive OCR. "Playing the Motor Game" is included only as the six-line verse prelude to the prose automobile article; the prose itself is described, not silently converted into poetry. "Who Said 'Pleasure Car?'" originally distributes comic notes around its columns. This edition sets the continuous poem first and preserves those authorial notes afterward in their original order. The three late poems follow the newspaper clippings in the editor's folder.

MacPherson often published as "Harry E. MacPherson" in Salt Lake City, while his book uses "Harry MacPherson." The latter is the volume title form. The online catalog label "H. G. (Harry G.) Macpherson" attached to one scan conflicts with the contemporary signatures and is not adopted here.

Book I

Squared Circles and Other Poems (1921)

Published by the *San Diego Sun* in San Diego, California. The complete book appears here in its original order. Its own acknowledgments name the *San Diego Sun*, *New West Magazine*, *San Francisco Call*, *Goodwin's Weekly*, and *Salt Lake Herald-Republican* as prior venues, without assigning every poem to a specific issue.

Dedication

*To those whose heartbeats vary now and then,
Emotion-swayed as Poseidon ruled the sea—
At times a bellowing breeze that joyously
Speeds up your lagging voyage, or again
Some peaceful calm to smooth and sooth your path,
Leaving a dreaming, drifting time to spend;
Or veering to the tempest's biting wrath—
Your barque the venture-craft, Variety,
Bearing a cargo joyous without end:
Of baby smiles, of dancing, distant chimes,
Moonlight on spires, the colored flame of sky,
Love, life and beauty ever flowing by—
To you and all my loved ones—every friend—
I dedicate this little sheaf of rhymes.*

—H. M.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), unnumbered dedication page.

Squared Circles

Some are flat—nor high nor low—
No heights, no depths, no Heav'n, no hell;
With dull, plain apathy they go
On cloddy level, and think it well;
Black death, white life they do not know!
What tale can gray *existence* tell?

I

Where lilacs drip with vernal rain
And Summer gilds the emerald grain,
Where Autumn cracks vermillion leaves
And Winter fairy-pattern weaves—
Embroidered chill on the window-glass—
Where I was a lad and she a lass,
Back to my fond home-land I strayed,
Back to the real game, fairly played,
Where simplicity's tyro-gaze
Stares with wonder at novel ways.

II

Train-trekking toward the gates of dawn
How suddenly sea and hills were gone;
How soon on undulating plains
Warm day kissed lips of ardent grains.
I sped ahead to a spot of charm,
Trivial town beside our farm,
Remembering well despite the years—
Mad, interlying, stirring years
So choked by laughter edged with tears—
How folks on Saturdays would gather
To gossip of the crops and weather.

III

Sure knots before the dry-goods store
Would swap the news and rustic lore:
That planting beets or carrot crops

In moonlight made 'em go to tops;
How measles raged down by the "crick" —
The whole blamed neighborhood was sick;
How ev'ry feller in the Spring
Should take a tonic, banishing
With sulphur and molasses all
The ails that piled up since the Fall.

IV

I idled on. The train raced through
A hundred towns, a city or two.
Familiar signs within my range
Of hungry vision seemed so strange.
New depots here and paved streets there,
Unshaded, regular and square.
Till finally the trainman bawled
My boyhood village. As he called
The name in accents coarsely clear,
With alien sound it stung my ear.

V

How changed are manhood-conjured scenes
When mem'ry upon childhood leans!
Here a building, remembered well,
That recognized and spoke. "Do tell!"
It shrilled in quaint, familiar tone,
"Where have you been and how you've grown!"
Haggard and wrinkled in roof and wall
My friend had shrunk, who once was tall;
Dwarfed by the curse of my heightened gaze.
Dulled by the splendor of newer ways.
Dimmed by the shadow of structures bold
Flaunting their youth to the warped and old.

VI

And wagon tracks? Long since all rolled,
Straightened and paved—how queerly cold
The same streets seemed. No curve the eye

Relieved. And there came crashing by—
Stunning my soul—well known machines,
But unfamiliar in these scenes;
This town where beauty used to glow—
This town I knew, but didn't know.
I spied the marshal from afar.
Then closer. "Chief" adorned his star!

VII

The folks I'd known spoke language quaint,
Oft interspersed with "fetch" or "ain't."
"I calculate" would slip from tongue
As fluently as an old song sung.
What was this talk, this conversation
These persons made? Some hesitation—
It seemed—was lurking on each lip
As though they ever feared to slip
Back down to phrases, early-learned,
And now by fresh-paint culture spurned.

VIII

I met Jack Price. He as a boy
Had known no luxury but joy.
His parents (luck is often murky)
Were well-nigh poor as old Job's turkey;
Jack—ever an ambitious cub—
Invited me to his Country Club.
Youth-chum talking with coin-hard eyes
And voice that sought to patronize.
To view success makes one inspired—
But what a broad "a" he'd acquired!

IX

"And where," I asked, "is Clinton Hall,
That kid whose father owned most all
The real estate in town?" Price said:
"Perhaps you know, the old man's dead;
Left all his stuff to Clint and he

Had a wild, four-year spending spree—
He doesn't count now, really poor;
Is selling shoes in Newman's store."
High-born can fall, low-born rise.
No sympathy in Price's eyes.

X

Down by the railroad where I'd played
And fought in Humboldt's lot, they'd made
A regulated playground there,
Fretted and fenced with grownup care;
My swimming hole in the careless stream
That used to echo with bare-boy scream,
Improved by a store-sold diving chutes
For nice, clean boys in bathing suits.
Rough woods, just made for walnut larks,
Were *beautified*—one of the city parks.

XI

Out on the slopeside, weather swept,
Where tired Old-timers softly slept,
I went. The graveyard was too bright
With tended flowers to left and right
All orderly. A dead breeze moaned
And slid by hard graves freshly stoned;
Expensive monuments replaced
Those etched by grief, by teardrops traced.
Gay gilded letters crowned the gate;
"*Memorial Park*"—our graveyard's fate.

XII

Remember how the Sunday swains
In winter snows or springtime rains
Or other seasons went to wait
For church-girls just outside the gate?
When parsons damned in words immortal,
Shaken, they faltered at the portal.
But in Cathedral, rich and fine,

Unmellowed yet by time or vine.
Unhallowed fearless gather there—
Smug lectures sooth, they never scare.

XIII

Drawn to a measure, taped and ruled
The people seemed—all virtue-schooled
With regulations writ for curbing
Irregularities disturbing.
Of old, by keen revivals prod,
They shouted sinners back to God,
And if they'd fallen far from grace
How joy-lit was each Heavened face!
But sons of these, year in, year out,
Curse sin, but ne'er for sinners shout.

XIV

Who knows but humans can become
By long residing, like their home,
And in a palace, stately, fair,
Absorb a grand and gracious air;
Or where the sharp peaks pierce the blue
And wet seas thicken nightly dew,
The people go from high to low
And up to high—all to and fro.
After pain, pleasure's vast—
We're happiest when sorrow's past.

XV

A fallen woman plucked from fire
Has super-virtue, none is higher.
Coarse granite is the statue base,
So staunch that time cannot efface
The higher marble, smoothly fine
In graceful texture, slender line.
Crudities in romantic tale
But limn the lovely lyrics frail.
Nor pure nor beautiful nor strong

Are middle morals, stone or song.

XVI

Land of my Dreams—I left it there,
Vibrationless as the pre-storm air,
Curbing and cramping all emotion,
Chill as an ice-breath on the ocean;
Specified, squared, surveyed and sure.
Certified, warranted right and pure.
Back I hurried to rest my eyes
On red-flecked sea when dim day dies,
Mystery-masts in the harbors old,
Magical mountains of unfound gold;

XVII

Shifting mists and the restless breeze
Pungent with odor of other seas,
Missions where age-green ivy sighs
And laughter and love in friendly eyes;
Loveliness smiles—no one suspects her;
Sin reforms—and none rejects her;
Only Dullness suffers pain,
Scorned—she's shallow, flat and plain;
Hers small credit for blameless station.
Ugliness never fights temptation.

XVIII

North or south or east or west,
I'll picture my home as I loved it best,
Youthful and arrogant, raw and free,
Flayed by winds like the storms at sea,
Balmed by peace of the purple sage—
Erring folks in a humaner age;
People with frailties, not too wise,
Novelty in each fresh sunrise;
White hearts, black hearts, hearts of gold;
Warm-blooded, hot-blooded—never cold!

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 1–11.

Wild Stuff

Let me go where air is thin, up in the hills once more.
With a staunch pal and rod and reel by mountain torrents' roar;
Crackle a fire before a tent pitched beneath a pine,
At daybreak let me whip the stream—and the world is mine.

Give me a gun and a good boat when the air begins to chill,
Then let the birds go flashing up and let me shoot until
My muscles ache, my eyes tire and night comes fluttering down
While back I tramp to the river camp, far from the futile town.

Boots of rubber up to the hips, cap and coat of leather,
What do I care for the drenching air as storm clouds rush together?
Freedom of woolen strengthens me as I bend to the pulling oars.
Change and wild forgetfulness in the different Out-of-doors.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 12.

Mission Cliff Gardens

(Sunset Song)

Where Nature's garden splendor overflows,
Deep shadows blur the paths with purple stain,
While winy wind across the mesa blows
With true Pacific balm in sun or rain;
And evening skies are amethyst and rose
As windows of the west fold shut again.

Off there a sun-bathed valley casts a spell,
All wound with highway like a ribbon thin;
Where toned of old the silv'ry mission bell,
Mellow as light, aiding the priests to win
Faith-followers; what tale the vale would tell
If it could reminiscences begin.

And other beauty!—How the color gleams
As the proud peacock spreads his feathers there,
Rich blue and satin green within the beams
Of sunshine tempered by the twilight air;
Bending acacias with the breath of dreams
Spread fragile perfume, delicate and rare.

But in the plaza, palmed, at close of day.
As muted night creeps up with starry stealth,
Comes lilt of laughter, children at their play,
Resplendent in their Southland-given health-
The amber gold of sunset's richest ray
Forgotten as we view this red-cheek wealth.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 13–14.

Blind?

He sits upon a plaza bench
The day is warm but he is cold.
The dark sun pounds his dead eyes,
Worthless and old.

Laughing they pass in silken skirts
How keen the glance of blind men's ears!
They show him sights that sped his pulse
In vanished years.

He sits upon the plaza bench
Night comes with ocean-chilling breeze.
But he is warm with the thrilling touch
Of memories!

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 15.

San Diego

Here on the rim of a sapphire sea,
Near to the mountains of glinting green.
Winds of the West touch tenderly
Harbor and highlands and vales between.

Wealth of the mesas and purple hills.
Fruit of the soil and the verdant vine
Riches the prodigal sun distills
Arrayed, displayed in this mart o' mine.

Apples of gold on the bending bough,
Soft, sleek cattle with coats of silk;
Glorious grapes that are ripening now
Land of mellifluent honey and milk.

Melody market where palm trees play,
Lovely as lilt of a soft guitar;
Tones of the tropics are calling today
Come to my bountiful, bright bazaar.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 16.

Alumni

Queer pencilings scribbled in the book.
Old Latin grammar—just a bit of junk
Initials of forgotten boyhood friends;
Memories lie slumbering in a trunk.

And here's a tattered program of a dance
With names of youthful sweethearts written there;
Titles of dead songs that used to stir
Our dancing feet before they knew a care.

Scrap-book, ragged story of the years,
Those pleasant years when, had we only known
(As children never will) that joys sublime
Are fragile things possessed by youth alone.

How carelessly with many a laugh and jest
These youngsters toss about their golden wealth;
School days brimming full with radiance,
Knowledge and life's own dewy morn of health.

Queer pencilings scribbled in a book
Class numerals, some mystic signs in Greek-
Poignant the glad-sad memories
Of Graduation Week.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 17–18.

Towering

Standing where a thousand roses blow
Their petals bending in the pleasant breeze
We see a sweep of green that row on row
Blurs in a distant vista of warm trees;
And pointing to the Southland's smiling blue,
Slenderly fair as any maid or flower,
A shaft of white between each glowing hue,
Rises the lyric California tower.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 19.

Schoolgirls

Heaviest tomes they lightly swing
Off to school with their chattering,
Ah, but it makes the heartstrings sing
Just at the carefree sight!
Youthful light in their bright, young eyes,
Eyes that are neither too dull nor wise.
Healthfully seeking each new surprise—
Oh for a pen to write!

Silks and satins and bold brocades
Heightening, brightening worldlier maids;
Theirs the necessity for such aids—
Glorious glamors of grace.
Can they compare with the high-school lass,
Bloused in simplicity's primer class
Who speeds our hearts as we see her pass
With eager and girlish face?

Learning their lessons of love and life,
Yet untouched by the storms and strife
That all in an elderly world are rife,
Tingeing our souls with gray;
Pray that they never may feel defeat,
Let them laugh while their laughter's sweet—
God keep the song in their dancing feet,
Just as it is today.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 20–21.

Loma

Between the mast-flecked harbor and the sea,
Point Loma bathes in sundown mists of gold;
Wrapped in the purple robes of royalty,
Adrip with jewels, reviews the pageantry
Watches the wealth of all the West unfold.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 22.

Artistry

If he were selling gilded things,
Jewels bold and brazen rings.
Shoes or clothes or furniture,
Buyers would be fairly sure
To come with money to his door
And purchase from his sodden store.

Alas!—He only has for sale
A little rift of dawning, pale;
A songbird fluttering in a tree
Or sunset colored gorgeously,
An open road, a country brook
The idle come, the curious look,
They smile, and praise and pass him by;
And never buy!

If he were playing raucous song
With tempo swift to please the throng,
The crowds would swiftly gather there
To pay for every careless air.
Alas!—His music is but this
A mother's smile, a baby's kiss.
An anthem to eternity,
A hymn of hope or song of joy;

And some may come and hold their breath
At thrilling shades of life or death;
And some may pause to hear the trill
Of wild fowl on the hill
And stirred, they only laud or sigh;
But do not buy!

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 23–24.

La Fiesta

Queen of a glistening realm is she,
Golden and gemmed is the pageantry
Passing her palace of pearl;
Wealth of the soil and the sea arrayed,
Lavish and rare in a vast parade
Splendors that God and Man hath made,
Colorful banners unfurl.

Who in her retinue is the chap
With the dancing feet and the jingling cap?
His seems a prominent place.
Can it be Folly?—No!—Jollity gay.
Laughingly lifting the hours away
With a bow to his ruler then seems to say:
“Gloom has abandoned the race.”

Ministers mighty—all serious, gray,
Smile in exceptional lightness today.
Won by the merriment spell;
Even old Commerce gravely unbends,
Flinging forth serpentine over his friends.
Knowing when all the frivolity ends
There will be profits to tell.

There in her train in a delicate maid
Richly in gossamer garments arrayed
Fair as the firmament blue
No one but beauty could have such eyes.
Light of the stars or the fair sunrise
And hair like the West when a twilight dies,
Flaming a gorgeous hue.

Queen of the South—on a scintillant throne
When magical scepter is waved there is thrown
About her a summertime lace;
Hark!—Hear the charming, melodious strain!
Hidden musicians create a refrain
Voices of blossoms in soft-falling rain,
Fragile with loveliest grace.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 25–26.

Just Home

Nothing ornate, but flower-clad and neat,
A modest house upon a quiet street.

How like a thousand others in the town
Is this small bungalow of green and brown!

And yet 'tis finer far than all the rest
No matter what they are—this is the best.

At evening as you near the homey place
There at the window is a lovely face.

With welcome-eyes a-shine like baby stars,
All eagerly she scans the coming cars.

How beautiful a house—though drab and plain—
When a tiny nose is pressed against the pane.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 27.

Lure o' the Open Road

Oh, the Open Road in her dress of Spring
Is singing so tenderly
A swinging and lyrical, luring thing,
Attuned to a melody
All sweet with the breath of an April park
And rich with the throat of a meadow lark,
Now calling us eagerly.

No siren is she—this Southland maid
Although she would draw us far
From work and care and the tracks of trade
Away where the playfields are
To silver beaches and hills of gold;
To modern wonders and missions old.
We'll fly in a fleeting car.

The cheek of dawn is pink with light,
Ablush in the waking day;
A turquoise sky has banished night
As our motors purr and sway;
Before the nose of our swift machine
Lies California—gold and green
And a smoothly broad highway.

Oh the Open Road in the open day
Is fresh with the youthful year.
Then comes the rainbow sunset ray
And starnight, clean and clear,
When music of purple comes bending down
From the jeweled sky as we leave the town
To speed on our track of cheer.

The Open Road is a violet mist,
Her eyes are the petals, faint;
Her lips are dreamy with sunbeam kiss.
She's telling a magic tale
Of Fairylands we may hope to see
In happiness-hours as we joyously
Float forth on the Gypsy Trail.

Where western beaches tint our dreams
Or up in the fir-pine hills;
By rumbling sea or troutful streams
The motor will work our wills
Come speed with me from the streets of men
And drink of the wine of sunshine then
That the Call o' The Road distills.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 28–29.

Scraps

Diamonds in ash heaps, pearls in piles of shells!
Who knows what hidden riches we may find
In scrapful junk of even poorest kind?
Words upon words—a heap of mental spells.

Digging within the mass that's piled so high
Of maudlin mediocrity entwined,
Some lifting thought, rich treasure, we may find—
A baby's smile, the song of birds, the sky.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 30.

Old Rag Dolls

Father so happily homeward brings
To year-old child a lot of things
Some blocks, a rattle, doll that sings
And baby hugs them all;
But though at first she'll laugh and coo
At all the toys so bright and new
She's soon discarding them to chew
And love her old rag doll.

Speeding years new pleasures bring,
New friends we meet, new songs we sing,
Luxuries come till everything
Old-fashioned seems to pall;
But when the paint wears off new toys,
Enjoyment of them, somehow, cloy,
And like the baby girls and boys
We love each old rag doll.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 31.

Green Eyes

Beaming your liquid light
Lamps of love
Starrier than the night
Far above.

Eyes that can warmly glow-
Love inspire
Often can flash, I know,
Flaming fire.

Warning upon the shoal
Beacon bright
Guiding me to my goal
In the night.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 32.

September's Lamb

Oh, the red gold gleams in her vagrant, sunlit tresses,
And her eyes are shining widely with a new light, gay;
And she chatters of the wonder while we gaze in fond caresses
As we start our little baby off to school today.

For it seems so short since she lisped her first expression,
Since she toddled with her daring feet across the floor,
But the time flew fast—there's a feeling of depression
As—I—watch her grow; a babyhood is gone once more.

She is six years old—how our hearts are proudly beating
As we watch her with her little books go down the walk.
There are smiles and tears for the years so swiftly fleeting
While we look at one another . . . and we dare not talk!

Ah, the six-year-olds—what a world of life before them;
As they work and learn and suffer may their dreams come true;
How we breathe a prayer that their friends may all adore them
And forgive their faults—their tiny faults—as parents do.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 33.

Close Harmony

Gemmed with stars the silent dome—flashing red, green or white;
A marvel moon is sleeping 'neath her canopy of night.
Lovers and a limpid lake!—A nightbird singing, croons
Quaint lullabies to his muted mate—same old plaintive tunes.

Moon madness and star gladness—let them sigh, but—I—recall
Far sweeter music than the birds have ever sung at all.
Throbbing drums, the weird trombone, a haunting saxophone
Have swung into a fevered strain, we claim it as our own.

A foxtrot lures our eager feet, we swing into the time
And all our world is whirled in subtle melody and rhyme?
Hot arms without intention press more tightly as we sway;
And what is there to make us care? Tomorrow? Yesterday?

Nay, for tonight the music throbs the tune our hearts are beating,
And step by step we glide and slide, our glances never meeting.
We'll let those other lovers have their lakeside and their moon,
Come dance with me, my Symphony, this is our lovetide tune.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 34.

Mother's Day

Symbol showing we care
Of love, pure-bright
Blossom this day we wear,
Red or white.

See, in a little while they fade;
Droop their dying petals on our breast.
For at best,
Flowers are fragile things, not made

To live upon a coat.
An exhibition of our hearts
An outward show within the marts
Of men of what we feel

But real;
A living thing, this love of ours,
Unlike the emblem flowers;
For more than living—undying!

Blossoms wither and die
Within an hour or two,
But mother-love is eternal
As the sky's blue.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 35.

Parsnips

Through all the weary, dreary years
I've eaten in this vale of tears—
With buttered corn upon my ears—
There's something that has vexed me;
There's been a question in my mind,
(I really have one, of a kind)
It's popped up ev'ry time I've dined—
It often has perplexed me.

On tables here and tables there.
On tables round and tables square.
At home, hotel or boarding fare,
Each time they came I shook 'em;
I never could devour the weed,
(Or is it fruit?) and I've agreed
With others that there was no need
For wasting time to cook 'em.

I've seen them camouflaged in creams,
I've seen them steamed in steamer steams,
But never in my weirdest dreams
Have I essayed to choose them;
Or oiled or boiled or stewed or fried
Have never even seen them tried
By diners thin, or fat folks wide—
Nobody seems to use them.

But now a friend says they are fine
If brewed into a parsnip wine—
He says it makes a drink divine,
With lots of kick, illegal;
The Volstead Law has taught us much,
We're brewing now to beat the Dutch,
But of all knowledge thus and such,
This cops the Golden Eagle!

If parsnips can be taken from
The menu cards and made to hum
In gala wine—that's going some!

I'll cheer them like a Deuce-Full;
I know the things are not a food,
Nor medicine, I've understood
And if they'll make a drink that's good
(And *strong*) they may be useful.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 36–37.

Resurrection

Love is a rosebush—roses bloom and die,
Fragrant and thorny, when the sunny sky
Has chilled to gray and comes the cruel snow
To blot warm color with a cloak of white.
The blossoms pass; but ever if there grow
Love roots beneath the sod, return alight
With perfume roses in another spring
Dreaming and bending in the sun or rain.

Love—or a flower—what a wonder-thing
That lives and seems to die and lives again.
All tenderly I do—my gardening
Against the time chill sleet beats on the pane.
Roses once more shall smile and bloom and blow,
And faded living love again shall grow.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 38.

Truce

Shivers of sunlight gleam on the stream,
Silver the trout as they leap for the fly;
Up in the mountains, far from the town.
Lazily dreaming am I.

Just for a day, here let me play,
Let me forget the city and walls;
Soothing with cheer on the tired ear
Nature's soft whispering falls.

Tomorrow I go again back to the strife
Back to my old loves—Hurry and Fray;
Tenderly balming the breath of the hills
Cools me and calms me today.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 39.

Immortal Riley

I like a song that hums to me of hidden mysteries,
I like the mystic music and the grand philosophies,
But best of all I love the simple folk-song harmonies.

The greater poets lead us into various winding ways,
They lose our mental footsteps in hazy, devious maze.
Not so beloved Riley who but wrote the plainer lays.

That wonder-brain is sleeping now; the brain that led a pen
A golden, thoughtful, happy pen that told of common men
Will form no more in human verse the songs we love and ken.

But though the one whom Nature loved now in her arms doth lie,
And though the Unknown claims the man who made us laugh and cry,
He ever shall be with us, for his songs shall never die.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 40.

Paternal

Jimmy McCann was a family man,
A father, proud, was he,
For to his home a babe had come,
The very first, you see.

Jimmy's head was loudly red
And the baby's head was too;
Across his face a smile did chase
And lit his eyes of blue.

For one whole week McCann would speak-
As all new daddies do
To every friend and money spend
On smokes for all he knew.

But one fine day his manner, gay.
Was gone and his step was slow;
No grin inspired, his eyes looked tired
And his face was filled with woe.

"Kids are nice—they're worth the price
We pay," said McCann. "and more;
But I can't feel glad when baby's had
The colic the night before!"

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 41–42.

Soft Shackles

I worked today!

And yesterday and yesterdays before,
I worked—
Doing the same dull, tiring tasks,
O'er and o'er.

Working today
Old happenings unbidden rushed to me—
Far places, other friends.
And I wondered as I pondered
If they'd greet me with the old-time fervor?
And dreaming, hated this—
Endless work!

Vagrantly I idled home
The truant thoughts tumbling my straying mind.

In a small home a woman waited
With kisses and a happy story
Of how the Baby spoke a word,
Or walked across the floor.

I'll always work!

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 43.

Turkey's H. C. L.

The terrible Turk has got the blues,
The Harem Blues, so runs the news,
No longer dare he calmly choose
A honeymooning series;
Old H. C. L. has hit their lives
And they must now cut down on wives,
The dear, expensive dearies.

In Turkey, in ye olden days—
In pre-war's gala, golden haze—
They sat around and sang love-lays
While lots of lovely ladies
Shook up the wicked Turkey Trot,
But now they can afford it not—
High living costs like Hades!

Imagine some poor Turkish gent
Who has a love for home's content
(And womenfolks) now forced to rent
A dinky, small apartment;
Too little to accommodate
His sweeties, ten, in former state
With each her own compartment.

They must retrench; it makes 'em sore
To be too all-fired blanky poor
To buy new clothes for three or four—
And Turk girls sometimes wear 'em—
So they, of course, must take these courses:
Accept some non-support divorces—
The cost of harems scare 'em.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 44–45.

Parting

Do you recall those magic nights
Those nights of long ago
When all the Blue was filled with lights
That tinkled to and fro
The nights when you and I were young,
And all our sorrows still unsung?

Do you recall the time that—I
As lovers sometimes so
Sat out with you and watched the sky
On your front porch till half-past two?
How little then—I—kenned my fate
Your father's boot was No. 8.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 46.

Mine

Wee dimpled hands reach to my face,
Wee arms clasp me in soft embrace
And Heaven is just a little pace
Not far away
As angel mouth lifts for a kiss.
No Midas wealth could purchase this
My joy today.

A tousled head of thickening hair.
Three tiny teeth, a dancing pair
Of shining eyes and skin as fair
As Easter flower;
I—said that Heaven's near, but when
“Daddy”, she coos, I seem to ken
'Tis here this hour.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 47.

Golden Game

Men often fail or find when gray and old;
 How searing is their grim, dead search for gold!
 But sing of the one whose trek for treasure-trove
 Is rich adventure, rollicking romance
 Gay quest of sport, contest to win and love;
 Joyfully fighting for Fortune's favor-glance
 Nor loses festive youth to gain success.
 Toward the top with many a jest he wends
 His way, content with just a little less
 Than grasping wretches, sacrificing friends
 Their golden friends—and social happiness.
 Admirable victor in life's game of chance,
 Less lucky ones still cheer the winning way
 Of Conquerer who yet can smile and play.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 48.

Author's note: "This poem, dedicated to C. W. McCabe of San Diego, California, was written Sept. 10, 1921."

New Year

I—love the smell of the fresh-turned soil
Or the sight of a new-born day,
With red and gold in the east a gleam.
The new are ever the things that beam
With promise replete alway.

I—love to look at an unsoiled book,
Though it sullies beneath my hand
Unopened I fondle for new books seem
To speak to me ever of author's dream
Untainted, fresh and grand.

I—love the feel of a baby's hand,
And the smile on a baby's face;
Picturing things the babe may do
In his life ahead; I am certain, too.
He will fill a real man's place.

And so today as upon clean wall
A calendar new—I—see,
With a rush come plans for the unstained year,
And never a thought of the past one, drear,
But of happiness sure to be.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 49–50.

Whistling

It seems but yesterday when all so proudly
A seven-year-old, my laddie, came to me—
“Look, Daddie! I’ve learned to whistle. See?”
Then pursed his baby lips and bravely, loudly,
Whistled a little, wavering, lilting tune—
“Yankee Doodle” I think it was. “It’s fine!”
I praised his wonder-feat. But all too soon
He stretched into a youth, this boy o’ mine.

I used to listen for him late at night
When he’d been out to high school dances, and
He used to whistle home some song the band
Had played, and step off quick and right;
He’d click his heels so surely on the walk
I’d always know ’twas he, and smile.
Then how I used to love his boy-man talk.
Life for him contained a lot worth while.

Then the war came. He wasn’t old enough
To go but every day around the place
He’d whistle bugle calls and in his face
The great desire shone—’twas pretty tough
When finally he said he couldn’t bear
To stay at home. But I let him go—
Mighty proud of the youngster, too, but there
Was a soul-ache—my only kid you know.

I used to get his letters—funny stuff
He’d write about the “cooties” and the mud;
And never a word of bayonets or blood
Or homesickness—but I knew him well enough
To feel he’d face machine-guns with a smile
And whistle with that little boyish nod.
His letters stopped. Then for an aching while
We didn’t know—and then we learned. Oh God!

Last night I lay and listened to the noise
That drifted in: laughter—roar of cars—
Nightbirds chattering underneath the stars—

Music of the night; the city's voice.
And then came ringing, singing from out there
The click of heels time-stepping a refrain
Some youngster whistling a patriotic air.
My heart leaped—stopped! Then choked me with the pain.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), pp. 51–52.

Shopping

In the mottled market-place a blur of eager faces,
Anxious fingers flinging forth the toil-won gold;
Jade and myrrh and calico and cocoanuts and laces—
What a luring store of things the counters hold.

Women flushed with fineries—silk and satin wrappings;
Women with their shabby gowns and faces faded gray,
Hurrying and worrying, a-scramble for the trappings,
Flaming with the fever of an age-old Play.

Riches men have died for arrayed in careless fashion—
Things that must have crawled across the ruthless sands;
Cargoes that have braved the ocean's wildest, reckless passion,
Here to feel the heedlessness of hungry hands.

Publication. *Squared Circles and Other Poems* (San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921), p. 53.

Magazine Verse

Goodwin's Weekly, 1916–1917

These six verse items were recovered through a full-text search of the Library of Congress newspaper archive and checked against the page images. None appears in *Squared Circles and Other Poems* in this form. The archive also locates MacPherson's automobile articles, "The Suffering Sandwiches" play notice, and the story "What's in a Name"; those prose and dramatic records are represented in the introduction and research record.

Progression

I walked down Temple street today and saw
The corner where the Valley House once stood.
The “old order changeth”—an enduring law.

A lilac’s fresh awhile, a tiny space,
With perfumed color strong which seems to say
’Twill never fade, and yet a sunny day,
A week or so, and see! the flower’s race
Is run, gay petals withered, and a rose
All newly blooms and, like the lilac, blows—
Then other blossoms come to take its place.

That Pioneer, in early days the joy
And pride of all the City and the talk
Of all the West, was raised when those who walk
With halting steps today were prancing boys.
And if the Spirit of the old hotel
Now that it is gone—should haunt the spot,
What weirdly dim, strange stories it could tell.
Tales of revelry in what seemed palace halls,
Tales of lightsome laughter, weary tears;
Of how the slow-swift unrelenting years
Assailed the building, crumbling the walls,
Scarring paint and tarnishing the gold;
How newer, finer hostelries were reared
To cast their shadows on the one so seared
And time-decrepit, once young, strong, bold;
Of when the hopeful youth of that old place
Passed into sober middle age and then
To reminiscence time—old age;
Finally to the end that comes to all—
To flowers; to things of brick and stone . . . to men.

In hey-day of the House they came by stage,
By wonder steam-cars in a later age.
Now super-modern trains, electric, fast—
Sped on their way by magic of a wire—
Clanging, shall pass the town’s historic spot.
In but a few brief years ’twill be forgot,

Except by hoary teller of the Past,
Who heard, perhaps, its romance from his sire.
I walked down Temple street today, and saw
The corner where the Valley House once stood.

Publication. *Goodwin's Weekly*, September 23, 1916, p. 5.

My Mother Knew

Soft beamed her quiet eyes beneath the light—
The mellow, yellow glow of candle there—
As with her best-loved book, in easy chair
She read to me;—all swiftly, sweetly bright
Memories rush back, stirring my faith of old—
It was the Christ-child wonder tale she told.

My mother knew
The story true.

To me, in simple words of Childhood folk,
She told how that far-shining day there came
To earth a Baby—not in cloud or flame
Or other mystic way, but as today
The children come: to tender mother-joy—
A tiny, cooing earthly-Heavenly boy.
But such a birth!—the holy seraphs sang
A welcoming and e'en a splendent star
Deserted its sky-path to point the way,
And Wise Men following, found Him . . . this she told.

At nightfall now comes climbing to my knee
A baby, holding dimpled hands to me
And lisping "Daddy" as she lifts her mouth—
Her rosebud cherub mouth—for goodnight kiss.
If I believe that story of the Christ,
'Ere long, in but a year or two at most,
I'll tell it to her on a Christmas Eve
Just as 'twas told to me in eve of yore
When icy branches beat against the pane
And wood fire flickered warm light through the room.

But if some doubt assails; some doubt conceived
And born amid a world of woe and war,
What shall I teach her then? What shall I say?

A speculation—seed of doubt is sown
And you and I, fighting with finite things,
Grove in the dark and fear the infinite;

Repeating to ourselves: "We do not know."
And, as a child on parent's errand bent
Repeats the name of things for which he's sent,
So we repeat, repeat . . . "We do not know."

The ancient purity of Greece and Rome
Was mired in slime before the Savior came.
Men bowed down before vile Bacchus' shrine—
All things were right side down for Vice
Was held a virtue; morals foolishness,
Until they heard those simple marvel-words.
Then His believers gained the sway of earth
And they restored the ancient Moral Rule.
But men, when normal feelings follow pain,
Forget their high resolves of suffering.

So mankind, blessed with all that God bestows
Upon his children—knowledge: science, art—
Has lost or but misplaced the faith of old;
Nor need we scan historian's far page
To learn of hell's all-woeful conquering.
For these be days which test our trust—we see
The god of wine and passion fully restored
To all his heathen panoplies and powers;
His temples decked with wealth so glittering
It would have mazed a sodden, sated Caesar.

We see bare Vice enwrap herself in cloak
Of Art and tempting, lift the scarlet skirt
To lure, while her gay sycophants loud cry
That she is Art . . . and some believe the lie.
We see Truth, Rightness, falter, fail
While Wrong wins easily in race for Fame;
For Fame—Ambition's dearest, purest bride—
Is prostituted by a greed for gold
Till if a man be rich we hold that he
Is famous and we fawn upon his word.

Then hear our prayer, O God! and let thy spirit
Be born again within the human heart;
Let Angels sing once more the Christmas Hymn

And make men take the old trail to the Star;
So shall He come upon the earth again
And salve the hurts of Truth and lift her up—
No more shall sneering Vice pass mocking by
Where Virtue shrinks with her small faithful band;
And war, the curse of ages, then shall cease
“And on earth peace, good will,” prevail again.

Then let them call it fancy; fabled lore;
But I shall teach my babe the story old—
The sweetest, rarest story ever told—
The one my dear old mother read of yore
And made so plain to baby on her knee—
I know she ever told the truth to me.

My mother knew
The story true.

Publication. *Goodwin's Weekly*, December 16, 1916, p. 16.

Playing the Motor Game

A Utah Winter Sport

Humming the song of the vanishing road,
Speedily curving away, away;
Bearing an eagerly happy load—
That is the motoring game, all gay.
Spinning us far from care and strife—
(Pardon the old stuff) This is the life!

Publication. Verse prelude to MacPherson's automobile article, *Goodwin's Weekly*, January 13, 1917, p. II.

A Definition

What is an auto show?
Oh, don't you know?
Shimmer of lights on shining cars.
Spectacled salesmen explaining about them.
Autos "the favorites of movie stars,"
That's what the sellers say—shall we doubt them?
Eager-eyed countrymen, laden with lucre,
Anxious to buy every gear that they pass;
Their's not to question why,
Their's but to dig and buy,
Asking but this: where to put in the gas.
Capped college youths of a joy-ride sagacity,
Sons of rich daddies, there joyously are
Looking for class and large tonneau capacity,
Planning to nick the old gent for a car.
Girls in their teens,
Academy queens,
Raving of wire wheels and colors and such.
Matrons and patrons,
Some who are somebody; some not so much.
Men who have owned every car in the coterie,
Slanting the engines, the crankshaft and hubs,
Knowing the purchase of cars is no lottery,
Scorning the judgment of paint-impressed dubs.
Using terms cryptical—
"Cantilever," "elliptical."
Band blaring ragtime—dancers may happily
Trot the new steps on the glittering floor,
While all the dealers so slangily, snappily,
Talk of "new jobs" till their tonsils are sore.
That is an auto show.
Now do you know?

Publication. *Goodwin's Weekly*, February 17, 1917, p. 4.

Who Said “Pleasure Car?”

Or the Narration of How a Scornor of Motor Became a Real Auto Bug (Words, Also Notes)

Summer was calling with all of her sprightliness,
When Mrs. McGee said to Mr. McGee,
“If it were not for your confounded tightliness
We’d have an automobile, and you see,
Having a car we could gain lots of healthiness,
Also we’d outshine our neighbors next door;
We can’t keep up an appearance of wealthiness
Minus a motor—folks think we are poor.”

She starts here with some good reasons.

So to keep peace, the husband concluded,—
Desiring to soften the family jar—
That he would pamper his Mrs., deluded,
And take her a-shopping and buy a new car.

Maybe they had money cached in the family jar.

“But listen here,” he said,
“You’ve gotta understand,
That I’m not keen
For a machine,
They eat up too
Much gasoline
Which costs to beat the band.
So if I buy a motor car
With wads of my good dough,
From your allowance every week,
You’ve gotta keep it up, you know,
For I don’t care a tinker’s dam
For all such fuss and show.”

Hubby here registers frugality.

“Oh fine!” said she with closeup glee,
“I’ll drive it to each p. m. tea
And to the club and matinee,
For it will be all mine, you see—”
“You’re welcome to it,” growled McGee.

You have to pronounce matinee so it rhymes with see, glee, etc.

Along Auto Row where the salesmen are lying—
Lying in wait for the prospects to show—
Down on the Row McGee next day went hieing,
Firmly determined that without half trying
He could select and in half hour be buying
A car that would suit both his wife and his dough—
But of multitude models he then didn't know.

The plot thickens a bit here.

Sing a song of touring,
Of the canyon's luring,
Sing a song of open roads,
Of hills and trouty pool;
Hum a little ditty, queer
Of the July city, drear,
When every motor owners wants
To drive out where 'tis cool.

Nifty little lyric this—What?

The sun down beat on the hot and dusty street,
The scorched paved walk was a-blistering their feet,
When McGee and his wife started out to buy a car,
Down along the line of places where the motors are.
When the first demonstrator fanned their faces with a breeze,
"Gee, it's cooler riding round," remarked the head of the McGees.

The first hint given of how the story will turn out.

Runabouts, tourabouts,
Sport cars classy;
Rummy cars, chummy cars,
Differentials, chassis;
Big sedans, motor fans,
Nifty jobs and boats—
Salesman reeling, lingo speling,
Finally got their goats.
Soon McGee, muttered he,
To his wildered wife:
“Better far buy this car
Than to lose my life.
This talk’s killing me, I’m willing
To take a chance it’s fine.”
“This job’s a bird,” the salesman purred—
“Yes, here’s the dotted line.”

*If hot air were gas, y’understand,
salesmen could make
demonstrations at no cost
whatever to the dealers.*

The man who wouldn’t use a car,
Decided he’d learn to run it—
“For I might want it once in a while,”
He told his wife with a sickly smile,
“Although I’ll mostly shun it.”

Look out! Now he’s weakening.

He drove it to the office
To show it to the boys.
He opened up the cut-out,
And learned to like the noise.
He took the gang on Sundays
Out to their favorite stream;
He used it in his business,
Admitting that it seemed
To be a useful sort of thing,—
More than he ever dreamed.

*The fever develops. McGee is
becoming a regular Auto Bug.*

Summer was called with more of her sprightliness,
When Mrs. McGee said to Mr. McGee:
"If it were not for your confounded tightliness,
I'd have a car of my own, for you see
Since the first day that we purchased the auto,
The one that you said I could use all the time
You've used it yourself and I think that you ought to
Live up to your promise—the car's really mine."

*Ah hab! That old promise comes
back to haunt him.*

Then Mr. McGee
Said to Mrs. McGee:
"I'll get you another one, honey;
A nice little bus with some curtains inside,
A pocket for paint and your powder to hide—
Although it will cost me some money—
But the car that we have—the big Buzzabout—
As a business machine I cannot do without."

*Yes, a nice lady-like bus for
her—he wants the big car
himself.*

"Oh won't that be dear,"
She said in glee.
"Yes, dear is correct,"
Remarked McGee.

*Think this over. Good joke we
say.*

And Happy Ending

McGee speaks:

"Though not fond of gay things,
Nor do I love bless-ed ease,
Machines are not playthings,
I've found, but necessities."

Publication. *Goodwin's Weekly*, July 21, 1917, p. 4.

Good-bye, Jawn

Hull, many a full year you and I
Have glassily wandered arm in arm,
And now has come your time to die,
Jawn Barleycorn—you've done much harm
(That's what the prohibits say) and so
I guess it's meet that you should go.
So gooda-bye, Jawn!

With august presence August First
Will soon be here—ah, lack-a-day!—
When folks (or, rather soaks) a-thirst,
Shall rue the wine wet night all gay;
Mere water on next Wednesday, drear,
Must cure the ills of Tuesday's cheer—
So Gooda-bye, Jawn!

Scotches, gin'rickeys, Rock and Rye,
My good pal, Sweet Tom Collins, all
The booze and beer when I am dry,
Some months ahead, I shall recall.
For Coca Cola will not avail
When longing for the old brass rail—
But Gooda-bye, Jawn!

Though cellars overflow with cheer,
(My own is somewhat damp, you bet)
I'll yearn for a seller of cold draft beer
When that is something I can't get.
The unattainable's sweet, 'stew true,
So long, I sob these words to you—
Just Gooda-bye, Jawn!!!

Publication. *Goodwin's Weekly*, July 28, 1917, p. 1.

Later Newspaper Verse

Los Angeles Times, 1929–1967

The three poems in this section come from clippings assembled by the editor. Together they extend MacPherson's documented poetic career from the late 1920s to five months before his death.

Sacrifice

All through the glowing, growing town
I see the tall trees tumbling down—
Big royal palms with their graceful fronds,
Drooping peppers with limbs like wands,
Trees that were old when we were young.
And placidly over the porches hung
In the soft old street, feel the ax's hew,
Dying to give us an avenue.

An avenue perfectly paved and wide,
Where never a squirrel may chatter or hide
Or a red-breast flutter till baby trees
They will later plant are old like these.
For the shining cars, an avenue wide—
Nothing must hamper the motoring tide.
And who knows whether to smile or frown
As the tall old trees came tumbling down.

Publication. *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1929, p. 101.

The Steal Problem

If pilferage losses pain ya,
Shopkeepers, I'd advise
You curb the kleptomania
By using counter spies.

Publication. *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 1962, p. 32.

Some Trope Dope

Alliteration's a charming cheerer,
Hyperbole lies of a better score,
Similes can make things clearer,
So what do we need the metaphor?

Publication. *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 1967, p. 40.

Chronology

1892

Born September 24 in Topeka, Kansas.

1908–1909

Named in northern California athletics coverage as a Mission High School runner and University of California competitor.

1910

Listed as comic editor on a Wichita high-school publication.

1913

Marries Juanita Weber in Salt Lake City on March 11.

C. 1915

Daughter Bernardine is born in Utah.

1916

Writes for a Salt Lake newspaper and *New West Magazine*; begins documented verse in *Goodwin's Weekly*.

1917

Publishes automobile writing, “A Definition,” “Who Said ‘Pleasure Car?’,” and “Good-bye, Jawn.”

1918

Goodwin's Weekly prints his story “What’s in a Name.”

1920

Lives in San Diego; works as automobile editor of the *San Diego Sun*.

1921

Publishes *Squared Circles and Other Poems*.

1922–1928

Moves through Pasadena into Los Angeles publicity work.

1929

Publishes “Sacrifice” in the *Los Angeles Times*.

1942

Registers for the World War II draft in Los Angeles.

1962

Publishes “The Steal Problem” in the *Los Angeles Times*.

1967

Publishes “Some Trope Dope” in the *Los Angeles Times*.

1968

Dies January 9 in Los Angeles.

Sources and Research Record

Primary poetry sources

MacPherson, Harry. *Squared Circles and Other Poems*. San Diego: *San Diego Sun*, 1921. Complete scan in the editor's folder; also digitized by the Internet Archive from the University of California, Los Angeles copy.

Goodwin's Weekly. Salt Lake City. Issues dated September 23 and December 16, 1916; January 13, February 17, July 21, and July 28, 1917. Library of Congress, Chronicling America.

Los Angeles Times. December 15, 1929; July 16, 1962; August 10, 1967. Clippings in the editor's folder.

Riverside Daily Press. April 18, 1921. "Lure o' the Open Road," a reprint represented here by the book text.

Biographical and documentary sources

Brian Kim Stefans, "Harry MacPherson" biographical notes and timeline, editor's folder.

Newspaper clippings in the editor's MacPherson archive: San Francisco athletics notices (1908–1909); Wichita notices (1910, 1913, 1916); San Diego and Southern California motor-trade items (1921–1927); Los Angeles publicity and photograph clippings (1927).

MacPherson's World War II registration card, 1942, image in the editor's folder.

"The Finest Capitol in the United States," *New West Magazine* 7.4 (April 1916), pp. 7–18, identified through the WorldCat record preserved in the folder.

Library of Congress catalog essay and issue records for *Goodwin's Weekly*, consulted August 2026. The archive identifies the weekly's Salt Lake City publication history and provides public-domain page images and OCR.

Research limits

The 1921 book's blanket acknowledgment does not identify the exact first-appearance venue for each reprinted poem. The present search recovered the signed *Goodwin's Weekly* items but did not establish a complete issue-by-issue concordance for the *San Diego Sun*, *New West Magazine*, *San Francisco Call*, or *Salt Lake Herald-Republican*. Those first appearances remain a productive line for future archival work. No additional book of MacPherson's poetry was located.