



L. SANDRA DEETH

Desert Dwellers

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

Desert Dwellers

L. Sandra Deeth

A Critical Reading Edition

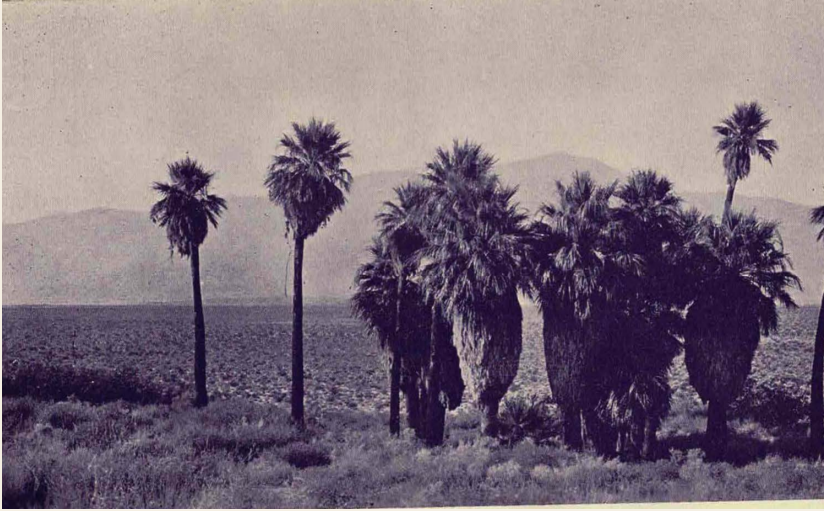
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The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Desert palms photographed by A. V. Paulsen for Desert Dwellers (1930).

Desert Dwellers

POEMS

By
L. SANDRA DEETH



949



WETZEL PUBLISHING CO., INC.
336 SOUTH BROADWAY
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
1930

Title page of Desert Dwellers: Poems (1930).

Editorial Note

This edition follows the complete 1930 scan of *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. A fresh page-by-page transcription restores ten poems omitted from the earlier Text/Tech edition and removes systematic OCR substitutions, stray punctuation, page furniture, and handwritten marginal annotations. The original part order, stanza divisions, epigraph-like sectional dedications, and clearly purposeful verse indentations are retained. Lines broken only by the source page's narrow measure are allowed to run within the wider Text/Tech measure. Unusual source spellings and dialect remain unchanged; no reading is silently modernized.

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Introduction

Desert Dwellers is a sprawling poetic map of Southern California's arid country, written by an author whose identity has nearly vanished. Under the name L. Sandra Deeth, the book moves from the Colorado River basin through the Mojave Desert and into Death Valley, naming springs, mines, plants, animals, ghost towns, roads, and camps along the way. Its poems can be funny, devotional, documentary, or quietly elegiac, and the accompanying photographs suggest travel grounded in repeated firsthand experience. This edition resets all 143 poems in the 1930 book, including ten poems omitted from the earlier Text/Tech edition, keeps the book's three-part journey intact, and restores the stanza patterns and purposeful indentations obscured by the scan's damaged text layer.

Biography

L. Sandra Deeth is the name printed on *Desert Dwellers: Poems*, issued in Los Angeles by the Wetzel Publishing Company in 1930. The copyright page, however, assigns copyright to Frances M. Paulsen, making it likely that Deeth was Paulsen's pen name or an authorial name under her control. No reliable public record located for this edition establishes Paulsen's life dates, birthplace, death place, occupation, or the circumstances under which she used the name Deeth. The book itself remains the firmest biographical evidence.

That evidence is substantial. *Desert Dwellers* contains 143 poems arranged as a geographic journey: an opening poem is followed by Part I, "The Colorado River Basin"; Part II, "The Mojave Desert"; and Part III, "Death Valley." The verse names specific trails, water holes, plants, peaks, abandoned settlements, Native routes, mines, and travelers' hazards. Its photographs are credited to A. V. Paulsen, suggesting that the book grew from shared travel and field observation. The poems repeatedly describe camping, prospecting, driving, and collecting desert specimens, and they return to conservation, heat, thirst, memory, and fellowship as lived experiences rather than decorative local color.

Wetzel Publishing Company produced a number of regional and literary books in Los Angeles, but *Desert Dwellers* appears to be Deeth's only separately published collection. No second poetry volume or substantial periodical bibliography has yet been verified. The obscurity of the author should not conceal the scale of the achievement: the book is one of the most

extensive verse records of the Colorado and Mojave deserts published in Southern California between the wars.

Desert Dwellers: Poems

The complete 1930 collection

The complete poetry text of the illustrated 1930 collection, reset from the original scan.

Opening Poem

The Deserts of the World

The Great God made these lonely places;
Lands beloved of sun and winds;
That He might walk apart in sorrow,
Brooding o'er a world of sins.

Gave them reaches wild, secluded,
Mighty hills of lava hurled;
That He might rest where Silence dwelleth
In the Deserts of the world.

'Tho He walks on troubled waters,
Moves thro' all His wondrous lands;
His mighty Spirit lingers longest

In His symphony of sands.

Lingers in the naked valleys,
On dunes opalescent, beryled;
Overwhelming is His Presence
In the Deserts of the world.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 17.

Part I | The Colorado River Basin

The Song of the Colorado River

*DESERT OF DESTINY, like unto Algeria your opal sand, Where grow
mesquite and smoke-tree, where palms, native, bearded stand.*

Often I dream of the wonderful things
That the river seeks to tell.
Often I've yearned as I went my way
Over the desert grim and grey,
For its voice's magic spell.
For the sound of its gurgled rush
Has the lure of a haunting croon,
Yet the river's tune is a lilting tune,
And the tale of the river is a long, long tale.

Some of this beautiful tale I'd tell:
A song that the river sings,
That others in some far place may feel
The river's beauty over them steal
With the comforting peace it brings,
And a bit of its melody wild
Fill their hearts with its lovely rune,
For the river's tune is a lilting tune,
And the tale of the river is a long, long tale.

The River Speaks

"From the marriage of two mountain rivers
Whose waters unceasingly flow
From the high peaks majestic and lofty,
From the lands of Eternal Snow;
I've gathered my waters together,
All the strength and beauty that is Me,
And have chosen a path full of glory
For my long mad race to the sea.
Thro' the fair green of sweet mountain meadows
With swift dancing feet I pass,
Never pausing yet seeing the image
Of much in my looking-glass.
Many the single wild roses
Their perfumes they generously gave

To the winds that gently waft o'er me;
Many pink petals I lave;
Little pink boats sailing swiftly
On waters that blush with the skies,
And murmur low greetings of rapture
To the heart of the rosy sunrise.
There waving so gaily above me,
And bending to nod as I pass;
Intermingling with gooseberry bushes,
Is long stemmed and fragrant bunch grass.
Here a swift trout flashes upward
To capture an insect, or die,
If perchance a lone fisherman laces,
With hook slyly hid by a fly.
I've seen the tanned face of some rider
As he sprawled in the grass at my brink,
A few feet above his tired mustang,
While of my sweet waters they'd drink.
Laughing low as I ripple on past him
Giving gladly of my precious store,
And singing a bit of a songlet
That must linger forever more
In some secret and unthot-of passage,
Some hidden away nook of his brain,
Till in memory the call of my water
Will lure him back with its refrain.
For ages the rush of my rapids,
Foam-crested and glisteningly white,
Have roared out a deep-throated warning,
The 'beware' of the river's might.
Over huge granite boulders I tumble
To dash and to churn into foam;
Then flow out again thro' a valley
Where many sleek range cattle roam;
Where in groves growing closely together
Quaking aspen with white trunks agleam,
While their little round leaves are aquiver,
Casting shadows that dance on my stream.
The yellow-jackets come in the autumn,
When water-holes elsewhere are dry,

To sip with the bees and to tell me
Little secrets they've learned as they fly;
Where masses of wild flowers are blooming;
Where little shy wood-creatures stay,
Coming out for their frolics at evening,
Tho' hidden securely by day.
My cascades a-thund'ring down cliff sides
 With irresistible breath-taking powers;
 While the cool mist from frenzy-frothed water
 Spray drenches the ferns and the flowers
 That nestle in cool shaded fissures
 Near ledges of moss, velvet green,
 That's the carpet upon which the pixies
 And the fairy-fay dance for their Queen;
 When the moonlight's a scarf of fine silver
 That trails o'er the fair form of Night
 As she dances thro' hours of enchantment
 With sandalled feet witchingly light.
 There are lovely dark pools of still water
 When I pause for a moment of rest,
 Where the stars or the clouds are reflected,
 Or the little Earth-folk I like best,
 As they frolic or bathe in contentment
 In sunshine or when the moon beams;
 I leave them alone and steal onward
 To greet the event of new streams
 That happily give me their waters
 To add to the strength of mine own;
 Then proudly I race toward the canyons
 Knowing well just how mighty I've grown,
 And eager to carve out more beauty
 From resisting clay butte or stone wall,
 I enter the region of canyons
 in response to their challenging call.
 Those canyons and gorges so wondrous
 That man can but marveling stand;
 Tho' few are the men who have ventured
 Just for sight of their beauty grand;
But I see their great cliffs so gorgeous,
With the eagle that soars o'er the rim,

And all their bold outlines and colors
Are glories that never grow dim;
But e'en as I journey onward
Grow greater thro' centuries of time,
Till one splendid chasm, stupendous,
Holds the beauty a world calls sublime;
But even its marvelous enchantment
Is not powerful enough to stay me.
I hear 'bove the call of Grand Canyon
The boom of the restless sea.
So I race thro' the region of canyons
Aflame with the sunset's hues,
Yet brighter still when the colors
Are wet with the rain or the dews
That help me to gather my burden—
Fine silt to create other lands;
For I am the river so destined;
My work, to redeem desert sand
That I have, thro ages, been heaping
Together, with elements grand;
An instrument powerfully fitted
To the use of the Infinite's Hand.
But I'm old when I reach the great desert,
And sullenly silent I flow;
Carrying onward forever my burden
That muddies my stream as I go,
Gives me the color the Spaniards
Tho't fitting to be my own name;
'El Rio Colorado' they called me;
 The Red River, meaning the same.
 There's still force in my swirling dark waters;
 Still deep in my heart is a song;
 Beauty still lives in my memory
 As sluggishly slow, I roll on
 Past the willows that border my edges;
 Their slender green whips trailing down.
 Infrequently there on the desert
 I flow past a hamlet or town.
 For them is my water still lovely,
 And charm is still mine when at night

My sand bars are radiantly silver
In the magic of desert moonlight.
Often I dream, in the sunshine,
Of the many long years flying fast;
As ever the hearts of the aged
Must dwell on the tho'ts of the past.
On thro' the wastes of the desert;
A land held in thrall by the sun;
While the charm of its own fascination
Enfolds me, as ever I run
Where only a few straggling piñons
Try to clothe desert mountains with green,
Or smoke-tree and pale palo verde,
Creosote or mesquite, dot the scene.
Rarely a giant saguaro
On reaches of lonely grey sands,
Commanding respect and attention,
Lifts up rigid arms as it stands.
Sometimes on the clay banks above me,
When the light is beginning to fail,
A grey shape pads out of the darkness
And its short bark ends in a wail.
A coyote aprowl in the desert,
The little lean wolf of the sands,
A thief whose wild voice is a clamor
As weird as these lonely lands
That have slipped so surely behind me
Into the far distant past.
I have come a long way and I'm weary
For the peace of the Gulf's arms at last."

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 19.

To the National Old Trails

Who has not known the thrill of a road,
Of an untried road and its promise, great,
Of a world of adventure, good and bad;
That lies around every bend in wait.
Who has not thrilled to the feel of a road,
Till there's only a ribbon of road and you;
And the answering song to its challenge strong,
Is the throb of a motor, running true.

Where down looks a blown blue sweep of sky
On an ancient town, many a sun-drenched wall;
First came the urge of the road's appeal—
The National Old Trails' luring call.
You who have answered the same call know
The flavor elusive of a queer quaint quest;
For the Old Trails run 'neath the desert's sun
Into the heart of the Golden West.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 25.

The Needles

“Say, bo, it’s hot at Needles!
How that sun is pourin’ down
All its burnin’ rays in fury
On the little desert town;
And there’s not a breath a-stirrin’ of the sand.
There’s only HEAT and SILENCE in that sun-soaked land.

“I’ve heard it said of Needles
That it’s surely mighty clost
To the place where Satan’s planted
The pore sinners as they roast.
But I’ve sorta got a feelin’ o’ good cheer.
There’s a heap o’ kindness in the folks that’s livin’
here.

“There’s a courage here in Needles
Of a mighty good true brand;
For the desert’s always tryin’
In some way to force yore hand.
There’s a gallant bit of bravery in the town,
That lives in trees they’ve planted spite o’ desert’s
frown.

“The trains pull into Needles
And fine folks strut up and down,
And wonder how in thunder
Other folks can stand this town.
They’ve never felt the beauty of it here at all.
Have never heard the glory of the desert’s call.

“For when it’s evenin’ in Needles
And the sands are not all grey,
But have caught a bit o’ color
From the sky o’ dyin’ day;
And the coolin’ wind’s a-sighin’ o’er the sand
There’s a fierce joy in livin’ in the desert land!”

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 26.

Morong Valley

Blue hills brooding, wrapped in robes of misty shadow,
Watching o'er Morong Valley at their feet,
Deep in silence as if listening.
Resting in a peace that's sweet.
Here we found the Live-forevers, (*Cotyledon pulverulenta*)
With inflorescences, yellow, crimson, raying out
From their stems like gay bright ribbons
Whose colors, in these subdued regions, shout.
Growing large on rugged hillsides,
Always near some plant or stone;
Thus, in their wild way, seek protection
Rather than stand there stark alone.
They seemed like lovely corsages,
Caught in the robes on mountain's breast,
And trailing down her soft blue negligée,
Add bright'ning color to her misty robes of rest.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 27.

To a Pepper Tree

I know a place where a pepper tree
Trails its ferny branches green
Down to a desert's burning sands,
To mock their glaring sheen.
To be, in those desolate reaches,
'Mid the horror of thirst and heat,
Where a man grows grey with the shimmery
dust
That lifts 'neath his shuffling feet;
The coveted goal of a lifetime,
The welcomest thing ever seen;
For there's safe rest, cool shade and water
'Neath the old tree's sheltering green.

Thus long ago did I find it;
Gratitude made my heart swell.
I lingered that night and I listened
To all that its songs had to tell,
As the night-wind from out of the desert
Harped in its branches so old,
Songs of the struggle of mankind
While searching the desert for gold.
But the old tree's crooning promise
Was better than gold to me;
And the tho't of the loving kindness
That had planted a pepper tree.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 28.

Old Woman of the Wastelands

Who is that mystery woman
Of a time-dimmed long ago day,
Who left on the face of the desert
Hints that her presence betray?
Sphinx-like secrecy shrouds her;
The curtain this land knows so well
How to drop before seekers of secrets,
x As if sacredly pledged not to tell;
Yet withal not above tantalizing
By suggestion, tho'ts of romances bring,
As when, here or there on the desert,
We've found Old Woman mountain or spring.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 29.

Sunset Over Pilot Knob

Cooling night winds o'er the lonely plains now came
And the sky behind old Pilot Knob's aflame.
Long and weary tho' the day a while,
We can lift our faces now and smile;
While the homely task of making camp is ours,
It's made a lovely ritual when the sunset flowers.
A glad peace buds within our hearts and grows,
As soul-inspiring as the sunset's glowing rose.
Oh, how simple are the needs for happiness, it seems;
Just a tiny fire at evening, sunset and our precious dreams.

Publication. Southern Pilot Knob at Yuma.

Trix at the Grave of Mojave Tim

My master stood a long time here
And looked down at your grave.
His face was sad and wistful,
But his eyes were smilin' brave.
"MOJAVE TIM, A GOOD DOG' " he read.
"You were some man's pal and friend,
And he loved you so he gave you
This tribute at the end."

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 31.

Palo Verde Valley

Palo Verde Valley—
How thy memory takes me back
O'er the hills of burnt sienna,
Ash and lava strewn track,
To see you framed fantastically
By crags of burnished sheen.
Your beauty, frail and tender,
A mystically ethereal green.
Distance lent enchantment,
So different did you prove to be
When I came at last to know you;
But there lingers e'er for me
In my heart a quick upsurging;
A lift of joy my being fills,
At tho't of Palo Verde Valley
First seen from Palo Verde Hills.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 31.

Acrostic

Always, when from thee I am far away,
Nor ever matters it where I may be,
Oblivious to triumph or defeat's caprice,
Forfending, my thoughts on thee deliberately;
Forgetting that aught else exists,
Encomiastic o'er thy blended colors flush;
Remembering also thy granitic glamour grey;
Imbued with memory of a deep engulfing hush.
Narcosis from the sun's drug, heat, intense,
Girding the loins of thy peaks with jeopardy;
Thwarting with the single word, "kismet,"
Opprobrious ones who would decry thy lethargy
That all too often proves to be a mask
Hiding a savage heart until, drawn near,
Egregiously, thy true self no longer is obscure;
Diabolical desolation lifts its head to peer.
Every fault effaced for me tho' in thy quietude,
So splendidly thy scoriaceous ramparts rear
Eroded ridges upward toward the stars;
Rising proudly with a primal beauty in each naked tier;
That, eagerly and gladly, tho' with fear unfeigned;
Humbly I wander thro thy vales of violet-tone,
Indefatigable as thou art to the wailing wind,
Learning to love it as the desert's xylophone.
Listening to its music, to thy mystic call I yield,
Safari then into thy regions, following my fancy, zealed.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 33.

Chuckwalla

In the region of Cottonwood Mountains
Where Dead Man's Butte stands nigh,
A loosely piled jumble of "rotten rock,"
Agglitter 'neath noon's brassy sky;
A chuckwalla lolled with reptilian ease,
On a slab of browned granite thrust out,
And stared at the Coxcombs and Pintos,
And wondered what we were about;
But when we'd have paid our respects,
This dweller so loving the sun,
'Stead of courteously waiting to greet us,
Chose rather to scorn us and run.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 34.

Buckaroo

In the heat and filth and squalor of a border town
Squatted on its heels, like traders do,
I first saw him strutting proudly up and down,
Importance in the bearing of his haughty five-foot-two.
He was guarding well the border of his peaceful Mexico;
A swagger o'er his job, a-working at it so
We could not help the chuckles that simply would burst thro';
We had to name him, so promptly we called him "Buckaroo."
With "poker face'" we gravely answered what he'd ask,
Noting all his flourishes and his pleasure at the task.
Saw, too, how his fingers caressed the outline of his gun;
How his silver-studded belt so boldly caught the sun,
Just as the brass and nickel on bull-dog collars do.
We looked at his conceited face and dubbed him "Buckaroo."

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 34.

Rocky Desert

There's a mesa set apart between mountains,
Rough and wild and its surface of stones
Has given it the name, "Rocky Desert";
It's a name that it rightfully owns.
Now ever the tho't of the desert brings
Visions of pure shifting sands,
But dunes are really exceptions
'In the wastes of these lonely lands.
Instead now we found the bajadas'
Sloping gently beneath the sun's blaze,
Their surfaces packed with stone fragments
Ashine with the desert's glaze.
As if the pale face of the landscape
Had suffered a strange rocky shower
Of a uniform size and dark color,
Then rolled into place by some power
That polished and left gleaming the surface
To reflect the bright glance of the sun
And mirror the heat of his passing,
Until finally the long day is done.
In such regions of pavements, mosaic,
A new tho't of deserts, is mine;
The grey sand of romance's fancy,
Is rivalled by deserts that shine.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 35.

Hills of Algodones

(To the memory of The Sheik)

The ancient hills of Algodones,
Favorite playground of the winds,
Lay golden massed in silence,
At the hour when day begins;
As the baleful lancers of the rising sun
Shot forth across the desert land, to run
So fleetly, to pale peaks of distant hills,
A delicate transparent veil of cobalt shadow fills
The deep recesses where the winds have cut away
The fine sands in a perfect quarter-circle arc,
And laid on long slants, waves of ripples, gay,
That are now defined so clearly by the shadows dark.

O ancient hills of Algodones,
What strange winds may sometimes stray
From far distant lands, and linger
Here among your dunes to play.
Winds that come, perchance, a-winging from the Nile,
And bring to you the mystery of old Egypt's smile;
Or a zephyr sweet, enchanting, from isles in southern seas;
Or the wind, a breath of heaven from the silvered Pleiades.
A gale, tiring of defiance in a rocking forest's roar,
Comes in raging fury, with its powerfully hot hands,
To move you and completely change you o'er;
Gratified to vent its wrath in yielding, shifting sands.

O ancient hills of Algodones,
Wrapt in mauve or cobalt veil,
Whispered o'er by gentle breezes,
Or lashed in fury by a gale;
I will keep you as an oriental jewel in my heart,
The setting, for a memory that must ever be a part
Of a dream-life flashed before me in the past;
For a radiant soul whose white light could not last.

A gallant, fine, romantic figure of a man,
Symbolic of the daring heart of love and youth,
Whose unvoiced vast appeal, no other can
Hope to excel in charm, sincerity and truth.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 36.

Old Dale

Old Dale, old Dale,
What have you given me?
A whisper, gay of a by-gone day,
That, and a memory
Of dark hills there and a grey-white flare
Of a dry lake, circled 'round
By a whiter shine where the alkaline
Of vanished waters, hides the ground.
Old Dale, old Dale,
What have you given me?
A whisper, gay of a by-gone day,
That, and a memory.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 37.

The Chocolates

The Chocolates are only blue from the distance,
When the sun's shining down on them bright;
But when you are close to their ridges,
They're chocolate brown all right.
A long range of ragged rough mountains
Slashed with barren barrancas, bleak,
And countless small canyons and gulches
Where forever a few miners seek
To wrest, from resisting red ramparts,
The secret of some "sure enough strike";
Or someone like us seeking beauty
In the vast solitude that we like.
From Yuma we followed a dim road
Running northward, across a great plain
Between the sand hills and the Chocolates,
Where arroyos swept down, made by rain
Into shallow but sandy dry washes,
Each with the woodsy small trees
Of mesquite, palo verde, and ironwood;
Offering a faint, cooler breeze.
In the scanty shade, cast by their branches,
We halted a short while to rest,
And to paint in our memory forever,
Lovely lines of the Chocolates' crest.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 38.

Lluvia De Oro

All the desert land rejoices
When the palos verdes bloom,
And the dusty grey sand washes
Have forgotten all their gloom;
For there's a shower of gold,
A shower of gold!
When palos verdes bloom.

All the insects and the wild bees
Fill the air with happy sound;
Hovering o'er the honey-laden trees,
Trailing all their branches to the
ground,
For there's a shower of gold,
A shower of gold!
When palo verde's crowned.

All the desert world is brighter
When the palo verde blooms,
And a nomad's heart is lighter
At the sight of yellow plumes.
Oh, there's a shower of gold,
A shower of gold!
When palo verde blooms.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 40.

Diddy-Bite-Choo

We would fill canteens at Midway, we decided
As we ate our noonday bread.
Midway's water was the coolest and the best
That's found upon the desert, it was said.
Didn't speculate about this Midway,
Just a water-hole we knew;
But when we came up to the place
We found Diddy-bite-choo!
Diddy-bite-choo was a shepherd, a tiny puppy dog;
His aim in life with the goats to go
As fast he'd grow big enough, but he's very little,
And he's also full of woe;
For he is very hungry and his boys just will not rush,
They would stop and talk to strangers, let him wait!
He moaned a while in anguish; said a cuss-word or two,
Couldn't they just see 'twas late?
Then at last they all trooped down to see the fun
At the goat corral; and his master caught him one.
At last he had his supper and his picture taken too;
And we went on our way still smiling
At tho't of Diddy-bite-choo.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 41.

Mammalito

Somewhere in the Palo Verde Hills
We came across a faded sign,
A short, rough board that said,
“Water, half a mile,” and pointed straight ahead.
We followed up a rocky gulch,
A few dim footprints in the sand,
The only hint that here might be a trail.
And as we walked we saw on every side
Bevies of the desert quail.
Above us rose red walls so bare,
Saw-toothed, rough, and granite, shale
That seemed trying the blue sky’s gaze to block;
We saw within a crevice, as we passed,
A wild bees’ hive upon the rock.
A palo verde tree in bloom,
And wild hollyhocks that clustered
’Gainst the silent rocks, rising high and grim,
Mocking the tho’t of water as a crazy whim.
But we plodded steadily on
Until at last we came
To where the canyon offered an unbroken face
And there at last we reached the place,
Where fouled and slimy, a little water lay
Full of dead things, and with living bees
Filling the rock-surrounded space with darting wings;
So menacing to intruders with the threat of stings.
We looked but did not care to drink
And as we turned to go
A tiny rotund cactus growing on the wall
Gave to this spring the name I tho’t to call
“Mammalito.”

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 42.

To the Mud Pots

Within an area so ugly that it seems
As if nature had forgotten all her charms;
Haglike, had instead, embraced fantastic dreams,
Holding them within her hideous naked arms;
There are a few scant acres of forbidding grounds,
Honeycombed with curious boiling springs,
That are forever building up queer mounds
Of plastic, grey-black clay that slowly rings
A circle 'round its pot aboil like mush
O'er fires from caverns, but God knows how deep.
Even the most casual know a hush
And awe, a wonder, half uneasy, that must creep
Into the mind and set it all aflame with "Why?"
We tread so near to some great unseen force;
We are so close to primal things from birth until we die,
Yet we hedge from nature, choose a superficial course.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 44.

Raro Vista Canon

We had traveled all day and were weary,
Many miles of rough road lay behind;
Seen Paradise and Salvation valleys,
And distant new mountains outlined;
So as the shadows were lengthening
In a canyon where huge chollos dwell,
We entered a sandy arroyo
And came to a place called "Beal's Well."
A wind-mill and much cool sweet water;
While 'round us the sharp peaks drew nigh,
In their sheltered nooks, bright ocotillos'
Flaming wands leaned to look at the sky.
But we chose to drive on a few miles
For the view that surely would be
As the canyon led west toward the basin
Where shimmered the blue Salton Sea.
As the sun set o'er Santa Rosas,
And a silvered sheet was the sea,
We camped with the dark cliffs behind us
And near us a scrawny smoke-tree.
The sand was a carpet of flowerets,
Frail beauty a scanty inch high.
When night had come, our wee campfire
Winked at millions of stars in the sky.
In the valley that stretched out below us
Twinkling lights of the desert towns showed,
And far up the coast of the Salton,
Sunset Limited's headlight glowed.
There was no name given this canyon;
I wanted only one that rang true;
So, humbly, I chose thus to name it,
"Raro Vista Canon"—rare view.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 46.

To an Owl of Calipatria

From the claybanks of the ditches,
Owls regarded us as we passed,
As if mutely wondering
Why we drove so fast.
For to them the ugliness
Of these ditches may be sweet;
They serve as fruitful trenchers,
For the food they like to eat.
I gaily doffed my hat
And waved to them in glee;
They ruffled up their feathers
And bowed gravely back to me.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 48.

Desert Turtle

Symbolic of this region's atmosphere;
As slow of progress, reticent, and just as queer.
Old and wise and patiently elusive too;
As if the very spirit of the desert lived in you.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 48.

Cottonwood Springs

Between the Eagle and Cottonwood mountains,
A long sandy wash leads out
To Shaver's Well and the Mecca hills,
And the land below sea level, lying about
The Salton Sea.

It was a royal road, this wash,
That day when the early spring's last flowers
Led us up the winding slow incline,
With the lure of their vivid color-showers,
Calling, 'Come and see.'
We followed on till the road forked, then
We chose the one to the right.
Where did it lead but to finding new friends
'Mid the rarest desert sight.

Hidden away at the head of a gulch
In a rincon of grizzled hills,
An oasis of such utter loveliness
That its memory ever fills
Our hearts with peace.
A-fan-palm lifted its shining head
As always, to look at the sun;
'While its feet were a-laved in cool water
That laughed as it hurried to run
On without cease.
Several great Balm of Gilead trees
With cottonwoods, cast a sweet shade;
Myriads of flowers clung to hillslopes, grey,
O'er which sunshine and shadow were laid.

Everywhere, everywhere, birds filled the air,
Each with the song that it sings.
Hummingbirds hung o'er the flowers that they loved,
And the swift endless whirr of their wings
Was music to me.

The low sobbing croon of a dove from the hills,
That call that's so wistful and wild,
Has had ever the power to charm me anew
Since I heard it first as a child,

And tho't it heavenly.
I'll go back to that rincón again in my dreams,
Whenever the desert's unkind.
Live o'er once again the pleasant hours there,
In that charming ravine left behind.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 50.

The Hill Called Superstition

The hill called Superstition lies
A pale painted shadow
'Gainst the desert's paler skies.
Washed with water-colors in a magic way,
A pale painted shadow
That may tomorrow fade to grey.
The hill that old traditions hold
In fanciful firm tale,
That dead men and their treasured gold,
Are guarded by wild winds that wail.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 51.

Lost

"I guess a feller ought to celebrate the Fourth," I said.
The notion stuck and I went right on ahead
To do it, e'en tho' they tried to 'suade me not to.
"Aw, hell, boys, I'll make it thro';
If I get tired I'll stop at Cottonwood, that's what I'll do."
So I started out afoot to the settlements, you see.
It was hot as hades, but heat had never yet fazed me.
"Guess I'll cut across these llanos, never mind the trail;
Take that peak for guidance; it shorely will not fail.

"This country's rougher than I tho't 'twould be.
Well, a few rocks and dry washes can't stop me.

"Shore is hot today!" and "Listen, what the 'ell is that?
A rattler! ... Well, bye-bye baby!" Spat!
"Good thing some of these here rocks are loose.
Had to kill the varmint, ain't that just the deuce.
Hope I don't see many, never liked 'em much.
Wonder why He made 'em, tarantulas and such.
Guess He had a reason. I'll watch closer as I go.
Ought to be near Cottonwood . . . but I've been goin' slow.

"Shore is hot; them hills are sizzlin' like a fryin' pan.
Where's that peak? Can't see it. From that hill ahead I can.
That it? I'm afraid that's not the one.
This heat's a-gettin' worse and these rocks are shore no fun.
I guess I'd better give it up and strike for Cottonwood.
When I've climbed this hill I'll see the trees—or should.
"No... I must have passed it. Guess I'll turn and go on back.
Follow my own trail... where is my track?
Can't begin to see it on this cussed crumblin' stone.
Rotten rock, it looks as if it had been thrown
For miles around here by a giant's hand.
Never saw a more confusin' lookin' land!

"Can I be lost? Now that's a joke on me!
No... shorely just over that shoulder, Cottonwood I'll see.

"My God, there's nothin' only miles and miles of this
Same dam' rock formation; and I hear a rattler hiss.

Wish I had a drink of water. I'm shore hot and sore.
I'll have to keep a-goin' on and hunt some more.
Each one of these canyons looks just like the rest.
Well, I'm LOST! Must figger out what's best.

"What's that buzzard circlin' over? ... water... could it be?
No, my God, he's circlin' over and a-lookin' down at me!

"All them stories that I've heard are a-ringin' in my ears,
And are not a-helpin' any to dissipate my fears.
But shorely such things can't happen here, you see;
The desert can't be cheatin' and a-holdin' out on me!
Why, I must be close to Cottonwood
And water ... water, why I see it over there!
Never knew that water could ever look so fair.
It's gone! God, help me!... My strength is goin' fast.
If only I could find it soon, I'd be able yet to last.
"My mouth and tongue is achin' and the sun's glare burns my eyes.
My head is burstin', and queer things around me flies.

"Shorely I could get water by diggin' in this sand,
If only I had somethin' here besides my hand!
What are these tracks? I'll follow them. . . they're only goin' round.
What is this beneath me? It is not—not the ground.
No—It's a couch—the softest I have ever had.
And water's runnin' o'er it... I'm so glad.

"Oh! ... No, my God, I'm goin'. The desert's got me, boys, for sure.
I gave her all and loved her much and followed e'er her lure.
After all, we die but once, and He seemed closer here.
Good bye, and never mind the price to her, no life's too dear."

THE BLACK ARMS OF A CROSS NOW STAND
GUARDING A LONELY GRAVE IN DESERT LAND.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 52.

Headless Palm

Lightning-riven pines may stand
With a sort of pitiful grace,
But from a headless palm—
I always turn my face.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 54.

Fightin' Snakes

On a low flat rock in an open space,
Lay a rattler asleep in the sun,
When out from some brush near by the place,
Came a king-snake, on the run.
Some warning noise betrayed,
And the rattler coiled up tight;
Shook out a menacing whirr and stayed;
And then there began a fight.

Slowly and well beyond the rattler's reach,
The king-snake circled around;
As if he was seeking a breach,
In the coiled defenses he found.
Faster and faster around he flew,
'Neath the rattler's steady gaze;
While closer and closer he drew,
And the rattler studied his ways.

Never uncoiled nor struck out;
Made no effort save to defend,
As if deeply afraid of his foe,
And knowing and fearing the end
Which came with the speed of light,
When the rattler was forced to strike,
The old king's tail lashed out to coil tight
'Round the throat of the other, noose-like.
They thrashed on the ground, here and there,
And the king-snake added a coil;
Tightened his hold for fair,
As the rattler continued to toil.
The old king drew his head back
Till side by side, head by head they lay;
The rattler ceased to struggle and whack,
And that was the end of the fray.

Then the king-snake loosed his hold,
And drew back to look at his foe;
Crawled over him carelessly bold,
And triumphantly started to go.

But from the edge of the brush
He paused, and again turned his head;
Then back he came with a rush,
To make certain, the rattler was dead.

It is legend, you know,
The kind desert men love to tell,
How the king-snake always will go
Back to make sure he's done well.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 56.

To Men Who've Died of Thirst

Many a man has never come back;
Their bones, out there, still lie
Unclaimed, save alone by the winds and waste,
'Neath the untroubled gaze of the sky.
And I, who might have been one with them,
May yet be one, who knows,
Have cast so often a pitying tho't,
On the wings of the wind that blows.

That, whoever they were; wherever they be,
My tribute will by them stand,
Unseen, a memorial of brotherly love,
For their last resting place on the sand.
And a comforting tho't comes back to me,
And holds my soul enthrall:
God must go often there to see
When he marketh a sparrow's fall.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 58.

Legend of Visnaga

The ages fleeting by, banish peoples;
 Their customs, their legends, their creeds,
'Til e'en their names are dim history
 And forgotten, their valorous deeds.
Such is the old race of Toltecs;
 Much of beauty that was theirs is now dead;
Yet in the script of a musty old volume
 This quaint ancient legend I've read:
 They believed that visnagas imprison
 The soul of a maid, Sun-god's Love;
 Symbolized by the white pulp her purity,
 A spirit sent down from above.

The armor of thorns all around her,
The Sun-god, himself, placed them there,
That naught would dare offer to harm
His lily-white maiden so fair.

Upon this strange legend the Toltecs
Fashioned their wooing, twas shown.
When approved was the troth of the couple,
The brave went to the desert alone,

To secure the largest visnaga,
Unaided to carry it back.
And if it merited approval,
The armor of thorns he'd attack,

Without the least aid from another,
With naught save his own hands bare;
And when the thorns he'd removed,
The tough skin awaited him there.

With his teeth he must cut it away,
Thus freeing the soul of his bride,
If courage yet equalled the task,
His suffering hadn't killed love or pride.

Then next he must fashion the pulp
Into small, thin circular disks,
Signifying no end to his love;

Proving the bride took no risks.

The pulp was next boiled half the day,
'Til the Sun-god stood over head.
The brave had brought water, pure
From a spring that mountain snows fed.

After thoro'ly chilling the pulp
Honey, garnered from wild desert bees,
Was used for the crystallization,
And the sweet was then sure to please.

The arduous tasks now were done,
And the Sun-god was leaving the sky.
The families and friends gathered 'round.
The hour for the wedding was nigh.

They circled the couple about,
Gave the bridegroom a crystallized sweet,
Which lightly he held with his lips,
From it she must daintily eat.

Until their lips met at last,
Their souls and their destinies, one.
Their marriage consummated and blessed
By parents, by friends and the Sun.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 58.

Desert Gold

You are never on the desert very long,
Never meet a desert dweller 'way out there,
But that gold, a haunting, strange, sweet song,
Keeps reoccurring till you come to think it fair.
Tales of rich strikes; lost mines, wealth untold,
Are added to and help make up the desert's lure.
The land, itself, hints always of its hidden gold.
Beckons men on, fills their dreams; death's the only cure.

Desert Gold, the very souls of men-have died,
When Chance has given you into their hands.
They've trampled good beneath their boots, and lied;
That each alone might wrest it all from out these lands.
But the desert, gaunt and ghastly, with its frown,
A master mathematician, that's concerned
Only, with proving man and his needs a clown;
Will measure out to him just what he's earned.

Wandering o'er dim trails and the trackless waste,
I have known too, all the urge so old;
All the fever and the passion of the taste,
The thrill, in searching for the desert's gold.
But I wonder if the striking of it rich
Would really give me half the pleasure pure,
That I've found in some rare flower nodding in its niche,
Or in some flaming golden sunset's vast allure.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 62.

Mesquite

A green and shrubby tree is growing there,
Often where the desert's face is pale and bare;
As if Flora, oft suppressed, had wished to give
A gift that makes it easier for desert folk to live.
A shade so grateful when the Sun-god's blinding stare
Is glaring down on mountain tops and valleys everywhere.
A wealth of food in seed-pods, alike for man or beast.
A juicy bit of nectar where the crawling creatures feast.
A perfect caravanserai that desert dwellers love;
Where oft the quail's shy cheeping mingles with call of dove.
Where the vile cicadas blow their buzzing whistles thin;
Spit disdainfully down upon you while they raise a din.
The jaunty rabbit kicks its heels, flaunts a saucy tail;
Leaping from the cover of mesquite, upon the trail.

Sometimes bits of pottery 'round there show,
Where an Indian sought for shelter in the long ago.
I never pause beside one, lingering in the shade to rest,
But I think of Padre Garces who long ago had blessed
The ferny treelet, o'er one kind used to muse;
Even in his diary wrote, he'd found a tree of screws.
Indeed the queer and curling seed-pods show
A marked resemblance to a real screw, as they grow.
A rare gift to the desert and a faithful friend.
Forever may mesquite, its root arms send
Their thirsty fingers down into the sand
That it may live forever in this barren land.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 63.

Desert Winds

Never absent from this silent world for long
Is the wordless melody of desert song.
The winds that roam the barren ridges steep,
Crooning lullabies to 'walla babes, asleep
In crevices of granite rock, sunbrown,
Or breathing little lonesome sighs when stars look down
Across the paling reaches of the waste,
Sway creosote and encelia in their haste
To reach again the hills so wrinkled, old;
And stir the lilac mists in shadowed fold.
But they seem the most contented when they play
Among the shifting sand-dunes, tawny grey.
Sing happily as they sketch, with lavish hand,
Long, lovely ripple-pictures in the sand.
An artist and a singer, so it seems,
Wandering o'er the desert dreaming dreams;
But as always is, in gifted natures, found
Flaring temperaments, and faults abound;
So the singing wind sometimes becomes a wail,
And the gentle hands then hold a flail;
But sweeter is repentance after wrong,
Then oh, how sweet the melody of desert song.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 64.

Devil's Garden

On gently rolling llanos,
Above Coachella Valley's floor,
With the peak of San Jacinto
Looking down forevermore,
Across the lilac shadows
Of the narrowed valley bare,
To the place where Satan's planted
A curious garden there.
Interspersed with creosote bushes
In a natural forcing ground,
With dust-grey rotund encelia,
Are myriads of cacti found.

Here grow the mammoth visnagas,
With flower-crowns aslant to the south;
And blossoms of brave basilaris
Ablaze in the heat and the drought.
Many beds of echinocactus,
Fierce spikes guarding blossoms so fair.
And tiny curving-thorned mammillaria,
Hid cunningly 'neath a bush there.
The rank and file of the warriors,
Cruel chollo, with armor a-gleam,
A-march on the rolling llanos,
Always warily watching, 'twould seem.
A weird, wild garden is Satan's,
Where beauty's grotesque as it grows.
And even the wind from Gorgonia
Carries wild dreams as it blows
O'er the garden where Satan has planted
Thorns of varying hue.
He walks 'mong his flowers at ev'n
And laughs as he passes thro'.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 65.

The Two Brothers

Two Indian chiefs guard a mountain pass
To a mystical land I know;
Their bronze shoulders blanketed with shadows and mist,
And their scalp-locks powdered with snow.
Two mighty warriors, unyielding and stern,
With the grandeur becoming the strong;
Their far eagle gaze to the sky they raise
Thro'out countless centuries long.
At war with the forces that challenge their rule,
Defying the lightning flash
From stormclouds hovering o'er canyon and cliff,
Where deep-throated thunders crash.
Their war-cry, the echoes that ever give back
Wild answers to furies above.
Brave chieftans they stand, ruling o'er a strange land,
While between them is brotherly love.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 66.

San Jacinto

San Jacinto!

Tho' I've wandered half a world away
Naught has ever crowded from me, the sweet memory of the day
When first I saw your massive ridges climbing high;
The matchless glory of your snowy peak against the sky.
The blue and lilac mists that in the canyons seemed to wait;
To fill the magic silence of their distances so great.
The fine white scarf of sand that's flung against your feet,
By hurrying, reckless desert winds so fleet.

San Jacinto!

Whither on the pale desert lies my way,
Always my yearning gaze will wistfully stray
Back to the compelling Force, the majesty of You;
So calmly set apart, amid the changing hue
Of light and shadow, moods that well express
So much of strength and beauty in this wilderness.
Always, tho' my restless feet may travel far,
Memory of you will call me back to where you are.

"San Jack" by desert dwellers.

Publication. Spanish pronunciation: "J" given the sound of "H." Often called "San Jack" by desert dwellers.

Palm Springs

Purple dusk
Wandering with me down the street
Of a rare oasis village
Crouched at San Jacinto's feet.
Where a few fan-palms are whispering
In the soft thick murk of eve;
While scent of oleander blossoms
On the warm air helps to weave
The gossamer fabric of a dream,
That bids the soul to feast
One brief enchanting hour
Upon the glamour of the East.
The desert's lure of purple skies begemmed
With those first stars that burn
So low, like candles held in dusky hands
And watched o'er by dark eyes that yearn
With all the fire of desert souls, suppressed,
Expressionless before the day's fierce light;
Awake and throbbing with a force, unguessed,
Of wild sweet rapture for the coming night.

Purple dusk
Lingering there upon the hills,
But East is gone and in its stead
A western flavor fills
My heart and all about me there;
Completely permeates the place,
For as I look upon the hills
A sculptured "Lincoln's Face"
Looks upward at the sky
With calmness and great peace,
As if to say that this we have
When life and glamour cease.
But ah, again, the sand verbenas trail
Their lilac blossoms 'cross the waste
And we who know that they are there,
Turn toward them then in haste.

With all the longing of a heart that knows
A kinship to this weird land of fears;
We eagerly embrace the glamour as it glows,
To warm our hearts against a day of tears.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 69.

Wild Flower Lovers

Do you really love the desert's flowers?
Then, LET THEM GROW.
Picked, they're yours but for a few brief hours;
Gone forever then, you know!
Your passing has not left the world more fair;
Should you return that way,
You'd miss the brightness of their faces there—
More lonely then the land, and grey.
Left growing there they follow God's sweet plan
And scatter far their seed;
So in the future years, some other man
Finds solace for a starved heart's need.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 70.

Palm Canyon

May day—————with a sky so softly blue.
The utter quiet broken only by our passing thro'
A pallid valley where the desert met the hill
And reached a tapering finger far into its heart
To tap the precious water, that sets this gulch apart;
And makes of it a wonder spot, where giant fan-palms thrill
Beholders with a sense of age-old mystery as they stand,
Their proud heads high uplifted. Natives of this desert land.

Far up the rugged canyon where the walls rise steep
We paused to watch the foam-white water o'er a giant boulder leap.
Listening for its faint, far roaring in the still, hot, shimmering air;
To see on naked canyon walls, Egyptian reds and brown,
And as the shadows shifted, spined visnagas frown;
Standing out in bold relief against the colors painted there.
In the pressing stillness, there are elf folk singing psalms;
Or is it just the wind a-roaming thro' the Canyon of the Palms?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 72.

To a Cabin at Snow Creek

Little and old and exteriorly mean,
Finished roughly within and not overly clean;
With a smoking oil-stove, deal table and bed,
And the dim light, a ten-candle bulb overhead;
But I'll never forget as I stumbled inside,
Cold, hungry and tired from a fourteen-hour ride;
How heavenly gracious its dingy walls seemed;
How welcomingly golden its mellow light gleamed;
For all day we had battled with sand, and with rain
Whipped into wild fury again and again
By a maniac wind that savagely tore
At the Sidewinder's motor and drowned its roar
With an insane screaming. It shook with its power
The small sturdy auto that hour after hour
Had lurched forward doggedly, while the storm screeched
Until there at Snow Creek the cabin we reached.
We tore off our goggles, and when warmed and fed,
We fell in tired postures across the old bed.
We could look 'round us then and more critical be,
But somehow we viewed it all tolerantly;
For the storm was out there in the dead winter night,
Only the shack held the warmth and the light.
Thro' the following hours I'd wake from a doze
To smile, as the wind's crescendo arose;
Yet to marvel a bit that the shack stood so well
The onslaughts of wind and the torrents that fell;
But when on the morning we found a surprise,
The sun rising hot out of clear cloudless skies;
The wind only whispering a soft melody;
We found that we'd slept in the arms of a tree.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 72.

San Gorgonio

San Gorgonio, so tranquil, majestic,
How many the centuries' long years,
Have you calmly regarded your valleys,
Their struggles, their triumphs, their tears?

From one side you view fertile acres,
Where blossoming fruit trees grow,
Where one can, while steeped in their fragrance,
Lift raptured eyes to your snow.

From the other side an enchanted valley,
The desert, its pallid grave face
Veiled with blue mist and mirages that promise
False oasis of fantastic grace.

San Gorgonio, how many souls love you,
Look to you for a peace that they lack
In this mad age of fast ruthless hurry.
You're a bulwark of strength, O Greyback.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 74.

Echinocarpa

Often when I've seen you there beside the trail,
 Old friend;
I've stepped aside to marvel at your beauty, frail,
 And send
A wondering tho't to Him, Who gave your thorns,
 Old friend,
The color and transparency of all "deerhorns,"
 That tend
To make you welcome, even tho you're feared,
 Old friend.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 74.

The Master's Picture

The Master painted a picture.
The canvas, a desert white.
The hour was a morning early
Overcast with a magic light.
Far away at the silvery skyline,
Violet mountains, eroded and old;
While massed at their feet were sand-dunes,
Mauve, rosy-shadowed and gold.
Reaching a long way, the foreground
Tawny grey, with shrubs glaucous green,
Widely spaced, with that vast urge of freedom
That seemingly rules desert scene.
The longer you study His picture,
Nearer you, the Master, it brings;
'Til He is standing beside you
In the oasis village, Palm Springs;
Looking out across the old desert
Where ages have come and have passed
While the Master was painting His picture.
Rare canvas, perfection at last.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 76.

Desert Palms

They mean a lot in the desert,
Yes, sir!

Those places where the native palms grow.
You can wager the old desert dwellers
Will not long delay telling you so.
Wherever a campfire is burning
At night on the desert's grey breast,
It's ten-to-one chances, talk's turning
To the palm canyons' haven of rest.
From Banning way down to El Centro;
From Yuma west to coast traffic jams,
In byways and out-of-way places,
I've heard tales of "Them old desert pa'ms."

Yes, sir!
I've been privileged to see them.
Their exotic and dignified grace
In the rare charm of far-eastern setting;
Hidden here in some wild, lonely place.
Palm Canyon and Thousand Palms Canyon,
Twenty-nine Palms and Seventeen Palms Springs,
Seven Palms Springs and Dos Palmas—
Each name its own story brings
Back to my mind. There are others:
Many canyons leading towards Salton Sea,
Here and there, all over this desert
A few half-forgotten palms be.

Whence came they; why, how do they grow?
The desert takes care of her children,
Guards her secrets. Ask the breezes that blow.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 76.

Peg-Leg Smith's Lost Mine

The desert's bred weird legends and queer tales,
And one of these, whose potency ne'er fails
To stimulate the spirit like rare wine,
Is the story of Peg-leg Smith and his lost mine.
Peg-leg was a frontier character of old:
A leader, in the thirties, of a band of trappers bold.
Roving o'er the West in search of fun and fur,
And the endless wild adventures that unfailingly occur
When the elements of nature meet the primitive in man,
And it seeks to overthrow him just to show him that it can.
In one scrape, an Indian's bullet shattered hopelessly his
leg,
By himself, he amputated and henceforth the timber peg,
That added not unto his beauty, but did add unto his name
The appellation that raised him, from a common Smith, to fame.
On one of his long journeys down the Colorado's stream
To the junction of the Gila, the fervor of a dream
Made him cross to California, then the party northwest
struck;
They hoped to cross the mountains at Warner's Pass with luck.
Before they reached the mountains, they chanced to camp
one night
Near a low hill's dark outcropping, sprinkled with a metal
bright.
Tho' they pocketed some fragments, the finding left them
cold.

They didn't even guess that what they'd found was—GOLD,
Until in San Francisco, in the mad year forty-eight;
And when Smith did find out, it seemed to him too late.
He did outfit a party, but some trouble then arose;
He gave it up and ne'er went back, or so the story goes.
But it seems that Indians found it in its black formation true.
From time to time they brought it in, but guarded what they knew

So well from every white man that the secret with them died.
No one else has found it and countless men have tried.
It's out there in the desert, a black butte rich in GOLD
A-calling YOU to hunt it, now the story you've been told.

Publication. Now San Felipe Pass.

Indio

If you ever chance to go
Down the road to Indio,
Past the groves on every hand,
Where rows of feathery date-palms stand;
Showing what this land could be,
Below the level of the sea;
You will find a small town there,
Just like small towns everywhere;
Striving hard to modernize,
There beneath the desert skies,
 Almost stifling, yet not quite
 The romance that's the desert's right.
 Instead of minarets and towers
 With bells chiming out the hours,
 Just plain streets where motors go
 Flying on past Indio.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 79.

Edom

From deep dread vales of anguish
To penetrant peaks of pain,
The very mention of Edom,
And I live it all over again.
The heat, the flies and cicadas
Shrill rasping, from out every tree,
The parching wind from the desert
Blowing hot breaths on me.
Edom's a little oasis
Man-made, in a wilderness world;
Fields and trees symbolizing man's courage
Are like brave, dauntless flags unfurled.
Ever I've found loving kindness
Again here in Edom for me
Were gentle hands, kind hearts, offering succor,
And the healing of real sympathy.
A windbreak of tall eucalyptus,
Outposts 'gainst the desert's advance,
Shared that agonized evening with me,
With the sunset's last crimson lance.

Publication. The author, taken violently ill on a desert trip, sought refuge at Edom.

Maps in Sand

'T was a hazy day, a lazy day,
And Mecca lay asleep
While close out there the mudhills bare,
Their silent vigils keep.

Not far below as flies the crow,
The desert's phantom sea,
Awash its swells, the myriad shells,
Minute mollusks they be.

And over all there hangs a pall
Of heat, intense and dry,
That saps the strength until at length,
You're glad when day's gone by.

On such a day we came that way,
From out the desert's worst.
At squealing brakes the whole town wakes
To marvel at our thirst.

And while we buy a new supply,
We find the time to chat
Of the different ways of older days,
With an old time desert rat.

"Wal now," he said, "I've made my bed
For fifty years 'neath the sky
And I'd like to go out there, you know,
Once more before I die.

"I'm eighty-two, but I'm strong as you,"
And his eagle eyes flashed fire.
"I can follow the trail at a burro's tail
And never limp nor tire."

Long he stood by the Sidewinder's hood
And looked our outfit o'er.
An incredulous smile he wore the while,
"I can't quite feel they're shore."

But we told him tales of desert trails
O'er which he'd onetime passed.

His face was wild like an eager child,
And he shook his head aghast.

From where he stood, he patted the hood
Of the Sidewinder, staunch and true,
And murmured low, "Oh, I'd like to go
Out there again with you."

In the dusty heat of Mecca's street
With a steady bronze old hand,
A map he drew that was clear and true—
A map of the desert land.

Again he said as he raised his head,
"Oh, I know and love it all.
I wish I could go out there, you know,
And maybe I will this fall."

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 81.

Painted Canyon

Hills of Mecca, hills so grey,
So ghastly looking every way,
So awesome in your silence, deep;
Suggestive of a death-like sleep.

Hills of earth instead of stone
Whereon no shrubs have ever grown;
s Eroded, washed into queer shapes
Of fret-work fine or lacy drapes.

Fluted columns of every size,
Perfection meant for artists' eyes,
But hiding like a hermit true
The beauty in the heart of you.

A canyon whose walls hold the grace
Of a fairy's garden place
Where colors rival rainbow hues,
The colors fairies always choose.

From the glorious canyon wall
I heard a fairy's echoing call
So full, its lilting golden trill,
The mem'ry of it haunts me still.

It was a fairy, tho I guessed it then
Was only just a canyon wren.
Oh, hills of Mecca, hills so grey,
Have you other wonders hid away?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 83.

The Old Butterfield Stage Route

Is that flickering light a star
Atop of the hill, where the shadows are,
 Or a phantom flash from seventy years ago?
I lie and dream awhile,
And the soft dusk hides a smile,
 A trembling smile that's close to tears, you know.

In the desert's perfect hush,
Do I hear the ghostly rush
 Of flying hoofs along the old stage trail;
The creak of harness straps,
And the long keen lash's snaps,
 And the swaying coach a-carrying folks and mail.

Closely huddled up inside,
Not enjoying much the ride,
 Listening ever for the Indian's merciless yells.
Half-famished for poor food,
Gulped down in stations rude,
 At Yuma, Palo Verde, Chuckwalla Wells.

Past Don Palmas and what now must be
The calm waters of the Salton Sea,
 And on across the desert to the hills.

A long and dangerous way,
But to the men of early day,
 It was routine work and little thrills.

I would like the world to know,
That to those men of long ago,
And to their gallant steeds, their comrades true,
I take off my hat today,
And I marvel at the way
They did the things that Fate set them to do.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 84.

Salton Sea Rhapsodies

Soft blue light, in the hour before the dawn,
Grey paling skies and the stars withdrawn.
A silent world waiting hushed and breathless for the day.
A desert world, a Rhapsody, in glaucous blue and grey.
Into pale grey sands fade so magically
The soft blue waters of the Salton Sea.

A fantasy, for surely it cannot be
That here on the breast of the desert
Is aught but a phantom sea!

No, this is but a hushed world, waiting breathless for the day.
A desert world, a Rhapsody, in glaucous blue and grey.

Lovely rosy mauve, suffusing eastern skies,
On grey old hills a faint color glowing lies.
An eager world waiting, awed but restless, for the day.
An ancient world, a Rhapsody, in rosy mauve and grey.
'Gainst rosy mauve-tipped mountains, lapping lovingly,
Grey and mighty waters of a primal sea.
A reality, old beachlines proving it to be.
Here in the cradling lap of the hills
Truly once was an ancient sea.

Yes, it was then an awed world, restless, waiting for a day.
A drowned world, a Rhapsody in rosy mauve and grey.

White blazing light, with the coming of the sun,
Dark blue the sea and its dying had begun.
A new world struggling upward, thro' ages, till the day
Made it a desert Rhapsody, in white and blue and grey.
Pale grey sands caressed regretfully
By dark blue waters of the Salton Sea.

A mystery, for surely it's strange there'd be,
In the midst of a tortured desert,
The deep blue of a dying sea.

It's still a new world, struggling thro' the age until a day
Made it a desert Rhapsody, in white and blue and grey.
Mellow burning gold, thro' long hot afternoons,

Mystic purple shadows on grey old sandy dunes.
A desperate world, fighting half-hopeless 'gainst a river's sway.
A desert world, a Rhapsody, in purple, gold and grey.
Maddened yellow waters rush so ruthlessly
Into purple shadows of the Salton Sea.
 A tragedy, if ever it was to be
 The river could conquer the desert,
 Hide its beauty beneath a sea.

No, it is a desperate world, fighting ever the river's sway.
A desert world, a Rhapsody, in purple, gold and grey.

Crimson flooded skies, and the sun was sinking fast,
Somber blue the Salton, a thwarted sea at last.
Grey triumphant land rejoicing, glad to be as well it may,
The conqueror, a Rhapsody, in crimson, blue and grey.
Pale grey sands advance inevitably
'Gainst pale blue waters of the Salton Sea.

 A potency that says, "It shall not be."
 In time from the breast of the desert
 Will vanish the Salton Sea.

Then it will be a glad land, rejoicing, triumphant as well it may.
A conqueror, a Rhapsody, in crimson, blue and grey.

Soft and swift the Dusk, a velvet robe that Twilight's hand
Let fall upon the desert grey, and left it trailing o'er the sand.
A quiet sea a-dreaming, lost in shadows as it lay.
A peaceful world, a Rhapsody, in duldest black and grey.

 A destiny that for all must ever be
 As black as the sinister shadows
 That are hiding the Salton Sea.

Ah, it is a quiet world, lonely, dreaming as the shadows o'er
it lay.

A peaceful world, a Rhapsody, in duldest black and grey.

White glorious light, and the moonbeams on the sand,
Are silver hopes that banish black fear from out the land.
A magic world offering beauty, in ethereal array.)
A desert land, a Rhapsody, in silver, blue and grey.
Grey gleaming sands frame exquisitely
Delicate blue waters of the Salton Sea.

Supremacy, for surely there'll ever be
Enthroned in the heart of ALL-BEAUTY
An image of Salton Sea.

Ah, yes, it is a magic world, offering beauty in ethereal
array.
A desert land, a Rhapsody, in silver, blue and grey.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 85.

Face of the God of Travertine

O Great Stone Face of the desert,
God of Travertine Rock,
You have list to the ocean's roar;
Heard the crunch of the earthquake's shock.
Thro' dust and the ashes of ages,
Enthroned on your temple of stone,
You have faced the vast sweep of the desert,
Its rage and its glory alone.
Man with his visions now convets you;
Will live at your feet for a while.
Men pass tho', a thousand years bring you,
Once more the lone desert's smile.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 90.

The Fish Traps

An old man dozing in the sun,
Waiting for the sand to run
Thro' the hour-glass of his life;
Remembering joy and peace and strife;
An old man of a simple race,
Whose people have not kept the pace
Of civilization, marching fast,
But lived here rather in the past;
An old man knowing many trails,
Remembering too, a thousand tales,
Traditions handed faithfully on
By word of mouth, since first the dawn
Shone down upon his people free,
And this tale's one he told to me.
"Once, a mighty water lay out there,
The Father of this puny sea,
Where now the tamerix windbreaks grow,
Where white man's fields and hogans be.
In that far-off long ago
Came a wise man of our race,
To stand upon the hills and gaze
Upon waters of the sea a space;
To lay before the Water-god, a wish
For abundant food and rainfall for the tribe;
And as he prayed, lo, there a fish
Came swimming in upon the tide—
A gift, sign of the great god's praise,
Directed shoreward by the god's own hand.
The wise man went away and prayed,
Returned then with the entire band.
In a rincon of the foothills rough,
Where mighty granite boulders lay,
They built of them long rows of traps,
And when they'd finished with the day,
The tide brought in a school of fish
And cast them-in the circles round,
And when all the water ran out the top
A score of treasured fish was found.

The long years came... and passed.
All but forgotten is that day;
All men have gone and I will go,
But the Fish-traps, they will stay.”

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 90.

The Legend of the Smoke Tree

O Parosela la Spinosa,
Little smoke tree of the desert,
Little twisted ash-grey smoke tree
Growing in arroyo shallow
Where it sweeps down from the mountains,
From the scarred volcanic mountains;
Bringing to the blistered desert,
To its flora and its fauna,
Precious streams of needed water,
When the winter rains are falling
And the thirsty desert swallows.
Growing there, O Little Smoke Tree,
Lifting prickly branches upward
In a cloud-like swirl of foliage,
To the brazen brassy heavens
Of the desert sky at noonday;
When the heat waves dance and shimmer;
Shimmer like the feet of demons,
Little fiery dancing demons
Crowding, swaying all together
'Til their golden garments mingle
Into one great gleaming mantle
Spreading far o'er all the desert;
From the lowest sandy valley
To the highest peak of lava.
And the dancing feet of demons
People all the ghastly reaches
'Til the lonely silent desert
Is alive with ghostly whispers.
Ghostly whispers carried onward,
Onward, upward and far distant,
By the fitful desert breezes,
'Til they're lost in other whispers;
To be heard again in spirit
By the Master of Creation.

Even as all smoke rose upward
To be lost in boundless spaces;

So too, many Indian legends
Have been lost to all the ages.
But the old men of Kaweah
Tell sometimes an ancient story,
'Round the campfire of an evening,
When they're hunting in the desert
For the succulent agave,
Or the flesh of many wild things;
Tell the story of the Smoke Tree,
Of the Smoke Tree, Parosela.
How, once long ago, a runner,
A brave warrior of Kaweah,
Bearing tidings of a battle,
Raced to warn his tribe of danger,
Thro' the heat and sand and cactus,
Thro' the white heart of the desert;
'Til, when almost there at evening,
At the hour when all the shadows
Creeping forth across the desert,
Fling their rosy spears and purple,

Far into the white seared places;
Wearied and half fainting, stepped he
Full upon a desert viper!
Little Brother of the Rattler
Little fiery quick Sidewinder,
With its curious sidewise motion,
With its rapid spiraled writhing,
And its buzzing, sharp, metallic,
Sounding instant note of warning
Even as it struck the runner.
Struck again in fear and hatred,
Angry from its day of fasting;
Forced to hide beneath the bushes,
Or in runway of the rodent,
In the labyrinths and alleys
Of the pouched-mouse, Kangaroo,
Lest the sun-god's burning glances,
Directly falling on its sinews,
Turn its life blood into ashes,

And its coils to empty snake-skin.

Gliding now away in silence,
To its hunting in the shadows,
Leaving there in pain behind it
A brave warrior of Kaweah,
And the queer sign of its passing,
Strokes aslant upon the desert;
While the burning of its poison
Mingled with the surge of horror
In the brave heart of the runner,
Noble warrior of Kaweah.

Lifting up his voice in sorrow,
While his gaze, strained toward the westward,
Saw the campfires, of his people,
Newly lighted in the evening,
Shine like tiny stars together,
At the foot of San Jacinto.
Lofty, mighty San Jacinto,
Stark and gaunt, its granite shoulders
Rising skyward from the desert,
Even in that vast inferno
Snowcapped until late in summer.
And the strong heart of the warrior
Climbed its last time to the crestline;
Borne aloft by anguished glances,
'Til in fancy did he stand there
All alone upon the summit,
Where the afterglow of evening
Lingered, with its rosy fingers
Touching all the rugged ridges,
As the Daylight paused a moment
For one last look at the desert,
Ere it fled before the Darkness
Fast ascending from the valley.
And the brave heart of the warrior
Struggled with the coming shadows,
With the Night that sought to hide him
Ever 'neath its folks of blackness,
With the blackness of its mantle.

Raising then his eyes to Heaven,
Throwing wide his arms in pleading,
Lifting up his voice, appealing
In a mighty burst of effort,
To the Master of Creation,
To the merciful Great Spirit,
Who has always heard His people
When they ask in prayer and longing.
“Give me back my strength, O Great One,
Not for mine own sake or glory,
But that I may warn my people
And fulfil my given mission.
Give me, O Great Spirit, wisdom;
In this scant hour of my being,
That I may devise some manner
Of a message for my people!
In this land of barren reaches
Where there’s not a tree or firewood,
How can I e’er build a watch-fire
To convey my urgent warning?
O Great Spirit, give me succor,
Hear my prayer and give me succor!”
And the Master heard his pleading
And His heart was filled with pity,
Pity for the noble warrior
And for these, his barren reaches.
So He sent down forks of Lightning,
’Til the Dusk was all illumined,
’Til the soft Dusk of the desert
Drew back half a pace and waited,
And He sent the Wild Winds wailing
Over buttes and sandy places,
Into canyons bleak and dreary,
And far up the lonely hillsides
Until on some nameless mesa,
There they found a withered Cedar
Riven by the forks of Lightning.
Borne aloft by Wild Winds, sailing
In a swirl of sand and cinders,
Over lava beds and dry lakes,

Far into the barren desert,
Hurrying to obey the Master
Came the withered branch of Cedar
To the feet of the brave runner;
Mighty warrior of Kaweah.
And he took the branch of Cedar,
Made a watch fire in the desert,
That was seen by all his people
And he sent to them the message.
Shielding now the flames from shining;
Drawing then aside his blanket,
'Til the camp fires in the distance
Winked and flared in turn their answer,
Signalled that they had his warning.
Then the warrior of Kaweah,
Giving thanks with all his being,
To the Master of Creation,
To the merciful Great Spirit;
Heard the little desert breezes
Murmur o'er his head in passing,
"Come with us, O mighty warrior,
The Great Spirit bade us tell you,
Come with us into the Dawning."

He went with them in silence,
O'er the lonely trail of Spirits,
O'er the grey sands to Hereafter,
To a greater, fairer Desert,
An Oasis of the Master.
Then the swift Dusk of the evening;
Swooping down upon the desert,
Found a gift there, strangely growing
Where had been the warrior's watch fire.
Its trunk was curving, twisted
Like the trunks of all the Cedars;
But its foliage grey and misty,
Hung like smoke wraiths in the gloaming.

Now thro'out the many ages
From that day until the present,
There still stand upon the desert

Grey-blue trees to tell the story
Of a prayer and its fulfillment.
And at evening when the moonlight
Bathes the desert all in silver
You can see the little Smoke Tree
Wave its smoky branches gently,
And on white sands' gleaming surface,
Held in sand cups made by breezes,
You can see the fallen blossoms,
Purpling blue in all their beauty,
Like the heart of the brave warrior
Royally true in steadfast purpose,
True to God and to his people.

Publication. Spanish "Cahuilla."

The Sun-Worshippers

Back to the days of the Dawn
Men've prayed to, and worshipped the Sun.
And we with our "prayers amiss";
Do we better than they have done?
 Oh, hear their prayer.

"O Great Giver of the Light,
Whose swift coming disperses night;
Kneel we at Thy golden feet,
Warm our chilled hearts with Thy heat.
We dare not lift our eyes to see
Thy glorious blinding Majesty.
O Gracious Ruler, King Most High,
Emperor of earth and sky,
Grant that Thy Radiance ever beat
On us, who worship at Thy feet."

When earth and moon and stars
Owe obeisance to this Greater One,
Shall bird and beast and man
Refuse their homage to the Sun?
 No, hear their eulogy.

"O Great Bringer of the Day,
How magnificent is the way
You roll across the heavens, blue.
How conscious is the world of You.
O Sun-god, how much joy You give
To all that know the pain to live.
E'en tho' at times the parching land
Is bowed in fear beneath Your hand.
But rulers feared because of might
Are not less loved, if just and right."

The trees and shrubs and flowers,
That lift themselves from earthy clod
That they might find their longing urge
Stilled in the golden smile of God;
 Sing their song of praise.

“O Mighty Father, Sire of Light,
Our tributes humble, for Thy sight,
Are graceful tossing branches free,
Lifting yearning arms to Thee.
Foliage, of marvelous hue,
We offer with our thanks, to You.
And we the myriad blossoms, fair,
We owe our beauty to You there.
Ever and forever, hear our cry
Of, ‘Praise Thee, thank Thee, Sun-god High’.”

“Oh, Little People of the earth:
Oh, little Winged Things of the Air,
That know so little, yet so much
Of their lives center in You there;
Hear their tribute too.

“QO Warmer, of our several ways,
How pleasant are Thy steady rays
That touch so lovingly the sand
And bathe with radiance all the land;
A mellow, glorious, golden bath,
’Til e’en the droning bees’ ready wrath
Is lulled; and we our lives pursue
In greater joy because of You.
Oh, We of Crawling Pace or Whirring Wing,
In each his way Your praises sing.”

The men who were Dwellers in Cliffs,
And Indians on mesas today;
Other men of religious cults
Each worships the Sun in his way.
On a mesa where once a Lost Race
Built a Temple divine to the Sun,
I saw there the Symbol in stone,
Still untouched tho all else is undone.
Out in beautiful Hopi land
And old Taos where the Sheeted Braves dwell,
Still many a dance to the Sun;
Ceremonies that all may be well.
High types of religion today

Still plant their cross on a hill,
And at Sunrise hold service divine;
Invoking the Master's good will.
Feeling somehow that the Sun
Is a symbol of true God's grace,
While to the Red men, the Sun's
A bright shield for the good God's face.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 101.

Moods of the Santa Rosas

The moody Santa Rosas lay
Facing east across the Salton Sea,
And their aspect, sullen, blue and grey,
Intrigued and fascinated me.

All day I watched the shadows change,
Shifting o'er ravine and darkling ridge;
Sometimes, the whole mountain range
Held translucent colors of a rainbow's bridge.

Toned down, so that my wondering gaze
Was not convinced that they were real,
Until the delicate filmy rays
Were changed to others, fairer still.

Morose they grew as large clouds lag,
Hanging almost still above their crests,
Like huge hawks hovering o'er a crag,
Before alighting on their nests.

Then as the Sun-god, from the last step of sky,
Flung back a rosy veil He'd blest;
It fell upon the Santa Rosas, there to lie
On peaks that now at last knew peace and rest.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 104.

Imperial Valley

Vivid bright your green alfalfa,
Square-cut emeralds in a setting of white sand,
Where man with his persistent industry has carved
A fertile valley from the desert land.

Not much beauty has he given you,
Much of your romance rare, he drove away,
And in the gravest way he sinned against you,
With those ghastly ditches of baked clay.

Deep gashes slashed across the valley there,
Open wounds, unlovely, necessary tho' they seem.
Is there no way to make them less unpleasant,
Less like unto a hideous, ugly dream?

While I pondered o'er the question;
Regretting all in life that isn't in some manner fair;
'I heard a limpid voice of sheerest beauty,
Rising, falling on the still hot air.

Perched upon a fencepost, by a ditch that I despise,
A meadow lark was singing in his incomparable sweet way.
His soul had power to lift itself and rise;
Stopped not to heed the mundane things that 'round him lay.

I caught his message, felt in my heart rebuked.
Applied his logic; knew it then for truth.
If Imperial Valley had its ditches bare,
It also had a lark's pure golden song, forsooth.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 105.

Yuha Well

We have been to the birthplace of Silence,
The worst spot it must be this side Hell;
With its dread hills and ravished ravines,
And its mockery of name, Yuha Well.
We wandered out there in its valleys
'Mid a thousand identical hills,
Each rounded, eroded and ash-strewn,
Where tons of charred mollusk shell fills
The depressions and covers the hill-tops
With conglomerate that shifts; for the dust
Of the ashes of ages is 'neath it,
Grey-white to the bronze upper crust.

From the summit of one such a hill-top,
Gazing southward, we studied the way
The bad lands unfolded below us,
To the border where Mexico lay.
We tho't of the day when De Anza
Marching 'cross with his brave little band,
Found here the well of the Indians,
And on a low, rolling hill near at hand
A curious formation of stone flowers;
A garden of nature's queer pranks;
Where thin leaves of shale lay in books,
With rock cabbage growing in ranks.

And there in that oddest of gardens,
Devoid of all life and all sound,
We camped while the moon's radiant silver
 Bathed with white light, the country around.
Thro' the long night, while the Silence
 Walked by in its garden so queer,
I knew an annoyance whose essence,
 Was really a half haunting fear;

A horror of absolute quiet
 Unbroken by small homey noise.
Oh, give me the faint sounds of living
 Desert creatures, with troubles and joys.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 106.

Border Land

Oh, what is there about it
That is ever calling so?
The Border Land, the Border
'Tween us and Mexico.
Is it hills of rosy lilac,
Or the swaying creosote,
The blue of Signal Mountain,
Or distant plains remote?
A mighty river flowing
Or a barbed wire humming low,
When the winds are skipping o'er it,
From our land to Mexico?
Is it lilting tunes of Border-men
That's calling me to go
To the Border Land, the Border
'Tween us and Mexico?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 108.

Rainbow Wood

The lesser Sun of winter had all day
Cast his burnished lances at the desert's breast,
And as afternoon wore on, we found our way,
Had led us to a unique spot to rest.
A mesa, covered with bright, broken bits of stone,
Looking down upon a wide arroyo's level sand
Unmarked by track, apparently the winds alone
Had ever wandered 'cross this bit of desert land.
Rumor of a forest, petrified, of rainbow hue,
Had lured us to attempt this lonely road
That ended all abruptly, and we knew
That we must leave our car and pack a load
Of canteens, cameras, walking sticks, field-glass.
Time was flying by and all too soon the Sun,
The rosy bronzed old mountains to the west, would pass;
The evening wind would rise and day'd be done.
So hurriedly we plodded down the canyon wall,
And crossed the wide arroyo's white expanse;
Just as we climbed the other side we heard a call;
Looking back we saw another car advance
And come to rest beside our own small car.
Other desert nomads, so we judged,
Scanning with our glass their outfit far.
Then across the sloping mesa, on we trudged,
Up the ramparts of a hill, volcanic, brown;
Where every foot we covered was strewn thick
With chips of wood, like colored jewels in a crown.
Jasper, shattered garnets, rattled 'gainst my stick.
Some marvelous specimens we found.
And one of wood, a hollowed block
So heavy that we must rest it often on the ground.
Rainbow ringed it was, a jewelled rock.

Just as the Sun's last kiss of gold
Won, from ocotillo's blooms, a fiery blush,
We scaled the seamed arroyo walls so old
And found the strangers' fire aglow there in the hush.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 109.

Gem Hunters

They were brown, those desert dwellers,
Hunters of the semi-precious stone.
They had calmly pitched their camp
Where we had tho't to rest alone.
We joined them at their evening campfire,
Squatting on our heels, swapped tales and lies,
With. three old men, unkempt and bronzed
From living long beneath the desert skies.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 110.

The Breakfast Hour

A cold wind sweeping mists away,
 There's a sudden jutting out of ledges high.
Canyon walls of naked rock dismay:
 With threatening frown as we pass by.
As with cheerless step appears the Day,
 Walking the ramparts, darkly lined against the sky;
Gazing into the canyon in a fitful way,
 No warmth nor gladness in her manner shy.

Chilled with hours of riding 'fore the dawn,
 We turned aside to seek a sheltered place,
Where a cut-off faintly led us on;
And there we found a spot of rugged grace.
Shielded by a shoulder of the mountain, from the wind;
Beside a granite boulder huge and grey,
We built a fire and when the smoke had thinned,
We watched it flower into a blossom gay.

Then soon tantalizing odors wafted 'round,
And on their wings we felt our spirits rise;
And 'as we ate, amazingly we found
That quickly had day come, and in the skies
Were only faint tongues of a rosy flame
That faded swiftly like a desert flower;
Then o'er the canyon rim the Sun-god came,
And gone forever was this breakfast hour.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 110.

Beneath the Stars That Night

In a tiny hidden hollow
Guarded by three mighty oak,
We pitched our camp at sundown
And soon our fire's thin smoke
Curled upward toward the tree-tops,
And our simple meal we ate;
As we talked of the day's journey,
Or harked to rustling trees sedate.
Then with tins of steaming coffee
In carefully steadied hands,
We wandered to the creek nearby,

And stood a moment on its sands
To watch its rippling water,
Ere it grew too dark to see;
Then back we turned together,
But I heard it calling me
Long after we had gone to rest
And the moon shone down so bright;
I lay awake to hear it there
Beneath the stars that night.

I watched the moonlight filter
Thro' live-oak limbs so old,
So bright in all its silver,
Tho' its light was only cold.
Then half a mile to windward
A coyote bayed the moon,
Like a dozen fiends together
Bent on swift destruction soon.

And somewhere in the shadows
A rodent worked away,
Carrying seeds and provender
Ere the coming of the day.
As I drifted into dreamland,
Once again the coyote's call
Stirred the little glade to waking,
And an acorn's tumbling fall

Striking sharply on the fender,
As if with all its might,
This land wished us to see the beauty
Beneath the stars that night.

Publication. Near Campo.

To Juan Bautiste de Anza

Our campfire glows,
In its heart of rose,
Tonight there is his name.
And the fire tongues hoard
The Spanish sword
Of Anza, in the flame.
The dancing light
Is a setting right,
For the gallant Spaniard bold;
Whose soldier sire
Left his heart's desire
And his sword, for his son to hold.
Anza treasured the trust,
And pleaded just
To follow his father's dream;
To find a way
In that early day,
'Cross desert mountain and stream,
To the missions where
The padres there,
Labored in lives austere;
To give them aid
With the plans they'd made,
To help them, an empire rear.
All the glory's there
In the fire-light's flare,
Of his great dream for New Spain.
 My head is lowered
 To honor his sword,
 Ere it burns into ashes again.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 113.

Dos Cabezas

Gaunt headlands frown
Forever down
Upon a valley view,
Where Flora wild,
The desert child,
Sways thro' a dance or two.
Her robes so clean,
The creosote green,
Embroidered are, with flowers;
Blossoms rare,
Of cacti there,
Blaze thro' sunny hours.
I recall the day
We passed that way,
The sand was damp with tears
For the skies had wept,
And the desert kept
And treasured the pearly tears.
Dos Cabezas guard
That valley, Pard,
But we'll go back there when
The chollos old
Are flowering gold,
Yes, we'll go back again.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 114.

The Tramp

Men pass me by with averted glance,
In the ease of swiftly moving cars,
And my hate follows them like a flaming lance;
But leaves on my soul, its burning scars.
Even here in this desolate dreary waste,
Where a man could so easily fall and die,
They pass me by with a heedless haste;
Were I falling they doubtless would leave me lie.
Oh, why has a fate set me apart,
That I'm not as others more fortunate are,
That I have no home and no worldly start,
Couldn't buy a gallon of gas for a motor-car?
I'm but a tramp to the ones that pass,
And they're afraid to even give me a smile;
While for me life has turned down an empty glass,
Hadn't even the chance of being worth while.
Oh, God, but how lonely these canyon walls!
How small 'neath their shadows I seem to be!
How my pitiful starving being calls
For a morsel of food, and the sympathy
Of a fellow man who could understand,
And could know how awful it is to be
Broke, and afoot in this desert land;
Not daring to think what's ahead of me.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 116.

Painted Gorge

In the southeastern edge of bizarre hills,
The Coyote Mountains, queer,
Lies the Painted Gorge, and its wonder fills
My heart, as I drink in its atmosphere,
And revel in all of its colors, bold,
That are dyed in the clay of its walls so old;
And have stained all the rocks that are lying 'round
In colored confusion upon the ground.
As if the Great Artist had tired of restraint
In the delicate coloring of desert land,
And here in this Gorge had scattered the paint
Of His unfading colors, with lavish Hand.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 116.

To a Mammalaria

(Acrostic)

Cunning little desert dweller tucked away,
And hidden almost surely from a casual eye,
There beneath imperial chollo's fierce array;
Or sheltered by limbs of ocotillo that defy
With daggered weapons, the intruding scoffer
Seeking thy fruits despite thy tiny curving thorns.
So, like thee, this verse's hidden offer
A treasure is, thy Spanish name secretly
adorns.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 116.

Tapers in Thermland

Thro' a taciturn land, oft inert,
Wanders a spirit of Love,
Like John must have searched the desert
For the peace that but comes from above.
When Hesper looks down thro' the gloaming,
On lands that the sun sought to scorch,
Love ceases a slow wistful roaming
And lights there, a bright flaming torch
On each tip of ocotillo's rough finger
Reaching up from an altar of sand;
And after Love leaves there still linger
Burning tapers, in silent Thermland.

Tall tapers that light weary reaches
For nomads a-wandering far,
A candle whose mystery teaches
A faith burning bright as a star.
Ocotillos, whom Love touched with gladness,
'Til slim thorny wands were aglow.
Bleak barren glades know not sadness
Wherever the Candlewoods grow.
And the charm of their branches' weird grace
Swaying lithely o'er altars of sand,
Is that Love might have candles in place,
Burning tapers in silent Thermland.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 118.

Wild Agaves

Where the wild agaves grow
And hot desert breezes blow,
Making little waves and ripples in the sand;
Where chollo and ocotillo tall,
Hold a silent world in thrall;
And everywhere the creosote's green bushes
stand,
There we camped at twilight's hour,
Found agaves then in flower;
And rejoiced anew in beauty of this land.
Outlined there against the sky
Graceful flower-stalks, rising high,
Dripping golden honey, it would seem.
In this canyon bleak and grey,
What a splash of color gay;
Worthy of an artist's painted dream.
And now perhaps we know
Why they always choose to grow
Huddled close together in a ring,
That their fleshy leaves' sharp points
Might protect the tender joints
Of the flowers that must mean everything.
All of beauty that's a part
Of the essence of their heart,
For after they have blossomed, they must die.
So the lovely gold they give
Is the price they pay to live
Thro' the seeds they'll scatter by-and-by.
I have often heard it said
That the Indians made a bread,
And the Spaniards, from the flower-stalks
made a wine.
And they baked them often too,
In an out-door oven new
And they always seemed to think their flavor
fine.

But I'd just much rather see
The golden beauty offer me,
In their graceful flowers, against the sky
 outlined.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 120.

The Chollo Knight

Golden armor gleaming
Or frosted silver mail
The knight of all the cacti
Has made the boldest quail.
Many a swearing cowboy
Has blessed it out in “French”
When a tuft of rolling chollo
Got fastened in the “cinch.”
The Indians have a saying,
“The chollo jumps at you.”
And I’ll declare that I believe
It actually does it, too.
There is something truly regal
In this knight’s fierce, haughty mien;
A barbaric gallant splendor
In his glistening armor’s sheen.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 121.

The Narrows

The Narrows were so dust-filled with silence,
Their halls were so ghastly with fear;
 Their halls were so ghost-like and drear,
 And everywhere vast scenes of violence
 Marked the walls that were crowding so near.
 Demons of Thirst dwelt in here,
en Imps of Madness, of Thirst and of Fear.
And even Death looked down to leer
At the victims of tortured soul-fear.

 The Narrows were so peaceful with silence.
 Their halls were now free from all fear;
 Their halls now no longer were drear,
 Gone was the aspect of violence,
 From the walls that were crowding so near.
 For water is hidden in here
 And the knowledge has banished the fear.
 So Death must pass by with its leer
 While the Angels of Life reappear.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 122.

The Sign Post

Lost—knowing not where to go;
Two roads that fork and it means so much to know.
For Life and Death walk ever hand in hand.
To err is often fatal in the desert land.
But there's a faithful guardian standing nigh
Pointing the trail that we must travel by.
Grateful am I that such signs stand
To guide the weary wanderer in the desert land.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 122.

Borego Valley

Long I looked into your shadows,
Searched into your farther edge,
Studied all your moods and pondered
From a near-by mountain ledge.
Saw the lovely deep'ning colors
On upland, butte and dune;
On long low sandy reaches
As pale as waning moon.
Traveled far into your mystery;
Knew some secrets you would keep;
Searched high and low in earnest
But—I never found your sheep.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 123.

The Stop-Sign at Kane Springs

Days of driving thro' chuck-holes
Filled with a powdery dust;
Of finding our way o'er the desert grey
At ten miles an hour where we must.
Never quite sure where the trail led
When there chanced to be one at all.
Can you e'en dimly see how happy were we—
How we laughed at the Stop-sign tall?
While we obeyed its grave warning ere we
Rolled the Sidewinder out on a road—
A ribbon of black, a smooth shining track
Whose every small turning we "knewed."

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 123.

To a Canvas Water Bag

How precious is thy grimy square,
Oh, canvas water bag.
Tho' many might not think thee fair;
Might scorn thee for a dirty rag.
But I—ah, God, I know how sweet
Thy little store of water is and cold;
And in the desert's blasts of burning heat
A priceless treasure, better far than gold.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 124.

Part II | The Mojave Desert

Fragments of Mojave Dreams

*DESERT of dead Dreams, oh, Mojave. Lilac light Burns always o'er your
Yucca-palms, from Dawn 'til Night.*

A great peace
A spread of sheltering wings
A crooning hush
As if love sings
A whispered lullabye
Night comes unto the desert
The moonbeams
Are silver fragments
Of Mojave dreams.

A weird forest
Reaching tortured hands
Prays for a blessing
For these ghostly lands
A low whispered prayer
Night comes unto the desert
The forest seems
A curious fragment
Of Mojave dreams.

A white light
A blinding veil cast far
Swathing the plains
To where pale mountains are
A magic veil
Day comes unto the desert
A mirage gleams
Fantastic fragments
Of Mojave dreams.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 125.

Swift

There's a little leering demon
Peering demon
Sneering demon,
Dwelling in the desert land.
And he patterns his own color
From the color of the sand
He's a not injurious imp,
Curious imp,
Furious imp.
For his speed, a wondrous gift,
He is called the desert swift.
Once I chanced to face him there,
Race him there,
Chase him there,
Beneath the Sheephole Mountains' frown.
Bet they smiled as they looked down.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 126.

The Phantom Car

From Mohave come some stories, bizarre, queer;
Yet scoff not always at the tales you hear,
For the desert has a way of making true
Strange things that happen to better men than you.
Such a story fabulous tho' it may be
Is this one that sometimes haunted me.

A tourist and his wife had lost their way,
Followed an old unused trail one day
Across the desert, to them, grim and drear,
And finally as the night was drawing near
They came upon a scene so ghastly, dread—
An automobile, in it were four persons, dead.
Three of them were women, one a little child.
The shocking sight 'most drove the tourists wild.
Lost as they were in that lone expanse of grey,
Horror and the fear of passing on that way
Clutched them. Jibbering with hysteria, sick;
Frantically the woman begged to leave there "Quick."
And the man, tho' unnerved yet not quite o'ercome,
Had presence of mind enough to note these details, some
Of which I've set down here. He told;
The make of car; number of the license plates; how old;
How the wind and sand had scoured so clean
The body till it shone with steely sheen.
The tires had shriveled up. The top was torn, a square
Of fabric that flapped idly in the air
And served perhaps to frighten bird and beast of prey
Had any ever chanced to come that way.

The poor unfortunates had been left intact;
There was no sign of violence done them there; in fact,
They seemed so calm and peaceful, as if they slept, no more—
A few small coins had fallen from their pockets to the floor.
This the tourist saw before he madly drove away,
And his tearful wife corroborated what he had to say
When in Los Angeles authorities tried to glean

A coherent story from them, of what they just had seen.
But no one seemed to take it seriously, so the tourists went
their way,
And the desert still is guarding her grim secret to this day.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 127.

A Mirage

How bright and clear the morning,
How distinctly hills stand out;
How the purring of our motor
In this quiet land does shout.
A long road lies before us,
Oh, how gladly do we go.
But look! what lies out yonder
I surely did not know
That such a farm was near us.
Just see the stacks of hay
And the pond with tall trees round it
In the good old eastern way.
There's a wagon, too, with horses
And some cows are grazing there.
Ah, look! It's fading, fading,
Leaving Bristle dry lake bare.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 128.

Gnomes of the Bullions

Opal lights were blending, changing,
Now glowing bright, now dull they burned,
As we headed toward the Bullions
Where for days my heart had yearned
To go poking 'round the gulches
Climbing ridges ragged rough.
My fancy peopled those bare mountains
With ghosts of miners, gnomes enough
To guard a thousand caves of riches
Strike with single jacks a thousand drill.
The flavor of those day-dreams lingered
Coloring the long hours of travel till
At last we reached the ragged ramparts,
Did the things I'd longed to do.
I was not disappointed either
For I found some wee gnomes too—
Little thorny, whiskered miners
Guarding in the Bullion Mountains bleak
Rich strikes of purple amethyst
More lovely than the kind men usually seek.

Publication. Purple cactus blossoms.

An Adventure

What was the most thrilling adventure
That ever came your way
While traveling over the desert?
I was asked the other day.
And I told the following story,
Tho' I found it hard to choose,
For if you wager there's naught in the desert
Of adventure, you are slated to lose.
Of a glorious afternoon in the springtime
Only a few hours remained,
When we left the small village of Amboy;
Our eyes on its crater we'd trained.
Tho't we could climb it 'fore nightfall,
For it was scarce three miles away
And we could drive half of the distance
To where the black lava flow lay.
At the base of a ten foot lava butte
We let the old Sidewinder rest
And started the climb up the crater
With a good deal of pleasurable zest.
We reached its rough summit and were half way
Down its steep side on our return
When the sun dropped below the horizon,
Tho' the sky still continued to burn.
On the slope of that jet-black crater,
Looking out o'er a white sea of sand,
We stood at salute; sang the "Taps" song
Filled with Jove of this beautiful land.

A deep sense of peace, of well-being
In our hearts, joy of life sang its tune,
While down on the desert the dusk came
And we knew that swift dark followed soon.
At the foot of the black-shadowed crater
As I stooped to a lilac-tinged clump
Of the delicate rare desert holly
I felt all my tingling nerves jump,
For thro' the cool hush of the evening
Came a rasping metallic clear whirr,

And it seemed for an instant the smooth sand
Held a shadow; a faint line; a blur.
'Twas gone and I tho't it a lizard
And the sound which now constantly rose
From the scanty brush through which we wandered
I took for cicadas, the insect one knows
Yet often mistakes for a serpent.
So saying, we calmly went on
A few yards, and then our composure
Completely was shattered and gone;
For there at our feet came a rattle—
That deadly insistent dry rasp
Whose warning and vehement menace
Even the most unwary grasp.
A sidewinder, the desert's horned viper;
As we stood still he spiralled away
An instant, and his clever skin blended
With the sand's own dull-colored grey.
Now as we listened, a rustling,
Sinuous coils sliding perilously near,
“And that,” said my partner's tense whisper,
“Is your blasted cicadas, my dear.”
A terrible moment of panic,
The dark filled with horrified fear.
Incessantly, everywhere 'round us
Sounded new rattlings clear.
A moment of horripilation,
Then nerves tensed, quiet and cool,
Knowledge that panic added danger
Was the useless reaction a fool
Might pay for, with life as the coin.
My partner must have reasoned the same
For we slowly strolled on through the darkness
Each intent on playing the game;
But I know now the fatalist feeling—
“Kismet,” as the Arabs would say—
A curious exaltation, uplifting.
A courage to endure, come what may.
Across lava flows, black, uncertain,
Avoiding as well as we could

The shrubs; and seeking intently
For a glimpse of our vehicle's hood.
Now, an added fear touched us
For the night grew unusually dark;
Could we find in that waste of black lava
A black car in its half-hidden park?
At last, after eons of walking,
We found the faint tracks of a road
And ahead loomed the bulk of our haven.
The headlights soon blessedly glowed.
With the fullness of real true thanksgiving
We returned to our camp at Amboy
And never did a small auto-cabin
Hold more of a real heartfelt joy.
Short-lived our sense of security. While writing
The day's ventures, taking down notes,
A mocking purr sounded near by us;
Made our hearts again beat in our throats.
I could not believe my own senses;
Had my nerves too severely been tried?
I dared not question my partner
Looking up, though, I found him wide-eyed.
Again came that sinister rattle:
"Do you hear what I hear?" I asked then.
Slowly he nodded in answer
As the dreaded thing rattled again.
It seemed to come from beneath us,
To come leisurely on and go past;
Faint in the distance we heard it
Then there was silence at last.
We didn't sleep well, I can tell you;
Next morning we saw his mark there
Below the cabin's small window.
Say, how would you like such a scare?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 131.

[Newberry Springs]

Hills dyed with pink and uranin,
Loose piles of lavic shale,
Rise near a settlement where I
Once studied desert quail.
Newberry Springs, they call it;
Some day the world will see
A fertile, fair oasis
Where the desert used to be.
I keep a little souvenir,
Pink as the native soil; I chose
A cactus grown upon those hills
Whose seed in a cotton seed pod grows.

Publication. The source prints this poem without a title; the bracketed place-name is editorial.

Joshua Trees

Glaucous blue, jade, in the sun,
Touched with bronze against a hill;
Silhouetted black, when day is done;
Bathed in glamorous romance still.
Offering little of protection, shade,
But to the dweller in the waste,
How much of all they long for, God has made,
Into this symbol, that the name tree, graced.
'Neath sun, or moon and star,
Thro' heat or chill of desert night,
If Joshuas but near me are,
I am more happy; for the sight
Of their twisted arms so bold,
The courage they must have to live
Praying like the Joshua of old.
A benediction to this land they give.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 135.

Yucca Blossoms

From the naked savage sabers
Drawn in defence of beauty frail,
The phalanx of the desert warriors
In their grey-green coat of mail;
Stately flower-stalks lift their burden
Of clustered blossoms, waxen white,
Drooping, each, its star-shaped petals
Redolent. A soul-inspiring sight!
Growing in the rugged wilderness,
The Lonesome Land, whose voice of pain
The wind is; whose heartbroken tears
Are wild, infrequent showers of rain.
Wind-blown blossoms, yucca blossoms,
Pale ivory, cool, pure, recherché;
Fairy candles lit at twilight
By stars, many worlds away.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 136.

Victorville

A mesa white with moonlight,
A sparse forest, black and still,
Of twisted grotesque yucca-palms
Watched o'er sleeping Victorville.
A desert town that huddled down
Behind clay cliffs to dream
Perhaps a wee bit wistfully,
On the banks of a hidden stream.
Streets narrow, mean, and not too clean,
'Neath the moonlight's silver glance,
Showed us the way to the desert grey,
And a road where the moonbeams dance.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 136.

Brown Butterflies

Fresh and cool is the desert breeze,
Damp and clean the sand;
An April rain has washed the sky
And the face of desert land.
In the winding road ahead
A pool of water lies,
And crowding thick around to sip
Are clouds of butterflies—
Brown butterflies, like pansies sweet
Did pansies e'er have wings;
Brown pansies sweet, brown butterflies:
My heart this songlet sings.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 138.

The Dry Lake at Murock

Imagine, if you will, a shallow bowl
Of delicate, white china, frail,
With just a hint of color, rosy mauve
That seems to be there, and again to pale.
On its rim a master hand has drawn
Low-lying mountains, finely shaded peaks,
And in the center of the bowl has placed
Design of mirages that to you speaks
Of day dreams and this realm of dreams seems
 real;
Of fairies and of fancies you've forgot.
You could linger there for long and feel
At last you'd found the precious thing you'd sought.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 138.

Mojave Town

“The desert gets you,” I’ve heard it said
Out in Mojave Town.
If you live awhile there, you will stay;
You won’t want to go away.
You’ll be glad to settle down.
“Oh, never mind the heat,” they scoff,
Out in Mojave Town.
“You’ll get used to it. It’s dry and good.
You’ll learn to like it or you should.
It’s great here when the sun’s gone down.”
“The desert gets you,” I know it’s true,
Out in Mojave Town.
I’ll suffer dust and wind and heat
For the desert’s lure just can’t be beat.
And maybe I will even settle down.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 139.

The Desert Blooms

When Nature has so long suppressed
The boundless urge of life
And meagerness, itself expressed
In struggle harsh and strife,
There comes unto the desert, Spring!
Spring, and its rains long waited fall.
The desert wakes, to gladly bring
Its joy, its hope, its faith, its all.
And in one vast outpouring, spreads
A robe of beauty, vivid, live.
Then, joy with joy old Nature weds;
Courage renewed, for life once more to strive.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 139.

Antelope Valley

Not all of the desert's deserted,
Not all of the desert is bare;
At the northern foot of San Gabriels
Antelope Valley lies there;
Dotted with farms in the making,
With fruit trees in orderly row;
Apricots, pears and kadotas
And grapes, flavored lusciously, grow.
In the old days, antelope wandered
Through the forests of Joshua trees
Where now the orchard's sweet blossoms
Shower fragrance on ev'ry Spring breeze.
Antelope Valley in Springtime!
Its pale blues, its greys, and its greens,
Together with clouds of pink blossoms—
Could an artist e'er wish fairer scenes?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 140.

Canyon of Devil's Desire

Oh, had God made me an artist
To dream on a canvas, I'd paint
Not the beauty of woman, tho' fair she might be,
Nor the pious, still face of the saint,
But a canyon, a canyon of colorful cliffs
Of breath-taking beauty and power;
Where in rapturous silence, o'erwhelmed by the sight,
I could live a long week in an hour.
I'd paint in a sky of a soft turquoise blue,
Rough mountain walls reaching high,
Their bold peaks a shining Egyptian brown red,
Clear cut 'gainst the untroubled sky.
I'd shade down the red to the rosiest pinks
With, here and there, long streaks of white,
And in the far background, a sullen, dark hill
In its shadows of blue, mystic light.
The canyon floor, narrow, a grey sandy wash,
Deep rutted and winding its way;
I'd name it the Canyon of Devil's Desire,
Wipe my brushes and call it a day.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 140.

Petrified Forest

At the end of the Canyon of Devil's Desire,
Where Last Chance Canyon begins,
Is a strange little basin of the queerest white soil And its atmosphere certainly
lends
To the feeling of mystery that hangs o'er the land.
A shadowy ghost of the fear
Of vast cataclysms of long ago days,
Perhaps when the Tertiary Period was here.
In the putty-white deposits half surrounding the glade Are embedded great
mammals and trees.
Petrified bits are abundantly found.
I took up specimens of these,
And over me swept a great feeling of awe;
Millions of years passed me by.
How old is the earth, how brief is the time
Man may live here before he must die.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 141.

Poison Spring

Nature the Cynic, the Jester,
Played a joke unbelievably grim;
When she placed in the thirsty desert
Poisoned springs as an idle whim.
In one of Mojave's lone canyons
We found such a spring one day;
Saw the cruel effects of the water
On the poor desert creatures that lay
Dying and dead all around it.
In the matted coarse grass I saw gleam
The bleached bones of others long perished;
Fallen there by the side of the stream
That trickled a short way ere it vanished
Again in the sand and was lost.
I shuddered at the tho't of the price
A good drink of this water would cost.
It looked so clear and so sparkling,
The "Vega" so temptingly green,
I'd never have dreamed that death lurked here
Had I with my own eyes not seen.
Yes, nature's a cynic, a jester,
Unbelievably cruel and grim
Or she'd not have placed in the desert
Poisoned springs, as an idle whim.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 142.

Little Wild Dog

When gold stars, like bright flowers, are beginning to bloom
At the edge of sunset's last glow;
When the pale jade of Joshuas turns to grey gloom,
And the desert wind whispers so low;
Out of that first fresh stillness, breaks forth a cry,
A lone coyote's wail to his mate;
His hunting call throbbing and eager, alive;
Willing to meet his measure of fate.
"Ah-a-a-ah! Ah-a-a-ah!" A challenge, insistently clear.
A little wild dog, greeting the night; telling the stars, "Hello,"
As they beam down on him seeming wonderfully near;
Urging him to race 'neath their golden glow.
"Ah-a-a-ah. Ah-a-a-ah!" A little wild dog greeting the night,
Telling the stars, "Hello."

When white stars, like plucked flowers, are beginning to fade,
And the east shows the first streak of dawn;
When the grey-black of Joshuas turns to pale jade,
And the mystery of night's nearly gone;
On the cool still sweet air, an eerie cry's borne,
The Voice of the Wilderness calls;
Fraught with primitive instincts, savage and wild,
A mockery of laughter, that rises and falls.
"Ah-a-a-ah! Ah-a-a-ah!" Ten demons, it seems, 'stead of one
Little wild dog greeting the morn; telling the stars, "Good-by."
His little grey muzzle tilted up as he's done,
Ever since he first saw glorious dawn in the sky.
"Ah-a-a-ah. Ah-a-a-ah!" Little wild dog greeting the morn,
Telling the stars, "Good-by."

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 143.

The Seeker of Dreams

Trudging slowly along o'er the desert
A little old Seeker of Dreams
Patiently trailing a jack,
With odds and ends of a pack
On its mousy grey back;
In its wise old eyes humorous gleams.

Trudging slowly along, lone, forgotten,
A little old Seeker of Dreams.
And I heard him say
That the world of today
In its mad bustling way
"T's hurryin' too fast, it jest seems."

Trudging slowly along in his own world,
A little old Seeker of Dreams.
He's panning the sand
In a wonderful land
Of a sunset grand
A-finding rich strikes in its streams.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 144.

Monuments of Lost Hopes

It was turning cooler on that long hot afternoon,
As the chariot of the sun rolled down its track,
And the dusky hills behind me stood out boldly in relief,
As I came to an old “diggins” and a weather-beaten shack.
Deserted now, and silent, with its gaping window bleak,
Where a little desert lizard sits and mopes,
And a lonely breeze comes sighing, ’round the corner, all
forlorn;
Where once somebody lived with dreams and hopes.
Dreams that turned to dust and ashes, with hopes that never panned.
Not a color left in either shaft or stopes,
And the dreamer drifted, dreaming, while behind him sadly stands
His abandoned cabin, a memorial to Lost Hopes.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 145.

Randsburg

Houses clinging to the steep sides of the gulch,
Perched on barren slopes as might a desert bird of prey,
Gazing down into a mist-blue valley
In a sullen, brooding sort of way;
A typical kind of mining town, where men
Live nearer to the natural in their search for gold,
Isolated yet by the harsh and gripping desert,
Even as it was in half-forgotten days of old;
But contented are the people there, and happy—
Kind also, to the stranger at their gate;
Inarticulate, but conscious always of the desert,
Feeling the vast power of its enchantment great.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 145.

At the Feet of the Desert God

At the feet of the Desert God, I cast
All that is left of me,
Sorry and sick and sinking fast
Into the sea of Eternity,
In the city there, where a million lights
Rivalled the sun of day,
Yet could not brighten the soul's dark nights,
Nor warn its feet of clay.
So to the desert when hopes seemed gone,
Beside me a faithful friend;
We'll see together, life's dearest dawn,
Or else—the sunset's end.
The chance is slim, but a hope I feel,
In the narrow trail I'll plod,
With a prayer in my heart as I humbly kneel,
At the feet of the Desert God.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 146.

Acrostic

Gradational hills shelter unpainted shacks
Of a mining camp I know,
Lingering still on Mojave's breast,
Deserted almost and destined to go—
Save one tiny cabin immaculate, clean,
That's "home sweet home" to one
Of these interesting men the desert breeds.
Nowhere are there finer under the sun.
Every tho'tful courtesy he offered us,
And pleasant the hours we spent.
He panned us gold so the tales he told
Might have a romantic reality lent.
His treasured pet was a turtle small:
"Jimmy," he said, was its name;
The size of a silver dollar it was:
"And he knows all about this minin' game
For I talk to him when I sit alone
After all of the work is done
And we watch the glint of broken glass
Turned to purple out there in the sun."
He gave me a bottle perfect, intact,
Of that delicate lavender hue.
I prize it so I'd like him to know
That it's part of my sun-garden too.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 146.

Fossil Beds at Barstow

Commanding were those columns and terraces
green,
Carved in colorful cliffs of clay;
With shadows grotesque and mysterious
Lingering o'er them at closing of day.
Among their fantastical galleries,
With steps awed and reverently slow,
We searched for the fossils that would tell us
Tales of the past long ago.
Huge mammals that roamed these wild regions
Fulfilled their odd fate, and that done,
Have vanished, no more reappearing,
Fore'er lost is their place in the sun.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 147.

My Little Dream

I've a little bit of fancy
I've a little idle scheme
I've a little plan I cherish
I've a little treasured dream:

Out there where the big Mojave
Stretches endlessly away,
I stumbled on the precious setting
For my dream one winter day.
Old Pilot Knob rose from the mesa,
Its gaunt shoulders' rolling swell
Hid a small rincón, a basin,
Wherein lies cold, clear granite well.
All dull grey, that little basin—
Grey, the upflung granite peaks
'Gainst that rare blue sky, that often
The true artist vainly seeks.
Unfolding there below me
A valley rich in shades of blue,
Reaching to the purple mountains—
A soul-satisfying view.
Then and there, my dreams slow shaping
Built a tiny house for me,
Looking down into that valley
With its changing lights' beauty;
A little grey stone cabin,
Lava black its big fire-place;
A flat, unbroken granite boulder

For the doorstep's homey grace.
Beside the deepset pleasant windows
Yucca Arboresces grow;
Frame the view within the cabin
Of the valley there below.
A riot of wildflower blossoms
And in the evenings lovely, cool,
Come the rabbits from the wasteland
To drink at the crystal pool.

My dream may never know fulfillment
But it's visualized so clear
That I'm happy just in having
Such a dream so close and dear.

Publication. Northern Pilot Knob.

“Joe-berg”

Just around the hill from Randsburg
Is her little sister town,
Squatted on a gently sloping flat,
Hemmed in by sun-baked mountains' frown.
A friendly place, a jolly place,
That handed us her key
And bade us camp just where we pleased:
“For them thar hills are free.
You can camp upon the railroad track
If a level place you seek,
And never mind about the train—
It comes but once a week.”

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 149.

Desert Ghost Towns

What can be sadder than desert ghost towns
Where men and their loved ones have trod,
Have lived and have laughed, both defied and loved God.
Have gone, left behind dreary shacks, rusty mounds
Of dented tin cans, where the wind's mournful sounds
Are songs listened to by trade rat as he plods,
Building his nest of bright ends and of odds
He's traded stones and sticks for at the dump-grounds.

How lonely these places brooded o'er by despair
That once were the havens of men!
The gold light from their windows shining out thru the night;
The prattle of child voices and laughs on the air
That will never be there again,
Driven forth as they were by the desert's grim might.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 150.

Indian Springs in November

Grey was that day in November.
Sullen and somber the sky.
Chilled steel were the hills all around us.
And the wind mourned in passing us by.
The desert moped sad and dejected
As the day wore on to a close.
Then just at sunset it quickened
To a world overshadowed with rose.
Pulsating with color the heavens.
Cloud curtains were drawn a while
And the sun looked out o'er the desert
With a mellow-gold whimsical smile
That gave richness and beauty ethereal
To this grave desert land that I love.
For a brief space 'twas radiant e'er fading
To the grey of a wild mourning-dove.
O'er Indian Springs the swift dusk came,
Black night settling down with a rush.
Past me in the gloaming, an owl swept low
On swift silent wings thro' the hush.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 150.

From an Old-Timer to the Calicos

There's somethin' mighty fascinatin'
That's a-callin' me back.
Them Calicos are out there waitin'
For me and my old pal, Jack.
Hills as purty as a picture;
And they've still got plenty gold.
Maybe every pan's not sure,
As in the days of old.
But I'd like them Calicos, no matter
If I never panned a hint,
For memories of the yesterdays,
And the colors as they glint
Forever in the sunlight.
Gosh, I'm headin' back out there
Where a man has freedom right
And a chance at good fresh air.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 152.

Part III | Death Valley

That Crucible of God's

*BEAUTIFUL, sinister valley, veiled in magical blue haze Thro' which gleam
the changing colors of your savage hills always.*

Out there where the mountains are naked,
Boldly scorning a garment of green;
Out there where the valleys forsakéd
Are bare but for mesmeric sheen
Of light, cast down from a heaven
Brazen, free from all trace of a cloud;
Where silence is such that a whisper
From a passing wind is so loud,
The Great Chemist has created his work shop
Where man now half fearfully plods,
Stumbling sometimes on a secret
In that melting pot of God's.

It is here that the Chemist has smelted
Rare metals, His silver and gold;
Mixed chemicals, elements, fused, melted
With a heat force unguessed and untold.
The uncovered saline breasts of those valleys
Where borax, salts and potash abound;
Perchance, unknown forces and factors
In future, will in them be found.
They haunt me, those dizzy deep valleys,
Those mountains where man seldom trods;
Where the eyes of but few have been privileged
To dwell on that workshop of God's.

I was never so happy, contented,
As when roaming those rough ridges steep,
Or when the Sun Demon relented,
Those valleys where long shadows sleep,
His laboratory, rife with confusion
Of experiments, principles, powers;
Brooded o'er by the quiet of study
Through ages that are but as hours.

I was never so happy, contented,
As I knelt where a lone holly nods,
To offer my soul to the Chemist
In that Crucible, vast, that is God's.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 153.

Panamint Mountains

The olden days, the golden days,
May ne'er come back, and yet
Those men of old who sought for gold
Have left their mark, you bet,
On hills of blue that yielded too
To those who did not fail
When they lashed the pack to a lazy jack
And hit a lone hard trail.
And we who ride where the trail is wide
To the snort of an iron steed
Will never know what it cost to go
Like the men of that brave breed.
And we never can "slosh" a frying pan
With the grace of those old days
When the miners bold panned their own free gold
And their forty-fives had taking ways.
If you listen well, they've tales to tell,
Those that are left, those few
Of that old-time band who washed the sand
When the gold fields all were new.
There's one I met who lives there yet,
And you'd know him since the fame
Of his Bull Frog Strike was the kind men like—
Need I tell you now his name?
He talked to me and he made me see
The roaring camps now dead.
He loves them still and he always will:
"Them was the days," he said.
I asked if he knew why the Panamints blue
Were called by that queer name,
And he told me why, with a bit of a sigh;
And I'll tell you the same.

“A desert rat by a campfire sat
And to his friend he told,
How he’d go out there to the mountains bare
And pan a mint o’ gold.”

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 154.

Hidden Spring

Let me tell you, fellers,
These hills are full of wit—
A sort of grim old humor
That makes you think a bit.
What's that? Why, sure, I'll tell you
Why I think it's so;
And Billy, here, my pardner,
Will second me, I know.
We were scratching o'er the hills
And pitched our camp one night
Near a place called Hidden Spring—
It oughta be all right.
We drank lots of the water—
It seemed pretty doggoned good—
But that night we thought we'd die
And only wished we could.
When we were feeling better,
'Twas all our hoggish faults;
We found the goldarn spring
Was full of epsom salts.
Some distance back away
They mine the blooming stuff,
in that one spot I'll say
There's epsom salts enough
To last the world a lifetime,
Yea, forever and a day.
Need I tell you laughin' horntoads
Me and Billy didn't stay?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 156.

Sketches on a Deserted Cabin Wall

Where are the Three Musketeers
Whose sketches, provocative, jokey,
Scrawled on the walls of a cabin deserted,
Were signed, “Happy,” “Frenchy,” and “Smoky”?
Are they still comrades together
Somewhere in the desert, those three
Whose scribbblings for one pleasant hour
Meant diversion, amusement for me?
In the quiet of crumbling shacks,
With lonely, sad hills crowding round,
Where laughter and joy must have lived,
Now only the pack rats abound.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 158.

Acrostic

There's a model little village tucked away,
Recessed there among the rocky hills
Overlooking Searles' Lake, where heat waves sway,
Nor ever cease their dancing while the sunlight fills
All the valley from the breaking forth of day,
Marching up the Slate Range to its crest
Yonder, lingering till the sun's last ray
Returns, its arrow winging to the west
Effulgent, that eccentric dry lake lies,
Giving its powdery white wealth to mankind—
A gift full compensating for the glare of desert skies.
Remote the village, but you'd scarcely find,
Despite its lonely setting, a more modern place;
So trim and neat the tamarix hedges of this town so full of cleanly grace.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 158.

First Camp

Camping tonight 'neath the stars
Where never I tho't I'd be,
In that magic Valley of Death
That's called so long to me.
Where scrawney creosote sways
To a warm wind, lashing free,
Singing strange wild lays
To my Pal, my dog, and me.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 159.

To Panamint Valley

When I'm dreaming sometimes of the desert,
I'll find myself wandering out there
To stand once again on the summit
Of the Slate Range, scoriform, bare;
Gazing down on a valley enchanted
With the light of the sun's mellow smile,
In that last wondrous hour ere the Sun-god
Turns his face from the desert awhile.

Eastward, the wrinkled old Panamints,
Their opaline slopes lifting high,
The snowy white peak called the Telescope,
To train it upon a clear sky.
Westward, blue hills and blue canyons
Beckon me on, and the spell
Of their promise of romance and mystery
In my heart forever will dwell.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 159.

Bench Marks

Bench marks, bench marks,
Bronze caps shining in the sun;
Wherever they chance to be,
I read them every one.
Bench marks, bench marks,
Men place for us to see
On the highest mountain peak
And the floor of Death Valley.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 160.

Ballarat

A few old brown adobe walls
Bathed in sunlight all the day,
At the feet of scarred, eroded mountains
That watched their rising and decay
With the same air of indifference;
The Panamints' own impassive mien.
Contrasting their impressive grandeur
With that fading mortal scene. '
Rusty cans and broken bottles;
An old pack-saddle in the street;
A band of shaggy burros stamping
At the flies, and silence, heat
Hanging o'er that desolate valley
Where one lonely old man sat,
Gazing 'cross the shimmery valley—
That's all that's left of Ballarat.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 160.

Death Valley Dunes

Magic dunes in a magic world,
Dunes where a magic dancer whirled
And left small footprints in the sand.

Golden dunes where a golden light
Glow like an opal until the night
Throws a black scarf over all the land.

Lonely dunes where a lonely soul
Finds kinship in the restless roll
Of constant shifting barren wastes.

Haunting dunes where a haunted heart
Finds in the magic dancer's art
An echo of its tastes.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 162.

Camp at Wild Rose

In the added hush of evening
When the first star comes to shine,
We pitched our camp in Wild Rose
At the edge of first snow-line.
The smoke of pungent sage brush
From our small fire floated high;
And the rosy blush from sunset
Lingered faintly in the sky.
What more, I paused to wonder,
Could countless riches give
Than this sweet hour of quiet,
Or the joy we knew to live?

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 162.

Emigrant Spring

Clear water, good water, cold.
This small tank a haven.
Precious alike in this wilderness waste
To man or—the raven.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 164.

Heat

Demon of torment, panting in glee.
Blasts of hot air breathing on me.
Heat! Heat! Heat!
Death Valley Heat!
Dragon of terror, sapping the strength,
Burning up life's force until at length
Madness and fear reason unseat.
Death seems to offer a welcome retreat
From Death Valley's monster
Heat! Heat! Heat!

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 164.

Mesa Negra

I like to remember a sunset I saw
Out there where the mountain is ragged and raw
From the fires of creation, tho' nobody knows
How old it may be, that mountain of rose,
Of brown and of green, of gold and of grey,
That reflected the glow of the fast dying day,
As we toiled up the road on the mountain's bare breast
To the small town of Ryan cuddled at rest,
Like a little white bird grown weary of flight
That stoops to the mountain to rest for the night.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 164.

Panamint George

The suns of many a torrid summer
On this Redman's head have shone;
Many a desert's winter storm's
Wild fury he has known.
He's wrested from the wasteland
Where a white man's faith would fail
A meager ranch, a resting place,
From whose hardships many'd quail.
Squatted low, a shack-like shelter,
'Gainst whose walls the old squaws sun
Themselves, sullen, silent, watching
While a pack of canines run
Barking, snarling forth to meet us
As we drove up to the place.
The old man came to greet us
With the calm poise of his race.
We brought to him a message
And we carried one away
To a kinsman in Death Valley:
That's the desert dweller's way.
I looked back from the next rise
To where scrawny tree's starved branch
Gives a bit of shade and color
To the desert Indian's ranch.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 168.

Portals of Rose and Gold

Thro' Portals of Rose and Gold
We looked on that valley far,
Wrapped in the blue of evening's robe,
Concealing the truths that are.
Thro' Portals of Rose and Gold
Where once in the long ago
Men struggled upward from death
In that valley far below.
Portals of Rose and Gold
Must ever frame for me
My first enchanted view
Of dreadful Death Valley.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 168.

Furnace Creek

'Was there ever anywhere a sound,
Sweeter than the laughter of that stream?
Gushing forth from ashen lavic mound;
Hurrying down the scarred old canyon 'til the gleam
Of its happy waters reach the handsome Inn
Built artistically atop a rise,
That its many windows might forever win
A priceless view of valley floor and desert skies.
Then on the rippling waters warm,
A magic gift, that in the valley there below
Might flourish the welcome greenery of a farm,
That palms of the far and glamorous East might grow.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 168.

Devil's Plowed Field

The Devil decided a farmer he'd be,
(To choose such vocation the Devil's own fault)
So he plowed up Death Valley with a sizzling share
And sowed it with alkali, borax and salt.
He gave it salt water, and heat quite intense,
And blew in some extra sand as he'd pass;
His crop was a stinking yellow-green weed,
And in the salt marshes a large devil-grass.

Death Valley's a land of the prettiest stones,
Odd-shaped and rough and unique.
I treasure a few that I gathered one day
On a hill in that valley bleak.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 170.

Eagle Mountain

I saw you first from fifty miles away,
 Eagle Mountain.
Faintly blue against the desert's grey,
 Eagle Mountain.
A strange shape, folded wing and out-thrust beak,
 Eagle Mountain.
As if you sought to guard the treasure that they seek,
 Eagle Mountain.
Those souls that live beneath your shadow on the desert bleak,
 Eagle Mountain.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 170.

Hole-in-Rock Spring

Up a steep trail, winding over ashen hills
With slim white signposts beckoning
From each successive rise.
Here and there along the trail
Round clumps of pink-spined cactus;
Above, the dreamy blue of desert skies
In late November. Trail's end
Where canyon thrushes sing
As they dart from cool green rushes
Growing in the grotto of the spring.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 172.

Winds of Wingate Pass

A breathless, waiting hush
Then wings of the desert's wind
Through Wingate Pass with a rush,
Beating on to the valley again;
Driving the grey cloud-sheep
In the twilight dusk above;
Stirring the holly, asleep
On the sun-brown slopes I love;
Whispering a gypsy song
To the campfire's eager flame;
Calling my heart along; (
Murm'ring a mem'ried name.
Wings of the desert's wind,
Through Wingate Pass with a rush,
Beating on to the wide world again
Then darkness, and breathless hush.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 172.

Trail's End

Trail's End! Rest there 'neath the open sky,
Stilled by all mortal yearning.
Cradled by the arms of Mother Earth, to lie
Still! Still! Dreaming ne'er nor turning.
Unconscious of the rising sun,
Or of its noonday burning;
Unheeding when the day is done;
No twilights beautiful discerning.

Awesome, awful there to die,
Alone—no human heart attending;
Like some wasteland creature there to lie
While suns and winds descending
Leave scant vestige of what was
A human, sins and virtues blending.
I can but wonder what the cause
For such a tragic ending.

Yet perhaps a better end by far
To a hard trail's wandering.
Rest beneath the desert star;
What matters all the pondering?
For after all alone each lives—
Alone each human soul is wandering
As we pass back to Him who gives
The gift we've all been squandering.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 174.

Dante's View

From an arid peak where wild winds shriek
A dirge to the Funeral Range;
The charmed gaze falls down colored walls
To a valley weird and strange.
Awesome too, a breath-taking view
Six thousand feet below;
A veritable maze of purple haze
With opal lights that glow.
Living light that burns so bright,
Or paling dull by turn,
When the shadows sleep in the valley deep
And the slopes of the Funerals burn.
So at peace it seems that vale of dreams
With its subdued color-tone,
True self belied for the whole world wide,
Its terrible nature's known.
So smooth the floor where the gleaming hoar
Of Salt Creek twisting winds
Dotting the scene the faint smudged green
Of waterhole outlines,
Beneath this brink is the lowest sink;
From it the gaze may go,
Traveling fast to rest at last
On Whitney, white with snow.
The lowest place on our country's face;
The highest mount as well.
Not far to go to Heaven you know—
And nearer yet to Hell.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 176.

Southern Sentinel

Over rocky cross-washes, fighting sand and the heat
Of that terrible valley lying still at your feet;
Seeking an egress by way of that pass
Called Wingate—little used and washed out, alas.
Lifting eyes bloodshot from the sun's blazing glare
To rest their tired gaze on your summit up there.
Gaining strength from the great inspiration you give—
Courage to plod on, to laugh and to live—
Oh, sullen, proud Guard of the valley's south gate
Who returns the sun's stare with a grim, dauntless hate.
He, who's robbed you of verdure, of trees rightfully thine,
And burned your great shoulders bronze, till they shine;
Stripped you down to the bare, solid rock, to your heart,
And struggled for ages to blast you apart;
Scornfully triumphant, you're still at your post,
Defying the Sun god's mad, glittering host.
Today like the yesterdays, Tomorrow will be
Just seconds of time in eternity,
While you brood o'er that valley, with its taluses veiled
In blue haze as down from the canyons they trailed
To spread wide, slate-blue, alluvial fans
On the sun-scorched floor of Death Valley's sands:
Magnificent mountain, sphinx-like as fate,
Sullen, proud Guard of the valley's south gate.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 177.

Canyon of the Moon

We've left our world behind us,
We have flown up to the moon;
And the moon has orange sunsets
With brown bats that zig-zag zoon
Thro' air that knows no motion,
O'er hills of sulphur hue,
Bathed in unearthly luminescence
That changes even Trix and you.

Our wee fire burning oddly
Will fade to ashes soon.
I'm afraid! I don't like camping
In this Canyon of the Moon.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 178.

Water

A tin can's good enough
To drink from when you're dry,
And you'll not complain about it
If the water's alkali!
You'll be glad to get it, brother;
You're in luck to get it, too,
For without that bitter water
You'd never make it thro'.
So drink it from a tin can,
Warm and brackish, but it's wet!
And thank your God you got it!
Men who didn't—are out there, yet!

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 178.

Mushroom Rock

The Devil a satiric demon must be,
With whims inexplicably queer,
That he must have a mushroom in the Valley of Death,
Where there's but half an inch rainfall a year.
But it's not such a mushroom as all of us know,
(Rich ivory, beneath tinged with red)
It spawned on a bare slope out of the sand,
Ethiopian marble instead.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 180.

The Devil: A Sportsman

That Satanic Sportsman plays a good game of golf.
If you don't believe it, feel inclined to scoff,
Go out to Death Valley some one of these days
And just see the course where His Majesty plays.
You'd have to admit that he swings a mean club,
No one that e'er sees it can think him a dub.
And beyond the last hole, all glistening grey,
Lies the race-track that is called the Devil's Speedway,
Requiring little imagination to see
His grim evil presence racing 'cross it in glee,
On his way toward the South where that Master of Sin
Makes a batch of hot biscuits from the Devil's Flour Bin.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 180.

Luring Trails

Little dim trails wandering
Out into the desert waste.
Little dim trails beckoning,
“Come in leisure, not in haste;
Follow us, we’ll find adventure,
Life and death may play with you.
Hardships, yes, you may encounter
But there’s always something new.”
I’ve a feeling of excitement
When a new trail calls to me.
The dim trails; alluring trails;
Let’s follow them and see.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 182.

My Garden of Allah

When the days are filled with hurry,
And I half resent it all;
When the nights are white with moonlight
And I feel the desert's call;
While I'm exiled in the city,
Though my dreams are wandering far
To the desert way out yonder
Where the shifting sand dunes are;
I'm impatient, restless, weary
Till I drift outside and see
Allah's little desert garden
That I've brought home with me.
Each clump of thorny cactus,
Every rock or bleaching bone,
Every cholla, ocotillo,
Holds a story of its own.
From the borders far, of Mexico
To Death Valley's northern end
Gulches, lonely, nameless canyons,
Hills and mesas all did lend
Some bits of treasured flora
Steeped in priceless memory,
That the little Allah's Garden
Might hold the desert's mystery.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 182.

Zabriske Point

In the galleries of human souls are hung
Memory pictures: some faint, some clear.
In retrospection we may pass along, to pause
Before a certain one especially dear.

So tonight I wander thro' the gallery of my soul,
Past the many scenes of desert land,
To the one that yet has power to thrill.
Once more before Zabriske Point I stand.

Ah, the glamour of each golden hill,
Serrated barren crests outlined with brown.
Beyond them, glimpses of the valley, still.
Towering o'er the distant range, Telescope looks down.
 Tl always cherish that one canvas bright
 In the treasure gallery that is mine,
 Yet wish that you who read these lines
 Might also hang this scene within the gallery that is thine.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 183.

Camp at McLean Spring

Coarse grass, salt yellowed marsh grass,
And salt-encrusted sand;
Ferny-leaved cat-claw
In wind-piled hummocks stand.
Cracking feet, stamping feet,
Big soft eyes of brown;
Fighting flies, looking wise,
A little long-eared clown,
Watching while I light the pile
Of sun-bleached mesquite root;
Slice the bread for evening's spread,
And dish up stew and fruit.
Work all done, the day's sands run,
The scarlet sun gone down,
He chose to budge, I felt the nudge
Of this little long-eared clown.
Raisins red from my hand I fed:
His muzzle, velvet soft,
E'er came the night and a flood of light
From a golden moon aloft.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 184.

Desert Dwellers

Scattered wide in the great “Outside,”
Back at the edge of things,
Are men and women who’ve lived and died
Or are living still, and memory brings
Again, treasured hours I’ve spent with them
Out there in the desert land,
When they’ve offered me hospitality,
And the quick, friendly grip of their hand.
I’ve been privileged to dine with men that were fine
In the highest sense of the word
Gifted, cultured and good in their line
Their tales are the best that I’ve heard.
Some, rugged and rough, but I’d count on them
If ever I needed a friend.
They stick by you the whole way through
To the bitterest sort of an end.
They’d never trade the trails they’ve made
For a city’s thorofare,
And city lights just pale and fade
Beside their stars out there.
They’ll talk to you, but they’ll never ask
Of things that belong inside;
Their lives and interests are buried out there
In the land where they abide.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 186.

This Desert Love of Mine

Like a beautiful pale-faced woman
Whose dark eyes inscrutably shine,
Draped in thin veils of lilac-blue shadow
Is this Desert Love of mine.
Exotic, remote and mysterious,
Yield once to her glamorous allure,
You will never be free from her presence,
That'll grow and ever endure.
You'll love her and hate her in union,
Ever seek yet to gaze on her face;
Never quite happy when from her,
Remembering forever her grace.
You'll not find it easy to woo her;
It'll cost you in hardships and pain,
Yet you'll follow, how gladly you'll follow,
Whenever she beckons again.
She's a beautiful pale-faced woman,
Whose dark eyes inscrutably shine.
You'll give all—nor regret the devotion,
To this Desert Love of mine.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 188.

In Memory of My Dad

I've camped with joy on desert hill and plain
But oh, I'd be so glad
If only I once more again
Could ride and camp with DAD.
He taught me all the wasteland's ways,
Mountains and the desert's lore;
And told me tales of frontier days,
And each time lived them o'er.
He taught me how to read a trail,
To draw a map in sand;
To "carry on" when luck would fail,
To love and understand
The wilderness, the reaches wide.
His far gaze seemed to see
The romance there on every side;
To pierce the veils of mystery.
He rides sometimes, not speaking,
Down the trails I can't forget.
I hear saddle leather creaking
And his spurs a-jingling yet.
But he's riding only down Memory Lane,
And I can ne'er be truly glad,
For I, no, never here again
Can ride and camp with DAD.
Until one day in some Far Place
I'll go to meet him there.
Together we will once more face
Another Land more vast and fair.
We'll prospect all the likely hills;
 Pan gold at the rainbow's end;
Find diamonds and their dust in stars;
 O'er lovely cloud-trails we will wend.
We'll hunt the Big and Little Bear
 Thro' the forests of the sky,
And when the sun at evening goes,
 On starry couches we will lie.

He'll ride his bald-face Punta horse,
And I, my Freckled Lad.
Oh, yes, one day in some Far Place
I'll ride and camp with DAD.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 190.

Campfires

On mountains high, that touch the sky,
My campfires burned at night;
And valleys low, have known the glow
Of their red dancing light.
They flickered o'er a score or more
Of faces loved and true
That now are gone forever on
From all the trails we knew.
But I'll always see in memory
Across a campfire's blaze
The eyes of you 'mong that wild crew—
My pal of other days.
Though treks lead far, like a shining star
Beside whose flames I'll rest,
I'll see the while your strange sad smile
'Cross a fire on the desert's breast.

Publication. First published in *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930, p. 191.

Bibliography

Selected primary and secondary sources

Book and periodical titles are italicized throughout.

Works by the Author

Deeth, L. Sandra. *Desert Dwellers: Poems*. Photographs by A. V. Paulsen, Wetzel Publishing Company, 1930.

Works About the Author

Colophon

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