

Fall 1977

## On Williams Street

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## ON WILLIAMS STREET

I am here in the deep shade of the bluff  
Leaning, on a day in June,  
Against a huge slab  
Of limestone  
Left among the ferns and birch  
By the cutters who went home  
And never returned, who turned instead  
Into those thick-armed men I see  
In work-shirts  
Pictured, circa 1902,  
In the county museum on Williams Street,  
Who turned and are riding the rest  
Of their lives on huge blocks  
Down the gray face  
Of the hill,  
Floating still as the stones  
And the wind they ride  
In the county museum on Williams Street.

And as this long bluff begins to cool,  
And the swallows are out riding  
The air in the quarry,  
I can hear myself  
When I step close and breathe  
Into the blow-holes, hear myself  
Far back in the stone.  
And for an instant, the bluff is alive,  
Breathing the long slow breaths  
Of my father, whom I see  
Along with these men  
In the county museum on Williams Street.  
Also Old Joe who sometimes stands  
In the warm evenings at the edge  
Of our lawn,  
Crazy with age, afraid of the long

Climb down the stone steps  
That fall away in grass,  
And that end at the Home where he's washed  
And bedded down, and lies alone  
In his white pajamas;  
Who dreams each night he's out  
Over the elms, riding a shining slab  
Down with the swallows, down  
Into the old freight yard,  
Pictured cold and desolate in 1902,  
In the county museum on Williams Street.