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Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley, Photographer 1865–1931

Francis Lunney

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**Wilson “Snowflake” Bentley, Photographer
1865–1931**

He catches snowflakes in a velvet box,
in a forest of yellow birch and sugar maple,

lungs filled with gathering cold. The tripod legs
of his giant camera break the ice. A crow calls

as the first flakes drift. He lifts crystals with a feather
onto a glass microscope slide, adjusts the pulse of knobs

and dials. He experiments with the camera: the smallest aperture,
long exposures. Nature’s designs come into focus:

hexagonal arms, dendrite stars. Jewels never seen before.
Perfect symmetry—its own miracle. What is delicate

quickly melts away. Summer nights, he hangs a bed sheet
on a neighbor’s clothesline, projects slides of winter’s beauty

for the children of Jericho.

Francis Lunnery

FRANCIS LUNNEY’S poems have appeared in *Outside Bozeman*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Salamander*, and *Blueline*. One of his poems is part of the Poetry in the Park installation at Edmands Park in Newton, Massachusetts. He also had a poem aired on WCAI’s (Cape Cod’s NPR station) *Poetry Sunday* program. He currently lives in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where he works as a reading specialist.