American Life in Poetry: Column 711

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Squirrels hide many more acorns than they can find, and thus we have oaks. And a child might hide precious belongings, then hide the map that gives their location, then hide the clue to where the map is hidden. Dan Gerber, who lives in California, remembers just such a hiding place, as well as a place and time that's far beyond finding. This poem is from his 2017 new and selected poems from Copper Canyon Press, entitled *Particles*.

**The Cache**

Behind the house in a field
there's a metal box I buried
full of childhood treasure, a map
of my secret place, a few lead pennies
from 1943.
The rest I've forgotten,
forgotten even the exact spot
I covered with moss and loam.

Now I'm back and twenty years
have made so little difference
I suspect they never happened,
this face in the mirror
aged with pencil and putty.
I suspect even
the box has moved as a mole would move
to a new place long ago.