

## Mapping Worcester in Poetry News, March 2022

<https://worcestercountypoetry.org/mapping-worcester-in-poetry/>

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Here's the latest news about **Mapping Worcester in Poetry**, an initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (through Scholarship in Action at Holy Cross) and directed by Susan Elizabeth “Beth” Sweeney, with the Worcester County Poetry Association as community partner and Kate Gregoire as liaison with the WCPA. **MWiP** identifies, documents, and marks sites related to some of the city's best-known poets—including Stanley Kunitz, Elizabeth Bishop, Charles Olson, Mary Fell, Etheridge Knight, and Chris Gilbert—while nurturing brand-new poetry about Worcester and Central Massachusetts.

### Starting up

We spent fall 2021 networking, brainstorming, planning, and organizing. After we received the Mellon grant, Beth was invited to read Stanley Kunitz's poem “My Mother's Pears”—which describes a pear tree he planted at 4 Woodford Street and is dedicated to Carol Stockmal and the late Greg Stockmal, the house's owners—at the inauguration of Holy Cross's new president.

We now have a Statement of Shared Expectations (endorsed by representatives of WCPA, SIA, and **MWiP**), a logo, and an advisory board that so far includes:

- Lisa Drexhage (Executive Director, Pow! Wow! Worcester)
- Judith Ferrara (Docent at Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home and author of a forthcoming biography of Yetta Kunitz Dine)
- Katherine Gregoire (Liaison with Worcester County Poetry Association)
- Rodger Martin (President, WCPA)
- Juan Matos (Worcester Poet Laureate)
- Joy Murietta (Executive Director, Main IDEA)
- Carolyn Oliver (Editor, *The Worcester Review*)
- Carol Stockmal (Curator, Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home)
- Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (Director of Mapping Worcester in Poetry)
- William Wallace (Executive Director, Worcester Historical Museum)

**MWiP** now has a [page](#) on the WCPA website which has already prompted inquiries from a Bishop scholar and from one of Chris Gilbert's friends, who offered to meet with Beth to identify the places where he lived in Worcester.

## What's happening now



Beth has been working with Katie Knippler, a Holy Cross student research associate, to develop free downloadable driving and walking tours related to Worcester's best-known poets. This research will also help build content for a future story-mapped website. The 20-minute Elizabeth Bishop tour is finished and [available for downloading](#) from the WCPA webpage. We look forward to feedback on it! Tours for Mary Fell, Stanley Kunitz, Charles Olson, and Frank O'Hara will be available soon. This spring, Beth and Katie are working in consultation with the Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home to develop the two Kunitz tours as well as a brochure for the house at 4 Woodford Street.

Meanwhile, Kate Gregoire, our WCPA liaison, is coordinating related programming, beginning with a successful reading of Bishop's poems at her grave in Hope Cemetery to celebrate her 111<sup>th</sup> birthday on February 9, 2022. We made the front page of the *Telegram*! We hope to make the reading an annual event. This spring, we are planning a series of free workshops on writing about place in poetry as well as Poems in Place, a one-time contest for poems about public spaces in the city (Deadline: June 1, 2023). Selected poems will receive a \$75 honorarium and be shared with the community through displays on site, an exhibit, publication, readings, and videorecordings.



## Future plans

Next year, 2022-2023, Beth will work with student research associates to build a story-mapped website that augments and extends the information from the driving and walking tours. In the third year of the grant, 2023-24, we will launch the website, host a one-day symposium at Holy Cross, collaborate on an exhibit at the Worcester Historical Museum, hold a reading of new poems about public spaces in Worcester, and produce a guest-edited feature section of *The Worcester Review*.

**MWiP** celebrates the poetry all around us in the community we share. We would love to get suggestions for collaborating on inclusive programs to help spread the word!