

Mapping Worcester in Poetry News, March 2023

<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 Katherine 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, Frank O'Hara, Etheridge Knight, Mary Fell, and Chris Gilbert—while nurturing brand-new poetry about places in Worcester and Central Massachusetts.

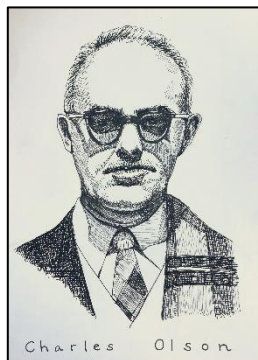
MWiP Project Update

Deborah Packard, executive director of Preservation Worcester, and Mary Conley, director of Scholarship in Action at Holy Cross, have joined ten other members of the advisory board. Due to the pandemic, our Mellon grant has been extended until 2025. Worcester Poet Laureate Oliver de la Paz will judge the Poems in and out of Places contest.

Poems
in and out of
Places

Poetic Tours and Portraits of Poets

With help from student research associate Katie Knippler '22, Beth completed research for eleven driving and walking tours of sites related to the city's most famous poets (two each for Kunitz, Olson, O'Hara, and Fell, and one each for Bishop, Knight, and Gilbert). Carol Stockmal and docents from the Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home helped to revise the first Kunitz tour, and Maureen O'Hara and Karen Durlach offered invaluable insights, information, and materials related to Frank O'Hara and Chris Gilbert. The Bishop tour and the first Kunitz tour are available online; the others are nearly complete. Eventually, the narrative, thematic, historical, and biographical elements of each tour will become part of an interactive story-mapped website.



Last fall, students in Beth's Poetry & Poetics course at Holy Cross, which features a unit on Worcester poets, enjoyed two field trips that combined aspects of several tours. The second field trip culminated in a special visit to the Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home at 4 Woodford Street, hosted by Carol Stockmal with help from docents Judy Ferrara, John Gaumond, and A.J. Leto.

Artist Emma Kuper has now completed seven exquisite pen-and-ink portraits of Bishop, Gilbert, Fell, Knight, Kunitz, O'Hara and Olson for MWiP. The images will appear on printed tours, on the website, and on sets of notecards that will be sold as a fundraiser to benefit the WCPA.

Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home Brochure

During spring 2022, Judy Ferrara, John Gaumond, Kate Gregoire, A.J. Leto, Carol Stockmal, and Beth Sweeney worked together to produce a six-panel brochure that serves as an introduction to the house at 4 Woodford Street; Kunitz's life; his poetry; his connection to Worcester; and his relationship with the Stockmals. We unveiled this brochure at the annual Kunitz Medal Ceremony on July 28.

Elizabeth Bishop Birthday and Bishop/ Menides Memorial Readings



MWiP hosted two readings at Bishop's grave in Hope Cemetery. Our celebration of her birthday, on February 8, led to a front-page story in the *Telegram*. On October 6, the anniversary of her death, we also honored Laura Menides—the poet, Bishop scholar, and past WCPA president who helped to make sure that Bishop's name, her dates, and the last two lines of her poem "The Bight" were finally carved upon her gravestone, seventeen years after her death.

Poems in and out of Places

In April 2022, MWiP announced a one-time contest to inspire new 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 readings, displays on site, videorecordings, publication, and an exhibit.

The City in Motion: Reading and Open Mic

MWiP launched the contest with a reading of old and new poems about Worcester places. On April 21, almost forty people gathered at TidePool Bookshop for a lively event featuring Worcester Poet Laureate Juan Matos, a handful of 2021 Rain Poets, several recipients of the Kunitz Medal—including Tony Brown, whose selection had been announced the day before—and other writers from the city.

Writing about History Free Poetry Workshop

On May 7, 2022, MWiP hosted a workshop, led by Susan Edwards Richmond, on writing poems about the history of a place. The event was held at the Worcester Popup and included field research around the Common. Several attendees enjoyed it so much that they started their own ongoing workshop.

Writing about Worcester's Changing Neighborhoods Free Poetry Workshop

MWiP hosted another workshop, led by Tony Brown, at The White Room in the Crompton Building on Oct. 16. Focusing on loss, growth, and community, it featured poetic collaboration, performances by 2021 and 2022 Rain Poets, field research in the Canal District, and tales of Worcester old and new.

