



**September, 2024**

## **The Connecticut Poetry Society**



The CPS website is <http://ctpoetry.net/>.

While you're online, *Friend us* on Facebook.

### **CPS Honorary Board**

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, CSU Distinguished Professor Emerita

### **CPS Officers**

President: Pat Mottola

Vice President: Jeanne LeVasseur

Secretary: Amy Graver

Treasurer: Patti Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, & John Surowiecki

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: B. Fulton Jennes

Youth Coordinator: Amy Graver

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

### **CPS Members Earn Prizes in the NFSPS Contests**

CPS members were well-represented in the annual poetry awards program hosted by NFSPS (National Federation of State Poetry Societies). They faced competition from poets across the country. **Joan Hofmann** earned first prize from the Stone Gathering Award and third place from the Poetry Society of Michigan. **Gwen Gunn** took third place in the Maine Poets Society Award. Honorable mentions were earned in various contests by **Tony Fusco**, **Emory D. Jones** (in two contests), **Norman Thomas Marchall**, **Julia Meylor Simpson**, and in three different contests, **Elaine Zimmerman**.



## President's Message, September 2024

Dear CPS members,

I hope you all have had a relaxing and productive summer. It's amazing how fast the months fly! Our membership continues to grow, and I am grateful to everyone spreading the word about CPS. And kudos to our membership chair, **Patti Fusco**.

Our fabulous *Connecticut River Review* was distributed, and I trust you are all inspired by the work therein. It's always a great read!

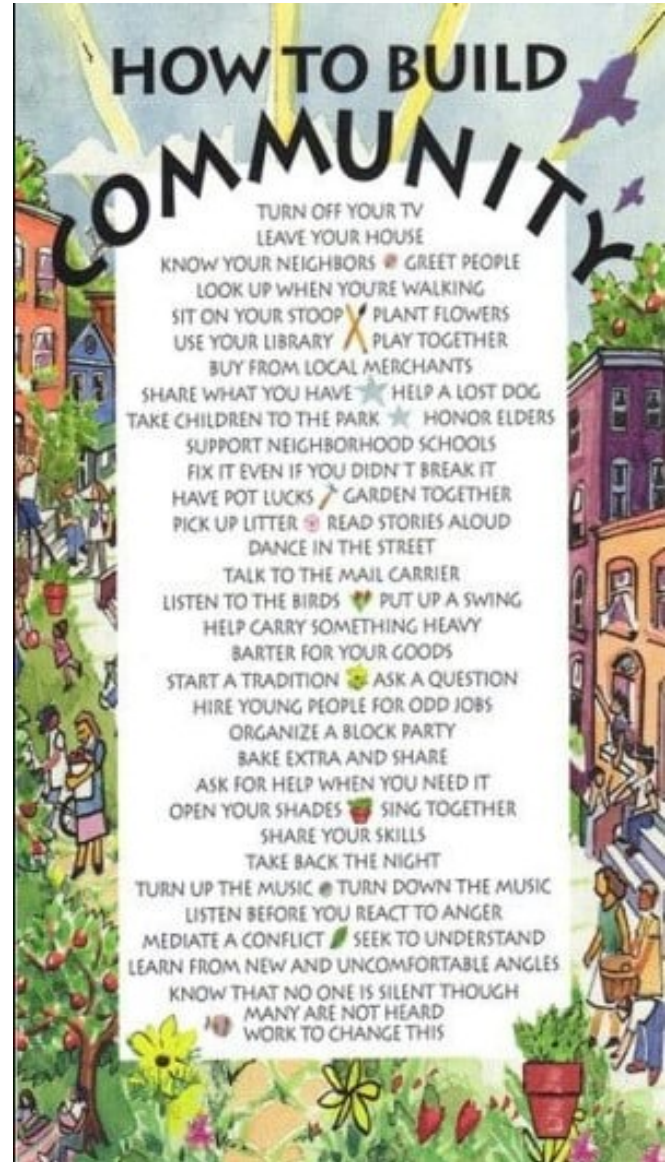
Thanks to our editors **Ginny Connors**, **Debbie Gilbert**, and **John Surowiecki**, who have, again, outdone themselves in putting together another stellar edition.

Know that we, your Board, are planning a wonderful in-person Fall event for you, our dear members.

I want to leave you with this inspiring credo titled "How to Build Community."

See you soon!

Pat Mottola, President, CPS



## CPS Board of Directors Featured at Riverbound Farm in Cheshire

How does CPS run so smoothly, and how does it offer so many fabulous programs and opportunities for its members? Does it magically run itself? Well, not quite. But it does run like clockwork! Our Executive Board of Directors give 200% of themselves each and every day, month, year, to preserve our Connecticut Poetry Society, the longest-running poetry organization in Connecticut! So who are they anyway? And are they really poets? Find out for yourself! Your CPS Board will be

Featured readers at Riverbound Farm. The location is 1881 Cheshire St. in Cheshire, and the program will take place on Sunday, September 22, from 2– 4 p.m. It will conclude with an open mic! The peaceful and serene Riverbound Farm and Sanctuary features a rustic outdoor setting, with walking trails and a museum and nature center. In the event of rain, the reading will be inside. Hope to see you there!

## CPS Chapters & Presidents

If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

### Bethel

**Michael Garry**

[mgarry1955@gmail.com](mailto:mgarry1955@gmail.com)

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-3 pm. Bring copies of a poem to discuss.

### Farmington Valley

**Debbie Gilbert**

[debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com](mailto:debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com)

This chapter meets on the first Monday of each month, from 7-9 pm. Meetings are held in person at One Huntington Glen Road in Avon. Bring ten copies of your poem to share for critique.

### Greater Hartford

**Pegi Deitz Shea**

[pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com)

This chapter will meet on the second Monday of each month (except for July and August) at 6:30 pm, via Zoom, and will be managed by Pegi Deitz Shea. We welcome all current CPS members of towns in the Hartford area. If you would like to join, please contact her at [pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com).

### Haiku Chapter

**Tony Fusco**

[tfusco357@gmail.com](mailto:tfusco357@gmail.com)

Members of the group share haiku in response to a prompt. The chair collects the poems in advance and emails them to all who have sent in a haiku. Poems are due by noon on the 15th of the month. Send poems to Tony Fusco with "CPS Haiku for (month & year) in the subject line. Type your haiku directly onto the email and include your name.

### Manchester

**Victoria Dubiel**

[victoria.dubiel@hotmail.com](mailto:victoria.dubiel@hotmail.com)

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 1-3. They meet at the Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street in Manchester.

### Middletown

**Pat Mottola**

[ctpoeetryline@gmail.com](mailto:ctpoeetryline@gmail.com)

This chapter is resuming. Contact Pat for information on how to participate.

### New Haven

**Tony Fusco**

[tfusco357@gmail.com](mailto:tfusco357@gmail.com)

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10-12. Presently they meet via Zoom.

### Orenaug Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem

**Sandy Carlson**

[orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com](mailto:orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com)

The Orenaug chapter meets in person on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 am. Contact Sandy for the location. The ekphrastic workshops are held at the Woodbury Public Library on the first Saturday of each month at 1 pm.

### Wilton

**Ed Ahern**

[salmonier@aol.com](mailto:salmonier@aol.com)

The Wilton Workshop meets from 2-4 on the third Saturday of each month at the Wilton Library. Email a copy of your poem to Ed in advance, or bring copies when you attend the meeting.



## Poet in the Spotlight: Ed Lent

Poet and Artist **Ed Lent** describes poetry this way: “Poetry is a letter we write to ourselves, then we put it in an envelope with no name, no address, no stamp and mail it out to the world in the middle of the night. That may seem fruitless but it’s probably the most wonderful thing we can do. Cave people painted images on the ceiling of their caves. That’s how we know they were there. Poetry assures us we are here, we saw something, we did something, and we want to tell somebody about it.”

For Lent, poetry, like his artwork, is an emotional response. He says that words have a color pallet for him. He loves writing haiku, and is a member of the Haiku Society of America. Recently he has been very interested in ekphrastic poetry. The Ekphrastic Poetry Trust is a project of his which results in exhibits of artworks paired with poems, and allows poets and artists to interact with each other, “a wonderful cross-pollination of creatives.” People who want to find out more about this or join the Trust should consult his website, <https://www.ealentartistpoet.com>.

Lent used to freelance for lifestyle magazines focusing on interior design, décor, entertaining, and “how-to” advice. Poetry, however, feels like writing that is much more authentic, as it comes from an individual’s uniqueness, and wells up from that place between heart and mind.

He began writing poetry after he had an accident and was rescued by mysterious beings (angels?), right on Fifth Avenue in New York. The mobility scooter he was using hit a curb,

he fell into a deep, icy puddle, and was unable to get up. “I was in panic when this very tall, thin, white-haired man with *cobalt blue eyes* appeared. He *clairvoyantly* spoke to me and assured me that all would be fine. Next thing I know, I’m on the corner on my scooter. I discovered a smaller angel was behind me and as I turned to thank them, they vanished.” And although his clothes should have been icy and wet, he soon discovered they were dry. Later, in bed, voices came to him, as if telling a story. This began to happen frequently, and he began to write down what he heard.

Eventually, these words became poems that resulted in his first book of poetry. Lent says that although he continues to write poems, the earlier muse is much more distant, and the newer poems are often based on memories or observations. He enjoys observing people and their interactions, wherever he and they may be, in a doctor’s office, restaurant, etc. Those observation skills enhance his poetry and his art.





Recently the Connecticut poetry community lost two of its longstanding, long-honored poets: **Rennie McQuilkin** and **Nicholas Giosa**.

Former Connecticut Poet Laureate Robert Rennie McQuilkin died on July 3rd of complications from hip surgery. He had been battling stage four male breast cancer for several years.

He was the son of William Winters McQuilkin, Chairman & Executive officer of Bausch & Lomb, who oversaw the introduction and production of the soft contact lens, and of Eleanor Godwin Atterbury, who was a poet herself. Rennie earned a degree in English Literature from Columbia University and taught at several private schools, including Loomis-Chaffee and Miss Porter's.

After retiring from teaching, he became founding artistic director of the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, held at the Hill-Stead Museum, and renowned throughout New England and beyond. The Festival continued for two decades, and was considered by many to be a landmark event in American poetry.

Later he founded an independent poetry press, Antrim House, which especially championed the work of Connecticut poets. Rennie's own poetry was published in some of the top literary journals, and he was the author of 20 collections. His poetry was characterized

by Richard Wilbur as "spare yet warm-hearted and admirably accurate" with "a honed sense of the New England region."

Predeceased by his beloved wife Sarah, he is survived by three children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

**Nicholas Giosa** passed away on June 29th at the age of 99. He grew up as the son of Italian immigrants; his father supported the family as a barber and expected his son Nick to follow in his footsteps. Nick was an outstanding student and won a scholarship to Columbia University. His time as a student was interrupted by the Battle of the Bulge, which ended student deferments, and he served in the U.S. Navy for two years. On his return home he decided to pursue a career in medicine.

Eventually he set up a practice in Hartford, first as a general practitioner and later as an anesthesiologist at Hartford Hospital. Nick Giosa had many interests, including painting, photography, tennis, and of course—poetry. Nick's poems were influenced by his love of philosophy and the classics, and by his interactions with people during his work as a physician. He self-published two collections of poems. Nick participated enthusiastically in the Hartford-area chapter of CPS. Upon his death, Nick's family generously requested that donations go to CPS in his memory.

He is survived by three sons, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

## Contest News

The 2024 **Connecticut Poetry Award** concluded on May 31 and was judged by **Vivian Shipley**. The results are as follows:

**First Place – Arlene DeMaris**, “Telling the Hive”

**Second Place – Shellie Harwood**, “Little Boy in Gaza”

**Third Place – Lauren Crawford**, “What I Have in Common with a Shovelhead Shark”

Read the winning and honorable mention poems, along with the judge’s commentary, on the CPS website: <http://www.ctpoetry.net/connecticut-poetry-award.html>

The 2024 **Experimental Poetry Contest** submission period ended July 31; results will appear on the website when they are announced.

The **Vivian Shipley Award** is currently underway. This year’s contest will be judged by **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**. Open to all poets. First prize is \$1000! Submit through August 31 at <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit>.

Looking ahead, the **2025 Nutmeg Contest** will open on December 1; all Connecticut poets are welcome to submit and CPS members may submit for free.

## You...A Poet Laureate?

Yes, you, if you love to read, write and perform poetry! Do you have good organizational skills and enjoy interacting with your community? Then you'd make a great candidate. Of 169 towns in CT, only about 50 have active poet laureates. Some towns, such as Middletown and Norwalk, have established positions, and are actively looking for candidates. If you don't know if your town has a poet laureate, call your librarian or your local government. If your town is applying to be a CT Sustainable City, they can get points toward that valuable designation. Check out the website of the Connecticut Council of Poets Laureate at <https://ctpoetlaureates.com>. If you have any questions, feel free to email [pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com).

## Don't Miss These POP Programs!

All Poets on Poetry programs are online. Visit the CPS website for details and registration info. Here's the fall lineup.

\* Sun., Sept. 15, 2:00-3:30 - **Patrick Donnelly** on **Sentimentality, Character & the Health of Your Poem** - explore how to offset the effects of sentimentality in your poems.

\* Wed., Oct. 16, 7:00-8:30 - **Martin Espada** and **Dr. Jose B. Gonzalez** on **Poetry as a Tool for Social Justice** - two award-winning Latine poets discuss the power of poetry to promote change.

\* Thurs., Nov. 14, 7:00-8:30 - **Frederick-Douglass Knowles II** on **The BreakBeat Poets** - a new generation of poetry inspired by hip hop, rhythm, speaking aloud, and more.

## Get Inspiration from These Poetry Events!

### Poems from CT's Four Corners Returns

After a two-month summer hiatus, the monthly online reading series "Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners" is back! On Wednesday, Sept. 4, **Bruce Cohen, Debora Kuan, Clare Rossini, Jack Sheedy,** and **Liane Strauss** share their work. The October 9 lineup features **Margaret Plaganis, Jefferson Singer, John Stanizzi, Marla Sterling,** and **Kat Szpekman.** Hosted by Ridgefield Library, the readings begin at 7:00pm. Please register to receive the Zoom link: <https://ridgefieldlibrary.librarymarket.com/events>.

### Poetry on the Patio

On Tuesday, September 24th at 6:30 pm **Bessy Reyna** will share her experiences in becoming a poet as she shares some of her poems and the unexpected sources that inspired her in a program called *When Poetry Happens and What Poets Do About It*. This will take place at the Bentley Memorial Library in Bolton.

She will also be featured in the *Voices of Freedom at the Old State House* program on Saturday, Oct. 12 at 3 pm. This will feature a dramatic reading of Reyna's poem "Freedom Journeys in Four Voices" by Bessy and friends, as well as a reading by **Kate Rushin** of her poetry celebrating the life of Marian Anderson.

Bessy's poem tells the story of Nancy Jackson, the young slave woman granted her freedom in 1837 by the Supreme Court of Errors located at the Old State House.

### Poetry Readings from *Draw Me Without Boundaries*

**Margaret Gibson's** new book, *Draw Me Without Boundaries*, features two speakers, Lena and Zoe, in a narrative blend of poetry and prose. Enjoy a reading from this book at one or more of these venues.

**September 12:** in **Guilford, CT, at the Guilford Library**, 67 Park Street, Guilford, at 6:30 p.m. **sponsored by Guilford Poetry Guild.** Margaret Gibson reading Lena, **Tori Richnavsky** reading Zoe.

**October 9:** in Hartford, at Real Art Ways, sponsored by Riverwood Poetry Series, at 7 p.m. Margaret Gibson reading Lena, Tori Richnavsky reading Zoe.

**November 9:** in West Hartford, Word House Poetry Series, at Noah Webster House, from 2-4 pm. Margaret Gibson reading Lena, **Heather Oakley** reading Zoe.

**November 14:** in Storrs, at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, sponsored by University of Connecticut English Department, at 5:30 pm. Margaret Gibson reading Lena, Heather Oakley reading Zoe.

**November 22:** in Stonington, at the La Grua Center, at 6:30 pm, sponsored by ARTS CAFÉ, MYSTIC. Margaret Gibson reading Lena, Tori Richnavsky reading Zoe.

## Connecticut Poet Laureate at Roseland Park

On September 15th State Poet Laureate **Antoinette Brim-Bell** returns for a second year to read in the Poets at Large Roseland Park series. This free poetry/spoken word event to be held on September 15th, 2-4 p.m. in the barn at Roseland Park, 205 Roseland Park Road, Woodstock, Connecticut. This is the fifth year for the regional group to bring poets to the park. Featured with Brim-Bell will be Massachusetts Beat Poet Laureate **Linda Bratcher Wlodyka** and **Christopher Reilley**, former poet of Dedham, MA. Sign up for open mic at [karen.warinsky@gmail.com](mailto:karen.warinsky@gmail.com). Five-minute limit as time allows.

## Poets at Large Fall Season

Worcester poet **Tony Brown** will help kick off the fall season of Poets at Large at The Vanilla Bean Café, 450 Deerfield Road in Pomfret. Brown will be featured on Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, followed by **Lee Derosiers** on October 26<sup>th</sup> with **Christie Max Williams** closing things out on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. These Saturday evenings of spoken word and poetry are from 7-9 pm. Admission is \$15.00 and includes a give-away. **Poets at Large** is a regional group of poets who read in CT and MA, now in its fifth year. Contact **Poets at Large** coordinator **Karen Warinsky** if you are interested in reading in the open mic at [karen.warinsky@gmail.com](mailto:karen.warinsky@gmail.com).

## Riverwood Poetry Series at Real Art Ways

The September 11th reading sponsored by Riverwood features T'challa Williams and John Stanizzi. On October 9, Margaret Gibson will read from her new memoir. The November 13th program focuses on readings from the

recently published anthology *Of Hartford in Many Lights: Celebrating Hartford's Buildings*. Several contributing poets will share their work. Riverwood programs begin at 7 pm and take place at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbors Street in Hartford. An Open Mic precedes the readings.

## Celebrating Hartford's Buildings

We hope you'll attend one or more of these events related to the anthology *Of Hartford in Many Lights*. On September 18th at 7 pm in The Hartford Times Building, Room 145, on Front Street in Hartford there will be a reading celebrating the book and new poetry banners honoring Connecticut poets.

On September 29th at 4 pm at the Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, 77 Sherman street in Hartford, another program will take place.

Hear what the editors, **Dennis Barone** and **Deborah Ducoff-Barone** have to say about the process of developing this book on October 9th at 7 pm at Mercy Hall at the University of St. Joseph, 1678 Asylum Avenue in West Hartford. Some other contributors will also be there to discuss the book.

The program sponsored by Riverwood Poetry Series takes place on November 13th at 7 pm, at Real Art Ways in Hartford.

## Three Voices Poetry Book Launch

**Ginny Lowe Connors**, **Julia Paul**, and **Debbie Gilbert** will read from their latest poetry books on Saturday, November 30, 1 pm, at the Barney Library, 71 Main Street, Farmington. An open mic will precede the readings.



## Word House Reading Series

The Word House Readings take place on Saturdays at the Noah Webster House, 227 South Main Street in West Hartford. The readings go from 2-4 pm. Programs begin with an open mic. Here's the fall line-up:

September 28th: **Richard Michelson** and **Julia Paul**

October 19th: **Marilyn Johnston** and **John Stanizzi**

November 9th: **Margaret Gibson** and **Vicky Nordlund**

December 14: **V. Penelope Pelizzon** and **Debbie Gilbert**

## Connecticut River Review Readings

All CPS members should have received their free copy of *Connecticut River Review*, 2024. It is packed with great poems! You can listen to some of the contributing poets share their poems in Zoom readings that will be offered on September 8th. There will be a morning program at 11 am and an evening program at 7 pm, each one featuring different poets. A Q&A session will be held as part of each program. Please register in advance for these programs. You will then receive a confirmation and information about joining the sessions.

To register for the morning session, go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYoce2tqD4sGNc1jA2klzKZdHjCq14F9Xw0>

To register for the evening session, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpcuyggj8sGdYGHZqbsWilXcOnWYSiglPC>

## The Poetry Box Live

On October 12th at 7 pm, **Ginny Lowe Connors** will be one of three authors sharing work from new books published by The Poetry Box. Her book, forthcoming in November, is *White Sail at Midnight*. She'll be reading along with **Lois Levinson**, author of *Field Notes from an Illusion* and **Fred Zirm**, author of *Rescue Dogs*. This is a Zoom reading—you can enjoy it from your couch or favorite chair. Please register in advance using this link!

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qd--hqzkvG9y7LkSoHAZ8KsiBfeHo0lI0#/registration>

## New Books by CPS Members

You will want to check out several of these new poetry books. Our members are talented writers. And good writers also read widely!

CPS President **Pat Mottola's** latest poetry book is *A Town Like That*. **Margaret Gibson** describes the book this way: "I want to be a stranger in a town like that," the line that opens this accomplished collection of poems by Pat Mottola, establishes the crucial distance that underlies these poems, relying as so many do on the eye of a small town spectator who, keeping her distance, gives us those who are overlooked, misfit, homeless, long gone, or just plain ordinary: everyone has a story." And **Pegi Deitz Shea** remarks, "In a time when 'I see you' has become a cliché, let it be known that Pat Mottola sees into, under, around, and beyond people." This book is available through the publisher, Grayson Books, or at your favorite bookstore, including online retailers.

## More New Books by CPS Authors

**Lee A. Jacobus** recently published *In a Bone-yard in Galway*. According to Jacobus, the poems were written in Ireland, in Boeing jets over the Atlantic, and at home.

**B. Fulton Jennes** has a new chapbook: *FLOWN*. It's an elegy-in-verse for her late sister. Poet **Joan Kwon Glass** calls the book "a stunning testament to how a traditional elegy can be rendered tender and unsentimental," and **Dr. Terry Blackhawk** adds, "Jennes delivers her unwavering, clear-eyed poems with a heartache made all the more unbearable by their simplicity." Published by Porkbelly Press, each chapbook is hand-bound.

**David Mello** has recently self-published his second book of poetry. It's called *Beyond the Wooded Edge*, and can be found on the Amazon site.

Some of our members are far-flung, including **Abu Bakr Sadiq**, who hails from Niger. His recent book *Leaked Footages* won the Sillerman First Book Prize for African Poets. The speaker in this collection addresses readers from the future, while haunted by the past. Lyrical and chronicle both, these poems explore Nigeria and act as poems of witness. The book will be released on November 1st.

**D. Walsh Gilbert** is a dual citizen of Ireland and the United States. Some of her poetry collections are narrative in nature and draw on Irish history to focus on one or more individuals living through difficult times. Her latest collection is *Misneach: A Story of Kidnap, Enslavement, and Colonialism*. The poems focus on a fictional character, Aoife McGuire, a young Irish midwife

forced to work on a plantation in Montserrat and later in Colonial New England. The title, *Misneach*, is an Irish term meaning deep courage the human spirit musters at times of uncertainty.



*Draw Me Without Boundaries* is the newest poetry book by **Margaret Gibson**. The powerful love between a grandmother and her granddaughter animate the voices in this book, set against a backdrop of global climate change and the Covid pandemic. **Robert Cording** says of *Draw Me Without Boundaries*: "Expanding her mastery as a lyric and meditative writer, Gibson has given us a remarkable book, full of gratitude for what is here and goes on (in all its infinite manifestations) and regret for what is always being lost."



**Of Hartford in Many Lights**  
Celebrating Hartford's Buildings

Edited by Dennis Barone and Deborah Ducoff-Barone



**Dennis Barone** and his wife **Deborah Ducoff-Barone** served as editors for the anthology *Of Hartford in Many Lights: Celebrating Hartford's Buildings*. **Tom Condon** contributed a preface and the book includes poems by many Connecticut poets, each one focusing on a Hartford landmark building. Short commentaries on each building, written by the editors, are also included. This book provides a new way to look at many familiar Hartford landmarks, and would serve as a fine gift for anyone who has lived in, worked in, or loved Hartford. Architect **Kent McCoy** says of this collection: "Follow along on this poetic romp through the city of Hartford, pausing at buildings as varied as the venerable Wadsworth Atheneum and the gleaming Hartford Seminary. You will see these and other landmarks as never before, while relishing the poetry that reveals their deeper character and beauty."

## Amy Graver's Poem Selected

Congratulations to **Amy Graver**. A poem of hers, "Ghost Apples," has been selected for inclusion in a poetry anthology to be released this spring by Central Avenue Publishers. The anthology is called *Central Avenue Poetry Prize 2025*.

## Connecticut's Youth Poet Laureate

Beginning in 2022, Connecticut has named a Youth Poet Laureate each year, for a term to last for a year. The first Connecticut Youth Poet Laureate was **Jaida Taveras**, followed by **Mercuri Lam**. The current Youth Poet Laureate is **Zivi Yan**, a writer and performer from Greenwich, Connecticut and Beijing, China. She has had work published in a variety of journals and has received numerous honors. She is also the founder of *The Dawn Review*, an online literary journal highlighting bold new voices. She has attended the Iowa Young Writers' Studio, Adroit Journal Summer Mentorship, and Kenyon Young Writers' Studio. She'll be studying English and Creative Writing at Princeton this fall. It is a pleasure to witness the talented young people joining our community of poets.