

A look at NH poets and their famous words

Did you know the [Cornish Art Colony](#) in New Hampshire was one of the most significant artist communities in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries? Around 80 of the world's most prolific painters, sculptors, writers, musicians, and other creatives sought inspiration and camaraderie in the picturesque rural landscape. ([See the entire list here](#))


The colony started with sculptor [Augustus Saint-Gaudens](#), an NYC artist who purchased a large estate in Cornish in 1885. He was drawn to the area for its natural beauty and tranquil surroundings. Saint-Gaudens invited other artists to join him, and over time, the colony grew into a vibrant community of creatives, like:

[Maxfield Parrish](#), an illustrator known for his landscapes and imaginative scenes.

[Thomas Dewing](#), an ethereal, symbolist painter.

[Paul Manship](#), who became known for his [public sculptures](#), like [Prometheus at Rockefeller Center in Manhattan](#) and the [Rainey Memorial Gates](#) at the Bronx Zoo.

Given our celebrated artist scene, it's no surprise that some of the world's most famous poets called the Granite State home. In honor of [national poetry month](#), let's take a look at four:

 [Robert Frost](#) worked on his grandfather's farm in Derry before moving around to London. He then returned to New Hampshire and purchased his own farm in Franconia ([now a museum](#)). You've probably heard of his poems "The Road Not Taken," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and "Mending Wall." Here's an excerpt from one of Frost's lesser-known poems:

Sometimes when I watch trees sway,
From the window or the door.
I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice

Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.

[The Sound of the Trees](#)

✍ **Donald Hall**, considered one of the major poets of his generation, was poet laureate of the United States from 2006 to 2007. He lived on a farm in Wilmot until he died in 2018. His poetry often reflected his deep connection to rural life and the New England landscape. He also wrote about loss, aging, and heartbreak, likely inspired by his wife, poet Jane Kenyon, who died of [leukemia at age 47](#). One of his most-loved poems is [Ox Cart Man](#). Here's an excerpt from another:

To grow old is to lose everything.
Aging, everybody knows it.
Even when we are young,
we glimpse it sometimes, and nod our heads
when a grandfather dies.
Then we row for years on the midsummer

[Affirmation](#)

✍ **Walter E. Butts**, known as Wally Butts, was one of our state's poet laureates. He reflected the beauty of the New England landscape, the rhythms of rural life, and the complexities of the human experience in his work.

Today, alone by the window, I've been
translating the repeated warble of sparrows perched
on the maple's high branches. "What's next? What's next?"
they ask. "Soon," I whisper. "Soon, we will know."

[What to Say If the Birds Ask](#)

✍ **Maxine Kumin** lived in Warner, and served as the poet laureate of the United States from 1981 to 1982. Kumin's poetry often explored nature,

family, and the passage of time. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1973.

It's snowing again.

All day, reruns

of the blizzard of '78

newscasters vying

for bragging rights

[New Hampshire, February 7, 2023](#)