



*Presented by Philadelphia Poet  
Laureate Frank Sherlock*

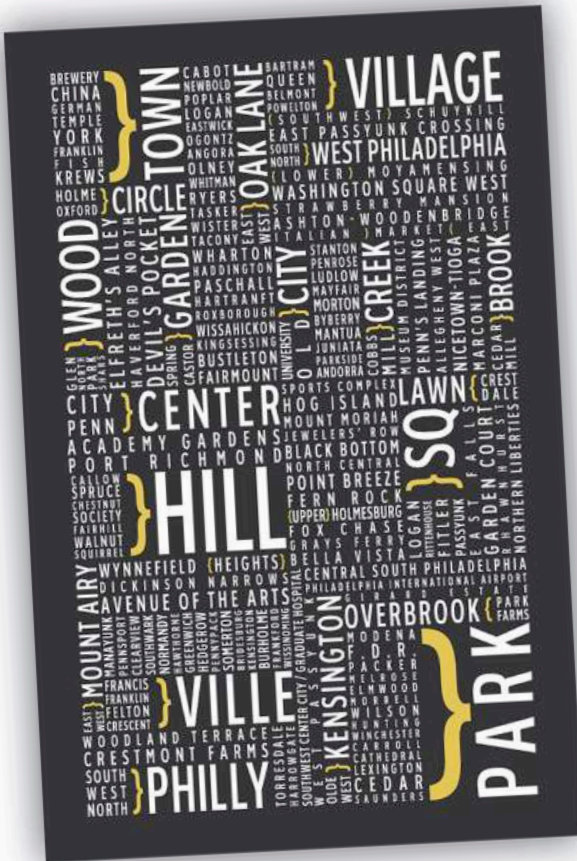
*& the Office of Arts, Culture, &  
the Creative Economy*



Frank Sherlock's work is concerned with new ways of seeing urban space. As a native of Southwest Philadelphia, he experienced city life as shifting scapes of deterioration, as well as pop-up constructions of new environments. When he realized his calling as a poet, he searched for ways to articulate his Philadelphia experience. In order to find a form for this type of discovery, he came to embrace the notion of the poet as a cartographer, or mapmaker.

# a city of neighborhoods

Philadelphia has often been referred to as a “city of neighborhoods” and those living here have very strong ideas about what defines a community- where some neighborhoods end and others begin. Some areas are referred to by the names of native people who predated William Penn, while others are denoted by Catholic parishes who have been integral to shaping the tenor and community life of a neighborhood. Find a Philadelphian and you’ll find a different opinion about defining, or “mapping” the place where they live.





Sherlock's first method of mapping through poetry was a long poem called *thirteen*. The piece was written in thirteen sections. Each was written on a different corner of 13<sup>th</sup> Street. His focus charted the diverse thoroughfare that cuts through the center of the city during a time of changing demographics and gentrification. The structured locality and site-specific writing of *thirteen* was one method of cartography. Searching for new ways of experiencing the space he lived in led to exploring new forms to document Philadelphia life.



*The City Real & Imagined* was a collaboration with poet CAConrad that came to be as an act of *psychogeography* (exploring the city in ways that spark new awareness to our surroundings.) As both a pilgrimage and a survey of desires yet to be drafted, these walks through Philadelphia in conversation created room for a City of Otherly Love. The book-length project is a testament to public space defined beyond official landmarks and conventional architecture. The idea of a city is activated by the imaginations of those who gather for mutual purpose.

# poem-mapping

- Another method of poem-mapping is charting the impact individuals both past & present have on the streets where they live. Sherlock's work with immigrant communities culminated in a public art project entitled *Neighbor Ballads*. The interactive poetry installations engaged the living history of Philadelphia's ethnically diverse South Philadelphia neighborhood. Archival research and oral history interviews informed the poems that celebrate immigrant community narratives. Their stories were shared through poetry and portraiture as newspapers, paying homage to those that shaped the character of South Philly. Their poems engage the impact that everyday people have had on the living history of the neighborhood.
- *There are as many methods of poem-mapping as there are neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Frank Sherlock wants to guide you toward developing your own way to map your neighborhood- to **Write Your Block**.*