

At the May 19, 2015 Council Meeting, Mayor Craig Petersen announced the appointment of Star Coulbrooke as the first City of Logan Poet Laureate. Ms. Coulbrooke will serve as the city's official ambassador of literary culture.

Star Coulbrooke moved to Logan from Preston, Idaho in 1968. She worked as a waitress, a hardware store clerk, and a Certified Nurse's Aide before earning her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees at USU in English and Folklore. She taught poetry writing for ten years and is currently Director of the USU Writing Center.

Star has been writing poetry since she was nine years old, with two chapter books and more than 70 individual poems published nationally since 1996. She has given over a hundred poetry readings and lectures, taught dozens of poetry writing workshops, organized scores of literary events, and provided publication opportunities for many local writers.

As Poet Laureate of Logan, Star will take poetry to the community through public events. She is already scheduled for readings, workshops, and school visits. Her project for the next two years will be to inspire poetry for Logan residents and visitors by conducting Poetry Walkabouts and inviting people to contribute lines to a community collaborative commemorative poem about Logan.

Please enjoy the following poetry that Star has written so far!

**\*\*Poetry read at Logan Municipal Council Meeting – May 19, 2015**

**STARRY SMALL TOWN WISH**

*Big Dipper gets crowded, so many bright rivals  
vying for my dark-sky view.*

*I can walk down paved roads looking up  
while I talk on the phone with my grandkids  
and never move over for traffic.*

*Sprinklers overshoot their settings,  
lawn-water splashing in arcs at my feet.  
I love that our drinking-water comes down the creek  
from the canyon and runs along Center Street,  
thrashing its rocky bottom clean.*

*I know how the creek looks in daytime  
carrying autumn leaves, but it's dark  
and my grandkids live in small-town Washington,  
pines too thick and tall for big-sky stargazing.*

*I tell them how warm the night is, how quiet,  
only the sound of the creek and the sprinklers,  
how I hope it won't rain when I come to visit,  
my flight already paid for. I ask what I can bring.*

*My granddaughter hints, says she pierced  
her own septum, stuck a needle through  
nice and straight, but can't find the right  
nose-ring, not in her too-small town.*

*I remember my teen years in a town  
smaller than this one, even smaller than hers.  
I tell her I'll drive to the city,  
stop by the piercing shop, pick out a ring.*

*Eyeing the stars scattered across the sky,  
I recall their density in the Milky Way  
when I was a child, so many more of them  
out there in the sticks, where I couldn't live  
until I left, stars and all.*

*City lights encroach, washing billions  
from my view, but I'm still talking,  
walking down the quiet street with sprinklers  
and the clear creek thrashing. I already got my wish.*

*Star Coulbrooke, introductory poem for the City Council Logan Poet Laureate Inaugural Ceremony.*

## City of Poetry

*In Downtown Logan, where artists inhabit  
bicycle shops and cafes, tattoo parlors and churches,  
where paintings and sculptures and photographs adorn  
the sporting goods stores and the old hotels,  
line the walls along stairways and narrow aisles  
among the coat hangers, above the tables,  
along the counters near the checkout stand,  
there's a bookstore mentality held-over from the days  
when poetry was valued as artwork, as an escape  
from the mundane workaday life, when people  
would read it everywhere they went, memorize  
their favorite verses, recite them over dinner.*

*Let's keep going there, keep going back to poetry,  
forward to more poetry. Let's plaster it on the walls  
of the City, compose our lines and stamp them  
in cement at every new roundabout, every sidewalk.  
Let's write poems to each other about our lives  
in the City of Poetry where everyone, no matter who  
they are, no matter what age or persuasion, what  
family, what job, what form of transportation or  
what inclination, will have a say, will know they matter.*

*Let's let poetry matter, let metaphor replace all  
diatribes, all misunderstandings. Let's say it in poetry,  
straight from the soul, not from media-feeds, not  
from google or TV or mass email, but out of the heart  
where our stories reside, where our memories  
and hopes don't fight with each other, where art  
for art's sake becomes our priority.*

*Here in the City of Poetry, let's look to the backyards,  
where families come out on a Sunday evening  
to watch urban owls rise from blue spruce and juniper,  
on silent wings, to go beyond the town and return  
before Monday's first white dawning, swept with canyon  
air from the forest's scent of summer to the paved  
wide streets where our cars and buses take us  
to work and to school, where we can think all day  
of the stories we'll tell when poetry rolls off our tongues  
like water over a spillway, fresh and clear and powerful.*

*Star Coulbrooke, introductory poem for the City Council Logan Poet Laureate Inaugural Ceremony.*

**\*\*Poetry read at Logan Municipal Council Meeting - August 5, 2015**

**Poem for the Neighborhoods of Logan**

*For those who've been here  
decade upon decade,  
stately porches resting  
in the afterglow of time,  
children selling lemonade  
out front, like their great  
grandparents' parents  
might have done before the streets  
were paved, the sidewalks laid.*

*For those who rose up  
in the fifties when the war  
had ended, brick three-bedroom  
houses neat and tiny, where  
college kids and newly-marrieds  
cozy-up behind back fences  
for communal barbecues.*

*For those in subdivisions,  
cul-de-sacs, with televisions  
pulsing through front windows,  
kids outside playing hide and seek,  
parents with their feet up after  
company, dishes waiting in the sink.*

*For those tucked in along the river,  
wooden clapboard sidling-up  
to rock and plaster, mansions  
and bungalows sharing the fenceline,  
willow branches dipping down  
like curtains in the evening breeze,  
a neighborly democracy.*

*For those within the cityscape,  
for those on hilltops, those  
of townhouses and seniors-only,  
those of row-on-row apartments,  
may they all endure as Logan  
grows, as people gather, may they  
pull together lightly, graceful  
in their history, and ours.*

*Star Coulbrooke, 08/04/2015,  
for the Logan City Council Meeting  
on the topic of Neighborhood Revitalization*

### **Two Sides of the Road: A Walking Tour**

*On the hillside to our left, evening primrose  
blooms ghost-white among short milkweed,  
spike-leaved, clustered with tight yellow buds.*

*On our right, a golden deer. It claims the yard  
where this house once made-up the neighborhood,  
no others but the deer, four more appearing  
among swing-set, playhouse, dark green lawn,  
ears twitching, grazing as we walk on by.*

*Look left again above our newfound primrose  
to houses hunkering like giants, plaster facades  
grinning down the gravel delta, wooden stakes  
and orange ribbons marking subdivisions  
yet to join them, families with children waiting.*

*See the deer? They cross this road twice  
every day, new obstacles to jump with every phase  
of moon we'll soon see rising on the right  
like half a lemon in the sky, salted with profiles  
of backhoes, dump trucks, mortgage-makers.*

*Take heart for the swallows that dip and tumble  
through the bug-thick dusk, gorging on mosquitoes  
that whine past our ears as we swat at them,  
as the peach-pink sunset spans both sides of the sky  
and closes to steel gray clouds, yellow half-moon  
haloing the grazing deer, burnishing the primrose.  
And you, seeing both sides from the middle.*

*Star Coulbrooke, 06/03/09-08/04/15  
Revised for the Logan City Council Meeting  
on the topic of Neighborhood Revitalization*

## EXCAVATION

*We found the first minuscule bone structure  
in the crawl space one winter  
when the plumbing froze: Fragile rib cage,  
long pointed tail, triangular jaw.  
The spidery ghost held our imagination  
until pipes thawed, then we tucked it away  
in a dresser drawer.*

*No one can say why realization descends  
when it does, but this year, in the early stages  
of renovation, we pried the kitchen floor up  
and there in powdery black dirt  
lay an entire community of dead,  
and we knew the skeletons were mice, knew  
the one we had forgotten in our bureau drawer  
was at least a distant relative.*

*But more intriguing than the mice, who squeeze  
themselves flat and get in before you can blink,  
was the desiccated cat we found  
inside our back porch landing  
lying among pork chop bones and tin can lids.  
It looked illogically content, as if it had gone  
happily to sleep and forgot to wake up.*

*We bent to pick it up—the bottom half was gone.  
As owners, renovators, we felt guilt for the cat  
surrounded in its tomb by remnants of food,  
for the mouse whose bones we misidentified and set aside.*

*The folklore of ancient builders tells us  
well-fed cats buried under houses are a boon  
for those who walk above them, a talisman for peace.  
We hope for a good omen with this cat, fur dissolved,  
skin dried to a leathery carapace, one eye a hole  
that seems to look right through us. A mystery  
we don't want to solve, afraid for the dawning  
of mouse bones on our paltry human conscience.*

*Star Coulbrooke,  
for 08/04/15 City Council Meeting  
Published in a different form  
in Pilgrimage Magazine,  
Vol. 35, Issue 3, Fall 2010*