

**Anne Osmer – UNO MFA in Writing
GRACA Grant Proposal**

1. Title of Project: Traverse City: Historical and Artistic Research Relevant to the Development of a Novel

This proposal is a request for financial support from the Office of Research and Creative Activity for research activity in Traverse City and nearby areas. This will serve as the historical and artistic foundation for the further development of a novel in progress.

2. Project Description

- a. Northern Michigan, or “Up North” as it is called by many Michiganders, is rich with natural beauty and history. Original inhabitants were the Anishinaabek, now also known in northern Michigan as the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. European colonialists moved into the land in the eighteenth century, taking over and settling in the area that is now Traverse City.

My novel, as yet untitled, takes place primarily in Traverse City, mostly on Mission Point Peninsula, land that straddles the west and east arms of Grand Traverse Bay. I plan to travel to Traverse City and stay there to conduct this research intensely in person over two weeks’ time, then continue the research afterward remotely, with additional shorter trips to Traverse City as necessary. All research will be completed in February and March 2025. I will then weave what I’ve learned into my novel.

The novel takes place in the 2000s but is strongly informed by historical events and may end up having scenes that take part in the past. Important to the plot of the novel is Traverse City Commons, former site of the Northern Michigan Asylum, also known as the Traverse City State Hospital. I plan to take guided tours of the Commons, immersing myself in the setting while learning the history. I will do this also for Mission Point Peninsula, staying at two different remote inns that are inspirations for my novel, while also visiting historical sites on the peninsula to further inform my work. I may also have an Anishinaabe character and history woven into the story, and learning more about this history will be important to the formation of my novel. I will also meet with local historians to learn anecdotes and more about the history of this storied area.

In addition to getting the facts straight, another critical reason for this research is inspiration: in spending time on Mission Point Peninsula and in Traverse City, I seek to absorb the atmosphere and natural landscapes that will become the settings of my novel. I plan to stay at two different places on Mission Point Peninsula that have served thus far as inspiration for my novel, although I have only seen each on a surface level at this point. Staying at them will cement my artistic vision for the setting. One site is a bed and breakfast the geography of which is similar to where the main action takes place in my novel, and another inn on the peninsula that is very old; features of this inn I feel will serve as grounding details for my novel. While I understand that inspiration and absorption of places may seem like esoteric reasons for research, they are actually paramount to creating verisimilitude and the correct atmosphere in my novel.

- b. Activities and Methodology:** Financial support will be used for travel and accommodations related to completing the following activities. I am requesting reimbursement in the form of a stipend.
- i. Visit historical organizations to learn about the history of Traverse City, Traverse City Commons and the Traverse City State Hospital, Mission Point Peninsula and the Anishinaabek. Please note: these museums and societies are either in or near the Traverse City area:
 - Traverse Area District Library, where the Traverse Area Historical Society archives are housed;
 - Elk Rapids Area Historical Society;
 - Leelaunau Historical Society Museum;
 - The Village at Grand Traverse Commons, site of the former Northern Michigan Asylum. An area in the Commons is dedicated to the history of the site, and guided historic walking tours are offered; I plan to take advantage of both, as the Commons and former asylum will figure prominently in my novel;
 - ii. Visit the Eyaawing Museum & Cultural Center of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians to learn about Native American history and cultures in Traverse City;
 - iii. Visit historical sites on Mission Point Peninsula to learn about its early history, including: the Old Mission Log Church, the Hessler Log Cabin, the Mission Point Lighthouse, and the Dougherty Mission House. The Mission Point Peninsula is the main setting for my novel, and its landscapes and history are critical to my project;
 - iv. If available, talk to local historians to learn about additional anecdotal information that may be useful to my novel. There are several historical societies that may help me in finding people to talk to, such as the Old Mission Peninsula Historical Society and the Grand Traverse Heritage Council.

How will this activity result in project completion? This research will uncover stories and information that are critical to completing my novel. On-site research will ensure that I get the facts right regarding Traverse City's history, including the history of indigenous cultures and of the former Northern Michigan Asylum, as well as Mission Point Peninsula. I plan to weave information I find pertinent or inspirational into my novel. Additionally, being on-site will allow me to inhabit and observe closely the settings of my novel, which will inform the artistic expression it takes. Both of these research activities are critical to completing my novel.

c. Timeline:

November 2024 – January 2025:

- Identify and contact historical societies and historians
- Submit questions to historians and schedule appointments to take place in February 2025

- Book travel for February stay in Traverse City
- Complete an outline for the novel

February 2025:

- Reside in Traverse City for two weeks, at two different locations

February – March 2025:

- Continue researching, traveling to Traverse City as necessary
- Begin synthesizing research into the novel

March – April 2025:

- Continue synthesizing research into the novel
- Complete a first draft of the novel

d. Student/Faculty Mentor Roles: Teresa Carmody, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Writer’s Workshop at UNO and a mentor in the UNO MFA in Writing program, has agreed to mentor me. I will submit a detailed outline of goals and timeline of activities and maintain communication with Professor Carmody throughout the project, working with her to refine and revise goals as necessary. I will discuss with Professor Carmody the factual and artistic elements I plan to incorporate into my novel as a result of my research.

e. Previous Internal Funding: I have not received previous internal funding.

3. Budget and Budget Justification: A stipend in the amount of \$5,000 is requested. I estimate I will spend 200 hours on this project over two months’ time, which works out to a wage of \$25 per hour.

4. References:

- Barnes, Al. *100 Years from the Old Mission: A Century in Grand Traverse County*. Horizon Books, 2000.
- Firestone, Kathleen Craker. *An Island In Grand Traverse Bay: Lake Michigan Island Volume I*. Michigan Islands Research, Northport, MI, 1992.
- Kerkhoff, Jack. *How Thin the Veil: A Memoir of 45 Days in the Traverse City State Hospital*. Mission Point Press, 2016.
- Miller, Chris. *Traverse City State Hospital*. Arcadia Publishing, 2005.
- Wakefield, Larry. *All Our Yesterdays: A Narrative History of Traverse City and the Region*. Village Press, 1977.



November 10, 2024

Dear Sophia Potter:

I am delighted to support Anne Osmer's proposal for 2024-25 GRACA grant. As a current student in the Master of Fine Arts in Writing Program, Anne has drafted a compelling and achievable grant proposal. As her faculty mentor, I believe that this proposal will represent the University of Nebraska Omaha admirably at the 2025 Research and Creative Activity Fair.

Anne is entering her fourth semester of graduate work in fiction writing in UN's MFA program. I served as Anne's faculty mentor during her third semester, working with her on both her craft paper and an early draft of this novel. For her craft paper, Anne focused on the literary technique known as *free indirect discourse*, drafting a remarkable theory and overview about the emotional impact of this technique. I was, to put it simply, floored by both the depth and breadth of Anne's research; she dove deep into the world of narrative theory, while also reading and analyzing several iconic and challenging novels by writers who deploy this technique: Jane Austen, Henry James, Virginia Woolf. Her paper – which will become the critical portion part of her Graduate Thesis – was engaging, insightful, and a fantastic read. It has since been adopted and posted as a model craft paper, so other students can learn by example. I have also encouraged Anne to revise the paper for publication in a literary journal, as her I believe her explication will benefit other writers.

I am similarly impressed with her creative work. Her novel-in-progress is a smart, engaging, and comically tragic portrayal of a group of aspiring writers who gather every summer in Northern Michigan. The haunted Michigan landscape plays a key role in the characters' sense of themselves: their self-connection (or lack thereof), their ambitions and dreams, their failures and willingness to start over. This proposal will allow time and resources for Anne to more fully research Traverse City and the surrounding area—the kind of research that is invaluable to writing the more rigorous and embodied descriptions of place. Anne is undoubtedly up for the task, and other faculty in the program agree with my assessment; program coordinator Kevin Clouter has described Anne as one of the top students in the program. I agree.

I encourage you to support Anne Osmer's proposal for a GRACA grant. You may contact me for more information at tcarmody@unomaha.edu or 402-554-2433. Thank you for consideration of my recommendation.

Sincerely,

Teresa Carmody, Ph.D., MFA
Assistant Professor, Writer's Workshop
University of Nebraska Omaha