

POLIS IS THIS: DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

All my life I've heard about Charles Olson. As a child around the holiday dinner table I'd listen to tales of a giant who walked the midnight streets of Gloucester, Massachusetts. In school, poets and writers asked if I was related to the Ferrini in *The Maximus Poems*.



Photo: Ann Charters

Back home in Gloucester, I'd crack the 600 plus page *Maximus Poems* to learn a little something about myself and my place in this place. I wondered why Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Stan Brakhage, Diane di Prima, and Amiri Baraka made pilgrimage to Olson's \$29-a-month flat. What was it about this postman's son, a Harvard trained historian, and the power of his imagination, that made a generation of poets and artists see him as "the big fire source."

How and why America's first fishing town became the portal to Olson's world became a mystery to solve. The poet's methodology, one that he borrowed from the Greeks, became my investigative technique as well. *Istorin* means to find out for oneself. It is the root of our word history and it became the route that I followed.

In 1995, during the first Charles Olson Festival held in Gloucester, writer Ken Riaf and I put shoulder to oar and set out to find out what all the fuss was about. We talked to professors in the academy and people on the street. We searched in university archives and found Olson's friends and family.



In *Polis Is This* I've focused decades of filmmaking experience to address an even longer held question about our relationship to the place that contains us.

Henry Ferrini, *Gloucester*
January 25, 2007



Samuel de Champlain's map of Gloucester, "Le Beauport," 1606