

# Walt Whitman

## A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2003

Contact information: <http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/mss/address.html>

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress  
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## Collection Summary

**Title:** Papers of Walt Whitman

**Span Dates:** 1837-1957

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1840-1891)

**ID No.:** MSS77909

**Creator:** Whitman, Walt, 1819-1892

**Extent:** 150 items; 2 containers; 0.6 linear feet; 1 microfilm reel

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Repository:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Abstract:** Poet. Correspondence, family papers, holograph drafts of Whitman's poetry and prose, printed matter, and miscellany. Includes a printed copy of *O Captain! My Captain!* with Whitman's handwritten corrections and letters exchanged with Abraham Leech, Whitman's earliest known correspondence.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by genres and listed alphabetically therein.

### Names:

Whitman, Walt, 1819-1892

Heyde, Hannah Louisa Whitman, 1823-1908--Correspondence

Leech, Abraham--Correspondence

Whitman, Louisa Van Velsor, 1795-1873--Correspondence

Whitman family

### Subjects:

American literature

American poetry

American prose literature

Presidents--United States--Election--1840

Long Island (N.Y.)--Social life and customs

United States--Politics and government--1841-1845

### Occupation:

Poets

## Administrative Information

### Provenance:

The papers of Walt Whitman, poet, were acquired by the Library of Congress through gift, transfer, and purchase, 1927-2001. The collection contains items described in the Library's publication *Walt Whitman: A Catalog Based upon the Collections of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1955), as well as more recent acquisitions unrelated to other collections of Whitman's papers in the Library.

### Processing History:

The papers of Walt Whitman were processed in 1981 and revised and expanded in 1997. Additional material received 1997-2001 was processed in 2003.

### Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Walt Whitman is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

**Microfilm:**

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on one reel. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

**Preferred Citation:**

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Walt Whitman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Walt Whitman (1819-1892) span the years 1837-1957 and contain examples of the poet's original correspondence and literary manuscripts, photocopies and transcripts of similar Whitman material, and printed matter and miscellaneous items relating to Whitman. Although the collection contains only a small sampling of the types of items found in the Library's larger collections of Whitman material, most notably those of Thomas Biggs Harned and Charles E. Feinberg, it includes Whitman's correspondence with Abraham P. Leech and a printed copy of Whitman's poem *O Captain! My Captain!* containing the poet's handwritten corrections. A small selection of Whitman family correspondence describing domestic routines and expressing personal sentiments is also included.

Whitman's letters to Abraham Leech, 1840-1841, the poet's earliest known correspondence, describe his life as a schoolteacher in the towns of Woodbury and Whitestone, Long Island, New York. The letters relate his distaste as a young man for teaching at Woodbury and portray his general dislike for small-town life at that time. Whitman also expressed his support for the Democratic party and its candidate for the 1840 presidential election, Martin Van Buren, despite Leech's adherence to the Whig party candidate, William Henry Harrison. The file also contains copies of letters from Leech to Whitman, genealogical notes of the Leech family, a small diary kept by Abraham Leech, 1838-1844, and other miscellaneous fragments and items.

*O Captain! My Captain!*, considered by many to be Whitman's most popular poem, was widely anthologized during his lifetime. The collection contains a copy of the poem formerly described as a proof sheet in the Library's publication *Walt Whitman: A Catalog Based upon the Collections of the Library of Congress*. It is instead a printed page torn from volume thirty-two of the Riverside Literature Series, corrected in Whitman's hand, and returned to Riverside Press. A short letter to the printer remarking on the errors and noting Whitman's accompanying corrections is included on the verso of the page.

Many of the items in the collection are identified in the catalog, which contains an annotated bibliographic listing of Whitman items located within the collections of various divisions in the Library of Congress. Identification numbers tagged to specific entries in the catalog are noted on the folders containing those items. This catalog should be consulted for the fullest description of the material.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	<p>Correspondence General, 1852, 1863, 1871-1872, 1882, 1888-1891 Leech, Abraham P., 1837-1844, ca. 1881, n.d.</p> <p>Family papers Whitman, Louisa Van Velsor (mother), 1872-1873 Whitman family letters, 1848, 1863, 1870-1873, 1889-1891, n.d.</p> <p>Literary file Poetry <i>Ah Poverties, Wincings, and Sulky Retreats</i>, broadside, n.d. "Death of General Grant," signed draft, 1885 "Funeral Interpolations," signed draft, ca. 1888 <i>O Captain! My Captain!</i> printed copy with corrections, 1888</p> <p>Prose "American National Literature," draft, ca. 1891 American poets, draft, n.d. "An Indian Bureau Reminiscence," signed draft, ca. 1883 "As to nationality in our literature," draft (first line), n.d. "A Gap now of over a Year," draft, n.d. "The great themes of the literatus," draft (first line), n.d. Modesty, draft, n.d.</p> <p>Miscellany Chronological file, 1881-1885, 1896-1899, 1912-1917, 1929-1931, 1940, 1955-1957, n.d. Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, exhibit, 1956</p> <p>Printed matter 1870, 1887-1915, 1935-1939, 1954 (3 folders)</p>
BOX 2	<p>Reproductions Photocopies Burroughs, John, "Work and Wait," 1856 Correspondence, 1880-1881, n.d. Diary notes, n.d. Furness, Clifton Joseph, notebook, 1940* *Microfilm shelf no. 11,058 Interior Department, dismissal from, 1865 National Archives and Records Administration, records, 1864-1874 Poetry and prose, 1861, n.d.</p> <p>Transcripts Correspondence, 1876 Poetry and prose, n.d.</p>