

**A1743**

**Whitman Family Papers, 1855-1946**

3 folders; 1 oversized folder

Processed by Dennis Northcott, January 2008

**REPOSITORY**

Missouri Historical Society Archives

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**DONOR INFORMATION**

Papers were donated in July 1959 by Mary Lackland Taylor, who was a friend of Walt Whitman's niece Jessie Louisa Whitman.

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Walt Whitman, one of the United States' most celebrated poets, was born May 31, 1819, in West Hills, Huntington, Long Island, New York. He published his most famous work, *Leaves of Grass*, in 1855. He suffered a paralytic stroke in 1873, and soon thereafter went to live with his brother George in Camden, New Jersey, where he died March 26, 1892.

Walt's brother Thomas Jefferson Whitman (1833-1890) married Martha E. Mitchell (1836-1873) in 1859, and came to St. Louis in 1867. Their children were Mannhatta Whitman (1860-1886) and Jessie Louisa Whitman (1863-1957). He served as water commissioner of the city of St. Louis for many years, and died November 25, 1890.

Another brother George Washington Whitman served in the 51st New York Infantry during the Civil War. He married Louise Orr Haslam (1842-1892) in 1871 and settled in Camden, where he died in 1901.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection consists primarily of Whitman family correspondence, including 17 letters and notes written by Walt Whitman, which were published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960. The collection is arranged chronologically.

**Folder 1**

- 1855 July 9                      Receipt of agreement to terms of payment for piano rental from Wm. Hall & Son, New York, signed Martha Emma Mitchell. (Notation regarding completion of sale, signed William Hall & Son, December 28, 1857.)
- 1863 May 15                     Letter signed G[eorge] W. Whitman, near Lancaster, Kentucky, to brother Jeff. Includes brief description of the movement of the 51<sup>st</sup> New York Infantry in Kentucky.
- 1864 Apr 9                      Letter signed Walt [Whitman], Washington, to brother [George W. Whitman], near Annapolis, Maryland. Encourages his brother to write to their mother more often. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1865 May 13                     Commission of George W. Whitman as major of the 51<sup>st</sup> New York Infantry. **(oversize)**
- 1868 Jan 29                     Diploma of Thomas J. Whitman certifying him as a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. **(oversize)**
- 1868 Oct 25                     Letter signed Walt [Whitman], New York, to brother Jeff. Discusses the health and medical care of his sister-in-law Martha Whitman. Includes transcription of letter from the *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- [1870?] May 27                 Letter signed Mattie [Mrs. Thomas J. Whitman], St. Louis, to my dear sister Lou [Mrs. Louisa Whitman], Camden, New Jersey. Discusses her health and family.
- [1873] Feb 8                     Letter signed Walt [Whitman], Washington, to brother. Mentions that he would come immediately to St. Louis if he had the use of his limbs. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1873 Feb 20                     Receipt of Bellefontaine Cemetery Association, St. Louis, to Thomas J. Whitman for lot in cemetery.
- 1873 Feb 20                     Deed of lot in Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis, to Thomas J. Whitman.
- [1876?] Oct 2                   Letter signed Uncle Walt [Whitman], Camden, [New Jersey], to my

dear girls [Mannahatta and Jessie Whitman], care of Mrs. Archer, Patapsco Seminary, Ellicott City, Maryland. Discusses family news and mentions receipt of an order for his books from England. Includes transcription of letter from the *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)

1876 Dec 20 Letter signed Uncle Walt, Camden, New Jersey, to Dearest Hattie (& Dearest Jessie too). Discusses family news. Includes transcription of letter from the *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)

1879 June 17 Diploma of the Archer Institute, Washington, D.C., awarded to Miss Mannahatta Whitman. **(oversize)**

[1879] Sept 12 Letter signed brother Walt [Whitman], St. Louis, to dear Lou [Mrs. Louisa Whitman]. Mentions his health, a train accident while en route to St. Louis, and his stay at the Planters Hotel. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)

## **Folder 2**

[1879] Sept 19 Letter signed brother Walt [Whitman], Denver, Colorado, to Lou [Mrs. Louisa Whitman]. Describes train journey across Kansas and Colorado. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)

[1879] Oct 11 Letter signed Walt [Whitman], 2316 Pine Street, St. Louis, to dear sister [Mrs. Louisa Whitman]. Gives his impressions of St. Louis; mentions his poor health; and asks her to send him his letters. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)

[1881] Aug 27 Letter signed Brother Walt [Whitman], Boston, to dear sister Lou. Mentions his lodging situation in Boston, and briefly discusses the progress of his book and his work with his publisher, Mr. Osgood, and his printers, Rand & Avery. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)

- 188[1] Oct 23 Letter signed Brother Walt [Whitman], New York, to dear sister Lou. Mentions the progress in the publication of his book; informs his sister that some packages will be delivered to him in care of her; and mentions his plans to remain in New York for "ten or twelve days" and then return home. (Letter is written on the stationery of the Grand Union Hotel, New York, and includes an engraving of the hotel.) (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- [1883] Dec 28 Note signed Uncle Walt [Whitman], Camden, New Jersey, to nieces Mannahatta and Jessie L. Whitman, 2511 Second Carondelet Ave., St. Louis, Missouri. Mentions that he received the book knife. (Note published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- [before 1886] Sept Letter signed Hatta [Whitman], postmarked Baltimore, to Miss Jessie L. Whitman, Camden, New Jersey. Describes her trip to Baltimore.
- 1886 Sept 6 Letter signed Walt Whitman, Camden, [New Jersey], to [Thomas J. Whitman]. Regarding the death of his niece Mannahatta Whitman. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1886 Sept 7 Letter signed W.W. [Walt Whitman], Camden, [New Jersey], to [Thomas J. Whitman]. Regarding the death of his niece Mannahatta Whitman. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1886 Sept 8 Letter signed Walt Whitman, Camden, [New Jersey], to dear brother & dear Jess [Thomas J. Whitman and Jessie Louisa Whitman]. Regarding the death of his niece Mannahatta Whitman. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- [1886] Sept 11 Letter fragment of Walt Whitman, Camden, [New Jersey], to Thomas J. Whitman, 2437 2nd Carondelet Avenue, St. Louis. Mentions his health, and states, "it is very monotonous & lonesome, as I can hardly get around at all." (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, "New Letters of Walt Whitman," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1888 Jan 26 Letter signed Papa [Thomas J. Whitman], St. Louis, to Jessie

- [Whitman]. Mentions that he returned from a trip to Arkansas and will depart soon for Texas; hopes that Jessie will “make fast friends of the New York and the Hartford people.”
- 1888 Dec 23 Letter signed Thomas J. Whitman, Milwaukee, to my dear Jessie [Whitman]. Wishes her a Merry Christmas, and hopes that she will like the enclosed muffler.
- 1889 May 24 Photocopy of five newspaper articles from unidentified newspapers: (1) “The Bitter Truth: O’Brien’s Sensational Testimony Before the Parnell Commission,” May 24, 1889; (2) “Brother of Poet Whitman Dead” regarding Colonel George Whitman; (3) “Colonel Whitman’s Will Probated”; (4) “Ex-Water Commissioner Thos. W. Whitman”; and (5) “Whitman Collection Offered to Camden,” 1928.
- 1890 Nov 30 Letter signed Walt Whitman, Camden, New Jersey, to dear Jess (Miss Jessie L. Whitman). Brief letter mentions that George has returned safe; hopes she “will bear up under this great affliction.” (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, “New Letters of Walt Whitman,” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1891 Jan 1 (postmark) Postcard signed Walt Whitman, Camden, New Jersey, to Miss Jessie Louisa Whitman, 2437 2nd Carondelet Ave., St. Louis, Missouri. Mentions family news and a storm. (Letter published in Edwin Haviland Miller, “New Letters of Walt Whitman,” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, Volume XVI, Number 2, January 1960.)
- 1891-1892 Certified copy of will and codicil of Walt Whitman and related probate papers, Camden County, New Jersey. (10 pages)
- Folder 3**
- 1897 Dec Letter signed Uncle George [Whitman], Burlington, to my dear Jessie [Whitman]. Discusses his intention to make a will, and to have Jessie and Jean Dow be the executors.
- 1926 Jan 11 Typescript letter signed H.E. Maule, Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City, New York, to Miss Jessie L. Whitman, 5887 Plymouth Avenue, St. Louis. As the authorized publishers of the works of Walt Whitman, he would like to discuss future royalties with Ms. Whitman, the sole surviving heir of Walt Whitman.
- 1928 Jan 27 Typescript letter signed William H. Iszard, realtor, Camden, New Jersey, to Miss Jessie L. Whitman, 5887 Plymouth Ave., St. Louis, Missouri. Replies to her request to send gifts to be placed in the Walt Whitman Home in Camden.

- 1928 Feb 28                   Typescript letter signed Carolyn Wells Houghton, New York City, to June [Jessie?] Whitman, St. Louis, Missouri. Houghton, a collector of Walt Whitman items, asks for “the date of the contract of the tomb . . . for the purpose of completing my data.”
- 1928 Dec 23                   Letter signed Harriet Sprague, New York City, to Miss [Jessie] Whitman. Sprague, a collector of Walt Whitman items, describes the Whitman House in Camden, New Jersey.
- 1930 Feb 3 (postmark)      Typescript letter signed Will S. Monroe, Waterbury, Vermont, to Miss [Jessie] Whitman, St. Louis. Monroe is preparing a work titled *Walt Whitman and His Contemporaries*, and asks Miss Whitman “for anything bearing on Walt Whitman that you thought might be of use.”
- 1934 Mar 26                   Letter signed Harriet Sprague (Mrs. Frank J. Sprague), New York City, to Miss [Jessie] Whitman. She has collected many Walt Whitman letters, and asks Miss Whitman for permission to publish some of them.
- 1939 May 28                   Photocopy of a portion of *The New York Times Magazine* article titled “Our ‘Good Gray Poet’: The National Library Celebrates Whitman, His Foothold Still ‘Mortis’d in Granite’.”
- 1939 May 30                   Photocopy of *Courier-Post* (Camden, New Jersey) newspaper clipping titled “Walt Whitman Statue at World’s Fair.” Includes photograph of the statue.
- 1940 Feb 20                   “Walt Whitman: A Sketch Biography” by James Waldo Fawcett. Read at a banquet given by the Association of South Jersey Stamp Clubs, Walt Whitman Hotel, Camden, New Jersey. (16 pages)
- 1942                            Printed announcement regarding Walt Whitman exhibition, principally from the collection of Mrs. Frank Julian Sprague, to be held May 9–June 27, 1942, at the University of Pennsylvania Library.
- 1946 May 1                    Printed article from the *Courier-Post* (Camden, New Jersey) titled “Foundation Created to Preserve Works of Whitman.”
- 1946 Aug 21                   Printed will receipt of Jessie L. Whitman from the Boatmen’s National Bank of St. Louis, agreeing to care for her last will and testament, which she deposited at the bank.
- no date                        Manuscript notes of births, marriages, and deaths in the Whitman family.
- no date                        Handwritten note of birth and death dates of Whitman family members.

- no date Envelope addressed in Walt Whitman's hand to Capt. George W. Whitman, 51st New York Vol. Veterans, Ninth Army Corps, Warrenton, Virginia, or elsewhere.
- no date Magazine article titled "Walt Whitman, Man and Poet" by R.M. Bucke. (6 pages)
- no date Portrait of Walt Whitman clipped from a magazine.
- no date Handwritten inventory of books, paintings, photographs, and papers sent by Jessie Whitman to the Walt Whitman House in Camden, New Jersey. Includes envelope with engraving of the Whitman House.