

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Walt Whitman Way in Washington, D.C.

“The Walt Whitman Way Designation Act of 2005” that “symbolically designates F Street, N.W., between 7th Street, N.W., and 8th Street, N.W., as Walt Whitman Way” was passed unanimously by the Washington, D.C., city council on December 6, 2005, and signed by Mayor Anthony Williams. The act provides for the display of a street sign for Walt Whitman Way in front of the old U.S. Patent Office Building, which Whitman called “that noblest of Washington buildings” and where he visited Civil War wounded soldiers (when it was temporarily turned into a hospital) and later worked as a clerk in the Office of Indian Affairs (from which position he was dismissed by Secretary of the Interior James Harlan in 1865). Begun in 1836 and completed in 1867, the building has served a number of purposes, including serving as the site of Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural ball (about which Whitman writes in *Specimen Days*). The Patent Office moved out in 1932, and the building was slated for demolition in the 1950s, but was saved by historical preservationists. Congress gave it to the Smithsonian to house the American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery, which opened in 1968. The building has been closed since 2000 for extensive renovation and will re-open in July 2006 on Walt Whitman Way. This photograph, by Martin Murray of the Washington Friends of Walt Whitman, was taken just after the sign was installed at the end of February 2006.

