

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE FIRST EDITION OF *LEAVES OF GRASS*

2005 is the sesquicentennial of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. A number of conferences and special events are celebrating the 150th anniversary of one of America's greatest and most original books. Listed below is information on the events that have already taken place or have been scheduled. An events calendar will be continually updated on the *WWQR* website (www.uiowa.edu/~wwqr) in the "Announcements" section.

"*Leaves of Grass: The 150th Anniversary Conference*" was held from March 31 to April 2, 2005, at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Directed by Susan Belasco, Ed Folsom, and Kenneth M. Price, this conference brought together some of the most distinguished American literature scholars from around the world, along with poets Galway Kinnell and Ted Kooser, jazz pianist Fred Hersch (who performed his own composition "Leaves of Grass"), and Whitman collectors. Essays from the conference will be published in *Leaves of Grass: The Sesquicentennial Essays*, edited by Belasco, Folsom, and Price, to be issued by the University of Nebraska Press.

Washington, D.C., was the site of a city-wide celebration of the sesquicentennial, called "DC Celebrates Whitman: 150 Years of Leaves of Grass," sponsored by the Washington Friends of Walt Whitman and numerous other groups and organizations. The events took place from March 29 to May 31. There were poetry readings at various locations throughout the city, and the Winter 2004 issue of the online poetry journal *Beltway* (www.washingtonart.com/beltway.html) featured poets responding to Whitman. A complete schedule of events is available at www.washingtonart.com/whitman/events.html.

"Whitman and Place," a conference investigating Whitman's relationship to particular American cities and regions, was held April 21-23, 2005, at Rutgers University, Camden, sponsored by the English Department and directed by Tyler Hoffman. Nearly fifty papers were presented, and selected papers will be published in a special issue of the online *Mickle Street Review*.

The Walt Whitman House National Historic Landmark in Camden, New Jersey, is offering special programs to celebrate the 150th anniversary of *Leaves of Grass*. Information is available at www.njparksandforests.org/historic/whitman.

The Walt Whitman Birthplace Association conducted a "*Leaves of Grass* 150th Anniversary Festival," with a number of events that took place from April

through June of 2005 at the birthplace in West Hills, New York. Information is available at the Birthplace Association's website, www.waltwhitman.org.

The University of Paris VII held a three-day international conference (July 4-6, 2005), "Celebrating Walt Whitman," organized by Éric Athenot of the University of Tours and Mark Niemeyer of the University of Paris IV (Sorbonne). Keynote speakers will be Betsy Erkkila (Northwestern University) and Ed Folsom (University of Iowa). Over twenty papers were presented by scholars from France, Germany, and the United States; there are plans for a book gathering selected essays. The conference schedule is available at http://www.ufr-anglais.univ-paris7.fr/COLLOC_CHV/Celebrating_Whitman.htm.

The Library of Congress is celebrating the sesquicentennial of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* with free public programs and an exhibit. Running until December 3, the American Treasure Exhibit in the Thomas Jefferson Building features "Revising Himself: Celebrating 150 years of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*"; this exhibit, curated by Barbara Blair and Alice Birney, draws upon the Library's Feinberg, Harned, Traubel, Houghton, and other Whitman collections and demonstrates how Whitman's continual recasting of his life roles paralleled the constant revision of his writings. From noon to 1:30 p.m. on November 3 in the Pickford Theater, a panel discussion on "Whitman and Place" will be held, with presentations by Whitman scholars Joann Krieg (Hofstra University), Ted Genoways (University of Virginia), and William Pannapacker (Hope College). They will talk about their research on Whitman in New York, Whitman and the Civil War, and Whitman in Camden and Philadelphia. Details are available at <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/whitman-home.html>.

Karen Karbiener of New York University has developed an exhibit entitled "Walt Whitman and the Promise of Democracy, 1855-2005" at the South Street Seaport Museum in Manhattan that will run through December 2005. The exhibit, in the Schermerhorn Row Galleries, will provide a three-dimensional, multimedia introduction to Whitman's work and his vision of America's potential. Information is available at <http://www.southstseaport.org/index.shtml>.

"Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*: The Sesquicentennial Symposium," directed by David Haven Blake and Michael Robertson, will be held September 22-24, 2005, at The College of New Jersey. Participants include Anita Anantharam, Benjamin Barber, Daphne Brooks, Lawrence Buell, Wai-Chee Dimock, Betsy Erkkila, Ed Folsom, Janet Gray, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Matthea Harvey, David Lehman, James Longenbach, Meredith L. McGill, Angela Miller, Kenneth Price, Michael Warner, and Ivy Wilson. For information on events and activities, visit the website at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~whitman/>.

Central Connecticut State University has planned a series of events entitled "'Look Back On Me': New England Celebrates the 150th Anniversary of Walt Whitman's 1855 Edition of *Leaves of Grass*." From July 1 to September 30, the Burrill Library is hosting an exhibition called "Images of Walt Whitman: The

Commercialization of an American Original,” and several events are planned for September 22-23, including talks by Billy Collins, Karen Karbiener, Jerome Loving, David S. Reynolds, and Martin Espada. Further information is available at: <http://library.ccsu.edu/lib/archives/Whitman/index.html>.

The University of Northern Iowa is hosting a one day conference called “We Celebrate Walt Whitman” on November 9, 2005, that will capitalize on UNI’s focus on education. The conference theme will be Whitman in the classroom and Whitman as a formative influence for young people. Ed Folsom of the University of Iowa will be the keynote speaker, and graduate students from the University of Iowa who work on the *Whitman Archive* will share their insights. A “Teaching Whitman Roundtable,” tailored to the needs of secondary English teachers, will take place. The conference concludes in the evening with a musical program, presenting solo, jazz and choral music inspired by Whitman poems. The UNI dance group, Orchesis, will also be featured. In addition, Whitman himself, portrayed by Bill Koch, will make an appearance. For further information go to www.uni.edu/english/whitman.

“Whitman Making Books / Books Making Whitman,” an exhibit and symposium celebrating Whitman as a bookmaker, will be held at The University of Iowa from November 2005 through January 2006. The symposium will take place on the weekend of November 10-12, 2005, and will examine the implications of Whitman’s love of the book as material object. It is arguable that Whitman in fact did not think of his works as “texts” but rather as “books,” each physical book having an existence and a meaning distinct from the others. So he tended to think of his various editions of *Leaves* not as a single evolving text, but as six separate books, each with its own history, its own social and political context, and its own cultural work to accomplish. The symposium will address the important relationship of those contexts to the physical changes in the various editions and the material identity that each book carries in its unique binding, page layout, decorations, and typeface. The exhibit, to be held at The University of Iowa Museum of Art, will focus on the making of Whitman’s books and will feature editions of his work from 1855 to the present, with an emphasis on editions that demonstrate printing and design innovations. Books featured in the exhibit are from the University of Iowa Special Collections and from Kendall Reed’s private collection. Keynote speaker will be Ezra Greenspan of Southern Methodist University, with presentations by Kathleen A. Baker, Betsy Erkkila, Ted Genoways, Charles Green, Amy Hezel, Karen Karbiener, Jerome Loving, Matt Miller, Kenneth M. Price, and Gary Schmidgall. Directed by Ed Folsom and David Schoonover, this event should appeal to those interested in Whitman and, more generally, those interested in the history of the book and the book arts. These events are sponsored by the University of Iowa Obermann Center for Advanced Studies and the Arts and Humanities Initiative. Further information is available at www.uiowa.edu/obermann/whitmanmakingbooks.