

“BUILDING THE HOUSE THAT SERVES HIM LONGER”: A HISTORY OF WALT WHITMAN’S TOMB

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“Was it heavy enough? Do you think it will keep me in?”
—Walt Whitman to Dr. William M. Reeder¹

“So Long!”

WALT WHITMAN DIED ON FRIDAY, MARCH 26, 1892; his funeral took place four days later, on March 30, 1892. Whitman’s plans for his final resting place, however, began to take shape four years before his death, in early December 1889, when he started to think seriously about what he called his “*burial house*.”² In letters and conversations with friends and acquaintances, Whitman’s ideas gradually evolved into what would become a carefully constructed above-ground tomb that included individual vaults for the remains of his parents, his brothers George and Eddy, his sister Hannah, and his sister-in-law Louisa Orr Whitman. The completion of Whitman’s tomb represented the culmination of a complicated series of decisions.

Whitman cultivated his literary legacy in his last years through correspondence, publication, friends and visitors, and an attentive reading of the newspapers and periodicals that mentioned him. His concerns about his brother Eddy (1835-1892) and his sister Hannah Whitman Heyde (1823-1908) were tied to the precarity of his own financial situation as well as theirs. His relationships with Harleigh Cemetery Superintendent Ralph Moore and the Philadelphia-based Reinhalter Company that constructed the tomb evolved over the four years that went into its planning and construction, from warmth and trust to concerns about fraud.

The location of Whitman’s tomb, its design, and its cost are topics that have received significant critical and biographical attention, but a close examination of the process as it unfolded in the years prior to Whitman’s death, as well as recently

uncovered materials, provide a more complete account.³ In the midst of health challenges and financial concerns, Whitman nevertheless made careful decisions about the location of his cemetery lot: he worked with the Reinhalter Company to design his tomb, oversaw the building of the tomb, and paid for the tomb. None of this was easy. This essay will trace the story of Whitman's tomb, provide new historical documents, reevaluate the biographical narrative surrounding its creation, and provide the first comprehensive history of Whitman's final statement to the world.

A Biographical Postmortem

Whitman's biographers focus mostly on the cost of the tomb and the above-ground placement of Whitman's body, especially since the latter seems to contradict Whitman's professions in *Leaves of Grass* about blending into the earth at death. Most famously, at the end of "Song of Myself," Whitman writes, "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, / If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles."⁴ Bliss Perry, one of Whitman's earliest biographers, notes that "Many friends who contributed, out of slender means, to his weekly support—since his brother George proved unwilling to help him—were surprised to find that in 1891 he had spent nearly \$4000 on a massive tomb in Harleigh Cemetery."⁵ George R. Carpenter offers a different interpretation of the expenditure, stating that Whitman had set aside a small fund "that provided for the future of his brother [Eddy] and paid for the granite tomb which he had built, and in which he desired that his bones should rest, together with those of his mother and father."⁶ Gay Wilson Allen states that "Whitman wanted his family united in death—as it had never really been in life."⁷ As Allen also points out, however, Whitman "made no plans" to place his brothers Jesse, Andrew, and Jeff in the tomb (Allen does not mention Whitman's sister Mary Elizabeth Whitman Van Nostrand, buried in Green Hill Cemetery, New York). Ultimately, Whitman's family was partially united, with Whitman's parents, Louisa and Walter, on either side of him, his brother George and George's wife Louisa and their infant son Walter (November 4, 1875-July 12, 1876), his sister Hannah, and Eddy all placed in burial vaults within the tomb. Allen concludes by praising Whitman's prescience regarding the tomb's design and location: "He knew that if *Leaves of Grass* lived—and he thought it might—his tomb would become a shrine, as it has. He showed good judgment in choosing the simple design from Blake, with a triangular capstone, and the location at the base of a small hill covered with laurel and oak trees."⁸

In his biography, *Walt Whitman: A Life*, Justin Kaplan provides a more extended account, devoting his second chapter to Whitman's "Burial House." Revising a sentence of Whitman's from an article Whitman had published in the New York *Herald*, Kaplan writes, "Whitman's tomb too was a special and self-chosen utterance."⁹ Whitman's decision to build the tomb may have been a response to the "neglected burial grounds" of his Long Island ancestors as well as to the desecration of cemeteries due to urban displacement and to grave robbers; the "violated and neglected grave," Kaplan affirms, "had become a constitutive metaphor" and was evident "even in Whitman's earliest work."¹⁰ The Civil War, too, was likely a factor in Whitman's decisions; he had written about hastily created battlefield graves in *Drum-Taps*.¹¹ These accumulated experiences, Kaplan concludes, help to explain the solidity of Whitman's tomb, "stark, elemental and secure."¹² Kaplan's analysis provides contextual background for Whitman's evolving understanding of death and his attitudes about the treatment of the dead. Whitman's poem, "To Think of Time" provides an example: the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1855) simply presents the poem as the third in a sequence of twelve; in the second edition (1856), the poem is titled "Burial Poem"; in the third edition (1860), "Burial"; and in the fifth edition (1871), Whitman gave the poem its present title. In all of the editions of *Leaves of Grass*, this section is present:

To think how eager we are in building our houses,
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent.

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or seventy or eighty years at most,
I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.)¹³

These lines perhaps capture the ways Whitman's views on tomb building changed over the decades. At first a metaphor for the body (that lasts "seventy or eighty years"), the reference shifts to become a metaphor for the process of constructing the tomb that houses the body.

David Reynolds calls Whitman's tomb "impressive," noting that it "seems to give literal meaning to the flouting of death," citing lines from "Song of Myself": "My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite, / I laugh at what you call dissolution, / And I know the amplitude of time."¹⁴ Reynolds is sharply critical, however, of Whitman's motives when he turned to his good friend Thomas B. Harned, an attorney, to assist him with the final bill for the tomb.¹⁵ Of this incident, Reynolds writes, "Once more, Whitman fell back on a capitalist supporter to bear him through a thorny financial situation."¹⁶ Reynolds overlooks two crucial factors—it was Harned's legal acumen, not his wealth,

that Whitman most needed at this time; and Harned was not a “supporter” but was a close friend. Moreover, Whitman was not well; his health was in decline, and when the final bill was presented, Whitman was less than a year away from death. His friends, naturally, were protective not only of his physical health but, more importantly, his emotional well-being while this matter was being sorted out. Reynolds asserts that Whitman had “little now but shrewdness to carry him through,”¹⁷ but this is a misreading of both the situation and of Whitman’s character. Whitman was beloved by a wide network of friends who stepped forward to assist him in his last days, to shield him from discomfort and to assure that he had ease of mind as he was dying.

“On a Little Wooded Slope”

Most prominent citizens of the Camden/Philadelphia area in the 1880s and 1890s were buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery (1869), the more recent version of Laurel Hill Cemetery (1836). As Geoffrey M. Sill points out, Harleigh Cemetery followed the model of “park lawn” cemeteries, “designed with curving drives, broad expanses of lawn, and artificial lakes”; most importantly, the cemetery was in a rural location away from “crowded” urban church burial grounds.¹⁸ It was part of a larger trend in American culture that saw “the emigration of the dead from city graveyards to rural cemeteries”—a development praised by Whitman, who had celebrated a number of rural burial sites in his early newspaper writings.¹⁹ Opened in 1885, Harleigh Cemetery copied the designs of Mount Auburn (1831) and Laurel Hill Cemetery, with winding, circular-shaped drives and careful attention to the natural landscape. Internal fencing was prohibited, as well as the duplication of monuments or elaborate statuary; these regulations developed over the course of the nineteenth century.²⁰ In August 1886, the *West Jersey Press* noted Harleigh Cemetery’s peaceful setting: “The burial ground of the past adds gloom to misery but at Harleigh Cemetery there is an opposite effect which is to cheer and comfort the sorrowing heart. A cemetery of 50 years ago makes one shudder in contrast with those of modern date.”²¹ Impacted by both the rural cemetery movement of the 1830s and the lawn cemetery movement of the 1840s, the names of the lanes in Harleigh Cemetery reflect the wider cultural emphasis on cemeteries as a place of solace and retreat: “Dale Drive,” “Forest Lane,” “Tanglewood Drive,” “Shady Ave” (see Figure 1).

The first mention of Harleigh Cemetery as a possibility for Whitman’s final resting place occurred on December 5, 1889. According to Horace Traubel,

Whitman described the day as “dull,” aside from a “visitor from Harleigh Cemetery,” an account that Traubel describes as “exceedingly comical”:

‘We had quite a talk. He wishes to give me a lot in the Cemetery, I to write a poem on it.’ I called it a ‘curious bargain’ and W. assented merrily, ‘I know it is, but I promised to consider it favorably. So you folks had better be prepared now for the worst!’ I inquired, ‘Haven’t you a lot at West Laurel Hill?’ ‘Very likely. I am very careless of my possessions. I have a farm somewhere which I have never seen—and lots, the Lord knows where. A more possessing man, you see, than you thought I was!’²²

There is no evidence that Whitman owned a farm or a lot at West Laurel Hill, however, nor is there evidence that Whitman crafted a poem in exchange for the lot in Harleigh Cemetery, although Whitman continued to write poems up until a few months before his death.

In a series of letters, mostly to his friend Richard Maurice Bucke, Whitman described his visits to Harleigh Cemetery. In a letter to Bucke dated December 7, 1889 (just two days after his “comical” visit with the cemetery representative), Whitman writes, “Bright sunny perfect day—have just been out an hour or two, a drive in a smooth cab in the rural roads & to Harleigh Cemetery—enjoy’d it well.”²³ Three weeks later, on December 21, Whitman notes John B. Wood²⁴ and the Cemetery Superintendent Ralph Moore visited him at Mickle Street: “they propose to give me a lot & I wish to have one in a small side hill in a wood—& am going out soon to locate it—am impress’d pleasantly with the Supt: Mr Wood—nothing special.”²⁵ Probably Wood offered Whitman a lot without charge in an effort to promote Harleigh Cemetery by offering lots to famous public figures. Three days later, on December 24, 1889, Whitman chose the lot: “Yesterday went out (two hours drive) to the Harleigh Cemetery & selected my burial lot—a little way back, wooded, on a side hill—lot 20 x 30 feet—think of a vault & capping all a plain massive stone temple, (for want of a better descriptive word).”²⁶ Even before he met with the company that would help design and build his tomb, then, Whitman knew he wanted a “massive stone temple.” Whitman’s lot was nearly double the size of the 9 x 18 foot lots that had been sold in the Granite Lawn and Marble Lawn sections of Harleigh Cemetery, priced at \$60.²⁷ Wood tucked a map of Harleigh Cemetery with Whitman’s lot marked on it into a letter to Whitman dated December 24, 1889 (Figure 1). The map reads, “Entirely on Landscape lawn / Plan,” reinforcing the cemetery’s natural setting and indicating the location of trees, a lake, and a spring-like creek that flows into the lake. In his letter to Whitman, Wood asked Whitman to name the spring (marked with a star on the top left part of the map) and the “old tree” which Wood drew, near the word “*Spring*”:

When your brain is weary please put on the map the name of the spring, which is about where the star is, and when it is very active, please do not forget the old tree, and name it. I have tried to put its gnarled form on paper, not at all like it for fear I should interfere with your work, but yet a sort of sign post to it. Below is the old willow and pine.²⁸

Whitman's cemetery lot, located in the southwest corner of the cemetery, is close to the cemetery office and in a section of the cemetery demarcated as "Wood Lawn." The Camden *Daily Telegram* took note of Whitman's visit to his "Burial Lot" and his choice of a lot (Figure 2). Four months after he chose the lot, Whitman received the deed—"(so that is settled for)," he noted in a letter to Bucke.²⁹

Harleigh Cemetery was less than two miles away from Whitman's house on Mickle Street. Aside from the generous offer of a free lot from the Cemetery Manager and the Cemetery Superintendent, its proximity to his home was probably one of the main reasons Whitman chose it. Whitman told Traubel that the distance from Mickle Street to the cemetery was "a mere walk—you can easily go it—why two or three years ago I should not myself have thought it much of a walk."³⁰ Whitman loved to visit the lot, often going for carriage rides with a driver and a few companions to view it. In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, visits to cemetery grounds were not unusual, even if one were not visiting deceased family members. Because of the rural and park lawn cemetery movements of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, cemeteries were considered havens of greenery, and preceded the development of municipal parks.³¹ The frequency of Whitman's visits to Harleigh Cemetery may also be understood, then, as part of a wider shift in cultural attitudes toward cemeteries. Thomas Bender notes that "America's rural cemeteries were explicitly designed for both the living and the dead."³² In addition to their natural setting, lawn cemeteries appealed to Americans because of their location on the outskirts of the city or town. Their proximity yet separateness from urban centers allowed visitors to get away for a brief period in order to refresh their spirits. "You have entered a realm of quietude, melody, and beauty," one visitor noted.³³

Several factors impacted Whitman's visits to Harleigh cemetery: the weather, his health, and access to a driver. If the weather was sunny, Whitman enjoyed seeing Harleigh Cemetery and viewing the lot he had chosen. In letters to friends, he recorded how much he relished these visits and how frequently they occurred: "Bright sunny perfect day—have just been out an hour or two, a drive in a smooth cab in the rural roads & to Harleigh Cemetery—enjoy'd it well—"³⁴ Excursions to Harleigh Cemetery usually began in the late morning, around 11 a.m., and lasted for about two hours. Whitman noted the following in a letter to Richard Maurice Bucke: "When the weather is right I go out lately—to-day have been out f'm two

to three hours—start at 11 abt—Stopt at Harleigh Cemetery to look again at my burial lot—(it suits me)—.”³⁵ Sometimes Whitman’s digestive system hampered his ability to leave his house, even for a brief two or three hours; other times his health did not allow for a visit. He writes to William Sloane Kennedy: “Bad days & nights with me—neuralgic sick head ache in addition to other ails.”³⁶ Excursions to the Cemetery had to be planned because Whitman could not drive himself. Sometimes Ralph Moore, the cemetery superintendent, would take Whitman, or he would go with friends, or with his housekeeper Mary Davis.³⁷

There were other reasons, too, why Whitman chose Harleigh Cemetery. He liked its wooded landscape and its newness, which allowed him greater latitude in the choice of lot. Instead of deciding on a more noticeable location, he carefully selected a lot that was in a dell, off by itself, telling Traubel, “I think they wanted me to go in the open, in some prominent place, conspicuous—but I went deep in the woods.”³⁸ This comment echoes the theme of many of Whitman’s poems, especially the poems of the *Calamus* cluster.³⁹ Whitman told Traubel that he viewed the cemetery superintendent, Ralph Moore, favorably because Moore’s sensibility was similar to his own: “Moore is not bitten with the art-side of life: not sacrificed to that bane of all literary, artistic ambition: elegance, system, convention, rules, canons. In that respect, he is our man.”⁴⁰ Whitman wrote to his friend John H. Johnston that his “burial vault” was “on a little wooded slope”⁴¹ apart from the main paths of the cemetery, while also remaining distinct.

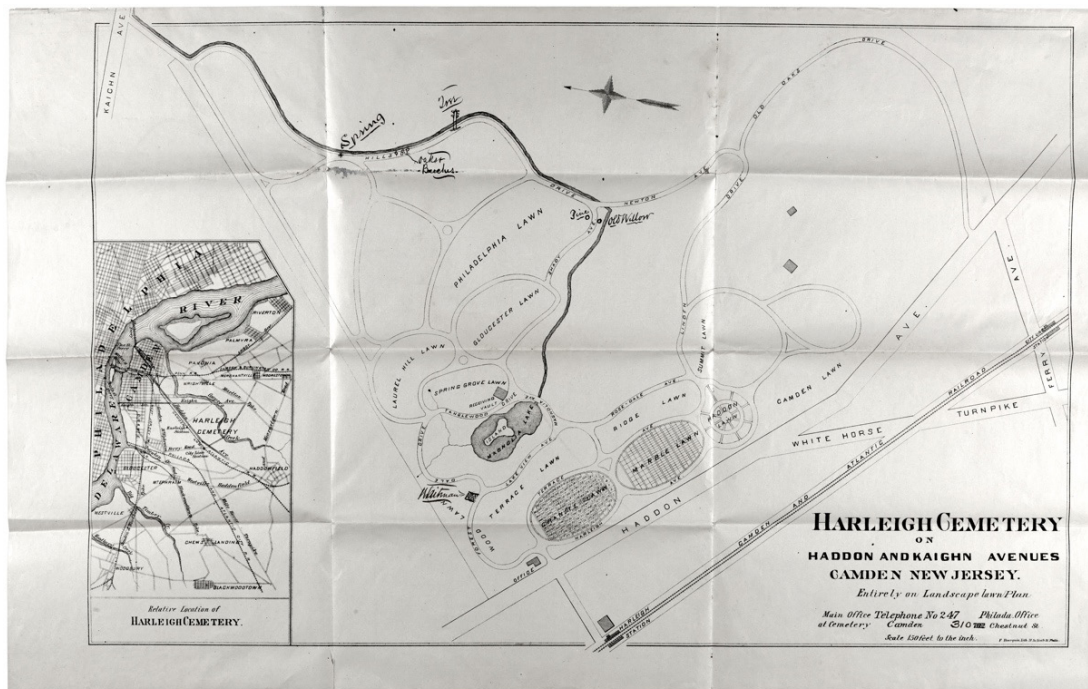


Figure 1: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Cemetery map.

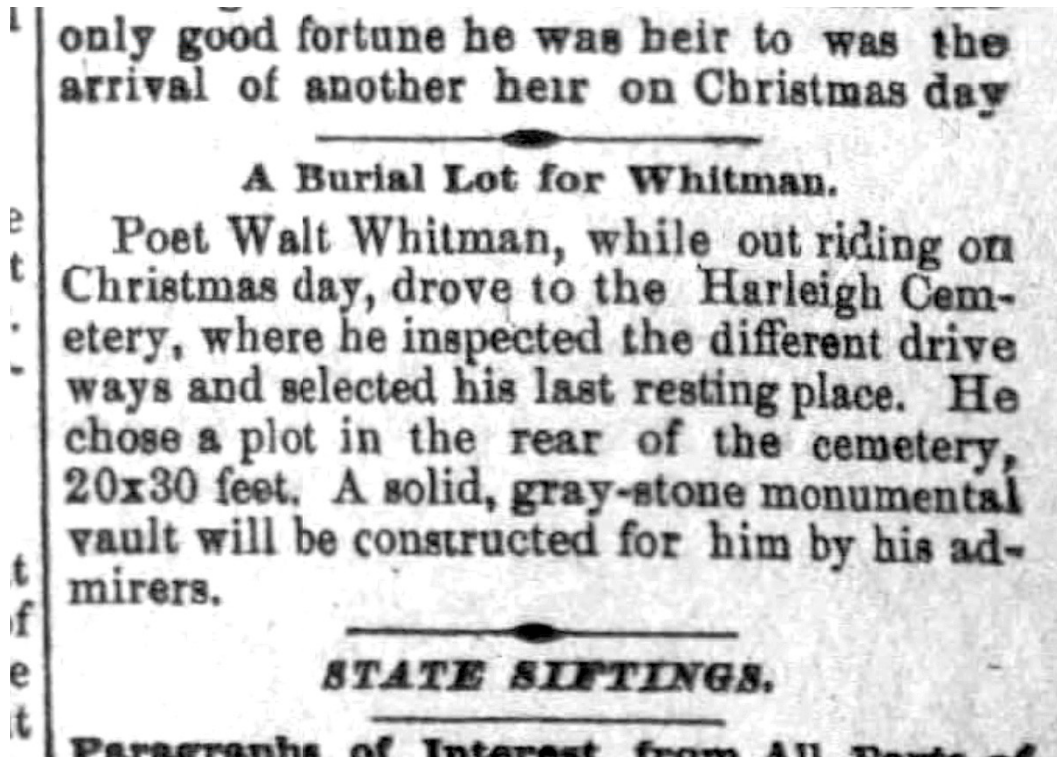


Figure 2: Camden *Daily Telegram* (Camden, New Jersey), Dec. 27, 1889.

Designing Whitman's Tomb

Early on, Whitman had envisioned his tomb as “a vault & capping all a plain massive stone temple (for want of a better descriptive word).”⁴² While Whitman had the general design of the tomb in mind, the specific details were decided during a meeting Whitman had with the monument designer J. Reinhalter & Co. of Philadelphia. On July 23, 1890, Whitman wrote to Richard Maurice Bucke: “—Did I tell you that a monument designer, Phila: has bro’t me a design for the Cemetary vault (do you remember Blake’s ‘Death’?).”⁴³ More than likely Reinhalter proposed a variation on William Blake’s engraving, “Death’s Door,” and it caught Whitman’s interest (figure 3).⁴⁴

The solidity of Blake’s square portal design for the entrance to the tomb may have appealed to Whitman. Blake’s roughhewn square door with two columns on either side topped by a horizontal column was translated directly into the design for the entrance to Whitman’s tomb. While there is no statuary on the top of Whitman’s tomb, it possesses a triangular shape that conforms somewhat to the rocks on which the figure in Blake’s illustration reclines. Later,

while visiting the cemetery, Whitman asked his good friend Nellie O'Connor, "What do you think of it, Nellie?" Explaining, 'It comes from far back—way back—into the East into the earliest Greek. It was my own choice, after I had looked at all the elegant tombs—monuments.'⁴⁵



Figure 3: William Blake, "Deaths Door," composed 1805. Copy 1, 1805. Collection of Robert N. Essick. Copyright © 2023 William Blake Archive. Used with Permission.

Whitman's plans continued to develop in the next several weeks. In a letter to Richard Maurice Bucke dated September 29, 1890, Whitman describes a visit from Ralph Moore: "The cemetery Sup't: and monument architect have just been here to talk ab't and see me anent of the tomb—I enclose a (very hasty, crude) outline of it, as I have the idea & will probably direct it done—very plain and massive quite alone on a side (moderate) hill & trees—."⁴⁶ Included with this letter was Whitman's sketch of the tomb with specifications about the size of the lot, the material composition and design of the tomb, and its location. On the drawing Whitman wrote, "Harleigh Cemetery, Camden Co. New Jersey Walt Whitman's Burial Vault Lot 20 x 30 feet on a sloping wooded hill vault heavy undress'd Quincy Mass. grey granite—unornamental—size ab't 12 or 14 by 16 or 18 ft surroundings trees turf, sky a hill every thing crude & natural." Despite his disclaimer that the drawing was "very hasty, crude" Whitman took some care with it, using a blue pencil to outline its shape and a pencil to draw a door and to write neatly in cursive his name on two lines above the door. In black ink Whitman provided specific details about the scope of the tomb (figure 4). While smaller details in the design of the tomb continued to evolve over the next three years until Whitman's death, its temple-like structure remained.

On December 6, 1890, an extensive article about the tomb was published in the Camden *Daily Courier*, taking up nearly two full columns on the left-hand side of the front page. The article contains much factual information about how the tomb was taking shape and what materials were being used. After the article, a smaller piece titled "The Poet Talks" includes an interview with Whitman about why he chose the lot in Harleigh Cemetery. The article states incorrectly that the plot was presented to Whitman by friends, although it is possible that Whitman was alluding to Ralph Moore, the Cemetery Superintendent, as a friend. It also reports that Whitman changed some of the architectural plans; instead of granite, Whitman wanted "pressed brick" to line the outer sides of the tomb, despite Reinhalter's protests. The completed tomb was "intended to resemble the construction of the walls of King Solomon's temple," the reporter notes, and continues, "This style of tomb it is expected, will out-last the ordinary vaults or any monument ever constructed, and Mr. Whitman chose this design because it was unlike any ever shown him." The dimensions of the tomb and the materials used to construct it are also reported. The granite was quarried in Quincy, Massachusetts; some of the pieces weighed as much as ten tons. The article states the measurements of the opening ("three feet six inches by six feet"), the vestibule ("11 feet 3 inches wide, 7 feet deep and 8 feet high"), the catacombs "form apertures where the coffins are to be deposited." The design

was for eight coffins, four on the bottom row and four on the top. Whitman's coffin would be placed in the lower row between his parents. The interior space, including the space for the eight coffins, "would be 14 feet 3 inches deep and 11 feet 3 inches wide." The thickness of the marble used for the catacombs themselves was "unusual" because they were twice as thick (three inches instead of one and a half inches). On three sides of the tomb, the walls were to be eighteen inches thick; but the front side was to be two feet thick. The illustration that accompanies this article also shows the original intention for the outer area as one approaches the tomb, comprised of "large pieces of rock face or rustic granite in a semi-circular form." Ivy would be planted on these walls, "Mr. Whitman's idea being to screen all but the mausoleum itself from an outer view."

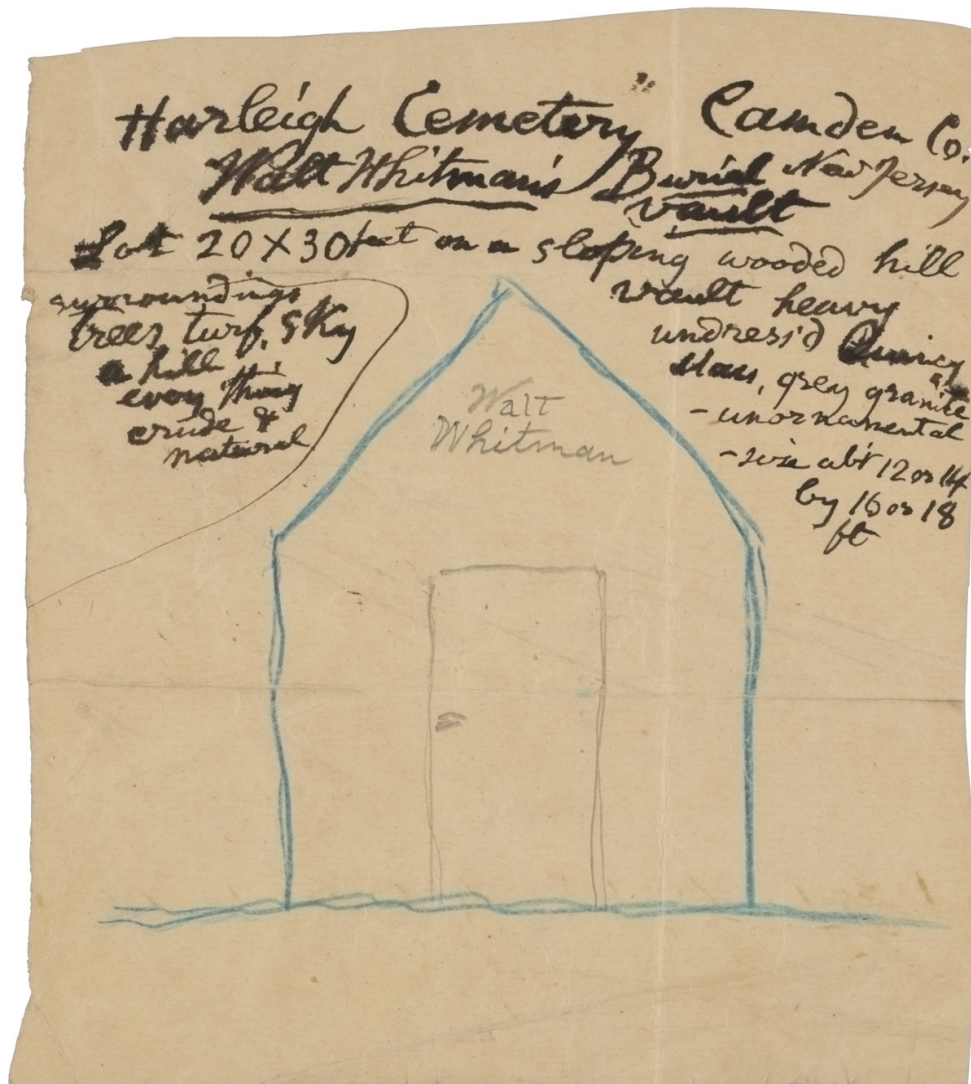


Figure 4: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Design and description.

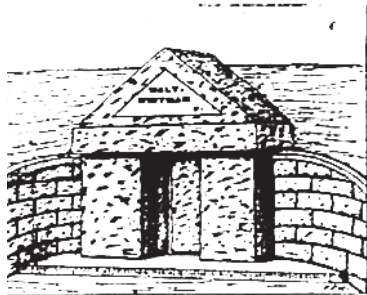
The length of the article, its placement on the front page of the newspaper, and the accompanying illustration reveal that the citizens of Camden were interested in the construction of the tomb and in Whitman's responses as the tomb was taking shape.

WALT. WHITMAN'S TOMB.

THE GOOD GRAY POET'S LAST RESTING PLACE DESCRIBED.

Handsome Mausoleum Being Constructed by the Restholders, of Philadelphia—Like the Man Its Beauty Will be in Its Plainness.

Much has been said and published about the Good Gray Poet—Walt Whitman and his burial place in the Harleigh Cemetery. There nestling on the hillside, the bard kept green by a gurgling brook, shaded by an aged oak tree and its arched branches, and protected by a massive structure of granite the mortal remains of Camden's poet will rest until the ending of the trump on the last day. A plot of ground was presented to Mr. Whitman by a number of his friends on his recent birthday and the style of the mausoleum to be built for the reception of the poet's body was selected on October 25th last, after great deliberation and changing the architectural plans, as they at first appeared. One of the principal alterations by him and at the suggestion of Mr. P. Reinholder, the builder, was in the material for the sides of the edifice. Originally they were intended to be composed of granite like the balance of the structure, but they will be lined with dressed brick, instead. The four corners of the tomb, which will be placed in a hillside are to be held together by the granite interlocking, and no bolts, screws or other fastenings will be used to hold the immense pieces of granite in place, and when fashioned and set in position, it is intended to resemble the construction of the walls of King Solomon's temple. This style of tomb it is expected, will out-last the ordinary vaults any monument ever constructed, and Mr. Whitman chose this design because it was unlike any of the others shown.



THE MAUSOLEUM WHEN FINISHED.

He would not have any other if it was made of pure gold," said Mr. J. E. Reinholder, of the firm of Reinholder & Co., of Philadelphia, who are the builders. "We are one on hand, which we are constructing at a cost of \$50,000, but I've no doubt

The work may be completed during January, and the firm is hurrying it along as fast as possible.

The granite came from Quincy, Mass., and is now nearly all quarried and will be forwarded in about two weeks. Some of the stones used will weigh as much as ten tons. The base of the entire pile is made of one solid piece of granite which is 14 feet 3 inches long, 3 feet 6 inches wide and one foot in thickness. The ponderous weight of the structure, the front of which will reach 70 tons of granite, will be sufficient to hold it to the ground without the possible displacement of one single stone. The door of the tomb will weigh 2,200 pounds, and measures 4 feet 2 inches in width and 8 feet 4 inches in height. Like the balance of the work it is to be of granite, six inches in thickness, and will be swung on brass pivots, one end projecting into the floor and the other into the granite. Rollers of brass also go under the door to facilitate an easy and perfect motion to this guard to the tomb. A brass lock will fasten the door when shut. The bolt of the lock is 1½ inches square, and runs into the side of the doorway, fully two inches. The builders say that in all monumental work other metal than brass is never used because brass will defy rust and corrosion.

The opening by which the tomb is entered will be three feet six inches by six feet, in measurement, and several inches smaller than the door itself which swings inward and is only embedded into the front wall of the tomb when shut, and thus will make the inside perfectly air tight were it not for an opening in the coping or summit of the turret.

The vestibule is to be 11 feet 3 inches wide, 7 feet deep and 8 feet high. The sides of the vestibule will be brick, and the face of the inner front and back walls of polished marble.

The catacombs are to be made after a very heavy type in keeping with the balance of the workmanship. They form apertures where the coffins will be deposited, and will be eight in number. Four of them will be placed side by side, 1 foot 4 inches from the floor with one end of each touching the rear end of the tomb. The remaining four are to be placed immediately over the lower tier and the top of the lower will serve for the floor of the upper. The upper tier of the higher catacombs will be 1 foot 4 inches from the ceiling of the tomb. Counting the space allotted for the eight catacombs the size of the inside of the tomb would be 14 feet 3 inches deep and 11 feet 3 inches wide. The marble of which the catacombs are to be made is 3 inches in thickness, and considered something unusual. The firm say the thickness of the marble never in ordinary cases exceeds one or one and a half inches in thickness. These apertures or caves are also extraordinarily large and measure inside two feet six inches wide, two feet four inches high, seven feet deep. After a body is interred in a catacomb the opening facing toward the entrance will be closed with a polished marble slab, one square and fastened in place with cement. In other tombs the catacombs are usually closed by a similar slab, but are fastened by cleets.

The walls on three sides of the tomb will be eighteen inches thick, but the front is to be much thicker and will measure two feet. It consists of five pieces and the door, each piece weighing from six to ten tons. The smallest stone in the entire

The roof, built of granite, will slant from the height of the wall to an angle of nine degrees, and will be formed of five pieces, eighteen inches in thickness.

No window will be inserted in the walls of the structure, and the only light will be received through the thick glass coping

which is to surmount the circular turret. The ventilation will be secured through six holes each one inch in diameter, which are drilled through the granite turret near the top, at equal distances from each other. The diameter of the turret will be 18 inches inside and the thickness the same as that of the sides of the tomb. The height of the turret will be about 4 feet and it will be constructed of the same kind of granite as the balance.

The approaches to the tomb will be built of large pieces of rock face or rustic granite in a semi-circular form, closing up to the sides of the mausoleum. They extend to the roof and will prevent the earth crumbling from the excavation in which the tomb is to be embedded. After the structure is completed and put in place ivy vines will be planted around the approaches, Mr. Whitman's idea being to screen all but the mausoleum itself from an outer view.

THE POET TALKS.

A "Courier" Reporter Has a Chat With Mr. Whitman About the Tomb.

Mr. Whitman was seen Thursday evening in his library by a Courier reporter, whose hand he heartily shook as he motioned him to a chair.

"One minute now," said he, "anybody else but a newspaper man could wait."

The venerable poet was thanked for the honor and an inquiry made after his health.

"Oh!" laughed he, with one of his mild exclamations, so well known to those who are acquainted with him, "I've got the grip and a number of maladies, but you may say that nothing serious is impending."

Gradually the conversation drifted upon the grave plot at the Harleigh Cemetery and Mr. Whitman expressed himself as follows:

"I selected the plot of ground because of its natural location. Yes, I love nature and places where nature shows itself and not so much artificial work. Not far away runs a country road and near by are several trees—oak and hickory—the hickory trees are about thirty years old and lusty. There is a natural cave on the incline of the hill and in that natural cave will be placed the tomb."

The reporter's minute was up and the aged poet was bidden good night.

Figure 5: Camden Daily Courier (Camden, New Jersey), January 6, 1890.

The language that Whitman used to describe his tomb in his letters to friends changed gradually from “vault” to “burial house” to “tomb.” Even before he met with the designer, he had definite ideas about what he wanted. In letters to Richard Maurice Bucke, he writes, “think of a vault & capping all a plain massive stone temple, (for want of a better descriptive word)” (December 25, 1889); four months later he retains the words “plain” and “vault”: “I rather think I shall have a plain strong stone vault merely made for the present—” (April 28, 1890).⁴⁷ In July 1890 Whitman writes that he met the “monument designer” and for the first time mentions “a design for the Cemetary vault (do you remember Blake’s ‘Death?’)”⁴⁸ In September 1890 to John H. Johnston, he reports, “I am writing a little annex (the 2d) to L of G. & giving out the design of my burial vault.”⁴⁹ In a series of letters to Bucke, Whitman describes his evolving ideas about the tomb. On September 29, 1890, he writes, “I have the idea & will probably direct it done—very plain & massive quite alone on a side (moderate) hill & trees—.”⁵⁰ On October 2, 1890, he writes, “they have commenced the tomb, broke ground yesterday & will build the vault proper—the stone quarried at Quincy Mass.”⁵¹ On October 25, 1890, he notes, “have signed & sent the contract . . . for my *burial house* in Harleigh Cemetery—.”⁵² On May 5, 1891, he writes, “had to be led assisted every movement, to see the tomb—it is well advanced is a hefty very unornamental affair not easily described—is satisfactory to me & will be to you—.”⁵³ On May 23, 1891, he writes, “the burial house in Harleigh well toward finished—.”⁵⁴ On June 4, 1891 he describes it as “the rudest most undress’d structure (with an idea)—since Egypt, perhaps the cave dwellers—.”⁵⁵ Once the construction of the tomb was done, Whitman was eager to send out photos to his friends. On June 27, 1891, he writes, “(I believe tomb finish’d)—soon as I get good pic’t. will send you”⁵⁶; on July 18, 1891: “Was out yesterday to my tomb in Harleigh Cemetery (will send you a sort of photo soon)”⁵⁷; on July 31, 1891, “Have you rec’d the tomb photos? Its best investment—vines creepers &c. —are yet to come.”⁵⁸ [To Dr. John Johnston, Corr. 5:232]. From December 1889 until October 1890, Whitman consistently uses the word “vault”; after October 1890, he uses the word “burial house” twice, but more often uses the word “tomb.” Kaplan suggests that “tomb” may be a slant reference to the New Testament and the burial of Christ,⁵⁹ but it appears that the shift in terminology is related to Whitman’s meetings with the monument designers and to his developing understanding of how the actual burial place would look within the context of the natural setting.

On Saturday, May 20, 1891, Whitman, Bucke (who was visiting), Traubel, and Warren Fritzing (Whitman’s attendant) went to Harleigh Cemetery. In his entry for this date, Traubel included a crude sketch of just the pediment of the tomb; Ed Folsom notes that this drawing may be by Traubel (figure 6).⁶⁰

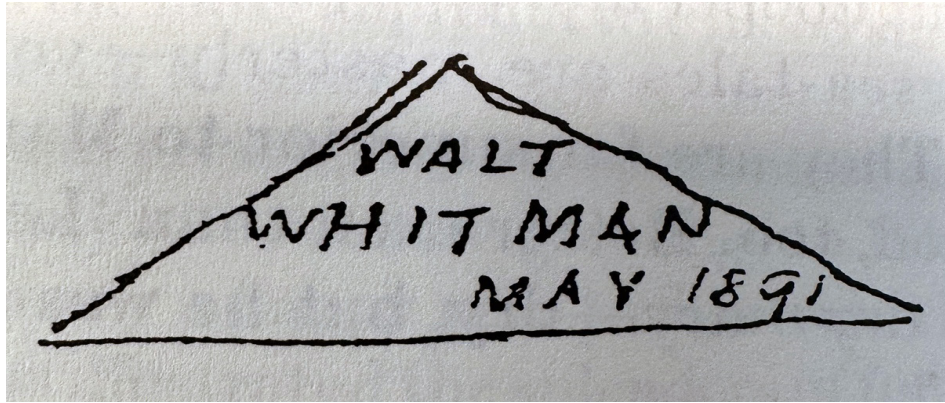


Figure 6: WWWC, 8:245.

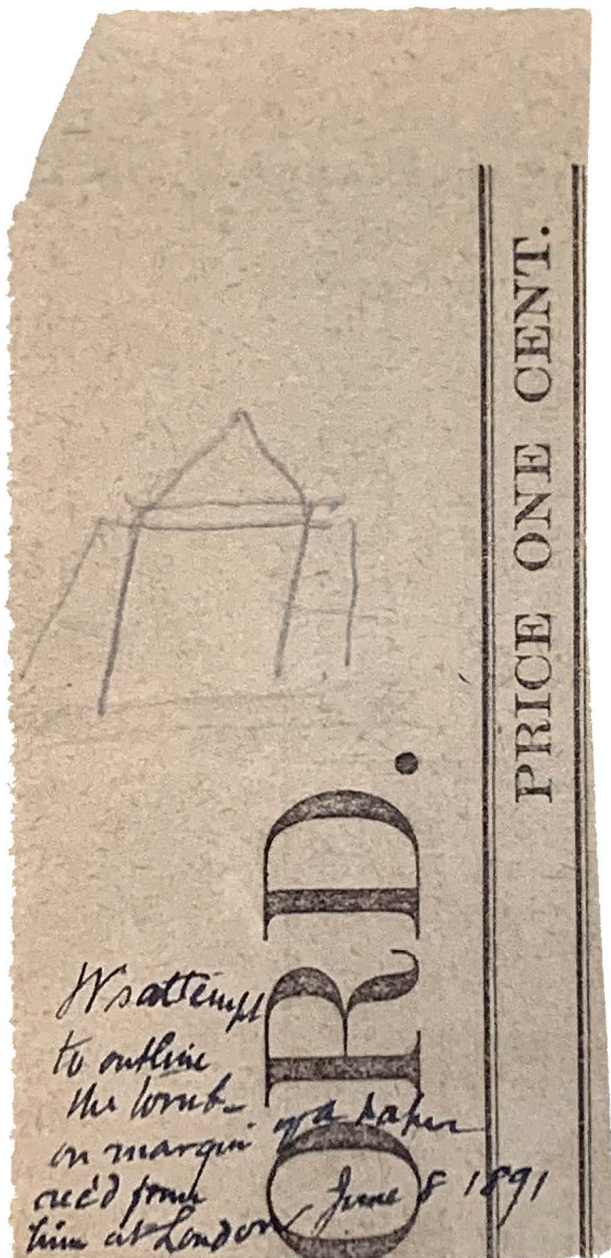


Figure 7: Horace Traubel and Anne Montgomerie Traubel Papers, 1824-1979, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

On seeing the tomb, Whitman told his friends, “My first look is unfavorable—somehow, my printer’s eye has been offended. I am not satisfied with it, yet cannot say why.”⁶¹ Bucke and Traubel did not like the date below Whitman’s name, and after some conversation, Whitman ultimately agreed with them, “declaring, ‘Let it go—it might as well—it is an easy matter—let it go!’”⁶² Fritzing reported in a letter to Traubel on June 8th that the date had been “chipped off.”⁶³ That week, Traubel and his wife Anne were visiting Bucke in Ontario, Canada. In a letter to Traubel, Whitman enclosed two pencil sketches that he had made of the tomb, perhaps to show what it looked like after the date was removed. The first sketch, on a newspaper clipping, is very crude but captures the basic shape of the tomb. The handwriting on the clipping (in ink) is Traubel’s; he writes, “Ws attempt to outline the tomb. on margin of a paper rec’d from him at London June 8 1891.” The second drawing was made on the back of a pamphlet titled “The Knights of the Plow.” Traubel notes again the date of June 8, 1891, and the location of London, Ontario, Canada, where Traubel was then visiting Bucke.

The pencil drawing in figure 9 has additional detail: the shape of the tomb is captured more accurately, and its natural setting is sketched in, as is what appears to be Whitman’s last name only. Compared to Figure 4, in these sketches the influence of Blake’s “Deaths Door” on the structural outline of the tomb is more evident.

Dr. William Reeder, who had taken photos of Whitman in his Mickle Street home in May of 1891, went to Harleigh Cemetery on June 27 to take pictures of the tomb as it was being completed.⁶⁴ Whitman had ideas about what kind of photographs of the tomb he wanted and the best time of day for it. He instructed Reeder: “‘We don’t want a picture of the bare tomb—we want all that goes with it—air, trees, a bit of sky, the hill. . . . The morning is the best time for the tomb,’ he said. ‘There is better light—’”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Traubel, Reeder, and Whitman’s physician, Dr. Daniel Longaker,⁶⁶ walked to Harleigh Cemetery in the late afternoon (after 4 p.m.) that same day. While there, Traubel notes, they “met Moore”—Ralph Moore, the Harleigh Cemetery Superintendent. When Whitman received a copy of this photograph on July 8, Traubel notes:

How he seemed to enjoy it! ‘Certainly it is much better than I expected it could be, *much* better. . . . Reeder is quite an artist—I can see that point of view was studied with great care—taste, too, and a good eye! . . . Well, order 20, we can use all of them. There is even a charm about this picture—even its vague, misty lines seem to suggest an atmosphere—rich, quite rich, with traces of the setting sun. Indeed, Horace, I consider this a success.’⁶⁷

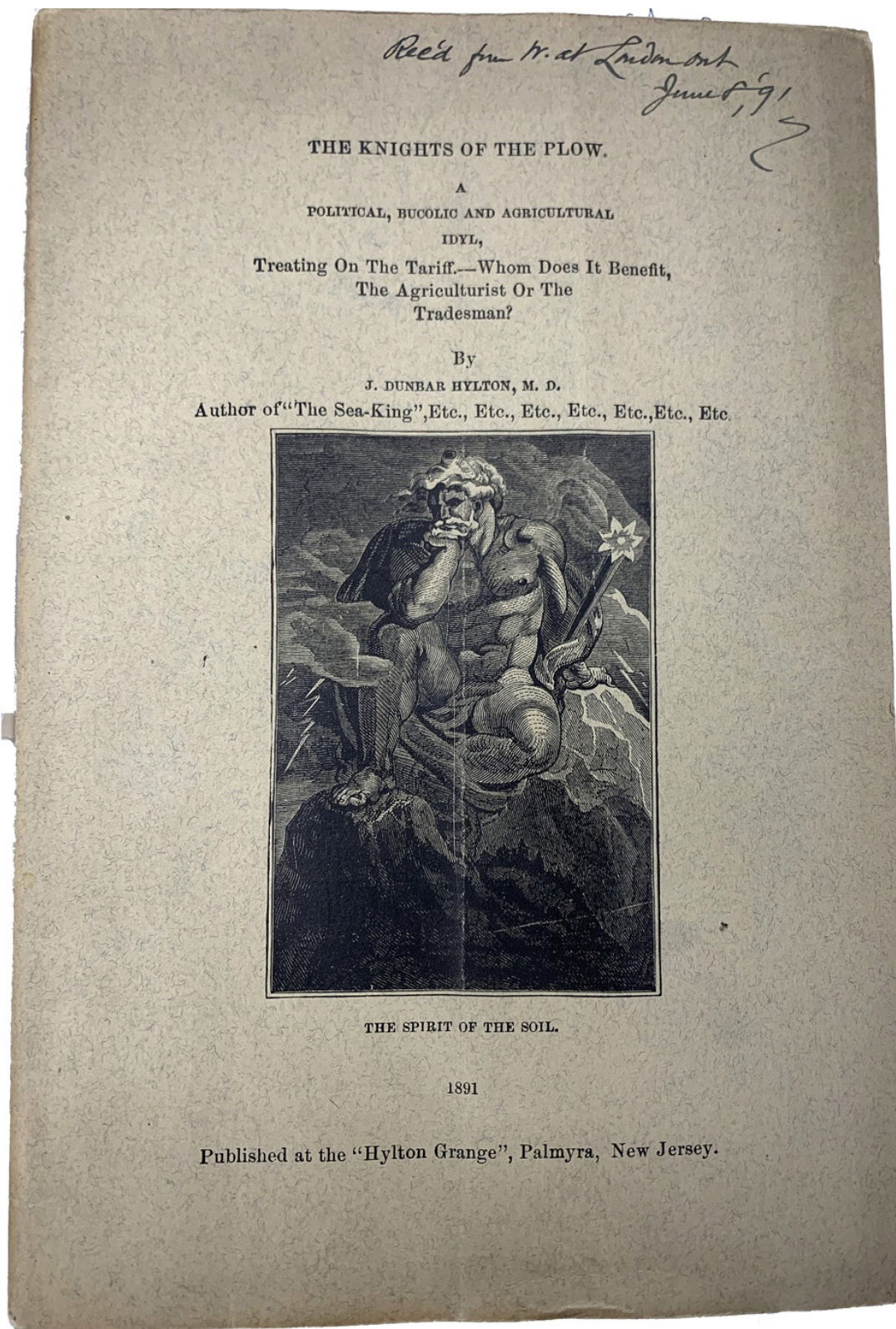


Figure 8: Horace Traubel and Anne Montgomerie Traubel Papers, 1824-1979, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Figure 9: Horace Traubel and Anne Montgomerie Traubel Papers, 1824-1979, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Whitman had specific ideas of what the copies should look like. He wrote directly on the plain yellow wrapper that accompanied the photo:

To head plate printer Can't you make me a photo: cut round plain round like a full moon or silver dollar & mounted on ab't this size card—of wh' this is a (crude) suggestion & sample? [on superimposed paper] put lines at bottom of photo & show taste in space—not too near, & not too low. After printing six (6) with the line "U S America" take out the line and print the rest (14) without it (the photographer Dr. Reeder, says the plate will show better by being printed middling light—I leave all that to y'r taste & judgment) –WW

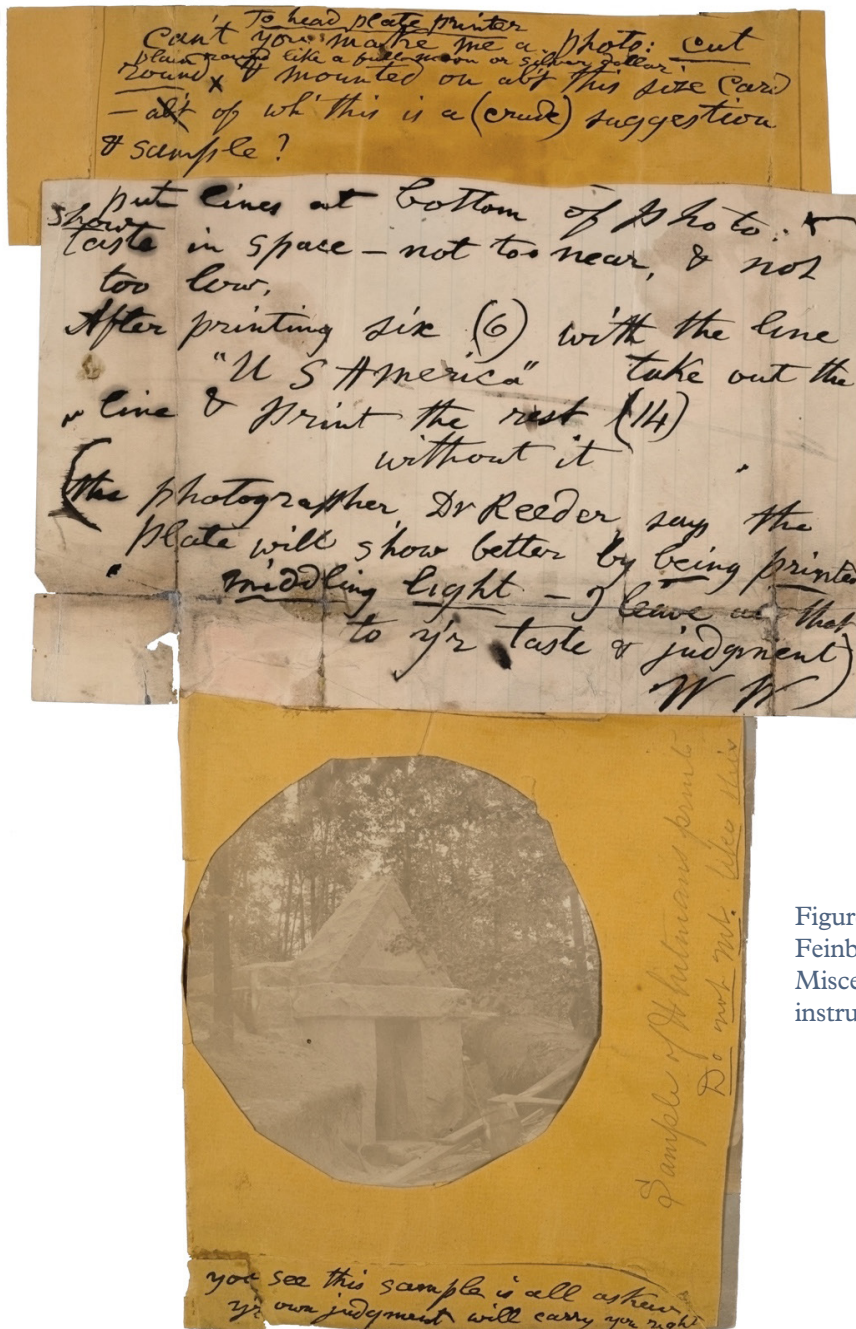


Figure 10: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Printer's instructions with notes.

Under the photo Whitman writes, “you see this sample is all askew y’r own judgment will carry you right.” On the right side of photo, in what appears to be Reeder’s handwriting: “Sample of Whitmans print Do not mt. like this.” Figure 11 shows the reverse side of the photograph and a yellow wrapper. Whitman used the reverse side of a letter from an admirer in Chicago requesting a book to write instructions to the printer. Figure 12 is the rest of the yellow wrapper, with Whitman’s directions, “To Head Plate Printer, and lightly penciled in “July 13 1891” as well as, in ink “see note July 13 1891.” A close up of just the photograph shows Moore’s right leg; he had been present when Reeder, Traubel, and Longaker visited the cemetery. Whitman noticed Moore’s leg and commented on it to Traubel: “He examined the picture a long time. Merry over my face, lost almost in the trees on the hill. Moore’s knee, too, exposed from the trunk of a tree.”⁶⁸ Looking carefully at the inset photograph, Traubel’s face can be seen to the right of the crossbeam at the base of the triangle, and Moore’s right leg and knee can be seen further right, near the trunk of the tree (figure 13).



Figure 11: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Printer’s instructions with notes.

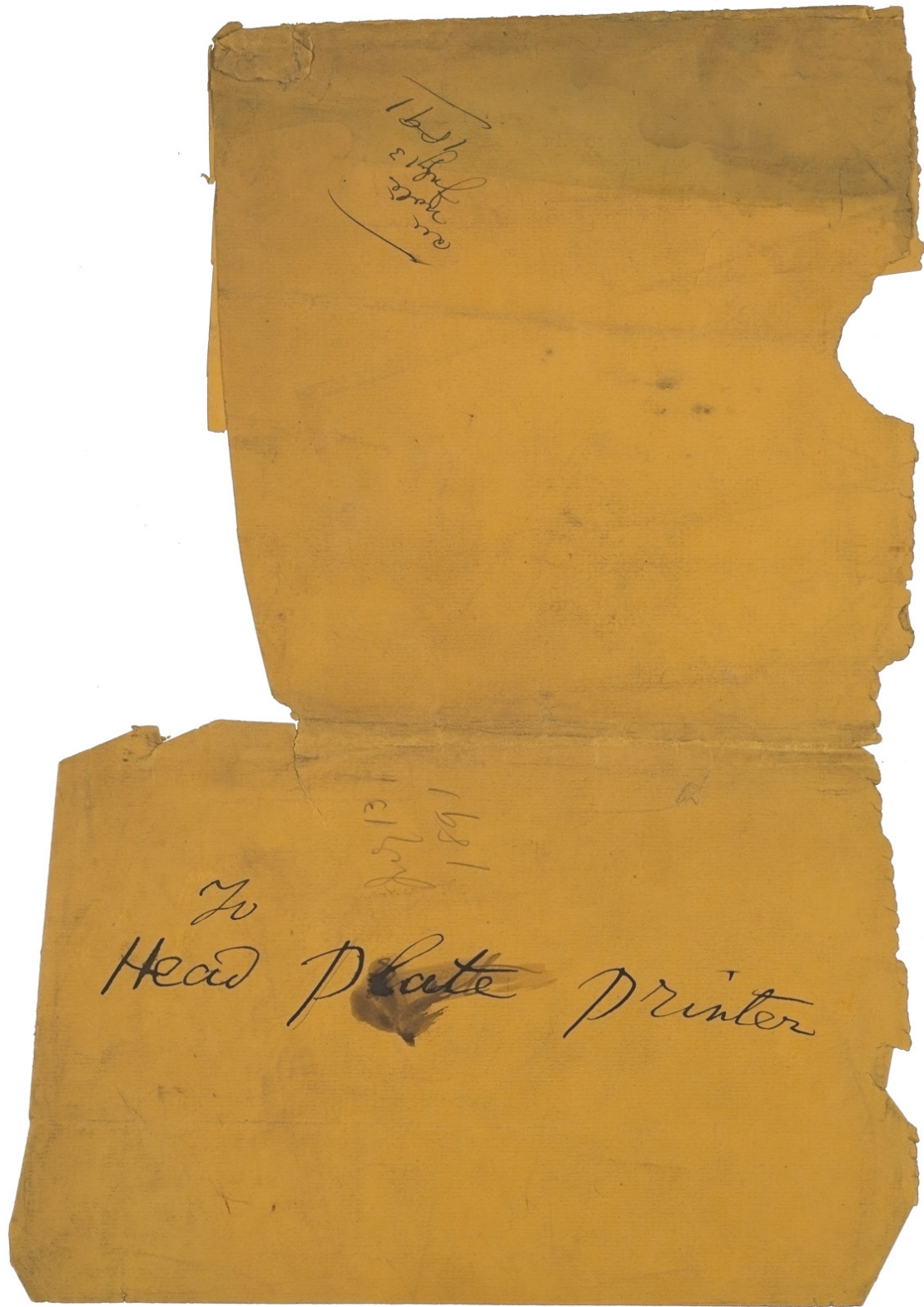


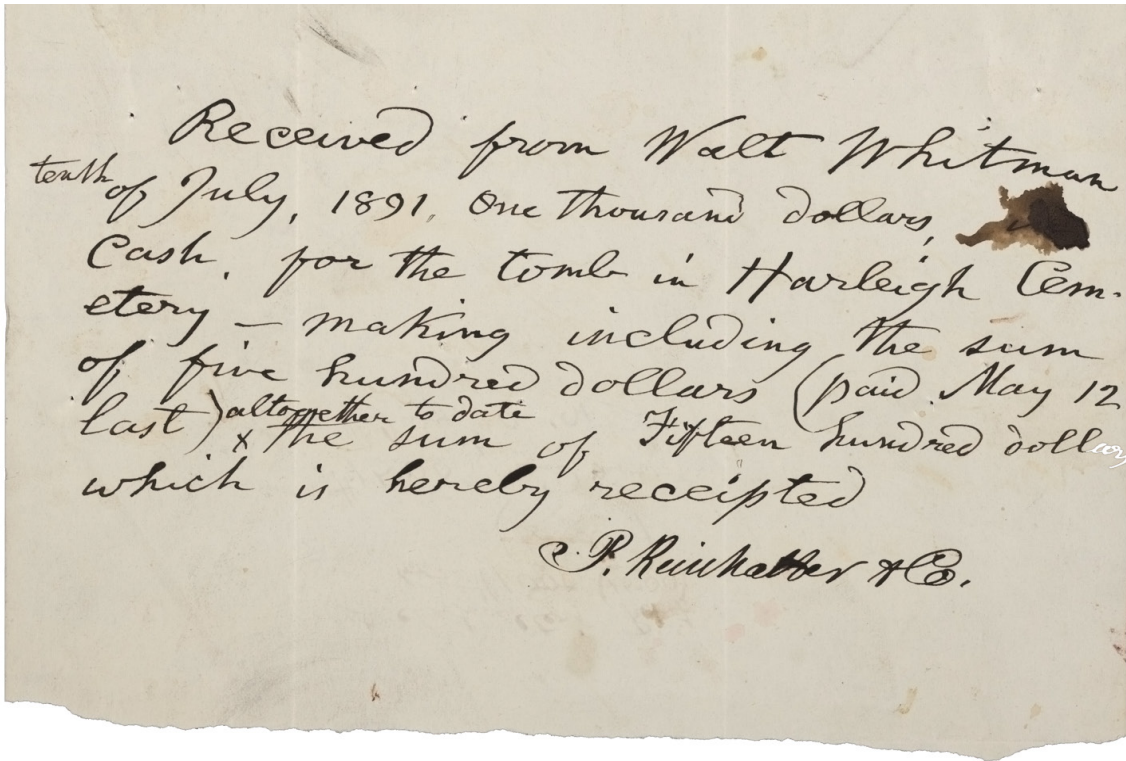
Figure 12: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Printer's instructions with notes.



Figure 13: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Printer's instructions with notes.

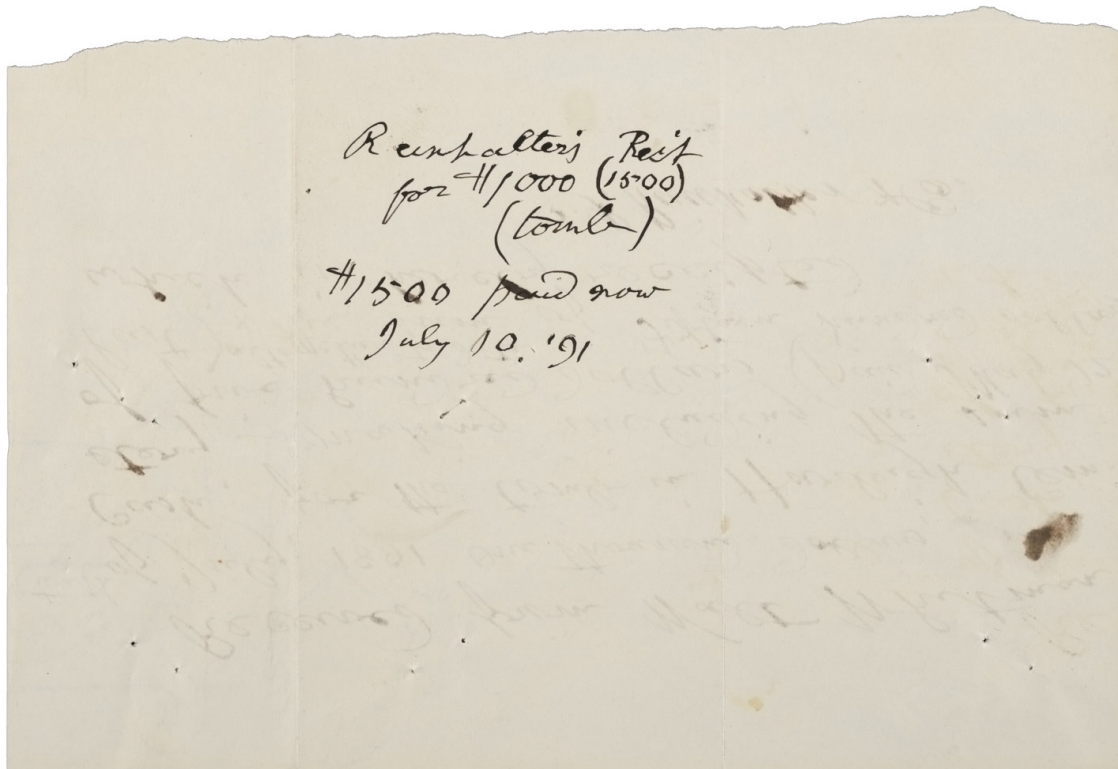
Contract Controversy

Moore met up with Traubel at the cemetery, however, because he wanted to present Whitman with a bill for the tomb. Traubel notes, “What he really wished to see us about was the payment—whether the money could not be raised among W.’s friends. Showed me contract for \$4,678. Thought that would pinch W., etc.”⁶⁹ The controversy over the exact cost as agreed to by Whitman and the Reinhalts would continue to cause concern for Whitman and for his friends until shortly before Whitman died. As the receipt in figure 14 shows, Whitman paid two sums to the Reinhalts: \$500 (May 12, 1891) and \$1,000 (July 10, 1891). The receipt information is written in Whitman’s handwriting and dated thirteen days after Moore first approached Traubel (June 27, 1891). P. Reinhalter signed the receipt on July 10, but that same day also presented Whitman with the final bill for the full amount. Whitman told Traubel, “The bill staggered me. I had expected a matter of a couple of thousand dollars, but this is literally a stunner. But,’ after a pause, ‘the job pleases me—it is done as I wanted it done, and that is about all I can ask.”⁷⁰



Received from Walt Whitman
tenth of July, 1891, One thousand dollars,
Cash, for the tomb in Harleigh Cem-
etery - making including the sum
of five hundred dollars (paid May 12
last) ^{altogether to date} & the sum of Fifteen hundred dollars
which is hereby received
R. Reinhalter & Co.

Figure 14 Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Receipt.



R. Reinhalter's Rec^t
for \$1,000 (1500)
(tomb)
\$1500 paid now
July 10. '91

Figure 15: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Receipt.

P. REINHALTER & CO.
GRANITE MONUMENTS
VAULTS AND STATUARY WORK.
OFFICE
18 SOUTH BROAD STREET.
Philadelphia Pa.

Details of Walt Whitman Mausoleum
 The style of architecture of the structure Roman
 The total width is 14'-3" depth 19'-3" outside measurement
 height is 14'-9" whole front and floor made out of Quincy
 Mass. Granite total weight is 72 1/2 tons, interior contains
 six catacombs made out of white marble american total
 weight of marble 5 3/4 tons vestibule made out of granite
 floor, and granite ceiling walls lined with encaustic tiles.
 sides and rear walls are made of hard brick ~~and~~ all
 18" thick and concrete on outside one foot thick and
 15500 bricks are used in walls. Designs and plans were made
 by J. E. Reinhalter of the firm of P. Reinhalter & Co. of
 Phila. Pa. and built under his supervision and Mr. R. Moore
 superintendent of Concrety

P. Reinhalter & Co.
J. E. Reinhalter

Figure 16: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Miscellany, 1834-1918; Burial vault; Design and description.

Below is Reinhalter's description of the construction of the tomb, titled "Details of Walt Whitman Mausoleum" (figure 16). The document states:

The style of architecture of the structure Roman The total width is 14'-3" depth 17'-3" outside measurement high [sic] is 14'.9" whole front and floor made out of Quincy Mass. Granite total weight is 72 1/2 tons, interior contains six cattacombs [sic] made out of white marble american total weight of marble 5 3/4 tons vestibule made out of granite floor, and granite Ceiling walls lined with encaustic tiles. Sides and rear walls are made of hard brick all 18" thick and concrete on outside one foot thick and 15500 bricks are used in walls. Designs and plans where [sic] made by J.E. Reinhalter of the firm of P. Reinhalter & Co. of Phila Pa and built under his supervision and Mr. R. Moore superintendent of Cemetery

P. Reinhalter & Co.

J.E. Reinhalter

Significantly, this document is not dated, nor does it contain any information about what Reinhalter would charge for the work. It may have been crafted earlier in the construction process because there are eight catacombs, not six as indicated in this document, in the tomb.

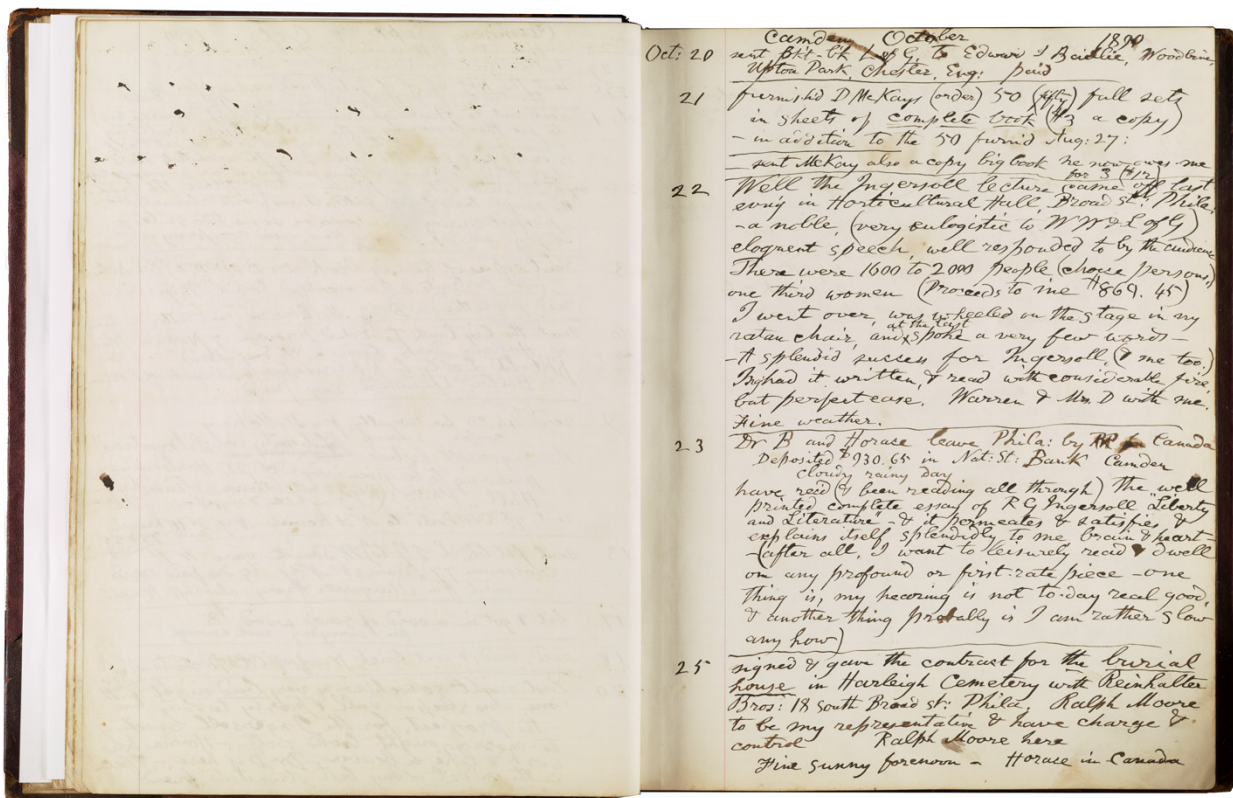


Figure 17: Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection, Library of Congress: Diaries, Diary Notes, and Address Books, 1863-1891; Diaries; 1876 to 1891, commonplace books.

Whitman had signed a contract with Reinhalter on October 25, 1890, nearly nine months before he was presented with the final bill, according to an entry in his commonplace book (figure 17). Whitman writes, “signed & gave the contract for *the burial house* in Harleigh Cemetery with Reinhalter Bros: 18 South Broad st: Phila. Ralph Moore to be my representative & have charge & control Ralph Moore here Fine sunny forenoon – Horace in Canada.” That Traubel was not present at the signing of the contract is significant. As this entry indicates, Traubel was in Canada⁷¹ when Whitman signed the contract and so did not witness the signing; therefore, Traubel likely did not read or see the contract. Whitman states that Ralph Moore was to be his “representative” and “have charge & control,” but it is not clear what type of authority Moore had been given and what kind of “control” he could exercise. Whitman used the same language in a letter to Richard Maurice Bucke dated October 25, 1890: “have signed & sent the contract with Rheinhalter [sic] Bros: 18 Broad st: Phila: architects &c: for my *burial house* in Harleigh Cemetery—Ralph Moore to have control & charge under my name & be my representative.”⁷² Viewing the contract that Whitman signed, however, it is clear that a line has been inserted at the end of the typed document and above Walt Whitman’s signature (figure 18). As this image shows, the last typed sentence of the contract, “Cost for work furnished by party of the first part \$4678,” appears to have been added *after* Walt Whitman signed the document. A closer look reveals that the sentence that begins with “Cost” is slightly lower than the sentence that precedes it. The usual amount of space between the end of one sentence and the next has been shortened from two or three spaces throughout the document to one space (“possible. Cost”), and the word “party” slightly obtrudes onto the left hand margin. However, the most convincing evidence that the line has been added is the space between the lines in the preceding text. In the contract, the lines are 1/2 inch apart, but the inserted sentence is 7/16 of an inch from the line above it. Had the line been inserted at 1/2 inch, it would have cut across Whitman’s signature. As it is, the section of the line that reads “the first part \$4678” partly intersects with the “W” of “Walt” in Whitman’s signature.⁷³

On November 20, 1891, Whitman told Traubel that Thomas Harned had gone to see the Reinhaltes, and “made them confess they had inserted that paragraph about the price—actually drove them to the wall, and made Reinhalter own up to that. What a petty fraud it was meant to be! They had the contract with them.”⁷⁴ Until this time, Whitman had thought highly of the Cemetery Superintendent Ralph Moore. However, while Moore may not have collaborated in the deception, Whitman told Traubel, “it *does* look bad for Ralph, too, when we know he held the contract and must have known the tricks it was up to.”⁷⁵

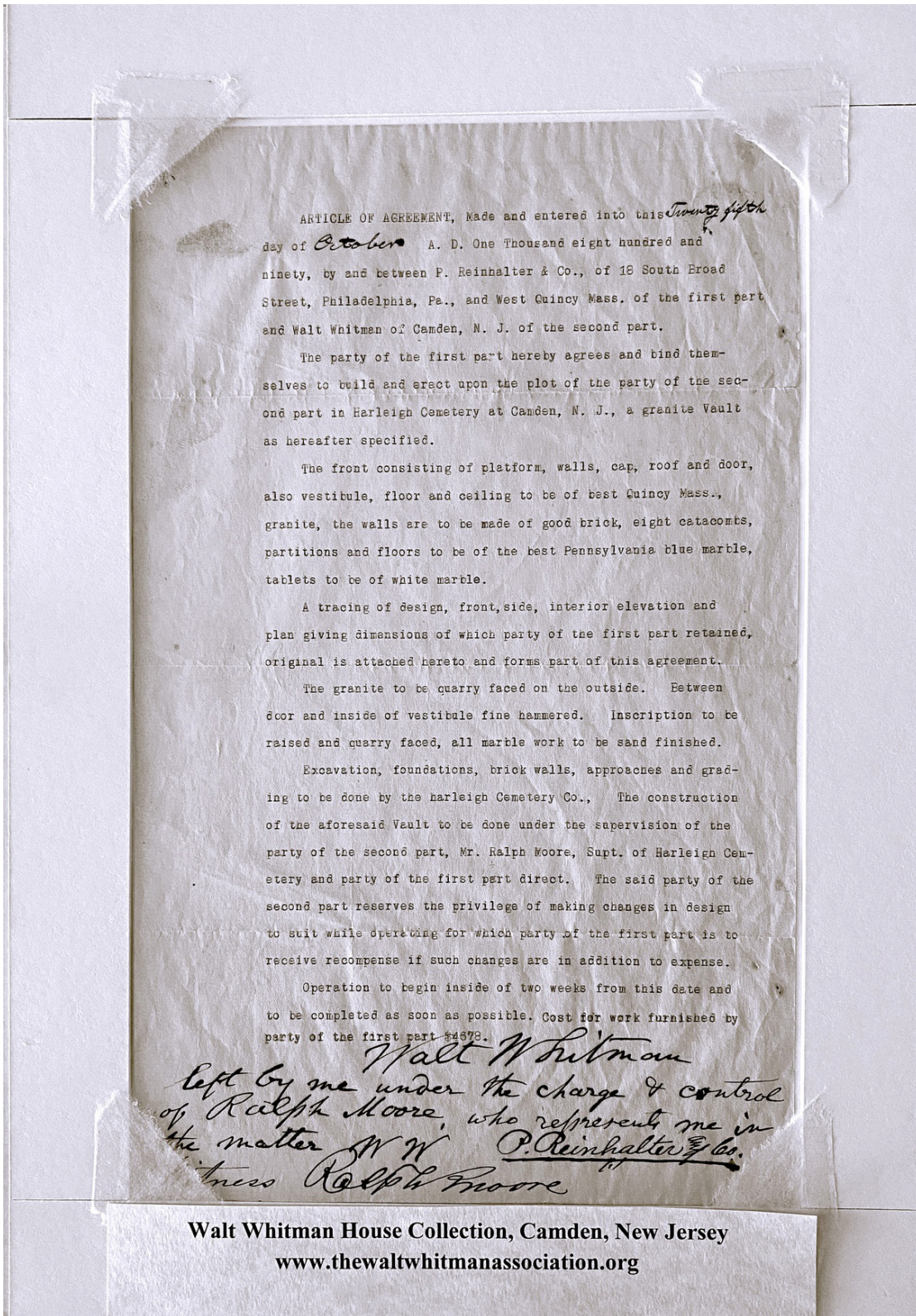


Figure 18: Conservation photograph of the October 25, 1890, Tomb Construction Contract between Walt Whitman and the P. Reinhalter & Co. monument engineering firm of Philadelphia, PA. Witnessed by Ralph A. Moore, Manager, Harleigh Cemetery, Camden NJ. Courtesy, Walt Whitman House, Camden, NJ.

Whitman made out a check to the Reinhalters for \$1500 and gave it to Harned, bringing the total up to \$3000, although Harned did not turn the check over to the Reinhalters until months later. Nevertheless, Whitman felt somewhat vindicated. He told Traubel, ““You see now that my memory served me well this time: I did not sign that document—not, at least, as it stands.””⁷⁶ Later that same day Traubel met with Harned, who described the Reinhalters as “damned buggers! I said to them—‘You ought to be ashamed of yourself, to drive this old man to the wall, to worry him. . . .’ By God! With their admission of the fraud, I had them right in my fist and I made ’em squirm.”⁷⁷ A few weeks later, Harned told the Reinhalters and Moore that unless the matter was settled equitably, the tomb would be deserted: “let it stand there unused—even bury Walt somewhere else.”⁷⁸

The check that Whitman had written to the Reinhalters for \$1500 was still in Harned’s possession and still uncashed as of January 27, 1892, Traubel notes, adding that Whitman’s bank account “shows over \$5000.”⁷⁹ The Reinhalters delayed settling the bill as long as possible; in late February 1892, Traubel and Harned agreed that “evidently [they] have been waiting for W. to die, but as he is in no hurry about that, and they are under financial pressures, they are forced to initiate some proceedings looking towards settlement.”⁸⁰ The next day, exactly one month before Whitman’s death, the matter was concluded. The Reinhalters agreed to accept the \$1500 check from Whitman plus \$1000 from Harned (which he would later collect from Whitman’s estate) for a total of \$4000.⁸¹ Traubel and Harned concurred that burdening Whitman with the details would not be necessary. Three weeks later, on March 18, 1892, Whitman told Traubel, “I guess Tom cleaned it all out without any heavings of dirt.”⁸² Whitman died one week after this comment, on March 26, 1892. Four days later, his funeral service was held at Harleigh Cemetery.

Parting Thoughts

In mid-November 1891, Whitman had told Traubel, “The tomb was built for a specific purpose—a purpose clear in my own mind, however it may have been mysterious to other people.”⁸³ While friends, critics, biographers, and admirers of Whitman were mystified by Whitman’s elaborate above-ground tomb, in his last years he possessed a vision for where his tomb should be located, its design, and, perhaps, its ultimate purpose: an imposing yet understated presence.



Figure 18 Walt Whitman's Tomb, Harleigh Cemetery, Camden, New Jersey. Photo taken by Maire Mullins, May 20, 2017.

His proximity to Harleigh Cemetery during the last years of his life allowed him to choose the lot, design the tomb, and observe its construction. This choice was not merely a pragmatic one but allowed the hands-on poet to co-create his final statement to the world. The sheer scale and cost of the tomb were matters of concern even during Whitman's lifetime, but Whitman's decisions about his "burial house" have, it seems, been vindicated: the tomb has become a place of pilgrimage for admirers of Whitman.

Many of the Whitmanites reading this essay will have experienced an encounter with the poet's tomb (or, at least, can imagine such an encounter). Standing in front of the tomb at Harleigh Cemetary (figure 19), it becomes clear that the site accomplishes the kind of communication across death that Whitman celebrated in this poetry. Whether it be stone or page—who touches this, touches a man. Tracing the site's complex history in no way diminishes this intimate effect. Instead, it suggests that Whitman's last act of autobiographical editing discloses the same care that his readers relish in *Leaves of Grass*.

Whitman's final statement was carefully plotted and long in the making. Consequently, it needed a title, just like his other poems. So, Whitman nicknamed his tomb "Beth." He explained his choice to Traubel, "'You see,' he said, 'I have given it a name. Has it music, sense? *Beth*, you know, generically, means the unseen, the way up, mystery. And that fixes us a near-enough significance.'"

Pepperdine University

Notes

1 Walt Whitman to Dr. William M. Reeder, as reported by Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 9 vols. (various publishers, 1906-1996), 8:290, entry for June 27, 1890 (hereafter *WWWC*).

2 Whitman mentions driving out to Harleigh Cemetery in a letter to Richard Maurice Bucke dated December 7, 1889: "have just been out an hour or two, a drive in a smooth cab in the rural roads & to Harleigh Cemetery." Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (whitmanarchive.org), ID: loc.07737 (hereafter *WWA*). Later, Whitman refers to his "burial house" in a letter to Richard Maurice Bucke, October 25, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.07850.

3 See Bliss Perry, *Walt Whitman: His Life and Work* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906); George R. Carpenter, *Walt Whitman* (New York: MacMillan, 1909); Gay Wilson Allen, *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, rpt. 1985), 540-544; Justin Kaplan, *Walt Whitman: A Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), 24-25, 48, 52-54; David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 571-572; Jerome Loving, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 479-481. See also Lindsay Tuggle, *The Afterlives of Specimens: Science, Mourning, and Whitman's Civil War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017), 181-185; and Matthew Ifill, "'The Rudest Most Undress'd Structure (with an idea) since Egypt': The Story of Walt Whitman's Tomb, Harleigh Cemetery, Camden, NJ," *Conversations: The Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Association* (Fall/Winter 2011-2012), 1-4.

4 From *Song of Myself* in *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1881-82), 78; available on *WWA*.

- 5 Perry, 270-271.
- 6 Carpenter, 162.
- 7 Allen, 540.
- 8 Allen, 540.
- 9 Kaplan, 51.
- 10 Kaplan, 51.
- 11 See, for instance, “As Toilsome I Wander’d Virginia’s Woods,” *Leaves of Grass*, 240-241.
- 12 Kaplan, 52.
- 13 “To Think of Time,” *Leaves of Grass*, 334.
- 14 Reynolds, 572.
- 15 See Dena Mattausch, “Harned, Thomas Biggs (1851-1921),” *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 267-268; hereafter *WWE*.
- 16 Reynolds, 572.
- 17 Reynolds, 572.
- 18 Geoffrey M. Sill, “Harleigh Cemetery,” *WWE*, 266-267.
- 19 Most famously, perhaps, in *Jack Engle*, which celebrates New York’s decidedly urban Trinity Churchyard as an old, quasi-rural site of respite, removed from the hustle and bustle of the city. For context on Whitman, his graveyard writings, and the rural cemetery movement, see Adam Bradford, “‘Move Slowly Through that Beautiful Place of Graves:’ Walt Whitman’s Cemeteries,” *The Oxford Handbook of Walt Whitman*, ed. Kenneth M. Price and Stefan Schöberlein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 298-321.
- 20 Until the 1840s cemeteries often had iron railings around individual gravesites; this practice was discontinued after the Spring Grove Cemetery (1845) in Cincinnati abolished internal fencing; other cemeteries followed suit. This phenomenon became known as the “lawn cemetery” movement. See Stanley French, “The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the ‘Rural Cemetery’ Movement,” *American Quarterly* 26 (March 1974), 52.
- 21 Cited in Gail Greenberg, “A History of Harleigh Cemetery,” *Camden County Historical Society Bulletin*, 36 (Fall-Winter 1983-84), 1.
- 22 Horace Traubel, *WWWC*, 6:175-176; entry for December 5, 1889.
- 23 *WWA*, ID: loc.07737.

- 24 Lydia Cooper Wood (John's wife), had sold the land to the Harleigh Cemetery Association in 1885. See Greenberg, 2.
- 25 WWA, ID: loc.07740.
- 26 WWA, ID: loc.07741.
- 27 Greenberg, 2.
- 28 John B. Wood to Walt Whitman, December 24, 1889. WWA ID: loc.04634.
- 29 April 28, 1890. WWA, ID: loc.07915.
- 30 WWWC 6:217-218; entry for December 27, 1889.
- 31 See Thomas Bender, "The 'Rural' Cemetery Movement: Urban Travail and the Appeal of Nature," *New England Quarterly* 47 (June 1974), 207. Desiree Henderson notes that the "impact that these memorial, spatial, and horticultural changes had upon American culture was profound," stretching from "new sanitary practices," to landscaping and gardening, to "the leisure practices of the rising middle class." See Henderson's essay, "'What is the Grass?': The Roots of Whitman's Cemetery Meditation," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 25 (Winter 2008), 89.
- 32 Bender, 196.
- 33 Cited in Bender, 205 n. 32.
- 34 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, December 7, 1889. WWA, ID: loc.07737.
- 35 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, May 14, 1890. WWA, ID: loc.07866.
- 36 July 18, 1891. WWA ID: rut.00032.
- 37 See for instance, Whitman's letter to Bucke where he writes "had a nice drive (took Mrs. Davis) out yesterday to the Cemetery & through the woody lane & around a little," June 5, 1890. WWA, ID: loc.07798.
- 38 WWWC 6:405; entry for May 14, 1890.
- 39 See, for instance, "In Paths Untrodden" and "When I Heard at the Close of the Day."
- 40 WWWC, 6:405.
- 41 September 20, 1890. WWA, ID: loc.07838.
- 42 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, December 25, 1889. WWA, ID: loc.07741.
- 43 WWA, ID: loc.07918.
- 44 See Sarah Ferguson-Wagstaffe, "'Points of Contact': Blake and Whitman," in *Sullen Fires*

Across the Atlantic: Essays in Romanticism, ed. Lance Newman, Chris Koenig-Woodyard, and Joel Pace (November 2006), Romantic Praxis Circles, Praxis Series, ed. Orrin Wang. Ferguson-Wagstaffe notes that Whitman had read Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* in 1881, and that "Whitman beheld Blake's 'Death's Door' in Gilchrist's book and decided to use it as a model for his tomb," but there is no direct evidence linking Whitman's reading of Gilchrist's biography and the design of the tomb. Amanda Gailey writes that Whitman was likely referring an illustration in *America, A Prophecy* (1793) "where the top figure is also missing, and where the tomb is nestled in a hillside with a tree on top, making this illustration much closer to Whitman's design and lending it additional significance as stemming from Blake's poem about the American spirit of resistance. Though we cannot be certain which illustration inspired Whitman, it seems that the illustration from *America* is more similar to Whitman's plans. . . ." See "Whitman's Shrines," in *Proofs of Genius: Collected Editions from the American Revolution to the Digital Age*. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 68.

45 *WWWC* 8:474; entry for September 5, 1891.

46 *WWA*, ID: loc.08234.

47 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, December 25, 1889. *WWA*, ID: loc.07741; April 28, 1890. *WWA* ID: loc.07915.

48 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, July 23, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.07918.

49 Walt Whitman to John H. Johnston, September 20, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.07838.

50 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, September 29, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.08234.

51 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, October 2, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.07970.

52 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, October 25, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.07850.

53 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, May 5, 1891. *WWA*, ID: loc.08037.

54 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, May 23, 1891. *WWA*, ID: loc.08050.

55 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, June 4, 1891. *WWA*, ID: loc.08055.

56 Walt Whitman to Dr. John Johnston, June 27, 1891. *WWA*, ID: loc.07980.

57 Walt Whitman to William Sloane Kennedy, July 18, 1891. *WWA*, ID: rut.00032.

58 Walt Whitman to Dr. John Johnston, July 31, 1891. *WWA*, ID: med.00949.

59 See Kaplan, who writes, "An earthquake and an angel of the Lord would have to roll back the stone from his door" (52).

60 Email correspondence, January 30, 2023.

61 *WWWC*, 8:245; entry for May 30, 1891.

62 *WWWC*, 8:245.

63 *WWWC*, 8:258; entry for June 8, 1891. Kaplan notes that the deletion “left his name standing oddly high above visual center” (51).

64 See Ed Folsom, “Notes on Whitman’s Photographers,” *WWA*. Dr. William Reeder of Philadelphia wanted to take pictures of Whitman in March 1891, but Whitman told Traubel, “It will do no good—he will not get it” (*WWWC*, 8:70). Reeder succeeded a few months later, taking “flash pictures in front and back bedrooms” of Whitman on May 24, 1891 (*WWWC*, 8:226; see Gallery of Images, “Walt Whitman by Dr. William Reeder, 1891,” *WWA*). On June 25, 1891, Whitman told Traubel that he wanted Reeder to take pictures of the tomb, describing him as “quite an adept” (*WWWC* 8:287). A month after Reeder had taken photographs of the tomb (late July 1891), Whitman told Traubel, “Reeder seems a very genuine fellow throughout—manly, simple, like all the real fellows” (*WWWC* 8:373).

65 *WWWC*, 8:289.

66 See Carol J. Singley, “Longaker, Dr. Daniel (1858-1949),” *WWE*, 408-409.

67 *WWWC*, 8:312.

68 *WWWC*, 8:312.

69 *WWWC*, 8:290.

70 *WWWC*, 8:321.

71 Traubel left with Richard Maurice Bucke on October 23. They visited Niagara Falls, then travelled to London in Ontario, Canada. Traubel returned on October 30, 1890. See *WWWC*, 7:229, 234.

72 Walt Whitman to Richard Maurice Bucke, October 25, 1890. *WWA*, ID: loc.07850.

73 Kaplan writes that Whitman “obligated himself to pay \$4,000 for a mausoleum, more than twice than what his house and lot in Mickle Street had cost” (49-50). Loving notes that Whitman had “more than \$8,000 in the bank, but he worried fretfully that there would be too little left of his estate to care for Eddy” (479).

74 *WWWC*, 9:164. See Dena Mattausch, “Harned, Thomas Biggs (1851-1921),” *WWE*, 267-268. Harned, a lawyer, was Traubel’s brother-in-law; later, he was one of the literary executors of Whitman’s estate.

75 *WWWC*, 9:164.

76 *WWWC*, 9:165.

77 *WWWC*, 9:167, 168. See also Harned’s letter to Clara Barrus, *Whitman and Burroughs, Comrades* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), 341, which corroborates Traubel’s account.

- 78 *WWWC*, 9:209; entry for December 6, 1891.
- 79 *WWWC*, 9:396.
- 80 *WWWC*, 9:489; entry for February 25, 1892.
- 81 *WWWC*, 9:491; entry for February 26, 1892.
- 82 *WWWC*, 9:561.
- 83 *WWWC*, 9:142; entry for November 12, 1891.
- 84 *WWWC*, 9:315; entry for July 9, 1891.