

2018-2019

Starting from Paumanok

The Newsletter of Walt Whitman Birthplace Association

CELEBRATING WALT WHITMAN'S 200TH YEAR

Introducing our 2019 Poet-in-Residence, Jane Hirschfield



WWBA is thrilled to announce Jane Hirschfield as the Birthplace's 2019 Poet-in-Residence. Ranging from the political, ecological, and scientific to the metaphysical, personal, and

passionate, Hirschfield's poetry addresses the urgent immediacies of our time. Her poems and essays traverse the crises of the biosphere and social justice, abiding in the intersections of facts and imagination, desire and loss, impermanence and beauty—all the dimensions of our existence within what one poem calls "the pure democracy of being."

Hirschfield's eight poetry books include *The Beauty*, long-listed for the 2015 National Book Award; *Given Sugar, Given Salt*, a finalist for the 2001 National Book Critics Circle Award; and *After*, short-listed for England's T.S. Eliot Award and named a "best book of 2006" by *The Washington Post*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and England's *Financial Times*. Hirschfield has written two collections of essays, *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry* (1997) and *Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World* (2015), and four books collecting and co-translating the work of world poets from the past: *The Ink Dark Moon: Love Poems* by Komachi & Shikibu, *Women of the Ancient Japanese Court*; *Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women*; *Mirabai: Ecstatic Poems*; and *The Heart of Haiku*, on Matsuo Basho, named an Amazon Best Book of 2011.



HUNTINGTON, NY

Remembering 2018 LI Poet of the Year Barbara Reiher-Meyers

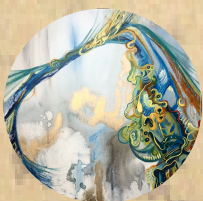
Each year, WWBA honors a notable Long Island poet as the Poet of the Year. Congratulations to Barbara Reiher-Meyers, our 2018 Long Island Poet of the Year! Long-term poet and community builder, Reiher-Meyers was lovingly celebrated for a lifetime of work at our reception on April 29, 2018.

In addition to her own poetry writing, Reiher-Meyers has been a board member of the Long Island Poetry Collective, hosted the Open Mic at the Conklin Barn in Huntington, NY for many years, curated a poetry calendar for www.poetz.com/longisland, and coordinated events for the Northport Arts Coalition and the Smithtown Township Arts Council. Reiher-Meyers has facilitated monthly poetry workshops in Ronkonkoma and promoted Long Island and New York City poetry events...

Continued on page 5



Museum Day
September 22, 2018



Artist Talks
Began October 11, 2018

From the Executive Director's Desk

Greetings from 2019, the Bicentennial Birthday Year of Walt Whitman! Walt was born on May 31, 1819, in Huntington, Long Island, New York. The historic house where he was born, now known as the "Birthplace," has become a State Historic Site and Literary Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We are celebrating Walt's 200th Birthday year with exciting events at the place "Where It All Began."

Our Bicentennial Birthday events and programs are in full swing! This Newsletter will give an overview of the Bicentennial year and our community events, and our next Newsletter will be a Special Edition highlighting all the Bicentennial Programs.

We raised a collective toast to Walt on May 31 and received over 700 visitors during the Birthday Weekend of May 31 – June 2. We will host WWBA's Inaugural International Whitman Conference in August which will feature 25 Whitman scholars, panel presentations and poets from around the world. We have collaborated with schools and libraries throughout Long Island. Along with the Whitman@200 Consortium, to expand Whitman's reach throughout Long Island and beyond during this special year.



The Board of Trustees and I thank the community for recognizing the importance of the Good Grey Poet's reach throughout Huntington and beyond. We are grateful to our members for their continued support of our mission to preserve the home where Walt was born in 1819, and to promote the legacy of Walt Whitman.

Many thanks to New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Suffolk County, the Huntington Town Council, the Gardiner Foundation, New York Council on the Arts, and Humanities New York for their generous and loyal support. We also thank our elected officials for their outstanding leadership and support for historic preservation and the cultural arts. We also welcome newcomers Senator James Gaughran, Assemblyman Steve Stern, Legislator Susan Berland, and Legislator Tom Donnelly.

We invite you to come visit, take a tour, participate in and enjoy our many programs and events, lectures, discussion series, and poetry readings. Please visit our website at www.waltwhitman.org/whitman200 for WWBA's full Bicentennial Birthday Calendar, and do plan on joining us in celebrating this historic year!

WWBA graciously acknowledges support from the following donors, sponsors & patron level members:

Adelphi University, Carlos Aguasaco, Penny & John Barr, Matthew Bessel & Peter Bridgstock, George & Joan Blednick, Claire Borgi, Mimi Bright, Jack Coulehan, Sherri & Thomas Casey, Deer Park High School Students, Dr. David Church, Stephen DeLugg & Charlotte Shutinitz, Emma DeStefano, Dorene Evans & Arthur Lothstein, Estee Lauder, Mary Flatley, Antoinette Fleig, Maryanne Noel and Phil Friedman, Francis Gagliardi, Priscilla & Robert Hughes, Jaggar Community Fellows Program, Eric Janson, Ronald Janssen, X.J. Kennedy, Carole and Harold Klein, Patricia & Keith Kulisky, Alex Lima, Charles Lipp, George Mallis, Alberto Meschiari, Minuteman Press, Network for Good, Shana Nichols and J.P. Grossman, Mark Nuccio, Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan, Frank Palmer, William Palmer, Eleanor & Joseph Perlman, Christina Plant, Mitsuko & Stephen Post, Ashley Ronquillo, Ruth S. Rosenthal, RSVP Suffolk, Yrene Santos, 7 in Heaven, Cynthia Shor, Six Harbors Brewing Company, Patti Tana and John Renner, Sophia Tarin, Carlos Velásquez Torres, James P. Wagner, Catherine Waitinas, Dr. William Walter, William Wientge, YAI (Young Adult Institute).

Special Thanks to our Library Members: Bethpage, Center Moriches, Commack, Copiague, Emma S. Clark, Farmingdale, Glen Cove, Harborfields, Half Hollow Hills, Huntington, Jericho, Longwood, Merrick, Middle Country, North Merrick, North Shore, Northport-East Northport, Oceanside, Plainview-Old Bethpage, Port Washington, Rockville Center, Shelter Rock, South Huntington, Syosset, and West Babylon Public Libraries.

Many thanks to New York State, Suffolk County, The Town of Huntington, The Gardiner Foundation, NYSCA, Humanities New York, Poets & Writers Inc., and Huntington Arts Council for their continued support.

Thank you for supporting Walt Whitman's Birthplace, State Historic Site & Interpretive Center, and for helping our mission to preserve the house where Walt Whitman, America's "Poet of Democracy" was born, to educate the public on the life, work, and legacy of Walt Whitman, to celebrate his continued influence on our lives today, and to inspire poets, writers, and artists in our contemporary world.

Starting from Paumanok:

The Newsletter of Walt Whitman Birthplace Association

Editor: **Cynthia Shor**

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Assistant Editor and Design: **Caitlyn Shea**

Cynthia Shor

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Gardiner Foundation Grant Received

Walt Whitman Birthplace Association (WWBA) is proud to announce that the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, established in 1987 by Robert David Lion Gardiner, has generously granted over \$82,000 to enable WWBA to refurbish the Interpretive Center and to execute 2019 programming in celebration of Walt Whitman's Bicentennial Birthday.

Whitman was born on May 31, 1819, in Huntington, Long Island, New York, and much of his work extols his Long Island roots. WWBA was established in 1949 to steward Whitman's Birthplace and promote his wide-reaching legacy. The Walt Whitman Birthplace Interpretive Center was built in 1999 to provide a location for the Birthplace's exhibits, which were originally housed on the second floor of Whitman's Birthplace. The Interpretive Center is comprised of numerous informative and photographic panels detailing Whitman's life and times. The restoration will refresh the panels that have been bleached by light and will add a new panel describing Whitman's Long Island roots and his years as a school teacher on Long Island. Throughout 2019, WWBA will host various historic, community, and literary events, including an operatic and theatrical Whitman-inspired performance in May, the Inaugural International Whitman Conference in August, lectures by notable Whitman scholars, and several archival exhibits.

"This restoration would not be possible without the generous donation from the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation," said WWBA Executive Director Cynthia Shor. "We are again working with Ralph Appelbaum Associates (RAA) who designed the original exhibits. William T. Walter, PhD., Board President, has contributed many hours to preparing detailed specifications for RAA. Additionally, he has taken an important lead in our Capital Campaign to obtain all the necessary funds to support this renovation. We are grateful and appreciative of the Gardiner Foundation which gives us major support with this grant for our Bicentennial historic celebrations in 2019."

The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation supports the study of New York State history. The Foundation is inspired by Robert David Lion Gardiner's personal passion for New York State history and encourages educational programs and the preservation, collection, restoration, and exhibition of documents and artifacts focused on this history. For more information regarding The Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, visit www.rdlgfoundation.org.

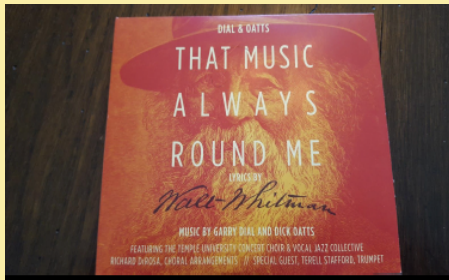
For more information on this project and to learn how you can make a contribution, please contact WWBA at 631-427-5240 x 111, or email director@waltwhitman.org.



Images L to R: Interpretive Center, George Mallis Photo Restoration designed Whitman Photograph Exhibit (above), George Mallis (below)

EXHIBIT SPOTLIGHT:

Walt Whitman's Prose and Poetry in Products and Advertisements



Whitman-inspired music album

For WWBA's Bicentennial Celebration, the Birthplace is pairing with esteemed Walt Whitman collector, Ed S. Centeno, with an exhibition featuring various cultural artifacts, commercial products, fine arts, and advertisements which depict segments of Walt Whitman's prose and poetry.

Mr. Centeno's 33 years of collecting Walt Whitman related items has been "rewarding, challenging, and inspirational." Though he never intended to exhibit nor lecture about his collection, Centeno discovered that an audience shares his passion. He reports that the public is curious to see his items and understand why he collects them.

The primary focus of Centeno's collection is the commercialization of Whitman's name, image, and words in memorabilia, commercial products, advertisements, fine arts, and digital formats. Centeno collects to enrich the knowledge of the past, preserve and perpetuate this aspect of collecting to future generations, and acquaint himself with the phenomenon of Whitman's popularity.

The commercialization of Whitman began as early as the 1880's. Whitman was not entirely opposed to having his image associated with products and services.

Upon seeing the earliest advertisements, Whitman laughed and said, "that is fame, giving the hat a little more height and it would not be such an offense..." Whitman received no monetary compensation for the usage of his name or image. Since the 1880s, Whitman's image, poetry and name have been used in advertising food products, beverages, music, movies, social media, art, books, political and social awareness efforts, theater productions, among others.

Until the mid-1960s, corporate America invoked Whitman with high reverence due to his iconic literary stature and fame through advertisements and commercial products that had no connection to his persona or body of works. From the 1970s and beyond, Whitman's persona took an entirely different perspective in mass media (TV, radio, internet, movies). Today's Whitman



Whitman pedestal displayed in Centeno's exhibit

is more ambiguous, daring, complex, and playful.

Centeno's fascination with the advertisements, posters, commercial products, and private art commissions depicting fragments of Whitman's prose and poetry humbly began while researching material for an article about American poets on stamps. To his astonishment, Centeno learned that the Walt Whitman House in Camden, New Jersey, was only miles from his teenage residence. While getting reacquainted with Whitman's poetry and reading several biographies, Centeno discovered the poet's depiction on cigar boxes, wine, beer, gift cards, insurance advertisements, postcards, postage stamps, etc. Not to mention the places and structures named after him—the Walt Whitman Bridge, Shopping Mall, and Apartment Building, as well as parks, high schools, bookstores, and other commercial businesses.

Centeno's collection demonstrates the significance and resonance of Walt Whitman's literary contribution to modern society, the importance of his high stature in commercialization, and the impact of his fame among collectors.

This exhibit is presented in the intimate setting of the Birthplace's Gathering House from January 16 - April 7. A special Member Preview and Reception took place on

Introducing our 2019 Poet-in-Residence, Jane Hirshfield ... *continued*

Hirshfield's other honors include The Poetry Center Book Award; fellowships from the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Academy of American Poets; Columbia University's Translation Center Award; The California Book Award, Northern California Book Reviewers Award, and the Donald Hall-Jane Kenyon Prize in American Poetry. Her work appears in *The New Yorker Supplement*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Poetry*, and ten editions of *The Best American Poetry*. In 2004, Hirshfield was awarded the 70th Academy Fellowship for distinguished poetic achievement by The Academy of American Poets; in 2012, she was elected a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

Hirshfield has taught at Stanford University, UC Berkeley, Duke University, Bennington College, and elsewhere. Her work has been translated into over a dozen languages and set by numerous composers, including John Adams and Philip Glass. An intimate and profound master of her art, Hirshfield's frequent appearances at universities, writers' conferences and festivals in this country and abroad are highly acclaimed. Hirshfield's ninth poetry collection, *Ledger*, will appear from Knopf in early 2020.

Hirshfield will teach a Master Class and Poetry Workshop during the afternoon on Saturday, April 6. Tickets are available with discounts for members and can be accessed through our website at www.waltwhitman.org; in the evening, Hirshfield will grace the Whitman stage for a Poetry Reading, which is free and open to all. On Sunday, April 7, Hirshfield will inspire and encourage our young poets by officiating WWBA's 33rd Annual Student Poetry Contest Awards Ceremony.

Remembering 2018 LI Poet of the Year Barbara Reiher-Meyers... *continued*

Reiher-Meyers passed away on January 27, 2019. Her love of poetry and the Long Island community will always be celebrated and remembered.

WWBA will be holding a memorial service for Reiher-Meyers in the upcoming 2019. For more information, please contact events@waltwhitman.org

Front, L to R: Executive Director Cynthia Shor, Dr. Maria Basile, Barbara Reiher-Meyers

Back, L to R: Dr. Richard Bronson, Dr. Jack Coulehan, Bob Savino, Susan Fishbein



WWBA Long Island Poet of the Year, J R Turek



J R (Judy) Turek is an internationally published poet, editor, and workshop leader. Turek has received two Pushcart nominations and Proclamations for her dedication to Poetry from Nassau County, Suffolk County, the New York State Senate, and the New York State Assembly. Turek was named Bards Laureate from 2013-2015, NYS Woman of Distinction in 2017, and Winner of the Village of Great Neck Poetry Contest in 2018. J R is a Council Member for The Bards Initiative, host for Performance Poets Association, and Board Member for The North Sea Poetry Scene (TNSPS), Princess Ronkonkoma Productions (PRP), and Performance Poets Association (PPA). Turek has been editor of The Bards Initiative's *Annual Anthology*, co-editor of *Whispers and Shouts* and Max Wheat's *Young Voices Children's Anthology*, and Moderator of the Creative Writing Group in Farmingdale for 22 years. Turek is the author of four full-length poetry collections. Her work has been

translated into Korean, Romanian, French, and Italian. Turek, the Purple Poet, is a lifetime Long Islander who resides in East Meadow and has been a "poem-a-dayer" for over 15 years.

CONGRATULATIONS JO-ANN RAIA, WWBA BOARD MEMBER,
for receiving Leadership
Huntington's Lifetime Achievement
Award!



HUMANITIES NEW YORK GRANT: Received \$1,000 grant for the 3rd season of Dr. Jack Coulehan's *Reading & Discussion* six session series.

Community Outreach

WWBA strives to support and promote community organizations by hosting a multitude of special events, programs, gatherings, and award ceremonies throughout the year:

Huntington Arts Council (HAC) Grant Awards: March 19, 2018.

Huntington Area Rapid Transit Poetry (HART) awards: April 23, 2018.

I Love My Parks Day: May 5, 2018. Annual state wide initiative drew fifteen community volunteers who assisted with grounds maintenance.

State Parks Sign: May 8, 2018. New free standing signage to be placed perpendicular to North-South traffic on Rt. 110.

Republican Women's Club Meeting: May 16, 2018.

Huntington Middle School Art Exhibition: May 14 - 21, 2018. Collaboration with Supervising Art Director Jackie Tutar, student artwork displayed on seven panels in Interpretive Center which were installed by Huntington School District.



I Love My Parks Day – May 10, 2018

Reception for artists, students, parents and teachers took place on Thursday, May 17th.

Leadership Huntington, Kick-off: September 17, 2018.

Suffolk County Cultural Arts Director Diana Cherryholmes' annual grant workshop: September 20, 2018.

Draw Out! at Heckscher State Park. Children were invited to play with Whitman-era toys and to learn tea party

etiquette: September 23, 2018.

Half Hollows Hills Library: October 2, 2018. *Dream Catcher* after school program during library renovations.

Half Hollow Hills Library Book Club: Birthplace to hold monthly book club meetings from January - June during library renovations.

Huntington & Regional Libraries Gathering, October 3, 2018. 18 local libraries on board to sponsor "Read Out Loud" Whitman poetry programs throughout 2019.

Eastern Suffolk BOCES / ELL Teachers Conference: October 12, 2018. 45 ELL teachers convened. BOCES selected Walt Whitman as their theme for the 2019 school year.

Super Poem Sunday – Annual Bards Initiative Event: February 3, 2019.

Poetry Out Loud: Regional Poetry Recitation Contest held at the Birthplace: February 11, 2019.

Meet our New Directors

Education and Visitor Services Director Dr. Kelly K. Ronayne has a diverse background in education, history, publishing, the arts, and teaching. She earned her Doctorate in Modern World History and her Master's and Bachelor's in Government and



Politics with a Theatre minor. She is the author of "Experimental Philanthropies and the Negro Theatre In the 1930s," "The Reality and the Promise and Stages of Modernity," and "The Federal Theatre Project and the New American Welfare State." Additionally, she has presented at numerous conferences. Dr. Ronayne worked as an Associate Dean and Adjunct Professor at St. John's University for 19 years.

Dr. Ronayne studied theatre at The School for Film and Televisions and TheatreVisions in NYC, and she has performed in hundreds of productions in NYC and Long Island. She is also a world traveler and created the first doctoral internship of its kind by studying school curricula throughout Ghana, Africa and presenting her findings.

Please contact Dr. Kelly K. Ronayne for information regarding group tours, school tours, and children's programming. Email educator@waltwhitman.org or call 631-427-5240 ext. 113.

WWBA WELCOMES OUR NEW DIRECTORS!

Poetry in Performance: *Walking With Whitman*

The eighth season of WWBA's signature series *Poetry in Performance: Walking With Whitman* returned on April 6, 2018, for an evening with Terrance Hayes. Hayes read from his sixth book of poetry, *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassins* (2018), and engaged the audience in a lively Q&A after the reading.

On May 4th, WWBA hosted poet John Dorsey. Coming straight from an



L to R: George Wallace (Writer-in-Residence), Scott Hightower, Executive Director Cynthia Shor

East Coast tour, Dorsey and his friend spent the afternoon at the Birthplace, sitting on the grass and chatting with people who came early for the event. Dorsey sat in the audience during the Open Mic and shared the energy and enthusiasm of our local poets. When it was time to take the mic,

Dorsey roared to an appreciative audience, impressing all with both his poetry and his ability to "shake the rafters" with his strong voice.

In September, WWBA hosted an intimate reading with Scott Hightower. The series continued with notable featured poets Tom Pickard from the UK (October 5) and Elaine Equi (November 2), who each brought their own unique and thought-provoking work to the Birthplace. The 2018 series ended on an ebullient note with poet and improvisational jazz musician Steve Dalachinsky, accompanied by Michael Bisio, on December 7.

WWBA recently kicked off the ninth season of *Poetry in Performance: Walking with Whitman* on March 1 with Craig Czury and Lois Walker. Throughout the 9th season, the Birthplace is pairing local poets with nationally recognized ones for a dynamic



L to R: Trustee Robert Savino, Peter Dugan, Poet Elaine Equi, George Wallace

evening including live music, refreshments, and a closing reception.

May 3: Tongo Eisen-Martin, Tony Policano, and Eibert Reed Trio. October 4: Nancy Mercado, Denis Gray, Tom Santoriello & Margaret Lassen. November 1: Eleni Sikelianos, Peter Dugan, Tom Santoriello & Margaret Lassen.



L to R: Tom Santoriello and Margaret Lassen

WWBA will also host two Community Open Mic Nights with Live Music as part of the 2019 series. Join the events on June 7 with host Christina M. Rau and 1 Step Ahead, and on September 6 with host Mary Healey and Tom Santoriello & Margaret Lassen.

Admission is \$10 for non-members, \$5 for members, and FREE for students. *Walking with Whitman* was founded by WWBA Writer-in-Residence George Wallace in 2010 and is sponsored by Poets & Writers, Inc.

Poetry for the HART

WWBA hosted "Poetry for the HART (Huntington Area Rapid Transit)" on April 23, 2018; winning poets from the HART Teen Poetry Project are celebrated each year during National Poetry Month at an evening award ceremony and poetry reading at the Birthplace.

As part of its Public Art Initiative, the Town's Public Art Advisory Committee annually invites teen poets (ages 14 - 18) residing or attending school in Huntington to submit their work for inclusion in the Poetry for the HART Teen Poetry Project. Selected poetry is displayed inside buses on ad panels on the Town's HART bus system for a minimum of one year. This year's awards was April 29.

For more information and contest guidelines, please visit <http://www.huntingtonny.gov/HARTpoetry>.



Two recipients of Poetry for the HART 2018, Sara Lopez and Brenda Mendez

The Americas Poetry Festival of New York

The fourth annual Americas Poetry Festival of New York, a multilingual poetry festival and writers' conference organized by CUNY and Professors Carlos Aguasaco, Yrene Santos, and Carlos Velásquez Torres was held on Thursday, October 11, from 11 am – 1 pm.

This free event featured international and multilingual poets from all over the world including: Lithuania, Brazil, Spain, Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay, Ecuador, and the USA. The Americas Poetry Festival of New York is sponsored by Walt Whitman Birthplace Association, The City University of New York (CUNY), and Instituto Cervantes. The poets read from *The America's Poetry Festival of New York's 2018 Multilingual Anthology*, a rich diverse multilingual sampler of poets from 22 different countries, which honors poet Virginia Moore. The anthology is coedited by Professors Aguasaco, Santos, and Velásquez Torres.

Teacher Alex Lima and a vibrant crowd of Deer Park High School students also attended. The afternoon, inspired by the multicultural embrace of Walt Whitman, was filled with the joy and spirit of a multitude of voices sharing poetry.



Poets at the Americas Poetry Festival of New York

Art at Walt Whitman Birthplace

WWBA is excited and proud to introduce art exhibitions featuring Artist talks at the Walt Whitman Birthplace! Each event is free and open to the public. Art exhibitions are curated using themes that relate to Walt Whitman, Poetry/Spoken Word, and/or Long Island. During the Artist Talk, each artist shares their experiences and insights into the creative process.



Detail image of Katherine Kaiser's painting, *Untitled*

As the focal point of her creative process, Kaiser revisits and archives significant places in her life on Long Island. In her studio, Kaiser reinvents the palette and changes each form to mirror her own vision of that object and its relationship with others.



Maggie Avolio installing her show *O Workmen and Workwomen Forever for Me!*

Maggie Avolio's exhibition "*O Workmen and Workwomen Forever for Me!*" Avolio believes that her work is poetic in itself and conceptually deals with labor and class, which is tied to Whitman's beliefs of democracy and equality.

Donations

Rebacca A. Mills graciously donated a copy of *November Boughs* by Walt Whitman to the WWBA Archive. This maroon leather-bound volume is inscribed by Whitman: "Mrs. Leach from the author WW with best thanks for kindness to my dear sister Mrs. Heyde in sickness. November 5. 1888."

Executive Director Cynthia Shor, Trustee Jeffrey S. Gould, and Trustee Tom Wismuller attended a luncheon honoring Natalie Swertfager Pearson in Sarasota, Florida. (Pictured above, left to right).

Swertfager Pearson donated a family heirloom and singular treasure, The Whitman Family Bible, to the WWBA Archive in 2014.

MUSEUM DAY

WWBA opened its doors free of charge on September 22 as part of *Smithsonian Magazine's* 13th annual Museum Day. Museum Day brings together museums, zoos & cultural centers from all 50 states to offer free admission to all Museum Day ticket holders. Museum Day represents a national commitment to access, equality and inclusion. Museum Day goes beyond getting visitors through museum doors—it acts as a springboard to empower and help advance the hopes and ambitions of the public, particularly school-aged children and those in underrepresented communities. For more information, please visit Smithsonian.com/museumday.

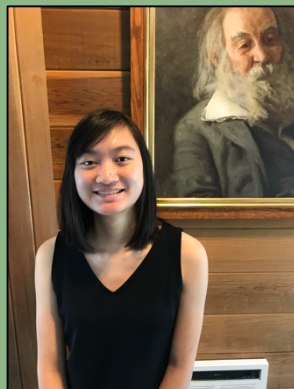


Thank You, Interns!

WWBA extends sincere thanks to its many interns for their time, energy, and special projects on behalf of WWBA. Interns are an indispensable part of WWBA. Their contributions greatly enlarge and enhance our operational capacity, and allow us to share our resources with local high school and college students.

Germaine Jeanty (Adelphi University) assisted with photography and video, creating a series of short videos including "Welcome to the Birthplace." Stevie Martin (Half Hollow Hills High School) researched and wrote a paper on Historical Gardening. Alec Lurie (Fairfield University) and Ricky Martorelli (Sarah Lawrence College/

Oxford University) researched Walt Whitman's experiences as a School Teacher and Education in the 1800s. Their work is instrumental in the creation of the text for a new digital display in our Interpretive Center. Emma Cesario (Stony Brook University) assisted WWBA by becoming



Intern Alexis Yang

an experienced Tour Guide. The Norman & Jeannette Gould Library Launch was assisted by Rebecca Volpe (Fashion Institute of Technology), who was responsible for the design and display of the books during the event, and further assisted by Jennifer Hirschowitz (Fashion Institute of Technology) and Gavin DeGaetano (Stony Brook University), who accessioned all of the books into our archive using PastPerfect Museum Software. Current interns Brandon Manley and Andrew McFarlane (Half Hollow Hills High School) are assisting WWBA with research and data analysis as part of their year-long HHH Senior Experience Learning Program. Alexis Yang (Smithtown High School East) is assisting with the development of WWBA's newsletter.

We accept internship applications throughout the year. Please email Executive Director Cynthia Shor at director@waltwhitman.org.

Celebrating Women with Walt Whitman in 2018

Our 2018 program series “Celebrating Women with Walt Whitman” has fostered meaningful and timely discussions about women’s issues, as well as enlightened and educated audiences of all ages in appreciation of Walt Whitman’s celebration of women.

Why celebrate women through Walt Whitman? As Janice Simpson noted in her bibliographic study “Walt Whitman: Supporter of Women’s Rights and Independence” (Rutgers University, 2009), “Walt Whitman was and still is considered a supporter of the feminists. Once I obtained an appreciation of what women were fighting for and against in the nineteenth century, it was easy to agree with the many critics who say that Whitman’s writing supports and encourages women in their fight for equality. This support comes not only from his poetry, but also from his prose and spans the length of his career. He truly believed all humans were created equal and should be treated as such.”

The first program in the series, “Out of the Justice of Women,” was a four-part collaboration with Nassau BOCES Long Island High School for the Arts presented on June 9. Teacher Michael Tester produced and directed a theatrical presentation composed by students. Employing Whitman’s iconic poetry, students composed “I Hear America Singing” in a physical and choral ode, followed by highlights from Whitman’s poetic references to women, including passages from “Song of Myself,” “Song of the Open Road,” “Unfolded,” and “Delicate Cluster.” Students visited the Whitman Birthplace to walk in Walt’s footsteps, participate in a poetry writing workshop, tour the historic site, and hold a dress rehearsal. Art students created the scenic backdrop to the performance. An audience Q & A followed the vibrant performance and art exhibit.

Carol Singley, PhD, offered a presentation of “Why Women Needed Women” on June 24. As a Professor of English at Rutgers, she prepared a discussion on Whitman’s relationships with feminists of his time. An Edith Wharton Scholar, Carol discussed how Edith and other women of her time needed each other for gender advancement and recognition. The presentation was based in feminist theory but was easily accessible and engaging to the audience. Contemporary issues such as the “#Me Too” movement were discussed, exemplifying why women still need women – to support each other in order to effect cultural change.

On October 14, WWBA’s “Favorite Poem Project,” back for its third year, included a community poetry reading featuring poems written by, for, or about women. The goal of the Favorite Poem Project this year was to creatively employ poetry to open a dialogue and stimulate a conversation about women. Participants enjoyed reading, listening, learning, and teaching through their favorite poems.



Jane Alexander

On December 9, Jane Alexander presented “My Achievements in Traditionally Male Professional Fields.” Alexander discussed the challenges she faced as an actor (“Kramer vs. Kramer”), as Chair of the National Endowment of the Arts (1993-1997), and as a

conservationist who has traveled the world. She presented her books *Command Performances: An Actress in the Theatre of Politics* (2000) and *Wild Things, Wild Places: Adventurous Tales of Wildlife and Conservation on Planet Earth* (2016). A Q&A and book signing followed this highly anticipated event!



L to R: Trustees Maria Basile, M.D., Susan Fishbein, Ed.D., William T. Walter, Ph.D.; Poet Carol Singley; Executive Director Cynthia Shor

Bicentennial Celebration Calendar

April – June 2019: “Children of Grass” Photography Exhibition by B.A. Van Sise, fifth-generation descendant of Walt Whitman. Van Sise offers 15 interpretive portraits of notable American poets who have served as visiting poets and/or WWBA Poets-in-Residence, alongside their poetry.

For National Poetry Month (April), WWBA presents “Whitman at 200: Distinguished Speakers Series” and “Performing Poetry: A 3-Workshop Series.”

April 6-7, 2019: 2019 Poet-in-Residence Jane Hirshfield offers a Poetry Writing Workshop and evening reading on April 6. On April 7, Hirshfield will officiate WWBA’s 33rd Annual Student Awards Ceremony honoring approximately 100 young poets.

May 31 – June 2, 2019: Bicentennial Birthday Weekend Celebration

May 31: Walt Whitman’s 200th Birthday! Whitman scholars David Reynolds & Jerome Loving hold a panel presentation from 10:00am – 12pm. The Final Session of the Walt Whitman Initiative’s “Whitman International Week” is held at the Birthplace. Activities include a Poets’ Corner and Whitman-era music, art and crafts. Join fellow Whitman enthusiasts for a “Happy Birthday Hour” and toast Walt in honor of his 200th birthday. Compagnia de’ Colombari presents “More Or Less I Am,” a music-theater piece drawn from Walt Whitman’s 1855 “Song of Myself.” The troupe, comprised of 8 actor/singers and 4 musicians, will circulate the Town of Huntington Friday afternoon reciting poetry in open spaces as prelude to evening performance. Closing revelries conclude at 9pm.

June 1: Poet’s Picnic. A musical presentation featuring Whitman-era music. WWBA will also host a collaboration with the “Bard’s Initiative,” a local poetry group, to stage a marathon reading of *Leaves of Grass* in front of the Birthplace.

June 2: *Whitman in the Park*. High School and College students and offer presentations of their poetry, art and theatrical works.

June 7: Community Open Mic hosted by local poet Christina M. Rau with a musical performance by 1 Step Ahead.

June 28: Stonewall Talk with Gary Smidgall.

July 2019: Whitman Family Reunion

July – October 2019: WWBA Archive Exhibit. This exhibition of books and artifacts from the WWBA archive includes Whitman family quilts, books signed by Whitman, the Whitman Family Bible, historic photographs, deeds, and documents.

August 9-11, 2019: Inaugural International Whitman Festival and Cultural Arts Celebration.

August 9: Inaugural International Whitman Festival - Day 1. Convening of international presenters, afternoon panel presentations, a student poetry writing workshop, and an evening musical performance.

August 10: Day 2. Whitman Scholar Ed Folsom is the Keynote Speaker. The Festival continues with more panel presentations and an evening theatrical performance.

August 11: Day 3. The final day of the festival includes panel and student poetry presentations.

October 5, 2019: Zachary Turpin presents his lecture “‘Missing Me One Place, Search Another:’ Thoughts on Finding More Whitman (and Even More Whitman) in the 21st Century.”

November 2019: Former Congressman Steve Israel presents his lecture “Whitman as the Poet of Democracy.”

October – December 2019: Library of Congress Facsimile Exhibit and Lecture is presented by Barbara Bair, MA, PhD, Specialist in Literature in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress. Bair oversees the three main Whitman collections and will showcase facsimile items along with their historical narratives.

Throughout the year, “Poetry in Performance: Walking With Whitman” joins local and national poets for a Poetry Reading, Q&A, Book Signing, Music, and Reception. March 1: Craig Czury and Lois Walker, May 3: Tongo Eisen-Morton with Tony Policano, October 4: Nancy Mercado with Denis Gray, November 1: Eleni Sikelianos with Peter Dugan.

For WWBA’s full Bicentennial Calendar, please visit our website at www.waltwhitman.org/whitman200.

Walt Whitman Birthplace Association

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2018-2019

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Our Mission

Walt Whitman Birthplace Association is Walt Whitman's voice today, celebrating the poet's vision of democracy, diversity, and creativity. Our programs and exhibits educate the public on Whitman's life and times, explore his contribution to our nation's rich cultural heritage, and inspire poets, artists, and writers.