



# An Unpublished Whitman Letter to John Burroughs

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ON THE BACK COVER:

AN UNPUBLISHED WHITMAN LETTER TO JOHN AND URSULA BURROUGHS  
—On 13 June 1878, after hearing of William Cullen Bryant's death, Whitman went to New York, where he stayed until 10 July. During his New York visit, Whitman attended Bryant's funeral on 14 June, took a trip up the Hudson River to Esopus to visit John Burroughs and then, after a brief stay with John H. Johnston and his family on Fifth Avenue, returned home to Camden, New Jersey. See Floyd Stovall, ed., *Prose Works 1892* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 1:165–172, and “New York Visit” in Edward F. Grier, ed., *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 3:1012–1013, for Whitman's descriptions of this trip. This previously unpublished letter, in the collection of the Burlington Public Library in Burlington, Iowa, is dated 26 June 1878, and is one of several similar letters Whitman wrote during this time (see Edwin Haviland Miller, ed., *The Correspondence* [New York: New York University Press, 1961–1977], 3:120–128). His observations of the New York surroundings became the basis for an article, “A Poet's Recreation,” which appeared in the *New York Tribune*, 4 July 1878, and most of which was reprinted in *Specimen Days* (see *Prose Works*, 1:329–330). This letter describes Whitman's trip down the bay to Sandy Hook with the “Sorois ladies”—the first important women's club in America, founded in 1868; Whitman, however, chose to spend “most of the time with the pilots” in the pilot house as he enjoyed the “sea-sail, sea-breeze, etc.” The “slip” Whitman cut from the *Tribune* and sent to the Burroughses may have been an attack on Whitman that the newspaper had recently printed (see William White, ed., *Daybooks and Notebooks* [New York: New York University Press, 1978], 1:102–103n).

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