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A Newly Discovered Image of Walt Whitman Restored by the Walt Whitman Association and the Mickel Street Review

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A NEWLY DISCOVERED IMAGE OF WALT WHITMAN RESTORED BY THE WALT WHITMAN ASSOCIATION AND THE *MICKLE STREET REVIEW*

The image of Walt Whitman on the back cover of this issue, which closely resembles the four known photographs from the sitting on August 6, 1889, in the studio of Frederick Gutekunst of Philadelphia, has recently been restored by the Walt Whitman Association and the *Mickle Street Review*.

The image came to the Walt Whitman Association in 1984, in the form of an acetate negative in an advanced state of deterioration. The previous owner, Archie Toffler (1904-1983), was a former resident of Camden; upon his death, his heirs passed the negative on to the then-President of the Walt Whitman Association, Dr. Geoffrey Sill, who arranged for its conservation by the Chicago Albumen Works, Inc., with the assistance of a grant from the Gilder-Lehrmann Institute for American History.

For the Gutekunst session, Whitman wore the lace collar that had been made for him by his housekeeper, Mary Davis, which is plainly visible in the image. He had worn the same collar when he sat to be photographed by George Cox in New York on April 5, 1887. Jeannette Gilder, editor of *The Critic* and an observer of that session, said that "He must have had twenty pictures taken, yet he never posed for a moment. He simply sat in the big revolving chair and swung himself to the right or to the left, as Mr. Cox directed, or took his hat off or put it on again, his expression and attitude remaining so natural that no one would have supposed he was sitting for a photograph." It is possible that this image derives from that session, though it more strongly resembles the other photos by Gutekunst.

Despite the naturalness of the pose, the image has a painterly quality, as if it had been retouched. Whitman complained about this practice to Jeannette Gilder, who quoted him in *The Critic* as saying that "Nowadays photographers have a trick of what they call 'touching up' their work, smoothing out the irregularities, wrinkles, and what they consider defects in a person's face." Another possibility is that the image is a photograph of a painting that was made from one of the Gutekunst photos, now lost.

Further information on the creation of this image or on its provenance would be very welcome to the editors of the *Mickle Street Review*. The editors acknowledge with thanks the assistance of Ed Folsom, Ted Genoways, and the *Walt Whitman Archive* in identifying the image to date.

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