



The Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association

Unveiling Latest Artifact Donation: The Whitman Family Bible

On November 14, 2014, Walt Whitman Birthplace Association was proud to accept the Whitman Family Bible donated by Natalie Swertfager Pearson, widow of Walter Whitman Swertfager, who was the great-great-grandson of Mary Elizabeth Whitman, Walt's beloved sister.

Mary received the Bible from Walt as a Christmas gift in 1878. Mary lived on the North Fork of LI in Greenport, and Walt visited her often. On two interior pages, Walt inscribed their immediate family births, marriages and deaths up to that time.

Also donated was a lock of hair of Walt's mother, Louisa Van Velsor Whitman.

Executive Director Cynthia Shor and Docent Margaret Guardi traveled to Florida to accept the donation. They videotaped Natalie's formal dedication since she was unable to travel. For the unveiling, Natalie's daughter, Sharon Wilson, and Sharon's daughters, Nicole and Stephanie, came from Florida. They conveyed their mother's great satisfaction at having the Bible returned to Walt's homestead. To honor Natalie and her family, a brick has been placed in the WWBA Commemorative Poetry Circle.

Huntington Town Supervisor Frank Petrone led the unveiling with many officials in attendance. Also invited were Whitman Family descendants, and 25 Whitman relatives held a Family Reunion after the ceremony. The Bible exhibit is on display at the site.



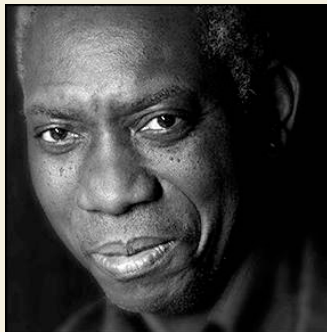
(L-R) Cynthia Shor, Exec. Director; William Walter, Ph.D., Board President; Sharon Swertfager Wilson, Fifth Generation granddaughter of M.E. Whitman; Nicole & Stephanie Wilson; and Frank Petrone, Huntington Town Supervisor.



Walter Whitman Swertfager. Natalie Swertfager Pearson, with the Whitman Family Bible.

Yusef Komunyakaa selected 2015 Poet in Residence

Yusef Komunyakaa began writing poetry in 1973 and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado Springs in 1975. His first book of poems, Dedications & Other Darkhorses, was published in 1977, followed by Lost in the Bonewheel Factory in 1979. During this time, he earned his MA and MFA in creative writing from Colorado State University and the University of California, Irvine, respectively.



Komunyakaa first received wide recognition following the 1984 publication of Copacetic, a collection of poems built from colloquial speech which demonstrated his incorporation of jazz influences. He followed the book with two others: I Apologize for the Eyes in My Head (1986), winner of the San Francisco Poetry Center Award; and Dien Cai Dau (1988), which won The Dark Room Poetry Prize and has been cited by poets, such as, William Matthews and Robert Hass, as being among the best writing on the war in Vietnam.

The annual Poet In Residence is proudly sponsored by NYSICA (through HAC). Each year the program features revered and distinguished contemporary poets who continue to embody Walt Whitman's spirit of democracy, diversity and creativity.

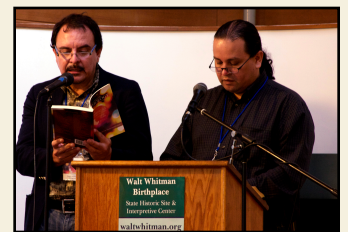
He will officiate at the Whitman Birthday Celebration on May 30th and 31st, 2015.

Community Outreach



WWBA was proud to welcome Congressman Steve Israel for a reading and signing of his new book, A Global War on Morris, on January 11th. Congressman Israel is pictured with Board members Dr William Walter, Thomas Wismuller, Faith Lieberman, Jo-Ann Raia and Executive Director Cynthia Shor.

WWBA hosted The Americas Poetry Festival of New York, an international multilingual writers' conference sponsored by CUNY, on October 16, 2014. Director Dr. Luis Ambroggio presented his book, "We Are All Whitman." Attendees included CUNY Professors Carlos Aquasaco (standing on R) and Yrlene Santos, 12 international poets and Deer Park HS students.



Launch of Gov. Cuomo's initiative "Path Through History" tourism website was celebrated on October 8, 2014. Associated with the "I Love New York" campaign, it highlights historical sites. Attendees included Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, State Parks Regional Director Wayne Horsley, Deputy Regional Director Brian Foley, Nassau County Commissioner of Parks Brian Nugent, LICVB President Yan Baczkowski, "ILNY" Rowena Sahulee. The Birthplace is featured in website video.

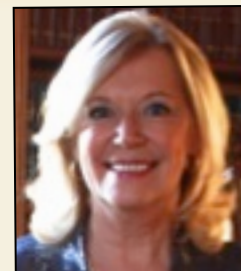
*From the Director's Desk*

Greetings, Members and Friends!

As our Newsletter indicates, we are busier than ever enacting our mission to preserve and promote the legacy of Walt Whitman. Our recent member survey indicated a high interest in historic programs. Coincidentally, 2015 marks the historic sesquicentennial of the Civil War's end in 1865. During the Civil War, Whitman administered to wounded soldiers and he captured these experiences in *Drum Taps*. Using Walt's book, and many others, our Program Committee responded to your survey and fashioned a series of five programs entitled WAR WORDS WISDOM: A Veteran Experience Series, sponsored by John & Penny Barr.

The Civil War, WWII, Vietnam, and Iraq are explored in this Series through the words of veterans. Long Island has the highest percentage of veterans in the country and we aim to create dialogues, give thanks and give back to veterans and their families. All programs are free and open to the public. Spread the word to community veterans and invite them to join you in attending. We are collaborating with Huntington who is also celebrating the sesquicentennial with multiple events, notably, the kickoff and reception at the Soldiers & Sailors Museum on April 17th.

Please continue to enjoy our signature Literary events, enriched school programs, and social activities. The Board and I thank you for your support which enables us to give back to the community. Please embrace the "Pride of Donorship" and pay it forward through sponsorships, donations, volunteering, attending. We appreciate your generosity and we hope to see you soon. Happy Spring!



*Cynthia Shor*

**Graham Everett Named 2015 Long Island Poet of the Year**

WWBA is pleased to announce Graham Everett as 2015 Long Island Poet of the Year, an annual award given by WWBA to honor a notable poet on Long Island. The honorees champion poetry through their writing, and through their teaching and support of the Long Island community of poets.

Poet **Dr. Graham Everett**, professor and publisher, is the founding editor of *Street Magazine* and Street Press. He has worked as poet-in-residence at New York area schools, prisons, and arts councils from 1974 to 1986. Dr. Everett served as the interim director of the Poetry Center at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and was a faculty member in the General Studies Program at Adelphi University.

The public is invited to attend as WWBA celebrates Graham Everett's honor during a reception at the Birthplace on April 21st. from 2-4pm. Dr Everett will also serve as *Writing With Whitman* series workshop leader for September 12, 2015.



**WWBA graciously acknowledges the continued support from the following Members & Donors at the Patron level and above:**

Penny and John Barr, John & Anne Coulehan, Francis Gagliardi, Robert Hughes, Charles Lipp, George Mallis, Michael Mann, Barry McCallion, Elizabeth & Joshua Miller, Mark Nuccio, Beryl Rimalovski, Ruth Rosenthal, Julie Sheehan, Susan and William Walter, Walter Wientge, Ginger Williams, and Tom Wismuller

Special thanks to New York State OPRHP, Suffolk County, Huntington Town, NYSCA, NYCH, Poets & Writers, and Huntington Arts Council for their continued support.

*Thank you to all renewed members!  
Your support helps us preserve and promote the legacy of Walt Whitman.*

Renew or Become a Member Today:  
www.waltwhitman.org  
or call Diana Alvarez  
(631) 427-5240 ext. 114

**Special Thanks**

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*Starting at Paumanok...*

The Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association

**Editors:** Katrina Lovett Cynthia Shor



# Walking with Whitman

## Poetry in Performance

The Birthplace completed the 2014 *Walking With Whitman* signature series of workshops and readings to much acclaim. Nationally renowned Poets, including Rowan Ricardo Phillips, Nathan Brown and Urayoan Noel, joined us for an eclectic mix of poetry and performance.

We are glad to announce our 2015 *Walking With Whitman* Series Schedule with founder and host, George Wallace, WWBA Writer in Residence 2009-2015

**March 7:** Sholeh Wolpe & David Axelrod\*

**May 2:** Peter Cole & Robert Peake\*

**September 12:** Garland Thompson Jr & Graham Everett\*

**October 3:** Joe Weill & Claire Nicholas White\*

**November 7:** Anthoula Katsimatides, Matt Pasca\* & Terri Muuss\*

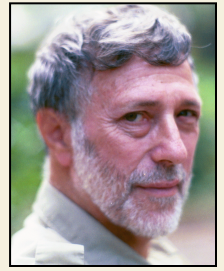
**December 5:** Eileen Myles & Julie Sheehan\*

Tickets for the workshops and readings may be purchased by phone at 631-427-5240 x115 or online at [www.waltwhitman.org](http://www.waltwhitman.org). A discounted season subscription to the series is available. Workshops are 2-4pm, performance readings 5-7pm.

### MARCH 7

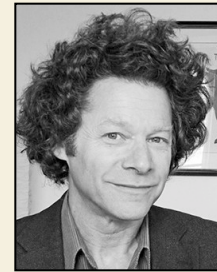


**Sholeh Wolpe**



**David Axelrod\***

### MAY 2



**Peter Cole**

*\*Workshop Leader*



**Robert Peake\***

### Join our Capital Campaign Inaugural Fundraiser:

#### *Whitman A'La Carte*

**Wednesday, June 24, 2015, 7- 10 pm, \$45**

Appliance World, 414 New York Avenue, Huntington

Six (6) Signature Huntington restaurants will provide a 6 course à la carte meal, plus dessert, wine and beverages. Your support will launch our Capital Campaign to incorporate interactive technology into our Interpretive Center Exhibit with a focus on enlarging the museum experience for our special needs visitors.

For more information or registration, call 631-427-5240 x112 or email [events@waltwhitman.org](mailto:events@waltwhitman.org).

### Four Historic Donations



**The Angel of the Battlefield**  
*Clara Barton with Walt Whitman at Chatham, December 15, 1862*

**Joseph Normoyle** – Huntington Station, NY. "Whitmanland" book by Verne Dyson, 1960 edition, plus newspaper archival materials.

**Mort Kunstler** – Oyster Bay, NY. Limited Edition giclee print of his oil painting (left). Civil War artist Kunstler appears Sept. 24, 2015, at the "Drum Taps" program to speak about his historic interpretive art.

**Heather Moore** – Charlotte, NC. Deathbed Edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Excellent condition with Whitmans' signature blind stamped and gilded on the cover.

**Desire (Hewlett) Osman** – Charlotte, NC. (Walt's first cousin, 7 times removed). Monogrammed woven quilt, MWH, possibly made by Walt's aunt Mary Walters Hewlett.

WWBA thanks them for preserving the legacy of Walt and for their generous donations!

### New 2015 Historic Series

#### WAR WORDS WISDOM: A Veteran Experience Series,

sponsored by John & Penny Barr

Series of Five Programs:

**April 19 "Long Island & The Civil War"** – book reading & discussion with co-authors and historians Bill Bleyer and Harrison Hunt. 3 – 5 PM.

**May 9 The Veteran Experience** – panel presentation by authors John Barr (Vietnam), Prof. Doug Anderson (Vietnam), Maurice Decaul (Iraq). Featuring poetry by Dan Levin (WWII). 1-4 PM

**June 13 Veteran Writers Workshop** – presented by *Words After War* poet and facilitator Maurice Decaul. 2-4 PM  
**Veteran Poetry Reading** 7-9 PM

**July TBA Songs of War** Exploration of American music making during the Civil War and WWII, with Professors Jim Davis and Gwyneth Bravo. Musical Interludes.

**Sept. 26 "Drum Taps"** – Civil War soldiers' stories through the words of Whitman, Professors Karen Karbiener and Brian Matthew Jordan, and artist Mort Kunstler. 2-4 PM.

### Nelson DeMille Honored as the WWBA 2014 Champion of Literacy

WWBA proudly announces Nelson DeMille as 2014 Champion of Literacy. Champions are nationally known individuals who enhance the impact of literacy through their body of work and who have gone beyond their craft to attain notable success and impact in promoting and nurturing literacy. DeMille has published 18 acclaimed novels, with eight attaining the NY Times Best-Seller Lists and with many selected by National Book Clubs for discussion. He has received honorary doctorates from Hofstra University, Long Island University and Dowling College. He has served on the Hofstra Board of Trustees and has endowed a scholarship for Hofstra students majoring in English. He has served as past president of the Mystery Writers of America and was honored as 1<sup>st</sup> place Best Author in *Best of Long Island 2013* in addition to being the recipient of the Estabrook Award from Hofstra and the Presidential Medal. His award ceremony at the Birthplace will coincide with 2015 book tour of his latest novel, *Radiant Angel*.



*STARTING FROM PAUMANOK...*

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Cynthia Shor

**2015 Calendar of Events**

March 18- April 22	NY Council for the Humanities Reading & Discussion Series: "Working"	June 20	Fundraiser by Trustee Karen Karbiener Walking Tour of Whitman's New York
April 17	Soldiers & Sailors Museum Kickoff event and reception	June 24	<i>Whitman A'La Carte</i> at Appliance World
April 19	WAR WORDS WISDOM: "Long Island and the Civil War." Presentation by co-authors Bill Bleyer and Harrison Hunt.	June 20-21	"Path Through History" Historic exhibits, music, books, and games.
April 26	2015 WWBA Long Island Poet of the Year Graham Everett: Award Ceremony	June 21	12th Annual Marathon Reading of "Song of Myself" at Brooklyn Bridge Park
April 30	Poetry for the HART Award Reception & Reading	Sept 12	<i>Walking with Whitman</i> Peter Cole and Robert Peake
May 2	New York I ♥ My Parks Cleanup Day	Sept 26	WAR WORDS WISDOM: <i>Drum Taps</i>
May 2	<i>Walking with Whitman</i> Garland Thompson Jr. and Graham Everett	Oct 3	<i>Walking with Whitman</i> Joe Weil and Claire Nicholas White
May 9	WAR WORDS WISDOM: The Veteran Experience	Oct 4	Northport: Civil War Parade
May 30	Whitman Birthday Celebration: Master Class with Yusef Komunyakaa	For event details, please visit: <a href="http://www.waltwhitman.org">www.waltwhitman.org</a>	
May 31	Young Poets Awards Ceremony with Yusef Komunyakaa	<b>Rentals Available</b> <b>Scout Programs Tea Parties</b> <a href="http://www.waltwhitman.org">www.waltwhitman.org</a> <b>School and group tours by appointment</b> <b>(631) 427-5240 x 113</b>	
June 13	WAR WORDS WISDOM: Veteran Writers Workshop		
July 15	Gae Polisner - Novel Writing Workshop		

**Walt Whitman Birthplace Association**

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 young poets and writers.

