

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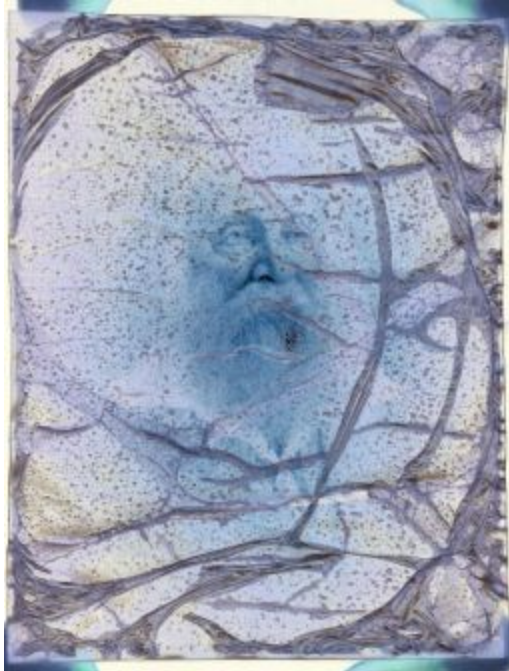
This image of Walt Whitman, which closely resembles the four known photographs from the sitting on 6 August 1889 in the studio of Frederick Gutekunst of Philadelphia, has recently been restored by the Walt Whitman Association and *The Mickle Street Review*.

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. Both the original negative and the restored image are presented here.

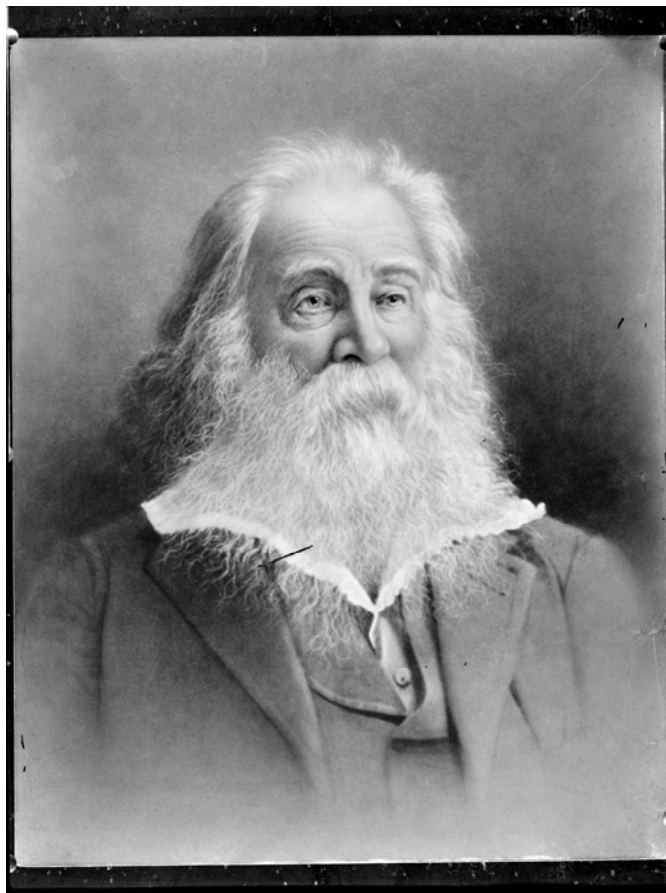
For the Gutekunst session, Whitman wore the lace collar that had been made for him by his housekeeper, Mary Davis, which is plainly visible in the photo. He had worn the same collar when he sat to be photographed by George Cox in New York on 5 April 1887. Jeannette Gilder, editor of *The Critic* and 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 photograph comes 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 which 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.



Condition of the image when it was received in 1984



Condition of the photo after major restoration



Whitman image fully restored

[Mickle Street Review](#)