Treasury Building, 1863

Whitman was forty-three years old and living in Washington when the Civil War began. He promptly volunteered to nurse Union soldiers. He was especially proud of one particular hospital he worked in, which provided care to members of the Confederate forces. His friend Elijah Allen owned a shop near the hospital, and Whitman shopped here regularly, especially for tobacco.

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particularly the opportunity to provide solace to "Calamus" poems and an architect of America's spiritual and political promise. Lincoln, and "Passage to India," a poem of praise and life in and around Brooklyn, Congressional Cemetery.

At least 56 separate facilities in Washington were used as hospitals at some time over the course of the war. At the current site of the Armory Square House, a mansion once owned by a widow, Mrs. Eliza Baker, of Whitman and on a visit to the city, called upon her, and a little sheet-iron stove in which there was no fire. But Walt, clearing a chair or two of their remains, made him depart the city. He suffered a stroke in early 1865. He responded to Congressional requests for information. Whitman described it in a letter to his brother Jeff:

"It is easy enough-I take things very easy-the rule is to come at 9 but I don't come at 9, and only stay till 4 when I want, as at present to finish a letter for the mail-I get in reading and writing in the comfortable offices. Quite a good deal of time, evenings & Sundays, interesting to listen to their descriptions of things of them coming in here..."

Whitman worked as a clerk for the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the ground floor of the building, here in early 1865. He responded to Congressional requests for information. Whitman described it in a letter to his brother Jeff:

"It is easy enough-I take things very easy-the rule is to come at 9 and go at 4-but I don't come at 9, and only stay till 4 when I want, as at present to finish a letter for the mail-I am treated with great courtesy, as an evidence of my being in a temporary hospital. Whitman frequently visited sick and wounded soldiers here. Commenting on use of the same rooms for Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural ball, Whitman wrote: "To-night beautiful women, perfumes, the violets' sweetness, the polka and the waltz; but then, the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rage, the odor of woe and blood..."

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Whitman was, "with his arms full of bottles and lemons, going to some hospitals, to give the boys a good time."

Entering the Metro station, take a look at the sculpture "Ocean Piece" by Jorge Martins. A gift of the Lisbon Metro system, the artwork symbolically unites the United States and Portugal with quotes from their representative poets, Walt Whitman and Fernando Pessoa.

Pennsylvania Avenue here has a special significance for Whitman. One evening in 1865, Whitman was riding the streetcars when he met the great love of his life, Peter Doyle, a conductor for the Washington and Georgetown Railroad. Doyle recalled his first meeting with Walt: "He was the only passenger, it was a lonely night, so I thought I would go in and talk with him...we were familiar at once-I put my hand on his knee-we understood.

From that time on, we were the biggest sort of friends." An Irish immigrant who was raised in Virginia, Doyle served as a Rebel during the Civil War. Just twenty-one when he met Whitman, Doyle was already the principal supporter of his widowed mother and younger siblings in a home he made for them in Southwest Washington.

5. FORD'S THEATER, 511 10TH ST., NW.
President Lincoln was assassinated here on April 14, 1865. Although Whitman was in Brooklyn visiting his family for the Easter holiday, Peter Doyle was present in the balcony when, "I heard the pistol shot. I had no idea what it was, what it meant...until Mrs. Lincoln leaned out of the box and cried, "The President is shot!"

Despite his friendship with Lincoln's secretary John Hay, Whitman never met Lincoln. Yet he felt he loved the President "personally."

Whitman wrote several poems commemorating the slain President, the most popular of which was "O Captain! My Captain!" Of more lasting artistic value is Whitman's elegy, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." This poem recreates the period of national mourning, as Lincoln's body was carried by funeral train from the Capital to its final resting place in Springfield, Illinois.

Here, coffin that slowly passes
I give you my spring of blue.

6. FREEDOM PLAZA, PENNSYLVANIA AVE., BETWEEN 13TH & 14TH STS., NW.
This urban park depicts Pierre L'Enfant's blueprint for Washington, and celebrates Whitman's connection with Washington, DC. In the southeast corner, one finds Whitman's observation, "I went to Washington as everybody goes there, prepared to see everything done with some furtive intention, but I was disappointed-pleasantly disappointed."

Closer to the White House, in the plaza's northwest corner, Whitman exhorts the passer-by, with "The sum of all known reverence I add up in you whoever you are, The President is there in the White House for you, it is not you who are here for him."

7. WILLARD HOTEL, PENNSYLVANIA AVE. AT 14TH STREET, NW.
There has been a Willard Hotel on this site since the 1850s (the present building dates from 1901). The hotel was the social center of Civil War Washington. Whitman worked as a copyist for the Army Paymaster during the War. The offices were on the 5th floor with "a splendid view" of the Potomac River and Georgetown. Whitman recalled the "clank of crutches" ascending the steep steps as a steady stream of wounded soldiers came to be paid before leaving on furlough. Outside his door, Whitman would observe, "A long string of army wagons are defiling along 15th street, and around into Pennsylvania avenue - white canvas coverings arch them over, and each has its six-mule team - the teamsters are some of them walking along by the sides of their animals - squads of the provost-guards are tramping frequently along - and once or twice a party of cavalry in their yellow-trimmed jackets gallop along."

Whitman lived in a boarding house on this block during his last year in Washington.

8. HOTEL WASHINGTON, 515 15TH ST., NW.
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9. U.S. TREASURY, PENNSYLVANIA & 15TH ST., NW.
Whitman worked for the Attorney General's Office from 1865 until 1873, and in this building in 1872 and 1873, as a clerk for the newly established Justice Department. His office was on the first floor, facing south, with a view of the partially-completed Washington Monument. Whitman processed pardons for former rebels, as he described in a letter: "This is the place where the big southerners now come up to get pardoned - all the rich men & big officers of the reb army have to get special pardons,
Whitman was riding the streetcars when he met the great love of his life, Peter Doyle, a conductor. Doyle was already the principal supporter of his widowed mother and younger siblings. Having served as a Rebel during the Civil War. Just twenty-one when he met Whitman, Doyle was present in the balcony of his boarding house in Georgetown visiting his family for the Easter holiday when President Lincoln was assassinated there on April 14, 1865. Although Whitman was in Brooklyn visiting his family for the Easter holiday, he felt he knew the President “personally.”

Entering the Metro station, take a look at the artwork symbolically unites the United States and Portugal with quotes from their respective poets, Walt Whitman and Fernando Pessoa. Pennsylvanian Avenue has a special significance for Whitman. One evening in 1865, Whitman was riding the streetcars when he met the great love of his life, Peter Doyle, a conductor. Doyle was already the principal supporter of his widowed mother and younger siblings in a boarding house he made for them in Southwest Washington.

Whitman wrote several poems commemorating the slain President, the most popular of which was “O Captain! My Captain!” Of more lasting artistic value is Whitman’s elegy, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” This poem recreates the period of national mourning, as Lincoln’s body was carried by funeral train from the Capital to its final resting place in Springfield, Illinois. Here, coffin that slowly passes I give you my sprig of lilac.

Across from Willard’s was “Newspaper Row,” which housed the offices of various out-of-town papers. A journalist by trade, Whitman occasionally wrote letters from Washington to the New York Times, and contributed to the local Evening Star and Morning Chronicle as well.

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