

**Books and Manuscripts (1706)**

May 20, 2021 EST, Freeman's

**Lot 40**

**Estimate:** \$3000 - \$5000 (plus Buyer's Premium)

**[Literature] Whitman, Walt Autograph Draft Letter**

Washington, (D.C.), July 1, 1869. One sheet folded to make 4 pp.; 8 x 5 in. (203 x 127 mm). Draft of an intimate autograph letter by Whitman, unsigned, on Attorney General's Office lined stationery, to friend and Civil War soldier, Alfred Pratt: "I am still in here in Washington, & work in the same office. My health is good, and there is nothing specially new or important with me since I wrote last. Dear boy I would like to see you, that we might be together once more, even if but for a little while. I have thought I would try to journey out your way, for a few days, but it don't seem likely just at present. Dear boy I hope you are well,--you must write me a good long letter all about yourself & your affairs.--I send you my love, & to your parents also--Tell them I hope yet to meet them some time...I too have not forgotten those times when you lay sick in the hospital--& our love for each other--such things are not easily forgotten--Some day I will come out there, & we will see each other again." Numerous emendations in Whitman's hand (most of which included in the finished letter); creasing from original folds.

*Together with:*

Pratt, Alfred

*Autograph Letter, signed*

Williamson Wayne Co., N.Y., May 1, 1869. 2 pp.; 7 7/8 x 5 (200 x 127 mm). Autograph letter signed by Pratt to Whitman, on N.Y. Military State Agency stationery, writing to inquire about his health, and to catch him up on personal matters: "Dear Father Whitman, I have faith to beleive (sic) that you're a live yet and I should like to Hear from you..."; with original postal envelope. Creasing from original folds.

An intimate exchange of letters between one of America's greatest poets and a former Civil War soldier.

Whitman and Pratt first met in Ward C of Armory Square Hospital in Washington, D.C. sometime in 1865. During the Civil War, Whitman would spend days wandering the hospital wards, talking with injured soldiers, bringing them gifts like fresh oranges and licorice, and providing them company while they convalesced. Pratt and Whitman corresponded for years after his release from the hospital and discharge from the army, updating each other on their lives, and awaiting the day that they would finally get to meet again. Whitman also corresponded with Pratt's parents, and he entertained ideas of staying with them at their farm in Williamson, in upstate New York, to get away from the routines of life in Washington. Sometime in 1870 Pratt moved to Kansas with his wife, their last known correspondence was on January 20, 1870.

The finished letter, also dated July 1, 1869 can be found in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, 1839–1919, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and it is printed in *Walt Whitman, The Correspondence*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961–1977), 2:82.

