Leaves of Grass

The rustic yet dignified figure looking back at you from this page is Walt Whitman, as depicted in the frontispiece portrait of his collection of poems *Leaves of Grass* published in 1855. Special Collections possesses three copies of this first edition, which the author produced and marketed himself. Each of these copies shows variants which suggest the turmoil of Whitman’s process of self-publication. In addition, Special Collections has a number of the subsequent early editions of this work, which had a profound influence on the course of American letters.

Whitman was an unlikely figure to loom so large on the landscape of 19th-century American literature. Born in 1819 on Long Island to parents with Dutch and English ancestry, Whitman’s first years were spent on the family farm, but when Walt was twelve his father moved to Brooklyn, N.Y., to try to improve the family fortunes. After a public school education, Whitman was apprenticed to the printing trade.

Not only did this trade provide him with a liveli-

Presently Special Collections is investigating the possibility of using these works, and other publications by and about Walt Whitman, as a nucleus for collecting materials which will shed light on Whitman as a poet and the profound influence he has had on American literature.

-P.A.M.

Special Collections materials are available for research and consultation without restriction. For further information contact Philip A. Metzger, Curator of Special Collections, or Ilhan Citak, Special Collections Assistant. Reading room hours are Monday through Friday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Telephone (610) 758-4506; fax (610) 758-6091; email: inspc@lehigh.edu

upper left: title and frontispiece of second edition
lower left: title page of third edition, unauthorized reprint
lower right: page [57] of the first edition