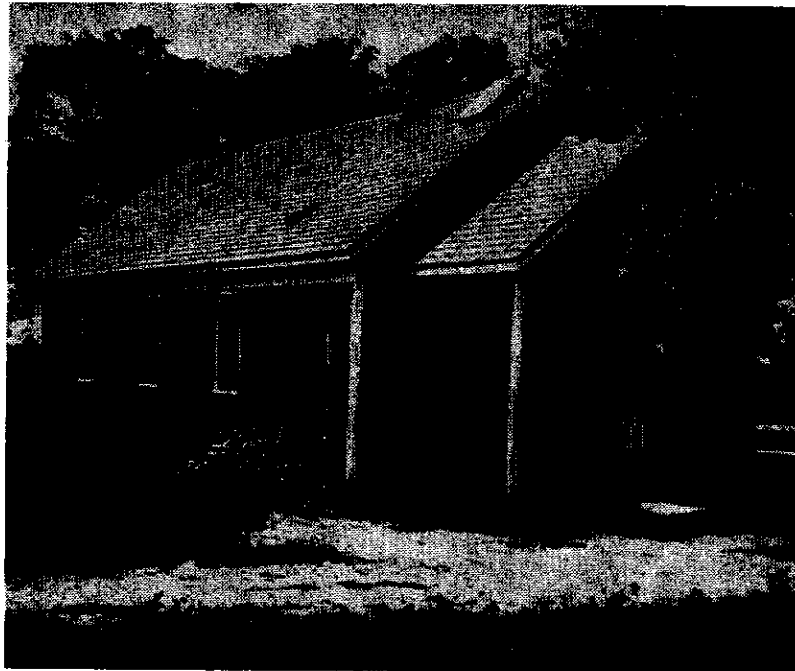


WALT WHITMAN AT SOUTHOLD



The Locust Grove ("Sodom") School

by

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BROOKVILLE, NEW YORK

*Number Four in a Series of Monographs
on Unpublished Walt Whitman Material.
Part One*

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this series to Professor Oscar Cargill, former head of the Department of English at New York University, and at present McGuffey Visiting Professor at Ohio University.

He has been both my inspiration and my Mentor, seeing the four monographs through their various stages with great kindness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish also to express my deep appreciation to:
Professor Gay Wilson Allen, of New York University, for his long custodianship of the first half of this work;
Mrs. Alice B. Wells, librarian of the Southold Free Library, for her help;
Mr. Wayland Jefferson, former Southold Town Historian, for his material;
the residents of Southold who shared their family memories with me;
and the numerous church historians, librarians and Old Residents who were good enough to correspond with me;

Mme. Helene Massalsky of Copiague, for her gift of books, clippings, letters, photographs and documents.

The photograph on the cover was copied by Joseph Lechleiter Jr., teacher at the Smithtown Junior High School.

December, 1966

K. M.

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Walt Whitman at Southold

I don't value the poetry in what I have written so much as the teaching; the poetry is only a horse for the other to ride.

Walt Whitman!

Teaching was one of the most important of Walt Whitman's aims, according to his own testimony. Looking back over his life, he told Horace Traubel, "I have thrown my life into the work: teaching, loafing, working on newspapers, travelling . . ."² His affectionate recalling of the benefits he received from his teaching on Long Island, and his association with the families of the pupils has often been quoted.³ Any new information about this area of his activities, then, becomes most significant, especially if the poet himself forgot to include it in his biographical material, or deliberately omitted it. I refer to Whitman's teaching at Sodom School, at Southold, Long Island, in the 1840s.

Since several eminently reliable residents of that town, among them a town clerk, three town historians, the president of a local historical society, and a librarian, assert that they had always heard that Whitman had taught at Southold, and since I have never seen any mention of Whitman's having taught any farther east than Smithtown (See Monograph 3 in this series), I have decided to print their statements before all possibility of corroboration disappears.

My purpose, then, is twofold: to record what has been told and written to me before it vanishes, and to save others from the need to retrace my steps — or to make it easier for them to do so. To that end I have put into the Appendix, in the order in which they are mentioned, not only the documents which support the statements made, but also those which do not, as well as notes and letters which indicate the avenues I followed in the attempt to check information, the contradictions I found, the dead ends I reached. There is no way of presenting the results without revealing the possibly sinister aspects of Whit-

1. Bliss Perry, *WALT WHITMAN, His Life and His Work*. (New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 299.
2. Horace Traubel, *WITH WALT WHITMAN IN CAMDEN*. Vol. III. (New York, Mitchell Kennerly 1914), p. 327.
3. Walt Whitman, *COMPLETE POETRY AND SELECTED PROSE AND LETTERS*. Ed. Emory Holloway (New York, Random House, 1938), p. 542.



The communities Whitman knew well during his stay at Southold: Peconic, Greenport, Sag Harbor, Orient, etc. Map by Max Rochmis.

man's stay at Southold. But, were Whitman alive today, he himself would speak much more freely about his experiences than was feasible in his time, and would expect others to do the same.

*W. said to me tonight: 'You'll be speaking for me many a time, after I am dead: do not be afraid to tell the truth — any sort of truth, good or bad, for or against: only be afraid not to tell the truth.'*⁴

Southold

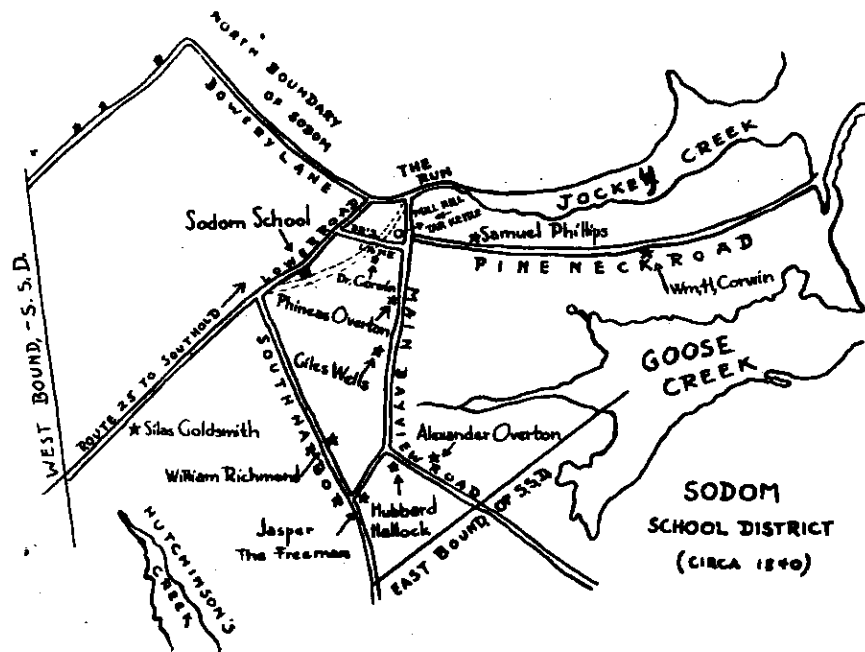
Southold is a very old and very quiet town on the North Fork of the eastern end of Long Island. Its long shore fronts on Peconic and Gardiner Bays, on Long Island and two other Sounds, and on miles of creeks and inlets. The land rises from 40 to 180 feet in various places, then falls from these bluffs to the shore in one- to five-mile stretches. Creeks surrounded by salt-water meadows section the land much as they did in Whitman's time. The climate is mild, the scenery beautiful, the soil rich, the harbors filled with fish. Farming became profitable only some time after Whitman's stay at Southold, the building of the Long Island Rail Road as far as Suffolk Station making it advantageous for the farmers to send their produce to New York City, ninety miles away. While Whitman lived there, farming was still, with fishing, the chief source of livelihood for the local people; in season, a "strawberry boat" carried farm products across the Sound every day.⁵

The townspeople among whom Whitman lived were simple, devout, laconic, and very proud of family and town history, which reached back to 1640.⁶ There were a number of professional men, and those who had been college-educated, but even poor families had shelves of treasured books, as well as *The Book*, and every child was given as much schooling as he could stand or the family afford. Most boys, after finishing

4. Traubel, op. cit., Vol. II, (New York, D. Appleton, 1908), p. 553.

5. SOUTHOLD TOWN, Published by Chamber of Commerce, Cutchogue, L. I. and Mattituck, L. I., 1939), pp. 5, 6, 51, 88.

6. George F. Hummel. HERITAGE, (New York, Fred Stokes, 1935), pp. 4-9.



Names and tracing provided by Wayland Jefferson. Map and lettering by Max Rochmis. Tracing, courtesy Suffolk Planning Commission, 1941.

Dotted lines indicate a road not in use in 1840.

District School, attended at least for a time the Southold Academy, which had been founded in 1834.⁷

Whitman taught in a small school originally called the Locust Grove School. It was situated between Peconic and Southold, or, as one correspondent had it, "about 4 1/2 miles east of Cutchogue." At one time, because of the paucity of official school records in general, and the complete lack of information about Whitman in particular, Wayland Jefferson⁸ believed the poet might have taught at a neighborhood school of the type which was supported at that time by groups of families who were protesting against the newly organized district schools, but no one else mentioned this possibility. The Locust Grove ("Sodom") School is still pointed out as the Walt Whitman school. It is unfortunate that early school records have been burned, but there may be other written evidence among the private papers of local residents.

The Sodom School

The first intimation that Whitman was supposed to have taught at Southold came to me in 1939 from Mrs. Jesse Brown of Smithtown, who brought me an illustrated booklet, "Southold Town, 1639-1939, by Wayland Jefferson, Official Town Historian, Southold." It contained an old photograph⁹ of the school, and in a section called "The Schools of Southold Town," the notation that "...Among the famous men who have taught in Southold, and they are many, is Walt Whitman, who taught for one term — not too successfully — at the Sodom School in 1841 . . ." ¹⁰

Intrigued by the name of the school, by the fact that it did not appear in the list of those Walt had made for his biographers, and by the hint that specific information about the quality of his teaching at that place might be obtainable, I wrote to the Town Clerk, who referred me to Mr. Jefferson (Appendix).

I corresponded with Mr. Jefferson and others, in the town and out of it, for three years, following up the letters with

8. Historian of Southold Town. He was followed by Mrs. John James Kramer, who was succeeded by Mrs. A. Nelson Chapman. Mr. Wilson Burdette became historian and part-time curator of the Southold Historical Society in June, 1966.

7. William S. Pelletreau, HISTORY OF SUFFOLK COUNTY, 1683-1882. (New York, W. W. Munsell & Co., 1882), p. 49.

9. Mr. Joseph Walters, Bowerie Lane, Southold, as well as Mrs. Hilliard, owned photographs of the old Sodom School.

10. P. 75. Later Mr. Jefferson changed the date to 1840 (appendix).

telephone interviews and visits to Southold. My latest visit, in July of 1966, yielded additional residents who affirmed that Whitman had taught there: Mrs. Alice B. Wells, Librarian, Mrs. Stanton Mott, president of the Whitaker Historical Society, Mrs. Margery Dickinson Burns, Mr. Gottlieb J. Nickles, Mr. Clement Booth, of the L.I. Traveller, Mrs. Marion Regent of the Town Clerk's Office, Mrs. A. Nelson Chapman, retiring Town Historian, and Mrs. Carroll Newell. (Appendix) (Notes)*. The school was a tiny one-room building, according to Mrs. Elsie C. Hilliard, who in 1939 was Librarian of the Southold Free Library on Main Road. She produced school records, dated 1843, which included names well known to Whitman: Wells, Goldsmith and Phillips. Mrs. Hilliard also exhibited the Howard Huntting and John Green scrap books, which indicated that Southold had become big enough for the Long Island Rail Road to extend its services that far, but that the teacher still received only \$7.50 for each of the three terms. Mr. Jefferson said this was also recorded in the school minutes of 1842-3, as well as the fact that Whitman had been hired by Ezra L. Goldsmith. (Latter statement not found-K.M.).

Mrs. Hilliard herself had attended Sodom School — of course long after Whitman's teaching there. Although the students numbered sixty, and ranged through the nine grades, there was still only one teacher, who had to manage in one room, much as Whitman did with twelve pupils.

"Inside were two rows of seats—just boards. Three sitting in them—flat benches for class recitals, and in fact it was the crudest of buildings," wrote Mrs. Hilliard. (Mrs. Brown, an Old Resident, remembered that it was painted red, and that the classes were ungraded) (Appendix). Mrs. Hilliard's father bought the building in 1902 for \$42.00, using it as a garage. It is now the property of Mrs. Rose Gradowski, Main Road, Peconic, who has turned it into a storage building, but hopes it will be restored some day.

The name of the school, according to Mr. Jefferson, who had it from Mr. George Hallock, was "derived" from the sermon of the Reverend Ralph Smith, ninth pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, who had preached a sermon referring to the school as a Sodom (Notes). Wayland Jefferson gave the date as 1840, just before Dr. Smith left Southold — perhaps because of this very sermon. From that day, at any rate, the Locust Grove was known as the Sodom school, and it is so referred to today.

Walt was denounced one Sunday morning from the pulpit, according to Jefferson. Smith was then thirty-one, but he had

begun by practicing medicine and at that time had been preaching only four years; had he been longer in the ministry he might have been more discreet. As it was, this otherwise brilliant clergyman brought into the open matters which in those days were kept out of the public eye, and which must have offended the larger part of the congregation. Indeed, perhaps this combined with an earlier parish smuggling scandal (in which Smith seems also to have been the Nemesis) to exhaust his popularity, for he left Southold for Connecticut in December of the very winter of The Trouble, as it is called.

It is interesting to speculate upon the relationship between the poet and the preacher. They must have been old acquaintances, since Ralph Smith came from Smithtown, where Walt often put up during his peregrinations on Long Island. In fact, he had taught under the commissionership of Ralph's brother, Samuel Arden Smith, in 1837. (Monograph 3). Could Smith's "savage indignation" have begun then? Miss Faith Smith, Ralph's grand-niece, recently asserted, "No one in our family had any use for Walt Whitman!" But she was unable to tell why.

The brutal aftermath of his denunciation the dedicated young preacher could not have foreseen, but Walt's actions evidently caused Smith to feel that he had to do something. Indeed, Walt's conduct during these early "dateless" years,¹¹ though discerned through a glass darkly, is reported by his biographers with impressive unanimity.¹² John Burroughs wrote mysteriously: "Through this period — from 1837 to 1848¹³ — without entering into particulars, it is enough to say that he sounded all experiences of life, with their passions, pleasures and abandonments . . ."¹⁴ I find it relevant to this story, also, that Walt managed to obtain teaching positions very often during this decade;¹⁵ Jefferson implies that the custom of "boarding 'round" and sharing the bedrooms of his pupils suited Whitman. (Appendix). Allen indicates the same "reasons for suspicion and misunderstanding":

11. Perry, p. 39.

12. Perry, pp. 34, 131; Edgar Lee Masters, *WHITMAN*. (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), pp. 35, 38; Newton Arvin, *WHITMAN*. (New York, Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 21.

13. "1848" is very important. See *HERITAGE* pages (Appendix).

14. John Burroughs, *NOTES ON WALT WHITMAN AS POET AND PERSON*. (New York, American News Co., 1867), p. 81.

15. Gay Wilson Allen, *THE SOLITARY SINGER, A Critical Biography*. (New York, Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 27. Note that each year had three school "terms" then.

*During the Civil War Whitman once confessed to a friend that 'the grown up son of the farmer with whom he was boarding while he was teaching school became very fond of him, and Walt of the boy, and he said the father quite reproved him for making such a pet of the boy.'*¹⁶

But to return to Southold. As Jefferson pieced the story together from accounts handed down through the sons and grandsons of the congregation, some members were so outraged "because of his behavior to the children, and his goings on" (Notes), that they formed a "mob", stopped at Kettle Hill where hot tar was always available for mending fishermen's seines, and started for the home¹⁷ of Giles Wells, whose son was later declared by Judge Jesse Case to have been "one of WW's victims" (Caption, photo-WJ). (Case also told Jefferson that Whitman had been dismissed from **The Republican Watchman** at nearby Greenport because he had written an anti-slavery editorial).

Whitman was in the house¹⁸ when he became aware of the mob. He fled to the "homestead" of Dr. Ira Corwin and burst in upon the housekeeper, Selina Danes, "the orphan's friend" (Appendix), who hid him in the attic. The men found him under the trestle upon which were piled the "straw ticks" (summer mattresses). They plastered his hair and clothing with the tar, and, said Jefferson in 1939 and an ex-official of the town in 1966, actually rode him on a rail. "Aunt Lina" rescued him, labored to remove the tar and feathers, and nursed him back to health. Dr. Corwin¹⁹ allowed her to keep Whitman there for a month, a period which predicates bodily injury, although he may have suffered mostly from shock.

16. Ibid., p. 37.

17. In 1942, the site of Arthur Vall's house.

18. To the end of his life, even when he was old and sick, Whitman kept his door locked at night. Traubel, I:280.

19. In 1843 Corwin was school district clerk (Jan. 2 entry, Records of Locust Grove School). Note the school is still called Locust Grove -- Hummel's 1848 date may be correct. In 1853 Corwin was elected Supervisor.

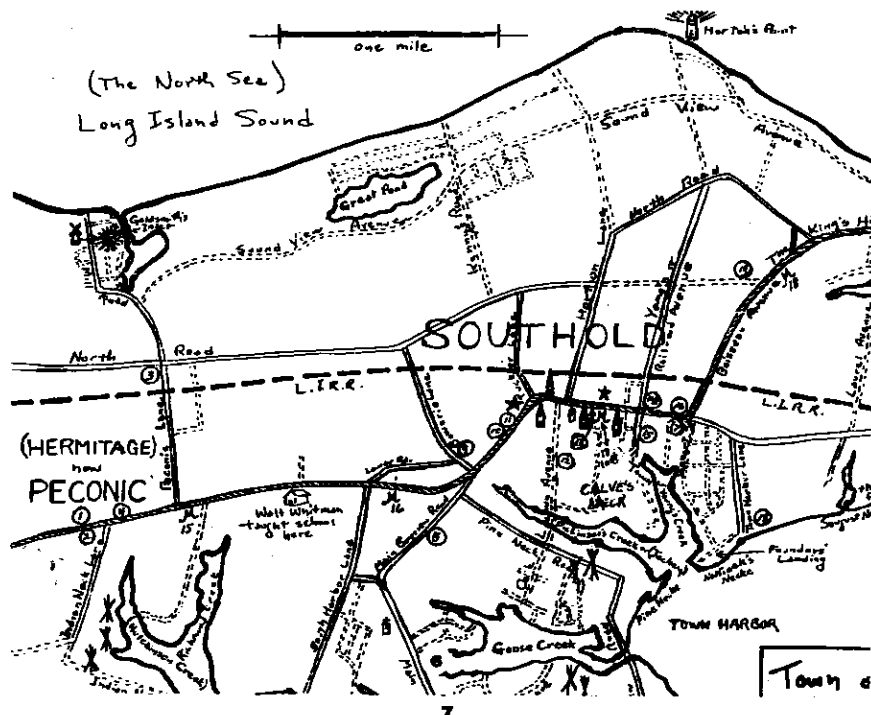
Walt Whitman at Southold

In addition to the Jefferson letters in the Appendix, we have the following reasons for believing that Whitman taught at Southold: (Appendix, pp. 14-51).

- Item: Russell Davison, town clerk, wrote: "Aside from recalling that Walt taught here, and that he left this town under a cloud, I am not familiar with the case."
- Item: Mrs. Aldo Brown (Lucy Corwin Goldsmith) wrote: "in the home I never heard the name of Walt Whitman mentioned, but have heard around he once did teach here."
- Item: Mr. J.N. Hallock, Southold banker, wrote in two letters to Jesse Merritt, Nassau County Historian, that although there was no documentation, he had heard that Walt Whitman had taught at the Locust Grove School "just west of Southold."
- Item: A letter from Mrs. Frank Smith stated: "It is only comparatively recently that we learned that at some time he (Whitman) taught in the little Locust Grove School which was located between Southold and Peconic. The daughter of the man who was then²⁰ school trustee passed away last year. I spoke to her once about the Walt Whitman episode, but she knew little or nothing about it." (This is one of several indications that people at Southold were still discussing the story nearly one hundred years after it happened. Mrs. Smith had discussed it before I wrote her.)
- Item: George F. Hummel, Southold novelist, wrote in **HERITAGE** about Whitman's having told Hummel's father that he had taught for a term in Southold.²¹ Hummel also wrote that Whitman had gotten into trouble there, a fact which was mentioned by two other characters in the book. He repeated it in **TRADITION**, pp. 253-4.
- Item: In this connection it should be noted that about fifty

20. When Whitman was teaching at Southold.

21. Hummel disguised the name of the town. According to Mrs. Margery Dickinson Burns, Mr. Clement Booth and Mrs. Carroll Newell, Hummel called Southold "Norwold" in the book. (Appendix and Notes). Also Long Island Traveller, April, 1935; N. Y. World-Telegram, April 17, 1935; New Yorker, April 20, 1935; N. Y. Herald-Tribune, April 20, 1935; East Hampton Star, May 2, 1935.



Whitman Schoolhouse in center. Number 7 on the map, the Abijah Corey (Dickinson) house on Cedar Lane, was where Whitman lived while at Southold, according to Mrs. Mildred Dickinson, who owns it.

The map in section 2 of *Summer of History*, published by the Town of Southold in 1965.

years after Whitman had left Southold, in 1900, the Library Board met in stormy session to determine whether his books should be allowed on the library shelves. (Notes.)

- Item: Wayland Jefferson stated that he had seen an article in **THE REPUBLICAN WATCHMAN**, shortly after Whitman's death, which mentioned his work on the paper, and his having taught locally (Not found-KM).
- Item: Miss Elizabeth Elmer, in a paper written in 1946, stated: "One of the stories is that the Rev. Ralph Smith denounced Walt Whitman as a Sodomite and thus the name Sodom was attached to the school and locality."
- Item: Mrs. Lizzie Horton, a local resident, wrote that although there was no proof, the report of Whitman's teaching "passed from one generation to another."
- Item: Mrs. Alice B. Wells, Southold Librarian, wrote that "a gentleman who knew (Hummel) well" said that "as a young man he was told that Whitman did teach here and was asked to leave town." (The gentleman was Mr. Clement Booth, who repeated this statement later in an interview).
- Item: Mr. Russell L. Davison, my first correspondent in 1939 (Appendix p. 1), wrote again in 1966: "The school in which W.W. taught earned the unlovely appellation of the 'Sodom' School. . ."
- Item: Mrs. Carroll D. Newell wrote that Hummel "called Southold 'Norwold' for Camouflage." Hummel had written that Whitman had taught and gotten into trouble at Norwold.
- Item: Mrs. Stanton Mott, historian of the First Presbyterian Church, stated that "Whitman definitely taught here." She quoted Mrs. Currie Bell (Notes).
- Item: George Howell, of Southold, stated that the "derivation" of the name "Sodom" was that the Rev. Ralph Smith preached a sermon referring to the school as "a Sodom" (Notes).
- Item: Mrs. Margery Dickinson Burns, Mr. Clement Booth, and Mr. Gottlieb Nickles, in interviews, said they had always heard that WW had taught at Southold. Mrs. A. Nelson Chapman, Southold historian, said the same on the telephone (1966).

It should not seem very strange — certainly psychiatrists

might not find it so — that Whitman could go through so devastating an experience without ever writing about it afterward. The reader will hunt long before he finds in Walt's prose or poetry references to the aberrations of his father or his sister Hannah (Monograph 2), to the retardation of his brother Eddy, or to the insanity of his brother Jesse, although Walt himself had signed his brother into an institution for the insane in Brooklyn. However, there is some possible trace of the Southold incident in Whitman's conversations and writings:

The grasp of a minister's hand produces a choking sensation, and the pulpit is often intercepted from my point of view by a ghastly gallows frame.²²

But as regards the Church and the preachers of his day, Whitman's attitude was that of Voltaire . . . It was the inherited antipathy of his Long Island boyhood, maintained throughout his life. In his youthful notebooks he remarks that "the Bible is now exhausted," and speaks of the castrated goodness of schools and churches. As an old man he was still irritated by "parsons and the police;" he slammed his windows tight on Sunday to keep out the sound of the bells and the choir of a neighboring church. "I always mistrust a deacon; his standard is low . . . the whole ideal of the church is low, loathesome, horrible."²³

. . . She asked me: "Why are you so bitter against religion, Mr. Whitman?" And [when] I answered, "I am not talking about religion — I am talking about the church . . ."²⁴

Whitman once said, "Did you ever think for a moment how so many young men, full of the stuff to make the noblest heroes of the earth, really live — really pass their lives, year after year and so till death? . . . unaware of any amusements except these preposterous theatres, and of a Sunday . . . those equally, preposterous and painful screamings from the pulpits."²⁵

22. Emory Holloway, *UNCOLLECTED POETRY AND PROSE*. (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921) Vol. I, p. 103. (*Democratic Review* Nov. 1845, XVII: 360-4).

23. Perry, p. 266.

24. Traubel, Vol. II, p. 184.

25. Masters, p. 273.

Whitman's use of "castrated", "loathesome", "horrible", "painful screamings," "bitter", etc., indicates a possibly violent contact of the poet with the church at some time in his youth. There seems to be no other explanation so plausible.

The Reverend Ralph Smith

The man who named the Sodom School was a brilliant, odd and interesting personality. Doctor, minister, then doctor again, this enigmatic preacher was almost as restless as Whitman, living and preaching in a dozen towns that we know of, and probably in many more. He was called the Fiddling Parson because he loved to play the violin,²⁶ according to Miss Faith Smith, his grand-niece, who relates that part of her family thought him most unorthodox for such "traits." They also disapproved of his preaching wherever he thought he might do good: he would hold services even in bar-rooms.

Born at Smithtown, Long Island, on November 11, 1811, to Epenetus and Rhoda Smith, Ralph was a member of a well-to-do and solidly entrenched family. He had six brothers and sisters, one of whom was to become Whitman's school commissioner in 1837. He was prepared for college at Clinton Academy, East Hampton, and was graduated from Williams College in 1830. Three years later he obtained an M.D. degree from Yale University, but practiced for only one year. He became interested in the ministry — perhaps in May, 1833, when he was baptized at Babylon, L.I. — and studied at the Presbyterian Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey, for two years. In November, 1835, he was licensed to preach by the Second Presbytery of Long Island, at Setauket, New York. A year later he was assigned to Southold, where he served as pastor of the old Southold Presbyterian Church²⁷ until 1838, and as Stated Supply (interim substitute) until December of 1840 (Notes).

From Southold Smith went to Litchfield (Milton), Connecticut, where he remained during 1841-2. In 1844 he moved to Curtisville (now Interlaken), Massachusetts; in 1846 to Lee, Massachusetts; in September, 1851 to Cornwall, Connecticut;²⁸ in 1854 to Trumbull (Center) Connecticut, where he stayed un-

26. Jefferson said that a melodeon he used to play was to be seen at the Southold Library, but it is no longer there.

27. The church was rebuilt three times; the present church dates from 1803.

28. Gould's History of Cornwall states he left Cornwall May 3, 1855; Starr's, May 6th.

til December, 1855; in April, 1856 to Wolcottville,²⁹ Connecticut, where he remained until September, 1857; in May, 1860 to New Canaan, Connecticut, where he remained until April, 1864, and some time between then and three years later, to Saugerties, New York, where he died on November 2, 1867, "near the Blue Mountain Church." He was then fifty-six years old. His body was returned to Smithtown for burial in the old cemetery "right back of" Faith Smith's own plot.³⁰

On September 9, 1833 — soon after obtaining his medical degree — Smith married and moved to Patchogue, L.I., to practice medicine. His wife was Cornelia Pelletreau of Southampton. They had six children.³¹ (Perhaps one of them kept the book of sermons written by their father? Or perhaps, as one town did, other communities had his sermons printed?)

During the years he was changing his residence so frequently Smith also changed from Presbyterian to Congregationalist: at Litchfield and Lee he was minister of the Congregational Church. For an interesting comment on the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in Connecticut and Long Island see the *Long Island Forum*, May 1966: Mr. Jere C. Austin's "The Strict Congregationalists." According to the records at Lee, Smith later "changed from preacher to physician", but no one knows when (Appendix).

In the towns where Smith stopped, however, he left vivid memories: one parishioner recalls that he drank quantities of black coffee and worked far into the night; another, that he left the composing of his sermons to the last moment; still another, that his manner in the pulpit was "without gesture of any kind. . . he stood like a graven image." One hearer thought him "a man of decided genius as a writer and preacher," whose sermons were "racy and original," although he had, "with the gifts of genius. . . some of its eccentricities, which may have interfered with his highest influence and success as a minister."

For the reader curious about this strange man, I have included in the Appendix some biographical material, two of his letters to his family, a page from an unfinished sermon, and material obtained from librarians and church historians.

Some day I hope to receive copies of other letters and sermons, including the one he delivered at Southold, from these and kindred sources.

29. Now Center Church, Torrington, Conn.

30. He moved back to Babylon before he died (Appendix).

31. See page 37.

Appendix

Walt Whitman's Teaching at Southold

Southold Town Clerk's Office

Russell L. Davison, Clerk

August 21, 1939

Answering your inquiry concerning Walt Whitman and his experiences in this town, I would refer you to our Town Historian, Mr. Wayland Jefferson.

Aside from recalling that Walt taught here, and that he left this town under a cloud, I am not familiar with the case.

I think that, if you will address your questions to Mr. Jefferson at Bay View, Southold, he will be able to give you whatever information you need in the matter.

(Signed) R.L. Davison

Wayland Jefferson
Southold Town Historian
Southold, New York

THE OLD HOUSE
Cutchogue N.Y.

February 1, 1941

Mrs. Katherine Molinoff
(Hunter College)
695 Park Avenue,
New York City

Dear Madam:—

This letter is written to correct a correction I made during our telephone conversation this afternoon. I did find in the files of the old *Republican Watchman* an account of WW's employment on that paper and a full account of his connection with that paper. I cannot set the exact date but I think it is a fair guess that this article probably was printed at the time of WW's death. These files I think are available at the Long Island Historical Society in Brooklyn. By wracking my memory I do recall now that I read this article while I was in school under Orrin F. Payne, who first told the story of the tar and feathering of WW. If you locate this item you will find that it confirms WW's connection with the *Watchman* and his teaching school locally. But there was nothing concerning the attendant scandal. Do not let the fact that I was eight years old at the time be a stumbling block. When I began school at

five I was popped into the third reader class and by the time I was eight I was half way through Dickens and Thackeray. Almost anyone hereabouts will testify to my precocity.

Here is a list of the students who attended Sodom during 1840-41.

Children of Giles and Jane Wells:

J. Sidney
George C.
William G.
Benjamin D. F.

Children of Frederick and Catherine Williams:
Frederick Williams, Jr.

Children of Albert and Mehetable Goldsmith:
Salem D.
Ezra L.

Children of Elias and Sarah Richmond:
William W.
Jame J. (sic)

Children of George and Hannah Phillips:
George Wells
Dyer Smith
Charles B.

The above listed are according to their ages children who lived in the district at the time WW taught. I am of the opinion that if you come to Southold and call upon Frank T. Wells, he will confirm the fact that his father the late George C. Wells was a pupil of WW at the old Sodom school. Beyond that I doubt if he would go and there is of course the possibility that he would not go this far but that is the gamble you would have to take. As far as I can determine there are no representatives of the second generation dating from 1840 left. Wells has second cousins descended from his great uncle, J. Sidney Wells, but I feel sure that they know nothing of the matter.

Now I would like to touch on a matter of confirmation in regard to this affair which I have recalled after trying to think of any possible person living who might be able to give you a missing link or two. If it would be of any value I am prepared to put this in the form of an affidavit, but frankly would rather not.

Some thirty five years ago I had a conversation with the late William H. Glover of Southold. During our talk he referred to Selina Daines "The Orphan's Friend" as the woman who had brought up his uncle, William L. Glover and he described her as the soul and essence of Christian charity and cited the fact that she had rescued a man from the hands of a mob and had with her own hand cleaned the tar and

feathers from his clothing and body and bound up his wounds and kept him at Dr. Corwin's until he had recovered and was able to leave town. He did not set a date as to the happening, but said it was before his Uncle went to live with Selina and Dr. Corwin. William L. Glover was born in the year 1839 and went to live with S & Dr. when he was five. Giving us approximately 1840-44.

So much for that. This is small town stuff. Glover and his partner Henry Cleveland were proprietors of a blacksmith shop on the main street of Southold. While waiting for a horse to be shod* George C. Wells, who was a caterer of sorts left a carving knife to be re-handled. It was evident that Cleveland and Wells were not on good terms and when Wells left the shop Cleveland's parting gibe was a reference to Daniel H. and the trouble he and Wells had had with H.'s father. Wells retorted that that was better than taking up with the leavings of J.A.**

I did not know what it was all about, but at the first chance I asked Glover and he told me with a smirk that Wells had never forgotten the lessons he had learned at school and that his attempt at improper relations with young H. were a direct result of what he had learned at Sodom. The A. matter does not concern us, but each reference was to the sore spot in the lives of each. The point to be made is that Wells made no attempt to deny . . . [The story].***

The nature of WW's relations with his pupils is open to speculation. But I have a definite recollection that the late George M. Howell told me that suspicion was turned toward him by the fact that at the various houses at which he staid the bedding was found to be bloody and that, houses being small, it was customary for him to sleep with the boys of the family in the open attic. That being the bedchamber of the youths at this period.

It was from Orrin F. Payne that I heard the story of the gathering of the mob and of WW's flight through the night to a haven at Dr. Corwin's . . . (I would insert a note here to the effect that Payne's account is false in one respect. He said that he went to school to WW. This I know is false as he was not born at the time. I think the truth is that for the sake of a little vicarious glory he substituted his name for that of his father, Hubbard C. Payne, who was born in the district and was of the proper age to have attended Sodom under WW.) This sort of a thing is a commonplace around here and at all times I have found it necessary to check ages to make sure that eyewitnesses are really what they say they are.

I have sent along with this letter a tracing of the map showing the bounds of the Sodom district and on the first sheet there is a list of

* That is, Wayland Jefferson was waiting, and witnessed the encounter.

** Name left out, as not being pertinent to this report.

*** Rest of sentence left out, as not being germane to this report -KM

students. Strange as it may seem there is hardly a descendant left of all the people whose names appear on this map. And Frank T. Wells is the closest that we can come to Walt Whitman and his stay in Southold. I have rehashed a great deal of what I have told you from time to time, in order to make this letter intelligible to myself.

I have a feeling that with the proper amount of flattery you may at least get a confirmation of George C. Wells as a student under WW at Sodom. I would suggest that you contact Russell Davison and get a note of introduction to Wells and see what can be done.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Wayland Jefferson

WAYLAND JEFFERSON
Southold, L.I., N.Y.

Official Historian
Town of Southold
Suffolk County
New York, U.S.A.

Feb. 26, 1942

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:—

Since the receipt of your two batches of snap shots I have done considerable research covering the period when W.W. taught at Sodom. The second picture of the school house indicates that the building stood at the foot of Mill Hill not far from the site of the Tar Kettle. I have taken the picture to the oldest resident hereabout and at 86 she seems to recall such a building at the site mentioned, but not used as a school house during her time (This was Miss Mattie A. Wells —K.M.).

Now I am trying to find the exact date of the erection of the building which was pointed out to me as the old Whitman school. The plot has been acquired recently for a public park and I have been promised a copy of the title search which would tell the exact date of the creation of this district.

Another matter I am looking into is the purchase of the Salter Horton house (the old Post Office) by Hiram Terry, who removed the building on the ground that it was an eyesore. It has occurred to me that we may be barking up the wrong tree in one particular— Walt may have taught in a private school supported by the neighborhood since there was considerable resentment over the passing of the general education act and the country people were slow in obeying the provisions of the act and

these small schools continued for some time after the erection of district bounds.

In regard to the missing church records you may be able to get some help from Mr. Case at Smithtown. There was a healthy period of rowing at the time and in all probability appeals were made to the Long Island Presbytery and possibly to the Synod. Mr. Case will be able to tell you where these records are kept. I think however that most of the trouble during Ralph Smith's time rose from charges of smuggling, which involved some of the officials of the church. . . This state of affairs was right up Smith's alley and he did not hesitate to pillory the chief members of his church.

In regard to Horton I have not been able to place him but when I do I may be able to solve the mystery of the missing church records. I am going through the Salmon Records (all the deaths in Southold for that period) looking in particular for the death of a young boy who was the victim of a pervert. Without any particular reason I have a feeling that Whitman's stay in Southold must have been marked by some particularly atrocious act otherwise the prejudice against him would not have been as long lived as it has been.

I have typed the names of the different houses and scenes as requested.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Wayland Jefferson

Southold, Oct. 27, 1939

My dear Miss Molinoff

Received your letter yesterday. Finally you reach Ezra L. Goldsmith's only child A person 77 years of age.

He was born in 1817 and lived all his life next Sodom School. Since our district joined the Village district and have a large school and our little red school has gone for years. . . .

. . . in the home I never heard the name of Walt Whitman mentioned, but have around heard he once did teach here. (sic). . .

Sincerely yours

(Signed) Lucy C. Brown
(Lucy Corwin Goldsmith
m. Aldo Brown)

November 23, 1940

Mr. Jesse Merritt

Dear Mr. Merritt,

In reply to yours, will say that it is said that Walt Whitman taught

the Locust Grove District School, just west of Southold. I do not know whether there is any documentary proof of this. The painting you speak of* cannot be that of the Locust Grove School, for it was not near the water. It was on the Main Road running through the village. The school house has been moved off its former location, and is now used by a neighboring Polish farmer for a storehouse. The school district has been consolidated with the Southold District. The school house was a small, one-room house, and only one teacher was employed to teach all subjects.

Yours truly,

(Signed) J.N. Hallock

[Original on Southold Savings Bank Stationery]

November 27, 1940

Dear Mr. Merritt,

I have considerable doubt as to whether Walt Whitman ever taught at Locust Grove and I know of no documentary proof of it, but I have heard that he did teach there.

Yours truly,

(Signed) J.N. Hallock

[Original on Southold Savings Bank Stationery]

Peconic, L.I.
Jan. 19, 1942

My dear Mrs. Molinoff,

Your letter of 16th inst. is before me. I am answering it for my husband. I regret that we have no information to give you regarding Walt Whitman and his life in Southold. It is only comparatively recently that we learned that at some time he taught in the little Locust Grove school house which was located between Southold and Peconic. The daughter of the man who was then school trustee passed away last year. I spoke to her once about the Walt Whitman episode, but she knew little or nothing about it. Of course it occurred many years before she was born.

I trust that Wayland Jefferson can give you some points.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Minnie T. Smith

(Mrs. Frank D. Smith)

* See Long Island Forum, "a Whitman Schoolhouse Puzzle," 1967, and pp. 22, 32.

HERITAGE

By George F. Hummel, Ph.D. (Frederick A. Stokes Co., N.Y., 1935).

P. 224

Date — "During the second summer of the [Civil] war" . . .

P. 230-1

Re. a military hospital in Washington, D.C. Letter from Gottlob Weller, of Norwold (actually Gottlieb Frank Hummel)

"...He was enclosing a piece of poetry which one of the nurses had given him. (Barbara) should read this poetry aloud to the twins, that is, if she could make it out. It was something they would both enjoy, especially Georgie. Tell Georgie the man said it was about two mockingbirds.

This nurse was a wonderful fellow. He never slept. He had a beard as big as Papa Kramer's and a laugh you could hear the whole length of the hospital, which must be half a mile long. He called himself a poet. He was in the real estate business in Brooklyn and claimed he had taught school one winter ten or twelve years ago right there in Norwold. He said he had an uncle living down in Hog Neck...He was a comical fellow. He would say this poetry as long as you'd listen to him. It had no head or tail to it, but sounded beautiful...Tell Georgie the man said Paumonok used to be the old Indian name for Long Island. Gottlob could not understand how a man who had taught school should write so horrible...

Enclosed in Gottlob's letter was a sheet of brown paper smeared on both sides with a crazy scrawl, of which Barbara could make out about half the words and no sense at all. It began:

Once Paumonok,

When the snows had melted —

and ended:

Listen to keep, to sing — following you, my brother.

And probably that must be the man's name sprawled across the corner. Walt Whitman...Maybe Papa Kramer would be able to make something out of it. He probably knew the fellow's uncle....

P. 252

...That reminded her of the piece of poetry Gottlob had sent to the twins.

She asked Grampa Kramer if he had ever heard of this Walt Whitman. Papa Kramer had heard about him. His uncle lived in a little shack down the road and had a copy of the fellow's poetry which he called "Leaves of Grass." His uncle said he was a kind of loafer. He had been in some kind of trouble there in Norwold. Just about the time Papa Kramer had come there . . . (P. 73 places this as the year of the

Revolution in Germany, 1848, and the discovery of gold in California, 1848, p. 72). On p. 80, June, Papa Kramer is in New York: July finds him in Norwold.

P. 256-7

One day when the twins came Grampa Kramer was reading a book called "Leaves of Grass" which a neighbor had brought to him to read. He said to Henry:

"Tell your mother to bring me that piece of poetry your father sent her to read to you. Do you know what I mean?"

"No," said Henry

"This man is a great poet!" boomed Grampa Kramer. "I want to know that man! This man is a voice crying in the wilderness!"...

When Henry gave his mother Grandpa Kramer's message Mrs. Conklin happened to be there.... When Mrs. Conklin heard the name, Walt Whitman, she cried out:

"You mean that schoolteacher? Your grandfather reads you that man's stuff? That unspeakable vagabond!" and turned to Barbara. "If I were you I wouldn't dream of letting my boys hear anything that loafer ever wrote. How does he dare show his face among people?"....

When, later, George asked Barbara why Mrs. Conklin thought they shouldn't hear Walt Whitman's poetry she said: "Well, it's a little over your heads yet. When you get a little older you'll understand such things better."

"What things?"

"I don't know, myself," said Barbara....

P. 510-511

Finally even Gottlob tried to read the book (written by one of the twins, George).... The first essay was about this Walt Whitman whom everybody in Norwold was glad to forget. ... George claimed that his priceless inheritance from his grandfather was the marked copy of "Leaves of Grass."

But Barbara insisted that Papa Kramer never owned the book and certainly never gave it to George. He had only borrowed it from that dirty old hermit, Charlie Whitman, who lived at the time in that tumble-down shack a little way down the road and who, as everybody knew, could neither read nor write his own name.

TRADITION

(New York, Coward McCann, 1936)

P. 253-4

... Gottlob Weller [Hummel] had bought this place from her father [John

Beebe] and had remodeled it into a home for his father-in-law, Papa Kramer [Karl Krause] ... when Herr Kramer lived in this house the great Jonathon Edwards had ... daily ... walked over from his mansion, which had stood exactly where Henry Weller's "Hawk's Nest" now stood ... a little way down the road toward the present South Downs Club,* just beyond the brow of the hill, still stood the house** in which the poet Walt Whitman had once lived. He had taught school in Norwold ...

*The Reydon Club

**The Dickinson house on Cedar Lane

SOUTHOLD FREE LIBRARY

Southold, Long Island, N.Y.

Mrs. Alice B. Wells

Librarian

June 18, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff,

In our local history collection I looked up a series of articles that were written several years ago about district schools in Southold*** Miss Elizabeth Elmer **** wrote about the "Locust Grove School" ... I will give a quote from that article, for what it is worth. . .

Sincerely,

(Signed) Alice B. Wells

Librarian.

***The paper was prepared for the Local History Collection of the Whitaker History Associates, c. 1946

****Now 84, living in Florida. According to a niece, all her records and papers have been disposed of.

Locust Grove School

by Elizabeth Elmer

The date of erection is not definitely known. It was a small, shed-like building as portrayed in the painting by William Sidney Mount* called "Walt Whitman's School," which is in the Brooklyn Museum. This seems to establish proof that Whitman was a teacher there for one or two terms. One of the stories is that the Rev. Ralph Smith denounced Walt Whitman as a Sodomite and thus the name Sodom was attached to the school and locality. . .

Sometime before 1843 the building was moved and set upon a better site. . .

*See pp. 19, 32

EAST HAMPTON FREE LIBRARY
159 Main Street
East Hampton, N.Y.

June 18, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

I am afraid I cannot help you much on the question of Whitman's ever having been a schoolmaster in Southold. We do have a very few old Southold school records, but they are not the right period, and if they were, would not include the teacher's name.

I did run across a statement in an article on Whitman by the late Jesse Merritt, in the Long Island Historical Society Quarterly for April, 1941, entitled "Walt Whitman and Long Island History." He says "The letters he wrote called 'East Long Island Correspondence' for the Eagle in 1847, about a railroad trip made to Greenport, give a fine account of some of the villages en route.... He stated that he had never been in Riverhead before, which seems to question the story that he ever taught in Southold, for in one of the letters he wrote from Southold, he gave no information that would reveal a previous acquaintance with this section. In fact, writing from Greenport, he did not mention his sister Mary Elizabeth, who, we know, resided there at a later period."

I am sending you a photocopy of some information about the Rev. Ralph Smith, from Pelletreau's History of the Town of Southold in "The History of Suffolk County . . . N.Y., Munsell, 1882." [Quoted elsewhere]

I also enclose a photocopy of an obituary of Judge Jesse L. Case which I found in our files.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Amy O. Bassford
Librarian, L.I. Collection

[This would seem to corroborate the 1848 date given by Hummel. KM.]

July, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff,

I had sent this letter on to a Mrs. Lizzie Horton... and I tho't might be able to answer some questions. She added little remarks, but nothing too definite...

Town Clerk's Office

(Signed) Marian Regent

[Comment of Mrs. Horton: Written at bottom of my letter to Town Clerk, Cutchogue, L.I. KM.]

"Whitman's teaching passed from one generation to another vocally — no written proof.

"Sodom School got the name from church people, as property adjoined was purchased for a cemetery.

"The Southold Library has the Case Diary?

"The Hortons are related to the Cases. Lizzie Horton, wife of Stewart Horton, [is one]."

SOUTHOLD FREE LIBRARY
Southold, Long Island, N.Y.
Mrs. Alice B. Wells, Librarian

July 23, 1966

...The date of the present building of the Southold Presbyterian Church is 1803.

In our Whitaker Memorial Historical Collection I found the record of the clerk and minutes of Locust Grove School 1843-1900. A quick glance did not unearth anything. . .

George A. Hummel did live in Southold for approximately 25 years. I talked to a gentleman who knew him well.* . .The same gentleman said that as a young man he was told that Whitman did teach here and was asked to leave town. Everything, however, is "hear say."

Sincerely,

(Signed) Alice B. Wells

*Mr. Clement Booth, of the L.I. Traveler, whom I interviewed July 27, 1966. He repeated the above, and said that he had often talked with Hummel, who was writing about Southold in Heritage, but called it "Norwold." (Notes. Part II)

RUSSELL L. DAVISON
Beckwith Avenue, Southold, N. Y.

August 15, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

This is in answer to your note of the 10th.

First of all, I want to correct some misinformation I gave you over the phone. The school in which W.W. taught earned the unlovely appellation of the "Sodom" School. I had thought it was located on a little triangle on the Bay View Road. I have learned that its location was on the little triangle of roads formed where the Main Road, Route 25, and

the so-called Lower Road meet just west of Southold Village. The building was moved at a later date by one Charles Corey,* who was at that time an agent for Wannamaker's. He moved it to his then location between Southold and Peconic and converted it to a storehouse for his business. I believe the building may still be extant.

There seems to be a bit of confusion over the lives of Jesse G. Case and Jesse Lewis Case. Jesse G. was a brother of my wife's Grandfather. Mrs. Davison does not have any distinct memories of Jesse G. . . .

Jesse L. was a scholar, a graduate of Yale and Yale Law School. I do not know all of his jobs in the town, but he was a long time Justice and a man much respected in the community.

Much of my knowledge, of course, has to be hearsay. I am a New Englander and I did not come here to live until 1924. There are still a number of venerable folks in the village who, I am sure, could give you far more and fuller information than I have.

Now, one further note. I came to be acquainted with Wayland Jefferson when I was Town Clerk in the late '30s. We had a fine committee preparing for the 300th anniversary of the founding of the town. Mr. Jefferson was a very brilliant person. He had a tremendous fund of early facts about Southold Town. He also had the alarming ability to get facts where none existed.

I remember the nice Latin adage which urges us to speak no ill of those who are gone, and I aim to obey the injunction. However, as I told you in previous conversations, all that I know of the early history is hearsay. . . . So anything that you have heard from me that happened prior to my coming here in 1924 is always purely hearsay.

I should have mentioned in my comment on Jesse G. and Jesse Lewis, that the latter was born in 1855, long after the Whitman episode. Jesse Lewis died in 1923.

I know you have been in correspondence with Mrs. Rose Newell. She has a lot of the family records of this branch of the Case family and can give you a far better picture of the family in this section than I am able to do.

Cordially,

(Signed) Russell L. Davison

*See pp. 30, 31.

Russell L. Davison
Beckwith Avenue, Southold, N. Y.

August 31, 1966

In answer to your question concerning Ebenezer W. Case, I have to admit total ignorance. If he was a member of our particular branch of the Case family, your best chance of getting information concerning him is Mrs. Rosaline Newell. She has family Bibles and as much of the actual records as are available.

My criticism of Wayland Jefferson was a bit of true Scottish caution . . .

I should tell you that after the departure of Whitman, the school where he taught was called the "Sodom" School, and was known by that name until it was moved from its original location to a spot between Southold and Peconic.

Of course there is no doubt that Whitman taught here. There are people still alive who can recount what their parents told them. There are old people who can remember the Sodom School and can even point out the spot to which it was moved.

My word of caution was merely to prevent you from including anything that might be controversial.

Cordially,
(Signed) Russell L. Davison

Mrs. Carroll D. Newell
Bayberry Road
Cutchogue, Long Island, N.Y. 11935

My dear Mrs. Molinoff,

In reply to your letter I believe that Wayland did get mixed up and made his own decisions occasionally. I have two old family bibles, the first dating back in the 1700's, so consider their marriage, birth and death records authentic.

My grandfather, Lewis R. Case, was born October 10th, 1820. His brother, Jesse Gordon Case, was born October 22, 1837. His son, Jesse Lewis Case, was born April 4th, 1855.* This uncle of mine, Jesse Lewis, was a lawyer in Southold and called "Judge" Case because he was Justice of the Peace. His daughter still lives in Southold and I have talked to her about your inquiries. She is Mrs. Russell Davison. Neither of us has any recollection or record of talk about Walt Whitman.

I knew George Fred Hummel, and his sister was a great friend of

*As son of Lewis R. Case, Jesse L. could have heard accounts of the Whitman episode to repeat to Jefferson.

my Aunt's. He called Southold "Norwold" in his books for Camouflage as they were so-called "Historical novels" and were not strictly authentic. He took what he knew of the history of Southold and made a story. He stirred up a terrific local fuss with his "Sub-Soil" as that was a collection of short stories founded on gossip and some of them quite unpleasant. But INTERESTING!

Sorry I can't be of more help.

Sincerely,
(Signed) Rosalind C. Newell

Southold, N.Y.
Aug. 5, 1966

Yesterday morning Mrs. Mott* called me to report on two items. First of all, when I had previously asked her about the use of the (exterior) picture of the church, she said that some might object, if it were linked with anything controversial. She raised the question before the Session. Members feel that they have no jurisdiction over the use of anything that is in the possession of another established organization. I think that there is, however, a hesitancy if the Church in any way would be open to criticism. . . .

At the same time Mrs. Mott said that she had read further in the church records. She found mention of the fact that a certain Elisha Horton, after repeated requests to appear and to answer, finally admitted tearing the pages from the church records. He was excommunicated. An accomplice, who was more cooperative in his replies, was not so severely punished. It is not definitely disclosed what the subject of the pages was,** but the writer states that it would not influence the church administration and that "it will live only in the memory" of those concerned. Somewhere*** in her reading she found a note referring to the "WW" affair, episode, or case or some such expression. Of course that does not prove anything since only initials were used. As I understand it this note was not in conjunction with the above mentioned excommunication.

...Hummel does mix things up for you. I wonder how accurate he was or had to be in writing fiction.

...I looked in the record book of the clerk of Locust Grove School. On two separate smaller sheets are the notes I made. . . .

(Signed) Alice Wells

*Mrs. Stanton Mott, Church Historian, and President of the Whitaker Historical Society.

**See Appendix, p. 41.

***Could not be corroborated. K.M.

Notes: Sheet 1:

Title page of SOUTHOLD TOWN booklet (See Page 5)

Notes: Sheet 2:

Record of Clerk, School District No. 15. Lydia M. Case, teacher, 1844-45-46-47. Amounts paid for various items in the above mentioned years are stated. When the year 1848 appears, the entries are as follows:

"1848 School District Dr. 1848 School District Cr.

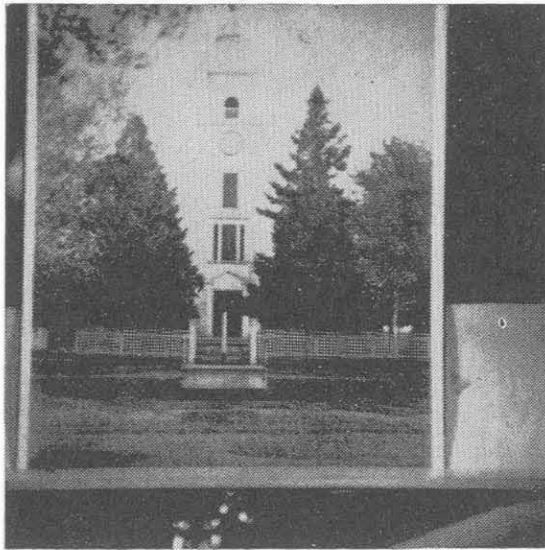
Cash on hand at the annual meeting 00.26"

Nothing else is indicated for that year!

1849 continues with entries similar to those given previously. It would seem that the teacher is Mary L. Hallock in 1849. Yet in summer of 1849 cash was paid to L.M. Case.

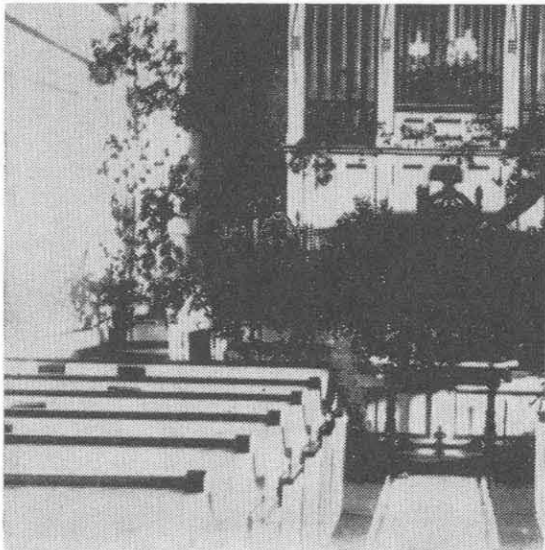
At the back of this same record book are the minutes of annual meetings. Nowhere is there the name of the teacher hired. Each year's entry gives the name of the trustee elected, name of clerk, collector and librarian in each instance. Never is there mention of the teacher!

(Perhaps it was a question of putting WW's books on school library shelves to which you found reference).



Exterior of the First Presbyterian Church, where Whitman was denounced.

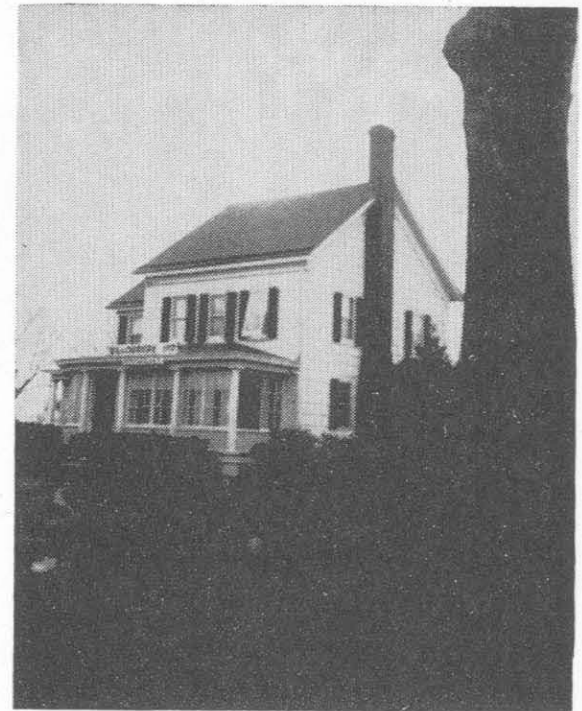
*Whitaker Memorial Historical Collection
Southold Free Library*



Interior. The Church was rebuilt twice. This building was erected in 1803.



Home of George C. Wells, named by Judge Jesse L. Case as one of Walt Whitman's victims. (W. J.) Whitman fled from this house to the one below.



Dr. Ira Corwin's Homestead

Appendix

Sodom School

Four Letters from Mrs. Elsie G. Hilliard
Librarian, Southold, New York

October 24 39

Dear Mrs. Molinoff,

I referred your inquiries regarding Walt Whitman's (career?) to the Town Historian, Wayland Jefferson.

Mrs. Lucy Goldsmith Brown*, a niece of Mr. Ezra Goldsmith is living —. But she is an invalid. She may be able to give some information.

My father purchased the old Sodom Schoolhouse, using it for a garage. It is still on the old farm. I had the pleasure of attending. A tiny one-room building, about Sixty attending when I did, and how one teacher ever accomplished the work I do not know. But I was able to do the nine grades.

I have no records and do not know where you can find them.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) Elsie C. Hilliard

*Mrs. Brown, q.v., writes she was Ezra's only child.

SOUTHOLD FREE LIBRARY
Elsie Hilliard, Librarian

October 28, 1939

I did attend the Sodom School, but not when Walt Whitman taught. My father was not born and who went before that I do not know and have never heard much about it.

I am sending a picture taken after I left. My brothers are in it (the head in line with the window). The group is small at this time the higher grades were sent to the Southold High School. Inside were two rows of seats — just boards. Three sitting in them. —flat benches for class recitals and in fact it was the crudest of buildings. Please return picture.

November 2, 1939

My father was Charles G. Corey* of course a descendant of the first John Corey. He purchased the old Sodom Schoolhouse in 1902 for which he paid \$42.00. I remember the thrills we had when we remarked that at last the school came to us after years of our going to it. I am sorry Wayland Jefferson can give you no more information. He is writing the pageant for the Celebration in 1940.

November 11, 1939

The picture was received. My family enjoy looking over the old pictures and have many a laugh at old groups.

I have been interested in the School history and have asked many questions during the past week and so far no one knows a thing about the teaching of Walt Whitman in Sodom School. All of my father's school friends have passed on. It was the other generation and no records are found. But I shall continue to ask.

*see p. 25

July 20, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

When we talked on the 'phone recently I truly believed that I would be able to help you with your local investigations for your Whitman paper. However...

In your case I at least have found some names of individuals who have some connection with Whitman and/or his "case."

Mrs. Vera Sage of Main Street, Greenport, (I'm not sure of her husband's name) was a Van Nostrand, her mother being a cousin (what degree?) to Walt Whitman.

In Nassau Point* there lives Mrs. Carroll Newell. I have been told that she is a niece of the late Jesse L. Case, judge at Southold. Whether or not she knows anything of the judge's papers I have no idea, but I am told she is a storehouse of local lore. Then a Mrs. Russell Davison of Beckwith Avenue, Southold**, is supposed to be the judge's daughter; yet it would seem a generation is missing here and with Mrs. Carroll. Wouldn't it be more likely "grand-niece" and granddaughter?"

The little "Sodom" school is standing in a backyard today, almost covered with vines. I have heard that the local parks commissioners hope to move it to a triangle of land nearby and restore it. The picture I am enclosing with this is one I made on a 3M machine from a copy

*Cutchogue.

**Wife of former town clerk of Southold. Appendix, p. 14.

loaned me by Mr. William Smith of Southold. He had had the copy made from a post card. His copy, by the way, is clearer than mine. I imagine Mr. Meredith, who made that, has a good negative. The classes or students shown in this are listed by Mr. Smith to the best of his ability. Although his own father attended this school he is not in this picture, probably this being taken later. Could this be about 1905-1910? If I had time I could find out by visiting one of these people, but I'm sure this won't help you at all. Your own snapshot is much better.

As far as finding out names of students in Whitman's era, I would inquire as suggested on your questionnaire. My old office has no such information. There are some records of all school districts about 1820 and names (but not which school) of teachers employed and their salaries, etc. Then at the end of that record book there is reference to "Book No. 2 Common Schools." Where such is to be found I cannot say. If you could, it might pay you to see the Whitaker Collection, Southold Free Library. Ask Mrs. Wells, Librarian, for the index to the Hunting scrapbooks, too. Under Whitman, Case and Wells you just might find something. However, local people are so interrelated and clannish (I am half one, and I know!) that any derogatory story, although maybe related orally often enough, would probably have been omitted or deleted from newspapers and such.

I think I know a descendant of the Wells you mention yet I hesitate to broach the subject to him in any way. I have to live here. As an outsider you have much more license. The house which was once that of George Wells is the lovely old Victorian mansion which was torn down only this past spring to make way for a new bank — GRRR.

Name Withheld.

Southold, L. I.

Apr. 3, 1958

My dear Mrs. Molinoff,

... I am acting as chairman of our Historical projects in Southold and Peconic — and felt that I could speak my own feeling to you about our problem.

... I do not know whether it was Mr. Jefferson who gave you the Whitman story or not. Doubtless those facts are correct to a certain degree. I always feel that there can be however, a decoration added to the truth which could possibly make the story luridly painful — even though painful enough!

I should hate to feel that Southold could cast a shadow across Whitman's reputation and people's affection for his poetry; for I, too, am very fond of much of his poetry.

The act of the church is of course pretty typical of the strict church

of that day everywhere — and ours condemned our various libraries from 1797 on for any novels carried by them, let alone Whitman's poetry after he had been here. (I did not know his was barred for 60 years, and feel that was distorted for you, according to my own memory).

Although we did have a sign up for the 1940 Tercentenary Celebration months, at the site of Whitman's teaching, and designated it as such, nothing came of it as far as publicity went — and I am quite sure that none of our townspeople nor I, myself, were aware of the actual Whitman experience. I would not wish however to place a sign in that spot other than naming the site that of the First Sodom School of the early 1800's. But our historical map would need, I feel, to make a single brief notation that it was one of the L. I. schools where Whitman taught. Otherwise, our people who know of his teaching here would immediately inquire why his name had not been honored, and our village honored as well!

My research Committee certainly would not broadcast the story and I surely would impress upon them that what we cannot prove in the way of lurid details of it could not be referred to — just from that viewpoint, if for none other.

I presume the painting you spoke of in the Grolier Club* is the one we think of as the William Sidney Mount painting of a school, placed beside our Jockey Creek, with a ship of some sort in the background. That would be the site of the 1st Sodom School, probably established as a school c. 1800 and where, in the years 1836-'39 we judge was the period of Whitman's teaching. In 1843 a second school was built (the 1st one believed to be destroyed or moved, long ago, somewhere) and on a site quite a bit (¼ mile) farther west, on a point of land, at the entrance to the village from the west, and with no water near it at all.

This second school simply carried on the nick-name of "Sodom" from either the previous school or from the general area of that west part of the village, which took on that name. The Town Historian names the first school — by the Creek — (a then larger piece of water) as related to Whitman's teaching, — but one other person remembers the 2nd as one spoken of by his father in that relationship. I would think the 1st would be correct, personally, if the Mount painting is exact.

Neither school building is in existence as a school now — the 2nd having been removed and used for some other purpose — and the 1st either torn down or moved to an unknown spot. The sites however do remain for historical recording; the second school holding the really great value of "my parents went to school there" or "I went to school there" among present day villagers.

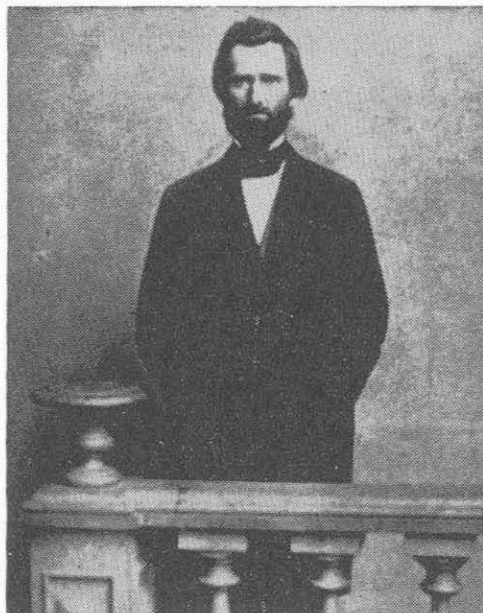
Very sincerely,

Ann Hallock Currie-Bell

(Mrs. Thomas Currie-Bell)

*See pp. 19, 22

[In 1958, president of the Historical Society.]



The Reverend Ralph Smith, originally of Smithtown. He preached at Southold from 1836 to 1840.

Unpublished photograph provided by Miss Faith Smith, of Smithtown, N. Y.



Walt Whitman in the 1840's.

Courtesy of the N. J. Dept. of Conservation & Economic Development.

Appendix

The Rev. Ralph Smith

THE PATCHOGUE LIBRARY

A. D. Custead, Librarian

November 21, 1939

At the bottom of this letter I have copied a paragraph taken from Thompson's HISTORY OF LONG ISLAND, vol. 2, p. 261, and also a very brief one from Ross's HISTORY OF LONG ISLAND, vol. 1, p. 139. This is all the information I have been able to procure about the Rev. Mr. Smith. I am very sorry indeed that I know of no one here who would be apt to remember him....

(Signed) A. D. Custead

Thompson's:

"Rev. Ralph Smith is the son of the late Epenetus Smith of Smithtown, and graduated at the medical institution of Yale College in 1833, but applying himself to divinity he was licensed to preach in Nov. 1835, and was ordained pastor of this church (Old Southold Presbyterian Church) July 15, 1836, whence he was dismissed April 18, 1838. He m. a daughter of Elias Pettetreau."

Ross's:

"List of ministers to the Southold Presbyterian Church: Rev. Ralph Smith from July 15, 1836 to Dec. 1840."

THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY

Princeton, New Jersey

Kenneth S. Gapp, Ph.D.
Librarian

Nov. 22, 1939

Your letter regarding Ralph Smith has been referred to me by the librarian of Princeton University. The Biographical Catalogue of the Princeton Theological Seminary, compiled by the Rev. Edward Howell Roberts contains the following information regarding Mr. Smith:

'Smith, Ralph — born, Smithtown, New York, Nov. 24, 1810; Williams College, 1830; Yale University, 1833, M.D.; Princeton Theological Semin-

ary, 1833-5; ordained Presbytery Long Island, June 15, 1836; pastor, Southold, New York, 1836-8; stated supply, 1838-40; stated supply, Milton Ct., 1841-4; pastor, Congregational Church, Lee, Mass., 1844; Pastor, Cornwall, 1851-5; stated supply, Trumbull, 1854-5; pastor, Wolcottville, 1856-7; pastor, New Canaan, 1860-4; died Saugerties, New York, Nov. 2, 1867.

If you desire more information than this about him I shall endeavor to search for more information in other sources. However, I shall be glad to hear from you regarding the kind of information you desire to find out about him.

Kenneth S. Gapp

REV. EARNEST EELLS

East Hampton, N.Y.

November 30, 1939

Your letter of 11/26 referring to Rev. Ralph Smith reached me yesterday. I am enclosing a copy of the biography in the Princeton Sem. Biographical Catalogue.

I will also write to Dr. Howell Roberts, the Registrar, and to Dr. K. S. Gapp, librarian at the Princeton Sem. to see if they have anything else. I also suggest that you look in the periodicals, OBSERVER, PRESBYTERIAN, etc., about the time of his death for obituaries, and also in Wilson's Presbyterian Almanac 1867 or 8 to see if a biography appears there. Be sure you look in both N.S. and O.S. records.*

I conversed with several about Walt Whitman in Sag Harbor. None could be of any assistance, and I asked Mr. Pennypacker** to write you as I am sure he did. I will see him again about Ralph Smith and if I gather anything of value will write to you later. I also will look in the Presbytery Minutes to see if there is anything, but doubt if any facts of interest to you will appear there...

(Signed) Earnest E. Eells

* New School and Old School — see next letter from Rev. Eells.

** Librarian, East Hampton

Rev. Earnest Eells

East Hampton, N.Y.

December 4, 1939

I have looked through the Records of Presbytery and find nothing about Rev. R. Smith, M.D., which would help you at all. I had a letter

from Dr. Gapp which did not help much but may get more from him later.

A Stated Supply is a minister who serves a church on a temporary basis, usually by a yearly engagement, between him and the congregation, which may be terminated at any time. It is an anomaly in the Presbyterian Church, being more like the congregational method of engaging a preacher, & yet is in effect far from the Congr. settlement which was for life. The other relationship in the Presbyterian Church is to be "called" by the Church, ordained & installed by the Presbytery, & thus he "pastor", a relationship that is continuous until dissolved by the Presbytery.

The N.Y. Public Library, Union Seminary Library, Princeton Seminary Library, and the Library of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, ought all to have bound vols of the NY OBSERVER & THE PRESBYTERIAN, as well as Wilson's PRESBYTERIAN ALMANAC.

In 1837 & for several years after, there was a controversy in the Pres. Ch. about the "Excinding of Presbyteries formed under the Plan of Union. Rev. R. Smith and Southold Ch. broke from the Old School & were in connection with the New School after 1840. I doubt if Whitman took part in this controversy; however, one quarrel leads to another. The bronze tablet in the S. Church shows that feeling was high.

What two places do you refer to as stating that WW was in Sag Harbor? I might help you trace them from their source of info.

You should write Dr. Thos. C. Pears, Jr., Witherspoon Bldg., Phila., & see if he has anything to help you.

(Signed) EEE

Letter in Whitaker Collection from
the Rev. William Fuller*

"Mrs. Nancy Sayre
c/o Mr. Foster Sayre

May 19, 1836

I understand you are about to have a minister settled in the Presbyterian Church in Southold and that the people are building him a house. I have heard very flattering reports concerning his talents. And if he is zealous of good works like Paul, not ceasing to warn every one night and day with tears, and especially the Devil's people — no doubt the Lord will bless his labors..."

* Fuller was the pastor in 1832. "Then the South Old Church united with the Presbytery, becoming known as the First Presbyterian Church of Southold."

The Theological Seminary Library
Princeton, New Jersey

Kenneth Gapp, PH.D.

December 1, 1939

I regret that I can give you very little personal information about Ralph Smith. Our institution, which was founded in 1812 and has never been part of Princeton University, has no yearbooks for this part of our history. Consequently, very little information has been preserved about the personality of students when they were in seminary.

I am able to add one or two minor details which you may not have obtained elsewhere. Mr. Smith was licensed by the Second Presbytery of Long Island, October 7, 1835. He was transferred to the Presbytery of Long Island on April 22, 1836. He was ordained and installed at Southold on June 15, 1836, and was released from Southold April 18, 1838. He then supplied the Church of Southold for a year or more. He was transferred to the Litchfield South Association April 19, 1842. The above found in a letter under date of October 23, 1893 from E. Whitaker, stated clerk of the Presbytery of Long Island. This letter is preserved in the file of the biographical material maintained in connection with our alumni catalogue.

You have noted, I presume, that after the division of the Presbyterian Church, he belonged to what is usually known as "the new school" and is so listed in their minutes for 1839 and 40. For his life after 1841 when he became stated supply at the Milton Church in Litchfield, Connecticut, you will have to refer to the records of the Congregational churches.

Kenneth S. Gapp.

27 N. Carl Ave.
Babylon, N. Y. 11702
July 27, '66

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

Yesterday your request came for information on Ralph Smith.

My husband looked through a history of the church and discovered the following facts.

- (1) Doct. Ralph Smith — Adult Baptized May 5, 1833
- (2) Francis Pelletreau, son of Ralph and Cornelia Smith — baptized on Aug. 9, 1835

Sincerely,

(Signed) (Mrs. A. A.) Evelyn Leininger

East Hampton Free Library
159 Main Street
East Hampton, New York

July 11, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

In "Record of the Pelletreau Family," by William S. Pelletreau, I find the following: — "Cornelia Pelletreau, b. Nov. 12, 1813, d. May 11, 1874; m. Rev. Ralph Smith of Smithtown, L.I., Sept. 9, 1833; he d. Nov. 11, 1867.

Issue: Francis P. Smith, Henry C. Smith, Arden Smith, Cornelia Smith, Mary L. Smith, R. Lee Smith. After the death of Francis Pelletreau, his widow m. her cousin William Conkling, who left to Henry and Cornelia Pelletreau his large farm in Islip, next to Babylon, and now called "Sutton Manor."

I do not know of any descendants of this family in this area....

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Amy O. Bassford, Librarian
The Long Island Collection

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
Office of the General Assembly
514 Witherspoon Building
Philadelphia, Penn.

December 5, 1939

I have had one of our research men examine carefully all the records in the Department of History of the Office of our General Assembly. I am very sorry, however, that he has not been able to find any reference of relations between Mr. Smith and Walt Whitman. The only facts with reference to Mr. Smith are available in the Department of History are herewith enclosed.

(Signed) Wm. Barrow Pugh, Stated Clerk

"Ralph Smith. Ralph Smith is entered as a licentiate in the Presbytery of L.I. in 1836. In 1837 he was the pastor of the South Old Church, South Old, N.Y., in the Presbytery of L.I.

"In 1838 his name appears under the 'Presbytery of L.I., 1838' with the South Old Church which is listed as vacant. In 1840 he is a member of the same Presbytery and is entered as the stated supply of Southold. Thereafter his name does not appear.

"(From Minutes of the Genl. Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America 1836 & 37; ibid., New School, 1839 & 40)"

"Smith, Ralph, b. Smithtown, N.Y., Nov. 24, 1810. Wms C(Williams College), '30; Yale U. '33, M.D.; P.T.S. (Princeton Theological Seminary), '33-5; ord. Pby L.I. 6/15/36; p(pastor) Southold, N.Y., 36-38; ss (stated supply), 38-40; ss Milton, Conn., 41-4; p., Cong. Ch., Lee, Mass., '44; p. Cornwall '51-5; ss Trumbull, '54-5; p. Wolcottville*, '56-7; p. New Canaan, '60-4; d. Saugerties, N.Y., 11/2/67."

(Fr. Biographical Catalogue of the Princeton Theol. Sem., 1815-1932, p.85)

Nothing has been located to show his relations with Walt Whitman.

* Became Torrington, Conn.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Southold, L.I.

E. Hoyt Palmer, Minister

Oct. 14, 1939

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

I am not even sure that Ralph Smith was here as late as 1841, the date given you by Mr. Jefferson. That is the date on which the next minister was installed, but Ralph Smith must have left about 1838. The church was vacant for a time.

During the time he was here there is very little to be found in the church record. There are indications that there was some contention and dissatisfaction in the church at that time, but whether it was something which had to do with him or whether it was mostly between others would be hard to say from what small amount of information is here.

There are no exact dates of his coming or going.*

*These were found later.

TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION, 1640-1940

First Presbyterian Church of Southold, L.I., N.Y.

P. 5 — The Rev. Ralph Smith — 1836-40

P. 13 — In June, 1784, the Southold Church was incorporated as "First Church, Congregation or Society in Southold."

P. 14 — The Rev. William Fuller, pastor (1830-33)

Nehemiah Cook (1833-35)

Rev. Jonathan Hunting (1806-28)

Elders during Rev. Fuller's pastorate:

Deacon William Horton

Deacon Austin Haynes

Deacon Joshua Overton

Deacon Israel Case

Deacon Moses Case

Deacon Jonathan Wells

Deacon Joseph Hallock

Deacon B.H. Hallock

Deacon L.H. Jennings

Deacon James McNeil

While the Rev. Fuller was pastor, 56 members were added to the Church. During Ralph Smith's stay, 14 were added. The minister following Smith, Alonzo Welton, (1841-44) added 46.

The above written by the Rev. Hoyt Palmer.

Sessions Book, filed with the Suffolk County Mutual Life Insurance Co.

"Records of the Southold Presbyterian Church" Vol 2...Pages 50 to 62 torn out (according to the testimony of the clerk, by Elisha Horton)

The Rev. J. Hunting was the moderator here on Aug. 21, 1838, when the records begin again with Alonzo Welton's notes.

P. 50 — written and signed by Ralph Smith:

"This book is seen here to be mutilated in the loss of many leaves, by which a blank occurs in the records of Session through a number of years. No great embarrassment will however result to the future operations of Session from the defects of this record, as everything of importance is retained in memory or noted elsewhere... It will be needful only to state that two cases of discipline were in progress when the Book was mutilated, the records of which are thereby lost, leaving Elisha Horton and William Volney Horton in a state of suspension from the communion of the Church, without certificate of the fact, except so far as it is testified on this page, or retained in memory by the Church and Sessions.

Ralph Smith, Mod. "of Session during the term whose records are lost."

P. 62 — Elders of the church in August, 1838

William Horton	A. Haines
Moses Case	J. Wells
J. Hallock	Daniel Bedel
B.J. Hallock	J. Terry
Israel Case	J. Overton

(Note: The names of Wells, Case also were part of the WW episode) From informant in the office of the Co., and W. Jefferson:

The pages missing from the Sessions Book cover four years. Elisha Horton obtained the book from Deacon Horton's house, and tore out the pages. A committee was sent to retrieve them (Messrs. Hallock, Wells and Terry).

P. 65

The committee called upon E. Horton — "no satisfactory information respecting the missing Record" obtained — and reported it to the session of August 30, 1838.

In the 8/13/38 session, E. Horton appeared and refused to tell why the record had been mutilated — and whether he had taken the pages or not. He retired refusing to answer who had cut them (but the impression given was that he did not know); "He was also asked if he could and would tell them who did cut them out, he said if he could he should not —"

The session decided to let it rest until something definite came out.
9/25/38 Session

Elisha Horton was excommunicated. He had charged the Church with partiality and injustice.

(A list of the Committee of Elders in 1890 included Orrin F. Payne, the schoolteacher whom Wayland Jefferson quoted, and S. Wells Phillips, whose name appeared on the 1843 school list.)

From

"A Copy of the Platform of the Church of Southold Presented to E. Whitaker by Mr. George C. Wells, Nov. 29, 1870." (Outside of Document)

Inside:

"A Plan of Discipline of the First Church in Southold."

This contains nine points regarding the settlement of differences, the accepting of candidates for communion, etc.

The Pastor has two votes; members of the congregation, one.

February 4, 1823:

Report of a committee: "Jonathan Hunting, William Horton, Lazarus H. Jennings, Austin Hains & Benj. K. Hobart, apt. by First Church to investigate grievances between Ebenezer W. Case and William Y. or Z. Brown."

The report refers the fact to that "Capt. Brown did not, in contradicting Judge Case's* testimony in Court, manifest that tenderness which he ought towards him..."

The quarrel concerned smuggling and some boards, ashes and casks which Capt. Brown took for himself, as well as mis-representation of ownership of the vessel used in transporting the cargo.

* Note there was also a Judge Case in 1823.

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Southold, L.I., N.Y.

John W. Howard, Minister

June 20, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff,

...I wish he (Whitman) had left something more visible in Southold. In fact even the Rev. Ralph Smith was stingy with his foot prints. A search of our session records turned up one page — and one page only — which is the total contribution of Mr. Smith to our archives. On a separate page I have had this information copied, for your enjoyment.

I'm sorry that no present church members by the names Dames*, Payne or Corwin are here for me to discuss your research. There is a woman in town by the name of Adele Payne who writes for the Long Island Traveler, Mattituck Watchman at whose office she may be contacted.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) John W. Howard

Dec. 31st, 1838 —

Session met at the house of B.H. Hallock — opened by prayer

Present

(B.H. Hallock)
(Daniel Beebe)
(Joseph Terry)
(Austin Haynes)

Remainder absent — of course

After examination, voted to receive Mehetibal Goldsmith, Elizabeth Jennings, Abigail Hallock, Mary Wells, Abigail Youngs into communion.
R. Smith, Mod

*Danes or Daines.

Sept. 30, 1839

Session met agreeable to appointment — opened by prayer —

After examination voted to admit Jonathan Vail & Maria Vail on profession of faith to communion of the church — Also Mrs. E (?) Cleveland on certificate from ch. of Union Parish.

R. Smith, Mod

April - 1840 --

Received Goldsmith Luce & wife on certificate from First Congregational Church of Riverhead — Appointed B.H. Hallock to represent the church in Presbytery at Cutchogue.

R. Smith

Thus far examined and approved by Presbytery

April 22, 1840 — Attest

Jonathan Huntting Moderator

THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
320 Witherspoon Building Philadelphia, Pa. 19107

July 21, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

We are sorry for the delay in replying to your request for information about the Rev. Ralph Smith.

Enclosed are some brief notes we have located from a historical sketch of the Southold Church and the Minutes of the Presbyterian General Assembly.

If we are able to locate additional material we will be sure and send it to you.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Dorothy Kurtz, Secretary to Mr. Miller
Dept. of History, United Presbyterian Church

"Reverend Ralph Smith came to Southold in 1835, and in 1836 a Parsonage (the original part of the present one) was built for his use. Nineteen members were added to the Church during the five years of his stay here."

-Historical Sketch of Southold Church

Minutes of the General Assembly:

1836 Licentiate Presbytery of Long Island

1837 South Old

1839 South Old

1840 Stated supply Southold

Two Letters from Ralph Smith,
Showing His Mood and Style While at Southold and After

"Southold, Jan. 27th, 1836

Dear Mother

You would hear from me by Mother Conklin but I will write a word or two — You wish to know what I calculate to do, as to place and manner of residence, & c. — I know nothing certain myself, whether I will stay in Southold or not, I cannot yet determine — At any rate I shall be at Smithtown in a few weeks on my way to Babylon with my wife, and then I shall have made up my mind as to the matter. They are about building a parsonage house here, and would shortly have everything convenient for the family of a minister — Possess your soul in patience and learn in whatever state you are, therewith to be content. I should think you might be easy among the clever folks where you are. Never mind being a pilgrim and Stranger upon the earth, but look for a city which hath more sure foundations eternal in the heavens. I shall shortly see you face to face, and tell you what things more I have to say. In the meantime, be content and quiet.

Your affectionate Son

R. Smith

Give my love to Uncle B's family and Richard's and all."

(This letter was sent during the pre-envelope and pre-stamp era. The folded end was sealed with wax. The letter was addressed to "Mrs. Rhoda Smith, Smithtown Branch.")

"Milton (Conn.), Dec. 14, 1842

Dear Sister,

Mother wants to talk to you through my pen. She is quite contented, for her — though she is afraid the winter will be very long. The weather is here (sic) very cold — terrible snow storms — have sleigh-riding all the time. She don't worry much about any of you — but if any of you

are like to die, she says Daniel must come & see us & carry her back with him. We laugh at her about an old widower Deacon who comes in often to see her. She seems to be very hearty & strong — once in a while swallowing one of my "pills for the belly" — & living every day on "good roast meat & applesauce" —

Her chief office is that of baby tender and knitter. She sits by the fire all day & at night heats her brick and goes to bed, groans awhile & goes to sleep. — She has no particular matters for me to write. — only she thinks about you all & about the Snow, whether you have our storms on Long Island & whether they drive into her house. She talks often about one & another of you — about Arden's baby & so on. By the way you never saw my gal - Cornelia Matilda Smith - lady - beauty - & pride of the house. She's a flaming one — Mother here says, you or Arden must write again & tell about Phoebe — whether she is sick yet or not — & Caroline, how she gets along & all about matters and things.

We have no news to tell you that you care anything for — We don't murder folks up this way. All goes on quiet and safe. — We are all comfortable — & when the winter is gone, expect to say to you, "How d'ye do" —

Excuse this short, good for nothing letter — I am busy and Mother won't tell me anything more to write and has run off to bed — so you may know it is about 8 o'clock, her regular bedtime.

Goodbye and write again

Yours ever

Ralph Smith

Rhoda Smith

Cornelia Smith"

(This letter also from pre-envelope, but not pre-cancellation era. Still no stamp affixed. Written on it is "Milton 61, Dec. 15, 12 1/2.")

Addressed to Mrs. Matilda Smith, Huntington, Comac P.O., Long Island.

The letter, also sealed with red wax and folded, was marked "Paid by the Postmaster," and stamped "Huntington, Dec. 20")

A page from one of Ralph Smith's Unfinished Sermons

Contributed by Falth Smith of Smithtown,

Who received it from a Smith descendant of Cornwall, N.Y.

I am not going to write of happiness exactly, but of what is kin to it. My Subject is Pleasure — If you do not See at once this diff between that & happ, I am afraid I shall not make it appear — but there is a diff -

Happiness is a unity — pleasures are various — happiness is a compound — pleasures are its components — So you see that I am a little cunning in choosing to Speak of pleasure rather than Happ Since it affords greater scope and variety.

I heard a Story the other day of a boy who was Sent by his mother to put eggs under a Setting turkey — on his return he was asked how many eggs he left with her — 140 Said he — Why, said the mother, She never can cover them all — Well, said the boy, but I wanted to make her Spread —

This is just my policy — Happ is a Single egg — Pleasures are a nest full — and afford a little more chance for exercise in warming them over.

But perhaps my Strange treatment of them may remind Somebody of Thomas Hood's Story about a German traveller who on seeing Some purple, pickled eggs, exclaimed in amazement, Good heavens, I wonder what color their hens are.

As I have happened to begin thus jocously, I may as well remark here that one egg in / nest of pleasures is that of mirthfulness in discourse — I thought I would Spread a little upon that — but I would have you rem that it is an egg that is very likely to prove addle, or to bring forth some very undesirable product.

The taste for the humorous is worthy of indulgence to Some degree, and Strongly marks many a man who is highly dignified and intellectual — but the popular craving for it may be fed too much. ...

The compliment is very equivocal, when we say of a man, as we Sometimes do — he is as full of humor as an egg is of meat — The chances are that he is not very full of anything else — that his mind lacks range and Solidity in its efforts & acquisitions . . .

CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(Connecticut Conference of
Congregational Christian Churches)
125 Sherman St., Hartford, Conn. 06105

Hemlock Park
Jefferson, Maine 04348
Undated. Rec'd 2/19/66

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:-

I have checked the places and dates of the service of Rev. Ralph Smith in Connecticut and find that your records are correct as far as they go.

My authority is CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF CONNECTICUT by Leonard Bacon and others. In this volume, which was printed in 1861, we have brief sketches of the churches and information regarding ministers. I also checked the records of the GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT to verify the New Canaan dates and found them correct. In the CONGREGATIONAL QUARTERLY for the year 1868 there is a notice of Mr. Smith's death at Saugerties, N.Y., Nov. 2, 1867.

With regard to Wolcotville I find the spelling in the CONTRIBUTIONS (page 514) Wolcotville. I imagine both spellings were used. Mr. Smith is reported as having served there from April 1856 to September 1857. This church is now known as the Center Church of Torrington.

Here is the story as I read it, —

Ordained 1836 — I think at Southold
Milton, Connecticut (Litchfield) — 1841-44
Cornwall, First, Conn. — 1851-55
Trumbull, Conn. (Stated Supply) — 1854-55
Wolcotville (Torrington Center) — 1856-57
New Canaan, Conn. — 1860-64

He apparently removed to Babylon, N.Y., after April, 1864 where he lived until his death.

It occurs to me there may be data about Mr. Smith in the histories or historical sketches of the various churches where he served. Such have been prepared for anniversaries and other occasions and in some instances we have in our files copies of them. If you would like to have me do so I will be happy to see what I can find when I return to Hartford early in September. I am serving as Historian of our Conference so this kind of work is a regular assignment.

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) James F. English
Minister Emeritus

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Hemlock Park
Jefferson, Maine 04348

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:-

I find in the minutes of the General Association of Connecticut that Rev. Ralph Smith was listed as a minister and member of the Fairfield West Association each year from 1860 until 1867. His address be-

gins to appear as Babylon, N.Y. in 1864 and in these reports continues so through 1867.

This I think would be the same in the Congregational Quarterly for the same years. I will check to be certain when I am in Hartford next week. The notice of his death does not appear in the Connecticut Minutes. As I wrote to you it appears in the Quarterly in 1868, as having occurred in Saugerties the year before.

He was listed as a minister "without charge" after 1864, so I fear you will not get much help from the Babylon Church. If I can discover any direct statement that he removed to Babylon I will send it to you. Certainly that was where he lived, according to our records, from some time in 1864 until his death.

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) James F. English
Minister Emeritus

STATE OF CONNECTICUT General Assembly

Representative
Harriet L. Clark
RFD Litchfield, Conn.

July 30th, 1966

Gold's History of Cornwall, p. 94, mentions Rev. Ralph Smith as installed pastor, September 1851. "He is regarded by the people of his charge as a refined and cultivated scholar & able preacher. The church records contain no account of the labors. He was dismissed May 3, 1855."

Starr's History of Cornwall, P. 92, says that Rev. Ralph Smith was the eighth pastor. He had been a physician and was ordained 3 Sept. 1851 with the gift of \$200 for his settlement and \$600 for his salary." etc. 6 May 1855 he was dismissed."

In the town vaults there might be sermons but the historical material is not yet indexed.

Sincerely

(Signed) Harriet L. Clark
Pres. Cornwall Hist. Society.

CENTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Torrington, Connecticut

August 30, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

Enclosed you will find a communication from our church historian providing such information as we have in answer to your request of August 19th. You have been very wise to seek information from our Conference Historian, Dr. James F. English, who was for many years the superintendent of our conference.

If you have not visited Torrington, you may realize that Wolcotville was originally a little industrial village within the town or township of Torrington. Center Church was begun as a church for this little settlement but this settlement grew to be the principal population area of the town. Consequently, in 1890, the name Wolcotville was dropped entirely. Our Church then changed its name from First Congregational Church, Wolcotville, to the Third Congregational Church, Torrington. A few years later they changed it again to its present official name, Center Congregational Church...

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Rolland G. Ewing, Minister

24 Whiting Avenue
Torrington, Connecticut
August 24, 1966

Dr. Rolland G. Ewing
Center Congregational Church
Torrington, Connecticut

Dear Dr. Ewing:

In answer to the inquiry of Mrs. David Molinoff about a Reverend Ralph Smith, I have found the following information which is quoted from the early records of the Village Ecclesiastical Society:

October 1, 1855. The propriety of giving a call to Rev. Ralph Smith was debated for some length. Meeting adjourned until Oct. 7, when it was voted to call Mr. Smith of Cornwall at a salary of \$750 and parsonage. Mr. Smith hesitatingly declined the call. Later the Society voted to hire Mr. Smith to preach for one year and on Feb. 24, 1856 it was voted to give Mr. Smith a call to settled pastor, which he accepted. He was installed March 26, 1856.

July 26, 1857. A letter from Mr. Smith refers to his ministry as being "inconvenient to him and unprofitable to you and the bond uniting

them to be too frail to bear such trial of patience and charity as the case may involve on your part and under present embarrassments will not admit of justice to myself or you." He desired his responsibility in the supply of the pulpit to cease on the next Sabbath. The Society concurred, apparently without question.

August 9, 1857. Rev. Ralph Smith resigned and on Sept. 29 he was dismissed by Consociation.

The records do not mention where the Rev. Smith went from the local church.

I hope this information will be helpful.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Peg Foster

THE STOCKBRIDGE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
Stockbridge, Massachusetts 01262

August 16, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

The enclosed sheet has all the information I could find in the Curtisville Church records on the Rev. Ralph Smith. I asked two members of the church about the Edwin Lumbert paper but they knew nothing — William Uhler, whose grandfather was also a pastor of the church, knew Edwin Lumbert's son, Charles, but he has been dead over twenty years.

I did see the name Edwin Lumbert, Tythingman, in the Church records as I was copying the enclosed, so he was a contemporary of Ralph Smith. I would not think the short pastorate — 1 1/2 years — was important enough for a paper. Perhaps his later history added glory.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Grace B. Wilcox, Curator
(Mrs. Graham D.)

Records of the
North Congregational Church
in Stockbridge

Curtisville, April 11, 1844

P. 162

Voted to unite with the Church in giving the Rev. Ralph Smith an invitation to become the pastor of this Church and People.

Voted to give the Rev. Ralph Smith a salary of four hundred and fifty dollars if he accepts our invitation to settle with us in the Gospel Ministry.

Voted to choose a committee of three persons to communicate to the Rev. Ralph Smith the doings of this meeting and to make such arrangements for his settlement as they shall think proper.

P. 164

March 3, 1845

Voted to raise the Rev. Ralph Smith's salary by the sale of the slips in the Meeting house for the year ensuing.

P. 166

Curtisville, September 30, 1845

The Society met according to the requirements of the foregoing warrant and chose John Burghardt Moderator.

Voted to unite with the Rev. Ralph Smith in calling an Ecclesiastical Council to dissolve the Pastoral relation between him and the Society.

2nd book

P. 135

October 9, 1845

A Council of Ministers and delegates was held at the meeting house this afternoon for the purpose of dismissing the Rev. Ralph Smith from his pastoral charge. The Council was called at his own request and after considerable discussion, proceeded to dissolve his connection with this church and society.

Lee, Mass. February 5, 1940.

I have your note of the 1st inst just at hand. I think all the data you wish is contained in an estimate of Rev. Ralph Smith in a paper prepared by the late Edwin Lumbert of Curtisville, a parishioner of Mr. Smith who knew him intimately, and Dr. Rowlands' tribute in his historical address at the 100th Anniversary of the Lee Congregational Church. I append verbatim copies. After referring to Dr. J. T. Headeley's pastorate Mr. Lumbert said, in 1896, "He was succeeded by that great man, great in every respect, mentally and physically — a Saul among the prophets, the Rev. Ralph Smith (There were giants in those days). His brethren in the ministry looked up to him as an oracle.

In the pulpit he was motionless as a statue, without gesture of any kind, original in every respect. I am tempted to relate some incidents I remember so well. One Sabbath after the choir had sung a peculiarly

inspiring hymn (we had a choir then the pride and envy of the whole community) he arose and stood like a graven image, it seemed to me a long time, and said, "It is a good thing to give thanks and sing praises unto thy name, O Most High." Preaching from the text "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah" — At the close he said, "Often in my boyhood days as I read the story of Androcles and his lion I have wished for that lion to follow my footsteps by day and guard my pathway when night shuts in the scene, this lion of the tribe of Judah, the lion of God."

Closing with the text "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

Mr. Smith went from here to the Church in Lee, remaining there for a short time when soon after he changed from preacher to physician. He removed to Saugerties, New York, where he died in the prime of life.

On May 25th, 1880, Dr. L.S. Rowland said, "The next pastor was Rev. Ralph Smith, who was installed December 8th, 1846, Rev. Tertius S. Clarke of Stockbridge preaching the sermon. He was called to Lee from the church in Curtisville. He remained with the church but four years being dismissed December 4, 1850.

"He was a man of decided genius as a writer and preacher. His printed lectures and sermons, some of which are still found in the hands of the people, deserve a high place as racy and original productions. With the gifts of genius he had also some of its eccentricities, which may have interfered with his highest influence and success as a minister. The additions to the church were not numerous during his pastorate, but that the congregation was growing is proved by the fact of the enlargement of the church edifice in 1848 to accommodate the increasing numbers...

Mr. Smith was a native of Long Island, a graduate of Williams college in 1830 and had studied medicine before entering the ministry. After leaving Lee he held several pastorates in Connecticut and died at Saugerties, N.Y., Nov. 2, 1867 at 57."

I hope these intimate glimpses will provide the information you are seeking

Very sincerely,

(Signed) Carl Wurtzbach

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Lee, Massachusetts

Aug. 11, 1966

Dear Mrs. Molinoff:

I have been Clerk of the church for over a decade and am the older daughter of Carl Wurtzbach of whom you wrote....I've just today had

the opportunity to go down to the church and look over old records in the safe. I found a printed booklet entitled

Rev. Smith's Sermon
on
The Manifestation of Christ to His People
preached at Lee, June 13, 1847
Published by Request

also—

Rev. Mr. Smith's Lecture
before the
Lee Lyceum

March 1st, 1847

but I do not find any paper prepared by Edwin Lumbert of Curtisville.

Curtisville, (now Interlaken) is a tiny township about 6 miles from Lee and Rev. Smith was called to the pastorate here from the Curtisville church.

Regarding the Presbyterian-Congregationalist aspects, I can offer no solution at all as it is not mentioned.

In the 100th Anniversary Historical Discourse Dr. Rowland had a few lines on each pastor and I am enclosing copy verbatim of his remarks* regarding Mr. Smith.

Cordially,
(Signed) Ethel W. Ambler

*[Quoted elsewhere]

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