

Whitman Woods Project



May 20, 2019

S A T U R D A Y , J U N E 1 , 2 0 1 9

**Walt FEST — the ultimate Whitman Bicentennial Birthday Party!
Walk in the Bard's footsteps, celebrate his iconic Poetry, Art & Nature**

***Prelude: Get the lay of the land on the “A-to-Z Whitman Woods Walk & Talk”
with New Jersey Native Plant Guru Joseph Arsenault***

LAUREL SPRINGS, New Jersey — This charming town's annual Walt Whitman Birthday party, an ode to the “Father of Free Verse” called **Walt FEST**, takes on milestone meaning in this Whitman Bicentennial year. Whitman devotees on both sides of the Delaware — and the Atlantic — are variously marking Walt Whitman's May 31, 1819 birth, but because the good gray poet spent his notably prolific twilight years summering here, recovering his health and writing extensively, the tiny Camden County Borough has come to be known as “Ground Zero for Whitman on Timber Creek.”

On Saturday, June 1, 2019, **Walt FEST** attendees will discover his iconic verse carved into the boardwalk that rims the wetlands at Crystal Springs Park, where they will also be treated to poetry readings and a Language Arts Exhibit. Festival goers with a penchant for history can tour the nearby 1785 Whitman-Stafford Farm House, where a Visual Arts venue will be staged, to include works by notable Laurel Springs resident artists, Glen Gables Studio artists and Sterling High School art students. Participants who share Whitman's love of Nature can walk in his footsteps with New Jersey's native plant guru Joseph Arsenault, who will lead the enlightening “**A-to-Z Whitman Woods Walk & Talk**” (*see A-to-Z addendum, p. 3*). Those with an affinity for crafting will be treated to a Nature-inspired MIY project at The Makers Workshop. A free trolley will ferry attendees between the historic venues.

The joy Whitman found in wandering the wooded lakeshore and sinking into palliative mud baths at Crystal Springs was documented by the Bard in first person in his “jottings in the woods.” Finding inspiration in every molecule of Nature he encountered here, it was from these environs that most of “Specimen Days” was penned and significant additions made to his monumental life's work, “Leaves of Grass.” In the process, Whitman became famously fond of the modest Victorian town. In addition to his formal writings, he penned effusive letters to friends about the beauty of its woods, lake and springs.

Founded in 2016, **Walt FEST** is a free community event. *See pages 2-4 for more details >*

LAUREL SPRINGS' "Walt FEST" ART & POETRY FESTIVAL

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF WALT WHITMAN

SATURDAY, JUNE 1ST

11AM - 3PM

RAIN DATE: SAT, JUNE 8TH

AT THE HISTORIC SITES:

- WHITMAN STAFFORD FARMHOUSE,
(CORNER OF STONE RD & E. MAPLE AVENUE)
- CRYSTAL SPRINGS PARK - LAUREL LAKE
(CORNER OF W. ELMA & LAKEVIEW AVENUES)

- VISUAL ARTS - POETRY
- TROLLEYS - FOOD
- MAKERS' WORKSHOP
- "WHITMAN WOODS" WALKS



LAUREL SPRINGS, NJ

WWW.LAURELSPRINGS-NJ.COM

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* MINUTES AWAY FROM LINDENWOLD PATCO STOP!

See page 3 for A-Z details, page 4 for Location details >

Channel Whitman's love of Nature — take the “A-to-Z Whitman Woods Walk & Talk” with Native Plants guru Joseph Arsenault, Saturday, June 1, 10 a.m.

LAUREL SPRINGS, New Jersey — Timeworn footpaths lined by towering beech, black walnut, oak and poplar crisscross aspirational “Whitman Woods.” As a prelude to **Walt FEST**, nature lovers and Whitman Bicentennial celebrants are invited to an illuminating “A-to-Z Whitman Woods Walk & Talk” on Saturday, June 1 at 10 a.m. led by Environmental Consultant Joseph Arsenault.

A botanist and ecologist, Arsenault grew up in Laurel Springs and played as a child in these very woods. The renowned New Jersey Native Plant specialist serves as the Whitman Woods Project lead adviser. Widely known for his captivating discourse, he is a veritable fount regarding the site's geologic genesis. Attendees will learn about the land's history — from the archaeological to the zoological — and why preserving these 3.75 wooded acres is ecologically significant within the Timber Creek watershed and beyond. “The eagles and bees are here for a reason,” Arsenault observes, “hopefully our walk will strike a chord for anyone wondering why Whitman Woods needs to be established as a passive park.”

In addition to the 10 a.m. A-to-Z Walk & Talk, docents will be present to answer questions from 11-3. **Walt FEST** attendees may also explore aspirational “Whitman Woods” during daylight hours. Visitors are advised to wear long pants and closed-toe shoes. Street parking only on Glen or Beech avenues.

Setting aside this privately owned lakefront parcel as Open Space in the otherwise built-out town presents an organic opportunity for the Delaware River Valley community to help **North American Land Trust** — the site's intended steward (nalt.org) — establish a passive park in the very area where Whitman penned much of his powerful, enduring works. Endowing the park in this Bicentennial Year of Whitman is the project's goal.

When established, the passive park's elevation will afford visitors wide views of Laurel Lake (Timber Creek); its shoreline will provide paddlers with lake access for kayaks and canoes. Safeguarding this cathedral-like green oasis from development and preserving it in perpetuity is an attainable vision shared by countless locals, patrons, pro bono collaborators and “Friends of Whitman Woods.”

Anyone with a love of Whitman can attend Walt FEST. Anyone with a love of Whitman, Nature and Open Space can become a stakeholder in the “Whitman Woods” project at WhitmanWoods.org, where it is easy to Give, Pledge or Volunteer. Similarly, one can learn more about the project at NALT.org.

Whitman Woods Mission — Distill art, nature, history and science into a living land legacy that will preserve precious passive Open Space in perpetuity, serve as an open classroom and pay homage to the iconic American poet Walt Whitman

See page 4 for Locations & Event details >

Walt FEST Locations & Events details, *page 4 of 4*

Parking: Free street parking throughout the business & residential districts

Food: Bella Vita Pizzeria, *809 West Atlantic Avenue, Laurel Springs, 08021*

Rain Date: Saturday, June 8

Crystal Springs Park

West Elma & Lakeview avenues at the lake, Laurel Springs, NJ 08021

11 a.m. – 3 p.m. **Poetry Readings** in the very spot where Whitman sought restoration.

All-day: Walt FEST attendees are invited to stroll the park and verse-inscribed boardwalk during daylight hours.

The Makers Workshop

801A West Atlantic Avenue, Laurel Springs, NJ 08021

11 a.m. - 4 p.m. **“Nature-themed Complimentary Crafting”** (supplies are limited). The Makers Workshop serves budding artists and aspiring “MIY” makers by providing them with the ideal tools, environment and community for being creative.

Whitman-Stafford Farm House

315 East Maple Avenue (at the corner of Stone Road), Laurel Springs, NJ 08021

11 a.m. – 3 p.m. **Visual Arts Exhibit & Tours** of the historic Whitman-Stafford Farm House

11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. **Good Gray Poet Program** presented by “Walt Whitman” as interpreted by American Historical Theater’s David S. Taylor.

“Whitman Woods” Walks

Enter the future Passive Park via footpaths at the terminus of Glen or Beech avenues, Laurel Springs, NJ 08021

10 a.m. **“A-to-Z Whitman Woods Walk & Talk”** led by New Jersey Native Plants guru and Environmental Consultant Joseph Arsenault.

All-day: Walt FEST attendees are invited to stroll the footpaths that thread aspirational “Whitman Woods” during daylight hours. Long pants and closed-toe shoes are suggested. Bask in birdsong and the shade of towering beech, black walnut, oaks and poplar. *Street parking only. No restroom facilities.*

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