

## *Were Whitman's Parents Quakers?*

Although Walt Whitman was nearly as great a lie-teller as a truth-teller, we can feel confident the following answer is perfectly accurate.

--*Mitchell Santine Gould*, curator, [LeavesOfGrass.Org](http://LeavesOfGrass.Org)

I asked W.: "What were your father's political affiliations?" "My father was always a Democrat—a Democrat of the old school." "Was he anti-slavery?" W. did not answer this with a yes or no, whether because he did not wish to (certainly not that) or had not caught it on the fly, I don't know. He went on to say, however, in answer to my remark that nearly all Quakers were opposed to slavery: "My father was not, properly speaking, a Quaker: he was a friend, I might almost say a follower, of Elias Hicks: my mother came partly of Quaker stock: all her leanings were that way—her sympathies: her fundamental emotional tendencies." He said further: "In those early days, as I remember, the Democrats feared the Abolition ideas—pestilential ideas, they called them, thought them."

*With Walt Whitman in Camden.* Friday, November 16, 1888.