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Walt Whitman (left) with Peter Doyle, his Confederate soldier friend, in Washington, D.C., in 1865.

Rare Copyrighted Books to Be Part of Library Exhibition

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“The Civil War in America” will showcase more than 200 unique items from the Library of Congress’ Civil War collections, many never before on public view. Marking the 150th anniversary of the war, the exhibition will open November 12.

Among the diaries, letters, song sheets, newspapers and other articles on display, dozens of copyrighted works will help tell the story of people from the North and the South whose lives were lost or affected by the war. First editions of *Hospital Sketches* by Louisa May Alcott and *Drum Taps* by Walt Whitman will be featured, as well as an early reprint edition of *Clotelle: A Tale of the Southern States* by William Wells Brown.

Boston publisher James Redpath registered *Hospital Sketches* on August 28, 1863, and *Clotelle* on February 13, 1864, both in the U.S. District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

In *Hospital Sketches*, Louisa May Alcott, then a struggling writer, fictionalizes her time as a

nurse at the Union Hotel Hospital in the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C.

She arrived just after the Union Army’s defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg, nursing soldiers “riddled with shot and shell” who had “borne suffering for which we have no name.”

Alcott was part of a path-breaking group of women; before the war, most nurses had been men. Her account of daily life in a wartime hospital was her first major literary success.

Originally published in 1853, *Clotelle* is widely cited as the first African American novel. And Brown, a former slave, is the first African American to

have made a living as a writer.

Redpath reprinted the book as part of a series for soldiers titled “Books for the Camp Fires.” The novel starts with the auction of Clotelle, the illegitimate daughter of Thomas Jefferson and an enslaved woman. Clotelle’s story highlights the often cruel fate of mixed-race people under slavery and its harsh effect on families.

Like Alcott, Walt Whitman spent time in Washington, D.C., hospitals tending to wounded soldiers. The Armory Square Hospital, near the Smithsonian Castle, was his favorite. There he walked through the wards, delivering items the sick and wounded wanted and visiting with them.

The poems in *Drum Taps* reflect Whitman’s reaction to the war, from initial enthusiasm to involvement with its victims. He registered the volume on April 26, 1865, in the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of New York.

“The Civil War in America” will be on display in the Southwest Exhibition Gallery of the Jefferson Building through May 23, 2013. ©