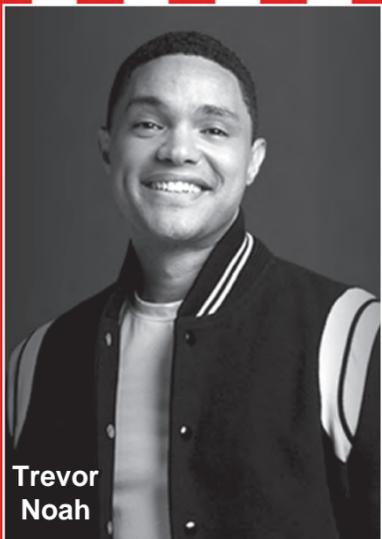




Joe Donnelly



Trevor Noah



Andrew Gillum



Patti Solis Doyle

## Who Will It Be?

### W&L Students Prepare To Make Their Pick For The Democratic Presidential Nominee



Donna Brazile

The 27th Mock Convention at Washington and Lee University has arrived and this cycle's political team is determined to maintain the legacy of accuracy when they reveal their prediction of who will be the Democratic nominee for president of the United States.

The organization, which is entirely student-run, boasts the title of the most accurate nominating convention in the country and has been in existence since 1908. Most notably, it was one of the first to predict Donald Trump to be the Republican nominee for president four years ago.

The students this time have done everything in their power to get it right. The prediction combines four years of research, including statistical analyses and on the ground research in all 57 delegations. Most recently, leader and political chair John Harashinski, a senior at Washington and Lee, attended the Iowa caucus and a few candidate campaign rallies to get a firsthand look at what is going on.

See Mock Con, page B8

### Convention Schedule

Thursday, Feb. 13

7 to 8:30 p.m. - Politics And Media Panel, Keller Theater, Lenfest Center.

Friday, Feb. 14

9 to 10:30 a.m. - Mock convention parade, Main Street, Lexington.

1:30 to 4 p.m. - Session one, featuring opening speakers and voting on the rules and the platform, Duchossois Tennis Center.

6 p.m. - Session two, featuring Democratic Party leaders.

Saturday, Feb. 15

10 a.m. - Session three, featuring additional speakers.

3 p.m. - Session four, featuring information on candidates and roll call vote.

Sunday, Feb. 16

2 p.m. - "How It All Happened" panel, Stackhouse Theater, Elrod Commons, with an inside look at the work that went into this year's convention.

### How To View It

If you don't already have tickets for this weekend's mock convention or the politics and media panel Thursday night, you're not going to get any.

Tickets for the convention sold out in December and tickets for the panel discussion were gone in just a few hours early this week.

But, don't despair. Both the panel and the convention will be livestreamed at [www.mockconvention.com/livestream](http://www.mockconvention.com/livestream).

Also, the Rockbridge Regional Library in Lexington will livestream sessions one and three in the Piovano Room. Session one will begin on Friday at 1:30 p.m. and session three will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday.



Bill Roberts



Mike Allen



Jim Acosta



WENDY ORRISON holds a letter dated Aug. 7, 1861, that was found within an interior wall of home she owns on Randolph Street. The letter was written by William Finney Junkin, a brother-in-law of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.

# History Uncovered

## House Renovation Leads To Discovery Of Civil War Letter

BY JOANN WARE

One often hears the expression "If these walls could talk." In the case of a home on Randolph Street, one wall did speak and in the voice of a Civil War soldier with ties to Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.

Wendy Orrison, along with her husband, Mike Orrison, and his brother Rusty Orrison and wife Laura Orrison, purchased the wood frame home on Randolph Street 15 years ago. It has been a rental property for Washington and Lee University students during that time. But when the school's policy for students living off campus changed, the Orrisons decided to get out of the rental business and sell the home.

The home needed some fixing up before putting it on the market and in the process of shoring up the foundation, some cracks appeared in the interior plaster walls. The decision was made to replace the aging plaster with drywall.

It was within one of these walls that a letter written in the early months of the American Civil War had sat undisturbed for over a century and a half.

"It has been there all this time among mouse droppings," Wendy Orrison said. "We even found the skeleton of a mouse.

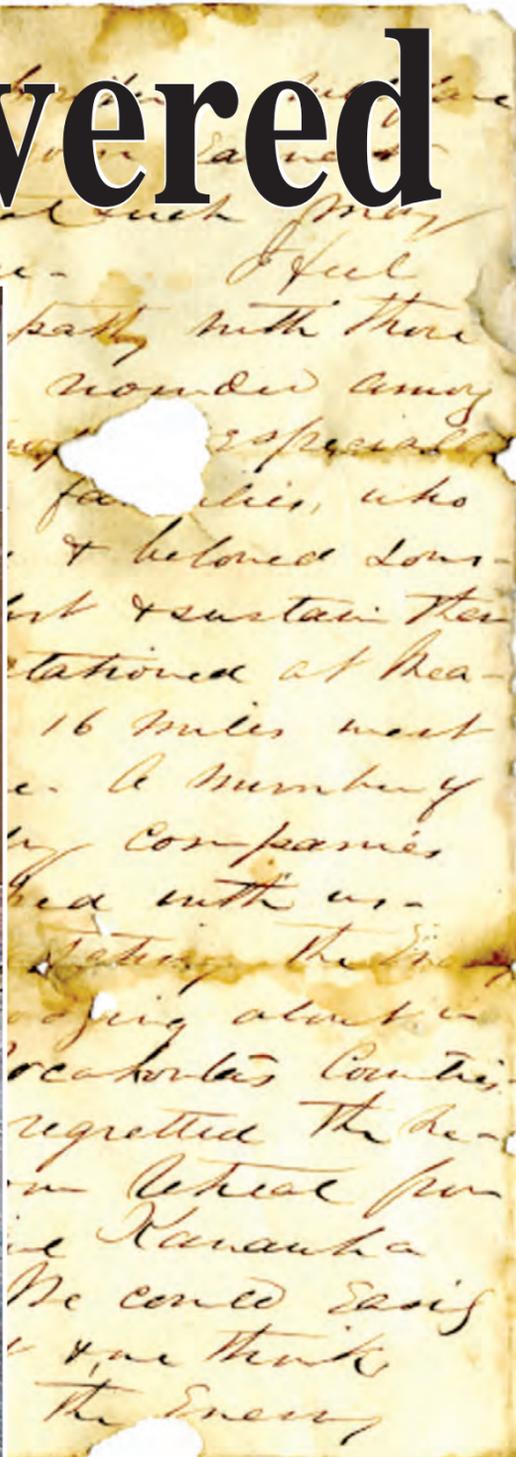
It's a wonder that the letter had not been eaten by a rodent."

The 9-by-11-inch paper on which the letter was written was very fragile, she said. "It was folded in half and then in thirds on top of that."

Because it has lost its envelope over the years, the outside of the letter was very dirty, but the words were still legible, except for the ones that had vanished because of tears that resulted from the many times it was folded



LAURA ORRISON holds the letter near the space where it was found in the home on Randolph Street. It has sat undisturbed through many changes of occupants for nearly 160 years.



Two other Junkin sons fought for the Confederacy -- Ebenezer D. and George G. Junkin. Ebenezer Junkin was the minister at Old Providence Presbyterian Church near Brownsburg from 1860 to 1880.

Jackson remained close to the Junkin family and had an abiding friendship with Margaret Junkin.

Mary Price Coulling, the author of "Margaret Junkin Preston: A Biography," said that as Jackson left Lexington in April 1861, William Finney Junkin witnessed his departure with his brigade. "He was on hand right near the cemetery when Jackson marched off to war," she said.

### In The Letter

After making the discovery of the letter, Orrison made her way over to Special Collections at W&L and put the letter in the hands of Seth McCormick-Goodhart, assistant director of Special Collections. He then transcribed the letter and essentially brought it from the 19th to the 21st century.

"We love these sorts of discoveries," McCormick-Goodhart said. "It's exciting. We've had a number of things like this, but not necessarily found in a wall."

As for how it ended up in the wall, he speculates that the recipient could have been convalescing in the home and it could have dropped from a desk and become wedged between the baseboard and the wall.

while encamped with his unit at Lewisburg, Virginia, now West Virginia.

Junkin was a son of George Junkin who was also a Presbyterian minister and the president of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University, from 1848 to 1861. The elder Junkin resigned from his post because of controversy over his pro-Union views. The younger Junkin had two sisters, Margaret and Elinor. Margaret Junkin was often called "the Poetess of the South." Elinor Junkin was Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson's first wife who died in childbirth at the age of 29.

and its age.

The letter, dated Aug. 7, 1861, was penned by William Finney Junkin of Co. D, 10th Virginia Cavalry, to Edward Y. Northern, Co., 27th Virginia Infantry, "Stonewall Brigade." Junkin, a native of Lexington, wrote the letter

# The Face Of Freedom

*Escaped Slave's Daring, Inspiring Story Comes Home*

*This article was written by Eric Wilson, executive director of the Rockbridge Historical Society, for the next piece in the "Local Black Histories" series on the RHS website. New, original research comes from historian Dorris Keeven-Franke, who visited Lexington in 2019. For more details, see her ArcherAlexander.blog.*

His name is Archer Alexander.

You won't find either name on his statue in the nation's capital; even its plaque. But now his name echoes resonantly, again, in Rockbridge County.

He was born here in 1806, enslaved.

In August 1829, he was taken west in an 800-mile, five-family caravan, moving from the nation's largest slave state, Virginia, to its newest, Missouri.

In February 1863, he made the decision to free himself: running away to Union lines, foiling a plot by Confederate sympathizers to sabotage a railroad bridge, saving scores of lives.

After the Civil War, he rose up - monumentally.

He became the national face, quite literally, for the Emancipation Memorial that was installed in Washington, D.C.: the anonymous, self-emancipated hero who was chosen to accompany President Lincoln to ground the bronze-cast statue in Lincoln Park. Dedicated by Frederick Douglass in 1876, it was funded entirely by the contributions of former slaves.

What most people who see the statue don't know, though, is Archer Alexander's distinctive history, and his own efforts in freeing himself and in aiding American war efforts to free others.

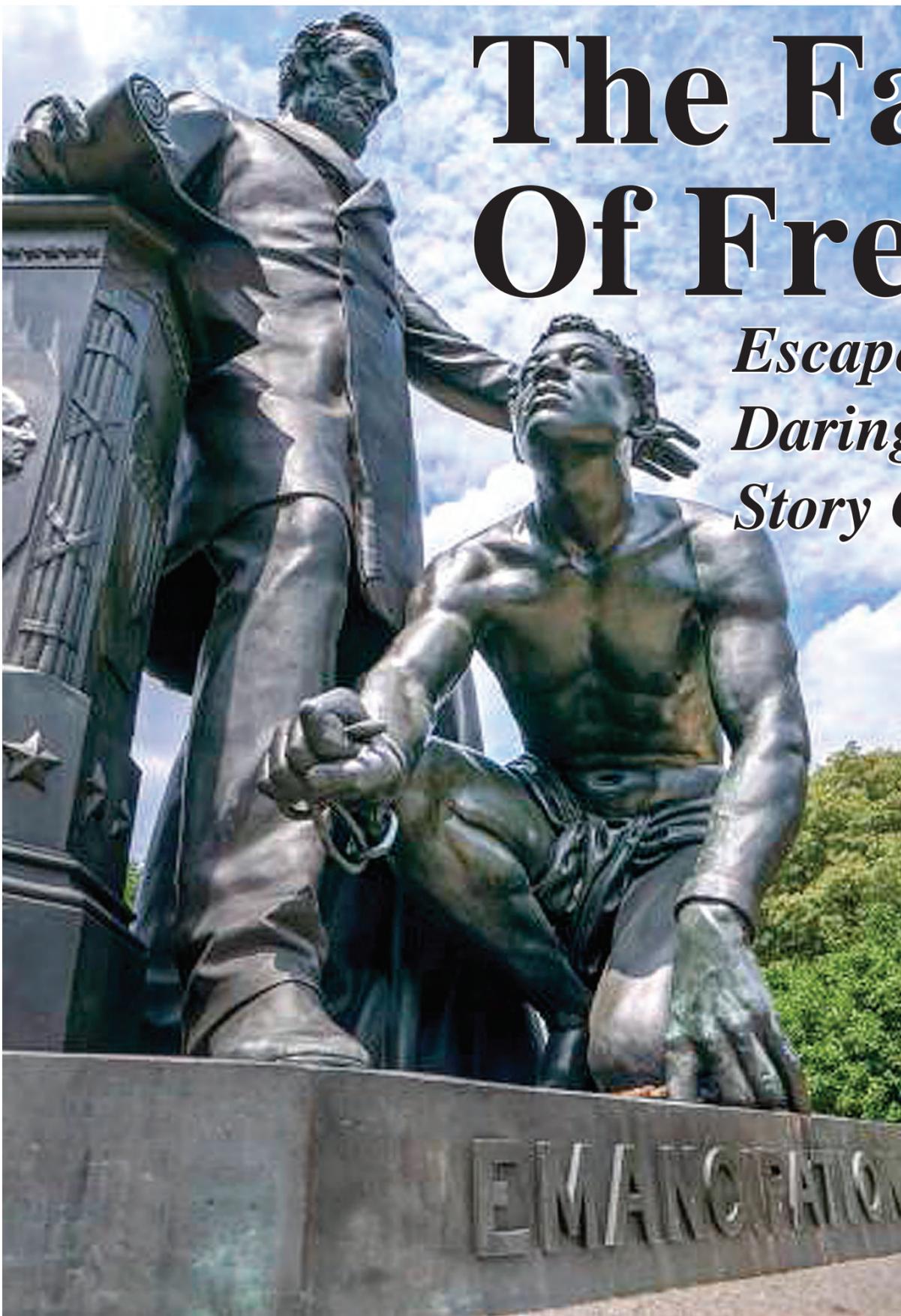
### Descendants

Archer Alexander died in St. Louis in 1880. His first wife, Louisa, was also born in Rockbridge ca. 1808, was taken on that same westward journey, along with their newborn son, Wesley. The couple was separated by an estate executor in the 1840s. But after fleeing to St. Louis during the Civil War, and hiding in Illinois, Archer paid \$25 to a German friend to smuggle Louisa to join him. Archer noted that in their 30 years of marriage, they had 10 children together.

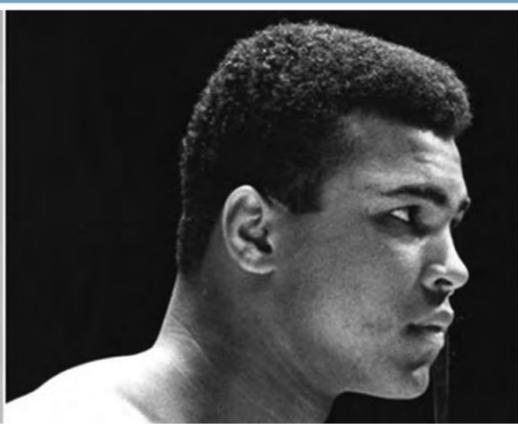
Their many descendants would include, most famously, Muhammad Ali.

After becoming boxing's heavyweight champion of the world, Ali then famously claimed his own

*See Alexander, page 2*



THE EMANCIPATION MEMORIAL, sculpted by Thomas Ball and erected in Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C., 1876.



ARCHER ALEXANDER (1806-1880) is the third great-grandfather of boxing great Muhammad Ali (1942-2016).



ABOVE, Keith Winstead (right), a third great-grandson of Archer Alexander, meets Tom Alexander, a descendant of John Alexander, at the historic Cherry Grove state in Fairfield last year. AT RIGHT is the railroad bridge at Peruque Creek, Mo., guarded by Union home guard troops during the Civil War. Archer Alexander warned the troops that the bridge had been sabotaged. The historic photo is courtesy of the St. Charles County Historical Society Archives, Mo.

