

JAMES ALEXANDER, aka “JIM LEWIS”

Larry Spurgeon¹ (2020)

“... let us not forget that James Lewis, General Jackson’s faithful body servant, lies in a neglected grave in the Colored Cemetery at Lexington, without a Stone to record his deathless devotion to the General.... He was faithful among the faithless in his devotion to and care of General Jackson’ and deserves a monument at our hands.”

Anonymous letter to Lexington Gazette (1875)²

A leading character in the wartime stories about General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson is his “body servant,” a black man known as Jim Lewis. Time has not dimmed his iconic status - he was featured in the book and movie about the Civil War, “Gods and Generals.”³ Though wartime anecdotes about him appeared in books and articles, almost nothing is known about his life. As Jackson’s preeminent biographer, James I. Robertson, Jr., put it, of the “people intimately associated with the general, less is known of this figure than any other person. Lewis was black and a Lexington resident. Beyond that the facts are few and confusing.”⁴

Some historians concluded he was a freedman,⁵ but Robertson thought “a good case can be made that Lewis was a slave whom Jackson hired from his owner.” That assumption was based upon entries in Jackson’s wartime account book for payments to William C. Lewis of Lexington, Virginia, for the “hire of Jim.”⁶ William Cook Lewis (1796-1868), was the Commissioner of the Rockbridge County Court of Chancery, and an elder at Lexington Presbyterian Church, where Jackson was a deacon.⁷ It was a common practice for slaveowners to “hire out” enslaved people, usually at a monthly rate, paid at the beginning of the year.

Yet there is an anomaly. Both of the adult male slaves owned by William C. Lewis, according to the 1860 census, were 56 years old, one described as black and the other as mulatto.⁸ One of Jackson’s military aides, Henry Kyd Douglas, described Jim as “a handsome mulatto, in the prime of life, well-made and with excellent manners.”⁹ A man nearing 60 when the war began was hardly in the “prime of life,” just one of the mysteries surrounding Jim Lewis.

I assumed the many questions about Jim would remain unanswered, given the passage of time, and the extensive research about Jackson. And then, while updating my research on the enslaved people owned by Jackson, I came across a newspaper article entitled “Stonewall Jackson’s Body-Servant.” Originally published in the Lexington Gazette, and reprinted by national newspapers in 1878,¹⁰ several details about Jim were included that have not appeared in Jackson biographies.

First, he was referred to as “James Alexander, or Lewis, Mr. William Lewis of Lexington, being his owner.” Since the piece was written for a Lexington audience only 13 years after the Civil War, many readers would have remembered Jim, so his actual surname must have been Alexander, the name Lewis an “aka.” Second, Jim “died at the house of Mrs. Winn during the winter of 1864.” First-hand accounts mentioned Jim’s death in Lexington that year, but the precise location was not known. Third, his “wife, whose name was Adaline, now lives in Philadelphia.”¹¹ No wife or family member has been associated with Jim before.

Intrigued, I set out to review primary sources, including censuses, newspapers, and courthouse records. What I discovered is explained in the second part of this paper, entitled “James Alexander.” But first, to provide context, is a chronological summary of what was previously known about “Jim Lewis,” taken mostly from recollections by officers who served under Jackson. Though complimentary of him, their accounts included crude dialect and stereotypical characterizations about blacks. The

National Park website for the battles of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania captured it well: “Any relationship Lewis had with Jackson, even one as amicable as surviving accounts suggest, cannot be removed from the context of the inequitable power dynamic between master and slave.”¹²

No monument was erected to him, despite the plea from an anonymous member of Jackson’s command in the letter to the Lexington Gazette ten years after the war. Even the location of his grave is lost to history. Perhaps the most fitting monument, more than a century and a half later, is to uncouple him from the legend of Jackson, and tell his story, a partial and incomplete story to be sure.

Jim Lewis

It has long been assumed that Jim was first with General Jackson in Winchester, Virginia. Jackson arrived in Winchester on November 5, 1861, after being given command of the Valley District.¹³ An entry in his account book for November 7, 1861, was for a \$10 payment to Jim. In early December, Jackson paid \$30 to William C. Lewis in preparation for Jim’s furlough to Lexington. Colonel J. T. L. Preston, Jackson’s friend and VMI colleague, who served for a time on Jackson’s staff, referred to that furlough in a letter to his wife, dated December 5, 1861. Margaret “Maggie” Junkin Preston, the well-known poet and novelist, was the older sister of Jackson’s first wife, Elinor “Ellie” Junkin. Preston wrote from Winchester “But now Jim Lewis is going home on furlough, I cannot refrain from scribbling again. White people here have no chance of getting a furlough; it is only our colored friends who can escape for a time the evils of war.”¹⁴

One of the puzzles surrounding Jim is why he took a furlough to Lexington in early December if he did not become Jackson’s “body-servant” until mid-November, at the earliest. The 1878 article corrects the timeline, stating that William C. Lewis’s son, W. W. Lewis, had a memorandum from his father’s papers, showing that “Jim left for Manassas to join General Jackson, who had hired him for and during the war at \$12.50 per month, also, several letters from General Jackson to his father in regard to Jim, and enclosing checks on Bank of Rockbridge for amounts due.”¹⁵

After the battle of First Manassas, on July 21, 1861, Jackson remained in the area until August 2, when his troops were moved to Camp Harman, eight miles north of Manassas and a mile east of Centreville. His wife, Mary Anna (Anna) Morrison Jackson, first visited her husband there, arriving on September 9, and leaving by September 17. Anna wrote to her husband’s sister, Laura Arnold, on the day she arrived, describing Jackson as “faring admirably, he has an excellent cook, & two of the best of servants.”¹⁶ She mentioned the cook by name, a man named George,¹⁷ in her book about her husband, and Jim was likely one of the two servants referenced.

Jackson relocated to a farm three miles from Fairfax Courthouse on September 17,¹⁸ and by mid-October was camped just west of Centreville. His 21 year old aide from Lexington, Alexander Swift “Sandie” Pendleton, wrote his sister on October 23 from Centreville that he was the “only member of the Genl.’s staff now – Adjut. Genl. aide de camp, & Boss generally, and I have to be here all the time.”¹⁹ Jim must have joined Jackson near Manassas in August or September, well before the general’s posting in Winchester.

Incredibly, Jim was mentioned by name in a Massachusetts newspaper in September 1862. Intended to be humorous, about the manufacture of wartime news in Washington, the piece was credited to a Washington correspondent of the Providence Press. It purported to be a story, passed through many hands, that a black man who had escaped the south was “well acquainted with Stonewall Jackson’s servant Jim.” Jim told him that Jackson was “going to get

between Gens. Pope and Butler with a force of 250,000 men, and surround them both, and then march on to Washington, by way of Block Island!!!”²⁰

Alexander R. Boteler had served in the United States Congress, and was a member of the Confederate Congress. Robertson described him as Jackson’s “close friend, confidante, and chief liaison in Richmond,” who later served intermittently on Jackson’s staff.²¹ In an 1888 newspaper interview, he emphasized the influence that Jim had on Jackson. One night during the battle of Fredericksburg, Boteler was in the tent when Jackson came in late and began reading his Bible. Pretending to be asleep, Boteler heard a horse gallop up and Jackson went outside. Told that one of his officers was “dying and wished to see him,” he ordered Jim to put the saddle on the “old sorrel, and Jim said “General, you don’t want the old sorrel. It has been ridden enough today.” Jackson replied that he always rode the sorrel in battle, and Jim said “But General, you are not going to fight to-morrow are you?” “Jim, I always ride the old sorrel in battle, and I want him to-night.” Jim replied that he could not have the old sorrel, that he would bring the young sorrel and if they fought the next day Jackson could ride the old sorrel. After more parley, “Jackson told Jim to do as he pleased and he took the young horse rather than his old and favorite one.”²²

James Power Smith, one of Jackson’s young military aides, related a story about a horse given to Jackson by Colonel Mike Harman and others from Augusta County, before the Battle of Fredericksburg, in December 1862. It was a “large and handsome bay,” known as Superior.

Superior was much admired by the general, and sometimes used by him in the last winter of his life when his headquarters were at the Corbin place, Moss Neck, Caroline County. This horse was more frequently used by the general’s servant, Jim, who had the care of him, and on the march from the Valley led the mounted servants and the headquarters’ wagons. Over in Clarke County, on a Sunday afternoon, Jim, on Superior, at the head of a troop of our servants, affected the style of a general and staff, and went off, with hat in his hand, to some church for the colored people. I remember the general himself and the staff coming out of their tents to see the colored contingent go off in great style.²³

Jackson referred to Jim in a February 7, 1863 letter to his wife. “Jim has returned from Lexington and brought a letter from ‘Cy’ asking permission to take unto himself a wife, to which I intend to give my consent, provided you or his mother do not object.”²⁴ That was the second furlough Jim took to Lexington in a period of 14 months. “Cy” was Cyrus, one of the enslaved people owned by Jackson. He and his brother George were hired out to Samuel J. Campbell, who owned a farm southwest of Lexington, through the end of 1862.²⁵

Henry Kyd Douglas provided one of the few physical descriptions of Jim:

The faithful fellow has become historical by reason of his association with General Jackson, to whom his devotion was a kind of superstition. He became important and was aware of it and never denied an anecdote told of him, however incredible, if the General was in it. He was a handsome mulatto, in the prime of life, well-made and with excellent manners, but perhaps altogether true only to the General.²⁶

Douglas recalled that Jim was an admirer of Jackson’s “temperance views, although they did not apply to himself, for he was fond of liquor and was, it was said, somewhat addicted to cards and a quiet little game.” Jim said he had been asked so often to drink to Jackson’s health that the “hospitality of the

people was too many for Jeems.”” Douglas wrote that when Jackson died “Jim’s honest grief was almost inconsolable,” and that he then attached himself to Sandie Pendleton, “but when he fell also Jim seemed to break down. He grew sad and went home on a short furlough, saying he would come back and join some one of the ‘old staff,’ Jackson’s own.” But, Douglas added, Jim was “taken ill and died in Lexington and lies buried in that historic town.”²⁷

When Jackson was taken to Guiney Station after his wounding at Chancellorsville in May 1863, Dr. Hunter McGuire, the Medical Director for Jackson’s Corps, ordered that the only people who could enter the room without his permission were James P. Smith, Joseph Morrison (Jackson’s brother-in-law), Rev. Lacy, and Jim. Jim occupied a small room downstairs next to the office where Jackson was placed, while the others stayed upstairs.²⁸ Dr. McGuire later wrote an account of Jackson’s last days:

About 1 o’clock Thursday morning, while I was asleep upon a lounge in his room, he directed his servant (Jim) to apply a wet towel to his stomach to relieve an attack of nausea, with which he was again troubled. The servant asked permission to first consult me, but the General knowing that I had slept none for nearly three nights, refused to allow the servant to disturb me, and demanded the towel.²⁹

Jackson died on Sunday, May 10. Anna wrote that “Tears were shed over that dying bed by strong men who were unused to weep, and it was touching to see the genuine grief of his servant, Jim, who nursed him faithfully to the end.”³⁰

The first funeral for Jackson was in Richmond on May 12. Jim Lewis was part of the procession, leading one of Jackson’s horses – Sorrel according to one historian, Superior according to another. He was with the funeral party on the train from Richmond to Lynchburg, and on the packet boat on the James River to Lexington. The 1878 article stated that Jim returned to Lexington with General Jackson’s remains, and “was in the funeral procession, leading the General’s horse.”³¹ He was supposed to have said that “I never knew a pious gentleman.”³²

After Jackson’s death Jim became the servant for Sandie Pendleton,³³ the son of General William Nelson Pendleton, the rector at Grace Episcopal Church in Lexington before the war. General Pendleton attended West Point, in the class behind Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston, and two years behind Jefferson Davis. During the war he was Chief of Artillery for the Army of Northern Virginia.³⁴ Jackson commended Sandie for “valuable service,” in his official report after First Manassas, notable because he was not known for high praise. Sandie was promoted to major in January 1863, and named the assistant adjutant general of the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. In August of that year he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.³⁵

Jedidiah Hotchkiss, Jackson’s noted mapmaker, wrote that from the time he first met Sandie he “had the most intimate and pleasant relations and whom I learned to respect and admire for his sterling qualities as a man and as an officer.”³⁶ Douglas called Sandie his “dearest friend” in the army, and of Jackson’s staff in the Second Corp, the “ablest of them all. I believe him to have been, in spite of his youth, the most brilliant staff officer in the Army of Northern Virginia, and the most popular with officers and men,” adding that “Jackson loved him as a son.”³⁷ Sandie was the one person who could indulge the general in humor.³⁸

On September 22, 1864, at the Battle of Fisher’s Hill, near Strasburg, Virginia, Sandie was “shot in the groin and through the body.” He told Douglas the wound was mortal, and “gave

me his watch, pocketbook, prayer book, Bible, and haversack, and some letters from his wife, to be sent to her, and asked me to write and tell her of his death.” Sandie was taken to Dr. Murphy’s house at Woodstock, and “died the next day in the hands of the enemy.”³⁹

A telegram with news of his wounding was received by Sandie’s sister in Staunton, Susan Lee. Their mother, Anzolette, soon arrived on her way to visit General Pendleton in Petersburg. Anzolette and Susan went to Lexington to tell Sandie’s sisters, and his pregnant wife, Kate Corbin Pendleton. Reports were received in Lexington on September 25 that Sandie had been seriously wounded, and was taken to a home in Woodstock. One report was from a courier sent by Dr. Black, who treated Sandie along with Dr. McGuire, and the other from an officer in the battle.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, General Pendleton was granted a two-week furlough by General Lee to return home. Though officers in Petersburg had received confirmation of Sandie’s death, they did not have the heart to tell him before he left.⁴¹



*Alexander Swift (Sandie) Pendleton (1840-1864)*⁴²

According to Sandie’s biographer, about October 1 the family’s “hopes were revived by two messages brought by Jim Lewis, Sandie’s servant, who had come from army headquarters near Port Republic.” The first message was from Dr. McGuire, saying that he could not believe Sandie was dead. The second was from Douglas, who provided Jim with a letter expressing hope of Sandie’s recovery.⁴³ Dr. McGuire arrived in Lexington on October 3, and Anzolette called on him at the hotel. He said that he had received word from Dr. Meems that Sandie had died, but apparently he still considered it a rumor. Perhaps he was being cautious, since he had not received official word, but the result was continuing agony for the family. Finally, on October 17, the family received a letter from Mrs. Murphy confirming Sandie’s death.⁴⁴

A letter about Jim was printed in the Lexington Gazette on December 17, 1875. The unidentified writer described himself as a major in Jackson’s command. Entitled “AN APPEAL TO STONEWALL JACKSON’S OLD COMMAND,” it is quoted here in full:

While the world is sounding the praises of England’s noble gift to Virginia in honor of her beloved son, let us not forget that James Lewis, General Jackson’s faithful body servant, lies in a neglected grave in the Colored Cemetery at Lexington, without a Stone to record his deathless devotion to the General. Jim was with the General until his death, followed his body through Richmond and to Lexington, and then served the gallant Colonel Sandy Pendleton till his glorious death at Tom’s Brook. The writer met him bringing the Col.’s horse and baggage home, bowed down with grief, inconsolable, but in

apparently good health. We tried to cheer him up, but could only get for an answer, “Major, de dear ole General’s gone, and Mars Sandy’s, and its Jim’s time next,” and sadly he went on his way to carry out “Mars Sandy’s” last requests; and in a few days afterwards we passed his corpse going to the cemetery.

He was faithful among the faithless in his devotion to and care of General Jackson’ and deserves a monument at our hands. Contributions from the Staff officers of the corps, and all who remember him, will be received at the Gazette office. P.S. – Papers South please copy or notice. ONE OF THE STAFF.⁴⁵

An extraordinary public tribute to a black man, by a former Confederate Army officer, in the midst of post-war Reconstruction, it was a call to Jackson’s command to contribute money for a tombstone. Jim was buried in the old “colored cemetery,” on Washington Street, a few blocks east of Jackson’s house. Burials were terminated by the city council in 1880, and a new black cemetery, later called Evergreen, was established. A persistent story over the years was that most if not all of the bodies from the old cemetery were removed to Evergreen, but in all likelihood few bodies were reinterred.⁴⁶

James Alexander

From previous research, I knew that Rockbridge County, Virginia began keeping detailed records of births and deaths in the early 1850s. The first thing I checked was whether a death had been reported for a black man named James Alexander in 1864. The images below are from the death register in the county courthouse.⁴⁷ The death of James Alexander is recorded on Line 3. Several things tie to the 1878 article. He died in 1864, he was the consort of a woman named “Addaline.” His occupation was “House Servant,” and his “Employer” was William C. Lewis. This is the death record for the man known to history as “Jim Lewis.”

REGISTER											
Lines Numbered.	NAME IN FULL.	COLORED.		NAME OF THE OWNER OF SLAVE.	SEX.		DATE OF DEATH.	PLACE OF DEATH.	NAME OF DISEASE, OR CAUSE OF DEATH.	AGE.	
		WHITE.	Free.		Slave.	Male.				Female.	Years.
1	William S. Alexander		1		1		1864 June 13th	Rockbridge County			4
2	Annanda Alexander		1			1	April 1st	"			17
3	James Alexander		1		1		August	"	Phuricy		20

DEATHS.						
Lines Numbered.	NAMES OF PARENTS.	WHERE BORN.	OCCUPATION.	CONSORT OF, OR UNMARRIED.	SOURCES OF INFORMATION.	
					Name of Person giving Information of Death.	Designation of Informant, whether Physician, Surgeon, Coroner, Head of the Family, Friend, &c.
1	Annanda & Jas Alexander	Rockbridge Co		Unmarried	Jacob Menden	Employee
2				James Alexander	"	"
3		"	House servant	Addaline	William C. Lewis	"

His age at death was estimated as “40,” corroborating Douglas’s description of him. The cause of death was “Pleurisy.” Pleurisy is “inflammation of the pleura, the membrane that lines the lungs within the chest cavity.” It can be caused by different things, including lung infections and the flu.⁴⁸ During the Civil War, it was a generic term for lung related diseases. Douglas wrote that Jim was home on furlough after Sandie’s death, that he intended to return and serve another officer in Jackson’s old command, but was “taken ill and died in Lexington.”⁴⁹ The writer of the 1875 letter to the Lexington Gazette recalled that Jim was apparently in good health about October 1, but died soon after. The most plausible scenario is that he contracted a bacterial or viral lung disease and died within a short period of time.

The column for a “Free – Colored” person was marked for Alexander, but all of the deaths for black people in the county for the year 1864 record that they were “free.” Clearly the death records were altered in later years. The question about Alexander’s status as free or enslaved cannot be answered definitively – circumstantial evidence cuts both ways.

No free black man named James Alexander is included in the censuses, and the fact that he was known as “Jim Lewis” would be strange if he was free. The 1878 newspaper article referred to him as owned by William C. Lewis, and W. W. Lewis said that his father’s papers included evidence that Jackson agreed to pay \$12.50 per month for the hire of James. Jackson paid William C. Lewis \$150 in both December 1861 and December 1862, reflecting an annualized payment for that monthly rate.⁵⁰ While it is possible the money paid to Lewis was intended for Alexander, and Lewis handled it by depositing it in the local bank, Jackson and Lewis treated the arrangement as if an enslaved person was being hired out.

Jackson’s wartime account book refers to payments to Alexander for a furlough in December 1861. “Paid Jim to go home on [sic] \$30 W. Lewis paid him to return on 9 total – 39. His expenses were 18, balance 21. Total charged him 26.” On December 25, Jackson wrote “Sent Mr. W. C. Lewis check for hire. On December 29, 1862, Jackson noted that he had “sent check No. 221, date Dec. 26, from Capt. Elhart on T. C. S. to Wm. W. Lewis/hire of Jim/150.” That was followed by a note that described an annual arrangement for his hire, at \$12.50 per month, through 1862, and then \$12 per month.⁵¹

Jackson’s cook George, mentioned by Anna Jackson about her visit to Camp Harman in September 1861,⁵² was a free man from Lexington, as reflected in the 1860 census, a laborer, age 45, living in the household of John W. Haughawout, later mayor of Lexington.⁵³ Jackson paid George \$45, for a total of \$200 to date, in December 1861. On December 26, he “gave George Frazier check on Bk. Of Rockbridge for wages to the end of 1861.” In February 1862, Jackson wrote that he “Paid George a Twenty dollar note.” Jackson later wrote that “George left Lexington on 19th of July 1861 & was to receive \$15 per month & clothe himself. I paid him his expenses to Manassas & included it in check dated Dec. 26, 1861.” The payment arrangements between Frazier and Alexander are notably different.

Yet some circumstantial evidence supports the idea that Alexander may have been free. As noted earlier, William C. Lewis reported two adult male slaves in 1860, both age 56, twenty years older than Alexander, based on his death record that was presumably reported by Lewis. In 1850, Lewis reported one male slave, age 15.⁵⁴ William C. Lewis did not own Alexander, or he failed to report him in two censuses.

Civil War buffs have long debated whether Alexander was enslaved or free, based on the two furloughs he took to Lexington in little more than a year. We now know why – he had a wife and perhaps children – but it has been speculated that he would not have been given leave to travel alone unless he was a free man. Though enslaved people did sometimes travel alone - an enslaved woman owned by the Jacksons, Hetty, traveled alone on at least two occasions, one during the war to North

Carolina – but it seems unusual in Alexander’s situation.

If he was a freedman, the question is whether he was emancipated at some point, or born into a family of freedmen. The story of the manumission of enslaved people in Virginia is complex, and far beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief overview illustrates the enormous legal and practical burdens placed upon them. In 1782 the Virginia legislature made it somewhat easier for slaveowners to grant manumission by will or deed. The result was a significant increase in the population of free blacks, for a time, but severe restrictions were imposed beginning in 1793. A Virginia law precluded non-resident blacks from moving to Virginia. Another law required free blacks to register with the county, to maintain registration papers, and to re-register if they relocated to another county. In 1806, a law was passed that required all slaves manumitted after that date to leave the state within one year, though the law did permit exemptions by petition.⁵⁵

... the order granting such permission shall be void, unless it shew that all the acting justices were summoned, and a majority of them present and voting on the questions of permitting said negro to remain in the state, that notice of the application for such permission was posted at the courthouse door for at least two months immediately preceding, that the attorney for the commonwealth, or in his absence some other attorney appointed by the court for the purpose, represented the state as counsel in the case, and that the applicant produced satisfactory proof of his being of good character, sober, peaceable, orderly and industrious.⁵⁶

Another statute required “Every free negro” to register every five years, and a book was to “be kept by the clerk of the court of the county or corporation where such free negro resides.” The register was required by law to “specify his name, age, colour and stature, with any apparent mark or scar on his face, head or hands, by what instrument he was emancipated, and when and where it was recorded; or that he was born free, and in what county or place.” Any person who could not produce a copy of his or her registration could be jailed until the copy was produced, and a second arrest could result in a punishment “with stripes” – lashing with a whip.⁵⁷

Alexander was a common name for blacks in Rockbridge County, both free and enslaved. before and after the war. Three free black men named Alexander appeared on early personal property tax records. Thomas Alexander of South River was included on the “List of Free Negroes and Mullattoes” for 1814, Andrew Alexander for 1819, and Thornton Alexander for the years 1816 to 1819. Thornton was described as “at the forge” in 1818.⁵⁸

Thornton, with a large family, was listed in both the 1820 and 1830 censuses for Rockbridge County.⁵⁹ He and three children appear in the registration records for “Free Negroes.” Thornton registered in 1838, described as 45, 5’4 ½”, and a “bright Mulatto colour,” born in Orange County, Virginia, the son of “Sooky Alexander.”⁶⁰ His daughter Susan Hope, age 16, registered November 1, 1836, the wife of William Hope, and their marriage was recorded in Rockbridge County in April 1836.⁶¹ Thornton’s son William Alexander was 21 when he registered on February 6, 1838,⁶² and his son James registered August 7, 1840.

Registered James Patterson Alexander, a free boy of Colour, aged twenty one years the 26th of Septemr. last, five feet six inches high, Mulatto colour Curly, bushy hair both his thumbs crooked, has a scar on the wrist of the left arm near the thumb born free in Rockbridge County, & son of Thornton Alexander.⁶³

Registrations of free blacks had to be submitted to the county court for approval. The images below, from the Rockbridge County Minute Book, 1837-1840, show the court's approval for the registrations of Thornton, William, and James P. Alexander.⁶⁴

cpd Register of Thornton Alexander a free man of colour made in the clerks office of this court. was produced in court and said Alexander being examined, it is ordered to be certified that said register is truly made

gd Same of William Alexander a free man of colour - same order

cp. Register of James P. Alexander a free man of colour made in the clerks office was produced in court and said Alexander being examined it is ordered to be certified that P. register is truly made

Other men in Rockbridge County were named James Alexander. A man by that name appeared in the 1870 census,⁶⁵ likely the same man mentioned in the death register on the same page as the death record for James Alexander. Line 2 recorded the death of Amanda Alexander, age 17, who died on April 1, 1864. The death of her four-month-old baby, William S. Alexander, on June 13, 1864, was recorded on Line 1. James Alexander was Amanda's consort and the father of William. Both deaths were reported by Jacob Mohler, described as the "Employer."⁶⁶ Mohler lived and farmed in the Natural Bridge area.⁶⁷

That James Alexander may be the same man who married Frances J. Williams on November 10, 1867 in Rockbridge County. He was the son of William and Jennie Alexander,⁶⁸ and was not, therefore, James Patterson Alexander. That increases the odds that the man known as Jim Lewis was James Patterson Alexander, but there is no way to be sure. If so, he was born September 26, 1818, making him 43 when he joined up with Jackson at Manassas in 1861, and 46 at the time of his death.

Aside from his status as free or enslaved, several other questions remain. Why was he chosen to be Jackson's "body servant," of the many black men in Lexington, including an enslaved man named Albert, of about the same age, owned by Jackson. Jackson's nephew Thomas Jackson Arnold, stayed with the Jacksons for nine months as a thirteen year old, in 1858-1859. He explained to Jackson biographer Roy Bird Cook in 1931 that his uncle "did buy Albert, a very reliable and industrious man, under an agreement by which Albert paid him back as he earned money. Albert had a good job that was paying him well."⁶⁹ He was hired out to several places by Jackson, including VMI and the Lexington Hotel, and Anna wrote that his occupation was waiter.⁷⁰ Perhaps James was better suited for the work expected of him, because of physical fitness and experience. The actual reasons may never be known.

Why was he called Jim Lewis if his real name was James Alexander? Jackson's staff officers referred to him simply as "Jim," and Jackson called him Jim in his letter to Anna. Yet in December 1861, J. T. L. Preston used the name "Jim Lewis" in his letter to Maggie, which suggests that he had

been a house servant for William C. Lewis for many years.

Why was there a discrepancy in the date of death? According to the death register, James Alexander died in August. Two people who knew Jim well were clear that he died after Sandie's death on September 23, 1864,⁷¹ Douglas and the writer of the 1875 letter to the Lexington Gazette. The latter wrote that he met Jim bringing Sandie's "horse and baggage home to Lexington, bowed down with grief, inconsolable, but in apparently good health."⁷² The wording implies he met Jim on the road to Lexington within days of Sandie's death, and Jim arrived in Lexington about October 1.⁷³ The August date must be incorrect. Most of the deaths reported in the official death register have a specific date of death, so the notation for "August" means that William C. Lewis reported the death weeks, if not months later. Either he recalled the month incorrectly, or the person recording the information made an error.

Adeline Alexander

The 1878 newspaper article stated that James Alexander died at Mrs. Winn's house. Sarah F. Winn and her husband Joseph Winn lived in Lexington for many years. Joseph's sister was Lucy Winn Jordan, the wife of John Jordan, a leading business and civic leader in early Lexington. John, from Goochland County, and Lucy, from Hanover County, moved to Lexington in 1802. After returning from the War of 1812, he purchased land between the North River (later renamed the Maury River), and Wood's Creek, where he established industrial works, an area now known as Jordan's Point. In 1818, the Jordans built the house known as "Stono," near VMI.⁷⁴

In 1850, Joseph and Sarah Winn owned nine enslaved people, including five females.⁷⁵ Joseph died in 1856,⁷⁶ and in 1860 Sarah reported 18 enslaved people, including adult females aged 59, 38, 38, 24, 22, and 20.⁷⁷ Between 1855 and 1861 Sarah reported ten births to her enslaved women.⁷⁸ One of them was "Adaline," who gave birth to an unnamed baby on January 26, 1857, who died the same day,⁷⁹ and to Emma, on January 21, 1858.

The Lexington Gazette printed an obituary on November 15, 1864, for Lucy Ann Winn, "daughter of Mr. Joseph Winn." She was "especially distinguished for the filial devotion with which she sought to promote the comfort and happiness of her widowed mother." Lucy died on October 24 "at the residence of her mother, near the V. M. Institute."⁸⁰ Sarah sold land and "the house in which she now resides," to George W. Jordan, the son of John and Lucy Jordan, in September 1865. The house was within the city limits, and the 25 acres lay "partly within & partly without said limits & adjoining the lands of Archibald Graham, S. McD. Reid, S. F. Jordan, & others."⁸¹



The map shown above of Rockbridge County, made by the Confederate Engineer Bureau in 1863, indicates the location of the Winn house, situated on the south side of the river, to the east of VMI and Stono, on the bluff close to today's Highway 11.⁸² The arrow marks the spot where James Alexander died.

Several months after his death the war ended and enslaved people gained their freedom, at least in name. The census for that year shows Adeline living in the household of Margaret McDowell (see below). Curiously, Adeline was reported to be only 21, which cannot be correct.⁸³ Age errors in censuses were common, and several things indicate that it must be the same person. First, the odds of two black women by that name in the small town of Lexington seem long. Second, a child named Emma of about the same age was living with her. Third, Margaret McDowell's husband, Robert Moore McDowell, who died in 1869, was the brother of Rebecca McDowell Lewis, the second wife of William C. Lewis.⁸⁴ Margaret McDowell took Adeline into her home after the death of William C. Lewis, her brother-in-law, in 1868.

1	301	301	McDowell Margaret	47	F	W	Horse Keeper		350	Virginia
5			— Maggie	24	F	W				Virginia
6			— Robert	21	M	W		?		Virginia
7			— Willie	19	M	W				Virginia
8			— James	17	M	W				Virginia
9			— Elizabeth	73	F	W			6880	Virginia
10			Alexander Adeline	21	F	W				Virginia
11			— Emma	10	F	W	At School			Virginia
12			— Fannie	8	F	W				Virginia
13			— Gilbert	12	M	W	At School			Virginia

Two other children named Alexander were shown with Adeline in the 1870 census, Gilbert 12 and Fannie 8. Sarah Winn did not report the births of any children with those names. The census described both as black, while Adeline and Emma were "mulatto." The Philadelphia city directories for the years 1876 through at least 1881 list Adeline Alexander, the widow of "James."⁸⁵

Coda

James Alexander, aka "Jim Lewis," was born about 1820, possibly into a family of freedmen. His wife Adeline was enslaved, and he took several furloughs to Lexington during the war to visit her, and perhaps, one or more of their children. After Sandie Pendleton's death in September 1864, James took another furlough to Lexington, charged with delivering letters to Sandie's wife and parents, and bringing Sandie's personal effects home. Within days he became ill and died at Mrs. Winn's house, cared for by Adeline. His final resting place is lost to history, a final indignity he shares with hundreds of nameless black people in Lexington.

NOTES

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- ¹ Larry Spurgeon (BBA, JD): Senior Lecturer Emeritus, Wichita State University; Secretary, Rockbridge Historical Society, and interpreter at the Stonewall Jackson House Museum in Lexington, Virginia.
- ² Lexington Gazette, December 17, 1875, p. 3 (Microfilm, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University)
- ³ “Gods and Generals,” a movie written and directed by Ron Maxwell (2003). Based upon the book by that name by Jeff Shaara (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).
- ⁴ James I. Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend* (New York: Macmillan Publishing USA, 1997) 290
- ⁵ William Gleason Bean, *Stonewall’s Man: Sandie Pendleton* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959) 69
- ⁶ James I. Robertson, Jr., n. 4, at 290-291
- ⁷ *1860 Census, Town of Lexington*, Transcribed, corrected, and annotated by Edwin L. Dooley, Jr. (updated 2014), Edwin L. Dooley, Jr. Collection, Washington and Lee Special Collections and Archives
- ⁸ 1860 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Rockbridge County, Virginia, p. 5, John B. Brockenbrough (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁹ Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode With Stonewall: The War Experiences of the Youngest Member of Jackson’s Staff* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940, 1968) 154
- ¹⁰ Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (May 2, 1878), The Norfolk Virginian (May 3, 1878), The Atlanta Constitution (May 3, 1878), and The Tennessean (Nashville), May 4, 1878 (<https://www.newspapers.com>)
- ¹¹ Id.
- ¹² <https://www.nps.gov/frsp/learn/historyculture/jim-lewis.htm>
- ¹³ James I. Robertson, Jr., n. 4, at 279-283, 290
- ¹⁴ Preston, J. T. L. Letter to Margaret Preston, December 5, 1861. Elizabeth Preston Allan, *The Life and Letters of Margaret Junkin Preston* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1903) 122.
- ¹⁵ Pittsburgh Post, et al, n. 10
- ¹⁶ Jackson, Mary Ann. Letter to Laura Arnold, September 9, 1861, VMI Archives, Manuscript Acc #102, Arnold Family Papers, Box 5. The original letter is in Cook, Roy Bird (1886-1961), Collector, Papers. A & M 1561, Box 10, Folder F2, West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University.
- ¹⁷ Mary Anna Jackson, *Life and Letters of General Thomas J. Jackson* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892) (reprinted, Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1995) 191
- ¹⁸ James I. Robertson, Jr., n. 4, at 272, 276-277, 290
- ¹⁹ Pendleton, A. S. Letter to his sister Rose, October 23, 1861. (Special Collections and Archives, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University).
- ²⁰ Fall River (Massachusetts) Daily Evening News, September 5, 1862 (<https://www.newspapers.com>)
- ²¹ James I. Robertson, Jr., n. 4, at 280, 289, 413
- ²² The Marion (Ohio) Star, June 5, 1888 (<https://www.newspapers.com>)
- ²³ James Power Smith, *With Stonewall Jackson*, Southern Historical Society Papers, September 1920, New Series Number V, XLIII, 98 (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044004363743&view=1up&seq=>)
- ²⁴ Mary Anna Jackson, n. 17, at 415-416
- ²⁵ “Stonewall Jackson and His Slaves,” New York Times, December 24, 1883 (<https://www.newspapers.com>)
- ²⁶ Henry Kyd Douglas, n. 9, at 154
- ²⁷ Id., at 154-155
- ²⁸ James I. Robertson, Jr., n. 4, at 743-744
- ²⁹ Dr. Hunter McGuire, *Death of Stonewall Jackson*, 1886 (<https://civilwargazette.wordpress.com/2012/05/10/death-of-stonewall-jackson-by-dr-hunter-mcguire/>)
- ³⁰ Mary Anna Jackson, n. 17, at 470
- ³¹ Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, et al. n. 10
- ³² William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 121-124. James I. Robertson, Jr., n. 4, at 757, 761.
- ³³ William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 189. See also, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette et al., n. 10.
- ³⁴ Susan P. Lee, *Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton, D. D.* (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1991, original copyright 1893, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia) 27, 104, 187
- ³⁵ William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 80, 148
- ³⁶ Jedediah Hotchkiss, *Make Me a Map Of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson’s Topographer* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1973) 11
- ³⁷ Henry Kyd Douglas, n. 9, at 313
- ³⁸ William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 89
- ³⁹ Henry Kyd Douglas, n. 9, at 312-313
- ⁴⁰ William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 211
- ⁴¹ Susan P. Lee, n. 34, at 368-372

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- ⁴² <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/10672/alexander-swift-pendleton>
- ⁴³ William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 213
- ⁴⁴ Id., at 213-215
- ⁴⁵ Lexington Gazette, December 17, 1875, n. 2
- ⁴⁶ Richard G. Williams, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Black Man's Friend* (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2006)
- ⁴⁷ Death Register, 1853-1870, Circuit Court, Clerk's Office, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia
- ⁴⁸ https://www.health.harvard.edu/a_to_z/pleurisy-and-pleural-effusion-a-to-z
- ⁴⁹ Henry Kyd Douglas, n. 9, at 154-155
- ⁵⁰ Megan Haley, Graduate Fellow, The Stonewall Jackson House, Lexington, Virginia, "*The African-American Experience in Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson's Lexington* (1994). Copies from the account book are included as exhibits to her paper.
- ⁵¹ Id.
- ⁵² Mary Anna Jackson, n. 17, 191
- ⁵³ 1860 U.S. Census, Lexington, Rockbridge County, Virginia, pop. sch., p. 3, dwell. 17, fam. 17, John B. Brockenbrough (retrieved from [www. Ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com))
- ⁵⁴ 1850 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Rockbridge County, Virginia, p. 6, H. Risk (<https://www.ancestry.com>). 1860 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Rockbridge County, Virginia, p. 5, John B. Brockenbrough (<https://www.ancestry.com>).
- ⁵⁵ Ellen Eslinger, *Free Black Residency in Two Antebellum Virginia Counties: How the Laws Functioned*, *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (May 2013) 266, 271
- ⁵⁶ The Code of Virginia, 1849, Title 30, Chapter 107, Section 2 (<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x002676106&view=1up&seq=9>)
- ⁵⁷ Id., Sections 7-10
- ⁵⁸ Rockbridge County Personal Property Tax Lists, 1782-1821, Library of Virginia microfilms 299-301 (<http://www.freeafricanamericans.com/Rockbridge.htm>)
- ⁵⁹ 1820 U. S. Census, Rockbridge County, Virginia, pop. sch. 220 (<https://www.ancestry.com>). 1830 Census, Rockbridge County, Virginia, pop. sch., 287 (<https://www.ancestry.com>).
- ⁶⁰ Register of Free Negroes of Rockbridge County, 1805-1860 (Special Collections and Archives, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University) 66
- ⁶¹ Rockbridge County Marriages, 1778-1850, compiled by Dorthie and Edwin C. Kirkpatrick (Athens, Georgia: Iberian Publishing Company, 1985) 237
- ⁶² Register of Free Negroes of Rockbridge County, 1805-1860, n. 63, at 64, 67
- ⁶³ Id., at 71
- ⁶⁴ Rockbridge County, Minute Book, 1837-40, Circuit Court, Clerk's Office, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia
- ⁶⁵ 1870 Census, Rockbridge County, Virginia, G. A. Baker, (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁶⁶ Rockbridge County, Virginia Death Register, 1853-1870, Death Certificates, 1912-1917, Compiled by Angela M. Ruley (Athens, Georgia: Iberian Publishing Co., 1991) 164
- ⁶⁷ 1870 Census, Rockbridge County, Virginia, pop. sch., 45, dwell. 307, fam. 307, G. A. Baker, (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁶⁸ Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940 (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁶⁹ Arnold, Thomas Jackson. Letter to Roy Bird Cook, December 14, 1931. Cook, Roy Bird (1886-1961), Collector, Papers. A & M 1561, Box 5168, Folder 5-10, West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.
- ⁷⁰ Mary Anna Jackson, n. 17, at 114
- ⁷¹ Henry Kyd Douglas, n. 9, at 155. Lexington Gazette, December 17, 1875, n. 2.
- ⁷² Lexington Gazette, December 17, 1875, n. 2
- ⁷³ William Gleason Bean, n. 5, at 213
- ⁷⁴ Richard Cummins, Paper entitled *Colonel John Jordan: A True Local Hero*, 1992 (https://repository.wlu.edu/bitstream/handle/11021/32289/WLURG38_ArchPapers_Cummins_1992.pdf?sequence=1)
- ⁷⁵ 1850 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Rockbridge County, Virginia, p. 3, H. Risk (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁷⁶ Ruley, Rockbridge County, Virginia Death Register, n. 70
- ⁷⁷ 1860 U.S. Census, Slave Schedule, Rockbridge County, Virginia, p. 7, John B. Brockenbrough (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁷⁸ Birth Register No. 1 – 1853-1877, Circuit Court, Clerk's Office, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Virginia
- ⁷⁹ Id., and Ruley, Rockbridge County, Virginia Death Register, n. 70, at 66.
- ⁸⁰ Lexington Gazette, November 15, 1864 (Special Collections and Archives, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University)
- ⁸¹ Deed Book JJ, p. 88, Clerk of the Court's office, Rockbridge County Courthouse
- ⁸² <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gvhs01.vhs00331/?r=0.698,0.017,0.163,0.092>
- ⁸³ 1870 Census, Rockbridge County, Virginia, pop. sch., 47, dwell. 301, fam. 301, G. A. Baker (<https://www.ancestry.com>)
- ⁸⁴ <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/119610051/person/330190507200/facts>
- ⁸⁵ U. S. City Directories, 1822-1995 (<https://www.ancestry.com>). Adeline lived at three addresses during those years: 1514 Carver (now Rodman), in 1876 and 1877; 1707 Kater in 1878; and 1622 Burton in 1879, 1880, and 1881.