

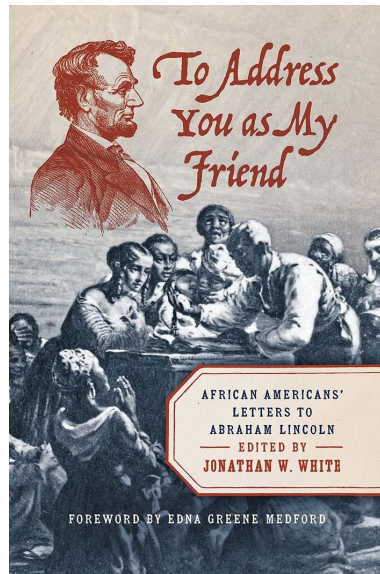


## Upcoming Virtual Programs at the National Archives

The National Archives is continuing to offer a full slate of public programs in October. An extensive list can be found [here](#). Below are several highlights on a variety of topics. All programs are scheduled according to Eastern Daylight Time.

### **To Address You as My Friend: African Americans' Letters to Abraham Lincoln**

On **Wednesday, October 6 at 1:00 p.m. EDT**, the National Archives will host author **Jonathan W. White** who will discuss a compelling collection of more than 120 letters from African Americans to Lincoln, most of which have never before been published. They offer unflinching, intimate, and often heart-wrenching portraits of Black soldiers' and civilians' experiences in wartime. As readers continue to think critically about Lincoln's image as the "Great Emancipator," this book centers on African Americans' own voices to explore how they felt about the President and how they understood the possibilities and limits of the power vested in the federal government. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).



### **A Nation of Descendants: Politics and the Practice of Genealogy in U.S. History**

On **Wednesday, October 20 at 1:00 p.m. EDT**, the National Archives will host author **Francesca Morgan** who traces Americans' fascination with tracking family lineage through three centuries. She examines how specific groups throughout history grappled with finding and recording their forebears, focusing on Anglo-American, Mormon/LDS, African American, Jewish, and Native American people. She explores how genealogy has always mattered in the United States, whether for taking stock of kin when organizing a family reunion or drawing on membership to claim rights to land, inheritances, and more. And today, millions of people have used DNA kits to learn about their medical histories, biological parentage, and ethnic background. Joining the author in conversation will be **Karin Wulf**, Director and Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).

### **Travels with George**

On **Wednesday, October 27 at 1:00 p.m. EDT**, the National Archives will host author **Nathaniel Philbrick** who will discuss his book *Travels with George*. When George Washington became President in 1789, the United States of America was still a loose and quarrelsome confederation and a tentative political experiment. Washington undertook a tour of the ex-colonies to talk to ordinary citizens about his new government, and to imbue in them the idea of being one thing - Americans. In the fall of 2018, Philbrick embarked on his own journey into what Washington called "the infant woody country" to see for himself what America had become in the 229 years since. Writing about his own adventures, Philbrick follows Washington's Presidential excursions: from Mount Vernon to the new capital in New York, a tour of New England and Long Island, and eventually across Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Author and historian **Evan Thomas** will join the author in conversation. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives [YouTube Channel](#).

## October 2021

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### Upcoming Events

Unless noted, all events are held at the National Archives 400 W. Pershing Road Kansas City, MO 64108

NOTE: All in-person public events at National Archives facilities nationwide are cancelled until further notice. This includes in-person public programs, tours, school group visits, public meetings, external conferences, and facility rentals.

# Hidden Treasures from the Stacks

## Wilhelm Alexander: From Wandering Artist to Celebrity Painter

“Hello. My name is Bill Alexander, and I can teach you how to paint.”  
-Wilhelm Alexander, *The Magic of Oil Painting*

You may not immediately recognize the name of immigrant artist Bill Alexander, but you are likely familiar with the accelerated wet-on-wet painting process he popularized in the United States through his own television show and that of one of his students, Bob Ross.

Wilhelm (William, later known as Bill) Alexander was born April 2, 1915, in Berlin, Germany. His early interest in art found him pursuing work in the field, beginning with an apprenticeship constructing and painting carriages, and later taking up portraiture work while in military service during World War II. After a move to Canada in 1952, Alexander worked as a professional studio artist travelling the country with his wife, Margarete, as he painted landscapes, set up mobile galleries to bolster sales, and offered painting technique classes.

In 1965, he was employed by Thibault Fine Arts in Montreal, Canada. A July 1965 letter to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) written by W.E. Thibault stated, “We are thinking of opening a Picture Frame business for Fine Arts, Mr. Alexander is going to make a survey in the United States of America to see exactly what the potential is and whether our new style frames will be accepted.”

The trip to the United States would not be a temporary visit, Alexander’s visa application and alien registration form indicate that he intended to make his permanent home in the United States with an initial address in Los Angeles, California, where he would work as an “Artist (Painter) - Lithographer.”

After settling in Long Beach, California, Alexander worked as a street artist often setting up his easel and painting in public to draw in crowds as he showed off his personal shortcuts and tools for the alla prima (wet-on-wet) painting process for landscapes. Although he was a working artist, his teaching portfolio also expanded over the years to include a large number of lessons and classes as he and Margarete travelled across the United States. In 1973, he was offered a television pilot that would take his art and techniques to an even larger audience.

Alexander’s most famous television series, *The Magic of Oil Painting*, ran 117 episodes between 1974-1982. The show was a 30-minute techniques driven class in using the wet-on-wet process to create landscape paintings. Each episode featured Alexander completing a painting from start to finish, a format Bob Ross would follow in his own instructional show, *The Joy of Painting*, which debuted in 1983. During his television career (1974-1992) Alexander won an Emmy®, created a painting supply line, and authored several books. Wilhelm Alexander died January 24, 1997.

Wilhelm Alexander’s visa application and supporting documents comprises the bulk of his 21 page Alien File (A-File) maintained by the National Archives at Kansas City. Created by INS beginning in April 1944, A-Files contain all records of any active case of an alien not yet naturalized as they passed through the immigration and inspection process. To learn more about A-Files and the search and request process, visit: <https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens>.

*(Images continued on next two pages.)*



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
**IMMIGRANT VISA AND ALIEN REGISTRATION**

LOS

(Family name) Alexander (First name) Wilhelm (Middle name) (William)  
 ALEXANDER Wilhelm (William)

I-3161197  
 I-3161197

PORT OF

**DETROIT, MICH.**

**ACTION OF SPECIAL INQUIRY OFFICER**

I certify that the immigrant named herein arrived in the United States at this port on

The immigrant herein was (admitted) (excluded) and  no appeal taken  appeal taken under

(Name of vessel or flight No. of aircraft) \_\_\_\_\_  
 and was inspected by me and

Symbol \_\_\_\_\_

Section \_\_\_\_\_ of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

IMMIGRANT SERVICE  
 DETROIT, MICHIGAN | 57  
 ADMITTED  
 OCT - 1 1965

Special Inquiry Officer. \_\_\_\_\_

detained for further inquiry by special officer under Symbol \_\_\_\_\_  
 Section \_\_\_\_\_ of the Immigration and Nationality Act

**ACTION ON APPEAL**

ADMITTED

EXCLUDED

DATE

This visa is issued under Section 221 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and upon the basis of the facts stated in the application.

AMERICAN \_\_\_\_\_  
 AT TORONTO, CANADA

**IMMIGRANT CLASSIFICATION**

NONQUOTA (Symbol) \_\_\_\_\_ QUOTA (Symbol) X

*Marguerite Whitehead*  
 Marguerite Whitehead

VISA PETITION NO., IF ANY

Consent of the United States \_\_\_\_\_ of the United States of America.  
 of America

IMMIGRANT VISA NO. 289 QUOTA German

ISSUED ON (Day) (Month) (Year)  
19th July 1965

THE VALIDITY OF THIS VISA EXPIRES MIDNIGHT AT THE END OF (Day) (Month) (Year)

18th November 1965

NATIONALITY (If stateless, so state, and give previous nationality)

GERMAN Canadian

**PASSPORT**



NO. 5-494933

OR OTHER TRAVEL DOCUMENTS (Describe)

Service No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tariff Item No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fee Paid \$20  
 Local Cy equiv. \_\_\_\_\_

ISSUED TO Mr Wilhelm (William) ALEXANDER

BY Canadian Gov't Ottawa, Canada

ON December 15, 1962

EXPIRES December 5, 1967

Form I-151 issued

STATISTICS



CLASSIFIER

SIGNAL  
CLASSIFIED

424 GUY STREET  
MONTREAL 3, P. QUE.

TEL. WE. 5-2 6 0 5

Thibault Fine Arts REG'D



July 13th., 1965

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

*This letter will serve to introduce Mr. William Alexander, Canadian Citizen, resident of Brossard, Quebec.*

*I have known Mr. Alexander as a personal friend and associate artist for the past twelve (12) years.*

*We are thinking of opening a Picture Frame business for Fine Arts, Mr. Alexander is going to make a survey in the United States of America to see exactly what the potential is and whether our new style frames will be accepted.*

*He will be carrying various samples of our frames with him.*

*Yours very truly,*

W. E. Thibault

# October Virtual Programs for Educators and Students

## Young Learners Program -

**Meet Washington Irving on Thursday, October 28 at 12:00 a.m. EDT**

Meet Washington Irving, the father of the American short story and author of one of the most famous and iconic Halloween stories: "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." **Neill Hartley** portrays Washington Irving, sharing Irving's life and excerpts from his short stories. This **free program** is available via live stream on the National Archives

[YouTube Channel](#).

The National Archives  
Comes Alive!

Young Learners Program  
**Washington Irving**

Thursday, October 28, at noon ET  
Featuring Neill Hartley  
Actor, Director, Educator

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Original photograph of Washington Irving,  
National Archives Identifier 528291

## National Archives Facility Information Regarding COVID-19

(updated as of September 29, 2021)

The National Archives is committed to the health and safety of our visitors and staff. We are continuing to monitor the situation regarding COVID-19. National Archives staff will continue to serve the public remotely by responding to emailed requests for records and [History Hub](#) inquiries. Finally, all in-person public programs and events are suspended until further notice. We will continue to update the public as agency guidance becomes available. Follow the National Archives at Kansas City on [Facebook](#) or on Twitter [@KCArchives](#).



NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES

KANSAS CITY

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** The National Archives is open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed on weekends and Federal holidays. Hours are subject to change due to special programs and weather.

The National Archives is located at 400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, Missouri, 64108, and is home to historical records dating from the 1820s to the 1990s created or received by Federal agencies in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

For more information, call 816-268-8000, email [kansascity.educate@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.educate@nara.gov) or visit [www.archives.gov/kansas-city](http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city). Tweet us [@KCArchives](#). Follow us on Instagram at: [kansascity.archives](https://www.instagram.com/kansascity.archives). Find us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity](http://www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity).