

Alexandria Times

Denise Dunbar
 Publisher & Executive Editor
 ddunbar@alextimes.com

Margaret Stevens
 Sales Director
 mstevens@alextimes.com

Caitlyn Meisner
 Editor
 cmeisner@alextimes.com

Sydney Kodama
 Reporter/Photographer
 skodama@alextimes.com

Andrew McCabe
 Photo Intern
 amccabe@alextimes.com

Ella Mitchell
 Reporting Intern
 emitchell@alextimes.com

ADVERTISING

Margaret Stevens
 mstevens@alextimes.com

Marty DeVine
 mdevine@alextimes.com

Patrice V. Culligan
 pculligan@alextimes.com

Stephanie Santiago
 ssantiago@alextimes.com

Tina Franco
 Office Administrator
 tfranco@alextimes.com

DIRECTOR OF ART & DESIGN

Jessica Kim
 graphics@alextimes.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Kim Davis
Mark Eaton
Mark Edelman
Thompson Eskew
Kim Gilliam
Ryan Hopper
Lexie Jordan
Louise Krafft
Brianne McConnell
Jim McGrath
Erin Shackelford
Hannah Shibliq
Dr. Vivek Sinha
Kathryn Ziemer

ALEXANDRIA
COMMUNITY MEDIA

Denise Dunbar
 President

The Ariail family
Suzanne Brock

Tax-deductible donations can
 be mailed to:
 Alexandria Times
 908 King Street, Suite 200
 Alexandria, VA 22314

Alexandria
 COMMUNITY MEDIA

Edgar Allan Poe's friend in Alexandria

On Oct. 29 and 30, David Keltz returns to the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum appearing as Edgar Allan Poe. Keltz commands more than five hours of Poe's poems, short stories, essays, literary criticism, letters and reported conversations. As Poe, he will also regale the Lyceum audience with two stories, literary criticism and poems.

While Poe himself never appeared at the Alexandria Lyceum, one of his friends did. Frederick William Thomas published poetry, novels, character studies and songs. He also worked as an editor, a clerk and Methodist Episcopal minister. Thomas was born in Providence, Rhode Island, educated in Baltimore and began his editing career at the Cincinnati Advertiser. From 1841 to 1846, he served as a clerk in the United States Department of the Treasury in Washington, D.C., where he also resided.

Of Thomas, Poe wrote in "A Chapter on Autography" in Graham's Magazine, December 1841:

"F.W. Thomas, who began his literary career at the early age of seventeen ... has since more particularly distinguished himself as a novelist. His 'Clinton Bradshaw' is perhaps better known than any of his later fictions. It is remarkable for a frank, unscrupulous portraiture of men and

things, in high life and low, and by unusual discrimination and observation and respect to character. Since its production, he has produced 'East and West' and 'Howard Pinckney,' neither of which seems to have been so popular as his first essay, although both have merit."

Poe and Thomas were not just acquaintances but were close friends. They expressed their friendship in their letters and sometimes frustration when too much time passed between correspondences.

In November 1840, Poe wrote to Thomas, "Mrs. Clemm and Virginia [Poe's aunt/mother-in-law and his wife, respectively] unite with me in the kindest remembrances to yourself and sister. ... How long will it be before I see you again? Write immediately."

Thomas wrote in February 1841, "I assure you, Poe, that nothing gives me greater pleasure than to know that you are well and doing well. Remember me most affectionately to your mother and lady and believe me truly your friend."

In the same letter, Thomas addresses the idea of writing Poe's biography, noting, "The notes for your biography will be better in the hands of some other person, for if I should take them in hand and speak but just appreciation of you, it would pass not for justice but the partiality of friendship."



Frederick
 W. Thomas.

PHOTO/
 ANONYMOUS/
 AMERICAN
 ANTIQUARIAN
 SOCIETY

They wrote often about wanting to meet in person. In September 1844, Thomas wrote, "I hope ere long to see you in Philadelphia and have a long talk about old times."

Thomas lectured three times at the Alexandria Lyceum on "William Wirt" – the longest serving Attorney General in U.S. history at more than 11 years in office – on "The Life and Character of Byron" and "The Life and Genius of Shakespeare." He also delivered remarks in Alexandria on the Fourth of July in 1843, though the exact location is not given.

The committee that brought Thomas to Alexandria wrote to him after the celebration and asked if they could publish his remarks, but he wrote back, "My address was partly spoken from notes," and

he would not have the time to write his remarks to his, or the committee's satisfaction.

Thomas moved away from Washington in 1850 but returned to The Lyceum in December 1859, where he recited a poem, "Woman," spoke about Poe – referred to in the Alexandria Gazette as "his personal and particular friend" – and either read or recited two pieces from Shakespeare: Othello's speech to the Senate and Hamlet's advice to the players.

Join us at The Lyceum on Oct. 29 or 30 as David Keltz brings Frederick Thomas' "personal and particular" friend to life. Tickets to the Poe in Alexandria performances can be purchased at shop.alexandriava.gov.

*Out of the Attic is
 provided by the Office of
 Historic Alexandria.*