

Publishing Lew and Susan Wallace in the Twenty-first Century

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Lew Wallace's importance as a subject for serious historical investigation does not rest on his having held high office or on his accomplishments in a single discipline or field. Rather it derives from his exceptional achievements in a wide range of endeavors during the years between the Civil War and the Progressive Era. He served in the Civil War as a colonel of the 11th Indiana, as a brigadier general, and then, to great controversy, as a major general commanding the 3rd division of the Army of the Tennessee at the battle of Shiloh. After the war, he wrote *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, which Emelyn Eldredge Story considered "the book of books of this age." Published in 1880, the book is an

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important document for the cultural and intellectual history of late nineteenth-century America.¹

It is also significant that Wallace, as a writer, diplomat, and speaker, enjoyed such high standing within the Republican Party and the nation. The success of *Ben-Hur*, and the public approval it received, considerably enhanced his influence within the GOP. In fact, President James A. Garfield decided to appoint him minister to the Ottoman Empire, rather than chargé d'affaires to Paraguay and Bolivia, after he read the book. Wallace was even able to exert influence on the floor of the Republican National Convention in 1888, which to his delight nominated his longtime friend Benjamin Harrison for the presidency. His rapidly written campaign biography of Harrison helped to achieve the Hoosier's victory.²

Lew Wallace's friendships with and access to prominent politicians, presidents, and military leaders (which even a well-placed observer like Henry Adams must have envied), and his active participation in, or close observance of, key events and trends make him an ideal subject for documentary treatment. Because his assembled papers accurately mirror his experiences, and because his honesty and sensibilities united to produce a valuable commentary, *The Papers of Lew and Susan Wallace* documentary edition will serve as an enduring research collection for scholars and researchers in several historical fields. Additionally, Wallace's ability to speak meaningfully to the serious-minded popular audience of the Civil War generation and to give expression to its ideals, fears, and anxieties makes him a key figure for broad historical investigations and reassessments of the postwar era or Gilded Age—thus it seems certain that the publication of *The Papers of Lew and Susan*

¹The most thorough, modern biography is Robert E. and Katharine M. Morsberger, *Lew Wallace: Militant Romantic* (New York, 1980).

²In his diary for April 17, 1881, Garfield wrote of *Ben-Hur*: "The plot of the story is powerfully sketched and its tone is admirably sustained. I am inclined to send its author (Lew Wallace) to Constantinople, where he may draw inspiration from the modern East for future literary work" (April 17). After finishing the book, he observed in his April 19 entry: "Wallace surprises me with his delicacy and penetration, as well as his breadth of culture. I think Constantinople would give him opportunities for success, and I will try to give him that Mission." Harrison tried to convince Garfield to appoint Wallace secretary of war. Harry James Brown and Frederick D. Williams, eds., *The Diary of James A. Garfield* (4 vols., East Lansing, Mich., 1967-81), 4: 563 and 577-78; Harry J. Sievers, *Benjamin Harrison* (3 vols., Chicago, 1952-68), 2: 194 and 368-71.

Wallace will have continuing effects on the interpretation and reinterpretation of late nineteenth-century American culture.³

Susan Wallace was one of many women to enjoy her own career as a popular writer in the late nineteenth century. This fact alone makes her papers significant for women's history and the history of post-Civil War popular culture, but since her life was closely tied to her husband's, her correspondence and work also complement his. Her letters to mutual friends often related anecdotes and inside accounts of his official activities, while providing a valuable perspective on their social and domestic life and circle of official and personal acquaintances. This perspective is particularly important for the Wallaces' periods in New Mexico and Turkey. Since most of Susan's letters to Lew were either destroyed or lost, her letters to third parties frequently provide information about him not found elsewhere—and his responses to her and his other correspondents also serve to re-create her documentary record. For these reasons, Susan Wallace's papers properly and usefully belong in this comprehensive collected edition.

Lew and Susan Wallace were unusual, if not unique, among literary couples of the Victorian era in that they were both published authors of fiction and nonfiction. They encouraged each other's writing and work—a welcome contrast to Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sophia Peabody, to pick one example from that era.⁴ Susan Wallace encouraged other writers, notably the sisters Caroline Virginia Krout and Mary Hannah Krout, the latter a suffragist and widely published nonfiction author. Lew Wallace's stepmother, Zerelda Wallace, was also a prominent suffragist leader. After her husband died, Susan worked to bring his *Autobiography* (1906) to publication with Mary Hannah Krout's assistance. Susan had long acted as an editor and critic for Lew Wallace, and *Indiana Authors and Their Books* noted, "It has been suggested that the literary taste of Mrs. Wallace was somewhat superior to that of her

³The need for a thorough, scholarly reassessment of the age was sounded by H. Wayne Morgan in his introduction to *The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1963). See also Alan Peskin, "Why the Gilded Age?," *Hayes Historical Journal: A Journal of the Gilded Age*, 5 (Summer 1981), 5-6 and Charles W. Calhoun, "Benjamin Harrison, Centennial President: A Review Essay," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 84 (1988), 135-160.

⁴T. Walter Herbert, *Dearest Beloved: The Hawthornes and the Making of the Middle-Class Family* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993).

illustrious husband and that his work could have been improved, in style and structure, by even more of her editing than it received.”⁵

Thanks to funding from the Lilly Endowment in 1940, the Indiana Historical Society purchased—from Lew Wallace Jr., Lew’s surviving grandson—the papers that were then at the Lew Wallace Study in Crawfordsville. Those papers became the society’s Lew Wallace Collection. In 1952 the society published—again with support from the Lilly Endowment—Dorothy Ritter Russo and Thelma Lois Sullivan’s *Bibliographical Studies of Seven Authors of Crawfordsville, Indiana*—including, among others, Lew and Susan Wallace. *Bibliographical Studies* is the indispensable starting point for any investigation of the Wallaces’ published literary works.⁶

In 1984 Donald E. Thompson, the former librarian and archivist at Wabash College, launched *The Papers of Lew and Susan Wallace*, a documentary edition to be co-published by the Indiana Historical Society Press and the Lilly Library. Originally intended to be a printed edition, *The Papers of Lew and Susan Wallace* soon outstripped the expectations of all who worked on the project. The society directed resources to move the project forward. In 1985 the society’s Preservation Imaging Department filmed Series 1 (of a total of thirteen) of the Lew Wallace Collection in sixteen microfilm rolls. C. M. Harris collected copies of Wallace documents during research trips to the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and many other repositories, and added thousands of document copies to the Wallace editing project files.

After Thompson’s death in 1992, the editing project moved from Wabash College to the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis. Paul Brockman reprocessed the society’s Lew Wallace Collection and created

⁵R. E. Banta, comp., *Indiana Authors and Their Books* (3 vols., Crawfordsville, Ind., 1949-81), 1: 331. See also Dorothy Ritter Russo and Thelma Lois Sullivan, *Bibliographical Studies of Seven Authors of Crawfordsville, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1952), 417-46.

⁶A member of the society’s Library Committee from 1936 to 1954, Josiah Kirby Lilly Jr. was the moving spirit behind the acquisition of the papers and the publication of a series of bibliographical studies—not only of the Wallaces but also of such other Indiana authors as James Whitcomb Riley and Newton Booth Tarkington. During the 1950s the Lilly Endowment also funded the processing by Martha Schaaf and others of the society’s Lew Wallace Collection. That collection is primarily political and military. The literary manuscripts and correspondence—J. K. Lilly’s focus of interest—were kept in a vault at Eagle’s Crest, Lilly’s lodge at what is now Eagle Creek Park northwest of Indianapolis. Those literary manuscripts and correspondence were later moved to the Lilly Library, which opened in 1960 at Indiana University Bloomington.

an item-level calendar. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission endorsed *The Papers of Lew and Susan Wallace* in 1993 and again in 2004. Douglas E. Clanin joined the Wallace project staff as editor in 1999 and discovered many more Wallace documents in repositories and newspapers.

The steady support of the Lilly Library led to a cooperative venture with the IHS Press to produce a comprehensive collected edition. The cooperation of B. Breon Mitchell, director; Sandra B. Taylor, curator of manuscripts; and Cheryl Baumgart, manuscripts cataloger at the Lilly Library, helped to make the project possible. In 2004 Taylor and Baumgart brought the Lilly Library's collection of Wallace manuscripts to the society, whose Preservation Imaging Department microfilmed this important collection.

Now nearing completion, *The Papers of Lew and Susan Wallace* is a comprehensive collected edition. Series I includes 9,444 letters, essays, speeches, military orders, and other categories of documents from 101 repositories in the United States and other countries, notably the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast and the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. Series II includes 43 large literary manuscripts and fragments. Series III includes visual materials—169 photographs, portraits, drawings, and paintings. The IHS Press will publish the edition in 49 microfilm rolls in 2008.

Since this edition represents the first scholarly presentation of the Wallaces' papers, the press has carefully designed a CD-ROM guide for the compilation. The first reel of the microfilm edition contains the table of contents (providing summary description—in most cases, the chronological span covered—of each reel of microfilm), the editorial method statement, biographical essays, and other documents. Users may view the documents in this edition on microfilm and locate them by means of control files in the electronic finding aid (EFA) on the CD-ROM that accompanies this edition. A database in Microsoft Access contains three tables: EFA, Image, and Itinerary. The user may search and sort the EFA table (Series I, Correspondence and Other Documents; and Series II, Literary Manuscripts and Fragments) alphabetically by name of sender, recipient, or repository; or chronologically by date of document. The user may search and sort the Image table (Series III, Visual Materials) alphabetically by medium, creator, title, or repository; or chronologically by date of image. The Itinerary table provides 1,175 records of the whereabouts of Lew and Susan Wallace, the date(s) they were in certain locations, and the source of that information. The user

may search and sort the Itinerary table alphabetically by location or source of information, or chronologically by date.

Several publications have resulted from researchers' use of the collections, including a biography of Lew Wallace for young readers, a biography of Susan Wallace, a study of Lew Wallace and the Civil War, and a collection of letters between the Wallaces (edited by John Y. Simon). The Indiana Historical Society Press looks forward to the projects that will grow out of future research efforts.

