THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GENERAL LEW WALLACE STUDY & MUSEUM



FROM THE STUDY

GENERAL LEW WALLACE
STUDY & MUSEUM
HOME OF BEN-HUR

November 2026
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The General Lew Wallace Study & Museum is deeply committed to the protection and preservation of Lew Wallace's legacy now and for generations to come.

20th Annual Holiday Tea & Fashion Show: An Early American Christmas

On December 4, the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum will be celebrating the 20th Annual Holiday Tea & Fashion Show. It is a lovely way to welcome the Holiday Season. Our theme this year is An Early American Christmas in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

We will be offering unique fashions from the local, family-owned store Denhart's Mercantile. We will also be introducing our guests to holiday décor by A Sprig of Lime!

With models showcasing beautiful ensembles, experience the creativity of Denhart's Mercantile as they offer the latest in fashion—clothing, jewelry & accessories, shoes, boots, gifts, and home décor. They also offer clothing for the men, children, and grandchildren in your life! Their curated looks are fresh, on-trend, and beautifully accessorized.

The designs by Denhart's will be complemented by the beautifully decorated Elston Homestead. Holiday decorations, by Kellie Maxwell-Algate, owner of A Sprig of Lime, will have a vintage vibe designed to delight and inspire guests. A Sprig of Lime offers fresh



Holiday Tea & Fashion Show.

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Notes From The Director



2027 is an important year in the life of the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum. Next year we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Lew Wallace. This museum has celebrated many milestones over the years including the transfer of the property to the City of Crawfordsville in 1941, the centennial of the publication of Ben-Hur celebrated in 1980, a symposium devoted to the Lew Wallace legacy in 2005, the restoration of the Carriage House in 2006, and the restoration of the interior of the Study in 2015. The celebration next year promises to be another of these important events.

Our exhibit in 2027 will focus on the life and legacy of Lew Wallace, both his personal and professional accomplishments. We will celebrate his creativity, his integrity, his family, and more. We will host several events on the property and throughout the community. Plans are still being developed, but we expect that April 10, 2027, will be a day of celebration on the museum grounds. Conveniently for us, Lew's 200th birthday falls on a Saturday! We have events on the property planned for that day including a behind the scenes tour, tours of Lew's Study, 19th century games on the lawn, visiting dignitaries, the unveiling of restored parts of the Lew Wallace collection, refreshments, music and even a Chariot on the grounds!

Beyond the fun on April 10, there will be additional events and programs throughout the year. In addition to our Dr. Howard Miller lecture series and our popular Hoosier Author Book Club discussions, we are working on plans to host a summer fishing event for children in recognition of Lew's famous love of fishing, a symposium devoted to aspects of Lew's life, official recognition of Lew at the local, state and federal levels, and the inauguration of a book award. We also hope to develop a program to boost our endowment at the Montgomery County Community Foundation.

To honor Lew's literary accomplishments, we are creating a graphic novel aimed at introducing 4th graders to the life of Lew. This novel, written by Julie Bergfors and illustrated by Michael Parks, will follow the life of Lew Wallace in three chapters and is designed to appeal to young people. It is our plan that this new telling of the Lew Wallace story will be made available to every 4th grade student in Montgomery County. It will also be available to students in

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other schools with a tie to Lew and to other historic sites that help tell the Lew Wallace Story.

Even as we look back at Lew's life and accomplishments next year, we will also be looking forward to the role that this museum plays in the life of our community. Through programming, events, serving as a tourist destination, and providing an open space for passive recreation, this museum plays an important role in the quality of life in Crawfordsville and Montgomery County. The Study building has been an icon in the community since 1896, and it will continue to play that role for generations to come thanks to support and encouragement this community provides.



Holiday Tea & Fashion Show Continued...

flower arrangements and gifts for every occasion. The store carries unique lines of holiday ornaments, everyday gifts, special occasion gifts, artwork by local artists, jewelry, and even sweet treats!

To further the Holiday Spirit, the Glee Club from Wabash College, under the direction of Juan Hernandez with music by Cheryl Everett, will be performing both holiday classics and some delightful, unexpected songs.

Finally, there is the food! Extraordinary sweets and savories, tea and coffee served on fine china and the Elston silver make this a unique event in Crawfordsville. In a very real sense this afternoon of hospitality continues traditions started by Maria Elston, mother of Susan Wallace and Joanna Lane, 190 years ago.

Our thanks to Wabash College for helping us host this event. Proceeds from the event support the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum and the Montgomery County Historical Society at Lane Place. Tickets can be purchased at the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum or online at www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/holiday-tea-and-fashion-show--2026. We hope that you can join us!



2025 Holiday Tea Model.



Denhart's Mercantile 2025 Holiday Tea Display.

Reluctant Love

Thomas R. Meeks Jr.
Associate Director

After attending the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Lew Wallace was invited to write the introduction to a new book, *Famous Paintings of the World: A Collection of Photographic Reproductions of Great Modern Masterpieces*. The volume featured many of the works displayed at the exposition, along with a number of other notable paintings. In his introduction, Wallace reflected on his lifelong appreciation for art, writing, "I have always loved Art, and [have] been thankful for the gift to discern the cunning next to the divine... That is to say, to me there is Art in everything we construct. The Natural is a procession from God. Art is human."

For Wallace, art was not limited to paintings hanging in galleries or masterpieces created by celebrated artists. He saw it as the human counterpart to nature. Nature, in his view, was an expression of divine creativity, while art was an expression of human creativity. Whenever people imagined, designed, and created something, Wallace believed there was an element of art involved and that it was an essential part of the human experience.

Wallace was a natural choice to write the introduction. By 1893, he was not only the author of *Ben-Hur*, the world's best-selling novel, but also an accomplished artist whose work had attracted considerable attention. His introduction reveals a thoughtful appreciation for artistic expression, but Wallace himself was not always the recipient of such generous criticism. While he could speak thoughtfully about the art of others, his own artistic pursuits sometimes drew considerably less flattering reviews.



H. Lieber & Company Art Emporium c.1890.

Before Indianapolis had a formal art museum or any public galleries, H. Lieber & Company Art Emporium served as a primary gathering place for supplying and exhibiting local and regional artists. In late 1875, two of Lew Wallace's paintings were exhibited in the emporium. The first, titled *The Dead Line at Andersonville*, depicted a starving Union soldier who had been shot dead at the infamous Confederate prison camp in Georgia. The second painting, quite different in subject and tone, was titled *Reluctant Love*. It portrayed a young woman kneeling before Cupid, the winged God of love.

The exhibition caught the attention of Indianapolis's self-proclaimed first art critic, Alois E. Sinks. Writing for the *Indianapolis Saturday Herald*, Sinks took particular issue with *Reluctant Love*, finding Wallace's choice of purple for Cupid's wings especially objectionable.

In a scathing review published on December 11, 1875, Sinks declared that "...no amount of logic can reconcile us to those purple feathers." He went on to describe the picture as "out of harmony" and expressed little hope for Wallace's future as an artist. Adding insult to injury, the *Herald* followed the critique with a backhanded compliment: "When it comes to a pen picture of an Aztec Maiden, though, Lew Wallace is at home." In other words, the newspaper suggested that Wallace might be better off sticking to the written word as expressed in his novel *The Fair God*. His talents as an author, apparently, were considerably more impressive than his talents with a paintbrush.

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When the criticism reached Wallace, he may have wondered why his choice of color warranted such attention. Nevertheless, he offered a thoughtful defense, explaining that the purple wings were not simply an artistic whim but a deliberate choice inspired by one of the most celebrated works of English literature. In Book IV, line 764 of *Paradise Lost*, the famed English poet John Milton describes his Cupid: "Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights, His constant Lamp, and waves his purple wings."

Wallace simply followed Milton's description. If the great poet had imagined Love with purple wings, Wallace saw little reason why he could not do the same. In defending his painting, Wallace demonstrated that his approach to art was much like his approach to writing: imaginative, thoughtful, and grounded in a deep appreciation for the works that had inspired him.

Had Wallace chosen to not respond, the criticism may have quickly faded from public focus. Instead, his defense brought the incident into the national spotlight, drawing far more attention than it might have otherwise received. Newspapers across the country picked up the story, including as far away as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which took the opportunity to pile on.

On December 26, 1875, the *Chronicle* reported, "Gen. Lew Wallace, having been ridiculed for painting a Cupid with purple wings, points to Milton as his authority. The General should not be ridiculed for painting a Cupid any particular color; he should be held up to mockery for painting a Cupid at all. He deserves to be convicted of conduct unbecoming a grown person and a General."

Wallace attempted to defend his artistic choice by appealing to one of the most celebrated poets in the English language. Instead, the newspapers turned his defense into another opportunity to mock him. What began as a local criticism of a painting had become a national joke at Wallace's expense.

Yet, perhaps fittingly, the episode illustrates the very idea Wallace would express years later when he wrote, "The Natural is a procession from God. Art is human." Art was human because it was an act of imagination and creation, but it also invited human interpretation, disagreement, criticism, and even ridicule. Wallace may not have received the artistic praise he hoped for, but his purple-winged Cupid became a memorable example of his willingness to express himself creatively, regardless of what his critics thought.

Reluctant Love was later given by Wallace to a friend, but sadly, the painting was destroyed in a fire during the 1920s. Wallace's interest in the subject, however, did not end there. A related painting by Wallace, *Love Triumphant*, is on display at the Study. It depicts two white-winged Cupids, one of whom triumphantly raises a bow, their figures suspended in the air and accompanied by a purple cape.

Although *Reluctant Love* has been lost, *Love Triumphant* offers visitors an opportunity to see Wallace's artistic interpretation of the subject for themselves. And perhaps, after considering the controversy surrounding those purple wings, visitors can decide whether Sinks and his fellow critics were justified in their judgment—or whether Wallace was right to follow his own artistic instincts.



Love Triumphant c. 1876.

2026 Lew Wallace Hoosier Author Fair

Each year, the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum hosts a gathering of regional authors for the Lew Wallace Hoosier Author Fair. The event is free and open to the public. Authors will have their books and related merchandise for sale and are happy to sign copies and chat with readers.

This year's Lew Wallace Hoosier Author Fair will be held in conjunction with Crawfordsville Main Street's Downtown Party Night Saturday, November 28, from 5 - 8 p.m. on the second floor of the Montgomery County Community Foundation at 119 E. Main Street.

2026 Authors (as of Nov. 1) Attending authors represent several genres of writing, including science fiction, fantasy, romance, Indiana history, nonfiction, poetry, mystery, politics, and Christian living.

Carlotta Berry is a Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and owner of NoireSTEMinist Educational Consulting. She has authored children's STEM books, academic textbooks, and adult romance novels under the pseudonym Carlotta Ardell.

Agata Izabela Brewer was born and raised in Poland. A teacher, mother, and activist for immigrant rights, she is Professor of English at Wabash College. Her creative writing has appeared in Guernica and Entropy. *The Hunger Book* is her first book of creative nonfiction set in communist Poland and contemporary Montgomery County, Indiana.

Josh A. Brewer teaches creative writing and literature at Purdue University. His work appears in Harvard Review, Southeast Review, Bluestem, Existere, and Poets Against War. His books include *Writers Resist: Hoosier Writers Unite* (2017) and *When is a Will* (2022). He has taught English at the University of Miami, University of South Carolina, and Tennessee State University.

Stephanie A. Cain writes epic & urban fantasy novels. She grew up in Indiana, where much of her urban fantasy is set. She works at a small liberal arts college and dreams of living somewhere without winter.

Christopher Clouser is an accountant by day, and a prolific author by night. He has written eighteen books, novels, and novellas and one play in the fantasy, science-fiction, mystery, and sports history genres while contributing to several compilations, along with multiple articles in national publications.

Kristina Cook is the author of more than a dozen books ranging from historical and NASCAR romance to paranormal and contemporary young adult fiction.

Edward Elkins has served in ministry for over forty-three years whose book *The Archko Volume* attempts to bring people closer to discovering truth regarding Christian belief.

Gary Gilliam, aka The Karate Bum, is a poet who loves travel. He is a U.S. Army veteran who writes of grit, love, and the long search for grace and providence.

Megan Hammond is the author of *Diamonds in Auschwitz*, a poignant novel exploring human connection and resilience during one of history's darkest times.

Jane Hartsock is a Bioethicist and Medical Humanities professor at Indiana University. She publishes regularly in academic literature, and has two novels, *Load Bearing* and *Fan Base*. In late 2026, she will publish a biography on the first English language translators of the Ebers Papyrus.

Erin Hayden writes fiction with heart, humor, and a hint of advocacy. With mystery-savvy service dogs and inclusive, relatable characters, Erin's stories celebrate everyday courage in the face of life's messier moments.

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Christy Heitger-Ewing is an award-winning Indiana author known for blending humor, heart, and mystery-savvy service dogs and inclusive, relatable characters. Erin's stories celebrate everyday courage in the face of life's messier moments.

Juan Manuel Cuevas Herrera was born and raised in the historic Andalusian city of Córdoba. Multifaceted in his own self-discovery as a human being, he has experimented with the photographic arts and a sense of justice. Awarded a decoration for a courageous intervention, he left everything amid the orange blossoms of the Jewish quarter to travel to the other side of the Atlantic.

Garret Hutson writes historical fiction featuring realistic LGBT characters. You can often find him reading about history, and day-dreaming about being there. This is where his stories are born, and he hopes they transport you the way his imagination transports him.

Chris Jensen is a nationally recognized baseball writer and novelist whose books *Baseball State by State* and *Baseball's Two-Way Greats* display his passion for America's pasttime.

Courtney Leach has twenty years of journalism experience writing for magazines, E-Commerce, and Social Media. Her two self-published books *Blazin'* and *He Answers to Grief*, share he adventures parenting three daughters, section hiking the Appalachian Trail, and traversing the peaks and valleys of life.

Krystina K. Leganza has B.S. and Ph.D. degrees in mathematics from Miami University (Ohio) and the University of Notre Dame, respectively. She has taught at the university level in Indiana for more than thirty years. Her childrens books include *M is for Math*.

Robin Lee Lovelace is an award-winning writer of short fiction. In 2017 she won the one-act play contest present by the 30XNinety theatre near New Orleans. In 2019 she won the Etchings Press annual novella competition. Robin's latest book *A Wild Region* is a collection of short stories.

Michael Dabney is an award-winning journalist whose debut novel *An Untidy Affair* is a murder mystery worthy of this seasoned writer. Dabney has published several short-story mysteries and is the co-editor of *Decades of Dirt* and *Murder 20/20*, both anthologies of the Speed City chapter of *Sisters in Crime*.

Maggie Marton is author of the book *For the Love of Dog* that celebrates the epic love story between humans and dogs through the lens of an award-winning pet writer and blogger.

Jim Meeks-Johnson likes to blend the elements of two science fiction subgenres that are often seen as incompatible: hard science and fiction. His hit series *Entangled Galaxy* imagines what happens when we make scientific breakthorughs in space opera, driven by action and adventure.

Daniel Newman is the author of two books, inclduing the Amazon best-seller *The Millenial CEO*, and his bew release *The New Rules of Customer Engagement*. His work has been recognized by the Huffington Post.

Bill Oakes spent a decade in journalism as a broadcast and newspaper reporter as well as a political columnist. Bill has channeled his experiences into fiction with his debut novel *Chasing Evil*.

James Pauley Jr. spent a college semester in each Guadalajara, Mexico, and Heidelberg, Germany. The experience piqued his interest and lifelong love of international travel. A flight attendant for forty-four years, he is the award-winning author of *Bumpy Rides and Soft Landings* and the coauthor of *An Unconditional Friendship* with best-selling author Charlene Potterbaum.

Joseph S. Pete is an award-winning journalist and columnist for *The Times of Northwest Indiana* who was

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written three books about the Hoosier State. He is an Indiana University graduate, an Iraq War veteran, the *Northwest Indiana Literary Journal* editor-in-chief, a frequent contributor to Lakeshore Public Radio, and an executive board member of the Indiana Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and Chicago Headline Club.

Purple Aardvark is a curated, hybrid publishing house and literary community based in Indiana that focuses on emotional, reflective personal writing, memoirs, and regional anthologies.

Stevie Rector is a super-natural storyteller with a deep fascination for mythology, emotional transformation, and the eerie tension of the human psyche. She crafts immersive narratives exploring resilience, justice, and the shadowed places where monsters—both real and imagined—lurk. Her debut novel, *Loki's Lost Memory*, conjures a world of forgotten gods and fractured souls, while her forthcoming book, *Anja's Awakening*, sharpens vengeance into poetry. She brings her stories to life through layered dialogue, vivid imagery, and a haunting emotional undercurrent that leaves readers breathless.

M.K. Scott is a husband and wife writing team behind the cozy mystery series, *The Painted Lady Inn Mysteries*, *The Talking Dog Detective Agency*, and *Cupid's Catering Company*.

Carrie Steinweg is a freelance writer, food blogger, travel columnist, and author of nine books, including four children's books, three local pictorial histories, and one on restaraunts in Indiana.

Phil Stephens is an Indiana native whose book *The Altar Boy* was named the 2016 gold medal winner in the international Publisher Awards for Best Contemporary Novel. His second novel, *At the Edge of the Stairs*, is a paranormal romance that tells of a love story of a woman who died in the arms of her fiancé.

Sarah Styf is a high school English teacher. When she isn't working or chasing after busy teenagers, she enjoys writing, running, hiking, and camping with her family.

Elise Tegegne writes to encourage readers to cultivate their eyes for the divine during daily difficulties. Her first book is *In Praise of Houseflies*.

Dr. Ronda Wells is an award-winning author who writes "Heartfelt Stories from the Heartland." An avid reader from a young age, her first dream job was a librarian. Her debut WW2 romance novella, *The Christmas Cherub*, released in July, 2025. A sweet nostalgic tale of lovers separated by war, they're linked by a special cherub which might hold the key for a Christmas miracle.

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From the Arboretum

This summer has been one of destruction and renewal! While preforming the closing procedures for the day, I admit, I let out a loud yell! To my amazement, during the day a large limb came down. How such a large limb falls and is not heard by the staff is puzzling.

One of only two bur oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*) on the grounds, situated northeast of the Study, lost a huge limb. It fell across the Water Babble garden, stretching all the way to the back terrace of the Study. The limb took down a few understory trees, knocking down the lilac bush at the Study's foundation and unfortunately, decimating a portion of the large magnolia tree that graces the Water Babble garden.

The hose bibb was covered by multiple limbs and came within inches of getting destroyed. The cleanup was extensive and done with precautions as to prevent further damage. The Study terrace and stairs, thankfully, had only minor damage- capstones on 2 pedestals were moved and a chunk of limestone was broken off a stair. The capstones were reset and the stair has been repaired, using pieces of the broken limestone step.



Fallen Pin Oak on top of the brick wall.

In September, a microburst storm swept through Crawfordsville's west side and toppled one of the Study's oldest and largest oaks. The Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) in the front lawn was toppled onto the brick wall, smashing a ginkgo tree in the process. The tree canopy was across the wall and narrowly missed the neighbor's pool, lamppost, firepit, and stopped within feet of the house! Another extensive cleanup was needed.



Fallen Burr Oak and moved capstone.

When the dust settled, the pin oak stump measured five feet across! A broken limb sometime in the past (before 1995), almost 20 feet up, had created a rotted area in the trunk and the straight-line winds took advantage of the weakness. Estimates calculated the age of the tree to be 110-130 years old!

In October, a pin oak tree was planted near the vicinity of the fallen tree. Oak trees in general are not fast growing, but the pin oak is considered one of the fastest in the Oak family. The Museum also planted a black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) tree near the Carriage House. The black gum has glossy dark green leaves that turn a brilliant red in the fall. It is a native tree that provides wildlife with food and shelter. Another native planted this fall is Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*), which when combined with the large magnolia should make the Study grounds a photographer's paradise. White blooms in the spring will fill the canopy and the fruit provides food for the wildlife. It is also known for its great fall color, ranging from yellow to bright red.

General Lew Wallace Study & Museum Contributions

Received July 1, 2026 through September 30, 2026

Every member and donor matters a great deal to us and we appreciate your support. We have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of this list. If we have made an error in your listing, please contact us immediately.

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Study Scrapbook



Visitor Henry Enjoying the Lew Wallace Scarecrow.



Hoosier Author Book Club discusses *Joy Goddess: A'Lelia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance.*



Model A visits the Study Grounds.



Newly planted Serviceberry Tree.

General Lew Wallace deserves his place in history. Help us preserve that place.

Membership to the **Lew Wallace Study Preservation Society** begins with your annual contribution of $25 or more. Membership offers discounts and complimentary admission and event tickets.

Lieutenant Level—$25 (Individual)
- Complimentary admission for 1
- Subscription to newsletter

Major General Level—$50 (Family)
- Complimentary admission for family
- Subscription to newsletter

Governor Level—$100 (Sustainer)
- Major General-level benefits, plus
- 10% discount in museum shop

Ambassador Level—$250 (Benefactor)
- Governor-level benefits, plus
- 2 tickets to the annual Taste of Montgomery County

***Ben-Hur* Level—$500+ (Patron)**
- Ambassador Level benefits, plus
- 1 ticket to the annual Holiday Tea

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2026 Fall & Winter Events Calendar

Thursday & Friday, November 26 & 27: **Museum Closed for Thanksgiving**

Saturday, November 28, 5 - 8 pm: **Lew Wallace Hoosier Author Fair:**
Downtown Party Night at
Montgomery County Community Foundation

Friday, December 4, 3 - 6 pm: **Holiday Tea & Fashion Show:**
Tea & Savory Sweets at the Historic Elston Homestead

Friday, December 11: **Last Day of the 2026 Tour Season**
Museum offices open normal hours. 9 am - 5 pm.

Tuesday, February 2nd, 2027: **Museum Reopens**