



# FROM THE STUDY



April 2026  
Volume 26, Issue 4

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## Mission Statement

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

## Celebrating America's Semiquincentennial Wallace Family: A Legacy of Service

*Thomas R. Meeks Jr.*  
*Associate Director*

Public service stands at the heart of the American experiment. From military service and elected office to teaching, first response, and community leadership, public service represents the everyday work of sustaining a democratic society. These often underappreciated roles ensure the functioning of institutions and the protection of rights envisioned by the founding fathers.

The progress of the United States over its 250 years stems not only from landmark

moments, but from generations of individuals who chose to serve something larger than themselves. By sharing stories of service, sacrifice, and stewardship, America 250 invites renewed civic engagement, trust, and responsibility. This anniversary calls Americans to action, reminding us that democracy endures only when people commit to serving it.

This year, the exhibit in the Carriage House Interpretive Center will share the public service stories of the Wallace family. Their generational

commitment to this country demonstrates that service is not limited to moments of national crisis or famous figures, but is sustained by ordinary citizens who answer the call to serve in their own time and place.

As we commemorate America's 250th anniversary, we invite you to visit and reflect on how public service shapes our community and nation. May the Wallace family's legacy inspire us to consider how we might answer the call to serve our country in a way that benefits the whole, and not the few.



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**@WallaceStudy**

## Notes From The Director



At this time last year, the full structural renovation of the historic Lew Wallace Carriage House was just completed.

The work served us well throughout 2025 and given our upcoming schedule, it's a good thing that project was done. The next two years at the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum will be special ones filled with recognition of lives well lived. As explained in our cover article, this year we are recognizing the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It's hard to believe, but when the Declaration was signed, there was no Crawfordsville and no Montgomery County—and wouldn't be for nearly fifty years, but the naming of our community has ties to the American Revolution and the early years of the nation.

Crawfordsville was named for William H. Crawford, an early Secretary of War and Secretary of the Treasury. Although he was only 4 years old when the Declaration of Independence was signed, he was an associate of several of the Founding Fathers including both James Madison and James Monroe in the early 19th century.

The naming of Montgomery County, however, does have a direct relationship to the Revolutionary War. This county was named for Richard Montgomery. Born in Ireland in 1738, Richard's father was an officer in the British military and a Member of Parliament. Like his father, Montgomery pursued a career in the British military. He arrived in America in the 1750s to fight for Britain in the 7 Years War against France. He remained in America and again fought for Britain in Pontiac's War.

After serving with valor in these and other military engagements, Montgomery returned to England and formed friendships with Members of Parliament who supported American colonists' demands for more political autonomy and he grew to question British policies in America. He left the British military in 1772 and sailed for America intending to become a gentleman farmer.

Montgomery made an advantageous marriage to Janet Livingston, whose father was one of the richest men in New York. As conflict approached, the Livingstons were very supportive of the Patriot cause and Montgomery aligned himself with them and against the British. After George Washington

was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in 1775, Montgomery was appointed Washington's Brigadier General. Montgomery rose to the occasion and proved to be an able leader of the men under his command.

Placed in charge of the American invasion of Canada, Montgomery saw some success. In December of 1775, his planned attack on Quebec failed and Montgomery was killed during the attack. He was admired by the British and given a formal burial by his opponents. His death was personally devastating to General Washington.

Montgomery was mourned on both sides of the Atlantic and within a month the Continental Congress authorized a monument be erected in his honor.

Montgomery's reputation grew in the years after his death. Our Montgomery County in Indiana is one of fifteen states with a Montgomery County, not to mention the numerous cities named for him. In our orientation video, our former director Joann Spragg, comments that we have plenty of heroes for our children to look up to—we have just forgotten them. While she is thinking of Major

General Lew Wallace, Major General Richard Montgomery is also one of those men!

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, I hope we will all take time to reflect on the women and men who contributed so much to the development of the United States. I invite everyone to come and learn a little bit about members of the Wallace Family who embodied these contributions and sacrifices.



## **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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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*Please clip & mail your membership information to LWSPS, PO Box 662, Crawfordsville, IN 47933*

Enclosed is my check payable to the Lew Wallace Study Preservation Society

I will pay with credit card online

Please visit [www.ben-hur.com/join-support](http://www.ben-hur.com/join-support) to pay for your membership with a credit card via Paypal

I wish to remain anonymous

I'm declining benefits, making my contribution deductible to the full extent of IRS regulations.

## An Unexpected Alliance

**Thomas R. Meeks Jr.**  
*Associate Director*

In early 1847, during the Mexican-American War, Lew Wallace and the 1st Indiana Volunteers found themselves retracing their steps toward Matamoros, a town near the mouth of the Rio Grande. New orders directed them to return to their former encampment, overruling their original assignment to join the rest of the army at the front near Monterrey. Having already traveled more than 200 miles upriver by steamship then another 80 miles on foot, the reversal hit the men hard. With sore feet and heavy spirits, the regiment began the long march back. By the time they made it back to the river near Camargo and boarded a steamship their rations were running as thin as their morale, prompting officers to send five men ashore to forage. Shortly after, two of the foragers came rushing back in a panic reporting that the party had been ambushed and the other three were dead.

The captain of the steamship, well acquainted with the region,

informed the regiment that the town of Reynosa was roughly four miles downriver. He described its violent reputation and that it was the frequent refuge for the notorious guerrilla leader General José María Jesús Carbajal. That name was familiar to the men. Carbajal gained infamy following the Thornton Affair, another deadly ambush in April 1846 that provided President James K. Polk with grounds to call for a declaration of war against Mexico.

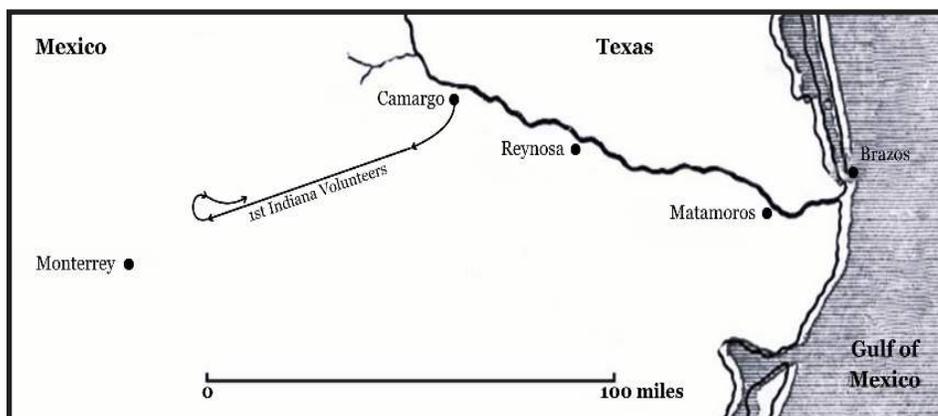
Incensed by the killing of their comrades, a fresh company led by Second Lieutenant Lew Wallace was sent to recover the bodies and strike Reynosa. Between them and their target was a broad and open meadow followed by a steep fifteen-foot bluff. The soldiers readied themselves, then recklessly charged across the field in a hasty assault. Despite being exposed to the buildings atop the bluff no shots were fired. Upon successfully climbing the hill they realized that the enemy had fled. Carbajal was gone, and the vengeance they sought had

slipped from their grasp.

Wallace's experiences in the Mexican-American War, deepened an interest in Mexico that took root long before. As a boy exploring his father's library, the young Lew devoured William H. Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*. He sympathized with the natives of the region, a sentiment expressed in his 1873 novel *The Fair God*, written from their point of view. He also found Mexico's landscape endlessly beautiful, writing to his wife Susan in 1866 that "if it were under our flag, I would rather live in Monterrey than any spot I ever saw." Mexico's allure, however, eventually led Wallace down an unexpected path.

In 1865, during the final months of the American Civil War, Archduke Maximilian I sat on the proverbial throne in Mexico City. The French invasion of 1862 pushed the elected president Benito Juárez and his Juárezistas to northern Mexico, where they remained undersupplied, undermanned, and unable to retake Mexico City from the French.

Concerned by this unstable situation, Wallace warned General Ulysses S. Grant that fleeing Confederates might exploit the political turmoil in northern Mexico to establish a quasi-nation from which they could indefinitely harass the United States. Grant agreed with Wallace's assessment and

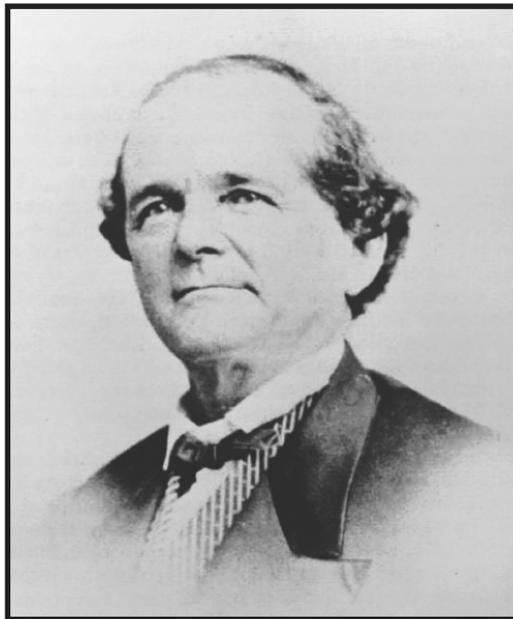


ordered him to the Rio Grande to investigate Confederate operations in the region. Upon arrival, Wallace dispatched a messenger to arrange a meeting with the nearest Juárezista general, hoping to discuss a potential joint action to check Confederate movements across the border and prevent an alliance between them and Maximilian's regime. Meeting on Brazos Island at the mouth of the Rio Grande, the nearest commander turned out to be José Carbajal.

Born in 1809 in what is now San Antonio, Texas, Carbajal was one of eleven children raised by his widowed mother just as the region was being rapidly settled by Americans. He spoke English fluently, and as a teenager came under the mentorship of Stephen F. Austin, the "Father of Texas," who helped guide his early education and career. With Austin's support, Carbajal found work first as an apprentice saddlemaker and later as a surveyor. When the Texas War of Independence broke out in 1835, Carbajal refused to take up arms against fellow Mexicans, even though he disagreed with their Centralist government. His stance as a conscientious objector came at great personal cost. His family's property was seized, and he was forced to move south. After the expulsion, Carbajal renounced his ties to Texas and devoted the rest of his life to what he saw as the betterment of the country of Mexico and the Mexican people,

including a devoted support for progressive politics.

For Carbajal, the meeting with Wallace came at an opportune moment. He was in desperate straits trying to resist the French, and the few hundred men under his command were armed with little more than bows and arrows. During their discussion, Carbajal presented a commission from



José María Jesús Carbajal, 1866.

President Juárez authorizing him to purchase 40,000 rifles and other military supplies. If Wallace could assist him in acquiring the arms, Carbajal promised in return that any Confederates attempting to cross into Mexico would be met with open hostility.

In April 1865, Wallace returned to Washington, D.C., accompanied by Carbajal, who traveled under the pseudonym Joseph Smith. Only President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, General

Ulysses S. Grant, and the Mexican minister to the United States were aware of Carbajal's true identity. Given official approval, the two men worked together in support of the Juárez government. From D.C. they travelled to New York City to raise money, establishing Mexican Aid Societies for supplies in the process.

Carbajal soon offered Wallace a major general's commission in the Mexican army, adding that he could command a corps of Americans. He also promised a payment of \$100,000 if their cause proved victorious and financial security for Wallace's family in the event of his death. Wallace resigned his U.S. Army commission and accepted the offer. Unfortunately, the Mexican government never fulfilled the full payment Carbajal had promised, and Wallace returned home in 1867 in significant debt, though a partial payment of \$15,000 was finally made to him in 1882.

Despite the disappointing outcome, Wallace later wrote of Carbajal that "never was a man more solicitous to do his duty and serve his country." During their time together, Wallace curiously asked Carbajal why he chose to not fire on the Americans charging across the open meadow that day at Reynosa in 1847. He responded, "I saw you had men enough to take the town, and thought it best not to fight on account of the women and children."

## Spring & Summer Programming

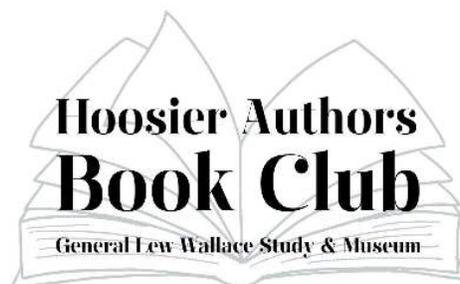
Our offered programs not only celebrate the life and legacy of Lew Wallace, but ensure that his story remains relevant and meaningful to audiences today. Through strong partnerships with organizations and individuals who share a deep commitment to Crawfordsville and Montgomery County, our programs have grown in strength and impact. We are sincerely grateful to the agencies and community groups who have been so open, collaborative, and welcoming.

None of this would be possible without our program partners and the generous support of our contributors. Whether through membership, memorial gifts, endowment contributions, sponsorships, event underwriting, or simply attending and participating, you make this work possible. We are deeply grateful to our supporters.

### Hoosier Authors Book Club

The Hoosier Authors Book Club began as part of our Indiana Bicentennial programming in 2016 with the Museum's exhibit on the Golden Age of Indiana Literature. This Golden Age began with the publication of Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur*. The book club has proven to be a popular program with more than 50 books on a wide range of subjects having been read since late 2015.

The meetings are at **7 pm EDT** in the **Carriage House Interpretive Center**. Book club books will be available to check out here as well. The books selected this year demonstrate the broad range of Hoosier literature that is available!



The first, ***Everything is Tuberculosis*** by **John Green** will be discussed on **April 16**. John Green explores how tuberculosis (TB) is a disease of injustice, poverty, and global inequity revealing the failures of public health, the power of personal narrative of curable illness, all through the lens of a personal connection with a patient named Henry, highlighting that TB's persistence is a reflection of societal choices, resource disparities, and the stigma that prevents people from seeking care.

The second book club will meet on **May 21** to discuss ***If This Isn't Nice, What Is?*** by **Kurt Vonnegut**. Vonnegut's classic humor and humanist perspective shines through

in this collection of witty and candid commencement speeches advising graduates to embrace life's simple and happy moments, to stay humanistic and recognize the joy around you. Vonnegut points out how people often fail to realize they are happy, and to step back and appreciate those moments.

On **June 18**, the book club will meet to discuss ***The Rabbit Hutch*** by **Tess Gunty**. Set across one week and culminating in a shocking act of violence, *The Rabbit Hutch* chronicles a group of people looking for ways to live in a dying city, a town on the brink, desperate for rebirth. How far will its residents—especially Blandine—go to achieve it? Does one person's gain always come at another's expense? Tess Gunty's *The Rabbit Hutch* is a gorgeous and provocative tale of loneliness and community, entrapment and freedom.

### The Dr. Howard Miller Lecture Series

The annual Dr. Howard Miller Lecture Series programs help to compliment our yearly exhibit in the Carriage House Interpretive Center. This year there are several lectures scheduled to support our 2026 exhibit *Wallace Family: A Legacy of Service*.

## Spring & Summer Programming continued

Our first lecture of the 2026 season took place on March 12 and featured historian **Ryan L. Cole** discussing his new book *The Last Adieu* on Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette's triumphant return to the nation he helped win independence nearly fifty years earlier. We thank him for his talk, and encourage readers to support him by purchasing his wonderful new book.

Our second lecture will be on **June 11** at **7 pm** with Author **Gail Stephens**. Gail is a retired U.S. Department of Defense employee who served as a volunteer at the Monocacy National Battlefield. Her experience at Monocacy led to an interest in the life of Lew Wallace and the publishing of her book *Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*. She has lectured across the country, led battlefield tours, appeared on podcasts and radio, as well as aiding our museum in designing exhibits. Gail will join us to discuss General Wallace's Civil War military career in the Carriage House Interpretive Center.

### American Battlefield Trust Park Day

For 30 years, thousands of volunteers have gathered at battlefields and historic sites across the nation to participate in the Trust's Park Day clean-

up effort. In addition to the satisfaction that volunteer work brings, participants receive a complimentary tour of the site. Park Day allows the American Battlefield Trust to highlight our beloved American landscapes nationwide. Projects will keep historic sites and battlefields clean, open and accessible for the enjoyment of all. Join us on **April 25** from **9am - 12 pm** to aid staff at the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum prepare the grounds for the 2026 season.

### Civil War Reenactment

On **June 6-7** the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum will host the **10th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry Regiment** for a Civil War reenactment. Historically known as "Lincoln's Own" unit, The 10th Volunteer Cavalry strives to reenact the citizen soldier from Illinois. It was formed to provide enjoyable opportunities for individuals and families to experience, learn, and teach others about aspects of life in the mid-19th century. The American Civil War is one of the most fascinating and defining moments in our history. Everything from the military conflicts and tactics to civilian life with its social expectations and customs, are experiences that our living historians in the 10th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry Regiment attempt to re-create.

### ArchiCamp 2026

ArchiCamp is our two-day architecture themed camp for kids aged 8-12 that uses historic local buildings and imaginative activities to educate and excite participants about Montgomery County history and instill stewardship and understanding of our cultural heritage. 2026 activities include walking tours of historic downtown Crawfordsville, building birdhouses, discussing historic preservation, and more. This year's camp will be held **June 16- 17** and costs \$25/student.

### TASTE of Montgomery County 2026

The Taste of Montgomery County is one of the area's most anticipated festivals and the General Lew Wallace Study & Museum's largest annual fundraiser. The event features local food vendors and musical acts. Proceeds support the Museum's programming and exhibits. This year's event is on **Saturday, August 22** from **12 pm - 9 pm**. Stay tuned for updates on the 2026 vendors and performers—we hope to see you there!



## From the Arboretum

*Deb King*

*Grounds Manager*

Fall was a color showcase of maples and dogwoods turning a vibrant red, and hickory, sassafras and ginkgo leaves turning bright yellow-gold.

Chrysanthemums in maroon, yellow and bronze added to the season's color.

Fall leaf cleanup consisted of 2-3 weeks of mower mulching, right up to Thanksgiving. The early onset of cold temperatures froze the ground, which prevented the planting of snow drops, daffodils, hyacinths and tulips. Snow began to fall and never seemed to melt. Winter hit with vengeance! We held out hope that the temperatures would moderate for the bulbs to be planted, but no luck.

Susan's garden is undergoing a much-needed revitalization. Dying shrub roses were removed and clumps of iris separated. The separated iris rhizomes were planted in other areas of the garden. This spring, the garden will be planted with a few native perennials.

Golden Alexander, *Zizia aurea*, is a native perennial which occurs most often in moist woods, meadows, thickets and prairies. A flat-topped cluster of tiny yellow flowers in late spring blooms atop a 3' stem. Like Queen Anne's lace, Golden Alexander is a member of the carrot family. Golden Alexander is planted in the moat garden,

alongside companion plants, coneflower and bee balm. It is a beneficial plant that provides food for the larvae of swallowtail butterflies.

Another Indiana native planted in the Moat garden in 2025 was Great Blue Lobelia.

*Lobelia siphilitica*, also called blue cardinal flower, grows 2-3' tall and blooms in the late summer. This perennial grows spikes of royal to dark blue tubular flowers and attracts bees, hummingbirds and butterflies.

We will continue to add to our Indiana native plant list and are researching which natives may thrive on the grounds of the Museum.



**Great Blue Lobelia**



**Swallowtail on Golden Alexander**

# Adopt-A-Spot Program

*“A place where I can get away...”*

Lew Wallace dreamed of a sanctuary, and his vision lives on today at the Museum. The serene grounds, filled with gardens and trees, offer a peaceful retreat for visitors and are an integral part of the experience.

The Museum invites you to help develop and maintain its gardens and arboretum. Thirteen gardens, each named after an aspect of Lew Wallace’s life, are available for adoption: Ben-Hur, Susan’s, Henry’s, Lew Jr’s, Tee’s, Water Babble, Wallace, Old John’s, Terrace, Princess Irene’s, Moat, Statue, and Zouave.

The Adopt-A-Spot program provides essential funds to sustain and enhance these gardens, supporting tree and plant labels, interpretive signs, maintenance, replanting, and other improvements.



**Learn how to Adopt-A-Spot Today!  
Contact the Museum at  
study@ben-hur.com  
or (765) 362-5769**

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## Adopt-A-Spot Form

Name/Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to adopt a     \$100 Garden     \$250 Garden     \$500 Garden

Payment Options:     Cash     Check     Credit Card

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_ Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to the Lew Wallace Study Preservation Society.

P.O. Box 662 Crawfordsville, IN 47933

For more information or questions, contact the museum - study@gmail.com (765) 362-5769

# General Lew Wallace Study & Museum Contributions

## Received October 1, 2025 through February 28, 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.*

### Memberships

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Mike Beemer  
Catherine Caldwell  
Lorena & James Elmore  
Sherry & Monty Harris  
Dee & Dennis J. Hohlbein  
Linda & Dale Petrie  
Sue Rickett  
Gail Stephens

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Marie & Tom Stocks

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Sheridan & David Hadley  
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Marie & Tom Stocks  
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Bronna & Peter Utterback  
Nancy & Larry Van Arendonk  
Nancy & Richard Williams  
Beverly & Jack Wyatt

#### Adopt-A-Spot

Cindy & Jerry Smith  
Susan Rosen  
Suanne & Tom Milligan  
Elaine & Rick Chase  
Betty & John Culley  
Barb & Steve Carver  
Roger & Jan Cain  
Henry, Heidi, & Tom Meeks  
Edward & Ruth Ann Quick



# Study Scrapbook



**GLWSM Board Member Nick Hedrick discusses *The Last Adieu* with Author Ryan L. Cole**  
(Photo Credit: Andy Chandler)



**Cheryl Everett Entertaining at the Holiday Tea.**

**Ben-Hur Beverages Bottle Sparkling Water made in Wallingford, Connecticut**



**Bernie O'Bryan Carrying Torch for Indiana Bicentennial in 2016.**

## ArchiCamp Returns this Summer

In partnership with Indiana Landmarks, we are offering ArchiCamp on June 16 - 17 for children ages 8-12. The camp will run from 9 am to 3 pm each day and costs \$25 per student.

During the two-day camp, students will learn about Crawfordsville's architectural heritage, including the historic General Lew Wallace Study building. Campers will take a walking tour through historic Elston Grove and Downtown Crawfordsville, learn about architectural terms and how to recognize corresponding features.

We will discuss historic preservation, learn about architectural careers, and examine preservation successes and failures in our community.

ArchiCamp strives to instill stewardship, teach the basics, and motivate participants to become creative problem solvers.

In order to provide this experience to students for only \$25, we rely on donations from organizations, businesses and individuals to sponsor students for \$75.

If you are interested in sponsoring a local child, or if you would like to register a student for ArchiCamp, please contact Thomas Meeks at [tmeeks@ben-hur.com](mailto:tmeeks@ben-hur.com).





**GENERAL LEW WALLACE STUDY & MUSEUM**

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

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## 2026 Events Calendar

April 16 - **Hoosier Authors Book Club** - 7 pm

*Everything is Tuberculosis* by John Green.

April 25 - **American Battlefield Trust Park Day** - 9 am - 12 pm

May 21 - **Hoosier Authors Book Club** - 7 pm

*If This Isn't Nice, What Is?* by Kurt Vonnegut.

June 6 & 7 - **Civil War Reenactment** - Time TBA  
10th Illinois Cavalry

June 11 - **Dr. Howard Miller Lecture Series** - 7 pm

General Lew Wallace in the Civil War by Gail Stephens.

June 18 - **Hoosier Authors Book Club** - 7 pm

*The Rabbit Hutch* by Tess Gunty

June 16 & 17 - **ArchiCamp 2026** - 9 am - 3 pm

Architecture themed camp for kids 8-12 years old

August 22 - **The TASTE! of Montgomery County** - 12 pm - 9 pm