LEW WALLACE
COLLECTION, 1799–1972 (BULK 1846–1905)

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by
Paul Brockman
1 June 1992
Revised 12 September 2002
Visual Materials Revised by
Dorothy Nicholson
12 September 2005

Manuscript Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 
Manuscript Materials: 20 manuscript boxes, 3 small manuscript boxes, 2 oversize boxes, 30 reels of microfilm
**Visual Materials:** 3 boxes of photographs, 1 OVA box of photographs, 1 OVB box of photographs, 2 boxes of OVA graphics, 1 box of OVB graphics, 1 box of OVC graphics, 2 photo albums

**Artifacts:** 2 reunion badges, 3 copper plates

**COLLECTION DATES:** 1799–1972 (bulk 1846–1905)

**PROVENANCE:** Bulk Lew Wallace, Jr., December 1940; Mrs. Lew Wallace Jr., May 1955, plus numerous others, 1940s–1980s

**RESTRICTIONS:** Wallace-Bonney material may not be reproduced.

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**ALTERNATE FORMATS:** Microfilm

**RELATED HOLDINGS:** Henry Smith Lane Collection (M 0180); David Wallace (SC 1523, F 0251); Wallace Genealogy (F 0095).

**ACCESSION NUMBERS:** 1940.1202; 1955.0501; plus subsequent other numbers since this is an ongoing collection; the two listed above are the primary acquisitions

**NOTES:** This is an ongoing collection with many items being acquired over the years from 1940 to the present. The original items in the collection are calendared from 1814 through 1950 (boxes 1–8)

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Lewis (Lew) Wallace (1827–1905) was born to David Wallace, an Indiana Governor, and Esther French (Test) Wallace in Brookville, Indiana. Wallace was a lieutenant in the 1st Indiana infantry during the Mexican War, 1846–47. In 1848 Wallace edited a Free Soil Party paper to oppose the election of Zachary Taylor for president because he believed Taylor treated Indiana regiments badly during the Mexican War. After the election, Wallace became affiliated with the Democratic Party. Wallace was admitted to the bar in 1849 and soon began practicing in Indianapolis. A short time later, he moved to Covington, Fountain County, where he was elected prosecuting attorney in 1850 and 1852. Wallace moved to Crawfordsville in 1853 and was elected to the Indiana State Senate in 1856 as a member of the Democratic Party.

In 1861, Governor Oliver P. Morton appointed Wallace Indiana adjutant general. For his recruitment services, Wallace was commissioned a colonel in the 11th Indiana Regiment and distinguished himself at the battle of Romney. He was soon promoted to general and fought at Fort Donelson and Shiloh, 1862. He was also in charge of the defense of Cincinnati, 1862–63, and was credited with saving the city from falling into Confederate hands. In 1864 he commanded a Union force of 5,800 at the Battle of Monocacy that held off an army of 28,000 Confederates and was credited with preventing the capture of Washington, D.C. Wallace was a member of the court-martial which tried the conspirators in the Lincoln assassination, 1865, and he was president of the commission that tried and convicted Henry Wirz, commander of Andersonville Prison, Georgia, 1865.
Wallace was also involved in acquiring arms and men for Mexican rebels fighting the French, 1865–67. In 1867, he returned to Crawfordsville and was a Republican Party candidate for Congress in 1870. Wallace was named to the committee to oversee counting of disputed ballots in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina after the 1876 presidential election. From 1878–81 Wallace served as governor of New Mexico Territory. He was then named U.S. Minister to Turkey, a position he held from 1881–85. While in Turkey, Wallace won the confidence of the Sultan to an unusual extent.

Wallace was probably best known as an author. Among his works were: *The Fair God* (1873); *Ben-Hur* (1880); *The Life of Benjamin Harrison* (1888); *The Boyhood of Christ* (1888), and *The Prince of India* (1893).

Wallace was married to Susan Elston in 1852. She was the daughter of Col. Isaac C. and Maria A. Elston. Mrs. Wallace was a frequent contributor to newspapers and periodicals.

The *Dictionary of American Biography* described Wallace as: "...simple in taste and democratic in ideals. For politics he had no aptitude; the law he did not like; the military life challenged his adventurous spirit but could not hold him after his country had no special use for his services; art, music, and literature were his most vital and permanent interests."


**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The bulk of the collection is from the period 1846–1905 and consists of Wallace's correspondence with his wife and son, retained copies of Wallace's business and professional letters, and letters to Wallace and his family. Included are Wallace's letters from Mexico (1846–47); letters to his wife describing his military service and civil service careers during the Civil War, in Mexico (1865–67), New Mexico Territory (1878–81), Turkey (1885), and on his tours throughout the United States (1886–87, 1894). There are also many contemporary transcriptions of these letters that are interfiled with the originals, 1860s–1880s. Also included is Wallace's official correspondence relating to the Civil War, New Mexico Territory and the Lincoln County Wars, and Turkey. Copies of Wallace's speeches are included, as well as notes and printed materials used in their writing, 1859–1903. In addition, the collection contains Wallace's correspondence relating to Mexico (1865–67), his publishing and lecture work, and his business interests in Crawfordsville, Indiana, Indianapolis, and New Mexico. Also, Wallace's notebooks relating to the 1876 elections, New Mexico, Turkey, and lecture tours.

Also included are the papers of Wallace's wife, Susan Elston Wallace (1830–1907), consisting of family correspondence, her letters to her son, Henry, from Europe, Turkey, and Egypt (1881–82). There is correspondence with publishers regarding her own writings and clippings and scrapbooks she assembled relating to Lew Wallace's life and times, 1861–85. In addition, there are letter books of Henry Wallace (1853–1926) relating to the family's business interests, and a lawsuit involving Wallace and his publisher, Harper & Brothers, against producers Klaw and Erlanger regarding the theatrical production of *Ben Hur*.

The collection also contains the papers of Wallace's father-in-law, Isaac C. Elston (1794–1867) of Crawfordsville. The majority of the material relates to Elston's business interests and in particular to the developing of Michigan City (1830–49). In addition, there is a small amount of Wallace family papers and correspondence, papers, and printed items, 1814–37. There is also Elston family correspondence, primarily from the period 1865–66 from Crawfordsville, Cincinnati, and Washington, D.C., and Sylvia Elston's scrapbook, 1846–61.

The collection also contains genealogical materials such as charts, correspondence, and related items regarding the Wallace, Elston, and Test families. There are also some documents and correspondence of the Test family, 1815–
The visual materials in the collection consist of original drawings and sketches by Wallace, plus photographs, albums, cartes de visite, cabinet cards, and prints of him, his homes, events, family members and individuals he knew during his life.

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“Study No. 1—All right but left arm,” n.d. [Drawing of prisoner shot while dipping cup into creek]

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“Etude, One of a jury of peers,” n.d. [Portrait of man with eyes closed]

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“Sam Arnold—Arraigned,” n.d. [Drawing of hooded man in shackles]

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“Abdul Hamid, Feb ‘85” [Profile sketch of the sultan]

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“Un Rancherito No. 1” n.d. [Sketch of a man and dog]

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“Rancho Salitro, No. 2”, n.d. [Sketch of farm yard]

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Visual Collections: OVA Graphics,
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“The School of the Lariat, No. 6,” n.d. [Children riding goats and lassoing a goose]

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“The First View, No. 14,” n.d. [Sketch of bison herd]

“The King of the Herd, No. 15,” n.d. [Sketch of bison]

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“Lew Wallace, From Sketch at Crawfordsville, Ind. 1895,” by A. Young

Sketches of Lincoln Conspirators: O’Laughlin, Spangler and, Herold, drawn June 7 ‘65

Sketches of Lincoln Conspirators: Dr. Mudd, Payne, Arnold, Atzerodt, drawn June 7, ‘65

Sketches of Lincoln Conspirators: Arnold, Atzerodt, drawn June 7, ‘65

[Sketch of two men seated beneath palm trees at an oasis]

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Lew Wallace Civil War Era Portrait by Matthew Brady from American Image Gallery Gettysburg [copy]

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Visual Collections: OVC Graphics, Box 1, Folder 1

Copper printing plate mounted on wood block: Portrait of Lew Wallace [same image as the printed portrait in Box 1, Folder 3]  
Artifacts: R1069

Copper printing plate mounted on wood block: Portrait of Lew Wallace [same image as the printed portrait in Box 1, Folder 3]  
Artifacts: R1070

Copper printing plate mounted on wood block: Blacherne Apartments [image taken from photograph]  
Artifacts: R1071

Series 13: Photograph Albums

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Civil War Album: contains lithographs of Lincoln, some members of his cabinet and Union officers. Inscribed in the front to General Wallace by James Dolan and dated 1864  Visual Collections: Album Storage, PAA

“Shiloh” Photograph Album: contains photographs of the battlefield ca. 1900. Inscribed on inside front cover “For General Lew Wallace of Crawfordsville,

Visual Collections: Album Storage, PAA
Ind. From a southerner who appreciates your pen a
great deal more than he does your sword. C. Waldo
Meador, Corinth, Mississippi July 2, 1902”

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:  http://opac.indianahistory.org
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the “Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0292)
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.