

General Lew Wallace Study & Museum

The Home of Ben-Hur

Empire Sign up!

Historic Difference Restoration Project

"The border around the skylight is handpainted, designed by the owner. It consists of implements of warfare in groups chained together. We see the shield, helmet, sword, bugle, breastplate, etc..."

— Ella Kostanzer, January 1, 1900

Restoration Completed!

The General Lew Wallace Study is Montgomery County's only National Historic Landmark and the discovery of these finishes reinforces our unique status. Once restored and conserved, the Study will feature one of the most elaborate and original Victorian finishes available for public viewing in the region.

The restoration of the interior of Lew Wallace's Study is complete. The first step in the process was the demolition of the old wiring and electrical system and the installation of new wiring. The project was completed by Glenroy Construction, with the electrical work being done by Electric Plus. Dane Macy and Tim Whicker from Electric Plus worked very hard with Dave Kroll of Ratio Architects to determine the best way to remove old material and install new material with a minimum amount of damage to the historic fabric of the building.

This work was complicated because the original wiring was installed prior to the finish plastering. Further, the installation of the wiring in the 1890s was handled differently at each of the three levels in the main room so the same approach did not work throughout the building. We learned much about the manner in which the plastering and original wiring was done that we will include in our institutional archives and share with interested visitors.

We have now completed the second phase of the project as we begin the dramatic restoration of the interior paint finishes as created by Wallace 120 years ago. One dramatic discovery during this process was that, rather than eight vignettes, we had thirty-two, and they were 95% intact! The work done by the talented restoration team has revealed the tastefully elaborate Victorian finishes Wallace enjoyed.

The Backstory

General Lew Wallace Study & Museum

When she discovered the new word in 1907, Ella Wallace became the only person to ever mention the frescoes on the dome of the Lew Wallace Study. Without her comments, lost for over fifty years and then quietly filed away and generally forgotten, this elaborate Victorian work of art designed by Lew Wallace himself, might never have been found. Imagine our surprise when a portion of it was uncovered in 2011!

Researchers generally dismissed her mention of the decorative paint finishes in the Study because no one—including the Wallace family—recalled these elaborate treatments. Although Wallace's unusual Study was widely covered in the press during construction in the 1890s, the decorative finishes were never noted.

During restoration efforts in 2011, a detailed paint analysis of the interior hinted at the possibility of an elaborate paint finish. Conservators were hired to remove nine layers of over-paint to see what might survive from the 1890s. After initially failing to find the hidden artwork, conservators reexamined Ella's written words and noted she said the artwork was "around the skylight." They went farther up on the dome to the perimeter of the skylight and there it was!

Following Ella's description, the conservators located a life and drum in the southeast corner of the dome and a section of the chain that will someday again link the elements of the military motif. Beyond the fresco design, the original painted finishes include an unusual color scheme that fades from dark to light blue in the main room and a dark red and gilded design in the entry vestibule. Additionally, the elaborate plaster floral band that surrounds the main room was gilded so each individual light sparkled.

To see where we've been with the fundraising campaign and our generous donors, please visit our **Making A Historic Difference Campaign Page**.



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Upcoming Events

OCT

13

Thu

([http://](http://www.ben-hur.co)

[www.b](http://www.ben-hur.co)

[en-](http://www.ben-hur.co)

[hur.co](http://www.ben-hur.co)

10:00 am Indiana Bicentennial Torch relay... @ General Lew Wallace Study & Museum

(http://www.ben-hur.com/event/indiana-bicentennial-torch-relay-crosses-study-grounds/?instance_id=146)

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General Lew Wallace Study & Museum

The Home of Ben-Hur

Empower
sign up!

OCT

20

Thu

(http://www.ben-hur.com/event/s/action~oneda_y/exact_date~1_0-20-2016/)

7:00 pm Hoosier Authors Book Club – Alic... @ General Lew Wallace Study & Museum (http://www.ben-hur.com/event/hoosier-authors-book-club-alice-old-vincennes/?instance_id=149)

OCT

27

Thu

(http://www.ben-hur.com/event/s/action~oneda_y/exact_date~1_0-27-2016/)

7:00 pm Evening with Indiana Poet Laurea... @ General Lew Wallace Study & Museum (http://www.ben-hur.com/event/evening-indiana-poet-laureate-shari-wagner/?instance_id=145)

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General Lew Wallace Study & Museum

Event Sign up!



View Calendar → (<http://www.ben-hur.com/venues/>)

The Home of Ben-Hur

Golden Age of Indiana Literature

Our 2016 exhibit, "The Golden Age of Indiana Literature: From Ben-Hur to Alice Adams" is open through Friday, December 16. For groups of 10 or more people, please reserve a tour appointment by calling 765-362-5769.

Recent Blog Posts

- > Carol Wallace talk – Video
- > Carol Wallace visits Crawfordsville
- > Seeking Young Architecture Enthusiasts
- > Discuss Hoosier Schoolmaster With Us
- > Exhibit explores Hoosier novels from Ben-Hur to Alice Adams
 - > House of a Thousand Candles next Book Club Pick
 - > Book Club Discussing Magnificent Ambersons Thursday
 - > Get a TASTE for a Good Cause

