



Susan Wallace

(1830 – 1907)

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Susan Arnold Elston Wallace was an American author and poet. Born on December 25, 1830 in Crawfordsville, Indiana, she was raised in a Quaker family. She was educated at home in and at Dr. Gibbons' Friends' Boarding School in Poughkeepsie, New York. While at boarding school, she studied literature, geometry, and writing, but preferred music, especially playing guitar and piano.

Susan married Lew Wallace on May 6, 1852. At the time of their courtship, Lew Wallace was a prosecuting attorney in Covington, Indiana. He also was a major general during the American Civil War, who was later appointed governor to the New Mexico Territory and served as the U.S. Minister to the Ottoman Empire. He later became one of the most celebrated American authors of the 19th century, with the publication of *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*. Susan accepted Wallace's marriage proposal in 1849 and three years after their first meeting, the couple were married at the Elston family home. Late in life she still described him as "my first, last, and only love."

Although Susan was a talented writer and musician, she preferred to remain in the background as her husband's companion and advisor. On occasion, Susan accompanied her husband to his various posts, but Crawfordsville remained their home. In 1881 Susan accompanied her husband to his diplomatic post in Constantinople, Turkey, and traveled throughout Europe, Egypt, and the Holy Land during their years abroad. When Lew's diplomatic assignment ended in 1885, they returned to Crawfordsville, where Susan was prominent in the town's literary community.

Susan Wallace was a published author and poet. One of her best known poems, "The Patter of Little Feet", first appeared in the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* on April 17, 1858. In addition to writing travel articles for several American magazines and newspapers, Wallace published six books, five of which contain collected essays from her travels in the New Mexico Territory, Europe, and the Middle East in the 1880s. Those works included *The Land of the Pueblos* (1888), *The Storied Sea* (1883), *The Repose in Egypt: A Medley* (1888), *Along the Bosphorus, and Other Sketches* (1898), and *The City of the King: What the Child Jesus Saw and Heard* (1903).

After her husband's death in 1905, Susan completed the manuscript of his two-volume autobiography with the help of Mary Hannah Krout, another author from Crawfordsville, Indiana. It was published posthumously in 1906. Susan Wallace died in Crawfordsville on October 1, 1907, at the age of seventy-six.



Photo courtesy: General Lew Wallace Study digital collection.