Touching your inquiry whether Ben-Hur was written in the Old Palace of Santa Fe, I beg to say it was finished there. That is, the MS was completed at the time of the appointment to the governorship of New Mexico (1877) [sic] down to the Sixth book of the volume and I carried it with me. . . . When in the city, my habit was to shut myself after night in the bedroom back of the executive office proper, and write 'till after 12 o'clock. The sixth, seventh, and eighth books were the results, and the room has ever since been associated in my mind with the Crucifixion. The retirement, impenetrable to incoming sound, was as profound as a cavern's.¹

So wrote ex-territorial governor of New Mexico Lew Wallace nine years after his resignation and departure from Santa Fe for his new appointment as United States Minister to Turkey. His two and one-half years in New Mexico (1878–81) often have been overlooked entirely or treated as a sidelight in his long career of public service.² That his was an important administration marked by controversy, perplexing problems, some achievements, and other failures is revealed in Wallace's personal papers and public records. While he confronted and sometimes resolved existing problems, he also initiated actions that others completed. Simultaneously, his positive approach, "do something" attitude, and efforts to bring New Mexico
Territory to national attention made his administration one of the more constructive ones in the nineteenth century.

Lew Wallace was fifty-one years old when he was appointed territorial governor of New Mexico by President Rutherford B. Hayes on 4 September 1878. Born in Brookville, Indiana, on 10 April 1827, he had already established himself as a controversial public figure as a lawyer, author, and military leader. He served in the war against Mexico and as a Union general in the War of the Rebellion. Married to Susan Arnold Elston, whom he described once as "a composite of genius, common sense, and all the best womanly qualities," he moved to her hometown of Crawfordsville in 1853. There he practiced law and became a state senator three years later. During the War of the Rebellion he served at Harper's Ferry, Romney, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, and in the defense of Baltimore and Washington in 1864. Subsequently he was a member of the special court to try Lincoln's assassins and headed a special commission to investigate the crimes of the warden at Andersonville prison. Thereafter he supported the Mexican Liberals and President Benito Juárez against the empire of Maximilian von Hapsburg. Returning to Crawfordsville to resume his law practice, which he disliked, he published his first major work, *The Fair God*, in 1873. After an unsuccessful attempt to be elected on the Republican ticket to Congress in 1876, Wallace was chosen to replace Governor Samuel B. Axtell in New Mexico.

Why was Lew Wallace appointed to this distant position? Very little information exists to provide a direct answer to this question. Neither Lew Wallace nor his wife gives much direct insight into the reason why the former sought or accepted such a responsibility. William A. Keleher speculates that Wallace needed the money, might make a fortune from a gold or silver mine, might be elected to the United States Senate if New Mexico became a state, and would have time to complete *Ben Hur*, which he had already begun in Crawfordsville. These explanations are not convincing. With an annual salary of $2,600, the position was not financially rewarding. As a lawyer in his hometown, Wallace was adequately provided with an adequate, if not large, income. Concerning the possibility of investing in a mining claim, it is possible but not probable since Wallace knew little of New Mexico before his appointment, and he
did not become interested in mining until after his arrival in Santa Fe. New Mexico was not being considered for statehood, so Wallace’s desire to become a senator seems improbable, although his defeat in the Indiana senatorial race of 1876 might have influenced him. Regarding the time to complete his manuscript, this may have been a valid reason, but one wonders why the time would not have been available in Crawfordsville amid the familiar surroundings of Wallace’s library.

Three factors may have been more important concerning the appointment. First, Wallace’s restlessness and dissatisfaction with the practice of law led him to seek new experiences and challenges. One of his biographers, Irving McKee, maintains that Wallace’s dream of Mexico persisted and that New Mexico offered him an escape from law practice, which he later called an “interminable rut.” As Wallace told an interviewer in 1898, “I never loved the profession.” Because he had travelled in Mexico and desired to see New Mexico, a land that he thought would be similar in many respects to old Mexico, he told a newspaper reporter that this was his reason for accepting the position after he had refused President Hayes’s initial offer as minister to Bolivia. Concerning his unwillingness to go to Bolivia, Wallace apparently believed it was too far away and such a move for himself and his family would be a financial drain even though the salary there was nearly twice that of New Mexico.7

A second important factor was the violence and political corruption existing in New Mexico during the Axtell administration, particularly the governor’s alleged identification with members of the powerful Santa Fe Ring. The report of special investigator Frank Warner Angel described the violence in Lincoln and Colfax counties and indicted territorial officials for their involvement, especially Governor Axtell for an administration of “corruption, fraud, mismanagement, plots, and murder.” President Hayes thereafter suspended Axtell and appointed Wallace on 4 September 1878.8

Finally, and perhaps most important, was party patronage. Lew Wallace had been a staunch supporter of the Republican Party since the War of the Rebellion. President Hayes, like Wallace, was also a veteran of that war, and he may have desired to reward his fellow officer and campaign supporter in the closely contested election of
1876 in which Wallace had served as legal counsel to resolve the disputed returns from Louisiana and Florida in Hayes's favor.9

Whatever the ultimate reason, Lew Wallace accepted the appointment and promptly arranged to go to Washington first for consultations and briefings and then to New Mexico. His journey from Indiana to Santa Fe took six days, via train to Trinidad, Colorado, ending with a two-day buckboard trip to the New Mexican capital with a stop at Cimarron, New Mexico, enroute. He arrived unannounced in Santa Fe about nine o'clock in the evening of 29 September 1878.10 Of his low-wheeled, weak-sprunged buckboard adventure from Trinidad, he wrote Susan, who did not accompany him:

When the vehicle, the like of which drew up in front of the hotel in the said town and I took a look at it, I was glad you did not come with me. When I jumped, or rather crawled, off it at [the] door of the Fonda here, I was thankful beyond expression; in truth, I do not believe you could have stood it all; you would have [been] sick in every hour, death in every muscle. A deadlier instrument of torture was never used in the days of Torquemada. Had anything the equal of it been resorted to then, there would have been few heretics.11

On the following afternoon Wallace called on Governor Axtell and subsequently was sworn in as chief executive by Judge Samuel C. Parks of the territorial Supreme Court.12 During the course of Wallace’s interview with Axtell he informed the incumbent of his removal from office. Wallace reported to his wife that, understandably, the interview was strained but cordial.13

Governor Wallace embarked upon his duties with enthusiasm, and the Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican displayed a similar feeling toward him. Noting that he was a man of “national reputation” and an “earnest Republican” with a splendid military background in the War of the Rebellion, the newspaper report went on to say:

We are very favorably impressed by his appearance and conversation. He is apparently in the prime of life, vigorous and active; a man of fine presence, evidently a keen observer, and a thoughtful,
self-reliant man. We predict that he will make an efficient and pop­
ular governor. We understand that Gov. Wallace intends to cast his
lot with our people, and become a permanent resident of the ter­
ritory. 14

Although he was faced with many administrative duties and prob­
lems at the outset, Wallace immediately concentrated upon the
strife in Lincoln County. His objective was to restore law and order
as soon as possible, but violence was so widespread and the problem
so complex that it took nearly nine months to bring about some
semblance of quiet there. After May 1879, there were periodic
outbreaks until 1881, when outlawry and murder subsided. In his
efforts to combat this situation Governor Wallace consulted and
worked with various federal, territorial, and local officials from
Washington, D.C., Santa Fe, and Fort Stanton, New Mexico. He
also instituted a militia company in Lincoln County to combat
rustlers and outlaws and personally visited this center of unrest for
six weeks in the late spring of 1879.

Wallace first requested on 3 October 1878 information on con­
ditions in Lincoln County from the United States marshal, whose
report two days later indicated there had been open warfare be­
tween two factions—one headed by Lawrence G. Murphy, James
G. Dolan, and John H. Riley, and the other led by John Chisum
and the widow of recently murdered Alexander McSween. Judge
Warren Bristol of the third judicial district corroborated this in­
formation explaining that the threat to lives and property was so
great in Lincoln County that he could not hold court in the town
of Lincoln. 15 Governor Wallace then sent a 1,500-word telegram
to Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz on 5 October, asking that
the president declare a state of insurrection in Lincoln County.
Although he did not call it an “insurrection” in his reply, President
Hayes did issue a proclamation to that effect on 7 October, ad­
monishing the citizens of New Mexico and calling upon them to
disperse before noon on 13 October. 16 One month later, Governor
Wallace issued an amnesty proclamation in both Spanish and En­
glish for the people of Lincoln County. 17 These actions temporarily
calmed the situation, but Lt. Col. Nathan A. M. Dudley, the com­
mmander of Fort Stanton, and other officers criticized the amnesty
proclamation because it inferred that they were guilty of misconduct. Huston I. Chapman, an attorney for Mrs. McSween, accused Lieutenant Colonel Dudley of complicity in the murder of his client’s husband, so Governor Wallace, pending an investigation of the matter, asked the military commander of the district of New Mexico, Gen. Edward Hatch, to remove Dudley from command at Fort Stanton. General Hatch referred the request to Gen. William T. Sherman in Washington, who refused, maintaining that this was a military matter and only specific charges before a military commission could authorize such a removal. 18

There the situation rested until Chapman was murdered in the town of Lincoln by two outlaws, William B. Campbell and Jesse Evans, on 18 February 1879. 19 This event triggered a second outburst of violence, leading directly to Governor Wallace’s personal investigation. He left Santa Fe on 2 March 1879, accompanied by General Hatch; four days later Wallace reached Lincoln, while General Hatch went to Fort Stanton. On 7 March, Wallace again asked General Hatch to remove Dudley from command at Fort Stanton. This time, instead of referring the request to Washington, Hatch suspended Dudley temporarily from active military service on 8 March, ordering him to Fort Union to await charges for complicity in the murder of Chapman. 20

Within his first few days in Lincoln, Governor Wallace had Chapman's murderers arrested and jailed. He also contacted William Bonney (“Billy the Kid”), an eyewitness who wrote Wallace on 13 March, offering to testify against Campbell and Evans. Four days later at a private home the outlaw and the governor met, but it was all in vain when the murderers escaped from jail. 21 Reflecting on the extent of the violence and corruption in Lincoln County, Wallace wrote that the grand jury there found “nearly two hundred indictments in the county of a voting population of 150 total.” 22

At this stage Governor Wallace determined to take military action to restore order. Rather than use the regular army forces, some of whom he believed were involved in the terrorism and robberies, he resorted to the erection of a militia unit known as the Lincoln County Rifles. On 15 March 1879, he instructed Juan B. Patrón, former speaker of the New Mexico House of Representatives and a resident of Lincoln, to raise and organize a company of mounted
riflemen, consisting of no fewer than thirty-two and no more than sixty men, “each of whom must be of good character and an owner of a horse and gun.” “Captain” Patrón subsequently initiated the company with eleven officers and forty-two privates, all voluntarily enrolled and sworn into service. Muster rolls for 15 March–1 May 1879, and 1 May–15 July 1879, along with an account for provisions totaling $160.12, were submitted to the territorial legislature. Governor Wallace supported reimbursement and explained to that body that the performance of the Lincoln County Rifles was “most excellent.” He emphasized that “the civil officers had at [their] command an efficient force, and the moral [sic] effect of knowledge of the existence of the organization was such that the enforcement of order within the province of its operations, was [as] perfect as in any community in this country.” Finally, he noted that detachments of this company were constantly being used, making “arrests theretofore often tried but always without result.”

Having resolved temporarily the problem in Lincoln County and having provided a deterrent against future outbreaks, Governor Wallace left for Santa Fe on 18 April, where he rejoined his wife, Susan, who had arrived in early February. He returned to Fort Stanton in May for the military court of inquiry investigating the conduct of Lieutenant Colonel Dudley, but his testimony was based largely on heresay, and thus Dudley was cleared of involvement in the Chapman murder.

The governor’s wife accompanied him on this visit to Lincoln County. Susan’s candid views of Fort Stanton and the surrounding country are reflected in a letter to her son in which she states that it might be desirable to have another war with “Old Mexico” to get that country to take back New Mexico. She continued her vivid description: “We are at the post traders, and I am the only feminine creature except an old hen. . . . I remarked to General Hatch this country was not made for civilized men. He replied I have held that opinion for a long while. It should be a buffalo-range for the Indian.” Noting a dust storm, she went on to say that “I taste the alkali dust; my clothes are gritty, and the last box in the bottom of my truck is grimy with sand. Yet I have heard of this as the garden spot of the territory. Garden! There has been no rain for
six months, and what can grow in soil made of fire-clay, alkali, and sand?"26

The Lincoln County problem was only one of many examples of the lawlessness with which Lew Wallace had to deal during his tenure as governor. There were also serious problems of violence in Colfax, Río Arriba, and Doña Ana counties. Governor Wallace met these difficulties vigorously, employing a many-sided policy of offering rewards for the capture of thieves and murderers, authorizing the creation of citizen militias, obtaining arms and ammunition for their use, sending special agents to investigate conditions and resolve the instability, visiting some of the afflicted regions himself, and signing death warrants for convicted outlaws.27

Toward the end of 1880 the notorious outlaw William Bonney once again became a major problem throughout the territory. Governor Wallace issued a proclamation offering a reward of five hundred dollars for the capture of "The Kid," an offer which the Santa Fe New Mexican believed was a "good step and will make it too hot for the prominent young man whose presence is so much desired by the executive."28 Bonney was captured after murdering a deputy sheriff and stealing some horses. From his jail cell in Santa Fe he wrote four letters in early 1881 to Governor Wallace seeking to testify against other outlaws and negotiate a bargain for his release.29 Wallace evidently did not answer any of these letters, nor did he visit the outlaw's jail cell. This is understandable in view of Bonney's record and Susan's report that earlier he had threatened to ride into the plaza of Santa Fe and shoot Wallace.30 Bonney was transferred to the jail in Mesilla, tried, and on 9 April 1881 convicted of murder. Governor Wallace signed his death sentence on 30 April, unaware that two days earlier the outlaw had shot his two guards and escaped. Pursued by Sheriff Pat Garrett, Bonney was killed at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, on 14 July 1881.31

Throughout his administration Lew Wallace confronted the problem of Indian depredations, particularly those of Apaches in the southern part of the territory. New Mexico was only a part of the vast region extending across the southwestern United States and northern Mexico subject to the continuous threat of various Apache bands from the 1870s until 1886, five years after Wallace's term as governor ended. Victorio was one of the formidable leaders of these
bands in the late 1870s, and Wallace recognized him as “an enemy not to be despised.” The residents of Grant County, in the extreme southwestern part of the territory, sent a petition to their governor in October 1879, asking him to provide them with arms and ammunition to defend themselves against Apaches. They described their settlement in the Upper Mimbres River Valley as “inhabited by peaceful agricultural people, who furnish fully one-half of the grain and hay used by the government at Fort Bayard.” As citizens of the territory, they felt that they needed to assist the military units as “a sort of auxiliary force.” They had organized a militia company composed of “our best citizens” and sought Wallace’s assistance in supplying them arms and ammunition. Although there is no direct evidence indicating Wallace’s assistance, it is likely that he did respond positively as he had done earlier in the nearby community of Hillsboro. In December 1879, Wallace personally visited Silver City and Ojo Caliente to discuss the Apache problem with local officials. There he observed the ravages of Victorio’s attacks, including sixteen mutilated corpses of men, women, and children. That the Apache problem was not entirely resolved is apparent by the widespread Indian raids in 1880, when the territorial legislature reacted favorably to the governor’s request and authorized him to call out a force of volunteers, not to exceed one thousand men for the whole territory, and appropriated the sum of $100,000 for this territorial militia. Although Victorio was killed in Chihuahua in October, Apache problems continued in the Southwest until Geronimo’s defeat in 1886.

Governor Wallace’s concern with territorial lawlessness was justified. President Hayes and Secretary of the Interior Schurz had warned that the threat to lives and property was the number one problem of the territory when he was appointed. Although he partially resolved that problem, particularly in Lincoln County, and the outlawry in Doña Ana and Río Arriba counties abated, an important reason for its decline in all sectors of the territory was that New Mexico was undergoing an extensive economic and commercial change in which outright murder and thievery were an anathema to the rapidly increasing population. Wallace added that he believed that the lack of a penitentiary (convicts were sent to
Nebraska's state prison) and weak jails were causes of the lawlessness in the territory. It should not be concluded that outlaws, Indians, and the re-establishment of civil authority took up all of Lew Wallace's time. In two other areas Governor Wallace succeeded in making at least partial progress in bringing major problems to the attention of federal officials and the general public at the national level. These were his initial efforts to promote the renovation of the three-centuries-old Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe and the recovery, organization, and preservation of the New Mexican archives. The latter included documents and records from the Spanish, Mexican, and United States territorial periods.

Lew Wallace first visited the Palace of the Governors on 30 September 1878, when he had his interview with his predecessor, Governor Axtell. Two weeks later he moved both his residence and office into that cramped, dark, deteriorating building, where he (and Susan while she was in New Mexico from early February to the first week in October 1879) lived and worked for the next two and one-half years. Almost immediately he attempted to bring the need for its renovation to the attention of authorities in Washington, D.C. He described the building in a letter to Susan as "a rambling one-story adobe structure with walls in places six feet thick. . . . The walls are grimy, the undressed boards of the floor rest flat upon the ground; the cedar rafters, rainstained and over-weighted by tons and tons of mud composing the roof." On 22 October, less than a month after his arrival, Wallace asked a group of physicians to inspect its sanitary conditions and determine its fitness "as an abode for a family and for offices." Their report, which the governor forwarded to Secretary of the Interior Schurz, described the entire building as one of "adobe, or sun-dried mud in blocks made coherent by straw." It had been in constant use for more than two hundred years and contained rooms with dimensions of twenty by twenty-four feet. The walls were four to eight feet thick; there was a portico on the south side; and the roof consisted of logs covered with two feet of mud. Inside, according to the physicians, it had a damp, earthy odor with the scent of vermin, and there was little light from the one small window in each room. Although they noted that it could be suitable for offices
Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe. Taken from *Land of the Pueblos* by Susan Wallace, p. 12.
if the floors were raised three feet, the number of windows increased, a new roof with attic space beneath provided, and the walls and ceilings plastered, they found it unfit for human habitation. They observed that they would not "stable our horses" in the east end of the palace, where the Legislative Assembly met annually. Judged by "the laws of modern hygiene, they [the quarters for the governor] are as unfit for human habitation as the legislative halls would be for horse-stabling." Their conclusion was that "we urge the total abandonment of the premises as a dwelling."41

Referring to this report, Governor Wallace wrote Secretary Schurz on 12 February 1879: "I beg leave to call your attention to the condition of the house called the 'Palace' and advise you that unless it is repaired in an early day a portion of it is likely to become an uninhabitable ruin. . . . The property is of great value to the government and if attended to in time can be made serviceable for many years to come.42

Even the press supported the governor's efforts, as did his wife Susan, who lived in the building for eight months. The Santa Fe New Mexican observed that among the good things Wallace had "in store for Santa Fe is a complete renovation of the Old Palace, enlarged and more convenient accommodations [sic] for the Legislature and Library, a second story, and above all a good roof and comfortable Executive residence and office. Estimates have been made and forwarded and the expenditures will reach somewhere near $30,000."43 Susan Wallace portrayed the building as the "leaky old Palacio del Governador," north of which was a "waste spot of earth" enclosed by high walls on two sides and unused, locked government buildings or offices on the other. When she opened the old colonial door to one of these rooms, she was alarmed by a "swarm of mice," which "scampered to their burrows in the walls." She continued, observing that "the deathlike smell of mildew and decay" was immediately evident in the small room estimated to be seventeen by twenty feet in size and barely high enough for a man to stand upright.44 There the archives of New Mexico were stored.

In spite of all the efforts made by Governor Wallace to begin the renovation of the Palace of the Governors, Congress did not appropriate the funds requested. Yet Wallace did recognize the historical value of the building, described for authorities in Washington
the degree of the deterioration, conducted a systematic inspection, estimated the costs of repair, and emphasized the need for immediate restoration both for offices and a residence. Left to later administrations, the Palace of the Governors was eventually completely renovated so that future generations might use and enjoy it.

The new governor was also quick to perceive the value of the archives of New Mexico which he found to be in deplorable condition when he arrived, that is, what was left of them. As an avid reader, researcher, and author himself, Wallace was appalled at the condition of New Mexico's surviving records and their disposition by previous governors. Since the occupation of New Mexico by United States forces in 1846, some official papers had disappeared from public custody through carelessness, neglect, and removal. Others were seriously damaged by water and vermin. Individual territorial governors early established the practice of taking their private and some public papers with them when they left office.45 One of them, William A. Pile, decided that he needed the uncompleted room occupied by the archives in 1869 and ordered the documents removed to an outhouse. A portion of these records he gave to convicts, and he instructed the librarian to throw others out the window. Still others were sold to merchants for wrapping paper, while a wood-hauler saw a pile of these records in the street and, with the permission of the governor, hauled them off to his home outside of Santa Fe. Fortunately, the local newspaper, residents of the city, and Pile's successor, Marsh Giddings, began the recovery of the Spanish, Mexican, and United States records, some of which were in a lumber room exposed to the weather and children at play, who trampled them and threw them about. By the time Lew Wallace arrived, they were boxed and piled in the library room.46

On 5 February 1879, Wallace wrote Secretary Schurz that the archives and public records of New Mexico "are at least in part in a most woful [sic] condition." He requested authorization to employ a "competent person" to overhaul and arrange the papers. "It is not everybody," he explained, "who is fit for the work. A good English and Spanish scholar will be acquired and he will of course have to be paid as an expert. And besides six weeks or two months
may be necessary to do the task thoroughly." The governor added that folders of several sizes would be required since nearly all the papers were in manuscript and some arrangement would have to be made to store them adequately once they were properly arranged.\textsuperscript{47}

Eight months later, having obtained no financial support from Washington, Wallace acted on his own by hiring Samuel Ellison, the "translator" for the Legislative Assembly and assistant secretary of the territory, who knew Spanish, was familiar with the papers, and could undertake the task.\textsuperscript{48} As Wallace wrote to the secretary of the Interior in September:

\begin{quote}
I immediately submitted the matter to Mr. S. Ellison, of this city, who is more familiar with the old archive papers than any other person in the Territory, and received from him a memorandum which I enclose for your information. The sum ($5,000) appears large, but when it is considered that it will take quite two years to complete the task, I am not sure but the proposal is reasonable enough.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Although the request for an appropriation was denied, Ellison's later appointment as territorial librarian in 1880 enabled him to begin the job of preventing further deterioration of the records, which he initially found in a confused state, tied in bundles, dusty, worm-eaten, and partially rotted from exposure.\textsuperscript{50}

Susan Wallace also had noted as early as 1879 that the archives were "tumbled into barrels and boxes, tossed on the floor in moist piles. . . ." She explained that an earlier governor [Pile] had "made his administration memorable by building a bonfire of parchments and papers, filled with priceless material, never to be replaced. He also sold a quantity as waste paper," but fortunately some of these papers were later recovered. Susan was irate, stating that this "destroyer of history in New Mexico has no defense. I suppress his name." She added that "an archaeologist from New England" [Ellison?] had begun the task of "overhauling" these records and that she was assisting in what she described as "pleasant work."\textsuperscript{51}

Lt. John Bourke, who was introduced to Ellison by Governor Wallace, wrote on 18 April 1881, describing the archives he had personally seen:
Next, we went into the archives' room and saw bundles upon bundles of paper, piled high above each other, in an inextricable confusion. There is no shelving, no glass-casing—nothing to retard the destroying influences of time and weather. Dust lies thick upon the leaves; mildew and decay have obliterated much of the writing, and worst of all it is said that a former Governor—a drunken, political deadbeat named Pyle [sic]—used many of these valuable documents for kindling the fires in his Office and sold cart loads of others for waste paper! Mr. Ellison is laboring occasionally to bring order out of Chaos, and as he is not only a patient student, but has a fluent knowledge of Spanish, I look for much good from his exertions. 52

"Much good" did come from Ellison's painstaking efforts, although most of it occurred after Governor Wallace had departed. Two acts of the territorial legislature increased Ellison's salary and appropriated limited funds for expenses, whereby he could arrange the papers by subjects and file them in pasteboard boxes 53 for use by generations of historians in the years to follow.

While Governor Wallace had made a permanent public contribution to New Mexico and to the nation with his program to restore the archives, he also experienced an even greater personal achievement with the completion of his manuscript of *Ben-Hur*. How he found time to write with the constant problems he faced in New Mexico is a wonder. Write he did, though, whenever he could, usually late at night and within the dark confines of the Palace of the Governors. By the light of a student's lamp, at an old table, isolated in the bedroom behind the executive's office, with locked doors and bolted windows, Wallace often wrote until after midnight. 54 That it was tedious, hard work for him is reflected in his letter to Susan, written on 4 December 1879, only two months after her return to Indiana:

> When I reach the words "The End," how beautiful they will look to me! What a long, long work it has been, a labor of love! How many hours and days and weeks it has consumed! Frightful to think of it; and yet I know no happier way of passing time, none which takes me so completely out of this world and affairs of the present, a perfect retreat from the annoyances of daily life as they are spun for me by enemies, and friends who might as well be enemies. 55
Later he wrote his wife that he was busy putting in “every spare moment copying my book for publication.” Reflecting upon the experience shared by many authors before and since, the governor noted that “it is curious this jumping from the serious things of life to the purely romantic. It is like nothing so much as living two lives in one. To pass from a meeting of the Wise Men in the Desert to effecting a reconciliation in the legislature and breaking a deadlock, are certainly wide enough apart.”

With the manuscript completed at last in March 1880, Wallace took a leave of absence in April and carried it with him to Joseph Henry Harper in New York. Readers’ opinions were favorable, a contract was signed giving the author a 10 percent royalty, and *Ben-Hur, a Tale of the Christ* was published by Harper and Brothers, 12 November 1880. Reactions to *Ben-Hur* were positive and negative, but by 1886 it was selling at the rate of 4,500 copies per month. Wallace sent one copy to President James A. Garfield, who read it in April 1881 and wrote its author: “With this beautiful and reverent book you have lightened the burden of my daily life—and renewed an acquaintance which began at Shiloh.” The *Santa Fe New Mexican* noted that the first edition of the book had been entirely exhausted by December 1880, causing the publishers to issue a second one, “and the author smiles.”

As governor, Lew Wallace also performed a wide variety of other duties. He appointed public officials, such as Epifanio Vigil of Santa Fe, as interpreter and translator in the executive office, and county commissioners of immigration throughout the territory. He issued proclamations, such as one declaring Thanksgiving a public holiday for Thursday, 25 November 1880, and urging the people to worship instead of practicing their everyday business or avocations. Not an avid church-goer, although he professed his Christian beliefs and Protestant allegiance, Wallace was not enthused by the resident Methodist minister in Santa Fe, and he resorted to aloofness at first toward the Catholic Archbishop Jean Baptiste Lamy, who did not call upon the new governor after his arrival. As Wallace wrote to his wife on 20 October 1878:

I broke off yesterday to go to church, where I was again intolerably
bored by Parson Smith. I don't know whether I can stand it or not. I came out a worse sinner than when I went in. Yet there is no remedy for it except the Catholic Cathedral, and there I will not go, even to gratify my curiosity—not one of the priesthood has called on me. I understand the Bishop is waiting for me to call upon him first. Be sure, my dear, he will wait a long time.  

His relations with the people of the territory and their representatives in the Legislative Assembly were generally amicable, and the press tended to support him, particularly at the outset of his term. Wallace travelled extensively and increasingly was on leaves of absence after the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad was completed on 9 February 1880, an occasion marked by a gala ceremony in which he helped drive the last spike. He travelled to Trinidad, Colorado, to meet his wife on her arrival in January 1879, and to see her off in October of the same year. En route he made stopovers in Cimarron and Las Vegas where he endeavored to resolve problems in northeastern New Mexico. As noted earlier, he also went to Lincoln County on at least two occasions. Finally, he visited Socorro, Grant, Lincoln, and Doña Ana counties in late 1879 and during the summer of 1880. Wallace also received visitors in his office at Santa Fe where he discussed problems and events with them. Furthermore, he evidently visited Hispanic communities. On one such occasion he received the respect of an unnamed community's residents at a "biley" [properly baile, or dance] given in his honor when he suspended the law prohibiting dancing on Sundays. Knowledge of the Spanish language from the time of the Mexican War and his later experience probably served Wallace well in his relations with the populace. That he promoted the development of New Mexico is evident from his message to the Legislative Assembly in January 1880, when he recommended that they create a territorial militia, reform the cumbersome Spanish laws, codify the statutes of the territory, and improve the school system with English as a required subject. Likewise, he provided full information on the economy, minerals, agriculture, population, education, and problems of the New Mexico Territory in his report of 1879 to the secretary of the Interior.
During his term as governor Wallace became interested in promoting New Mexico's mineral resources, and he invested some of his personal funds—unsuccessfully it should be noted—in this activity. He observed that the territory had just entered the era of prospecting, not one of vast production. Although he invested in areas near Bernalillo and in the nearby Sandia Mountains early after his arrival, he reported rich discoveries in 1879 at Los Cerrillos, south of Santa Fe, stating that they were so extensive that he expected them to be "greater than Leadville" in Colorado. He and his son Henry prospected near Las Vegas and bought claims in Socorro County. Each bought a claim in the Shakespeare district near Silver City later, but Wallace showed his interest in a quick profit by trying to sell all these claims for $465,000 without success. Even though he tried to interest New York bankers in them, he was unable to realize any profit from his mining ventures by 1886. Indeed, Wallace's mining efforts appear to have been a complete failure.

Two parties of distinguished visitors reached Santa Fe during Wallace's term as governor. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and his wife arrived by train and were entertained with public receptions at Santa Fe and Las Vegas from 7–15 July 1880; President Hayes and his party reached Santa Fe also by train from California on 25 October 1880. They were welcomed in New Mexico by Acting Governor William G. Ritch since Wallace, ironically, was in Indiana on one of his leaves of absence.

Lew Wallace evidently liked New Mexico and was enthusiastic in recording his impressions of its people, topography, and climate. Soon after his arrival in 1878, he wrote Susan describing the beauty of the sunsets and clouds hovering over the "mountains, understand, not hills—royal mountains." The daytime wind, he observed, died down at night, and by midnight it was so cool he recommended wearing a heavy shawl. The people of New Mexico "do not care for Old Probabilities," he wrote, but they said that "tomorrow will be so and so, according to the season, and they don't miss it once in a hundred times." Noting the purity and dryness of the air as beneficial to weak lungs, Wallace observed: "What perfection of air and sunlight! And what a landscape I discovered to show you when you come—a picture to make the fame of an artist, could he
only paint it on canvass as it is.” Although the governor did not paint these vistas himself, he did sketch plazas, citizens, and grotesque characters. His pencil sketch of the Palace of the Governors appeared later in Susan’s book *The Land of the Pueblos.*

That his impressions of the beauty of New Mexico did not dim with the passing of time is apparent in Wallace’s letters over the course of the next two years. On 10 April 1881, scarcely a month before he left Santa Fe, he wrote his wife, describing Sunday as a beautiful day with the band playing in the pagoda “meekly and with manifest improvement.” He portrayed the people and the scene this way:

Inside and outside the gate there is the customary motley crowd—Whites, Blacks, Mexicans, Indians, men, women, children, men on horseback, families, friends, and lovers in carriages. It is not Sunday as much as all men’s day. Good folks in the States might be horrified at the scene. I confess to a different feeling. . . . It is life.

Susan’s attitudes toward New Mexico and her impressions of its natural beauty, climate, topography, and people were in marked contrast to those of her husband. Her distaste for the dryness of the weather, the lack of vegetation, the sand and dirt, and the scarcity of comforts in everyday living certainly marked her as no promoter of western migration. From her home in Crawfordsville before her departure, she wrote her uncle: “It will be no small sacrifice for me to leave the society of my sister and sweet, sweet home for the land of the Apaches. I never liked the West and despise Western hoes [heroes?] of all sorts.” Not wishing to go to New Mexico and dreading the journey to join her husband, she continued, “The idea of a hundred miles of stage travel fills me with terror. How am I to stand it?” In her later book she described her buckboard experience from Trinidad, Colorado, to Santa Fe, often using the exact wording of Wallace’s earlier account. “Jolt, jolt; bang, bang; cold to the marrow, though huddled under buffalo robes and heavy blankets,” she descriptively portrayed the ride. Of her overnight stay at Las Vegas, she said it was a “horrid spot,” where she and her husband were lodged in a “dismal den called a hotel.” Even her trip by train from Kansas City to Trinidad was
unpleasant; noting the treeless, waterless, flat nature of the land in which nothing grew but buffalo grass and sage, Susan observed “I always did hate sage. What anyone finds to interest him in Kansas passed my comprehension. It should be left to the Apache and the coyote and is hardly good enough for them.”

During her short stay of eight months in New Mexico, from February to early October 1879, Susan did not overcome her preconceptions and inclinations to pass harsh judgment on her new environment. Her comments concerning Fort Stanton and its surrounding countryside have been noted earlier. Concerning Santa Fe, she wrote that it was a “drowsy old town” with single-story adobe houses resembling “an extensive brickyard.” Although she conceded that it had the charm of some foreign communities, she felt that it was “dirty and unkept [unkempt?], swarming with hungry dogs.” Describing her living conditions, she wrote her sister at the end of June, “For I still live in a palace—made of mud as Babylon was.” She concluded with a reference to the stone age, emphasizing that “it is not yet ended in New Mexico.” Displeased also with the lack of rainfall and dust, Susan again wrote her sister:

The air was so full of electricity my clothes crackled all the time, and fire followed my fingers whenever they touched the buffalo skin.—no fear of rain, there was one shower in March, and two little sprinkles since, all I have seen in New Mexico. But O the dust! O the desert—like the sands of awful, silent Africa. One day we saw no living thing but the mail boy in a sort of cart, not a horse, sheep, cow, scarcely a bird—not a house. Eternal sunshine and never ceasing westwind—this is the land for those who love them.

According to Susan Wallace, “General Wallace enjoyed New Mexico at first but to me it was the wilderness without the manna and how glad we both were to leave it for the Bosphorous.” James M. Carpenter, a former native of Indiana and casual acquaintance of the general’s then residing in Missouri, wrote Wallace in August 1879, informing him that a recent article in the Platte City Landmark stated that the governor appeared to like his new post, although he was occasionally “perplexed” by preserving the peace
in that lawless territory. “Mrs. Wallace, his wife,” the article con­
tinued, “is not so well pleased, and longs to return to her old home
in Crawfordsville.”

Although he began his administration with enthusiasm, it is evi­
dent that as the months passed Wallace became frustrated and
disillusioned. Constant efforts to suppress outlaws and overcome
Indian threats, struggles with the legislature over financial support
of his programs, lack of material support from Washington, isolation
from national and world affairs, absence from his wife, and ad­
vancing age weighed heavily upon him. On his birthday in 1881,
he wrote Susan: “Fifty-four years old today. Six more years and
Sixty! It is not a comfortable thought. If not the fear of death to
trouble me, there is that other even more horrible—helplessness
and sans everything.” Toward the end of his term he reflected in
a letter to his wife: “I am tired of this place and the territorial
climate is too severe for you.” Considering territorial politics, he
observed that “every calculation based on experience elsewhere
fails in New Mexico.” Concerning his successor, whoever he might
be, Wallace observed that he “will do just as I did, have the same
ideas, make the same attempts, and with the same heartiness of
effort, soon cool in zeal, then finally say ‘All right, let her drift.’”

Although there were rumors of his resignation as early as No­
vember 1880, Wallace flatly denied them, adding that the “idea
had never occurred to him.” However, the election of a new
president provided him with the opportunity on 9 March 1881 to
resign and seek a new position. President Garfield offered him a
diplomatic post in Paraguay, but Wallace refused. After the pres­
ident had read Ben-Hur, he decided to offer Governor Wallace the
position he felt the Hoosier was ideally suited for, that of United
States Minister to Turkey with residence at Constantinople. Lew
Wallace’s last act as territorial governor was to appoint William G.
Ritch as acting governor, pending the arrival of Lionel A. Sheldon
as his successor. On 30 May 1881, the first and only Hoosier to
govern New Mexico left Santa Fe in a Pullman car on the railroad
he had helped to complete. The Santa Fe New Mexican reported
on that date that “Wallace made hosts of friends here, and was as
good a governor as the Territory has had.”

In his two and one-half years as territorial governor of New
Mexico Lew Wallace accomplished as much as could have been expected of him, if not more. He restored peace in Lincoln County and established law and order not only there but in other regions ranging from Río Arriba to Doña Ana county. He succeeded in establishing both local and territorial militia units to assist officials in law enforcement. Some of these militias were of great benefit; others evidently, as in Río Arriba County, were as violent as the outlaws they were supposed to control. In 1880, using Wallace's earlier success with county militias as an example and at the urging of the governor, the Legislative Assembly created a territorial militia to assist scattered military forces in resisting the threats of various Indian bands to the lives and property of New Mexican citizens. Although Wallace did not succeed in eliminating the danger from Apache raids, he did focus attention on the problem and convinced authorities in Washington that the difficulty was not one contained within New Mexico, but was a more general threat throughout the Southwest. The governor also brought national attention to the importance of preserving both the Palace of the Governors and the New Mexican archives. His constructive efforts in both areas were crowned by future administrations.

Yet Wallace's term was one of frustration, some failures, and new problems requiring both immediate and long-range attention. New Mexico was undergoing an economic, transportation, and social "revolution" in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The development of the livestock industry, the trend toward monopoly and growth of big business, completion of the railroad, emergence of vast economic interests closely tied to politics, and major demographic changes, such as the increase in population and arrival of large numbers of Anglo-Americans, all were characteristics of the late 1870s and early 1880s. Instead of ignoring problems or procrastinating, Governor Wallace at least tried to resolve them. He was not a man of words but of action.

It should not be concluded that the Hoosier's term as territorial governor was the major achievement in his life. Indeed, the publication of *Ben-Hur* was. Nevertheless, that *magnum opus* was finished while he served as governor and in the very building he sought to have restored. Wallace gave constructive direction to
New Mexico following an era of graft and manipulation. His administration was an active one, and it reflected its governor's honesty, sincerity, openness, and interest, not only in the territory itself but in its people. As he later wrote denouncing a bill to admit Arizona and New Mexico as one state, "I love the people of New Mexico; I lived with them two and one-half years as their Governor, and I know their condition and their needs." His opinions were not critical of either the territory or its people even though they were not shared by his wife. He travelled widely throughout the territory and brought his personal attention to individual and collective problems, whether from his office in the capital or in the separate regions. His firmness and belief in fair play, his recognition of pressing problems, and his "do-something" responsiveness undoubtedly led to his popularity then and his reputation since as a Hoosier who administered New Mexico in a positive manner. Many have observed that throughout his life Lew Wallace was a restless romantic. In New Mexico the territorial governor was a realist as well.

NOTES

*An earlier version of this study was delivered at the Ben Hur Symposium in Crawfordsville, Indiana, in November 1980. This paper is dedicated to my daughter Kathy, who died in the final stages of research for and preparation of the original manuscript.

1. Lew Wallace to A. J. Wissler, Crawfordsville, Indiana, 6 May 1890, Wallace Papers, New Mexico Records Center and Archives (hereinafter NMRCA), Santa Fe. Wallace's recollection of the year of his appointment is incorrect; he was appointed in 1878.

Corral of the Westerners, Spring 1980):174–85, concentrates upon Wallace’s problems with the Santa Fe Ring and Indians of the territory.


6. James Gilfillen, treasurer of the United States, to Lew Wallace, Washington, D.C., Draft No. 7418, Warrant No. 363, 7 May 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, Indiana Historical Society Library (hereinafter IHSL). Kelcher, *Violence in Lincoln County*, p. 164, states that the annual salary was $2,400, but the quarterly treasury draft shows $650, making the annual salary $2,600.


10. Lew Wallace to Susan Wallace, Santa Fe, 8 October 1878, Wallace Collection, IHSL; *Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican*, 5 October 1878, Museum of New Mexico, Microcopy, roll 23. Wallace’s letter to his wife says he arrived the night of 30 September, but the *New Mexican* stated he arrived on Sunday night, which was the twenty-ninth. Since he called on Governor Axtell and was sworn in during the afternoon of 30 September, he must have arrived on the previous evening. The twenty-ninth is the date given by Jenkins, *Guide*, p. 17; Kelcher, *Violence in Lincoln County*, p. 165; and Calvin Horn, *New Mexico’s Troubled Years: The Story of the Early Territorial Governors* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963), 200. Morsberger and Morsberger, *Lew Wallace: Militant Romantic*, p. 264, state that Wallace arrived the evening of 30 September.

11. Lew Wallace to Susan Wallace, Santa Fe, 8 October 1878, Wallace Collection, box 1878–79, IHSL.


17. Lew Wallace to Hon. W. G. Ritch, Amnesty Proclamation, 13 November
1878, Records of the Territorial Governor, Territorial Archives of New Mexico, 1846–1912, NMRCA, Microfilm, roll 99; U.S. Interior Department, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, 1851–1914, Executive Proceedings, 1874–88, National Archives (hereinafter NA), RG 48, Microcopy 364, roll 1, frame 209.

18. Keleher, Violence in Lincoln County, pp. 195–202; Jenkins, Guide, pp. 17–18; Horn, New Mexico’s Troubled Years, pp. 202, 204. Governor Wallace stated that there had been “no violence” in Lincoln County since the president’s proclamation and that he would not use military forces there “unless it is absolutely necessary.” See Wallace to Hon C. Schurz, Santa Fe, 22 October 1878, U.S., Interior Department, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, 1851–1914, Executive Proceedings, 1874–88, NA, RG 48, Microcopy 364, roll 8, frame 141.

19. Keleher, Violence in Lincoln County, p. 204.


22. Quoted in Horn, New Mexico’s Troubled Years, p. 207.


24. Keleher, Violence in Lincoln County, p. 225; Horn, New Mexico’s Troubled Years, p. 207; Jenkins, Guide, p. 18. Susan Wallace travelled over the same route her husband had the previous September. Governor Wallace met her in Trinidad, Colorado, and accompanied her on a buckboard journey between 25 January and 2 February 1879, stopping en route at Las Vegas. See Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican, 25 January, 1 February 1879, Microfilm, roll 23, History Library, Museum of New Mexico.


27. For Wallace’s actions and those of his appointed investigator in Río Arriba County, see Philip J. Rasch, “Feuding at Farmington,” NMHR 50 (July 1965):214–32, and Max Frost to Lew Wallace, Journal, April–May 1881, Records of the Territorial Governors, TANM, 1846–1912, NMRCA, Microfilm, roll 99, frames 39–89. For Doña Ana County problems, see Lew Wallace to Hon. W. G. Ritch, Santa Fe, 10 January 1880, and Lew Wallace to Sheriff of Doña Ana County, Santa Fe, 30 April 1881, both in Records of the Territorial Governors, TANM, 1846–1912, NMRCA, Microfilm, roll 99, frames 90, 477–78.

28. Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican, 14 December 1880, in Oliver LaFarge,

29. These letters are in the Wallace Collection, box 1880–83, IHSL.
37. Horn, New Mexico’s Troubled Years, pp. 209–10.
39. Horn, New Mexico’s Troubled Years, p. 216.
40. Unsigned Report of Physicians to Hon. C. Schurz, Santa Fe, 23 October 1878, Wallace Collection, box 1878–79, IHSL.
41. Wallace Collection, box 1878–79, IHSL.
42. Lew Wallace to Hon. C. Schurz, Santa Fe, 12 February 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, IHSL.
43. Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican, 23 November 1879, Microfilm, roll 23, History Library, Museum of New Mexico.
47. Lew Wallace to Hon. C. Schurz, Santa Fe, 5 February 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, IHSL.
49. Lew Wallace to Hon. C. Schurz, Santa Fe, 15 September 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, IHSL; U.S., Interior Department, Territorial Papers, New


57. McKee, "Ben-Hur" *Wallace*, p. 169. The initial selling price for the work was one dollar and a half.

58. McKee, "Ben-Hur" *Wallace*, p. 173. At first the demand was moderate. In the first seven months following publication, 2,800 copies were sold, yielding Wallace a royalty of less than $300.


60. 22 December 1880, quoted in LaFarge, *Santa Fe*, p. 101.


64. McKee, "Ben-Hur" *Wallace*, p. 158. Wallace was on a leave of absence in March and April 1880 and again in September 1880, for two months, to support the Republican Party in Indiana during the election of Garfield and Arthur (see pp. 159, 169).


68. Lew Wallace to the Legislative Assembly of New Mexico, 24th Session,


71. For this visit, see U.S., Interior Department, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, 1851–1914, Executive Proceedings, 1874–88, NA, RG 48, Microcopy 364, roll 8, frame 369. Strangely, there is nothing in the Wallace papers, either in Indiana or New Mexico, commenting upon the visit by General Grant during Governor Wallace's presence in the territory.

72. For the record of this visit, see note 71 and frames 392–401. Gen. William T. Sherman accompanied President Hayes in New Mexico.

73. Lew Wallace to Susan Wallace, Santa Fe, 10 October 1878, Wallace Collection, box 1878–79, IHS.

74. See sketch opposite page 12, Susan Wallace, The Land of the Pueblos. Some of Governor Wallace's sketches are in the special file of his papers at the New Mexico Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe. There are also some in the Wallace Collection, IHS.

75. Lew Wallace to Susan Wallace, Santa Fe, 10 April 1881, Wallace Collection, box 1880–83, IHS.

76. Susan Wallace to E. F. Test, Crawfordsville, Indiana, 17 September 1878, Wallace Papers, NMRCA. The emphasis is hers.


78. Susan Wallace to Ev[elyn] Miller, Las Vegas, New Mexico, 31 January 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, IHS.


80. Susan Wallace to "my dear sister," Santa Fe, 29 June 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, IHS. The emphasis is hers.

81. Susan Wallace to her sister, 23 May 1879, Wallace Collection, box 1879, IHS. This letter describes her journey from Santa Fe to Lincoln County.

82. Susan Wallace to Mrs. George Wallace, Crawfordsville, Indiana, 18 February 1907, Wallace Papers, NMRCA. The emphasis is hers. This letter was written less than eight months before her death on 1 October 1907.

83. James M. Carpenter to Lew Wallace, Weston, Platte County, Missouri, 11 August 1879, Wallace Collection, IHS.

84. Lew Wallace to Susan Wallace, Santa Fe, 10 April 1881, Wallace Collection, box 1880–83, IHS. The emphasis is his.

86. Weekly New Mexican, Santa Fe, 29 November 1880, Microfilm, roll 24, History Library, Museum of New Mexico.
88. Lew Wallace to E. F. Test, Santa Fe, 30 March 1881, Wallace Papers, NMRCA.
89. U.S., Interior Department, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, 1851–1914, Executive Proceedings, 1874–88, NA, RG 48, Microcopy 364, roll 1, frame 500; Horn, New Mexico’s Troubled Years, p. 218; Keleher, Violence in Lincoln County, p. 361. Sheldon arrived in Santa Fe, on 4 June 1881.
90. Quoted in Keleher, Violence in Lincoln County, p. 364.
91. Howard R. Lamar, The Far Southwest, 1846–1912: A Territorial History (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1966), 160, is in error when it contends that while governor of New Mexico, Wallace “was to begin his famous book Ben-Hur, while unable to sleep in the airless Governor’s Palace at Santa Fe.”