



Photo: Bryn Mawr College

Zerelda Wallace

Crawfordsville, Montgomery County

August 6, 1817 – March 19, 1901

Born August 6, 1817 in Kentucky, Zerelda Gray Sanders was the eldest of five daughters of Dr. John Sanders and Polly Gray Sanders. Coming to Indianapolis with her family in the early 1830s, she benefited from her father's belief that girls should receive the same education as boys.

At 19, she married David Wallace, a widower 18 years her senior and the father of three small boys, on December 25, 1836. After they were married, he brought her to Crawfordsville to meet his boys for the first time. Years later, the middle son, Lew, would model the beloved mother in his novel, *Ben Hur*, on her. David and Zerelda had six additional children, three of who survived. The youngest woman ever to be first lady of the state of Indiana, she supported her husband's political career while he served as the sixth governor of Indiana and then represented Indiana in Congress.

She became the first president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Indiana. She also served as president of the Equal Suffrage Society of Indianapolis, was a founder of the Indiana Woman Suffrage Association, and was elected vice president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, serving with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. She became known as a powerful speaker for both temperance and woman's suffrage and was in constant demand, speaking at gatherings all across the nation. On January 21, 1875, she testified before Indiana General Assembly, presenting 21,050 signatures on temperance petitions from 47 counties. On January 23, 1880, she testified before U.S. Senate, Judiciary Committee on woman's right to vote. She addressed the 1883 International Council of Women in Washington D.C. on "The Moral Power of the Ballot" and was a featured speaker at Conventions of the National Woman Suffrage Association in both 1886 and 1887.

- For more information about Zerelda Wallace, go to: http://www.journalreview.com/opinion/article_f910582c-dc48-11e1-8255-0019bb2963f4.html.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women's History Month

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