

Living History 101

Being a part of history



THE WILDERS
In Florida

DOLL OF THE MONTH "Bunny"

Hopping Spring!



THE DISCOVERY PAPERS



Little House in the Ozarks

While living as a homemaker on a farm in the Ozarks of Missouri, Laura Ingalls Wilder saw her life changing, the stories of her childhood and the lifestyles of her family fading from view. She believed there was great value in future generations learning from those stories and those lives and she vowed to capture them on paper so they would not be forgotten.



Wilder wrote her books by hand using red Big Chief tablets.

Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura moved with her family many times during her life, loading their lives in horse drawn wagons along with their hopes and dreams for the future. Her childhood was filled with adventures, disappointments, and lots of love.

She captured the stories of her childhood and those of her husband, Almanzo Wilder, in a series of books that have come to be known as “The Little House Books.” She began as a writer of articles for magazines like the *Missouri Ruralist*, where she told of her life in the Missouri Ozarks, Almanzo’s work on the farm, and her enviable skills at raising chickens.

With her daughter Rose’s encouragement, Laura made her first attempt at writing about her family’s life on the American frontier in a book she called Pioneer Girl. This autobiography did not appeal to publishers and they suggested she rework it as a children’s book. Over time, she rewrote her book into an entire series of beloved children’s books that have captured imaginations for generations.

Rose Wilder Lane, the only surviving child of Laura and Almanzo, was also a writer and journalist. She traveled extensively and wrote about her discoveries and adventures. She also wrote biographies and novels using the stories she grew up hearing from her parents.

In the 1970s, actor Michael Landon, used Laura’s “little house” books to create a television series called “Little House on the Prairie.” Perhaps you’ve seen it. The series used Laura’s stories as a jumping off point but were not accurate portrayals of the books or of Laura’s life.

After World War II, the United States Government distributed copies of the “little house” books to war-torn Germany and Japan as examples of life in America. Visitors from those countries flock annually to the United States on a pilgrimage to the various sites associated with Laura and her family. Some schools and homeschool families utilize curriculums based on the books.

Today, Laura’s books and her life story, as well as that of her daughter, Rose, continue to fascinate authors, researchers, and historians. Illustrated chapter books, new stories of the Ingalls and Wilder family members, new biographies and compilations of letters and magazines of Laura’s writings continue to appear. Recently, an annotated version of Pioneer Girl was printed.

*Laura ...
through the years*



Laura Ingalls Wilder lived in Wisconsin, Missouri, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota as a child.

As an adult, she lived in South Dakota, Florida, Minnesota, and Missouri.

In how many places have you lived?

Be A Part of History

The letters and journals of individuals, be they children or adults, have always been a great resource for historians. It is said that Anne Frank kept her diary, not so much for herself, but for others, future others, to learn about her, her thoughts and experiences at her time in history. That diary has proven to be her legacy.

Your thoughts about your life, what you are doing and dreaming about, will be valuable and priceless to others. Future family members will treasure learning about you and what your life was like, what your dreams were, and how you spent your time. Historians will use your journals and letters as examples of life and be the foundation of your biography.

If you haven't already started one, start a journal so that you can be a part of history. President Harry S Truman, who became President on April 12, 1945, following the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, (yes, 75 years ago) was big advocate of "remembering history" through letters, journals, and diaries. So, follow Harry's example, and remember your history.

Time Travelers

We are Time Travelers, out to discover the past and create the future. Do you have a favorite year or period of time? Maybe you love the mysteries of Ancient Egypt. Perhaps the heroics of the Knights Templar inspire you. Do you long for the life of a cowboy driving cattle to Kansas City? Would you have loved to model clothes for Nell Donnelly on Petticoat Lane?

Why not set out on the adventure of a lifetime and learn everything you can about life for someone living during your favorite time? What did that person wear and eat? What was a typical day like? How did they travel? Where did they go? Are there journals, letters, diaries that will help you learn more?

Living historians follow this type of quest to create their first person presentations. It's a great way to share what you've learned with others. The Westport Historical Society Time Travelers can share their "living histories" at our monthly meetings. Join the quest!

Living Like Laura

The life and writings of author, Laura Ingalls Wilder, are rich finds for a Time Traveler and Living Historian. There are letters, autobiographical accounts, magazine articles, books, photographs, audio recordings, as well as biographies of Laura and accounts of 19th and 20th century life.

Laura's life spanned 1867 until 1957. Putting that in context, she was born two years after the end of the American Civil War and passed just at the birth of the space program. Think of all the things she saw within her lifetime! For example, when she, her husband, Almanzo, and daughter, Rose, left South Dakota for Missouri in 1894, they traveled in a wagon drawn by horses. When Laura and Almanzo returned to South Dakota for a visit in 1939, they went by car. Think of all the things that were invented during her lifetime.

Let's start exploring how to live like Laura.....

Walking in her Footsteps

How about a day trip to places where Laura lived?

- 1) Rothville, Missouri (Chariton County)
Laura, Mary, Ma and Pa Ingalls lived here in 1868-1869.
- 2) Independence, Kansas (Montgomery County) Laura, Mary, Ma and Pa Ingalls lived here in 1870.
- 3) Mansfield, Missouri (Wright County)
Laura, Almanzo, and Rose Wilder moved here in 1894. This is where the "Little House" books were written.



Learn More About Laura

In addition to the "Little House" series of books, here are some other resources for your quest.

[Laura Ingalls Wilder Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography](#) Edited by Pamela Smith Hall

[Pioneer Girl Perspectives: Exploring Laura Ingalls Wilder](#) Edited by Nancy Tystad Koupal

[Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder](#) By Carolyn Fraser

[The World of Little House](#) By Carolyn Stom Collins and Christina Wyss Eriksson

[The Little House Cookbook: Frontier Foods from Laura Ingalls Wilder's Classic Stories](#) By Barbara M. Walker

[My Little House Crafts Book](#) by Carolyn Stom Collins and Christina Wyss Eriksson

[The Wilder Life: My Adventures in the Lost World of Little House on the Prairie](#) By Wendy McClure

Ideas/Resources for Living Like Laura

School Days: Laura and her sisters were homeschooled and went to one room schools. Laura worked as a teacher during her courting time with Almanzo. Students had few books and often used ones that belonged to their parents from their school days. Resourceful teachers used the *Holy Bible* and store catalogs to create lessons. Some used the McGuffey Readers series of books. You can find copies of the Readers and the Spelling book on Google Books. There are also examples of Spencerian script, the form of cursive writing used then. Create a series of lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic (the 3 r's).

Lunch Pail



Laura and her sisters would have used something like this to carry their lunch to school. Hardware stores carry empty paint cans and they are perfect substitutes. Wrap up your goodies in scraps of fabric and tuck them inside the pail. Then set off to find a perfect spot for lunch. When the weather allowed, students would eat their lunch and have some playtime outside.

had

What to eat? Lunches were often made of leftovers. They also homemade bread with bacon drippings, an apple, and in the cooler months would carry baking potatoes, warm from the oven or fireplace carried in their coat pockets to warm their hands. A kindly teacher would let them place the potatoes in or on the stove in the classroom so the student would have a hot meal for lunch.

Toys

Laura would often make toys from items available on the farm - like cornhusks and scraps. These yarn dolls are great fun to make. <https://weefolkart.com/yarn-dolls-o/>



Recipes

One of the staples in the Ingalls household was Johnny Cakes. They are easy to make and delicious with maple syrup.

1 cup corn meal

1 tsp raw sugar

1 tbsp salt

1/2 cup water

1 lb bacon

1. In a bowl, mix the corn meal with the salt & sugar.
2. Add water & mix into a nice paste.
3. Use the paste to form patties & set aside.
4. Fry the bacon & remove it from the pan.
5. Fry the patties in the bacon grease until golden brown.

Laura was known among the various clubs and church groups in Mansfield for her gingerbread. She almost couldn't keep up with the demand!

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 cup packed brown sugar | 1. Preheat oven to 350 ° F and Grease a 9 x 13” pan. |
| 1/2 cup shortening | 2. Blend sugar & shortening, stir in the molasses. |
| 1 cup molasses | 3. Measure 1 cup of boiling water in a 2 cup measuring cup |
| 2 tsp baking soda | 4. Add the backing soda and mix well. |
| 1 cup boiling water | 5. In large bowl, sift together flour and spices. |
| 3 cups all-purpose flour | 6. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. |
| 1 tsp ginger | 7. Pour into prepared pan. |
| 1 tsp cinnamon | 8. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until cake is done. |
| 1 tsp nutmeg | 9. May be served warm or at room temperature. |
| 1 tsp clove | 10. Top with applesauce, lemon sauce, or whipped cream, |
| 1/2 tsp salt | 11. OR, Laura's favorite - top with chocolate frosting! |
| 2 large eggs, slightly beaten | YUM!! |



it out

Historians at the State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia have opportunities for you to share your story and your experiences during the pandemic. Check at: <https://shsmo.org/collections/covid>

Tell your story and be a part of history!

The Westport Historical Society/Harris-Kearney House is closed due to the Kansas City, Missouri Stay - At - Home order. The Time Travelers will not meet in April or May 2020. Look for information about future activities and field trips in the May 2020 issue of *The Discovery Papers*.

The Discovery Papers and The Time Travelers group are part of the Westport Historical Society/Harris-Kearney House located at 4000 Baltimore, Kansas City, Missouri 64111. Our

partner in this program is the United Federation of Doll Clubs Museum at 10900 Pomona Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri 64153.



The Discovery Papers journalists hard at work planning future activities and field trips for The Time Travelers. Be Safe. Stay Home. And Be a Part of History!