

## Laura Ingalls Wilder

In 1873 6-year-old Laura Ingalls was living in a log cabin in a thickly wooded area of Wisconsin. Called "Little Half-Pint" by her father, she was adventurous and lively. When she wasn't helping her mother with chores, she climbed trees and played ball. After supper, she loved to sit by the fire and listen to her father tell stories and play his fiddle.

When Laura was 7, she and her family headed west in a covered wagon for the open prairies of Minnesota. They settled there on the banks of Plum Creek. Laura walked two miles into town to attend school. At home, she liked to wade in the creek and pick wildflowers that grew among the tall prairie grasses. She helped her father plant wheat, but before it could be harvested, swarms of chomping grasshoppers descended and stripped his fields bare.

By 1880 Laura was living in De Smet, a new town in the Dakota Territory. Laura continued her schooling, earned money as a teacher, and began to take part in the social life of the growing town. She attended ice-cream socials, went on church picnics, and took long rides in a horse-drawn buggy with a young farmer named Almanzo Wilder.

Laura married Almanzo when she was 18. At her wedding she wore a black cashmere dress she had made. The early years of her marriage brought both joy and **misfortune**. In 1886 Laura gave birth to a daughter they named Rose. Two years later, though, their house burned down, their newly born son died, and hot weather dried up their crops. Hoping for better opportunities, the Wilders moved to Florida, back to De Smet, and then to the Ozark Mountains of Missouri. They bought a farm there, using \$100 that they had managed to save for the down payment. Laura's years of moving were finally over.

While in her 40s, Laura began adding to their small income by writing articles for the *Missouri Ruralist*, a newspaper for farmers. In time she had her own column that she wrote twice a month through 1925. During these years Laura thought about how much her life had changed. She now took rides with Almanzo in a car they had named Isabel, and her house had a phone, electricity, and a radio. Wanting to keep alive what it had been like to live as a pioneer on the American frontier, she began writing down memories of her childhood.

With her daughter Rose's help, Laura turned what she had written into a children's book titled *Little House in the Big Woods*. It was published in 1932 when Laura was 65. She went on to write six more "Little House" books based on her childhood and teen years. The books received **accolades** from the critics, and thousands of young fans wrote her letters.

Laura Ingalls Wilder's stories about pioneer life live on. Her books are still very popular today and have been translated into a number of languages.

