

# The ROCKY RIDGE REVIEW

Summer 2000

Laura Ingalls Wilder - Rose Wilder Lane Home Association, Mansfield, Missouri 65704

## NORMA LEE BROWNING KEYNOTE SPEAKER FOR ROCKY RIDGE DAY 2000

Rocky Ridge Day 2000 has been set for Saturday, October 14 on the grounds of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Home and Museum. The traditional blend of tours, autographing, music, performances and visiting will be repeated for the tenth straight year.

This year, the Wilder Home Association is proud to announce the visit of distinguished journalist and author, Norma Lee Browning. Ms. Browning was for years investigative reporter for the Chicago Tribune, and later syndicated entertainment columnist for the paper. Stationed in California, she was a favorite of such entertainers as Lucille Ball, Frank Sinatra and Katherine Hepburn. She is also author of fifteen books, including the inspiring favorite, *He Saw A Hummingbird*.

Ms. Browning has been involved in Wilder lore since the late 1930s, when she first met Rose Wilder Lane while a student at University of Missouri. Mrs. Lane took an interest in her budding writing career, and "taught me how to write", as Browning recalls. She and her husband, photographer Russell Ogg remained closely connected friends of Rose Wilder Lane until the latter's death in 1968.

The shared adventures of life in Columbia, Missouri, in the New York slums, Rose's Danbury home and numerous other memories are currently being spun into a memoir by Ms. Browning.

Come and hear a preview at this year's Rocky Ridge Day!

## THE MORGAN, A HORSE FOR THE OZARKS

*For Army Mounts or Farming, This Breed Wins*

By George F. Jordan

*(Editor's Note: Although Rocky Ridge Farm currently appears as the homeplace of the authors, it is good to remember the day when this land was in agricultural use. Any "Little House" reader remembers the importance of horses in Laura's and Almanzo's lives. Here is a vintage article which explains Almanzo's use of the Morgan horse here early in the twentieth century.)*

There are horse lovers who will tell you there was an "iron horse" long before the tractor came to encroach upon the equine domain. That horse was the Morgan. Hardy, docile, noted for speed as well as for the harder work of the farm or lumber camp, throughout many years of service the descendants of Justin Morgan's stallion have been looked upon as great all-purpose animals. And now in Missouri, under Ozark conditions, they are expected to prove their worth. Go with us and visit "Governor of Orleans" and the friend who has him in charge, A. J. Wilder of Rocky Ridge Farm near Mansfield.

### The Morgan's Conformation

A dark bay is "Governor," round in body, rather broad for a horse his size, or when compared with our regular standard-bred horses, but standing on four legs that are supported with as fine feet as ever traveled an Ozark road. His

shoulders are more sloping than those of the well bred horses we usually see in this section, and his chest is broad, ribs deep and well sprung to produce a superb back, the width of which is carried over his loins to his hips. But with all this, the 1,150 pounds of horseflesh would not be all desired did not two kindly and intelligent eyes, a wide forehead and general expression of his face stamp him as gentle, lovable,

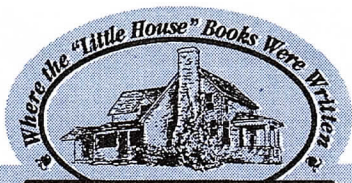


*Here we find neighbor A. J. Wilder telling Governor of Orleans to "look pleasant" for his Missouri Ruralist picture. But it's a natural pose.*

intelligent and trustworthy. That, friends, is Morgan tradition and what has characterized the Morgan since those days when the progenitor of the breed acquired his master's name. "Governor of Orleans" lives up to the Morgan standard in what it means as to speed, stamina, dependability in the collar and other

*Continued on page 2*





**THE WILDER HOME**  
**NEWS FROM THE**  
**HOME & MUSEUM**

## WILDER NEWS

The ever-evolving saga of preservation at the Wilder Home and Museum is a continued effort as our visitation continues to expand. Since the last newsletter, much has been accomplished. Paving of the parking lots at the Rock House and opposite the Wilder Home has been done. Continued "cleaning up" of the property at the Rock House has kept Gaylerd Miller busy. He has also tended the fledgling apple orchard, planting five new apple trees. A redbud was planted in honor of the sister of Jean Coday. A much needed project is expected to begin around November 1. A grant will enable us to perform badly needed bolstering up of the kitchen, dining room and bedroom areas of the historic Wilder house. Termite damage and the weight of years and many visitors have weakened the infrastructure of those areas of the house, which was built a century ago to serve a family of three. The contractor has assured the Board of Directors that this work will last "at least 200 years!"

We extend sympathy to the family of Juliana Fraser Davis, an early Founder Member. Julie, who died in March at her Michigan home, first became interested in the Wilder books when reading them to her son and daughter in the 1960s. In 1966 she launched the first effort to honor Laura Ingalls Wilder on a U.S. Postage Stamp. Her work, which included sizeable efforts by the Wilder Home Association, ultimately led to the issuance of the Little House on the Prairie stamp in 1992.

With financial assistance of the Missouri Reading Council, a historical marker was cast for the Rock House area. Board member

*Continued on Page 3. . .*

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Check pattern on front page streamer is duplicated from flyleaves of original Harper & Brothers editions of the Wilder books and favored by Laura

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## THE MORGAN, A HORSE FOR THE OZARKS, cont.

attributes that create a horse "you like to work." And these characteristics are now in good demand in two particular places - the Ozarks where a good "traveling" horse is needed and in the Army where loads must be carried and pulled, not at the pace of the ordinary drafter but quite often at terrific speed. It has been a combination of these demands that brought "Governor of Orleans" to the Ozarks, or more particularly to the community of Mansfield where his services are at the disposal of the farmers of that section.

"What we hope to do is to improve the quality of Ozark horses by an admixture of Morgan blood" neighbor Wilder told me. "For many years we have been attempting to breed an ideal Ozark horse, and this has been helped to some extent by a few drafters and coach horse blood. On many farms there are fine mares weighing from 1,110 to 1,350. But in many cases the quality is lacking. The Morgan horse has that quality. It means good feet to withstand the stony roads and fields; it means an exceptionally good back. And there must be ability to pull, yet serve our purpose for road uses - and this ability must be backed by a willingness to go into the cellar. A horse must have sense as well as weight, and the Morgan, I'm convinced, has more intelligence than any breed of horses I have ever known."

While breeding good farm horses of the lighter type is Mr. Wilder's purpose, the American Remount association owning the stallion, hopes to be able to shortly go into the Ozark territory and find good horses for cavalry and artillery purposes. The Morgan was developed in the mountainous section of New England, and is a saddle horse of proved worth - perhaps short on a few of the "gaits" but long on endurance, and sureness of foot. Then for the artillery, a horse is needed that not only can pull but do it in a hurry. Here is where the lighter horse is in demand. So the Morgan is filling the bill for two purposes because his qualities are necessary to those horses which either fight or farm.

"Governor of Orleans" sired 23 colts last year. I did not have an opportunity to see all of them, but the few I did see show the horse to be a very prepotent sire. Mr. Wilder thinks that the colts will develop into horses larger than the sire, but it is evident that the backs, quality of bone, feet and general conformation will be greatly improved and brought nearer to Morgan type, and in a very short time by the use of this stallion. For the thing outstanding in the colts was the uniformity of the features just mentioned.

### Action and Stamina

There is some common blood in the standard-breds and Morgans of today and in the "early days" of racing a few Morgans featured. Black Hawk, a grandson of Justin Morgan, and sired by Sherman Morgan, did a mile in 2:43½. This was in 1847. Ethan Allen was a son of Black Hawk and sired six trotters within the 2:30 limit. So you see the "get up and go" was there with the endurance that has given the Morgan a reputation of his own.

What impress Governor of Orleans will leave on future horses in the community of Mansfield will be watched with interest. If this cross does all that is expected of it, and as there are signs of it doing, horse prices will be decidedly better in one community of Missouri at least. Anyone who has sold a horse to the army knows something of the quality demanded, but that when quality is found the price usually is "long." That will be on vindication of the introduction of Morgan blood into the Ozarks. Just now the remount association has another Morgan stallion in service in Missouri, and six stallions are privately owned. Where medium weight horses will fill the bill, and this should include much of the Ozark territory, Morgans undoubtedly will increase. They are as near iron as a horse can be, and their good sense and willingness to pull stamp them as ideal for work, road use and a horse you can love - this last being not any means the smallest tribute that can be paid.



## WILDER NEWS, cont.

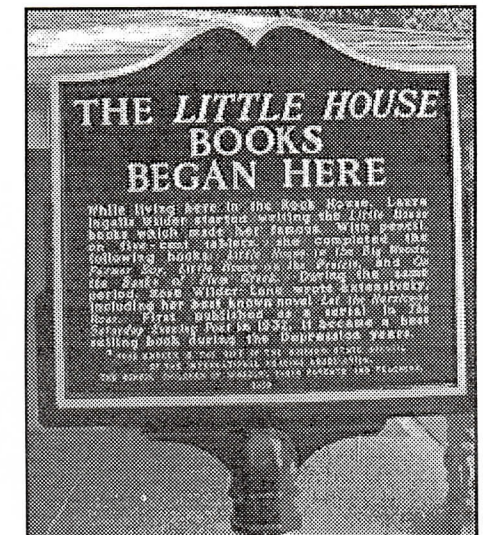
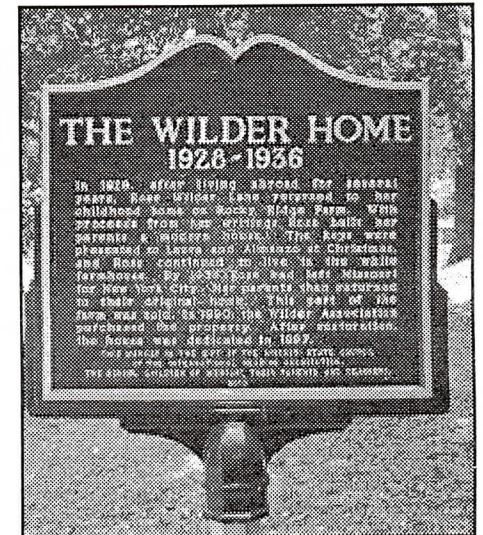
Jane Decker was the liaison person for this needed project. Front and back of the marker shown below.



*The Model T Club's visit to the Rocky Ridge Farm in fall, 1999, brought an array of vintage vehicles to the Wilder homeplace.*



*Laura described the windows of her farmhouse as "living pictures". When she moved to the Rock House with Almanzo, she had similar spectacular views from that vantage point. Here is the scene from Laura's bedroom window.*



The Association is currently working to expand its offerings on the internet, to include convenient on-line shopping and current updates on news from the Wilder Home. Keep watching for exciting new changes. Our current web site address is: [www.bestoftheozarks.com/wilderhome](http://www.bestoftheozarks.com/wilderhome). Email us at: [liwhome@windo.missouri.org](mailto:liwhome@windo.missouri.org).

Dates for the "Little House Memories" pageant performed by the Ozark Mountain Players, will be August 25-26, September 1-2, 8-9, 15-16.

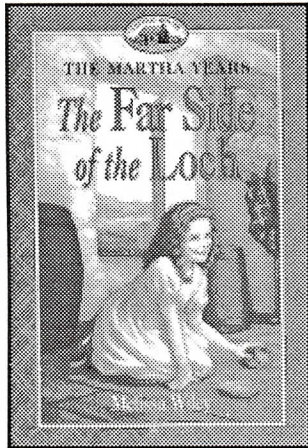
Our Christmas Open House at the Wilder Home will be December 1-17, 4-8 p.m. See the historic home in Christmas array and remember our wonderful gifts for holiday buying.

Another CBS movie, a sequel to the show aired in January, is in the making.

The Ingalls family photo album and Laura's personal photo album, both badly in need of attention, are in the hands of the conservationists.



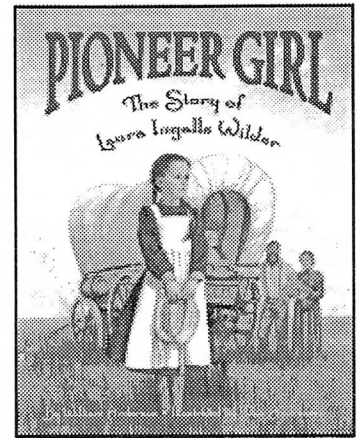
# NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP



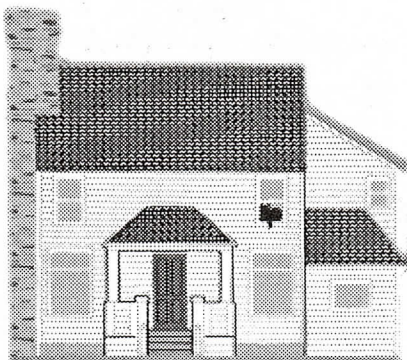
The second book in the series about Laura's Great-Grandmother, young Martha Morse, a lass growing up in the highlands of Scotland. Historical fiction. Hardcover \$15.95/Paperback \$4.95



2000 Christmas ornament  
 "These Happy Golden Years"  
 Pictured: Almanzo in his cutter picking up Laura at Brewster School.  
 \$8.50



This beautiful story of Laura Ingalls Wilder is now available in paperback!  
 \$5.95



"Cat's Meow" has produced a unique wooden replica of the Wilder Home, a perfect keepsake or gift. \$10.95



**Re-released!**  
 A photo guide packed with Leslie A. Kelly's gorgeous photographs of Wilder country -- \$10



**MYSTERY PICTURE!** This photo shows Laura Ingalls Wilder at an unidentified home. It is not recognized as being in Mansfield, but possibly is located in the nearby towns of Ava or Mountain Grove. The inscription on the back reads: "Alan and Ethelyn Gorline and the little lady they love so well (Lancaster, Calif.) July 1946."

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