

The ROCKY RIDGE REVIEW

Summer 2006

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

"LAURA'S PATHWAY" NOW IN USE

A dream-come-true and an important new dimension for visitors to Rocky Ridge was officially dedicated on May 6. It is the pathway through the woods and over the hills from the Rocky Ridge farmhouse site to the 1928 Rock House where the Wilders lived for several years. The new feature was celebrated by a ribbon-cutting ceremony and the first official visitor use of the trail.

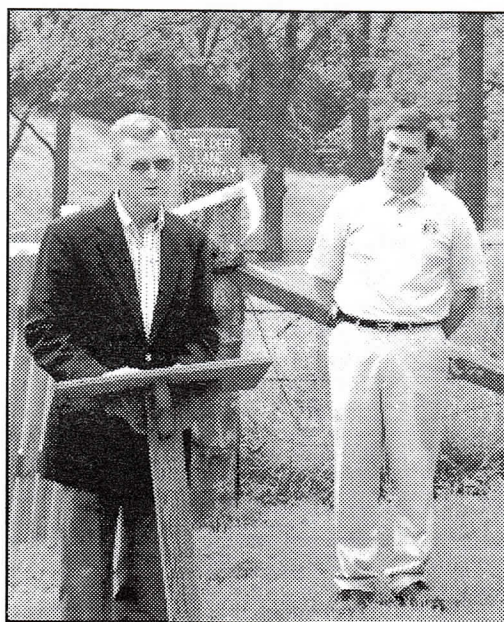
Jean Coday, Association president, welcomed those attending the ceremony, and credited board member Phillip Bennett for his work in making the pathway a reality. "With the assistance of an architect and engineer, Phillip has researched, mapped and marked the trail Laura and Almanzo and Rose used to walk between the two houses."

Hutchens Industries, The City of Mansfield, Hank Flageolle, Loren Day and the staff of the Wilder Home all were a part of the project.

Phillip Bennett noted that "This shows how things can happen when neighbors help one another. May it be a symbol of our community's love and unity."

State representative Van Kelly also spoke. He stressed the importance of preserving history. "If we lose our appreciation for history, we are in trouble," he said. "I know that Mrs. Wilder would be very proud of this."

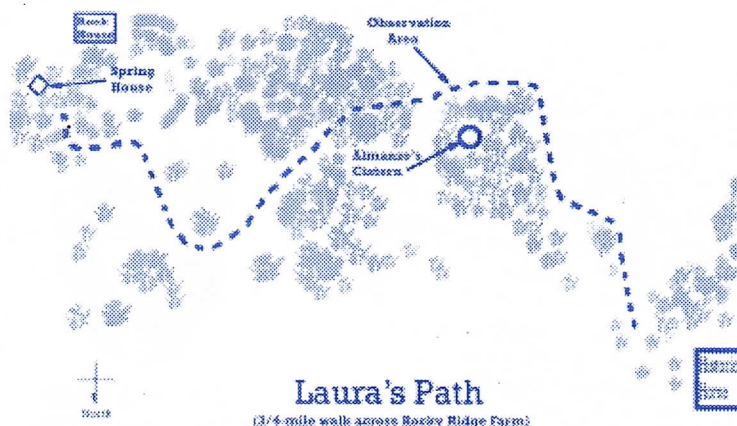
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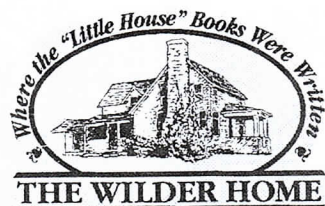
Phillip Bennett describes the path project, with Van Kelly looking on.



Left to right; Jean Coday, President and Director of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association, Van Kelly, MO State representative and longtime Wilder Home friend and supporter, Phillip Bennett, Board Member, Mayor Dale Keith, Eddie Calhoun and Loren Day, Alderman, and Kay Goss, Board Member.



Map of Laura's Path, by Phillip Bennett



NEWS FROM THE HOME & MUSEUM

WILDER NEWS

Jean Coday and Darlys Wynn attended a Charette in Bowling Green, MO in May. The event was sponsored by the Missouri Humanities Council and offered the chance to share the wonderful things going on at the Wilder home and to bring back ideas to use at this site...We are sorry to announce the passing of Elva Bogart, an educator and longtime Wilder Home employee. Elva provided many of her handcrafted items for sale in the bookstore. Her daughter has donated a large supply of her mother's work to be sold for the benefit of the Wilder Scholarship Fund...Board member William Anderson will be speaking on Almanzo on July 28 at the historic Wilder farm near Malone, NY. The day will include Morgan horses, which Almanzo favored all his life. Come and meet the Morgans!...The Ozark Mountain Players presents "Laura's Memories", an outdoor pageant, on July 21-22, 28-29, August 4-5, 11-12 and September 15-16...A Little House Christmas play will be held at Carthage, MO on December 7-10, 14-17 by Stones-throw Dinner Theater. The Wilder Home will include a lobby exhibit for playgoers to

Continued on Page 3. . .

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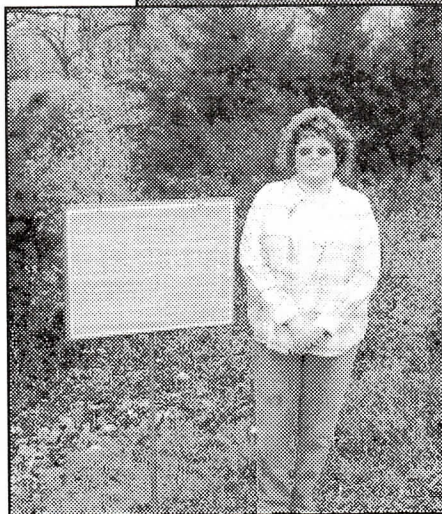
Check pattern on front page streamer is duplicated from flyleaves of original Harper & Brothers editions of the Wilder books and favored by Laura

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"LAURA'S PATHWAY", cont.

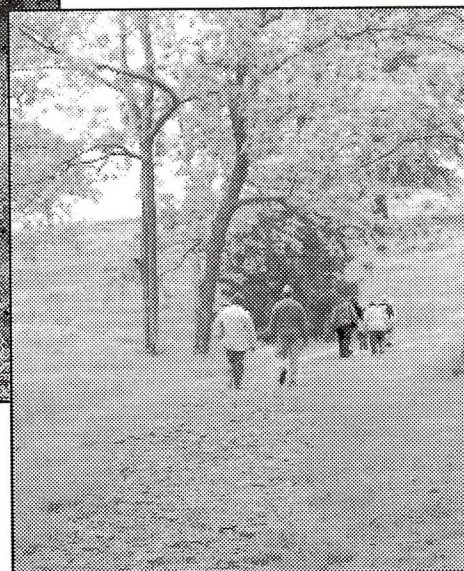


Above, visitors examine the interpretive signage on the trail



Cheryl Whitlock of Alabama was the first guest to walk the trail.

"It is marvelous," she said. "And it makes me feel so connected to the farm!"



The Pathway



PHILLIP BENNETT'S LIFELONG ADMIRATION OF THE WILDERS



Laura Ingalls Wilder, circa 1950, as Mr. Bennett may remember her.

As one of the most recent board of directors of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association, Phillip Bennett brings a long fascination with the lives and ideals of Laura and Almanzo Wilder. The Mansfield resident's connection with Wilder lore dates back more than fifty years.

As an elementary student in Mansfield, Bennett remembers hearing the Little House books read to his class. And he vividly recalls the day when the author herself made a visit to his school during the early 1950s.

"Here she comes!" he remembers his class chorus, as they

Continued to next page 3

ADMIRATION...

saw the pretty, well dressed, elderly author approach the elementary building. As a greeting, the children sang a special jingle composed especially for "Mrs. Wilder".

"We went to the gym," he recalls, "and there she talked to us about her life and her books. How thrilled we were! Afterwards, Laura gave my sister, who was too small to reach the drinking fountain, a little boost. She was that kind of person, always so friendly to children."

Later on, in seventh grade, Phillip Bennett decided to draw the Wilder home as an art project. "I made it poster sized, and the principal was so taken with the picture that he hung it near his office for the rest of the year."

The Bennett family has had a long association with the Wilder home. Phillip's wife Janice and his daughter Becky are veteran employees. He is an engineer at Hutchens Industries, but also has a deep interest in the environment, particularly at Rocky Ridge Farm. This led to Jean Coday's request that Bennett tackle the job of establishing the trail between the two historic homes. It was a long and scholarly process.

"I studied satellite photos and topographical maps," he recalled. "Then I looked for trails, studied the land, used a protractor, and took into consideration the easiest route the Wilders might have selected between the two houses. There were still remnants of a trail. I discovered how steep the ravines are; from the road there is no indication of this."

After the research was accomplished, Bennett's wife Janice told him he needed to write a book. The result was twofold: the colorful book LAURA'S PATHWAY TO HOME and a narrated DVD version. As an expert photographer, Bennett's work illustrates both versions, and his work has also been used by the Association.

Phillip Bennett has many goals for the stewardship of Rocky Ridge Farm. "I view it as a national treasure," he says. "And I feel fortunate to be a part of it."



WILDER NEWS, cont.

enjoy...Traub Associates has completed an Interpretive Plan for the Association, giving ideas for future plans and possibilities for the entire Wilder site. Board members have studied the document and added their input. The Plan is a necessary portion of a larger architectural plan for the site...Mansfield's Laura Ingalls Wilder Day will be held Saturday, September 16. Come and join the festivities!

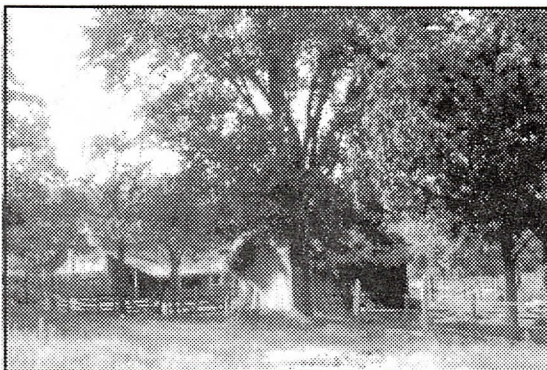


***Honor your loved
one by purchasing an
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Donor
Recognition
Tree...
A Lasting Tribute!***

COME TO VISIT LIFE "BETWEEN FENCES"

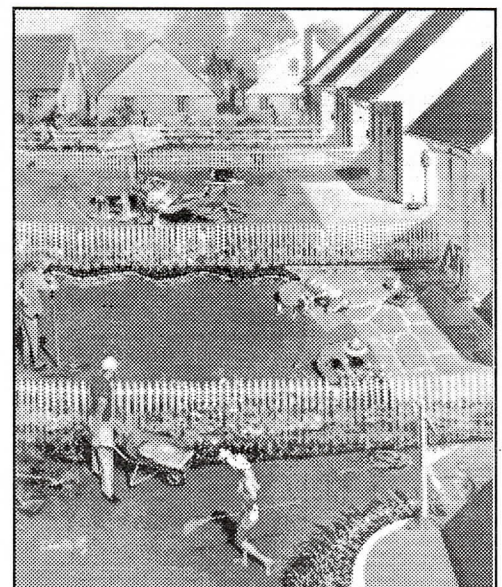
The Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association and the town of Mansfield will host the Smithsonian's "Museum on Main Street" exhibition *Between Fences* from May 12 - June 23, 2007. Voluntary docents will staff this touring exhibit, which will be housed at Mansfield's community center.

The exhibit will focus on the importance of fences in American culture, including agricultural use, cattle ranching, American ideas of land, property, community and happiness.



Various types of fences built by the Wilders

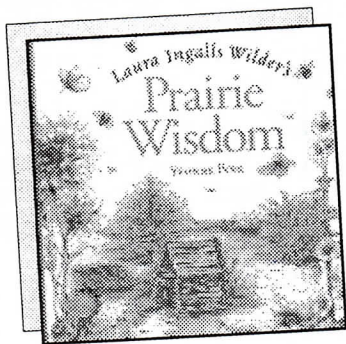
In his farming, Almanzo Wilder experienced a variety of fencing, from stone fences in upstate New York, wire fences on the prairies, and rail fences here on Rocky Ridge Farm.



Color Painting: *Spring Yard Work*, by Thornton Utz. Cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 18, 1957.

**1957 SEPS: Curtis Publishing,
Indianapolis, IN.**

NEW IN THE LITTLE HOUSE BOOKSTORE



Laura Ingalls Wilder's PRAIRIE WISDOM

By Yvonne Pope

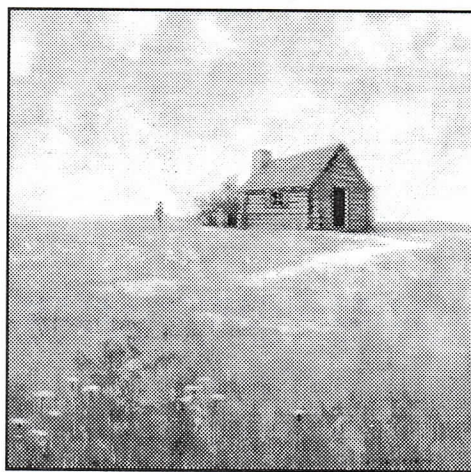
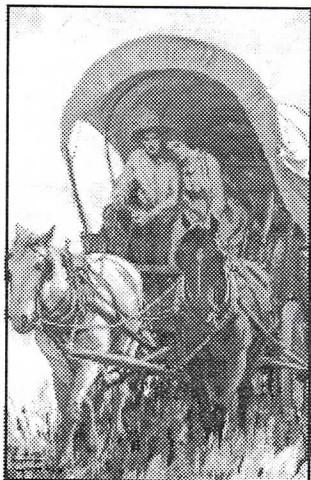
Inspirational words of wisdom from the beloved author of the "Little House" books, extracted from her early writings in the Missouri Ruralist.

\$9.95



TWO NEW ART PRINTS NOW AVAILABLE

Many visitors have requested to have a copy of the painting that hangs on the wall in the parlor of the historic farmhouse by W.D. Koerner. The other painting, painted on site by artist Dan Andreasen, is displayed in the museum. These high quality prints are suitable for framing and a bargain at \$24.95 each.



Be sure to visit the On-Line Bookstore at www.lauraingallswilderhome.com for many more books, gifts and collectibles.

WALLS DON'T TALK AT ROCKY RIDGE, BUT FURNITURE DOES

This spring, in the course of doing cleaning of the Wilder home prior to opening Association employee D.D. Koster made a surprising discovery. In a crevice of the brown sofa in the Wilder home parlor D.D. discovered a long lost letter to Laura and Almanzo from Grace Ingalls Dow, written on December 6, 1932. Here is content of the letter, not read in 74 years:

"Your box of nutmeats received this morning. I was never more surprised when I opened them, sat bump down on a chair and if the chair hadn't been there would have sat on the floor. What a terrible lot of work it must have been and what big nut meats...Gee that many nutmeats would have cost something if one tried to buy them here...Glad you are better Laura. What makes you work so hard? I do believe you are too particular. Manly and Rose don't want you to, I know....."

D.D. has searched the rest of the furniture for missing items, but so far no more discoveries!



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Mansfield, MO 65704

Visit us on-line @ www.lauraingallswilderhome.com