



The ROCKY RIDGE REVIEW



LAURA INGALLS WILDER – ROSE WILDER LANE HOME ASSOCIATION, MANSFIELD, MISSOURI 65704 WINTER 2009/2010

Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Life Stories of a Pioneer Girl

Laura Ingalls Wilder remains one of America's most well-known and beloved authors. Her popular "*Little House*" books, reflecting her life experiences, are favorites with young and older readers alike. The stories of her family and their travels leading to Mansfield, Missouri, document an American era of settlement in a uniquely personal and enduring way. Her books are respected for their historical perspective and celebrated for their loving human interest qualities. Laura Ingalls Wilder and her writings have introduced generations of readers to life on the early western prairie...her books continue to be a source of education and enjoyment to 21st century readers.

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum, in Mansfield, Missouri, has worked with Ozarks Public Television to create a 30 minute documentary about Laura Ingalls Wilder's life, experiences and writings. The program features reenactments and a rich collection of archival images and documents as well as showcasing the historic Mansfield, MO site where Laura settled. Award-winning actress and Missouri State University alum Tess Harper narrates the program, which should be released in early spring, 2010.

BELOW: Creek bank scene cast, front from left: Skylar Adams as Carrie, Sarah Anne Wynn as Christy back from left: Bailey Adams as Laura, and Adrienne Adams as Nellie Oleson



ABOVE: cast from left to right: Sean Spyres as Almanzo, Audra Dierksen as adult Laura, Clint Jackson as Charles Ingalls, Brenda Miller as Caroline Ingalls, Taylor Trip as Mary Ingalls, Jim Cantrell (standing) as Uncle Henry, Natalie Quick as Rose Wilder, and Sarah Anne Wynn as Little Laura.



Judy Cantrell portrays a Mansfield neighbor visiting in her buggy



The Ingalls family moving from Pepin, WI to Independence, KS

Cast: Walking beside wagon Adrienne Adams, left (Laura), Brenda Miller (Ma), on wagon from left, Clint Jackson (Pa), Sarah Wynn (Carrie) Taylor Tripp, back (Mary)



Ozarks Public Television's Tom Carter, Producer and Camera man Steve Wynn filming Almanzo, Rose and Laura arriving in Missouri in 1894. Jim Cantrell holding horses.

Cast: Sean Spyres as Almanzo, Audra Dierksen as Laura and Natalie Quick as Rose

Missouri's Favorite Sons & Daughters' exhibit offers a glimpse into the life of beloved nationally-known figures such as Harry S. Truman, Mark Twain, Walt Disney, Laura Ingalls Wilder, George Washington Carver, Thomas Hart Benton and Payne Stewart. September 30 - October 31, 2009, Wednesday - Sunday, during Silver Dollar City's National Harvest Festival for Missouri's Best!



The Silver Dollar City exhibit, featuring Laura as Missouri's Favorite Daughter



Another area of the exhibit space in the Frisco Barn Building at Silver Dollar City



These beautiful quilts, made by Museum Director Kathleen Forte, were the perfect back drop for the exhibit

Mary Swanzey Harris's Gift of History

Among the artifacts in the Association's displays are many significant Ingalls family belongings. We might assume that Laura had these keepsakes in her home for years, but other than Pa's fiddle, she actually had little from her parents. The origins of the Ingalls belongings now on exhibit date back just fifty years.

In the summer of 1959, the Wilder Home did not offer regular tours, but Association members were on site during the summer months to host passersby. Mansfield librarian Florence Williams was often on duty. She was there when a family from Hill City, South Dakota arrived. Mary Swanzey Harris announced that she was the step-daughter of Carrie Ingalls. With her was her husband, her daughter Sue, and son-in-law Wayne Upshaw.

While touring the house, Mary shared stories of Carrie as her second mother. Mrs. Williams asked Wayne Upshaw to drive her to the Mansfield Mirror office to summon the editor for an interview. While they were gone, Sue Upshaw absorbed the atmosphere of the Wilder home with her parents.

"I had the feeling that the Wilder's were a little well-to-do," Sue says today. "We loved the setting of the house and yard. I remember the rooms being light and clean, with such a warm atmosphere. I imagined how happy and comfortable Laura and Almanzo were there. We looked through leisurely; upstairs, Rose's room seemed as if she had just left it."

When Mary Harris heard the goals of the young Association, she thought of a box of keepsakes in her Black Hills home. She acquired many Ingalls family possessions when her stepmother died in 1946. Mary decided that the Wilder Home was the place for them.

On a later visit, Mary donated her collection. The Ingalls family Bible...Carrie's autograph book the jewel box described in *On the Banks of Plum Creek*...each item was an exciting addition to the museum collection. The tintype of the three Ingalls girls came to light at this time. California librarian Clara Webber plucked the now-familiar photo from a bushel basket, and urged the Lichty's to copy it for sale. Rose dated the photo *"at the time of Little Town on the Prairie."*

Clothing, handwork, Braille slate, and personal belongings of Mary Ingalls were among the Harris gift. There was a bed jacket made by Mary Harris for Mary Ingalls. Mary's college diploma and Sunday School temperance certificate date from the 1870's and 1880's. Although not clearly documented, it is likely that Pa and Ma Ingalls' wedding certificate appeared at this time.

Mary Harris died in 1969, leaving a large family of children and grandchildren. Family members periodically visit Rocky Ridge Farm, enjoying the site as much as their mother and grandmother did.

Mary's gift of history has enhanced the visits of several generations of readers who arrive eager to learn more about the Ingalls family.

Visit Us In Mansfield, Missouri or Visit Us Online at www.lauraingallswilderhome.com