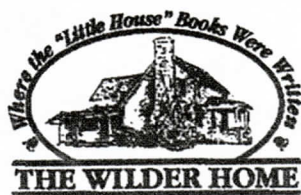


The ROCKY RIDGE REVIEW

Laura Ingalls Wilder - Rose Wilder Lane Home Association, Mansfield, Missouri 65704 ■ Fall 2011/Winter 2012



❖ *The Treasures of Rocky Ridge Issue* ❖



News from the Home & Museum

WILDER NEWS

This issue, sub-titled "Treasures of Rocky Ridge" is an attempt to share some of the miscellaneous items of historic value which, as yet, cannot be shown within our limited space. In the proposed new museum-archives building, many options will present themselves: safe storage and inventory, revolving exhibits, and a fine new home for such priceless items like Pa's fiddle. In this issue we also want to acquaint our members with

some of the "backstage" responsibilities and projects which keep the historic homes and assorted buildings up and running through the year. We hope you enjoy this added view.

As 2011 comes to a conclusion, the Wilder Home Association is happy to note that our year's visitation is inching to 30,000 visitors ... As a happy end to the year, and a thank you to many supporters, December 2-3 was designated as "Christmas on Rocky Ridge" open house. The decorated historic home, which resounded with fiddling and story-telling was the focal point. Visitors had photos taken in front of the fireplace, which had a Christmas tree in evidence. Christmas during the Wilder times was a much less decorative time, but it is documented that a Christmas tree was once trimmed in the parlor, during Rose's occupancy in the 1930s ... A local group of eight, "Laura's Angels," has been active in supporting projects connected with the Association's goals and activities. One of them is the Christmas event. Thanks to this group for all of its work! ... In 2012 we have many upcoming projects slated. Painting of the historic farmhouse is one of them. Upgrading and re-stocking the bookstore is being planned. Look for "signed" books in the new year! A number of Little House connected authors and illustrators have agreed to provide signatures to include in the books we sell on site The wonderful Ozark Public Television documentary on the Wilders, produced by the Association, won second place in a Missouri Broadcast Association competition. The DVD is available in our bookstore. (See back page).

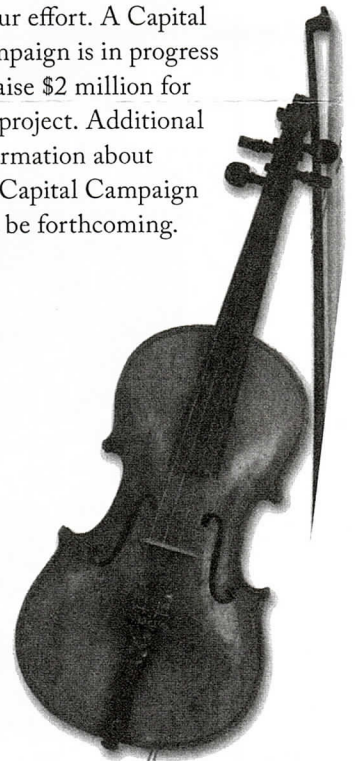
Director Jean Coday appeared on "Ozark Watch," a public television program, discussing projects and plans of the Wilder Home Association. With her was Daniel Hancock, who was instrumental in developing our Museum Master Plan. Jean also spoke to Southwest Missouri Museum Associates group on October 19. ... Board member William Anderson will present at the 44th annual Children's Literature Festival at University of Central Missouri in March. Office Manager Greg Goss exhibited the Museum's 16-panel display boards at the First State Capitol in St. Charles. The event marked "Missouri Day." We also have two table top versions of these biographical-historical panel commentaries, which are booked through 2012. Contact us if your organization is interested in displaying them ... This newsletter will be available in an on-line version in the future. Please contact us if you prefer receiving it in that mode. We are also interested in receiving member email addresses; please let us know yours. The museum email address is: liw@getgoin.net. Opening date for the 2012 season is March 1.

Best wishes to all the members and friends of this project!

A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS A New Home for Pa's Fiddle

There has been substantial research and planning on how best to protect and preserve Laura's legacy. This work positions us well for present and future endeavors as we seek to be good stewards of Rocky Ridge Farm. With thorough planning completed, we are ready to proceed with funding and construction of facility enhancements that will draw new and returning adventurers to the beautiful Missouri Ozarks.

Plans include a new Archival Library, a replica of Laura and Almanzo's Rocky Ridge Cabin, an Apple Orchard, a replica of Laura's Hen House and restoration of the walking trail to the Rock House. **Restoration, Preservation, and Education** is the goal of our effort. A Capital Campaign is in progress to raise \$2 million for the project. Additional information about the Capital Campaign will be forthcoming.



"If enough people think of a thing and work hard enough at it, I guess it's pretty nearly bound to happen, wind and weather permitting."

- Laura Ingalls Wilder

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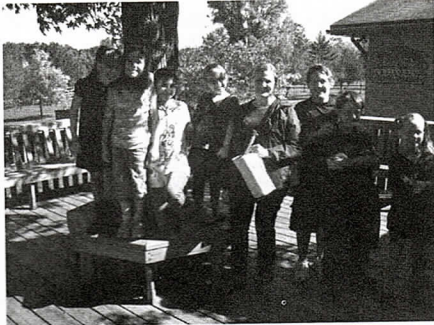
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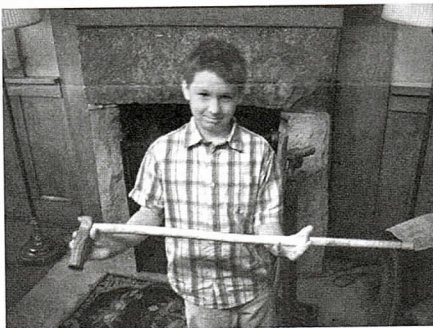
ROCKY RIDGE FARM, A PLACE FOR CHILDREN

The charter of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association charges its keepers to preserve the home and belongings of the Wilder family. Over the years since 1957, the majority of visitors have been children, in school groups and with their families. Laura herself first opened her home to children, inviting classes in to see the house and hear her stories.

October 13, a beautiful fall day in the Ozarks, was a truly a children's day at the Wilder Home, with two visiting school groups: Our Lady of Sorrows, from Eugene, Missouri, and Gloria Deo School, from Springfield, Missouri. In addition to the freedom of exploring the grounds, the kids, all well-versed in the Wilder books, learned about historic restoration, viewed artifacts, and toured the two historic homes. These pictures show some of the experiences awaiting young and not-so-young readers who come to this site.



ABOVE: Gloria Deo students visit the museum bookstore; BELOW: A boy examining one of Almanzo's handmade canes.



ABOVE: Stanley Jones explains how historic homes are maintained; BELOW: Eugene, MO students finishing with tour guide Stanley Jones.



"WE REVEL IN WATER" — Laura Ingalls Wilder

This is the way the board members and staff at the Wilder Home and Museum now feel. We "revel," as Laura wrote in 1916, in water. A recently completed project now gives the Home access to the City of Mansfield water and sewer service. We are no longer reliant on antiquated and inadequate methods of supplying vital needs to a site which hosts well over 30,000 people each year.

Laura, when writing of the ingenious gravity water system tapped from an ever-flowing spring on the farm, mentioned that "we feel we have protection in case of fire." This is a significant asset at the Wilder Home. A red water plug is now located at the slope near the road.

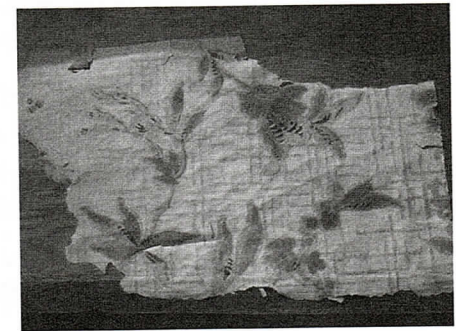
The City of Mansfield received a grant from the USDA Rural Development Program in 2008 to run water and sewer lines from the town to the Wilder Home. The amount of the grant was \$113,000. Responsibility to connect the lines remained with the Home Association. Fortunately, in 2009 a Coover Regional Grant (through the Community Foundation of the Ozarks) partially covered the hook-up expenses.

The water line was completed in 2010. Hook-up costs were \$22,600. City water now serves the museum building, the parking lot, and the bathrooms. A water line was also stretched to the potential new museum site. Sewer lines were finished earlier this year. They were not connected with the museum building, but are in use in other areas. This was expensive as well: \$40,466.

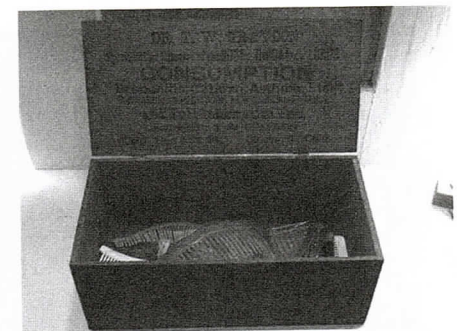
This project is one of many of the "invisible infrastructure" needs, which, though not visible to visitors, are necessary to operate the Home & Museum for the friends of the Wilders who visit the site. The Association is grateful to all who assisted with this worthwhile project.



Original wallpaper has been faithfully reproduced, as shown by this vintage picture of Laura's desk in her office.



Here is a scrap of the original wallpaper. The remnant enabled the Association to replicate the original design.



The Wilders were recyclers! This wooden box containing "patent" medicines was later used for various household needs, such as hair combs.



A trunk that came with the Wilders to Missouri in 1894.

CARE & MAINTENANCE OF WILDER SITE IS DAILY JOB



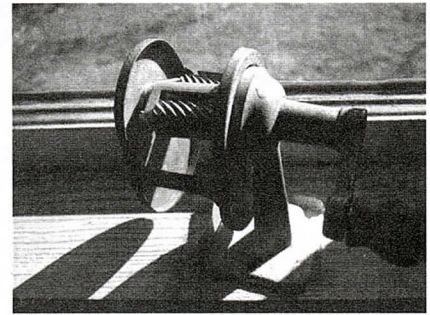
The Jackson's tend the re-born orchard (pictured above) on Rocky Ridge Farm.

Jim and Clint Jackson, father and son, are constantly at work on Rocky Ridge Farm keeping the grounds and buildings in good repair, along with special projects needing their attention. Their reports to the board of directors list varied needs and needs met. Here are some of the jobs which needed the Jackson's attention in 2011: tree and stump removal, highway advertising maintenance, tree pruning, working with the City of Mansfield to prevent foot erosion and deterioration of the Wilder

graveyard; rebuilding of rock walls, haying and baling on the Wilder land, repairs on most of the buildings, working with the sewer/water line project, electrical wiring needs, and keeping the twenty acres of property mowed in season.

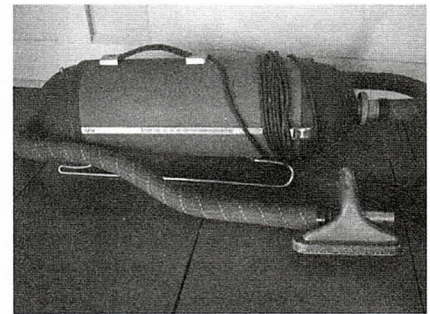
A special project is the replanting of the Wilder apple orchard. Working with Missouri State University extension in Mountain Grove, the Jacksons tend the orchard. It consists of Missouri Pippin and Ben Davis apple varieties, same as the Wilder orchard did. The local deer like the apples; an electric fence has been installed!

The Jackson's labor is another example of the largely unseen jobs essential in keeping the Home and Museum open to the public.



Rose's Pencil Sharpener

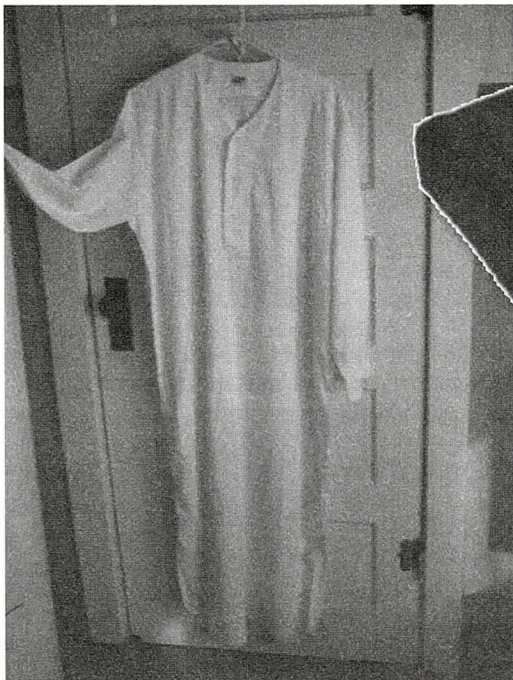
Rose's pencil sharpener is still attached to the window sill in the "sleeping porch."



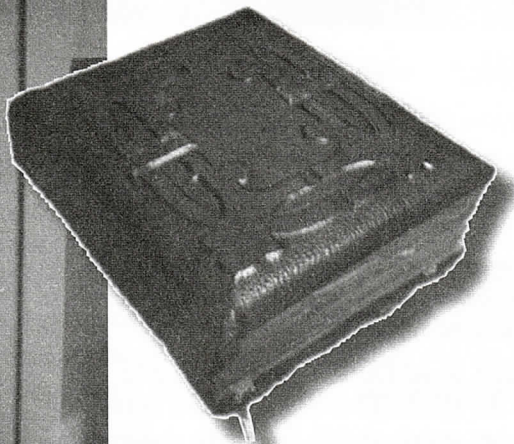
Laura's Westinghouse Sweeper

Laura recalled using a twig broom and was later thrilled when Pa brought home a "store bought" broom. In her last years, Laura used a tank-style Westinghouse sweeper.

SOME OF THE TREASURES ON DISPLAY AT ROCKY RIDGE . . .



Almanzo's Nightshirt Men continued to wear ankle-length night shirts well into the twentieth century.



Laura & Almanzo's Photo Album

Laura and Almanzo's photo album, brought to Mansfield in 1894. The photo album cover is in amazing condition, but the interior pages are in great need of professional conservation.



Laura's Brown Sugar Container

On their fall break, these Missouri State University students toured the Wilder Home & Museum. They are: Kelsey, Mary, Renee and Lauren. Renee said that she "read all the books this summer and loved them." On the day of the girls' visit, some museum displays were being revised, so museum director Kathleen Forte showed the girls Laura's brown sugar container, a primitive antique which dates to at least 1900, and probably earlier.



A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

Rocky Ridge Farm is where Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote the internationally claimed "Little House" books. Annually, more than 30,000 visitors from all 50 states and about 20 different countries make their own special pilgrimage to the Missouri Ozarks Region to experience a uniquely displayed

piece of Americana and visit the historic Laura Ingalls Wilder Home.

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association of Mansfield, Missouri has undertaken extraordinary challenges attending to the restoration, preservation and education of Laura's legacy. The Association's passionate attention to detail and diligent efforts are ensuring that these priceless treasures will be available for future generations.

The Proposed Master Plan for Restoring Rocky Ridge Farm PROVIDING A SAFE DISPLAY FOR TREASURES

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Home Association is asking your for help in their restoration/preservation efforts, and seeks to raise \$2 million for several necessary improvements to the "Farm". This critical funding will provide (see architect's rendering below):

- A. **New Archival Library** to expand document preservation initiatives, academic and scholarly research to promote educational opportunities, and provide much needed space for displaying additional heirlooms and artifacts.
- B. **A Replica of Laura & Almanzo's Rocky Ridge Log Cabin** (their first home at Rocky Ridge) which will provide children of all ages an interactive opportunity to immerse themselves in another of Laura's life experiences.
- C. **A Replica of Laura's Hen House** based on her original design that was published in the Missouri Ruralist Magazine; which will add to the historical and sensory accuracy of the Farm and and visitor experience.
- D. **An Apple Orchard** will be planted, continuing the restoration of the Farm to its prominence and provide an educational focal point of critical sustainability practices.
- E. **Restoration of Almanzo's Walking Trail** will offer visitors a walk through history, experiencing the trail Laura, Almanzo and Rose used to walk from the Farm House to the Rock House.

WILDER HOME ASSOCIATION

Become A Member!

The Wilder Home Association is accepting contributions in the form of annual and lifetime memberships to the association. The Wilder Home Association is a not-for-profit organization with a 501-C-3 classification, and your gift is a charitable contribution. You are welcome to contribute online, or feel free to contact us.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS:

These levels of membership entitle bearer to a membership card, two issues of the Association newsletter, free admission on regular Home & Museum tours and 10% discount on purchases over \$10.00 in the Little House Bookstore:

Student \$25.00

Individual \$50.00

Supporter \$100.00

Lifetime Memberships:

SPONSOR \$500.00

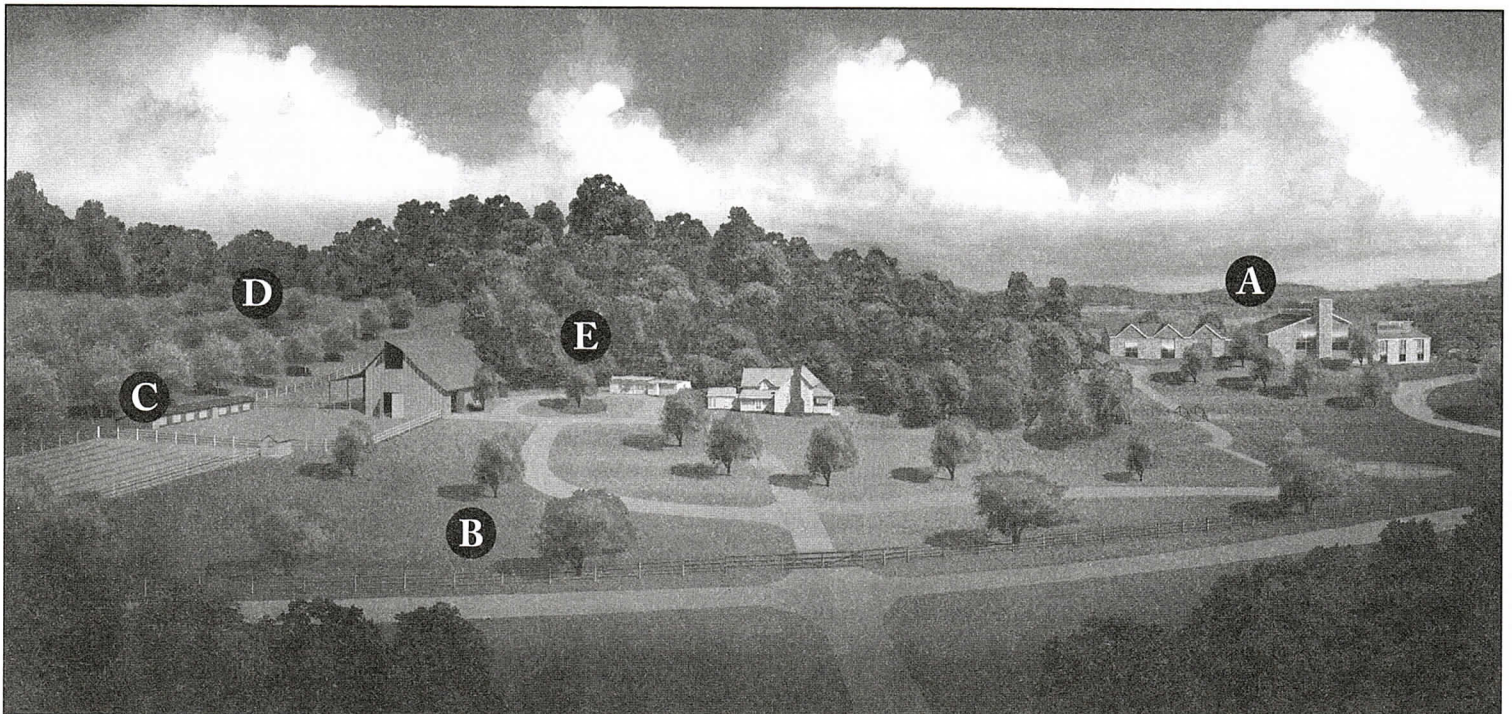
Membership entitles bearer to all benefits of annual membership, plus voting privileges in person or by proxy, at yearly association meetings.

PATRON \$1,000.00

Membership entitles bearer to all the above benefits, plus a brick with member's name to be placed outside the new museum.

BENEFACTOR \$5,000.00

Membership entitles bearer to all the above benefits plus, member's name to be placed on a permanent plaque inside the new museum.



MY RETURN TO LAURA WORLD

by Wendy McClure



The journey that led to my book *The Wilder Life* began a few summers ago when I re-read the Little House novels for the first time in — well, a *very* long time. I know many longtime fans of the series revisit the books every couple of years or so. In my case, though, it had been much longer: about 30 years.

Whenever I relate this fact I still wonder why it took me so long. There were a number of reasons, I suppose. For instance, the vision of the Dakota prairies that I'd come to love from the books was punctured during high school, when I was assigned the O.E. Rolvaag novel *Giants in the Earth*.

I read the whole thing in a single day in order to pass the next day's exam. I crammed nearly 600 pages of Norwegian Dakota settler chronicles of relentless hardship, locusts, and hypothermia. In the end I felt like I had cabin fever myself.

Years later, when I began working for a children's book publisher, I read everything with a critical editor's eye, which served me well at work but made me reluctant to return to books I loved as a child, like the Little House series. Thanks to my job I've read more historical fiction manuscripts than you can shake a stick at (or for that matter, a musket) and knew so many of the genre's conventions that I worried that I'd lost my ability to be enchanted by log cabins and trundle beds.

I was wrong, and I am grateful for that.

I finally picked up the Little House books again about a year after my mother's death from cancer. Since she'd been gone, my childhood felt distant and abstract. But re-reading the books made me feel like myself again, because their world returned to me so completely — all the details and landscapes that I still knew by heart.

I brought *On the Banks of Plum Creek* with me on a work trip, to the American Library Association summer conference in California. After long, grueling days walking the convention floor, surrounded by thousands of books, I'd go out into the sun and sit under the palm trees in Anaheim and read about a door in the earth and a cow named Spot. Disneyland, of all places, was within walking distance, but where I really wanted to be was western Minnesota.

Somehow, as a child I'd had no idea that you could go to the places where the Ingalls family had lived, and now the thought of visiting the woods and the prairies and the creeks I knew so well was hard to resist. Of course I also knew that stories like *Giants in the Earth* had happened in these places, which made them all the more compelling (and definitely *not* Disneyland).

I found myself telling everyone I knew that someday I'd visit all the homes where Laura Ingalls Wilder lived and write about it. Then a good friend suggested I write it sooner than "someday," and so I began to travel, write, and travel some more.

I thought at first that I would be most interested in finding out the history behind the Little House books — the *real* story of the Ingalls family, which as we know, often diverged from the narrative of the series. I came to understand where the facts left off and the fiction began. And while the history was always fascinating, I continued to look for signs of what I knew as "Laura World" — and often found them. This world lay on the other side of frozen Lake Pepin in early March; it appeared in the late afternoon shadows in South Dakota, and in a rain cloud that darkened the highway in Kansas. In between the glimpses, of course, was plenty of reality, even occasional disappointments (Silver Lake and the Big Woods aren't what they used to be). But these truths, I discovered, could coexist with the world of the books that I knew so well.

There's always been plenty of talk about the lessons the books impart, and they've been both praised and criticized for the "values" they supposedly represent. But I don't believe those things are the reasons why the books have endured. I think we identify with the character of Laura on a much more intuitive level. I spent a great deal of my childhood in this girl's head, and through her I became aware of my own subjectivity and my place in the vast world around me. The Little House books taught me how to observe the world: they showed me how life is made up of all these moments of looking.

NOTE: *The Wilder Life* by Wendy McClure is available at the Museum bookstore.

PRESERVATION OF PAPER & PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES IS ONGOING

In recent years the Wilder Home & Museum has carefully collected and conserved antique paper and historic photographic holdings found in the historic home. This allows for their preservation, and for easier viewing in museum exhibits.

Most of the vintage photos have been duplicated or enlarged for display on the museum's multiplex fixtures and display cases. Originals have been placed in acid-free folders and stored away so that no further deterioration will occur. When the Home was first opened, and later when the Museum was built, the originals were freely used. More informed preservation skills have been used since, taking those precious images away from light and other deteriorating factors. The Association makes a small yearly income by charging use fees for photos requested by book publishers and other educational entities requesting them.

Similar treatment has been given to clippings, magazine issues, and various history of the site which has accumulated through the years. These items are also kept in acid-free storage. Most recently, museum director Kathleen Forte noticed that the Charles and Caroline Ingalls 1860 wedding certificate was fading. An enhanced copy is now on display, giving the original a "rest" in safe storage. Other documents in the museum were given a similar treatment: Laura's teaching certificates and the 1894 travel letter clipping written by Laura on the way to Missouri.

The enlarged copies provide better legibility for visitors to the museum. The proposed new building project here on Rocky Ridge Farm will provide state-of-the-art storage for these many historical items.

This project is one of many of the "invisible infrastructure" needs, which, though not visible to visitors, are necessary to operate the Home & Museum for the friends of the Wilders who visit the site. The Association is grateful to all who assisted with this worthwhile project.

Finding Family History at Rocky Ridge

On October 13 the Wilder Home & Museum enjoyed a visit from David Watters and his daughter Lora. They were on a visit to experience Watters family history in Marshfield, MO, and included a side trip to re-visit the Wilder Home.

There is a strong Wilder/Watters connection. Dave's uncle, Ralph Watters, was editor of the *Mansfield Mirror* from the 1930s through the 1950s. He raised his family not far from the Wilder farmhouse. And one of his special friends was Laura Ingalls Wilder. Although there was a great age difference — Ralph was born in 1912 — he and "Mrs. Wilder," as he always called her, clicked. She was so well-read, versed in current events, and of course, involved in the publishing business ... that the two had much in common.

On her weekly visits to Mansfield, especially after Almanzo's death, one of Laura's stops was the *Mirror* office. Ralph understood her literary stature, and found her delightful company. He also visited her at home and gave her career and news great chunks of space in the local weekly.

When notable happenings such as awards or other recognitions were bestowed on "Mrs. Wilder," Ralph didn't let them go unnoticed. He arranged a celebration. His daughter Diana was one of the neighborhood children who visited Laura regularly during her years alone, especially during the summers.

Ralph was an expert photographer and took many of the fine photographs of Laura in her later years, such as the library dedication in Mansfield just sixty years ago this fall. His work has enriched many publications and shows us the sprightly and stylish lady who stepped into a public role when it was called for.

Dave says that his Uncle Ralph never boasted about his friendship with Laura. The topic came up once and he just said, "Oh yes, I knew her." When Dave heard this, "the hair on the back of my neck stood up," he said. His daughter Lora, a journalist and avid reader was also thrilled to hear of the connection.



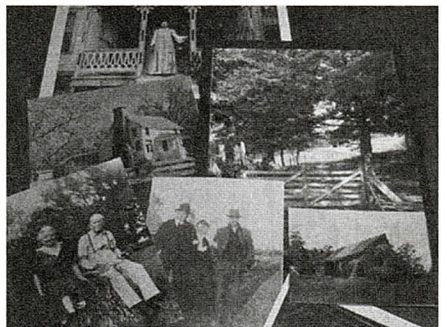
Dave Watters and daughter Lora examine photo of Laura Ingalls Wilder taken by "Uncle Ralph"



Michelle Martin, Historical Coordinator for the Little House on the Prairie Museum in Independence, Kansas and Mary Kurtis, granddaughter of the owners/founders of the site visited Rocky Ridge in October. They happened to be present when the original Ingalls marriage certificate was transferred to safe storage. They remarked that this document must have been in the cabin on the Kansas prairie circa 1870. Note the white gloves: these are used when handling historical objects. Mary's father is broadcaster Bill Kurtis; he and his sister Jean Schodorf now maintain the Kansas site.



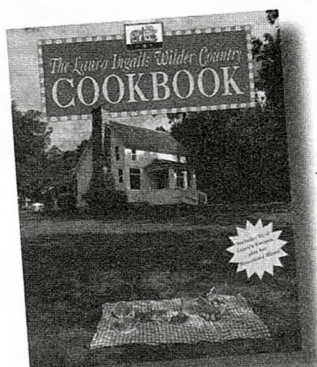
Numerous clippings about the Wilders, their home, the Little House books, and other paper ephemera is now kept in museum-quality file folders. The 1933 Harpers Magazine contains an article by Rose Wilder Lane. She was in good company; the issue also featured writing by Bernard DeVoto and Leon Trotsky, who discussed the menace of Hitler.



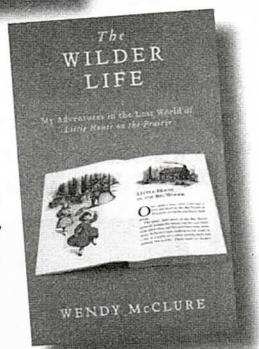
Rose Wilder Lane was amazed to discover the large array of photographs among her parents' belongings after their death. These represent a century of photography of the Ingalls-Wilder family, their activities and their associates. Our massive copying project is near complete; modern duplicates are displayed at the Home.

from the BOOKSTORE ...

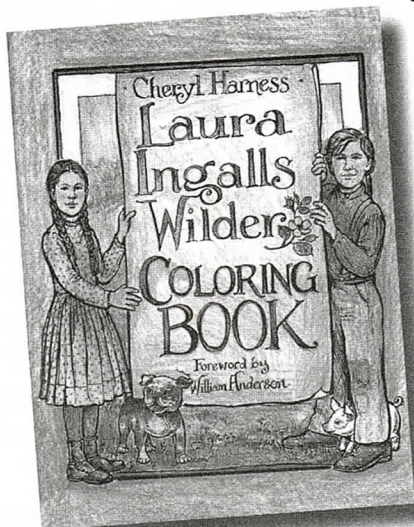
... featuring a full stock of Wilder books, souvenirs and collectibles. Visit our online store at www.lauraingallswilderhome.com or call toll-free to place an order: (877) 924-7126.



The Laura Ingalls Wilder Country Cookbook
(50 authentic recipes prepared by Laura)
\$17.95

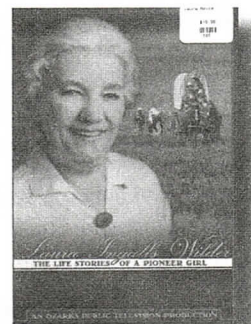
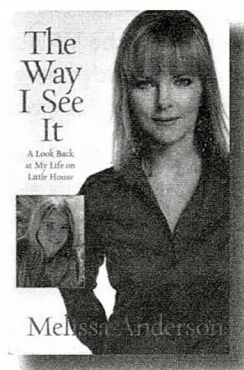


• **The Wilder Life**
Wendy McClure
\$25.95



• **Laura Ingalls Wilder Coloring Book**
Cheryl Harness \$6.95

• **The Way I See It**
Melissa Anderson
\$17.95



Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Life Story of a Pioneer Girl
(DVD) \$19.95

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