

The Real Laura Ingalls Wilder

A Timeline



Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura Ingalls Wilder's books have captivated young readers for decades. Laura said that she told her story, but left some things out. So where do the books cross the line from fact to fiction? Historians sometimes have trouble figuring this out. This timeline can help.

1867: Laura is born.

Her parents are Charles and Caroline Ingalls. She has an older sister named Mary. They live on a farm in Pepin County, Wisconsin, until Laura is two years old. Laura calls this home the "Little House in the Big Woods."



Laura's parents

1869—1871: The Ingalls family moves from one Little House to another.

Laura's family moves onto land that belongs to the Osage Indians in Kansas. The Ingallses are squatters. They live there unlawfully. This home is the setting for *Little House on the Prairie*. Laura's sister, Carrie, is born in 1870. The family returns to the Little House in the Big Woods in 1871.

1873–1875: The Ingalls family moves to Minnesota.

Laura's family buys a farm on the Banks of Plum Creek. Laura's younger brother is born in November of 1875. The family is forced to move when their crops are destroyed by a plague of grasshoppers.

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(left to right) Carrie,
Mary, and Laura

1876: The Ingalls family moves to Iowa in a covered wagon.

Laura's brother, only nine months old at the time, dies along the way.

1877: The Ingalls family returns to Walnut Grove, Minnesota.

They live in town for a short time. That year, Laura's sister Grace is born.

1879—1881: Mary becomes blind and the family moves again.

Laura's older sister, Mary, becomes blind after a serious illness. Soon after, Charles gets a job in the Dakota Territory and moves his family there. That summer, they stay in a house near Silver Lake.

The winter of 1881 is an exceptionally difficult one. The town is buried in snow. No one can get food, fuel, or supplies for months. Laura's family suffers from cold and hunger.



Laura and Almanzo

1883: Laura becomes a teacher.

Laura lives in town during the week. She gets a ride home each weekend with Almanzo Wilder. The two eventually fall in love.

1885: Laura marries Almanzo Wilder.

Laura is 18 years old at the time. Their daughter Rose is born one year later.

1888—1894: The Wilders struggle.

In 1888, Laura and Almanzo both get sick with diphtheria. The illness leaves Almanzo partially paralyzed. He never fully regains his strength and walks with a limp. In 1889, Laura and Almanzo have a baby boy. The baby tragically dies one month later. In 1890, they move to Minnesota and later to Florida. They return to the Dakota Territory in 1892.

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1894: The Wilders buy Rocky Ridge Farm in Missouri.

Laura and Almanzo live out the rest of their lives on this farm.

1930s–1940s: Laura writes the *Little House* books.

Laura's daughter, Rose, edits every book Laura writes. Rose makes changes to help the story sound more interesting. Now middle-aged, Rose is a writer and journalist who works for newspapers and magazines. She also writes a number of her own books. Almanzo dies in 1949.

1957: Laura Ingalls Wilder dies.

Laura dies on her farm in Mansfield, Missouri, at the age of 90.