

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 and they live on a farm in Pepin County, Wisconsin, until Laura is two years old. She has an older sister named Mary. Laura later calls this home the "Little House in the Big Woods."

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 and lives as squatters, which means they live there unlawfully. This home becomes the setting for *Little House on the Prairie*. Laura's sister, Carrie, is born in 1870 and the family returns to the Little House in the Big Woods in 1871.



Laura's parents

1873—1875: The Ingalls family moves to Minnesota.

Laura's family buys a farm and they live in the dugout house described in the book *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. Laura's younger brother is born in November of 1875. The following summer, the family is forced to move when a plague of grasshoppers destroy their crops.

The 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.

The family lives in town for a short time where Laura's sister Grace is born.

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(left to right) Carrie,
Mary, and Laura

1879—1881: Mary becomes blind and the family moves to the Dakota Territory.

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

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

1883: Laura becomes a teacher at age 15.

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



Laura and Almanzo

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, but 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 who tragically dies one month later. In 1890, the Wilders move first to Minnesota and then Florida. They return to South Dakota in 1892.

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 all of Laura's books, making changes to help the story sound more interesting. Now middle-aged, Rose is a writer and journalist who works for newspapers, magazines, and 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.

