



Laura Ingalls Wilder

Dakota Images

Laura Ingalls Wilder was born on 7 February 1867 in Pepin, Wisconsin. Her birthplace became the scene of *Little House in the Big Woods*. Laura's family moved to DeSmet, South Dakota, and, at the age of fifteen, Laura taught in rural schools around DeSmet. On 15 August 1885 she married Almanzo Wilder, as told about in *These Happy Golden Days*.

During their first years of marriage, Laura and Almanzo faced very hard times. Due to crop failure Almanzo lost his land. On 24 August 1888 their only son died. In 1891 they faced a fire that destroyed their home and a severe bout with diphtheria that left Almanzo partially paralysed. On 17 July 1894 the Wilders moved to Mansfield, Missouri, which was a welcoming sight after the Dakota Dust Bowl.

In 1932 Laura's only daughter, Rose Lane, asked her to write down some of the stories that she told about her childhood. Realizing the merit of her mother's stories, Mrs. Lane took them to Harper and Brothers, Publishers, and *Little House in the Big Woods* was published in 1932. It was an immediate success and was the runner-up for the Newberry Award that year. In all, there are seven books that tell the story of Laura's life from the ages of five to eighteen. *Farmer Boy* deals with Almanzo's boyhood on a large New York farm in the 1860s.

In 1943 the last "Little House" book, *These Happy Golden Years*, was published. Laura was seventy-six years old and wished to retire from writing. She won many awards, but the greatest honor was the establishment of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, given to any author who made a substantial contribution to children's literature. The beloved author passed away at her farm home on 10 February 1957, just three days after her nintieth birthday.

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