

# Laura's Little Houses

*A Guide to the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Sites*



The Notgrass Family

*Dedicated to the volunteers, associations, and businesses who maintain the historic sites associated with Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family.*

*Thank you are preserving history for all of us and promoting the values Laura cherished.*

*Laura's Little Houses*  
*A Guide to the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Sites*  
*by the Notgrass Family*

Design by Mary Evelyn McCurdy and John Notgrass

ISBN 978-1-60999-118-0

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Teaching the Heart, Soul, and Mind™

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**Join us on virtual field trips to learn more about the Ingalls and Wilder families and the places they lived: [NOTGRASS.COM/VIDEO](https://www.notgrass.com/video)**





For over twenty years, we have enjoyed exploring the places where the Ingalls and Wilder families lived. We have now made memories with four generations of our family. We are delighted to share these photos and stories with you, and we hope that you will be able to visit some of Laura's little houses very soon!

— Ray and Charlene Notgrass  
John Notgrass, Bethany Poore,  
Mary Evelyn McCurdy



# Introduction

Laura Ingalls Wilder lived in many different little houses in many different places during her long, fascinating life. Laura was a farmer's daughter and a farmer's wife. The Ingalls and Wilder families were pioneers, part of the westward migration that went by covered wagon to new places to build homes and create productive farms.

As an elderly woman living happily at Rocky Ridge Farm, Laura sat with pencil and five-cent lined school tablets and wrote the story of her childhood and early adulthood that we now treasure as the *Little House* books. The first, *Little House in the Big Woods*, was published in 1932. Young readers were hooked and begged for more.

My mother began reading the *Little House* books to my brother and sister and me when I was in the 4th or 5th grade. I remember the little group of us sitting around on the living room carpet full of enjoyment as she read. Most vividly, I remember laughing to split our sides at the antics of Almanzo and his siblings while their parents were out of town as told in the "Keeping House" chapter of *Farmer Boy*.

I love the *Little House* books. Since my family first read them aloud, I have read them myself again and again. The scenes and settings are so vivid, they are more like my own memories than things I read in books: making maple sugar at Grandpa's, Ma slapping a bear thinking it was a cow, Laura going alone into dangerously deep water, the infuriating Nellie Oleson, the heartbreaking implications of Mary's blindness, the death of Jack the good bulldog, the bumping of the wagon over the wild prairie, the passing flocks of birds, the howl of wolves, the blast of blizzards, and the beautiful, longing music of Pa's fiddle. For my family, they are more than books; they are guides to marriage and child-rearing, models of hard work and contentment, pictures of commitment and love of family.

Please give the children in your life the gift of *Little House* before childhood passes. Read them again or for the first time as an adult. Read them aloud to your children and to your grandchildren. Laugh together over slippery parlor furniture, a stray cat climbing up Laura's hoop skirt, and Ma saying "Charles!" while trying to hide a grin. Huddle together in the back kitchen through a blizzard, wait together anxiously for Pa to return from a trip to town, and work together to save for Mary's college tuition. Listen together to Pa playing his fiddle.

And if you love Laura, take your experience a step further and visit the places where her little houses stand or once stood. The grassy prairies, the murmuring creeks, and the vast skies she describes so beautifully in her books are real places—places that readers can visit to get to know Laura and her world better. Laura is so well-known and widely-loved that all of the places she lived have a marker of some sort, from a simple sign to a museum complex with multiple preserved structures.

Laura Ingalls Wilder gave us a gift to treasure—her family's story. Loyal "Laura fans" give us the gift of preserving her homeplaces. We, the recipients of these gifts, have much to be thankful for and so much wonder to anticipate.

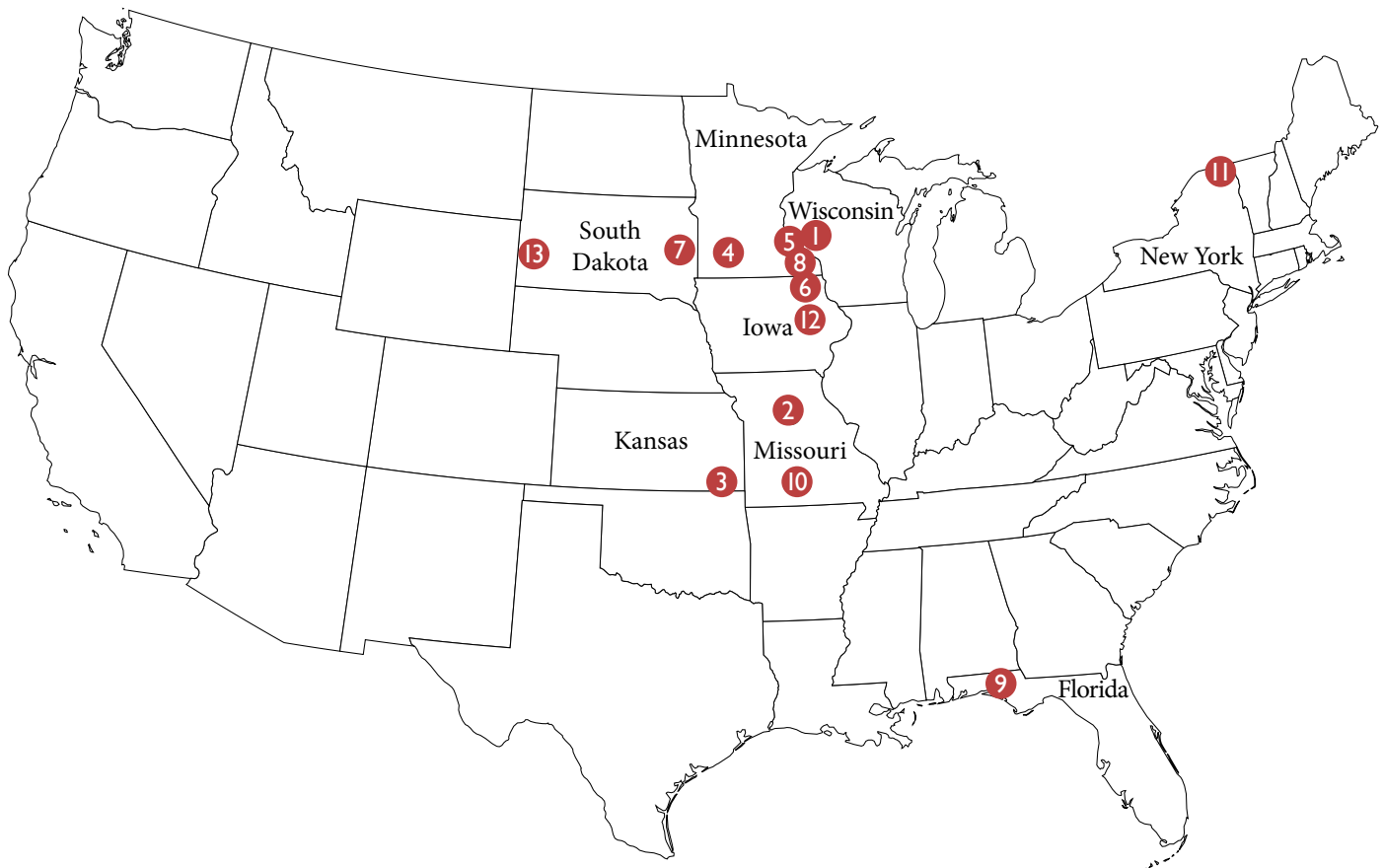
— Bethany Poore

# The Sites

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*Ray and Charlene as Pa and Ma at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum in Walnut Grove, Minnesota, 2016*



*Several of these sites are only open seasonally. Please call to confirm details before planning a trip!*

# Walnut Grove, Minnesota



## *On the Banks of Plum Creek / By the Shores of Silver Lake*

In 1874 the Ingalls set out to go west again, this time stopping near Walnut Grove, Minnesota, where they bought a farm and planned to raise a wheat crop.

In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura tells of her family's time in a dugout beside the creek and then in a beautiful home that Pa built on their farm. *By the Shores of Silver Lake* begins with the Ingalls living at Plum Creek. As the story unfolds, a new opportunity arises, and the Ingalls prepare to leave Walnut Grove.

## What You Can See and Do

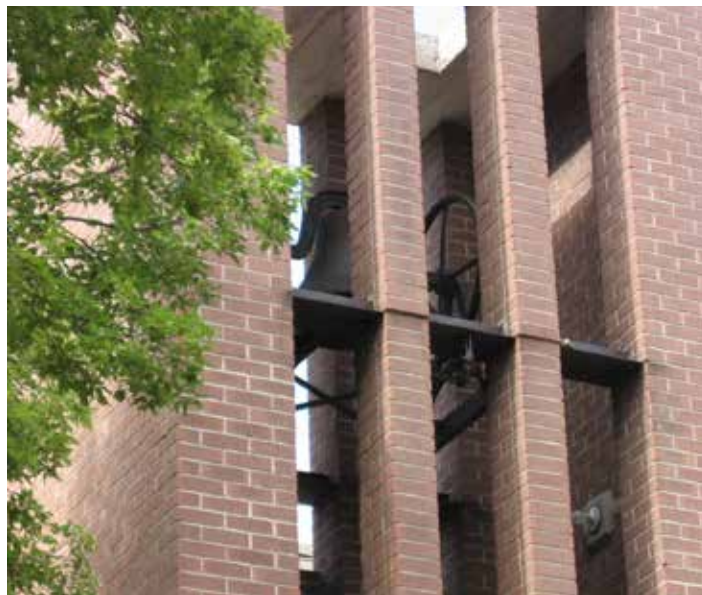
### Ingalls Dugout Site

The site of the Ingalls' dugout on the banks of Plum Creek is privately owned. It is open to visitors during part of the year. A depression in the ground where the dugout once stood is all that remains of the Ingalls' homestead. You can walk down to the creek and over a bridge that crosses it. Nearby are features such as plum thickets, table lands, big rock, and a spring that Laura described in her book. The site is located 1.5 miles north of Walnut Grove on Redwood County Highway 5.

[BestTrips.guide/wgdugout](http://BestTrips.guide/wgdugout)



*Plum Creek Near the Site of the Ingalls Dugout, 2006*



*Church Bell of the English Lutheran Church, 2006*

### Church Bell

In 1874 Pa Ingalls made a sacrificial contribution to the Union Congregational Church for the purchase of a church bell. In her book, Laura wrote that the amount of the contribution was \$3 and that Pa's donation kept him from buying a pair of boots he badly needed. The bell still rings today in the belfry of the English Lutheran Church at 450 Wiggins Street in Walnut Grove.



## Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum

This museum houses memorabilia related to the Ingalls family and also to the *Little House on the Prairie* television series made in the 1970s and 80s. The museum includes several different structures, including a train depot from 1898 and a replica of the dugout in which the Ingalls lived on Plum Creek.

330 8th St., Walnut Grove, Minnesota

800-528-7280 ♦ 507-859-2358

**BestTrips.guide/wgmuseum**



## Walnut Grove Family Festival

This festival is held on Saturdays in July in Walnut Grove City Park. It features demonstrations of historic arts and crafts, activities for children, dance performances, a Laura and Nellie Look-Alike Contest, and booths selling homemade wares.

**BestTrips.guide/wgfestival**

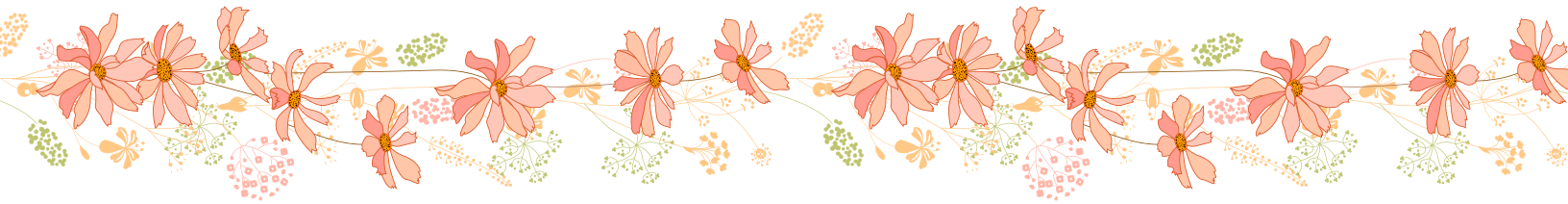


*Evelyn, Charlene's Mother, Beside a Covered Wagon at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, 2006*

## Wilder Pageant

This production is performed each year in July at a hillside amphitheater near Plum Creek. It tells the story of the Ingalls family in Walnut Grove during the 1870s.

**BestTrips.guide/wgpageant**



*Charlene and Her Mom on a Bridge over Plum Creek, 2006*

My sister Bethany and I enjoyed countless hours of our childhood playing imagination games together. Sometimes we were in a castle, sometimes we were in an orphanage, sometimes we were on the prairie. I know many of our pioneer imaginings originated from Laura's books. I am thankful that Laura's writings opened for us a very special window on what life was like at that time. I have enjoyed visiting the sites where Laura's stories really took place. When you have traveled on a covered wagon and lived in a dugout with Laura through her books, there is something very special about standing "on the banks of Plum Creek" yourself.

— Mary Evelyn

# Mansfield, Missouri



Rocky Ridge Farm near Mansfield, Missouri, is a testament to Almanzo and Laura Ingalls Wilder's pioneer spirit of determination and hard work. They moved there in 1894 and worked hard to make Rocky Ridge a successful farm. It is a beautiful piece of land with two lovely homes, one built by Almanzo and Laura, and the other built for them much later as a gift from their daughter Rose. Here Laura started her writing career as a columnist for a newspaper for farmers called *The Missouri Ruralist*. Settled in her happy home at Rocky Ridge, Laura wrote the books we know as the *Little House* series, telling the story of her special family and the American history they helped to make as brave pioneers settling the West. Almanzo died at Rocky Ridge Farm in 1949 at the age of 92, and Laura died there in 1957 at the age of 90.

## What You Can See and Do

### Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum

Visitors can tour Almanzo and Laura's Rocky Ridge farmhouse, which was completed in 1913, as well as the Rock House which Rose had built for her parents in 1928. The farmhouse appears as it did in 1957 when Laura passed away. A vegetable garden is maintained on the farm as a tribute to Laura's passion for gardening. The museum houses many keepsakes from the Ingalls and Wilder families, including Pa's fiddle, Laura's needlework, and tools Almanzo made. Original manuscripts of the *Little House* books are also on display.

3060 State Highway A, Mansfield, Missouri

877-924-7126

[BestTrips.guide/rockyridge](http://BestTrips.guide/rockyridge)



Ray and Charlene at  
Rocky Ridge Farmhouse, 2005



### Mansfield Town Square

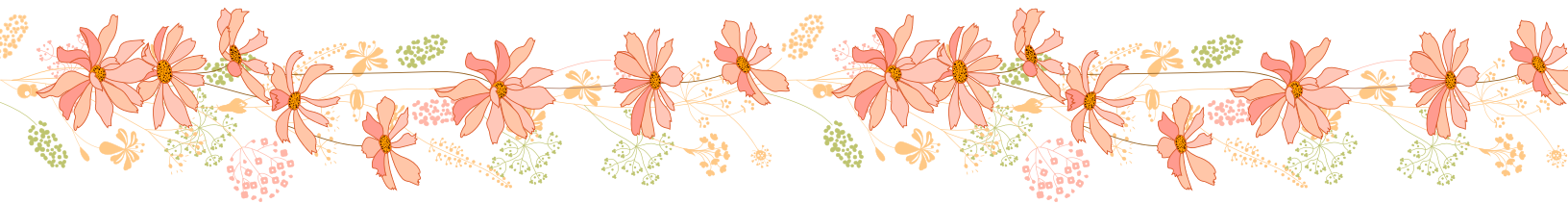
In downtown Mansfield stands a bust of Laura, a replica of the one that stands in the Hall of Famous Missourians in the Missouri State Capitol building in Jefferson City.

### Laura Ingalls Wilder Library

The local public library, located on U.S. 60 Business Route, is named after Laura and has a small display related to her life and books.

*Laura and Almanzo with neighbors at Rocky Ridge around 1920.*





### Mansfield Cemetery

Almanzo, Laura, and Rose are buried in this cemetery, located on Lincoln Street.

### Wilder Days

Held in September each year, Wilder Days feature music, vendors, and children's programs in Mansfield plus special events at Rocky Ridge Farm.

**BestTrips.guide/wilderdays**



*The Rock House, 2017*

### Laura's Memories

This musical drama based on Laura's life is presented each year in Mansfield.

**BestTrips.guide/memories**

### Christmas at Laura's

Christmas is celebrated in a special way each year at Rocky Ridge Farm. You can see Rocky Ridge decorated with vintage Christmas decorations, taste treats made from Laura's own recipes, and hear music played on Pa's fiddle.



*Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, 2017*

I read the *Little House* books when I was in elementary school. Many years later, after Charlene and I had read the books to our children, I enjoyed seeing the house that Laura and Almanzo built at Rocky Ridge Farm. One particular spot that I remember is the desk where Laura wrote her books. So that's how she did it, I thought, with a pencil and lined paper. I also enjoyed seeing Pa's fiddle—the real thing!—in the museum. Laura and Almanzo lived most of their adult lives on Rocky Ridge Farm, so going there filled out the picture for me of who they really were.

— Ray

If I could choose only one Laura Ingalls Wilder site to visit, it would be Rocky Ridge Farm. What I remember most is the quiet joy I felt as I stood in the front yard of the farmhouse Almanzo and Laura built themselves. This is the place to come to learn, gratefully, that their story of challenges and hardships had a happy ending. You stand in Laura's kitchen, in their parlor, take in the view of this beautiful piece of land and feel a contentment, knowing that they were happy there.

— Bethany