



Laura Ingalls Wilder LORE

Newsletter of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society

Summer Hours

JUNE–AUGUST

Monday–Saturday

9:00 am–5:30 pm

Sunday

Noon–5:30 pm

Winter Hours

SEPTEMBER–APRIL

Tuesday–Saturday

9:00 am–4:00 pm

MAY

Monday–Saturday

9:00 am–4:00 pm

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From the Executive Director's Desk

by Mary Jo Wertz

From Preservation to New Discoveries: An Exciting Year at the Society

Dear Friends of Laura,

There is so much to share in this edition of the Lore! First and foremost, thank you to David and Marilyn Meade, Suzanne Carmine, and the many friends whose donations help us preserve the places, artifacts, and stories entrusted to our care. We are also grateful for a Deadwood Grant that is helping support preservation work on the Ingalls Home this summer.

One of our major accomplishments this year has been the ongoing preservation of the **Ingalls Home**. In 2024, the Society received a prestigious Collections

Assessment for Preservation (CAP) grant, bringing professional assessors to our campus to evaluate our collections, archives, and historic structures.

Their recommendations helped us identify critical preservation needs, with the Ingalls Home emerging as one of our highest priorities.

Because the home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, every repair must meet strict historic preservation standards. Rather than replacing original materials, damaged siding is carefully restored through a painstaking process that preserves the historic fabric of the building—possibly even boards originally worked by Charles Ingalls himself. We are also repairing windows, protecting interior artifacts from sun damage,



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From the Executive Director *continued from page 1*

improving structural elements, and ensuring the home remains stable for generations to come. We extend our sincere thanks to Kirst Custom Craft for their exceptional craftsmanship and dedication to this important work.

Preserving history also means preserving the stories and artifacts that connect us to the Ingalls family. In November 2025, we received an extraordinary gift from Kris Blome: **several original Dunn and Dow family photographs and an original Harvey Dunn painting, *Farewell***, which once hung in the Ingalls Home and belonged to Grace Ingalls Dow.

The painting's journey home is remarkable. Harvey Dunn painted *Farewell* for his Aunt Grace, and it hung in the Ingalls Home for many years. During childhood visits with Grace, Kris's mother, Yvonne, admired the painting so much that Grace eventually gifted it to her. Decades later, after the passing of both her mother and husband, Kris chose to honor their wishes by returning the painting to De Smet and to the Society that preserves the home where it once hung.

To celebrate this historic homecoming, we hosted a special **Reveal Party** featuring an elegant afternoon tea and a fancy hat contest. Friends and supporters gathered to welcome the painting back to its rightful home, enjoying delicious refreshments from Kirst Confections & Café, wonderful fellowship, and the opportunity to view this remarkable piece of history. It was a joyful celebration of both the painting's return and the generous gift that made it possible.

Now that *Farewell* has returned to De Smet, our goal is to ensure that it is properly protected and preserved for future generations. We are raising funds to purchase a secure, museum-quality display case that will safeguard the painting from fading, accidental damage, and theft while allowing visitors to enjoy it for years to come. The cost of the display case is approximately \$1,000, and donations of any size are greatly appreciated. Your support will help us preserve this treasured artwork and make it accessible to all who visit the Ingalls Home and Museum.



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From the Executive Director *continued from page 2*

The exciting acquisitions did not stop there. In March, Don Atyia of Deadwood contacted us about **a collection of postcards he had discovered, all addressed to Carrie Ingalls Swanzey**. Several were written by family members, including Grace Ingalls Dow and Aunt Martha. We were thrilled to add these treasures to our archives. A selection of the postcards is now featured in our exhibit, **The First Families of De Smet: The Story Behind the Real People Who Shaped Laura's Little Town**, which will remain on display through the winter of 2027.

We have also been busy caring for other pieces of Ingalls history. Through the generosity of Carrie Aadland, we are working with John Ball of South Dakota State University to **protect and preserve Pa Ingalls' historic cottonwood trees**. Carrie also helped fund updated cemetery signage, making this important site more welcoming and informative for visitors.

Looking ahead, we have **several exciting events planned during Pageant weeks:**

Saturday, July 18, 2026, 10am to 4pm: The Story Behind *The Long Winter*

Join us at the First School for a unique opportunity to experience the story behind *The Long Winter*. This special program is included with our regular guided tours and features guest authors Cindy Wilson, author of *The Beautiful Snow* and *We Suffered Much*, and Barbara Boustead, author of *Wilder Weather*. Visitors will enjoy an enhanced schoolhouse experience that explores the history, research, and real-life events that inspired one of Laura Ingalls Wilder's most powerful books. Stand where Laura once attended school and gain a deeper understanding of the legendary winter that shaped her family and community.

Saturday, July 25, 2026, 10am to 4pm – A Day with Laura

Step back in time for A Day with Laura! Meet Laura Ingalls Wilder brought to life by acclaimed historical actress Jessica Michna and enjoy a full day of hands-on pioneer activities and demonstrations. Visitors can watch and learn traditional skills including barbed-wire twisting, soap making, paper making, wool spinning, and shoe making. We are also pleased to welcome special guests from the Sioux Falls Fiber Guild. It's a wonderful opportunity for families and history lovers of all ages to experience pioneer life firsthand.

Next year also marks the **160th anniversary of Laura Ingalls Wilder's birth!** We are already planning special birthday celebrations for February, so stay tuned for details in the coming months.

Meanwhile, we continue expanding our educational outreach. Thanks to a Teaching with Primary Sources Grant from the National Council for History Education and the Library of Congress, we partnered with 44i of Sioux Falls to create **two educational videos** that will enhance our school programs and field trips. We are excited to put these new resources to work for students.

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Harvey Dunn Painting: *Farewell*

by Snookie Stoddard

I've often wondered why we, as human beings, love a story. It doesn't matter if they're the stories that are the gossip of the local watering hole or the stories that free our minds to do and think incredible things. We love stories. It is with that thought in mind that I'd like to tell you a story that has just now wound its way to us.

Laura Ingalls Wilder is a native of our town of De Smet, South Dakota. She was here when the town was just a field of surveyor's flags surrounding the newly built railroad. Laura grew up here and then, as an adult, created some of the most enduring children's literature the world has seen. She set five of her nine books here in De Smet. These books were tales of the prairie and pioneer life. They were books about Laura growing up and becoming a woman, all the while surrounded by her loving family, including her sister Mary, who was blind, her sister Carrie, and her baby sister Grace.

Grace grew up in De Smet, got married in De Smet, and then settled down in a little town called Manchester, eight miles west of De Smet. Grace's husband Nathan Dow had a loving family too, including his sister Bersha. Bersha had married a man whose name was Dunn. They had a child whose name was Harvey.

This is where the story begins. Harvey Dunn became a world-famous artist, a painter and an illustrator. He painted with his emotions. You can tell by looking at Harvey's paintings just exactly the emotion he's trying to convey.

Grace Ingalls Dow was Harvey's aunt. He loved his aunt. She treated him like an adult and had a sweet funny streak to her. Harvey would often paint little things for her: watercolors of the corn in the field, sketches of clothes people were wearing. One day he painted her a beautiful miniature, titled 'Farewell.' It's a picture of an army officer who comes to tell his sweetheart "Goodbye" before he goes to battle. The painting is haunting in its ability to show us their love, their desperation at having to part, and the cold dread that they feel as death looks their way. Grace loved that painting and had it on the wall wherever she lived.

After Grace's mother died—"Ma", as Laura calls her in her stories—Grace and Nathan came to De Smet to live with her sister Mary who had become blind just months after her 14th birthday. One day, relatives of Nathan's came to call, a mother and a child. The child was ten years old and her name was Yvonne. A bright child who spoke with kindness, she was fascinated by Mary Ingalls and how she could walk anywhere as though she could see, and do things that seeing people do. She became wholly devoted to Mary. This charmed Grace because Mary was a shy person and didn't have close confidants. Yvonne brightened everyone's day, especially Mary.

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Dunn's Farewell continued from page 4

One day Yvonne looked at the miniature on the wall and said, "that's a very pretty picture." Grace, without hesitation, took the picture from the wall and gave it to Yvonne. The girl was shocked and pleased and promised to keep it with her forever.

Forever is a long time but for the lifetimes of we, earthly creatures, it doesn't go on long enough. When Yvonne was near her time, she told her daughter that the picture should go back to the place where the lives of the Ingalls are cherished.

And so, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society was given that privilege. And now we share with you the painting that took two lifetimes to be created.



From the Executive Director continued from page 3

We are grateful as well to NorthWestern Energy, whose employees volunteered their time during a **spring cleanup day** and provided a generous donation to support our mission. Their enthusiasm and community spirit made a tremendous difference.

Finally, we have been honored to share the Society's work with larger audiences through **interviews and features with PBS, the London Times, KELOLAND News, Dakota News Now, and others.** Every opportunity to tell the story of De Smet and the Ingalls family helps ensure these important pieces of American history continue to inspire new generations.

As you can see, it has been a busy and exciting year so far. From preservation projects and new acquisitions to educational programs and community partnerships, we are continually reminded that the work of preserving history is truly a shared effort. Thank you for being part of that journey. We look forward to seeing you in De Smet soon!

Mary Jo



What remains of Laura's De Smet? This is the second of a multipart article that will answer just that question.

Another original building, still standing on Calumet (Main Street) today is Florence Bell's Millinery Shop. Florence opened her shop in the fall of 1882 after purchasing Lot 9 on Block 4 of De Smet.

"Millinery and Fancy Goods. I shall keep constantly on hand the latest in Millinery and Fancy Goods. A complete assortment of Fichus, Scarfs and Collars, Spanish, French and plain Laces, and embroidery material. Ribbons of all kinds, Plushes, Velvets, and Satins. Ladies' Furnishing Goods, Ladies' and Children's Hoods. Cutting and Fitting, dressmaking and family sewing.

Florence E. Bell, Calumet Avenue, opposite Kingsbury County Bank"

De Smet Leader – 1/27/1883

The building, as seen in the early photo with the word MILLINERY across the top, has been in the same spot since October/November of 1882. Florence sold her shop in 1892. It has been a millinery, dentist office, jewelry shop, and a dry cleaner. It is currently an apartment building, with one unit on the second floor and one on the first. There may also be a third unit attached to the back; however, as that addition was added well past the Laura years, it is not part of the original structure.

While the original *look* of the building has been preserved for 144 years—making it the only building on Calumet that can be recognized instantly as one of the originals—at this point the only surviving part of the original building is the frame. In 2025 a small portion of what appeared to be the base frame was visible for a short time while the new sidewalks were installed. However, the original structure is no longer visible under all the renovations throughout the years.

Laura wrote about Florence and her shop in chapter 16, "Summer Days" in *These Happy Golden Years*. "Laura thought Miss Bell handsome, with her tall figure and dark hair and eyes." Laura also mentioned interest in becoming a milliner herself.

Even Almanzo had a connection to Florence. His sister Laura worked for Florence during a long visit to see her siblings (Almanzo, Royal, and Eliza Jane) one summer.

Florence came from Carmichaels, Pennsylvania, the same town as Banker Ruth and his brother William. As it turns out, many of the Bells and the Ruth family were married to each other. In De Smet, Florence's sister Amelia married Banker Ruth (Thomas) in 1895. Florence herself married into the Ruth family when she married Thomas's brother William in 1892.

Florence and William remained in De Smet until her death in January 1906. William brought her back to Carmichaels for burial in the family plot. William later left De Smet and remained in Carmichaels until his death in 1925.

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NOTE: There are no identified photos of Florence. During the investigation in 2025 the Carmichael's Historical Society was contacted, they provided dozens of photos of the Ruth family. While one of the society's members is a descendant of the Ruth family, they were unable to identify some of the family members. Contact with the Bell family was also made, though they too were unable to identify Florence in a picture. So, the question remains: "what did Florence look like?" If anyone can assist with this, it would be greatly appreciated.



Special Thanks to:

Nancy Cleveland for Bell and Ruth information.

Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society for historical photos of Calumet.



Book Review: *By the Shores of Silver Lake* by Josslyn O'Dea

Hi everyone, my name is Josslyn O'Dea and I am one of the many tour guides at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society. I have been working here for four years as a tour guide, and I have had so many great experiences.

What I enjoy most about being a tour guide is meeting people from all around the world coming to enjoy the Laura legacy together. We have been visited by people from places such as Germany, England, Colombia, China, Japan, Australia, and so many more. I love learning about different cultures from people around the world and how they came to be Laura fans.

A couple of weeks ago, we had a journalist from England come on the tour and write about our Society and what Laura's life was like out on the prairie. I had the privilege of taking the journalist on a tour and she absolutely loved it. I went through each of the buildings, teaching history of the Ingalls family and along the way I got to know the journalist and learn about what it's like living in England, and her travels before arriving in De Smet, South Dakota.

This year for our *Lore* newsletter I was assigned one of the books from the Little House book series to read, and then give my overall thoughts on the book. I was given *By the Shores of Silver Lake* which is the first book that takes place in De Smet.

In the beginning of the book, Laura and her family are still living in Walnut Grove, Minnesota. Ma, Mary, Carrie, and Grace had came down with a serious illness known as scarlet fever. Mary had scarlet fever the worst because it had settled in the nerves of her eyes, causing her to become blind at the age of fourteen.

Then Aunt Docia comes on her wagon offering Pa the job as the timekeeper and paymaster for the railroad into the Dakota Territory. Pa takes the job and leaves with Aunt Docia while Ma and the girls stay behind to continue their recovery and regain their strength so that they can join him to Dakota.

Eventually, Ma and the girls hop on a train for the first time and make their way to what became De Smet. Pa comes to get them, and their first stop is a railroad camp at the Big Sioux River, with workers for the railroad. This was not that far east of Silver Lake.

The Ingalls family stayed with Aunt Docia, Uncle Hi, and cousins Lena and Jean before leaving for Silver Lake. While riding in the wagon towards Silver Lake, Pa and Ma noticed two men on horses that were following them but then Pa noticed it was Big Jerry, a local Indian that Pa knew well.

Throughout the following chapters, the Ingalls family get to know the west more each day. Mr. and Mrs. Boast join the Ingalls family for Christmas. It was also Mrs. Boast who introduces them to the Whatnot Shelf, and tells Pa how to build one and shows the girls how to decorate it.

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By the Shores of Silver Lake continued from page 6

Pa is still looking for a homestead, thinking he has plenty of time, until Mr. Boast encourages him to hurry before it is all gone. Pa goes to Brookings to file on a piece of land he found nearby, and is almost too late but is helped by the beloved Mr. Edwards, making one of his late-series appearances.

Men were coming to build the town's main street, and some of these original buildings still stand today! Many of these men boarded with the Ingalls family, and Ma charged them 25 cents for a meal and 25 cents to sleep on the floor in the Surveyor's house. Sometimes there would be fifteen men sleeping on the floor every night. By the time the rush ended and Ma no longer had to host them, the family had accumulated a total of forty-two dollars and fifty cents, which Laura thought would be a nice amount to save for Mary's college.

Pa built and sold a building on Main Street, and another one across the street which he kept (and where the family would live during *The Long Winter*).

But it was on the Homestead that they would build their main home, a small shanty that Pa added on to as he could. This would remain their home throughout the rest of the books in the Little House series: portions of *The Long Winter*, *Little Town on the Prairie*, and *These Happy Golden Years*.



Overall, *By the Shores of Silver Lake* is a great read, and I really enjoy the descriptions that Laura gives throughout the book. I learned and read many interesting things that I didn't know that the Ingalls family went through and experienced while living by the shores of Silver Lake.

Throughout the 4 years that I have worked here, I have learned so many skills that I will use in the near future. I really enjoy getting to know new people from around the world and learning about how they discovered Laura and her books.

In summary, I really enjoyed reading *By the Shores of Silver Lake* and I can't wait for more tours to come. I hope to see you here and maybe I'll be your tour guide here at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society!



Book Review: *The First Four Years*

by Mandy Soren

Like most elementary-age children in the early 2000's, I was introduced to Laura in social studies during our South Dakota unit. I was fascinated. I remember checking out *Little House in the Big Woods* from our school library not long after being introduced to the Ingalls family by my third grade teacher, Mr. Surat. From there, I flew through the rest of the books. Growing up, I had only read eight of the nine, ending with *These Happy Golden Years*. It wasn't until high school that I was introduced to the last book in the series.

When I was a senior in high school, I had to write a paper on a famous historical figure and of course, I chose Laura Ingalls Wilder. I spent many late nights researching and taking notes. I wanted to know the real story, not the fictional tale she wrote for children. During my research, I discovered *The First Four Years*. I was a bit confused, since prior to this, I did not know about its existence. I read that the book was more mature than the others, it was a bit of a harder read, and the writing style was different. I will be honest, this made me not want to read it. And I didn't, until 2026.

I started working at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society in May of 2026. This was a dream job for me. The younger and newer tour guides were given a task for the month of June; you'll be assigned a book and you need to report what you learned to the director and write an article on it for the *Lore*. Being as I am the oldest of the newbies, I was given *The First Four Years*. I was a bit leery, but went into it with an open mind.

One night after work, I curled up with my favorite blanket and got to reading. It only took me an hour and a half to get through, but it was a tough hour and a half. My first thought, honestly, was poor Laura. There was so much hardship. From losing their crops, to their barn burning down, to their bout with Diphtheria, to Almanzo's stroke, the birth and death of their son, to their house burning to the ground. She went through so much, I cannot even begin to imagine how she felt. They had good times too, but it seems as though the bad out-weighed the good in those four years.

This story has a completely different feel than the other Little House books. *The First Four Years* is believed to have been written in the mid to late 1940's. It is also believed that after the death of Almanzo in 1949, Laura stopped writing and put the story away, never picking it back up. In 1969, a year after Rose Wilder's death, her publisher, Ursula Nordstrom, had received word from Roger MacBride that he had found a ninth manuscript that Laura had written. Nordstrom had received a typewritten manuscript from MacBride's secretary, but changes had been made from the original version that Laura had written. Several lines and paragraphs had been removed, and names had been changed for some of the characters. The book was published in 1971 and was sold as the final book in the Little House series.

In my opinion, the book should not have been published. I truly believe that if Laura, or even Rose, wanted it published, it would have been. I believe both women thought that *These Happy Golden Years* was the perfect ending to the series. If this book has taught me anything, it's that having a strong faith and good relationships will get you through anything.



A Visitor's Experience

by Kristen Hirsch

Serendipity brought me to eastern South Dakota last month: the ability to tag along on my daughter's work trip to Sioux Falls, and an inexpensive flight from Denver made this last-minute trip affordable. My biggest expense was a rental car, which was only necessary because I knew I wanted to take a quick trip to The Little Town on the Prairie. As a lifelong fan of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books, I could not pass up the chance to visit De Smet.

I stopped at the Ingalls' homestead on my way into town, pausing on the gravel road to allow two horse-drawn covered wagons to pass. The views were spectacular even as the skies darkened and a light rain began to fall. I didn't mind the weather; I just thought about how good the moisture would have been for the Ingalls' crops. Imagining myself in their world was my favorite aspect of this trip, and so easy to do, thanks to how well preserved the homestead, buildings, and artifacts associated with Laura are. There is so much to see and explore, even on a couple of chilly weekdays in April.

Wanting to warm up was a recurrent theme for me during my time in South Dakota, so I headed into town to the Hazel L. Meyer Memorial Library. The librarian was welcoming and I spent a long time looking at every item in the Ingalls memorabilia display just inside the door. Seeing Ma's beloved china shepherdess was a highlight. The library also introduced me to Harvey Dunn's paintings (on the walls) and I spent some time reading about him. Now I am a fan!

Researching my options for a place to lay my Ingalls-family-filled-head, I'd found two Bed and Breakfast options that sounded exactly like what I wanted: linked to the past but with modern comforts. Prairie House Manor had no rooms available, but Heritage House did, so I called Kim to book it on the spot. My overnight stay was steeped in history, with the stunning original tin ceiling and bank vault taking my breath away. I loved being on the corner of 2nd and Main (now Calumet), just steps from where the Ingalls family survived the Long Winter. Walking down the street, stopping to read all the plaques describing what businesses used to occupy the buildings and lots, it was easy to clearly picture scenes from Laura's books. I walked all over town and made plans for the next day.



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A Visitor's Experience continued from page 11

At the very top of my list was a visit to “Discover Laura” and see the original homes and schools (plural!) that the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society has so beautifully preserved and made accessible to the public. I’d walked the grounds and knew guided tours of the buildings were available. I’d also read the De Smet Visitors’ Guide that morning and had been struck by the story of how Mary Jo Wertz became the Director of the Society. I texted a picture of the blurb to my friends because I, too, would have been tempted to apply for that job and move to De Smet. I could relate to Mary Jo’s love of the town.

But first, I wanted to walk the first completed section of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Wilderness Trail. Starting just south of 4th St. near Lyle Ave., this quarter mile paved path leads down to the Big Slough and is just east of Silver Lake (more info: sdnewswatch.org/desmet-biking-hiking-trail-historic-south-dakota-highway-14). I found it absolutely magical. Tall slough grass blew in the wind just beyond the end of the trail. I held the stalks and imagined twisting the hay into sticks to heat a stove in the middle of a hard winter. Eventually, the trail may extend across the slough and continue to the Ingalls’ homestead, and perhaps even to Lake Henry. I spent so much time here in the bright sunshine and biting wind, envisioning that walk in both the present and the past, that I once again needed to warm up. So I made my way to the Gift Shop at 105 Olivet Ave.

That’s where I met Mary Jo Wertz, of De Smet Visitors’ Guide fame, and agreed to write this summary of my trip to town. Eric Fairchild, proprietor of the Prairie House Manor and LIW Memorial Society employee extraordinaire, took the photo of me and Mary Jo. He ALSO moved to De Smet not so long ago, from Denver, so we had a lot to talk about. I was unfortunately just a day too early to see the new exhibit about De Smet’s First Families, but I got to hear some of the juicy details and could not have been more intrigued. This is an exhibit that will blow you away the minute you step through the door and back into the past. The LIW Memorial Society definitely needs to BOAST about it (wink).

I had the most amazing time immersing myself in history for the duration of my visit, and heartily recommend that anyone who loves Laura do the same. If you have a little extra time, you can drive to Almanzo’s homestead parcel north of town (staked with a historical marker) and tree claim (a few original trees remain just south of the Wilder Field Airport).

For my final stop on my way out of town, I spent an hour at the lovely De Smet Cemetery, where so many of the people who lived with and loved Laura and her family have been laid to rest. While I was there, a school bus full of teenagers arrived and disgorged students carrying trash bags to spruce the site up! I was grateful to see this civic duty performed, although I hadn’t noticed any litter. Maybe having the same thought, I overheard one student ask another, “are we supposed to pick up sticks?” It’s a beautiful spot, filled with trees, so there were plenty of those! Definitely plan an outing here to honor the past, enjoy the views, and say goodbye to The Little Town on the Prairie.



Scenes from Kristen's Visit



Finding Your “Inner Laura”

by Anne Aamot

As a child I grew up eating “fried potatoes.” Typically, ours was served with any leftover roast meat that may have remained from a previous meal. My family would always cut the meat into tiny pieces and fry it together with the potatoes. Usually, potatoes are boiled before being fried but they can also be “raw-fried,” as Ma did them for the Boasts’ surprise Christmas visit at Silver Lake. If that is the case, they will need to be peeled and sliced as thin as possible and allowed more time to cook.

In *These Happy Golden Years*, we read of Mrs. Brewster and Laura cooking potatoes: “Slices of salt pork were frying, and Mrs. Brewster was slicing cold boiled potatoes into another frying pan on the stove. Johnny fussed in the bedroom, and Laura quickly pinned her braids, tied on her apron, and said, ‘Let me fix the potatoes while you dress him.’ So while Mrs. Brewster brought Johnny to the stove and made him ready for breakfast, Laura finished slicing the potatoes, and salted and peppered and covered them. Then she turned the slices of meat and set the table neatly.”

Fascination with the pioneering lifestyle and Laura Ingalls Wilder began early for me. As a young farm girl born in the late 1970’s, the Little House books and TV franchise was in full swing. I remember my mother reading a chapter out of the books every night before I went to bed, and I anxiously awaited the next exciting adventure and especially enjoyed the illustrations in each book.

As a high school student, we were required our junior year to write a term paper. Now, remember this was the age of typewriters or the very early beginning of computers. To cite everything without a backspace or delete button was quite a challenge! I remember quite well my topic of Laura Ingalls Wilder and how I enjoyed learning more about her and putting it on paper.

Fast forward several years (ok maybe a few decades), and as a middle aged farm wife and part-time museum worker, I see how my days can and sometimes do have a parallel with Laura and her lifestyle. Raising livestock is not for the faint of heart, especially sheep. Almanzo and Laura had a flock of Shropshire sheep while farming in Kingsbury County. I have a flock of sheep as well. I never raised sheep growing up and I can tell you the learning curve is tremendous. I enjoy the sheep and find them to provide a nice bump in income during off times of the year, the same as Laura and Almanzo did.

As a crop farmer I can empathize with the Wilders and their pursuit of homesteading. I also understand how things are out of your control as well. Tornadoes, grasshoppers, excessive rain, no rain—all things we cannot control—contribute to the success that can come or not come with farming/homesteading. We know that in the book *The First Four Years* the Wilders are doing their very best, but some circumstances they can’t control cause havoc in their farming operation.

And last but not least, the gritty lifestyle, yet carrying forth the hope and determination that tomorrow is another day. Knowing that times are tough but finding the silver lining in each cloud. May you find your “Inner Laura” and bring forth the positive to not only your lifestyle but to those around you.



Fried Apples 'n' Onions

Apples and onions....upon first hearing of this combination one may not find it very appetizing. But to Almanzo Wilder this was one of his favorite dishes. In the book *Farmer Boy* it says that “Almanzo ate four large helpings of apples ‘n’ onions fried together.” If you share Almanzo’s enthusiasm for different foods, you might like to try fried apples ‘n’ onions.

Ingredients (For 6 servings)

- Bacon or salt pork, 1/2 pound, sliced
- Yellow onions, 6 (2 pounds)
- Tart apples, 6 (2 pounds)
- Brown Sugar, 2 tablespoons

Utensils needed:

- 12-inch skillet with cover
- Apple corer

Directions

1. Fry bacon or salt pork slices in the skillet until brown and crisp. Set them aside on a warm serving platter.
2. While the meat is frying, peel the onions, leaving the stems to hold for slicing. To prevent eyes from watering hold a slice of bread in your teeth while you slice onions as thin as possible. Discard stems.
3. Core the apples and cut them crosswise in circles about 1½ inch thick. Apple skins help the slices keep their shape and add color to the dish, so don’t peel unless skins are tough or scarred.
4. Drain all but 1 tablespoon of fat from the skillet, then add the onion slices. Cook them over medium-high heat for about 3 minutes.
5. Cover with apple slices in an even layer. Sprinkle brown sugar overall, cover the skillet, and cook until tender, for a few minutes more.
6. Stir only to prevent scorching. Remove to the warm plate with bacon or salt pork slices.

Fried Potatoes

Ingredients (For 6 servings)

- 10 medium potatoes
- Salt and Pepper
- 3 Tablespoons drippings (Salt pork, bacon, oil, etc.)

Utensils needed:

- 2-quart saucepan
- 42-inch skillet with cover
- Paring knife

Directions

1. The potatoes can be cooked the day that they are to be fried or they can be cooked the night before and refrigerated before using.
2. Heat the skillet using the drippings available to you. Cut the potatoes into pieces, season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook approximately 8 minutes or until golden brown. Make sure to stir to get an even brownness on the potatoes.



Exciting News! The *Lore* is Going Digital!

We at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society are looking at ways to save money while continuing to excel at our mission to preserve the heritage of Laura Ingalls Wilder and her time here in De Smet.

One way to do that is to minimize the ever-increasing costs of printing and postage. Therefore, the *Lore* is going digital!

(And not to worry if you prefer to receive the print version. Simply let us know, and we'll mark your record so that you receive a printed copy).

To ensure that you continue to receive future editions, **send your email address to info@discoverlaura.org and stay up-to-date with the latest news and updates. Please also provide your name and address so that we can match your digital request to your record and remove you from the print list.** Thank you!



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