

IDAHO STATE LIBRARY



3 9373 00452198 1



**WESTERN
WRITERS SERIES**

No. 112

LAURA INGALLS WILDER

by Fred Erisman



ID DOCS
Z2350.25
No. 112
c.2

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOISE, IDAHO



Boise State University Western Writers Series Number 112

Laura Ingalls Wilder

By Fred Erisman

Texas Christian University

Editor: James H. Maguire

Business Manager:

James E. Hadden

Cover Design and Illustration
by Arny Skov, Copyright 1994

Boise State University, Boise, Idaho

STATE DOCUMENTS
IDAHO STATE LIBRARY
325 W. STATE ST.
BOISE, IDAHO 83702

Copyright 1994
by the
Boise State University Western Writers Series

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Library of Congress Card No. 94-70448

International Standard Book No. 0-88430-111-7

Printed in the United States of America by
Boise State University Printing and Graphic Services
Boise, Idaho

Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura Ingalls Wilder

A fluke of geography makes ours a westward-moving culture. Explorers and European settlers, the Atlantic at their backs, necessarily moved westward in their endeavors, and the pattern was begun. Succeeding eras saw new populations, the Gold Rush, and the Homestead Act, steadily pushing the line of settlement westward, until movement to the west became intimately associated in the public mind with the course of "progress" and the advancement of the nation. From this association come two of the most evocative of American cultural myths, those shared stories in a society's history that provide "a symbolizing function that is central to the cultural functioning of the society that produces them . . . [and contain] all of the essential elements of our world view" (Slotkin 16). They are the beliefs that bind us together as a culture and that color our view of ourselves, our society, and our nation.

One is the myth of the frontier itself—the belief that the line separating civilization and wilderness offers an opportunity for independence and self-determination unique in human history. With that independence, however, comes change. The "stubborn American environment" compels the individual to adapt old habits to local needs, and from the adaptation come qualities—among them energy, practicality, ingenuity, and individualism—that distinguish the "American" character (Turner 38). The other is the myth of "growing up with the country," the linking of personal and national maturity. The West, says the myth, offers the people and

the society a chance to grow in tandem, leading both to maturity, community, and civilization. It is a compelling belief and makes the myth a powerful complement to that of the frontier. The two together make up principal elements of a still larger myth, the American Dream of personal success, and it is the rare American writer, Eastern or Western, who is immune to the impressive power of their appeal.

The durable vitality of the myth is nowhere better demonstrated than in the writings of Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867-1957). As author and as icon, Wilder has been kept in the public awareness in the decades following her death by six posthumous collections of her writings, a popular television series (1974-1983) loosely based upon her children's books, and a busy industry producing association items (e.g., a song book, a cook book) to capitalize upon her image. Her lasting reputation, however, rests upon the eight volumes of the "Little House" books published during her lifetime. Drawing upon her childhood and adolescence along the American frontier in the years just prior to its closing in 1890, she creates for young readers an interpretation of the mythic West that stands as a unique part of American literary history. At the personal level, the "Little House" books record a young girl's growing to maturity and responsibility. At the social level, they document the transmission of community values and cultural awareness to the newly settled American West. And, at the mythic level, they memorably dramatize the motifs of westering and "growing up with the country," becoming at last for twentieth-century readers a moving invocation of the powerful allure of the American frontier.

Laura Elizabeth Ingalls was born on 7 February 1867 in Pepin County, Wisconsin, the second of four daughters of Charles Philip and Caroline Quiner Ingalls. A fifth Ingalls child, a son, died in infancy in 1876. Her parents, a farmer-settler from New York and a schoolteacher from Wisconsin, gave her most of her early educa-

tion, combining the three R's with lessons in home-making and frontier skills. With them she traveled, between 1868 and 1875, to Missouri, then to the Indian Territory in what is now Kansas, back to Wisconsin, and on to Walnut Grove, Minnesota, where the family stayed, with a brief interlude in Burr Oak, Iowa, for five years. Illness and financial problems led them to move, in 1879, to De Smet, Dakota Territory, where they were among the first settlers.

The De Smet years gave the adolescent Laura a degree of stability and preparation for her future. Her schooling, intermittent at best, ended in 1882 when she won a teaching certificate and began a three-year stint of teaching in territorial schools. In 1885, she married Almanzo James Wilder, a homesteader from Malone, New York, giving up her teaching career and beginning a life as frontier homemaker. Almost immediately, however, the Wilders encountered problems. A succession of bad crops; the birth of a daughter, Rose, in 1886; Almanzo's suffering a debilitating stroke in 1888; the birth and death in 1889 of a son; and a fire that destroyed their home—all these difficulties left them in precarious financial condition.

Discouraged by these setbacks, the Wilders left De Smet in 1890, dwelling briefly in Minnesota, then moving on to Florida. Unable to earn a living in either place, they returned to De Smet in 1892, remaining until 1894, when they made their final move, to Mansfield, Missouri. The move was a prudent one and brought, at last, a measure of security. It also brought a reshaping of the family. Sales of produce and the eggs her chickens produced made Laura Almanzo's equal as breadwinner, and she gradually became the moving spirit of the household. Her interest in poultry led her to work with local farm organizations and she acquired a developing reputation as a speaker on farm topics (Spaeth, *Laura Ingalls Wilder* 6).

From speaking on farm matters to writing about them was a small step, which she took in 1911, publishing an article in the *Missouri Ruralist*. In 1912 she became a regular columnist and Home Editor for the *Ruralist*, a position she held until 1923, and she went on to contribute articles to *McCall's*, *Country Gentleman*, the *State Farmer*, the *St. Louis Star*, and other publications. She began work on an autobiographical novel, *Pioneer Girl*, but made little progress until her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, herself a developing journalist and writer, undertook an extensive revision of the manuscript and negotiations with several publishers. The revised manuscript was published in 1932 as *Little House in the Big Woods*, and the "Little House" series was under way (Anderson, "Literary Apprenticeship" 320-31).

The immediate success of *Little House in the Big Woods* encouraged Wilder, with Lane's continuing help, to extend her fictionalized autobiography. Except for *Farmer Boy* (1933), which tells of Almanzo's boyhood in New York State, each of the books that follow grows out of events in the Ingalls family's life; although the stories cannot be taken literally as autobiography, they build upon real-life events and persons to present a portrait of frontier life that is "true" in essence if not in fact. The reception of the series was consistently favorable, and five of the books in succession, beginning with *On the Banks of Plum Creek* (1937), were designated as Newbery Honor Books.

Other recognition was not long in coming. *The Long Winter* (1940) became a part of the rebuilding of the post-World-War-II world, being translated into German and Japanese for distribution abroad (Fellman 557n). All eight of the "Little House" books were reissued in 1953 in a uniform edition with illustrations by Garth Williams, and *The Horn Book Magazine*, one of the earliest journals of children's literature criticism, devoted its entire December 1953 issue to appreciations of Wilder and the series. In 1954, the

American Library Association established the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award to honor an author's lifetime contribution to children's literature, bestowing the first award upon Wilder herself. She died at her home in Mansfield, Missouri, on 10 February 1957, with one final book, *The First Four Years*, left incomplete.

Interest in her works, always steady, increased in the years following her death, prompting the publication of several volumes of her journalism and incidental writings. These books add little to her literary stature; on the other hand, they supply helpful biographical insights, particularly with respect to her life after leaving De Smet, and they show Wilder honing her skills as a homespun journalist writing for a predominantly rural audience. The first volume to appear, *On the Way Home* (1962), reprints the diary she kept as she and Almanzo made their way, by horse-drawn wagon, from Dakota Territory to Missouri in 1894. Never intended for publication, the diary offers a highly personal picture of Midwest life in the late nineteenth century.

Next was *The First Four Years* (1971), the unfinished story of the early years of Laura's marriage to Almanzo and the troubles that befell them. Presented as a continuation of the "Little House" books by the publisher, the book in its unrevised state lacks the artistry of the other stories and is of more historical than literary interest, though it reaffirms Wilder's enduring belief in the frontier myth. *West from Home* (1974), published three years later, collects letters Wilder wrote to Almanzo during a 1915 visit to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco; its principal value is its record of a time and place now long past.

The most useful of the volumes are two collections of journalism: *A Little House Sampler* (1988) and *Little House in the Ozarks* (1991). The first reprints a mixture of talks, reminiscences, journalism, and fiction by Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane, providing an introduction to the lives and relationship of both women and re-

trieving some ephemeral and previously unpublished material. The second offers a varied and uncritical selection of excerpts from Wilder's writings for *McCall's*, *Youth's Companion*, the *Ruralist*, and other publications between 1911 and 1925. Both works give a good sense of her style and outlook, and illustrate her developing ability to incorporate her experiences into her writing.

Her other writings notwithstanding, Wilder's final reputation derives wholly from the "Little House" series. Although the books are, in the last analysis, collaborative works, the product of Wilder and Lane working together in the tradition of other composite authors such as Ellery Queen, they nonetheless constitute a notable evocation of the frontier experience (Anderson, "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane"; Holtz, *Ghost in the Little House*). Wilder, in her sixties when she begins writing, draws upon memories of her childhood and youth to present a personal history of her own growing up with the West. Lane, for her part, combines a journalist's political sophistication with the dual perspective of an adult's looking backward to introduce a social and cultural complexity that few other juvenile works possess.

That dual perspective leads the books to fall readily into three categories. The first, the books of origins, includes *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932) and *Farmer Boy* (1933). In these Wilder introduces her cast: Laura, Pa, Ma, and Mary Ingalls, Almanzo Wilder, his parents, brother Royal, and sisters; she establishes the principal themes of the later books; and she communicates to her readers her own abiding sense of the continuity of life in the United States. As befits the opening book of the series, *Little House in the Big Woods* is a simply told account of slightly more than a year (1872, more or less) in the life of the Ingalls family—Pa, Ma, Mary, four-year-old Laura, and baby Carrie.

The family lives in a one-room cabin in the Big Woods of Wisconsin, where "there were miles upon miles of trees, and only a

few little log houses scattered far apart in the edge of the Big Woods" (2). Isolated and surrounded by nature, they make life for themselves, and the book is a record of the organicism of frontier life. Yet, as the story makes clear, that life is more than mere existence, and the personal qualities that enhance the family's activities are as important as the survival skills they employ. The book opens in late fall, with life dominated by preparations for the winter to come. Pa hunts daily, and Ma smokes or salts the meat he brings home. They slaughter a pig and Ma makes ham and sausage; they make butter and gather vegetables.

With the winter comes still greater isolation, as snow surrounds them and the bitter cold keeps the children indoors. Life goes on: Pa tends the stock, runs his traplines, and tells stories in the evenings. Relatives trek in for a Christmas celebration, but the confinement weighs heavy on Laura, and even her birthday does little to break the monotony. Spring brings relief. Pa takes his furs to the settlement of Pepin, a day-long round trip on foot, and the start of the sap run lets the family and the Ingalls kin gather for sugaring-off and a festive family dance. Warm temperatures and longer days mean the start of plowing, and, crops in, the whole family accompanies Pa to Pepin for supplies. Family visits interrupt the solitude, the girls frolic out of doors, and Pa tends his crops. Spring slides into summer, summer into fall, and the cycle starts again. Ma gathers and stores their vegetables, Pa harvests the fields and chinks the house against the cold, and the family, secure and self-sustaining, readies itself once more for the winter ahead.

Simple though the book's tone and organization are, they allow Wilder to introduce a number of noteworthy elements. One is the exceptional integration of frontier life. Each member of the family, even the children, has an explicitly defined role, and their common well-being depends upon each person's carrying out that role. Pa

tends to the external matters of farming, hunting, and building. Ma deals with the internal economy, seeing to food and the household. The girls follow both parents, and if they learn traditionally domestic roles as they help Ma with cooking and housekeeping, they gain from Pa their share of other frontier skills. They help him, for example, with trap-greasing, bullet-making, and the evening routine of cleaning and reloading his rifle, absorbing the knowledge that one does "not want to meet trouble with an empty gun" (52).

A second notable element is the process of establishing and maintaining social cohesion. Some of their practices are personal. Laura and Mary look forward, at slaughtering time, to playing with an inflated pig's bladder and snacking on the pig's tail frizzled over the fire (14-16). Others are family, such as Pa's game of "mad dog" and the stories of his and his father's boyhood, which quietly reinforce the continuity of family history and family life as they implant the ideas of duty and responsibility (35-36, 53-58, 87-96). Still others are social, and instill the qualities that bind persons into societies. Whether in the melodies Pa plays on his fiddle (e.g., "Yankee Doodle," "Buffalo Gals," or "Oh, Susanna") or in the scattered occasions of socializing that punctuate the cycle of life—the Christmas get-together, the sugaring-off dance—they communicate not only the larger kinship outside the immediate confines of the family cluster, but also the social continuity and regularity that it supports. Isolated the Ingallses may be, but insular they are not: Laura takes away from the rituals of her childhood the knowledge that she is part of a society that extends beyond her own immediate surroundings and carries its own set of necessary skills and obligations.

The book's most important element, however, is its emphasis upon the qualities of the American frontier—its magnitude, its emptiness, and its demands. The opening pages set the scene: "As

far as a man could go to the north in a day, or a week, or a whole month, there was nothing but woods. There were no houses. There were no roads. There were no people" (1). There is only the land, the animals, and the occasional settler, the quintessential frontier environment lying ready for the pioneer. Within that environment is the wild life that co-exists with the settlers: bears steal a pig and later turn up in the Ingalls cowpen, Laura's aunt has a close call with a panther, and a cousin almost dies when he falls into a nest of wasps (25-26, 67-72, 103-07, 205-09). There is the demanding climate of the upper Midwest, fluctuating from the mild sunshine of summer to the subzero temperatures of winter that impose days, even weeks of cabin-bound life. And there are the distances that must be dealt with; when Pa takes his furs to town, he accepts "that by starting before sun-up and walking very fast all day he could get home again before dark" (102). Wilder's frontier is no Eden, and the obstacles it puts in the settler's path are formidable.

The frontier has, nevertheless, its compensations, and the person who accepts its realities finds rewards to balance the hazards. The immense land is a place of plenty, where the capable settler can find abundance. The forest provides wood, meat, maple sugar, and honey. The fertile land, cleared and cultivated, yields corn, oats, turnips, pumpkins, potatoes, and carrots. All is available for the well-being of those like Pa and Ma, whose determination and skills equip them to confront the American environment on its own terms. Those who lack appropriate skills or who ignore their responsibilities must bear the consequences, as an early incident makes clear: "Pa had told them never to touch a new bullet. If they burned their fingers, that was their own fault" (46). Those who possess the requisite skills and live up to their responsibilities, however, as do the Ingallses, will find in frontier life security and fulfillment. Surrounded by the yield of man and nature work-

ing in harmony, all is secure, all is safe: "Often the wind howled outside with a cold and lonesome sound. But in the attic Laura and Mary played house with the squashes and the pumpkins, and everything was snug and cosy" (20). Life on the American frontier, as seen through Laura's eyes, is all that a person might ask.

Whereas *Little House in the Big Woods* portrays family life on the frontier, *Farmer Boy* examines family life in a settled community. Based on the boyhood of Almanzo Wilder, it relates the Wilder family's activities on their prosperous farm near Malone, New York, in the late 1860s. Theirs is an established existence, governed in great part, like that of the Ingallses, by the cycle of nature, but subject also to social and economic cycles that shape the patterns of life. As a farmer, Father Wilder must of necessity pay heed to the climate and the seasons, but as a *commercial* farmer and stock-raiser, he must be just as aware of the marketplace, and dickering with buyers and competing in the county fair are as crucial to the family's well-being as tending the crops.

Almanzo, youngest of the four Wilder children, accepts this life as a matter of course. The book opens in January, and while he goes to school during the day, he does his share of the milking, helps store ice cut from a nearby lake, breaks a pair of ox calves to the yoke, and sorts potatoes for buyers from New York. Spring brings plowing and planting, and the family sets out fields of potatoes, wheat, rye, oats, corn, and carrots. It brings outside contacts, as well; first the tin-peddler, with his stock of pots, pans, and news, then the horse-buyer, who pays Father Wilder four hundred dollars for a pair of Morgan four-year-olds, later the shoemaker, with his tools and specialized skills.

With summer come other tasks: sheep-shearing, weeding the fields, and berry-gathering. Occasional rainy days make time for Almanzo and his father to go fishing, and everything comes to a halt for the community Independence Day celebration in nearby

Malone. Early harvest marks summer's end: the male Wilders cut hay, the girls gather beans, and Mother Wilder sells five hundred pounds of butter for fifty cents a pound. Autumn brings the late harvest—corn, apples, and root vegetables—the family garners four ribbons at the county fair, and through it all, Almanzo moves, watching, thinking, and growing. In the final chapters, the local wheelwright proposes that Almanzo be apprenticed to him, and the family is divided. Father Wilder acknowledges the ease of town life and the money that a successful business generates, but Mother Wilder is outraged, seeing business life as a demeaning surrender of independence. They consult Almanzo, who makes his choice. Whatever the merits of other occupations, the life he knows is the life he loves. A farmer is what he wants to be.

In the course of *Farmer Boy*, Wilder establishes elements that complement those of *Little House in the Big Woods*. One, obviously, is her presenting the farmer as the counterpart in society of the self-sufficient frontiersman. Wanting Almanzo to make up his own mind about the apprenticeship, Father Wilder bluntly explains all that merchants and craftsmen enjoy, then states the case for the farmer:

There's the other side, too, Almanzo. You'd have to depend on other folks, son, in town. Everything you got, you'd get from other folks.

A farmer depends on himself, and the land and the weather. If you're a farmer, you raise what you eat, you raise what you wear, and you keep warm with wood out of your own timber. You work hard, but you work as you please, and no man can tell you to go or come. You'll be free and independent, son, on a farm. (370-71)

It is a forthright statement of the tension between the yeoman farmer and the business entrepreneur, and its reliance upon the power of the myth is undeniable.

Wilder, however, subtly modifies the traditional picture of the farmer, implying that the myth is less simplistic than it seems. Free-standing the farmer may be in person, but farming is inseparable from the society. It is, in fact, very much a part of a well-organized, smoothly operating economic world. The very affluence of the Wilders accentuates this point. Farmers they are, but they *sell* their horses, hay, potatoes, and butter, and the community considers Father Wilder "an important man. He had a good farm . . . and every year he put money in the bank" (22). Here is a fact of farm life that the myth ignores: even the independent farmer has become tied to money. The point becomes explicit during the Fourth of July celebration, when Father Wilder turns a request for lemonade money into a lesson in the labor theory of value. He takes Almanzo, step by step, through the process of planting and harvesting potatoes, drudgery the boy knows well, then, handing his son fifty cents, says: "That's what's in this half-dollar, Almanzo. The work that raised half a bushel of potatoes is in it" (184). Work, farming, and money are one.

In her melding of a Fourth of July celebration and a lecture on economics, Wilder explicitly links the farmer to the development of the American nation *and its economy*. Frontiersmen play a part, to be sure, in opening the land, but the farmer balances the equation and makes the functioning society possible. Watching the Fourth of July festivities, Father Wilder remarks that though "it was muskets that won the Revolution . . . , it was axes and plows that made this country." Almanzo, puzzled, asks for a gloss, and his father explains, in words that might have been written by Frederick Jackson Turner:

We were farmers, son; we wanted the land. It was farmers that went over the mountains, and cleared the land, and settled it, and farmed it, and hung on to their farms. . . .

This country goes three thousand miles west, now. It goes

'way out beyond Kansas, and beyond the Great American Desert, over mountains bigger than these mountains, and down to the Pacific Ocean. It's the biggest country in the world, and it was farmers who took all that country and made it America. (188-89)

Those words echo through the remainder of the book and underscore Almanzo's decision at book's end. And with that decision, Wilder completes her statement of origins. At the most literal level, she introduces her protagonists: the young Laura and Almanzo, who are to grow up with the country. At a higher level, however, she establishes the mythic components of the story to follow. On the one hand stands the family of the frontier, energetic, resourceful, self-sufficient, and westward-looking. On the other is the family of the farmer, equally resourceful and independent-minded, but nationally conscious, commercially aware, and a necessary part of an established society. They prepare the way for the conflicts of moving on versus settlement, of independence versus interdependence, and together constitute the dialectic from which emerges the American synthesis.

The second category of "Little House" books, the books of movement and transition, comprises *Little House on the Prairie* (1935), *On the Banks of Plum Creek* (1937), *By the Shores of Silver Lake* (1939), and *The Long Winter* (1940). Here the spirit of westering appears in overt form, as the Ingallses leave Wisconsin and work their way westward, arriving at last in De Smet and a permanent homestead. As a group, the books memorably capture the magnetic draw of the West and its open spaces. At the same time, however, they make clear the consequences of westering, the inexorable changes that come to individuals, society, and the land as the nation moves west. They become, therefore, like *Farmer Boy*, correctives to an unthinking acceptance of the myth, reminding one and all that progress does not come without cost.

Little House on the Prairie opens in Wisconsin, as the Ingallses prepare to move on. Pa, chafing at the influx of settlers and a decline in game, sells the cabin, packs family and possessions into a covered wagon, and strikes out across the frozen Mississippi in search of elbow room. The little party travels south and west, crossing the Missouri River and moving deeper into the central prairies, until they find themselves in the Indian Territory, the Osage Preserve in present-day Kansas. Picking a site near the Verdigris River, they settle in. "There's everything we want here," Pa cries exuberantly. "We can live like kings" (50). What follows is a textbook of the process of settlement. Pa builds a cabin (an undertaking occupying four chapters), cutting logs in the nearby creek bottoms, framing and flooring the house, and finally roofing it with the help of Mr. Edwards, a Tennessean living only two miles away. He digs a well with the aid of Mr. Scott, another neighbor from less than three miles away, builds a chimney, and, after a four-day round trip for supplies, installs glass windows. Ma organizes succulent meals—jack rabbit stew with dumplings, roasted prairie hen—from the land's bounty, reestablishes the household routines of baking, washing, and ironing, and offers emotional security to complement the physical security of the house and Pa's endeavors.

The internal security, however, is threatened by external perils. Ma is injured when a log falls during the building of the house, and Mr. Scott almost suffocates at the bottom of the well. Nor is nature always kind: in addition to jack rabbits and fowl, the prairie has wolves, and Pa has a chilling encounter with a pack of fifty. The mosquitoes that infest the summer evenings carry malaria and lay the family low with fever 'n' ague. A spring prairie fire comes close to destroying the house and all in it. Indians materialize from the landscape, invade the house, frighten Ma and the girls, make off with Pa's tobacco, and later threaten

an attack. The newest peril, though, comes not from the prairie but from the United States. The federal government, despite having opened the territory for settlement, ratifies a treaty with the Osage Indians and returns the land to the tribe. Settlers in the territory are now there illegally, and the government readies troops to force them out. Mr. Scott determines to stay, but Pa, too proud to wait for forcible eviction, turns his back on the year's labors, repacks the wagon, and the family sets out anew. Ma ruefully remarks that they have wasted a year, but Pa's reply is that of the mythic frontiersman. "What's a year amount to?" he says, heading north and west toward new land and new freedom. "We have all the time there is" (321).

Little House on the Prairie resonates with the mythic West, from the covered wagon and log cabin to the trail drive of longhorns that passes by the Ingalls cabin. It radiates the appeal of open space and virgin land. Wilder's prairie is as vast, as empty, and ultimately as dangerous as that of O. E. Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth* (1927), but, for all its hazards, carries none of the menace. This is the West to which Pa responds, as his frequent remarks make explicit. In the opening pages of the book, for example, he talks longingly

about the Western country. In the West the land was level, and there were no trees. The grass grew thick and high. There the wild animals wandered and fed as though they were in a pasture that stretched much farther than a man could see, and there were no settlers. Only Indians lived there. (2)

And, once settled, he exults in the prairie openness: "This is a great country. . . . No matter how thick and close the neighbors get, this country'll never feel crowded. Look at that sky!" (74). Here, indeed, is westering's freedom.

Enjoying that freedom, however, changes it, and the book records

as well the costs of progress and the increasing presence of the American nation. Though the Ingallses do not overtly recognize the loss, life is already beginning to change, and, in subtle ways, they unconsciously change with it. Frontier openness gives way to social caution, and Pa padlocks the stable, for “when neighbors come into a country, it was best to lock up your horses at night” (106). Frontier self-sufficiency begins to yield to community cooperation; Pa maintains that “I’ve never been beholden to any man yet, and I never will be,” but he borrows nails from Mr. Edwards to finish his roof, calls upon Mr. Scott to dig his well, and goes to town for sugar, tobacco, quinine, and glass (124).

The greatest change comes in the relationship between the Ingallses and the society outside their immediate sphere. Long accustomed to carving out life where they please, Pa and the other settlers take for granted their inherent right to the land. “Land knows, [the Indians]’d never do anything with this country themselves,” says Mrs. Scott to Ma and the girls. “All they do is roam around over it like wild animals. Treaties or no treaties, the land belongs to folks that’ll farm it. That’s only common sense and justice” (211). Yet it is the settlers who must ultimately move on, and Pa’s fury over the “blasted politicians in Washington” tacitly attests to the power of the larger nation to which even the frontiersman must at last give way (317).

The American West is changing about the Ingallses, and *Little House on the Prairie* records the first signs of that change. Socially, economically, and politically, they have taken the first steps from frontier independence to social interdependence. Neighbors become necessary, and even outsiders can be of value; a black doctor sees the family through their bout of malaria and the eloquence of the Osage chief, Soldat du Chêne, forestalls a territory-wide Indian war (191-92, 300-01). They do not yet recognize the full extent of the forces creating the change, nor do they un-

derstand their own part in the process, but they feel the consequences nonetheless. For all its mythic elements, the book conveys a realistically complex sense of the changing West and the stirrings of a national culture.

A composite of the Ingallses' two sojourns in Walnut Grove, Minnesota, between 1874 and 1879, *On the Banks of Plum Creek* accelerates the changes begun in *Little House on the Prairie*. In it Laura has her first real contact with a settled community, becomes more aware of society's conventions and imperatives, and slowly begins to perceive the nagging complexities of the larger socio-economic world into which she is moving. Her parents, for their part, continue to embrace the westering myth, yet find themselves increasingly caught up in a life for which the myth has not prepared them. Arriving in Minnesota at the end of the forced departure from the Indian Territory, Pa trades wagon and horses for a dugout home and tract of land and the family resumes its regular life. Pa readies the fields for the next year's crop, puzzled by the oldtimers' calling the mild days "grasshopper weather," Ma tends to the household, and the girls deal with their chores and explore the lush banks of Plum Creek (66). Winter passes quickly, marked by the purchase of a pair of plow horses, and with spring comes a new kind of work. Pa sows oats and potatoes for the family and, for the first time, wheat for sale, and, counting on the success of the wheat, he buys lumber on credit for their first real house.

The house completed, the family moves from the dugout, and the girls learn new responsibilities. Now that the family is settled near a town, Laura and Mary are to start school. They approach the experience with trepidation, but discover compensations: other children attend the school as well, and they find themselves, for the first time, members of a heterogeneous group. The transition is not entirely smooth, for rivalries erupt, notably a series of clashes with the snobbish Nellie Oleson. Her father keeps the local

store, making the Olesons, in Nellie's eyes, several cuts above the country folk, and she tries to lord over her classmates. Nevertheless, Laura and Mary quickly discover the joys of friendship, strengthened by their first exposure to Sunday school, church services, and a congregation Christmas party.

The adults, however, face major trials. Grasshoppers devastate crops throughout the region, and Pa, with no wheat to pay off his debts, must walk three hundred miles to find work, leaving Ma and the girls on their own throughout the summer and into the winter, when he at last returns. A mild winter does little to inhibit the grasshoppers, and, his crops again ruined, Pa must once more search elsewhere for work. This time life for Ma and the girls is more difficult. They get in the hay crop with the help of Mr. Nelson, a Norwegian neighbor, but come close to losing it when a prairie fire scours the area. They gather what food crops they have, principally potatoes and turnips, eking out their supplies with fish from Plum Creek, and endure until Pa's return. Winter carries new perils. While Pa is in town, an unexpected blizzard hits, stranding Ma and the girls for four days. Pa himself comes close to death, for he is caught in the open and survives only by finding shelter in a gully and eating the candy and oyster crackers he has bought for their Christmas treat. He returns safely, though, and, confident that the severe winter will kill the grasshoppers, the family looks to their Christmas dinner and the new year.

The events allow Wilder to extend the elements found in the earlier volumes even as she introduces new ones. A continuing element, obviously, is the call of virgin land: "This is great wheat country," Pa chortles. "Rich, level land, with not a tree or a rock to contend with" (6). Continuing as well is the developed society's eroding of independence. Pa, seeing his wheat crop as a capital investment, tells the family that it will bring "a dollar a bushel.

They were rich now. This was a wonderful country. Now they could have anything they wanted" (193, 109). Yet, when the grasshoppers come, he is left in debt, and for the first time finds himself in a predicament that his frontiersman's skills cannot solve. Money alone will solve his problem, and to earn that money he must join the larger economic system and become an employee. Another kind of dependence comes from the family's increasing reliance upon neighbors. The family has little reluctance to turn to the Nelsons for help, and Ma says in all sincerity that "there is nothing in the world so good as good neighbors," little realizing that they have unconsciously surrendered yet another bit of their cherished independence (275).

New to the stories is a related element, socialization, with all the accommodations and compromises that it entails. Until now, Laura and Mary have known only family or occasional visitors; now they find themselves in the midst of an organized community and must accept its requirements. They discover, for example, that external circumstances have led Pa and Ma to their own quiet compromise. Ma has agreed to follow Pa in his westward trek, and he, in turn, has promised that the girls "would have a chance to get book learning. That's why we stopped here, so close to a town that has a school." And, when he once more harks to the call of the West, murmuring that the lack of game "makes a fellow think of places out West where—," Ma jerks him back to earth with the sharp rejoinder, "Where there are no schools for the children, Charles" (138, 283). The power of community is gradually overwhelming the power of the westering urge.

The most telling consequence of a developing society, however, is Laura's discovery of social classes and the rural-urban tension. Until now she has known only a democratically integrated life. She, family, and friends have been level pegs, all sharing the common goals of the western frontier. Now, suddenly and without

preparation, she encounters social discrimination, and the town-country split becomes a nagging reminder that equality is only what the society makes of it. On Nellie Oleson's lips, "Country girls!" is an overt slur, and her snobbish airs, her needling of Laura, and her pretentious "town party" drive home the message of yet another kind of social change (148). Social stratification is challenging frontier democracy, and Laura, like the nation at large, must learn to deal with the changes that result.

The pace of change accelerates yet again in *By the Shores of Silver Lake*. The family is at the lowest ebb yet seen in the books, but the West continues to exert its power; when the chance to move on is combined with the prospect of financial relief, Ma, Pa, and the girls turn away from their Minnesota farm and resume their movement westward. The circumstances, though, are tellingly different from any they have so far encountered, and in that difference is much of the poignancy of the book. The year is 1879, and two more seasons of poor crops and the birth of a fourth child, Grace, have drained the family's finances. Even worse, an epidemic of scarlet fever, sparing only Pa and Laura, has weakened the others and left Mary blind. They are so deeply in debt that they cannot pay even the doctor, and when his sister offers Pa work as timekeeper with the railroad construction in Dakota Territory, he has little choice but to accept. He leaves immediately, trusting to Ma and twelve-year-old Laura to close the household and follow when and as they can.

A day-long railroad trip, the girls' first encounter with a train, brings them to the end of the line. Pa meets them with a wagon, and, after two more days on the prairie, they reach Silver Lake camp and the leading edge of the railroad construction. With the help of cousins they settle into their company-built shanty, and Pa returns to his work, doubling as paymaster and keeper of the company store. The weeks that follow bring their share of excitement:

horse thieves are a constant threat, the workmen, restive over company pay policies, at one point come close to rioting, and Pa warns the physically maturing Laura to stay well away from the workmen and their "rough language" (96).

Construction shuts down with the onset of winter, but Pa stays at the site, moving the family into the house normally occupied by the railroad surveyors. His motives combine pragmatic realism and the frontier dream: they will be first on the spot when it is time to file for a homestead, but they will also have free housing and food. Ma swallows her objections and they settle in for the winter, the surveyors' left-over provisions letting them eat better than they have for several winters. Pa finds a quarter-section ideal for the homestead, the family celebrates Christmas with neighbors from only two miles away, and a surprise visit from their minister from Minnesota, en route to a new posting in the Territory, lets them hold the first church service in what will become De Smet.

Springtime brings an onslaught of settlers, and, while Pa treks to Brookings to file his claim, Ma and the girls turn the surveyors' house into an improvised hotel, supplying bed and board for all comers and glimpsing frontier life at its crudest. Pa returns to work as a carpenter on the booming townsite while Ma and the girls continue their hotel, and, within three weeks, a town emerges from the prairie, complete with stores, a real hotel, and saloons. When the boom tapers off, the family camps in a building Pa owns in town while he puts up a shanty on the claim site. They move to the claim in April, catching sight of the Wilder boys, Royal and Almanzo, who are developing an adjacent claim, and, settled in, once again resume the familiar patterns of their life.

For all the Ingallses' efforts to cling to familiar things and familiar patterns, they are surrounded by change. Pa's westering urge is as strong as ever, but he accepts the need to compromise. "You and I want to fly like the birds," he says to Laura. "But long ago I

promised your Ma that you girls should go to school. You can't go to school and go West" (126). His remark strikes chords on at least two levels. It is a statement of personal honor, without question; he has made a promise, and his integrity requires that he stand by it. But, in a larger sense, it acknowledges the changes taking place in Western American life. A developed society requires education, which can only be attained at the cost of westering. It is a process as inexorable as the movement of the railroad, and Pa, unwittingly, is a part of it.

Indeed, the book is permeated with the ironies of progress, for continuing the westering dream is possible only through a series of compromises and accommodations. When Ma and the girls set out to follow Pa, they go by train instead of by wagon, and Laura reflects, "Traveling on the train cost money. They had not paid anything to travel in the wagon." Yet, though progress makes new demands and requires new assets, it has its compensations: "In one hour that train would go twenty miles—as far as the horses traveled in a whole day" (16, 22). Pa, for his part, goes further west only as a wage-earner and part of the corporate enterprise of the railroad, and later must earn his living by putting up buildings for others.

At book's end Pa is once again a landowner and settler, but his situation is made possible only by the benevolence of the national government. "We can get a hundred and sixty acres out west, just by living on it. . . ," he says in the opening paragraphs of the book. "If Uncle Sam's willing to give us a farm in place of the one he drove us off of, in Indian Territory, I say let's take it." Later, returning from filing his claim at the territorial land office, he reports: "I've bet Uncle Sam fourteen dollars against a hundred and sixty acres of land, that we can make out to live on the claim for five years" (4, 237). Pa believes he is on the brink of independence, but Wilder documents his dependence on government aid in ways

that anticipate the revisionist historians of fifty years later.

For all its dwelling upon change and dependence, though, *By the Shores of Silver Lake* nevertheless affirms growth and maturation. Throughout the book, Wilder repeatedly stresses that growing up is neither easy nor always pleasant, but its obligations must be accepted. Laura gets a glimpse of all that maturity entails as Pa starts for the Territory, leaving Laura, Ma, Mary, Carrie, and Grace on their own: "Laura knew then that she was not a little girl any more. Now she was alone; she must take care of herself. When you must do that, then you do it and you are grown up" (14). She is on the brink of adulthood and must accept all that maturity implies. Young people grow up, and so, moreover, does the country, and both must deal with maturity's mixed blessings.

Civilization brings its manifestations to the West—schools, stores, and churches, boarding houses, saloons, and land offices—but takes its toll in the process. The railroad scars the virgin prairie; teamsters cut muddy roads; population pressures and the boom in building frighten away the game. All this knowledge comes to Laura as well, and her own growth extends to a new understanding of her role, as individual and as part of the larger enterprise, in the process. Standing outside the claim shanty, looking at the scattered lights of De Smet among the immensity of the prairie, she muses to herself, "The buffalo are gone And now we're homesteaders" (285). Just as the railroad cuts down hills to fill gullies, the coming of settlement drives away nature. It is a necessary dialectic, but a melancholy one, and Wilder wants her readers, young though they may be, to understand.

A subtle shift of emphasis occurs in *The Long Winter*, anticipating the final books of the series. The earlier books, as their titles imply—e.g., *Little House in the Big Woods*, *Farmer Boy*, *Little House on the Prairie*—stress the household, the individual, and personal responses to challenges, whether from society or from na-

ture. Now, however, *The Long Winter* portrays *community* life struggling against that nature, in a telling conclusion to the books of movement and transition. The summer of 1880 has brought a measure of stability to the Ingallses. They are comfortable in their claim shanty and crops are doing well. An early frost, an October blizzard, and an Indian's warning of a hard winter to come, however, prompt them to move into De Smet, where the stores—hardware, grocery, and Royal Wilder's feed store—will guarantee supplies. Settled and secure in the town, Carrie and fourteen-year-old Laura resume school and renew old acquaintances among the town youngsters.

A succession of blizzards pelts the region, but Pa and five other men clear fifty miles of track to permit the passage of a supply train. With the town's shelves restocked, the weather no longer seems a threat. That train, however, proves to be the last until spring. The expense of clearing ice and drifted snow from the right of way causes the railroad to shut down operations, stranding the town. Stocks of food and fuel, once seemingly limitless, quickly dwindle, and the townspeople face starvation. Community activities cease, and even the school closes until fuel is available. When coal runs out, Pa improvises a substitute from bundles of hay, but no amount of improvisation can provide food.

After a roaming herd of antelope is spooked by a premature shot, Pa, in desperation, persuades Almanzo Wilder to sell him a few bushels of seed wheat, but malnutrition and enforced isolation wear down adults and children alike. Pa's obviously undernourished condition shocks Almanzo into a recognition of the town's straits, and, staked by one of the merchants, he and a friend, Cap Garland, make a heroic forty-mile trek through snow and subzero temperatures to bring back sixty bushels of wheat. Doled out by mutual agreement, the wheat proves enough to augment remaining supplies, and the townspeople successfully get through the re-

mainder of the winter. Blizzards continue into April, but spring and the thawing chinook come at last. The trains resume their schedule, food, fuel, and building supplies arrive, and the Ingallses celebrate their survival with a Christmas dinner in May.

Within this chronicle of hardship and survival Wilder offers a thought-provoking commentary on the evolution of life on the frontier. She reminds readers, initially, of the continuing power of nature. So long as the railroad maintains its regular infusions of goods, De Smet functions smoothly. Yet only three blizzards totally isolate the town, and the fragility of their situation drives home the awesome power of nature. When still another blizzard strikes, midway through the account, she makes the point explicit:

Laura thought of the lost and lonely houses, each one alone and blind and cowering in the fury of the storm. There were houses in town, but not even a light from one of them could reach another. And the town was all alone on the frozen, endless prairie, where snow drifted and winds howled and the whirling blizzard put out the stars and the sun. (224)

Like Stephen Crane, Hamlin Garland, and O. E. Rølvaag before her, Wilder paints a picture of humanity left at the mercy of unassailable natural forces. The townspeople do their best to survive, but their efforts are so easily overwhelmed by the storms that nature, once benevolent, seems to reflect a new and more menacing aspect. Hungry, fatigued, and deeply worried, even Pa at last cries to the storm, "You can't get at us! You've tried all winter but we'll beat you yet!" and, collapsing in his chair, says to Ma, "Seemed for a minute like that wind was something alive, trying to get at us" (288). Nature poses as great a menace to the townspeople as it does to the lone settler, and those who ignore it do so at their peril.

This point leads to a still more telling one: the cost of progress. In the opening pages of the book, Pa states the creed of frontier

self-reliance in terms making it an inherent American quality:

Like it says in the Declaration of Independence, God created us free. That means we got to take care of ourselves. . . . He gives us a conscience and brains to know what's right. But He leaves it to us to do as we please. . . . A man can build any kind of house he can think of. So if his house don't keep out the weather, that's *his* look-out; he's free and independent. (13)

The myth of frontier individualism as Pa expresses it clearly remains strong as an article of faith in his mind and underscores his outward approach to the land and the society.

The myth notwithstanding, though, the citizens of De Smet have traded a significant degree of self-determination for the privileges of community life, and now they must pay the price. A community of fourteen businesses and eighty-odd residents, De Smet's outward solidity makes the storms so terrifying to an isolated settler seem a thing of the past, and the townspeople become complacent. Even Pa succumbs, saying comfortably, "Living in town, we're in no danger of running short of any kind of supplies" (74). Though he claims the right of self-determination, he does not see that his decision to join the community is eroding that right. He is, like it or not, increasingly dependent upon the trains bringing supplies and the wholesalers who load the trains, and Wilder wants her readers to understand what he has given up.

Reinforcing the settlers' loss of independence is a complementary point, the growing importance of cooperation in the community context. Whereas life in a purely frontier setting was almost wholly self-determined, life in a community requires the conscious, sustained collaboration of the citizens, and the actions of a single person can have social as well as personal consequences. Two episodes illustrate the point. In the first, while stalking a herd of antelope, an over-excited member of the hunting party fires at the

herd long before it is within range. The animals flee in panic and the chance of fresh meat for the town is gone. The hunters pass it off with rude jokes, but Pa reveals the enormity of the deed when he gets home. Bleakly hanging up his shotgun, he collapses into a chair and, after a moment's silence, says wearily: "Foster lost his head from excitement. He jumped off his horse and fired before he was anywhere near within gunshot. None of the rest of us had a chance" (209). One person loses his head, and the entire town goes hungry.

Cooperation of another kind informs the second incident, when Almanzo and Cap Garland return with their load of wheat. The storekeeper who has backed them puts an inflated price on the grain, and the townspeople, at his mercy, must meet his price or go hungry. Tempers flare and the crowd turns ugly, until Pa intercedes. They live, he says, in a free country, and the merchant may put any price he chooses on his goods. But they, too, are free. Turning to the storekeeper, he says:

If you've got a right to do as you please, we've got a right to do as we please. It works both ways. You've got us down now. That's your business, as you say. But your business depends on our good will. You maybe don't notice that now, but along next summer you'll likely notice it. (305-06)

They need the wheat and the merchant needs their custom; they are an interdependent community, and frontier individualism must give way to cooperation for the well-being of all.

With the end of *The Long Winter*, Wilder brings to a close the books of transition. She has brought Laura from girlhood to adolescence, she has brought the Ingalls family to the limit of their frontier, she has brought Almanzo into the picture as a stalwart member of the society, and she has established the burgeoning power of the state and the community. The winter of 1880-81 has been a low point in the lives of the Ingallses and the community of

De Smet, but the book ends with the family singing "Where There's a Will, There's a Way" (334-35). Life requires its adjustments, but good can be derived from it nonetheless. The forthright individual, working within a progressive society, can still find satisfaction and fulfillment.

The last two "Little House" stories, the books of maturity and acceptance, bring the series to a satisfying close. Both deal explicitly with growing up—one with the maturing of a community, the other with the maturity of a person. *Little Town on the Prairie* (1941) focuses upon De Smet's emergence from the long winter as a full-blown town. It is not a perfect place, as Wilder makes clear, but it is a town nonetheless, and offers its citizens a life that cannot be found on the open frontier. *These Happy Golden Years* (1943), on the other hand, is solely Laura's story, the account of her brief career as a teacher, her courtship, and her marriage. She, like De Smet, has attained maturity, and she looks with anticipation to life as an adult in the American West.

Recovered from the rigors of the long winter and newly conscious of community cohesion, the Ingallses in *Little Town on the Prairie* begin to engage in the variety of activities that social and community life makes possible. It is the summer of 1881, and Laura takes a job as seamstress in a dry goods store, making shirts for the settlers who arrive daily. Pa, his fields plowed and planted, is working as a carpenter, putting up buildings to meet the demands of the growing population. The money they bring is important to the family, for Mary is to attend a college for the blind in Iowa, and her tuition and expenses must be paid. With autumn, Laura and Carrie return to school in town, renewing their acquaintance with several old friends and one old nemesis, Nellie Oleson, whose family has lost their store in Minnesota and been forced to move further west. There is a new teacher as well, Eliza Jane Wilder, sister to Almanzo and Royal and herself independent holder of a

claim. Her lax ways in the classroom make her easy for Nellie to manipulate, and Laura soon finds herself the target of undeserved scorn.

Other changes are also in the air. A mild winter permits the townspeople to relax somewhat, and the season sees a boom in social events. The Ladies' Aid Society gives a dime sociable. A bountiful New England Supper makes a striking contrast with the privations of the preceding winter, while a round of "literaries" gives everyone a chance to show off, with Friday evenings given over to a spelling bee, musical programs, charades, a political debate, and a rowdy minstrel show. Each event stirs increased excitement, and as the townspeople vie to outdo each other, they unconsciously weld themselves into a community. Laura, too, encounters change. Almanzo Wilder falls into the habit of walking her home from church, and, following the School Exhibition, Laura's mastery of grammar and American history persuades a member of a nearby community that she is the teacher they want for their two-months' school. She consults with Ma, agrees to take the appointment, and finds herself a certified teacher in the Dakota Territory, about to begin an adult undertaking, two months short of her sixteenth birthday.

Little Town on the Prairie is, at the outset, a story of stability and security. The uncertainty of the long winter is replaced by a new-found solidity as life and town take form. Although Mary's college tuition is an added financial burden, and gophers and blackbirds continue to harass Pa's crops, the Ingallses' finances are stronger than ever before. The family can even afford occasional luxuries: Ma freely contributes a dime for the Ladies' Aid sociable, Laura gets a volume of Tennyson's poems for Christmas, and Pa encourages her to squander twenty-five cents on printed calling-cards (196, 205, 235). This affluence comes at a cost, however, for the adults find themselves caught up in the throes of

progress. Pa's case is typical. The area surrounding De Smet is organized into a county, and Pa "must help. As the oldest settler, he could not shirk his duty" (23). He becomes a member of the school board and has to listen judiciously to Miss Wilder's criticisms of Laura (180-82). He is a prime mover in the creation of the "literaries," playing fiddle for the musicales and taking part in the minstrel show. With the passing months his involvement with the community grows, until he spends more time in dealing with town matters than in tending his claim.

With community progress, moreover, comes acculturation, and social customs and fashions take on new prominence. Laura must learn the conventions of parties, name-cards, and being walked home from church. Mary's college clothes are based on styles in *Godey's Lady's Book* and Laura exults that "There won't be, there just can't be, one single girl in college who can hold a candle to you" (96). Ma brings the girls autograph books from Iowa, saying "Autograph albums are all the fashion nowadays. . . . All the most fashionable girls in Vinton have them," and endorses Pa's giving Laura money for name-cards, for "we want you to have the pleasures of other girls of your age" (123, 196). The values of frontier life are, indeed, becoming overshadowed by those of community life.

Wilder ties her account of change to a realistic picture of the American West. The stubborn American environment retains its power. Pa must buy a "breaking plow" specifically adapted to the tough prairie sod, permanently giving up the slash-and-burn practices he learned in a wooded environment (9). Moreover, there is a new sense of the pervasive power of nature. "The prairie looks so beautiful and gentle," Laura muses. "But I wonder what it will do next. Seems like we have to fight it all the time" (89). In addition, tension between rural and urban settlers is still real, and Laura, relishing the reversals that Nellie Oleson has suffered, at one

point gloats, "It's just too bad your folks are nothing but country folks, Nellie. If you lived in town, then maybe your father could be on the school board" (150). Nor is De Smet itself, for all it has to offer, any garden spot. Its streets are muddy and manure-soiled, the false-fronted buildings are weathered and warped, and the stores and saloons exude dank smells of every sort, until the town could easily be a forerunner of Sinclair Lewis's *Gopher Prairie* (49).

Unifying and guiding all of the events, however, is the continuity of American values. Because Laura, her family, and the townspeople about them are Americans, they are in Wilder's appraisal equipped to take change in their stride. Whether the changes are the socio-economic changes of the community or the personal and physical changes Laura is experiencing, they face them with the resolution of self-determining Americans. Regardless of the machinations of government, regardless of the pressures of nature, their determination has saved them in the past, and it will save them in the times to come. An explicit statement of this faith in self-determination emerges during a Fourth of July celebration in De Smet, when Pa, Laura, and Carrie hear a reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Laura, reflecting on the document's ringing phrases and the obvious respect accorded it by the townspeople, has an epiphanic moment of revelation:

Americans are free. That means they have to obey their own consciences. No king bosses Pa; he has to boss himself. Why (she thought), when I am a little older, Pa and Ma will stop telling me what to do, and there isn't anyone else who has a right to give me orders. I will have to make myself be good. (76)

Social freedom and personal freedom, social obligations and personal obligations, national purpose and national responsibility—

Wilder here welds them into one coherent statement, at last overtly linking the growing-up of the country and the growing-up of Laura.

Emphasizing that growing-up is a new sense of ripe acceptance. Pa has made his peace with the frontier and is content to work as a wage-earner. He continues to be his own master in individual ways, but willingly adjusts to the obligations and limitations that community life entails. Laura, in her stead, must arrive at her own acceptance of change. Physically, she is becoming a woman. Emotionally, she has unwittingly caught the eye of the community's most eligible bachelor. Socially and economically, she has won a niche for herself as a teacher. As an adult, she must deal with the reality that confronts her and make of it what she can: "She did not want to go. The less she thought of it the better, for she must go, and she must meet whatever happened as it came" (307). The challenge is daunting, but she faces it with equanimity, as an American must.

Just as *Little Town on the Prairie* records De Smet's emergence as a functioning community, *These Happy Golden Years* records Laura's emergence as an adult. Her metamorphosis is complete, and she makes the transition into adult life with relative ease. As she does so, though, she takes with her the perspectives gleaned from her years with Pa and Ma: a sense of individual purpose and responsibility, a sense of community involvement, and a sense of her role in the ongoing process that is the settlement of the American West. All work together to make *These Happy Golden Years* the most Turnerian of a Turnerian series, for the "Laura Wilder" that emerges from "Laura Ingalls" at book's end is an individual shaped by the vital interaction of personal, social, and natural influences.

Taking up her post as teacher of the Brewster School in January, 1883, Laura is plunged into an environment unlike any she has

heretofore known. She is on her own, cut off from the ready counsel of Pa and Ma, and must make her own way and her own adult decisions. Discipline is a problem among the five youngsters of the school, two of whom are older than she, and the Brewster household, where she is boarding, is hostile, dirty, and depressing. She faces an existence a far cry from the happy domesticity she has known at home, and only Almanzo's offer to drive her back to De Smet each weekend relieves the bleakness. Her two months' duty completed, Laura returns to De Smet and the familiar routine of home and school, but life has a new tempo. She continues her weekend rides with Almanzo, now purely for the fun of being with him and the other young people of the community, and she takes a Saturday job with Mrs. McKee, the local dressmaker. In the spring, she takes on new duties, living for two months with the dressmaker on their remote claim while Mr. McKee earns a living in town. Mary's return from school and the start of summer bring Laura back home, and her life returns to normal, the old patterns and attitudes restored.

Autumn harvest and winter activities occupy the men of De Smet, but Almanzo finds time to resume his rides with Laura. In March, further changes occur. Laura wins certification as a second-grade teacher and begins a three-month appointment at the nearby Perry school. Nellie Oleson tries to insinuate herself between Laura and Almanzo, but Laura lays down the law to Almanzo, their relationship grows closer, and she accepts his proposal of marriage. The last chapter begins. In the spring of 1885, Laura takes on one more school appointment. She and Ma work steadily on the clothes and household goods that she will need as a young matron. With Almanzo she makes wedding plans, insisting that they eliminate the pledge "to obey" from the ceremony (269-70). The two young people marry in August at the minister's home, have a quiet wedding dinner with Ma and Pa, and move to

Almanzo's claim to begin their life together. Laura has become a woman and a full-fledged citizen.

The events of *These Happy Golden Years* take place within a well-established context of local and national life, and Laura herself emerges as an increasingly socialized person. Her dreary weeks at the Brewster School contrast with the busy hubbub of De Smet to make her forget "that she had ever disliked the town" (37). Her outings with Almanzo and the other young people let her be "one of the line of sleighs and cutters, swiftly going the length of Main Street" (92), she revels in the harmonies of the weekly singing school, and her growing social consciousness and awareness of Almanzo's interest in her give her a new appreciation of the town's gift shops, dressmakers, and milliners.

Her acculturation extends to the national scene, as well. With Pa she glimpses the larger, westering movement in which they have been taking part, recognizing the national process at work. Looking forward to the time "when we have our patent from the government" (160), Pa marvels over the mobility of the society—"No sooner do I get acquainted with a newcomer than he sells the relinquishment of his claim and goes on West"—and comes at last to a vision Turnerian in its scope (135). "It's a queer thing," he says. "People always moving west. Out here it is like the edge of a wave, when a river's rising. They come and they go, back and forth, but all the time the bulk of them keep moving on west" (142). Many move on, but others stay and establish the nation and its attributes on the heels of the frontier. This, Laura now knows, is progress.

At the center of the book, however, is Laura's growing acceptance of adulthood. She understands, to be sure, the haunting call of carefree frontier freedom. She, like Pa, feels the urge to move on, and can share, with a pang, "the look in his blue eyes as he gazed over the rolling prairie westward from the open door where he

stood" (138-39). Yet Laura accepts maturity's realities as well. Her first day at the Brewster Schools sets the tone, for she looks at the tiny schoolroom, notes its improvised blackboard and teacher's desk, then thinks to herself: "Oh, my; I am the teacher" (14). Her teaching, moreover, reminds her yet again that adult life carries its unpleasant duties: thinking of Pa's westering urge, she muses, "He must stay in a settled country for the sake of them all, just as she must teach school again, though she did so hate to be shut into a schoolroom" (139). Growing up, in sum, is a necessary part of life, and when Mary reflects about her returning to college and Laura's impending marriage, Laura states her recognition explicitly. Carrie and Grace, she says, "are growing up, too. Yet it would be even stranger if we stayed as we were for always, wouldn't it?" (247).

That recognition equips her to accept the changing world in ways denied to her parents. Pa and Ma have come west, bringing along the intellectual baggage of their frontier-oriented past, looking to the West as a place of unfettered new beginnings. Laura, however, growing up within the larger culture of the nation and its evolving societies, is the beneficiary of both parts of the frontier synthesis. "What good times we had when we were little," she says to Mary. "But maybe the times that are coming will be even better" (264). Better they will be, for, embracing both frontier and society, Laura is ready to embark on her own life. In the final paragraphs of the book she thinks about the future, and her thoughts bring frontier, society, and nature together into a final, enduring harmony: "All this was theirs; their own horses, their own cow, their own claim. The many leaves of their little trees rustled softly in the gentle breeze" (289). The farmer and the homesteader, the individual and the citizen, are one, in a telling evocation of the American Dream.

Throughout the series' history, the "Little House" books have not lacked for attention. From the very outset, their popular critical

reception was favorable. The books of the series have remained consistently in print since the first volume of 1932, and each of the books has been reissued in a variety of formats and languages. Prior to 1965, however, they did not garner serious critical examination; published studies were either pedagogical accounts intended for the use of librarians and elementary school teachers, or “appreciations,” often by enthusiastic amateurs, responding uncritically to the homely appeals of the series. After 1965, though, the emergence of children’s literature as a legitimate scholarly field and the appearance of new critical approaches stirred a resurgence of interest in the series.

Wilder scholarship falls into several convenient groups. The first emphasizes biography, examining the life of the historical Laura Wilder and its relation to that of the fictional Laura. The fullest biography to date, William Anderson’s *Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Biography* (1992), supplants Donald Zochert’s often speculative *Laura: The Life of Laura Ingalls Wilder* (1976), but is written for young readers and unavoidably lacks depth. More satisfactory is Janet Spaeth’s volume in the Twayne’s United States Authors Series, *Laura Ingalls Wilder* (1987); despite the limitations of the Twayne format, Spaeth provides a combination of biography and criticism that makes the book an essential beginning for any further study. William Anderson’s coffee-table book, *Laura Ingalls Wilder Country* (1990), offers few additional insights but collects family photographs along with period and modern pictures of the locales mentioned in the “Little House” books, giving visual substance to the historical reality underlying the stories.

Shorter biographical overviews include Kathy Piehl’s “Laura Ingalls Wilder” (1983), an essay in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* series. Informally written, the essay nevertheless covers the principal events of Wilder’s life, summarizes her works (posthumous as well as those published during her life), and gives

brief but helpful excerpts from contemporary reviews of her books. Perhaps the most useful of the shorter accounts is Fred Erisman's "Laura Ingalls Wilder," in *Writers for Children* (1988), which considers Wilder's life and work against the dual backgrounds of the westering movement and the American domestic novel for children.

A second significant category of criticism examines the personal and artistic relationship between Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane. Rosa Ann Moore, in "Laura Ingalls Wilder's Orange Notebooks and the Art of the Little House Books" (1975), is the first critic to look beyond the content of the books to the mechanics of their composition, examining the Wilder manuscripts and comparing them with the finished texts. In "The Little House Books: Rose-Colored Classics" (1978), Moore goes on to supply the first detailed evidence of Rose Wilder Lane's involvement in the creation of the series, giving an initial glimpse of the Lane papers and establishing beyond question Lane's contributions as editor and agent.

The opening of the Lane papers to researchers has led to further investigations of the Wilder-Lane relationship. Moore continues her studies in "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Chemistry of Collaboration" (1980), further documenting Lane's active involvement in the shaping of the books. That involvement is examined at length by William T. Anderson in two essays, "The Literary Apprenticeship of Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1983) and "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Continuing Collaboration" (1986), while Anita Clair Fellman's "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Politics of a Mother-Daughter Relationship" (1990) offers additional insights through its application of feminist critical techniques. The fullest account of the Wilder-Lane collaboration to date is William Holtz's *The Ghost in the Little House* (1993). Although a biography of Rose Wilder Lane,

it necessarily examines her relationship with her mother, citing diaries, letters, Wilder's manuscripts, and the finished "Little House" books to reveal the extent to which Lane shapes and colors the entire series. Holtz's book is important and is certain to stimulate further investigations into the creation of the "Little House" books.

A third category embraces studies utilizing other current theoretical critical techniques to explore Wilder's works. In "'Intimate Immensity': Mythic Space in the Works of Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1978), Dolores Rosenblum draws upon Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) to examine the thematic effects of the contrast of open and enclosed spaces in the books. Virginia L. Wolf, in "The Symbolic Center: *Little House in the Big Woods*" (1982), offers a structural analysis of inside-outside, narrator-participant tensions within the first of the books, while Janet Spaeth's "Language of Vision and Growth in the *Little House* Books" (1982) explores the connotative implications of Wilder's general vocabulary and particular word choices throughout the series.

Bachelardian theory recurs in Hamida Bosmajian's "Vastness and Contraction of Space in *Little House on the Prairie*" (1983) and Virginia Wolf's "The Magic Circle of Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1984-85). Bosmajian's essay illustrates the complexities that assiduous application of phenomenological analyses can discover in even the most straightforward text, while Wolf's suggests that spatial consciousness is a principal source of the books' cohesion and emotional unity. Charles Frey, in "Laura and Pa: Family and Landscape in *Little House on the Prairie*" (1987), examines Wilder's portrayal of Laura and her father to explore the mechanisms of parent-child bonding. In "Growing with Laura: Time, Space, and the Reader in the 'Little House' Books" (1992), Margaret Mackey draws upon narratology and reader-response theory to trace the increasing sophistication of language in the series, while Jan Susina, in "The Voices of the Prairie: The Use of Music in Laura

Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*" (1992), takes up the metaphoric implications of the tunes Pa plays throughout the book.

Considerations of the books as documents of gender-role formation, not surprisingly, make up a fourth critical category. Kathryn Adam's "Laura, Ma, Mary, Carrie, and Grace: Western Women as Portrayed by Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1987) considers Laura alongside the other women of the Ingalls household, profitably discussing the contributions of each to the development of the larger story. Sarah Gilead, in "Emigrant Selves: Narrative Strategies in Three Women's Autobiographies" (1988), places Wilder in the company of Isak Dinesen and Maxine Hong Kingston to study the authors' differing uses of self and persona. In "'Oh My: I Am the Teacher': Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Prairie Schoolteacher" (1990), Ann Romines considers teaching as a socially approved female role on the frontier, and, in "*The Long Winter: An Introduction to Western Womanhood*" (1990), she goes on to consider female social roles in general within the context of the home and the frontier community. Louise Mowder's "Domestication of Desire: Gender, Language, and Landscape in the Little House Books" (1992) combines feminist techniques with revisionist history to contend that westering silences the female voice, permitting it to speak only in memory.

Of all the categories of criticism, the fifth, which treats the "Little House" books as a part of the literature of the American West, provides perhaps the most satisfying approach to the works. William Jay Jacobs's "Frontier Faith Revisited: The Little House Books of Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1965) offers an early explication of the books' frontier qualities, basing his argument upon the American "articles of faith" advanced by Henry F. May in *The End of American Innocence* (1959). Fred Erisman, in "The Regional Vision of Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1971), is the first to detail

Wilder's evocation of various forms of regional experience, an analysis that he develops and extends to other juvenile authors in "Regionalism in American Children's Literature" (1978). "Laura Ingalls Wilder's America: An Unflinching Assessment" (1977), by Elizabeth Segel, explores the honest picture of frontier life underlying Wilder's deceptively simple tales, while Roger G. Barker's "The Influence of Frontier Environments on Behavior" (1979) examines the books as expressions of Western environmental determinism.

In "It is better farther on': Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Pioneer Spirit" (1979), Anne Thompson Lee gives a largely conventional reading of the books as reflections of American pioneering. More substantial is William Holtz's "Closing the Circle: The American Optimism of Laura Ingalls Wilder" (1984), which looks at the political and historical reality underlying the books and links them to the Turner Hypothesis. John E. Miller, in "Freedom and Control in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *De Smet*" (1989), constructively examines the processes of acculturation as they appear in the last five books of the series, while Chilton Williamson's "Big Little House in American Literature" (1991) argues that the books offer a politically conservative vision of national life and themes.

The steady increase in scholarship dealing with the eight "Little House" books confirms their value as documents for the continuing study of American life and thought. They are, to be sure, children's books, written for the entertainment and edification of the young. That status, however, gives them added significance, for they stand as a sustained, unified narrative deliberately shaped to illustrate *and interpret* for young readers values and attitudes that play a continuing part in the later course of the American nation. What is most telling, however, is that they express those values and attitudes within the context of two of the most basic myths of the Western American experience. They are, therefore, the voice of

one generation speaking to those to come, transmitting national ideals in a compelling combination of candor and myth that instills the possibility of continuing progress.

As juvenile literature, the "Little House" books stand within the continuing tradition of the American domestic story, portraying realistic yet appealing characters who deal in matter-of-factly competent fashion with the dilemmas that confront them. Pa, Ma, and Laura are, as they must be, inherently "good" persons. Pa loves and strives to support his family; Ma fulfills her role as homemaker, mother, and mentor; Laura seeks to deserve her parents' praise. Yet each has flaws. Pa's yearnings to move on tempt him to shirk his family responsibilities; Ma is sharp-tongued, rigidly narrow in her sense of what constitutes "proper" behavior, and at times downright domineering; Laura is strong-willed and vengeful, admitting to sibling rivalry in her relations with Mary and gleefully rubbing Nellie Oleson's nose in the Olesons' changed circumstances. Good they are, but perfect they are not, and the characters gain in human credibility as a result.

What gives the series its special richness, however, is its using these recognizably "real" characters to live out mythic roles, wherein their actions take on meaning far larger than the immediate circumstances imply. Thus, the books are in one sense a chronicle of an individual's growing up in the classic tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. Over the thirteen-odd years spanned by the eight volumes, Laura evolves from dependent child to independent matron, and the steadily more adult manner in which she deals with life's exigencies offers a quiet object lesson in all that "maturity" means. Her growing maturity and sophistication, moreover, are accentuated by the books themselves; as the series proceeds, the language and social portrayals become steadily more complex, paralleling the growth of their readers and adapting their message to the needs of each age group (see Mackey 61-63).

From that record of a girl's growing up emerges an intriguing picture of the development of a distinctive female identity, for it is here that the historical Laura Ingalls Wilder and the fictional Laura most closely coincide. Wilder, as her later life demonstrates, capably balances the demands of conventional domesticity and the more individualistic needs of earning a living. The fictional Laura reflects many of the same attributes, asserting her independence and her identity when her principles genuinely demand such assertion, yet recognizing as well that she can make equally significant contributions within the social environs of the family, the workplace, and the home. Though she at last turns away from her career for marriage and a family, her awareness of her identity and her abilities makes her an early example of the modern female role model, anticipating by thirty years and more the attention given gender roles in the later twentieth century.

Growing up, however, takes on a still larger significance in its role as a metaphor for the coming of civilization to a wilderness. As Laura grows in judgment and understanding, the surrounding world grows with her, and the levels of awareness through which she passes are paralleled by those of the developing society. Thus, her first level of social awareness unfolds in a basic, essentially "natural" context. As the series begins, the people she sees are linked by biological ties (i.e., family bonds) that overshadow external social considerations, while the Big Woods about them invoke the elemental freshness of nature and accentuate their close-knit, organic, self-directed life. The move to Kansas raises her awareness to a second level. American space remains vast, empty, and virgin, allowing Pa once again to shape nature to his particular needs, yet Laura here encounters cooperation and interdependence developing outside the family circle. What is of more significance, she begins to gain an awareness of larger, abstract, and as yet unintelligible forces at work, shaping human life if apparently spar-

ing the land itself.

A third level of awareness emerges in Minnesota. Laura experiences directly the impact of social institutions such as school and church, pre-existing entities requiring new adaptations in her acceptance of the evolving world. Significantly, the natural world into which she moves is also marked by society's coming: the land Pa buys is already tilled and holds a dugout house. With the move to De Smet, she achieves a fourth level of socialization, and the process is complete. The land, to be sure, is still largely empty, but its future is already being determined by external national concerns: the townsite exists as lines on a legal map; and the railroad, altering nature in ways unimagined by the frontiersman, carries the nation into the virgin West.

As she witnesses the birth of a town and the people's adaptation to the needs of an interdependent community, Laura herself comes at last to a perception of all that "progress" and "civilization" entail. She recognizes the limitations that follow in the path of that progress—having to live with the acts of persons of questionable competence, for example, or becoming dependent on outside support—yet comes to appreciate the economic, intellectual, and emotional benefits that only a community can provide. She surrenders the independence of the frontier person, but gains the life of the civilized person in a progressive, socialized town.

The growing up of America requires many things. It requires, to be sure, resourceful and resilient individuals—folk like Pa, Ma, Almanzo, and Laura herself—who can survive the hardships of frontier life yet retain the values that bind them as persons and as citizens. It requires settlement, as well, those waves of civilization that follow the frontier, domesticating nature and establishing the communities that bring law, education, religion, and commerce to the land. Above all, though, the maturing of the United States requires a vital and committed vision—the belief that the people's

endeavor is a worthwhile part of a unified national enterprise, in which individual, community, and the “stubborn American environment” collaborate to create the vital, democratic society of the mythic dream. Silently present throughout the series, this vision emerges overtly in the steady westward movement in which both Laura and Almanzo participate, the familial and patriotic ceremonies of their childhoods, and the affirmations of work and responsibility that each experiences. In the best Turnerian fashion, they shape and are shaped by the frontier encounter, and the outcome is the truly American citizen.

Wilder’s final words on the grandly mythic process of westering confirm for all time the compelling power of the myth’s “coded message[s] from the culture as a whole to its individual members” (Slotkin 16). In the unfinished *The First Four Years*, Laura, now in her twenties, a mother and a homesteader, reflects upon all that she has met. Her thoughts, as recorded by Wilder and untempered by Rose Wilder Lane’s revision, evoke yet again all that the myth holds for her generation, Wilder’s generation, and generations to come, as they embark on the greatest enterprise of all:

The incurable optimism of the farmer who throws his seed on the ground every spring, betting it and his time against the elements, seemed inextricably to blend with the creed of her pioneer forefathers that “it is better farther on”—only instead of farther on in space, it was farther on in time, over the horizon of the years ahead instead of the far horizon of the west. (133-34)

The powerful components of the western myth, frontiersman and farmer, wilderness and settlement, coalesce at last, and their message is clear. The geographic frontier may, indeed, have closed, but the frontier of the human spirit remains ever open. No matter what the future may bring, the vision endures, and readers of every time, Eastern or Western, like Laura herself, can themselves

take up the challenge of growing up with the country, becoming the truly mature men and women who use the spirit of westering to carry out the mature American Dream.

Selected Bibliography

WORKS BY LAURA INGALLS WILDER

A collection of Wilder letters is held in the Laura Ingalls Wilder - Rose Wilder Lane Collection, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa. Smaller holdings, including some manuscripts, are at the University of Missouri, Columbia, the Detroit (Michigan) and Pomona (California) Public Libraries, and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Home and Museum, Mansfield, Missouri. The Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society, De Smet, South Dakota, displays family belongings. An enthusiasts' newsletter, *Laura Ingalls Wilder Lore*, publishes appreciations and biographical minutiae.

Little House in the Big Woods. New York: Harper, 1932; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

Farmer Boy. New York: Harper, 1933; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

Little House on the Prairie. New York: Harper, 1935; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

On the Banks of Plum Creek. New York: Harper, 1937; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

By the Shores of Silver Lake. New York: Harper, 1939; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

The Long Winter. New York: Harper, 1940; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

Little Town on the Prairie. New York: Harper, 1941; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.

- These Happy Golden Years*. New York: Harper, 1943; rpt. Harper, 1953, with ill. by Garth Williams.
- On the Way Home: The Diary of a Trip from South Dakota to Mansfield, Missouri, in 1894*. New York: Harper, 1962; rpt. Harper, 1976.
- The First Four Years*. New York: Harper, 1971; rpt. Harper, 1971.
- West from Home: Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder, San Francisco 1915*. Ed. Roger Lea MacBride. New York: Harper, 1974; rpt. Harper, 1976.
- A Little House Sampler* (with selections by Rose Wilder Lane). Ed. William T. Anderson. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988.
- Little House in the Ozarks: A Laura Ingalls Wilder Sampler*. Ed. Stephen W. Hines. Nashville: Nelson, 1991.

WORKS CITED AND SELECTED CRITICAL STUDIES

- Adam, Kathryn. "Laura, Ma, Mary, Carrie, and Grace: Western Women as Portrayed by Laura Ingalls Wilder." *The Women's West*. Ed. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1987. 95-110.
- Anderson, William T. *Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Biography*. New York: Harper, 1992.
- _____. "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Continuing Collaboration." *South Dakota History* 16 (1986): 89-143.
- _____. *Laura Ingalls Wilder Country: The People and Places in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Life and Books*. Photographs by Leslie A. Kelly. New York: Harper, 1990.
- _____. "The Literary Apprenticeship of Laura Ingalls Wilder." *South Dakota History* 13 (1983): 285-331.
- Barker, Roger G. "The Influence of Frontier Environments on Behavior." *The American West: New Perspectives, New Dimensions*. Ed. Jerome O. Steffen. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1979. 61-93.
- Bosmajian, Hamida. "Vastness and Contraction of Space in *Little House on the Prairie*." *Children's Literature* 11 (1983): 49-63.

- Erismann, Fred. "Farmer Boy: The Forgotten 'Little House' Book." *Western American Literature* 28 (1993): 123-30.
- _____. "Laura Ingalls Wilder." *Writers for Children*. Ed. Jane M. Bingham. New York: Scribner, 1988. 617-23.
- _____. "The Regional Vision of Laura Ingalls Wilder." *Studies in Medieval, Renaissance, American Literature*. Ed. Betsy Colquitt. Fort Worth: Texas Christian UP, 1971. 165-71.
- _____. "Regionalism in American Children's Literature." *Society and Children's Literature*. Ed. James H. Fraser. Boston: Godine, 1978. 53-75.
- Fellman, Anita Clair. "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Politics of a Mother-Daughter Relationship." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15 (1990): 535-61.
- Frey, Charles. "Laura and Pa: Family and Landscape in *Little House on the Prairie*." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 12 (1987): 125-28.
- Gilead, Sarah. "Emigrant Selves: Narrative Strategies in Three Women's Autobiographies." *Criticism* 30 (1988): 43-62.
- Holtz, William. "Closing the Circle: The American Optimism of Laura Ingalls Wilder." *Great Plains Quarterly* 4 (1984): 79-90.
- _____. *The Ghost in the Little House: A Life of Rose Wilder Lane*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1993.
- Jacobs, William Jay. "Frontier Faith Revisited." *Horn Book Magazine* 41 (1965): 465-73.
- Lee, Anne Thompson. "'It is better farther on': Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Pioneer Spirit." *Lion and the Unicorn* 3 (1979): 74-88.
- Mackey, Margaret. "Growing with Laura: Time, Space, and the Reader in the 'Little House' Books." *Children's Literature in Education* 23 (1992): 59-74.
- Miller, John E. "Freedom and Control in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *De Smet*." *Great Plains Quarterly* 9 (1989): 27-35.
- Moore, Rosa Ann. "Laura Ingalls Wilder's Orange Notebooks and the Art of the Little House Books." *Children's Literature* 4 (1975): 105-19.

- _____. "The Little House Books: Rose-Colored Classics." *Children's Literature* 7 (1978): 7-16.
- _____. "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Chemistry of Collaboration." *Children's Literature in Education* 11 (1980): 101-09.
- Mowdor, Louise. "Domestication of Desire: Gender, Language, and Landscape in the Little House Books." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 17 (1992): 15-19.
- Piehl, Kathy. "Laura Ingalls Wilder." *American Writers for Children, 1900-1960*. Ed. John Cech. DLB, Vol. 22. Detroit: Gale P, 1983. 351-66.
- Romines, Ann. "The Long Winter: An Introduction to Western Womanhood." *Great Plains Quarterly* 10 (1990): 36-47.
- _____. "'Oh My: I Am the Teacher': Laura Ingalls Wilder and the Prairie Schoolteacher." *West Virginia University Philological Papers* 36 (1990): 53-60.
- Rosenblum, Dolores. "'Intimate Immensity': Mystic Space in the Works of Laura Ingalls Wilder." *Where the West Begins*. Ed. Arthur R. Huseboe and William Geyer. Sioux Falls: Center for Western Studies, 1978. 72-79.
- Segel, Elizabeth. "Laura Ingalls Wilder's America: An Unflinching Assessment." *Children's Literature in Education* 8 (1977): 63-70.
- Slotkin, Richard. *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*. New York: Atheneum, 1985.
- Spaeth, Janet. "Language of Vision and Growth in the Little House Books." *Great Lakes Review* 8 (1982): 20-24.
- _____. *Laura Ingalls Wilder*. TUSAS 517. Boston: Twayne, 1987.
- Susina, Jan. "The Voices of the Prairie: The Use of Music in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*." *Lion and the Unicorn* 16 (1992): 158-66.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Holt, 1920.
- Williamson, Chilton, Jr. "Big Little House in American Literature." *Chronicles* Nov. 1991: 20-25.

- Wolf, Virginia. "The Symbolic Center: *Little House in the Big Woods*." *Children's Literature in Education* 13 (1982): 107-14.
- _____. "The Magic Circle of Laura Ingalls Wilder." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 9 (1984-85): 168-70.
- Zochert, Donald. *Laura: The Life of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. Chicago: Regnery, 1976.

WESTERN WRITERS SERIES

(list continued from outside of back cover)

59. RICHARD HUGO by Donna Gerstenberger
60. SOPHUS K. WINTHER by Barbara Howard Meldrum
61. WILLIAM SAROYAN by Edward Halsey Foster
62. WESTERN AMERICAN LITERARY CRITICISM by Martin Bucco
63. MARI SANDOZ by Helen Winter Stauffer
64. BARRY LOPEZ by Peter Wild
65. TILLIE OLSEN by Abigail Martin
66. HERBERT KRAUSE by Arthur R. Huseboe
67. WILLIAM EVERSON by Lee Bartlett
68. JOHN HAINES by Peter Wild
69. SAM SHEPARD by Vivian M. Patraha and Mark Siegel
70. ROBERT CANTWELL by Merrill Lewis
71. CHARLES SEALSFIELD by Walter Grunzweig
72. WILLIAM STAFFORD by David A. Carpenter
73. ELMER KELTON by Lawrence Clayton
74. SIMON ORTIZ by Andrew Wiget
75. JOHN NICHOLS by Peter Wild
76. JOHN GREGORY DUNNE by Mark Royden Winchell
77. GERALD HASLAM by Gerald Locklin
78. HELEN HUNT JACKSON by Rosemary Whitaker
79. RICHARD BRAUTIGAN by Jay Boyer
80. OLE RØLVAAG by Ann Moseley
81. LANFORD WILSON by Mark Busby
82. JOHN C. VAN DYKÉ: THE DESERT by Peter Wild
83. D'ARCY McNICKLE by James Ruppert
84. KENNETH REXROTH by Lee Bartlett
85. EDWARD DORN by William McPherson
86. ERNEST HAYCOX by Richard W. Etulain
87. TONY HILLERMAN by Fred Erisman
88. DAVID WAGONER by Ron McFarland
89. JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH by Paul N. Pavich
90. DAVID HENRY HWANG by Douglas Street
91. JOHN GRAVES by Dorys Crow Grover
92. MATT BRAUN by Robert L. Gale
93. GEORGE WHARTON JAMES by Peter Wild
94. CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD by Edwin R. Bingham
95. DEE BROWN by Lyman B. Hagen
96. PAULA GUNN ALLEN by Elizabeth I. Hanson
97. JACK SPICER by Edward Halsey Foster
98. JEANNE WILLIAMS by Judy Alter
99. JAMES D. HOUSTON by Jonah Raskin
100. CAROL RYRIE BRINK by Mary E. Reed
101. ALVAR NÚÑEZ CABEZA DE VACA by Peter Wild
102. LAWRENCE CLARK POWELL by Gerald Haslam
103. WINSTON M. ESTES by Bob J. Frye
104. BESS STREETER ALDRICH by Abigail Ann Martin
105. WILLIAM HUMPHREY by Mark Royden Winchell
106. PETER WILD by Edward Butscher
107. NORMAN MACLEAN by Ron McFarland
108. PEGGY POND CHURCH by Shelley Armitage
109. WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE by Diane Dufva Quantic
110. ISHMAEL REED by Jay Boyer
111. ANN ZWINGER by Peter Wild
112. LAURA INGALLS WILDER by Fred Erisman
113. REX BEACH by Abe C. Ravitz
114. JOHN WESLEY POWELL by James M. Aton
115. HAROLD BELL WRIGHT by Lawrence V. Tagg
116. CAROLINE LOCKHART by Norris Yates

This continuing series, primarily regional in nature, provides brief but authoritative introductions to the lives and works of authors who have written significant literature about the American West. These attractive, uniform fifty-page pamphlets are useful to the general reader as well as to teachers and students.

Please send orders to: Business Manager
BSU Western Writers Series
English Department

Boise State University
Boise, Idaho 83725

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOISE, IDAHO 83725

WESTERN WRITERS SERIES

1. VARDIS FISHER: THE FRONTIER AND REGIONAL WORKS by Wayne Chatterton
2. MARY HALLOCK FOOTE by James H. Mequire — out of print
3. JOHN MUIR by Thomas J. Lyon
4. WALLACE STEGNER by Merrill and Lorene Lewis
5. BRET HARTE by Patrick Morrow
6. THOMAS HORNSBY FERRELL by A. Thomas Truety — out of print
7. OWEN WISTER by Richard Etulain
8. WALTER VAN TILBURG CLARK by L. L. Lee
9. N. SCOTT MOMADAY by Martha Scott Trimble — out of print
10. PLAINS INDIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHIES by Lynne Woods O'Brien — out of print
11. H. L. DAVIS by Robert Bain
12. KEN KESEY by Bruce Carnes
13. FREDERICK MANFRED by Joseph M. Flora
14. WASHINGTON IRVING: THE WESTERN WORKS by Richard Cracroft
15. GEORGE FREDERICK RUXTON by Neal Lambert
16. FREDERIC REMINGTON by Fred Erisman
17. ZANE GREY by Ann Ronald
18. STEWART EDWARD WHITE by Judy Alter
19. ROBINSON JEFFERS by Robert J. Brophy
20. JACK SCHAEFER by Gerald Haslam
21. EDWARD F. RICKETTS by Richard Astro
22. BILL NYE by David B. Kesterson
23. GERTRUDE ATHERTON by Charlotte S. McClure
24. HAMLIN GARLAND: THE FAR WEST by Robert F. Gish
25. JOHN G. NEIHARDT by Lucile F. Aly
26. E. W. HOWE by Martin Bucco
27. GEORGE CATLIN by Joseph R. Milichap
28. JOSIAH GREGG AND LEWIS H. GARRARD by Edward Halsey Foster
29. EDWARD ABBEY by Garth McCann
30. CHARLES WARREN STODDARD by Robert L. Gale
31. VIRGINIA SORENSEN by L. L. and Sylvia Lee
32. ALFRED HENRY LEWIS by Abe C. Ravitz
33. CHARLES ALEXANDER EASTMAN by Marion W. Copeland
34. RUTH SUCKOW by Abigail Ann Hamblen
35. DON BERRY by Glen A. Love
36. ENOS MILLS by Peter Wild
37. GARY SNYDER by Bert Almon
38. CHARLES MARION RUSSELL by Robert L. Gale — out of print
39. JACK KEROUAC by Harry Russell Hubel — out of print
40. C. L. SONNICHSEN by Joyce Gibson Roach
41. JANET LEWIS by Charles L. Crow
42. TOM ROBBINS by Mark Siegel
43. JOAQUIN MILLER by Benjamin S. Lawson
44. DOROTHY JOHNSON by Judy Alter
45. LESLIE MARMON SILKO by Per Seversted
46. GEORGE R. STEWART by John Caldwell
47. SCANDINAVIAN IMMIGRANT LITERATURE by Christer Lennart Mossberg
48. CLARENCE KING by Peter Wild
49. BENJAMIN CAPPS by Ernest B. Speck
50. CHARLES F. LUMMIS by Robert E. Fleming
51. HORACE McCOY by Mark Royden Winchell
52. WILL HENRY/CLAY FISHER by Robert L. Gale
53. JESSAMYN WEST by Ann Dahlstrom Farmer
54. THE NEW WILD WEST: THE URBAN MYSTERIES OF DASHIELL HAMMETT AND RAYMOND CHANDLER by Paul Skenazy
55. MABEL DODGE LUHAN by Jane V. Nelson
56. STRUTHERS BURT by Raymond C. Phillips, Jr.
57. JAMES WELCH by Peter Wild
58. PRESTON JONES by Mark Busby

(list continued on inside of back cover)

Please send orders to: Business Manager
BSU Western Writers Series
English Department

Boise State University
Boise, Idaho 83725

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
BOISE, IDAHO 83725