

“BECAUSE WILDER AND LANE LIVED LESS THAN A MILE APART, USUALLY WALKING BACK AND FORTH ALMOST DAILY OVER A PATH CONNECTING THE TWO HOUSES ACROSS THE TOP OF ROCKY RIDGE, THEY DID NOT LEAVE BEHIND ANY CORRESPONDENCE THAT DOCUMENTS EXACTLY HOW THIS [EDITORIAL] COLLABORATION WORKED.”

—*Laura INGALLS WILDER: A WRITER'S LIFE*

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Laura INGALLS WILDER

a writer's life

PAMELA SMITH HILL

Reader's GUIDE



“When the Wilders set out for Missouri, they had few material possessions with which to banish misfortune. Wilder once told a reporter, ‘We brought all our belongings—one bed spring, a feather mattress, piece-work quilts, pots and pans, a skillet, coffee pot and a little homemade cupboard.’” —*Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Writer's Life*

‘I can hardly say enough good things about this book. It’s exactly the sort of Laura Ingalls Wilder biography I’ve been wishing for: straightforward, non-fiction, with a steady focus on Laura, giving equal weight to both the true details of her life and to her writing.’ — www.sarahmillerbooks.com

‘This will most likely be the definitive published source for ‘Pioneer Girl.’ — *The Homesteader*

‘In some ways, Laura fans have been waiting for the second half of this book since the 1994 publication of William Holtz’s *Ghost in the Little House*.’ — *The Homesteader*

‘If you’ve ever wanted to peek behind the scenes of the ‘Little House’ series and other vignettes, this is your book. . . . This biography is sometimes happy, sometimes sad, but always a page turner.’ — *Roundup Magazine*

‘Hill skillfully examines the complex relationship between Wilder and her daughter.’ — *Kansas History*

‘Hill’s dissection of the personal and professional interactions between these two women, as mother and daughter and as collaborating (and rival) artists, is performed with delicacy and tact that, nevertheless, confirms Laura Ingalls Wilder’s place in the canon of American writers.’ — *Nebraska History*

This book ‘is a thoughtful and sometimes compelling portrait that will provide readers with new insight into both the Little House books and Laura Ingalls Wilder.’ — *The Lion and the Unicorn*

‘Hill’s absorbing book chronicles Wilder’s original writing efforts, and how her daughter guided her (not actually wrote her books, as suggested in Holtz’s *Ghost in the Little House*) into the creation of a more dramatic narrative. In addition, this volume supplies more details of Wilder’s life that have not shown up in biographies, including the fact that a young couple and their newborn baby lived with the family during ‘the long winter,’ and that Laura was once almost assaulted by a drunken man whose wife she was caring for. Highly recommended if you are interested in the life of Laura Ingalls Wilder.’ — Cozynook.blogspot.com

“The Ingalls family soon packed up their wagon and moved farther west to the railroad camp on Silver Lake in Dakota Territory. ‘Almost at once,’ Wilder wrote in her memoir, ‘we drove through the breaks along the river; crossed the [Big] Sioux river and were out on the broad prairie that looked like a big meadow as far as we could see in any direction.’—*Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Writer’s Life*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the main point that Smith Hill makes in this biography?
- How much did Rose Wilder Lane influence and affect her mother?
- What sort of impact did Dakota Territory have on Laura?
- After reading this book, how realistic do you perceive the Little House books to be?
- Should “Pioneer Girl” be published?
- Was Laura’s assertion that her books were based on true life akin to the recent controversy surrounding James Frey’s *A Million Little Pieces*?



PAMELA SMITH HILL

Pamela Smith Hill is a multi-award-winning author. She lives in Portland, Oregon, after growing up in Missouri and starting her writing career in South Dakota.

Smith Hill specializes in creative writing, and young adult and children's literature, but this departure from that specialty was not a big leap. Her time spent in Missouri and South Dakota created the interest in, and impetus for, her new book about Laura Ingalls Wilder. Smith Hill believes that her experiences with writing for young people helped her to examine the influences on Ingalls Wilder, and in particular, the relationship between her and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane.

Smith Hill's first writing job was as a newspaper staff writer on an old fashioned Society page, where she wrote about weddings and Girl Scout. After moving to South Dakota, she began a career in advertising and public relations. Over the next twenty years, her writing covered everything from Mount Rushmore to Water Piks, Navajo rugs to basketball shoes. In 1994, Smith Hill left the corporate world behind and started writing books for young adults. She published her first book, *Ghost Horses*, two years later.