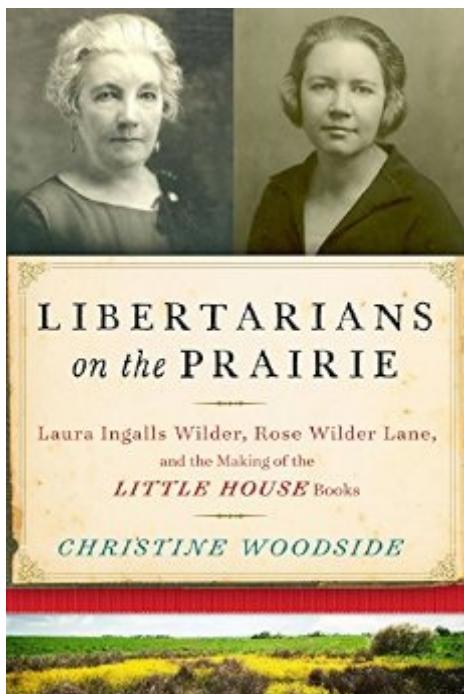


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# Libertarians On The Prairie: Laura Ingalls Wilder, Rose Wilder Lane, And The Making Of The Little House Books



## Synopsis

Generations of children have fallen in love with the pioneer saga of the Ingalls family, of Pa and Ma, Laura and her sisters, and their loyal dog, Jack. Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House books have taught millions of Americans about frontier life, giving inspiration to many and in the process becoming icons of our national identity. Yet few realize that this cherished bestselling series wandered far from the actual history of the Ingalls family and from what Laura herself understood to be central truths about pioneer life. In this groundbreaking narrative of literary detection, Christine Woodside reveals for the first time the full extent of the collaboration between Laura and her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane. Rose hated farming and fled the family homestead as an adolescent, eventually becoming a nationally prominent magazine writer, biographer of Herbert Hoover, and successful novelist, who shared the political values of Ayn Rand and became mentor to Roger Lea MacBride, the second Libertarian presidential candidate. Drawing on original manuscripts and letters, Woodside shows how Rose reshaped her mother's story into a series of heroic tales that rebutted the policies of the New Deal. Their secret collaboration would lead in time to their estrangement. A fascinating look at the relationship between two strong-willed women, *Libertarians on the Prairie* is also the deconstruction of an American myth. Skyhorse Publishing, along with our Arcade, Good Books, Sports Publishing, and Yucca imprints, is proud to publish a broad range of biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs. Our list includes biographies on well-known historical figures like Benjamin Franklin, Nelson Mandela, and Alexander Graham Bell, as well as villains from history, such as Heinrich Himmler, John Wayne Gacy, and O. J. Simpson. We have also published survivor stories of World War II, memoirs about overcoming adversity, first-hand tales of adventure, and much more. While not every title we publish becomes a *New York Times* bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

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## Customer Reviews

The first books I remember buying as a kid were the Little House books. I still have them; they've been read so many times I had to tape the spines. In the 1990s, I read the books about Laura's daughter Rose, and kept going to the books about Laura's mother and grandmother. But Laura's stories were always my favorite, and I loved Laura's plucky attitude and pioneer spirit, and the knowledge that the Ingalls family would survive any hardship because they had each other. Essentially, I've been a huge fan of the Little House books and Laura Ingalls Wilder all my life. I even embody some of that pioneer spirit. I'm a farmer. I love the land. I like being self-sufficient. After reading LIBERTARIANS ON THE PRAIRIE, I have to wonder if I absorbed the intended messages of Rose Wilder Lane, the themes she slid into her mother's books. The author deconstructs the œnewâ • pioneer myth Rose built, shaping her mother's stories into a vehicle for her political beliefs of freedom, love of nature, self-sufficiency, and so on. I'm not sure if LIBERTARIANS ON THE PRAIRIE will appeal to all fans of the Little House books. It can be hard to see the layers peeled back on childhood favorites, to learn that Rose carefully edited the books, picking which of Laura's experiences best fit the ideal she wanted to portray. But I geeked out over learning more about Laura and Rose, their writing process, and their relationship, as well as how their personal beliefs and politics influenced the books. LIBERTARIANS ON THE PRAIRIE is, in part, a biography of Rose's adult life. At first I didn't know why Woodside was including information on Rose's travels through Albania or her writing career.

I eagerly awaited this book, since the blurb about it seemed to imply that there was a lot of new information the author had dug up concerning Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane and their collaboration on the Little House books. I was disappointed. Much of the information about Rose

Wilder Lane seemed to come from "A Ghost in the Little House: A Life of Rose Wilder Lane" by William Holtz. I have a copy of the Holtz book and much of what I read here was information I already knew. (I'm just saying that it was information that was already out there, I in no way suggest the author borrowed from the Holtz book.) What really bothered me, however, were two glaring errors I caught. On page 104 in the hardcover edition, the author mentions "Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography" and gives it a release date of 2012, when the book was actually published in 2014, and is in fact cited in the bibliography with the correct date. Another error came later in the book. The author states that Almanzo Wilder, Laura's husband and Rose's father, suffered a heart attack in July, 1949. That's on page 152. The next page it is stated that Almanzo died later that year on October 23. But, on page 155, the author states "After Almanzo's death in July, 1948 Rose returned to Mansfield..." Don't know if the sloppiness was the fault of the author or editor but a mistake like that should have been caught. I did find the information about Roger Lea MacBride, who was a close friend of Rose Wilder Lane and who ran for President on the Libertarian party platform in 1976.

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