

Little House of Libertarianism: How Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane Deployed the  
Frontier Myth to Fight the New Deal

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Historical Paper

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## Process Paper

In elementary school, I vividly remember borrowing Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* from our classroom library. At the time, I was captivated by Wilder's vivid depictions of life in the American West, her approachable prose, and her knack for making every-day events exciting for young readers. Most of all, though, *Little House on the Prairie* provided me with an opportunity to learn about our country's history from a young age. I was recently surprised, then, to find through research that the *Little House* books are thinly veiled libertarian treatises. Throughout the series, there is a strong embrace of frontier values like personal industry and self-sufficiency. Yet Wilder leaves out critical context about government support for life on the prairie, not to mention her own willingness to look to Washington, D.C. in times of crisis. As a young reader, I was not attuned to thinking critically about pieces of historical fiction like *Little House on the Prairie*. Perhaps that was the whole point. In any event, I thought that exploring the subtle political undertones of the *Little House* books would make for an interesting National History Day paper.

My historical argument is that Wilder at times fictionalizes the reality of life on the American frontier for political purposes (namely, opposition to the New Deal), and this has had a profound impact both on our understating of prairie life and on modern conservative thinking. This argument fits this year's National History Day theme because it focuses on the American frontier, and it concerns a person (Laura Ingalls Wilder), a place (the American West), and an idea (libertarianism).

When I started my research, I first read historian Caroline Fraser's celebrated Wilder biography, *Prairie Fires*. While Fraser provided a comprehensive overview of Wilder's life and accomplishments, I wanted to ground my paper in a more historiographical sense of how the

*Little House* books conform with dominant views of the frontier. To that extent, I also read Fredrick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," as well as the perspectives of numerous other historians. Primary sources were instrumental to my research. In particular, I drew on Wilder and Lane's own books, which provided firsthand and unvarnished accounts of their beliefs. I also supplemented my research with census reports, Homestead Act affidavits, and contemporary newspaper articles—all with the purpose of demonstrating how Wilder's experience fit with those of frontier settlers more broadly.

One challenge that I faced was ensuring that my paper does not come off as politically biased. While I criticize how Wilder and Lane used the somewhat fictitious *Little House* series to build the pillars of the modern conservative/libertarian movement, my intention in doing so was to make the historical point about how pieces of historical fiction often form dominant narratives within our society. In my conclusion, then, I decided to include an example of fictionalized history in liberal media to demonstrate that, while I focus on Wilder and Lane's libertarianism, historical bias is not confined to one side of the political aisle.

*“This is a free country and every man’s got a right to do as he pleases with his own property... Don’t forget that every one of us is free and independent...”*

– Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Long Winter*<sup>1</sup>

In 1940’s *The Long Winter*, Laura Ingalls Wilder does something that she does not do in the earlier books of her *Little House* series: she is explicit about her liberation values. Nevertheless, and unbeknownst to the generations of young readers who engaged with her books, there is a strong-but-subtle political undertone that lies beneath them. *Little House on the Prairie* has been translated into over 40 languages, and the *Little House* series has sold more than 34 million copies.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, these books have been the first touchstone to the American frontier for generations of children.

Wilder’s novels closely follow Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” through their celebration of hard work and the American West. Yet the picture of the American frontier that she painted was not an innocent retelling of her life story. Aided by her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, Wilder rewrote and recharacterized her life experiences as an implicit manifesto against President Roosevelt and the New Deal. The discrepancy between Wilder’s actual experiences and her fictional retelling demonstrates that the Frontier Thesis often could be more accurately characterized as a frontier myth, and that readers should be judicious when engaging with texts that attempt to employ history to make political points.

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Long Winter* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1940), 305.

<sup>2</sup> Elaine Showalter, “Review | At 150, Laura Ingalls Wilder Still Speaks to Readers Old and New,” *The Washington Post*, February 6, 2017, sec. Books, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/at-150-laura-ingalls-wilder-still-speaks-to-readers-old-and-new/2017/02/05/81eefb24-e98e-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/at-150-laura-ingalls-wilder-still-speaks-to-readers-old-and-new/2017/02/05/81eefb24-e98e-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c_story.html).

## The Frontier Thesis and Wilder's Frontier Experience

“The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West,” historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared to the crowd gathered in Chicago for the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893.<sup>3</sup> The event, which marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the New World, was focused on showcasing the United States, and more specifically the American West, to the world. In this spirit, Turner’s Chicago speech would come to represent a clarifying moment in American history. By arguing that the West was to America what “the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks,” Turner’s Frontier Thesis framed the territory not as the East Coast’s neglected backyard, but instead as integral to the prosperity and sustainability of a growing country.<sup>4</sup> Most importantly, the promise of the West could only be unlocked through hard work, grit, and determination of the people who Turner saw as brave enough to settle on the frontier.

Having grown up on that frontier, Wilder would have doubtless been influenced by rhetoric akin to Turner’s. In the decade before Turner’s speech, the thirteen-year-old Wilder and her family settled in the railroad town of De Smet, South Dakota, several hundred miles down the line from Chicago.<sup>5</sup> Shortly thereafter, her father Charles Ingalls filed paperwork under the Homestead Act to “prove up” a plot of land for his family to farm.<sup>6</sup> Initially, Laura planned to do the same. On August 29, 1885, the *De Smet Leader* announced the marriage of “two more of our

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<sup>3</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (Mansfield Centre, Connecticut: Martino Publishing, 1894), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Turner, 28.

<sup>5</sup> John E. Miller, “Freedom and Control in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s De Smet,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1989): 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23530886>.

<sup>6</sup> “Sample Homestead File (for Charles Ingalls)” (National Archives, May 11, 1886), <https://www.archives.gov/research/land/ingalls>.

respected young people”—Laura Ingalls and Almanzo J. Wilder.<sup>7</sup> The next year, the couple welcomed a baby girl, Rose.<sup>8</sup> At a time when the infant mortality rate was 15 percent,<sup>9</sup> the family later lost a baby boy 12 days after his birth.<sup>10</sup> The same drought that caused their farm to burn down in 1889 triggered a larger panic that brought American financial institutions to their knees.<sup>11</sup> The South Dakota frontier ultimately proved to be too harsh, so the Wilders packed up and moved to the Missouri Ozarks in 1894.

The Ozarks became instrumental to Laura’s life experience for two reasons. First, they gave her a degree of stability. As Rose recalled in a post-script to her mother’s posthumous memoir, *On the Way Home*, the Wilder’s homestead outside of Mansfield, Missouri, represented “just what they wanted... so much, much more than they had hoped for,” with its idyllic apple orchard and year-round brook.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Laura and Almanzo had finally overcome the “stubborn American environment” and gained a newfound “freshness and confidence,” per Turner’s theoretical framework.<sup>13</sup> But Missouri impacted Laura in another way: It launched her writing career.

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<sup>7</sup> “Married, Wilder--Ingalls,” *The De Smet Leader*, August 29, 1885, 4, National Endowment for the Humanities Chronicling America, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn00065129/1885-08-29/ed-1/seq-4/>.

<sup>8</sup> Appendix A, Appendix B

<sup>9</sup> Samuel H. Preston and Michael R. Haines, *Fatal Years: Child Mortality in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4, <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c11541>.

<sup>10</sup> William V. Holtz, *The Ghost in the Little House: A Life of Rose Wilder Lane* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, *On the Way Home: The Diary of a Trip from South Dakota to Mansfield, Missouri, in 1884*, ed. Rose Wilder Lane (New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1962), 1; Albert C. Stevens, “Analysis of the Phenomena of the Panic in the United States in 1893,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 8, no. 2 (1894): 148, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1883708>.

<sup>12</sup> Wilder, *On the Way Home*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 28.

By the early 1900s, the experiences of frontier women were shifting rapidly.<sup>14</sup> A fledgling suffragist movement emerged in the Ozarks, with women there winning the right to vote in 1919—a year before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified.<sup>15</sup> Amid this backdrop, Laura began writing a column for the *Missouri Ruralist* in 1911. The *Ruralist* gave flight to Wilder’s political and social beliefs. In her first column, “Favors the Small Farm Home,” she denounced “country women who are wasting their time envying their sisters in the city” and extolled the values of hard work and personal industry.<sup>16</sup> This frontier mindset would come to play an important role in her later writing.

At the same time, Rose was embarking on a journalistic career of her own. In 1908, she secured a job as a telegrapher at San Francisco’s Avon Hotel and soon thereafter began a short marriage to a young reporter living in her apartment building, Claire Gillette Lane.<sup>17</sup> Drawing on her husband’s connections, Rose started writing human-interest stories for local yellow-journalism outfits, with her first published piece appearing in the *San Francisco Call* in

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<sup>14</sup> Caroline Fraser, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder* (New York, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017), 222.

<sup>15</sup> “Campaigning for NO. 13: Noted Suffragist to Come to Missouri Soon,” *The Mansfield Mirror*, November 5, 1914, 5, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lcn/sn89066901/1914-11-05/ed-1/seq-5/>; “Signs Missouri Suffrage Bill,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 6, 1919, 1, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/174446341/citation/24CCC88649014487PQ/1>.

<sup>16</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, “Favors the Small Farm Home,” *Missouri Ruralist*, February 18, 1911, [http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist\\_02\\_18\\_1911.jpg](http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist_02_18_1911.jpg); Laura Ingalls Wilder, “Shorter Hours For Farm Women,” *Missouri Ruralist*, June 28, 1913, [http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist06\\_28\\_1913a.jpg](http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist06_28_1913a.jpg).

<sup>17</sup> Holtz, *The Ghost in the Little House*, 50.

September 1908.<sup>18</sup> Slowly but surely, her journalistic renown increased, and she made friends with the likes of Dorothy Thompson and Sinclair Lewis.<sup>19</sup>

Eventually Wilder and Lane began collaborating on pieces of writing. From early in her career, Lane recognized her mother's potential, writing to her that the *Ruralist* columns stood out "like a skyscraper on a plain."<sup>20</sup> After retiring from *The Ruralist* in 1924, Wilder turned to the cathartic experience of autobiographical writing, the result of which was her first long-form piece, *Pioneer Girl*. This manuscript chronicled Wilder's early upbringing, from her birth in Wisconsin to her time living in "Indian Territory" in Kansas to her marriage to Almanzo.<sup>21</sup> Though much of Wilder's first work dealt with the same stories as her later *Little House* books, *Pioneer Girl* was a pared-down retelling intended for older audiences.<sup>22</sup>

Wilder finalized a draft of *Pioneer Girl* in early 1932 to favorable reviews in national serials, with the *Saturday Evening Post* recommending it as "a grand piece of work, fascinating material and 'most intelligent writing.'"<sup>23</sup> Yet editors in Lane's circles wanted more, with one of

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<sup>18</sup> Fraser, *Prairie Fires*, 212; Rose Wilder, "Ups and Downs of Modern Mercury," *San Francisco Call*, September 20, 1908, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=SFC19080920&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN----->.

<sup>19</sup> William Holtz, "Sinclair Lewis, Rose Wilder Lane, and the Midwestern Short Novel," *Studies in Short Fiction* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 45, <https://unr.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=7151249&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>20</sup> Fraser, *Prairie Fires*, 252.

<sup>21</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography*, ed. Pamela Smith Hill (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2014), 1; Wilder, 324.

<sup>22</sup> Anita Clair Fellman, "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Politics of a Mother-Daughter Relationship," *Signs* 15, no. 3 (1990): 546, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174427>.

<sup>23</sup> John E. Miller, *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman Behind the Legend* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 182, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/knowledgecenter/detail.action?docID=3570911>.



her confidant's noting that the book lacked "enough high points or crescendo."<sup>24</sup> As opposed to a rigid autobiography, they revealed an interest in historically-unbound free form fiction. Lane was well experienced with this kind of "historical" writing. While working at San Francisco periodicals a decade earlier, she released multiple biographical sketches on the powerful and elite of the day, writing a posthumous book about Jack London and the first biography of Herbert Hoover.<sup>25</sup> In an era of opaque journalistic standards, Lane was also known to smudge the facts; London's widow decried his biography as "fiction for the most part," and Hoover is rumored to have sought the printing plates for his biography so that they could be destroyed.<sup>26</sup> Thus, when publishers approached Lane, who was acting as her mother's de facto agent and editor, she was well equipped to turn Wilder's personal narrative into more compelling fiction—and the *Little House* series was born.

Not coincidentally, the development of the *Little House* books occurred during a radical realignment of American politics—from the *laissez-faire* Twenties to the heavy hand of government in the New Deal Thirties. Wilder and Lane viewed this realignment with disdain. True, both were heavily invested in Palmer investment accounts and were hit hard when the stock market crashed on Black Tuesday.<sup>27</sup> But President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's election did not stir hope in the two. To the contrary, by 1933 Lane was already adamant that he was a dictator.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ann Romines, *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls Wilder* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 21.

<sup>25</sup> Rose Wilder Lane, *The Making of Herbert Hoover* (New York, NY: The Century Co, 1920), 355.

<sup>26</sup> Holtz, "Sinclair Lewis, Rose Wilder Lane, and the Midwestern Short Novel," 27; Fraser, *Prairie Fires*, 308.

<sup>27</sup> Holtz, *The Ghost in the Little House*, 226.

<sup>28</sup> Holtz, 246.

Wilder, for her part, also became alarmed by New Deal policies, which she saw as antithetical to the small-government self-sufficiency she outlined in the *Little House* books.<sup>29</sup> In one letter to Lane, she lamented both the celebrations of the President’s birthday in Mansfield and the general expansion of government. “I wish Mrs. Roosevelt would have to scrub her own floors and do her own work,” she concluded the letter.<sup>30</sup> In another missive, Wilder goes so far as to allege that the grasshopper infestation that she and Almanzo were suffering from on their farm was a divine punishment for the New Deal.<sup>31</sup> But her wrath was not limited to Roosevelt himself; she would also decry the efforts of notable local politicians and even the system itself. She variously deplored then-Senator Harry Truman as a liar and proudly outlined her scheme to avoid paying federal income tax.<sup>32</sup> Influenced by her daughter, Wilder had become a libertarian firebrand in-the-making—and the *Little House* series would come to reflect that.

### **A Literary Rejoinder to the New Deal**

Amid the economic tumult of the Great Depression and man-made ecological disasters like the Dust Bowl,<sup>33</sup> many Americans began to lose touch with Turner’s Frontier Thesis. One 1938 letter published in *The New York Times* expressed regret for “man’s reckless exploitation of

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<sup>29</sup> Romines, *Constructing the Little House*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Selected Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, ed. William Anderson (Harper Perennial, 2017), 193.

<sup>31</sup> Fraser, *Prairie Fires*, 375.

<sup>32</sup> Wilder, *The Selected Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, 112.

<sup>33</sup> Robert A. McLeman et al., “What We Learned from the Dust Bowl: Lessons in Science, Policy, and Adaptation,” *Population and Environment* 35, no. 4 (2014): 417–40, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-013-0190-z>.

natural resources” in the West.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, President Roosevelt told radio listeners that Americans must “unlearn the too comfortable superstition that the American soil was mystically blessed” with immunity to financial and natural calamity.<sup>35</sup> Wilder and Lane set out to prove otherwise.

From time to time, express libertarian rhetoric makes an appearance in the *Little House* books. In 1940’s *The Long Winter*, the series’ sixth installment, Wilder defends a shop-owner’s right to price gouge local townspeople during a poor harvest. She argues that the free market, instead of the government, should be the only control on the business’s profits.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps coincidentally, the *Long Winter* was released the same year that the Roosevelt administration reestablished the Council of National Defense, which eventually took on the mandate of price control for agricultural commodities.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in the *Long Winter*’s sequel, *Little Town on the Prairie*, the daughter in the book—eponymously named Laura—spontaneously declares, “God is America’s king... Americans won’t obey any king on earth. Americans are free.”<sup>38</sup> Across the *Little House* books, Wilder and Lane venerate hard work, celebrate personal industry, and express much the same patriotic fervor that swept the United States after Fredrick Jackson Turner’s speech in Chicago.

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<sup>34</sup> “Paying for Past Errors: Nature Exacting High Price for Our Exploitation of Resources,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 1938, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1938/03/27/99538079.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Fraser, *Prairie Fires*, 374.

<sup>36</sup> Wilder, *The Long Winter*, 305.

<sup>37</sup> Franklin Roosevelt, “Executive Order 8875 Establishing the Supply Priorities and Allocations Board.” (1941), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-8875-establishing-the-supply-priorities-and-allocations-board>.

<sup>38</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little Town on the Prairie* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1941), 51.

More important than Wilder's express libertarian rhetoric, however, is the historical context that she omits from her life story. For example, she writes about how her family settled on Osage Trust Land near modern day Independence, Kansas, after hearing that they would be protected by the federal government. Eventually, however, word comes that troops are on their way to expel the Wilders. "I'll not stay here to be taken away by the soldiers like an outlaw," Laura's father defiantly declares. "If some blasted political in Washington hadn't sent out word it would be all right to settle here, I'd never have been three miles over the line into Indian Territory."<sup>39</sup> In this way, Wilder and Lane advance Turner's frontier myth; the prairie had limitless and untapped potential, indigenous Americans have squandered that potential, and only individual hard work and determination can fix that.

What goes unsaid throughout the semi-autobiographical *Little House* stories is that Washington played a central role in allowing the Wilders to live on the prairie in the first place. The Homestead Act, signed into law by President Lincoln in 1862, encouraged westward migration by giving public land away for "settlement and cultivation," provided that applicants could prove that "said land has not been alienated."<sup>40</sup> The Wilder family benefited from the Homestead Act for generations, as they had hoped to do on native land in Kansas.<sup>41</sup> By suggesting that settlers thrived without the government, the *Little House* books leave out the critical detail that collectivism, through the Homestead Act, permitted the frontier way of life—not to mention that their land had, in fact, been "alienated" from Native Americans long before their arrival.

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<sup>39</sup> Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1935), 316.

<sup>40</sup> "An Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain," LXXV § (1862), <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/homestead-act>.

<sup>41</sup> "Sample Homestead File (for Charles Ingalls)."

Throughout their lives, the Wilder family benefited from government assistance in other ways. Wilder's sister, Mary, was blind, though there was no local school that could accommodate her needs and their family could not afford to send her out of state. They did not rely on their rugged individualism to solve this problem. Instead, they pursued and received a government grant from the Dakota Territories to send Mary to the Iowa College for the Blind.<sup>42</sup> Later in life, Wilder even took a job with the Mansfield Farm Loan Association, handing out federal-sponsored loans to insulate farmers from poor harvests. Though readers of the *Little House* books might not know it, she was proud of her work there. Indeed, when Wilder unsuccessfully ran for public office in 1925, she declared in the *Mansfield Mirror*, her former gazette, that she had been entrusted with \$102,675 in federal money. "I believe that this amount of money," she continued, "brought into our community from the government has increased our prosperity by that much, and has been of direct and indirect value to us all."<sup>43</sup> Wilder's reliance on government aid, either as part of her family's efforts to care for her blind sister, her father's homestead claims, or her own management of federal farm loans, stands in sharp contrast to the theme of self-sufficiency lauded in the *Little House* books.

## Conclusion

In 1894, Frederick Jackson Turner rallied Americans to cross the Ohio River in pursuit of freedom, tranquility, and prosperity. Four decades later, Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane likewise rallied the nation against the New Deal—using overt rhetoric and subtle historical omissions to make their case against governmental intervention in people's daily lives. Their

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<sup>42</sup> Fraser, *Prairie Fires*, 119.

<sup>43</sup> Fraser, 286.

impact was lasting. Building on that narrative, Lane in the 1940s authored *The Discovery of Freedom*, a political treatise which many believe gave rise to the modern Libertarian movement. Prominent libertarian Robert LeFevre described it as “one of the most influential books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,”<sup>44</sup> and, referring to the Greek gods of vengeance, right-wing intellectual William F. Buckley later identified the “three Furies” of libertarianism as Lane, Isabel Paterson, and Ayn Rand.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, the *Little House* books continued to resonate with Conservatives for generations. The multi-season 1970s *Little House* series topped President Reagan’s list of favorite TV shows,<sup>46</sup> and First Lady Laura Bush cited the books as among her “family favorites.”<sup>47</sup>

To be sure, historical revisionism is not unique to right-leaning media. Just as Lane and Wilder left out important context and oftentimes deployed political rhetoric, Lin Manuel Miranda’s recent hit musical *Hamilton* has been panned by historians for attempting to paint Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton as an anti-slavery crusader. In reality, Hamilton’s stances on slavery were more nuanced,<sup>48</sup> and Miranda has conceded that criticisms of *Hamilton*’s

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<sup>44</sup> “The Discovery of Freedom,” Mises Institute, August 18, 2014, <https://mises.org/library/discovery-freedom>.

<sup>45</sup> Debra McDonald Birzer, “Three Women Writers Who Defended Liberty in an Age of Collectivism,” *National Review* (blog), December 15, 2022, <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2022/12/30/three-women-writers-who-defended-liberty-in-an-age-of-collectivism/>; Jennifer Burns, “The Three ‘Furies’ of Libertarianism: Rose Wilder Lane, Isabel Paterson, and Ayn Rand,” *The Journal of American History* 102, no. 3 (2015): 746, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44286642>.

<sup>46</sup> “Facts about Ronald Reagan,” Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, accessed March 4, 2023, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/reagans/ronald-reagan/facts-about-ronald-reagan>.

<sup>47</sup> “Laura Bush’s Family Favorites,” The White House: President George W. Bush (Archived), accessed March 4, 2023, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/firstlady/initiatives/familyfavorites.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Renee C. Romano et al., *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America’s Past* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 85, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/knowledgecenter/detail.action?docID=5393740>.

treatment of history are “fair game.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, the lesson for people who engage with pieces of popular “history” like *Little House on the Prairie* or *Hamilton* is to be mindful of their creators’ biases. Sometimes those biases can make “historical fiction” more “fiction” than “history.”

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<sup>49</sup> “Lin-Manuel Miranda Says Hamilton Criticism Is ‘Fair Game,’” *The Associated Press*, July 7, 2020, sec. Lin-Manuel Miranda, <https://apnews.com/article/lin-manuel-miranda-archive-04f52c6c2c0141ac95fbfaa76128771>.

## Appendix A



Laura and Almanzo Wilder, 1939

*Laura and Almanzo Wilder Visiting DeSmet, SD, 1939.* 1939. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. <https://hoover.archives.gov/education/rose-wilder-lane-photographs>.



## Appendix B



Rose Wilder Lane, Undated

*Rose Wilder Lane*. n.d. The Institute on Religion and Democracy.

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2018/10/30/rediscovering-freedom-rose-wilder-lane/>.

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An Act to secure Homesteads to actual Settlers on the Public Domain, LXXV § (1862).  
<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/homestead-act>.

I quote the Homestead Act of 1862 when providing an overview of the federal mechanisms that enabled the Wilders to live in the West. From one perspective, the Homestead Act challenges Wilder and Lane's anti-government sentiments by showing how the federal government supported pioneer individualism. Moreover, both the Act and the *Little House* books exhibit a disregard for Native Americans, in that Kansas was not originally the federal government's land to give away.

“Census Bulletin: Population of South Dakota by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions.”  
 Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau, February 1, 1901.  
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/bulletins/demographic/47-population-sd.pdf>.

This source is a 1901 bulletin from the United States Census Bureau about population growth in the Dakota Territories (and, subsequently, North and South Dakota) between 1860 and 1900. While thousands of Americans were pouring across the Ohio River, Fredrick Jackson Turner gave his speech in Chicago celebrating migration westward. The Wilders were among these settlers, having been married in De Smet, South Dakota.

Chicago Daily Tribune. “Signs Missouri Suffrage Bill.” April 6, 1919.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/174446341/citation/24CCC88649014487PQ/1>.

I accessed this 1919 *Chicago Daily Tribune* article through the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database. The article describes how women in Missouri won the right to vote in 1919, one year before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1920. Amid this context of women's liberation, Wilder emerged as an important voice from the Ozarks.

The De Smet Leader. “Married, Wilder--Ingalls.” August 29, 1885. National Endowment for the Humanities Chronicling America.  
<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn00065129/1885-08-29/ed-1/seq-4/>.

The Library of Congress administers a database of historic newspapers, including the *De Smet Leader* (at which Wilder's mother, Carrie, worked as a printer for some time). This edition of the paper announces the nuptials of Laura Ingalls and Almanzo Wilder. I cite this source when briefly discussing Wilder's frontier background in South Dakota.

History of the World's Fair. Chicago, Illinois: World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.  
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012106069>.

In order to tie Wilder and the Frontier thesis together chronologically, I introduce Turner through his 1894 speech at the World's Columbian Exposition, which occurred several hundred miles down the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad from De Smet. This source, which I found through the Hathi Digital Trust database, is the Convention's official history. I also identified a quote from the commissioner, Thomas Barbour Bryan, that I incorporated into my paper.

Lane, Rose Wilder. *The Discovery of Freedom*. New York, NY: The John Day Company, 1943.

Perhaps one of my most important sources, "The Discovery of Freedom" is Rose Wilder Lane's 1943 political treatise, which has since come to be a foundational text for the modern libertarian movement. Specifically, I compare Lane's condemnation of Native Americans and their supposed lack of private property to anti-government and anti-indigenous themes in *Little House on the Prairie*.

*Laura and Almanzo Wilder Visiting DeSmet, SD, 1939*. 1939. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. <https://hoover.archives.gov/education/rose-wilder-lane-photographs>.

For the sake of humanizing Wilder, I include an image of her in my appendix. This image, archived at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, was taken of Wilder and her husband on a trip back to De Smet in 1939.

———. *The Making of Herbert Hoover*. New York, NY: The Century Co, 1920.

One of Lane's first big breaks as a journalist was when she became the first author to publish a biography of Herbert Hoover. While Lane can be credited with introducing Hoover to the American public, she took significant artistic liberties in her book—with Hoover Himself rumored to have wanted it destroyed. I cite "The Making of Herbert Hoover" when addressing her trend of journalistic malpractice, which would later influence the *Little House* series.

The Mansfield Mirror. "Campaigning for NO. 13: Noted Suffragist to Come to Missouri Soon." November 5, 1914. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066901/1914-11-05/ed-1/seq-5/>.

One of the most interesting parts about Laura Ingalls Wilder's life is how closely it tracks to the broader frontier experience, as I suggest through the Frontier Thesis. While Wilder was not a feminist (and was ambivalent about the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment), I argue that her early writing in *The Missouri Ruralist* was only possible because the female frontier experience was finally beginning to be valued. To this end, I cite an article published in *The Mansfield Mirror* about suffragism in the Ozarks, which I accessed via the Library of Congress's "Chronicling America" database.

The New York Times. "Paying for Past Errors: Nature Exacting High Price for Our Exploitation of Resources." March 27, 1938.  
<http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1938/03/27/99538079.html>.

Accessed through the *New York Times*'s TimesMachine archive, this source is a 1938 letter to the editor written by a New York resident who expressed his guilt about the ecological implications of immigration Westward. With regard to Laura Ingalls Wilder, the letter reflects the anti-frontier sentiment that she sought to counteract. Interestingly, we can still feel the implication of prairie settlement today.

The Outlook. "Comment on Current Books: Black's Medical Dictionary The College Man and the College Woman..." New York, United States: American Periodicals Series III, June 9, 1906.  
<https://www.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/136611766/abstract/26671767705D4CA5PQ/3>.

*The Outlook* was a weekly New York City publication that provided reviews of major historical, political, and literary works. To prove that Frederick Jackson Turner has had an important impact in American culture, just like Wilder and Lane, I found *The Outlook*'s 1906 review of one of Turner's historical works.

Roosevelt, Franklin. Executive Order 8875 Establishing the Supply Priorities and Allocations Board. (1941). <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-8875-establishing-the-supply-priorities-and-allocations-board>.

When researching Wilder's aversion to government price control, I noticed that President Franklin—whom she frequently derided—enacted many such measures. For example, Executive Order 8875 created the Supply Priorities and Allocations Board, a successor to the Council of National Defense. I accessed the executive order through the University of California, Santa Barbara's American Presidency Project.

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. "Facts about Ronald Reagan." Accessed March 4, 2023.  
<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/reagans/ronald-reagan/facts-about-ronald-reagan>.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California hosts a list of his favorite books, movies, and television shows. Shortly before President Reagan's election, the *Little House* TV series premiered on national television, which made his list. Thus, I use President Reagan to demonstrate the degree to which the *Little House* universe has impacted the modern conservative movement.

*Rose Wilder Lane*. n.d. The Institute on Religion and Democracy.  
<https://juicyecumenism.com/2018/10/30/rediscovering-freedom-rose-wilder-lane/>.

This source is the image of Rose Wilder Lane that I include in my appendix. I pulled the image from the Institute on Religion and Democracy’s blog.

“Sample Homestead File (for Charles Ingalls).” National Archives, May 11, 1886.  
<https://www.archives.gov/research/land/ingalls>.

I found it ironic that much of the *Little House* series bemoans government and celebrates private property, when, in reality, settlers had their land given to them by the federal government per the Homestead Act of 1862. The National Archives in Washington, D.C. contains the documents that Wilder’s father, Charles Ingalls, prepared to “prove up” ownership of his land in South Dakota by demonstrating the improvements that he had made to it.

Stevens, Albert C. “Analysis of the Phenomena of the Panic in the United States in 1893.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 8, no. 2 (1894): 117–48.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1883708>.

Economist Albert C. Stevens lists the economic causes for the Panic of 1893 in his article “Analysis of the Phenomena of the Panic in the United States in 1893,” which was published the year after. Connecting to the Frontier thesis, Stevens advances the idea that one of the precipitating factors behind the panic was unregulated farming east of the Mississippi River, which caused massive doubts and bank failures. I list this as a primacy source because it is a contemporaneous account of the causes of the Panic.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. Mansfield Centre, Connecticut: Martino Publishing, 1894.

Much of my paper’s analysis focuses on linking Wilder and Lane’s rhetoric to the popular Frontier thesis, where historian Fredrick Jackson Turner argued that the United States could only survive and prosper by expanding westward. Turner’s ideas have largely been discredited by modern historians, though they played a substantial role in giving a voice to the millions of settlers traveling to stake their claim on the prairie. As I write in my paper, Turner gave a speech derived from his book “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in 1894, around the same time that the Wilders were traveling in a covered wagon from South Dakota to Missouri.

The White House: President George W. Bush (Archived). “Laura Bush’s Family Favorites.” Accessed March 4, 2023. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/firstlady/initiatives/familyfavorites.html>.

On the archived website of the Bush White House, I found a list of First Lady Laura Bush’s “family favorites,” which were intended to promote literacy. Bush lists nine books

that she recommends being read out loud to children, including *Little House on the Prairie*. This evidences the *Little House* series as supporting themes of individualism and personal-industry—even though it contains repugnant language about racial minorities.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. “Favors the Small Farm Home.” *Missouri Ruralist*. February 18, 1911. [http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist\\_02\\_18\\_1911.jpg](http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist_02_18_1911.jpg).

As part of my discussion of Wilder’s early writing in the *Missouri Ruralist*, I quote her article “Favors the Small Farm Home” to suggest that her lasting political beliefs were first manifested there. While [pioneergirl.com](http://www.pioneergirl.com), a website that celebrates Wilder’s life, is not an ideal academic source, I was unable to find reliable digital copies of Wilder’s *Ruralist* articles elsewhere.

———. *Little House on the Prairie*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1935.

Any paper about the *Little House* series would be incomplete without including its most famous entry, *Little House on the Prairie*. While conducting my research, one of the first steps was to reread the book so that I understood its implicit and explicit political messages. I quote it when discussing its depiction of Native Americans in Kansas.

———. *Little Town on the Prairie*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1941.

The seventh installment in the *Little House* series, *Little House on the Prairie* tells the story of Laura’s late adolescence and her marriage to Almanzo. Notably for my research, she also has a long internal dialogue about the importance of freedom, free will, and self-determination. I incorporate *Little Town on the Prairie* in my paper when scaffolding my historical argument that the *Little House* books contain strong libertarian undertones.

———. *The Long Winter*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1940.

*The Long Winter* is an instance in the *Little House* universe in which Wilder is fairly explicit about her libertarian leanings. She does not hesitate to defend price gouging out of the classically-*laissez faire* view that the free market is the remedy for misconduct. Given her rhetorical transparency, *The Long Winter* helped me prove the political undertones present throughout the *Little House* series.

———. *On the Way Home: The Diary of a Trip from South Dakota to Mansfield, Missouri, in 1884*. Edited by Rose Wilder Lane. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1962.

In 1962, Lane posthumously published her mother’s notes about their journey from South Dakota to Missouri. Specifically, Lane writes in a post-script that Missouri finally provided a source of rest and relief for her parents after a lifetime of turmoil on the

frontier. In this way, the Ozarks helped to nurture Wilder and form her into a writer later in life.

———. *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography*. Edited by Pamela Smith Hill. Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2014.

In 1932, Wilder finished a draft of *Pioneer Girl*, which later became *Little House in the Big Woods*. This edition includes annotations from staff at the South Dakota Historical Society. In my paper, I discuss how *Pioneer Girl*'s mature stories differ from Wilder's later writing.

———. *The Selected Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. Edited by William Anderson. Harper Perennial, 2017.

One challenge that I faced when looking for primary sources was finding Wilder's personal documents, including letters, given that very few of them have been digitized. "The Selected Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder" was a critical source for my research, then, because it helped me to gain a more authentic and personal view into Wilder's life. For example, she speaks freely and directly in her personal letters about her hatred for Senator Truman and President Roosevelt.

———. "Shorter Hours For Farm Women." *Missouri Ruralist*. June 28, 1913.  
[http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist06\\_28\\_1913a.jpg](http://www.pioneergirl.com/ruralist06_28_1913a.jpg).

Another Wilder article from the *Missouri Ruralist*, "Shorter Hours for Farm Women" argues that women played a critical role on the frontier, and thus should be valued and appreciated. In this case, Wilder begins to develop a feminist-tinge, although she was sure to point out in later writing that she was not, in fact, a feminist. I bring in Wilder's article to my paper to draw connections between the Suffrage movement in the Ozarks and the beginning of Wilder's writing career.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls, and Rose Wilder Lane. *A Little House Sampler*. Edited by William Anderson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.

Published in 1988, *A Little House Sampler* is an anthology of several pieces of Wilder and Lane's more notable work. The book includes a previously unpublished draft of a short story called "Grandpa's Fiddle," written by Lane as an extension of the *Little House* universe. "Grandpa's Fiddle" comes into play in my research when I discuss Lane's anti-indigenous sentiments, given that she minimizes pre-Columbian American history.

Wilder, Rose. "Ups and Downs of Modern Mercury." *San Francisco Call*. September 20, 1908.  
<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=SFC19080920&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN----->.

Shortly after moving to San Francisco in 1908, Rose Wilder Lane began her career in writing at the *San Francisco Call*. The turn of the century was the golden age of Yellow

journalism, which is characterized by lurid details, factual inaccuracy, and blatant political bias. In many ways, the articles that Wilder wrote for the *Call*, which is archived at the University of California, Riverside, resemble her later writing with her mother. The article was published shortly before Rose married, hence the use of her maiden name.



## Secondary Sources

Birzer, McDonald. “Three Women Writers Who Defended Liberty in an Age of Collectivism.” *National Review*, December 15, 2022. <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2022/12/30/three-women-writers-who-defended-liberty-in-an-age-of-collectivism/>.

The *National Review* is one of the predominant magazines on the American right. This article, a book review, discusses Rose Wilder Lane’s influence on the American libertarian movement. Particularly, it mentions how William F. Buckley associated her with libertarian heavyweights like Ayn Rand and Isabel Paterson, which proves the lasting political impact of the *Little House* books.

Bogue, Allan G. “Frederick Jackson Turner Reconsidered.” *The History Teacher* 27, no. 2 (1994): 195–221. <https://doi.org/10.2307/494720>.

Throughout my essay, I weave in the perspective of Frederick Jackson Turner, who famously argued that the West was the next great frontier of American civilization. In “Frederick Jackson Turner Reconsidered,” history teacher Allan Bogue reflects on Turner’s legacy and lasting impact. Bogue’s article was especially helpful to my analysis insofar as it showed me to contextualize how modern historians interact with Turner’s ideas.

Burns, Jennifer. “The Three ‘Furies’ of Libertarianism: Rose Wilder Lane, Isabel Paterson, and Ayn Rand.” *The Journal of American History* 102, no. 3 (2015): 746–74. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44286642>.

While some level of historical fiction is permissible (though certainly not when it is racist), I contend that one significant problem with the *Little House* books was how Wilder and Lane weaponized their historical liberties to push a political point. In her article “The Three ‘Furies’ of Libertarianism: Rose Wilder Lane, Isabel Paterson, and Ayn Rand,” political scholar Jennifer Burns considers the role of women, as described by conservative intellectual William F. Buckley, in the early libertarian movement. Notably, Buckley places Lane among the likes of Ayn Rand, who was one of the most important political novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Celebertainment. “Lin-Manuel Miranda Says Hamilton Criticism Is ‘Fair Game.’” AP NEWS, July 7, 2020, sec. Lin-Manuel Miranda. <https://apnews.com/article/lin-manuel-miranda-archive-04f52c6c2c0141ac95fbfbaa76128771>.

Throughout my essay, I was cognizant not to attack conservatism itself; while Wilder and Lane were Republicans, my thesis relates to their shaky use of history, not politics. I

decided to bring in Lin-Manuel Miranda's dubious relationship with Alexander Hamilton's true background and beliefs as an example of people on the political left engaging in a similar selective-retelling of history. In this article, the Associated Press reports on Miranda's conceding that historical criticisms of his musical are "fair game."

Cronon, William. "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1987): 157–76.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/969581>.

William Cronon's 1987 article, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," was another source that I used to help understand how modern historians view Frederick Jackson Turner's legacy. In his article, Cronon's central point is that Turner's thesis was so important in giving a voice to the American frontier that we can never truly escape it, even as we begin to understand its negative implications. Indeed, Turner's thesis has permeated many aspects of everyday life, as I argue, including children's literature.

Fellman, Anita Clair. "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Politics of a Mother-Daughter Relationship." *Signs* 15, no. 3 (1990): 535–61.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174427>.

Published in 1990, "Laura Ingalls Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane: The Politics of a Mother-Daughter Relationship" analyzes how Lane used her background in Yellow journalism to at first convince her mother (reluctantly) to stray from her true biography. The article's author, Anita Clair Fellman, specializes in studying mother/daughter familial relationships, and thus the article focuses specifically on how their relationship shifted as the *Little House* books gained popularity. While I did not have space to discuss Fellman's full analysis, her article did help me scaffold my argument about Lane's influence on her mother.

Fraser, Caroline. *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*. New York, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2017.

One of the first steps of my research was reading Caroline Fraser's celebrated biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder. In it, she charts Wilder's birth in the woods of Wisconsin to her marriage in De Smet to her writing career in the Ozarks. Fraser's work was critical to helping me build a timeline of Wilder's life, especially in that she incorporates primary source material that I could not find readily available in archives or online.

Greer, Allan. "Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America." *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (2012): 365–86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23310740>.

Continuing a theme throughout her and her mother's work, Lane takes an extremely unsympathetic view towards Native Americans in her libertarian monograph "The

Discovery of Freedom,” decrying them as communists who lacked private property. Canadian scholar Allan Greer does not specifically reference Lane, though he describes this claim as historically dubious for two reasons. First, it discounts the common indigenous practice of willing farming plots to descendants, and second, it supposes that indigenous people are backwards for lacking land—even though the system served them well for generations.

Holtz, William. “Sinclair Lewis, Rose Wilder Lane, and the Midwestern Short Novel.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1987): 41.

<https://unr.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=7151249&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

Given Rose Wilder Lane’s lack of journalistic credibility, I was surprised to learn that she was close friends with Nobel-Prize-winning writer Sinclair Lewis and his equally well-pedigreed journalist wife Dorothy Thompson, who was an early enemy of Adolf Hitler. These friendships, which William Holtz elaborates on in his 1987 article, demonstrate how ingrained Lane became in the upper echelons of the literary intelligentsia. More specifically, they also show how Lane was able to draw on her writing colleagues to support Wilder’s work, beyond her mother’s intentions.

———. *The Ghost in the Little House: A Life of Rose Wilder Lane*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1993.

Missouri historian William Holtz chronicles Rose Wilder Lane’s troubled life, from when she was accused as a girl of burning down her parent’s home to her later battles with depression, in his book “The Ghost in the Little House.” The book’s title alludes to the massive impact that Lane had on her mother’s story-telling; she was not physically in the *Little House* series, but she nevertheless influenced their political direction. Holtz’s book was useful to my research because it takes a thorough look at the roots of Lane’s anti-New Deal sentiments.

McLeman, Robert A., Juliette Dupre, Lea Berrang Ford, James Ford, Konrad Gajewski, and Gregory Marchildon. “What We Learned from the Dust Bowl: Lessons in Science, Policy, and Adaptation.” *Population and Environment* 35, no. 4 (2014): 417–40. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-013-0190-z>.

Part of the reason why Wilder and Lane vehemently opposed President Roosevelt, as I argue, is that the New Deal marked a turn from the celebration of the frontier in their books. Across the West, farms were devastated in the 1930s by drought and dust storms—which were largely the result of unbridled migration and development. In “What We Learned from the Dust Bowl: Lessons in Science, Policy, and Adaptation,” published in the peer-reviewed journal *Population and Environment*, a group of environmental scientists discuss the human causes behind the Dust Bowl.

Miller, John E. *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman Behind the Legend*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1998.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/knowledgecenter/detail.action?docID=3570911>.

Something that I thought was lacking from Fraser's biography of Wilder was a clear and concise explanation of how *Little House in the Big Woods*, the first *Little House* book, was published. Miller, one of the preeminent Wilder scholars, provides just that in his 1998 book "Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman Behind the Legend." While I was cautious not to rely too heavily on one source, I found Miller's book especially important in piecing together the different figures who each had an influence over *Little House in the Big Woods*—and thus moved the book further and further away from Wilder's childhood stories.

———. "Freedom and Control in Laura Ingalls Wilder's De Smet." *Great Plains Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1989): 27–35. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23530886>.

Miller's 1989 article "Freedom and Control in Laura Ingalls Wilder's De Smet" is about the social context in which Wilder spent her formative years. Particularly, Miller focuses on how opposition to the railroad on De Smet shaped her outlook on ideals of freedom later in life. I did not have enough words to address this content, though I found Miller's article helpful in understanding Wilder's later political views.

Mises Institute. "The Discovery of Freedom," August 18, 2014.  
<https://mises.org/library/discovery-freedom>.

In an uncredited page on its website, the free-market Mises Institute celebrates Rose Wilder Lane as an "American original" and a "treasure." The institute continues by describing the accolades of her book "The Discovery of Freedom," from which I include libertarian activist Robert LeFevre's quote about its influence. As I allude to, Lane could not have made such strides in the libertarian movement if not for her mother's fictitious autobiographical writing.

Preston, Samuel H., and Michael R. Haines. *Fatal Years: Child Mortality in Late Nineteenth-Century America*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991.  
<http://www.nber.org/chapters/c11541>.

One point that I make in my paper is that Laura Ingalls Wilder's life experience closely tracks the experiences of frontier settlers more broadly. For example, she lost a child twelve days after birth at a time when the national infant mortality rate was 15%, and even larger on the prairie. This loss stayed with her for the rest of her life.

Romano, Renee C., Jeffrey L. Pasley, Claire Bond Potter, William Hogeland, Joanne B. Freeman, Lyra D. Monteiro, Leslie M. Harris, Catherine Allgor, Michael O'Malley, and

David Waldstreicher. *Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America's Past*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2018.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/knowledgecenter/detail.action?docID=5393740>.

“Historians on Hamilton: How a Blockbuster Musical Is Restaging America's Past” is a popular book written by historians at Rutgers University in New Jersey about the historical accuracy—or lack thereof—of the musical “Hamilton.” While several of the historians included speak positively of the musical, the vast majority believe that it distorts historical truth in attempting to paint Hamilton as an anti-slavery crusader. I brought in “Historians on Hamilton” as part of my conclusion.

Romines, Ann. *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls Wilder*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.

In her book “Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls Wilder,” English professor and gender scholar Ann Romines explores how Lane and Wilder's gender impacted their ability to be published in the popular press. Romines also includes a primary source from one of Lane's literary confidants about *Pioneer Girl* lacking “enough high points or crescendo.” Romines' book aided my research by proving that Wilder and Lane were more motivated by fame, financial gain, and American exceptionalism than they were by historical accuracy.

Showalter, Elaine. “Review | At 150, Laura Ingalls Wilder Still Speaks to Readers Old and New.” *The Washington Post*, February 6, 2017, sec. Books.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/at-150-laura-ingalls-wilder-still-speaks-to-readers-old-and-new/2017/02/05/81eefb24-e98e-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/at-150-laura-ingalls-wilder-still-speaks-to-readers-old-and-new/2017/02/05/81eefb24-e98e-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c_story.html).

I mainly used Elaine Showalter's 2017 *Washington Post* article in my introduction because it includes statistics about the sales of the *Little House* books both domestically and internationally. Given how popular the books have been, they taught generations of children biased historical revisionism with significant racial animosity.

Smulders, Sharon. ““The Only Good Indian’: History, Race, and Representation in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*.” *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2002): 191–202. <https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.0.1688>.

In my paper, I write about how one of the principal problems with Wilder's shaky relationship with history is that she generalizes the *Little House* books, and thus her racist utterances, to be representative of the American experience. In this peer-reviewed article, literary scholar Sharon Smulders includes an anecdote about a speech that Wilder gave in Detroit in 1937, where she writes about wanting children to better understand her history. But the history that Wilder speaks of was not, in fact, the true reality of the United States.

Wissler, Clark. "Changes in Population Profiles Among the Northern Plains Indians."  
Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History. New York, NY:  
The American Museum of Natural History, 1936.

"Changes in Population Profiles Among the Northern Plains Indians" is a series of papers published by the American Museum of Natural History, of which the University of Nevada, Reno houses a copy in its archives. The papers describe the significant demographic drop-offs among indigenous people as white settlers pushed them out of their land. "Changes in Population Profiles Among the Northern Plains Indians" benefited my research by helping me to show one impact of the Frontier thesis.