

Site Manual

**Laura Ingalls Wilder
Books**

and

**The
Taylor County Historical
Museum**

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Some Thoughts for Docents or Museum Guides

As guides we are interpreters. We help visitors look at objects effectively.

Objects in the Museum

Artifacts

An artifact is an original thing or object that has been made by people. The word comes from two Latin words: "ars" which means art and "facere" which means to make. Artifacts in a museum have stories to tell. By looking carefully we can often learn their stories.

Reproductions

An authentic reproduction is an exact replica of an artifact. It is often made in a later time period.

Model

A replica of an object that may be smaller or larger than the real thing so that its parts can be observed. It may be built so the inside can be seen or it may be a working model that demonstrates how something operates.

Specimen or Mount

We often use these terms to describe a stuffed animal that was once alive or a preserved creature such as an insect.

Helping Visitors Observe Carefully so They Can Make Educated Guesses about Objects and Their Uses

Words and names are useful. Labels help everyone.

Questions I Could Ask Myself or Others

- How can I describe this object? Color, material, moving parts, etc.
- What do I already know that helps me know about this object?
- What were some questions I had before I came?
- How is the object like something I use now?
- Where might it have been used? Kitchen, farm, work area, play area, etc.
- How is this object like something I use now?
- How is this object like other things in the museum?
- Is something like this object still being used today?
- Who made the object or used it? When was it used?
- How was the object made? Handmade? Machine made?
- What uses could I think of for this object?
- Why might this object have been important? To whom?
- What customs, ideas, or values does this object represent?

Things to Remember for a Good Museum Visit

- Look with your eyes and not with your hands. In a museum we try not to touch objects because:
 - Oil from our skin may make the object stick and dirty.
 - Some objects are very old and breakable and cannot be replaced.
- Walk. Do not run. We could easily bump into something.
- Speak in a quiet voice so others can hear.
- Stay with your group or your partner.
- Listen quietly when a guide is speaking
- Raise your hand if you have a question, want to answer a question, or need to say something.
- Use only pencils in a museum to take notes. Pens or ink could damage the objects.
- * Try to stand so that others can see, too. Take turns if the space is small.

Notes to Guides

- Watch to see that children do not become too warm, too cold, or too tired from standing.
- Regulate your own voice so that your group can hear you but that you are not competing with another group or speaker.
- Sometimes one visitor may wish to tell all about his or her many experiences. Invite him or her to make a note of the ideas and share later.
- Do allow opportunity for questions and some sharing.
- Be compassionate and aware of visitor needs.
- Check out the locations of rest rooms, phones, emergency exits and other resources before you give a tour.

Notes

Site Manual
Laura Ingalls Wilder Books
Artifacts in the Little House Books and Our Museum

Laura Ingalls Wilder, who wrote the "Little House" books, was born in 1867 in Pepin, Wisconsin. She lived until 1957 when she was ninety years old. She wrote about her life as a little girl in the big woods of Wisconsin and on the prairies where she moved by covered wagon. She lived in Wisconsin when she was about six years old. That was just the same time that the first permanent settlers came to Medford.

Many of the objects or artifacts in the Taylor County Historical Museum were used by people here in Taylor County from the 1870's through the early 1900's. Laura and her family used the same kinds of things.

See how many of the things named in the "Little House" books you can find in the museum. The objects are listed under the names of the books where they are described. The page numbers may vary depending upon the edition of the book you are using.

Little House in the Big Woods

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Log house	Chapter 1	Compare the description with the log house in our museum.
_____	Cook stove	pp. 15, 17, 19, 182	
_____	Butchering tools	pp. 13-18	Look for our meat grinder and the big iron caldron.
_____	Traps	pp. 21, 24	Pa greased the traps before he set them.
_____	Wooden bowl, paddle and butter churn	pp. 30-33	How were these used to make butter?
_____	Cheese boxes	pp. 189-191	How was cheese made?
_____	Kerosene lamp	p. 38	
_____	Fiddle	pp. 37, 73, 99, 236-237	Pa played his violin or fiddle for many occasions.
_____	Dolls	pp. 20, 33, 75-76	Corn cob dolls, paper dolls, rag dolls
_____	Wooden shoulder yoke	p. 135	People could carry heavy buckets by using a yoke on their shoulders.
_____	Military uniform	p. 136	Uncle George had a Civil War army coat. We have uniforms from other wars.
_____	Galluses	p. 168	When Pa bought these at the store he bought suspenders.
_____	Grain cradle	Chapter 11 - Harvest p. 200	Picture of Pa cutting grain with a cradle.
_____	Whetstone	p. 203	Stone used to sharpen the blade of a cradle scythe.
_____	Plow	p. 168	
_____	Saws	p. 168	Tools that were for sale in the store in Pepin.
_____	Hammer heads	p. 168	
_____	Ax heads	p. 168	
_____	Knives	p. 168	

Little House on the Prairie

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Covered wagon Going West	Chapter 1	Packing a covered wagon to leave the Big Woods.
_____		Chapter 26 Going Out	Packing a covered Wagon again to leave Indian Territory.
_____	Building a log house Roof Chinking Floor	pp. 56-65 pp. 123-126 p. 130 pp. 128-129	Compare the description with our cabin.
_____	Auger	p. 101	Used as a tool to bore holes.
_____	Iron pots, bake oven and spider	p. 30	
_____	Sadiron	p. 47	How are the heavy metal irons different from those we use today?
_____	Coffee mill	p. 30	
_____	Quilts	pp. 78, 114, 119	They used quilts for beds and for a door. They pieced a quilt patch.
_____	Soap	p. 42	
_____	Bootjack	p. 260	
_____	Rocking chair	pp. 194-196	Have you seen furniture made of willow twigs?
_____	Fiddle	pp. 5, 50, 65-69, 334-335	
_____	Plow	pp. 274, 279	

On the Banks of Plum Creek

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Covered wagon	Chapter 1	The family traveled to Minnesota by covered wagon and horses and traded them for land and oxen.
_____	Scythe	Chapter 8	They cut wheat with a scythe.
_____	Wooden rake	p. 52	They raked hay into stacks.
_____	Ox yoke	p. 52	They yoked oxen to a wagon.
_____	Cookstove	pp. 114-116	Compare the stove in the story to the one in the museum
_____	Blacksmith shop	p. 144	Look at the blacksmith tools.
_____	Kerosene can	p. 243	Pa got kerosene at the store.
_____	Pots, pans, lamps, lanterns, plows, nails, hammers, hatchets, knives		Things to buy at the store.
_____	Dolls	pp. 230-231	Paper dolls and rag dolls

Farmer Boy

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Ox yoke	Chapter 5	How did Almanzo train his calves to behave like big oxen?
_____	Shaving knife	p. 59	Used to make shingles thinner at one edge
_____	Froe (frow)	p. 58	Picture of a kind of ax used to split off pieces of a log for shingles.
_____	Cross cut saw	pp. 67-68	Long saws with two handles
_____	Ice tongs	pp. 65, 69 Chapter 6	Describes filling the ice house.
_____	Caldron	pp. 110, 164	Big iron pot used outdoors to make soap and to boil maple sap.
_____	Churn	pp. 198-199	A barrel churn was used to make butter.
_____	Rake	p. 231	A wooden rake was used to make windrows.
_____	Grindstone	p. 228	They sharpened tools with a big stone that could be turned. (Picture)
_____	Scythe	p. 229	Used to cut grass and grain.
_____	Grain cradle	p. 233	Grain was cut with a special scythe.
_____	Fanning mill	p. 309	They fanned the grain to clean out the dirt.

Little Town on the Prairie

_____	Sewing machine	Chapter 5	A storekeeper in town bought a sewing machine to have someone sew shirts for the settlers. Laura did hand sewing to earn money.
_____	Dipper	pp. 77-78	Lemonade for a 4th of July picnic was made in a barrel. Everyone drank it from the same dipper.
_____	Trunk	pp. 108-109	Pa bought a new trunk for Mary to take to college.
_____	Lamps and lanterns	pp. 213, 228	
_____	Organ	pp. 222-223	The one person in town who had an organ let others borrow it.
_____	Autograph album	pp. 123, 184, 188-189	Pa and Ma brought autograph albums from Iowa for Laura and Carrie. That was about 1881. The books were very popular then. The autograph book in the museum belonged to Mrs. Emma LeSage, a Medford doctor's wife. She used it in about 1880.

Here are copies from some of the pages in Mrs. LeSage's autograph book.

Compliments of your friend
Emily
Sheboygan June 13 '78

Emma:

Many be the blessings, that heaven
may send to you.
Many be the friends, that wish this
as I do.
Sheboygan May 12, 1878 Emma Heyer

Though the world smile on you blandly;
Let your friends be choice and few,
Choose your course, pursue it grandly,
And achieve what you pursue.
Your friend
Mary Bredemeyer

Eiwards, Apr. 14 th 179

"There is a gift that is almost a
blow, and there is a kind word that is
munificence; so much is there in the
way of doing things."
Albert Rabe Jr.

Sheboygan 12/19/78

May joy and happiness be yours forever.
Your friend,
Sophie Bredemeyer

April 3, 1879
Friend Emma
Desire not to live long,
but to live well;
How long we may live
not years, but actions tell.

Hugo C. Leberman

Sheboygan Dec 20th '78

Under the shade of a great oak tree,
sat three maidens full of glee.
Em, remember the original of this.
Yours very truly -
One of the Three

Dubuque Aug 3rd 1880

Models or Replicas

Artifacts in a museum are kept in glass cases so that they cannot be damaged by being touched or handled. Sometimes a museum will have models and replicas on touch-and-feel tables so visitors can examine them. Our museum has replicas and photographs of some of the objects in the "Little House" books.

Corncob Dolls

Children used corncobs, corn husks, and corn silk to make dolls for themselves. They might use a bit of cloth or an old handkerchief for a blanket.

Laura's Corncob Doll

This is what Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about her corn cob doll.

"Mary was bigger than Laura, and she had a rag doll named Nettie. Laura had only a corncob wrapped in a handkerchief, but it was a good doll. It was named Susan. It wasn't Susan's fault that she was only a corncob. Sometimes Mary let Laura hold Nettie, but she did it only when Susan couldn't see.

Rag Dolls

Volunteers for the Taylor County Museum made rag dolls like the kind pioneer mothers made for their children. They used whatever cloth they had in their scrap bag. Sometimes the dolls were stuffed with cloth, or bran, or sawdust.

Laura's Rag Doll

Read the description of the rag doll Laura Ingalls got for Christmas.

"Laura had a rag doll. She was a beautiful doll. She had a face of white cloth with black button eyes. A black pencil had made her eyebrows, and her cheeks and her mouth were red with the inks made from pokeberries. Her hair was black yarn that had been knit and raveled, so that it was curly. She had red flannel stockings and little black cloth gaiters for shoes, and her dress was pretty pink and blue calico."

"She was so beautiful that Laura could not say a word. She just held her tight and forget everything else. She named her Charlotte."

China Dolls

This is a photo of a China doll head that was found in a field just east of the Medford Elementary School. Walter Kuse found it when he was plowing a field near the place where the Lawrence Johnson cabin stood. The Johnsons had a cabin there in 1874. Maybe the doll belonged to little Carrie Johnson.

Paper Dolls

Sometimes mothers drew and cut out paper dolls for their children. Sometimes the children traced or cut a doll from a catalog or newspaper. They made clothes for them from cloth or paper scraps.

These paper dolls are replicas of the kinds mothers or children could make from scraps.

Remember, paper was scarce so wrapping paper and other paper had to be recycled. Children did not have crayons. The family might have a pencil, some ink, and maybe one or two colored pencils. Mother might give them tiny scraps of cloth or ribbon from her scrap bag to glue to the paper.

This is what Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about paper dolls.

"After the day's work was done Ma sometimes cut paper dolls for them. She cut the dolls out of stiff white paper, and drew the faces with a pencil. Then from bits of colored paper she cut dresses and hats, ribbons and laces, so that Laura and Mary could dress their dolls beautifully."

Make Your Own Dolls

You could make old fashioned dolls like these. Look at old family pictures. Draw or photocopy the people. Make costumes like the ones your ancestors wore.

Homemade Soap

Early settlers made soap from used grease and drippings. They added lye and stirred it in a big iron or enamelware pot. Then they poured it into a wooden box to get hard and cut it into bars. Sometimes they made their own lye by running water through wood ashes. The lye was not as strong as the kind they bought at a store. The soap did not get hard. They called it soft soap.

Wild Animals

You can see animals named in the "Little House" books by Laura Ingalls Wilder in the Taylor County Historical Museum. Laura and her family saw many wild animals in the woods or on the prairies. Pa hunted some for food and trapped some so he could sell or trade their furs.

The museum has a display of more than 200 mounted animals donated by Mr. Ed Czarneski, a Medford taxidermist. Mr. Czarneski was over eighty years old when he gave his collection to the museum in 1992. More than ninety per cent of the animals were collected in or near Taylor County. Some were caught more than seventy-five years ago when more wild animals lived near here. Mr. Czarneski also painted the scenery and backgrounds for the displays. The museum also has a video tape that shows Mr. Czarneski at work as he helped to put up the display.

Mr. Czarneski used common names for the animals when he made labels for the display. Scientific names have been added so that people from anywhere can identify the animals. Such names also help researchers find more information on the Internet or other sources.

Can you find animals that Laura Ingalls Wilder described in her books? If you have a copy of the list you might place a check mark in front of the names of animals you see. (Page numbers may vary, depending upon a hard cover or paper back edition is used.)

Little House in the Big Woods

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Animal</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Deer	pp. 4-5 and Chapter 13	Venison for food. Deer Pa didn't shoot
_____	Bear	pp. 5, 11, 101-116, 194-198	Story of Two Big Bears Bear and bee tree
_____	Muskrats	p. 2, 24	Animals that lived in the woods, animals Pa trapped, or animal tracks the children saw.
_____	Mink	pp. 2, 24	
_____	Otter	p. 2	
_____	Foxes	pp. 2, 24, 132	
_____	Rabbits	pp. 54, 132	
_____	Red squirrels	p. 54	
_____	Chipmunks	p. 54	
_____	Owl	p. 58	Pa and the voice in the woods.

Little House on the Prairie

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Animal</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Jackrabbit	pp. 14, 41, 49, 65, 121-122, 278	Jackrabbits seen on the prairie or eaten for food
_____	Squirrels	pp. 49, 109	
_____	Gophers	pp. 43, 282	In their holes or after a prairie fire.
_____	Frogs	pp. 110, 170, 210	
_____	Deer	pp. 49, 108, 182	Hundreds of deer
_____	Antelope	p. 49	Laura's family saw these animals on the prairie. The animal Mr. Czarneski mounted was taken by hunters on a trip out West and not in Wisconsin.
_____	Snakes	pp. 21, 109	Some harmless and others not.
_____	Animals Used for Furs		
_____	Rabbits	p. 233	Caps were made for the family
_____	Muskrat	p. 233	
_____	Red fox	p. 233	Pa sold furs and bought a plow with the money.
_____	Beaver	pp. 233-234	
_____	Mink	p. 233	
_____	Birds of Many Kinds		
_____	Hawks	p. 44	Gophers vanished when hawks appeared.
_____	Ducks	p. 205	
_____	Wild turkeys	p. 205	
_____	Canada goose	p. 200	Honked as they migrated
_____	Prairie chickens	pp. 41, 49, 121	Often eaten for food by Laura's family.

Children in the story saw birds that are not in the museum display but that you can see here in Taylor County. Have you seen them?

_____	Meadow larks	p. 39	
_____	Dickcissals	pp. 40, 43, 107	Children called them Dickie birds. There are a few in Taylor County.
_____	Blue jays	p. 182	Liked to eat berries that Laura and Ma picked.
_____	Crows	p. 172	
_____	Phoebe-birds	p. 50	

On the Banks of Plum Creek

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Animal</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Badger	Chapter 5	The strange animal that kept Laura from going to the deep water.
_____	Muskrat, mink, otter, fox, beaver	p. 282	Animals that Pa trapped for furs to sell.
_____	Fish - Pickerel, catfish, shiners, bullheads	p. 139	Fish Pa caught in his fish trap.
_____	Birds - Blue heron, snipes, prairie hens	p. 142	Birds the girls saw on the way to school
_____	Wild goose	p. 81	Shot for Thanksgiving meal

Little Town on the Prairie

<u>Did you see it?</u>	<u>Animal</u>	<u>Page or Chapter</u>	<u>Other Information</u>
_____	Gophers	Chapter 3, p. 20	Gophers ate the crops.
_____	Mice	Chapter 3, pp. 20-21, 32-33	A cat was necessary to have. No cat was in the settlement. Mice were everywhere. The storekeeper had a cat shipped in. Pa bought a kitten.
_____	Blackbirds	pp. 98-106	Blackbirds ate the oats and corn crops. The family ate blackbirds.