

LAURA INGALLS WILDER

# Little House on the Prairie



ILLUSTRATED BY GARTH WILLIAMS





## GOING WEST

**A** long time ago, when all the grandfathers and grandmothers of today were little boys and little girls or very small babies, or perhaps not even born, Pa and Ma and Mary and Laura and Baby Carrie left their little house in the Big Woods of Wisconsin. They drove away and left it lonely and empty in the clearing among the big trees, and they never saw that little house again.

They were going to the Indian country.

Pa said there were too many people in the Big Woods now. Quite often Laura heard the ringing thud of an ax which was not Pa's ax, or



the echo of a shot that did not come from his gun. The path that went by the little house had become a road. Almost every day Laura and Mary stopped their playing and stared in surprise at a wagon slowly creaking by on that road.

Wild animals would not stay in a country where there were so many people. Pa did not like to stay, either. He liked a country where the wild animals lived without being afraid. He liked to see the little fawns and their mothers looking at him from the shadowy woods, and the fat, lazy bears eating berries in the wild-berry patches.

In the long winter evenings he talked to Ma 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.

One day in the very last of the winter Pa said to Ma, "Seeing you don't object, I've decided to go see the West. I've had an offer for this place, and we can sell it now for as much as

## LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

we're ever likely to get, enough to give us a start in a new country."

"Oh, Charles, must we go now?" Ma said. The weather was so cold and the snug house was so comfortable.

"If we are going this year, we must go now," said Pa. "We can't get across the Mississippi after the ice breaks."

So Pa sold the little house. He sold the cow and calf. He made hickory bows and fastened them upright to the wagon-box. Ma helped him stretch white canvas over them.

In the thin dark before morning Ma gently shook Mary and Laura till they got up. In fire-light and candlelight she washed and combed them and dressed them warmly. Over their long red-flannel underwear she put wool petticoats and wool dresses and long wool stockings. She put their coats on them, and their rabbit-skin hoods and their red yarn mittens.

Everything from the little house was in the wagon, except the beds and tables and chairs. They did not need to take these, because Pa could always make new ones.

There was thin snow on the ground. The air was still and cold and dark. The bare trees



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
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