



Pages of the Past

CELEBRATING
HISTORICAL FICTION

Vol. 1, No. 27, October 4, 2019

In this issue:

- Eating an Elephant
- Author Spotlight: Laura Ingalls Wilder
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1940s

From the Editor

This week we're doing something a little different for our Author Spotlight. We're interviewing (kind of) a well-known author from the past – Laura Ingalls Wilder. I was excited to learn that she didn't have her Little House on the Prairie books published until she was in her mid and late 60s. But that doesn't mean she turned 60, picked up a pencil, and started writing.

Oh no! Although these books, published in her later years, are what she's most known for, she had the same trail as a novice that we all have to travel. I was surprised to discover this past week that she had twenty years of writing for farm journals, magazines, and newspapers before her books were published.

Borrowing a few of her words from her earlier writing projects, re-published in *Little House in the Ozarks*, we've cobbled together a mock interview. I hope it works.

The book era that we're featuring this week is the 1940s. We're sharing two books from this time period, both written by authors that we've spotlighted in the last month or two: *Whom Shall I Fear*, by Anne Clare and *On the Homefront*, by Barb Warner Deane.

Wishing you a wonderful weekend full of delightful books!

Trisha

texastrishafaye@yahoo.com

Eating an Elephant

I'm sure you've heard the answer to the question – How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. The same method applies to writing your family history. Often it's hard to get started on a project that seems so large and overwhelming. So instead, we do nothing.

When I'm feeling that there's too much to do, or I'm not sure what direction I need to head in next, I'll sit down with a few sheets of paper and break the project into smaller bite-size tasks. I end up with a lot of

lists, but it gives me a good overview of what I still need to do. On the days I can fit in an hour or two on the project, I scan through these pages that I keep in the front of the file and find something that I can accomplish in the time I have available.

One page may be titled 'Interviews.' I'll list the names of people I want to talk to. Who can I call? Who can I write to? Who can I message on Facebook? Are there specific stories I want to ask about, or certain times in their life, or do I simply want to let them talk as I record or make notes?

Another page may be 'Research.' What books do I want to look for? What subjects can I research online? What places do I want to visit? Are there local historical societies that may provide nuggets of additional information?

'Timeline' may be another. I might start outlining the period I want to write about, and start inserting names, dates, and incidents on the timeline, trying to get a jumble of notes line up into a semblance of organization.

I may have some pages for 'Characters', where I'll begin adding details to each person's page. Having everything handy on one page sure saves a lot of time later on. Initially I didn't do this, and I can't count how many hours I spent combing through a notebook and three legal pads full of notes, looking for that one date or name I needed.

When you do this and have a handful of pages of smaller tasks, it's easier to check them off one at a time, with every fifteen minutes or every hour you have available. One bite at a time – and soon you're whole elephant is beginning to look like a manageable project after all.



[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>



This week's author spotlight is a little different. I was amazed to discover that although Laura Ingalls Wilder's books weren't published until she was in her 60's, she had been writing articles for twenty years before her books were published. In 1911, she was invited to submit an article to the *Missouri Ruralist* that led to a permanent columnist position with that publication until the mid-1920s.

Today, we're visiting with a name that many of you may know from the *Little House on the Prairie* series, Laura Ingalls Wilder. Kind of. Okay. Not much. I've added a little fictional narrative here – but everything in quotes is Wilder's own words, excepting a quote from her editor, John F. Case.



Welcome, Mrs. Wilder. It's great to have you as a guest today at Pages of the Past. I've been reading some of your earlier articles and with all that you had to do on the farm, I'm amazed that you found the time to write. I know many of our writers here at Pages of the Past struggle with trying to squeeze writing time in between our many obligations. What are your thoughts on finding writing time?

It's a pleasure to be here today with Pages of the Past. My goodness, we're talking about 'the past', but for some odd reason, I feel as if I've jumped into the future. But, be it now or then, I'll just have to say, yes, the farm kept us both very busy. From sunup to sundown. But writing was such a pleasure, I always found time to include it in my life. To avoid repeating myself, let me share these words. My editor, John F. Case, interviewed me in February 1918 and here's what he wrote in his article, '*Let's Visit Mrs.*

Wilder.'

"One may wonder that so busy a person, as Mrs. Wilder has proved to be, can find time to write. "I always have been a busy person," she says, "doing my own housework, helping the Man of the Place when help could not be obtained; but I love to work. And it is a pleasure to write. And, oh, I do just love to play! The days never have been long enough to do the things I would like to do. Every

year has held more of interest than the year before.” Folks who possess that kind of spirit get a lot of joy out of life as they travel the long road.”

From South Dakota to Florida and back to Missouri. How did you end up settling in Missouri on the farm your Rocky Ridge Farm?

I shared a little bit about how we came to be on our little farm that I wrote in *‘Our Little Place in the Ozarks’*, published in December 1923.

“When we came to Missouri in 1894, we were looking for a place where the family health might make a good average, for one of us was not able to stand the severe cold of the North, while another could not live in the low altitude and humid heat of the Southern states.

It was before the days of “Tin Can Tourists,” and we traveled with a team and covered wagon. It was rather unpleasant journeying in the heat of summer, but as we climbed into the hills this side of Springfield, the air grew fresher and more invigorating the further we went until, in Wright County, we found the place we were seeking. It was far enough south so that the winters were mild, high enough for the air to be pure and bracing, sheltered in the hills from the strong winds of the West, yet with little breezes always blowing among them, with plenty of wood for fuel and timber and rocks for building, with low lands for cultivation and upland bluegrass pastures for grazing, with game in the woods and fish in the rivers, and springs of pure, cold, mountain water everywhere.”

I know that many of us complain about never having enough time to write – or not having enough time to read all that we want to. There are so many demands on our time. With all you’ve written – while maintaining your farm with all the myriad tasks that fill your day – you must have discovered a solution. Can you share a few tips with us?

Absolutely! There are so many time-saving devices that have entered our lives, freeing up extra time during the day. I wrote a little about this in my article, *‘The March of Progress’*, which was published in February 1911.

“...I must say if there are any country women who are wasting their time envying their sisters in the city – don’t do it. Such an attitude is out of date. Wake up to your opportunities. Look your place over, and if you have not kept up with the modern improvements and conveniences in your home, bring yourself up to date. Then take the time saved from bringing water from the spring, setting the milk in the old way, and churning by hand to build yourself a better social life. If you don’t take a daily paper, subscribe to one. They are not expensive and are well worth the price in the brightening they will give your mind, and in the pleasant evenings, you can have reading and discussing the news of the world.

Take advantage of the circulating library...”

Laura, you’ve written a lot of non-fiction articles for the farm papers, and now your Little House on the Prairie books are out too. While based on your early childhood experiences, they are told in a fictional manner. Are these the only two genres you write in?

While the largest portion of my writing is either the non-fiction articles or my beloved Little House on the Prairie books, I’ve also dabbled a bit with some poetry. In fact, while I was visiting my daughter Rose in

San Francisco in 1915, several of my poems were published by the *San Francisco Bulletin*. Here is one that they published in April 1915.

Naughty Four O'Clocks

There were some naughty flowers once,
Who were careless in their play;
They got their petals torn and soiled
As they swung in the dust all day.

Then went to bed at four o'clock,
With faces covered tight,
To keep the fairy Drop O'Dew
From washing them at night.

Poor Drop O'Dew! What could she do?
She said to the Fairy Queen,
"I cannot get those Four O'Clocks
To keep their faces clean."

The might Storm King heard the tale;
"My winds and rain," roared he,
"Shall wash those naughty flowers well,
As flowers all should be."

While I see that you appreciate some of the labor-saving devices that have entered our world and our lives over the years, is there anything you miss about 'the good old days?'

Most definitely! One custom that has seemed to go by the wayside that I'd like to see revived is the Literary Night at the school house. Gracious, those evenings were always such an enjoyable time. I always went home feeling enriched. Events like that are not only a good social event, mixing with friends and neighbors, but they broaden the mind. It's always a good thing to learn. I wrote about this desire in one of my columns, 'The Friday Night Literary', that was published in January 1919.

"There is one social affair, which used to belong to country life, that I would like to see come back again. That is the old-fashioned Friday night literary at the school house...

At early candle light, parents and pupils from all over the district gathered at the schoolhouse, bringing lanterns and candles and sometimes a glass lamp to give an added touch of dignity to the teacher's desk...Do you remember how the schoolchildren spoke their pieces and dialogs? It gave one a touch of distinction to speak a part in a dialog.

Then came the debate...

...I really think that a training in public speaking and an understanding of public questions would be worth more to pupils of the schools than games of basketball, because by exercising their brains they might grow into intelligent, wide-awake citizens.

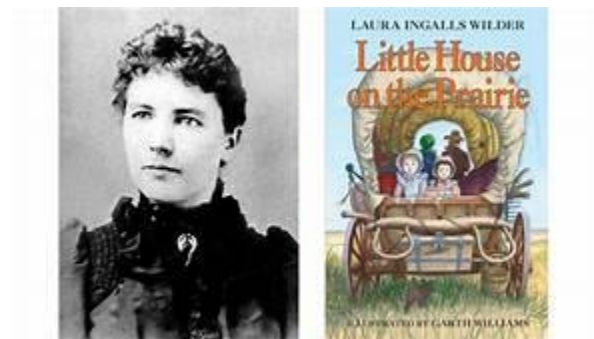
Well, the debate is finished and it is time for the spelling-down match. How earnestly we used to line up for the struggle and valiantly contest for the honor of remaining longest on the floor, and

how we used to laugh when some small schoolchild spelled down an outsider who had the forgotten the lessons in the old spelling book.”

Thank you for having me as a guest on Pages of the Past. I’ve enjoyed sharing a bit of my life with your readers. Do take a gander at a few of my tales and be sure to let me know what you think of them.

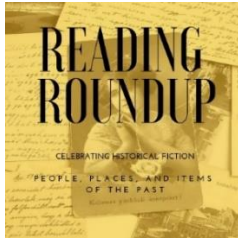
Thank you, Laura, for taking the time to join us this week. I’ve enjoyed chatting with you. I’ll be sure to take a look at your books and do a little catch up reading for those stories I’ve missed. For those you haven’t caught all of Mrs. Wilder’s books, following is a listing.

- Little House in the Big Woods
- Farmer Boy
- Little House on the Prairie
- On the Banks of Plum Creek
- By the Shores of Silver Lake
- The Long Winter
- Little Town on the Prairie
- These Happy Golden Years



[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

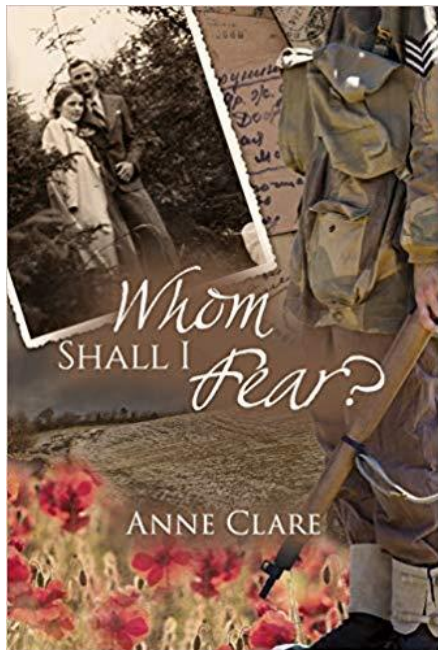
Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>



The 1940s

Whom Shall I Fear?

Anne Clare



1943

All that Sergeant James Milburn wants is to heal. Sent to finish his convalescence in a lonely village in the north of England, the friends he's lost haunt his dreams. If he can only be declared fit for active service again, perhaps he can rejoin his surviving mates in the fight across Sicily and either protect them or die alongside them.

All that Evie Worther wants is purpose. War has reduced her family to an elderly matriarch and Charles, her controlling cousin, both determined to keep her safely tucked away in their family home. If she can somehow balance her sense of obligation to her family with her desperate need to be of use, perhaps she can discover how she fits into her tumultuous world.

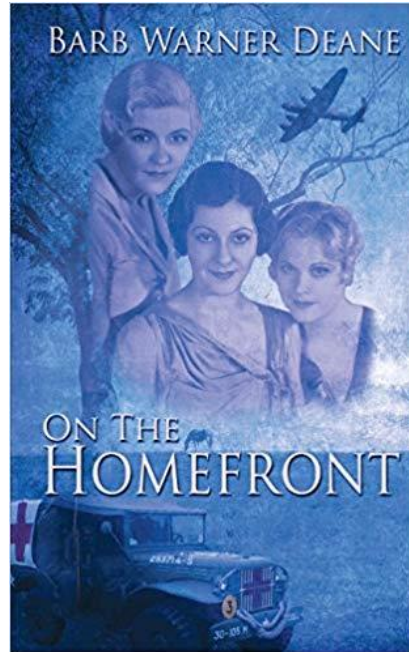
All that Charles Heatherington wants is his due. Since his brother's death, he is positioned to be the family's heir with only one step left to make his future secure. If only he can keep the family matriarch happy, he can finally start living the easy life he is certain he deserves.

However, when James's, Evie's, and Charles's paths collide, a dark secret of the past is forced into the light, and everything that they have hoped and striven for is thrown into doubt.

Weaving in historical detail from World War II in Britain, Italy and Egypt, *Whom Shall I Fear?* follows their individual struggles with guilt and faith, love and family, and forces them to ask if the greatest threat they face is really from the enemy abroad.

On the Homefront

Barb Warner Deane



In 1941, WWII begins for the United States, and life will never be the same for three women as they send their husbands, brothers, and friends off to war. Ruth, a young wife and teacher, Lilly her teenaged sister-in-law, and Helen, a British war bride, learn to cope with rationing, change, fear, loss, humiliation, and brutality while they forge an impenetrable bond and grow to be stronger than any of them ever dreamed possible. They lean on each other for support, aided by the family and friends who surround them, but when one decides to go to the front lines as part of the American Red Cross Clubmobile program, how can they cope with her absence—and more telegrams reporting loss?

Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at texastrishafaye@yahoo.com to see about scheduling your book or short story in a future issue.

[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>