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Spirit of the Western Frontier: Meet Caroline Quiner, the little girl who would grow up to be Laura Ingalls Wilder's mother.

Little House in Brookfield marks the launch of an on-going series about the adventures of Caroline Quiner, who would grow up to be Ma Ingalls in the Little House books. Written in the classic tradition of the Little House and the Rocky Ridge books, and based on diaries, letters, and other historical papers, these books offer a glimpse into America's adventurous past, as seen through the eyes of another girl from America's beloved frontier family.

Little House in Brookfield Details

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Author : Maria D. Wilkes , Dan Andreasen (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Little House in Brookfield for online ebook

Jaime K says

I didn't feel like there were enough Charlotte books so the fact that this first in the Caroline years focuses on a 5-year-old Caroline is good...and it maintains the Little House feel. I do wonder though as to when and why Charlotte moved to Wisconsin. Was it with her parents and family? Did she move after she and her husband Henry Quiner were married? - some of these questions are answered later.

Caroline has two older brother - Joseph and Henry - an older sister Martha, younger sister Eliza, and younger brother (the baby) Thomas. Her father has been lost at sea for over a year and the family is suffering. Yet it's nice to see that Charlotte isn't shunned for being a widow. Her mother-in-law (Grandma Quiner) lives with the family (I love that old time family dynamic; it's unfortunate we don't have that often these days in the U.S.) and shopkeepers take her business.

Plus, the Carpenters (the father, Ben, in particular), are wonderful friends and make me smile.

I like that Martha, not Caroline, is the tomboy. I was getting a little tired of having the direct maternal descendants of Laura to be very much like her.

Like Caroline, corn is my favorite vegetable. It makes me want a small crop!

Yet we see how farmers (both then or now) truly depend on the weather. It makes me appreciate the farmers in my area much more.

"Driving your duck to the wrong pond" is an interesting phrase.

It's interesting to see the details of how clothes were washed, particularly after reading of the washing of clothes in the Martha Morse years.

The stagecoach is a great reminder of life in different areas of the U.S. as technology and industry slowly made its way west.

The "Such a Treat" chapter made me tear up.

I find it amazing that the children would have time to walk almost three miles to and from school at dinner time!

And it's weird that there weren't assigned seating areas for different level learners. Even Charlotte had had that.

Paul Lunger says

Caroline Quiner is the little girl who would go on to become Laura Ingalls's mother in the Little House on the Prairie series in both film and print. Maria Wilkes's "Little House in Brookfield" begins the tale of Caroline at the age of 5 in 1845 Wisconsin. The story finds the Quiner family dealing with the recent death of their father Henry who has been lost at sea in a schooner accident & follows them across the better part of a year. From the harvest to a visit to town to Christmas to school, Wilkes's story is enjoyable & very easy to

read. The characters themselves jump off the page as in the other spin-off series & captures the imagination of a family that is a part of American folklore. A very good start to what should be a promising series.

Dawn says

Another great Little House series book! I am really enjoying reading about Caroline "Ma" Ingalls as she grew up. My eight year old daughter and I read this book together every night. She loves it as well.

Rosa Cline says

Once again a really good book that even though it was from a different author than the Martha and Charlotte years; this author writes very similar to the other so it's not to often you recognize the difference.

This book introduces you to Caroline (Laura Ingalls mother) when she was 5 (as in the other books they all seem to start when the child is 5 or 6) Right after Caroline's Daddy was lost at sea and so the story takes you into the first year of trials and adjustment of Charlotte doing what she knows to do as a single mother in the early 1800's. Caroline's Grandmother lives with them and she's spoken about from time to time through out the book but primarily speaks of Caroline and her older sister Martha. They do have several brothers and the oldest having to take on extra responsibilities now that he has to do more to fill in Daddy's place.

As in the other series of the Little House books; book 1 is always a little 'slow' as you are getting to know the characters and just get a feel for the environment etc. I really enjoyed reading this book.

Amy says

I read all the Little House books as a child, and my now 9-year-old wants nothing to do with them, in part because they're long. I got her this one to try and ease her into them, hoping she'd love this one and want to read Laura's originals. She didn't, but I read it myself. I never knew Caroline's father had died when she was a child and that the grandpa in Little House in the Big Woods was her step-father.

Story_Girl says

Like all the books in this series, Little House in Brookfield provides a short, sweet glance at what life may have been like for one of Laura Ingalls Wilder's ancestors - in this case her mother Caroline. Caroline's life was full of heart-break. Her father died at sea when she was young. Yet this book isn't depressing or tragic. It is written as the family begins to heal and is full of hope. It is a lovely glimpse at what this well-loved woman may have been like as a child.

Lizzie says

8-year-old me would rate this 5 stars. This was a favorite book of mine back then.

Ashley Perham says

Apparently this was one of my favorite books ten years ago. I seem to have started it so much that the first two chapters are falling out of the book! I can see why my seven year old self might have liked it. It's basically Little House on the Prairie before Little House on the Prairie but written after. It had a protagonist basically the same age I was, and it's a fun read.

But reading it after the Charlotte series was different. Young Charlotte and young Caroline are basically the same. Maybe we can attribute their sameness to an author shift, but still. Also, what happened to Mother Charlotte! I know she wouldn't be the same kind of mother as Martha, and her husband has died, but still! She talks like a Quaker at times and always quotes Bible verses. (Not that I have anything wrong with that, but she didn't seem as if she grew up like that) Also, it's never clearly stated that the book takes place in Wisconsin, at least not for a long time.

But on to the positives! This book does have great historical detail, and the characterization in this book is great! I love how Caroline is concerned with not getting her clothes dirty, and I love how she stands up for Martha. Henry-O is awesome, and I love how the children, especially Joseph, all look out for their mother. I think I'll enjoy this series once I get over the author change shock. By the way, is Caroline pronounced Caroline or Carolyn? Also, I love the blue on this cover!

PS: Because the books are getting longer and comparatively harder, I probably won't be able to finish them as fast.

Megan says

This is the first book in the Caroline Year's series. They are based around Caroline Quiner the little girl that grows up to be Laura Ingalls' ma. This book starts out with five-year old Caroline and her family in their frame house in Brookfield, Wisconsin a year after their father, Henry Quiner, was lost at sea. These books are based on letters that Laura and her aunt Martha Quiner Carpenter exchanged about Martha and Caroline's life when they were young. I have always loved the Little House books and when I found out that not only was there a series for Rose Wilder people had also written a series for Caroline, Charlotte, and Martha. So I went right out and bought the ones I could get my hands on. The Caroline year's are definitely my favorite, not sure exactly why but they are. This book talks about all the trials and tribulations that this family goes through after their father goes missing. It also shows how little things really make a difference and all though they didn't have a lot they had enough and they had each other. These books always make me wish I could have lived back then. Even though they didn't have indoor plumbing and really no luxuries whatsoever. Caroline is such a sweet and inquisitive kid and she really thinks about how what she does is going to affect those she loves. This book also spends a bit of time in the winter, which in Wisconsin is pretty harsh. There is an early frost which causes problems because they didn't have any of their garden picked yet. But they make what they have last and get a few food surprises along the way. I wish the world was a bit more like this because no one really helps each other out with no thought for themselves the way they did in this time period.

Beverly says

Caroline Quiner is the fourth of six children. Older siblings are Joseph 12, Henry 10, Martha 8. Caroline is 6, Eliza 3, and Baby Tomas 1. Father was lost at sea the previous year and his mother came to live with them. Mother, Charlotte, was a dressmaker in Boston when she met Henry Quiner, Sr. He was a silversmith at the time. He was a happy go lucky fellow who trusted in his wit. Charlotte realized the dangers of silver making, and he told her she could worry for him. The day of his wedding, he did not appear at the appropriate time. She waited and waited until evening, when he appeared, dressed for the occasion. He urged her to open her wedding present..she would not until she was married...then discovered his bandaged hand as she reached for it in the ceremony. He had made a set of silver candlesticks, and somehow, spilled the silver into his hand. It was the end of silver working for him and they moved to Wisconsin, where he farmed. His scarred hand made him known to the Indians as Red Hand. He treated them kindly and because of that, they brought a deer for the family during a brutal winter.

As I read this, I was again reminded of the saying, " a woman's work is never done." Charlotte is quite capable, but early snows freeze the vegetable garden, corn meal replaces flour when it becomes scarce, and she reverts back to her sewing skills to make extra cash.

The kids are hungry during the winter, shoes have to worn with holes, and dresses have to be cut down and reworked for church. I'm pretty crafty but don't think I would have done as well as Charlotte did, feeding six kids and 2 adults with root vegetables.

Ruby Johnson says

I've been wanting to read this since I got it when I was eight or nine, but have never had the attention span until now haha. I read it quickly in about an hour and a half. It was cute, definitely a fun quick read for kids.

Lindsay says

Very touching. I can't wait to read the rest of caroline's series. Only complaint was, I wish it would have been longer.

Rea K says

Excuse me while I go and cry in a corner. Caroline Quiner's father died about the time she turned five, and this begins towards the end of their first year without him.

I recognized parts of this book, making me wonder if perhaps I read this one already. I remember laundry day the best. Thank goodness for wash machines. And running water. All that modern stuff. I take back all I said about going back in time. Doctor, if you were planning on stopping at my house, I'm going to have to put a leash on you so you don't leave me in the past. And I'll kick weeping angel butt if I get sent back.

beheads weeping angel statues

Melissa Wiley is no longer writing, so it took a tad bit of time to get into the story. I'm excited to read the rest because this is the first series where we get to see the blossoming romance. Ah. Reading THIS one, I wanted to know everything about what brought Charlotte and Henry Quiner into their meeting. How did Charlotte get to Wisconsin and why? I totally get how Martha Morse might (probably?) have run away to Boston for Lewis Tucker, but why did Charlotte end up in Wisconsin?

I felt dreadful for the Quiners. There was no safety net back then for a widow. Dude. Charlotte was completely blessed to have a passel of children to assist her with daily tasks and her mother-in-law to help with the baby. Of course, in the event that she wouldn't have had children to keep her tied to Wisconsin, she might have sold the farm and gone back to Boston (changing the course of her family's future). But, she had kids. She had kind neighbors (and credit. That's super important) and her family. She was tough. Even the Caroline noticed how poorly off they were. There are moments where the lack of enough to eat was mentioned (hungry bellies, unsatisfying food). They had to do without a lot. Charlotte took in sewing to earn money. They sold ashes (used to make candles) and pelts to make extra money. You can only get so much without paying for it. However, they weren't so badly off that they had to farm out the kids. None of them died of starvation.

Planning to do some extra research again (I mapped out where Brookfield is... swallowed up by Milwaukee, basically. and Roxbury). Being that Laura started writing when her mother's family was still alive, we have more information about Caroline than the rest. Of course, by the time Caroline was born, recordkeeping was much, much better than when Charlotte was born and scads better than whatever Scotland was doing when Martha was born (of course, if she eloped and her family scratched her out of the records, I can understand why she's impossible to trace. That's scandalous behavior for you, gettin' your name burned out of the family tree since Cain killed Abel). Family trees are 95% bullshit anyway (especially with those Ellis Island clerks and the Hitlers all changing their names). My mother's cousin is finding it ridiculously difficult to track women in our family tree because of that pesky wedding name change thing. I'll just continue claiming to be related to Good King Wenceslas and call it good. Who cares if it's a lie?

ahem 3.5 rounded up to 4. I still don't feel talked down to, it just wasn't fireworks and woooooooooo. It was kind of a Debbie Downer. Seriously. But, these folks stayed mostly cheerful, even if it was fictitious. I would have done the exact same thing if I was in Martha's shoes. Er. You'll know if you read.

Barbara says

Nicely written. One could easily envision the events through little Caroline's eyes. Have not read the Little House books for years, but this fills in details on the mother in those stories.

Kristen Luppino says

A good intro to "Ma." Though some felt a little generic...guess that's what happens when you go back through the years!

Michelle says

I grew up reading the Little House On The Prairie books, featuring Laura Ingalls and her sisters and parents. These books were originally my mum's and have been well read over the years. I also watched and enjoyed the TV show throughout the years, but I never knew there were more books, until recently.

Of course, the books are written by different authors, while still trying to hold onto the original magical quality of the Laura Ingalls Wilder stories.

I managed to find this book quite easily, although the others in the series were slightly more difficult, and more expensive!

This first book is abridged, so it is slightly shorter than the other books - for example, this is 110 pages, with a preview to the next book, a recipe, song and what was happening of significance elsewhere in the world while Caroline was growing up. In comparison, the second book is 343 pages.

I haven't read the original stories for some time now, but the Caroline described here (Laura's mother) is different to how she's pictured in the TV show. She's described as having a long brown braid (as you can see from the cover), whereas the TV show, the young Caroline seen in flashbacks was shown with very white-blond hair, quite close to the older Caroline (played by Karen Grassle).

I enjoyed this book, even though it only took me an hour to read, it's over before it really has a chance to get going. It sticks pretty closely to the same kind of formula that Laura Ingalls Wilder stuck to, and it was showing a happy family life, but also showing the harder times, such as the first frost, the cold winters, little or no money, hand me down clothes and the first day of school.

While I look back on stories from my childhood, such as the Little House On The Prairie/Anne Of Green Gables/Narnia, they have a certain magical quality that has never quite translated to re-reading as an adult. However, I think if you have loved the books as a child, you can retain some of the old feeling from your childhood. While I don't think these books will ever capture the original, they come pretty close and it will be quite enjoyable to find out more about Caroline growing up and meeting Charles, hopefully taking us up to the beginning of Little House In The Big Woods.

Stephanie Snyder says

One of our family's favorites.

A classic.

A great choice for every child's bookshelf.

Leslie says

Reads very much in the style of the original LH books. I'm in this rabbit hole for good now, I guess, haha!

♥Xeni♥ says

Sadly, this was the only Caroline book that I managed to read. I always wanted to buy the others, but by the time I had enough allowance, I had already moved on to greater books.

One of these days I will buy the whole entire series (from Martha all the way down to Rose!)

As I recall the novel, though, Caroline was a bit boring. The most interesting thing was that she lived in Boston (all the other girls I'd read about lived in frontier towns, or something similar), so we got a bit of city life (before it was the huge, traffic ridden mess it is these days).

I think she'd be more interesting once she grew up a little and developed some more personality, but as I remember it, she didn't really stand out in my mind. Large family (like all but Rose had), school life like anyone in that era, and same old problems.

Still, I'm glad that I had the chance to read it! It was most interesting to see what sort of traits Caroline already had as a young girl that would later be exhibited in her as a mother (as we got to know her from the start via Laura.)

Lauren says

You know a book is good when I (age fifteen) am reading about the daily life of a five-year old. Not guaranteeing that every Fifteen year old will love this book, But it reminds me of my childhood, and makes me happy. I just wish it was a fairy tale, because if it was based off anything but a true story, Father would come waltzing in Christmas morning with a big sack of flour and candy all around. Unfortunately, this is not a movie, this is not one of my "once upon a time" novels, this is little house, and though they have some of those simple pleasures that make you wish you were them, they don't have perfect lives. Real grief, real loss, amnd real suffering. unfortunately. Because they are so strong and amazing you want everything to work out for them. the same reason theat everytime i re read Laura's Little house books, i am tempted not to read the last one, because it just doesn't work out as well, they suffer, and have bad luck, and real life happens. I like the fairy tale Ma and Pa, log cabin, story telling approach. Because i like happy endings. and beginings and endings. just happiness.
