

THE *HAPPY LAND* COMPANION:  
MUSIC FROM THE WORLD OF  
LAURA INGALLS WILDER

A companion volume to the CD  
*Happy Land: Musical Tributes  
to Laura Ingalls Wilder*  
(Pa's Fiddle Recordings SAR 1259)

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# C O N T E N T S

v	P R E F A C E
vii	I N T R O D U C T I O N
1	The Arkansas Traveler
2	Barbara Allen
4	The Big Sunflower
7	The Blue Juniata
10	Captain Jinks
14	The Devil's Dream
15	The Girl I Left behind Me
17	The Happy Land
19	Highland Mary
22	Nelly Was a Lady
26	Oft in the Stilly Night
29	Oh! Susanna
33	On Jordan's Stormy Banks
35	The Promised Land
37	Roll the Ole Chariot
39	Sweet By and By
41	Uncle Sam's Farm
45	L I S T I N G O F S O U R C E S

## P R E F A C E

Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867–1957) in her famous *Little House*<sup>®</sup> series of eight books loosely traces her family’s history through episodes located in Wisconsin, Kansas (Indian territory), Minnesota, and South Dakota (Dakota Territory) over a period from 1867 to 1885. Her compelling narratives of frontier life have justly become cornerstone classics in American children’s literature, read by many millions the world over.<sup>1</sup>

Embedded in the stories are references to 126 separate songs and tunes. *By the Shores of Silver Lake* alone contains mention of thirty-seven songs; *These Happy Golden Years* is titled after a song; and six of the books close with music-making. The genres and subgenres of music Wilder employed and evoked are wide-ranging and extensive. There are parlor songs, stage songs, minstrel show songs, patriotic songs, Scottish and Irish songs, hymns, spirituals, fiddle tunes, singing school songs, play party songs, folk songs, a Child ballad, broadside ballads, Christmas songs, catches and rounds, and references to “cowboy songs” and “Osage war dances.” Throughout, the guiding musical spirit is her father Charles Ingalls (1835–1902), a musician who passed up few opportunities to sing and play his fiddle. It is “Pa’s fiddle,” carefully wrapped, stowed in its fiddle-box and cushioned by pillows, that accompanies the Ingalls family through all its adventures and comes to symbolize the endurance of the family unit in an often wild and threatening frontier world. Indeed, Wilder wrote to her publisher that “(t)here is one thing that will always remain the same to remind people of little Laura’s days on the prairie, and that is Pa’s fiddle.”<sup>2</sup>

There may be no books in American literature of comparable standing and popularity where America’s music is so central to the themes, assumes such a major narrative role, and is found in such rich abundance. If Laura Ingalls Wilder penned what have become the books that best express “The Great American Family,” then the music she referred to in those books has become an important part of that mythology too.

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1. The books are: *Little House in the Big Woods* [LHBW] (1932); *Farmer Boy* [FB] (1933); *Little House on the Prairie* [LHP] (1935); *On the Banks of Plum Creek* [BPC] (1937); *By the Shores of Silver Lake* [SSL] (1939); *The Long Winter* [LW] (1940); *Little Town on the Prairie* [LTP] (1941); and *These Happy Golden Years* [THGY] (1943). All are published by HarperTrophy (New York).

2. Quoted in Jan Susina, “The Voices of the Prairie: The Use of Music in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie*,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 16/2 (December 1992), 158.

*Happy Land: Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder* (Pa's Fiddle Recordings SAR 1259) is a recording of some of that music, an effort to give new voice and sound to music that has lain silent on the page for far too long. But, commendably, that seems not enough for many, for the producers and distributors of the recording have heard time and again: "Is there an edition of music to accompany the CD?" With this volume, that question has been answered.

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The music you hold here was the starting point for the production of *Happy Land*. This edition is of sources that were collected or published in the 19th century, much of it sheet music or volumes of music that might well have been used by Laura Ingalls Wilder or her father. (One song—“Roll the Ole Chariot Along”—was published in 1901, but even it was likely collected and arranged at the end of the 19th century.) The CD producers (Butch Baldassari and Dale Cockrell) worked from these sources to help performers shape, work, and reshape the music so that, while it necessarily became expressive of contemporary musical sensibilities, it was informed by the idioms of an earlier time. In fact, this process is much like that which fashions nearly all vernacular musical expression: it is and always has been in the nature of this music to work from an earlier source (a chart, a recording, a score, a 12-bar harmonic progression, a form, even an idea) toward something different, special, unique, and expressive of the individual or the community. We hope that musicians who use this volume will, by starting with the sources and re-expressing the music in keeping with their own idiosyncratic musical beings, arrive at a point where the musical past is constantly infusing the musical present, for such is much the way of life itself. When performing from this edition, free reign and free play is not only permissible, it is expected.

*The Happy Land Companion: Music from the World of Laura Ingalls Wilder* is not an edition of the music that is heard on *Happy Land: Musical Tributes to Laura Ingalls Wilder*. Indeed, in some instances performers knew or developed other melodies, harmonies, structures, keys, and texts, leading to strikingly different music. In others the music one sees on these pages and that which one hears on the recording are quite similar.

Editorial emendations to the original sources are modest. Punctuation has been modernized and brought to a uniform and consistent standard. Typesetting conventions have been modernized. The inevitable errors discovered in the source music have been corrected.

Chord figurations have been added, and assume a modest level of skill on the part of a fretted, stringed instrument (probably guitar) or keyboard (piano) player. Unfortunately, while guitar players generally prefer “sharp” keys (A, D, E, G), keyboard players just as often like the “flat” keys. (While everyone seems to smile at the thought of C major!) The music has not been transposed to accommodate one or the other instrument preference or practice. If the chords do not work for an application or a performer, some transposing work with a pencil (and, perhaps, a capo) will work wonders!



## I . THE ARKANSAS TRAVELER

As a fiddle tune, “The Arkansas Traveler” functioned primarily to provide for social entertainment and dancing. Like most others of the type, it has an opening 8-measure strain that is exactly repeated in measures 9 through 16, but for the ending; measures 17–24 are likewise similar to measures 25–32. The performers then repeat the whole, with variations, until the dancers (or the musicians) are happily exhausted.

The well-known “Arkansas Traveler” was an obvious favorite of Pa Ingalls and his daughter Laura, for it shows up in both *Little House in the Big Woods* and *Little House on the Prairie*. Although its composer is unknown, it seems to be of 19th-century origin. It was often performed with an accompanying “comedy-routine” patter between the musical repeats.

*Song references in books:* LHBW—“Christmas,” “Dance at Grandpa’s”; LHP—“The House on the Prairie”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32

33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40



## 2 . B A R B A R A A L L E N

“Barbara Allen” was likely first sung in the early 17th century somewhere on the British Isles, but by whom, no one knows. It has since become one of the best-known ballads in the English language. Brought to the New World in the minds, hearts, and voices of immigrants from England and Scotland, it was soon rooted in American ballad traditions. Like many other such ballads, deeply felt emotions surge throughout “Barbara Allen”: Can anything be more horrible, yet more base-level (even beautiful, in a way) than to die for young love? Although we often think of this today as a song of the Appalachian Mountains, it was once sung widely, even by frontier folk like Pa Ingalls far out on the edge of the Great Plains.

*Song reference in books:* SSL—“Evening Shadows Fall”

1. In Scar-lett Towne, where I was borne, There was a faire maid dwell-in',  
2. All in the mer-rye month of May, When greene buds they were swell-in',

Made ev-ery youth crye, “Well-a-waye.” Her name was Bar-b'ra Al-len.  
Young Jem-mye Grove on his death-bed lay For love of Bar-b'ra Al-len.

3. He sent his man unto her then,  
To the town where shee was dwellin';  
“You must come to my master deare,  
Giff your name be Barbara Allen.
4. For death is printed on his face,  
And ore his harte is stealin';  
Then haste away to comfort him,  
O lovely Barbara Allen.
5. Though death be printed on his face,  
And ore his harte is stealin',  
Yet little better shall he bee  
For bonny Barbara Allen.”
6. So slowly, slowly, she came up,  
And slowly she came nye him;  
And all she sayd, when there she came,  
“Young man, I think y'are dying.”
7. He turned his face unto her strait,  
With deadlye sorrow sighing;  
“O lovely maid, come pity mee,  
I'me on my death-bed lying.”
8. “If on your death-bed you doe lye,  
What needs the tale you are tellin;  
I cannot keep you from your death;  
Farewell,” sayd Barbara Allen.

9. He turned his face unto the wall  
As deadly pangs he fell in:  
“Adieu, adieu, adieu to you all,  
Adieu to Barbara Allen.”
10. As she was walking ore the fields  
She heard the bell a-knellin’;  
And every stroke did seem to saye,  
“Unworthye Barbara Allen.”
11. She turned her bodye round about  
And spied the corps a coming:  
“Laye down, laye down the corps,” she sayd,  
“That I may look upon him.”
12. With scornful eye she looked downe  
Her cheeke with laughter swellin’;  
Whilst all her friends cryd out amaine,  
“Unworthye Barbara Allen.”
13. When he was dead, and laid in grave,  
Her harte was struck with sorrowe,  
“O mother, mother, make my bed,  
For I shall dye to-morrowe.
14. Hard-harted creature him to slight,  
Who loved me so dearlye:  
O that I had beene more kind to him  
When he was alive and neare me.”
15. She, on her death-bed as she laye,  
Beg’d to be buried by him;  
And sore repented of the daye,  
That she did ere denye him.
16. “Farewell,” she sayd, “ye virgins all,  
And shun that fault I fell in:  
Henceforth take warning by the fall  
Of cruel Barbara Allen.”

### 3 . THE BIG SUNFLOWER



The most popular form of 19th-century American music theatre was the blackface minstrel show. As hard as is to imagine today, millions of Americans flocked to the theatres and stages in cities, towns, and crossroads to see the dances and antics of white men with faces blackened by grease-and-burnt-cork and to hear their music and jokes. (Indeed, Pa Ingalls stars in an amateur minstrel show in *The Little Town on the Prairie*.) One of the biggest minstrel stars of the 1860s was Billy Emerson, and this song, written by Bobby Newcomb in 1867, became his theme song. A bouncy, happy song, it functions in the books both to signal despair in the face of unrelenting blizzards—Laura calls it Pa’s “trouble song”—and to project a shaft of its sunny cheer into the gloom.

*Song references in books:* SSL—“Living in Town”; LW—“October Blizzard,” “We’ll Weather the Blast”

**Andante**

C F C D7 G7

4 C F C D7 G7 C

8

Dm G7 C

1. There is a charm I can't explain About a girl I've seen; My \_  
 2. As days passed on and we became Like friends of old-en times, I \_  
 3. I went next day dressed in my best This young girl for to see To \_

*p*

13

Dm G7 C

heart beats fast when she goes past In a dark dress trim'd in green. Her  
 thought the ques- tion I would pop And ask her to be mine. But the  
 ask her if she would ex- plain Why she had shak- en me. She

17

D7 G E7 Am

*f*

eyes are bright as eve- ning stars, So lov- ing and so shy, And the  
 an- swer I re- ceived next day, How could she treat me so? In-  
 said she real- ly felt quite sad To cause me such dis- tress, And

*The Big Sunflower* (cont.)

21

D7 G D7 G

folks all stop and look a- round When- ev- er she goes by.  
 -stead of be- ing mine for life, She simp- ly an- swered, "No."  
 when I said, "Won't you be mine?" Of course she an- swered, "Yes."

CHORUS

24

G7 C Dm7 C

And I feel just as hap- py as a big sun- flow'r That nods and bends in the breez- es,

28

Am E7 Am Dm E C G G7 C

And my heart is as light as the wind that blows The leaves from off the trees- es.

## 4 . THE BLUE JUNIATA



Marion Dix Sullivan composed the lyrics and melody to “The Blue Juniata,” which was then arranged by Edward L. White and published in 1844. The song appeared during a time when many Americans were becoming more concerned about the plight of the American Indian, as its sympathetic narrative suggests. The song’s placement in *The Little House on the Prairie* points up the moral dilemma felt by many. In a dramatic chapter, Ma and her daughters manage to hold off two Osage men who were attempting to steal the family’s cache of furs, virtually their entire capital. (In an ironic parallel, the Ingalls family was then, in 1870, living on land that was officially “Indian territory,” virtually all that still “belonged” to a whole nation of people.) As the Ingalls children prepare for bed, they hear Ma sing “The Blue Juniata,” a deeply poignant song about loss. Laura, who is clearly moved by the sympathetic portrayal of the “Indian girl, bright Alfarata,” wonders, “Where did the voice of Alfarata go, Ma?” She is told that Alfarata probably went west because that is what “the government makes [the Indians do].” She asks if the Osage will have to go west. “Yes,” Pa said. “When white settlers come into a country, the Indians have to move on.” “But, Pa, I thought this was Indian Territory. Won’t it make the Indians mad to have to—” “No more questions, Laura,” Pa said, firmly. “Go to sleep.” And the chapter ends, but the question, underscored by the bittersweet song, lingers.

*Song reference in books:* LHP—“The Tall Indian”

F                      C7                      F

6                      B♭                      C7                      F                      C7

1. Wild    rov'd an    In-    dian girl,  
2. Gay    was the    moun-    tain song Of

*The Blue Juniata (cont.)*

11 F C7 F

Bright Al- fa- ra- ta, Where sweep the wa- ters Of the  
 bright Al- fa- ra- ta, Where sweep the wa- ters Of the

15 Bb C7 F

blue — Ju- ni- a- ta. Swift as an an- te- lope,  
 blue — Ju- ni- a- ta. Strong and true my ar- rows are

19 C7 F Bb C7

Through the for- est go- ing, Loose were her jet- ty locks In wav- y tress- es  
 In my paint- ed quiv- er; Swift goes my light ca- noe A- down the rap- id

24 F B $\flat$  C7 F

flow-ing.  
riv-er.

3. "Bold is my warrior good,  
The love of Alfarata,  
Proud waves his snowy plume  
Along the Juniata.  
Soft and low he speaks to me,  
And then, his war-cry sounding,  
Rings his voice in thunder loud,  
From height to height resounding."

4. So sang the Indian girl,  
Bright Alfarata,  
Where sweep the waters  
Of the blue Juniata.  
Fleeting years have borne away  
The voice of Alfarata,  
Still sweeps the river on,  
Blue Juniata.



# 16 . S W E E T B Y A N D B Y

This much-loved hymn was composed by Joseph Philbrick Webster (1819–75) in 1867 and set to words penned by his friend Sanford Fillmore Bennett (1836–98). It was apparently written quickly and on the spot, inspired by an offhand remark by Webster. Published the next year in sheet music form, it soon gained wide favor and has been compiled in countless hymnbooks since. Although there is only one reference to the hymn in Wilder’s books, she wrote in her unpublished memoir (titled “Pioneer Girl”) that Pa “loved to play the hymns we had sung in the little church at Walnut Grove” in Minnesota, “but of all, ‘The Sweet By and By’ was his favorite. (So much that it was sung at his funeral).”

*Song reference in books: LW 130—“We’ll Weather the Blast”*

G C G

1. There’s a land that is fair-er than day, And by faith we can see it a-  
 2. We shall sing on that beau-ti-ful shore The mel-o-di-ous songs of the  
 3. To our boun-ti-ful Fa-ther a-bove We will of-fer our trib-ute of

4 D G C G

-far; For the Fa-ther waits o-ver the way To pre-  
 blest, And our spir-its shall sor-row no more, Not a  
 praise For the glo-ri-ous gift of His love And the

7 D7 G CHORUS D

-pare us a dwell-ing-place there. In the sweet by and by We shall  
 sigh for the bless-ing of rest. In the sweet by and by We shall  
 bless-ings that hal-low our days. In the sweet by and by