

Laura Pauline Jepsen was born on a dairy farm near Davenport, IA, on October 30, 1907. Her father, William Jepsen, owned the farm and an interest in a hardware store in the community nearby. Descended from German immigrants who arrived in the mid-1800's, Laura would have heard her grandparents still speaking their native tongue as she studied her lessons in the long afternoons after school.

Laura was interested in science, an interest born of the hard work of the Davenport Academy of the Natural Sciences, (later the Putnam Museum), and its hosting of frequent field trips from the local schools. The Academy's extensive collection of over 500 mounted specimens of local birds kept on display in glass cases, created a lifelong interest of Laura in her winged friends. This interest was expressed in her starting the first local chapter of the Audubon Society in Tallahassee and working tirelessly on the creation of the Tallahassee Junior Museum. Even in her personal life she never forgot the birds seen in her youth. Among her few pieces of personal artworks was an Audubon print of the extinct Passenger Pigeon, four specimens of which numbered among the Davenport Museum's exhibits.

Laura graduated from Davenport High School, (now Central High), in 1925. Her high school classmates formed a "Prophecy Committee" charged with attaching a short sentence or two to each student, tagging them with a prediction of their future or a commentary on their demeanor. Some of the prophecies were humorous, some biting, Laura's simply read, "Her ambition is fixed to the highest star", prophetic indeed.

Laura went on to attend Iowa University and through the turmoil of war and depression completed her Doctoral degree in 1946. Utilizing this degree, Laura selected what was then the Florida College of Women, (later Florida State University), in Tallahassee, FL to begin her career. Whether it was the warmth or the surrounding woods, Tallahassee became Laura's adopted home and she contributed much to her new community.

Despite Laura's great love of teaching, her tenure at the University was not without conflict. Having witnessed the promotion of male professors over their female colleagues for decades, she filed a discrimination suit in 1974 against the school. The legal battle ended with a hearing before the Florida Supreme Court in 1985 and the settlement received was used found the Leon County Humane Society, an organization still thriving today.

In the midst of these activities, Laura found time to author three books, two academic and the third a more personal work entitled, "Lichgate on High Road" self-published in 1981. This last book described the inspiration behind and construction of her most unique legacy, a small cottage protecting an old oak. Sharing its name with the book, this three acre parcel located about two miles from the campus of the university where she taught, was home to a Tudor-style cottage incorporating principles from naturalists such as Henry David Thoreau and John Burroughs. Construction was completed on the 300 square foot cottage in 1959 and Laura resided there for the remainder of her life. Called Lichgate on High Road, Laura chose to name her home after the lichgates she encountered while traveling in England. There the gates were the passageways between Church's and their accompanying graveyards, a sort of portal between two worlds. This sense of a path between the now and the hereafter appealed

to Laura's desire to treasure memory, to protect history, and is the magic that still clings to the home and property today.

Laura Pauline Jepsen died on December 24, 1995 at 88 years of age in her adopted home of Tallahassee, FL. Having seen the passing of horse-drawn wagons and footsteps on the moon, she became an author, an advocate for equality, a world traveler and ultimately a simple guardian of a precious tree. She lived fully, completely and inspires people even today, what better legacy could a person ask for.