

MY SABBATH HOME

Dr. C. R. Blackall, Lyric, 1870; W. H. Doane, Music, 1871

Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867-1957) was an American author best known for a series of autobiographical books documenting pioneer life on the American frontier in the late 19th century, collectively known as the “*Little House on the Prairie*” books. Embedded in the narratives of their pages, Wilder referenced nearly 130 songs and tunes she remembered being sung and played by her father, recreational fiddler, Charles “Pa” Ingalls (1832-1902). Although, no recorded tracks were ever found, his playing still hold great historical influence today, courtesy of the “*Little House*” books. The books document not only the names of many of the songs and he tunes he played, but also where he played them, for whom, and often why he chose them.

The words to “*My Sabbath Home*” were written by Dr. Christopher Ruby Blackall, an doctor, who served in the Union army during the Civil War. After the war, he left the medical profession, and started working for the Baptist Publication Society as an editor. Those duties included working on a great many publications, including various song books for Sunday School use. That work inspired him to start writing poems and lyrics of his own, including, “*My Sabbath Home*”, 1870, which was originally published only as a hymn poem. It was, then, paired with a tune, of the same name, by William Doane and first published in “*Christian Songs: for the Sunday School*” (1871). It might have fallen into obscurity, if not for the popularity of the “*Little House*” books, since the hymn was only published in less than 30 hymnals. Other hymns written by Dr. Blackall include “*By and By*”, “*We Are Little Sunbeams Shining*”, and “*Jesus Loves the Little Children*”.

American composer, hymn-writer, and music educator, William H. Doane (1832-1915) originally, routinely refused invitations to compose Sunday school hymns, fearing they might detract from his aspirations as a classical composer. That changed in 1862, when Doane suffered a near-fatal heart attack on a train ride from Connecticut to Chicago and vowed to devote his talent to musical evangelism if he recovered. True to his word he began composing songs for the burgeoning Sunday school market and published, “*Sabbath School Gems*” that same year. His often collaborated with well-known hymn writers, such as, Robert Lowry, Ira Sankey, and Fanny Crosby.

~ Tull