



MAY ALCOTT
a talented artist

DOLL OF THE MONTH
Jo March in her writing togs.



THE DISCOVERY PAPERS



Orchard House

.....the home of Alcott Family in Concord, Massachusetts. The Concord community included luminaries Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau. The Alcott's lived surrounded by innovative ideas and literature. Concord was rich in its roots in the freedom of America, supporters of abolitionists and suffragettes, and transcendentalism. What an exciting time to be a part of such an exciting place.

Home of the Alcott's 1858-1877. Louisa wrote Little Women here 1868-1869.

More than just *Little Women*

The Alcott Family consisted of Bronson and Abba Alcott plus four talented and creative daughters, Anna, Louisa, Elizabeth, and May.

Bronson was an innovative educator who felt all children should be educated and be encouraged to love learning. He kept detailed records on his daughters, their appearances, and interests. He was a philosopher, a Transcendentalist, and even established a commune of like-minded followers. The Alcott's were vegetarian with apples being a staple of their diet. Because of Bronson's ideas about the subjugation of people and animals, he only wore clothes made from linen. That must have been awfully cold in those New England winters.

His ideas didn't always provide food for his family. Abba and the girls sought many opportunities for an income beyond the charity provided by their friends and neighbors. Anna and Louisa worked for other families taking care of and teaching children. Abba worked as a social worker. Louisa discovered as a teenager that she could sell her stories and support her family. She published her first poem under the name *Flora Fairfield*. At age 22, her Gothic pulp fiction was being published under a new name, *A.M. Barnard*. In the 20th century, Louisa's *noms de plume* were discovered and a wealth of new stories were uncovered. In fact, just this week an unfinished piece of Louisa's has been published. There may even be other works still to be discovered.

Louisa's *Little Women* and *Good Wives* turned the family's fortunes around. Bronson's popularity as a lecturer and philosopher grew as "the father" of Louisa. May was able to pursue a life in Europe as an artist. And much to Louisa's relief the debts were paid at last and Abba could live as Louisa had always dreamed.

Beyond Little Women

Louisa wrote thrilling and exciting stories well beyond those she wrote for children. Her works paid off her family's many debts and gave them a prosperous life. Among her "other" works are:

Hospital Sketches

Behind A Mask

Work

A Long Fatal Love Chase

Transcendental Wild Oats

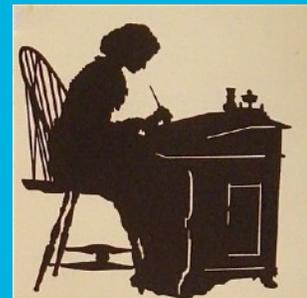
The Inheritance

Moods

A Modern Mephistopheles

A Modern Cinderella

The Abbot's Ghost



The New York Times

Published: September 8, 1879
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MISS ALCOTT AT THE REGISTRY OFFICE,
From the Boston Commonwealth, Sept. 6.

An eye-witness reports the appearance of Louisa M. Alcott before the Selectmen of Concord to secure registration for herself. It was several weeks ago. Miss Alcott meant to register early. She said to the authority: "I want to have my name put on the register that I may vote for School Committee." "Very well," said the Selectman; "have you brought your receipt for last year's tax?" "No," said Miss Alcott, "I did not know it was necessary." "You will have to bring it." "Won't this year's tax receipt do just as well?"

"Oh, yes; but you have not paid it." A little comical look came on her face as she said: "I never did hanker to pay my taxes, but now I am in a hurry to pay them." The Selectman, as much amused as Miss Alcott, got the tax bill made out by the Assessor, and then and there Miss Alcott paid it, and was the first woman to register in the town of Concord.

The Alcotts were adamant abolitionists, harboring escaping slaves as part of the Underground Railroad, and were friends of John Brown and his family. They believed in social reform and women's suffrage. Louisa proudly cast the first ballot by a woman in Concord.

The Artist.....

May's artistic talents were celebrated by the family. Bronson built her a small studio when they moved to Orchard House. Her works appear on the walls of her

bedroom, an owl on the fireplace of Louisa's room, and flowers on the wall above the little shelf desk that Bronson built where Little

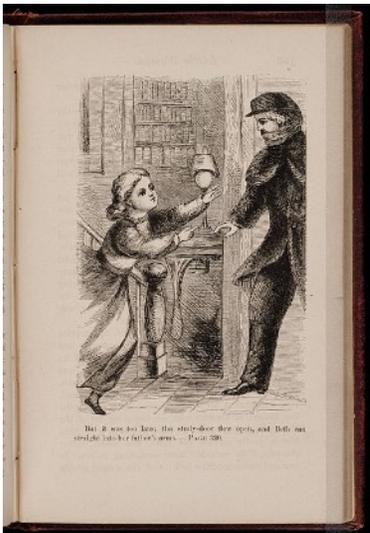
Women was born. May also provided the illustrations for Little Women. Her limited training was evident and later editions were illustrated by other artists.

Thanks to the success of Little Women and Good Wives, May and Louisa were able to travel to Europe and May's talents were refined. By the 1870s, she had come into her own as an artist.

Her still life was the only one chosen by a woman for the Paris Salon, over the works of Mary Cassatt. She was known for portraits, landscapes, still

life, and as a copyist, especially of J.M.W. Turner. One of her best known works, also exhibited at the Paris Salon is *La Negresse*.

May moved to France where she met her husband and gave birth to a daughter, Louisa May or "Lulu". May died a few months after Lulu's birth and she was sent to America to live with Louisa. After Louisa's death, Lulu went to Switzerland to live with her father, Ernest Nieriker.



Activities from Little Women

Pickled Limes - Amy's treat

A unique favorite treat and easy to make. Put whole (washed) limes in a large jar. Fill jar with water and a tablespoon of sea salt for each cup of water. Put in the fridge for three weeks. Cut the tops off and suck the juice out, which is what Amy did. You can also peel and slice them. They are tart, so you might want to dip them in sugar as you eat them.

(For more information on pickled limes, check out this piece written by an Orchard House interpreter: <http://plaidpetticoats.blogspot.com/2020/05/the-pickled-lime-project-begins-or-more.html>)

Pickwick Club Badges

You will want badges for the members of your "Pickwick Club" to wear at your weekly meetings. Cut strips of white lightweight cardboard 10 inches long and 1 3/4 inches wide. Punch a small hole about 1/2 inch from each end. Cut two pieces of yarn in lengths 5 inches shorter than the circumference of your head and thread one piece through each hole. Write the initials P. C. in large letters in the center of one side of each badge. On the other side write the character name of a club member. Place a badge around your head with your character's name across your forehead, then tie the yarn in a bow at the back of your head.

Post Office

Laurie created a post office for the March and Lawrence families to leave notes, invitations, and small gifts for one another. You can create one for your family and friends. Look around and see what you might have on hand that would work - an old birdhouse, an old metal mailbox, or even a large flowerpot turned upside down. Decorate it, find a place for it, and invite everyone to share in the fun! (During the pandemic, this might be a great way to communicate with your friends and neighbors, too.)

Imagination Book

The March girls were very creative. Jo wrote stories, poems, and plays. Beth played piano. Amy drew and painted. Meg loved acting and homemaking. They shared their thoughts and dreams through their letters, talks, and journals. You can create your "Castles in the Air" through an imagination book like Jo March. Any notebook will do - a 3 ring binder that you can add pages to or an art book from a craft store, for example. You can decorate the outside and fill the pages inside with your thoughts, drawings, pictures of things you love or dream of, even recipes and favorite quotes.

Apple Slump - Louisa's Favorite

Apple Base:

5 to 6 tart apples; pared, cored and sliced (Granny Smiths work well)

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon salt

Topping:

1 1/2 cups flour

1/3 cup sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 egg, beaten

1/2 cup milk

6 tablespoons butter, melted

1/2 cup chopped walnuts

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease the inside of a 9 x 13 baking dish.
2. Make apple base: In a large bowl, gently mix apple slices, lemon juice, and vanilla (or bourbon). In a small bowl, mix brown sugar, nutmeg, cinnamon, and salt. Add the sugar mixture to the apple mixture and toss until coated.
3. Spread apple base evenly in prepared pan and bake until soft, about 20 minutes.
4. Make topping: While the apples are baking, sift together flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add egg, milk, and melted butter. Stir gently.
5. Pour flour mixture over baked apples and sprinkle walnuts evenly over the top. Continue baking 25 minutes, or until the top is brown and crusty. Cool 5 minutes and serve with your favorite ice cream

Jo March in her writing togs - cap and cape
courtesy of Marmee.

When Louisa was in her vortex of writing and
creativity, she wrote pages and pages.





Be true to yourselves; cherish whatever talent you possess, and in using it faithfully for the good of others you will most assuredly find happiness for yourself, and make of life no failure, but a beautiful success.

L. M. Alcott.

To read more about Louisa May Alcott and her amazing family, check out:

[Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters.](#) by Anne Boyd Rioux

[Louisa: The Life of Louisa May Alcott](#) by Yona Zeldis McDonough

[Eden's Outcasts: The Story of Louisa May Alcott and Her Father.](#) by John Matteson.

Orchard House has a fabulous website and has done some wonderful digital tours and programs during the pandemic. <https://louisamayalcott.org>

The Time Travelers group may not meet until Spring of 2021 due to the pandemic. The Westport Historical Society is creating a number of resources and activities for you in the meantime. Look for announcements in future issues of *The Discovery Papers*.

The United Federation of Doll Clubs, Inc., is hosting an online convention in July 2020. It's free. Check out all the fun and support this wonderful organization with your membership.

Time Travelers is a joint program of The Westport Historical Society and the United Federation of Doll Clubs, Inc. Please check out their websites and become a part of the fun.

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