

THEME: Literature, Drama, Music

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Orchard House

AND/OR COMMON Orchard House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 399 Lexington Road, corner Alcott Road

CITY, TOWN	Concord	— NOT FOR PUBLICATION	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
		— VICINITY OF	Fifth
STATE	Massachusetts	CODE	COUNTY CODE
		025	Middlesex 017

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association

STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box 343

CITY, TOWN Concord VICINITY OF STATE Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Middlesex Registry of Deeds, Southern District
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Cambridge 02141 STATE Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey (catalogue number: MASS-552)

DATE 1941 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN 10 First Street SE., Washington, 20240 STATE D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Orchard House is located on a 2.1 acre parcel of land at the northwest corner of Lexington Road and Alcott Road in Concord, Massachusetts. The property is low and open along its southern and eastern edges and bounded by wooded slopes on the north and west. The house, which faces south-south-east, stands approximately 100 feet from Lexington Road. About 75 feet northwest of it is the simple, church-like building which housed Bronson Alcott's Concord Summer School of Philosophy and Literature.

The earliest portion of Orchard House was constructed during the 18th century but the building owes most of its present appearance to alterations and additions made to it after 1857 when it was purchased by the Alcott family. No significant changes have been made in the building since that date.

In its present form, Orchard House is a 2 1/2-story frame and clapboard building; its gabled roof is broken by a corbelled center chimney and a broad gable set in the center of the front slope. The attic story projects slightly on the gable ends. At the rear of the building are two gabled-roofed ells, set at right angles to each other, and two smaller shed-roofed additions. Windows are 9/9, 6/9, and 6/6 double-hung sash topped by cornices or gabled hoods. The main entrance to the house, at the center of the 5-bay front facade, is covered by a 1-story enclosed porch with a gabled roof. The main block of the house follows a 4-room, center hall plan; the floor plan of the other portions is irregular. The house appears to be in good condition generally though in need of repainting and minor repair.

The School of Philosophy was constructed in 1879 under the direction of Bronson Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Frank Sanborn (journalist, philanthropist, and author of valuable biographies of Alcott, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and others), and served its original purpose until 1888. In accordance with Alcott's theories on architecture, the building was never painted but allowed to weather and become a natural part of its environment. The School is a 1-story board and batten structure, measuring approximately 60 by 25 feet, with a gabled roof (the present asbestos shingle covering is a replacement of the original roof). Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash. At the eastern end of the south (front) elevation is an enclosed, gabled-roofed entry porch containing 12 steps. The interior of the School consists of a single room, open to the rafters, with a seating capacity of 75 to 80. There is a low stage along the north (rear) wall and a large stone fireplace at the western end of the room. The School now stands some 30 feet southwest of its original location; it was moved because of problems with erosion of the first site.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1857-1882 BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Orchard House was for 25 years the home of Amos Bronson Alcott and his family, including his daughter Louisa May Alcott, who wrote a part of Little Women here. An author, educator, and Transcendental philosopher, Alcott established one of the first adult summer schools in the eastern United States, the Concord Summer School of Philosophy and Literature, which met in the building constructed for it near his home. Louisa May Alcott is well known for her children's books, among them Little Women, An Old-Fashioned Girl, Little Men, and Eight Cousins.

Orchard House is an unpretentious, 2 1/2 story frame structure with a central chimney; it was begun during the 18th century and substantially altered and enlarged by the Alcotts about 1857. The house and the adjacent school are owned by the Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association; the house is open to the public from April to November, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday.

Historical Background

Amos Bronson Alcott was born November 29, 1799, on a farm at Spindle Hill near Wolcott, Connecticut. His formal education was limited, derived mainly from district schools and a few months of tutoring from two local clergymen. At the age of nineteen, Alcott went to Virginia hoping to teach but failed to secure a position. For the next four and a half years, he traveled Virginia and the Carolinas as a pedlar.

Between 1823 and 1839, Alcott taught or operated his own school in Bristol, Wolcott, and Cheshire, Connecticut (1823-27), Germantown, Pennsylvania (1831-33), and Boston, Massachusetts (1828-30; 1834-39). Though he was recognized as an able teacher, the educational program he advocated was too far in advance of anything then known in America to be generally accepted. Alcott's goal was the harmonious development of the student's physical, esthetic, intellectual, and moral natures, with special emphasis on the imagination. To achieve this, he introduced in his schools organized play, gymnastics, the honor system, and juvenile libraries; minimized corporal punishment; beautified the school-rooms; and approached instruction and study as activities pleasant in themselves rather than as the means to discipline and acquisition of knowledge. Negative reaction to Alcott's program was only increased by the books he published-- The Record of a School, Exemplifying the General Principles of Spiritual Culture (1835), and Conversations with Children on the Gospels (Volume I, 1836; Volume II, 1837)-- which made it clear that he was stimulating his students to independent thinking on religious matters.

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bradford, Gamaliel. Portraits of American Women (1919).
- Cheney, Ednah D. Louisa May Alcott: her Life, Letters and Journal (1889).
- Sears, Clara Endicott. Fruitlands (1915).
- Shepard, Odell, ed. The Journals of Bronson Alcott (1938).
- Shepard, Odell. Pedlar's Progress, the Life of Bronson Alcott (1937).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.1 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 9	3 0 7 9 6 0	4 7 0 3 1 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark (shown in red on the attached assessors map): beginning at the intersection of the western curblineline of Alcott Road and the northern curblineline of Lexington Road; thence, westerly along said northern curblineline to its intersection with the eastern line (extended) of Parcel 4121; thence, northerly along said eastern line to its intersection with the southeastern line of property at 85 Revolutionary Road; thence,

(Continued)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Projects; original form prepared by J. Walter Coleman, Historian, 10/19/61

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Historic Sites Survey, NPS	1/20/75
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
1100 L Street NW.	
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Washington 20240	.D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____ STATE _____ LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

[Signature] SIGNATURE/A National Historic Landmark

Landmark Designated: Dec 29, 1962

DATE Boundary Commission: _____

Chief, Hist. G. _____ date

DATE Boundary Commission: _____

Director, Office of _____ date

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS).

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Conelma Hene B. 2-75
A. Montanari 7/3/75

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Alcott had married Abigail May in 1830 and by 1840 was the father of a growing family. In that year, deeply in debt, he moved from Boston to Concord, where he attempted unsuccessfully to support his family by farming. For several years, Alcott had corresponded with James Pierrepont Greaves, John Heraud, Charles Lane, and Henry Wright, who together had founded a school near London which they called "Alcott House," and in May, 1842, with money supplied by Ralph Waldo Emerson, he went to England to visit his spiritual offspring. He returned in October with Wright, Lane, and the latter's son William, who were to form the nucleus of a Utopian community.

Many of the numerous cooperative communities established in America during the mid-19th century failed but perhaps none of them so quickly and completely as Alcott's Fruitlands. During the winter of 1843-44, Wright and the Lanes stayed with Alcott at his home in Concord, where they worked out plans for the new community. In the spring, Lane invested his savings in a hundred-acre tract near the village of Harvard, Massachusetts, to which the party moved in June, 1844. Others joined the community during the summer; at its largest, it included only eleven persons. Fruitlands was organized on vegetarian principles but the crops were planted late and carelessly. At harvest time, the men left to attend a reform meeting, and Mrs. Alcott and her daughters rescued what they could from an impending storm. By winter, the Lanes and the Alcotts, the sole remaining members of the community, were on the brink of starvation, and in January, 1845, the undertaking was abandoned.

Over the next twelve years, the Alcott family lived in Concord (1845-57), Boston (1848-54), and Walpole, New Hampshire (1855-57). In 1857, they returned to Concord and began their residence at Orchard House. During this period (and until the successful publication of Little Women in 1868), the family was supported mainly through the efforts of Mrs. Alcott and Louisa May Alcott in sewing, teaching, and even domestic service, supplemented by the assistance of various friends.

In 1859, Alcott was appointed superintendent of the dozen schools in Concord, where he introduced to the curriculum singing, calisthenics, and the study of physiology; advocated the introduction of dancing, hours of directed conversation, and a course of reading aloud; and organized an informal parent-teachers club. In 1879, he formed the Concord Summer School of Philosophy and Literature, the first adult summer school in the eastern United States, which met in the building constructed for it adjacent to Orchard House. Though Alcott's active participation in the School ended when he was paralyzed by a stroke in 1882, it continued to operate until his death in 1888.

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Louisa May Alcott, the second of Bronson Alcott's four daughters who lived to maturity, was born at Germantown, Pennsylvania, on November 29, 1832, but spent most of her life in Concord and Boston, Massachusetts. She was educated almost entirely by her father, though she received friendly guidance from Emerson and Thoreau and from her childhood was exposed to the conversation of Margaret Fuller, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry James, Sr., and other scholars.

As a child, Miss Alcott earned money by making dolls' clothes and, after the failure of the Fruitlands community, she worked continually to help support her family. She began to write for publication at the age of sixteen and was always concerned as much with the commercial as the artistic value of her work. Her first book, a collection of fairy stories entitled Flower Fables, appeared in 1855. By 1860, her poems and stories were appearing in the Atlantic Monthly.

During the Civil War, Miss Alcott, who was an ardent abolitionist, became a nurse in the Union Hospital at Georgetown, where she served efficiently until she contracted typhoid fever and was sent home (she was never completely well again). Her letters to her family, revised and published under the title "Hospital Sketches" in the Commonwealth in 1863 and brought out the same year in book form, excited wide interest.

In 1867, Miss Alcott became the editor of Merry's Museum, a magazine for children. The next year she was asked by the Boston publishing firm of Roberts Brothers to write a book for girls. She produced the autobiographical Little Women (first volume, 1868; second, 1869), an immediate success and one of the most popular books for girls ever written. In 1869 she was able to write in her journal "Paid up all the debts...thank the Lord!...Now I think I could die in peace."

After 1869, much of Miss Alcott's work was done in rented residences in Boston, though she continued to visit regularly at Orchard House. Her later works include An Old-Fashioned Girl (1870), Little Men (1871), Eight Cousins (1875), Under the Lilacs (1878), Jo's Boys (1886), and A Garland for Girls (1888). She died on March 6, 1888, two days after the death of her father.

The Alcotts sold Orchard House in 1882. It was occupied as a residence until 1911 when the Concord Woman's Club decided to purchase the house as a permanent memorial to Louisa May Alcott. The Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association was subsequently organized to assume title to the property and operate Orchard House as a museum. Many Alcott family pieces, including furniture, books, and pictures, have since been returned to the house.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Orchard House

northeasterly along said southern line to its intersection with the southern line of Parcel 4141; thence, easterly along said southern line (extended) to its intersection with the western curblineline of Alcott Road; thence, southerly along said western curblineline to the point of beginning.