The Louisa May Alcott Society announces two calls for papers for the American Literature Association Conference in Boston, MA, May 26-29, 2027.

1. **Wild(ing) Alcott**

Take a walk on the wild side with the Louisa May Alcott Society at ALA 2027. We invite proposals for a panel addressing strange, rebellious, unruly, radical, or otherwise feral scenes in Alcott's writing. "Wildness" might be personal, familial, communal, political, aesthetic, or an attribute of the natural world. Wild plots, wild settings, wild children, wild adults: who or what is coded as "wild" in Alcott's writing, and how are dangerous, exciting, or exotic others (human or not) valorized, domesticated, tolerated, or expelled? How did Alcott depict the wilderness? Was Alcott herself a wild child growing up? Who among her contemporaries perceived Alcott's wildness? Where in her fiction, essays, letters, and journals does Alcott express longing to sow her own wild oats (transcendental or otherwise)? Did or does Alcott inspire wildness in her readers past or present?

Please email 300-500 word proposals and a 100 word bio to Karyn Valerius: nuckmv@hofstra.edu by January 15, 2027.

2. **Larix Decidua: Connecting the Landscape of Literary Work by Alcott and Hawthorne across the Larch Path**

ALA 2027 Panel sponsored by the Alcott Society and the Hawthorne Society

When Hawthorne was returning from Europe to the Wayside in 1859, the home he had purchased from the Alcotts in 1852, he hired Bronson Alcott to oversee renovation of the house and landscape improvements, which included the construction of the larix decidua, or "larch path," connecting the Wayside to Orchard House, the home next door which the Alcotts purchased in 1858. The Alcotts had previously owned the Wayside, which they named Hillside, from 1845-1852 and constructed many footpaths across the property and planted an abundance of produce. In 1846, Elizabeth Alcott drew a map indicating a garden on the western half of the parcel and a field on the eastern half. This parcel was also a garden for the imagination of the Alcott girls and the setting for much of what Louisa pens in *Little Women* (1868) when she writes the novel from her upstairs bedroom desk at Orchard House. When Hawthorne acquired the Wayside, he had already published *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)*, The House of Seven Gables* (1851)*, and The Blithedale Romance* (1852), but spent time walking a path along the ridgeline, plotting subsequent work. Louisa May Alcott was just beginning to see her poems, short stories, and thrillers in print. This panel will explore the connection between the literary work of Louisa May Alcott and Nathaniel Hawthorne and their family circles, including Bronson Alcott, May Alcott Nieriker, and Sophia Hawthorne, in relation to any aspect of the "larch path" and its literary, botanical, ecological, environmental, architectural,

conversational, artistic, and print culture implications. These could include, but are certainly not limited to, investigations of:

- Allusions to gardens, and particularly the Garden of Eden, in the work of Hawthorne and Alcott, including the treatment of transgressive female figures
- Bronson Alcott and Nathaniel Hawthorne as utopian cultivators and planters, at Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Hillside/Wayside
- Sophia Peabody Hawthorne and May Alcott Nieriker as landscape artists
- Elizabeth Alcott as a designer and planter in conjunction with the garden plots of the March sisters in *Little Women*
- The ecological and environmental in Hawthorne, from the "Tanglewood Tales" to *Septimius Felton*, both written at the Wayside
- *The Flower Fables* (1854), Louisa May Alcott's first published work, and its impact on the Victorian "language of flowers" in her subsequent short stories, poems, and novels, perhaps considered in tandem with Hawthorne's *Wonder-book* and *Tangle-wood Tales*
- Plant analogies found in fictional and non-fictional Hawthornian work, including *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance*, "Rappaccini's Daughter," "Young Goodman Brown," and the American and Italian Notebooks
- The interest in herbs and herbariums among the Alcotts and Hawthornes, including Reverend William P. Alcott**,** Louisa May Alcott's second cousin, whose collection is at the Peabody Essex Museum
- The atmospheric in the work of Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott's work, from her "blood and thunder" tales to *Moods*
- Consideration of the landscape in works produced by Alcott at Orchard House, including *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (1870), *Little Men* (1871), *Work* (1872), and *Transcendental Wild Oats* (1873)
- Transplantation as literal and figurative practice in the work produced at the Hillside/Wayside
- Mary C. Pratt's "The Wayside School for Young Ladies" (1871-1879), convened at the Wayside, where Bronson Alcott gave lectures and shared stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott with the female students
- The preface to *The Wonder-book*, "The Wayside," which is set in one of Bronson Alcott's architectural works
- Hawthorne's construction of the third-story tower at the Wayside as a writing retreat and Alcott's subsequent interest in the tower as a "sky palace" of the imagination
- The figurative "larch path" connecting the responses Hawthorne and Alcott make to the work of the other
- Consideration of Hawthorne's unpublished "Elixir of Life" manuscript in relation to the "Larch Path" and "Hawthorne's Path" along the ridgeline which was worn into the earth "by the handwriting of his body"

It is intended that this panel will lead to the publication of a collection of critical essays on the "larch path" by Vernon Press. Submissions may be considered for the panel, the collection of essays, or both.

Please send submissions of an abstract and brief bio to Ariel Silver (ariel.silver@svu.edu) and Marlowe Daly-Galeano (hmdalygaleano@lcsc.edu) by December 15, 2026.