

ORCHARD HOUSE



# PRESS RELEASE

Louisa May Alcott's ORCHARD HOUSE – “Home of Little Women”

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## LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S ORCHARD HOUSE NAMED FINALIST FOR PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION AWARD

*Public Voting On-Line Will Choose Winner*



CONCORD, MA – April 14, 2009 – **Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House** (ca. 1690), where the beloved classic novel, *Little Women*, was written and set in 1868, is proud to announce that it has been named a finalist for the 2009 “Partners in Preservation” Award sponsored by *American Express* and *The National Trust for Historic Preservation*.

This award honors deserving historic sites that reflect the region's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and also provides much-needed funding for urgent preservation projects. Winners will be chosen after daily public on-line voting at [www.PartnersinPreservation.com](http://www.PartnersinPreservation.com) that begins Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup> and continues through May 17, 2009. The winner of the public vote is guaranteed to receive a grant. The rest of the winning sites will be selected by *American Express*, *The National Trust for Historic Preservation*, and an Advisory Committee comprised of Greater Boston civic and preservation leaders.

Launched in 2006, “Partners in Preservation” is a program in which *American Express*, along with *The National Trust for Historic Preservation*, committed \$5.5 million over a five-year period toward preserving historic places throughout the United States. Over the past three years, historic places in the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicagoland, and New Orleans have received \$2.4 million in preservation grants, which has enabled recipients to make significant progress in achieving their preservation goals. *American Express* has also given \$1.1 million to *The National Trust for Historic Preservation* to support its work helping people save the places that matter to them all across the country.

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LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S ORCHARD HOUSE, A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT, IS AN “OFFICIAL PROJECT” OF SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES, WINNER OF THE 2005 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD FOR PRESERVATION, A CATALOGUE FOR PHILANTHROPY CHARITY, AND A YANKEE MAGAZINE'S “SIMPLY THE BEST” SITE

Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House could not be more suited for the "Partners in Preservation" award. A recent recipient of a \$100,000 grant from the *Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation* and a Concord Community Preservation Act grant, Orchard House is considered one of the oldest and most authentically-preserved historic sites in the country, and welcomes more than 50,000 visitors annually from around the world for guided tours, educational programs, and unique special events.

Until only a few years ago, the 319-year-old home rested on bare earth and was literally sinking unevenly into the ground. Walls were near collapse and major support posts were almost powder, threatened by wood-boring insects, water damage, and lack of a foundation under the rear of the home. Today, thanks to public and private support, the rescue of Orchard House is well underway, although further structural work on the first, second, and attic levels awaits additional funding. Also needed is conservation of irreplaceable artifacts and historic finishes; installation of state-of-the-art safety and security systems; preservation of The Concord School of Philosophy (ca. 1880); and restoration of the historic landscape. The preservation grant that accompanies the "Partners in Preservation" Award – up to \$100,000 -- will help defray a portion of the enormous costs for these vital projects that will restore Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House according to the highest standards of historic preservation.

### **On-Line Votes Will Help Preserve a National Treasure**

Votes in support of Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House are strongly encouraged and can be cast at [www.partnersinpreservation.com](http://www.partnersinpreservation.com) through May 17, 2009. Voting is permitted once daily per e-mail address. The initial voting experience requires a brief registration process, but routine voting can be done in less than 30 seconds. At the end of the voting period, *American Express*, *The National Trust for Historic Preservation*, and a special Advisory Committee comprised of Boston area dignitaries will review the popular vote along with each site's monetary needs to determine how the \$1 million in preservation grants will be awarded. The site with the highest popular vote is guaranteed to receive funding.

### **Spring Open House: May 2 & 3, 2009**

Welcome the joyous month of May and celebrate Orchard House's "Partners in Preservation" finalist status with a very special Open House. The weekend will feature Living History re-enactors, 19th Century games, Maypole dancing, Morris Dance demonstrations, a silhouette artist, live music, period-appropriate refreshments, and preservation tours. Guided tours offered throughout the weekend will feature the themes of love and marriage as expressed in the diaries and letters of Alcott family members. Visitors will also have access to a laptop to vote for Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House to win the "Partners in Preservation" contest. Regular admission is charged for guided tours of the home, but all other activities and refreshments are offered free of charge.

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### About Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House

A National Registered Historic Landmark and "Official Project" of *Save America's Treasures*, Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House ([www.louisamayalcott.org](http://www.louisamayalcott.org)) was rescued from certain destruction through the first phase of a multi-phased Preservation Project begun in 2000. The unique historic site provides more than 80% of original furnishings and archival materials for scholars, students, and the general public to experience. Exemplary tours and educational programs offer both local residents and visitors from around the globe a tangible way to connect to the Alcott legacy in literature, art, education, philosophy, and social justice. The site is open year-round, and also houses a Museum Store featuring items inspired by the Alcotts, their residence at Orchard House, and their many talents and involvements. Phase II of the Preservation Project is currently underway to prepare the home for its Centennial in 2011, as well as for visitation by many more generations to come.

### About The National Trust for Historic Preservation

*The National Trust for Historic Preservation* ([www.PreservationNation.org](http://www.PreservationNation.org)) is a non-profit membership organization bringing people together to protect, enhance and enjoy the places that matter to them. By saving the places where great moments from history – and the important moments of everyday life – took place, *The National Trust for Historic Preservation* helps revitalize neighborhoods and communities, spark economic development and promote environmental sustainability. Headquartered in Washington, DC, with nine regional and field offices -- including the Northeast Office in Boston -- 29 historic sites, and partner organizations in all 50 states, *The National Trust for Historic Preservation* provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to a national network of people, organizations and local communities committed to saving places, connecting us to our history, and collectively shaping the future of America's stories.

### About American Express

*American Express Company* ([www.americanexpress.com](http://www.americanexpress.com)) is a leading global payments and travel company founded in 1850. Historic preservation has long been the hallmark of *American Express'* involvement in the community, reflecting its recognition of the contribution of sites and monuments to a sense of national and local identity and the role that their preservation can play in attracting visitors and revitalizing neighborhoods. As early as 1983, *American Express* launched a cause-related marketing effort that raised \$1.7 million for the preservation of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. From 1996 to 2005, *American Express* contributed more than \$10 million to help preserve 126 historic sites in 62 countries from the World Monuments Watch List of the 100 Most Endangered Sites. In June 2006, the company announced the *American Express* Partners in Preservation initiative, with *the National Trust for Historic Preservation* as its partner in the U.S. and the World Monuments Fund as its partner internationally.

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