Louisa May Alcott died at the age of 55, two days after her father. Perhaps disillusioned by her parents' marriage, she concluded that it was not possible for a woman to marry and pursue a career.

"Most heartily yours for woman suffrage and all other reforms" was one of Louisa May Alcott’s favorite salutations.

The author Louisa May Alcott is beloved by generations for her novel *Little Women*. Her own family life was more complicated.

**The Alcotts of Concord and Other Venues**

Louisa’s father, Bronson Alcott, failed in several attempts to make a living. An aspiring “philosopher,” he exempted himself from responsibility for the financial support of the family. Mired in poverty, the Alcotts moved twenty-two times over a thirty-year period. Louisa’s mother Abigail supported the children with help from family and friends and hard work in menial jobs. Highly literate, Abigail encouraged her daughter to read, keep a journal, and publish her writings.

**Fruitlands**

Fruitlands in Harvard, Massachusetts was a utopian community promoted by Bronson Alcott. It quickly failed, as chronicled in Louisa’s later account, *Transcendental Wild Oats*. Her father attained wider recognition as a lecturer after his daughter became famous from *Little Women*.

**Literary Career**

While aspiring to be a writer, Louisa worked in a variety of difficult jobs, including service as a Civil War nurse. Using assumed names to hide the fact that she was a woman, she wrote "lurid" stories for adults. Although tame by 21st century standards, her stories reflect anger at the limitations placed on women and their efforts to overcome them. After *Little Women* became a sensation, she focused on children’s stories and became America’s best-selling author.

**Suffragists: Like Mother, Like Daughter**

In 1853 and 1875 Abigail May Alcott submitted petitions to amend the Massachusetts constitution and allow women’s suffrage. One petition was “set aside with as little regard as the stump of a well-worn cigar,” she wrote. Daughter Louisa May Alcott wrote articles advocating female suffrage in *The Woman’s Journal*, based in Boston. In 1879 she was the first woman to register to vote in Concord after women were allowed to vote in school committee but not general elections.