CITY OF OCEANSIDE

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

CJ Di Mento, Senior Librarian
760-435-5614

OCEANSIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY

For Immediate Release
September 9, 2011

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT: THE WOMAN BEHIND LITTLE WOMEN

FREE PROGRAMS AT OCEANSIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Louisa May Alcott is recognized around the world for her novel *Little Women,* but few know Alcott as the bold, compelling woman who grew up in the innermost circle of the transcendentalist and antislavery movements, served as a Civil War army nurse, and led a secret literary life writing pulp fiction. Louisa May Alcott was her own best character, and her life was her own best plot.

Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women is a documentary film co-produced by Nancy Porter Productions, Inc., and Thirteen/WNET New York's *American Masters*, and a biography of the same name written by Harriet Reisen.

To support *Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women,* the Oceanside Public Library will present a number of programs during September and October that will re-introduce audiences to Louisa May Alcott's story. Louisa May Alcott programs in libraries are sponsored by the American Library Association Public Programs Office with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

-more-

The Oceanside Public Library's public programs shed light on Louisa May Alcott by exploring her life and the historical and cultural context that inspired her remarkable body of work. Alcott's childhood was characterized by chronic economic difficulties and frequent uprooting due to her father's utopian experiments. Despite her family's financial hardships, Alcott experienced a rich intellectual life influenced by family friends such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller. When slavery threatened the nation, the Alcott home was an Underground Railroad stop for fugitives; during the Civil War, Alcott wanted to fight, but as a woman she could enlist only as a nurse.

Through her writing, Louisa May Alcott passionately expressed her views on many of her era's ideas for social reform, including women's rights, racial integration, and education. During her lifetime, she produced an enormous body of work, including sensational thrillers, satires, fairy tales, Gothic novels, and works of domestic realism. Louisa May Alcott amassed her fortune with the success of her novels for young adult readers, helping her to prove that a woman could make a living as a self-trained and professional writer. Louisa May Alcott programs at Oceanside Public Library will present a new understanding of the author and her place in American culture.

"We're very pleased that our library was chosen to receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for programs focused on Louisa May Alcott," said Deborah Polich, Oceanside Public Library Director. "We have plans for a number of events that will explore Louisa May Alcott's life, work and times. Besides her best known children's novel, Alcott authored many other stories for adult audiences, such as *Hospital Sketches*, an account of Alcott's time spent as a Civil War nurse; and *Behind a Mask*, one of Alcott's recently

-more-

discovered thrillers. Our library is excited to explore these little-known works, which provide a unique perspective on American history. We look forward to sharing the documentary and biography with our community." Programs scheduled include:

- September 19 at 5:00 pm, City Council Chambers, authors discussing the influence of writing on social reform
- October 1 at 4:30 pm, Mira Costa Community College Theater, viewing of the documentary "Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind Little Women"
- October 15 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm, events ranging from garments of the mid-1800s, project scholar with her talk "Unmasking Alcott", and Tea with Louisa May Alcott from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, a living history presentation with Valerie Weich as Louisa May Alcott
- October 22 at 10:30 am, Early Women of Oceanside presentation highlighting Alcott's jobs and the early jobs of Oceanside women
- Various other book discussions, film screenings and workshops

For more information on the Oceanside Public Library's Louisa May Alcott programs, contact the Library at 760-435-5600 or visit www.oceansidepubliclibrary.org.

###