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Applestein-Sweren Book Collecting Prize

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Collecting Heroines

I cannot remember a time in my life when I have not loved books. Books fill every available shelf in my bedroom and spill out onto the shelves in hallways and in the basement of my house. I am currently trying to bribe my brother for shelves on his bookshelves. I have always been the child who gets an eye-roll when she asks her parents for a new book. I have always been the child who has been forced to clean out her bookshelves. I always dread my parents' instructions to clear space on the shelves. I have, however, a core collection of beloved books that will never be donated to a library.

The first book that I ever consciously collected was my great-grandmother's copy of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. Alcott's novel has been a major part of my childhood and continues to influence my life. I currently own five editions of *Little Women*, which I have discovered in my grandparents basement, bought at Barnes and Noble or carefully located in used book stores. As my Alcott-obsession grew, I began to purchase other Alcott novels. Beautiful editions, books with meaningful inscriptions, new stories, I wanted everything she had ever written.

As my literary world began to expand, I began to collect the stories by and about other strong women. My next literary icon was the *Nancy Drew* mystery series, written under the pen name Carolyn Keene. Nancy Drew was a huge influence on my childhood, I spent an entire summer attempting to *be* Nancy Drew, which was nearly impossible in a small, boring town.

When my dad gave me a first edition of one of the mysteries in the series, I began to consciously collect old copies of Nancy Drew. People in my family began to give me their old copies of *Nancy Drews* which have helped to fill out my collection. What I love most about these older editions of the mysteries is that Nancy Drew is a very different person from the modern copies—the editors of the series modernized her so that she would fit into modern society. I find this fact to be so interesting and I love that I own a few small pieces of Nancy Drew’s history.

Most recently, my literary icon is Jane Austen. I love the fact that she, as a 19th Century female writer, did something that women from her time rarely did. I love the fact that she worked so hard to publish her novels and has enjoyed such incredible success. Though some of her heroines may not appear to be conventional heroines, they are groundbreaking for their time, as groundbreaking as their creator.

I am drawn to strong, independent female characters. I have a difficult time reading books without central female characters or even with weak women. I spent the majority of my childhood reading books in a mother-daughter book club led by some of the most incredible women I have ever met. I learned about myself and about how to grow into my own personal heroines from the books we read. I have always learned from characters in books, and I look especially to heroines to teach me something new, something incredible. Be it Louisa May Alcott, Jane Austen or Nancy Drew, I was drawn to interesting stories, strong heroines, and beautiful copies of the works. My collection was an obvious assemblage of my loves. I have collected editions of some of my favorite books with great personal meaning to me. Though they may not be incredibly monetarily valuable, these books have great sentimental value to me.

“A Collection of Heroines” Annotated Bibliography

Alcott, Louisa May. *A Garland for Girls*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1908. Print.

This work is a collection of Alcott’s short stories (the ones that she wrote for children). The short stories focus on girls of all walks of life and all types of personalities. Like the majority of her children’s novels, this collection includes many moral lessons. I purchased *A Garland for Girls* because of my love of all things Alcott. Though it is far from one of her most famous works, I have greatly enjoyed reading another aspect of Alcott’s children’s writing. Since this collection focuses on heroines, especially in children’s literature, Alcott’s short-story collection fits in beautifully.

Alcott, Louisa May. *An Old Fashioned Girl*. New York: The Saalfield Publishing Company, 1928. Print.

An Old Fashioned Girl is an Alcott novel that, like its predecessor *Little Women*, conveyed the importance of love and family above money and social standing. The novel’s heroine Polly visits her wealthy cousins, but is both shocked and alienated because of her humble upbringing and values. In true Alcott style, Polly teaches her family to value the more important things in life (love and family) over money. This novel, like all of Alcott’s other novels, fits in with both my collection because of its strong female characters and my love of Alcott’s writing. This book is included in my collection not only because of the story it presents, but also because of the inscription within, a birthday message for a young girl named Lucille. To me, this adds infinite value to the book; it was given to a young girl in New York around 1928 for her birthday and somehow it ended up on my bookshelf—this edition contains a story within a story.

Alcott, Louisa May. *An Old Fashioned Girl*. Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1928. Print.

I found this edition of *An Old Fashioned Girl* on my first trip to the Baltimore Book Thing. This book is one of my favorite finds because I literally pulled a gorgeous book by one of my favorite authors out of a cardboard box. The beauty of the copy as well as the story it contains made it an obvious addition to my collection.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Eight Cousins*. New York: Puffin Group, 2004. Print.

Eight Cousins presents an entirely new Alcott heroine and series. The story is another very simple

on: about a young orphan sent to live with her six aunts and seven boy cousins. It is a beautiful story about family and love, but it is very different from Alcott's other works but it is also very enjoyable. I wanted this book to be part of my collection because I really enjoyed Rose as a character. She was quirky, a little selfish and very interesting. She represents many of the characteristics that make a great heroine!

Alcott, Louisa May. *Jo's Boys*. Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999. Print.

Jo's Boys and I crossed paths one summer in a tiny and dark book store. I immediately purchased the book and entered the final installment on the March sisters. This book was very interesting because it focused on the second generation, the children of the March sisters. But the book also spends a lot of time with Jo, my favorite character from *Little Women*. I wanted to include this book in my collection because it completes the *Little Women* series, but also because it completes Jo's story.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Men: Life at Plumfield with Jo's Boys*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1947. Print.

I stumbled across this edition of *Little Men* in a used book store. What I found to be far more fascinating than the gorgeous cover of the sequel to *Little Women* was the note tucked inside of it. Somehow saved in a yellowing envelope, a grandmother gave her love and the book to her granddaughter. Somehow, I feel like Jo would be proud that the story of her school and her family was passed on in such a way. This book was an obvious part of my collection, both the story and the note are welcomed amongst the heroines.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. New York: Books, INC, c.1936. Print.

The first novel in what became a three novel series, *Little Women* tells the story of the four March sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy—and their struggles maturing into young women during the Civil War. This novel is not full of adventures; it is simply the story of four lives. The characters are very realistic: they are as flawed and as interesting as real people. I learned many life-lessons from the trials and triumphs of the March sisters. Many scholars also believe that the novel is loosely based on Alcott's own childhood. This edition of the novel, though the most battered, is extremely important to be. It has been passed down from my great-grandmother to my grammy to my mom and now to me. This edition is included in my collection because of its sentimental value to me; though it is not the most monetarily valuable of my books, it is the one I treasure above all others.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1947. Print.

I found this copy of *Little Women* in a used book store. Published a few year after World War II, both the its cover and its interior illustrations are breathtakingly beautiful. I really love this copy because of its beautiful presentation and also because of its differences with all of my other editions of the novel. You can definitely see the 40s influence in the artwork, but it really adds character to the novel. The March sisters in *Little Women* were important influences on my life and therefore I believe that they represent strong, childhood heroines for girls.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women Or, Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1994. Print.

Though this is the same story as was presented above, the illustrated A.A. Knopf Everyman's Classics edition was the first copy of *Little Women* I read. As a child, the illustrated pages and clear type made the novel easy to read. Once again, this edition holds sentimental value to me because it gave me that first glimpse into the world of *Little Women*. This book has been read nearly yearly by me and because of its deep impact on my life, has earned its place in my collection. I actually collect beautiful and inscribed editions of *Little Women*.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women at Christmas Time*. Nashville: CandyCane Press, 1999. Print.

This picture book was my first glimpse into the world of the March family. Before I was old enough to read the full chapter book, I read this edition, which illustrates the first chapter of Alcott's novel. The illustrations are beautiful and I remember reading it over and over again. This picture book is included in my collection because it is an adaptation of Alcott's *Little Women* and the March sisters, even in this shortened edition, greatly impacted my life and the lives of many other girls.

Austen, Jane. *Emma*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2004. Print.

Emma is a heroine who was distinctly out of place in the early 19th Century. She was strong-willed, independent, self-assured and a bit meddling. I think that, while she might not be the most likeable of characters, her traits make her a strong heroine. Out of all of Austen's heroines, Emma would find herself most at home in modern society and enjoy the independence that women are still winning. She is a strong heroine who deserves to be included in this collection.

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003. Print.

Though Anne Elliot may not seem to be the strongest of heroines, I admire her greatly for ultimately valuing herself over others. It takes Anne the majority of the novel to discover her own worth, but once she does and once she removes herself from the persuasion of others, she becomes a happier person and a stronger heroine. I think that that makes her a heroine who deserves to be a member of this collection.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Penguin, 2009. Print.

I should preface this by stating that I really love Elizabeth Bennet. Though she is in some ways a product of her time, she has a strength that carries her through her mother's desperation to marry Elizabeth off. I believe that Lizzy is a true heroine because she holds strong to her own values and makes the decisions that will ultimately make her happy. I want nothing more than for her to be included in this collection.

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003. Print.

The Dashwood sisters are strong heroines because they value their relationship to each other over romance. Though they are very different from one another, they each have aspects that make them strong heroines. Marianne is impulsive and romantic. Her blatant disregard for 19th Century social conventions makes her far more applicable in the 21st Century. Elinor is the strength behind her family. Though she internalizes the majority of her emotions, she keeps her family together and safe. I think both of these girls deserve to be considered heroines and deserve to be included in this collection.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. New York: Random House, 1946. Print.

My grandparents recently gave me a two-volume set of Lewis Carroll's famous children's novels. These two books are absolutely amazing: their binding, their illustrations, the box that they are stored in. I really love the art that these books are. I believe that Alice is a strong heroine and that she belongs with the other heroines in my collection.

Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking Glass*. New York: Random House, 1946. Print.

I've always enjoyed the classics, even as a child. Alice is definitely a heroine who I admired greatly as a little girl. As I previously stated, Alice has adventured herself into a clear slot in my collection.

Freedman, Benedict, and Nancy Freedman. *Mrs. Mike: The Story of Katherine Mary Flannigan*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1947. Print.

When I was about eleven, I asked my mom what her favorite book was. She handed me *Mrs. Mike*. This book is the incredible story of a young woman who fell in love with a Mountie and lived this incredible adventure. Katherine Flannigan was such a strong woman who experienced more sorrow and more struggles than most of the other heroines who I admire greatly. This book was an obvious addition to my collection; Katherine is a heroine to be admired and praised for all her strengths.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Clue of the Broken Locket; The Message in the Hollow Oak*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972. Print.

I have always been an avid Nancy Drew fan. This edition of the *Nancy Drew* series is very interesting to me. It contains two mysteries bound into one book. As a girl who could not read enough about Nancy's adventures, having two mysteries in one was very helpful. This, like all the other mysteries about Nancy Drew, is included in my collection because of my love for Nancy's adventurous spirit, desire to help others and all the "scrapes" in which she finds herself.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Clue in the Old Stagecoach*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1960. Print.

This is another *Nancy Drew* that was passed down to me through my family. I chose to include this edition because of the interesting, vibrant cover. I really enjoy the covers on the 60s era *Nancy Drews* because of the focus on depicting Nancy in the midst of danger and adventure. I have always looked up to Nancy for her sense of right and willingness to confront danger head-on.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Hidden Window Mystery*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1956. Print.

Though this book was printed later, the cover remains on the plainer side. But this illustrated edition still contains the same Nancy Drew that readers have loved for over eighty years. I really admire Nancy as a heroine and as a detective. She is everything that I have ever wanted to be, I have always looked up to her.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Mystery at the Ski Jump*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1952. Print.

Printed in 1952, this *Nancy Drew* has another incredibly detailed cover. I really love this cover

because it foreshadows the intense peril Nancy will find herself in later in the book. What I have always loved about Nancy is that she fights her way out of danger herself. No matter how perilous the situation, she manages to escape and save the day. I always loved that aspect of the *Nancy Drew* mysteries.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Mystery of the Ivory Charm*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1936. Print.

This mystery novel was the first book that I ever actively collected. My dad gave it to me as a birthday present and I have treasured it ever since. Prior to this birthday, I loved books, I loved the history of older books and I loved Nancy Drew. This 1936 edition of *The Mystery of the Ivory Charm* is not only a first edition, it also contains marked differences from the current editions that are printed. I find the history and evolution of Nancy Drew as both a character and a mystery series to be very interesting; Nancy actually changed with the times both physically and at times mentally. Throughout time, however, Nancy Drew has remained a bold young woman who bravely takes on new mysteries and braves new dangers.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Secret in the Old Attic*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1944. Print.

This is another first edition *Nancy Drew* that my great-aunt gave to me. Though the cover may not be as interesting as the later editions, I find the first editions to be extremely special. This was the first Nancy that girls ever met, now she is a different and more modern person, but even in the 30s and 40s she was a strong and brave heroine.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Sign of the Twisted Candles*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1933. Print.

This edition of Nancy Drew was given to me by my great aunt. Another first edition, it is another point of comparison between the version of *The Sign of the Twisted Candles* that is published today and what was originally drafted in 1933. I admire Nancy as a heroine above all else because even in 1933, she was an independent and stubborn detective. She provided a strong female role model before such bravery was the norm.

Sanderson, Edgar, John Porter Lamberton, and Charles Morris. *Six Thousand Years of History: Famous Women*. Vol. V. Philadelphia: Thomas Nolan, 1914. Print.

I took this volume from my grandparents because of its content. It is a historical account of famous historical women that goes up to Queen Victoria. This book is slightly unique to the collection because it is

the only non-fiction, encyclopedia-like book I own. But it also deserves to be listed amongst the other books of this collection because it tells the story of a few very important women in history—real heroines.

Worick, Jennifer. *Nancy Drew's Guide to Life*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2001. Print.

This entertaining pocket-sized book contains quotes from various *Nancy Drew* mysteries. When I spent a summer trying to be Nancy Drew (a difficult feat in a town with no mysteries to solve), I carried this book around in my “detective kit.” Though I am no longer trying to be Nancy Drew, this book remains a reminder of all the incredible things this heroine accomplished and all the potential that every girl has.

“A Collection of Heroines” Wish List

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Men: Life at Plumfield with Jo's Boys*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1871. Print.

As a connoisseur of all things Alcott, the obvious addition to my collection would be a first edition of my favorite series. Someday, I know that I will purchase my own copy of each novel in the series. *Little Men* presents the next chapter in the life of the March sisters, focusing specifically on Jo's school and family. I would very much love to add this edition to my collection one day.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885. Print

Though this edition of *Little Women* is not a first edition, a specific book from this printing contains a very unique signature and inscription from Alcott herself. It reads: Louisa May Alcott; Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy/ Teddy, Jo. I would be so incredibly happy to add this incredibly personal book to my collection, with the actual handwriting of my favorite author.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women, or Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1868. Print.

There was no more obvious book that I would love to add to my collection than a first edition of *Little Women*. To hold one of the first copies of the novel that the world ever encountered would be absolutely amazing and to actually own one of those copies would be a dream come true. *Little Women* has influenced my life so deeply and there is no book that I would rather own than this.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women; or Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. Part Second*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869. Print.

What many people don't know is that the book that is now published as *Little Women* was originally published in two separate volumes (entitled *Little Women* and *Good Wives*). I would very much like to own the entire *Little Women* series and, more simply, I would love to own both books that have become the modern *Little Women*.

Alcott, Louisa May. *The Inheritance*. New York: Dutton, 1997. Print.

One day (relatively recently), two scholars were researching Louisa May Alcott in the Harvard library when they decided to call up an untitled manuscript. What they discovered that day was an

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unpublished story by Alcott. It is one of her adult novels and I have read my library's copy but I have never actually purchased the book. I would absolutely love to own such a unique book with such an amazing story behind it.

Austen, Jane. *Emma*. London: John Murray. 1816. Print.

As an avid Jane Austen fan, she is, in fact, my second favorite author, I would love nothing more than to own a first edition of every one of her novels. Emma is a girl who is a strong, though at times unlikeable, heroine and owning this first edition of *Emma* would be an absolute dream come true.

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. London: T. Egerton, 1814. Print.

Though Fanny Price may not be the most conventional heroine, I feel that any book by Austen deserves to have a place in my collection. And what Austen fan does not dream of owning first editions of all of her incredible novels? I admire Jane Austen so much for all that she accomplished and I truly believe that every single one of her novels deserves a place in this collection.

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*. London: John Murray. 1818. Print.

Persuasion is actually my absolute favorite Austen novel. I love the story, though Anne Elliot is not my favorite Austen heroine. I would absolutely love to have a first edition of my second favorite novel included in my collection.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: George Allen, 1894. Print.

More famously known as the Peacock edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, I would absolutely love to own such a gorgeous version of the novel. I have loved *Pride and Prejudice* for years, and this edition is as ornate and gorgeous as Austen's writing. This beautiful copy would greatly enhance my collection.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: T. Egerton, 1813. Print.

I really love Elizabeth Bennet and the love story told in *Pride and Prejudice*. And, as I have previously stated, owning first editions by my favorite authors would be a dream come true for me. Though it is a long way away, someday I hope to be the proud owner of such incredible pieces of literature and literary history.

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. London: T. Egerton, 1811. Print.

Owning the first novel published by Jane Austen would be incredible. Though in many ways, Austen was just coming into her powers as an author, *Sense and Sensibility* is still an incredible novel and I would love to include a first edition in my collection.

Keene, Carolyn. *The Secret of the Old Clock*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1930. Print.

I currently own many first editions from the *Nancy Drew* mystery series. But owning the first one, the first mystery story that turned into a childhood love of Nancy Drew, would be an incredible addition to my collection.