

***The Pirate's Wife: The Remarkable True Story of Sarah Kidd* by Daphne Palmer Geanacopoulos**

The Pirate's Wife is a great read for celebrating women's history. Everyone has read or watched tales about pirates and buried treasure. Pirates loom large in these tales with outsized personalities and physical characteristics. Author Geanacopoulos asks the question – what about their wives? Who were these women and what happened to them?

In this book Geanacopoulos presents the story of Sarah Kidd, wife of convicted pirate William Kidd. Sarah was born Sarah Bradley in 1670 in England. At the age of 14 she traveled with her father, Captain Samuel Bradley, and two younger brothers (her mother had passed) to the English colony of New York. Shortly after their arrival, her father met William Cox, a wealthy flour merchant in his mid-thirties. On April 17, 1685, Cox and Sarah were married. She was only 15! Its hard for us to imagine life in early colonial America where teenagers were taking on the role of wife.

From accounts, they had a comfortable life and Sarah learned business skills while opening and running a store. Unfortunately, their marriage was short lived as Cox passed in a tragic accident in 1689. Sarah was a widow at age 19. Women during this period had few rights. Cox's estate got tied up in colonial politics, and Sarah was in a rough place as she was unable to advocate for herself. In 1690, a year after Cox's death, she married merchant John Oort. Oort was not so successful in business and ran up debt. During their first year of marriage, she met Captain William Kidd, a wealthy privateer who was establishing himself in New York. Things quickly changed – Oort mysteriously died and two days after his death (on May 16, 1691) Sarah married Kidd. Definitely a bit suspicious.

As Mrs. Kidd, Sarah became a mother to two daughters and lived a good life. In 1697, Kidd took a big privateer contract for England and set sail, expecting to be gone for a year. He didn't return for three years. Sarah had no idea what happened to him. When he did return, it was done in secret as he was wanted for piracy. The bulk of the book details Sarah's support of her husband during this time – she was even jailed briefly. Kidd was hung in London in 1701 and Sarah was on her own again at the age of 31 with two children to support. It was a difficult time as her husband's estate was tied up in legalities. Sarah was strong and a survivor though, and she rebuilt herself and her standing in the community amidst the notoriety of William Kidd. She married merchant Christopher Rousby in 1703 and they had three sons. They were married for 25 years until Rousby's death in 1728. Sarah passed in 1744. She is buried in the Trinity Church Wall Street graveyard in Manhattan.

Geanacopoulos thoroughly scoured all available documents of colonial New York found in New England, Washington, D.C., and London. Document types included wills, inventories, probate records, land records, letters, court records, and more. She uses the information contained in these various documents to piece together the best story possible of Sarah's life without the benefit of Sarah's own words. My only criticism is that the author takes liberties with imagining the emotions of Sarah and William Kidd. These imaginings do help the story flow and makes the history read more like fiction; however, readers should keep in mind that these parts of the story may not be true. Overall though it is a fascinating glimpse into the lives of pirate wives.