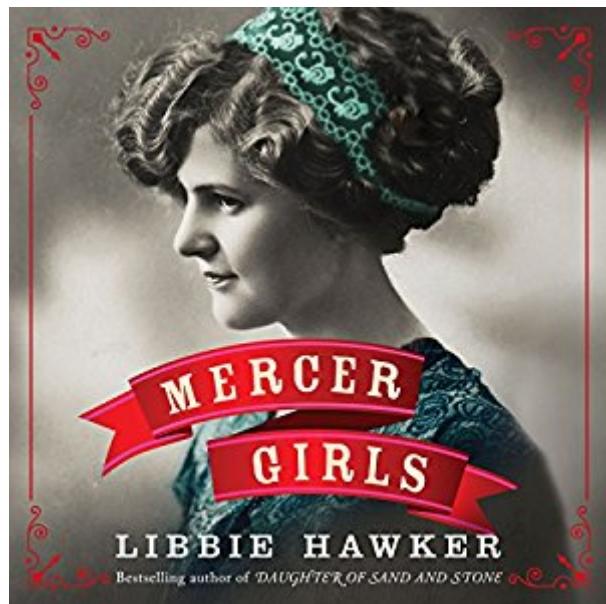


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# Mercer Girls



## Synopsis

It's 1864 in downtrodden Lowell, Massachusetts. The Civil War has taken its toll on the town - leaving the economy in ruin and its women in dire straits. That is, until Asa Mercer arrives on a peculiar, but providential, errand: he seeks high-minded women who can exert an elevating influence in Seattle, where there are ten men for every woman. Mail-order brides, yes, but of a certain caliber. Schoolmarmish Josephine, tough-as-nails Dovey, and pious perfectionist Sophronia see their chance to exchange their bleak prospects for new lives. But the very troubles that sent them running from Lowell follow them to the muddy streets of Seattle, and the friendships forged on the cross-country trek are tested at every turn. Just when the journey seems to lead only to ruin, an encounter with a famous suffragist could be their salvation. But to survive both an untamed new landscape and their pasts, they'll need all their strength - and one another.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

During the Civil War there were very few "marriageable" men in the Northeast as most single men were fighting for the Union. This is the jumping off point for Libbie Hawker's Mercer Girls, a very unusual "mail order bride" story. Three very different women of very different backgrounds, social class and secrets all sign on to travel from Lawrence, Massachusetts to Seattle, Washington in the 1860's to marry and bring culture, education and domesticity to an uncivilized city with thousands of single men. Their trip, its travails and their very unorthodox circumstances are detailed throughout the book. This is not a romance novel although there is some romance in the story -- but if that's

what you're looking for, this is not the book for you. Towards the end, Hawker adds a story line about women's suffrage and the fight for the vote, adding Susan B. Anthony and other famous American suffragettes to the plot. I don't know if the book is historically accurate but Mercer Girls is a unique tale with unusual and many faceted characters. It's not a quick read and my only complaint about the book is that it took so long to wrap up some of the character's story lines. that I was beginning to grow tired of them, That said, I highly recommend Mercer Girls and am looking forward to reading more works from Hawker.

In 1864, the Civil War has ruined the economy in Lowell, Massachusetts. Asa Mercer has come seeking women of high quality to travel with him to Seattle to become teachers and/or brides. Jo, Dovey and Sophronia are three of those volunteers looking for new lives. These three very different women will form a friendship and eventually become involved in the suffragist movement. The history behind the story is outlined by the author at the end of the book. The characters, though fictional, become even more interesting knowing they were patterned after actual women.

This is historical fiction based on actual events, and so it provides an interesting glimpse into US history and women's rights. The settling of the west, the difficulties of travel, and social conventions are all extremely well portrayed throughout the book. I found the characters fascinating. We have three very different women fleeing from one end of the country to the other, each for unique, personal reasons. Their ideals conflict and they have their secrets, yet they become close friends. This first part of the story, as they came together in the westward journey, was, for me, the most compelling part of the story. Once the women arrive in Seattle, I thought the pace slowed and the story lost some of its zest. The women go their separate ways, in interests and goals rather than in distance, and we lose much of the bond that drove the first part of the book. We also have a lot of detail on life in the early west. No doubt the author knows her history and did a lot of research, but the bits and pieces of each woman's life felt too disconnected. Then the last part of the story completely shifts gears, almost as if it's a different book. We skip ahead seven years and get heavy into the Suffragist movement. The three women do come back together in this, and we see their growth and how this changes them. But the jump ahead in time and the expansive material is a major jolt after the slow pace and narrow time frame of the rest of the book. For my taste, the story was perhaps a little overreaching in its content. That being said, this book does offer a compelling look at life for women back in the mid to late 1800s.\*I received an advance ebook copy from the publisher, via NetGalley, in exchange for my honest review.\*

The first third of book was okay. The historical description of how Asa Mercer recruited the women was reasonably accurate. The main story revolves around three women and the description of their interactions and comradery as they travel to Seattle was decent. But once they arrived in Seattle, the novel got pretty boring. The only one of the three women who was interesting was Josephine, who is based upon a real women, who never married. She has some decent character development. The other two women are not based upon real people and are polar opposites in personality. Their characters are more cartoon like and very boring. Life is too short for me to finish the book. There are too many good books out there to waste anymore time.

First of all I'm a big fan of historical fiction. I found the whole Asa Mercer expedition most intriguing. I wonder if I would have had the strength these women had. There is strength in friendship and the trials & tribulations of women during this period in frontier history led me to cheer Jo, Sophie and Dovey on in. Realizing their dreams. The author did a good job of developing each character's story, showing her growth, weaknesses and personal victories. I didn't want to put the book down. Now I want to read other books by Libbie Hawker.

We read Mercer Girls in our Book Club. Everyone seemed to like it. It was entertaining and led to a good discussion. I enjoyed the Author's notes as much or more than the actual story. I'm NOT a "romance" book fan, but I LOVED the TV show called "Here Come the Brides" which was based on the actual Mercer Girls. Although none of the TV characters had as loose of morals as the characters in this book. A story like this is about the only way I enjoy any kind of history. It was interesting to learn about the complex journey that was required to get to Seattle. If I liked romance or history I would probably have given this book 5 stars.

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