



Ship of Dreams

Brenda Hiatt

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On her own in wild, wicked, post-Gold Rush San Francisco, Della Gilliland has become a bit of a con artist, though a harmless one. Falsely accused of murder by a rival snake-oil salesman, she is forced to flee the lawless city's vigilantes aboard an outbound steamer. Surely her quick wits--and tongue--can convince someone to help her until her pursuers are far behind.

Stuffy New York businessman Kent Bradford is shocked when a lovely redhead he's never met suddenly introduces herself as his wife to an important business contact. Fearing a scene, he plays along . . . for the moment. But moments turn into weeks and growing attraction becomes something more. Then, only days out from New York, their ship encounters a hurricane that threatens not only their budding love, but their very lives.

Ship of Dreams Details

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Author : Brenda Hiatt

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From Reader Review Ship of Dreams for online ebook

Loraine says

Based on the true story of the SS Central American and its sinking in 1857, this story had good characters and an interesting story line. I definitely would have given it a 4 but unfortunately the author spoiled this novel for me by including several intimacy scenes that included too much information. Sorry to see a very good book spoiled by its author when these scenes could have been described with one or two sentences with much less detail. Would not recommend it as I could not deem it a clean read.

Nancy says

Della, a medicinal herbalist, escapes from a possible murder charge in San Francisco onto a cruise liner headed to Panama and eventually the States. Needing a quick disguise, she proclaims a stranger onboard to be her husband. For reasons of his own, he plays along until the ship sails and he gets her alone in his cabin. When she reveals her ruse, he explains that he needs a wife for business purposes. They agree to an arrangement but their fake marriage soon changes into deep affection. Their marriage becomes real when the ship's captain performs a secret ceremony.

Unfortunately, their wedded bliss is cut short when the ship founders in a storm and sinks. The two are separated, and she believes her husband to be dead. She makes her way to the eastern U.S. to meet his family, where she is not very welcome. She's about to run away when her husband turns up, alive and well. Will their troubled start allow them to settle down, or are they each better off on their own? This heartwarming romance, along with vivid scenes of a shipwreck based on true stories, will keep you turning pages.

Misfit says

3.5 stars

San Francisco, 1857. Della Gilliland has been making her way in the world by selling harmless medicines, but one of her *patients* has just died and she's being wrongfully blamed for it. With the law hot on her heels and justice in San Francisco somewhere questionable, Della figures her safest bet is to get on the first ship heading out-of-town. But how to get on board when there's not enough money for it? Why, she marches up to ever-so-handsome Kenton Bradford (of the New York Bradfords!) and introduces herself to his business associate as his wife. Bemused, Kenton plays along at first, but confessing the truth could squash his hopes of a business deal, so he finds himself stuck in the role for the entire trip back East.

This being a romance novel and all I think you'll guess where the rest of the story is headed, although Hiatt lets that part of the story build slowly. Della and Kent start off talking about their lives and getting to know one another as friends - you aren't going to get insta love and steamy kisses on every page. Once that spark ignites, the path to true love gets a bit rocky when they face a wee bit of a storm at sea...

Here's the deal. Despite that seriously cheesy cover (I'll show it to you in a bit), this is not a sexed up romance, so if that's what you're looking for I'd suggest you pass and keep on looking. As I mentioned, Della and Kent spend a great deal of the first part of the book talking and getting to know each other. The latter part of the book is based on a real historical event, the final voyage of the SS Central America, so they're a bit too busy with other priorities to be bed-hopping.

My thoughts? While not the greatest book ever, this was a good solid read for me and really couldn't put it down, and one of the better Kindle freebies I've picked up. Adding a lesser known bit of history, and keeping events as close to what happened as possible is a huge plus for a history geek like me, and I thought the author did a nice job with it. According to the author's notes at the end (always appreciated!), several of the characters she wrote into Della and Kent's story were passengers on the SS Central America.

Now about that cover...

That cover looks like it would be better suited to a pirate romance, doesn't it? Like I always say. Never ever judge a book by its cover. While there is some sex in this book, it is very tame and it always happened in the stateroom, not on deck.

Robyn Echols says

Interesting historical romance. I skip over the blow-by-blow sex scenes, of which there were several, but I did enjoy the historical detail. The character development for the main characters was good, although some of the minor characters (New York blue-bloods) were cookie-cutter predictable.

Heidi says

this was a fun book. Della is spunky and great for Stuff shirt Kenton. She is a bit too perfect and I found I liked her better when she began to despair. Kent is a man who grows into hero_ism and we are so glad of it! Anyone who likes ships, history, and romance will want to try this book.

Nubia Sanchez says

This book was amazing!! I really like it! I didn't actually love it because I wish it would continue on with Della and Kent new adventure. Yet I like the plot and setting that the characters have to go through. Each setting show how much Della and Kenton relationship grew more within each passing day that they could no longer hide their for one another! But to those who love historical romance novel this book is a good one!! :)

Jaime says

I would give 3 stars for the historical event, the account of a steamship sinking which is based on an actual occurrence (and one of which I had been previously unaware). I didn't find the characters particularly sympathetic, or their situation remotely believable, but I enjoyed learning something new. The book prompted me to find out more about the wreck of the SS Central America.

Linda says

A full transit Panama Canal cruise in 1857. While this is fiction, it is based on an actual historical event where a steamer sinks off the east coast. A penniless girl boards a ship to escape from San Francisco where she is wrongly accused of a crime. She introduces herself as the wife of one of the passengers (much to his surprise). Because his business interests demand that he live a scandal free life, they must continue with the lie and, of course, this is where the romance begins. A shipboard romance, but so much more!

Nessa says

A SOLID 2.5 STARS!

OKAY, I WILL ADMIT THAT I HAVE A PROBLEM AND IT LIES WITHIN MYSELF. THIS STORY STARTED OUT PROMISING BUT, BEING A VORACIOUS READER OF DARK EROTICA....THIS ONE PALES IN COMPARISON. SILLY ME, I SHOULDN'T COMPARE IT BUT WHILE THE PLOT SOUNDS PROMISING, THE CHARACTERS WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF AS ENEMIES FIRST BEFORE LOVERS.

OUR HERO is from a renowned family - money if you will. During his trip back to New York aboard the ship, a brazen redhead claims to be his wife and somehow he finds himself playing along to her charade, EVEN after its ended. That particular point caught my attention however, the rest of the story fell bland after that. I expected more banter, more flirtation, heck even a nice build up of sexual tension. It was all very tame and the sex scenes were clean. Kent is rather straight-laced and rigid, as one can expect of a man with his social status. He's trying hard to rebuild his family's reputation after his younger brother's erring ways and he's also engaged to marry another, a society miss to elevate his family's current social stature. The rest, you can imagine. It was rather predictable.

OUR HEROINE is a realistic Irish woman who is running away from the law, because she's selling non-patent drugs and although it hasn't harmed anyone YET, it's still illegal. It's not that she chose this profession but a girl's got to do something to put money on the table. When she met Kent on the ship, for whatever reason, she chose him to be her 'husband' and begins the story of their unlikely romance.

OVERALL it was all too very tame, and too languid for my taste. I'm more into drama, angst, gritty and raw while I do enjoy historical romances, especially from authors like Kleypas and Foley....this one didn't reach my expectation at all.

Becky says

Romantic, Historical fiction. A wonderful love story and a great deal of historic information and interest. Keeps you on your seat. A real page turner. Reminded me a lot of the story of the story of the Titanic.

Natalija says

Ship of Dreams by Brenda Hiatt is a historical romance inspired by a true event, the sinking of the *S.S. Central America*, a 278-foot sidewheel steamer that operated between Panama and New York City during the 1850s.

Overall, Ship of Dreams was a great read that pulled me in from the first page, though it was not without its flaws. My biggest issue with the book was the main heroine Della Gilliland. I never warmed up to her and all I saw was a lying opportunist who kept running away from her problems, even when it wasn't necessary anymore.

Anyway, if you enjoy historical romances based on true life events, this may be the perfect fit for you.

Regan Walker says

Adventure Aboard a Sidewheel Steamer in 19th Century America—Simply Superb!

This was my first book by Hiatt and I was impressed with how well she portrayed an historic event through the eyes of a man and woman falling in love. I love historical romances that integrate real history and real historical figures (and do not just use historical settings as background “wallpaper”). This one does it very well.

SHIP of DREAMS is a romance, yes, but a romance wrapped around the true story of the sinking of the luxury sidewheel steamer SS Central America (aka the Ship of Gold for all the gold it carried) that went down in a hurricane off the Carolina coast in 1857.

Della Gilliland, seller of herbal tonics and the daughter of a gold miner, and Kenton Bradford of the wealthy “New York Bradfords” meet in San Francisco onboard a steamship as Della is fleeing a false accusation of murder (for one of her tonics). Seeking to hide among the first class passengers, Della introduces herself as Kent’s wife. Startled, he plays along with the ruse and finds himself falling in love with the beautiful Irish girl, no matter he is engaged to another woman, a woman he does not love.

Hiatt is a superb storyteller and I soon found myself absorbed—both in the romance and life aboard the steamship. Della is a strong, unpretentious, unselfish heroine and Kent is a noble man whose love for the adventurous Della changes him into a better man. The emotion between Della and Kent is believable, the chemistry real and the love scenes appropriate. The steamship travel from San Francisco to the East Coast via Panama and the hurricane that hit the ship are an integral part of the story and obviously reflect considerable research. All in all, I think Hiatt did an incredible job of bringing both the Victorian period in America and this incident in history to life. I highly recommend it.

Larena says

Historical Romance

Della flees San Francisco aboard a ship after being accused of a crime she didn't commit. Della then introduces herself as Kent Bradford's wife to an important investor, shocking Kent. Determined to not cause a scene he goes along with the ruse.

The story is set amid the real events of the final voyage of the ill-fated SS Central America.

This is a story that takes the reader back in history and brings a tragic part of history to life for the reader. The reader gets to know some historical people that were on a voyage that ended up having a very tragic end. While the ship had a tragic ending the story of Della and Kent does not. The reader is pulled into the story so well that they can picture the people and everything that happened quite well. Based in fact the story reads more like a story that is pure fiction and not the reality it really is. For readers that enjoy history and romance this is definitely a book worth reading and getting lost in.

Received a review copy

Lisa Howard says

The ships and most of the people in this book were actual living people, the author added the two main characters to romanticise the story. I thought the story was a great one and it kept me interested throughout the entire book.

Beth says

This was a well-written fictional story of an actual historical event, the sinking of the SS Central America in 1857. I found the historical aspects and descriptions of the events leading up to the sinking and the actual event and aftermath very interesting. The story line was enjoyable too, though I found it hard to believe that Della attempted the deception and Kent went along with it. I found that part of the book to be pretty slow, and was disappointed that they didn't just go to the captain early on before their relationship progressed. Later on the story became more exciting and I was engaged to find out how everything (fictional and nonfictional) would be resolved.
