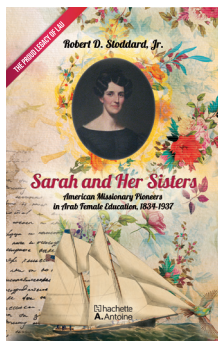


*Robert D. Stoddard*

# *Sarah and Her Sisters*

*American Missionary Pioneers  
in Arab Female Education, 1834-1937*



When newly married Sarah Smith arrived in Beirut in 1834, she was appalled by the ignorance and ill treatment of Arab women and girls. Well educated for her times, she was not content just to keep house for her missionary husband. Rather, having taught Mohegan Indians in Connecticut, she, in her two remaining years, opened a small school for girls that began the transformation of education for Arab females.

Sarah's pioneering venture inspired a series of Protestant "sisters," married and single, to follow in her wake as missionary teachers. Leaving loved ones and the comforts of home behind, they crossed two perilous seas, learned Arabic, and against great odds continued her work in elementary and then secondary and higher education. Sarah's posthumous memoir was widely read. But the stories of her "sisters" were little known—until now. Here, they are linked in an extraordinary chain of educational achievements despite religious strife, civil war, epidemics, famine, isolation and finally a world war, pandemic and global depression. Regrettably, many "sisters," like Sarah, paid the ultimate price and were buried abroad.

As long as *any* girls *anywhere* are denied an education, these stories can inspire teachers of girls and advocates for female education worldwide to persevere. And hopefully coeds at Lebanese American University will be inspired and motivated to excel knowing that your university goes back to Mrs. Smith's Beirut Female School and that you are the direct beneficiaries of *Sarah and her sisters*.

**Type:**  
History  
**Language:**  
English  
**Hardcover + Jacket Format:**  
16.5 x 24.5 cm  
**Nbr. of pages:**  
408  
**ISBN:**  
9786144695371  
**Edition / Year:**  
1st / 2020

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**Robert D. Stoddard** was Beirut University College's director of development in North America (1988-1979) and Lebanese American University's vice president for development (2005-1999). He and wife Judith live in Wilmington, Delaware near their two children, spouses and four grandchildren. He made brief visits to Beirut during the civil war and, as a vice president, spent extended periods in Lebanon growing to love its people, culture and history. Bob has a MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary and is an ordained Presbyterian minister. In retirement he has researched the early history of LAU and written about Arab female education. He co-founded Delaware Churches for Middle East Peace and promotes arts education for minority children in city schools. He is currently a Delaware Symphony Orchestra board member and president of his College of Wooster class. Bob is also the author of *A Grand Strategy: The Scenario for Saving Wilmington's Grand Opera House* (Preservation Press, 1978) and *James Caldwell: Militant Clergyman of the American Revolution on file at the Presbyterian Historical Society*.

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**John Waterbury, President Emeritus, the American University of Beirut**

*"Extracted from letters, memoirs and school records, Sarah and Her Sisters is the extraordinary history of how Sarah Smith and successive missionary "sisters" passed the torch of Arab female education forward from her Beirut Female School in 1834 to what became the co-ed Lebanese American University in 1994. It is hard to grasp the courage of these women, some married, some not, who bade farewell to their homes and families not knowing if they would ever return."*

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