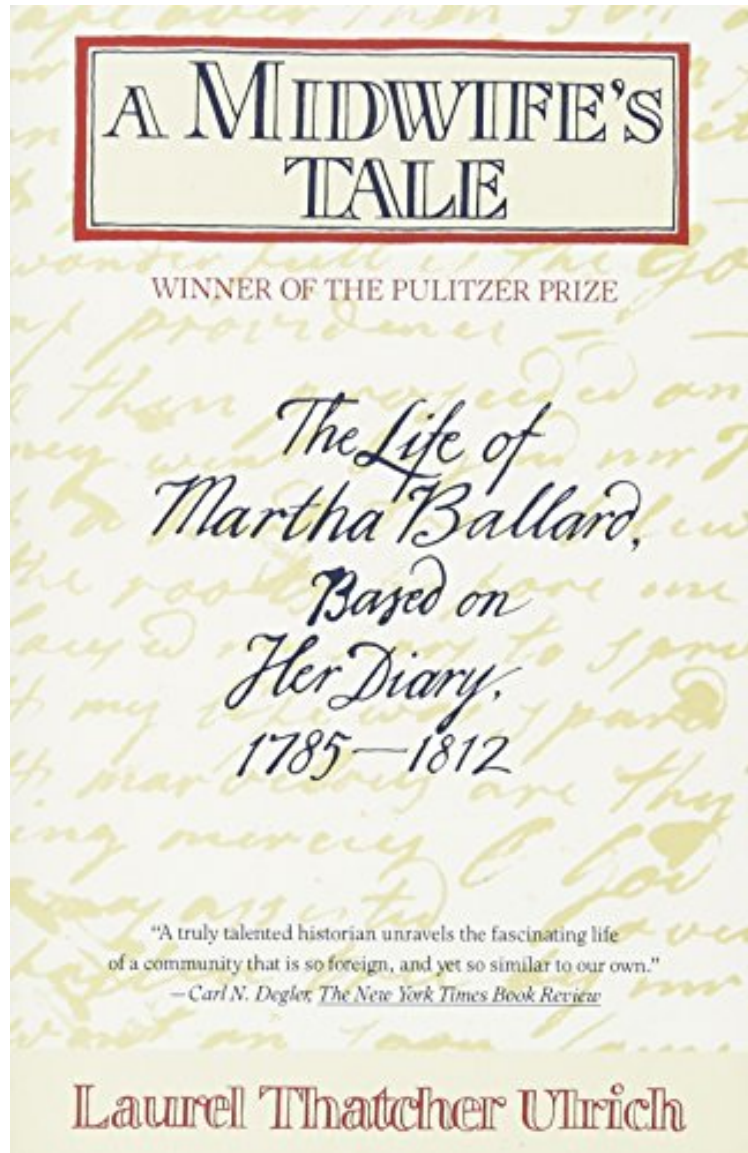


A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

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Laurel Thatcher Ulrich : A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812:

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Great book. Much needed type of history that reconstructs the importance of women's role in society in a period when women did not write much. This historian pieces together evidence of what women's lives were like from all sorts of historical evidence, beyond or between the lines of traditional records. She really looks at the documents and "sees" what so many historians before her neglected or minimized. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An amazing book and an amazing life! By Customer A true window into the every day life of an early woman and pioneer. Read it for the wonderful historical insight, and then weep like a baby when Martha dies at the end because she has become so real to you by that point... 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Glorifying quiet obscurity By Danielle Wonderfully interesting--the author intersperses transcriptions of Martha Ballard's original diary with historical context and commentary on the themes contained therein. I always find histories about everyday lives so much more engaging than the "great men" models of history, and this book decidedly explores the largely unwritten parts of our past.

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE Drawing on the diaries of one woman in eighteenth-century Maine, this intimate history illuminates the medical practices, household economies, religious rivalries, and sexual mores of the New England frontier. Between 1785 and 1812 a midwife and healer named Martha Ballard kept a diary that recorded her arduous work (in 27 years she attended 816 births) as well as her domestic life in Hallowell, Maine. On the basis of that diary, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich gives us an intimate and densely imagined portrait, not only of the industrious and reticent Martha Ballard but of her society. At once lively and impeccably scholarly, *A Midwife's Tale* is a triumph of history on a human scale.

From Publishers Weekly The diary of a midwife and herbalist reveals the prevalence of violence, crime and premarital sex in rural 18th-century New England. "Fleshing out this midwife's bare entries with interpretive essays . . . Ulrich marvelously illuminates women's status, the history of medicine and daily life in the early Republic," said PW . Illustrated. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This book is a model of social history at its best. An exegesis of Ballard's diary, it recounts the life and times of this obscure Maine housewife and midwife. Using passages from the diary as a starting point for each chapter division, Ulrich, a professor at the University of New Hampshire, demonstrates how the seemingly trivial details of Ballard's daily life reflect and relate to prominent themes in the history of the early republic: the role of women in the economic life of the community, the nature of marriage and sexual relations, the scope of medical knowledge and practice. Speculating on why Ballard kept the diary as well as why her family saved it, Ulrich highlights the document's usefulness for historians. - Marie Marmo Mullaney, Caldwell Coll., N.J. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A truly talented historian unravels the fascinating life of a community that is so foreign, and yet so similar to our own." --The New York Times Book "Expertly executed and endlessly interesting. An offbeat gem of scholarship." --Washington Post Book World "A marvelously nuanced, subtle, and unillusioned portrayal of one woman's life in early America. It has the makings of a classic." --Stephen Innes, University of Virginia "It takes a historian of extraordinary persistence, skill, and empathy to recognize [Martha Ballard's] diary as something of a buried treasure and to painstakingly unearth its gems. . . . Ulrich has recognized Ballard's great spirit, and has given to us the gift of a life worth knowing." --Philadelphia Inquirer