



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

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

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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 twenty-seven 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.

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