

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

**A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich**

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# Contents

<a href="#">A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Introduction.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">August 1787.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">September 1788.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">October 1789.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">November 1792.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">December 1793.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">January 1796.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">February 1801.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">March 1804.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">April 1806.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">May 1809.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Epilogue.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">38</a>

# Plot Summary

The book is an incredible history of the life of the average midwife of late 18th Century New England. This is an area of information that has been overlooked and understudied for many years. The book starts out with a history of Martha Ballard up until the time she and her husband, Ephraim, move to Hallowell. The diary begins in Hallowell and explains the remainder of Martha's life through her midwife practice; her garden; travels taken by herself, family, and neighbors; trading; weaving, and trials.

Each chapter is representative of just one aspect of the life of a woman in the late 18th Century. It explains how the women of the community worked to help provide for their families. Martha had two businesses: weaving and midwifery.

The next section delves into the community of Hallowell. It explains the differences between the male populace and the female populace and the few times where the two groups mix.

After the explanation of the social differences, religion and courts become the topics. It gives an idea as to how the women of the late 18th Century dealt with crimes against them, and how the outcome was influenced by the men in the community. Then, Martha's diary explains courtship, or lack thereof, marriage, and premarital sex. Martha's entries show the acceptance and tolerance of the community, as well as the normal wedding process.

The book then explores Martha's midwife practice through the entries regarding the births she attended. It makes it clear that some things were not discussed with anyone other than the mother and the attendants. Martha begins to change and her diary becomes a release of emotions as well as a way for her to keep track of her accounts. Martha is aging and does not like it.

Martha's diary takes a turn. Although she is still regarded in a medical capacity in the community of Hallowell, the medical profession is growing and so are the intimidations of physicians in the area. Martha intimidates them by her traditional knowledge. It also shows, though the majority of physicians in the area defer certain patients to her, the younger women in the field are being pushed out of the field or have to become nurses.

Martha is feeling her age and begins to lose the independence that she has loved for most of her life. Ephraim is in jail, and she is depressed. Martha's son, his wife, and their family move in with Martha, which only makes her situation worse.

The murder/suicide of the Purrinton's, followed by two more suicides in Martha's neighborhood, are devastating. The community has a new way of looking at circumstances, and one another, after these occurrences. It shows how the community works together to help each other, especially in troubling times.



The Malta war of 1809 was fought over land. Martha did not show any real sign of interest. Martha had her garden and her midwife practice. However, in May of 1812, Martha died. Martha attended deliveries up until about a month before her death. Martha was an incredible woman, and her diary shows how hard her life was, and yet, she persisted and survived the best she could.

The epilogue tells the history of Martha's diary after her death. It was handed down through the family and eventually made its way to the Maine State Library.

# Introduction

## Introduction Summary

Martha Moore was born and raised in Oxford, Massachusetts in 1735. Martha married Ephraim Ballard in 1754 and became Martha Ballard. Martha's husband was a surveyor and fourth generation miller. Martha had nine children. She moved to Maine with her husband and five of her children in 1775 because of his milling and surveying work and eventually settled in Hallowell before the diary begins. Martha's last child, a son, was born in Maine.

Martha was one of the oldest women in the area, and her abilities as a midwife became almost instantly apparent. Martha spent her time along the Kennebec River, delivering children for approximately forty years. Martha started her diary in 1785, although many are sure there were diaries prior to the 1785 diary. Martha faithfully kept her diary until a few months before her death in 1812. By that time, she had delivered 816 children, moved several times between towns along the Kennebec, and raised her own family.

Martha's diary has been overlooked by many historians as mundane or uninteresting. Only one historian in the late 1800s gave her diary any kind of support, and actually included it in his own book of the history of Augusta, Maine. However, looking at the book now gives the modern person an understanding of the day-to-day life, beliefs, and problems that were endured by an 18th Century housewife, mother, and midwife.

The fact the diary exists is incredible, since many men at the time felt that the education of a woman was unnecessary. Although her spelling was not perfect, she knew how to write complete sentences, and thought her life was important and wrote it down. People have speculated that this was a way for her to affirm her own position to herself. No one will truly know why she started and kept a diary, but one thing is for certain, her experiences have given historians a close look at the life of the pioneer women.

## Introduction Analysis

Ulrich used the introduction to give a brief history of Martha Ballard. Ulrich also used some of the illnesses, achievements, highlights, and heartaches to create the person for the reader. Ulrich also used this chapter to move Martha and her family to Maine, where the real story and the only known parts of the diary begin.



# August 1787

## August 1787 Summary

During the summer of 1787, an epidemic of scarlet fever ran rampant through the little town of Hallowell where Martha lived. During this same time, her husband's mill burned down, and she experienced the first death of a mother and child within four days of birth. There were five deaths due to scarlet fever that year, although Martha was kept busy tending to most of the children of Hallowell who had the illness. In the 18th Century, her tallying of deaths and births proved Hallowell to be a healthy place. The death rate between 1785 and 1790 was approximately 15 deaths per 1000 inhabitants and there were four births to every death.

Midwives have long been feared by authority and loved by women. However, during Martha Ballard's time, midwifery was a common profession for a woman. Some places even gave the midwife free land or stipends. Martha charge six shillings for every birth. Martha, however, was more than just a midwife; she was also a physician, nurse, pharmacists, housewife, neighbor, and mother.

Martha grew her medicines or found them growing wild in the fields. Martha used herbs to make compresses, teas, ointments, and other medicines for her patients. Martha's medicines were simple, with no more than four ingredients. Martha believed in purging the body to make her patients feel better, and often prescribed herbs to help, such as manna and senna, and used blisters to expel liquid.

At the time of Martha's midwife practice, there was no real animosity between the midwives and doctors. Doctors were used for illness, but so were midwives. However, most doctors left the child birth to the midwives unless they were called because no midwives were available. Many times, both the midwife and the doctor would prescribe the same medicines, however this was not always true and Martha describes one such episode in her diary.

There were several doctors in the area of Hallowell. However, they were only part-time physicians, they had other jobs as well and several who doubled as Justice of the Peace. Only one of these doctors would ever bother Martha to any extent. Martha was not the only midwife or healer in Hallowell, but she was the busiest.

By November of the year, Ephraim was making arrangements with the property owner to rebuild the mill that had burned down earlier in the year and it would be completed before the one year anniversary of the fire.

## August 1787 Analysis

This chapter focuses on the work that Martha and others like her did in the town of Hallowell. Martha was more than a midwife; she was a friend, and a reliable source of



health. The reader understands this with the discussion about one of the doctors ignoring a patient. Martha ended up delivering the baby. Martha also worked two separate outbreaks, one of Bilious fever and another of scarlet fever. The reader is taken through one family's fight with the epidemic. This same entry gives a basic idea of how people would pay the female healers.

The author also makes it very well known that the field of medicine was strictly male, and was just at the beginning of pushing the female healers from the community. Although, many women did not give up their practices and were still often called, the tides were starting to change.



# September 1788

## September 1788 Summary

Society or the community during Martha's time was explained as similar to a blue checkered cloth. The men and their businesses were represented by the blue squares; the women and their businesses were represented by the white squares. Those few squares that have both colors represent the few times that the socially separate worlds of men and women overlapped.

These types of transactions were few and far between in Martha's diary. For the most part, men handled their businesses and the public business. Women handled their business and the unseen community business. Both sides flourished in economy and trade.

Ephraim was a surveyor, a mill operator, a community selectman, and, at times, constable, and tax collector. Martha tells in her diary that Ephraim worked at these jobs but did not have a lot to say about them, unless something happened that was interesting to the community. However, Martha mentioned both of her businesses throughout the diary. In fact, the diary was more of a way for Martha to track her business than a diary.

Prior to 1787, Martha's daughters, Hannah and Dolly, spun yarn to be used for weaving and trading. In 1787, Ephraim and Jonathan built a loom for Martha and her weaving business was born. This was one time that the two roles of the community overlapped. The men knew that the weaving industry would benefit them in clothing and not having to shoulder all the financial responsibility. Therefore, they happily built the loom, sheared the sheep, and broke flax to help the family weaving industry. In Martha's midwife practice the overlap happened a little more often, since the husbands called on the midwife, and transported the midwife and nurses to the patient. The men are not part of the birth in any other way.

Because Martha had two lucrative businesses, she was able to keep her daughters at home for the majority of their young adult lives, unlike her sister, Dorothy Barton, who had to send her daughter out to work for money for the family. It was not unusual for young women to work outside of their homes to learn different wifely trades; it was not something Martha wanted to do, although, Dolly did eventually work outside the house. These young women were usually single and ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-five. From 1785 until 1800, Martha had a total of thirty-nine young women, including daughters, nieces, and others, who worked in her home at some point.

Much of Martha's accounting was kept in her diary, but not all of it. Many women could not write and therefore used memory for their accounts. The entries showed that Martha's daily economy was based on things bought, borrowed, lent, rewarded, and paid. Martha also made sure to enter fees and if she wrote someone fees off the book





and why. The entries also contained information about her daily activities, such as if she attended a birth, how much cloth was woven and the type, how the weather was, where she traveled, where others near her traveled, and any visitors, gardening and harvesting, and other items in similar fashion. The entries of daily activities are more informative of the time than any diary or account book of men from the same time period.

When Martha mentioned a man in the entry, she made sure to include his title. For women she varied slightly. Married women were represented by "Mrs." Single women were represented by "Miss" or their first name only. If the woman was widowed the woman's title would be either Mrs. or Widow. Martha seldom used the terms "Lady" or "Mistress." This was very important. Men in Martha's diary can have several titles, depending on whether she was discussing them in terms of legal, friend, or business. Men ran the society of women and had the titles. Women stayed in the background and did not have titles.

## **September 1788 Analysis**

Ulrich used the entries of Martha's diary to give the reader an understanding of the type of society in which Martha lived on a daily basis. This book is a wonderful examination as to the relationship between men and women. The book also shows that, although women were hidden from the public business, they had their own businesses and could financially take care of themselves. However, even Martha knew her place in this society, and that place was subordinate to the male population.



# October 1789

## October 1789 Summary

Reverend Isaac Foster came to Hallowell in April 1786 to audition for the position of preacher, and was eventually offered the position. Reverend Foster moved to Hallowell with his wife when he accepted the position in October of the same year and rented a house from Thomas Sewall. Historians have written much about Isaac Foster, but hardly mentioned his wife. Martha however, knew Rebecca Foster, delivered her children, and knew of her accusations against one of the prominent men of Hallowell.

Hallowell, as many New England towns were at the time, was religiously divided between the strict Calvinists and the liberals. The church in each town was supported by State taxes, and therefore, each town was only allowed one preacher. Only one side was ever happy with the person who was given the position. The Calvinists did not like Reverend Foster, especially Henry Sewall, the brother of Thomas Sewall. In fact, he stopped attending church while Foster worked for Hallowell and would go to prayer meetings at the homes of other Calvinists instead.

Henry Sewall tried to talk to Reverend Foster on several occasions about his messages and religious doctrine, but was never successful in persuading Foster to change his ways. Of course, Foster's background would have upset Henry Sewall, if he would have known, without ever hearing Foster speak. However, Martha enjoyed Reverend Foster's sermons and quite often mentions them in her diary, although not in detail.

Women in the community were happy to include Rebecca into their world. Mrs. Foster was twenty-seven years old and had been born in Lebanon, Connecticut. Rebecca's son was an infant when she and Reverend Foster moved to Hallowell, and had only been married a short time. Martha did not like nor dislike Rebecca, but it was obvious that she spent more time than normal with Rebecca after the delivery of her second child. This may be attributed to the fact that Martha valued the deeds of a person and was trying to make up for the actions of others in the community.

These actions were a long time in the brewing. It all began earlier in the year when Thomas and Henry Sewall began to speak badly of Reverend Isaac Foster. When Reverend Foster heard what they had said, he sued them for defamation and won. Henry Sewall appealed the decision, but when it came for the court date, he had no witnesses or evidence, and therefore no trial. Sewall paid the fine. Eventually Thomas Sewall sued Reverend Foster for rent and won. Then Reverend Foster sued Henry Sewall for defamation again.

By December, 1788, the community of Hallowell formally fired Reverend Foster and he was relieved. Reverend Foster had been waiting for this and was happy it had finally happened. Even though Reverend Foster was no longer employed by Hallowell, he and Rebecca stayed for another year.



During this last year in Hallowell, Reverend Foster was gone quite often, and Rebecca alleged that during one of these times, she was raped by Colonel North. The allegations rapidly spread throughout Hallowell. Rebecca had confided in Martha six weeks before she publicized the allegations. Martha had told her to say nothing about it, but there were factors that could not be ignored. Rebecca had a baby just a little over eight months from the date of the supposed rape.

Martha was a witness in the case. Martha wrote in her testimony in her diary, and it was the only part of the testimonies of the trial that survived. At this time, trials were more of a power play between the males involved, and less about the crime committed against the woman. In fact, the prosecution would often time charge the defendant for a lesser crime in hopes for a conviction. Colonel North was acquitted of any crime. This series of entries shows how hard it was for a woman to find justice in the world run by men.

It was also during this time that Martha and her family left John Jones Mill. Peter Jones took over the mill, and the Ballard's moved into Old Lieutenant Howard's house. Martha had a rough time, because the ground was not as good as at the mill, plus she had been gardening there for ten years, and the animals did not like the move. Several died, but the Ballard's and their animals did the best they could at the new home.

Jonathan worked for Peter Jones at the mill in some capacity, but was eventually fired and sued by Peter Jones, who won the court case. Martha knew Jonathan had been fired for his temper, but Jonathan said it was Jones' fault. Martha believed him.

Martha's weaving industry grew, and young Ephraim began working for neighbors. The move to Lieutenant Howard's house placed the Ballard's in with a new set of neighbors in the community. Martha had never written of an argument between her and other neighbors, but now she did. Martha was accused of taking one of the turkeys from a neighbor who threatened to sue the Ballard's. It must have eventually blown over, because not much more was said about the conflict. However, other neighbors, such as the Densmores, were more cordial. Mr. Densmore was a farmer and tailor. Mrs. Densmore was a dressmaker, and would eventually take Dolly as an apprentice. In the diary, it mentions that Dolly apprenticed with Mr. Densmore, but it was really Mrs. Densmore.

With the girls working the loom and doing the housework, Martha's midwife practice grew, too. Martha was delivering about 50 babies per year at this time. Unfortunately, these births usually piled on top of one another, instead of having nice intervals between them. There were many times Martha would deliver two to four babies in a 48-hour period, and then nothing for weeks. Martha's other industries were doing well, though, and her accounts were doing well, too.

## October 1789 Analysis

The author uses these entries to give a basic idea of how things happened during conflicts. The conflict of Reverend Foster and Henry Sewall shows how men fought one



another, in this case, all originally based on the fact that Henry Sewall was a Calvinist and did not like the way Reverend Foster gave sermons and messages. However, this goes a step further when the author gives the reader just a little insight as to how women were represented in the court system. It was more a lack of representation, and even when the evidence is cut-and-dry against a man, such as a pregnancy, he can still walk away with an innocent verdict.

These entries also give insight into the religious climate of late 18th Century New England. It is obvious that communities were never completely happy with their preachers. A committee made up of both sides voted on each preacher, but Martha does not go into much detail about it. What we do know was that when the preacher falls toward Calvinism, Martha stayed away from church. When he was more liberal, she enjoyed herself and attended.

Martha's family left Jones Mill and head to a different house and a new set of neighbors. Jonathan was continuously in trouble, but the girls, Hannah and Dolly were helping the family weaving business grow, and Martha's midwife practice was growing, too. This was a time of abundance for the Ballard family.



# November 1792

## November 1792 Summary

In 1792, two of the Ballard children, and a niece that lived with them, were married. Martha's entries give insight into the marriage customs of the time. Though many people believe courtship and marriage were still very strict and possibly arranged in the late 18th Century, Martha's entries prove otherwise. It seems that many of the young men and women chose spouses for themselves, were unsupervised during courtship, and that pre-marital sex was a normal occurrence, but this did not mean that the wealth of the other person played no part in the decision.

After the wedding, which was not elaborate, and had few, if any, guests, the bride remained with her parents for approximately one month, until the husband purchased, or more often rented, a home and prepared to bring his wife to their new house. Parthenia and Hannah both began their marriage with the prescribed publication of intention, but did not live with their husbands until six weeks after, when the men came to take their wives to "housekeeping." During this month, or possibly prior, the bride and her parents were expected to obtain all household items for the new couple, and the new wife was expected to make a quilt for the couple's bed.

Martha did not describe the courtship in any detail. In fact, Martha mentioned Moses Pollard only four times before he married Martha's daughter, Hannah. However, it was not uncommon for groups of young men and women to go out together, or meet at the local tavern and spend time together, away from the parents. This leads to the fact that pre-marital sex was a common occurrence. Not only was courtship unsupervised, but the party that ensued from a house raising, completed marriage quilt, and husking bee, which brought many of the young men and women together, provided plenty of opportunity.

In October 1791, Martha delivered the illegitimate son of Sally Pierce, who professed that Jonathan Ballard was the father. By naming the father during the birth, she was guaranteeing child support for the baby should the case go to court, and the courts decided Jonathan was the father. Sally's admission, along with many other similar entries that Hallowell was not a Puritan or Victorian community, showed that the community had an understanding which made their social structure work. This understanding was, coupled with the fact that the basic sexual attitudes about sexual activity differed, and though many parents did not condone premarital sexual intercourse, it was a common occurrence, and was accepted as a reality. Jonathan married Sally in February 1792.

In 18th Century New England, sexual intercourse between two unmarried people was considered a crime. If an unwed mother became pregnant before she could file for child support, she was required to admit guilt to the crime of fornication, and pay her fine. The crime was forever on her record. The father was only charged with fornication when he



refused to take responsibility of the child and the court had to step in. If the court decided he was the father, he, too, was charged with fornication and had to pay the fine. However, the majority of the time, the father of the child reached an agreement with the mother of the child in the form of financial support or marriage, and therefore, was never charged with fornication.

The diary showed that status and wealth were not prerequisites for premarital sex, pregnancy, and out of wedlock births. Every social and economic class had their fair share of premarital sex, pregnancy, and out of wedlock births. The main factor was the young man in the relationship. Unwed mothers remained with their families until they were wed to another man in the community or to the father of the child.

By the end of 1792, Martha's children, Jonathan and Hannah, and her niece, Parthenia, had all left the Ballard house to set up "housekeeping" with their spouses. With their departures, Martha found two new helpers, Betsy Barton and Sally Cox.

## **November 1792 Analysis**

Martha's diary gives the reader a glimpse at the no frills courtship and wedding of late 18th Century New England. It may not have been like this for all couples, but her family seems to be the norm, and from other entries, the reader can see this follows other families as well. Martha's entries shed some light on the fact there was a problem with premarital sex, even then, although not as prevalent as today. The reader learns that it was much easier for an unwed mother to get child support than to have someone convicted of rape. This is an interesting chapter with a lot of details surrounding the single, young men and women of a community, as well as the customs of the young married couples.



# December 1793

## December 1793 Summary

In 1793, Martha delivered 53 babies from all walks of life, including the wealthy, middle class, poor, and free blacks. One birth per week was not so bad, but there were many other factors involved in Martha being a midwife, such as weather, false labor, and other things. During this year Martha would run two or three days straight, without a break, and then would have days and weeks without delivering any babies.

Martha noted every birth she attended with meticulous details. Martha listed the time called, the time of the birth, gender of the baby(ies), if the delivery had problems, how her patients were doing when she left them in the care of the after nurse, and payment. Martha did not mention medical details in most of her entries. Martha left out other details about the births, not from embarrassment, but because during her lifetime it was inappropriate to discuss these things.

Everyone knew that birth was a natural process, but could be dangerous if the woman was alone. Martha's success rate was incredible and was comparable to the statistics of the 1930s if not a little better. Martha's training was traditional and manual rather than equal to a physician, which would be experimental and literary training. Martha's entries did not follow the same tone as other midwives from England. Martha explained her practice in her own way. Martha's patients were never in labor, just unwell. Martha also avoided any comments about the woman's body or the birth process.

It was during this time that Dr. Page began to be mentioned in the diary and was a bother to Martha. Dr. Page was a physician in Hallowell and had decided to include midwifery in his practice. Martha did not think he was well trained for a midwife practice, because he was young and single, and had learned from books, not the actual process. Because of his training, Martha believed that he was over confident. Dr. Page did not understand obstetrics. After several bad deliveries, he finally decided to step back and watch, conceding to Martha.

In the 27 years of Martha's midwife practice, she called a doctor only two times. One time the mother was hurt and the doctor was called for a medical emergency that was not associated with the birth. Martha delivered the baby. The other time, there was a problem with the birth, but Martha safely delivered the baby before the doctor arrived.

Martha's diary explained the process from the onset to the aftercare of the mother and infant. When the labor pains began, the wife told her husband to get Martha. Martha sat with the wife, who continued working around the house until she could no longer stand. Then, the wife's family and neighbors were called. This would be equivalent to hard labor, when the baby was ready to be born. The family and neighbors helped Martha by holding the patient to help with the birth. They were also there for physical and emotional support, to tend the baby upon delivery, and were witnesses to the birth, and



any declarations of paternity. The last stage in Martha's diary was the "lying-in" period which started with the arrival of the after nurse and lasted as long as the woman's husband could afford the nurse. Some women were up and about a few days after delivery; others were in bed for a month or more. The "lying-in" was over when the woman was well enough to make her own bed. It can also be deduced from Martha's diary that a successful birth did not mean the survival of the child or an easy lying-in period. The very last part of the birth was Martha's payment. Martha's normal payment was six shillings, but if she used medications, the price increased, and if the father was exceptional wealthy or excited he may pay her more.

Martha was a midwife for many reasons, including money, religious beliefs, and being of service to others in the community, however, these factors alone would not explain why she was a midwife. They all work together.

## **December 1793 Analysis**

This chapter focuses on Martha's midwife practice. It describes how she entered the information into her diary and why some things were left out of the diary altogether. It also explains another way the women of the community worked together. Neighbors were always at a birth, even if the family did arrive in time. These were the people most intimate with the woman, and would become her support system after the delivery.

This chapter also gives the reader insight into the process of birth in the late 18th Century. It explains from the moment the pains start until after the baby has arrived. It gives details about what is entailed in each phase, and who is there. It is an incredible account of a woman's life in 18th Century New England in relation to family.





# January 1796

## January 1796 Summary

Ephraim had spent approximately 59 nights in the woods as a surveyor. Martha had spent more time attending births. Both were getting older by 1796. Ephraim was over 70 years old, and Martha was over sixty.

Martha had begun to feel tired. Martha's daughters had married and left. Martha had no reliable help at home, and her midwife practice was still growing. Martha was constantly in pain, but wanted to keep up with Ephraim.

The fact that Ephraim endured the hardships of surveying the wild lands of Maine well into his seventies showed he was not ready to slow down. The hardships most often associated with surveying were wild animals, bugs, and lack of food. Plus, surveyors had to provide and pay their own crews, and at that time had to pay outrageous sums, especially around harvest or planting time.

Ephraim, during one trip, ran into squatters who had settled in and were not about to give up the land up. The squatters threatened Ephraim and his crew. This was just the start, and eventually the rebellion led to the Malta War of 1809. Ephraim would try to survey this same land in 1802, but would be turned back again. This time the settlers had guns.

Martha was feeling overwhelmed. Martha used the phrase that her house "was up in arms.," meaning that it was fighting with her. Martha would leave for a delivery and return to a house that was dirty: dirty kitchen, dirty laundry, dirty everything. Martha's daughters had helped her businesses grow, but with them gone, she was left to do everything by herself. During this time, she was becoming increasingly ill, and her hired help were not help at all. When they were not stealing from her, they were threatening to sue her. On top of everything else, Ephraim did not notice Martha's distress with the hired help or with her illness. This was the beginning of a very hard time for Martha and she relied heavily on God.

Jonathan had purchased a farm and Martha and Ephraim built a house there. Shortly afterward, Hallowell was annexed into Augusta and a road was created through the land owned by Jonathan. The new road forked off of another road and created Ballard's Corner, where Ephraim and Martha lived.

Once they were in the new house, Martha hired a new girl named Hepsy. Hepsy did not help Martha in the least and Ephraim refused to back Martha, because he liked the new girl. With Martha's illness, Hepsy would leave the house for Martha to tend. Martha did all the cleaning, the laundry, and still had her midwife practice. Ephraim was enthralled with Hepsy, but did help Martha a little when she was very ill.



This was a turning point for the diary. Martha began to pull away from only entering statistics into her diary. Martha began to enter her feelings about her situation, as well. The illness made her life hard, and she eventually called for a doctor in 1801. The prognosis was that she would never be fully healthy again. Martha felt neglected and misused by her husband, especially when the illness was just starting, but she did her best to continue her wifely duties, and her midwife practice.

## **January 1796 Analysis**

This chapter was the real turning point of Martha's life. Martha was very ill and no one seems to acknowledge it and no one helped. It seemed as though Ephraim was reliving his youth with Hepsy. Although he would never leave Martha, he definitely pushed her aside for Hepsy. The reader can feel Martha's despair through her entries. Martha, who has served the community for many years, was being ignored by that same community.



# February 1801

## February 1801 Summary

John Davis Jr. was the son of Hetty Pierce. Hetty Pierce was the sister of Jonathan Ballard's wife, Sally. A child was born out of wedlock and was fathered by a prominent man of Hallowell, serving as Justice of the Peace. His name was John Davis, Esquire, and he financially supported his son. In 1801, John Davis Jr. died at the age of three. Martha was invited to view the autopsy of the child, and she accepted.

This was one of the four autopsies Martha attended. The other three were young women of Hallowell and included Martha's niece, Parthenia.

It was a common practice for midwives to attend autopsies during Martha's lifetime. However, when autopsies stopped being done in homes and medicine became more institutionalized, the invitations were stopped, and midwives were left out.

Professionalism and male dominance did away with the community female healers. Some of the women gave up and others went into nursing to continue their work. Martha's experience in the field of healing and midwifery allowed her to continue working, however, other, younger women may have been discouraged by the doctors in the area.

There is proof of this discouragement in Martha's diary. Dr. Cony felt threatened by Martha's practice and accused her on several occasions of overstepping her bounds and telling a patient of his not to follow his prescription, but rather to follow hers. Martha denied the accusation, and when she questioned the patient, he denied ever saying such things to Dr. Cony. Whenever Dr. Cony accused her of acting inappropriately, she added this to her diary. The tension between Martha and Dr. Cony continued and was just a small shadow of the professionalism of medicine pushing the community healer and midwife out of the picture.

During this time, Opium was used quite frequently, and so was bloodletting. Both were used for a variety of ailments, including labor and delivery. There was an invisible line being drawn between the physicians and healers.

## February 1801 Analysis

This chapter gives the reader insight into the world of midwives while the world of professional medicine grew. Martha's age and experience left her out of the fray for the most part, but new, younger women were turned away, because male physicians stepped in and took over.

The tension between Dr. Cony and Martha was just a foreshadowing of what was going on around New England and the country at this time.



# March 1804

## March 1804 Summary

Martha was now seventy years old and was very tired and ill. Martha was also stressed by Jonathan, whose temper was as bad now as it was when he was a young man. Martha, however, was more concerned with the fact that she was getting older and was having to give up her authority and independence to the younger generation. Martha could not fight against age, but she did fight to retain her independence. However, with Ephraim's arrest in 1804, Martha became dependent even more on Jonathan.

Ephraim had been working as a tax collector and he was short in his accounting by \$800. The courts added up his belongings and realized they were not \$800, so he was arrested and put in the Hallowell jail. Ephraim was released during the day, so that he could work to pay the \$800, attend meetings and church, but he would return every night and sleep at the jail. Ephraim thought of it like a vacation. Martha was far from having a vacation, and now had to rely only on herself and her children, mainly Jonathan and Sally, for her support. Martha thought it was horrible.

Ephraim turned 80 in jail, because he was past his prime, and no one would lend him the money to pay his debt, not even his own children.

Martha's life continued pretty much as normal, but she missed her husband. Martha's only real problem during his incarceration was her ability to get wood in the winter. Martha would go out and pick up broken pieces of fence and find other scrap pieces of wood. Martha wanted her children to realize that she needed wood, but no one seemed to notice, so Martha did not ask for months. Martha did eventually ask Jonathan, even though she did not want to seem dependent on him, and he sent someone to cut wood for her.

Jonathan, Sally, and their family moved into Martha's house. Martha had a well and bake oven that Sally wanted. Martha was offended and did not like feeling like an outsider in her home. During this time, Martha rotated through several of her children's houses while Ephraim started his second year in jail. With spring approaching, Martha returned to her home and started her housecleaning and gardening. Upon Ephraim's release from jail, Jonathan built a house for his family and shortly thereafter, his family moved from Martha's house. Life seemed to be getting a little better, but Martha was still very ill.

## March 1804 Analysis

Martha had been independent for the majority of her adult life. Although she relied on Ephraim for certain things, she was not dependent on him for everything. This chapter shows she reluctantly gave into age, illness, and dependency. With the Ephraim's

return, she regains some of her independency, but her illness and age overshadowed this independence.



# April 1806

## April 1806 Summary

The little community that had started out as Hallowell was growing. Jonathan rented two of the houses on his farm to other families. Captain Purrinton bought the parcel of land beside Jonathan. It consisted of over 100 acres and during the next two years, he had cleared enough land for a house, barn, and garden. Captain Purrinton's wife and children finally joined him. They seemed to be a wonderful family and good neighbors.

However on July 9, 1806, Captain Purrinton injured two of his children, killed the remaining six, and then killed his wife and himself. The murder/suicide was brutal and shocked the whole community, but the direct neighbors were deeply affected and would never be the same. This included Martha, Ephraim, and Jonathan and his family. Religion helped Martha and others in the community a little through the ordeal. The fact that Captain Purrinton's coffin was tossed into a hole alongside the road and not given a proper burial also helped.

James and Martha Purrinton were the only two children to survive. Martha told everyone what she remembered. Hezekiah Purrinton, Captain Purrinton's brother, came to Hallowell for Martha and James. Martha Purrinton stayed with Jonathan and Sally, Hezekiah and James stayed with Martha and Ephraim for awhile, and then left, only to return and stay with Martha and Ephraim again during the funeral.

Most of Augusta and Hallowell returned to normal, but Martha's community had a harder time, which was made even harder with the deaths of Mr. Gill, Betsy Barton's husband, and Benjamin Petty.

## April 1806 Analysis

Crime and violence stayed away from Hallowell more often than not. However, the reader sees how the murder/suicide of the Purrinton's affects Martha and her community. They are more likely to react and jump to conclusions about the actions of other people for fear that a similar situation will occur. Although no other murder/suicides occur, two suicides put the community in turmoil again. The community tried to heal itself and understand these occurrences. It eventually returns to normal, but is not quite over the situations and occurrences of that time.



# May 1809

## May 1809 Summary

The year started like every other year for Martha. Martha attended a delivery. However, during this year, a group of settlers were fighting back against the corporations who owned all the land. The fighters dressed like Indians and ambushed survey crews. The actual militia groups had been disbanded, but the men informally reactivated them when threats came to the city of Augusta from these Indians, and attempts were made on the lives of the citizens of Augusta. Martha's entries only slightly acknowledged the conflict. Martha preferred to enter information about births, her garden, travels, and the weather. At this same time, there was the Jefferson embargo that lasted for fourteen months. It was created by the federal government, because of a disagreement with France and England. This embargo led to the bankruptcy of many merchants who fought to keep possession of their homes and businesses in the midst of growing debts and lack of trade.

Paul Chadwick volunteered to survey 100 acres of Malta in May 1809. Elijah Barton and his white Indians stopped attempts in June and in September. However, during the September attack they wounded Chadwick, and he died three days later. In less than a week Elijah Barton and seven other insurgents had been caught and put in jail for the murder of Paul Chadwick. During the trial, the defense said it was a "fatal accident." The prosecution said the men had truly become savages and wild, and it was no accident. During the trial, the remaining white Indians kidnapped a man named Abner Weeks and gave him a message for the Augusta town leaders. They stated that Augusta needed to release the prisoners or the white Indians would burn the town. The group was found not guilty in November 1809.

During this entire year, Martha focused on her garden. Martha kept it going as much of the year as possible. Martha sold seeds and planted the remaining seeds that were indigenous to the area. Merchants tended to sell more exotic types of seeds. Ephraim always dug the ground for Martha, but he rarely worked in the actual garden. The garden was always obvious within her diary, but more so in 1809. Martha's garden provided food for her family, as well as herbs and medicines for her patients. Good gardens and crops insured payment of rent and debts, especially with the embargo being enforced.

As the year ended, Martha looked over her life. Martha may have been able to put her family's trials and problems into perspective with the trials and problems associated with the community during the year.

Ephraim and Martha were getting older. Every night, at least one of Jonathan and Sally's children stayed with them for two main reasons. The first reason was to relieve some of the overcrowding in their own home, and the other reason was to help Martha and Ephraim. During this time, Martha very seldom comments on quarrels with her



children and family. Martha seems to have filled this year's diary with entries that would bring happiness to her if she were to read them later on in her life.

Martha's practice greatly diminished from 1801 and 1808. However, in 1809, the practice picked up again, and she delivered 21 babies, seven times as many babies as in 1808. This increase in work could be attributed to the death of Ann Mosier, who was also a midwife, and died that year.

Ann Mosier had moved to Augusta in her midlife. Ann may have had some prior midwifery skills, but seemed to remain a substitute for Martha for many years. However, Martha's practice declined again in 1810 and 1811, although it never declined as much as it did in 1808. By 1812, her practice was almost as busy as 1785.

Martha's diary ended on May 7, 1812. Martha lived a while longer, but she wrote no more. Martha delivered babies until April 26, 1812, just weeks before the end of her journal and her life. Henry Sewall notated Martha's funeral in his diary on May 31, 1812. Any service for Martha was either not written or did not survive. Without the diary, there would be no record of Martha Ballard. It was her husband's name that appeared on all property and public accounts. Martha's name did not even appear in the original church records, and was later incorrectly added beside Ephraim's name. Ephraim died in 1821 at the age of ninety-six.

Today Jones Mill, Martha and Ephraim's first house in Hallowell, is lost to the congestion of Augusta. The Howard farm is the location of the water treatment facility.

## May 1809 Analysis

The author gave details of the last big conflict that would affect Martha, but the reader sees from the diary entries Martha was more concerned for her garden. Martha's midwife practice was all but over, and only began to grow again with the death of another midwife. Martha declined in health and eventually succumbed to death.

Martha's life would never have been known if it was not for her diary. Because she was a female in a world of men, her name appeared on nothing, and many of the people with whom she associated did not even know her name. Martha's identity was in her work and her diary. The author made sure the reader knows Martha Ballard by the end of this chapter. The author also made sure the reader has insight into the daily life of the average wife in late 18th Century New England.





# Epilogue

## Epilogue Summary

Martha's diary is truly special for two reasons. The first is that she kept a diary at all. Many women of the time could not write, so Martha's diary is incredible in that respect. The other reason is that her family saved it.

Mary Hobart inherited a pile of papers in 1884 upon graduation from medical school and applied to the Massachusetts Medical society. Mary's cousin, Lucy Lambard Fessenden arranged the pages in order and bound them into two volumes with linen covers. Mary had a mahogany box made to hold the two volume set. Mary saw the professionalism of Martha's practice. Mary seemed to have taken up where Martha had let off with the care of women and children.

When Mary Hobart gave the diary to the Maine State Library in 1930, she was told she would receive a typewritten transcript of the diary, but she never did. What she did receive was an abridgement created by Charles Elventon Nash that he used for his two volume history of Augusta.

Nash's abridgement omitted many important items. Nash also paraphrased and reworded the entries that interested him for his book. Those entries ended up comprising approximately one-third of his two volume set. Nash gave her story to the world. The first volume of the history of Augusta was printed after Nash's death, but for about fifty years, no one bothered to bind the books or sell them. A descendent found them in the barn and gave them to the library. Edith Hary decided to publish it and with the help of two of her friends prepared the pages and published the book.

Mary Hobart may have inherited the book, but she was not the only medical professional in her family. A relative by the name of Clara Barton lobbied Congress in 1882 to receive help with establishing the American Red Cross. Clara Barton had left her office job to go to the battlefield and help the wounded soldiers, which led to her creation of the American Red Cross.

## Epilogue Analysis

Martha's family seemed to have stayed in the field of medicine, and was competing with the men on their level. Hobart's gift of the diary to the Maine State Library ensured that Martha's story would be available for many years to come and would shed light into the lives of early settler women. It is obvious that the author was a little disappointed with the abridgement, but found what she could and used it to help the reader to understand the life and times of Martha Ballard.



# Characters

## Martha Ballard

Martha Ballard was born in 1735 in Oxford, Massachusetts. As a young girl, someone in the family taught her to read and write, although the education of females was not a common practice. Martha married Ephraim in 1754. They had nine children between 1756 and 1779. Three of their daughters died of scarlet fever in 1769.

Martha moved with her family to Hallowell in 1776 and began her weaving and midwife industries shortly thereafter. In her midwife practice, from 1775 - 1812, she delivered almost one thousand babies, and had a better success rate than most doctor and hospitals, well into the 1930s. Martha not only had her midwife industry, but her daughters learned to weave, and Ephraim built a loom. Martha's daughters took care of the weaving industry, the house, and the laundry. This allowed Martha's midwife practice to grow until her own illness and the medical profession began to push her out of the field. However, there was a renewed interest in her practice the year before she died.

Martha planted gardens to provide food for her family and herbs for her patients. What she could not grow, she could usually find growing wild or purchased at the hook. Although in modern terms her life was hard, Martha seemed pleased with it, for the most part.

Martha's life did have trials, which became more apparent in her later years. Martha tried to take them in stride, but Ephraim's arrest made her realize she could not do it alone, and she was dependent on someone. This was not what Martha ever wanted to feel.

Martha died in May 1812, but her legacy lives on in her diary and her descendants.

## Ephraim Ballard

Ephraim Ballard married Martha in 1754, and brought her to Hallowell, with the rest of their family. Ephraim worked as a surveyor and miller, and provided well for his family. Ephraim worked hard into his seventies as a surveyor, and showed no signs of slowing down when Martha's illness set in. Ephraim was not always a good husband, but he did provide for her, and she loved him. Ephraim died in 1821 at the age of ninety-six.

## John Ballard

John Ballard was the oldest son of Martha and Ephraim. John married Sally Pierce after she gave birth to their son. John took care of Martha and Ephraim in their old age, even though Martha did not see it in the same way. John was hot tempered and given to drink, but he also had amassed over 300 acres of land, and provided well for his family.



## **Dr. Cony**

Dr. Cony was one of the physicians that lived in Hallowell. Dr. Cony tended to be more a politician and corporate officer than physician, but he did not think very highly of Martha. In later years, when the medical profession was growing, he accused her of many things, and the tension between them grew.

## **Dr. Page**

Dr. Page was a twenty-four year old, unmarried physician upstart who believed he could have a midwife practice along with his medical practice. Although he finally gave in and learned from the midwives of the area, he had several bad experiences prior to that decision.

## **Parthenia**

Parthenia was one of Martha's nieces and helped Martha around the house and with weaving.

## **Hannah**

Hannah was one of Martha's daughters. Hanna worked in Martha's weaving industry and around the house.

## **Dolly**

Dolly was Martha's youngest daughter and helped with Martha's weaving industry and around the house. Dolly eventually apprenticed under a neighbor to learn dressmaking.

## **Ephraim Jr.**

Ephraim Jr. was Martha and Ephraim's youngest son.

## **Captain Purrinton**

Captain Purrinton was the neighbor who killed his family and then himself. This crime led to a change in attitude of the neighbors.



## **Colonel North**

Colonel North was a prominent man of Hallowell. Colonel North was a selectman, justice of the peace, and held other titles, too. Colonel North was also accused and proven innocent in the rape of Rebecca Foster.

## **Isaac Foster**

Isaac Foster was the Reverend in Hallowell for two years before he was fired. Reverend Foster's wife was Rebecca Foster.

## **Rebecca Foster**

Rebecca Foster was the wife of Reverend Isaac Foster, and she accused Colonel North of rape.

## **Henry Sewall**

Henry Sewall was a prominent man in Hallowell. Mr. Sewall was a Calvinist and did not like Reverend Foster. The two men were constantly suing one another.



# Objects/Places

## Hallowell

Hallowell was a small community on the Kennebec River in what is now Maine. At the time of Martha Ballard's life, it was a province of Massachusetts. Hallowell eventually became part of Augusta, Maine. This was Martha's community during the time of her diary.

## Fort Halifax

Fort Halifax was Ephraim's first home in what is now Maine, but at the time, was part of Massachusetts. The Fort was built by the Massachusetts government, and surrounded by 400 acres of woods. The Fort was in disrepair, and after only one year, the government took the fort away from Ephraim. Ephraim moved down the river to Jones Mill, in Hallowell.

## Jones Mill

Jones Mill was the first house that Martha and her family used, in what is now Augusta, Maine, but was Hallowell, Massachusetts during her lifetime. They lived there for ten years before Peter Jones took over. The Ballard's moved to Howard's farm until they were able to build a house on their son Jonathan's farm in 1801.

## Howard's Farm

Howard's Farm was the second place the Ballard's lived in Hallowell. They did not live there very long before they moved into their own house in 1801.

## Ballard's Corner

This is the location of Ephraim and Martha's final house. When the city of Augusta decided to put a road through Jonathan's farm, it forked onto another road. The corner was where their house was located.

## The Hook

This was the location of many of the merchants and stores. It was not far from the mouth of the Kennebec River, which allowed for commerce and supplies to be brought in, and then be taken farther up the river to places like Hallowell. Occasionally, Martha



would travel to the Hook for supplies she needed or presents for her daughters' weddings.

## **Lambard's Tavern**

One of the two local pubs where young people would meet and men would discuss politics. Lambard's Tavern sometimes served as the local court house.

## **Pollard's Tavern**

One of the two local pubs where young people would meet and men would discuss politics.

## **Kennebec River**

Kennebec was the river that Martha traveled by boat or over ice while attending deliveries. This river was a main staple to life in Hallowell.

## **Pownalboro**

This is the city where the bi-annual courts met to hear major criminal cases and appeals from the lower court. Martha traveled here for the Rebecca Foster rape case against Colonel North.

# Themes

## Male vs. Female

Life in the late 18th Century was structured between men and women. The lines were drawn and each gender stayed within their appointed roles.

Men were the face of the public. They ran the community, the State, and the federal government. They held titles such as Judge, Justice of the Peace, tax collector, selectman, and were the only citizens allowed to sit on a jury. Women had their roles, but they were in the home and the female community only. Their titles were given by the services they performed for the community such as midwife, dressmaker, baker, after nurse, and others. These were unofficial titles and were not acknowledged, for the most part, by the men of the community.

In Hallowell, and most of the United States at the time, only men were members of the Church, could hold office, or own a home. Women could own the quilts, pot, pans, dishes, and household items. They would even say that the animals were theirs, but the actual ownership was with the male head of the household. This was also a problem, when a husband died. The husband would usually leave his property to his oldest son, and the mother would be allowed to stay, but the house and her belongings were now her son's.

In court cases, the defendants and plaintiffs were men, even when the crime was against a woman. The judge looked at the woman's husband, as did the jury. A crime such as rape was against the woman, but if the husband of the assaulted wife did not have good standing in the community, the defendant was often times found innocent. The law worked against women in other ways, too. If a woman became pregnant out of wedlock, and filed for paternity, she had to admit to breaking the law of fornication. The male being named as the father could avoid this if he came to an agreement with the mother of the child prior to the court hearing. The woman would retain her record, but he would not have any record against him.

## Traditional Healers vs. Medical Professionals

There were many changes during the end of Martha's lifetime. Martha's profession was quickly losing ground to the male medical professionals who intimidated and threatened legal action against women who gave medicine to people in the community.

Many women preferred midwives, because their training was communal with other women. They knew what they were doing from experience, and used herbs, vegetables, fruits, and sometime alcohol in their remedies. There was a comfort level with the community healer and midwife that was not available with the physicians of the time.



Many of the physicians were only part-time doctors. Some were politicians, heads of corporations, or had general stores. Their education was all instructional and book based with very little hands on training prior to becoming a doctor in the community. They learned by trial and error, rather than observation and apprenticeship. They also used new medicine and remedies that many of the women in the society did not trust. These physicians expected society to just accept the prescription, because they were a trained physician, but many of the women were hard to convince.

## **Independence, Dependence, and Interdependence**

Many women in these societies that had their own sources of income and trade believed they were independent from their husbands on many levels. It is true, many women were financially independent, but they were never truly independent. There independence was given to them by their husbands who owned everything they used, and ran the government and community in which they lived.

These independent women did not like to admit they needed help or would not accept that they were becoming dependent on someone due to death, jail, or some other situation in which they were forced to lived with family members or rely on someone other than their husbands. The women fought this type of dependence, because they wanted to retain their independence as long as they could. Should the husband be jailed or just away, their independence returned with the husband, but if the husband died, in many instances, the women never became independent in the same way again. Women remained dependent on their children for housing and other necessities.

This, however, did not show dependence or independence in the husband or wife. They were dependent on each other and created interdependence. The husband would plow the ground for a garden. The wife would plant the seeds and tend the garden for food they ate. They worked as a team, both believing they were independent, but never realizing and perhaps not admitting that, without the other, they would be dependent on someone else.





# Style

## Point of View

The point of view for this book is third person, however, the author uses the real entries of Martha Ballard's diary for her analysis. This creates a feel that the story is actually unfolding while it is read. The analysis delves into Martha's life, but also is used as a basis for the life of a wife in late 18th Century New England.

By giving the reader some of the actual entries, and then analyzing them, the reader is helped to put into perspective how the women of Hallowell dealt with one another, with men, crime, life, death, the economy, and with every situation that would come their way in a lifetime. Martha's diary does not leave out the male side of life, but does not hold much interest in it either. Martha and the author preferred to relay the female side of the population.

The use of the entries and the third person analysis shows Martha Ballard as a person, not just a diary. The reader feels her happiness, sadness, and depression. It is all spelled out in the entries to the diary and in the analysis by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.

## Setting

The setting of the diary is the late 18th Century and early 19th Century New England. It is a glimpse into the life of a woman who worked as a midwife and weaver in her community. Martha came to the community when the majority of her children were old enough to help with the house work and eventually with the family weaving business.

The analysis part of the book is set in current times, but as a retrospective view of life during the time of Martha Ballard. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich uses Martha's own words to convey the hardships Martha, and many women like her, had to contend with on a daily basis. Even in illness, Martha continued. Ulrich uses the analysis to show the strength of the women during this time frame and give a small insight into their world.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the entries is, at times, hard to read. Martha Ballard was not formally educated, and therefore, she misspelled many words, and, often used fragments. This is why the analysis by Ulrich is so important. The author uses easy to understand language that puts each entry into perspective. Ulrich also uses information from the entries to help explain the culture of the community of Hallowell. From Martha's entries, Ulrich made them it easy to understand how the men and women of the community worked separately and together. Ulrich also explains what was involved in daily life, midwifery practices, and cottage industries, such as weaving. The author shows Martha's depression and illness, which would possibly go unnoticed if a person were



just reading the entries like they are given. Ulrich does not take each entry as a separate story, nor does she take each month or year as separate. Instead, she uses the entire diary to tell of Martha's life and the life of women in the late 18th Century in a clear and concise language.

## Structure

The book has eleven chapters that focus on different parts of Martha's life and one chapter that focuses on the life of the diary. Ulrich also uses these chapters to show how women, in general, lived, worked, and created their communities. Each chapter is titled with a month and a year, but Ulrich uses times before and after the given date to explain her analysis of the diary and makes it all fit well together. The only exceptions are the introduction, which leads up to the beginning of the diary, and the epilogue, which ends the story of the diary.

The first chapter is the introduction. It introduces Martha Ballard to the reader by giving information about her family and background. It tells of her birth, marriage, children, and deaths of three of her daughters. It also explains how Martha and her family ended up in Hallowell. It then gives a bit of history about her husband, Ephraim, and his work as a surveyor and miller. Ulrich uses this information to prepare the reader for the beginning of Martha's diary and the exploration of women in late 18th Century New England.

The first chapter is set around the time of August 1787, two years after the beginning of the diary. This chapter focuses on the general midwife practice and the female traditional medical practitioner. It explains how these functions are used by the community in general.

The second chapter is titled September 1788 and focuses on the relationship between men and women of the community, each knew their roles, and lived within those roles.

The third chapter is titled October 1789 and focuses on two major issues within the community: religion and courts. Religion, at the time, was divided and the communities only had one preacher. This made for tensions within the group that did not like the reverend. The other issue was how women were seen by the courts. The case presented here shows that women were not acknowledged, even when the crime was against them. It is their husband, father, or brother who is in the case and if he is not in good standing, the court will likely find the defendant innocent.

The fourth chapter is titled November 1792. It gives insight into courtship, chaperones, weddings, marriage, and premarital sex, which seemed to be fairly prevalent in most cities in the 18th Century.

The fifth chapter is titled December 1793 and focuses on the growth of Martha's midwife practice and takes a deeper look at the entries surrounding her practice.

The sixth chapter is titled January 1796. Martha is getting older; her children have married and moved. Martha had no one to help her around the house, and her practice



was as busy as ever. This was the point where Martha began to admit to herself that she was getting older and was ill, but hoped she could keep up with her husband a while longer.

The seventh chapter is titled February 1801 and the world of professional medicine began to push Martha away from midwifery. Doctors in the area accused her of hurting their patients, but she refused to accept their profession and continued doing what she had done for years.

The eighth chapter is titled March 1804. Ephraim was in jail, and Martha felt she had lost her independence. Martha had to rely on Jonathan and his family, and then they moved into her house, pushing her to the side even more. It was a very trying time for Martha.

The ninth chapter is titled April 1806 and discussed the murder/suicide of the Purrinton family, who lived on the farm next to Martha. It explores how a horrid event pulled a community together and changed the views of the same community in regards to their neighbors and friends.

The tenth chapter is titled May 1809. Martha did not die until May of 1812, but this chapter takes us to the completion of her life. It takes the reader through the Malta war of 1809 and how Martha worried more about her garden than the war. It shows how, through the death of another midwife, Martha's practice began to grow again. It shows a woman who is happiest serving others, even when she is old and tired.

The epilogue explains about Martha's descendents: Mary Hobart and Clara Barton. It tells the story of the diary ending up in the Maine State Library after being carefully cherished by Mary Hobart, the first female medical doctor of Martha's descendents. It explains how the diary had been used in other books and how all that have come in contact with it have loved it for one reason or another.



## Quotes

"The number of children I have Extracted since I came to Kennebeck I find by written account & other Calculations to be 405,' she wrote on December 31, 1791."

Introduction, pg 20

"Her own descriptions demonstrate that her most immediate concern was to make her patients feel better." August 1787, pg 53

"Spinning, like nursing, was a universal female occupation, a 'domestic' duty, integrated into a complex system of neighborly exchange." September 1788, pg 77

"The two institutions that dominated his thinking, the court and the church, had one thing in common, however: they were both ritualized structures set apart from everyday life." October 1789, pg 111

"Martha's diary supports the notion that children chose their own spouses; there is no evidence of parental negotiation, and little hint of parental supervision in any of the courtships she describes." November 1792, pg 139

"In medical terms the success of Martha Ballard's practice is conveyed in what she didn't write." December 1793, pg 169

"Twenty years after settling in Maine, Martha and Ephraim were still pioneering, she riding through driving rain to deliver babies in flea-infested cabins in the second and third miles of settlement, he swatting mosquitoes and black flies on uncharted swamps and streams from Damariscotta Pond to the Penobscot." January 1796, pg 207

"The professor's concern with female delicacy suggests that changing notions of womanhood played some role. More important is the emphasis in his treatise on a new kind of male professionalism based on the full-time practice of medicine and on a unified therapeutic system in which 'ordinary' and 'emergency' practice were merged." February 1801, pg 254

"Although there were fewer deliveries to take her from her bed in the night, there was enough work in the house and barn to keep her back stiff and her fingers sore." March 1804, pg 264

"For most of the town, the Purrinton story ended there. For Martha's neighborhood, however, there would be a long forgetting." April 1806, pg 306

"For both women, then, as now, the needs of the sick and the obligations of kinship superseded political allegiances." May 1809, pg 334

"The diary is a selective record, shaped by her need to justify and understand her life, yet it is also a remarkably honest one." May 1809, pg 343



"No grave stone bears her name, though perhaps somewhere in the waste places along Belgrade Road there still grow clumps of camomile and feverfew escaped from her garden." May 1809, pg 345



## Topics for Discussion

Ephraim went to Fort Halifax before settling in Hallowell. What occurred that required him to move to Hallowell and how is this significant?

Ulrich uses the blue checkered cloth to explain Martha Ballard's the community. Explain how you think the community worked and if everyone accepted this type of community.

Do you think the division of religion had any influence in the outcome of Colonel North's trial for sexual assault against Rebecca Foster? Why do you think he was found innocent?

How were the weddings in Martha's time different from the weddings of today? Do you think they were better or just different?

Why do you think so many women ended up giving birth either as unwed mothers or less than nine months from their wedding day?

Why was it important to Martha to keep records of her midwife practice, other than to account for fees?

How did the professionalism of medicine influence Martha, if at all?

Why did Martha wait to see if her children noticed she needed wood when Ephraim was in jail? Was this truly an issue of her not wanting to give up her independence?

What was the community reaction to the Purrinton murder/suicide?

Why are Mary Hobart and Clara Barton important to the history of the diary?