



A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

- Why did Martha Ballard keep track of births in her diary? What kinds of information did she include?
- What conclusions about the relative safety of midwifery can we draw from tables IV, V, and VI in A Midwife's Tale?
- What were the stages of social birth exemplified in Martha Ballard's diary? Why is this called social birth?
- How was Martha Ballard paid for her midwifery services?
- In what ways was Martha Ballard's midwifery practice different from practices of male doctors in the same time and place?
- What functions did the women, other than the officiating midwife, perform at a social childbirth? What relation might these women have to the women giving birth?
- How did the stages of family production change according to the life stages of the parents and the number, ages, and sex of children at home?
- How did Martha Ballard's work and chores at home in January 1796 differ from those in September 1788? What made the difference?
- What does Laurel Ulrich mean when she says "Martha's trials had less to do with the Revolution than with the inevitable transitions in her maturing family?"
- When and why did Martha Ballard's midwifery practice begin a permanent drop in numbers of deliveries?
- How was the move in 1791 different in its affects on Martha's work than the move was in 1799?
- How did gender expectations appear in nineteenth century arguments that women should not become medical doctors?
- What happened to social medicine in the nineteenth century?

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