



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

TRADITIONS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY

JOANNA L. DAVIS, CPM, LM(VA)

HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

History

Granny Midwives/Granny Women

- Served all of Appalachia since settling region
- Knowledgeable in herbs and usually only training was her own births, and that of other family and women of the community
- Often the only healer in the county, cared for more than just birthing women
- Traditions deeply rooted in Celtic/Druidic traditions, which led to much superstition.
- Western medicine was slow to arrive on the Appalachian frontier, however once it did, midwives were thought of as ignorant and dirty.



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

History

Granny Midwives/Granny Women

- Most midwives were compensated through barter.
- The Granny Women were deeply respected in the communities
- Problems arose with the arrival of western medicine, people could not get to facilities, but midwives were discouraged. The infant and maternal mortality rates did not improve with the arrival of physicians.



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History

Frontier Nursing Service

- In 1925 a nurse named Mary Breckenridge founded the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies
- Brought midwives from England and Scotland to provide care in the communities and train other Appalachian midwives
- Origin of the Certified Nurse Midwife credential
- Located in Leslie County in Eastern KY

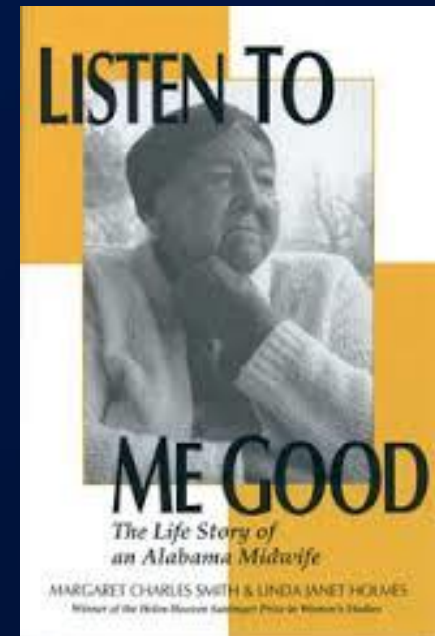


HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

History

Notable Mention

Biography of an Alabama midwife
Margaret Charles Smith

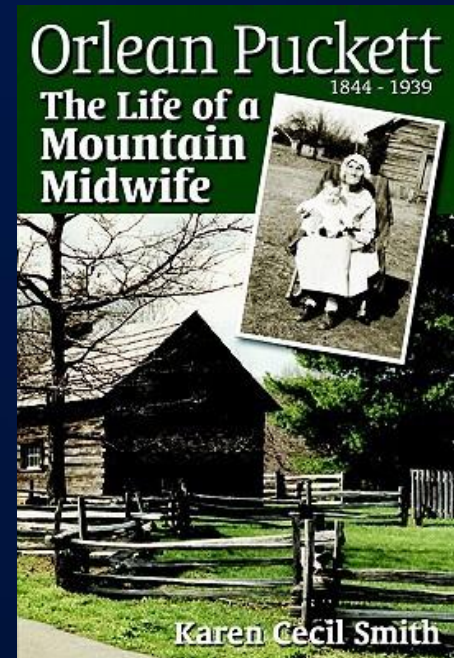


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History

Notable Mention

Biography of an Appalachian
midwife Orlean Puckett



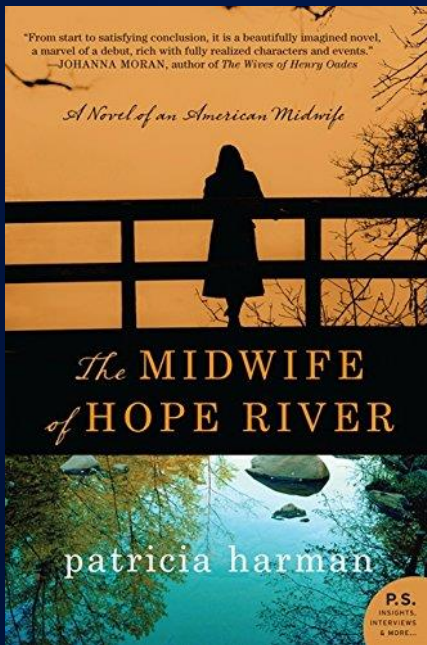
HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

History

Notable Mention

Patricia Harmon transports us to poverty stricken Appalachia during the Great Depression years of the 1930s and introduces us to a truly unforgettable heroine, Patience Murphy, a midwife struggling against disease, poverty, and prejudice.

(from Amazon)



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

History

NPR -



Home Birth in Appalachia

By [KARA LEIGH LOFTON](#) • APR 29, 2016

Part 1 - <http://wvpublic.org/post/home-birth-appalachia#stream/0>

Part 2 with podcast - <http://wvpublic.org/post/hippies-home-birth-and-history-birthing-babies-appalachia#stream/0>



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

History

Notable Mention

- **My Great Grandmother was a midwife here in Logan County WV for over 30 years!**
- **Many Appalachian midwives have ancestors who were also midwives.**

A blue-tinted photograph of a mountain range in the background, with a dark blue curved shape in the foreground.

HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

Religious Communities

Amish and Mennonite Families

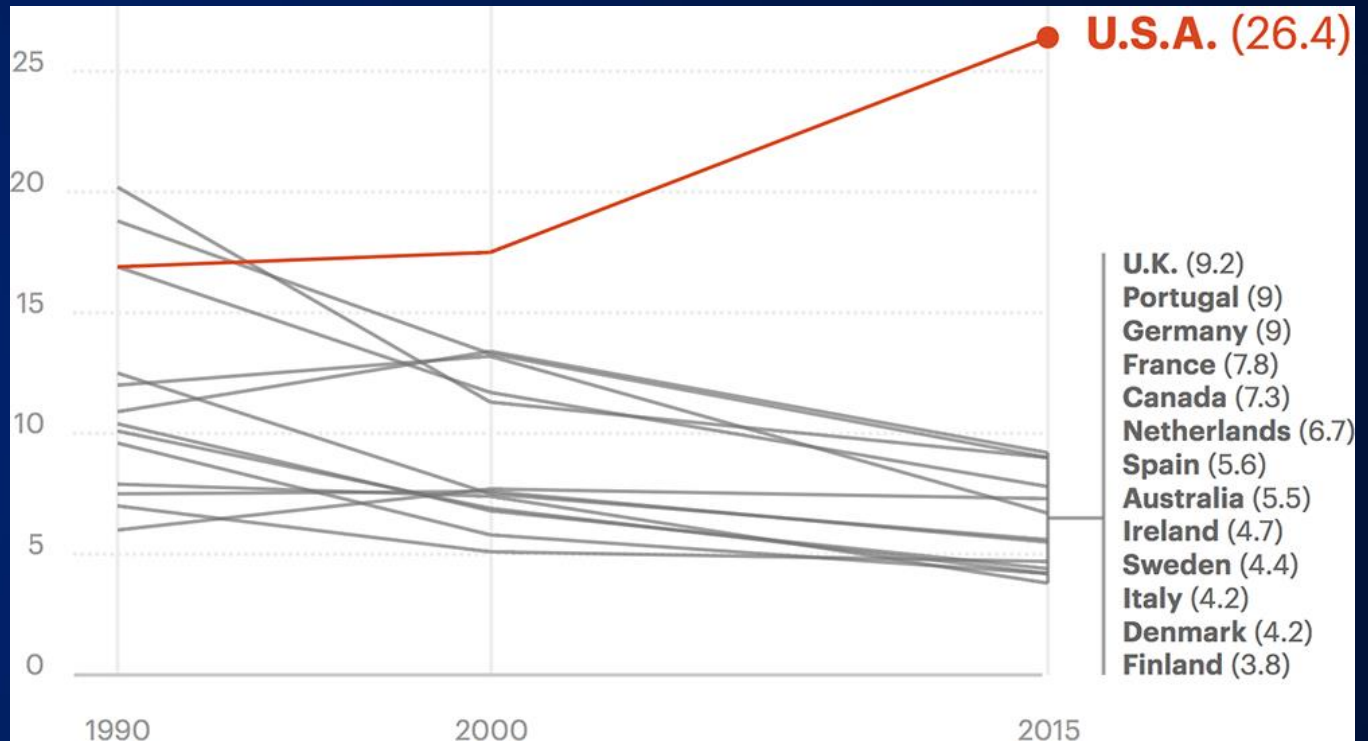
- **Most of the larger older order Amish, Mennonite and German Baptist communities are located in Appalachia**

(Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York mainly, but smaller pockets located all across Appalachia)

Other orthodox communities are returning to homebirth for religious and spiritual reasons

Homebirth in Appalachia

National Maternal Mortality Rates



Homebirth in Appalachia

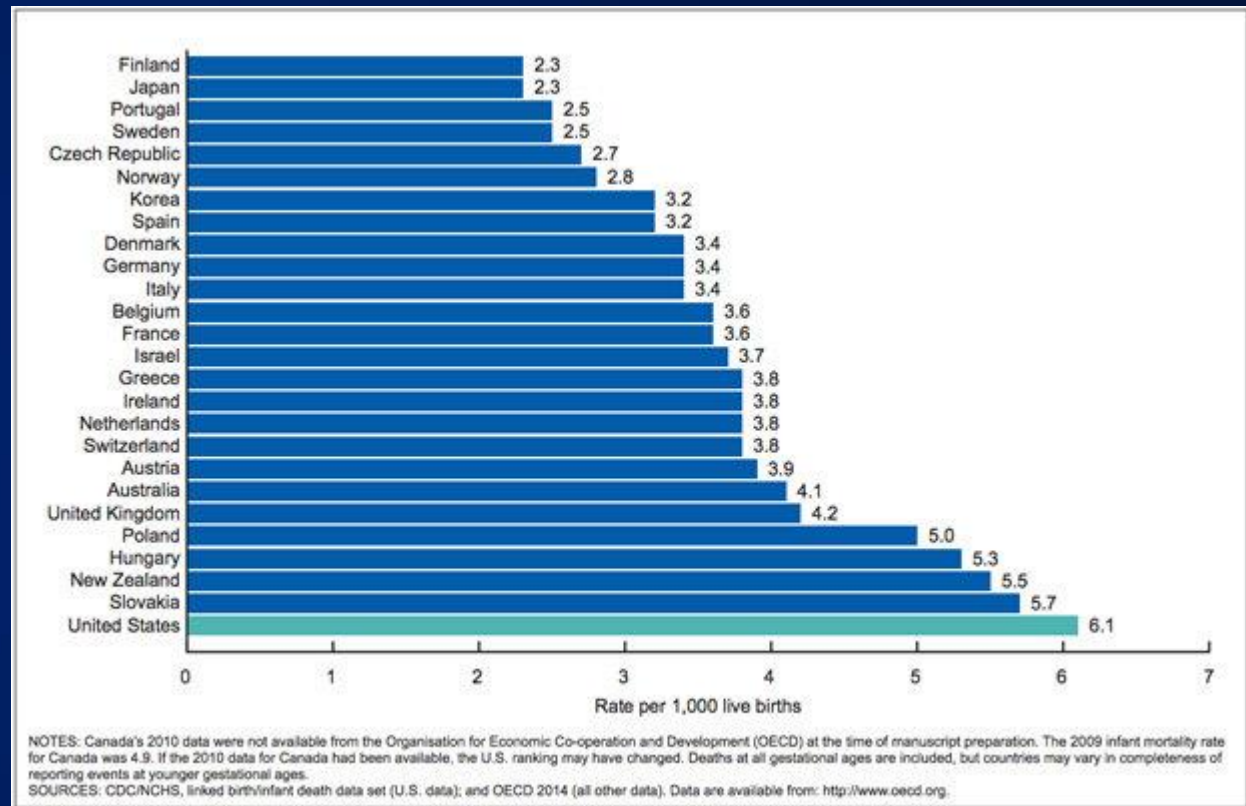
Maternal and Infant Mortality rates

- National Maternal Mortality Rate
- NPR Investigative report –
 - <http://www.npr.org/2017/05/12/528098789/u-s-has-the-worst-rate-of-maternal-deaths-in-the-developed-world>



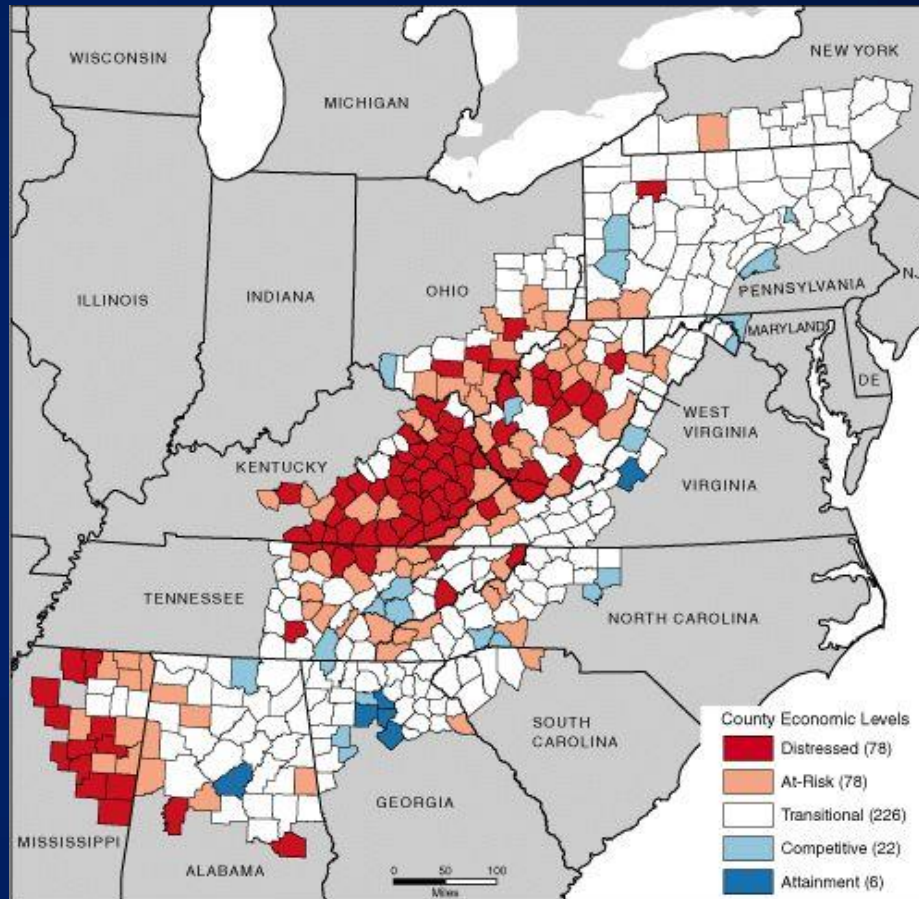
Homebirth in Appalachia

National Infant Mortality Rates



Homebirth in Appalachia

Appalachian Infant Mortality Rates



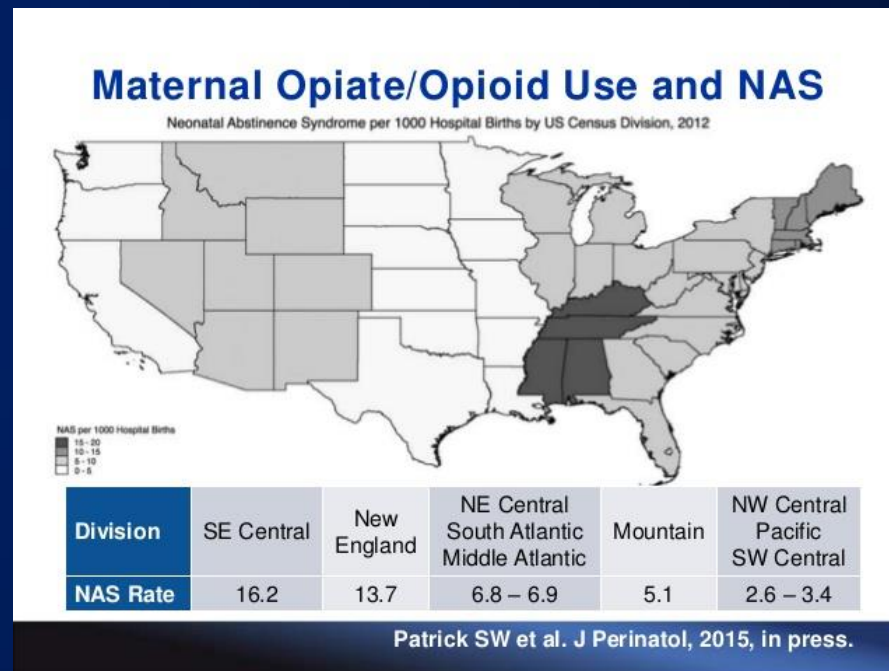
Map by: Appalachian Regional Commission, October 2007.
Data Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2003-2005;
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS, 2004;
U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, SF3.

Effective October 1, 2007
through September 30, 2008.

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Appalachian Maternal Mortality Rates

While Appalachian women are not dying faster than average for our nation, the rate of maternal deaths from cardiovascular disease, and opioid overdose is much higher in Appalachia.



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

Modern Midwifery

Certified Nurse Midwife - Registered Nurse with Nurse Practitioner specialization in midwifery

- Most CNMs practice within the medical model and in hospital settings
- Some CNMs are able to serve homebirth families
- CNMs require no out of hospital experience for their credential.
- Most CNMs are better able to take Medicaid and private insurance



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

Modern Midwifery

Certified Nurse Midwife - Registered Nurse with Nurse Practitioner specialization in midwifery

- CNMs have access to medical back up and prescriptive authority in most cases
- Some states prohibit CNMs from attending out of hospital births
- CNM led birth centers
- Are becoming more accessible

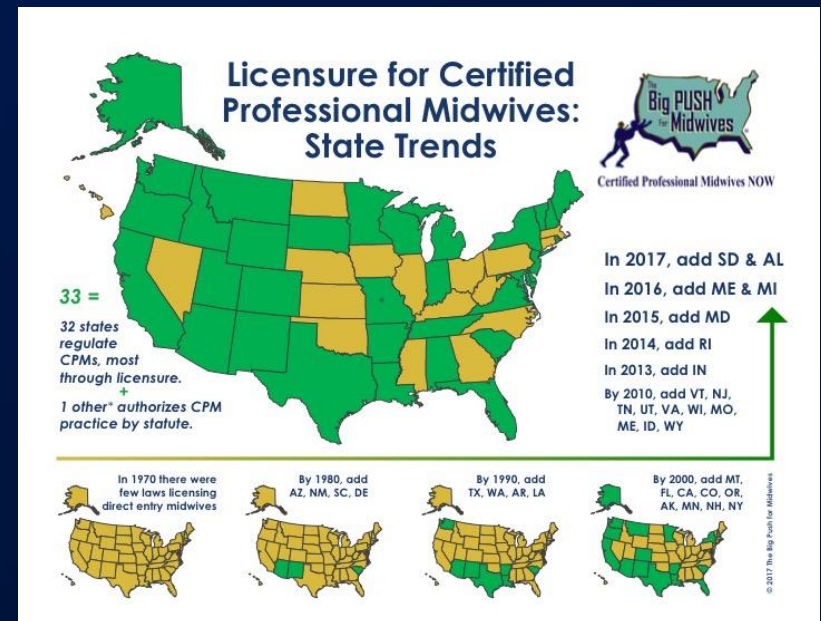


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Modern Midwifery

Certified Professional Midwife - Non nurse midwife, specifically trained in normal pregnancy, and out of hospital birth

- CPMs legal in 33 states
- CPMs attend majority of homebirths
- CPMs are trained specifically in out of hospital emergencies
- CPMs can take Medicaid in some states, and personal insurance in more



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

Modern Midwifery

Certified Professional Midwife - Credentialed non-nurse midwife, specifically trained in normal pregnancy, and out of hospital birth

- CPMs provide access to care in rural areas by bringing the provider to the mother
- CPMs trained in both academic and apprenticeship model



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

Modern Midwifery

Direct Entry Midwife- Trained through apprenticeship model in out of hospital birth, works in all states, but predominantly in states that have no mechanism for licensure.

- DEMs attend only homebirths
- DEMs rarely are able to accept health insurance
- DEMs may not have access to community support and training
- DEMs are competent care providers
- DEMs serve most of Appalachia



Homebirth in Appalachia

Statistics for Planned Homebirths with Low Risk Women via MANA Statistics Project (16,984 births)

- Cesarean Rate 882 (5.2%)
- Successful VBAC Rate (6% total TOLAC) 915 (87%)
- Intrapartum Transfer rate (pain relief, labor augmentation, IV support, maternal infection, fetal distress, assisted and surgical deliveries)1850 (10.9%)
- Postpartum Transfer Rate 251 (1.5%)
- Neonatal Transfer Rate149 (0.9%)
- Successful Vaginal Breech Del. (1% total breech presentation at labor) 142 (0.8%)
- Low Birth Weight (<2500g)127 (57.2%)
- Preterm Birth423 (2.5%)
- Neonate with APGAR <7 at 5 minutes245 (1.5%)
- Any NICU Admission in the first 6 weeks479 (2.8%)
- Breastfeeding initiation / exclusive breastfeeding at 6 weeks16,914(99.6%) / 14,344(86%)



HOMEBIRTH IN APPALACHIA

The Appalachian region has a higher infant mortality rate than the United States as a whole

Areas most affected include;
Central to south West Virginia
Eastern Kentucky
Mississippi
Central Alabama

Homebirth in Appalachia

Access to Care for Rural Families

- One of the mitigating factors in poorer outcomes for Appalachian families is the decreasing access to care for rural families. It is not uncommon in the area I serve for mothers to drive up to 2 hours to prenatal visits and to get to a hospital during labor. Lack of access to care is a real issue in Appalachia.

Midwives bring the care into the rural communities



Homebirth in Appalachia

Access to Care for Rural Families

- Normalizing birth, focus on healthy lifestyles and prioritizing breastfeeding create a dynamic of holistic wellbeing for the families. In communities where there are resource insecurities midwives help families problem solve for healthier choices.

Midwives help create healthier families!



Homebirth in Appalachia

Access to Care for Rural Families

- Supporting families to birth in their own way, in their own time creates an empowered dynamic that carries through their entire lives. Midwives create a safe space so that families can do the work to birth babies in a safe and loving space.

Midwives help make birth safe!



A blue-tinted photograph of a mountain range, likely the Appalachians, serves as the background for the top half of the slide. The mountains are layered, creating a sense of depth. A dark blue curved line separates the image from the text below.

Homebirth in Appalachia

Get Involved!

If you live in one of the Appalachian states that don't recognize the CPM credential, it is likely that your access to midwifery care, especially homebirth, is limited. Get in contact with your state's midwifery organization and get involved in making changes for better access to care. These organizations can also help you access midwifery care no matter what the laws in your state might be.

- *Kentucky Homebirth Coalition*
- *Midwives Alliance of West Virginia*
- *Midwives Alliance of Pennsylvania*
- *North Carolina Friend of Midwives*
- *Mississippi Friends of Midwives*
- *The Big Push for Midwives*
- *NACPM (National Assn. of Certified Professional Midwives)*

Homebirth in Appalachia

