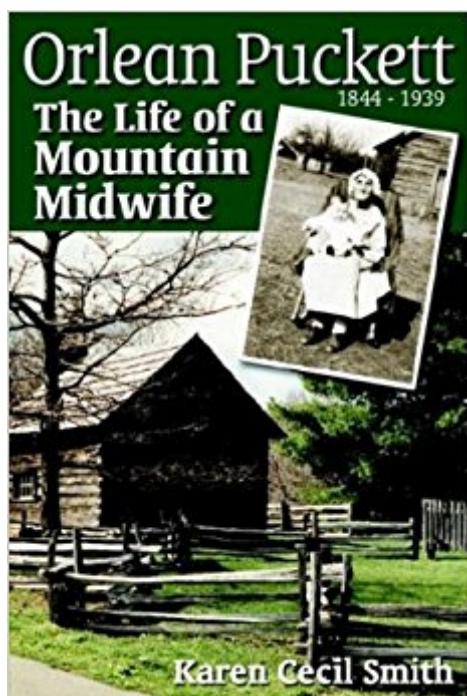


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# Orlean Puckett: The Life Of A Mountain Midwife



## **Synopsis**

Orlean Puckett was a midwife who lived from 1844 to 1939 in Carroll County, Virginia. Aunt Orlean delivered thousands of babies in the mountain region of Virginia. She herself, however, lost 24 children of her own. She is commemorated on the Blue Ridge Parkway by a marker which was put up the National Park Service.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I really enjoyed reading the Life of a Mountain midwife. However, as I am practicing as a midwife in a different country many historic descriptions did not mean a lot to me. Because of the title I expected to read a lot about her midwifery life. Only one chapter is directly related to this, which I absolutely love dreading, as it gave wonderful insight and wisdom of what it was like to practice as a midwife in those days. The rest of the book seems to focus a lot on relatives and descendants which would be useful for readers that have lived in that area. I would consider changing the title as it is somewhat misleading.

When I first read the "teasers" of this book, I just felt I had to get it and read it. I am so glad that I did! Being a woman, I enjoy reading about the lives of ordinary women during various times in history, and knowing how they lived, what motivated them, what may have captured their imagination, what made them laugh and smile. Orlean Puckett was a woman born into the early part of the 19th century in the mountains of Virginia. Her arrival into this world came before the war between the States, when slavery was still an accepted way of life south of the Mason-Dixon line.

She married at 16 - considered normal in her community - just before the start of the Civil War. She also gave birth to her first child within a year of getting married. She would go on to get pregnant 24 times - and lose all 24 children. A travesty I cannot comprehend any woman being able to overcome. And yet, Orlean Puckett became a midwife in her middle years. She assisted other women with bringing new life into the world, and became one of the most trusted women in her community to do so. She delivered, by all estimates, at least 1,000 babies into her mountain community. As we read about these simple facts of Orlean's life, we also learn about what life was like to live in the mountains of Virginia when people lived in log cabins, where windows were few, electricity was non-existent, and indoor plumbing was un-heard of. We come to know how people lived when there was no supermarket down the street, and people had to rely on themselves or their neighbors. The author does a wonderful job bringing Orlean Puckett to life and allowing the reader to really get to know her, to almost hear her laugh, and feel her gentle but firm touch as she assisted the women giving birth and held the babies she "caught." Orlean Puckett was a much loved woman in her family and community, and she would have been a woman I would have liked to have met. I very much enjoyed this telling of her life story.

Orlean Puckett. Such a strong, tenderhearted woman. She travelled all over the mountains birthing hundreds of babies and yet buried 24 children herself (a result of RH hemolytic disease). So heartbreaking. And so inspiring. This is a true story and a good one. She gave her heart and soul for the love of children. There's some humor too. Orlean's husband-to-be was super shy. When he finally got the courage up to express himself this is what he said, "they just wasted party on you when they made you, didn't they? They made you party as they could and then pitched a shovel full in your face." They were married the next Saturday. **CONTENT:** Suitable reading for all audiences

I discovered this book through reading Mountain Man--imagine my surprise when my relative, Orlean Puckett (my paternal grandmother was a Puckett from SW Virginia) was mentioned in the first few pages. As a child, I was shown her cabin many times and heard the tales of her accomplishments. So I bought this book and found a few other of my relatives (Worrells) and recounting of the family stories I had heard growing up. I had seen some of the photos that the author included in our family albums. It is a tale of a strong mountain woman who lost all her own babies but then delivered over 1000 babies in the Blue Ridge mountains.

I have visited the still standing home of Ms Puckett and you can still picture her living her simple life

there. She is a fascinating person in our history. The book depicts a life that to us seems extraordinary but to her were just the way it was. Great read !!

Other than the unneeded use of a couple of off-color terms, this biography is a wonderful look into the lives and customs of North Carolina and Virginia mountain folk of the last two centuries. Having visited Orlean's area and hearing some of her story for most of my life, this book brought it all to life. Orlean's life was indeed full of struggles and grief, but it's amazing how she was used to bless her family and neighbors as an elderly midwife.

Let me say this, .... it will be a long time before I complain again about how hard my life is! I don't know how women lived to the ripe ages some of them did? Orlean was a tiny woman with a big spirit. She overcame more trials and tribulations ... as most pioneer women did ... then I can imagine happening in our time. If you like history about real pioneer life, midwifery, hard times and persevering through it all, this is the book for you!

This book was easy reading. I had a grandfather that lived during this change in the mountains and this gave me insight in his life.

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