



# These Healing Hills

*Ann H. Gabhart*

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## **These Healing Hills** Ann H. Gabhart

Francine Howard has her life all mapped out until the soldier she planned to marry at WWII's end writes to tell her he's in love with a woman in England. Devastated, Francine seeks a fresh start in the Appalachian Mountains, training to be a nurse midwife for the Frontier Nursing Service.

Deeply affected by the horrors he witnessed at war, Ben Locke has never thought further ahead than making it home to Kentucky. His future shrouded in as much mist as his beloved mountains, he's at a loss when it comes to envisioning what's next for his life.

When Francine's and Ben's paths intersect, it's immediately clear that they are from different worlds and value different things. But love has a way of healing old wounds . . . and revealing tantalizing new possibilities.

## **These Healing Hills Details**

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Author : Ann H. Gabhart

Format : Kindle Edition 368 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Christian Fiction, Romance, Inspirational, Christian Historical Fiction

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# **From Reader Review These Healing Hills for online ebook**

## **Linda Klager says**

What a great story situated in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky! I loved hearing about the adventures of a young midwife nurse. Oh, how much Francine learned while helping to "catch babies", the term mountain people use when a baby is born. It was very interesting how this author explained the life of these people. Also the author talked about the beauty of the land. I could picture how gorgeous, but how difficult it would have been without modern conveniences that we take for granted.

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## **Maureen Timerman says**

I really found myself rooting for young Francine Howard as she began her new career as a baby catcher, or midwife, in the mountains of Kentucky.

The author made those mountains so alive with word pictures that I found myself crossing the creeks, and going over the rocks. Such a great story, with the end WWII we are with the veterans and those left behind. Most of all we meet the mountain people and you will really fall in love with some of these unforgettable individuals.

Will our girl end up losing her heart to these people and maybe someone else, or will her mother get her way and she will go back home to Cincinnati? How about our young soldier and the responsibilities that are now placed on him, will he take advantage of the GI bill, or stay and help family?

I really enjoyed this story, and made me want to move and live here, but that grass usually looks greener on the other side.

I received this book through Net Galley and the Publisher Revell, and was not required to give a positive review.

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## **Hannah says**

What a delightful tale! Francine's whole heart is longing for a useful place to call home, after her mother's long effort of trying to cut Francine down to the size of the mold of her mother's ambitions. The new venture of becoming a mountain nurse-midwife (She does much more than simply catch babies, thus the "nurse" part) is her effort at finding freedom to make her own choices in life. Kentucky Appalachia in 1945 is represented in charming and not-so charming detail. I also liked the parts that detailed her job and her relationships with the mountain people.

I really liked that the romance in the book is very low-key, and Ben, the young man, isn't introduced until 1/3 of the way in when he returns from war.

A heartwarming, inspiring, and clean story.

Thanks to the publisher for a free review copy.

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## **Sue says**

This was a wonderful historical fiction novel. The characters are extremely well done and the mountain areas of Kentucky are written about so beautifully that the reader feels like they are there when reading this book.

The year is 1945 and Francine has just found out that the man she planned to marry after he came back from fighting in Europe is bringing home his English fiancée. She doesn't want to deal with this heartache so she joins The Frontier Nursing Service to learn to be a nurse-midwife and take care of people in the Appalachian area of Kentucky. She not only has a real heart for her job but loves the people who live in the mountains. Some of the other nurses felt like they are there to teach the people but Francine soon realizes that she can not only teach but she can also learn from them. When she meets Ben, a mountain man who has just returned from the fighting, they realize that their lives are very different even though there is a spark between them.

This is a lovely novel about life in the mountains in the mid-1940s. It was beautifully written and a joy to read -- the word I want to use to describe it is 'gentle'. I highly recommend it.

Thanks to librarything for a copy of this book to read and review. All opinions are my own.

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## **Madison says**

These Healing Hills is a delightful historical romance novel. The descriptive writing firmly places the reader in the gorgeous scenery and amongst the friendly people of the Appalachian Mountains. It was wonderful to sink into this story and journey with Fran and Ben as they overcome the obstacles before them, each find a place to call home, and find peace.

Francine Howard didn't start her life looking for adventure, but when her fiancé writes home from the war to tell her he has found someone else, she knows home in Cincinnati is no longer where she wants to stay. Instead, she takes up the offer to travel to the Appalachian Mountains and put her training as a nurse to use as one of the Frontier Nurses. It is a vast change in culture, but Fran soon feels at home there. Ben Locke has spent many years away at war and wants nothing more than to return to his home in the mountains. He isn't sure what his future holds, but the kind nurse with the amazing smile draws him like no one has before.

This book is set just as World War Two is coming to an end. However, at times it feels like it could be set in an earlier era, as the people in the mountain seek out an honest and simple living and the women of the Frontier Nursing Service ride horses across the rugged lands to offer what medical help they can. So the mentions of buses and cars, and women wearing pants sometimes came as a bit of a shock and reminder of the true setting of this story.

The setting was almost a third main character in this book. The mountains truly came to life on the pages. These Healing Hills is beautifully written. It was a long story. While there is no shortage of exciting happenings, from snow storms, babies needing catching and shootings, this book had a beautiful, slow cadence to it that made sinking into its pages a delight. I took the time to savour every moment. However, the ending was way too sudden for me. I was left desperately flicking for pages I might have missed, another chapter, a long epilogue, anything! I thought there was more to learn, endings to be neatly tied in a bow, but maybe that's because I wanted the book to go on forever. I would be content, however, with a sequel or a companion novel... Here's hoping.

The slow sweet burn of the romance in this novel was oh so delightful. Little moments, shared laughter, simple things that brought Ben and Fran together, while they doubt and wrestle with their feelings. It made the ending all the better (if still too short!).

I was totally surprised by just how much I enjoyed this wonderful book. I eagerly look forward to discovering what else this talented author will produce. *These Healing Hills* is highly recommended for readers who enjoy historical novels with strong characters, detailed and descriptive writing that flows beautifully, a touch of adventure and heartwarming romance.

The publishers provided an advanced readers copy of this book for reviewing purposes. All opinions are my own.

Find more reviews, reading age guides, content advisory, and recommendations on my blog [Madison's Library](#).

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### **Alicia says**

*These Healing Hills* is the story of a nurse who left her comfortable home to “catch babies” and aid the people of the Kentucky Appalachian Mountains. Despite her supervisor’s and mother’s warnings to not get too close to her neighbours, Francine finds that the mountains and its people- particularly one soldier- are capturing her heart.

I was hoping for something with the same charm as *The Heart of Hollyhill* series or *Angel Sister*, and it did not disappoint! I felt like I was right there in the mountains, back in time. I really liked all the characters and reading about all of Francine’s adventures as a midwife. As a bonus, the dog on the cover plays an important role in the story (you can never have too many stories with dogs).

I also liked how the main character was always getting lost. Lol. It always seems like every main character in a book has an uncanny sense of direction. Then there's me, who needs a Google Maps printout of every step if I go somewhere new and who can never remember which way is north or south. So, it was nice to read about someone who doesn't know where she’s going either!

I loved this one!

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### **Shantelle says**

#### **4.5 stars.**

I suppose stories about midwives, the Appalachian Mountains, frontier and family life, and slow, tender romances just touch my heart. *These Healing Hills* by Ann H. Gabhart was a beautiful novel that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Set during the end and aftermath of World War II, this book introduces us to frontier nurse/midwife, Francine Howard, and soldier, Ben Locke, who's a native to the mountains. Besides our two main characters, who both quickly endeared themselves to me, we meet many other unique people in the beautiful and

sometimes harsh Appalachian hills. Woody. Becca. Granny Em.

Midwifery is interesting to me, and *These Healing Hills* got into it a fair amount. What a miracle pregnancy is! What a beautiful thing new life is! What a precious blessing - babies. \*smiles\* Francine is also a nurse and just helps with random needs of the mountain people. It was neat to learn about frontier nurses and what their lives looked like. In the old-fashioned mountain life, people generally rode horses instead of having cars and had to work hard to keep up their gardens in order to make it through the winter.

In her nurse outfit, blue tunic and trousers, and with her trusty horse, Jasmine, Francine maneuvers the mountain paths and befriends the people. I like how she can have her no-nonsense "nurse attitude", but also has such compassion for her patients, and genuinely cares about them as people, and is interested in their lives. I love how sweetly she falls for Ben.

I like Ben. And Sarge. And the parts they play in Francine's life. ^\_^

*These Healing Hills* was just a really lovely and tender story. With bits of drama and excitement here and there. A heartfelt journey of faith. A story of friendship that slowly blossomed into love. It's something akin to Catherine Marshall's *Christy*. Very satisfying tale. Looking forward to reading more by Ann H. Gabhart!

*I received a copy of These Healing Hills from Revell publishers in exchange for my honest review.*

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### **Anna says**

Francine Howard had her life planned out. She was going to marry her high school sweetheart, Seth, when he returned from WWII, make a home, and start a family. But when Seth's sister revealed that he is coming home with a girl from England, Francine is devastated and embarrassed. Already having trained as a nurse, she volunteers for the Frontier Nursing Service in the mountains of Kentucky to receive training to be a midwife. Having been raised in Cincinnati, and discouraged by her mother not to interact with those "hillbillies", Francine is uncertain what she will encounter. What she does find though is a great beauty in the land and a people who value family and hard work.

Ben Locke has survived the war as a medic and his greatest desire is to return home to his family and the mountains he loves. Yet Ben is restless and unsure what the future holds. When a chance encounter throws him together with Francine, a longing for love awakens in his heart.

Having been hurt by Seth's rejection, Francine too is leary to give her heart to another. As she grows in confidence in her nursing skills and begins to feel drawn to the beauty of the mountains, she learns to trust in the feelings she is experiencing.

For anyone looking for a "clean" historical Christian novel, I would highly recommend this book.

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### **Mary Jackson \_TheMaryReader says**

Being from Kentucky this was a great book. I loved the vivid descriptions and the way Gabhart took me back to the mountains.

The characters were so easy to love, well most of them were. I enjoyed going home in this heartwarming read.

You are going to get lost in the mountains with Fran and like me you just might enjoy it.

Well crafted read and you are going to be left wanting more. I loved the ending. I just might be Gabharts biggest fan.

This is a 5 star two times read! I HIGHLY recommend this book.

The Mary Reader received this book from the publisher for review. A favorable review was not required and all views expressed are our own.

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## **Joleen says**

*These Healing Hills* by **Ann Gabhart**

*Genre:* Historical Fiction

*Format:* Kindle

*Timeframe:* 1945

*Location:* Appalachian hills, Kentucky

Characters:

*Francine Howard:* Nurse, beginning midwife training

*Ben Locke:* Medic returning from WWII to Kentucky hills

*Woody Locke :* Ben's talkative young brother

*Mary Breckinridge:* Founder of Frontier Nursing Service

*Granny Em:* Elderly wise-woman and healer

*Betty Dawson:* Stoic nursing teacher from New York

Francine's "intended" writes from England near the end of WWII to say he's fallen in love with another woman. Devastated, trying to figure out what God has for her life now, she applies and is accepted to the Frontier Nursing Service midwife program. She leaves her home and mother in Cincinnati, and heads for the hill country of Kentucky, in Leslie County. She would apprentice, then have her knowledge and skills tested, eventually receiving a midwife license.

She's promised a horse and a dog to get from house to house in the back woods. Her fears are moonshiners, snakes and getting lost... which happens often as there are only unmarked dirt roads/trails and a map she cannot seem to follow. Fortunately the mountain people are friendly and will help whenever possible, like Woody, a fun, talkative teenager who finds her lost on her first day there, in the woods just trying to find the hospital to which she was supposed to report...on foot.

A new way of life in the hills, and a new vocabulary for this "brought-in" girl who is learning to "catch babies". Here she meets Woody's older brother, Ben, who was a medic in the war, returning after an injury. They are both leery of each other. He's leery of her because she's not from there, and she's leery of him because he is in no way as friendly as his brother Woody. But her being a fixture in the hill folk homes, and how they've taken to her, gives her a fighting chance to win many hearts, including Ben's. But her teacher, Betty, warns her not to take to their ways, and to maintain an emotional distance because these are "different" people with backward ways and beliefs.

I've enjoyed many Ann Gabhart books and I thoroughly enjoyed this one. I live near these Appalachian hills,

and am familiar now with a different way of speaking than I'd ever heard before. So it was fun getting inside the homes, inside their communities and to hear old proverbs, and maxims and pearls of wisdom in this book.

I nearly gave it a 4.5 star-rating because of the ending, but when I heard there's another book to follow, the ending made sense.

Very good book, one I can completely recommend!

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### **Olivia says**

It's so nice to read a book that catches human nature so well. The gentleness, yet straight-forward characteristic of the mountain people in this book is so refreshing. Fran and Ben's romance may not be extremely different from many others, but the setting and the background creates something incredibly unique and special.

This took me several days to read only because I wanted to savor every scene. It's a slow story that must be read carefully, although there were several intense/action-filled scenes. There were so many lines that I smiled and laughed at. Woody's character made me beam inside and out. He's just the perfect sunshiny fellow. Sometimes I got riled with Fran and Ben with ignoring their feelings, but it was so short-lived and realistic that I couldn't really fault them.

I absolutely loved how Fran thought of the spiritual wisdom her grandmother passed on to her. That was just perfect! And then even in some of the mountain people who didn't want to talk religion, they brought up simple truths from God's Word that was so thought-worthy. This book reminded me of so many things, but especially that the little moments of life are important. Not the huge things we may accomplish, but our daily decisions to help, love, and be a blessing to others. And also to speak to the truth.

Romance-wise everything was very discreet and sweet. There is several mentions about babies, and the love in marriage. But really, I loved how the author portrayed it all. Never blunt...even the birth scenes.

I highly recommend this book because it was a simple delight to read.

\*I received this in exchange for an honest review\*

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### **Jean says**

Sent to me for an early review - Another "can't put down " story - Set in the mountains of KY after WWII - Nurse/mid-wife - plenty of action, romance, heart warming story - characters come to life -

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### **Laura says**

i am a huge fan of Gabhart's cozy mysteries, but haven't read very many of her historicals. When I was offered a chance to review THESE HEALING HILLS I thought I'd give it a try. Recently my son graduated



from A school for the Coast Guard and we drove through "these hills" and saw how massively huge they are. It gives new appreciation to these "pioneer" nurse midwives who traveled them on foot and on horseback to "catch babies" or see to sick women and children.

The story is rather slow, easy to put down, but it was a nice peaceful read, a good escape. I identified completely with Fran, out of her element with the setting (she was a city girl) and getting used to hillbilly lingo, and traversing steep mountain trails on foot. And so many other dangers out where people are likely to shoot first and ask questions later.

Ben is a sweet hero, battle worn, glad to be home, but mourning so much. he has a lot of hurts to work through and a lot on his plate with the death of his dad and his mom and siblings needing so much from him.

I rooted for these characters. Granny Em was a lovely secondary character and some of the others added humor and drama as well.

A great historical fiction read. Historical fiction loves will devour this book.

I was given a copy free. All opinions are my own.

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## **Kav says**

This book cast a spell over me. Enchanting. Captivating. Riveting. And the word-crafting! Sheer beauty! No skimming allowed -- you'll want to savor every single sentence.

Gabhart celebrates the life and culture of a proud mountain people with reverence and respect. Francine is just as enthralled as I am! Never mind that her nurse midwife mentor expects her to remain apart (really 'above') these simple hill folk. But Francine can see the beauty in that simplicity -faith, family and service. It brings her a unique sense of belonging which is a stark contrast to her sterile upbringing.

And then there's Ben. He's spent his years in the war aching to feel the mountain back under his feet but once he's home he finds himself yearning for something more. Especially when a certain 'brought-in nurse' keeps getting lost on his mountain. Sigh. Their love story is the perfect blend of laughter and uncertainty and oh-so-sweet-and-tender hope.

Some of my favourite parts in the book are the snippets of wisdom we get from the sage elders who played a significant role in Ben and Francine's lives. Things like this: "What was it his pa used to say when Ben started worrying a problem like a dog licking a sore? You don't have to know the last step. Just the first one. You and the Lord can figure out the rest of it on the way." (p 218) I've got that written out on a card and taped to my wall now -- I'm in desperate need of enough faith to trust that 'the Lord and I can figure out the rest' in many areas of my life. And this book is full of sage takeaways like that.

There's a quality in the storytelling that stays with a reader long after the last page has been read. Definitely one of my favourite novels of 2017.

Book provided courtesy of Baker Publishing Group and Graf-Martin Communications Inc.

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## **Christian Fiction Addiction says**

I am never happier than when I crack the cover of a historical fiction novel and encounter a piece of history I've never heard of before. Such was the case with "These Healing Hills", and learning about the Frontier Nursing Service that operated in the Appalachian Mountains, offering midwifery nursing care (or digging out bullet wounds for that matter!) The author has done a great job at bringing the Mountains to life, capturing their beauty along with the strength of the people who lived there. Gabhart has crafted some wonderful and endearing characters in the plucky Francine as she seeks to heal from her past, and the likeable Ben Locke, who seems torn between his home in the mountains and all that the rest of the world has to offer. The romance that simmers between them is sweet to behold, and readers will enjoy watching them grow over the course of the novel, as they live life alongside the community around them. Although some parts of the novel move faster than others, there is plenty of drama woven into the plot to keep you absorbed in the story. And the way that Gabhart depicts the stereotypes against the mountain people by outsiders is so remnant of the way that people continue to be judged by their differences to this day. The story offers a needed reminder that we all need to take the time to get to know people where they are at, discovering that we aren't so different after all!

Ann H. Gabhart continues to give life to endearing and uplifting stories that satisfy the heart, and "These Healing Hills" will not only please her wide fan base but appeal to those looking for good historical fiction. I award this novel a solid rating and give it 4 out of 5 stars.

Book has been provided courtesy of Baker Publishing Group and Graf-Martin Communications, Inc.

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