

Mary Edna (Lyll) Jeffrey

A biography prepared by Ward Skinner, Sept 2019

Mary Lyall was born 4 May 1774 on the Sunnyside Farm in the Borders region of Scotland. Sunnyside was between Chirnside and Reston, in Berwickshire, now located about two miles from the A1 highway. She was baptized 4 days later, on 8 May, by the Chirnside Parish Church. Her parents were Joseph Lyall (1740-1799) and Jean Simpson (1741-1810). Mary had at least 7 siblings: Isabel (1769-1793), Jean (b. 1772-1776), John (1776-1851), Joseph (b. 1780), Margaret, called Peggy (1784-1798), Elizabeth (1788-1820), and Beatrix (b. 1790).

Mary's father, Joseph, was mostly a farmer, but also had been a servant, of William Hall, who lived at the Whitehall estate, and Mrs. Ker of the Nisbet estate near Duns. In 1785, Joseph was said to be a resident of the village of Chirnside, and very soon afterwards, he moved to a local farm, Crowbut. Mary would have been ~ 11 years old at this time. The family lived here until Joseph's death in 1799, and his wife, Jean, was also said to have passed away at Crowbut in 1810.

Sometime around 1798, Mary married William Jeffrey. The details of this marriage are cloudy, because there is no official record of it in the Old Scottish Parish registers. But it was a legal marriage, because at the christening of her first son, Andrew, in 1800 in Foulden, he is said to be "the lawfull son of" William and Mary". Mary and William's second child, Isabella, was born 29 October 1801, and baptized on 13 December, also in Foulden.

Around May, 1804, William Jeffrey, smith Foulden, signed a rental agreement (tack) to live and work the property of Swinewood Mill, which was a corn farm and mill on the Eye Water, near Reston. The agreement was to possess the property for a period of 19 years. It is unknown how long William and Mary actually lived and worked on this property.

Mary was said to have at least 3 more children: Jean (1803-1887), Catharine (1806-1882), and Mary (1809-1883), but there are no birth or baptism records in the Old Scottish Parish registers for these births. The death records of these last three children all list 'Scotland' as their birthplace. On Mary Jeffrey Short's tombstone, her birthplace is listed as Berwick, Scotland.

In 1820, Mary and her family followed her husband, William, to Canada. Mary's name appears on the passenger list of the ship, Malsham, traveling from Quebec City to Montreal in August 1820, along with her son, Andrew, and two other children.

Her name next appears in the records of St. Peter's Anglican Church in Cobourg. On 4 May 1823, George Gillespie and Isabella Jeffrey baptized their first child, Mary Gillespie. The godmother of this child is listed as "Grandmother, Mrs. Jeffrey." Mary Gillespie was Mary Lyall Jeffrey's first grandchild. Mary Lyall Jeffrey ended up with 37 grandchildren from her 5 children.

Mary died on 26 May 1857, in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, at the age of 83. The cause of death was listed as "old age." She was buried the following day, 27 May 1857 in Little Lake Cemetery in

Peterborough, in a plot owned by Adam Hall, her son-in-law who was married to Catharine Jeffrey. Her tombstone reads, "Sacred to the memory of Mary Lyall, wife of William Jeffrey. Age 83 years."