

Mary Hyde was born (possibly) in February 1779 at Halesowen which at the time was in Shropshire but in 1844 the changed boundaries put it in Worcestershire. Mary's parents were Edward Hyde and Sarah Blunn.



Mary was baptised at St John the Baptist Church of England at Halesowen on 19 February 1799.

The next time we hear of Mary is November 1795 when 16 year old Mary is accused of stealing items of clothing from Francis Deakin, her employer, including 1 black silk cloak, 1 muslin shawl, 1 cotton gown, 1 dimity petticoat, 2 pair of cotton stockings and 1 pair of scissors.

On 21 March 1796 Mary was tried at the Warwickshire Assizes where she was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation. At the trial she used her mother's name as an alias. It was not until January 1798 that Mary left Plymouth aboard the former whaling ship, Britannia II, which had been converted for carrying convicts. Ninety-two female convicts travelled on the ship to New South Wales. Only two convicts died during the voyage. The ship arrived at Sydney Cove on 18 July 1798.

There was still a shortage of females in the colony when Mary, now aged 19, arrived. Mary was possible luckier than many of the women as she met a ship's officer, John Black, and they lived together when he was in port. From March 1799 their home was on land (near what is now De Mestre Place in Sydney on eastern side of George St between Hunter St & Martin Place) that John Black leased from the government. Mary &

John's son, John Henry Black, was born on 31 May 1799. In the muster of convicts undertaken in 1800, Mary & her son were listed as being no longer reliant on government stores as they were living on land owned by Mr Black and owned seven pigs, four sheep & one goat.

Captain Black was frequently away from Sydney but from 11 January 1801 to January 1802 he lived in the settlement with Mary and their son. While in Sydney he worked in the liquor trade establishing a shop on land that he leased from Simeon Lord. On 6 October 1801 Mary Ann Black was born. A month earlier on 7 September 1801 Governor King had granted Mary an absolute pardon ( 18 months before it was due). Mary (now 22) appeared to have settled into her new life in Sydney.

In January 1802 Captain Jack Black was back at sea. He was aboard the ship, *Fly*, travelling to India. Unfortunately of the return voyage the ship was wrecked and the crew were lost at sea. The last sighting of the ship was on 14 May 1802 when it was due to travel across the Indian Ocean and around the southern coast of Australia through Bass Strait and then north to Sydney. It is not known where and when the ship disappeared. The ship was not declared missing until February 1803 and an article in the *Sydney Gazette* for 15 April 1804 officially confirmed that Captain Black was lost at sea.

Mary stayed in Sydney with her two young children and no doubt continued to run the family business. By 1805 she had entered into a new relationship, this time with Simeon Lord who had had business associations with her husband. An emancipist, Simeon had carved out a successful life for himself in the new colony. He was a trader, shipowner, sealer, auctioneer, magistrate, landowner and manufacturer - textiles, leather goods, soap, candles, hats - at various times during his business career. He was also well known as a litigant and like many other former convicts attempted to use the courts to his advantage.



Mary Hyde taken towards the end of her life

Mary and Simeon had five children - Sarah born 1806, Louisa born 1808, Simeon born 1810, Francis born 1812 and Edward born 1814 - before they were married at St Philip's Church on 27 October 1814. They then had another five children - John born 1815, Thomas born 1816, Frederick born 1817, George born 1818 and Robert born 1821. The family lived in a large three storey house near the Tank Stream that had been constructed for Simeon in 1803. As well as the children of Mary and Simeon, Simeon's adopted daughter (Joanna Short) lived in the house. Mary's two children also lived with them though Mary Ann spent seven years living with her grandfather, Rev John Black, in England until his death in 1814. She then returned to Sydney.

In 1814 Simeon established his first factory and mill at Botany. During the next few years additional buildings were added including Banks House where the family lived from 1821 when they leased the Sydney property. The businesses at Botany continued to diversify and products were exported to the other colonies such as Van Diemen's Land.

Simeon Lord died on 29 January 1840. In his will Simeon left the members of his large family well provided for. Mary continued to live at the house in Botany and managed the businesses there. The government decided to reclaim part of the property as part of an extension to the water

supply system in Sydney. So, in 1855, when some of the land was flooded, including the stream that supplied the mill, Mary took to the courts to receive proper compensation for the land and loss of business. The matter was finally resolved to Mary's satisfaction after she won an appeal to the Privy Council in England in February 1859. She was obviously a very determined woman.

Mary Hyde died on 1 December 1864 aged 85. In her will Mary left property to all her children including her daughters, stipulating that the property belonged to the women and not their male partners. Unfortunately the government at the time was not as enlightened as Mary regarding female rights.