

Mary Hirst Hepworth

Compiled by Brenda Hoskin, 1995

Mary Hirst was born November 8, 1820 in Drighlington, Yorkshire, England. She was the daughter of John Hirst and Jane Dunwell.

Little is known of Mary's early life until she was married. On April 9, 1837 in Batley Parish, Yorkshire, England, the home parish of the bride, Joseph Hepworth married Mary Hirst.

At the time it was a common practice for a groom to establish residency in the bride's parish several weeks before the marriage. Therefore, although Joseph is listed in the marriage record as "of this parish," his permanent residence at the time of his marriage is uncertain. The couple was married by the curate, W. H. Teale, with George Hirst and James Gates listed as the witnesses. Since Joseph was 21 and Mary only 17, they were considered young to be marrying at that time. Because of economic conditions, most couples married at age 25 or 26.



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Tragedy struck the young couple when their first child, born July 20, 1837 and christened August 20, 1837, died on August 26, 1837 of "fits." The couple was living at Tong, probably with or near Joseph's parents, who were listed as living at Tong, in October 1839, when Hannah, Joseph's mother, died. Joseph is recorded to be a collier (coal miner) at the time of his son's birth.

The young couple soon moved to New Lane, Drighlington, where William was born May 26, 1839. Joseph was listed as a coal miner on Williams' birth record (as well as on the rest of the children's birth records). The 1841 census finds the family at the same address living in a single family dwelling. Edmund was born March 7, 1841 at the same place. Although family sources say the family lived at Gildersome, evidence doesn't confirm that fact. New Lane borders on the township of Gildersome, however, which might account for any discrepancy. Squire's birth on May 4, 1843 is also listed as occurring at New Lane in Drighlington. This places the family at New Lane for about five years.

Joseph and Mary moved their family to Nethertown (Netherton), another part of Drighlington, sometime before March 1845 to be nearer to Joseph's work. Their first daughter, Hannah, was born there March 13, 1845. (With 6, 4, and 2 year old boys in the family, one wonders if along with the joy, Mary felt a little relief at the birth of a girl.) Sarah followed, born at Nethertown, March 14, 1847.

The year 1847 was an important year for the family for another reason. Their home area

was "opened" to the Gospel in about 1844, and they heard the missionaries and were converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mary was baptized September 26, 1847 by Elder Miller, "the first fruits of our labor at Drighlington" per journal of Joseph Beecroft. Joseph was baptized December 19th that same year by Charles Wilkinson. The children were baptized in later years.

These baptisms represented the beginning of a lifetime of devoted service to the Church. Their home was opened to the missionaries in the area not only for preaching of the gospel but also for sustenance. The Hepworth's were willing to share whatever they had.

From the records, the family's life seemed relatively smooth for the next few years. The family added two sons: James born March 3, 1849, and Joseph, born May 28, 1850. Both births were listed as occurring at Nethertown, Drighlington. By that time even the younger children were hard at work. The 1851 census, in which the family was listed as living at Nethertown, showed Joseph Hepworth and his sons, William, Edmund, and Squire, to be "coal miners".

The mines meant a living for the Hepworth family, but it also brought tragedy. William was working at the Samuel Garforth and Company mine in Drighlington, when there was a gas explosion. The explosion half buried William in coal and dirt. The blast cut open the calf of his right leg and broke his left leg below the knee. His brother Edmund had been working at his side, but had moved away just before the accident, narrowly missing him. William lingered four days, and then died (May 30, 1851). He was Mary's oldest living son, twelve years old.

Further tragedy hit the family that year with the death of four year old Sarah on September 2, 1851. The attending doctor certified her death as caused by laryngitis. The family was listed as residing at Nethertown. The family was still at Nethertown, in Drighlington at the birth of Elizabeth, April 16, 1852, and Ann, January 16, 1854. Mary Jane's birth certificate lists her family's residence as Drighlington. She was born December 23, 1855.

Life was not easy for the family. The brother's biographies record that food was minimal. Meat was a rarity, cheese a luxury. Joseph Jr. recalled that he and his younger brother, Samuel, had to wait until the older brothers had eaten before they could have what was left. Sometimes the family had only dried bread to eat.

Eighteen-hundred and fifty-six was another sad year for the family. On April 12, 1856, Ann died. Her death was caused by teething and whopping cough, according to the attending doctor. She was two years old. Later that year, October 4, 1856, four year old Elizabeth died of scarletina, which she had had for one week. No doctor attended her at her death.

The couple's last girl, Martha Annice, was born at Nethertown, Drighlington, on March 10, 1858. She was the last child born at Nethertown. The family lived in Nethertown for about 14 years. However, sometime before January 8, 1860, when the youngest boy, Samuel, was born, the family had moved to Lumb Bottom, another part of Drighlington, a sort of gully area

where there is record of an old mine.

Education was very expensive and only the more well-to-do had much chance for a formal education. It is not known if Mary ever learned to read or write. In a letter from Joseph (the son) to his father in 1871, he mentions not hearing from her because perhaps "she cannot get a confidential scribe to write for her..." On the 1900 census record of Salt Lake City, she states that she could not read or write. It is a credit to the family that though they lacked time and money for education, they developed talents such as music, verse, carpentry, etcetera.

Before October 12, 1861, the family had moved to Howly Back Brick Row near Batley. They hosted many church meetings while living there also.

The next few years were years of change for the Joseph Hepworth family. The older children were of marriageable age and the Church was stressing the "gathering of Zion." Edmund and his wife emigrated in 1863 and Squire and his wife in 1864.

At some time during this period, probably 1866, Mary immigrated to America with the three youngest children, Mary Jane, Martha Annice, and Samuel, financing the journey through the Church's emigration fund.

James emigrated in 1871. Hannah had emigrated in 1869 with her two young daughters. Mary's husband, Joseph Hepworth, then 54, joined his family in America in 1870. The last of the family in England, Joseph Hepworth Jr., married to Mary Ann Green, came in 1873 with their infant son.

Mary's husband Joseph died April 18, 1878 at Oxford, Idaho. Mary passed away September 21, 1903 of inanition at her daughter Hannah Balmforth's home in Salt Lake City.

*Contents taken from "History of Joseph Hepworth 1816-1878"
written by Nel Lo H. Bassett and Sandra F. Strange, June 1978
and Hepworth-Hirst Family Research*