

Mary's Parents

Alexander MacKillop 1812 – 1868

Alexander, the father of Mary MacKillop, was born in Lochaber, Scotland in 1812. Lochaber is known as the 'cradle of the Faith in Scotland' and Mary MacKillop in later years observed "...it is quite a Catholic place".

At first, Alexander began his studies in Scotland on the island of Lismore. At the age of 13 he went to Scots College in Rome to study to become a priest. After several years in Rome he returned to study in the seminary at Blairs College in Aberdeen, leaving after 17 months.

Instead of becoming a priest, Alexander left Scotland for Australia, arriving in Sydney in 1838 on the ship the *Brilliant*. In Sydney, Campbells (importers and exporters) employed him. Later, he moved to Melbourne.



In Melbourne, Alexander became a close friend of Father Geoghegan's, the first Melbourne priest. He became a leading layman in the infant Catholic community that was only ten percent of the population.

In 1840, Alexander married Flora MacDonald, and together in 1841 they purchased a house in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. At this time Alexander owned land between Merri Creek and Darebin Creek, was engaged in commerce and was a member of a company formed to investigate coal deposits.

Due to some unfortunate business deals, Alexander was declared bankrupt. Shortly after Mary was born their house in Brunswick Street was sold and the family moved to Merri Creek and then Darebin Creek, in the country outside of Melbourne, where Alexander farmed.

From this period on, Alexander was never again fully employed for any great length of time. His inability to provide for his family forced them to rely on the generosity of relatives and friends.

In 1857 Alexander tried to find work in Sydney, Again, in 1859, Alexander was appointed as clerk to the Back Creek goldfield near Clunes, leaving the job after three months. In 1862, Alexander went to South Island of New Zealand in search of gold, but was unsuccessful.

In 1864, he joined the family in Portland, then subsequently moved to a property with relatives near Hamilton, where he died at the age of 56.

Alexander's extensive knowledge and deep Catholic faith was a major influence on his daughter, Mary. His instability, however, placed the responsibility for the family on her shoulders.

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Flora MacKillop 1816 – 1886

"...The mother I have so much cause to love..."

Flora Macdonald, the mother of Mary MacKillop, was born in 1816 in Fort William, Scotland.

At the age of 22, together with her family, Flora arrived in Port Phillip in 1840 on board the ship, *The Glen Huntley*. In Melbourne, she met Alexander and within three months they were married at St Francis' Church by Father Geoghegan.

Flora experienced considerable tragedy in her life. Her beloved father died when Mary was five years old, drowned in the Darebin Creek. Six months later, her baby son, Alexander, died. Of her eight children, five died at a young age.



As a wife, Flora was not well supported by her husband, and the marriage did not bring her material comfort. Instead, she had to suffer a life of poverty and continual dependence on the generosity of others.

Mary loved her mother deeply. In 1870 she wrote her:

"You do not know what a good Mistress of Novices you have been – at least, you were mine. Your resignation under affliction, and your always confiding, simple trust in Divine Providence proved a wonderful comfort and example to me."

Mary to her mother, Brisbane, June 6 1870

And in 1874:

"May my darling Mother be rewarded for what I owe to her early training, teaching, and example. Yes, dearest Mamma, you above all..."

Mary to her mother, London, March 10 1874