



## Mary Reibey (1777–1855)

*Pioneer businesswoman with interests in shipping and property.*

*In the emancipist society of New South Wales, Mary Reibey had gained respect for her charitable works and her interest in the church and education. An enterprising and determined person of strong personality, during her lifetime Reibey earned a reputation as an astute and most successful businesswoman in the colony of New South Wales.*



**1777:** Mary Reibey, baptised Molly Haydock, was born on 12 May 1777 in Bury, Lancashire, England.

**1779:** Following the death of both her parents by 1779, she was raised by her grandmother, before being sent into service.

**1791:** She ran away, and was arrested for horse stealing in August 1791.

**1792:** Sentenced to seven years' transportation, she arrived in New South Wales on the *Royal Admiral* in October 1792.

**1794:** On 7 September 1794, 17-year-old Mary married Thomas Raby, a junior officer on the store ship *Britannia*. Raby also used the surnames Raiby, Reiby and Reibey interchangeably, but the family adopted the spelling Reibey in later years. Thomas Reibey was granted land on the Hawkesbury River, where the couple lived and farmed following their marriage. He commenced a cargo business along the Hawkesbury River to Sydney, and later moved to Sydney. He acquired several farms on the Hawkesbury River.

**1804:** Thomas Reibey's business undertakings prospered, enabling him to build a substantial stone residence on a further grant of land near Macquarie Place.

**1807:** The schooner *Mercury* was bought for trade with the Pacific Islands.

**1811:** When her husband died, Reibey assumed sole responsibility for the care of their seven children and control of his numerous business enterprises. She was no stranger to this task, having managed her husband's affairs during his frequent absences from Sydney. Now a woman of considerable wealth, Reibey continued to expand her businesses.

**1812:** She opened a new warehouse in George Street.

**1817:** She extended her shipping operations with the purchase of further vessels.

**1825:** She was appointed one of the Governors of the Free Grammar School.

**1828:** By 1828, when she gradually retired from active involvement in commerce, she had acquired extensive property holdings in the city. On her retirement, she built a house at Newtown, Sydney, where she lived until her death.

**1855:** Reibey died on 30 May 1855. Five of her seven children had predeceased her.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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