



Mary Ann's philanthropic activities began when she was little more than a child herself making clothes for the Poor House children. Her maternal uncle, Henry and Robert Joy, were among the earliest members of the Belfast Charitable Society, who designed Clifton House. It opened in 1774 as Belfast's first institution to care for the disadvantaged in society.

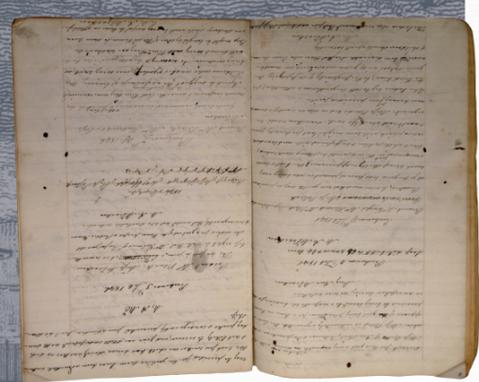
HER CAUSES

in education, supporting the Lancasterian School amongst other institutions, having helped to form the Belfast Ladies' Anti-Slavery Association. One of the most powerful and enduring images of Mary Ann is in 1859, at almost 80 years of age, standing at the docks in Belfast, handing out anti-slavery leaflets to those embarking to the United States.

Mary Ann lived through some of the most turbulent years of Irish history, starting with the 26 July 1849 at the age of 70. Her grave remained unmarked for 170 years until the current headstone was erected in 1919. It consists of a simple rectangular stone, with the inscription: 'MARY ANN MCCRACKEN, BORN 1770, DIED 1866'. The headstone was erected in 1919. It consists of a simple rectangular stone, with the inscription: 'MARY ANN MCCRACKEN, BORN 1770, DIED 1866'.

The establishment of the Poor House Ladies' Committee was inspired by the social reformer, Elizabeth Fry, in 1827. Mary Ann served as Treasurer, Secretary and Chair of the committee at various points. Her first major achievement, after facing many hurdles, was the establishment of a nursery school. Education remained an important emphasis for the women, who helped to expand the curriculum, and brought the children out on field trips. They are believed to oversee the apprenticeship scheme, ensuring the children were safe and well cared for.

Outside of the Poor House, many of the women who helped ensure the children were safe and well cared for. They are believed to oversee the apprenticeship scheme, ensuring the children were safe and well cared for.



of her day. The closeness of Mary Ann is evidenced in her trek through the soldier and rebel infested hills in search of her brother, Henry (Harry) Joy McCracken, after the United Irishmen defeat at the Battle of Antrim. Mary Ann was the only family member to accompany William, who was executed for his role in the 1798 Rebellion.

The opening decades of the 19th century were not easy for Mary Ann. Her first major hurdle was the loss of her parents and another brother, William, following Harry's execution. She discovered that she had a daughter called Maria. Mary Ann was often a renewed sense of purpose and energy in this young woman, who she named Maria. She was often a renewed sense of purpose and energy in this young woman, who she named Maria.

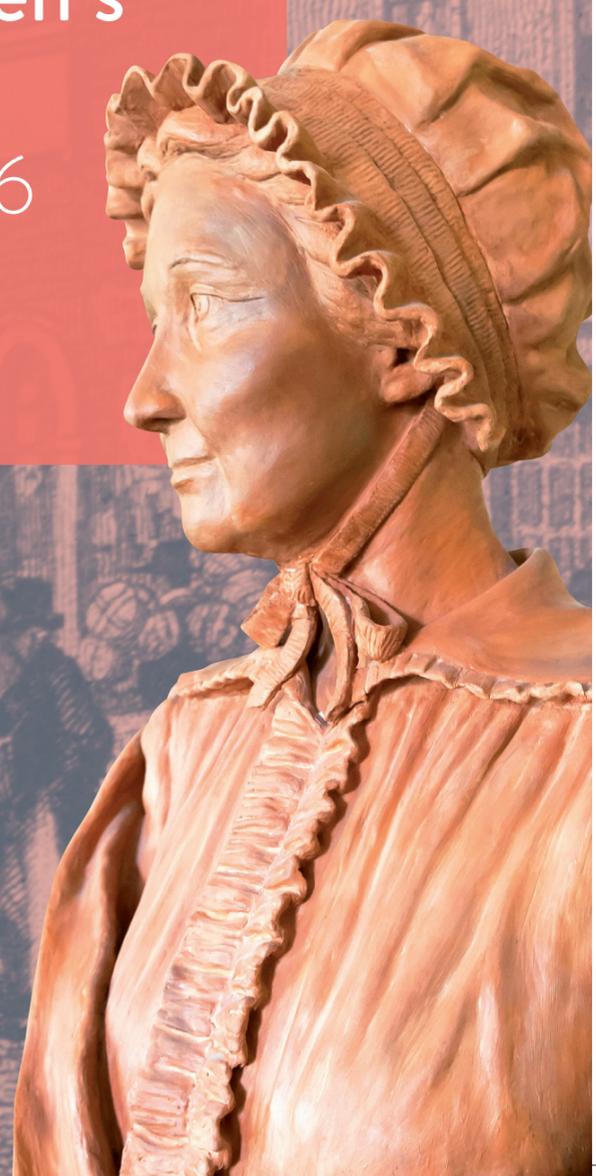
Mary Ann McCracken (1770-1866)

HER LIFE

*Mary Ann McCracken*

Mary Ann McCracken's Belfast 1770-1866

Abolitionist  
Philanthropist  
Reformer



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### 1. Clifton House

Mary Ann McCracken's uncles, Henry and Robert Joy, were instrumental in raising the funds for, and designing, the Poor House. They were joined on the Belfast Charitable Society Board by Mary Ann's father Captain John McCracken. Mary Ann was a founding member of the Poor House Ladies' Committee, which sought to improve the lives of the residents, particularly the women and children.



### 2. Clifton Street Cemetery

Opened by Belfast Charitable Society in 1797, the cemetery is the final resting place of many who had connections to Mary Ann including her immediate family, her Joy cousins and her niece, Maria McCleery. Mary Ann was buried here in 1866. The grave remained unmarked until 1909 when bones believed to be those of her brother, the executed United Irishman, Henry Joy McCracken, were reburied here.



### 3. Frederick Street Meeting House

Elizabeth Fry, the social reforming Quaker, visited Belfast during her tour of Irish prisons in 1827, and spoke at a meeting in Frederick Street Quaker Meeting House. Inspired by Fry's philanthropic drive, a group of ladies including Mary Ann and Miss Joy, believed to be the daughter of Henry Joy Junior, established a Ladies' Committee for the Poor House.



### 4. Donegall Street

Mary Ann was educated at the progressive co-educational David Manson school in Donegall Street. She later lived with her brother, Francis, on this street for a number of years. Upon his death she was forced to give up the house, and her friends came together to help buy her out of the lease. Donegall Street was also home to John McCracken's cotton mill.



### 5. Assembly Rooms, Four Corners

The old Northern Bank building, once the Assembly Rooms, played host in 1792 to the Belfast Harpers' Festival. Edward Bunting, who recorded the music at the event had been partially financed by the McCrackens in his efforts to preserve traditional Irish music. It was also the scene for Henry Joy McCracken's court martial in 1798, when he was condemned to death for his part in the Rebellion.



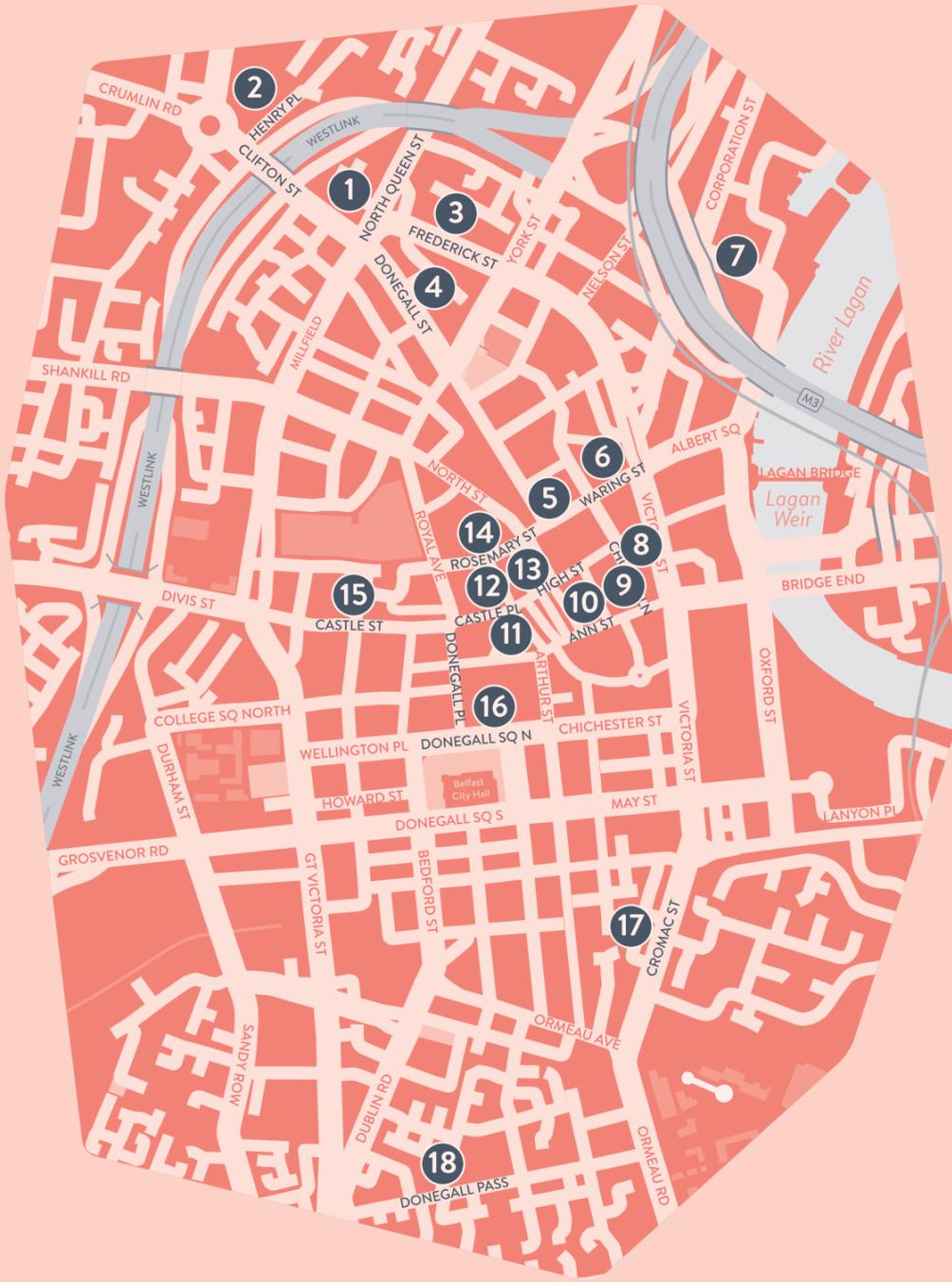
### 6. Waring Street

Mary Ann and her sister, Margaret, were from a wealthy background but established their own business to provide employment for local women, and to generate their own income, free from family ties. They founded Margaret McCracken & Co Muslin Manufacturers, which was based in Waring Street by 1808. Waring Street was part of the growing commercial district, and close to the quays.



### 7. Fore Plantation

McCracken & Co Rope & Sail Manufacturers was established by Captain McCracken. It was located on the Fore Plantation in 1807, which is now occupied by the docks. In 1808 Johnathan Bryans, a 14-year-old boy from the Poor House, was apprenticed to the company. The docks area was the location from which Mary Ann gave out anti-slavery leaflets in her late 80s to emigrants sailing for America.



### 8. St George's Church

The Corporation Church and graveyard once stood on this site. It was here that earlier generations of the McCracken and Joy families were buried, including Mary Ann's brother, Henry Joy McCracken, before his remains were reburied in Clifton Street Cemetery. David Manson, the renowned educationalist and teacher of the McCracken and Joy siblings, was laid to rest here in 1792.



### 9. Pottinger's Entry

Founded by Mary Ann's grandfather in 1737, the Belfast News Letter and General Advertiser, was ultimately sold out of the Joy family ownership in 1795. However, they continued to manufacture paper in the town of Belfast. In 1807 Henry Joy's paper manufacturing business was located here, in Pottinger's Entry, with the paper mill itself situated on the Blackstaff River.



### 10. Joy's Entry

This entry is named after Mary Ann's maternal family. Both the Joys and McCrackens lived in houses nearby and it was in High Street that Mary Ann was born. Wilson's Court, another important entry in the vicinity is where the Northern Star, the United Irishmen newspaper, was published from 1792. Mary Ann was an avid reader of this paper until it was suppressed in 1797.



### 11. Castle Place/ Corn Market

Henry Joy McCracken was executed for his role in the 1798 Rebellion in front of the Market House, at the junction of Castle Place and Corn Market, approximately where Dunnes Stores is now located. Mary Ann was the only family member to accompany him to the scaffold. Many years later she told RR Madden, historian of the United Irishmen, that she did not weep until that point.



### 12. Winecellar Entry

The merchant families of Belfast had many close connections over the years through marriage and shared business interests. Winecellar Entry was a busy laneway where many of Mary Ann's extended family had business premises. The 1807 and 1808 directories for Belfast show that Joy, Holmes & Tomb, merchants, as well as James Joy & Co cotton manufacturers, were based in this entry.



### 13. Bridge Street

Mary Ann's grandfather, Francis Joy, established the Belfast News Letter and General Advertiser in 1737. The newspaper was originally published in Bridge Street at the sign of 'The Peacock'. It remained in family ownership for three generations until Henry Joy Junior, Mary Ann's first cousin, sold the business in 1795. The Joys continued to produce paper at their mill on the Blackstaff River.



### 14. Rosemary Lane (now Street)

The McCracken family moved to Rosemary Lane from High Street in the latter part of the 18th century. The house was described as 'Noah's Ark', as neither stray animal nor friend was ever turned away. Rosemary Lane was also the location of the Third Presbyterian Church where the McCrackens and Joys worshipped. Captain John McCracken is recorded as an office bearer for this church.



### 15. Castle Street

The McCrackens were a merchant dynasty in Belfast. Mary Ann's brother, William McCracken, and his wife, Rose Ann, lived in Castle Street. Rose Ann operated a haberdashery shop from their home. William was another sibling who was active in the United Irishmen. It was his wife who accompanied Mary Ann in the search for the McCracken brothers after the failed 1798 Rebellion.



### 16. Donegall Square (Linen Hall Library)

Mary Ann's uncles, Henry and Robert Joy, provided generous contributions to the building of the White Linen Hall in 1783, which stood on the site of Belfast City Hall. The building was originally home to the Linen Hall Library. Mary Ann replaced her brother, Henry Joy McCracken, as a member of the library following his execution. The library is now located at 17 Donegall Square North.



### 17. Cromac Street

Established on St Patrick's Day 1808, the Belfast Harp Society had premises in Cromac Street. The Harp Society aimed to provide blind children with the means of earning a living by teaching them the harp as well as promoting the study of the Irish language, history and antiquities. Mary Ann was one of the original subscribers, alongside Edward Bunting.



### 18. Donegall Pass

Mary Ann McCracken lived through some of the most turbulent years of Irish history, witnessing the 1798 Rebellion, the Industrial Revolution and the Irish Potato Famine. Following a life dedicated to the disadvantaged at home and abroad, Mary Ann passed away on 26 July 1866 at the age of 96 in the home she shared with her niece, Maria McCleery, at 62 Donegall Pass.