

Jessie Aitken Love (née Tennant)

Jessie Aitken Tennant was born at "Tallala", a property near Port Lincoln, South Australia, in 1842. She was the youngest child of Jessie Aitken and John Tennant, who both came from Scotland to the Colony of South Australia in 1838 on the "Duchess of Northumberland". They had numerous farming properties in the early days of the Colony, including "Tallala" and others at Dry Creek, Chain of Ponds, Lyndoch Valley and Burra.

In 1863 Jessie married John Love, a native of Scotland, who sailed to South Australia on the "Duncan" in 1849. John Love engaged in pastoral pursuits at Port Lincoln and, later, with well-known pastoralist Andrew Tennant, in northern stations. Jessie and John lived at "Mount Wedge" station and later at "Cooyamoolta" station, both in the Port Lincoln district. Stories are told of Jessie's courage and determination when left at home with trusty servants and her young children while her husband and his men were away, taking their sheep and cattle to other properties. The hostility of the Aborigines in that area to white settlers was well known--men and stock having been speared by them.

When John retired from active management of his pastoral properties, they moved to the Adelaide foothills. In 1864 they bought six acres of land overlooking Adelaide and converted a bluestone house, formerly used as a small school, into a comfortable home with sufficient room for their large family of thirteen--ten girls and three boys, some of whom were born there. The family home, "Mitcham Lawn", still commands wonderful views of Adelaide city and the Gulf and, restored by the current owners, is regarded as one of Adelaide's heritage buildings.

The family grew up and were educated from "Mitcham Lawn", later taking part in the social life of Adelaide. They were keen followers of the horse racing and hunting: Jessie's son, John Tennant Love, became Master of the Adelaide Hunt Club about the turn of the century. The family were members of St. Michael's Church, Mitcham, where Jessie and John Love and many of their family are buried. Some of their daughters were also married there, with wedding receptions at "Mitcham Lawn".

John Love died in 1905, but Jessie lived on at "Mitcham Lawn" with members of her family until 1933, when she died at the age of ninety-one years.

I remember Jessie Love (my grandmother) knitting babies' singlets for charity, playing Bridge and writing letters, when in her nineties, and my sister remembers her attending church at St. Michael's in her eighties. She must have been a good horsewoman in her day: once when her grandson John Scott paid her a visit, having ridden his pony from Unley to Mitcham, Jessie asked if she might have a ride. She thereupon hitched up her voluminous black skirts and rode the pony round a small paddock. She must have been in her late seventies or early eighties!