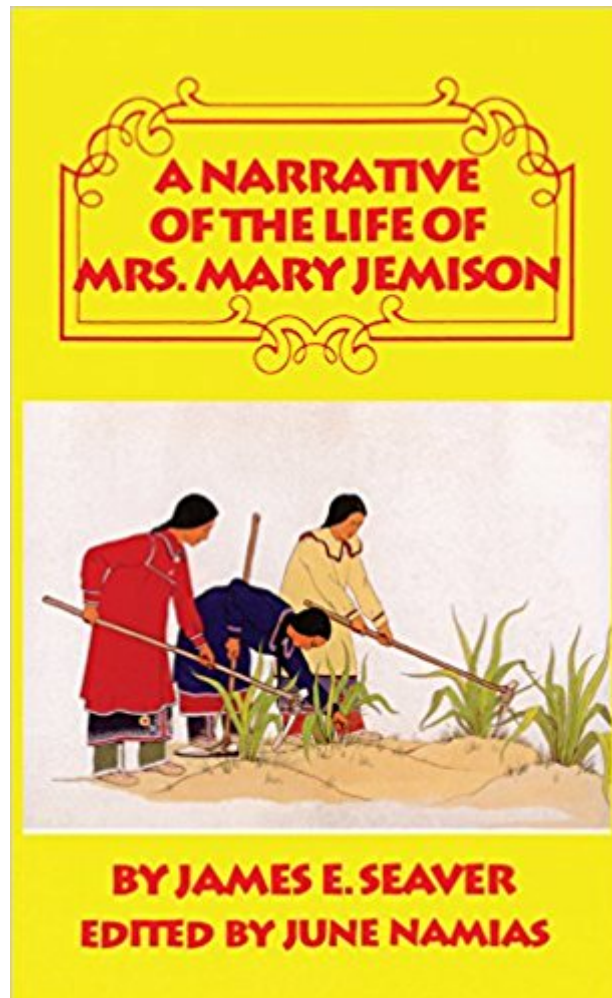




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A Narrative Of The Life Of Mrs. Mary Jemison



Synopsis

Mary Jemison was one of the most famous white captives who, after being captured by Indians, chose to stay and live among her captors. In the midst of the Seven Years War(1758), at about age fifteen, Jemison was taken from her western Pennsylvania home by a Shawnee and French raiding party. Her family was killed, but Mary was traded to two Seneca sisters who adopted her to replace a slain brother. She lived to survive two Indian husbands, the births of eight children, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the canal era in upstate New York. In 1833 she died at about age ninety.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

YA-- A story of extraordinary courage and human survival as told by the subject herself, originally published in 1824. Jemison recounts how she was captured as a teenager by Shawnee Indians, who mutilated and killed her family. She was then sold to two Seneca sisters, with whom she remained willingly, married twice, and produced many children. This version of the affecting account is edited by feminist scholar and teacher June Namias.- Mike Printz, Topeka West High School, KS
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In 1758, fifteen-year-old Mary Jemison and her family were captured near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, by a Shawnee and French raiding party. Shortly thereafter, her family was killed; she

was turned over to a Seneca family, adopted by them, and four years later taken to their western New York homeland--where, by choice, she spent the rest of her life as an Iroquois wife, mother, and landed proprietor. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Near the end of her life Mary Jemison told her story to James Seaver. He then wrote it and added information that would make the information understandable to someone of his generation. Mary was kidnapped by a French patrol during the French and Indian War. All but four of the patrol were Native Americans, members of the Iroquois Confederacy. After a few days of running the patrol killed all of the captive except Mary and an adolescent boy. They were later sold as slaves. Mary was bought by two sisters who had recently lost a close relative. She later married an older Oneida man and they had a couple of kids. Her husband later died. She remarried and had more kids. Later when her oldest sons were grown and had influence in Iroquois politics she was granted some land to farm. She was such a shrewd negotiator that she ended up with about 10,000 acres of land south of what became Rochester, New York. She also became involved with some interesting people in the area. The story is a fairly good description of why a woman of that time would prefer to live as a Native American woman instead of the Irish immigrant she was..

Mary Jemison was a young child when her family was murdered and she was taken captive by the Indians. She grew to adolescence and was constrained to marry a warrior of the tribe. Her travails, second marriage to a kind person after the death of her first husband, and birth of eight children prevented a return to the 'white' people. Her story is valuable as a historical record, as well as a true narrative of the relationship between the Indians and the white people of her time period. The book is well written and detailed.

Mary Jemison's narrative was worth reading, but the author's comments and interpretation were obviously influenced by the prejudice of his time. She would never have used the word "squaw" for example as that would have been an insult to a Seneca woman.

From the moment I started to read her story until the end, I was absorbed. I'm from Pittsburgh myself, and I recognized most of the places Mrs. Jemison spoke of. It's hard to believe that what happened to her, happened not all that long ago. For all that she went through, all those she lost, she didn't seem bitter but accepted it and kept on going. I wish I could have met her, to tell her she has my utmost respect, and that I hope I can live my life as well as she did.

I actually bought this book accidentally, then decided to give it a go. Turns out, much of it takes place in my neck of the woods in southwest Pa., which made an already fascinating narrative even more so. Particularly interesting is that she describes the people around her with such objectivity, denouncing depravity and extolling virtue, sometimes in the same act, as when she recalls her son's plan to kill her. This book was engaging and memorable, well worth the time spent reading.

Although this is not an exact account of Mrs. Mary Jemison's life, it is still a considerably well done memoir. The author, Dr. Seaver, through a series of interviews with the then aged Mrs. Jemison, recounts her life from her pioneer days, to her captivity, to her acceptance and contentment as an adopted member of the Seneca Iroquois. There is recounting of her escape from bounty hunters, her Native American husbands and other family members and an excellent insight into a few aspects of Native American life that they don't often teach you in school. Though some accounts of torture either by the settlers or to the settlers was difficult to read, I thoroughly enjoyed the book. Really fascinating.

The story of Mary Jemison was interesting, BUT telling the reader she was never schooled again past the age of 14, (after being captured) left me dizzy trying to decipher the BIG WORDS and narrative used by the interviewer telling this story. I have read many books on White Captives, and this would be one of the best as far as describing cruelties by Indians spent on their enemies but for the writer trying so hard to make a simple tale complex!

The narrative gives an interesting insight into the life at the frontier in America near the time of the War of 1812. Although the narrative is supposed to be an accurate account of Mary Jemison's life, the detail included seems rather high from a person of her age to relate, and I feel that some of the story has been embellished by the author James Seaver, although it does make a good read.

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