

Lahy family origins

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by James Michael Fleming

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Jim Fleming is a retired Customs Manager and lives on Sydney's lower north shore. He began researching his family history in 1983 and has been a member of the Society of Australian Genealogists for 35 years. Aside from genealogy he enjoys travelling and sings baritone in two choirs.

Researching: Bowen, Flowerdew, Gardner, Gordon, Grady, Hanrahan, Jolliffe, Kemp, Kessey, Murphy, Poulton, Press and so many more!

Website: <http://jimfleming.id.au/up/index.htm>

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Lahy family origins revised

I originally published this research report in 2019 to outline how I managed to identify the parents and siblings of Mary Lahy and her brother Patrick Lahy, both of whom were born in Kilkenny and emigrated to New South Wales (NSW). I revised it in 2023 after I located Mary's death certificate, which confirms my earlier conclusions.

Several researchers had previously identified their parents as James Lahy and Mary Gadlin. This furphy is still included in many online trees even though my 2019 research disproved that theory. Instead, I laid out the evidence that showed that their parents were Martin Lahy and Bridget Kain. That conclusion has now been confirmed with the discovery of Mary Lahy's death certificate.

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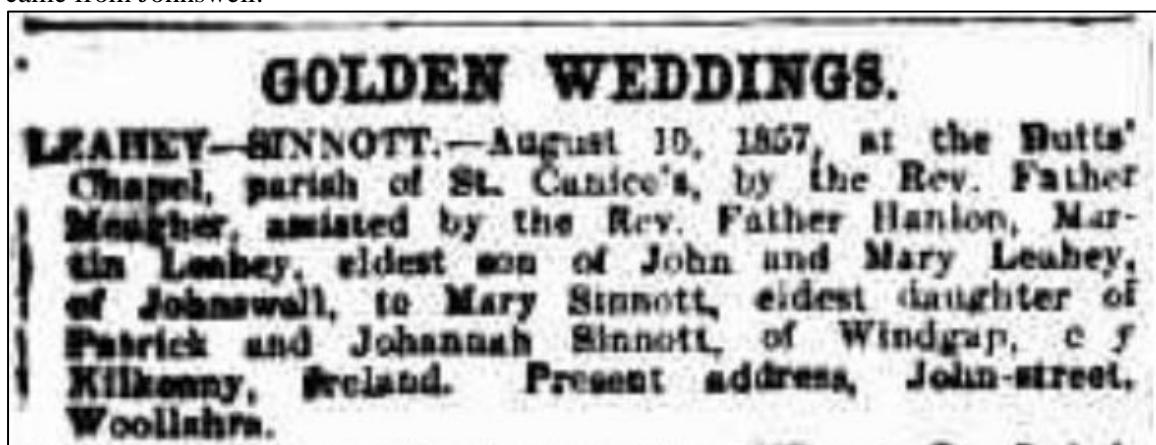
Lahy family origins revised

Introduction

Thanks to information supplied to me by two fellow-researchers, I have been able to undertake further research that enabled me to ascertain the origins of the Lahy family of Kilkenny (Ireland) and New South Wales (NSW). Patrick and Mary Lahy were siblings who were transported (several years apart) to NSW, as were Mary's children Patrick Tobin, Mary Tobin and Martin Bohen. Mary Lahy's youngest daughter Ellen Bohen accompanied her to NSW as a free emigrant. I wrote about this family in my essay [An unfortunate family](#).

Firstly, Lahy family researcher Julie King brought to my attention five baptism records at St John's Parish, Kilkenny. They relate to Mary Lahy's children and reveal that the family lived at the nearby hamlet of Johnswell.

Secondly, distant cousin (Heather Noakes) alerted me to a notice that was published in the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) on 10 August 1907. It announced the golden wedding anniversary of Heather's great-grandparents, Martin Lahy and Mary Sinnott. The notice states that Martin Lahy came from Johnswell.



The page 12 notice in the Sydney Morning Herald of 10 August 1907

Furthermore, I remembered that I had previously found an 1833 Kilkenny tithe record for a Mary Lahy but had laid it aside because I was not sure whether it related to our Mary Lahy. I checked it again and, sure enough, she lived at Johnswell!

It was time to delve deeper. This report outlines that research and the conclusions that I was able to draw. Since first publishing the report in 2019, those conclusions have been definitively corroborated by the discovery in 2023 of Mary Lahy's death certificate.

Tobin and Bowe baptisms

I started with the five baptism records that Julie King had brought to my attention. What I knew was that Mary Lahy had arrived in Sydney aboard the SS *Margaret* in 1837 as a convict. She was accompanied by her young daughter Ellen Bohen. Her sons (Patrick Tobin and Martin Bohen) had arrived a year earlier as convicts aboard the SS *St Vincent*. Her other daughter (Mary Tobin) arrived aboard the SS *Sir Charles Forbes* a few months after Mary. All except Ellen had been convicted at the Kilkenny Assize court of crimes associated with sheep stealing.

Based on the information in the arrival indents for their various ships and Ellen's death certificate, Mary's known children had been born as follows:

- 1817 – Patrick Tobin – Kilkenny
- 1818 – Mary Tobin – Kilkenny
- 1821 – Martin Bohen – Kilkenny
- 1825 – Ellen Bohen - Kilkenny

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The indents for Mary Lahy's ship also state that she was a widow with 4 male and 1 female children. This indicates that she must have had two other sons in addition to Patrick Tobin and Martin Bohen. I speculated in *An unfortunate family* that one of those sons may have been called John Bohen.

The five baptism records that Julie King found are available online through rootsireland.ie. The following details (all for children of Mary Lahy) are taken from the register of St John's Parish, Kilkenny (9 kilometers from Johnswell). It is notable that the hamlet of Johnswell did not have a church until the 1820s – and still does not have a Catholic church.

- 2 Apr 1815 Patrick Tobin; father Thomas Tobin (Jn^o Well); Witnesses: Michael Doolan, Bidy Lahy
- 11 Jul 1817 Mary Tobin; Thomas Tobin (J Well); Judy Morisy
- 4 Dec 1819 Martin Bowe; Corney Bowe (Johnswell, illegitimate); Mary Brinan
- 25 Dec 1823 Ellen Bowe; Con^l Bowe (J Well); Mich^l Lahy, Judy Sullivan
- 15 Apr 1827 John Bowe; Con Bowe (W New); Ja^s Dowling, Cathⁿ Burke

These records align so closely with what we know of Mary Lahy's family from other sources that there is no doubt that they relate to our Mary Lahy's children. All of them were, in fact, 1 or 2 years older than their convict indents (or death certificate) later indicated. Based on the information in the baptism records for these three "Bowe" children, I conclude that their father's Christian name was Cornelius. This Christian name recurs through several later generations of the Bowen family of NSW. My great-grandmother, Ellen Ruby Bowen (1882-1912) had a brother, an uncle, and a nephew named Cornelius.

Mary Lahy's tithe assessment

In 1833, a Mary Lahy was assessed for a tithe of 7 shillings and sixpence on 5 acres of third-rate land at Johnswell. The next block was assessed against a Martin Lahy who had a tithe of 1 pound six shillings and five pence halfpenny on 5 acres of second-rate and 10 acres of third-rate land. Also at Johnswell, Pierce Lahy and James Lahy were each assessed for a tithe of 1 pound 2 shillings and eleven pence on their plots of 10 acres of second-rate land. A Michael Lahy was in partnership with Peter and Matthew Reilly on three plots of land totaling 59 acres that were assessed at a tithe of 4 pounds 2 shillings and two pence. Could this be our Mary Lahy and some of her relatives?

Patrick Lahy

I now turned my attention to Mary Lahy's brother, Patrick. The arrival indents for Mary's ship state that she had "*brother, Patrick Lahy, a prisoner in the colony 15 years*". Her age was given as 40, implying a birth year of 1797.

Australian convict records reveal that there were three men named Patrick Lahy who arrived in Australia before Mary Lahy arrived in 1837. I set out to establish which of the three was Mary's brother. They were (listed by ship and arrival year):

- *Governor Ready* 1829 (a ploughman from Kilkenny born circa 1794)
- *Andromeda* 1830 (from Tipperary; born circa 1811)
- *Eliza* 1832 (from Tipperary; born circa 1793)

None of these had preceded Mary Lahy by 15 years, but we must remember that she was illiterate.

The *Andromeda* man is unlikely to be our Patrick Lahy because he came from the wrong Irish County and was at least 14 years younger than Mary. The *Eliza* man was about the same age as Mary but is unlikely to be our Patrick Lahy because he came from the wrong Irish County. He died in 1839.

Lahy family origins revised

I conclude that it is most likely that Mary's brother (Patrick Lahy) arrived in Sydney aboard the *Governor Ready* in 1829. Their given ages would make him about three years older than her and they both came from Kilkenny. He had been convicted of stealing butter in 1828.

This Patrick Lahy was assigned to James Thorp of Sydney, who was an ex-convict. James Thorp later had land at Picton and may have taken Patrick with him to that district.

Patrick Lahy was granted a ticket of leave (TOL) on 30 Nov 1838 that restricted him to the Liverpool district. He may be the Patrick Lahy who owned 24 acres of land at nearby Camden in 1843.

On 4 July 1845 his TOL was amended to allow him to reside at Windsor. A few months later, on 4 April 1846, his sister Mary Lahy was given a TOL to live at Windsor. Seven months after that, Mary's son Patrick Tobin was given a TOL to live at Windsor. And two months later her other son Martin Bohen was given a TOL to live at Windsor.

The fact that Patrick Lahy lived so close to the family of Mary Lahy at this time is circumstantial evidence that they were related; and, therefore, that Patrick Lahy (Governor Ready 1829) was the brother of Mary Lahy (Margaret 1837).

An "elderly" Patrick Lahy fell from a moving cart and was killed while travelling between Picton and nearby Camden in March 1861. Our Patrick would have been about 73 years old (based on a birth year of 1788 – see below).

Baptism records for Patrick and Mary Lahy

Information on the arrival indents for their ships implies that Patrick Lahy was born about 1794 and Mary Lahy about 1797. I decided to search rootsireland.ie in an endeavour to find their baptism records.

Gadlin theory

A number of researchers had identified the parents of Patrick and Mary as James Lahy and Mary Gadlin but had not published the source of this information. Nevertheless, I found the source on Ancestry.com. It is a baptismal record for a Mary Lahy who was baptised at Cashel (Tipperary) on 20 March 1797. Her parents were James Lahy and Mary Gadlin and the baptism was witnessed by John Stapleton and Mary Murphy.

This record fits with some of the known facts: the baptism year is about right and the name is right. But the "native place" of our Mary Lahy was Kilkenny, not Tipperary. As I have shown above, she came from Johnswell, Kilkenny.

If it could be shown that James Lahy and Mary Gadlin also had a son called Patrick, the Gadlin theory would be stronger. But I could not find any evidence that this couple had any other children.

Patrick Lahy

The rootsireland.ie baptism indexes reveal three Kilkenny baptism records for a Patrick Lahy/Lahy within 10 years of 1794:

- 1788 at Thomastown f Martin Lahy m Bridget Cain
- 1793 at Clara f Robert Lahy m Ann Delany
- 1801 at St John's f Darby Lahy m Elizabeth.

Lahy family origins revised

Only one of these couples also had a daughter named Mary. Robert Lahy and Ann Delany had no other children recorded. Darby Lahy and Elizabeth Kavanagh had two other children: Sally and Darby. But Martin Lahy and Bridget Cain had a daughter named Mary who was baptised in 1793.

Mary Lahy

Mary Lahy was baptised at St John's Kilkenny on 12 Mar 1793. While the details are recorded in the index, there is no image available online. Nevertheless, these two Lahy/Cain baptism records represent (in my view) a stronger case than the Gadlin baptism mentioned above.

The fact that the father's name is Martin adds further weight, because Mary Lahy later named her second son Martin. She did not name any son James. As we will see later, Patrick Lahy also named his eldest son Martin; and did not name any son James.

Other Lahy family baptisms

I decided to check whether Martin Lahy and Bridget Cain had any other children baptised. I found three. In summary, their five known children were:

- 1788 Patrick (Bridget Cain); Thomastown; Witnesses: Patrick Murphy, Ann Comerford
- 1790 John (Bridget Lahy); St John's; Patt Nowlan, Mary Nowlan
- 1793 Mary (Bridget Kain); St John's; Thomas Dowling, Margaret Nowlan
- 1795 Sarah (Bridget Cody); St Johns; John Quirke, Mary Ryan
- 1798 Michael (Bridget Kean); St John's; John Hoban, Margaret Reilly.

It is noteworthy that four of these children were baptised in the same church where Mary Lahy's children were baptised about 25 years later.

Finally, the 1833 tithe records for Johnswell showed Mary Lahy, Martin Lahy and Michael Lahy as neighbours. Could Martin have been her father and Michael her brother? These records show near neighbours with the surnames Quirke, Ryan, Hoban and Reilly; all names associated with the above baptisms as witnesses. This is strong evidence that the Martin Lahy who had five children with Bridget Kain is the same person as the Martin Lahy who lived nearby Mary Lahy at Johnswell in 1833; her father.

Patrick Lahy's family

The arrival indent for the *Governor Ready* (1829) indicates that Patrick Lahy had a family of five. I decided to search rootsireland for possible records of his marriage and children.

I searched for marriage records for Martin, Mary and Patrick Lahy. The only results were three for Patrick Lahy:

- 17 Feb 1814 to Mary Keating at Gowran;
- 28 Jan 1820 to Mary Finne at St Mary's; and
- 20 Sep 1824 to Bridget Fitzpatrick at Windgap.

I also looked for baptisms of Patrick Lahy's children. There were two families of note:

- 5 children 1815 – 1827 for Patrick Lahy and Mary Keating; 3 at Johnswell; and
- 5 children 1817 - 1828 for Patrick Lahy and Ann Harding/Harden at Gowran.

The five children of the former couple, all baptised at St John's Kilkenny, were:

- 1 Oct 1815 - Bidy; Address: Johnswell; Witnesses: Michael Meany, Nellie Burke
- 2 May 1819 - Martin; Ballysalla; Michael Lahy, Ellen Butler
- 7 Mar 1822 - Anne; Johnswell; Thomas Duffy, Catherine Keating
- 21 Aug 1824 – Michael; Johnswell; Maurice Summers, Margaret Hoban
- 11 Aug 1827 – John; NR; John Keating, Mary Conway

Lahy family origins revised

I concluded that the husband of Mary Keating (married at Gowran in 1814) was our Patrick. Not only were three of their children born at Johnswell, but the eldest son was called Martin as we would expect. In addition, one of the baptisms was witnessed by a Margaret Hoban, one of the neighbour's names from the 1833 Johnswell tithe record. And all were baptised at St John's, where Mary's children were later to be baptised.

Martin Lahy and Mary Sinnott

I was now convinced that I had found the origins of Patrick and Mary Lahy of Kilkenny and NSW. So, I now turned to the SMH Golden Wedding announcement of 10 August 1907 that researcher Heather Noakes had alerted me to. Could this Martin Lahy from Johnswell be related to Patrick and Mary?

The "Golden Weddings" notice commemorated the marriage of Martin Lahy to Mary Sinnott at the Butt's Chapel in the parish of St Canice's, Kilkenny, fifty years earlier. The notice said that he was the eldest son of John and Mary Lahy of Johnswell.

Sure enough, the online images of the marriage register for St Canice's includes a record of the Lahy-Sinnott marriage on 10 August 1857. The witnesses were Mathew Shiels and Katie Lawrence.

This Martin Lahy died at 10 James Street Woollahra on 22 September 1911. His son-in-law Thomas Dowling provided the information for his death certificate, which contradicts the Golden Wedding notice in relation to Martin's parents. The death certificate says that they were Martin Lahy and his wife Elizabeth. It gives his age as 78 years, implying a birth year of 1833.

Martin Lahy and his wife Mary Sinnott had arrived in Australia on 4 July 1859 aboard SS *Nimroud*. The passenger list states that his parents were "*John and Mary, both dead*". So, the Golden Wedding notice and passenger list agree; which means that the death certificate is wrong. The passenger list also states that Martin had a "*brother and sister Michael and Mary Lahy in the city somewhere*".

In fact, Martin's sister Mary Lahy had arrived in NSW as a 20-year-old aboard the SS *Kate* on 10 October 1852 as an assisted immigrant (implying a birth year of 1832). The passenger list indicates that her parents were "*John and Mary, both dead*".

Mary's brother Michael Lahy had arrived in NSW as an assisted immigrant on 19 May 1855 aboard the SS *Matoaka*. The passenger list indicates that he had a "*sister Mary Lahy living in Woolloomolloo Street*". It gives his parents as "*John and Mary both dead*".

Mary Lahy married Thomas McMahon at St Mary's Cathedral (Sydney) on 10 Sep 1857. She recorded on the marriage certificate that she was a 24-year-old from Kilkenny and that her parents were John Lahy (farmer) and Mary Dolan. A record in the Immigration Deposit Journal for 3 June 1858 reveals that it was her husband (Thomas McMahon) who had paid seven pounds to sponsor the immigration of Martin Lahy and his family aboard the SS *Nimroud*.

John Lahy and Mary Dowling

Records on rootsireland.ie reveal that John Lahy and Mary Dowling/Dooling/Dolan had four children baptised at St John's church in Kilkenny, as follows:

- 16 Apr 1831 - Mary; Address: Mount Nugent; Witnesses: Michael and Mary Loughlin
- 7 Dec 1832 – Bridget; Johns Well; John Walsh, Bridget Hogan
- 27 Apr 1834 – Martin; Ballysallagh; Thomas Butler, Catherine Dooling
- 17 Jan 1836 – Michael; Mount Nugent; Mary Hobin

Lahy family origins revised

Mount Nugent and Ballysallagh are both very close to Johnswell. John Lahy had married Mary Dowling at Killeshin, Kilkenny on 24 February 1830. Killeshin is 7 kilometers from Johnswell. Given that he lived in the Johnswell area and named his eldest son Martin, I conclude that he is the brother of Patrick and Mary Lahy who was baptised at St John's Parish on 7 March 1790. This means that his children (Mary, Michael and Martin) who later emigrated to NSW were nieces and nephews of Patrick and Mary Lahy. It is possible that there was some sort of family reunion in NSW, although the younger generation had not been born when Patrick Lahy was transported to NSW in 1829.

Conclusions

The evidence for the Gadlin theory (that the parents of Patrick and Mary Lahy were James Lahy and Mary Gadlin of Tipperary) is extremely weak when compared with the very good evidence that their parents were actually Martin Lahy and Bridget Kain of Johnswell, Kilkenny.

- This is the only family that has been shown to have both a Patrick and a Mary Lahy of the right vintage.
- Mary Lahy and three of her siblings were baptised at the same Parish where Mary's own children were later baptised: St John's, Kilkenny. The five children of Patrick Lahy and Mary Keating were also baptised in this church.
- The baptism records for four of Mary's children and three of Patrick's state that the family then lived at Johnswell, 9 miles away.
- The 1833 tithe records for Johnswell have a Mary Lahy farming 5 acres right next to a Martin Lahy. This is likely to be her father.
- The tithe records show that the Lahy family at Johnswell had neighbours with the surnames Quirke, Ryan, Hoban and Reilly. These surnames coincide with witnesses for the baptisms of the children of Martin Lahy and Bridget Kain; and with one of the children of Patrick Lahy and Mary Keating.
- Patrick Lahy named his oldest son Martin, after his father. Mary Lahy named her second son Martin, after her father. Neither of them named a son James.

When all this source information is taken together, it provides very strong evidence in support of my conclusion that the parents of Patrick and Mary Lahy were not James Lahy and Mary Gadlin of Tipperary; rather they were Martin Lahy and Bridget Kain of Johnswell, Kilkenny.

The circumstantial evidence is also very strong that John Lahy (the father of siblings Mary, Michael and Martin Lahy who all migrated to NSW between 1855 and 1859) was a brother to Patrick and Mary Lahy (who were transported to NSW as convicts in 1829 and 1836 respectively).

- He was married to Mary Dowling at nearby Killeshin in 1830 when the brother of Mary and Patrick Lahy would have been 40 years old.
- His children were all baptised in the same church as Mary Lahy; three of her siblings; all of her children; and all of Patrick Lahy's children.
- The family addresses recorded for his children's baptisms (Mount Nugent, Ballysallagh and Johnswell) are all in the district where Patrick and Mary Lahy came from.
- He named his oldest son Martin (after his father); and his second daughter Bridget (after his mother, Bridget Kain).
- A witness for the baptism of his youngest son (Michael) was Mary Hobin – the same surname as one of the neighbours of Martin and Mary Lahy listed on the 1833 tithe record.

Lahy family origins revised

Confirmation

Four years after I published the original version of this research report on my website, I received an email from the Secretary of the Toowoomba and Darling Downs family History Society. She was writing to draw my attention to the admission record of Mary Scott to the Benevolent Asylum at Dunwich (Queensland) on 24 January 1884. Details in that record leave no room for doubt that Mary Scott is Mary Lahy; and they corroborate all the conclusions outlined above about her origins.

182	BENEVOLENT ASYLUM, DUNWICH.	
Name:	Mary Scott	
When Admitted:	24 Jan	1884
From:	Toowoomba. Recommended by PH	
Cause of Admission:	Infirmity	
Where Born:	Johnswell Kilkenny Ireland Religion: RC.	
Trade or Profession:	Farmer	
Father's Name and Profession:	Martin Leahy	Farmer
Mother's Name and Maiden Surname:	Bridget Kain	
Married, &c.:	at Kilkenny when 15 yrs — Scott.	
Children:	Ellen (Jackson) last heard of in Rockhampton "dead" 2 yrs ago	
History:	Came to Sydney ship Margaret many years ago. Living of late in Toowoomba	

The Dunwich Benevolent Asylum admission record for Mary Scott nee Lahy on 24 January 1884

Mary ended up in the Benevolent Asylum after being remanded for a month on a charge of vagrancy at Toowoomba on 8 January 1884. She claimed to be 100 years old (although she was only 90) and to have command of all her faculties. On her arrival at the asylum two weeks later she provided all the corroborating details included in the admission record shown above. This record confirms that her parents were Martin Lahy (farmer) and Bridget Kain of Johnswell in Kilkenny; that she came to Australia aboard the "Margaret"; and that she had a daughter named Ellen Jackson.

Mary Scott nee Lahy died three days later and most of these corroborating details are also included on her Queensland death certificate (4077/1884).

The Lahy family of Johnswell

Church and tithe records show that there was a large extended Lahy family in the Johnswell district. Martin Lahy and Bridget Kain raised a family of five children (Patrick, John, Mary, Sarah and Michael) born in the area between 1788 and 1798. They also had at least 14 grandchildren (Lahy, Tobin and Bowe) who were born between 1815 and 1836 and raised in the area. But there were other people named Lahy in this district.

Lahy family origins revised

Darby Lahy married Mary Kennedy and had three children (Bridget, Joan and Darby) between 1779 and 1785. It seems that his wife died, because Darby Lahy subsequently had two children (Sally and Patrick) with Margaret Kavanagh between 1793 and 1801. **Darby Lahy may have been a brother or cousin of Martin Lahy** (father of the family of five named previously).

Edmund Lahy and Catherine Cody had a son called Pierce Lahy who was baptised at St John's on 13 June 1793. This is likely to be the Pierce Lahy who (with Mary MacDaniel) had a son called Pierce baptised on 11 September 1819. Pierce Lahy subsequently married Mary Egan of Ballysallagh at St John's on 3 July 1822. They subsequently had three children all baptised at St John's (Catherine, Thomas and Bridget) between 1823 and 1830. It was probably Pierce's oldest son (also Pierce) who married firstly Margaret Phelan and secondly Margaret Brenan. With the former he had a daughter who was baptised Ellen on 28 February 1843. **Edmund Lahy may have been a brother or cousin of Martin Lahy.**

It seems likely that the Pierce Lahy who was a neighbour at Johnswell of Mary, Martin and Michael Lahy on the 1833 tithe assessment was either Edmund Lahy's son or grandson.

James Lahy had a son named Michael baptised at St Mary's on 7 November 1807. It may have been this James Lahy who subsequently married Catherine Kenny on 14 February 1822 at Muckalee (witnesses Grace Phillip and John Lahy). James and Catherine subsequently had sons James and Pierce (who was baptised at St John's on 5 March 1826). **James Lahy may have been a brother or cousin of Martin Lahy.** It seems likely that he was the James Lahy who was recorded on the 1833 tithe assessment for Johnswell as a neighbour of Mary, Martin and Michael Lahy.

Family tree

Based on the research outlined above, the Lahy family of Kilkenny and NSW can be summarized in the following family tree chart.

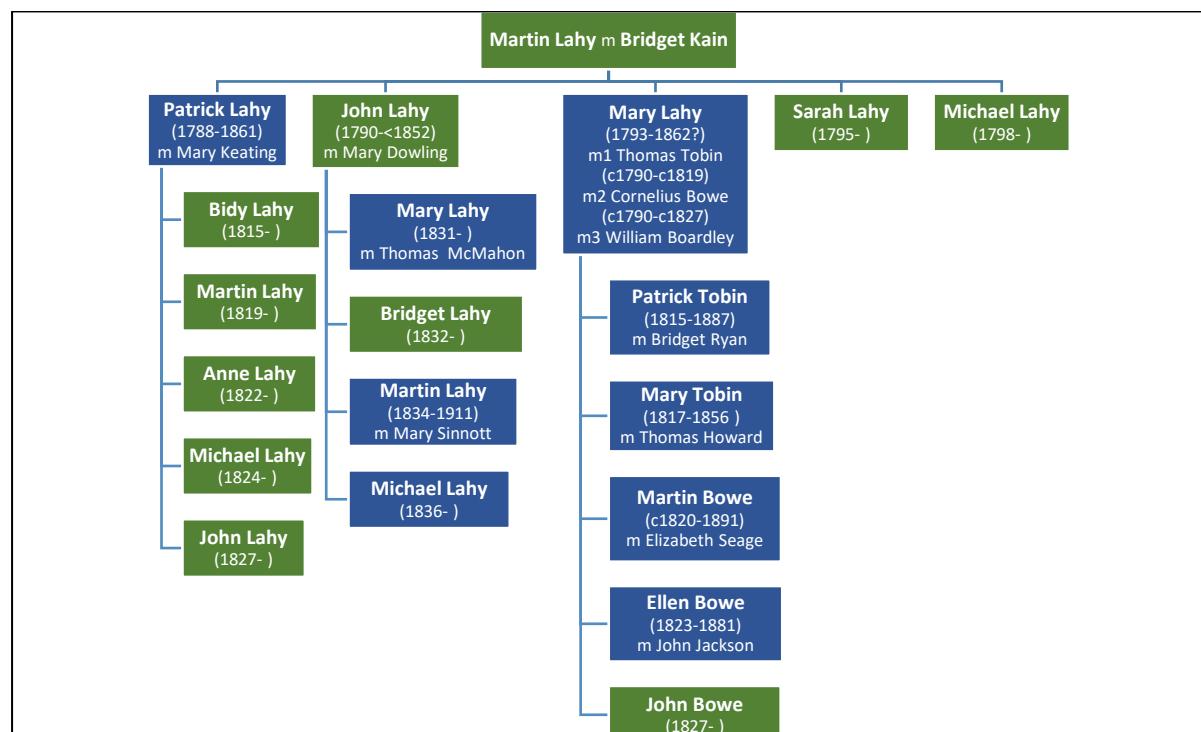


Chart: The Lahy family of Kilkenny and NSW

Those in blue boxes are known to have emigrated to NSW.