

## RESEARCH – Impact of a Surname Change on Researching Roots

By Joe Petrie

Surname spelling differences can cost us a lot of time and effort. Two of my family surname problems are Mackie (vs. Mackey) and Laffin (vs. Laffan) – both of Lingan. The impact: I have started researching Mackey and Laffan in Ireland. In fact, I have a large amount of Cape Breton Laffin Research that has never been entered in my database because I have not found a link to my one Laffan ancestor.

MACKEY or MACKIE:

On November 16, 1825, Thomas Mackey of County Wexford married Sarah Jordan of Bay Bulls in Bay Bulls, Newfoundland.

Because Irish Census records for that time period were lost, people doing genealogy are forced use Irish Birth records and Irish Census Substitutes. I had no luck with digitized Birth records. The Tithe Applotment Book records for 1823 – 1837 are one of the better Irish Census Substitutes. In the Tithe Applotment Books there were 3 Mackey records in Wexford:

Mackey	Patrick	Ballysheehan	Carrigleamleary	Wexford	1831
Mackey	Michael	Grandrilagh	Kilmannan	Wexford	1833
Mackey	Henry	Killeany	Moyacomb	Carlow, Wexford, Wicklow	1837

Because the Tithe Applotment records covered individuals who owned or rented at least one acre, there may have been more Mackey families in Wexford. In fact, in the Tithe Applotment Books, Mackey was a fairly common name in Ireland. There were Mackey records in 22 of the 32 counties.

When Thomas and Sarah Mackey records for Cape Breton appear in Censuses etc., their surname was Mackie. In the Tithe Applotment Books, Mackie was not common name in Ireland. There was a Mackie record in 1 county.

The problem for people doing genealogy: Is Mackey or is Mackie (or both) the root to follow?

LAFFAN or LAFFIN:

Michael O'Brien and Elizabeth Park were married in St. Joseph's in North Sydney on February 16, 1847. (The image of the record is available in FamilySearch.) Michael's mother is listed as Ellen Laffan. For years, I have been asked whether I was related to the Lingan Laffins. I wonder if they were really Laffans in Ireland who came to North Sydney, Sydney Mines or Lingan and became Laffins. Or was my ancestor's surname incorrectly recorded?

The problem for people doing genealogy: Is Laffan or is Laffin the root to follow? Laffin is the more common Surname in the Tithe Applotment Books.

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