

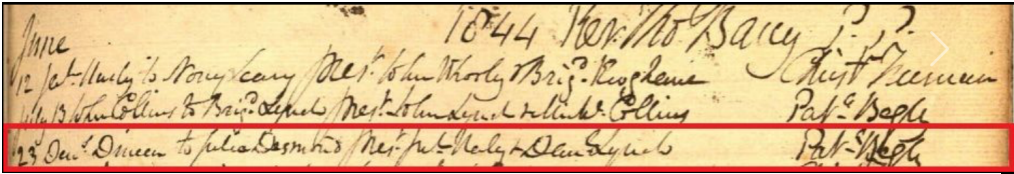
FAMILY BRANCH NARRATIVE

Denis Dineen and Julia ‘Johanna’ Desmond

Great Great Grandparents

1820
Birth year

This family group story begins with the strongest confirmed anchor: the marriage of Denis Dineen and Julia Desmond, later referred to here as Johanna, on July 23, 1844, in Bantry, Co. Cork, Ireland. This is one of the few official documents found to date for Denis and Johanna, while their birth, baptism, death dates, parents, and siblings remain unconfirmed.



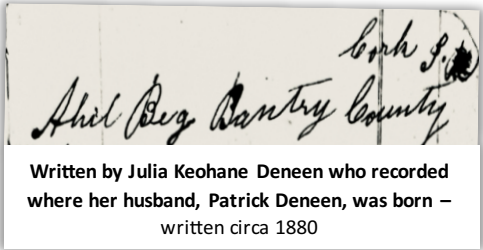
July 23 Denis Dineen to Julia Desmond Wit. Jul Healy & Dan Lynch
Cork Bantry 1823-1866 Digital images provided by E-Celtic Ltd; Dublin, Ireland; Irish Catholic Registers

Based on the marriage record, their births are estimated at about 1820, plus or minus a few years. Following is a narrative timeline revealing a general understanding of their lives based on surviving sources.

Talamuh
Land

To understand Denis and Johanna, one must understand that for the 19th-century Irish, land was never just dirt, property, or acreage. It was identity, a shield against absolute ruin, and a sacred, spiritual map of who they were. This fierce emotional attachment was forged through centuries of painful history—of systemic dispossession, colonial tenancy, and the grinding, daily struggle to keep a roof over their heads. The Irish did not view a plot of ground as a commodity to be bought and sold; they held it in their hearts as a baile fearainn, a homeland or townland that breathed life into their family tree and meant the literal difference between survival and starvation.

Denis and Johanna lived out this profound connection entirely within the sweeping, rugged landscapes of southwest County Cork, choosing to raise their children in the rural townland of Ahil Beg. Long before the Norman invaders arrived on Irish shores in the late 12th century, townlands existed as the smallest, most traditional units of land division. They were organically sized to support an extended kinship network, and their boundaries naturally followed the dips of ridges, the flow of streams, and the ancient stone walls that had stood for generations. In the rolling terrain of Munster, Ahil Beg—or An Achail Bheag, meaning the "small corner or field"—lay quietly tucked beside its larger neighbor, Ahil More, defined by the classic inland Cork landscape of dense, sprawling hedgerows and small, patchwork fields.



Written by Julia Keohane Deneen who recorded where her husband, Patrick Deneen, was born – written circa 1880

In Ireland, the sea whispers tales of wanderlust, while the land sings a song of belonging.

James Joyce
1914

What
is in a
Name?

Within this landscape, the names the family carried bore witness to their ancient regional origins. Surnames were heavy with history, anchoring families to specific provincial heritages and forgotten clans. The Dineen name, varying across generations from Dinneen to Deneen, was deeply rooted in the southwest traditions of Cork and Kerry. Derived from Ó Duinnín, which

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

Práta Potato

Ar scáth a
chéile a
mhairimid

*We live in the
shelter of one
another*

translates poetically to "descendant of the little brown one," the family line carried a proud intellectual legacy. For centuries, the Ó Duinnín sept served as the hereditary poets, chroniclers, and antiquarians—the seanchadh—to the great MacCarthy Mór and O'Sullivan dynasties. These scholars underwent a grueling fourteen-year education to master the laws and genealogies of their patrons, and early 17th-century records explicitly tie their schools of poetry to Blarney, County Cork. Julia's surname, Desmond, carried an equally grand provincial weight. Evolving from Uí Deasmhumhnaigh, it literally meant "man from South Munster," binding her ancestry to the historic Kingdom of Desmond and the medieval sub-clans that once ruled the south.

However, the spelling of these proud names changed dramatically as British colonizers consolidated power after the Cromwellian conquests of the 17th century. Through systematic anglicization, officials stripped away traditional Gaelic prefixes like "O'" and "Mac," simplifying and standardizing phonetic spellings to systematically dismantle the old-world identifiers of the native Irish. The Dineens who immigrated to America used both the "i" and "e" spellings of Deneen.

By the time Denis and Johanna were growing up in the 1820s and 1830s, the grand histories of the old clans had faded into the harsh realities of rural poverty. Ireland was firmly under British rule following the 1801 Act of Union, and life in West Cork was dictated by a punishing landlord system. Families like the Dineens and Desmonds lived in small, dark cottages made of mud or dry-stacked stone, containing little more than rudimentary furniture. They held no title to the earth they tilled, instead renting tiny patches of land from middlemen or directly from the wealthy Earl of Bantry, who controlled vast, sweeping estates across the region.

To survive, the tenants relied almost exclusively on the potato. It was a remarkable crop that could grow in poor soil and feed large families, fueling a massive population boom, but it left the entire island perilously vulnerable to any blight or agricultural failure. A short distance away, Bantry Town grew into a bustling market hub where deep-water harbors exported vast quantities of corn and flour to English markets, even as the local tenant farmers back in the hills faced crushing, unyielding rents.



Because surviving records place Denis and Johanna in a rural farming community, it is reasonable to infer that Denis, his father, Johanna's father, and earlier generations were farmers or tenant farmers. They likely worked small, rented plots, relied heavily on potatoes and oats, kept modest livestock, and paid rent to landlords.

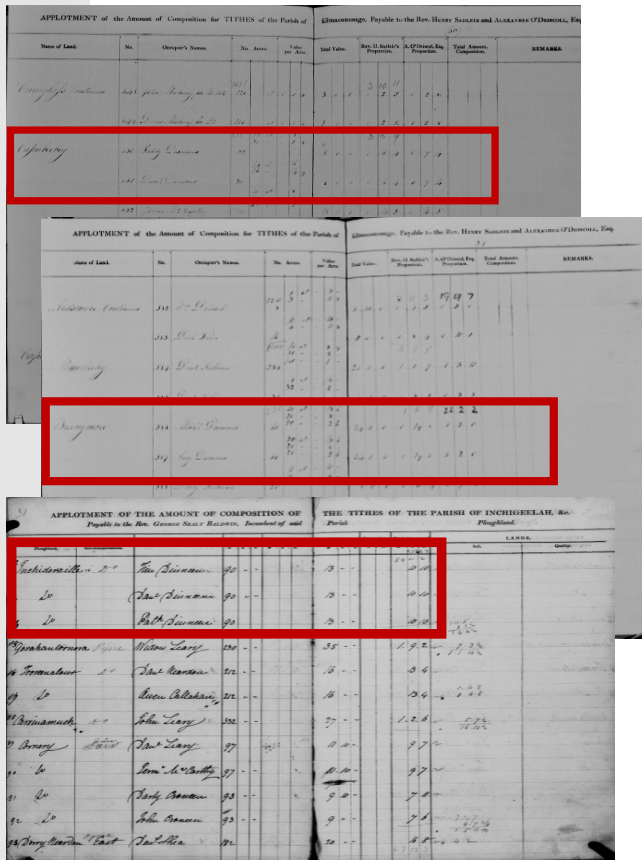
Extended families often lived near one another because farm labor, inheritance, and survival depended on kinship networks. Land was commonly kept within the family, with one heir taking the holding while unmarried siblings and nearby relatives provided labor and support.

Most farmers in the Bantry area rarely moved far from family, often staying within the same parish or a neighboring townland. Marriage, work, worship, and markets usually took place within a small radius, creating deep local roots and strong extended-family ties.

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

1823-
1837

Compiled between 1823 and 1837, the Tithe Applotment Books recorded agricultural holdings over one acre to determine tax payments. Denis and Johanna's parents were required to pay these tithes to the Church of Ireland—the state-established Protestant church until its disestablishment in 1871. While these records offer vital clues regarding Dineen and Desmond relatives living near Ahil Beg, they stop short of confirming the definitive names of Denis and Johanna's parents.



The image shows three pages of Tithe Applotment Books. The first page is titled 'APLOTMENT of the Amount of Composition for TITHES of the Parish of Cappaboy, Ballymore, and Ballymore, Co. Wick.' It lists landowners and their tithes. The second page is titled 'APLOTMENT of the Amount of Composition for TITHES of the Parish of Breeny More, Ballymore, and Ballymore, Co. Wick.' It also lists landowners and their tithes. The third page is titled 'THE TITHES OF THE PARISH OF INCHIGEELAH, Co. Wick.' It lists landowners and their tithes. Red boxes highlight specific entries in each page.

Although these early tax pages are difficult to decipher, a close analysis suggests two compelling clusters of potential ancestors:

Desmond: Andrew, Michael, Patrick, and Daniel Desmond lived within two miles of one another in the neighboring townlands of Cappaboy and Breeny More. Their proximity strongly suggests they were brothers, meaning one of these four men is likely Julia Desmond's father.

Dineen: In nearby Inchigeelah, Timothy, Daniel, and Patrick Dineen lived clustered within a single mile of each other. This tight geographical footprint indicates a fraternal bond, pointing to one of them as the probable father of Denis Dineen.

Daily
Life

For a tenant family in Ahil Beg, daily life was an exhausting, uninterrupted rhythm of labor that stretched from dawn until dusk. Every family member, from the youngest children to the eldest adults, had an expected role to play.

The morning began in the chill of the stone cottage with a sparse breakfast, usually consisting of boiled potatoes washed down with buttermilk or sour milk. Because timber had been cleared from the hills long ago, wood was a rare luxury. One of the first and most critical tasks of the morning was heading into the local bogs to cut, dry, and stack turf.



Picture depicting cutting turf late 19th century Ireland.

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

This peat was the lifeblood of the home, carefully hauled back in hand-baskets or donkey carts to ensure the central hearth fire never went out.

Out in the elements, the centerpiece of family survival was the cultivation of "lazy beds"—raised earth ridges constructed completely by hand. This was backbreaking work that required heavy spade labor rather than horse-drawn ploughs, demanding immense physical endurance. Children spent their days alongside their parents, clearing heavy rocks from the soil, pulling invasive weeds, and helping tend the small vegetable gardens. The family also minded a few pigs or perhaps a single dairy cow, but these animals were far too valuable to ever be eaten by the family; they were kept strictly as economic assets, destined for the market to secure the money needed for the landlord's rent.

The turning of the seasons brought its own acute anxieties, particularly during the late summer months of July and August. This was known as the "summer hungry season," a precarious time when the old potato stocks from the previous winter had rotted away in storage, and the new crop was not yet mature enough to be dug from the earth. Families were forced to forage for wild greens or drastically ration what little they had left, waiting anxiously for the harvest.

Amidst the endless outdoor chores, domestic labor was equally relentless, epitomized by the grueling, day-long process of washing the family's clothes. Once a week, the women would collect rainwater or haul heavy buckets from nearby running brooks and streams, leaving the stained linens to soak overnight. Lye soap had to be made by hand in large, carefully tended batches, created by boiling down animal fat mixed with the alkaline ash of burned potato plants or bracken fern. Because commercial cleaners were non-existent, stale urine was frequently gathered and used as a primitive bleaching agent to lift deep stains from rough fabrics. The women would then take a heavy wooden paddle, known as a battledore, and physically beat the dirt out of the clothes against flat river stones before boiling the garments in iron cauldrons and spreading them across sunny hedgerows and stone walls to dry.



Rush light

As the sun finally dipped below the rugged West Cork mountains, the heavy physical strains of the fields slowly gave way to the quiet, insular sanctuary of the cottage interior. The final outdoor tasks required bringing in the last baskets of dried turf for the night and securing the livestock safely against the damp, creeping mist. Inside, the peat fire was carefully stoked, throwing a warm, flickering amber light across the rough whitewashed walls. The light of a rush light (a rush dipped in tallow) often accompanied or substituted the peat fire. Neighbors, who were often extended, it was only now that the family gathered for their main, and often only, substantial meal of the day. A steaming pot of boiled potatoes was poured directly onto the center of a bare wooden table, occasionally accompanied by a bit of salted cabbage or a shared cup of milk.

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Once the simple meal was cleared, the evening transformed into a beautiful space of communal resilience, faith, and memory. Deeply religious, the household would gather around the dying embers to recite the nightly Rosary, their voices rising and falling in the rhythmic, ancient cadences of the Irish language, finding solace in a faith that had carried their ancestors through generations of systemic hardship.

When the prayers concluded, the heavy atmosphere lifted as the timeless oral traditions of the seanchaí came alive by the fireside. In a world completely isolated from electricity, books, or formal schooling, the history of the Dineen and Desmond families was preserved and passed down entirely through the spoken word. Denis and Johanna would spend the remaining hours of the night sharing old folklore, tracing complex family lineages, singing traditional Munster melodies, and retelling stories of survival and resistance. As the peat fire eventually burned down to gray ash, warming the small stone room, the family went to sleep close together, comforted by the enduring bonds of kinship and community, ready to rise at dawn and face the soil of Ahil Beg once more.

Peace
Be with
You

Denis and Johanna grew up in an era of profound transformation for the Irish Catholic Church. Their childhood coincided with the dawn of Catholic Emancipation, championed by Daniel O’Connell in 1829. This monumental victory finally dismantled the oppressive legal restrictions of the Penal Laws, which had constrained Catholic life since the early seventeenth century.



To attend Mass, their families traveled to a handful of modest local churches. In Bantry town, the old thatched-roof chapel of St. Finbarr’s was replaced between 1825 and 1826 by a substantial stone church that stands to this day. Closer to home was St. Joseph’s Church in Coomhola, a small stone structure built in 1806. Despite these permanent buildings, the shadow of the past lingered; older family members could still vividly remember a time when Catholics were forced to worship in secret—gathering in barns, private homes, or secluded outdoor valleys.

Resistance
1821-1824

Life around Bantry, County Cork, was fraught with tension during their youth. Local farmers bitterly resisted paying tithes to support the established Protestant Church of Ireland, giving rise to secret agrarian societies. Operating under the cover of darkness, these local factions were bound by clandestine oaths and answered to mythical, symbolic leaders known as "Captain Right," "Captain Steel," or "Captain Rock."



A satirical illustration titled
Captain Rock's Banditti Swearing in a New Member

The "Rockite" movement was one of the most widespread and severe rural uprisings in pre-Famine Ireland. Driven by local grievances, the Rockites established an alternative system of rough justice. They targeted magistrates, landlords, and police through intimidation, property destruction, and armed night raids. Threatening letters were left on doorsteps, and violent retaliation awaited anyone who paid the hated tithes or took over land from an evicted neighbor. Using their intimate knowledge of the rugged rural terrain, they easily ambushed British authorities and vanished into the night.

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

Oíche na Gaoithe Móire

Denis and Johanna were just children during the height of these disturbances, but the atmosphere of fear and rebellion undoubtedly shaped the conversations of the adults around them. The British government took the threat so seriously that the Home Secretary admitted they faced an "actual, & most formidable Danger." Five army regiments were deployed to crush the uprising, and the Insurrection Act imposed strict nighttime curfews and trials without juries across eight counties. This turbulent era ultimately led to the creation of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) to police the unruly countryside.



Impoverished farmers preparing to use boulders as weapons against the organized eviction party in the background.

In their late teens, Denis and Johanna witnessed a terrifying meteorological marvel that passed into Irish folklore: Oíche na Gaoithe Móire, or The Night of the Big Wind. Over January 6 and 7, 1839, a hurricane-force tempest roared across Ireland, leaving catastrophic ruin in its wake. In Bantry, the destruction was absolute. The wind ripped thatched roofs from cottages, leveled entire homes, flattened ancient forests, and smashed ships against the rocks of Bantry Bay. For a superstitious and struggling populace, the unprecedented fury of the storm felt like a grim omen of the Great Famine that would devastate the country just a few years later.



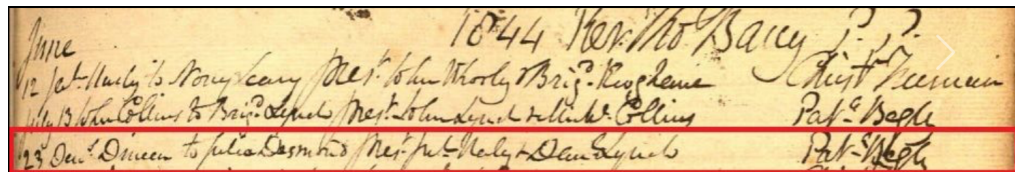
Decades later, the legendary storm left a fascinating bureaucratic legacy. When the Old Age Pensions Act was introduced in Ireland in 1908, applicants had to prove they were at least 70 years old to qualify. Because official civil birth registrations did not begin in Ireland until 1864, verifiable records were incredibly rare. Instead, government officials used the collective memory of the country as a yardstick: any elderly applicant who could clearly and accurately recall

surviving the horrors of the 1839 "Big Wind" was deemed eligible for the pension.

1844

I Do...

Before the great troubles began, Denis Dineen and Johanna Desmond married on July 23, 1844, in Bantry, County Cork. A "dacent" wedding for farming families in the Bantry area was a deeply communal, festive, and traditional milestone. After the Catholic church ceremony, the community gathered for a lively celebration filled with music, dancing, whiskey,



July 23 Denis Dineen to Julia Desmond Wit(nesses)Jul Healy & Dan Lynch

Cork Bantry 1823-1866 Digital images provided by E-Celtic Ltd; Dublin, Ireland; Irish Catholic Registers

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

and poitín (traditional Irish moonshine). The vibrant strains of fiddle and pipe music kept the guests dancing well into the night.

A favorite tradition of these wedding festivities was the dramatic arrival of the "straw boys." These uninvited, masked locals gatecrashed the dance wearing elaborate suits and tall, conical hats crafted from woven straw. Far from being seen as troublemakers, they were believed to bring luck, fertility, and good health to the newlyweds. Tradition dictated that the hosts welcome them warmly, feed them, and grant them a dance with the bride. This wedding provided a vital, much-welcomed escape from the grueling labor and political anxieties of daily rural life—a fleeting moment to celebrate love and hold onto hope.



An Gorta Mór 1845-1852

That hope was brutally tested the very next year. In 1845, a mysterious potato blight crossed from England and Scotland into Ireland, rotting the crops in the ground. The blight, caused by the airborne oomycete *Phytophthora infestans*, returned with even greater fury in 1846. This triggered the Great Hunger (An Gorta Mór), which ravaged the nation from 1845 to 1852.



Ireland wrestles with famine, while Mr. Balfour plays golf (PD United Ireland 1890 August 23)

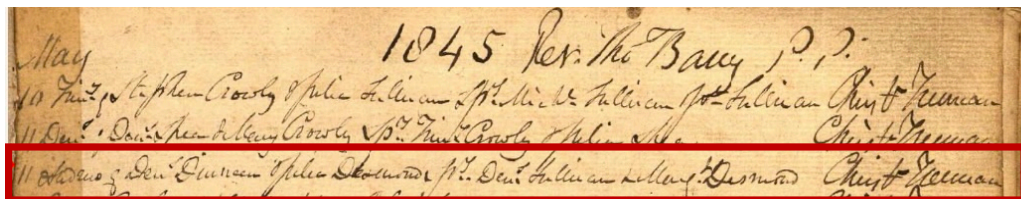
Because the rural poor relied almost exclusively on the potato crop for survival, its total failure brought catastrophic economic collapse, widespread disease, and mass starvation.

We do not know the exact details of what Denis and Johanna endured during these dark years. As newlyweds raising vulnerable young children, they faced a waking nightmare of severe food scarcity, rampant typhus and cholera, and the heartbreaking suffering of their closest neighbors and relatives. While they undoubtedly sought solace and strength in their Catholic faith, the sheer, unimaginable scale of the

misery around them must have tested their beliefs to the absolute limit.

1845

Denis and Johanna welcomed their first child, a son, Andrew Dineen on May 11, 1845. While he was very likely named after a relative, and since we haven't conclusively identified Denis' father, they may or may not have followed the traditional pattern of the first son being named for his paternal grandfather.



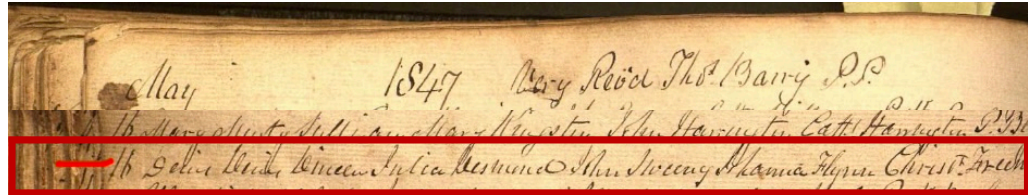
Baptism 1845 May 11 Andrew of Dens Dinneen & Julia Desmond Spr (sponsors) Dens Sullivan & Mary Desmond
Cork Bantry 1823-1866 Digital images provided by E-Celtic Ltd; Dublin, Ireland; Irish Catholic Registers

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

With a newborn in the house, Denis and Johanna faced the first effects of famine as crop failures spread panic. In the years that followed, starvation and disease devastated families, even as other food crops were exported from Bantry under guard. The famine permanently altered the social and demographic landscape of the region.

1847

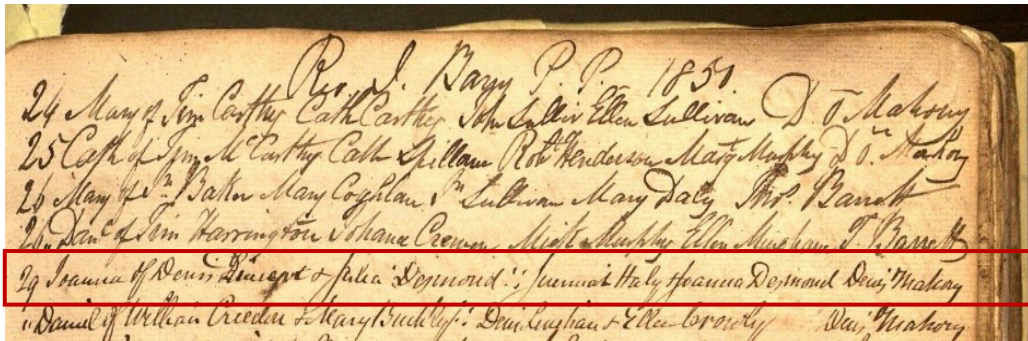
Denis and Johanna welcomed a second son, Denis Dineen, on May 16, 1847.



Baptism 1847 May 16 Denis of Denis Dineen & Julia Desmond Spr (sponsors) ? & Hanna Flynn
Cork Bantry 1823-1866 Digital images provided by E-Celtic Ltd; Dublin, Ireland; Irish Catholic Registers

1850

Their third child, a daughter named Joanna, was born on April 29, 1850.



1850 Baptism, Bantry Cork & Ross: 29 Joanna of Denis Dineen & Julia Desmond :: Jeremiah Healy & Joanna Desmond Denis Mahony [priest]

By
1852

At some point before 1852, Denis and Johanna's second child, Denis, died. The demands of labor on the farm did not stop for mourning. Infant and child death was common due to poor nutrition and hygiene, and grief was often a communal, shared burden among neighbors who had likely faced similar losses. There was a tradition of neighborly cooperation. Neighbors did not wait for an invitation; they simply arrived to shake hands, help with farm chores, and offer the traditional condolence, "I'm sorry for your trouble."

The family's grief would have been shaped by Catholic practice, older Gaelic customs, and the hard pragmatism of rural survival. Denis' body was laid out in the home, with neighbors gathering for a wake that was quieter and more somber than one held for an adult.



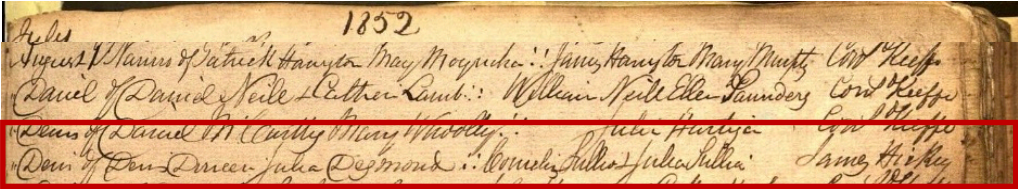
Keening was more than just crying; it was a crucial part of the communal Irish wake, serving as both a final farewell and a way to ensure the deceased was remembered. Female relatives might perform a traditional rhythmic wailing or *caoineadh* over the body to express the community's grief. While it began to disappear around this time, it persisted in isolated areas well into the early 20th century.

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND

1852

Denis' body was never left alone from the moment of his death until burial, a practice known as "watching" or "waking" the deceased. Six male family members typically served as pallbearers to carry the coffin to the local church and then the graveyard.

On July 27, 1852, Denis and Johanna's fourth child was born, a son they named Denis Lawrence Dineen. If a child holding an essential family name died young, the parents would often give that same name to the next baby of that gender to ensure the ancestor was still honored.



1852 Baptism, Bantry Cork & Ross: 1 Denis of Denis Dineen & Julia Desmond :: Cornelius Sullivan & Julia Sullivan James Hinkey [priest]

1853

Ahil Beg

In the wake of the Famine, a massive bureaucratic effort named Griffith's Valuation was undertaken to assess the value of all rateable property across Ireland. Completed between 1847 and 1864, these property records offer a rare glimpse into the lives of the survivors. In the 1853 registry for Kilmocomogue Parish, Denis appears as a tenant in the townland of Ahil Beg, renting a house, an "office" (a standard term for a farm outbuilding or barn), and a plot of land. Tellingly, a John Dinneen is recorded just nearby, renting a modest house and garden. While their close proximity strongly suggests a family connection—perhaps a brother, cousin, or uncle—the exact biological relationship remains unconfirmed by surviving parish records.

Parish of Kilmocomogue			
	House	Office	Land
1. Denis Dinneen	135	1	11
2. John Dinneen	0	2	5
3. John Dinneen	260	3	11

Heritage World Family History Services. Ireland, Griffith's Valuation, 1847-1864 [database on-line]. Provo, UT,

Life for Denis and Johanna in the 1850s was entirely defined by the brutal, lingering aftermath of the Great Hunger. West Cork was left reeling from extreme rural poverty and severe land-tenure insecurity, forcing a slow, painful transition away from the treacherous mono-crop reliance on the potato.

The harsh reality of their daily labor is captured vividly in an 1849 report by Henry J. Fawcett, a "Practical Instructor on Husbandry" sent to evaluate the region. Fawcett described agriculture in the Bantry area as "very backward." Because tenant farmers lacked modern tools, the local land was typically left fallow for four to five years after yielding just a single crop of corn. Ploughs were crude, described by Fawcett as "a few sticks put together with pins only," which barely

Family Branch: DINEEN | DESMOND



1855

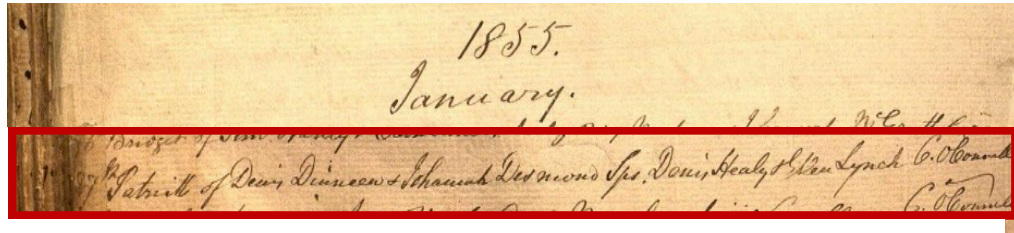
Suaimhneas
síoraí

Eternal Peace

scratched the ground a few inches deep. Transportation was equally primitive. The area completely lacked proper roads, forcing families to rely on rugged "pannier tracks"—narrow paths traversed by starving horses carrying heavy wicker baskets.

Yet, Fawcett's report also noted a "huge potential" for the Bantry soil, highlighting an abundance of natural local manures. He passionately advocated for structural improvements, including deep field drainage, better seed selection, and the widespread introduction of robust grain crops. Amidst these recommendations, Denis and Johanna witnessed a massive economic shift sweep across the Irish countryside: the dramatic move from crop tillage to pastoral farming. Livestock numbers, particularly cattle and sheep, began to skyrocket. Driven by an insatiable demand for dairy and meat exports to Britain, cattle numbers would swell toward five million across Ireland by the early 20th century, forever changing the face of the land.

Against this backdrop of a changing world, Denis and Johanna welcomed their youngest child into the world on January 26, 1855—a son they named Patrick Dineen.



1855 Baptism, Bantry Cork & Ross: 27 Patrick of Denis Dineen & Johanna Desmond Sps (sponsors) Denis Healy & Ann Lynch C. O'Connell [priest]

Just as this family narrative began with unknown birth dates for Denis and Johanna, it concludes with their passings similarly lost to time. Because official civil registration of deaths did not become mandatory in Ireland until 1864, we must rely on secondary clues to piece together their final chapters. We know with certainty that Denis passed away sometime before 1877; when his daughter Johanna married that year, the civil marriage registry explicitly marked Denis as deceased. Even fewer traces remain regarding his wife, Johanna. Her death occurred at some unknown point following the birth of Patrick in 1855.

Ultimately, Denis and Johanna's story is a profound testament to survival, soil, and sheer resilience. They cultivated the land before the blight, endured the absolute darkest years of the Famine, and persevered long enough to see the scarred fields of County Cork turn back toward life.

The inheritance they passed down to their descendants was not one of material wealth, but of tireless hard work, fiercely tight family bonds, and an unyielding Irish spirit. Those core values crossed oceans and boundaries as their surviving children grew to build lives of their own.

While their eldest son, Andrew, chose to remain rooted in the native soil of Ireland, three of his siblings made the monumental choice to immigrate to the United States, carrying the memory of Ahil Beg into a new world.



The following section shifts from the shared story of Denis and Julia to brief profiles of their surviving children and grandchildren.