



PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA

**BARACK OBAMA**

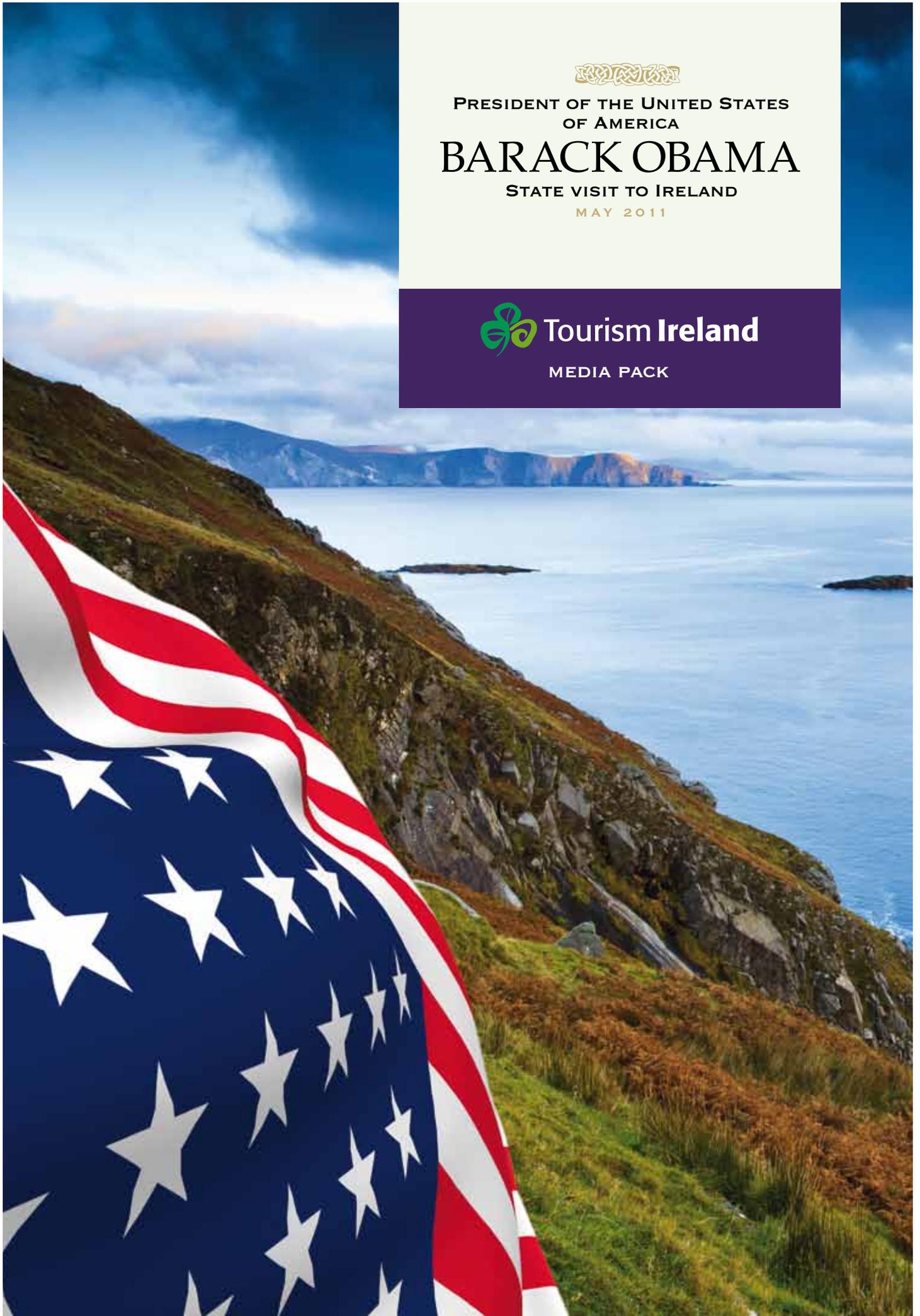
STATE VISIT TO IRELAND

MAY 2011



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## INTRODUCTION

In May, Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States of America will make his first visit to the Republic of Ireland

It will be the first visit to Ireland by a US President since George W. Bush visited in June 2004.

This historic visit signifies the scope of American ancestry and the relationships both past and present between the two countries.

### In this document you will find:

A provisional itinerary of locations still subject to confirmation at time of going to press.	<b>PAGE</b> <b>1</b>
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IMAGE LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## PHOENIX PARK

Established 1662 on behalf of King Charles II, Phoenix Park is one of Europe's largest enclosed recreational spaces. Trees cover 30% of its 11752 acres trees (mainly broadleaf including beech, lime, sycamore, horse chestnut), while the grounds have hosted a herd of fallow deer since the 1660s when the Duke of Ormond introduced them. Among the flora and fauna sits Áras an Uachtaráin, a former Viceregal Lodge and residence of Irish Presidents since 1938. Also to be found in the park is the America Ambassador's residence, a stately home built in 1776 by former Bailiff of the Phoenix Park, John Blaquiere which embraces 1,760 acres of parkland.

For more information visit: [www.phoenixpark.ie](http://www.phoenixpark.ie)



## COLLEGE GREEN

College Green is a three-sided square in Dublin's city centre. At its centre is Ireland's Oldest University, Trinity College, founded in 1592. In the foreground of Trinity's entrance stands a statue of Henry Grattan, a member of the Irish House of Commons and campaigner for legislative freedom for the Irish Parliament. To Trinity's right is the Bank of Ireland, designed in 1729 to host the Irish Parliament, until 1800 when the Act of Union was passed. The area to the south of Trinity College leads toward the pedestrian Grafton Street. It was here in 1995 that U.S President Bill Clinton delivered a speech to an audience of tens of thousands of people.

For more Information visit: [www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie)



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## MONEYGALL, COUNTY OFFALY

Moneygall, a sleepy village of some 298 souls, is abuzz at the prospect of a Presidential visit. Before Barack Obama's connection was established, its biggest celebrity export was Papillion, the racehorse that won the Aintree Grand National in 2000. Located on the Tipperary/Offaly border, the village boasts just two pubs and one main street, but visitors can also see the house Obama's great-great-great grandfather Falmouth Kearney grew up in, as well as the old schoolhouse he attended.



## THE OBAMA/KEARNEY HOMESTEAD

According to records held in the Irish National Archives, No. 123 Main Street is where Joseph and Phoebe Kearney raised Falmouth and his siblings before they emigrated in the 1850s. Primary Valuation of Ireland House Books describe the house as having been thatched with stone or lime mortar walls, and in "very bad" condition. Today, a second storey has been added, though the interior has been stripped back to its original style, and it is hoped to develop a heritage attraction.

For more Information visit:

## THE ANCESTRAL SCHOOLHOUSE

Dating from the early 1800s, Falmouth Kearney is likely to have attended classes in this Anglican schoolhouse on Main Street, and their parents probably joined them for religious services on Sundays too. The schoolhouse is a private residence and closed to the public, though its vaulted windows and smart stone are clearly visible between two 20th-century townhouses on Main St., Moneygall.



## OLLIE HAYES'S PUB

The Stars and Stripes flying outside Ollie Hayes' pub on Main Street are the only a hint of the colour you'll find inside. This country pub, run by the genial Ollie Hayes, was the focal point for celebrations of Obama's primary and election victories in Ireland, and its lounge is festooned with posters, t-shirts, a life-size bust of the President and even a painting of a smiling Obama holding a pint of Guinness. It is widely anticipated that Obama will stop by for a pint on his visit to Offaly.

## TEMPLEHARRY CHURCH

Dating from the early 1800s, this Anglican church sprung to fame in 2007, when its records were found to confirm Barack Obama's Irish ancestry. Hidden away down a small country road, it opens on one Sunday a month in summer (details of services can be found on modreeny.com). The exterior is grey and austere, but gives way to a surprisingly atmospheric space within, the highlights of which are an elegant stained glass window, antique wooden galley and old pedal harmonium.



President Obama is unlikely to be able to visit any more of the local sites on his tight schedule, but other sites in the area of interest include the following:



## SHINRONE, COUNTY OFFALY

Moneygall isn't the only Irish village with a claim on Barack Obama. Parish records at St. Mary's Church in Shinrone include the baptism of Patrick Kearney, son of Obama's seventh great-grandfather Joseph, in 1741. The church dates from the 1820s, but the mossy little cemetery alongside is much older, and can be explored by visitors. Although the Kearney graves are unmarked, the community is fiercely proud of the connection - local schoolchildren have written to Sasha and Malia Obama.

For more Information visit:

## CULLENWAIN CEMETERY

Squirreled away off the R490 connecting Moneygall with Cloughjordan lies the tiny cemetery in which many of Barack Obama's Irish ancestors lie buried. Though the Kearney headstones themselves are unmarked, it is possible to browse through the ruins of an old church, hulking yew trees and tantalising stone stumps, getting a real feel for the atmosphere at the heart of this amazing story. Recently, locals in Shinrone have erected a monument to the President's ancestors in the Church of Ireland in Shinrone.





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## SLIEVE BLOOM MOUNTAINS

Stretching over the counties of Laois and Offaly, the Slieve Bloom Mountains measure in at 527 metres at their highest point (called 'Arderin,' or, 'height of Ireland' in Gaelic). The mountains are set in Ireland's central plain and as such are visible from a wide area. Along with the Massif Central, the Slieve Blooms are the oldest mountains in Europe. Among the range's walking routes is the Slieve Bloom way, a 77km circuit crossing ridges and glens along a route heavily forested with modern conifers.

For more Information visit: [www.slievebloom.ie](http://www.slievebloom.ie)

## SHANNON/LOUGH DERG

At 386 kilometres, The River Shannon is the longest river in Ireland and flows through ten of Ireland's 32 counties. First mapped by the geographer Ptolemy, the river connects with Ireland's two major canal arteries, The Royal and the Grand Canal, as well as linking with Lough Derg via the Ardnacrusha dam. Lough Derg is 36 metres at its deepest point and represents one of Ireland's most popular angling centres with its 32,000 acres of waterway home to pike, trout and tench.

For more Information visit: [www.iwai.ie](http://www.iwai.ie)



## CLONMACNOISE

Founded by St Ciarán in the mid 6th century, Clonmacnoise is an early Christian site that includes ruins of a chapel, seven churches, two round towers, three high crosses and the largest collection of Early Christian grave slabs in Western Europe. Located directly on the banks of the Shannon in County Offaly, the site can be reached by road or alternatively as a stop off while cruising the river. This useful location along the country's most used river made the site a centre for religion, craftsmanship and trade.

For more Information visit: [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie)

## BIRR CASTLE

Home of the 7th Earl of Rosse, Birr Castle is located in the town of Birr, County Offaly. This site has hosted a castle since the 12th Century while the building standing there now was built during the Tudor period around the 17th Century. The castle itself is not open to visitors, however the gardens, designed by Sir William Parsons in the 18th Century, are. Birr Castle is known as a centre for scientific discovery—an aspect of the castle's history that is represented by the Giant Telescope, which was designed by William Parsons, 3rd Earl of Rosse.

For more Information visit: [www.birrcastle.com/](http://www.birrcastle.com/)



## ROSCREA CASTLE

The site of Roscrea Castle was originally a monastic site established by St Cronan in the 6th Century. The original structure was a motte-and-bailey form castle built by King John around 1213 with stonework on the building beginning in the last quarter of the century. Today the grounds, enclosed by curtain walls, feature the castle with drawbridge and dungeons as well as the Damer House (the Damer Family purchased the demesne in the early 18th Century), bordered by 18th Century Gardens centred around a fountain designed by Samuel Turnley.

For more Information visit: [www.heritageireland.ie](http://www.heritageireland.ie)



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# OBAMA'S IRELAND CONNECTIONS

COMPILED BY POL O'CONGHAILE

## The story behind President Obama's historic visit to Ireland...

- ★ "Our family's story is one that spans miles and generations, races and realities," US President Barack Obama has said. "It's the story of farmers and soldiers, city workers and single moms. It takes place in small towns and good schools, in Kansas and Kenya, on the shores of Hawaii and the streets of Chicago." To that list, he can now add Moneygall, County Offaly.
- ★ Obama's Irish connection was sealed in one, spine-tingling moment in April 2007. After receiving a call from ancestry.com regarding possible links, Canon Stephen Neill trawled through the parish records of Templeharry Church near Moneygall. To his delight, he discovered a record detailing the baptism of a boy born to Phoebe and Joseph Kearney in 1829.
- ★ The boy was Falmouth Kearney, who emigrated to America on the SS Marmion in 1850. Kearney has been confirmed as then-Senator Obama's great-great-great grandfather.
- ★ In 2008, researchers with Eneclann, a leading historical research consultancy in Ireland, delved further into Obama's Irish links. They were able to trace the Kearney lineage back to Obama's seventh great-grandfather, Joseph Kearney, who was born in 1698.
- ★ As the improbable links between Obama and a tiny village in rural Ireland became official, the story caught the public imagination. Moneygall (population 298) threw itself behind Obama's presidential candidacy, marking his primary victories and speeches with exuberant celebrations in the local Ollie Hayes' bar. Media flocked to cover the festivities.
- ★ All of a sudden, Moneygall was on the map. "There's a little village in Ireland where my great-great-great-great grandfather came from," Obama told ITN's John Irvine after winning the Iowa caucus in 2008. "I'm looking forward to going there and having a pint."
- ★ "There's No One as Irish as Barack Obama," recorded in 2008 by County Limerick band, The Corrigan Brothers, became a YouTube sensation. Indicative of both the fun and pride behind the Moneygall connection, the brothers even performed on MSNBC's Hardball.
- ★ After Obama's election victory, the Irish government, led at the time by Offaly man, Brian Cowen, extended an invitation to Obama to visit. Even then, it seemed unlikely that the author of 'Dreams from My Father' could be tempted to explore his mother's ancestry in Ireland.
- ★ Local man Henry Healy, who claims to be Obama's eighth cousin, has been hugely active in pushing the Moneygall connection. 'Henry the Eighth', as locals call him, shares a common sixth great-grandmother with the US President, a connection dating back to 1761. Healy and Canon Stephen Neill travelled to Washington to attend Obama's inauguration.
- ★ A worldwide TV audience of one billion watched Obama sworn in as the 44th President of the United States on January 20th, 2009. Amongst them was an ecstatic crowd in Ollie Hayes' bar in Moneygall. With Obamamania in overdrive, a local radio station changed its name to Obama FM for the day, and a life-size bust has been installed in the pub.
- ★ Almost four years after his Irish ancestry was confirmed, President Obama announced that he would indeed visit Ireland. The announcement was made with impeccable timing, during the visit of Taoiseach Enda Kenny on St. Patrick's Day (March 17th), 2011.
- ★ Within four years, a single entry hand-written in a dog-eared book of parish records has snowballed into a Presidential visit. Obamamania has reached fever pitch. Moneygall has been painted and sandblasted, the Secret Service has conducted several security checks, and locals have been fielding media requests from CNN, the BBC and Al Jazeera. O'Bama T-shirts and Barack's brack (fruit loaf) have already been rushed into production.
- ★ Of course, no US Presidential visit to Ireland is complete without a pint of the black stuff. This month, Guinness dispatched a master brewer to Offaly with a specially selected barrel of brew, and Ollie Hayes is keeping it under wraps for the anticipated visit. "I'll give him instructions and let him pull the pint himself if he likes," the publican says.
- ★ All that remains is for Falmouth Kearney's great-great-great grandson to come home.



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ANCESTRY

## Who were Obama's Irish ancestors?

★ Falmouth Kearney, who lived in Moneygall, County Offaly, before emigrating to the US in 1850, was Barack Obama's great-great-great grandfather.

★ Kearney's father Joseph worked as a shoemaker in Moneygall. Though he came from a background of skilled artisans, Joseph's family failed to prosper in a time of famine. He emigrated to the US in 1849, and his wife Phoebe and their children followed.

★ The Irish form of Kearney is 'Ó Cearnaigh', which derives from two different names, as Stephen McDonagh writes in 'Barack Obama – The Road from Moneygall'. The first is Cearnach, which means 'victorious'; the second, Caithernach or Cathernaigh, means 'warlike' or 'foot-soldier'. One much-celebrated Irish warrior hero was Conall Cearnach – 'Conal of the Victories'.

★ Barack Obama's line of the Kearney family probably originated in Tipperary, research by Eneclann has shown, before settling in Offaly in the 1700s. Research has found another Joseph Kearney, born in 1698, to be Obama's seventh great-grandfather.

★ In the 18th century, Joseph's brother Michael Kearney was a successful wigmaker in Dublin. Wigmaking was a respectable business in the mid 1700s, a time when people took aversion to washing their hair (water was thought to spread disease) and wigs were widely worn in society, and not just by aristocrats and professionals.

★ John Kearney, another distant relative of Obama's, served as provost of Trinity College and in 1806 became the Bishop of Ossory. Bishop Kearney died in 1813, and his tomb can still be seen at St Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny, where an inscription reads: "In the studies of things divine and human he trained his mind with diligence and refinement." The tomb was visited by the US Ambassador to Ireland Dan Rooney in 2009.

★ The Kearneys appear to have been most prosperous in the mid to late 1700s, but their fortunes went into decline thereafter, according to Eneclann research. Wigs became less fashionable, the family itself was less involved in business and, ultimately, Falmouth's father Joseph found himself making shoes for an impoverished rural community in Moneygall, County Offaly.

★ Joseph Kearney, Obama's fourth great-grandfather, was born in Moneygall in 1794. He married Phoebe Donovan in 1825. According to parish records at Templeharry Church near Moneygall, the couple's son Falmouth was baptised in

1830. Falmouth had an older sister Margaret, two younger brothers William and Joseph, and a younger sister Mary Ann.

★ Phoebe and Joseph raised their family at No. 123 Main Street, Moneygall. Records dating from the early 1850s in the National Archives describe the thatched house as being in "very bad" condition, with a lease of £10"0"0 a year. The house, where the young family would have lived through the famine years, is still in existence (albeit in an extended form) today.

★ Joseph Kearney emigrated to the US in 1849, paving the way for his wife and family to follow. Falmouth and Margaret arrived into Baltimore on the SS Marmion on March 20th, 1850. Phoebe, William and Mary Ann arrived on the Clarissa Courier a year later in 1851.

★ Joseph and his family weren't the first Kearneys to have emigrated to the US. After Thomas Kearney emigrated to Baltimore and subsequently Ohio in the 1780s, several relations followed him to the Scioto Valley region of Ohio, where some of their graves can still be found in small local cemeteries, alongside the earliest settlers in the state.

★ In the US, Falmouth Kearney found work as a farm labourer. In 1852, he married Charlotte Holloway in Fayette County. By 1865 the couple had moved further west to Indiana. Their daughter Ann Kearney was born in 1869. She in turn married Jacob Dunham, and their great-granddaughter, Anne Dunham (b. 1942), was Barack Obama's mother.

★ One of the unique things about Barack Obama's Irish ancestors is that they were Church of Ireland Anglicans. Other presidents with Irish links, such as John F Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, famously had Irish Catholic connections. Obama's Irish Anglican ancestry is not a typical emigrant story, but it is an important and often forgotten part of Irish heritage.

★ Moneygall isn't the only Irish village with claims on Obama. Records at the parish church in nearby Shinrone contain as many as 45 Kearney references, including that of Patrick Kearney, a brother of Obama's sixth great-grandfather, born in 1741. Though its graves are unmarked, Shinrone may contain the oldest traceable Obama link in County Offaly.



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