

Anthony O'Grady Lefroy, (1816-1897), pastoralist and civil servant, was born on 14 March, 1816 at Limerick, the eldest son of Henry Lefroy, vicar of Santry near Dublin, and his wife, Dorothea, daughter of John O'Grady of Kilballyowen. He was descended from Antoine Loffroy, a Huguenot refugee who left Flanders and settled at Canterbury about 1587. On 22 October, 1832, Lefroy entered Trinity College, Dublin, and was followed on 2 July, 1839 by his brother Gerald de Courcy. After graduation they decided to migrate to Western Australia. They sailed in the *Lady Grey* and arrived at Fremantle in January, 1843. As they were being rowed ashore, their belongings, including equipment and a bag containing 900 sovereigns, fell overboard; fortunately their possessions were soon recovered.

The brothers briefly visited their cousin, Henry Maxwell Lefroy, at York, before going to live with the Burges family to learn the essentials of colonial husbandry. Some months later they rented Springdale, near Northam, and a property at Bolgart. In 1846 they found a choice pastoral run at Walebing and took out a squatting licence. Faced with a dire shortage of labour when trying to develop Walebing and anxious to overcome the problem, Lefroy supported the settlers' petition to the Colonial Office for a penal establishment in Western Australia. Later he engaged several ticket-of-leave men to work on building projects at Walebing.

Men of his education and training were then rare in the colony and Lefroy was invited to join the civil service. He accepted and in 1849 became private secretary to Governor Fitzgerald. In 1856 he was appointed clerk of the Legislative and Executive Councils and colonial treasurer. He also served as chairman of the Board of Education, as paymaster of the Pensioners' Board and in 1875-77, as acting colonial secretary. Always amiable and tactful, Lefroy was nominated to the Legislative Council in 1856 and held office until responsible government in 1890. Before the elections in that year he announced his intention to retire on a pension after thirty-four years as colonial treasurer.

In the early 1850s Lefroy had dissolved his partnership with Gerald, who continued to manage the property at Walebing. Despite his landed interests 'it was not so much as a pastoralist that Lefroy was to have an enduring mark upon the history of the colony as one of the oldest and most faithful servants of the Government'. On 3 June, 1852, he married Mary, daughter of John Bruce and his wife Johannah Jacoba, nee Herklotz; they

# Anthony Lefroy: Public Servant



*Rough justice in the Australian bush.*

had three daughters and two sons, one of whom, Henry Bruce, became premier of Western Australia in 1917. Lefroy, already a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, was appointed C.M.G. in 1878. He visited England and Ireland with his family in 1863 and died at his home, Cambray, in Perth on 20 January, 1897.

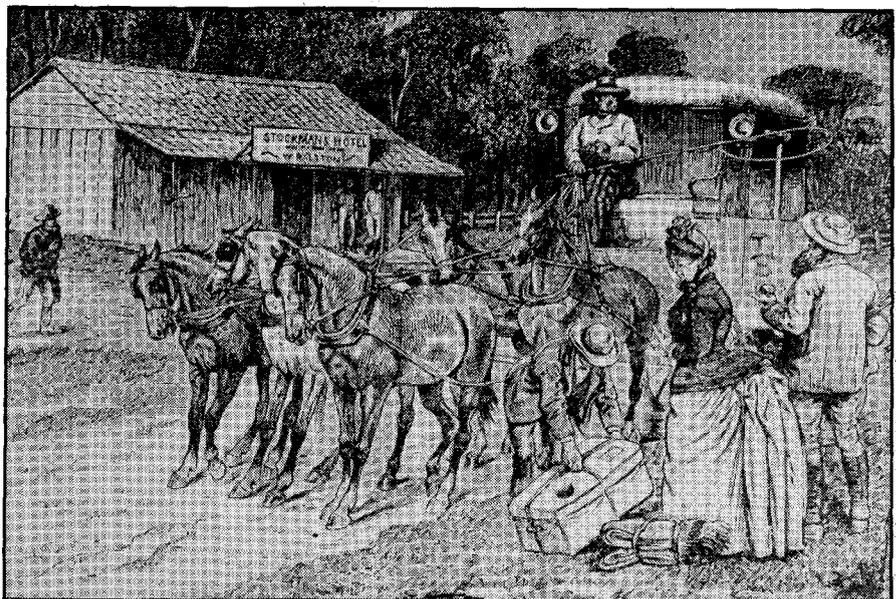
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G. C. Lefroy

## Sources

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*(Reprinted from the Australian Dictionary of Biography)*



*Up country in Queensland.*