

A Castle in Phoenix: How to Trace Your Irish Ancestors without Going to Ireland

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Introduction

The McClelland Library

- Book Collection
- Search books online at www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org
 - Limit by “[Irish Cultural Center](#)” using the advanced search option
- McClelland Library Website www.azirish.org
- Subscription Websites
 - Ancestry – www.ancestry.com
 - Find My Past – www.findmypast.com
 - Irish News Archive – www.irishnewsarchive.org
 - The Irish Times – www.irishtimes.com
 - Irish Ancestors – www.johngrenham.com
 - Roots Ireland – www.rootsireland.ie
 - Ancestry Ireland – www.ancestryireland.com
 - American Ancestors – www.americanancestors.org
 - Fold3 – www.fold3.com

Three Main Waves of Irish Emigration

Early to Mid-1700s

- Primarily Protestant Scots-Irish farmers who lived on the edge of the frontier and valued their personal and religious freedom

Mid-1800s

- Mainly Roman Catholic families of poor, unskilled laborers who left Ireland to avoid starvation during the potato famine

Late 1800s to Early 1900s

- Many young, single workers who moved to large American cities looking for better jobs

Challenges in Irish Research

Loss of Irish Records

- Invasions – The country has been occupied for most of its history
- 1861 through 1891 census records destroyed by government
- 1821 through 1851 census records destroyed by fire
- 1922 Irish Civil War – Four Courts building burned

Irish Naming Pattern

1st Son – Father’s Father

2nd Son – Mother’s Father

3rd Son – Father

4th Son – Father’s Oldest Brother

1st Daughter – Mother’s Mother

2nd Daughter – Father’s Mother

3rd Daughter – Mother

4th Daughter – Mother’s Oldest Sister

Irish Names and Dates

- Nicknames were common
- **“A Rose by any Other Name: A Guide to Irish Christian Names”** by Judith Eccles Wight
- Name spellings varied
- Surname prefixes not used consistently
 - O’ indicates “descendant of” – Irish origin
 - Mc or Mac indicates “son of” – Scottish or Irish origin
 - Fitz indicates “son of” – Anglo-Norman origin
- Dates and ages not consistent over time

The Irish Place of Origin

Success with Irish research depends on locating the parish or townland an ancestor came from in Ireland before beginning the search in Irish records.

- Family Records
- Obituaries, Death Records and Gravestones
- Birth and Marriage Records
- Church Records
- Newspapers
- Military Records
- Land and Court Records
- Immigration and Naturalization Records
- Associations
- Business and Financial Records
- DNA Testing

Irish Jurisdictions

When the townland or parish is known, determine all other jurisdictions for that place.

Irish Geographical Divisions

- 2 States: Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- 4 Provinces: Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connaught
- 32 Counties: Antrim, Armagh, Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Down, Dublin, Fermanagh, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Leix (Queen’s) Limerick, Londonderry (Derry), Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly (King’s), Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Tyrone, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford, Wicklow
- 137 Poor Law Unions
- 331 Baronies
- 2,508 Civil Parishes
- Church Parishes – Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, or Presbyterian Congregations
- 62,000+ Cities, Towns and Townlands

Geographic Finding Aids

- **Free Online Townland Databases** – provide baronies, civil parishes and poor law unions for each townland; based on the 1851 Census of Ireland
 - Townland Database – www.swilson.info/db/townlanddbs.php
 - IreAtlas Townland Database – www.thecore.com/seanruad
- **“A New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland”** by Brian Mitchell (2nd Edition)
 - County, barony, parish and poor law union maps
 - Use to visually locate a parish or poor law union in a specific county

Major Types of Irish Records

Census Returns – only 1901 & 1911 are complete; fragments for 1821-1851

- National Archives of Ireland – www.nationalarchives.ie

Civil Registrations (Vital Records) – non-Catholic marriages began in 1845; all others started 1864

- Indexes on www.ancestry.com, <https://familysearch.org>, www.findmypast.com
- Original images online – www.irishgenealogy.ie
 - All 32 counties before 1922; only Republic of Ireland 1922 and later
 - Registration District names are the same as Poor Law Union names
- Order original records from the General Register Office (GRO)
 - GRO of Ireland (in Dublin and Roscommon)
 - All of Ireland up to 1921; Republic of Ireland records 1922 to present
 - www.welfare.ie/en/pages/general-register-office.aspx
 - GRO of Northern Ireland (in Belfast)
 - All records for six counties of Northern Ireland
 - www.nidirect.gov.uk

Church Parish Records – baptisms, marriages and deaths; some going back to the late 1700s

- Online images of Catholic Parish Registers at National Library of Ireland – registers.nli.ie
- Online indexes
 - www.findmypast.com
 - www.ancestry.com
 - www.rootsireland.ie
 - www.irishgenealogy.ie

Gravestone Inscriptions – published and on websites

- Irish Graveyards – www.irishgraveyards.ie
- Historic Graves – historicgraves.com
- Billion Graves – <https://billiongraves.com>
- Find A Grave – www.findagrave.com

Griffith's Primary Valuation of Ireland – property tax records 1848-1864

- askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation

Valuation Office Books – comprehensive property tax records 1824-1856

- House, Field, Tenure and Quarto Books used to create the Primary Valuation of Ireland
- <http://census.nationalarchives.ie/search/vob/home.jsp>
- www.findmypast.com

Valuation Revision Books – updates to the Primary Valuation records 1864 -1933

- Republic of Ireland – <https://familysearch.org>
- Northern Ireland (PRONI) – <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/valuation-revision-books>

Tithe Applotment Books – Church of Ireland tax records 1823-1837

- titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie

Wills & Administrations – most originals destroyed in 1922; some indexes and abstracts still exist

- Will index books at McClelland Library

- Will indexes online
 - www.findmypast.com – 1484-1858
 - www.ancestry.com – 1536-1857
 - <https://familysearch.org> – 1858-1920
- Will calendars, abstracts and indexes
 - www.nationalarchives.ie – 1858-1982
 - www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni – pre-1858-1943

Landed Estate Records – apply to large land owners; tenants may be mentioned

- Free online Landed Estates Database c.1700-1914 for Connaught and Munster landedestates.nuigalway.ie
- Landed Estate Court Records on www.findmypast.com

Registry of Deeds – Protestant land owners

- Property Registration Authority – www.prai.ie
- Volunteer transcription project for free access to deeds www.irishdeedsindex.net

Reference Guides

John Grenham – www.johngrenham.com

- Website is based on his book, “**Tracing Your Irish Ancestors**” (4th Edition)
- Detailed county-by-county reference guide of available records and where to find them
- Interactive surname distribution maps and place name maps online

FamilySearch Research Wiki – https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Genealogy

- Explains Irish record types and where to find them; includes digitized FHL films

Irish Genealogy Website – www.IrishGenealogy.ie/en/

- Free online search portal with links and descriptions of various record types
- Online access to church parish record transcriptions for Kerry, Carlow, southern Cork, and Dublin City in the Republic of Ireland

Additional Irish Websites

Irish-Genealogy-Toolkit.com

- Free “how-to” guide to researching Irish Family History, with maps and family history forms
- Blog - www.irishgenealogynews.com

IrelandGenWeb.com

- Part of WorldGenWeb with website links containing indexes and guides for all 32 counties

IrelandXO.com

- Ireland Reaching Out - “reverse genealogy” program
- Volunteer effort to identify worldwide descendants of Irish people who left Ireland

Griffith’s Valuation Example

- James Parker, Sr. living in the townland of Ballykeel in the mid-1800s
- Ask About Ireland website - askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation
- PRONI - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/searching-valuation-revision-books>