



The Luck of the Irish

*How to Overcome the Record Losses
and Find Your Ancestors*

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Overview

- Conduct an exhaustive search of U.S. records before beginning research in Ireland to identify your ancestor's home town/townland and religion.
- Review Irish history to understand Irish customs, changing laws and shifting boundaries.
- Verify you are researching the correct person in the correct place – common names, spelling variants, and multiple townlands with the same name are common.

Some Excellent Online Resources

- The Irish Genealogy Toolkit <https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/>
- Irish Ancestors <https://www.johngrenham.com/>
- The FamilySearch Wiki https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Genealogy
- The Family History Guide <https://www.thefhguide.com/project-9-ireland.html>

Irish Administrative Land Divisions

- Countries – Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (divided in 1922).
- Provinces – Ulster (north), Leinster (east), Munster (south) and Connacht (west).
- Counties – most record collections are organized by county.
- Baronies – important for land surveys and early census records.
- Civil Parishes – important for property taxes.
- Townlands -- the most fundamental of all Irish land divisions; essential for successful genealogical research. Many townlands share the same name.

Ecclesiastical Divisions

- Dioceses (12 Church of Ireland; 26 Roman Catholic).
- Church of Ireland Parishes – nearly identical to civil parishes; important for baptism, marriages and many burial records.
- Roman Catholic Parishes – important for baptism, marriages and some burial records.

Registration Districts

- Superintendent's Districts (formerly Poor Law Unions) (137) – important for civil registration records.
- Registration Districts (District Electoral Divisions) (4,000+) – important for cancelled land books and modern census returns.

Irish Administrative Land Divisions (cont.)

- [Irish Genealogy Toolkit](#). Brief descriptions of the various land divisions.
- [Irish Townland Database](#). Online version from the 1851 census,
- [Townland Index and Database-1851](#). Allows for several types of searches, including two 'Sounds Like' functions, advanced wildcard and group-by search modes and a 'browse' mode to show lists of townlands included in a Poor Law Union, Barony or Civil Parish.
- [Townlands.ie](#). Search for a townland, civil parish, barony, electoral division or county.

Census Records

- Indexes and images of the 1901 and 1911 censuses are freely available online at [The National Archives of Ireland](#), [FamilySearch](#) and [Ancestry](#) (subscription).
- Fragments of the 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851 censuses remain and are freely available online at [The National Archives of Ireland](#), [FamilySearch](#) and [Ancestry](#) (subscription).
- The 1861-1891 censuses are completely gone.

Pension Search Forms of 1841/1851 Census Records

- The Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 introduced a non-contributory pension for eligible people aged 70 and over. Almost 99% of those eligible in Ireland applied.
- Applicants could request a search of the 1841/1851 census records for proof of age.
- An index and images of the Pension Search Forms (1915-1922) **for those living in what is now the Republic of Ireland at the time of their pension applications** are available on the [National Archives of Ireland Web site](#) and on [FindMyPast](#) (subscription).
- Images of Pension Search Results Books **for those living in what is now Northern Ireland, plus Counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan at the time of their pension applications** are available on [FamilySearch](#) (must be viewed at a Family History Center or FamilySearch affiliate library).

Civil Registration Records

- Registration of non-Catholic marriages began in 1845.
- Registration of all births, marriages and deaths began in 1864.
- 100/75/50yr rule for access to birth/marriage/death records.
- Until 1877 the indexes were arranged alphabetically for the entire year, but from 1878 they were divided by quarter years (Jan-Mar, Apr-Jun, Jul-Sep, and Oct-Dec).
- Free access to index and images of civil registrations for all of Ireland until 1921, and Republic of Ireland 1922 onward on the [General Register Office Web site](#).
 - Still adding images for deaths prior to 1870.
- Pay per view access to civil registrations for all of Ireland until 1921, and Northern Ireland 1922 onward on the [General Register Office Northern Ireland Web site](#).
- The Family History Library has microfilms of original birth, marriage & death registers. (Must be viewed at a Family History Center):
 - Births: [All of Ireland 1864-Mar 1881](#); [1900-1921](#), plus
 - Births: [Republic of Ireland 1922-1958](#); [Northern Ireland 1922-1959](#).
 - Marriages: [All of Ireland 1845-1870](#); [Northern Ireland 1922-1959](#).
 - Deaths: [All of Ireland 1864-1870](#); [Northern Ireland 1922-1959](#).

Land Records

Griffith's Valuation

- It was published county by county across the island between 1847 and 1864.
- Covers who owned what and who rented what. Does not include those in cities.
- Only the head of each household is identified.
- Is arranged by county, barony, Poor Law Union, civil parish and townland.
- Available on subscription sites [Ancestry](#) and [FindMyPast](#) and – for free – on [Ask About Ireland](#), where it can be searched by surname, or by place name.

Cancelled/Valuation Revision Books

- Records of changes to land ownership following Griffith's Valuation. As each Revision Book was filled, it was 'Cancelled', and a new Revision Book created in that series. Some of the series continue up to the year 2000.
- The Books for Northern Ireland the years 1864 to 1933 have been digitized in color and are available, free to view, on the [Public Record Office of Northern Ireland \(PRONI\) Web site](#).
 - Includes a fully searchable place name index.
- The Books for the Republic of Ireland up to 1900 can be viewed at LDS FamilySearch Centers and affiliated libraries.
 - Unfortunately, they are only available in black and white.

Tithe Applotment Books

- Record the amount of tax due from each occupier of tithe-eligible land, regardless of religion, to support the clergy of the Church of Ireland, 1823-37.
- The books list about 40% percent of land occupiers; They do not include those who worked on Church-owned agricultural land, those who did not rent land, or those who lived and worked in urban areas.
- Arranged by townland, listing the names of each land occupier, the size and quality of their land, and the tithe deemed payable.
- Books for the 26 counties of the Irish Republic are available for free on the [National Archives of Ireland \(NAI\) Web site](#) and on FamilySearch: [Ireland Tithe Applotment Books, 1814-1855](#) and [Index to Tithe Applotment Books, 1823-1838 CD-ROM](#).
- The books for Northern Ireland are available through the PRONI Web site. Please refer to: [Access Instructions from Irish Genealogy News](#).

Landed Estates Court/Encumbered Estates Court

- Established to dispose of land whose owners were either insolvent or otherwise without the resources needed to properly manage their estates after the Famine.
- The sales took place between 1849 and 1875, and included about 8,000 estates.
- Descriptive information including the names of tenants and the value of their rents was published for potential buyers.
- Most genealogists won't find anything about their ancestors in the collection. However, more than half a million tenants are identified, and many maps are included.
- The leases and tenancies often date back to the 18th century and may be the only surviving written evidence of the lives of many of our ancestors.
- Available online at [FindMyPast](#) (subscription) and at [FamilySearch Centers](#).

Land Records (cont.)

Registry of Deeds

- While the original purpose of the Registry of Deeds was to enforce rules limiting the land transactions of Catholics, many Catholics and representatives of Catholic families appear in the memorials, including merchants, traders, and Catholic occupiers of land.
- The Family History Library has digitized the [Transcripts of Memorials of Deeds, Conveyances and Wills, 1708-1929](#).
 - A memorial in legal terms was the preservation or recording of an event, and specifically an abstract of the particulars of a deed for registration.
 - A conveyance was a document relating to the transfer of property.
 - Includes an index to grantors and an index to lands (townland or address) by county. There is no index to grantees.
- Includes mention of some Catholics, middle-class merchants and traders.
- [Ongoing Index Project](#): 465,510 index records from 48,784 deeds as of 9 Jan 2022.

Church Records

Church of Ireland Records

- Most don't begin until the late 18th or early 19th century.
- About half were lost in the 1922 explosion and fire.
- Registers and General Vestry Minutes include mention of those of other faiths.
- Microfilm copies are available through the Representative Church Body Library in Dublin, and The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast.
- Consult [The List of Church of Ireland Parish Registers](#) to determine which records are available and where they may be found.
- Images of Pension Search Results (1916-22) of parish registers for proof of age in support of pension applications are available on [FamilySearch](#) (must view at a Family History Center or FamilySearch affiliate library). [List of parishes searched](#).

Roman Catholic Records

- Few exist before the 1820s, and the oldest records are from churches in the east.
- The National Library of Ireland recently digitized and placed online the registers up to about 1880 it had microfilmed in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Images at [National Library of Ireland](#); linked indexes at [FindMyPast](#) (free) and [Ancestry](#) (subscription).
- Transcriptions of many Irish Catholic parish records are available by subscription at [RootsIreland.ie](#). Check their holdings [using this link](#) before you subscribe.

Presbyterian Registers

- Most don't begin until the late 18th or early 19th century.
- Many pre-1830s baptisms, marriages and burials will be found in Church of Ireland registers.
- Available through Public Record Office of Northern Ireland & [Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland](#) (subscription).
 - PRONI's '[Guide to Church Records](#)' lists all the reference numbers for records they hold of Presbyterian and other denominations across Ireland.
 - The PRONI reference numbers for the records of Presbyterian churches which have been microfilmed are prefixed MIC 1P/ and those that are in original or photocopy form are prefixed CR3.

Church Records (cont.)

IrishGenealogy.ie holds a free database of indexed parish registers for:

- County Carlow - Church of Ireland registers.
- County Cork - Roman Catholic registers for the Cork & Ross diocese.
- Dublin City - Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic registers.
- County Kerry - Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic registers.

Once the Representative Church Body Library completes the digitization of the Church of Ireland registers it has, they will be indexed and made available [on this Web site](#).

References

FamilySearch Learning Center. Has 178 free lectures to help you do your family history research in Ireland.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/learning-center-search/?q=Ireland>

Grenham, John, 2019. *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors: The Complete Guide. Fifth Edition.* Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, MD, 688pp.

Grenham, John, 2022. John has a YouTube channel with many videos related to the use of his comprehensive Web site. Click the SHOW MORE button below this first video to see all the others. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVLZQdypGfs>

Legacy Family Tree Webinars. Has 48 (subscription) recorded Webinars with handouts, including a 12 lecture series by John Grenham, to help you do your family history research in Ireland. <https://familytreewebinars.com/>

List of Church of Ireland Parish Registers. A color-coded resource accounting of what survives; where they are; and with additional information of copies, transcripts and online indexes.

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/AboutUs/library/registers/ParishRegisters/PARISHREGISTERS.pdf>

Macafee, Bill. *Family and Local History Website.* The purpose of this website is to provide a research tool for anyone interested in researching their ancestors and the localities where they lived within the area of Ulster covered by Co. Londonderry and North Antrim. <http://www.billmacafee.com/>

Paton, Chris, 2019. *Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet: A Guide for Family Historians.* Pen & Sword Books Ltd., Barnsley, South Yorkshire, 176pp.

Roulston, William, 2018. *Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors: The Essential Genealogical Guide to Early Modern Ulster, 1600-1800 (Second Edition).* Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast, NI, 640pp.

Santry, Claire, 2017. *The Family Tree Irish Genealogy Guide: How to Trace Your Ancestors in Ireland,* Family Tree Books, Cincinnati, OH, 240pp.

The Record Repositories

The General Register Office of Ireland. Free access to civil registrations for all of Ireland until 1921, and Republic of Ireland 1922 onward. Records available online include: births (1864-1919); marriages (1845-1944); and deaths (1878-1969). Yet to be added are deaths prior to 1878.

The 100/75/50 year rule applies to births/marriages/deaths.

<https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/civil-search.jsp>

The National Archives of Ireland. Free access to census returns for the 19th and early 20th centuries, the 19th-century Tithe Applotment Books, Valuation Office house, field, tenure and quarto books for 1824-1856, soldiers' wills and Will Calendars for 1858-1920 and 1922-1982. <http://www.genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/>

The Irish Family History Foundation. Subscription site. "The Foundation has been the coordinating body for a network of county genealogy centres and family history societies on the island of Ireland for over thirty years. The genealogy centres' databases include parish church records of baptisms, marriages and deaths, many civil records, census returns and gravestone inscriptions." (A trick: entering four wild-cards – percentage symbols – in the Townland/Address field gets around the requirement to enter at least one surname in a search!) RootsIreland.ie

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. A free index to civil registrations records (births over 100 years, marriages over 75 years and deaths over 50 years) with images of the certificates. Also, a free indexed parish register transcript database for: County Carlow - Church of Ireland registers; County Cork - Roman Catholic registers for the Cork & Ross diocese; County Dublin - Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic registers; and County Kerry - Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic registers. <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/>

The National Library of Ireland. The National Library provides free access to a wealth of information that can be used to trace the history of a family. A significant record source is the images of the Catholic parish registers to 1880. <https://www.nli.ie/en/family-history-introduction.aspx>

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Free access to church records, valuation books and maps, tithe applotment books, estate records, and maps. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/family-and-local-history-records>

The General Register Office of Northern Ireland. Pay per view access to civil registrations for all of Ireland until 1921, and Northern Ireland 1922 onward. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/go-groni-online>

Ask About Ireland. Free search of Griffith's Valuation, with copies of transcripts, the original printed pages and maps. <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>

The Representative Church Body Library. The Anglican Record Project is an ongoing endeavor to make the registers of baptism, marriage and burial from Church of Ireland parishes available in a digital format. <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/anglican-record-project>