



Researching Your Irish Ancestors

I. U.S. Sources

You will need to research and fully exhaust all possible records in the immigrant's new country before looking for records in Ireland. Talk with extended family members to see if they remember anything or have old letters or records.

Types of records to look for in the U.S.:

U.S. Federal Census records, church records, passenger lists, obituaries, newspaper articles, death or marriage certificates, naturalization records, probate records, military records, World War I or World War II draft registration cards, Irish organizations (religious, political, fraternal, etc.), published county histories

II. Records in Ireland

Understanding Irish land divisions will help you locate the correct genealogical records. Once you have located the townland in Ireland, you can begin looking in Irish records.

A. Land Divisions

- i. Nation, province, county, barony, Poor Law Union, superintendent registrar's district, District Electoral District, diocese, ecclesiastical parish, civil parish, city and town, townland

B. Church Records

You should also know your ancestor's religious affiliation. The Roman Catholic faith was predominant, but the Church of Ireland (Anglican Church) was the state-recognized church. Tithes were paid to the state church whether you belonged or not.

- i. Parish Records (Catholic)
 - Baptism and marriage common, burials rare. Records could be in English or Latin. Godparents are often close relatives. Lists place of residence.
 - Ancestry LE (in-library use only) and Findmypast (in-library use only)--index and images
 - [National Library of Ireland](#)—images only
 - FamilySearch—check catalog to see if digital images available for parish
- ii. Parish Records (Church of Ireland)
 - Law required Church of Ireland parish registers to be sent to Dublin. Those records were destroyed in 1922 when the Public Records Office burned. Not all records were sent to Dublin and other parishes made copies of records before sending them. [RCB Library](#) (Representative Church Body Library) has a list of every known record.
- iii. Presbyterian Church Records
 - Mostly Northern Ireland—Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) or in local custody

C. Civil Registration

- i. GRO (General Register Office) or PRONI (Public Records Office Northern Ireland) holds civil registration records organized by Superintendent Registrar's district. Birth, marriages, and death registration began in 1864 (1845 for non-Catholic marriages)
- ii. Ancestry LE (in-library use only), Findmypast (in-library use only), FamilySearch, [IrishGenealogy](#)—Indexes only

D. Irish Census

- i. Censuses were taken every ten years from 1821–1911. The 1901 and 1911 censuses are the only complete surviving census records for the pre-Independence period. A few fragments from 1821–1851 survived the 1922 fire at the Public Records Office. 1861–1891 were destroyed for other reasons.
- ii. [National Archives of Ireland](#)—index and images; FindMyPast (in-library use only) and AncestryLE (in-library use only)—index only

E. Census Substitutes

- i. Old Age Pension Claims (1908–1922)
 - Act of 1908 required proof of age to validate claim and receive assistance. 1841 and 1851 Census returns used to prove claim (before they were destroyed).
- ii. Griffith's Valuation of Ireland (1848–1864)
 - Property tax survey that lists householders (renters) and landholders (owners). Only head of household listed but can help you locate the townland where your ancestor lived so that you can find additional records.
- iii. Revision Books, Cancelled Books, and Current Land Books
 - Revisions made to Griffith's Valuation since 1860s. Noted changes in occupancy and ownership on an annual basis, directly into the books. Useful for helping genealogists to calculate significant dates in their family's history such as dates of emigration or death and to help find living descendants. Revisions made in color (Family History Library microfilm is not in color.)
- iv. Tithe Applotment Books (1823–1838)
 - Compiled to determine the amount of tax or tithe which occupiers of agricultural land paid to the Church of Ireland. Only head of household is listed. Laborers who worked on land owned by the Church, those laborers that did not rent land, and those that lived in cities were exempt.

F. Other Records and Resources

- i. Registry of Deeds
 - Began in 1708. Most Irish did not own land. Could contain marriage settlements, leases, mortgages, and wills with deed registrations.
- ii. Wills and Administrations
 - Generally, only males with property but could list the names of the deceased's family and friends.
- iii. Irish Heritage Centres and local libraries and archives