

Getting Started with Irish Genealogy Records

Abbreviations:

ALE – Ancestry Library Edition – Available at every Buffalo & Erie County Public Library location. Temporarily available from home with a B&ECPL card through at least December 31st, 2020.

COI – Church of Ireland

FS – FamilySearch – The genealogy website of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
<https://www.familysearch.org/en/>

FMP – <https://www.findmypast.com/> – A subscription (\$) genealogy website that includes many Irish records.

GROI – General Records Office of Ireland (Republic of Ireland) -
<https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en>

GRONI – General Records Office of Northern Ireland - <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk> (\$)

NI – Northern Ireland

PROI – Public Records Office of Ireland - <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/article/guide-records-deposited-public-record-office-ireland-herbert-wood/>

RI – (\$) Roots Ireland, the website of the Irish Family History Foundation, the coordinating body of county genealogy centers and family history societies. <https://www.rootsireland.ie/>

ROI – Republic of Ireland

1. **A New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland** by Brian Mitchell – A great county by county map guide to religious and civil boundaries. Available in the Grosvenor Room.
2. **Civil Vital Records** – Births, deaths, marriages. Original records are kept by the Superintendent Registrar and duplicates are at the General Records Office.
 - a. **Civil Birth Records** – Began in 1864. Births were supposed to be registered within one month. Sometimes parents registered late and falsified the birth date to avoid fines. In this case, you may find a baptismal record for the child before a birth date on a civil birth record. Usually include: date and place of birth, father's name, mother's maiden name, father's profession, informant's name, date of registration and registrar's name.
 - b. **Civil Marriage Records** – Non-Catholic records began in 1845. Catholic records began in 1865. Parish clergy recorded these. These were kept in duplicate, one with the parish and one with the local registrar. Quarterly marriage returns were made and given to the General Records Office. These usually include: Names of bride/groom, residential addresses, marital status, age (often only lists that the individual is of full age), occupation, father's names and occupations, date and place of marriage (incl. church name), religious denomination.
 - c. **Civil Death Records** – Began in 1864. Historically had one year to register a death. These usually include: date and place of death, gender, marital status, age,

occupation, cause of death, informant and their place of residence, date of registration and registrar.

- d. **Online Indexes of Civil Vital Records** – ALE, FMP
 - i. FS - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1408347>
 - e. **Online Civil Vital Records** –
 - i. GROI - <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en>. The online records are from GROI. Births: 1864-1919. Marriages: 1845-1944. NI records to 1921 only. Deaths: 1871-1969. NI records to 1921 only.
 - ii. GRONI - <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk> (\$) This website can be searched, but a fee is required to view results.
 - iii. RI - <https://www.rootsireland.ie/> (\$) – These are generally record transcriptions. Includes: civil vital records, church records (Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Quaker, others), census records, census substitute records, gravestone transcriptions.
 - f. **Obtaining Offline Civil Vital Records** –
 - i. Republic of Ireland Records – GROI - <https://www2.hse.ie/births-deaths-and-marriages/>
 - ii. Northern Ireland – GRONI - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/ordering-life-event-certificates>
3. **Church Records History** – Catholics were oppressed from the time the Church of Ireland became the Irish State Church (1560) until the late 1700s. Few Catholic records exist before the 1820s. Catholics were emancipated in 1829. Church of Ireland was the state church until 1869. James G Ryan's, ***Irish Church Records*** (Dublin, 1992) is a good book to learn church history, the records kept, and where to access them.
- a. **Catholic Church Records** – Parish borders are fluid. Always look in bordering parishes for records.
 - i. **Baptisms** – Record: baptismal date, parents' names (incl. mother's maiden), sponsors, child's name, maybe residence. First child (at least) usually was baptized at mother's church of baptism (even if moved away).
 - ii. **Marriages** – Record: names of parties marrying, date of marriage, witnesses, and may include residences, father's names, ages, occupations, relationships of witnesses to those getting married. Most took place at the church where the bride was baptized.
 - iii. **Burials** – Only the Church of Ireland was allowed to have burial grounds.
 - iv. **Online Catholic Church Records** - <https://registers.nli.ie/>
 1. FMP and ALE indexed the National Library of Ireland online records and link to the same images which are online for free.
 2. FS has about 40% of historic Catholic records.
 3. RI – Has transcriptions of about 85% of Catholic records to 1900 or later.
 - b. **Church of Ireland Records** - Kept 1600s upwards (more likely to exist late 1700s upward), over half were destroyed in 1922 (fire) Public Records Office, Dublin. Some local clergy had copied their records before sending to PROI, or hadn't sent them yet. Church of Ireland beliefs translate to the Episcopal Church in the U.S.
 - i. **Baptisms** – Record: date of baptism, parents' names and address, father's profession and officiant.
 - ii. **Marriages** – Record: date of marriage, names of couple, may list age, marital status, profession, residences, church of marriage, witnesses, officiant, fathers' names and professions.

- iii. **Burials** – May record: name, residence, burial date, age, officiant.
- iv. **Church of Ireland Record Access** –
 - 1. **Representative Church Body Library**, Dublin holds most surviving historical (pre-1900) original records:
<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/rcb-library/list-of-parish-registers>
 - 2. **RI** – Has transcriptions of about 50% of surviving records.
 - 3. **GROI** – Has Dublin records online and a few other areas.
- c. **Presbyterian Church Records** – Presbyterianism spread through Ireland in the 1700s and 1800s. Not it is mainly in Northern Ireland. Presbyterians were oppressed when the COI was the state church. Information recorded is the same as for the COI.
 - i. **Marriages** - Had to be performed under Church of Ireland ceremonies (until 1782) or children would be illegitimate (lost inheritance rights). Look in COI records, especially if the couple owned land. Prior notice of marriage had to be given in Kirk Sessions (minutes Elder meetings). Look for marriage in Session Minute books.
 - 1. **Marriage License Bonds (1629-1864)** - A marriage may be recorded here if the marriage took place in a home or if the marriage was to take place immediately.
 - ii. **Funerals** – A COI minister had to be present. Look for burials in COI burial grounds.
 - iii. **Kirk Session Minutes** – May include: New members, mentions of marriages or baptisms, disciplinary actions, certificates of transference, communicant roll books.
 - iv. **Record Access** –
 - 1. **RI** – has Ulster and a few other areas.
 - 2. **In-Person Access** - PRONI has most records on microfilm; Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland has a few records; some held at local churches.
 - v. **History of Congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland...** - Listing of congregations. <https://archive.org/details/historyofcongreg00kill>

d. Other Denominations

- i. **Methodists** - Usually had dual membership with Church of Ireland until 1820s.
 - ii. **Quaker** - Mid-1600s, FMP has some records. The National Library of Ireland has some records on microfilm.
 - iii. **Jewish** – <http://irishjewishroots.com/>
 - iv. **PRONI** – Public Records Office of Northern Ireland Guide includes Church of Ireland, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Moravian, Quaker, others.
https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Guide_to_church_records.pdf
4. **Census Records** - 1821-1851 – most destroyed 1922 fire. 1861-1891 – most intentionally destroyed by the government after statistics were taken. 1901 & 1911 survived. People didn't usually know their birth date or care about exact age. 1921 – none taken due to Irish Civil War. There is a 100 year waiting period before records are accessible. Censuses were taken in the following years: 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1979, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2002 and 2006.

- a. **Online access** – FS, FMP include surviving records for 1821-1851 fragments; 1901, 1911. ALE has 1841, 1851, 1901, 1911.
 - i. National Archives of Ireland – Free, includes 1821-1851 fragments; 1901, 1911. - www.census.nationalarchives.ie.
 - b. **1901 & 1911** – Include population schedules, building censuses and out-offices return. 1901 census lists names, relationships to head of household, religion, whether can read or write, age, gender, occupation, marital status, place of birth (Irish county or foreign country), language spoken, disabilities. Extra details given in 1911 census includes: for women, number of years married, number of children born alive, number of children still living.
 - c. **1821-1851** – Records: Names of all family members, relationship to head of household, age, marital status, religion, read/write, occupation, where born. Extra details given in 1841 and 1851: number of years married, who died since previous census, year died, cause of death, who is absent, where now residing?
5. **Old Age Pension of 1909** – Qualifications: 70 years old and up, good moral character. No birth records exist for this age group so the 1841 and 1851 censuses were used to verify birth. Forms were filled out with verification information.
- a. Access, Northern Ireland – Books in Grosvenor Room: Josephine Masterson – ***Ireland: 1841/1851 Census Abstracts***. FS
 - b. Access, Republic of Ireland - <http://censussearchforms.nationalarchives.ie/search/cs/home.jsp>
6. **Griffith's Valuation** - Taken to determine land values to pay Poor Law taxes. Richard Griffith, Commissioner of Valuation; Boundary Commissioner. Published 1847-1864. Arranged by county, barony, Poor Law Union, civil parish and townland.
- a. **Information included** - Landholders [land owner], property lessor [renter] (paid the taxes), property description, house, offices, land, etc., acreage, valuation.
 - b. **Online access** – ALE, <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation> (free)
 - c. **Application in American immigrant research, mid-1800s** - May help in locating townland of your ancestors, especially if an already married couple came to the U.S. Families married individuals who lived nearby because they wanted to keep the family's land. Look for an area with both surnames.
 - i. Which areas had both the bride and the groom's surnames? Use the free tool on the Swilson website, <https://www.swilson.info/surnamexref.php>.
 - d. **Connect to later land records** – Use names from the Griffith's Valuation to move forward in time using Valuation Office revision books. Renter names are crossed off and new names are written. This could indicate a death and the new names may be heirs. ROI Books go at least until 1970s (sometimes 1980s) – not online. NI – 1864-1933 – online - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/searching-valuation-revision-books>
7. **Freeholder Records** - Freeholders were men who either: Owned their land, had a lease for the duration of their life or held a lease of lives [tenants could name three persons on their lease and they could stay on the land as long as one of those persons was alive. Usually named young family members.]
- a. List those entitled to vote or who did vote in an election.
 - i. 1727-1793 - Protestants with a freehold of at least 40 shillings a year could vote.
 - ii. 1793-1829 - Protestants and Catholics with 40 shilling freeholds were allowed to vote.

- iii. 1829 onwards - the rate was increased to 10 pounds thus making the wealthy more powerful.
- b. **Access** - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/about-freeholders-records>. These Northern Ireland freeholders' records include pre-1840 freeholders' registers and poll books. Many records destroyed in 1922 fire.
 - i. **Finding freeholder records** – John Grenham's *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* includes county by county listings of records and where to find them. Some common places to find surviving freeholders lists include landed estate papers and newspapers. Because landowners had an interest in knowing what voting freeholders lived on their estates, copies of freeholders lists are often found among the papers of landed estate owners.
 - ii. **Finding leases** - John Grenham's *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* includes county by county listings of records and where to find them. Leases are often found in the estates of landholders. These are largely not online.
 - iii. **FS:** Keyword search: Ireland CountyName Land Property –or– Ireland CountyName Manors –or– Ireland CountyName Estates.
- 8. **Wills** - Will calendars were published since 1858 and include: Name, address, occupation and financial effects, date of death, date and place of probate of will or grant of letters of administration, name(s) and address(es) of executors/beneficiaries of the will, and relationship, if it exists, to deceased, marital status of all women mentioned.
 - a. Online access - Republic of Ireland - <http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp>; Northern Ireland - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-will-calendars>

9. Useful Tools and Referrals

- a. **Resources for finding Irish place names:**
 - i. <https://www.logainm.ie/en/>
 - ii. <http://www.placenamesni.org/>
 - iii. <https://www.swilson.info/townlands.php>
 - iv. <https://www.irishancestors.ie/search/townlands/index.php>
- b. **Finding given name variants** - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/310684>
- c. **Finding more resources - *Smith's inventory of genealogical sources: Ireland*** - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/745738>
- d. **How-to books on Irish genealogy – *Genealogist's Handbook for Irish Research*** by Marie Daly; John Grenham's *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*. Both are available in the Grosvenor Room.
- e. **Grosvenor Room's Irish Genealogy Guide** - <https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications#8>
- f. **Buffalo Irish Genealogical Society** - <https://bigсны.webs.com/>
- g. **The Septs** – The periodical publication of the Irish Genealogical Society International. Available in the Grosvenor Room.
- h. **Cyndi's List** - <https://www.cyndislist.com/uk/irl>

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