

Irish Research: Discovering a Family Left Behind

Description:

Using a case study of an 1857 Irish immigrant to America, selected Irish resources will be introduced. Both text and web-based resources will illustrate a range of records and tools readily available for your research.

Availability:

The Dallas Genealogical Society will provide a recorded presentation for one year, March 2025-February 2026. <https://dallasgenealogy.org/videos/>

Limitation:

Website addresses (URLs) change over time. Some of the links may no longer work.

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Abbreviations

IFHF	Irish Family History Foundation
GRO	General Register Office
GRONI	General Register Office of Northern Ireland
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PRO	Public Record Office (Dublin)
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RC	Roman Catholic
RCB	Representative Church Body, Church of Ireland

Presentation Resources

Church Records

Catholic

Roman Catholic Parish Registers

Digitized images of parish baptism, marriage, and death registers up to 1880 are online and free to browse at the National Library of Ireland (NLI). The registers are from more than 1,000 Roman Catholic (RC) parishes and generally begin in the late 1820's, when the laws forbidding the maintenance of Roman Catholic registers were lifted.

The online registers are accessible by clickable maps of Counties, RC Dioceses, and RC Parishes. Coverage dates for the registers of each parish are listed.

- <https://registers.nli.ie/>

Searchable indexes of the registers, including free access to the NLI images, are available with a free subscription at both Ancestry and FindMyPast.

Ancestry

- *Ireland, Selections of Catholic Parish Baptisms, 1742-1881*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2195/>
- *Ireland, Selections of Catholic Parish Marriages and Banns, 1742-1884*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2239/>
- *Ireland, Selections of Catholic Parish Deaths, 1756-1881*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2240/>

FindMyPast

- *Ireland Roman Catholic Parish Baptisms:* <https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records/ireland-roman-catholic-parish-baptisms>
- *Ireland Roman Catholic Parish Marriages:* <https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records/ireland-roman-catholic-parish-marriages>
- *Ireland Roman Catholic Parish Burials:* <https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records/ireland-roman-catholic-parish-burials>

RootsIreland

RootsIreland is a searchable database, comprised of several collections, coordinated by the Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF). It contains data from 34 county genealogy centers across Ireland. The main sources on the site are Irish Catholic and other denominational records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths. A subscription is required to view the data extracted from the original records. Links are provided from specific records to the images at the NLI.

- *Baptismal/Birth Records for Ireland:*
<https://rootsireland.ie/ifhf/quis.php?type=birth&new=1>

- *Marriage Records for Ireland:*
<https://rootsireland.ie/ifhf/quis.php?type=marriage&new=1>
- *Burial/Death Records for Ireland:*
<https://rootsireland.ie/ifhf/quis.php?type=death&new=1>

Protestant: Church of Ireland

The Church of Ireland was the Established Protestant church in Ireland from 1536 until it was dis-established in 1871. Prior to the 1922 fire in the Public Register Office (PRO) in Dublin, many congregations archived original registers of marriages prior to 1845 and baptisms and burials prior to 1871 at the PRO. Over half of these were destroyed in the fire. However, many surviving registers have been preserved.

- Church of Ireland: <https://www.churchofireland.org/>

The Representative Church Body (RCB), Church of Ireland, published a list of surviving registers in December 2024. The list is organized by Parish and includes coverage dates for baptisms, marriages, and burials. Record access locations, both websites and physical sites, are included.

- *The List of Church of Ireland Parish Registers: A Colour-coded Resource Accounting For What Survives; Where It Is; & With Additional Information of Copies, Transcripts and Online Indexes.*
- <https://www.churchofireland.org/cmsfiles/pdf/AboutUs/library/registers/ParishRegisters/PARISHREGISTERS.pdf>

(See the *Multidenominational Record Collections* section below for additional record sources.)

Presbyterian

Presbyterian registers are in three main locations: in local congregational custody, in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), and at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Belfast. Many pre-1830s baptisms, marriages, and burials of Irish Presbyterians will be found in Church of Ireland registers.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

PRONI has microfilmed nearly all registers of Ireland's Presbyterian congregations. Some registers have been digitized and are available for onsite viewing.

- *PRONI Guide to Church Records*
The Guide lists the records by civil parish and indicates what records are available for what dates and where to find the records.
 - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/Guide-to-Church-Records-October-2019.pdf>
- *Church Records Available as Digital Copies in PRONI*

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/Church%20Records%20Available%20as%20Digital%20Copies%20in%20PRONI.docx>

Presbyterian Historical Society

The Society has an almost complete set of microfilms of registers of baptisms and marriages and other records of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. These are viewable onsite in Belfast.

- <https://presbyterianhistoryireland.com/our-services/family-history/>

Multidenominational Record Collections

Northern Ireland: Guide to Church Records (PRONI)

Primarily covering the six counties in Northern Ireland, this guide identifies what churches are in a parish, what records exist for each church, the coverage dates, and PRONI reference numbers. Any available digital copies at PRONI are also identified. Denominations include Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Non-Subscribing Presbyterian, Reformed Presbyterian, Methodist, Moravian, Congregational, Baptist, and Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/guide-church-records>

Irishgenealogy.ie Database of Church Records

This database is maintained by the Republic of Ireland's Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media. It includes church records of baptisms, marriages, and burials from (a) the Roman Catholic parishes in the city of Dublin, and in the RC Dioceses of Kerry and Cork & Ross (except Cork city), and (b) the Church of Ireland parishes in the city of Dublin, and in Counties Carlow and Kerry. This is a free, searchable database and includes digital images of the original records.

- <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie>

RootsIreland

RootsIreland is a searchable database, comprised of several collections, coordinated by the Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF). It contains data from 34 county genealogy centers across Ireland. The main record sources on the site are records of baptisms, marriages and deaths, primarily Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, and Presbyterian. Some counties include other denominations, for example, Methodist, Reformed Presbyterian, and Baptist.

- <https://www.rootsireland.ie/>

Property/Land Records

Griffiths Valuation: The Primary Valuation of Tenements

The purpose of the primary valuation “conducted under the direction of Richard Griffith, was to assess the amount of tax every head of household should contribute towards the support of the poor and destitute in their parish. ... Griffith’s Valuation of Ireland records the town land address, the name of each occupier, the names of the immediate lessor (the landlord’s name), a brief description of the landholding, the number of acres of land in each holding, the value of buildings and land for taxation purposes, together with the overall valuation of each holding.”

- *Dr. Robert Somerville Woodward*, <https://timeline.ie/revision-books/>

Griffith’s Valuation provides a uniform guide to the relative value of land throughout Ireland. It was conducted between 1846 and 1864 and utilized the first complete Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland, which were created between 1824 and 1842.

The final valuation reports are arranged in over 300 volumes either by Barony (1847-1852) or Poor Law Union (1852-1864), and within these by civil parishes and townlands. Several different repositories hold copies of many of the volumes.

Images of Griffith’s Valuation books are available online at the sites below. In addition, RootsIreland.ie has an indexed version.

- AskAboutIreland.ie
 - *Griffith's Valuation*
 - <https://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/index.xml>
 - Includes a historical map overlaid on a current map
- Findmypast.ie
 - *Griffith's Valuation 1847-1864*
 - <https://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records/griffiths-valuation-1847-1864>
- Ancestry
 - *Ireland, Griffith's Valuation, 1847-1864*
 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1269/>

Valuation Revision Books, 1864 to 1933

The Revision Books are a continuation of Griffith’s Valuation of Ireland. Each book covers approximately a 10-year period and records changes in the occupiers and valuations for every tenement. Books are organized by civil parishes and townlands. These records can provide hints of vital events (e.g., death of a previous occupier) as well as suggest family members (e.g., who inherited the lease).

Northern Ireland

- Freely available online: Public Record Office Northern Ireland (PRONI)
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/valuation-revision-books>
- Ancestry
 - *Northern Ireland, Valuation Revision Books, 1864-1933*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62658/>

Republic of Ireland

- Available in person at the Valuation Division Public Office in Dublin
<https://tailte.ie/en/valuation/archive-research/genealogy/>
- Records for Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork City & County, Donegal, Dublin City & County, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick City & County, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary and Wexford:
 - Digitized images available to browse in the Valuation Division Public Office

Civil Registers

Civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths started in Ireland in 1864, apart from registration of non-Catholic marriages, which began in 1845. The General Register Office in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are the repositories for registration records. There is no public access to the records in accord with privacy restrictions:

- Births, 100 years
- Marriages, 75 years
- Deaths, 50 years

Note: Registrations for the six counties of Northern Ireland prior to 1922 are available in both repositories.

It is helpful to know the Superintendent Registrar District (SRD) where the event (birth, marriage, or death) took place when searching for civil registers. Likewise, it is helpful to know that the Superintendent Registrar Districts and their component Registrar's Districts (RD), which are on the original registration images, have the same boundaries as Poor Law Unions (PLUs) and their component Dispensary Districts. Three website sites offer databases to assist in the discovery of these administrative divisions.

John Grenham: "Places"

- https://www.johngrenham.com/places/plu_index.php
- Identifies the PLU, SRD, and Registrar's District

Irish Genealogical Research Society: "Index to the Townlands, 1901"

- <https://www.irishancestors.ie/search/townlands/>
- Identifies County, Barony, Parish, County district / Superintendent Registrar's District, District Electoral Division (DED)

Shane Wilson

- <https://www.swilson.info/regdistmap.php?gregdistid=59>
- Identifies the PLU/SRD for each county & shows the location of their Dispensary Districts (Registrar's Districts) on Registration District Maps

General Register Office, Ireland (GRO)

- IrishGenealogy.ie is a free web-based service operated by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
- Historic civil registers of births, marriages, and deaths are included:
 - 1845/1864 – 1922: Records for the island of Ireland
 - 1922 – present: Records for the Republic of Ireland
 - <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie>

General Register Office for Northern Ireland (GRONI)

GRONI offers a fee-based web service through nidirect of historic registration records of births, marriages, and death.

- Records for the 6 counties of Northern Ireland
 - 1845/1864 – 1922
 - 1922 – present
- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/go-groni-online>

Census

19th Century

- 1821-1851: Mostly lost in 1922 fire at the Public Register Office in Dublin
 - Fragments survive and are searchable at the National Archives of Ireland (NAI)
 - <https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census-c19/>
- 1841-1851: Census Search Form Extracts

The Old Age Pensions Act 1908 introduced a non-contributory pension for eligible people aged 70 and over. The 1841 and 1851 census returns of Ireland at the PRO in Dublin were used as evidence of age. Applicants submitted Census Search Forms to initiate searches of these censuses at the PRO.

The completed forms provide extracted data from the censuses. The records are available online at NAI and on microfilm at PRONI.

NOTE: PRONI has the forms for the nine counties of the province of Ulster.

- *Census Search Forms, 1841/1851*
<https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census/census-search-forms-1841-and-1851/>

- The extracted data is also in two books by Josephine Masterson, which are held at many libraries, as well online at Ancestry.
 - Josephine Masterson, creator:
 - “1841/1851 Census Abstracts (Republic of Ireland)”; Print Book. Publisher: Genealogical Pub. Co., Baltimore, MD, ©1999
 - “Ireland 1841/1851 Census Abstracts (Northern Ireland)”; Print Book. Publisher: Genealogical Pub. Co., Baltimore, MD, ©1999
 - Ancestry:
 - *1841/1851 Census Abstracts (Republic of Ireland)*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/48493/>
 - *1841/1851 Census Abstracts (Northern Ireland)*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/48489/>
 - 1861-1871: Purposefully destroyed by the government shortly after collection
 - 1881-1891: Pulped in 1918

20th Century

NOTE: All census returns from 1926 onwards are closed to the public for 100 years.

- 1901 & 1911: Available online at NAI
<https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census/>
- 1921: Not taken
- 1926
 - Republic of Ireland: Available online April 2026 at NAI
 - Northern Ireland:
 - Returns destroyed
 - Reports, both general & county, available online from NI Statistics and Research Agency
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/1926-census-reports>

Newspapers

Online Irish Newspapers

British Newspaper Archive

- Partnership between the British Library and FindMyPast to digitize the Library’s newspaper collection; Subscription service
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>
- Included in FindMyPast’s Everything Annual Subscription
<https://www.findmypast.com/upgrade>

Irish Newspapers Archive

- Based in Dublin; Subscription service
- Complete runs of *The Irish Independent* (from 1905+) and *The Irish Press* (from 1930+)
<https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/>

Irish Times Archive

- Based in Dublin; Subscription service
- Articles beginning March 1859
<https://www.irishtimes.com/digital-subscriptions>

Ancestry

- *Belfast, Northern Ireland, The Belfast Newsletter (Birth, Marriage and Death Notices), 1738-1925*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2193/>

Probate Records

Church of Ireland Courts: Pre-1858

Consistorial (Diocesan) Courts

- For property held within one Anglican diocese

Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Armagh (Dublin)

- For property held in more than one diocese, where each property was valued at over £5

Availability:

- Most wills & grant books were destroyed in the 1922 fire at the Public Record Office in Dublin
- The National Archives of Ireland: *Diocesan & Prerogative, 1596-1858*
 - Copies of some wills & extracted indexes to others
 - <https://willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp>
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: *Pre-1858 Wills and Admons*
 - Accessed via the PRONI “Name Search” feature
 - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/name-search>

Civil Courts: Post-1857

Probate authority was transferred from the Church of Ireland to state authority in 1858.

Administrative areas, called probate registries, were established to process both wills and letters of administration (admons).

- Principal Probate Registry (Central registry in Dublin)
- District Probate Registries (initially 10)

All counties were assigned to a district. The FamilySearch Wiki includes tables mapping each County to its corresponding pre-1858 Diocese and to the post-1857 Probate District.

- https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Ireland_Probate_Records

Many probate records were lost in the 1922 fire at the Public Records Office in Dublin (PRO). The lost records include those from the Principal registry up to 1904 and from the District registries up to 1899. Surviving records include copies of wills at district registries that had not yet been transferred to the PRO as well as indexes of records that had been created at district registries.

Calendars (alphabetical indexes) of wills and admons were created by the Principal Registry of the Probate Court between 1858 and 1876 and by the Principal Registry of the High Court between 1877 and 1962.

- 1858-1867: Two calendars for each year, one for wills and one for administrations
- 1868 onwards: A single calendar for each year

Availability

National Archives of Ireland: *Calendars of Wills and Administrations 1858 - 1920*

- 1858-1917: Calendars cover the whole of Ireland
- 1918 onwards: Calendars cover the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland
- <https://willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp>

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI): *Will Calendars*

- 1858-1965: Indexes covering the six counties of Northern Ireland
 - Can search specific District Probate Registries: Armagh, Belfast, and Londonderry
- Images of copy wills, i.e., copies created at registry offices from the originals, are available for some years:
 - Armagh Registry (1858 to 1918): Counties Armagh and Fermanagh
 - Belfast Registry (1858 to 1909): Counties Antrim and Down
 - Londonderry Registry (1858 to 1899): Counties Londonderry and Tyrone
- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-will-calendars>

Additional Resources

General References

Websites

Genealogy Toolkit

<https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/>

Launched in 2008 by Claire Santry, a Fellow of the Irish Genealogical Research Society (IGRS). Her site provides helpful current information on releases of Irish records. It also includes an A-Z guide to assist researchers in readily finding Irish family history records, information, and advice.

Ireland Reaching Out (IrelandXO)

<https://www.irelandxo.com/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/IrelandXO>

Founded in Galway in 2009, this non-profit organization includes a volunteer community of contributors, with 32 volunteer networks in Ireland. Helpfully, the site has a free message board service for posting questions. It includes a platform for sharing ancestral stories with others.

Irish Ancestors

<https://www.irishancestors.ie/>

This website is managed by the Irish Genealogical Research Society (IGRS), a learned society founded in 1936. Its extensive library includes copies of materials compiled before the 1922 Great Fire at the Public Record Office in Dublin. It has been recognized as “holding the world’s largest and most important collection of Irish genealogical material in private hands”. Its *Unique Resources* include searchable databases, some with member-only access, and others freely available.

John Grenham

<https://www.johngrenham.com>

John Grenham is the author of *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, a valuable guide for Irish family history research. He is a member of Accredited Genealogists Ireland (AGI), the accrediting and representative body for professional genealogists in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

His informative website identifies resources in the key areas that family history researchers explore. The Maps section includes helpful interactive and overlay maps: Civil parish maps, RC parish maps, RC and civil overlaid, Poor Law Union maps, DEDs, Institutions in 1911, and Barony maps.

Shane Wilson

<https://www.swilson.info/index.php>

The freely available resources on Shane Wilson’s website include digitized historic maps for Ireland and Dublin, a townland database, “scans and extracts from a number of directories, a database of Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes as they were during the mid-1830s, Catholic and civil parish links for over 1,000 parishes, and map coordinates to over to 2,000 churches and chapels.”

Books

Title: *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, Fifth edition

Author: John Grenham

Description: John Grenham's well-established and detailed guide has thorough descriptions of all the relevant sources and county-by-county reference lists.

Publisher: Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, Maryland, 2019

Title: *Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet: A Guide for Family Historians*, Second edition

Author: Chris Paton

Description: Chris Paton's guide to researching Irish history using the internet illustrates the extraordinary variety of sources that can now be accessed online.

Publisher: Pen & Sword Family History, Yorkshire, 2019

Guides to Church Records

Family Search Wiki

- *Ireland Catholic Church Records*
- https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Ireland_Catholic_Church_Records

IrishGenealogy.ie

- *Church Records*
- <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie>

John Gresham

- *Irish Roman Catholic records*
- https://www.johngrenham.com/browse/retrieve_text.php?text_contentid=25

Administrative Divisions

Websites

Irish Placenames

John Grenham

<https://www.johngrenham.com/places/>

Irish Townlands

<https://www.townlands.ie/>

Based on data in the OpenStreetMap Project for Ireland. Provides a list of clickable counties in Ireland. Lists of baronies, civil parishes and townlands are listed for each county.

Books

Title: *General alphabetical index to the townlands and towns, parishes, and baronies of Ireland: based on the census of Ireland for the year 1851*

Author: Ireland Registrar-General
Publisher: Genealogical Pub. Co., Baltimore, 1984

Title: *A New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland* 2nd ed

Author: Brian Mitchell
Publisher: Genealogical Publishing, Baltimore, Maryland, 2002

Archives & Libraries

National Archives of Ireland (NAI)

<https://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/>

The NAI was established in 1988 and is comprised of the holdings of two earlier repositories: The State Paper Office (SPO) and the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI).

The collections listed below are free to access through searchable databases and linked images.

- Census Records: 1901 and 1911
- Pre-1901 Census Records
- Census Search Forms, 1841 – 51
- Tithe Applotment Books, 1823 – 37
- Soldiers' Wills, 1914 – 1918
- Calendars of Wills and Administrations, 1858 – 1922
- Prerogative and diocesan copies of some wills and indexes to others, 1596 – 1858
- Diocesan and Prerogative Marriage Licence Bonds Indexes, 1623 – 1866
- Catholic qualification & convert rolls, 1700 – 1845
- Valuation Office house, field, tenure and quarto books 1824 – 1856
- Shipping agreements and crew lists, 1863 – 1921
- Will Registers 1858 – 1900

National Library of Ireland (NLI)

<https://www.nli.ie/>

Catholic Parish Registers: <https://registers.nli.ie>

Further Research: <https://www.nli.ie/family-history/further-research>

Located in Dublin, the NLI collects, protects, and provides free access to over 12 million items. Four helpful information and consultation services for family history researchers are offered: Getting Started, Family History Service, Catholic Parish Registers, and Further Research.

The Further Research service provides helpful descriptive information and locations (both physical and online) for records in these key areas: Civil Records, Church Records, Census Records, Newspapers, Directories & Local History Publications, Property Records, Landed Estates, Maps, Migration Records, and Military Records.

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni>

Information Leaflet Series: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/information-leaflets>

PRONI is the official archive for Northern Ireland and holds documents from 1600 to the present day. PRONI offers an online e-catalog of its holdings and access to records of importance to family history researchers.

PRONI also offers helpful information leaflets for many record collections and topics. The leaflets are arranged into four series: *Your family tree*, *Local history*, *Historical topics*, and *General information*.

The collections listed below are free to access through searchable databases.

- eCatalogue
- Freeholders' records
- Londonderry Corporation records
- PRONI Historical Maps viewer
- PRONI Web Archive
- Street directories
- Ulster Covenant
- Valuation Revision Books
- Will calendars
- Name Search
 - Pre-1858 diocesan wills and administration bonds
 - 1740 Protestant householders returns
 - 1766 religious census returns
 - 1775 dissenters' petitions