

Ireland and the Great Famine of Records: How to Find Your Irish Ancestors

Getting Started

Learn About Your Ancestors

- What part of Ireland did they come from?
 - Talk to family
 - Look at death records, census records, immigration records
 - Do DNA testing
- Were they Catholic or Protestant?
- Were they wealthy or peasants?
- Did they change their name?

What to Expect in Your Research

- For most people, if you locate your family in Ireland, you should be able to find ancestors back to mid-1800s. With luck, back to 1800. If you can connect to a clan family head, even further.

- People—whole families—can just disappear in Ireland.
- They may have died, emigrated, or just stop showing up on records. Just keep looking!

Things to Watch For

- Be extra careful evaluating records!
- Records are scarce—because a record matches name, place, time, etc., don't assume it's accurate.
- There are relatively few surnames in Ireland, and even fewer given names.
- Given names are repeated over and over in families, and multiply through generations.
- You need a higher standard of proof to accept a record. Try to prove it's wrong before you accept it as right!

What There Is and Where to Find It

Census Records

- Census for 1901, 1911 and bits of 1821, 1831, 1841, and 1851 are available
- Information is typical: Name, Age, Sex, Relationship to head of household, Occupation, Marital status, etc.
- Atypical information: Religion, County or country of birth, Knowledge of the Irish language
- 1911 Census includes questions for married women: How many births; How many children still living.
- Free Access at <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>
- Also available on Ancestry and FindMyPast

Catholic and Protestant Parish Records

- Catholic and Protestant parish records until 1864. Later ones only accessible at origin.

- Free access to all Catholic parish images at <https://registers.nli.ie/>, but not indexed
- Free access to some indexed parish records at www.irishgenealogy.ie
- FamilySearch and Ancestry have some indexed records and images.

Civil Birth/Marriage/Death Records

- Civil Records were kept from 1864
- Non-Catholic marriages from 1845
- Privacy laws limit record access to after 100 years (birth), 75 years (marriage), 50 years (death).
- Free access at www.irishgenealogy.ie to
- Births: 1864-1919: images and index
- Marriages: 1845-1944: images and index
- Deaths: 1864-1877: index only; 1878-1969: images and index. Should have more soon.
- FamilySearch may have indexes of years that are not available from IrishGenealogy.

Land Records—Census Alternative

Tithe Applotment records

- Compiled between 1823 and 1837 to determine payment of tithes.
- They don't cover cities or towns, only farmland holdings of > 1 acre.
- Free access at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie

Griffith's Valuation

- Gives information on where people lived from 1847 to 1864 and the property they possessed.
- Arranged by County à Poor Law Union à Civil Parish à Townland
- Gives head of household, landlord, property description and value.
- Map reference number gives location on Ordnance Survey map.
- Free Access at www.askaboutireland.ie.

Land Records

- Valuation Revision Books show changes in holdings after Griffith's
- Free access to counties of Northern Ireland (1864 – 1933) at PRONI
- For the counties of Ireland, some are on FamilySearch and FindMyPast. Others are in Microfilm at SLC or at the Valuation Office in Dublin.

Estate Records

- In the 18th and 19th centuries, most Irish people weretenant farmers on landed estates. If the estate records are available, they may include leases and deeds, rental and account books, maps, and correspondence.
- During the 20th century, many landed estates were broken up and sold off. Their records can be searched for at the NLI at sources.nli.ie. Not all will be available online.

Pro Tips

Find My Past

- Specializes in UK records
- FREE subscriptions available for church members and also available at Family History Centers. Search accessible from FamilySearch search panel.
- Best overall place to search for: Parish, Land, and Census records; Workhouse Admission and Release Rolls and Commission Minutes; Petty Court Records, Prison Records, Trade and City Directories

RootsIreland

- Subscription site www.rootsireland.ie is the largest and best search engine for parish records (\$34/month).
- It allows searches by lots of parameters, making it easy to find siblings.

JohnGresham.com

- Some usage for free. \$12/month subscription.
- No unique information, but well presented.
- Valuable for beginning research.

Newspapers

Tips for using newspapers:

- In 1800s, only wealthy people have notices of BMD in newspapers.
- Poorer people appear only if sensational death or criminal activity.
- Death Notices in Newspapers—more recently, Irish custom required placing a death notice and/or thank you when a family member died.

British Newspaper Archive

- A project of FindMyPast and British Museum
- Available at Family History Centers (limited)
- About \$17/month, \$102/year, or pay as you go (\$26 for 40 pages)

Irish Newspaper Archive

- Not as fast or useful as BNA, but worth looking through as they have different newspaper issues available.
- \$29/ month. Hourly, daily, yearly subscriptions also available.