

Researching Ulster Scots Ancestors

Class 5: Researching in Northern Ireland

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Despite the large amount of online records for Irish family historians, there is still a wealth of information in libraries and archives throughout Ireland. This class will introduce some major record sets that are not online or only have a partial online presence. We'll learn what they contain, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, where they are located and how to use them for research. We will explore the benefits of researching in local county archives, libraries, and museums and discuss some tips for planning a future research trip to Northern Ireland as well as steps to take for those interested in hiring a researcher.

Why go to Ireland

My top five reasons for going to Ireland are to:

1. Visit the ancestral place.
2. Connect with possible relatives.
3. Access records not online.
4. Dig deeper in your ancestors' lives.
5. Immerse yourself in your Irish heritage by experiencing the country and its people.

What you need to know before you go

As you learned in Class Two, research for your ancestor's origins begins on this side of the Atlantic. You want to learn as much as you can about your ancestor before taking up research in Ireland. Here are some things you should know before you go:

- Name of immigrant's ancestor's parents (preferably with maiden name of mother).
- Religion of ancestor.
- The exact place – the townland. (Knowing the parish name is fine.)
- Time period for when your ancestor and their family lived in Ireland.
- Know all the administrative divisions associated with your ancestor's placename. This is important as many records are organized by parish name, barony, or other administrative divisions.
- Learn more about the origins of your ancestor's placename by consulting websites such as <http://www.placenamesni.org/> for Northern Ireland and <https://www.logainm.ie/en/> for all of Ireland.

Beyond traditional sources for research

As family historians we are always seeking more information about our ancestors lives in Ireland. There are many records that previously were only available in Ireland, but more and more are coming online.

- The records of the Registry of Deeds.
- National School Records.
- Records of organizations:
 - The Freemasons
 - Orange Order and Lodges
- Local and family history manuscripts.

Exploring 17th and 18th century records

Since many Presbyterian church records begin in the 1800s, extending the family tree back into the 18th or even the 17th century presents great challenges for family historians. There are, however, some surviving records, many of which are at the Public Record Office (PRONI) in Belfast.

Some 17th Century records:

- Books on the Ulster Plantations.
- Muster Rolls.
- Name Lists such as:
 - 1659 census
 - Hearth money rolls
 - Poll books

Some 18th century records:

- Census substitutes:
 - Census of Protestant Householders 1740
 - Religious census of 1766
 - Flaxseed lists 1796
- Records related to the United Irishmen and 1798 Rebellion.

Genealogical research collections and their records

Many professional genealogists, clergymen, and others have compiled and extracted data from records in Ireland. Many worked tirelessly transcribing and extracting data from records sets that were destroyed in the 1922 fire at the Public Records Office in Dublin. It is their transcriptions of so many records that are a great value to researchers today.

Important Irish genealogists and their collections:

- Tenison Groves
 - His collection is at PRONI and consists of:
 - 27 boxes, 20,000 copies of documents.
 - Database for pre-1858 wills online at PRONI is based on his work.
 - What will you find?
 - Muster rolls, militia lists, Protestant householders' survey, gravestone inscriptions and more!
 - Microfilmed by Family History Library and browsable online access at FamilySearch.org.
- Gertrude Thrift
 - 150,000 abstracts containing transcripts of wills with notes from parish registers, military commissions, freemen rolls, wills and more.
 - Pedigree charts and family notes.
 - On FindMyPast.com.

- Dr. Francis Crossle and son Philip:
 - Transcribed many military records.
 - Newry, County Down research
 - On FindMyPast.com.
- Rev. David Stewart
 - Focus on Presbyterian families in Down, transcripts of Presbyterian records.
 - Papers at PRONI are restricted but can use available microfilm.

Registry of Deeds

The Registry of Deeds, located in Dublin, was established in 1708, to oversee the registration of lands held by the Protestant Anglo-Irish that were confiscated in the previous century from Roman Catholics and others. Contains memorials or transcripts of original land transactions includes deeds, leases, wills, marriage settlements, and conveyances. There is a Grantor index and a Land index but no Grantee index.

Where to find them:

- The Registry of Deeds Index Project is an ongoing volunteer project whose purpose is to create finding aids for the records held at the Registry, <https://www.irishdeedsindex.net/index.php>
- The Family History Library has microfilmed the Registry records. The digitized images can be accessed from home via their library catalog, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/>

National School Records

National schools were established in Ireland in 1831. These records can have useful information for family research and usually contain:

- Name, age, and address of child.
- Occupation of father. (But no parents names are provided).
- Names of previously attended schools, if applicable.
- Sometimes references to emigration.

Where to find them:

- National Archives of Ireland in partnership with www.findmypast.com has put many of their records online. These records include school registers for the counties of Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan.
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has an online guide, organized by parish <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/index-school-collections-proni>
- The Family History Library has some microfilmed school records. The collection of Northern Ireland School records can only be accessed at the Family History Library or an Affiliate Library. Some school records for the city of Belfast can be accessed remotely.
- Local county archives and libraries in the Republic may also have school records.

Repositories for research in Northern Ireland

- The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland should be the first stop of your journey to connect with ancestors from Northern Ireland. Although a government archive, their many private collections can be quite useful to family historians. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni> Consult their online guides and catalogs to help you plan before your visit:
Guides to PRONI record <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/guides-proni-records>
Online catalog <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-ecatalogue>
- Presbyterian Historical Society has a library and archive with material that relate to the history of Presbyterianism in Ireland, <https://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com>
- Linen Hall Library was founded in 1788 is the oldest library in Belfast. Located in the city center. It has a strong reference collection of genealogy, heraldry, and history materials. <https://linenhall.com/>

Mining the records of local county archives and libraries

Prior to the digitization of so many Irish records, local county archives and libraries took a backseat to the major repositories in Dublin and Belfast – but no more! Many local records are not online and Irish genealogists seeking to dig deeper should explore the resources of these repositories.

Records they may have:

- Records of the Poor Law (Workhouse records). These records may contain:
 - Indoor relief registers
 - Infirmary and hospital records
 - Death registers (pre-date 1864)
 - Board of Guardian minutes and correspondence
- Small family estate records
- Grand Jury records (some date back to 18th c.)
- Family and local history materials

Donegal County Archive (also known as Donegal County Council),

<http://www.donegalcoco.ie/culture/archives/>

Cavan County Archives, www.cavancoco.ie

Monaghan County Library Local Studies Collection, www.monaghan.ie/library

Armagh County Museum, <https://visitarmagh.com/places-to-explore/armagh-county-museum/>



Hiring a Professional Researcher

You may want to hire a professional research services or a professional genealogist to research your family history in Ireland.

- Ulster Historical Foundation, <https://www.ancestryireland.com/>
- Many local County Genealogy Centers throughout Ireland do lookups and research for hire. A complete list can be found at www.rootsireland.ie
- Accredited Genealogists of Ireland, <https://accreditedgenealogists.ie/>

Conclusion

Arming yourself with the tools and information you need and doing as much work on this side of the Atlantic will pay off in the long run. Don't be disappointed if you can't trace your Presbyterian ancestor all the way back to Scotland! Just remember that genealogical research in Ireland holds the possibility of being able to stand on the land or walk through the doorway where your ancestor once lived. It can't get any better than that!