

Using Irish Land Records in your Family History Research

Class 2: Griffith's Valuation: A Second Look

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This lecture takes a closer look at the types of Griffith's pre-publication records available for research. The records generated as part of the Townland Valuation and Tenement Valuation Acts include House books, Field books, Survey books, Tenure books, Quarto books, and Rent books. Additionally, Cancelled Land/Revision Books are a valuable source for details about the occupants and lessors of properties recorded from the 1860s forward. While there are gaps in record availability, there are several online sources available to help you learn more about and search these records.

Townland Valuation

The objective of the Townland Valuation Act of 1826 was to assess the value of land and buildings throughout Ireland. It was stated in this act that "all Houses shall be valued at the sum or rent for which each such house respectively could be let by the year." Using this information, the annual tax amount to be charged would be calculated. Each valuator would record the details on both maps and in notebooks, which would then be given to the Office of the General Valuation of Ireland.

At the beginning there were several issues with the Townland Valuation including a delay in starting the project and problems with the maps used for the valuation. Several changes were made during the 1830s regarding the types of buildings to be included in the valuation.

The valutors were provided with instructions to keep the collection of data uniform, since the work was being conducted across the country by many valutors. Several editions of these instructions are available online through the National Archives of Ireland website (*see Resources section of handout for URL*).

1838 Irish Poor Law Act led to a review of the Townland Valuation process.

Tenement Valuation

With the 1846 Valuation Act, the tenement rather than the townland was used as a measure of valuation. For areas where a Townland Valuation already took place or was underway, the use of the townland as a measurement remained in place until the passage of the 1852 Valuation Act. Areas where the townland had been used as a measurement were reassessed to change to a tenement valuation.

The term "tenement" pertained to lands, buildings, and other features of the property such as bogs.

Valuation Books

The valuator recorded information in a variety of books that provide valuable information for genealogical research, including Field books, House books, Quarto books, Rent books, Survey books, and Tenure books.

- **House and Field Books** from both the Townland Valuation and the Tenement Valuation exist. Keep in mind that not every area is covered in the surviving books. House books provide detailed information about the property and its occupants. Field books were used to record the size and quality of the soil on a property. There are instances where the names of individuals are included in these books, so it is worth checking these books for information.
- **Quarto Books** were used to record information about the valuation of houses in towns, dating from the 1840s. Some were recorded as part of the Townland Valuation, while others as part of the Tenement Valuation. As with the other types of books, not all areas have a corresponding Quarto book.
- **Tenure Books** were utilized for Tenement Valuations. While mostly rural areas are covered in these books, there are some instances where Tenure books were used as part of the valuation of towns. Information typically included the occupants and lessors, as well as a description of the property, and lease details.
- **Rent Books** were used for Tenement Valuations. Oftentimes the immediate lessor and not the occupant is listed, but it is still worth checking this source, since lease information can be found.

Although there are gaps in coverage, there are databases available that have both transcriptions of these books and images of the original records. FindMyPast, FamilySearch, and the National Archives of Ireland provide databases pertaining to these records on their websites. It is also worth checking websites such as johngrenham.com and IrishGenealogyNews.com for blog posts and links that provide background information and updates related to these records.

Cancelled Land Books/Revision Books

The Cancelled Land or Revision books noted changes to immediate lessors, occupants, size, or value of properties. Many of these changes were noted in the records starting in the 1860s. It is important to look at color images of these records because the changes were marked in different colored pencils.

For locations in Northern Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) has digitized these records, and they are available online through their website. The counties covered in this database are Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone, covering the years 1864 through 1933. You cannot search by name, but you can search by townland, city, parish, or county. Included in the

collection of Ancestry.com's databases is *Northern Ireland, Valuation Revision Books, 1864-1933*. This database allows you to search by name and provides images of the records.

Resources

Books

Marie E. Daly and Judith Lucey, *Genealogist's Handbook for Irish Research* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2016). Part 3 provides information about valuation records.

John Grenham, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors, 5th Edition* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2019). Chapter 4 covers property and valuation records.

Ian Maxwell, *Tracing Your Northern Irish Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2016).

Frances McGee, *The Archives of the Valuation of Ireland: 1830-1865* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018).

James R. Reilly, *Richard Griffith and His Valuations of Ireland* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2002).

Websites

FamilySearch Library, www.familysearch.org. Databases include valuation records. Check the FamilySearch wiki page titled "Ireland Taxation," which includes information about Valuation Office Revision Books.

Find My Past, www.findmypast.com. Databases include valuation records.

National Archives of Ireland, "Guide to the Archives of the Valuation Office," at www.nationalarchives.ie/article/guide-archives-valuation-office/. Includes links to booklets containing instructions for valutors dated 1833, 1844, and 1853, as well as a link to the database *Valuation Office house, field, tenure and quarto books 1824-1856*.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, "About Valuation Revision Books," at www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/about-valuation-revision-books. A database of the Valuation Revision Books covering counties Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone between 1864 and 1933 is available on the PRONI website at www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/searching-valuation-revision-books. Note that is searchable by place name.

Valuation Public Office, Dublin, Ireland, www.tailte.ie/en/valuation/archive-research/genealogy/. Provides information on the county records (digitized images) available to browse in person at the Valuation Division Public Office.