

Researching Your Irish Roots The Irish Provinces and Counties

Ireland is currently comprised of four provinces. Prior to 1543, the country had five provinces. The Kingdom of Meath (Milde) was the fifth province of ancient Ireland. The Irish word for a province 'cuige' (pronounced 'coo - igga') means a fifth. The Kingdom of Meath was prominent in the political turmoil of the 11th and 12th centuries, and was recorded as a 'shire' or county in 1297. It was eventually 'shired' into two counties by Act of Parliament of King Henry VIII in the year 1543. The counties formed were Meath and Westmeath.

Ulster(Ulaidh) one of the four provinces in Modern Ireland is contained in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The counties contained in Ulster are Cavan (IRE), Donegal (IRE), Monaghan (IRE), Armagh (NIR), Derry(NIR), Down (IRE), Fermanagh (NIR), and Tyrone (NIR).

Leinster (Laighin) is also a province of Ireland. The counties of Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wickham comprise the county of Munster.

Munster (Mumha) is the third province in our discussion. Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperay, and Waterford are the counties of Munster.

Connaught (Connaught) is the fourth province of Ireland. Counties Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, and Sligo comprise this county.

The Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland occupies all but the most northern corner of the island of Ireland. From 1922 to 1937 the country was known as the **Irish Free State**. Dublin is the capital of the republic and by far its largest city. The most northern corner of the country continues to be called Ireland.

Researching Your Irish Roots

Chapman Code

When researching counties in Ireland it is helpful to become familiar with the abbreviations for each county. These abbreviations are known as the Chapman Codes. The following is a complete list of abbreviations for all counties, some cities, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland.

NIR – Northern Ireland

IRL – Republic of Ireland or Eire

ANT, NIR - Antrim

ARM, NIR – Armagh

CAR, IRL - Carlow

CAV, IRL – Cavan

CLA, IRL – Clare

COR, IRL – Cork

DON, IRL – Donegal

DOW, NIR – Down

DUB, IRL – Dublin

FER, NIR – Fermanagh

GAL, IRL – Galway

KER, IRL – Kerry

KID, IRL – Kildare

KIK, IRL – Kilkenny

LDY, NIR – Derry/Londonderry

LET, IRL – Leitrim

LEX, IRL – Leix/Queens/Laois/Laoighis

LIM, IRL – Limerick

LOG, IRL – Longford

LOU, IRL – Louth

MAY, IRL – Mayo

MEA, IRL – Meath/Navan

MOG, IRL – Monaghan

OFF, IRL – Kings/Offaly

ROS, IRL – Roscommon

SLI, IRL – Sligo

TIP, IRL – Tipperary

TYR, NIR – Tyrone

WAT, IRL – Waterford

WEM, IRL – Westmeath

WEX, IRL – Wexford

WIC, IRL - Wicklow

Researching Your Irish Roots

Irish Surnames

Session I

In Ireland, the practice of inheriting family names began more than one thousand years ago, earlier than European countries. The earliest names appear to be those incorporating "O" or its earlier form "Ua," meaning grandson. The first recorded fixed surname was O'Clery (O'Cleirigh) as noted by the *Annals*, which recorded the death of Tigherneach Ua Dierigh, lord of Aidhne in Co. Galway in the year 916. By becoming familiar with the history and origin of your ancestor's surname, you may be able to narrow down where your family lived in Ireland. Surnames are one of the best links to the past.

Traditionally, married children usually lived in the same place as their parents and grandparents. As a result, many family names are densely clustered in the same areas.

Surname Origins

Most Irish surnames are typically of Gaelic or Anglo-Norman origin. The surnames have also been influenced by the church. English and Scottish surnames are also common in Ireland, particularly in the northern counties. Gaelic surnames derive from many sources. It should be noted that who you were related to was much more important than where you came from in the use of surnames.

Given Names – **O'Brien**, "O" is used to signify "son of" – Son of Brian

Occupations – **O'Riordan**, Riogh Bhard translates to royal bard – Son of the Royal Bard

MacGowan, "gabhann" translates to smith – Son of the Smith

Plants – **MacDarragh**, "dair" translates to oak

Personal attributes – **Kennedy**, "ceann" means head and "eidigh" means ugly

Some of the older Anglo-Norman names have been modernized. MacGowan, shown above as the "son of the Smith" became Smith (e). Many names however have remained intact, such as Browne, Fitzgerald, and Powers.

English names have been common throughout Ireland for many centuries (Wilson, Spenser, Hughes, Anderson). Scottish surnames were introduced into Ireland in great numbers during the Plantation of Ulster, under King James II, in the seventeenth century (Stewart, Graham, Ferguson).

Variations occur with the spelling of surnames. The following are some examples of what you might find in various records:

Margaret O'Connor may be written as "**Maggie Connor**" on a passenger list.

Bridaet Lvsaht may be written as "**Delia MacLvsaht**" on her marriage

Michael Sullivan may be written as “**Mi.O Suilleabhain**” on his baptismal certificate.

William O’Rourke may be written as “**Gulielmus Rorke**” on a parish record.

Surname Localities

As stated previously, most families stayed within close proximity of each other. As a result, many surnames have become associated with certain counties and parishes.

To help you identify the distribution of your ancestor’s surname in Ireland, try looking in an Irish phone book. Relatively common surnames may still be concentrated in just a few parishes in a county. You may find a long lost cousin. Two websites to utilize are:

www.goldenpages.ie/extra/phonebook.html

www.11850.ie

If you are looking for the location of families in earlier time, try **Griffith’s Valuation**. This is a land record from the mid-1800. You can search for the surname distribution across all of Ireland or within the county and parish. This is available through www.Ancestry.com and the [Family History Library \(http://www.familysearch.org\)](http://www.familysearch.org)

Resources in Ire and NIR

Session 11

A Brief History of Ireland

From the time of the Viking invasion of Ireland in the eighth century until the twentieth century, the administrative center of all the counties (32) in Ireland was Dublin. The Act of the Union of 1800 shifted some of the administrative responsibility to London. It was the Act of the Union that Ireland lost its own parliament in Dublin. Consequently, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was created. The partition of Ireland in 1921 changed the governing bodies once again. The six counties, which comprise Northern Ireland, remained part of the United Kingdom. The administrative center became Belfast. The remaining counties created the Irish Free State, which ultimately became the Republic of Ireland. Dublin remained the administrative center.

Before you try to locate sources in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Island, ***you must know the location*** of where your ancestor lived. Census records and Griffith’s Valuation may help you with location depending on when your ancestor lived in Ireland. Passenger lists, and naturalization forms may also aid in location. Do as much research from records where your ancestor immigrated. If your relative arrived at Ellis Island, the web site is <http://www.ellislandrecords.org>. If they arrived prior to the opening of Ellis Island, 1892, you may try <http://www.nara.gov/genealogy/immigration/iimigrat.html>. This is the National Archives and will provide lists of microfilm rolls available for each port. Use census records for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. These years may provide the age, place of birth, immigration date. whether naturalized or naturalization applied for. and the

It is also helpful to become acquainted with the history of Ireland and the counties. There is ample information on Ireland's history. If you have access to a computer, simply type in "Ireland's history" utilizing a search engine. (Google, Yahoo, Dogpile, MSN, etc)

Republic of Ireland

The Office of the Registrar General contains birth, death, and marriages and some non-Catholic marriages.

- birth, death, and marriages for all of Ireland from 1864 to 1921
- records of non-Catholic marriages after 1845
- births, deaths, and marriages for the Republic of Ireland from 1922 to the present.

The Office of the Registrar-General

Joyce House

8-11 Lombard Street East

Dublin 2

Ireland

Telephone: 01 6711000

Fax: 01 6354440

The National Archives of Ireland contains the **Irish Census** returns of **1901** and **1911**, and some transcripts of earlier returns, the original of which were destroyed in 1922. The National Archives was originally known as the Public Record Office of Ireland (PRO) and was located at the Four Courts, Dublin. In 1988, The Public Record Office was merged to form the National Archives. The original Public Record Office was destroyed by fire in 1922 during the Irish Civil War. The remaining records were moved to the new office on Bishop Street. Records from the State Paper Office were also moved to this location. Records, which may be found at the National Archives, include:

- 1901 and 1911 census records
- Griffith's Valuation (may only be viewed on microfilm)
- tithe Applotment Books (may only be viewed on microfilm)
- some Church of Ireland parish registers
- school registers
- trade union archives
- abstracts of indexes of wills

National Archives of Ireland

1 Bishop Street

Dublin 8

Ireland

Website: www.nationalarchives.ie

State Paper Office has been part of the National Archives since 1988. Records relating to the administration of Ireland from approximately 1790 to 1922 may be found

- police and crime reports
- convict reference files
- rebellion papers
- documents relating to transportation and state sponsored emigration

State Paper Office c/o National Archives

15 Bishop Street

Dublin 8

Ireland

Telephone: 01 4783711

Fax: 01 4072333

Website: <http://www.nationalarchives.ie>

The **National Library of Ireland** contains a large number of genealogical sources including estate papers, newspapers, street directories, the Ordnance Survey Books, and letters. It also has microfilm copies of all Roman Catholic parish registers up to 1880.

National Library of Ireland

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

Ireland

Website: www.nli.ie

The **Registry of Deeds** contains records dating from 1708 that are connected with property transactions. Land transfers, marriage settlements, and tenure contracts are available.

The Registry of Deeds

King's Inns

Henrietta Street

Dublin 1

Ireland

Telephone: 01 6707500

Fax: 01 8048406

Military Archives is part of the National Archives. It holds records of the Department of Defense and Defense Forces since 1921. Researchers need to write or telephone in advance.

The OC Military Archives

Cathal Brugha Barracks

Rathmines

Dublin 6

Ireland

Telephone: 01 4975499

Fax: 01 4974027

The **Genealogical Office** incorporates the **State Heraldic Museum of Ireland** and the **Office of Chief Herald**. It has been in existence since 1522 assigning and ratifying coats of arms for individuals and institutions.

Genealogical Office

42 Kildare Street

Dublin 2

Ireland

The **Representative Church Body Library** holds some surviving Church of Ireland parish records, records of Church of Ireland clergy and other records and books relevant to the Church of Ireland.

Representative Church Body Library

Braemor Park

Rathgar

Dublin 14

Ireland

Website: www.ireland.aglican.org/library/library.html

The **Library of the Society of Friends** (the Quakers) has a long tradition of philanthropic activity in Ireland. They were involved in providing extensive relief during the Great Famine of 1845 – 1851. Their collection includes both manuscript sources and an extensive library relating to the activities of Quakers in Ireland. They also have a number of genealogical sources. The library only opens on a limited basis. Contact the librarian before visiting.

Religious Society of Friends in Ireland Historical Library

Swanbrook House

Morehampton Road

Donnybrook

Dublin 4

Telephone: 01 6687157

Northern Ireland

The **Public Record Office of Northern Ireland** is the main source of genealogical material in Northern Ireland. It holds the official records from government departments relating to Northern Ireland from about 1830 and has large collections of private papers and church records.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

66 Balmoral Avenue

Belfast BT9 6NY

Northern Ireland

E-mail: proni@nics.gov.uk

Website: www.proni@nics.gov.uk

The **General Register Office for Northern Ireland** contains birth, death, and marriage

General Register Office for Northern Ireland

Oxford House
49-55 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 4HL
Northern Ireland
Website: www.groni.gov.uk

Land Register of Northern Ireland contains three registries: The Register of Deeds, Land Registry, and the Statutory Changes Register.

Land Register of Northern Ireland

Lincoln Building
27- 45 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7SL
Northern Ireland
Website: www.lrni.gov.uk

The library of the **Presbyterian Historical Society** contains a great deal of manuscript material relating to Presbyterian families and baptismal and marriage records from Presbyterian churches throughout Ireland.

The Presbyterian Historical Society

Church House
Fisherwick Place
Belfast
BT1 6DW
Northern Ireland

The Baptist Union of Ireland holds records from Baptist churches throughout Ireland.

Baptist Union of Ireland
117 Lisburn Rd.
Belfast BT9
Northern Ireland

The Ulster Historical Foundation is a non-profit organization which promotes interest in Irish history and genealogy, with particular reference to the province of Ulster. It offers an ancestral research service, publishes books, organizes conferences, and runs a membership club.

Ulster Historical Foundation
12 College Square East
Belfast
BT1 6DD
Northern Ireland
e-mail: enquiry@uhf.org.uk
website: www.ancestoryireland.com

The North of Ireland Family History Society is a voluntary organization for those interested in researching their family history in the north of Ireland.

The North of Ireland Family History Society

C/o School of Education
The Queen's University of Belfast
69 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1HL
Northern Ireland
Website: www.nifhs.org

The public libraries in Northern Ireland are valuable repositories of information that is useful to the family researcher, including local newspapers and material on local history.

The **Society of Friends Library** holds an extensive collection of register, wills, letters, and family papers.

The Society of Friends Library

Meeting House
Railway Street
Lisburn
Co. Antrim
Northern Ireland
(postal queries only)

Belfast Central Library has a vast collection of publications of interest to the family researcher.

Irish and Local Studies Department

Royal Avenue
Belfast
BT1 1EA
Northern Ireland
Website: www.belb.org.uk

The Linen Hall Library is a subscription library containing a unique collection of local material including a specially designated genealogical section with its own catalogue.

The Linen Hall Library

17 Donegall Square North
Belfast
BT1 5GD
Northern Ireland
Website: www.linenhall.com

