

October at the Museum!



October brings Family History Month and Hallowe'en!

This month, we will be hosting multiple spooky events to honor the Celtic Festival of Samhain of course, but did you know that October is also Family History Month? Lisa Walsh Dougherty, our resident genealogist, is available in the museum on the last Wednesday of every month to answer your questions, or help you solve family riddles. But this article has lots of helpful places to start your search if you are beginning to trace your family roots.

There has never been a better time to research Irish family history. A revolution in access to Irish genealogical records has taken place over the past decade. From being a laggard in providing online record transcripts, Ireland has become one of the world leaders.

Some credit must go to competition in the marketplace to meet researchers' demands. But most of the change has been driven by the Irish and Northern Irish public sectors. Their increased awareness of the huge numbers who descend from emigrants, and who cherish that historic connection, has had a dramatic effect. Politicians and public servants now accept that it should be as easy as possible for members of the Irish diaspora to unearth the historical detail of the connection, their family history. Publicly-funded websites such as IrishGenealogy.ie, genealogy.nationalarchives.ie, askaboutireland.ie, databases.dublincity.ie and nidirect.gov.uk/proni have gone about supplying the tools to make that possible.

The result is that most people of Irish origin can now take their family back to the second quarter of the 19th century quickly and easily and, for the most part, without payment. This guide contains links to those many free resources, as well as paid genealogy services which could help speed up the process or guide you towards records you may not have known existed. It also covers new ways to trace your ancestry using increasingly popular home DNA kits.

Before you go near any records, talk to your family. It makes no sense to spend days trawling through databases to find out your great-grandmother's surname if someone in the family already knows it! So first talk to parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents - find out what they know before they're gone for good. Most families have at least one individual who keeps track of the extended network of relatives, and if you can buttonhole them, you're off to a good start. To begin with, quantity is less important than quality - there'll be plenty of time for precision later.

The only cast-iron rule of family history is that you start from what you know and use it to find out more. Don't begin with Attila the Hun and try to work forward to yourself! Take your granny and work back from her.

What You Can Expect to Find

What you'll uncover depends on the quality of the surviving records for the area of origin, on the point where you start and the most important ingredient of Irish research, luck. For the descendants of Catholic tenant-farmers, the limit is generally the starting date of the local Catholic parish records. It would be unusual for records of such a family to go back much earlier than the 1780s, and for most people the early 1800s is the more likely limit. In Gaelic culture genealogy was of crucial importance, but the collapse of that culture in the 17th century, and its subsequent impoverishment and oppression in the 18th century, left a gulf that is almost unbridgeable.

That said, exceptions immediately spring to mind. One Australian family, starting with only the name of their great-grandfather, his occupation and the date of his departure from Ireland, uncovered enough information through parish registers and State records of births, marriages and deaths to link him incontestably to the Garveys of Mayo, for whom an established pedigree is registered in the Genealogical Office stretching back to the 12th century.

An American family, knowing only a general location in Ireland and a marriage that took place before emigration, discovered that marriage in the pedigree of the McDermotts of Coolavin, which is factually verified as far back as the 11th century.

Discoveries like this are rare, however, and are much likelier for those of Anglo-Irish extraction than those of Gaelic or Scots Presbyterian extraction.

Online Resources

For Irish online research, the glass is both half-empty and half-full. A huge quantity of irreplaceable records was blown up in 1922 - almost all 19th century censuses, to name just one - and nothing will ever bring them back. On the other hand, there are only four universally relevant sources, civil records, church registers, censuses and tax surveys, and nearly all of them that survived is online and free. The easiest win for most people starting out is the free National Archives of Ireland census website (census.nationalarchives.ie). It's plain but powerful and serves up images of the original returns for the earliest complete censuses, 1901 and 1911, complete with great-grand-parents' signatures and overviews of names, family relationships and occupations. Be warned: being able to wander around streets and townlands peering into the neighbors' households can be powerfully addictive.

The next step will usually be to search the civil records of births, marriages and deaths. Registration began for everyone in 1864, with non-Catholic marriages starting in 1845. The indexes are free to search up to 1958 at the Mormon site FamilySearch (familysearch.org/search/collection/1408347). The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht runs an excellent free site at irishgenealogy.ie that includes full images of the original registers (births 1864-1916, marriages 1870-1941 and deaths 1878-1966). Be sure to work the "More Search Options" page as hard as you can.

Griffith's Valuation (1847-1864) is a vast and minutely detailed property survey carried out to assess local taxes (aka "The Rates"). If we hadn't blown up the 19th century censuses, it would be an afterthought. As things stand, it's the only comprehensive census substitute before 1901. It's free online at askaboutireland.ie, a site run, strangely enough, by the Local Government Management Agency. Like the census site, [askaboutireland](http://askaboutireland.ie) doesn't take variant surname spellings into account, so ingenuity may be required. One of its glories, however, is the huge collection of accompanying valuation maps, overlaid on contemporary Google maps, making it possible to match the precise locations of houses and field boundaries in the 1850s with what survives today.

The last of the universally relevant sources is the most important and the most tricky. For the years before civil registration in 1864, church registers of baptisms, marriages and burials are virtually the only direct sources of family information. Roman Catholic registers generally start in the late 1700s or early 1800s in the more prosperous East and South-East, but only in the 1840s or later in poorer western counties. Almost all pre-1880 Catholic registers have been microfilmed by the National Library and digital images of the microfilms are freely available at registers.nli.ie.

They can be hard going. Two commercial genealogy sites, FindMyPast and Ancestry, have transcribed them, with access free only on FindMyPast. Another commercial site, rootsireland.ie, has been making transcripts since the 1980s and covers about 80 per cent of pre-1900 registers. One significant difference is that the [rootsireland](http://rootsireland.ie) transcripts were made from the originals, not microfilm, and the difference in the quality of the transcripts can be striking.

The Church of Ireland was the state church until 1870 and after disestablishment parish records before that date were regarded as public records. As a result, a large number were in the Public Record Office in 1922 and were destroyed. The largest collection of original registers is in the Representative Church Body Library in Dublin, which also maintains an online listing of what was destroyed and what survived (goo.gl/4eHlIZ). The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has an excellent collection of microfilm of records of all denominations in the nine counties of Ulster (goo.gl/ok8NuR).

Presbyterian records can be hard to track down. The best collection is in The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, with a lot of material also in the Presbyterian Historical Society. Detailed guides to which records are where can be found at www.johngrenham.com. The site is free for light users, with a soft paywall for more persistent souls. Claire Santry's Irish Genealogy News (irishgenealogynews.com) is the go-to site for all news of record releases and publications and also includes a free "Irish Genealogy Toolkit", which gives a good overview of what's available.

Free Research

Unlike any other country in the Anglophone world, a large majority of the most important Irish records are free online. Why?

The main reason is Ireland's unique imbalance between diaspora and the Old Country. There are more than ten times more people claiming Irish descent in the US alone than there are in Ireland, a disproportion found in no other country. In the 1990s, as that began to dawn on official Ireland, it became government policy to make as many records as possible freely available online. They're all in different formats, in different locations, each with its own quirks and flaws. But they're there and they're free.

Paying a Genealogy Company or Expert

So why would anyone doing Irish research need to subscribe to commercial record-transcriptions sites such as rootsireland or ancestry.com or findmypast.ie? Because they give levels of access not found in the free records. Rootsireland, for example, is purely Irish and uses the transcripts produced by the network of heritage centers set up in the 1980s. It makes possible all sorts of weird and wonderful searches. Want to see everyone who died in Ardnurcher, Co Offaly between 1864 and 1900? Or every marriage involving a woman called Matilda in Co Derry between 1821 and 1921? Rootsireland is your only man.

Even the global genealogy sites have their uses. Many of the records free to search elsewhere are set up much more conveniently on Ancestry and FindMyPast. For example, if all you know is that your ancestor John Sullivan had a daughter Mary who was born around 1890, you can use ancestry to search the 1901 census for all John Sullivans with a 10-year-old daughter Mary, something not possible on the National Archives site. (There are 138 matches.)

Professional researchers can also be very useful. Someone who's been scouring the records for decades, as most professionals have, sees angles, connections and shortcuts that elude a newcomer. At the very least, they can do in an hour what might take an amateur a day or more. And no decent professional thinks of themselves as doing all the work. They're just helping. Accredited Genealogists Ireland (accreditedgenealogists.ie) includes many (but not all) of the self-employed professionals in Ireland. The Irish Family History Centre (irishfamilyhistorycentre.com) run by long-established research and publishing company Eneclann provides advice and commissioned research and has a walk-in center as part of the emigration museum EPIC on Dublin's Custom House Quay. Ancestry has its own team of highly experienced professionals (progenealogists.com), focused primarily on North America, but with deep expertise in Ireland also.

Local Document Research

One of the first things every researcher learns is deep skepticism about records and record transcripts. Taking a transcript alone as gospel truth is tantamount to accepting the word of a stranger in the street that he knows you're descended from Brian Ború. Always look at the original. Thankfully, it is now standard practice online to combine a transcript with the original record image, providing an opportunity to see how flawed the transcript is. All transcripts are flawed, because all human beings are flawed. People misspell the names of their children, record-takers misheard surnames, transcribers mistook "Ts" for "Fs", database designers left out entire sections of records ... If you're researching records online, know that this is the price you're paying.

And of course, there are plenty of records not online, from militia and British Army records in the English National Archives in Kew, to estate rentals only available in the National Library or in local archives, through to ephemeral but invaluable local histories that might only survive in a local county library.

Because of what happened in 1922, Irish research is much more dependant on fragmented sources like these than is the case elsewhere. You'll need to consult a county-by-county (or parish-by-parish) reference for what survives. Online guides are at IrishGenealogy.ie, irish-genealogy-toolkit.com and johngrenham.com. The standard published books are James Ryan's *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History* (2nd ed Ancestry.com, 1997) and John

Working with Voluntary Organisations

Ireland is blessed (or cursed) with a standing army of local and family historians. The main genealogical organisations are:

- Cork Genealogical Society corkgenealogicalsociety.com
- Clare Roots Society clareroots.org
- Genealogical Society of Ireland familyhistory.ie
- Huguenot Society of Great Britain & Ireland huguenotsinireland.com
- Irish Family History Society ifhs.ie
- Irish Genealogical Research Society irishancestors.ie
- North of Ireland Family History Society nifhs.org
- Ulster Historical and Genealogical Guild ancestryireland.com
- Western Family History Association (Galway) wfha.info
- Lackagh Parish Centre wfha.info/locations/lackagh-parish-centre

Genetic (DNA) genealogy

Genetic genealogy is the use of DNA testing to assist genealogical research. The key word is "assist": DNA testing can never take the place of research, though it can be a very useful tool in solving particular problems.

There are three kinds of DNA test used for genealogy, Y-DNA, mtDNA and atDNA. Y-DNA testing concentrates on the Y-chromosome, which exists only in males and is passed from father to son in a way that mimics the European practice of patrilineal surname inheritance. Because of this, Y-DNA tests are particularly useful in single-surname studies, as they can provide a rough estimate of when the most recent common male ancestor lived. When a mutation or transcription error occurs in a particular man's Y-chromosome, that mutation or error is then passed down to all his male descendants, making it possible to trace every male with that error back to him, the common ancestor.

The second type of test, mitochondrial or "mtDNA", follows the maternal line. Mitochondria are energy-producing organelles that are long-standing symbiotes in the cells of many living things. Their DNA is not part of the human genome, but is passed from mother to daughter in a way analogous to the male Y-chromosome. Men receive their mitochondrial DNA from their mother, but do not pass it on. Again, testing for mutations can provide evidence for the period when the most recent common female ancestor lived. The big difference is that mitochondrial DNA changes much more slowly over time than Y-DNA and is thus of use mainly for deep ancestry.

Autosomal or atDNA testing uses DNA taken from the 22 non-sex chromosomes, in other words all of the genome apart from the X and Y chromosomes. Because everyone inherits half the DNA in these 22 from each parent, the average share of DNA inherited from direct forebears halves at each generation.

One point to be kept in mind is that all genetic genealogy depends on examining the here-and-now and deducing information about the past. In other words, test results are compared with the results of others and a statistical analysis of those results is then performed. The quality of the analysis depends entirely on the number of other test results in the comparison. Many of the problems with genetic genealogy stem from collections of test results that are just too small to draw sound conclusions.

Other problems stem from the fact that all genetic genealogy depends on commercial testing done by companies whose profitability depends on not having to say "There is not enough evidence". Much snake oil is sold. See University College London's 'Debunking Genetic Astrology'. The three main companies are Ancestry.com, Family Tree DNA and 23andMe, all based in the US though offering tests worldwide. Ancestry and 23andMe sell tests in Ireland as a subset of the UK market. All three provide extensive online interpretation and follow-up on their websites.

Ancestry only does autosomal testing and has by far the largest database of results for comparison, with more than four million test results. Because of this its "Genetic Communities" section can provide very useful solid evidence of 19th century place of origin in Ireland. The other two companies perform all three tests. Family Tree DNA, in a piece of enlightened self-interest, allows the upload and comparison of test results from the other two.

A very useful way to compare results with as big a collection of tests as possible is via the free, open-source website, www.gedmatch.com. This allows the upload of any of the commercial test results together with a family tree in the standard GedCom format. Multiple DNA comparisons are then possible, as well as a cross-check with family information.

Resources tailored for Ireland include:

- The Ireland y-DNA project (familytreedna.com/groups/Ireland-heritage);
- The Ireland mtDNA project (familytreedna.com/groups/Ireland-mt-dna);
- The Ulster DNA project (ulsterheritage.com).

One of the most satisfying aspects of family history research is the awareness of ever-expanding interconnectedness. You have two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents ... So nine generations back, about two and a half centuries ago, you have direct links to 128 families. Think of the average size of Irish families then. Think of all the cousins, second, third, fourth in each generation and you'll soon be agreeing with the central tenet of hippiedom: "We're all brothers, man." More concretely, most families have members who have been forgotten or written out of history. Many men who joined the British Army to fight in the first World War in 1915 - at the urging of the leader of the Irish Volunteers, John Redmond, remember - returned in 1919 to a country that shunned them. Many newly-Republican families simply rejected these men. The act of reconnecting with them through family history can be irresistible. That sense of righting historic family wrongs is powerful and addictive.

One of the most innovative social media initiatives of recent years is also based on that compelling sense of healing the extended family and re-knitting lost kinships. Ireland Reaching Out (irelandxo.com) is a volunteer-based, non-profit group that aims to build links between the global Irish diaspora and parishes of origin in Ireland. The way it works is simple: a group of local volunteers in Ireland (very often local historians) act as a liaison between emigrants or emigrants' descendants and their locality of origin.

The real aim, of course, is to reconnect with living relatives and it happens much more than it used to. For one thing, people are a bit less anxious than they used to be about the Yanks coming back to claim the inheritance they neglected to inform them about! For another, DNA and the digitization of records have made reverse genealogy, following families forward in time rather than back, much much easier.

Thanks to John Grenham in the *Irish Times*

Rambling House: Traditional Irish Music **Irish American Heritage Museum** **Thursday October 3rd, 7pm**



Derek Warfield and the Young WolfeTones
Capital District Irish American Association, 375 Ontario Street
Friday October 11th, 7pm \$20 for members, \$25 non-members.



Derek Warfield's 50 years of experience coupled with the talent and energy of The Young Wolfe Tones brings the old tradition of Irish balladry into a new age. The story of Ireland is transmitted in their music and song and illuminated by the outstanding musicianship of three wonderful ambassadors of a new generation of traditional players. Derek Warfield and The Young Wolfe Tones deliver Ireland's traditional music and folk songs with an energy and skill that shows the quality of contemporaries within that tradition. The patriotic spirit of Irish music carried through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s by the Wolfe Tones now marches on in the dynamic sound of The Young Wolfe Tones.

The band are from Ireland and America - Damaris Woods - Banjo; Mylo Moylan - Guitar and Vocals; Wayne Brereton - Bass, Vocals; Cormac McGuinness - Vocals; Andreas Durkin - Keyboard/Vocals; Brendan Keenan - Bouzouki/Mandola/Vocals

Grosse Ile: Island of Hope and Sorrow for the Irish
Dr. Martin and Lynda Lyden
Tuesday 22nd October 5pm



OLD MONUMENT, GROSSE-ISLE

It was eminently befitting, too, that the task of producing the memorial should have been entrusted to men of Irish blood and of such artistic taste and mechanical skill as the enterprising firm of Fallon Bros., of Cornwall, Ont., who, with the whole race, have every reason to be proud of their noble creation and handiwork, from designs prepared by Mr. J. Gallagher, one of the founders and leading members of the Quebec branch of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, as well as one of Quebec's chief civil engineers and head of its water works department. Standing on Telegraph Hill, the most elevated point on the island, where it occupies a site of 150 feet square, and overlooking the graves of the Irish dead near its western shore, the monument, which is composed of grey Stanstead granite, rises to a further height of 46 feet 6 inches, so that its total altitude above the level of the river is 140 feet, making it a most conspicuous and striking object in a landscape having as its foreground the sparkling waters of the St. Lawrence and for a background the dark ramparts of Cape Tourmente and the Laurentian mountains, and rendering it visible for miles up and down the river.

The pedestal is also of granite. The dimensions of the lower base are 15 feet by 13.4 by 2 feet; of the next base, 13 feet by 10.10 by 2 feet; of the die, 9 feet by 8.4 by 8 feet, and of the plinth, 8 feet by 7.2 by 5 feet.

The shaft and cross stand 29 feet 6 inches high and the arms are 8 feet in length, the top of the cross being 2 feet 6 inches square. As usual, in the case of all Celtic crosses, the symbol of the Christian faith at the summit is enclosed within a ring or circle of the same material, binding as it were the shaft, arms and upper portion of the cross together, the spaces between the intersecting arms being pierced and the whole sculpture thus forming the cross.

The panels on which the inscriptions are carved are of dark ebony. There are four of these panels, one on each face of the pedestal. On three of them is the following inscription in Gaelic, English and French respectively. The English and French inscriptions are appended:

"Sacred to the memory of thousands of Irish emigrants, who, to preserve the faith, suffered hunger and exile in 1847-48, and, stricken with fever, ended here their sorrowful pilgrimage."

"Erected by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America, and dedicated Feast of the Assumption, 1909."

"Thousands of the children of the Gael were lost on this island while fleeing from foreign tyrannical laws and an artificial famine in the years 1847-1848."

"GOD BLESS THEM."

Hear the story of Grosse Ile, Canada's Ellis Island and the largest burial ground for refugees of the Great Hunger outside Ireland. The island is preserved as a place of memory to honor the immigrants who traveled to Canada during the 19th and early 20th centuries, in particular the Irish who died during the Great Hunger in 1847. It is believed that over 3,000 Irish died on the island and over 5,000 are currently buried in the cemetery there as many died en route. Most who died on the island were infected with typhus, which sprang up from the conditions there in 1847.

Sonya Babineau Tarot Card Reader
Saturday and Sunday, October 26 & 27 12 - 4pm. Call the museum for appointment now!



To celebrate the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, Sonya will read your fortune in the Museum. Sonya had a fascination for all things metaphysical throughout her teenage years. It wasn't until her own children were grown that she found the time to explore these fascinating topics in greater detail and start practicing them for herself. After many years of studying things like Tarot, Runes and Numerology and actively participating in local Tarot study groups and classes, she now uses her knowledge and experience in readings and demonstrations. From relationships, to tragedy, to career and to love, Sonya enjoys supporting people on their journey to help them find their path to synchronicity and healing. Any situation can bring opportunity and she would be honored to be the one to help you find the answers you are looking for! \$10 for a 10 minute reading, \$20 for 20 minutes.

**Disclaimer: Per New York State law, all readings are given solely for the purpose of entertainment.

**Haunted Voices: Hallowe'en Stories from Ireland and America.
Saturday, October 26th, 7pm**



Join us at the Museum and we'll tell you a ghost story. Don't be alarmed by the creak of the floorboards, the murmurs in the basement, the shrill ululations of a distant dog. Try not to be perturbed by the flickering candle, the fleeting shadows, the horned, hairy hand that appears at your elbow. Something moved? There's a face in the brickwork? A murderer, long ago, was buried in the cellar? Stay calm. Breathe deeply. Perhaps the veil between our world and the next is thinner than you might care to imagine, especially on All Hallow's Eve!!

Back by popular demand!! A must-see eclectic night of music and song with Andrew Finn Magill and Dave Curley.

Celtic Hall, 430 New Karner Road.

Monday, October 28th, 7pm. \$10 members, \$15 non-members

Curley and Magill met in 2017 and since then have done four tours under the banner of their duo. Blending their traditional Irish backgrounds with a myriad of acoustic influences, they co-write original songs and instrumental music that make their show modernly fresh as well as firmly traditional.

Dave Curley is one of Ireland's leading multi-instrumentalists, vocalists and a champion step dancer. Hailing from Co. Galway on the west coast of Ireland, Curley has brought his wealth of talents to the largest of stages in North America and Western Europe. He has performed at the prestigious Ryman auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, recorded with Grammy award winners Ron Block, Jeff Taylor and Buddy Greene, and toured with Grammy award winners Moya Brennan of Clannad and Ross Holmes of Mumford and Sons. For 10 years, Curley has worked with the award winning traditional super group, SLIDE, headlining North America's largest Irish festivals.

Multi-instrumentalist, All-Ireland fiddle finalist and Ropeadope Recording artist Andrew Finn Magill has watched his career surge ever since the 2016 release of his 2-disc concept album *Roots* (which debuted at #46 on the Folk DJ charts) & *Branches*. Raised at The Swannanoa Gathering in Asheville, NC, Magill has learned and carved out a name for himself in Irish, American and Brazilian music, collaborating with everyone from *Open the Door for Three* to John Doyle. He has toured four continents and self-released four

music, collaborating with everyone from Open the Door for Three to John Doyle. He has toured four continents and self-released four albums in everything from traditional Irish music to African fusion.



**Lecture by Kevin Jennings, President of the Tenement Museum, NYC
"Excluding Newcomers is a Tradition as Old as the Republic"
Wednesday, October 30th, 7pm. \$5**

Like our museum, the Tenement Museum in New York City is dedicated to telling the stories of immigrants who came to America to make a new life for themselves and their families. As museum founder Ruth Abram described it, the museum, which has recreated several family homes, aims "to bring Americans home to meet our immigrant forbearers ... and to help them see that the immigrants on the streets of New York and other parts of our country today are in the very same shoes. That was the idea of the Tenement Museum: to promote tolerance through the telling of history." Kevin Jennings takes that mission seriously and has written extensively about immigration then and now, to educate and illuminate America's long-standing love-hate relationship with immigration. His many articles, including *Excluding Newcomers is a Tradition as Old as the Republic*, are the basis for his talk tonight.

A historian by training, Kevin's first professional job at age 18 was to be a tour guide at the Paul Revere House in Boston. He is president of The Tenement Museum in New York City and served as assistant deputy secretary of education under President Barack Obama from 2009-11. He is the author of seven books and the executive producer of two historical documentaries.



