GUIDE TO RESEARCH SOURCES for Irish Genealogy Records

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Genealogists know the frustration of tracking down our Irish immigrant ancestor’s birth, marriage or death certificate, hoping that each one will be the document that finally tells you where in Ireland your family came from—only to be disappointed once again.

It is common that genealogical records kept here in the United States only give the place of birth as “Ireland.” We need to know where our ancestor lived in Ireland in order to go back further on the family tree.

Ireland Civil Registration Records

Civil registration in Ireland for birth, marriage and death records began in 1864. However, Protestant marriage registration began two decades earlier in 1845.

Irish Birth & Baptismal Records 1620-1881 (Church & Government)
https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1584963

Irish Marriage Records 1619-1898 (Church & Government)
https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1584964

Irish Death Records 1864-1870 (Church & Government)
https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1584965
Contact the General Record Office in the Republic of Ireland for a certified copy of your ancestor’s birth, marriage or death record.

Contact the General Record Office in Northern Ireland for records for that part of the country.
http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/gro

**Irish American Newspapers**

Not finding your ancestor in these early records? Take heart! These early Irish vital records were published in American newspapers, and many can be found in online collections such as GenealogyBank’s [Irish American Newspaper Archives](http://www.genealogybank.com/irish-american-newspaper-archives).

For example, the *Irish American* – a U.S. newspaper published in New York City – routinely published thousands of Irish marriage and death records from 1849 to 1914.

No, not every Irish marriage and death record, but nonetheless this historical newspaper does provide exceptionally wide coverage of marriages and deaths from across Ireland. This material is extensive enough that genealogists will want to thoroughly review this online newspaper for coverage of their family in Ireland.

Here is a typical example of an Irish marriage record from the *Irish American*: Thomas Mathews of Dunbar, County Louth, married Bride Somers of Court Brown, Askeaton, County Limerick, on 19 June 1895.

Image credit: Library of Congress, digital ID ppmsc.09881

GenealogyBank.com
This Irish couple got married at the “Kingstown Catholic Church,” which is pictured in the center right of this 1895 image of Kingstown harbor.

Kingstown is in Dublin County, Ireland.

Reading further in this Irish marriage record, we learn that the bride was the eldest daughter of Michael Somers and the niece of John Fitzgibbon of Castlerea, County Roscommon. Wow—relatives in three counties are named: Limerick, Louth and Roscommon, plus the Church was located in Dublin County. That’s four locations in Ireland to look for additional family records.

This is terrific information that genealogists are looking for to trace their Irish ancestry.

Here is another example from the *Irish American*, this time of Irish death records published in 1849.

1849? Wow! This newspaper’s Irish death records start in 1849—15 years before the official civil registration started.

These obituaries were published in the 28 October 1849 issue of the *Irish American* (New York City, New York).
Here’s a handy list of GenealogyBank’s online Irish-American Newspapers.

Historical newspapers (digital editions of every page of the newspaper):

- **Exile** (1817) (New York City, New York)
- **Irish American Weekly** (1849-1914) (New York City, New York)
- **Irish Citizen** (1867-1868) (New York City, New York)
- **Irish Nation** (1881-1883) (New York City, New York)
- **Irish World** (1890-1905) (New York City, New York)
- **Shamrock** (1810-1817) (New York City, New York)
- **Western Star** (1812-1813) (New York City, New York)

Obituaries (only the obituaries from each issue):

- **Irish Voice** (2006-Today) (New York City, New York)

All newspapers have obituaries, but an important feature in Irish American newspapers is that they often picked up obituaries from areas far away from where the newspaper itself was published.

Because these historical newspapers were written specifically for the Irish who settled here in America, these obituaries provide useful pieces of family history that can be hard to find in other sources. Newspapers are a great resource for finding the name of the town or county in Ireland where your Irish American ancestor was born.

Only newspapers give us this much detail about our Irish American ancestors.

**United States Census Records**

The census is an essential tool for genealogists. All of the U.S. censuses from 1790 to 1940 have been digitized and put online.

U.S. Census 1790-1940
[https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list?page=1&recordType=Census&countryId=1](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list?page=1&recordType=Census&countryId=1)

Just like the federal census, many of the states also took a census of their residents. You want to search these for your ancestors.

State Census Records
[https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list?page=1&region=UNITED_STATES&recordType=Census](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list?page=1&region=UNITED_STATES&recordType=Census)

Like you often see in other documents, many census registrars simply wrote “Ireland” on the form, giving us no additional clues about the town or county of origin of our families.
You can see this problem in the 1892 New York state census, which is online. Here is a typical entry, for the Scully family. The census tells us that the family members were born in “Ireland” and now live in Albany, New York.

![Image of 1892 New York State Census entry for the Scully family]


Again—we want to turn to newspapers for more details about the family.

Here is the newspaper obituary for the mother in the family: Catherine Scully.

![Image of newspaper obituary for Catherine Scully]

Source: *Irish Weekly World* (New York City, New York), 2 December 1893, page 3

Here we have an obituary about a widow who died in Albany, New York, that was published in a New York City newspaper.
This tells us that we want to be flexible with our family history research, and search beyond the town where our ancestor lived.

This obituary gives us a lot of information about Catherine—including where in Ireland she was born. This is a reminder that Irish American newspapers are a great source for finding the name of the town or county in Ireland where the person was from. This information is rarely in death certificates, but is common in newspaper obituaries.

- She was the widow of Andrew Scully
- She was born in Ballingarry, County Tipperary, Ireland
- She died 3 November 1893, at her home in Albany, New York
- Her maiden name was Hayde
- She was buried in St. Agnes’ cemetery
- Mass was celebrated at St. John’s Roman Catholic Church on 6 November 1893
- She was survived by four children: Ellen, John, Lawrence and Patrick
- She was a member of the Ladies’ Catholic Benevolent Association, Branch 25

So—she was born in Ballingarry, County Tipperary!

Wow!


Hey—could that be her on the right side of this image standing with her father?
Every genealogist wants to know exactly where in Ireland—or any country—their family came from. Newspapers are a great resource for finding those family facts. Dig into GenealogyBank’s newspaper archives online and find the details and stories of your ancestors’ lives.

1901 & 1911 Irish Census Records

The United States is not the only country that takes a regular census. Ireland also kept a census of its people.

This illustration shows the 1911 enumeration for the Brown family of Lisbellaw, County Fermanagh, Ireland. The census shows which church they attended—a question not asked on U.S. census forms. The church name can be used to locate church records that may also contain information about your Irish ancestry.

The National Archives of Ireland has put the 1901 and 1911 Irish censuses online. This is a great resource to help you explore the Irish branches of your family tree.

Search the census of Ireland online at: http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/

This handy online genealogy tool can be searched by name, townland, county and other search terms.
Tithe Applotment Books from Ireland

Tithe Applotment Books are a combination of a census and a tax list. In Ireland property was accessed and taxed to support the official national church: the Church of Ireland. These records have all been digitized and are available free online on FamilySearch.

Ireland, Tithe Applotment Books 1814-1855
https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1804886
Griffith’s Valuation and the Ordnance Survey Maps

Richard Griffith undertook a property valuation for all of Ireland between 1847-1864. This is an important tool for locating where in Ireland your ancestor lived. All of the survey and, importantly, the accompanying ordnance survey maps are now free online.

Griffith’s Valuation & Ordnance Survey Maps

http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/index.xml

Source: Ask about Ireland
Ask about Ireland is a terrific free site created by a consortia of Irish libraries. They have put up digital copies of the original Griffith’s Valuation, with an accompanying text print-out to make it easier to read. These are linked—pinpointed to the exact location where your ancestor lived—on handy interactive copies of the ordnance survey maps.

All these helpful online historical records and Irish American newspapers are a few more examples of the luck of the Irish!