GETTING STARTED

Irish family history research begins at home. Talk to your family, particularly the older members, and gather their memories of the past. Be sure to take notes. Not only does this remind you of your source once your family tree begins to grow, but it is also a document of your personal history for future generations.

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK RELATIVES ABOUT YOUR ANCESTORS

1. WHERE AND WHEN WERE THEY BORN?
2. WHEN DID THEY DIE? WHERE WERE THEY BURIED?
3. WERE THEY MARRIED? IF SO, WHAT WAS THEIR SPOUSE’S NAME?
4. WHERE DID THEY LIVE?
5. DID THEY HAVE CHILDREN? IF SO, WHAT WERE THEIR CHILDREN’S NAMES?
6. WHAT DID THEY WORK AT?
7. DID THEY SERVE IN THE MILITARY?
8. DID THEY EVER LEAVE IRELAND AND TRAVEL OR MOVE ABROAD?
9. WHICH RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION WERE THEY?
10. DO YOU HAVE ANY OF THEIR ORIGINAL WRITTEN RECORDS, PHOTOGRAPHS, NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, OBITUARIES, LETTERS, PROPERTY DEEDS OR WILLS?

Tracing ancestors in Ireland can be challenging but that makes it all the more rewarding. With the largest collection of historical Irish records anywhere online, Findmypast is the go-to resource for discovering your unique Irish family story. There really has never been a better time to start building your Irish family tree so start your journey today with this handy guide.
CENSUS RECORDS

Once you've found out all you can about your ancestors from family members, the next best starting point is to try and locate them in the 1901 and 1911 Census of Ireland. These census records are searchable online on Findmypast. You can search by name, location, birth year, other household members and more criteria, which should narrow down your search to the record you’re looking for quickly and easily. Census records provide plenty of interesting facts about your ancestors including their occupation, their level of education and where they were born.

KEY findmypast: RECORD SETS TO SEARCH

- Ireland Census 1901
- Ireland Census 1911
- Ireland Census 1821–1851

LAND & SUBSTITUTE RECORDS

With so few 19th century Irish census records surviving, you need to look at substitute sources for pinpointing your ancestors. Griffith’s Valuation is perhaps the most important Irish land record available for the 19th century. It lists approximately 80% of householders in Ireland 1847-1864 and includes over 2.9 million records. Information found on Griffith's Valuation includes location, occupier's name, landlord's name and property description, including size and value. The most complete versions of both the survey and its accompanying maps and town plans are found on Findmypast.

Findmypast provides exclusive online access to the Landed Estate Court Rentals 1850-1855. This source comprises the records of all the large estates bankrupted in the Great Famine and for the next generation (1849-82). There are over 8,000 estates, with more than 500,000 tenant holdings in this record set.

National, regional and local directories are also a great census substitute when tracing your Irish ancestors, especially if they practised a trade, owned land or ran a business. Findmypast has the largest online collection of historical Irish directories. You’ll also find a range of exclusive collections on Findmypast to help you plug the gaps in your family tree including, government records, workhouse registers and electoral rolls.

KEY findmypast: RECORD SETS TO SEARCH

- Griffith’s Valuation 1847–1864
- Landed Estates Court Rentals 1850–1885
- Ireland, Poverty Relief Loans 1821–1874

DID YOU KNOW?

The vast majority of Ireland’s 19th century census records were destroyed at a fire in the Public Records Office of Ireland during the Irish Civil War in 1922. The surviving fragments can be searched on Findmypast.
SEARCHING IRISH RECORDS ON FINDMYPAST

STEP 1
To search Irish records on Findmypast go to the homepage and enter the name and any details you know of the ancestor you are researching into the search box. Make sure you have selected Ireland as your location and click search.

STEP 2
The results of your search will be displayed on a new page. You can narrow your search using the filters on the left-hand side to choose a specific record category. You can also sort your search results at the top of the page by name, date and record set name.

STEP 3
Once your search has been narrowed, click the transcript or image icons to view the records. To make a change to your search click ‘Edit search’ on the left-hand side of the search results screen.

TOP TIP:
If available, be sure to view the record image as well as the transcript. The transcript always contains the most important information from the record but the original image may well have additional valuable details.
BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS (BMDs)

Vital records are another essential starting point for tracing your Irish family history. Civil registration began in Ireland in 1864 (1845 for non-Catholic marriages). To find a civil birth, marriage or death record, and make the best use of your time, search the 21 million indexes online at Findmypast. They’ll tell you all the information you need to order a copy of your ancestor’s certificate from Ireland’s General Register Office.

KEY findmypast RECORD SETS TO SEARCH
- Irish Births 1864–1958
- Irish Marriages 1845–1958
- Irish Deaths 1864–1958

PARISH RECORDS

There are over 10 million Irish Roman Catholic Parish Registers FREE FOREVER on Findmypast. These records are key to taking your Irish family history research back further as many date back into the 18th century. Like BMDs, parish records will normally reveal your ancestor’s name, age and where they were living. Knowing which parish your family came from in Ireland is important for getting the most from these records. Cross-referencing with land records can help as they sometimes include the parish name. For non-Catholic church records, there are a small range of niche resources on Findmypast as well as other websites and offline archives.

KEY findmypast RECORD SETS TO SEARCH
- Ireland Roman Catholic Parish Baptisms
- Ireland Roman Catholic Parish Marriages
- Ireland Roman Catholic Parish Burials
LEGAL AND CRIMINAL RECORDS

The Irish Prison Registers 1790-1924 on Findmypast are a treasure trove of information for family history research. There are over 3.5 million names included and they cover all prisons in modern-day Republic of Ireland. From a genealogical point of view, the wonderful thing about prison records is the depth of information provided in them. Everything from next of kin information to physical descriptions, including scars and tattoos are often included. Irish court records are just as captivating. At Findmypast there are over 22 million Petty Sessions Registers which are one of the great untapped resources of Irish research. A window on Ireland’s past, they provide detailed identifying information (names, occupations, addresses) about people in their own communities.

WATCH OUT!
Prison and court records for Northern Ireland are held separately from those for the Republic of Ireland, either in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland or in individual court houses and prisons.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers are a rich source for family historians because of their detail and colour. In the 19th century, personal details such as names and addresses, that would be omitted today to protect identities, were often published. Findmypast’s Irish Newspaper Collection includes titles for every county on the island and is constantly growing with brand new titles and additional articles for existing ones. The kind of information you can expect to find in historical Irish newspapers includes:

- News reports, including details of crimes and misdemeanours
- Family notices such as births, marriages, deaths and elopements
- Letters to the Editor
- Obituaries that may include unique information
- Advertisements of a family business
- Photographs and illustrations

KEY RECORD SETS TO SEARCH

- Irish Prison Registers 1790-1924
- Ireland, Petty Sessions Court Registers
- Irish Newspapers
MILITARY RECORDS

The ‘fighting Irish’ have been involved in some of history’s most pivotal conflicts, both on Irish soil and abroad. The amazing stories of these brave individuals can be told through the records they left behind. British Army Service Records are where you’ll find the majority of Irish soldiers in our records. These unique records document a whole range of details on your ancestors, you won’t find elsewhere including physical descriptions, the regiment they served in, next of kin and whether they won any war medals. Ireland’s tumultuous history of rebellions and unrest has also resulted in some interesting records where you can locate your rebel relatives.

DID YOU KNOW?
An estimated 175,000 Irishmen fought in the American Civil War (1861–65). Be sure to search US military records for your Irish ancestors too.

KEY RECORD SETS TO SEARCH
- British Army Service Records
- Easter Rising & Ireland Under Martial Law 1916-1921
- Ireland’s Memorial Record: World War 1: 1914-1918

TRAVEL & MIGRATION RECORDS

The Great Famine (1845-51) reduced the Irish population by a quarter, and was the start of mass emigration from Ireland. With movement on such a scale, passenger lists and travel records are very important resources for Irish family history. From these records you can find out where your ancestors went, the ship they travelled on and who they travelled with.

KEY RECORD SETS TO SEARCH
- Passenger Lists Leaving UK 1890-1960
- Irish Famine Immigrants, 1846-1851
- New York Passenger Lists & Arrivals

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

- www.irishfamilyhistorycentre.com
A vast online library of sources, where you can join a community of Irish genealogists and get help discovering your past.

- www.nationalarchives.ie
National Archives of Ireland website offers free access to many Irish records including wills, transportation registers and more.

- www.nli.ie
The National Library of Ireland website includes a section dedicated to family history with an online catalogue of the library’s resources.

- www.irishgenealogy.ie
Irish Government site with free access to civil records as well as a range of transcribed Catholic and Church of Ireland parish registers.

- www.irishlivesremembered.ie
Monthly Irish family history e-mag, packed with features. It is free to download and read online.