



One Family's Journey: From County Cavan to Nebraska

Genealogy KC 2025

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Introduction

One of the difficulties in doing Irish family research is understanding how to start. Family history research becomes more challenging when we start to research our distant generations. As with other practices for family history, you need to start from what you know and use that information to find out more. This means you should take the time to evaluate your records and see if you have overlooked any meaningful clues.

Exhaust Every Resource That You Have

- Ancestral Heat Map
 - A heatmap visualization gives you a high-level view of your ancestors by showcasing geographic areas with a higher concentration of references (surnames) associated with your family tree.
 - Ireland: Use Griffith's Valuation to see where the surname is most prevalent. Griffith's Valuation (1847-64) is a comprehensive mid-nineteenth-century census substitute.
 - www.johngrenham.com
- Cemetery Records
 - Look for cemetery records, gravestones, and published (or unpublished) transcriptions of gravestones.
 - In Ireland: www.discovereverafter.com (Northern Ireland); www.historyfromheadstones.com (Northern Ireland); www.interment.net/ireland; www.kerrylaburials.ie; www.glasnevintrust.ie
 - FindaGrave.com; BillionGraves.com
- Census Records
 - The Irish government conducted censuses of all of Ireland in 1821, 1831, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, and 1911.
 - The fire at the Four Courts building (which contained the Public Records Office) in 1922 destroyed most of 1821, 1831, 1841, and 1851 census records (some fragments still exist).
 - The Irish government destroyed 1861, 1871, 1881, and 1891 censuses for unknown reasons.
 - The earliest surviving comprehensive Irish censuses are from 1901 and 1911.
 - Websites for Irish census records include:
 - National Archives of Ireland (<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/>); FamilySearch.org (1901 and 1911 census); FindMyPast.com (Ireland Census 1821-1851); Ancestry.com (Ireland 1766 Religious Census).

- Civil registration indexes and some abstracted records can serve as Irish census substitutes. They can be found online at familysearch.org (Under Browse by Location, click on Europe, then go to Ireland in the alphabetical list of places).
- Tracing family migration through the US census can also help corroborate your ancestors' place of origin/birth. Detailed analysis of friends, acquaintances, and neighbors (FAN) can provide insight into possible cluster migration, indicating origins.
 - As censuses evolved, additional information was added that might be helpful in your research. The National Archives has resources that help to explain these changes (<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1850-1940>).
- Several Great Plains/Midwestern states conducted their own censuses (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin).
 - The data collected by each state varied, but most recorded the person's birth location.
- Church Records
 - Understanding the family's religious traditions may provide a clue as to the ancestor's religious faith.
 - In Ireland: National Library of Ireland (www.nli.ie); www.johngrenham.com; www.rootsireland.ie; www.irishgenealogy.ie;
 - Local church or archdiocesan archives in the US.
- General Register Office Records (Ireland)
 - These government records of births, deaths, and marriages can help verify what you may have learned from your family. Marriage records, if available, are instrumental.
 - Transcripts of indexes (and some births 1864-1881) are available on FamilySearch.org.
 - Transcripts of some local registrar's records are available through RootsIreland.ie, and IrishGenealogy.ie.
- Irish Property Records
 - Tithe Applotment Books (www.nationalarchives.ie); Griffith's valuation maps (www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/); Northern Ireland Valuation Office (www.proni.gov.uk/).
- Naturalization Documents
 - Declaration of Intent was usually filed two years after establishing residency (exceptions exist, notably for veterans and women married to naturalized husbands).
 - Petition for Naturalization was filed after three years after the Declaration of Intent.
 - Look at census records for naturalization clues.
 - PA = Papers filed; NA = Naturalized; NR = No report; AL = Alien
- Obituaries and newspapers
 - In Ireland: www.irishnewsarchive.com (20th century newspapers); www.irishtimes.com/archive (from 1859); www.findmypast.ie (pre-1922 copyright collection of newspapers).
 - Newspapers.com; GenealogyBank.com, Newspaperarchive.com; ChroniclingAmerica.loc.gov.

- Ethnic Irish newspapers (FindMyPast.com; GenealogyBank.com; New England Historic Genealogical Society (Americanancestors.org); state library or archives).
- Passenger Lists and Ship Manifests
 - Ancestry.com, FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org/); www.ellisland.org; SteveMorse.org.
 - Occasionally the maiden name of the woman will be listed.
- Vital Records
 - A valuable source of information, especially in the later years (i.e., after 1900). Be sure to identify the informant of the information and determine how that person was likely to know the accuracy of the information provided.
 - Some birth, marriage, and death records may indicate the Irish townland or county of origin.

Recommended Reading:

- Greenwood, Val D. (2017). *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*. 4th ed. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, ISBN: 978-0806320663.
- Grenham, John. *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*. Gill Books, 2019; ISBN: 978-0717174652.
- Mitchell, Brian. *NEW Pocket Guide to Irish Genealogy*. Clearfield, 2020; ISBN: 978-0806359083.
- Ouimette, David S. *Finding Your Irish Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide*. Ancestry Publishing, 2005; ISBN-13: 978-1593312930.
- Paton, Chris. *Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet: A Guide for Family Historians - Second Edition*. Pen and Sword Family History, 2019; ISBN: 978-1526757814.
- Ryan, James G. (1997). *Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History*. Ancestry.com, ISBN: 978-1681620138.
- Santry, Claire. *The Family Tree Irish Genealogy Guide: How to Trace Your Ancestors in Ireland*. Family Tree Books, 2017; ISBN: 978-1440348808.