

Emigration from Ireland - sources

The year 1718 is seen as iconic in the story of Irish emigration to North America. While some people left Ireland for America before that date, it is generally recognised as the key date in what became a stream of Ulster and Irish migrants to colonial America. And despite the impression that the eighteenth century is the period of greatest migration from Ulster, far more emigrants left the north of Ireland in the nineteenth century. Migration to the southern hemisphere similarly started relatively slow with convict transportation to Australia in the late eighteenth century but built steadily through the nineteenth into the twentieth century.

The period 1718 to 1845 is interesting and presents the researcher with challenges for finding emigrant ancestors in this period. The lack of available sources in Ireland and North America, the hiatus caused to regular migration by the Revolutionary War (1775–83), and the challenges posed in finding ancestors who left during the Great Famine require the researcher to be resourceful.

Official records recording the outward movement of people from Britain and Ireland were not kept before 1890. In addition, the USA only required lists of passengers to be kept from 1820, before this period they were not compulsory.

It is also important to realise that the few passenger lists which exist for the nineteenth century and for a few years in the late eighteenth century for the most part survive in North America *not* in Ireland, thus researchers should exhaust archives in USA and Canada for passenger lists, ships manifests, etc, and not expect to find ‘undiscovered’ material back in Ireland. In the main, what archives here hold are often merely copies of material found in, eg, the National Archives of the USA.

Given the dearth of sources for the period it is therefore difficult to document the migration of ancestors and researchers often must rely on clues gleaned from a wide range of Irish historical sources. None of which were ever compiled with migration in mind. That said, experience has found, for a few researchers at least, the records can be ‘peppered’ with references to the outward or onward movement of ancestors from their homeplace to other locations, be it within the island of Ireland, or the British Isles, or overseas to North America, Australasia, and other ‘exotic’ locations.

Researchers should keep an open mind about the possible route an ancestor might have taken to get to their new home – was it direct from an Irish port (probably), but could it have been via England or Scotland (as many did in the mid to later nineteenth century, Liverpool being a key point of departure), or was it via another part of the world – the Caribbean, South America, Australia or New Zealand to North America (or vice versa).

Moreover, family historians should not overlook any possible Australian link that the family might have, when searching for North American ancestors. For example, if several members of the same family emigrated, with some going to USA/Canada and the others going to Australia, follow that lead. States like New South Wales at times recorded far fuller information on new immigrants and their family background in Ireland than was the case in USA or Canada.

Some sources for finding emigrant ancestors

Passenger lists, 1890–1960 are held by The National Archives (TNA), Kew

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/passenger-lists-leaving-uk-1890-1960>

The National Archives (TNA) Kew – Guide to emigration

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/emigration/#4-online-records

New York Passenger Lists, 1820–1897

www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Free_Online_New_York_Passenger_Lists_1820-1897

New York Passengers 1820–1957 (Castle Garden & Ellis Island)

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7488/>

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1849782?collectionNameFilter=false&cid=bl-fsup-8014>

The Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation

<https://heritage.statueofliberty.org>

Ireland, Poverty Relief Loans 1821-1874 (T91)

<https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-Records/ireland-poverty-relief-loans-1821-1874>

Dunbrody Famine Ship and Irish Emigrant Database

www.dunbrody.com/get-involved/irish-emigration-database/

Abraham Bell Collection, 1809–1917, State University of New York, Albany

<https://archives.albany.edu/description/catalog/mss035>

The Famine Immigrants: Irish Immigrants Arriving at the Port of New York, 1846–51

www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/5969/

Emigrant's savings bank, New York, 1850–83

<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/8760/>

Missing Friends from newspapers, e.g. *Boston Pilot* 1831–1921

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/UNJU3N>

Emigrant letters and journals

Irish Emigration Database <https://www.dippam.ac.uk/ied>

OR <http://ifhf.rootsireland.ie/quis.php?type=ships&new=1>

Emigrant letters at Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/search-pronis-ecatalogue

Printed sources: e.g. Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, 1830s

All 40 volumes of the OS Memoirs can be purchased from the Foundation's website:

www.booksireland.org.uk/store/ordnance-survey-memoirs

Names of emigrants extracted from the OSMs for counties Antrim and Londonderry are available for members on the Foundation's website:

www.ancestryireland.com/family-records/emigrants-from-counties-antrim-and-londonderry-1830s

Irish Census records 1911, 1901 and fragments including 1821–51

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

Census search forms for Old Age Pension claims

<http://censussearchforms.nationalarchives.ie/search/cs/home.jsp>

Irish Military Archives – Pension and Medal Applications

www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923

1901 and 1911 Census – families returned from USA or overseas

www.census.nationalarchives.ie/

Drumcondra/Loughbracken census 1871(IGRS website)

www.irishancestors.ie/resources/unique-resources/drumcondra-loughbracken-1871-census-fragment/

Additional information in Valuation Revision Books

www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/searching-valuation-revision-books

Roots Ireland website – for births/baptisms, marriages, deaths/burials, gravestone inscriptions

www.rootsireland.ie

Registry of Deeds Index Project Ireland – eg Places in North America

<https://irishdeedsindex.net/index.php>

Diocesan and Prerogative wills, 1595-1858

<http://census.nationalarchives.ie/search/dw/home.jsp>

American wills in The National Archives (TNA)

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858/

Useful books

General genealogical guides

Numerous books on Irish genealogy have been written. Probably the best general guide is John Grenham's *Tracing your Irish Ancestors*, the fifth edition of which was published in 2019. Another useful guide is *Tracing Irish Ancestors* by MacConghail and Gorry (1997). A recent addition geared specifically towards North American audiences is *The Family Tree Irish Genealogy Guide* by Claire Santry, who also compiles the excellent website: www.irishgenealogynews.com

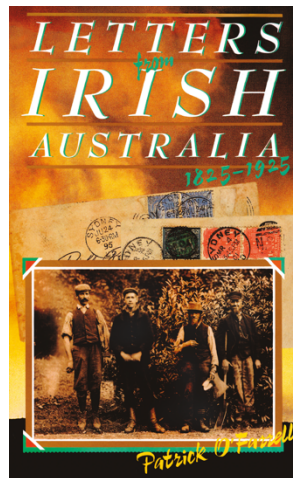
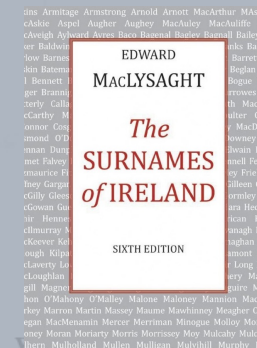
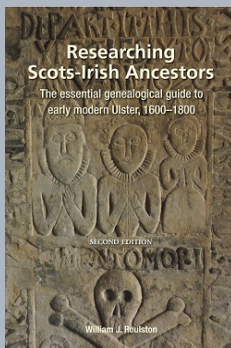
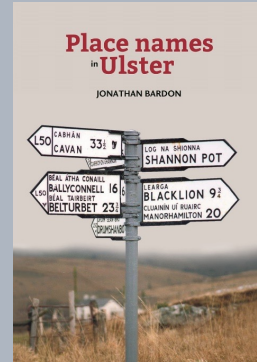
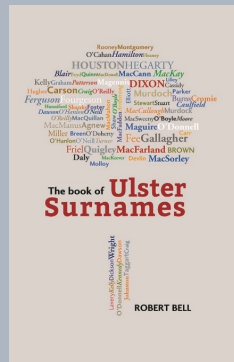
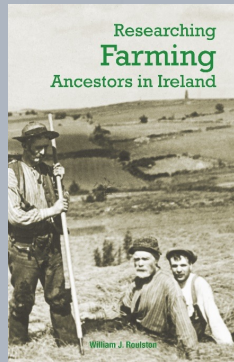
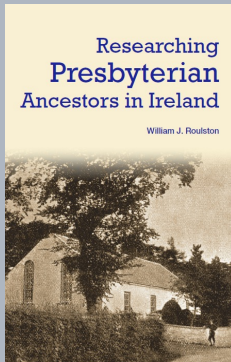
William Roulston's *Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors: the essential genealogical guide to early modern Ulster, 1600–1800* (Ulster Historical Foundation, 2018), provides a comprehensive overview of sources for studying family history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including a summary listing of sources for virtually every parish in Ulster. Dr Roulston has also produced two complementary titles to this major work, *Researching Presbyterian Ancestors in Ireland* (2020) and *Researching Farming Ancestors in Ireland* (2021) both also by the Foundation.



Canadian migration titles



Recommended guides to Irish research



Useful addresses

ULSTER HISTORICAL FOUNDATION
 Bradley Thallon House, 44D Belfast Road, Kiltonga Estate, Ballycullen, Newtownards,
 Co. Down, BT23 4TJ
 Email: enquiry@uhf.org.uk
 Web: www.ancestryireland.com

IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FOUNDATION

E-mail: enquiries@rootsireland.ie

Web: www.rootsireland.ie

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND

Bishop Street, Dublin 8

Email: mail@nationalarchives.ie

Web: www.nationalarchives.ie

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

Kildare Street, Dublin 2

Email: info@nli.ie

Web: www.nli.ie

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

2 Titanic Boulevard, Belfast, BT3 9HQ

Email: proni@communities-ni.gov.uk

Web: www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni

Ulster Historical Foundation – Genealogical and historical research services

If you have you hit a brick wall in your family history research or have exhausted the different online avenues and need expert genealogical advice and assistance, then let us do the hard work for you! The Foundation offers expert genealogical advice through our comprehensive range of professional research services to assist you in your family history research. These include:

- Personal face-to-face consultations – a consultation with a member of our experienced research team could save you a considerable amount of time and increase your chances of research success.
- Initial research assessments – An initial assessment explores the feasibility of archival research by identifying sources of potential relevance for your family history.
- In-depth archival research – Whether you are at the start of your family history journey or have been researching for years; utilising original sources in the archives we can provide a detailed report of your ancestral history.
- Specific archival research – If you have specific research that you would like to have carried out, for example a particular Church register, we can do this research for you.
- Document retrieval – If you need a specific record from our local archives, which you cannot access remotely yourself, we will find and copy it for you.

For our full range of research services go to: www.ancestryireland.com/research-services

Ulster Genealogical and Historical Guild

Our membership association, the Ulster Genealogical and Historical Guild, was established in 1978 to provide a forum for the Irish and Scots-Irish genealogical community to share their knowledge with other researchers across the world. It is designed to give local and family historians access to a range of specialist resources and services that you will find invaluable in your quest to complete your research.

To join go to:

www.ancestryireland.com/membership