Success in Irish research is highly dependent on discovering the exact location in Ireland where one's ancestors were born and typically clues to the location are in records in the United States. This presentation will survey the types of resources available to Irish researchers, focusing on records that can be found locally, through major repositories or the Internet both in the United States and Ireland.

Myth and Reality of Irish Records
Have you heard that you can’t do Irish research because all of the records were burned? On the 30th of June 1922 a fire at Four Courts, which housed among other things, the Public Records Office, burned. The reality is that the loss of records was devastating...1000 years of Irish history were lost, but many records do survive, and depending on when your ancestors emigrated and where they were from, you may be able to find records. In addition, collections are constantly being rebuilt from other records through donations and newly identified records.

Some Family Sources for Discovering Irish Localities
To begin your Irish research check for records on all members of the family here before you jet off to Ireland. Some U.S. records that might provide information on the place of origin of your Irish ancestors are:

- Family Records
- Obituaries
- Church Records
- Military Records

- Oral Tradition
- Tombstones
- Cemetery Records
- Probate Records

- Naturalizations
- Passenger Lists
- Newspapers
- Funeral Cards

Irish Administrative Districts
What you are looking for in your search is the name of the townland where your ancestors were born or were living prior to their emigration. Knowing just the county won’t be of much help because records in Ireland were not kept on the county level. In fact, different types of records are kept by different Administrative Districts in Ireland so you need to know the Barony, Parish (both civil and ecclesiastical) and the Poor Law or Registration District. The key to finding this information is by first identifying the townland. Without a doubt this is the most difficult information to find.

Irish Civil Records
Ireland began civil registration in 1864. The good news is that none of these records were at the Public Records Office so all registered birth, death and marriage records from 1864 survive. The recording of Protestant marriages began in 1845. The index to these records can be found at FamilySearch.org.

Census Records (1901 and 1911)
Now the bad news...although the censuses began in 1821, only the 1901 and 1911 fully survive. Like our 1890 census however, there are some remnants that do exist for other years. Maybe you’ll be lucky! Both the 1901 and 1911 censuses are now online at the National Archives of Ireland site. There are also ongoing discussions about the release of the 1926 census within the next few years.

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Griffith’s Valuation
Completed between 1848 and 1864, Griffith’s is sometimes referred to as a census substitute because it is only of the only lists of people in Ireland just before, during and after the famine. But remember, it is a tax list (with those owning or holding leases on property). It can be a useful tool for identifying localities even if ancestors emigrated earlier. (Origins.net and AskAboutIreland.ie)

Church Records
It is important to understand that religion in Ireland was a political as well as spiritual issue. The Church of Ireland was the State Church from 1560 through 1869. As such it had a civil and well as religious function. The Roman Catholic and to a certain extent the Presbyterian and other protestant churches, as dissenters, were unable to keep records for many years. During this time, you may find records of your Catholic or Presbyterian ancestors in the records of The Church of Ireland (Anglican) if they still exist. Since they were considered civil records the Church of Ireland records were required to be sent to the Public Records Office for “safekeeping” in the 1870’s and many were lost in the fire.

Since the early 1990s a project to index and transcribe Irish church records has been ongoing and the index is now available online at the Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF) website (fee based). In addition, the Irish Ministry for Tourism, Culture and Sport has added church records for some areas that are not available through IFHF at IrishGenealogy.ie.

Some Other Records
There are many other records which might help you research your Irish ancestors. In addition to the list below, once you know the specific location, check a reference book such as Tracing Your Irish Ancestors by John Grenham, or Irish Records: Sources for Family and Local History by James Ryan to see what records have survived for that specific location.
- Tithe Applotments (Tax Lists) 1823 - 1838 (at Ancestry.com)
- Tithe Defaulters Lists (on CD and at Origins.net)
- Wills (indexes or abstracts as most were destroyed in the fire) (at Origins.net and Ancestry)
- Transportation Records (Convicts to Australia) (at National Archives of Ireland)
- Estate Records (mostly in Ireland at National Archives and PRONI)
- Old Age Pension File Search Reports (in Ireland; some indexed at Irish Genealogy)
- Heritage Centers (church records, Griffith’s Valuation, local records) (IrishRoots)
- “Missing Friends” Ads (online or books) (Boston College and AmericanAncestors)
- New York Emigrant Savings Bank (available on Ancestry.com)

Where to Find the Records
Irish records are accessible in many locations. There are a number of Irish research sites on the Internet, as well as Blogs which can tell you what’s new. There are also subscription sites such as Ancestry.com, FindMyPast.ie and Origins.net which contain Irish records. Many libraries have substantial Irish collections...try using WorldCat.org or the county library catalog to check. And don’t forget the Family Search Centers to order films. Some of my Irish friends tell me it’s easier to do Irish research in Salt Lake City than in Ireland!
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