

Scots- and Scots-Irish Genealogical Research Seminar
11 Mar 2017
Bentonville Arkansas
Ulster Historical Foundation
In Conjunction with the Northwest Arkansas Genealogical Society

GOAL: The goal I had in attending this seminar was to learn more about resources available to do Scots-and Scot-Irish genealogical research, with the idea being to get past my “brick wall”, which is my 4th great grandfather, Valentine Kerr, born in 1760 in western Pennsylvania. An interesting sidelight to this is that after attending this I talked for 2 hours with a Kerr cousin I State College PA and he said he discovered just recently a “Valentine Car” in the 1790 Franklin County PA Census and the ages marked in the census lined up with the ages of the wife and the one child they had (a girl) before 1790). And, I am thinking my Kerr’s may have come from County Antrim in Ulster Province and Donald my cousin, said there is an Antrim Township in Franklin County PA.

I. Introduction to various archives in Ireland & their websites

An excellent book to purchase to assist on in their research is *Tracking Your Irish Ancestors* by John Grendham

In 1922 there was a fire at the Public Records Office in Dublin resulting from a war in Ireland. This fire destroyed 2/3 of the Irish church parish record: pre 1845 marriage and pre-1864 baptismal records.

This was the Catholic records

It did not affect the Presbyterian records. These were at churches

It also affect pre-1900 wills & testamatories for all the country

Since then there has been a movement in place to develop these records and with the advent of the internet this has been going much quicker.

Some websites that help in this are:

www.ancestryireland.com parts are subscription and parts are free. This is the website for the Ulster Historical Foundation

www.familysearch.org —free

www.irishgenealogy.ie —free-- which is the Irish government site

National Library of Ireland: <http://www.nli.ie/> FREE

National Archives of Ireland: <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/> FREE

THE BIG ONE:

PRONI—this is the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and is FREE. I always thought it was one you needed to subscribe to get. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni>

This site is “a whole other world” and you can spend HOURS at it and not cover everything. I will not try to explain it all here because, frankly, I still am learning.

For people interested in Presbyterian records, the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland -- <http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com/>

They gave a handout with FIVE pages of websites listed

II. Understanding Irish Town-lands: The importance of place, identity and administrative divisions in Irish research

There are 4 basic land divisions, going from smallest to largest:

1. Town-land: 200-300 acres, there are 64,000 of these in Ireland
2. Civil Parish: made up of 25-30 town-lands. These were originally church divisions but are now civil.
3. Barony: Portion of a county or a group of parishes. There are 273 in Ireland
4. County: going back to the 13th century. There are 32 formed into 4 provinces

Provinces: Leinster, Munster, Connacht and Ulster. Ulster is the province where the majority of the Scottish and English who moved to Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries moved to.

PRONI has a Historic Map Viewer app that can locate town-lands within civil parishes and so on

The people said that if you find people with your surname in a town-land in the censuses in the 1800's chances are real good that is where these peoples' ancestors lived in the previous two centuries. In other words, people did not move from one town-land to another very often, or at least not to far-off town-lands. They became more mobile in the 2nd half of the 19th century.

There is a website <https://www.johngrenham.com/surnames/> where you can go and type in your surname and it will give the distribution on a map of where that surname is located. When I did this for Kerr the vast majority of the hits were in Ulster County. This is a subscription site after four searches.

There were tax lists taken in the 1800's called Griffith's Valuations. Once you can locate a person with our surname on these it is possible they are your relative, because as mentioned above, the folks in Ireland were not very mobile until the late 1800's. The Griffith's Valuations give the location in Town-land, etc.

For the origins and derivations of names of current towns, cities, villages and physical features, the presenters recommended the book *Irish Place Names* by Laurence Flanagan.

III. Church records for use in genealogical research: baptismal, marriage and burial records

There are 3 C's of these types of records: Civil, Census and Church records

The earliest records are the Church of England (Anglican Records) that date back to the early 1600's.

Presbyterian ministers could not legally perform marriages before 1784 so check the other church's records for marriages before that date.

These records are available on PRONI

IV. Using land records: Griffith's Valuations, Tithe and Estate Records

Land Records from the 1820's to 1930's are used to substitute for census records that were destroyed in the 1922 fire.

Tithe Applotment Books from 1823-1837 were records of tithes paid to the Church of Ireland. Everyone paid these no matter what their religion was. These records are available in the National Archives site <http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/>

First Town-land Valuation from 1828-1840 are available on PRONI. The problem with these records is the standard for the valuation of the property is high enough that most did not meet the minimum requirements.

As mentioned before, the Griffiths Valuation was taken from 1848-1864—this is the main census substitution and is also known as the "Primary Valuation". Land owners can be the same for generations so if you see people with your surname in these years this could have been rented to your people before these records were kept.

These also have nicknames at times, such as for occupations if there is a common name repeatedly on the same page or father's name

Ireland Valuation Office Books were kept from 1820 to the 1850's & were conducted by the Office of the General Valuation of Ireland. www.familysearch.org has this by searchable means for the dates 1831-1856.

The website <http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/valuation-books.html> gives a good in-depth discussion of these records.

There are also the Valuation Revision Books and they cover 1864-1933 and these are available on PRONI at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/searching-valuation-revision-books>

LEASES: The very earliest of all real estate companies is the Rentals Vintners Company, started in 1718.

The leases lasted 21 or 31 years and consisted of what rent was to be paid, location of land and conditions to be fulfilled by the lessee.

There was also what was called the "Three Life Lease" where three people from the same family would be listed and the lease lasted until the last person on the lease was living. This was done in the following manner: a family would list father, another adult and then one of the youngest if not THE youngest child, counting on that child to live a long time.

Catholics could not have these leases

Muster Rolls: 1745 Men of the area with arms were counted. The reason for this was concerns about the Jacobite Uprising. One interesting thing: the arms were listed as either being in good working condition or non-working condition. Again, PRONI has these records

V. Emigration from the north of Ireland to North America, strategies for researching emigrant ancestors.

One good website that gives a summary of this is <http://www.sneydobone.com/webtree/history-ir.htm>

Scots and English moved to Ireland in the 1600's and 1700's when there was a movement to make Ireland a Protestant country, per King James. This pushed the Catholics off their land.

Most of the protestants were Presbyterians. This worked pretty well until several “push factors” caused these protestants to look elsewhere to live. North America was the primary place.

These push factors were:

1. In the 1690's there was a severe famine
2. In the 1711-1721 era, the 21 year leases were due and the protestants were treated badly in that their rents were raised a lot and other factors changed making the continued living there undesirable.
3. 1723/24: migration from Ulster renewed again due to positive letters from others who moved to North America.
4. 1740/1741: Another Irish famine which was almost as bad as the Potato Famine in the 1800's but no of as long duration. Also the 31 year leases were coming due just as in #2 above.
5. 1763-1770: 7 years War, economy and linen trade were all pushes to get people to move to North America.
6. 1754/1755: Bad harvests and once again rent issues
7. 1771-1775: 10,000 people per year emigrated

Emigration dropped a lot during the Revolutionary War: the the war emigration increased again.

Other factors were high pressure from Catholics for the return of their land, por harvests, falling prices.

Pull Factors to increase emigration to North America:

1. Economic opportunity
2. Freedom of worship: In 1704 there was a Test Act passed which banned Presbyterians from Civil and military offices, repealed in 1780
3. Letters from successful emigrants
4. Ads similar to letters
5. Schemes to get people to move

Emigrants left via the following ports in the North of Ireland:

1. Newry;
2. Belfast;
3. Larne;
4. Portrush; and,

5. Londonderry.

The Scots-Irish settled in the following areas in North America:

1. Southern New Your State
2. Western and central Pennsylvania
3. Virginia
4. North Carolina
5. South Carolina

The Highland Scots were more likely to have settled more towards the coastland.

This is all described very well at the following website:

<http://coursesite.uhcl.edu/HS/Whitec/xhist/ScotsIrishImm.htm>

This site also discusses the eras in which the emigration from Northern Ireland to North America occurred.

SUMMATION:

1. Use more current records (1800 census, land records, tithe records and the like) to help determine where people of your surname were located. People in Ireland were not mobile until the latter years of the 1800's so these are indications where your people may well have been in previous decades and even centuries;
2. Town-lands are the smallest land divisions and the more distinct areas you can find your surnames in later years above the more likely you are to find your people from previous years;
3. Look for patterns of settlement in North America. If your people settled in central parts of the North American states they are more likely to be Scots-Irish as opposed to Highland Scots who came directly from Scotland. One pattern I have seen in writings before which was not discussed at this seminar is this: If you have people of Scottish descent who, when they came to America settled in rural areas and were craftsmen (i.e., carpenters, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, etc.), then they are more likely to be Scots-Irish (came to America by way of Ireland. If they settled in bigger towns and cities and were merchants, then they were more likely to have been Highland Scots (came to North America directly from Scotland.
4. PRONI is a FREE site. It is located at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni>. It will take time to learn how to navigate this. I am still learning.

The idea of “patterns” is alluded to in the GOAL paragraph in the beginning of this handout.

I purchased a book entitled *Tracing Your Northern Irish Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* by Ian Maxwell and I recommend it.

Lastly, I have a handout they provided which is 16 pages in length. There are 4 pages of websites listed. If anyone wants a copy of this, email me at chiefman1962@gmail.com.