



Irving Genealogical Society

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Irving, Texas

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Officers:

President: Joe Sissom

Vice President: Jeanne Mantooth

Secretary: Norma Childers

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A Reminder:

Dues were due in January. This is the last newsletter you will receive if you have not paid your dues. Please send them in or come to the meeting on Monday.

Our speaker on Monday, March 19 will be Marynell Bryant. She will speak on Genealogy: Using DNA to identify your Family Lineage. Come and enjoy the program and learn more about DNA and Genealogy.

Our Speaker for April 16 will be Bill Matthews. He will be speaking on Recording Oral History and getting it on a Computer. Bill will discuss how oral histories can be captured and how to transfer cassette recordings to the computer with minimal expense and have either .mp3 or .wav files.

We are still looking for members to serve on the board.
Please let Joe Sissom know if you can serve the society.

Finding Your Ethnic Origins: An Irish Example

by Juliana Smith

One of the most thrilling aspects of family history is the ability to trace your ancestor's steps back to the very place where she or he lived in the old country. While it can be challenging, the rewards are great. When you discover that patch of earth they called home, you suddenly have a better understanding of who they really were and why their move to this country has made a difference in your life. With the discovery of foreign origins, doors open to brand new research possibilities. You may even find that you have relatives living in the old country who are ready and waiting to meet you and tell you more!

When taking any family history quest overseas, it's best to exhaust sources on this side of the ocean first. Records that are right here in the United States can be rich in information about your family. Many nearby sources can get you closer to learning where you inherited your twinkling eyes, your wonderful smile, your sense of humor, and your all-round great disposition. While some of the resources mentioned here are Irish specific, many of the techniques can also apply to other ethnicities. Here are some things to consider closer to home:

Home Sources

As with all things family history, it's best to start with clues in home sources. Talk with family members and ask them if they can recall hearing anything about your Irish origins. Check old photographs. Something found written on the photograph or something you can see in it may provide you with an idea of how to proceed. Newspaper clippings, postcards, journals, and other items your family members chose to save may be right under your nose. See if anyone has saved old letters that mention places where the family may have lived.

I know of someone whose cousin found a long-forgotten letter that was written by an ancestor as he journeyed to America for the first time. Not only did the letter include interesting details of the trip, but the dated letter revealed the names of friends and relatives who would be dearly missed in his homeland.

Local Sources

Most of us are not as fortunate as those who find treasured letters and clues in their own home, but new leads can be found in records in or near the place where your ancestor lived in this country. A library or archive in the area where your ancestor lived may have a stash of information that names your great-grandfather and tells you where he was born. We have had good luck finding information about our ancestors' origins online, from census records, passenger lists, newspapers, naturalization and other court records, and especially in church records in this country.

Depending on where and when your ancestor died or was married, his death or marriage record may also include details on his birthplace. Obituaries can be particularly helpful. The following obituary on my great-great-grandmother gave us our first foothold in Ireland.

From [*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*](#), Wednesday, July 17, 1912, pg. 5,

Jane Howley, widow of Thomas Howley died yesterday at her residence, 630 Park Place. She was born in Balbriggan, Dublin County, Ireland. She had lived in Brooklyn for 62 years. Her husband died in 1884. She was a member of St. Teresa's R.C. Church where a mass of requiem will be celebrated Friday morning and leaves two daughters, Mrs. Madden and Mrs. John Dalton, a son Thomas W., 14 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

(A side note: For those with New York City-Irish roots, check out the [*New York Herald*](#). There are only four years currently available at Ancestry, but the obituaries in that paper are often a goldmine for Irish immigrants and typically will note the city and county of origin for the deceased.)

Check for locality-specific publications. There are many dedicated individuals out there helping to preserve pieces of history by scanning or transcribing parish registers, recording tombstones, and other similar projects. For example, in *Old Calvary Cemetery: New Yorkers Carved in Stone*, Rosemary Muscarella Ardolina documents 424 pages of gravestone inscriptions, most of them Irish, and most with city and county of origin in Ireland.

Local histories may feature short biographical sketches of prominent citizens. Here is one I found online at Ancestry:

From the [*History of Brooklyn New York*](#), by Henry Stiles,

Henry Dawson was a native of Dublin, Ireland, of good family; and at one time a major in the British army. He came to this country about 1760, and married for his first wife a Miss Coombs, of Jamaica, L. I., and for his second wife, a sister of Gen. Jacob Morton, for twenty-six years the clerk of the common council of the city of New York. Mr. Dawson resided in Brooklyn, near the Old Ferry, in Doughty street, and (retaining all the sportsmanlike tastes of his early life), he kept a pack of dogs, as well as hunting steeds, with which he frequently took "a brush" in the country around the village of Brooklyn.

The Importance of Family

Just as it is important to work with your current relatives to discover information about your past, you will find that family ties are equally important as you go back in time. You will find that your ancestors' relatives have left some important clues for you in some surprising places. It may be that census, church, court, or other records will link them to your grandparents. Records left by your ancestor's brothers and sisters will lead back to a common ancestor or common origins. Look too at the extended family, as well as sponsors and witnesses.

In my own research, I gathered church documents for my extended family then made a list of fourteen baptismal sponsors from the 1840s and 1850s for one line of the family. Checking [*Griffith's Valuation*](#), I discovered that of the fourteen sponsors named on these records, eight of their surnames are found in County Westmeath--the same county from which this line of my ancestors had emigrated. Since some of the surnames are uncommon, this is a clue worth following. Many of the sponsors emigrated from the exact parish and town or near it. I can't draw any strong conclusions for those sponsors who had more common names, but community patterns are emerging from this small study.

In one of the more conspicuous ironies of my research, I now have taken my Kelly line further back than any other family line. Because Kelly is one of the most common surnames in Ireland, we had little hope of discovering their Irish hometown. But because I worked at getting records for the entire family rather than focusing on my direct ancestors I located the exact town name in his homeland for our first Irish ancestor to set foot in America.

My third great-grandmother died at the young age of twenty-six leaving little in way of a paper trail. Her siblings however were much more generous. Through probates and cemetery listings, I was able to piece together the family structure and by knowing all the players, I was able to identify my fourth great-grandfather in the records of the [Emigrant Savings Bank online at Ancestry](#). Here is what I found in his entry:

- Nov. 19, 1857
- Account #15751
- James Kelly
- Occupation: none, infirm
- Address: 34 John St.
- Remarks: Native of Glackmore, Coy. Donegal and arrived at Halifax 30 yrs ago Wife dead Bridget McLoughlin and ch. James, Mary, Jane and Elizth.

Without knowing the family structure, I probably wouldn't have been able to identify this James Kelly as my ancestor. Instead I was able to not only identify him, I learned his town and county of origin, that he emigrated through Halifax thirty years prior, and that his wife's maiden name was McLoughlin. (This one still makes me want to get up and give it a little dance!)

The Usual Suspects

While many of us are disappointed when we find little information regarding a place of origin in our ancestors' passenger arrival records or naturalization papers, there are many exceptions. Passenger lists that I've found for my Irish ancestors who immigrated in the first half of the nineteenth century provide only the word "Ireland" as a place of origin. However tens of thousands of passenger arrivals online at Ancestry do include the county of origin in Ireland, and not all of them are the more recent arrivals.

Typically it is the records after the turn of the twentieth century that will include more detailed information. Later naturalization records may also list a more specific place of origin. But don't exclude earlier records because dates, places, and names of witnesses may turn out to be the just the breakthrough you need. And regardless of what kind of records you are looking at, don't overlook the possibility of exceptions. In "Finding Your Irish Ancestors," author Dave Ouimette points out that he "searched the 1880 U.S. census index at Ancestry.com and found over three thousand Irish emigrants with their county or city of birth in Ireland actually listed on the census." I did searches for various county names in 1860 and got similar results. A search for Dublin turned up 265 hits, Derry got 215, and Galway came in with the highest number with 367. From my little survey, it appears that there are more than 2,000 individuals in the 1860 with county names, and I didn't even look for specific cities as Dave did.

Don't Give Up!

Even if you've been searching for your link to the land of your ancestor's roots for many years, don't give up hope. As you continue to learn more about their lives here, you are increasing the odds that you'll find it and add a new dimension to your family history.

Wishing all of you a very happy St. Patrick's Day!
Juliana

Juliana Smith has been the editor of Ancestry.com newsletters for more than eight years and is author of *The Ancestry Family Historian's Address Book*. She has written for *Ancestry Magazine* and wrote the Computers and Technology chapter in *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*, rev. 3rd edition. Juliana can be reached by e-mail at Juliana@Ancestry.com, but she regrets that her schedule does not allow her to assist with personal research.

New titles at the Library

Courthouse Indexes Illustrated. Christine Rose Publications. 2006.

Fowler, Simon. *Family Skeletons: Exploring the Lives of Our Disreputable Ancestors*. The National Archives, UK. 2005

Guide to South Carolina Genealogical Research and Records. Brent Holcomb. 2001

Hardin County, Tennessee: A Pictorial History. Turner Publishing. 1994.

Hollick, Martin E. *New Englanders in the 1600s: A Guide to Genealogical Research Between 1980 and 2005*. New England Historic Genealogical Society. 2006

MacFarland, K.T.H. *Hollidaysburg Records. Marriages, Deaths & Partitions from Weekly Newspapers of Hollidaysburg Huntingdon/Blair Counties, Pa.* Closson Press. 1994.

Marriages of Some Virginia Residents 1607-1800. series 1, vols. 1-7. Dorothy Ford Wulfeck. 1961.

No Land...Only Slaves! vol. 10, Slave Records Abstracted from the Deed Books Of Fannin County, Texas. Edith Smith & Vivian Lehman. 2005.

No Land...Only Slaves! vol. 11, Abstracts from the Deed Books of Upshur & Ellis Counties in Texas. Edith Smith & Vivan Lehman. 2005.

Oklahoma Rural Settlers in Woodward County, Oklahoma 1893-1910. Nandine Young Billingsley. 2006

Old St. Stephen's Land Office Records & American State Papers Public Lands.

vol.1, 1768-1888. Marilyn Davis Hahn. Southern Historical Press. 1983

On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldier II. Irene and Frank Schubert. Scarecrow Press. 2004.

Orphan Train Riders: A Brief History of the Orphan Trail Era (1854-1929)
With Entrance Records from the American Female Guardian Society's Home
For the Friendless in New York. Tom Riley. Heritage Books. 2005

South Carolina Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865. Broadfoot Publishing. 1998.

Stricklin, Dawn C. Cherokee Reserves Letters. Picton Press. 2005

Thode, Ernest. German English Genealogical Dictionary. Genealogical
Publishing. 1992.

Tracing Your Army Ancestors. Sam Fowler. Pen & Sword Military. 2006

University of Dallas. 50 Years of Vision & Courage, 1956-2006. University
of Dallas. 2006

Wayne County, Tennessee History and Families. Turner Publishing. 1995.

NEWS FROM CAROL BAKER:

Learned about this site recently on a Baker web board and thought I would pass it along in case you didn't know about it. The idea is that disasters make the papers, and the reports often give names of people who suffered losses or injury or death. Sometimes those disasters affected our families. Even if the articles don't name our people, they may tell us about their neighbors or give supporting data on where & how they lived.

<http://www.gendisasters.com/>

My only complaint about the site is that it does not include epidemics.

You may know all about their holdings at Stephen F. Austin Univ.

ETRC Newspaper Collection

Substantial runs of the Panola Watchmen, the Clarksville Northern Standard, the Jefferson Jimplecute, the Rusk Cherokeean, the Paris Morning News, and several Marshall and San Augustine papers are also found in the Center. When using this index check not only the title, but also the date of the issues we hold.

For many titles we have only a few issues. The East Texas Research Center contains newspapers from over 200 different Texas Cities and Towns.

<http://www.sfasu.edu/libweb/etrc/collections/newsppr/index.asp>

Sounds like you may need to make a road trip!

Carol Baker is a past member of the society and still keeps us up to date on local happenings.