

COUNTY MAP OF IRELAND



Ireland: Territorial and Administrative Divisions and Related Terms

Country: Land in Ireland is divided into different jurisdictions, religious and political. Boundaries of Irish administrative divisions often cross one another. The first accurate census of Ireland was taken in 1841, but earlier sources indicate, that the population grew very rapidly in the late 18th century and the early 19th century. In the sixty years before the Great Famine of 1845/7, the population probably doubled and the countryside became increasingly overpopulated. Until the 20th century, the vast majority of people lived in the rural countryside. By 1841 Ireland had over 8 million people, the greater proportion of whom were living of the land at bare subsistence level and heavily dependent on potatoes for food. There were no important industrial resources or developments in Ireland—land was the only major resource and farms had to be divided again and again to accommodate the growing numbers, while a large landless class was also created. Emigration was for many the only alternative to poverty. (See Source 2, pages 1 and 104.)

Northern Ireland -- A country that formed in 1922 after the Irish Civil War; part of the British Commonwealth. (See Source 4.)

Province: A traditional administrative division of Ireland. Present-day Ireland has four provinces: **Connaught, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster.** (See Source 4.)

Plantation of Ulster -- A plantation that James I, king of England, started in 1605 when he sent thousands of Presbyterians from Scotland to live in northern Ireland (Ulster). The king did this to displace Irish Catholics and to strengthen English rule. (See Source 4.) **Plantation** -- Land in Ireland granted to English and Scottish families. Queen Mary I started this practice in 1549 to strengthen English rule of Ireland. (See Source 4.)

County: There are 32 divisions in Ireland reflecting the 12th century imposition of the English system of local government completed in 1606. (See Source 3, page 8.) A county is a political unit comprising a number of civil parishes. (See Source 1, page 1.) In 1898 county status was given to the six largest towns in Ireland under the title of county boroughs. (See Source 2, page 143.)

Barony: A barony is a land division within a county in Ireland. Baronies were originally held by Irish chieftains who obtained or leased them from the kings of the provinces. Eventually baronies came to be used only for financial and administrative reasons. Jurisdiction Type: Land (See Source 4.) A barony is presently an obsolete division, but widely used in the 19th century. The 331 baronies tended to reflect the holdings of Irish clans. Baronies and counties became established in the government land surveys of the 17th century. A barony comprises several civil parishes or parts of civil parishes. Baronies were widely used in land and tax records. (See Source 3, page 8.)

Poor law union: Districts in Ireland set up to care for the poor, established in 1838; named after market towns. (See Source 4.) From the middle of the 1700s, the population of Ireland virtually doubled. (See Source 2, pages 104.) Under the Poor Relief Act, 1838, Ireland was divided into districts or "unions" in which the local ratable inhabitants were to be responsible for the care of all paupers in their areas. The unions did not respect county boundaries and were usually centered on a large market town. By 1850, 163 unions were created. The Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, adopted the poor law union as the basic administrative division in place of the civil parish and barony. The poor law unions of Ireland were subdivided into 829 registration districts and 3751 district electoral divisions. Townlands were now arranged according to these divisions, with parishes and baronies being retained only as a means to make comparisons with records gathered before 1898. (See Source 3, page 8.)

Parish: Parishes are civil or ecclesiastical. Ecclesiastical parishes may be Roman Catholic or Church of Ireland. Further there may be Presbyterian congregations. Roman Catholic parish boundaries sometimes differ from those of Civil/Church of Ireland. The Roman Catholic Church, owing to the Reformation of the 16th century, had to adapt itself to a new structure centered on towns and villages. (See Source 5, pages 24-25.)

Civil parish -- An administrative division of a county in Ireland. Before the Reformation, the civil parish was an ecclesiastical division. (See Source 4.)

Church of Ireland -- An independent Anglican Church in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is the largest Protestant church in Ireland. The Church of Ireland separated from the Church of England in 1871. (See Source 4.)

Penal Laws, Ireland -- Laws passed to persecute Roman Catholics in Ireland. The clergy were banished, and the Catholic Church was forbidden to keep records. Catholics also lost the rights to own property, hold office, and vote. (See Source 4.)

Catholic Relief Acts, Ireland -- A series of laws passed to restore to Roman Catholics in Ireland the rights that had been taken away in the Penal Laws passed between 1695 and 1728. (See Source 4.)

Townland: A unit of land in Ireland that was a family holding, varying considerably in size but on average about 350 acres. A townland is also a territorial division equivalent to a township. (See Source 4.) There are about 64,000 townlands in Ireland. The townland is the closest concept to an "address" for rural Irish families. (See Source 1, pages 2-3.) A townland is not a town nor does it have its own government. It is a surveyed piece of ground (often with a Gaelic name) consisting of a few acres to several thousand acres and may be unpopulated. Usual townlands do not appear on standard road maps because of their small size and may be sub-denominations, e.g. a field or farm. (See Source 4.)

Freemen -- People who were given special privileges, such as the right to vote, in an incorporated city, town, or borough by birth, apprenticeship, servitude, marriage, or by gift (*grace especial*). (See Source 4.)

See also the following sources: 1. *Beit and Radford, Ireland: A Genealogical Guide, 1998* (FHL Br. Ref. 941.5 D27bkj); 2. *Meally, Encyclopedia Ireland, 1977* (FHL Br. Ref. 941.5 A5e); 3. *Mitchell, New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland, 1986* (FHL Br. Ref. 941.5 E7m); 4. www.familysearch.org Library, glossary; 5. *Granham, Tracing Your Irish Ancestors: The Complete Guide, 1999* (FHL Br. Ref. 941.5 P27gj)

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