

Sources for Family History in the Public Record Office of Ireland

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Like most archival institutions, the Public Record Office of Ireland has two broad functions. One is concerned with the care, control, and safety of the records of the Irish central administration, and the other with the communication to the public of the records brought into archival custody. It is a recognized part of the communication services incumbent on the archivist that students with particular interests should receive, as far as resources permit, guidance to the material likely to assist them in their researches. In that sense I welcome the opportunity given to me to fulfill a basic archival duty by addressing the World Conference on Records on the sources for family history which relate to the holdings of the Public Record Office of Ireland. My purpose, then, will be to offer an illustrated introduction to the sources, particularly those for the nineteenth century, the dominant century in emigration to northern America.

The Public Record Office of Ireland was established in 1867 to provide a safe repository for the Irish records then widely scattered in a number of premises and locations. It undertook the accessioning of records from the courts then in existence, from the probate registries, from parishes of the Church of Ireland, from official bodies which had ceased to function, and from the State Paper Office which since 1702, had been gathering the records of the central administration under British rule. Fifty years after its foundation, the office had accumulated a vast body of records dating from the thirteenth century and ranging geographically from one end of the country to the other, including many classes which the family historian would regard as of primary value and importance. The extent of the holdings can be seen in the 300 printed pages of the Guide to the Public Records of Ireland published in 1919. Unfortunately, within a period of three years, a civil war with disastrous results for Irish archives engulfed the newly independent state.

The office became the center of military action and on 30 June 1922, its repository, comprising six floors of accessioned records, was reduced to ruins and rubble. Comparatively little of its documentary wealth was salvaged by the dispirited Irish archivists, but they soon recovered and set about the search for documents to substitute, as far as possible, for the losses incurred in the disaster. As a result, thousands upon thousands of documents were acquired through purchases, or through donations by persons who, without seeking monetary reward, helped to initiate the recovery of our national archival heritage. These accessions covered a wide range of documents, especially wills, court records, and deeds. Indeed, the destruction of 1922, an unfortunate fact of Irish life for archivists and for users alike, had at least one beneficial effect in that it opened the archival door to a wide variety of record material not public in the sense of having been created and kept in the custody of a public office.

As a logical extension of the gathering in of substitute documents, the office began to accept, and has continued to accept, documents from private sources which are deemed to be of utility to the research public and which in many cases would otherwise have been destroyed as unwanted by their owners or custodians. The records of trade unions and of business firms can be cited as the latest extension of accessioning activity in the private, as opposed to the public, sector.

Side by side with searching for substitute material, the office resumed the accessioning of public records and has since been extending its services to an increasing number of public departments and offices. The normal sources from which the Public Record Office of Ireland now derives its accessions can be summarised as:

1. Offices of the departments of state forming the Irish central government.
2. Probate or testamentary registries.
3. The Circuit Court and all courts of superior jurisdiction including the Supreme Court.
4. Parishes of the Church of Ireland, in so far as relates to pre-1871 records.
5. Private persons and bodies who present or sell materials.

The cumulative effect of the increasing accessioning activity has led to the filling of over 38,000 linear feet of shelving, and present holdings are larger in volume than at any time since the foundation of the office, one hundred and thirteen years ago.

Not all the records received from the sources outlined will be of interest to the family historian or the genealogist. It is unlikely, for example, that records relating to the building of harbors, records occurring in the accessions from the Office of Public Works, will be held to be of interest. On the other hand, any record which names individual persons will be of potential utility to the family historian, and despite our archival history, there are more than several millions of such records in our custody. To describe all of these records even by classes and in the briefest manner would not be possible within the confines of a single communication, and therefore, some measure of selection must be adopted. Accordingly attention will be drawn to the records of family history or genealogical interest which are found in the Public Record Office, if not uniquely and exclusively then at least to a pre-eminent degree.

As can be readily understood, no single repository has the absolute monopoly of the Irish archival heritage. For example, the Public Record Office is the official place of deposit for wills and other testamentary papers, but many other repositories also have wills - - the Genealogical Office, Dublin Castle; the National Library of Ireland; Trinity College Library, Dublin; the Society of Friends; the Registry of Deeds; and of course the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. The student of Irish family history will find a fuller list of potential sources in the *Index to Manuscript Materials for the History of Irish Civilization* by Dr. R. J. Hayes, and in the two volumes by Margaret Dickson Falley, *Irish and Scotch-Irish Ancestral Research - A Guide to the Genealogical Records, Methods and Sources in Ireland* published in 1961 and 1962. This pioneering work still remains the best single guide to the material relevant to the study of Irish family history. No doubt, with the passage of the years, changes have taken place, and in presenting the account of the public records, attention will be drawn to accessions since the year of publication and to improved finding aids.

Other published aids to the contents of the Public Record Office of Ireland should be consulted by the students engaged in research into Irish family history. The lists of accessions printed in the reports of the Deputy Keeper should be examined closely for relevant records, particularly numbers 55 to 59 as they indicate the material which survived the destruction of 1922, or which has been acquired since then. The student should also read the *Short Guide to the Public Record Office of Ireland* prepared by Margaret C. Griffith, who was deputy keeper from 1956 to 1971 and who addressed the first World Conference on Records in 1969 on “How to Use the Records of the Republic of Ireland.”

What follows is to be taken as additional to the information contained in these published sources. It does not include information about the resources of a small number of repositories not mentioned by Mrs. Falley, or not in existence at the date of the publication of her work, but which should be brought within the scope of any inquiry into Irish family history. They are –

1. Irish Land Commission, Merrion Street, Dublin.
2. Cork Archives Institute.
3. Dublin Corporation Archives.
4. Mid-West Regional Archives, Limerick.
5. Archives Department, University College, Dublin.
6. National Trust Archive (for architectural records).
7. Garda Síochána Museum and Archives (for police records).
8. Irish Labour History Society Archives (for trade union records).

With these prefatory remarks, it is now proposed to speak about a small selection of the relevant record sources in the Public Record Office and to illustrate the sources by showing some samples from the classes mentioned.

If asked to select one class of records as ideal for the purposes of studying family history, the population or census returns would be a good choice. In the Irish context, the censuses were based on the family as the unit, and consequently they provide ready-made what the family historian would otherwise have to compile step-by-step from a number of records. Usually the census returns record the names and ages of all members of the family (and in some cases the religious persuasion) and the relationship of each to the head of the family. Not only are these details of direct relevance, but they are a sound foundation of authentic information on which other inquiries can be based. Unlike many other nineteenth century sources which record Irish people of wealth, property, social standing, and other distinctions, the census returns are all-embracing, and, therefore, as well as recording what were called ‘the upper classes,’ they include the poor, the men of no property, the laborers and the small farmers, so many of whom were destined to emigrate to the shores of North America. There is, of course, a difficulty in using them for family history because they were collected and are arranged on a precise territorial basis—parish by parish, townland by townland in rural areas, and street by street in urban areas. Indeed it may be apposite here to make a general observation on the feasibility of helping those who cannot come to the office.

Given that so much of Irish records are kept by county, parish, and townland arrangement, it is exceedingly difficult for the archivist to come to the assistance of correspondents who cannot provide precise information about the families or individuals under study. Apart from

the loss of records, this is the greatest single obstacle both archivists and researchers meet in the line of genealogical research. To take an extreme case, the archivist could only provide a comprehensive answer for the correspondent totally unaware of the area of family residence if he examined census returns for 3,751 distinct divisions or, in the case of other classes, records for 2,428 civil parishes which in turn have 60,462 subdivisions called townlands. Most genealogical inquiries lack this information vital for a successful search and look to the archivist to provide it.

At present there is no simple solution to this dilemma. The researcher must pursue his or her studies to identify the location and thereby limit the search to manageable areas, preferably parishes.

In the future, with the development of computer facilities to provide overall indexes to family names, the problem may be reduced in magnitude, but, in the meantime, the onus must be carried by the researcher. This is true of records both in the Public Record Office and elsewhere in Ireland. For example, the General Register Office, Custom House, Dublin, had records of all births, marriages, and deaths from 1864, and of Protestant marriages from 1845, but to ensure a successful search, details of location must be given, as well as names and dates, particularly in the case of prevalent names like Gallagher in Donegal or McCarthy in Cork.

The earliest census record in the Public Record Office is dated 1749. Compiled by direction of the bishop of Elphin, Edward Synge, 1740-1762, it covers fifty-two parishes in County Roscommon, thirteen parishes in neighboring Sligo to the north, and nine parishes in County Galway to the south. Under divisions of the parishes roughly equivalent to modern townlands, the census records the Christian name and surname of the head of the family, and in many cases those of the spouse as well. It gives the numbers (but not the names) of children, distinguishing between those under and over fourteen years of age, and the number of servants, distinguishing between male and female. In all cases, the religious affiliations are shown, distinguishing between Protestant and Papist (or Roman Catholic). It is of course a unique source for the demographic study of the area, but it must be consulted in all cases by historians in search of families who lived in the parishes of County Roscommon or neighboring parishes in the mid-eighteenth century.

The Public Record Office also had, in part, the returns of another eighteenth century census, namely the 1766 Religious Census. This census was taken following a resolution passed on 5 March 1766 in the Irish House of Lords. The resolution desired the archbishops and bishops of the Established or Protestant Church of Ireland to direct their parish ministers to return a list of families residing in their parishes and to distinguish which of the families were Protestant and which were Papist. For the taking of this census, taken on foot, no single or standard form was prescribed (a standard form was usual in nineteenth century state censuses) and consequently the resulting returns vary considerably in detail or in lack of detail. Some returns record the Christian and family names living in the parish and some merely the numbers of families of each religion, Protestant and Catholic, living in the parish as a whole. Not all of the returns which have survived are in the Public Record Office, but among those deposited in that office, there are returns which contain Christian and family names of heads of households in 174 parishes. The bulk of the parishes for which there are family names occur in three dioceses—67 in Cashel and Emly (largely modern County

Tipperary), 52 in Cloyne (modern County Cork), and thirty in Armagh (modern County Armagh and Louth).

The first of the two illustrations for this census, that for Creggan parish, which extends across the present political border from County Armagh into County Louth, gives only the names of the heads of households. The second illustration, that for the parish of Clonpriest in County Cork, gives as well as the names of the householders and account of the other persons (generally children) residing with them. The 196 householders in the parish represent a total population of 845 persons. Again, as in the cases of the Elphin diocesan census, the genealogical utility of the returns is obvious for research into any families who took their origin or lived in the areas covered by the surviving returns. Mention should be made here that returns for parishes in Counties Antrim, Armagh, Down, Derry, and Tyrone are preserved in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

The first national or government census taken in Ireland was for 1813, but, unfortunately, none of the original parish returns of any use for family history have survived. The next government census was taken in 1821. This census records the name of each head of household, the names of others in the same house, and their relationship to him. It also records ages and occupations, numbers of storeys in the house, and, in some cases, the number of acres held. These returns are preserved in the Public Record Office for fourteen parishes in County Cavan, two parishes in County Fermanagh, eight in County Galway, nine in County Offaly (formerly King's County) and eighteen parishes in County Meath. After 1821, a census covering the whole of Ireland was taken at ten-year intervals until 1911.

The only surviving part of the 1831 census is confined to parishes in County Londonderry, but as an indication of its value, it should be noted that it extends to forty-five separate volumes. In passing, it must be stressed that as well as the surviving census records described here by areas covered, there are in the office many single returns, or copies or extracts from them, occurring among deposited private records.

Apart from fragments and returns for individuals, only one complete set of returns from the 1841 census survived—the returns for the parish of Killeshandra, County Cavan. In these returns, the details for each named person show age, sex, relation to head of family, marital status and year of the marriage, occupation, education (ability to read and write), and place of origin. A novel feature of the 1841 census, which makes its loss all the more to be regretted, is that it included similar details for members of the family absent on census day and information on members who had died since the previous census taken on 6 June 1831.

The returns for 1851 included details about persons absent and those residing with the family who had died since 6 June 1841, showing the cause of death and time of year. Otherwise, the details were as in 1841, but with the addition of information on deaf, dumb and blind members of the household. Of the 1851 returns, the only surviving areas represented are one townland in the parish of Drumkeeran, County Fermanagh, and a number of townlands in thirteen parishes in County Antrim, making twenty-three volumes in all.

Census returns were not preserved for 1861, 1871, 1881, and 1891. The decision to destroy them was made by the administrators and not by archivists, whose influence, one can only surmise, was not strong enough to insist on the preservation of such a wealth of detail for

family historians, sociologists, and demographers, to mention but a few. As a result of the destruction of the returns of four consecutive censuses and of the 1922 destruction, the earliest surviving returns covering the whole of the 32 counties of Ireland are those for 1901. Happily they have been deposited in the Public Record Office, and a complete finding aid, based on the 3,751 district electoral divisions (the unit used in the making, taking, and arranging of the returns), has been prepared. The original census returns are open to the public, and they are among the records most frequently called for in the public reading room. Microfilm copies are available in the library of the Genealogical Society of Utah, but it must be pointed out that the microfilming was completed before the returns were checked and repacked in their original order of district electoral divisions to which the present set of finding aids corresponds.

The details recorded in the 1901 census are—

1. Names, with relationship to head of the family.
2. Religious profession.
3. Education (reading and writing ability).
4. Age and sex.
5. Rank, profession, or occupation.
6. Marital status.
7. Place of origin (county in Ireland, country if born elsewhere).
8. Language (ability to speak Irish and English).
9. Details of disabled person (deaf, dumb, blind, imbecile, idiot, or lunatic).

It must be emphasized that the returns cover the entire country, both north and south, in the political as well as the geographical sense. Its utility for the study of any given family as it was in 1901, is obvious, as it shows the family unit as it then was, the occupation followed by each member of the family, his or her ability to read and write, and ability to speak one or more of the two languages in use, English and Irish. The 1901 census information can be used for studies of the family in earlier years, thanks to the recording of the age of each person in the returns. Using the ages shown, the members of the family alive at a given year, say 1850, can be derived from the returns and also their place of origin (by a county at least). Indeed, given the relative steadfastness of the majority of the rural Irish in their native area, the census may indicate a family connection with the address given in the 1901 return stretching back possibly to 1841 and beyond.

It is possible that brothers and sisters of those who emigrated in the years of the Great Famine and later years may be found in the 1901 census returns. For the study of families who emigrated, it may be essential to establish the family identification or the link between those who left and those who remained. In a sense, those who stayed at home may be regarded as the continuing extension of the original family root. The census returns for 1911 are also available for inspection in the Public Record Office.

So far, stress has been laid on the census returns as the ideal record for the study of family history in Ireland. While it may be discouraging for the researcher to find that so little has survived before 1901 and that even then difficulties stand in the way of easy utilization where the exact location is unknown, there is some consolation in the fact that alternative sources,

though less complete, exist. These sources, described in the publication cited, will be indicated briefly, highlighting points not already made with appropriate emphasis.

Among the alternative sources are the records of the Valuation Office which have been deposited in the Public Record Office. Up to the nineteenth century, the administration of each county was in the hands of the Grand Jury which imposed a local tax, known as county cess, on householders to finance its work. The incidence of this form of taxation was far from satisfactory, and attempts were made in the first quarter of the century to find a remedy for the defects, discrepancies, and inequalities.

Arising from these attempts, an act of 1826 authorized the making of the first valuation. This work was continued and extended by amending legislation, and the 1852 Act provided the basis for the valuation of lands and buildings, rural and urban, still in use in modern Ireland. The results of this valuation, known as the Primary Valuation, or more familiarly as Griffith's Valuation, were printed. Though copies are available in many archives and libraries at home in Ireland, it should be pointed out that those in the Public Record Office constitute a full set for the whole country comprising thirty-two counties. The great merit of the printed valuation for the family historian is that it can be regarded as a partial census, recording the Christian names and surnames of each occupier of lands or houses linked to an exact address, which could well be the key to open other research possibilities.

Among the records received from the Valuation Office which may be useful for family history are the manuscript field books which, while being primarily concerned with type of soil prevailing in the townlands surveyed as a means of determining the valuation of the land, also record houses over £ value and the names of their occupiers. Another class of Valuation Office records worth examining by the family historian are the house books which, besides the occupiers name, give, for rural townlands, information about the nature of the building (generally the dwelling house), its quality, measurements, and the amount of the valuation determined.

A further Valuation Office record class, the Quarto books, are worthy of examination as they record for houses in urban areas details such as names of occupiers, descriptions of the tenements, estimated value, rent, and final valuation. Recent accessions from the Valuation Office contain books in which appeals against fixed valuation were entered, and in them changes in the names of occupiers are recorded. All in all, the family historian should be remiss if he did not consult the printed Primary Valuation records of the Valuation Office now deposited in the Public Record Office. There are 4,578 field books, 4,262 house books, and 470 record of tenure books among them, to all of which finding aids are available in the reading room.

Continuing to illustrate the sources alternative to the census returns, the researcher must be guided to the Tithe Applotment books, 1823 to 1837. Opposition to the payment of tithes, endemic in Ireland since the Reformation, made them payable by the Catholic majority of the rural population to the clergy of the Protestant minority, heightened in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The first statutory attempt to improve the system of tithe payment was made in 1823, when an act authorized two commissioners to determine the total composition or moneys to be paid to the tithe owners by each parish. The act imposed on the commissioners the obligation of recording the proportion payable by each occupier of land as

valued for the purposes of the act. In 1832, tithe compositions were made obligatory, and an act in 1837 converted tithe payments into rent-charges payable by the occupier to the landlord with the rent. The tithe applotment books, compiled on a parish basis, give details of the occupiers of land liable to tithes, townland by townland.

While the primary purpose of the tithe applotment books was to record under the parish and townland the amount of money payable by the occupier, they have acquired such a high degree of secondary importance that they represent the record class, after the census returns, most frequently consulted in the Public Record Office. They are so valuable because the lists of occupiers of land in them are in the nature of a census of heads of families in a period (1823 to 1837) for which the census returns (except in limited areas) are not extant. Their value to the researcher is further enhanced when it is noted that the tithe applotment books relate to the period of from ten to twenty years before the Great Famine which led to major changes in many parishes due to death and emigration. To facilitate research into the Tithe Applotment books and into the Primary Valuation books, a county by county index has been compiled to the surnames in both these record classes.

Among the other record groups in the office which contain personal names on a countrywide basis, mention must be made of the quit Rent Office records. These records cover nearly the three centuries after the inception of Quit rents in Ireland which were acreable and perpetual rents payable on lands granted or decreed in pursuance of the acts of Settlement and Explanation in 1662 and 1665. Pride of place must go to the Books of Survey and Distribution of which there are twenty large folio volumes covering the whole country. In them are to be found in parallel columns the proprietorship of forfeited lands at three distinct periods—1641 when rebellion broke out, 1662 to 1665 after the restoration of Charles II, and 1703, by which year were sold all the lands possessed by King James II or by persons convicted or attainted of treason from 1688 to 1701. Thus, in these books can be seen the changes in landownership over a period of sixty years involving a radical overturn of ancient ownership. The family historian will find in them a record of all the proprietors as they were in 1641 and as they were displaced by newer owners. Again it must be stressed that they are arranged on a basis of parish and lesser divisions of land, making searches difficult where the area in which a particular family lived is not known.

In recent times, the Public Record Office of Ireland has been concerned with the appraisal, accessioning, arranging, and listing of records held by the modern departments of state and by the offices forming parts of them. Some of these modern departments and offices originated in the nineteenth century, and they may hold specialized records of use to the family historian and genealogist. Among the records received from the Department of Education, for example, there are salary books which, as well as recording the amounts paid, show the names and the status of the teachers and their school addresses. Another example would be found in the records of the Modern Mercantile Marine Office to which have been added the crew lists and agreements (1865 to 1902) formerly in the custody of the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, United Kingdom; they could be searched for references to members of families who were connected with seafaring.

The position in regard to census material in Ireland can be described as fragmentary until 1901. Under the circumstances, the Irish church records of the various religious denominations—Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterians to mention the most

numerous of them—must be of unparalleled value. The Public Record Office of Ireland has statutory responsibilities for the records of only one of the denominations—the Church of Ireland or Protestant records. The parish registers containing entries of baptisms, marriages and burials prior to 1 January 1871 were declared in 1875 and 1876 to be public records. By 1922, records from 1,006 parishes had been accessioned by the office, but, unfortunately, only four of the registers survived the destruction of that year. Nevertheless, records from 637 parishes escaped that fate through the fact that they were then in local custody, and, in general, they continue to be held by the local incumbents.

Since 1922, the office has been enabled to make transcripts and photocopies from 55 parishes. At present the office is engaged in making microfilm copies of all surviving parochial registries and vestry books. To date copying has extended to 646 items from 207 parishes in the united dioceses of Cork, Limerick, Tuam, Cashel (except Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin) and Meath (excluding Kildare). It is the intention to continue the microfilming project and, by adhering to international standards, ensure that the most legible and durable copies be made. Upon completion of the project, copies on microfilm of all surviving pre-1871 Church of Ireland records will be in the custody of the office.

The extent to which these films can be made available for research into family history will depend on the outcome of negotiations with the church authorities. In the meantime it will not be possible to accede to any request to deposit copy films elsewhere, and researchers will have to apply to the Public Record Office for information about the eighty parishes for which original records or transcripts or photocopies on paper are held, and directly to the local incumbent in all other cases, using the annual Irish Church Directory for names and addresses.

In regard to finding aids, there is available in the Public Record Office a general index of all Church of Ireland registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials. It gives the years covered in each register, and shows what survives either in the office (in original or copy form) or in local custody, and what perished in 1922. An index to all records microfilmed, transcribed, or photocopied in the office is being maintained.

Though the interest of the Public Record Office has by historical circumstances being confined to Church of Ireland records, it may be of assistance to those interested in family history to state that a somewhat similar arrangement exists in regard to Catholic parochial registers which have been microfilmed by the National Library of Ireland: the films are not for public use in the library, unless the ecclesiastical custodians, generally parish priests, give their consent to this course.

Family historians and genealogists are fully aware of the value of wills, administrations, and supporting papers. The Public Record Office of Ireland was charged from its inception with the duty of acquiring all the testamentary records in public custody. This responsibility continues to be discharged by the office in relation to 26 of the 32 counties of Ireland, and by the Public Record Office of North Ireland in relation to the six counties within its jurisdiction. At present it is estimated that the number of originals and copies of wills and administrations in the custody of the Public Record Office of Ireland exceeds 700,000. With the exception of wills proved in the Principal (or Central) Registry before 1904,[1] practically all the wills survive from the year 1858, and they can be traced through annual testamentary

calendars (listed in dictionary order) and through the consolidated index for 1858 to 1875, all available in the reading room.

From 1536 until 1857, the proving of wills and the granting of administrations was a matter for the Established Church either through the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Armagh or through the diocesan courts. Few of these records deposited in the Public Record Office survived the destruction of 1922. Nevertheless, much of the loss has been mitigated by existence of abstracts in the custody of the office. Pride of place must be given to the 241 volumes of genealogical abstracts compiled by Sir William Betham. Acquired by purchase in 1935, they include abstracts of 37,000 wills proved in the Prerogative Court and in the diocesan court of Kildare (82 vols) in the period from 1536 to 1826, as well as abstracts of 5,000 administrations for the period from 1595 to 1800 (56 vols). Betham also abstracted Prerogative and Dublin marriage licences, 1629 to 1824 (74 vols).

Abstracts from public records made by Gertrude Thrift before the destruction of 1922 exceed 3,300 in number and include wills proved in the Prerogative and diocesan courts, marriage licence bonds and grants. In 1939 the office purchased the genealogical abstracts made from public records before 1922 by Arthur Tenison Groves, giving information taken from wills, court records, and deeds.[2] Also acquired were the notes of Philip Crossle, who also abstracted, before 1922, records relating to a variety of families dating from 1661. Other private collections containing abstracts of public records made before 1922 are Greene MSS, Jennings Notebooks (DKR 59, pp. 50-84), Grove-White MSS (mostly extracts from parish registries in County Cork), and Sadleir collection (wills 1672 to 1868). Two official collections of abstract/extract material from wills remain to be mentioned. Abstracts of Prerogative and diocesan wills are to be found in the Irish will registers 1828 to 1839 and in the abstract books of the Office of Charitable Donations and Bequests now deposited in the Public Record Office of Ireland.

The Public Record Office of Ireland has as one of its main tasks to receive the records of the courts, and by 1922 it had accumulated a vast amount of documents relating to the courts in Chancery, Exchequer, King's Bench, and Common Pleas. While practically all of the original records perished in 1922, a number of books of entry and transcripts survived, including the following which may be profitably consulted for families involved in law-suits:

1. Chancery bill books 1633 to 1640 & 1660 to 1877
2. Chancery decrees, repositories 1537 to 1836 (8 vols)
3. Chancery order books 1699 to 1788 (gapped) 34 vols
4. Equity Exchequer bill books 1674 to 1850
5. Exchequer decrees, repositories 1624 to 1804 23 vols
6. Inquisitions, Chancery 15 vols
7. Inquisitions, Exchequer 17 vols

8. Deeds and wills in inquisitions 42 vols

9. Chancery pleadings 1570 to 1630 5,486 items

Among the greatest losses were the original patent and close rolls of Chancery, but the loss has been mitigated in regard to them and to court records in general through gifts by solicitors and others, and through the accessioning of abstracts and transcripts of the originals made in the office before 1922. In this connection special mention should be made of the manuscripts of John Lodge Keeper of the Rolls (1692 to 1774).^[3] Among these manuscripts, which are in the Public Record Office, are his Records of the Rolls comprising thirteen volumes and containing abstracts of enrollments on the patent and close rolls and on Act of Settlement, Commission of Grace, and Trustees Deeds rolls. His manuscripts also include lists of converts with their additions and place of residence, 1709 to 1772. These lists are of special value because of the relative paucity of genealogical material of records generally for the eighteenth century.

For that period the indexes to the Catholic Qualification rolls, part of the surviving Chancery records, should be consulted. They cover all the provinces for 1778 to 1796, Leinster for 1797, and Munster for 1797 to 1801. A transcript of the allied lists of 1,526 Catholics testifying allegiance to the King of England under an oath prescribed by statute, 1775 to 1776, is printed in the Deputy Keeper's Report 59, pp. 50-84.

Before passing on to other types of records, it must be pointed out that members of the legal profession continue to donate court documents singly and in large numbers to the Public Record Office of Ireland. In some cases, the entire holdings accumulated over a long span of years are donated, and there is inevitably a delay in making the finding aid for readers. The research student should be aware of this delay and should therefore check, from time to time, on the availability of new finding aids.

The surviving records of the Clerks of the Crown and Peace commence in general about 1880, but there are some survivals which could give names of interest to the family historian. There are registers of trees planted in which the names and addresses of land occupiers are given for fourteen counties, dating from 1767 to 1919. In connection with elections, names occur also in the freeholders registers and papers for the nineteenth century, but there is a much larger collection of such records in the State Paper Office where there are lists with names of freeholders or voters or jurors for every county except Armagh. These records date from 1830 to 1852. In the Voters List for Dublin County, 1843, over 3,300 names, addresses, and occupations are given, while in County Wexford, over 3,600 names of freeholders and leaseholders are recorded.

Documents arising out of the arrangements between landlords and their tenants are always of interest to the family historian. Of particular value are rentals which the Public Record Office has in considerable numbers for estates in different parts of the country. With an exception to be noted later, they are not systematically collected or received but come in generally as parts of private donations. The researcher must therefore inquire about the particular area. His starting place should be the exception mentioned, namely the rentals of the Encumbered and Landed Estates Court which was established in 1849 to facilitate the disposal of encumbered estates in post-Famine Ireland.

It sold estates at the request of the encumbrancer or the owner and gave an absolute title to the purchaser. The powers of the Court were extended in 1858 when it became the Landed Estates Court, and in 1877 it became part of the Chancery division of the High Court. The records deposited in connection with the sales have survived in part, and where not, may be examined in a damaged condition in the Public Records Office. The most accessible records of these courts are the printed rentals, which were really prospectuses for the sale of individual estates, with engravings in some cases showing the house and gardens fronting it. These rentals, which comprise 148 volumes, 1849 to 1885, in the O'Brien set, and 90 volumes, 1849 to 1915, in the Quit Rent Office set, generally include the names of tenants and the legal terms of their tenure, rents payable, and maps showing their holdings. There is in the office a territorial index covering the whole country which can be used to determine whether or not there is a rental for any particular parish or townland. If the exact location of the family holding can be learned from this source, these rentals could prove to be an extremely useful tool to open up other search possibilities.

Each year the Public Record Office of Ireland receives documents not only from official, but also from private sources. The total amount of material acquired annually by gift or purchase varies in size as do the individual acquisitions which may range from single items to the total surviving records of a firm, a family, or a society. To illustrate the scope of these private sector documents, reference will be made to a few donations to the office. The firm of solicitors, McMahon and Tweedy, Dublin, presented to the office a collection of documents which include five volumes of maps of estates in counties Cavan, Clare, Donegal, Dublin, Kildare, and Limerick dated 1756 to 1834. These maps which predate the first Ordinance Survey mapping of Ireland are accompanied by reference sheets giving the names of proprietors or principal tenants. One presentation to the office in 1964 to 1965 of family papers extends to approximately 20,000 items covering the years 1652 to 1898. They are the papers of the Blake family, Ballyglunin, County Galway, one member of this family was a member of Parliament for Galway town in the early part of the nineteenth century. The papers include wills, marriage settlements (1672 to 1830), rentals, deeds, maps and plans, accounts, and correspondence. Also in the collection are forty documents relating to parliamentary elections, and they include poll books and lists of electors, 1812 to 1854. As an example of a large accession in recent years from a private concern, the records of the Protestant Orphan Society may be mentioned. The Society provided support for children at least one of whose parents was dead and one a member of the Church of Ireland. Consisting of reports, minutes, correspondence, accounts, and records of individual orphans, 1828 to 1973, the deposit includes photographs of some of them.

To conclude this short section on records from private sources, the survey of business records, initiated in 1970 by the Irish Manuscript Commission with the cooperation of the Public Record Office and still in progress, must be mentioned. Though concentrating on records relating to commercial enterprises, it has resulted in deposits in the office of family records from many different parts of the country. A few deposits may be cited as representative examples. The papers of the Langrishe family of Knocktopher Abbey, County Kilkenny, range in date from 1639 to 1886 and include rentals, marriage settlements, wills, leases, and conveyances of land and documents in court cases. The papers of the Nesbitt and Burrowes families and their estates in County Cavan have similar documents, the oldest of

which is a copy letters patent of 1665 granting 3,849 acres of land in that county to William Cosby.

It is time to conclude this introduction to the records likely to be of use for the study of Irish families. Much has had to be compressed, much emitted, and time will bring new accessions and new finding aids. Despite its shortcomings, acutely apparent to the archivist, it is hoped that this account will be accepted as a signpost to guide the researcher to the full resources for family history which can be found and freely used by all on equal terms in the Public Record Office of Ireland.

[1] See Deputy Keeper's Report, 55:25-31 for a complete list of surviving records.

[2] Part also deposited in PRONI (see Margaret Dixon Falley Irish and Scotch-Irish Ancestral Research—A Guide to the Genealogical Records, Methods and Sources in Ireland, 1961.)

[3] Deputy Keeper's Report, 55:116-22.

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