

## Handout: Researching Irish Ancestry in the 17th and 18th Centuries

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Many Americans with Irish ancestry had ancestors who arrived before the American Revolution (roughly 1635-1775), or who arrived after the Revolution and before the Great Famine (1783-1845). They came from many parts of Ireland and included Native Irish, who were not all Catholics after 1707, Scots-Irish mostly from Ulster and other counties of northern Ireland, and Anglo-Irish or Welsh-Irish. Religious warfare, civil warfare between monarchy and the English parliament and competing monarchs, and land ownership all caused immigration. To have a better idea where one's Irish ancestors who emigrated to North

America prior to 1845 originated, it helps to know a little Irish history. As this is meant to be an introductory hand-out, we first refer you to our website page called **"ancestors"**, [www.americeltic.net/ancestors](http://www.americeltic.net/ancestors). This webpage covers ancestral research generally, and has documents and links to some items for some large families that came to the U.S. from primarily Ireland and Scotland. Under "ancestors", you will find three useful sections to researchers, especially those researching Irish and Scottish ancestors prior to 1850. They are: [www.americeltic.net/ancestors-tutorial](http://www.americeltic.net/ancestors-tutorial) which explains how to do good research generally, and more specifically Irish and Scottish research for ancestors who emigrated at different times; [www.americeltic.net/documents](http://www.americeltic.net/documents), which includes some family specific items and [www.americeltic.net/sources](http://www.americeltic.net/sources) which are actually links to sites with large collections of primary and valid secondary source materials and to collections of data themselves, such as **"the 1641 Rebellion Depositions."** To make the most of the "sources" and "documents", select and read one or more of the "tutorials," first.

Near the bottom of the **"sources"** webpage, is a section you may find very useful, **"Cecilia's Library"**, [www.americeltic.net/sources#personal](http://www.americeltic.net/sources#personal), a list of materials that I own. These materials are not on-line, as they are either still in print, or too long to upload (more than a few hundreds of pages), but I can look up information in these (Donations to AmeriCeltic are appreciated). Send me a short query related to the specific item or items you'd like me to search, and the name of the individual, or couple, with as much basic documented data you have on that person or couple, such as names and dates, or years, of birth and death anything of places. Many of the "too long to upload" books/series are available for purchase as pre-owned books in various places, like Amazon, EBay and Powers Books, and good regional pre-owned books' stores. If you can afford it, I highly recommend you purchase a few of the collections, especially if you are working on many lines of ancestors. You can always donate what you don't need any longer to your local county historical/genealogical society that either has its own library building or has acquired space at the largest local county library.

Some materials are neither online, nor in published format available at libraries or for purchase. LDS microfilms have far more Irish records than most people realize but since the fall of 2017, are now only available in their entirety at the library in Salt Lake City. For northern California, copies of some of the films in the large microfilm collections are still available in the Oakland (largest Bay area) LDS library. Unfortunately, even at the Oakland LDS library, very few of the entire collections are there. Consult [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), then "catalog," select a library location, use keywords e.g. "Irish," then click on the "collection" that interests you to see how much of that collection is actually available. The LDS through Family Search has been digitizing these microfilms as fast they can, but made a major "Business 101" mistake by ending the microfilm rental program before it was fully replaced with the new substitute providing the same service. Only SOME of the materials once available on microfilm can as yet be identified and viewed in digital format at

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). You will have to keep checking frequently for updates at <https://www.familysearch.org/ask/faq#overview> for further updates.

In March 2018, I checked what is currently available as “digitized” and was dismayed to find that they had NOT yet digitized the largest important collections of pre-1845 records, including what was misleadingly called but very comprehensive: “Irish Muster Rolls” and was described as “A Genealogical collection of Muster Rolls, Householders, Wills, Deeds and Parish Registers.” This also included civil dispute court records abstracts, some as early as the late 1500’s. I called my local LDS library and was told by a staff member, that “Family Search” is rapidly digitizing volumes of material, and the 3-5 years before availability of all has been cut in half. However, many people, understandably aren’t happy waiting 1 to 3 years before being able to resume family history research. Thus the staff at Family Search are taking suggestions of collections for which to expedite digitizing, and will do so if enough people request it. On the website, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), under “feedback” there is a form for “problems and suggestions.” Use it.

**You do not need to be a member of the Mormon church to use the materials they have at their libraries.**

Besides the Oakland LDS library is the Sutro Library in San Francisco, which also has some microfilmed and published parts of collections of pre-1845 Irish records. Unfortunately the Sutro Library was moved about 2 years ago to the heart of San Francisco State University where it is nearly impossible to find parking. You can even access several paid-subscription genealogical research sites, there, such as [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), as the libraries have their own subscriptions. The libraries, like all libraries, gladly accept the occasional monetary donation to keep their community services going. Like many other entities that offer community services, the church libraries are, together, a 501(c)3 organization.

Here are several extremely useful collections of pre-1845 Irish records that were **on LDS Microfilms and should be requested to be digitized ASAP**.. There are **Irish Muster Rolls (and Civil Court Records** --54 microfilm reels of records), organized by counties and surnames. The records are mostly from the 1600’s through 1800’s. Another set was **Sir William Betham’s Pedigrees and Prerogative Wills Abstracts** for Irish families of many types, prior to 1840. These covered everyone he knew of to be “gentry,” roughly gentleman and Esquire and above, and including prominent merchants, whose records he could find in Dublin Castle where the prerogative wills for the whole of Ireland were in his day. There were some mostly Protestant, but also some Catholic, **Irish Parish Records** that were copied from the originals before the Public Records Office Fire and Explosion (1922) and ended up in the Registered Church Body Library, and other libraries, that were microfilmed by the LDS. Irish Catholic records do not consistently exist prior to about 1800, but are on-line, though with slow downloads of pages and unindexed.. There were LDS microfilms of additional **Groups of Irish Pedigrees/Genealogies**, done by at least three other researchers besides Betham, made in the 1800’s but actually covering multiple earlier generations of hundreds of families, taken from various collections of wills and other records that once existed. Much of the **Contents of the Registry of Deeds**, prior to 1841, which includes leases and sub-leases, as well as property sales and property gifts (such as dowries). The indexes to the Deeds and Leases were also microfilmed. These are the abstracts of the original deeds and leases and will include all the names of all the parties, their relationships to one another, dates when the transactions were made, locations, and some detail, but not all the detail of the original records. All in all, there WERE over 300 rentable, accessible LDS microfilms of pre-1845 Irish records that are NOT yet digitized, representing a tremendous interruption to Irish researchers. Do as LDS members themselves are recommending: Complain about this--in writing!

Besides [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com), which is the largest paid subscription on-line research website, there are two or three **“newspaper archives” websites** that have another useful on-line source of early Irish records, such as obituaries, marriages, and acquisitions or developments of major family-related properties, including

businesses, with locations and dates. I found that the **“Irish Builder and Engineer”** had many records of individuals and families for Dublin and several counties near the city going back to the late 1500’s. It was literally published for centuries and reprinted materials from other publications. However, some of the items, from the same publication, were free to read in their entirety, and others available to view only through a subscription service (usually paid).

In Ireland are collections of **“Estate Records”** covering all the transactions between land-owners and their extended family members, in-laws, tenants, neighbors, local businesspersons for centuries, **from the 16th to the 20th centuries**. All transactions name the parties, the dates and the locations, and some give additional history of the transaction and prior parties, such as fathers of current parties, involvement. Thus, some estate records give multi-generational data and tell you when many less prominent people died, or came of age to hold land or do business, and where. Most **“Estate Records Collections”** are in the National Archives and National Library in Dublin, Ireland, and are not on-line. Some do have on-line indexes, and the indexes are available from a surprising variety of websites, including U.S. libraries, who sometimes obtained a print copy of an index and digitized and uploaded it. I found both entire collections and indexes on-line using keywords on Google, such as the surnames of leading families mentioned in plantation and other records, and the counties in which I found them in some records. We have links to a few estate collections and indexes to others on AmeriCeltic.net, under “ancestry,” then “sources.”

Working backward in time the following items/collections have been found to be very helpful. First, in the early 1800’s in the 1820’s and 1830’s there were **“tithe applotments”** that are now on-line and showed where heads of families, identified with forenames and surnames, lived at that time. Many of these persons would have been living in these places for a decade or more. These are organized by county and surname, and can be found with a Google search using the search terms “Irish tithe applotments,” and the county or the county and surname.

The **1760 Religious Census of Ireland**, is being digitized and uploaded by the National Archives of Ireland, [www.theirisharchives.com](http://www.theirisharchives.com). Portions of it are already on-line, by location such as county, then barony, then parish, at a variety of websites, including a few **county heritage centres**. It often includes all the adults in a household or at the least husband and wife and the number of children they had, in the various locations, as well as what religion they were.

For titled Irish families (baron and above--no baronets) between roughly 1570 and 1760, see the first and second edition of **Sir John Lodge’s Pedigrees, called *The Peerage of Ireland*** – the first edition available for purchase as an E-book. I have a copy of this book and can do look-ups from it. The second edition was done a few years after the first and is on-line. These are the oldest documented pedigrees of Irish noble families, both done in the mid 18th century. Look at BOTH editions, because, just within the few years between the two editions, some families lost titles when a senior line had died out without male heirs and the title had not yet been “re-created,” and new titles had been created by the King of England (who was king of the entire UK by this time). Lodge’s pedigrees, as described by himself, were based on original family records he himself examined, some of which were two hundred years old, and included the less noble history of the entitled that preceded their loftier titles. It also includes some information on less prominent in-laws, children and grandchildren. Lodge also described, in detail, many, if not all, the holdings of the families by counties, baronies and townlands and precisely when they were acquired and how.

**Many 18th and early 19th century, cemetery records have been transcribed and are on-line.** They can be found by a Google keyword search using counties and surnames. Some will be found, with transcriptions and photographs or drawings, in very old **“gazetteers”** and copies of **“antiquarian”** or **“antiquities”**

**magazines** that were popular in the late 1700's and 1800's and are now on-line. The website, **JSTOR**, [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), has copies of many such magazines, and that has both a free subscription with limited downloads per month and a modest paid subscription allowing more downloads is, which has literally thousands of magazines and other very old printed materials covering the U.S. Ireland and the UK. that have been digitized and uploaded. **JSTOR** also has publications with **Abstracts of Irish Wills Filed in London**, resulting from Irish refugees in London during civil warfare who died before they could be restored to their estates, particularly in the period of 1650-1661. It should be remembered that Irish and Scots were sent into permanent or temporary exile at different times to Spain and France and there are both wills and stone memorials/headstones of individuals and families in those countries. There are both old magazine articles and books on clan and family history, that cover the exiles and describe wills and memorials in other countries. The Irish came to be called 'The Wild Geese,' and the first large numbers resulted from Cromwell's invasion and occupation of Ireland (1648-54). This is also when the first several hundreds of Scots and Irish arrived in North America. One of the best county websites for **both cemetery inscriptions and indexes to many other records that still survive** of the 18th and early 19th centuries, is the "**Ros-Davies County Down Heritage Centre**" website. We have a link to that site at [www.AmeriCeltic.net/sources](http://www.AmeriCeltic.net/sources).

Prior to 1700, the next earliest useful set of records for a specific event and time is the "**Lists of Attainted**" **made in 1689-90** by the extremist Irish Catholic Parliament of King James II in Dublin, when he was trying to regain his English and Scottish thrones through Ireland, with the help of France. His opponent was his nephew and son-in-law William of Orange who married James' oldest daughter, Mary.

In 1688-9, the extreme Catholics in Ireland joined James II in his effort to regain his throne through Ireland and were rewarded with an exclusive, hand-picked parliament in Dublin. Many had not been fully restored to what they thought was their due by the compromises of Charles II. They wanted to completely redistribute all lands assigned from the time of the first plantations, including that of the Montgomery's and Hamiltons who had negotiated directly with the O'Neills themselves, and restore all land ownership in Ireland to what had existed prior to Elizabeth I. The one major act of this parliament was to attempt to redistribute land all over Ireland in a very deadly way.

Over 3,000 heads of families deemed to have received lands "wrongfully" were proscribed against and put on "**Lists of Attainted**," by the Catholic Irish Parliament in Dublin of James II in 1689-90, and many were arrested and imprisoned and, of course, abused. Some were killed. Their wives and children were sent begging, driven off their lands, or were made poor tenants until after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. **The "Lists of Attainted" survived and were put in published histories.** They include the names and the principal estate (seat) of heads of families, the counties in which they lived and often notes that they fled to particular places during the brief existence of this Parliament, or joined the army of William of Orange. The lists were used by William of Orange to determine estates to be restored to those on the lists and other remedies for those who had been killed.

One copy of this **Lists of Attainted** is on-line, at [www.americeltic.net/documents](http://www.americeltic.net/documents). Another is in print form and at several libraries, in the U.S., including Stanford University Library in the San Francisco Bay area and is under "sources." Note that even Irish Catholic families who disagreed with the extremism of the Earl of Tyrone and James II, were put on these lists, including members of the O'Brien family—descendants of the high king Brian Boru, who after St. Patrick, was among the most revered of all Irish historical figures.

Prior to the lists of attainted are several sets of records for the 1600's. There is the **1659 Census of Ireland**, sometimes called the "Petty Census" or the "Pender Census," for the creator, and then the later transcriber printer. In 1659 and 1660, Parliament and Charles II decided to tax "hearths" (fireplaces) per household and for



Ireland, as well as the rest of the UK. There were hearth tax rolls made for each county that indicated by forename and surname the most prominent men within the baronies and within each civil parish and townland. The number of persons in the household was also listed. Other than the prominent men, families were indicated by surname within townlands and numbers of persons having that surname. The hearth rolls were not paid for by the Parliament and there was but one copy made, as far as is known and it nearly was destroyed in the private possession of an English nobleman, the Marquis of Landsdowne, in his muniments room. It not been thought much of by his servants. The remaining census rolls were rescued when a head servant discovered underlings using the rolls for lighting hearth fires in the room. As a result, the records of a few counties and parts of another few were missing from the rolls when they returned to Ireland in 1867, and were later published in book form in the 1930's by the Irish government. A few copies of the book still exist in the U.S., one at Santa Clara University. We digitized and uploaded the transcribed information about a number of individuals with some of the more common Scottish and Scots-Irish surnames in all the counties they lived. These are files, **A Census of Ireland 1659 Excerpts Part 1 & 2** at [www.americeltic.net/documents](http://www.americeltic.net/documents). Eventually I intend to return to the university and transcribe the other more common names and upload those, probably later in 2018. Between 1660 and 1662, **Sir William Petty**, under orders of Parliament, also made lists of all the land owners in Ireland to assess **Quit Rents** and the **Quit Rent Lists** were then used by the King and Parliament to determine forfeitures of estates or parts of them and redistributions. Sir William Petty actually made TWO lists, but only one is usually remembered if any. The first volume of the published Sir William Petty Papers has a 100-page section described as the “**structure of Ireland**,” which relates to his two surveys. Again, we have a link to the Sir William Petty Papers, volume I at [www.AmeriCeltic.net/sources](http://www.AmeriCeltic.net/sources).

John O'Hart's Supplement to (his) **Pedigrees of Ireland: When Cromwell Came to Ireland** also lists by rank and full name, all the men in Cromwell's armies, “and other adventurers” who took up lands in Ireland in 1653 and 1654, and where their land grants were. I own an e-book copy; it's listed under “**Cecilia's Library**,” and can do look-ups from this. Some of the common soldiers later sold their parcels, usually to their officers, to have cash to return home to England, Wales or Scotland and obtain forfeited lands closer to where they were born and raised.

In 1629-30, another royal officer, Pynnar created ***The 1629 Census of Northern Ireland***, of the Plantation counties of Northern Ireland (Ulster and part of Connaught). It is available in published form and partly, if not completely, on-line on sites of the **Rev. George Hill Collection**, Volume IV, of his **Conquest of Ireland Series, in four volumes**, reprinted in recent years by the Irish Genealogical Foundation, Kansas City, Missouri. Again, prominent individuals were listed by forename and surname, and where they lived by county, barony, civil parish and townland. Other families were listed by surname and numbers of persons having those surnames in the same areas. Also as part of his Conquest of Ireland series, Rev. Hill collected and published in Volume II, ***Names in the Land Grants***, all the names in the original (Northern Ireland) land-grants, many leases under the grants, and some of the early sales of lands in the grants. The land grants were described in detail within the counties, then baronies then townlands. Many of the original grantees also are described in some detail, with sons and brothers named, notable relatives named, and sometimes where they originated in Scotland or England. Volume III of this series covers the Londonderry area grants. I own print copies of all four volumes, listed in “Cecilia's Library,” and can do look-ups from them. Again an excerpt of **Scottish Names in the Plantation Grants, Part I**, is also at [www.americeltic.net/documents](http://www.americeltic.net/documents).

Last, for those who find ancestral information back to 1620 about their native Irish and Norman Irish, and some early Anglo and Scots-Irish families and want to go back yet further, the entire 6 volumes of the ***Annals of the Four Masters***, is on-line complete with a 7th index volume, as, transcribed and edited by John O'Donovan and there is a link to that at [www.AmeriCeltic.net/sources](http://www.AmeriCeltic.net/sources). This covers the mythology, oral history and monks records of “royal” and noble families, poets, tanists and law givers/mediators (brehons and others) and

significant events of all Ireland from about the 3rd century to 1616 which was found, compiled and written up by monks between that time and 1636. It gives names, places and some dates, and citations of original records with more dates from about the 14th century forward.

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## Biography

The founders of [AmeriCeltic.net](http://www.AmeriCeltic.net) are **Cecilia L. Fabos-Becker** and **Anthony J. Becker**, husband and wife. **Cecilia L. Fabos-Becker** is mostly the “history” and “ancestors” part of the operation. Cecilia has degrees in history and anthropology from the University of Minnesota, including four fields of history, and a post-graduate certificate in “Non Profit Management” from San Jose State University. One of the fields of history was “Pre-Modern Europe.” Another distinction in her academic work is that she completed a master’s degree program in history as an undergraduate culminating in a master’s level thesis entitled *Trade and Cultural Exchange Between the Han and Kushan Empires* (and including the relations of both those empires with ancient Rome). The thesis was notable for several reasons including the fact that it combined research and writing in three of her four completed fields: “Pre-modern Europe (Rome--Pre-Modern Europe included Ancient History),” “East Asia,” and “South and West Asia.” She has also been engaged in extensive family history research and writing for over 45 years, researching and writing related to Scots, Irish, English, Austro-Hungarian, and Limburgische and Rhineland areas families and more. In about 2004, the Beckers decided to found a newsletter for Celtic events and to help promote greater awareness of Celtic heritage, Cecilia decided to create sections for general history and ancestral research with links to sites she’d found in her own research, or to which she had been referred by other researchers, uploads of copies of some documents she had, or had transcribed, and a few out of print books she owned or had been able to arrange for others to digitize that were not on other sites. She also started writing tutorials about research and resources issues and aspects that either were not in the usual published books on genealogical research, or only lightly covered. The history and ancestors part of the website specializes in pre-1850 materials. It is still a “work in progress.”

## AmeriCeltic Mission

[www.AmeriCeltic.net](http://www.AmeriCeltic.net) is an **user supported, non-profit service organization**. Our Mission is **to restore awareness, celebrate and preserve the culture and history of Celtic Americans by promoting live Celtic music, festivals, history & ancestry**.

Read more about all our work on our website here: [www.AmeriCeltic.net/about](http://www.AmeriCeltic.net/about)







