



# Irish Roots



## Local Resources For Tracing Your County Limerick Ancestors

*Celebrating Irish Ancestry*



**A Guide To Visiting And Using The Irish Photographic Archive, Dublin.  
Discover The History And Origins Of Various County Limerick Surnames.  
Remembering Many Forgotten And Fascinating Cures Of Ireland.  
Helpful Tips To Assist You With Your Irish Family History Research.  
Keep Up To Date With The Latest Irish Genealogical Record Releases.  
Letters To The Editor, Book Selections, And Genealogy Queries Answered.  
News From The World Of Irish Genealogy And Lots Lots More!**



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## A few words from the editor

Welcome to our spring edition of Irish Roots magazine.

In ancient Ireland, the seasons of the year were well received and indeed celebrated by the Irish. Spring was the festival of Imbolg, Summer - Bealtaine, Autumn - Lunasa and Winter - Samhain.



In Catholic Ireland, Lent occurs during the spring season, which traditionally involved forty days of fasting and praying in preparation for the much anticipated feast of Easter. The first day of lent is Ash Wednesday and the day before is known as Shrove Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday was a most popular day for weddings among the Irish in olden days. Family researchers may well find many of their Irish ancestors were married in February or early March.

There were many customs associated with marriage in Ireland especially among farming families with the tradition of the bride bringing a dowry with her marriage. In fact, many such marriages were arranged, and the usual dowry in the 1930s was in the region of three hundred pounds. It was the tradition among farming families that the eldest boy in the family remained working at home on the farm and he then inherited the farm, usually upon his marriage. The eldest girl remained working at home and on the farm until her marriage. Other family siblings would then typically emigrate or join a religious order. More fortunate families were able to afford to educate their other children so they could pursue a chosen career, alternatively many went on to take up employment as servants to other farmers.

An incoming dowry to a family was a significant financial benefit to any struggling household, the dowry from the incoming bride was passed as a dowry to the eldest outgoing daughter upon her marriage, otherwise it was used to purchase a farm for another son to move him off the family farm. In my parent's case, my dad's father met my mam's father in a solicitor's office and my mother's dowry was transferred from her dad to my dad's father. My grandfather then purchased a farm for my uncle as he had to be financially provided for. This form of a dowry system began to abate around the late 1960s when Ireland started to become more industrialised.

Check out our contents listing opposite for all the great articles, from our regular contributors in this issue. Keep sending in your letters (emails) to [editor@irishrootsmagazine.com](mailto:editor@irishrootsmagazine.com), see pages 24 and 25 and for a taste of 'Cures of Ireland', head over to pages 28 and 29. Wherever you are celebrating Saint Patrick's Day this year, we wish you all the joyous blessings of our great Patron Saint of Ireland. Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig oraibh go léir.

*Maureen*



Thomond Bridge and King John's Castle, Limerick, Ireland, circa 1903. Underwood and Underwood.

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 MAGAZINE

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By James G. Ryan

This article deals with researching Limerick ancestors, but with an emphasis on the resources specific to the county, or only available within the county. Limerick is a largely rural county with prosperous farms served by the market towns of Askeaton, Abbeyfeale, Kilmallock, Newcastle West, Raheen and Rathkeale. However, it also contains the bustling city of Limerick, the third largest in Ireland. Limerick city has an ancient port, and is also famous as the site of the final battle of the Williamite wars whose outcome was central to modern Irish history. It is now home to many high-tech industries in IT and healthcare. The population of the county fell from 330,000 before the Famine to 158,000 in 1891. Popular Limerick surnames include McNamara, Ahern, Cregan, Bourke, Cussen, O'Brien, O'Connor, O'Donnell, Hayes, O'Shaughnessy, McEnery, Madigan, Murphy, Ryan, Walsh and Woulfe.

**L**imerick has all of the major national records: Civil records of birth, death and marriage start in 1864 (see [www.groireland.ie](http://www.groireland.ie)); Griffith's Valuation (a major listing of land occupiers) was conducted in 1851/2 and is available on many websites; and the 1901 and 1911 census returns are available on-line at [www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie). If you are beginning your search and do not know where your family was located, these are useful starting points. Some useful county-specific sources include:

### *Archives and Libraries*

Limerick is very well served with archives, libraries and on-line sources housing records of relevance for family history. They include:-

- **Limerick City and County Council Libraries:** The library's local studies section has an extensive collection of books, journals, maps, newspapers, lists of voters and freeholders, and other material. It also has a digital collection of national and local journals, Grand Jury presentments etc. [www.limerick.ie/council/services/community-and-leisure/libraries/local-studies](http://www.limerick.ie/council/services/community-and-leisure/libraries/local-studies)

- **Limerick Archives collection** includes (a) the historic records of Limerick City and County Council; and (b) acquired or donated records including family papers, hospital and business records, oral histories and much more. [www.limerick.ie/archives](http://www.limerick.ie/archives)

- **Limerick Genealogy** is a research service which has indexed local church records and other sources. They also offer membership, which gives on-line access to many of their sources, and discounts on family history consultation. [www.limerickgenealogy.com](http://www.limerickgenealogy.com)

- **Tipperary Family History Research** ([www.tipperaryexcel.com/tfhr.html](http://www.tipperaryexcel.com/tfhr.html)) offers a similar research service based on their database of Catholic records of the Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly, which includes the Eastern parts of County Limerick.

- **Limerick's Life** was founded to 'preserve and share the untold stories of Limerick's past'. It contains wonderfully diverse sources including gravestones, biographies, and lists of tenant, public officials, ship passengers and much more. Well worth a look. <https://limerickslife.com>

- **County Limerick Genealogy Page (IGP)** is also worth exploring as it provides (free) records contributed by volunteers: abstracts of church records; census, headstones; newspaper extracts and obituaries. <https://www.igp-web.com/IGPArchives/ire/limerick>

- **Limerick Museum.** Although primarily an urban museum, it has useful on-line sources including (a) of estate maps and names of tenants, lessees etc. and (b) Historical essays and research theses, providing background information on local organisations, trades, events and people. [www.limerick.ie/council/services/community-and-leisure/museum/limerick-museum](http://www.limerick.ie/council/services/community-and-leisure/museum/limerick-museum)

### *Church Records*

Catholic baptism and marriage records start relatively late in comparison to many Irish counties. There are 62 Catholic parishes in Limerick but only 5 have records which date before 1800. The earliest registers are St. Mary's (1745) and St. Munchin's (1764), both in Limerick City. There are 35 Church of Ireland parishes whose records are available. The earliest is St. Mary's in Limerick city (1697) and Ballingarry (1698). There are also Presbyterian and Methodist congregations in the county.



# What's New? Review

**A creaking but essential database that researchers have moaned about for years finally gets dragged, kicking and screaming, into its first major overhaul in nearly 20 years, and what happens? Researchers go full-on into the “if it ain't broke, don't mess with it” vibe, and start romanticising its clunkiness and simplicity.**

By Claire Santry



The National Archives of Ireland (NAI) launched its long-anticipated new online presence in early February. Its plan, as far as was understood by users, was to redesign the interface of its official ‘what we do’ website at [nationalarchives.ie](https://nationalarchives.ie), update its online catalogue offering of downloadable materials such as wills, and for the renovated site to become the new home of the NAI’s free-to-access genealogy databases. To all intents and purposes, the latter ([genealogy.nationalarchives.ie](https://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie)) has had its own distinct and separate web presence ever since it launched in 2007 with the first tranche of digitised records from the 1901 Census of Ireland.

**S**o what has the comprehensive renovation of the NAI site delivered? It has a brand-new 2020s look and will be much loved by everyone (any one?) who enjoys scrolling. Left, right, up and down... plenty of opportunity for exercise. Beyond that, it’s fair to say it has certainly fallen short of expectations. This is nearly always the case when we’re talking about genealogists’ expectations. Let’s face it: Irish family historians have to be remarkably optimistic characters even to start researching our ancestors given the Irish genealogy’s often over-exaggerated reputation for challenge!

I’d say the problem here was that a launch date was set in stone, regardless of whether the site was ready. The main NAI website, with its fancy new styling, may be doing pretty much what was expected of it (I confess I have not had time before starting this Review to rummage around more than the genealogical materials), although other genies have told me the promised access to wills has not appeared.

It is the upgraded genealogical databases (or lack of) that has dampened the mood. Only the 1901 and 1911 census returns, plus the 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851 census fragments, have made the move. And while there are some improvements in the display and other features, researchers were scuttling back to the old trusted site within only a couple of days of the new fangled reconstructed one’s arrival.

This is, I suspect, mainly to do with familiarity, although there are some issues with the new workings that are going to cause a bit more than short-term mild irritation for researchers. Perhaps the worst aspect of this re-imagined database is the loss of existing links to census records under the old regime. Many researchers will already have gathered and cited these in their family trees. So, too, have how-to books, magazines and newspapers, lecture handouts, websites and online videos. And then there are the pay-to-view family history databases such as Ancestry and FindMyPast who will shortly realise they need to make up to

nine million link changes to allow their users to view Irish census images.

## There Could Be Turbulence Ahead

It could be worse. A rumour flying around at launch suggested that none of the links on the new site will be permanent links. This would mean a link saved on a Friday may not work the following week, or month, or whenever. I’ve been unable to check the veracity of this claim yet. If true, I predict some tetchy communications between the NAI and its customers, AKA all hell will break loose.

As I write this, only the NAI’s census databases have moved to the new site. The 1901 and 1911 censuses can be searched at <https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census/>. For the surviving 19th-century census fragments, go to <https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census-c19/>. Or to browse all these collections, go to <https://nationalarchives.ie/collections/search-the-census/>.

For now, the cosy, old version is still