

## 'ALL IRELAND SOURCES' NEWSLETTER

A Monthly Newsletter: Editor: Terry Eakin, 334 Burns Bay Road, LANE COVE, NSW 2066

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Introduction: '*All Ireland Sources*' is a monthly newsletter distributed free by E-mail to Family History Societies and interested researchers near the end of each month. Distribution by Australia Post costs 50 cents/month (\$6.00 annually) within Australia. The aim is to bring items of interest regarding Irish record sources to the Australian genealogist. The editor would appreciate being made aware of records relating to the Irish, particularly those held in Australia. This month we continue looking at wills in Ireland and the two testamentary systems which operated, ecclesiastical pre-1858 and civil from 1858 onwards. The records of both systems were destroyed or severely damaged by the destruction by fire of the Public Record Office of Ireland (now the National Archives of Ireland) in June 1922. Last month was Northern Ireland and this month we continue the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and its holdings.

This article is continued from a PRONI *Guide to Probate Records* (December 1995) which states: "This material may be freely reproduced except for sale or advertising purposes". Alternative Sources of Pre-1858 Wills continues as a guide to the wills held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

### 3. Irish Land Commission Archive (Dublin):

The records of the Irish Land Commission in Dublin contain over 10,000 copies of wills and administrations, mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century and will include those of persons with addresses in Northern Ireland. They were lodged with the Irish Land Commission as evidence of title to land prior to the sale of the land to the Irish Land Commission. An index to these wills and administrations (which simply gives the name and address and the date of grant of probate or letters of administration) is available on the shelves in the Public Search Room in PRONI. The documents themselves can be consulted at the Irish Land Commission's Office in Upper Merrion Street, Dublin.

### 4. Irish Land Commission Archive, Northern Ireland:

There are copies of wills. Etc., in the Irish Land Commission papers in the Northern Ireland Land Registry archive (**PRONI Ref. LR.1**). Although there is no separate index to the wills, there is an index to estate owners which leads you to the reference for the appropriate papers.

### 5. Registry of Deeds, Dublin:

Another source of pre-1858 wills is the Registry of Deeds where wills as well as title deeds, etc., were sometimes registered (usually where a dispute was anticipated, for example, over persons excluded from the provisions of the will). Over 2,000 wills were registered from 1708, when the Registry of Deeds was set up, to 1832 when registering of wills ceased. Abstracts of these indexes, 1708-1832, were published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission in three (3) volumes with an index to the testators and beneficiaries. These are available on the shelves in the Public Search Room in PRONI.

The printed abstracts are quite full, recording the name and address of the testator, the occupation (where given), the names of the relatives and their relationship to the testator, names and addresses of other legatees, executors, etc., the lands being bequeathed, and the names and addresses and occupations of the witnesses. These printed abstracts were made from the transcripts of the memorials of the wills which can be found under the PRONI ref. MIC 311 and which will record the entire will. The printed abstracts give the volume number, page number and memorial number to the transcript books so the wills can easily be identified.

### 6. Genealogical Office, Dublin:

Apart from copies of Betham's abstracts of administration grants and his will pedigrees, the Genealogical Office in Dublin holds many abstracts of pre-1858 wills, some of which relate to Ulster. A manuscript index of most of these is held by the Genealogical Office and was published in *Analecta Hibernica* No.17, 1949, but has since been added to. It covers amongst others, the Swanzy and Welply collections, which are additional to those described under these collections.

7. Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) Records:

The Society of Friends has always had a strong emphasis on proper record-keeping, including the keeping of a record of wills in order that any personal or real estate left to trustees on behalf of children would be secured. However, the only wills for Northern Ireland are to be found amongst the Ballyhagen Meeting House records which contain 28 wills, 1695-1740. Abstracts of these were published in *The Irish Genealogist*, 1950. Many of these are unique as they were never proved and therefore do not appear in the indexes to the wills handled by the ecclesiastical courts.

8. Estate Duty Office Records:

Estate duty is levied on the value of property which passes on the death of a person. Copies of wills proved in English Prerogative and Diocesan Courts of testators with an Irish address and liable for estate duty, 1812-57, were sent to the Estate Duty Office, London, and were then passed to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland by the Public Record Office in London. There were originally almost 3,000 wills in this series but only those numbered 546-1916 were received. The series therefore begins in 1821 (though an index is available from 1812-20) and includes testators with addresses in Northern Ireland. Attached to each will is a declaration as to the value of the property (that it was under a certain amount) and the date of death is also given.

9. Commissioners of Inland Revenue:

Abstracts of prerogative and diocesan wills and administrations, 1828-39, (apart from the first half of 1834) sent to the Inland Revenue were obtained by the National Archives in Dublin. The will registers record the date of the will and probate, date of death, names and address of executors and details of main legacies and beneficiaries. The administration registers are less detailed but record date of death and names and address of the deceased and the administrators. There are also indexes to the wills and administrations for 1928-79 in the National Archives, Dublin.

10. Stewart-Kennedy Notebooks:

Trinity College Library in Dublin possesses the Stewart-Kennedy notebooks, which contain about 500 will abstracts, mainly from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They relate to the Stewart and Kennedy families and related families. Many of these wills were proved in the consistorial courts of Down and Connor. A copy of these abstracts for Ulster testators can be found under the PRONI Ref. T 700.

11. Welply Collection:

W. H. Welply of Greenisland, Co. Antrim, deposited his collection of about 1,500 abstracts of wills in the Representative Church Body Library, Dublin. They consist mainly of Prerogative (some relating to Ulster) and Cork and Cloyne wills and date mostly from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Copies of a large number of them were given to PRONI and can be found under the PRONI Refs. T 797, T 993 and T 996. An index to those in T 797 can be found in the Deputy Keeper's Report for Northern Ireland for 1937, apart from those where a transcript already existed in the Public Record Office, Dublin.

The Welply will abstracts, which form a sizeable proportion of the Irish will abstracts held by the Society of Genealogists in London, include some testators with addresses in Ulster so you should check the index in the 1934 Deputy Keeper's Report and the Rev. Wallace Clare's *Guide to Copies and Abstracts of Irish Wills, 1930*.

12. Swanzy Collection:

The Rev. H. B. Swanzy of Newry, County Down, compiled abstracts of many wills and administrations from the Prerogative Court, 1681-1859, Clogher diocese, 1697-1832, and

Kilmore diocese, 1694-1806. These are in the National Archives, Dublin, but copies are available in PRONI under the reference T 282. An additional 863 abstracts, largely of Down, Connor and Dromore wills, are to be found in the Representative Church Body Library with a copy in the Genealogical Office, Dublin.

13. Crossle Manuscripts:

A useful collection of copies or abstracts of wills, grants, etc. was made by Philip Crossle of Dublin and is available in PRONI largely under the PRONI reference T 283 A-B (but there are also copies in T 467, T 699, T 743, T 748, T 780 and T 845). They include wills, grants, etc. from the Prerogative Court, 1668-1855, and from the Consistorial Courts of Armagh, 1697-1819, of Clogher, 1720-1824, of Connor, 1672-1847, of Derry, 1682-1810, of Down, 1718-1830, and of Dromore, 1728-1852. An index to those in T 283 can be found in the Deputy Keeper's Report for Northern Ireland, 1925, Appendix F.

14. Tennison Groves Collection:

In 1939 PRONI purchased a large accumulation of notes of the late Tennison Groves, an Irish records agent of many years experience who had transcribed documents in the Public Record Office, Dublin, which were destroyed in 1922. Included are abstracts of wills and administrations from the 17<sup>th</sup> century relating to testators with addresses in Ulster. The indexes to these are to be found in the Personal Names card index in the Public Search Room in PRONI.

15. Office of Charitable Donations and Bequests:

A printed list of abstracts of all charitable donations and bequests contained in wills registered in Prerogative and Consistorial Courts, 1801-07, was published and is available on shelves in the Public Search Room in PRONI. Those for 1805 and 1814 were abstracted by T. U. Sadlier and can be found at the Genealogical Office and are indexed in *Analecta Hibernica*, No.17. Details of them were also published from 1825 in the *Dublin Gazette*. Indexes to these for the period 1800-28 and 1840-57 are in the National Archives, Dublin.

16. English Ecclesiastical Courts:

If the deceased had property both in Ireland and in England and Wales, then a grant of probate was made both in England and in Ireland. So you will find some Irish wills in the Prerogative Courts of Canterbury and York and in English Consistorial Courts. There are some indexes available to these:

- List of Irish wills and administrations, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, before 1660 and 1751-75 at the Irish Genealogical Research Society, London.
- Calendar of Irish Wills, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1634-52 published in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. 78, part 2, pp. 24-37.

**PRINCIPAL AND DISTRICT REGISTRIES FROM 1857:**

Under the Court of Probate and Letters of Administration Act (Ireland) 1857, the testamentary authority of the ecclesiastical courts was abolished and the Prerogative Court and Consistorial Courts were replaced by the Principal Registry in Dublin and 11 District Registries, which included those for Armagh, Belfast and Londonderry. Applications for probate or letters of administration could be made at the Principal Registry in all cases but could also be made at a District Registry within whose area the deceased had a fixed place of abode.

From 1858 to 1921 (when it was abolished) the Armagh Registry covered counties Armagh, Fermanagh, Louth, Monaghan and Tyrone except for the baronies of Strabane and Omagh in county Tyrone. Belfast Registry from 1858-1921 covered only counties Antrim and Down, but in 1921 it became the Principal Registry for Northern Ireland. Londonderry District Registry from 1858 to 1921 covered counties Donegal, Londonderry and the baronies of Strabane and Omagh in county Tyrone. In 1921 Donegal was removed from this District and thereafter applications for probate or letters of administration could be made at the Londonderry District Registry where the deceased had a fixed

place of abode on counties Fermanagh, Tyrone and Londonderry (though applications could still be made to the Principal Probate Registry in Belfast).

In 1922 the original wills of the Principal Registry (Dublin) up to 1904 and the 11 District Registries up to 1899 were destroyed in Dublin but the will transcripts made by the District Registries survived as they were held in each District Registry. They are as follows:

| District Probate Registries  | References   |
|--|--|
| Armagh, 1858-1921, with an index to each volume.                             | PRONI Ref. T ARM 1. 1858-1900 only on microfilm ref. MIC 15C/1 |
| Belfast, 1858-1909, with an index to each volume from 1858-99.               | PRONI Ref. T BEL 1. 1858-99 only on microfilm ref. MIC 15/C2   |
| Londonderry, 1858-99 and 1921-47, with an index to each volume from 1858-99. | PRONI Ref. T DER 1. 1858-99 only on microfilm ref. MIC 15C/3   |
| Cavan, 1858-1909, with an index to each volume.                              | PRONI Ref. MIC 499   |
| Principal Probate Registry, Dublin 1874 'G-M'                                | PRONI Ref. MIC 232   |

There is a complete list of all post-1858 wills and letters of administration available in what are known as will calendars. An alphabetical list was produced for each year recording the name and address of the deceased, occupation, usually the place of death (after 1982 this detail is omitted in all cases), the date of death, the value of the estate and the name of the person to whom probate or administration and in the early volumes relationship to the deceased.

These will calendars continued to be produced from 1921 onwards for Northern Ireland testators and intestates. They are on open access in the Public Reception area of PRONI. A consolidated index (which includes Belfast, Armagh and Londonderry District Registries) exists for the period 1858-77 and is to be found on the Public Search Room shelves. Other indexes on the Public Search Room shelves in PRONI are:

- Index to Belfast will books, 1890-99.
- Index to Belfast wills and administrations, 1900-08.
- Index to Londonderry wills and administrations, 1900-09, with Donegal wills, 1900-03.
- Index to Armagh wills and administrations, 1901-08, with Louth and Monaghan wills, 1900-03.

This article will conclude next month covering Original wills in PRONI.

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Book Review: Familia Ulster Genealogical Review No.15 (1999): Edited by Trevor Parkhill. pb., 122 pages, 200 grams, £5.95 plus packing and postage. ISBN 0-901905-99-2

Contents – Theodosia, Countess of Clanwilliam 1743-1817 (Anthony Malcomson); Beyond Belief: An Account of the life and career of Thomas McMurrugh Kavanagh PC (Peter Froggatt & Norman Nevin); Uneasy Bedfellows: Academic and Family Historians (Trevor MacCloughlin); Robert Hyndman's Census of Belfast, 1782 & 1791 (Sean Magee); Old World Famine, New World Plenty: The Career of Sir Arthur Edward Kennedy 1810-83 (Jennifer Harrison); The Evolution of the Abercorn Estate in North-West Ulster 1610-1703 (William Roulston), the Praeger Family of Holywood (Roger Blaney) and a series of reviews of books of general historical and genealogical interest. Authors are in brackets.

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**The Ulster Historical Foundation Conference 2000** will be held Tuesday 19 September to Tuesday 26 September 2000. There is a post conference tour from Tuesday 26 September to Sunday 01 October 2000. Family History Societies please copy this for your journals. Full details are on the UHF website at: <http://www.uhf.org.uk> Check out the book list whilst visiting this site, it is very comprehensive and a secure site for orders by credit card.

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**Change of Address:** Please note my change of address from Concord to 334 Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove NSW 2066. My private phone number is now (02) 9428 2520 and has Telstra message bank connected for when I am unable to answer calls. Please leave your name and phone number.

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Articles, suggestions and information for this newsletter are welcome and may be E-mailed to: [teakin@chilli.net.au](mailto:teakin@chilli.net.au) or posted to **Terry Eakin, 334 Burns Bay Road, Lane Cove NSW AUSTRALIA 2066.**

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