

Celtic Connections Conference 2020

Wednesday, August 5th, 2020

Question & Answer Log: Chat with Melanie McComb and David Rencher

QUESTION: How should I start to trace immigrants from Ireland to and through: Scotland, Quebec 1820-1860? (McComb)

ANSWER: Starting off with Irish going to Scotland, the main community you want to look at to see if you have any ancestors there is in Greenock – especially during the Famine. One of the key parishes is St. Mary's and their registers are available on Scotland's People (<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/church-registers>). Also look at the 1851 Scotland Census (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1076/>) to see if it helps solidify where you ancestor was, especially since it will identify the county where there are from on that census.

Now in terms of Quebec it is a different strategy. I recommend using land records. Using notarial records (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1471015>) to back up to the immigrant you can then see what records are available. You can also see if the ancestor applied for a Crown Land Grant – those are available through Library and Archives Canada (- <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-lower-canada-1764-1841/Pages/land-petitions-lower-canada.aspx>). You also may want to look at the Peter Robinson settlers – even though most of them went to Ontario, there were ships that went on to Quebec. Check the passenger lists of those ships. Some of these passenger lists can be found at <http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships/canada/PeterRobinson.shtml>.

QUESTION: In the 1850-1860 time period was employment in U.S. ever prearranged, was indentured servitude that paid for passage made in advance? What records might show this?

ANSWER: There were people who were lining up employment, primarily through word of mouth and through relatives and friends, Getting their passage paid there may have been a number of different schemes. It is hard to document these however. For those leaving landed estates and the Poor Law Unions may have records related to employment. There were work type agreements for passage, but again they are hard to find. Many of the Poor Law records are held by the County Libraries and start with estate records at the National Library of Ireland, Dublin. (Rencher)

To add on to this, during this time period there were indentured servant

agreements but it really was dying off as a process. To find indentured servant records look to town records, court records – you might see cases. (McComb)

There's a good online database on Richard Price and Associates for colonial servants – put together primarily by Nathan Murphy. See "Immigrant Servants Database" <https://immigrant.pricegen.com/login/login.php> (Rencher)

QUESTION: DNA evidence and name distribution point to County Cavan, but family lore says Cork, which area should I focus on? (Rencher)

ANSWER: The challenge with DNA is that it isn't the magic bullet answer we want, so it has to be coupled with records that support the DNA evidence. If the DNA evidence points to Cavan, I would certainly start my searches there. It seems from this example that the researcher wasn't sure who was from Cavan – it could have been the wife from Cork vs. the husband. And if it is yDNA and point to Cavan, that would rule out the wife. I always take the DNA evidence and use the records to support that DNA evidence. Out of Cavanaugh they could have gone to Limerick or Cork. I would say stick with where the evidence points.

QUESTION: Are there records for 1828 for entry to a Maine port, and are there records for people who stayed briefly in St. John, New Brunswick around 1828? (Rencher)

ANSWER: There is actually a database available in Family Search that actually includes some of these different ports. It is miscellaneous ports on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and ports of the Great Lakes and covers from 1820 to 1873. *Copies of Lists of Passengers Arriving at Miscellaneous Ports on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and at Ports of the Great Lakes, 1820-1873* - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/66154> (includes some ports in Maine. A lot of people really didn't come through Maine – most likely through Boston or New York. There are some passenger lists available for St John, New Brunswick- <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/387268> (includes index) (McComb)

Terrence Punch has published a number of things for people who were in St. John, New Brunswick. See Family History Library Catalog, author search, Punch, Terrence <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/results?count=20&query=%2Bauthor%3APunch%20%2Bauthor%3ATerrence&subjectsOpen=3923-50> (Rencher)

QUESTION: What records exist for early migration from Northern Ireland such as Donegal to America 1700-1750? (Rencher)

ANSWER: This one is a bit of a heavy lift due to the time period. It would depend upon the name, whether they were Protestant or Catholic. If they are from the Inishowen Peninsula just across from Londonderry they were likely Protestant;

if they are from the west side of Donegal they are most likely Catholic. Estate records are probably the best bet for the time period and I would use John Grenham's Surname Distribution tool to isolate specific parishes to search. <https://www.johngrenham.com/surnames/> For this time period if they are available you would want to use the 1740 and 1766 Religious Censuses or Heathmoney tax records where there are transcripts for those specific surnames. (Rencher)

To add on to that there is a book by Frances McDonnell, *Emigrants from Ireland to America, 1735-1743: A Transcription of the Report of the Irish House of Commons into Enforced Emigration to America*. The author discusses many of the transported prisoners from Donegal so that's another avenue to investigate. But as David said you need to make sure you study the area where they settled and what religion they are to narrow down and track the migration. (McComb)

QUESTION: Asks are there records of emigration from Ireland in the 1880s, and if so, where are they? (Rencher)

ANSWER: So there are records in Ireland that refer to people and connections. The post-1858 probate records, for example, could name someone who has property left in Ireland and in America. On FamilySearch, see "Ireland Calendar of Wills and Administrations, 1858-1920" <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1921305> Tombstone inscriptions where children sent money back and had a tombstone erected for their parents. But for outgoing passenger lists for the time period, there aren't any. Look to the various miscellaneous records such as clearances off the Irish estates that may give you names and info on how many people left the estates. But you need to look in the clues of other types of records. With that, you have to have a locality to zero in on beginning your research. (Rencher)

You really don't see any "leaving records" until 1890 when you see the official outward passenger lists. These are available on Ancestry and Findmypast – UK Outward Passenger Lists 1890-1960 <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2997/> . Otherwise you need to use other records like newspapers, etc. that David suggested. (McComb)

QUESTION: Regarding "Bonded" i.e. prepaid passage: What was the process of paying? How and where paid? How was family in Ireland told when the ship was to sail?

ANSWER: Typically, indentured servants would sign a contract that outlined all the terms – so they knew when they would be leaving. In many cases you are sending over young people and teenagers. If they were minors, their parents would be signing the contracts and they would know when they are shipping out. Also the captains would know and they would sell the legal papers to someone in America to collect the passage fees. (McComb)