

Celtic Connections Conference 2020

Thursday, August 13th, 2020

Question & Answer Log: Chat with Melanie McComb and Donna Moughty: Irish

SUBMITTED QUESTIONS

QUESTION: RootsIreland transcriptions are higher quality because they are based on original parish registers, not on microfilms, so they stand a better chance of being more accurate? Are the original registers still retained by the individual parishes? Were they loaned to the Heritage Centers for transcription? A RootsIreland transcription would lead you to look for the digitized record elsewhere?

ANSWER: First, yes, it is true. The RootsIreland transcriptions were done from the original records. They borrowed the registers from the parish priests and did the transcriptions then returned them. So, those registers are retained locally. Now, the other part of that, though, is that many of those registers were microfilmed back in the 1960s and are at the National Library. So if you want to look at the originals, go to the website of the National Library of Ireland and go to their digitized records of Roman Catholic Church records. (Moughty)

And if you're looking at Northern Ireland as well, you'll want to check out the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) also to see what other microfilm is available. And something to keep in mind, not everything is going to be online so even on sites like RootsIreland and other websites including the NLI (National Library of Ireland) Roman Catholic Parish Project not all the records have been filmed. Or if they are filmed, not all of them have been uploaded so there's definitely more that can be explored. So, don't use what you see on a genealogy website as gospel truth that those are the only records available. Definitely fully check the catalogues to make sure that you looked for all possible years and records of that parish. (McComb)

One of the other things, if you use John Grenham's website Irish Ancestors, and go to the locality and then go to church records, he will tell you exactly where the records are located and what years are covered. (Moughty)

QUESTION: What would it have cost for passage for a single man from Ireland to Canada? In the 1830s through the 1860s? Would the passenger be paying for his own fare? What would the percentage have been "self-pay" and how much would be "assisted immigration?" (McComb)

ANSWER: On average when we look at the cost of fares of going from Ireland to Canada it was roughly around 55 shillings. Which to give you an idea was about half of someone's salary in Ireland. So, it is quite a bit of money. If you were going to the United States, the cost would vary between 70 shillings and even 100 shillings. So, almost nearly double. Now most immigrants are going to be going over via steerage – the cheapest option possible. That's why Canada was definitely an appealing option. And that cost difference was done on purpose. The US did not want Irish paupers coming over. Now in terms of the percentage of assisted immigration to self-pay, assisted immigration was only a fraction of immigration. Most immigrants self-paid by money that was coming from family or different charity organizations, maybe from their parish church as well that would be assisting them. Landlord assisted migration and immigration, for example, was about 5% of total immigration so it was very minor. There are some great journals that you can find online at sites like JSTOR that talk about assisted immigration to Canada and they even do breakdowns of the different Poor Law Unions and how many actually came over. Here's one article I recommend: "State Aided Emigration from Ireland to Canada in the 1880s" by Gerard Moran published in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25512998?seq=1>. You'll find that it really was only a fraction of the over 1.5 million who left Ireland. (McComb)

QUESTION: Would estate records give any info on landlords sending tenants out of Ireland during the famine?

ANSWER: The answer to that is yes. The first thing you need to do is to figure out if there are any estate records. So, knowing who the landlord is and finding out if estate records exist. Remember that not all landlords provided assisted immigration. If you know, for example, that they did, the chances are that the information would be in the estate records. Now finding estate records, PRONI probably has the largest collection of records – these are records you are not going to find online. However, the National Library and the National Archives at Dublin both have estate records as well. Estate records can also still be private, or at a repository in England if it was an absentee landlord. For assisted emigration, besides the landlords remember that the poor law or the workhouse provided some assisted emigration to people as did private organizations. The Quakers were pretty active in terms of providing assistance to people to emigrate. (Moughty)

One of the famous examples of the tenant evictions is Captain Mahon. He evicted thousands of people out of his estate in Roscommon. His estate is now the site of the National Famine Museum. They have several of Capt Mahon's papers (<https://www.strokestownpark.ie/famine/museum/>). In some cases, with the larger estates the landlord's papers might be in private archives outside of the government archives. (McComb)

The Shirley Estate in Monaghan was another one that did quite a bit of assisted emigration and those records are at PRONI. (Moughty)