

Finding Your Ancestors from the UK and Ireland

AT ANCESTRY.COM



It's no secret that the U.S. has close ties to England – just check any history book. Genealogically speaking, descendants of immigrants from the British Isles – including Ireland – make up a significant portion of the U.S. population today.



English immigration to the U.S. began in the 1600s, but particularly large waves of occurred around 1870 and 1881 to 1890 when the difficult living conditions in the UK during the Industrial Revolution motivated people to leave their mother country.

Irish immigration:

Irish immigration began a bit later, with one of the most significant waves occurring between 1847 and 1860 – spurred by the Irish potato famine. By its end, hundreds of thousands of Irish had escaped to America in over-crowded ships. Immigration rose again between 1881 and 1890 resulting from crop failures as well religious and political strife throughout Ireland.

Tip: Your English or Irish ancestry could send you far back in time. Create timelines for families to help you quickly view the key events in the family tree. Include migration, key life moments and local events that may have affected your ancestor.



Settlers from Mother England helped found the new world but immigration from various British Isles has continued ever since.

England began sending settlers to the U.S. in the 17th century. Fortunately many of those early colonists were great record keepers – a boon for family historians.

Finding Your UK and Irish Ancestors

Locating Their Arrival

While Ancestry.com provides a huge collection of U.S. passenger arrival lists, your potential success in finding details about your British ancestor's arrival can hinge upon when he or she arrived in the new world.

KEY DATES	WHAT YOU'LL FIND
Colonial period thru 1819	Passenger lists weren't required but some ship captains retained lists of all aboard. Search the Passenger and Immigration List Index to see if a record of your ancestor's arrival exists. Records in this collection date back to the 1500s.
1820-1893	Passenger lists first required to be kept; however, details on these lists are somewhat limited. To successfully identify an ancestor in a less-detailed list, look for the full family unit. Compare names, location information, dates and any other available details to facts you've discovered in later U.S. records about the family to determine if the person could really be your ancestor.
1893-1906	Sixteen new fields added to passenger lists, including marital status, last residence, final destination, literacy, financial status and others. Use each of these to help you determine if you're looking at the correct person.
1906-On	Manifests required to include a physical description of the passenger and place of birth; shortly thereafter, name and address of the closest living relative in the country of origin was added, too. Use the latter to help you locate the family in the homeland.

Steps to Discovering Your British Roots

STEP 1: BEGIN WITH RECORDS CREATED BY THE FAMILY IN THE U.S.

Start with the most recent records, including the 1930 and 1920 censuses, military draft registration cards, yearbooks, obituaries and other records at Ancestry.com.

HOW: Click on the Search tab at Ancestry.com to get started. Input the name of an ancestor who would have been living during the 20th century. Include other details including birth year, residence or birthplace and the names of other relatives, if available.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Click on the results returned and inspect the details. Family names, ages and relationships, birthplaces, occupations and addresses (scan horizontally across the page to see all of the information) can help you determine if you've found the correct family.

Kitchen Samuel F.	Head	R 45	46	M	W	46	M
Louise	Wife			F	W	44	M
Frank R.	Son			M	W	18	S
Sherman Lawrence	Roomer			M	W	32	M
Grace	Roomer			F	W	28	M
June	Roomer			F	W	5	S
Kitchen George S.	Brother			M	W	44	S

Use the information you discover in a census record to populate your search for earlier records.

Search Clear Form

☐ Match all terms exactly

Name

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

[Use default settings](#) [Use default settings](#)

Event

Birth Year +/- Location

☐ Exact Only [Use default settings](#)

Lived In

[Use default settings](#)

Any Event Year +/- Location

☐ Exact Only [Use default settings](#)

Family Member

First Name Last Name Remove

☐ Exact Only ☐ Exact Only

Remove

[+ Add family members](#) (mother, father, spouse, siblings, children)

Finding Your UK and Irish Ancestors

STEP 1: CONTINUED

WHERE NEXT: Use the information you discover to create more searches for the same family moving backwards in time. Census records are full of details – and 20th-century records include information about immigration and/or naturalization – so try to discover each one your family appears in.

Tip: Your British family line may run very deep – but you'll still want to start in the records created most recently and march back step by step until you find the ancestor who was born on foreign soil. That way you'll know you're researching the right family and the right immigrant.



Immigration & Travel
Passenger Lists
Citizenship & Naturalization Records
Border Crossings & Passports
More...

STEP 2: FIND THE IMMIGRANT IN THE IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL COLLECTION AT ANCESTRY.COM

Once you know who the immigrant was — and have his or her name, approximate birth year and other identifying details from census and other records — search for records directly related to his or her immigration.

HOW: Click on the **Search** tab at **Ancestry.com**. From the Special Collections list on the right side of the page, select Immigration and Travel to limit your search to records from this collection. Fill in the search form with details you've discovered about your family's immigrant — name, birth year, year of arrival — and search. Note that the form contains fields for names of other family members, locations in which your ancestor may have lived, where he or she arrived in America, and more. You can fill these in later if you've received too many results, but be careful: immigration details reported years later on a census may not be entirely accurate.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: The Immigration and Travel collection includes passenger arrival lists, naturalization (citizenship) documents, passport applications and other records that link to a person's international travel. Compare dates, family members and other details you find on an Immigration and Travel record to the information you've already collected about your ancestor to see if you've found a match.

A handwritten census record for the Ventura family. The names are written in cursive: Frank, Lucia, Peter, Thomas, Henry, and Charles. The record is dated 1900.

Census record with Teresa Ventura's family

A passenger list for the Ventura family. The names are written in cursive: Teresa, Francesco, Luigi, and Tequila. The record is dated 1900.

Passenger list with the right Teresa shows the same family members and age ranges, but with ethnic-equivalent given names.

A passenger list for a different Teresa Ventura family. The names are written in cursive: Teresa, Giuseppe, Angelina, and Cease. The record is dated 1900.

Passenger list for a different Teresa Ventura can be ruled out since children's names and ages don't match the later U.S. census record.

Tip: Discrepancies exist. Details in immigration and naturalization records may not mirror what you've found elsewhere. Census immigration dates may be off by a few years and even first and last names can differ slightly (yes, even English-speaking immigrants sometimes changed their names or spellings after arrival). Carefully analyze all finds and assess them against known facts to be sure you have the right person.

WHERE NEXT: With any research, it helps to know where your ancestors lived before immigrating to the U.S. to find them in records created in the homeland. But even without a specific hometown, you may be able to locate later immigrating British ancestors in census records at Ancestry.com by focusing on the full family itself. Learn as much as you can about children, parents and siblings after immigration through U.S. census records, passenger lists

Key Resources at Ancestry.com for Tracing UK and Irish Roots

STEP 2 CONTINUED

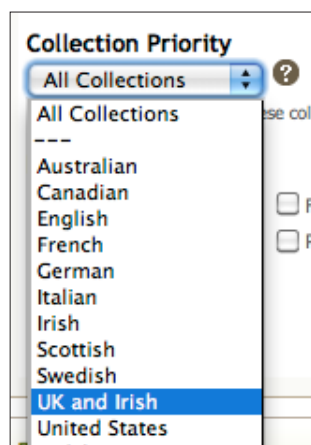
and naturalization documents first. Then compare this information to UK census records, birth, marriage and death records and more to see if you've found the right family. Remember, though, once you trace the family back before civil registration and the 1841 census, you'll need the hometown name so you can search church records there.

Not sure a record you found is linked to your family? Save it to your Ancestry.com Shoebox so you can review it later after you've had time to learn more about the family.

STEP 3: USE NAME, BIRTH DETAILS AND PLACE INFORMATION TO LOCATE YOUR ANCESTOR IN THE RECORDS CREATED IN THE HOME COUNTRY.

Use the same steps you use for U.S. research on your ancestors from Britain. Start with the most recent records you're likely to find them in – and know that census records are key resources abroad, too. Make special note of the entire family. You can use these details to help you follow them back through time.

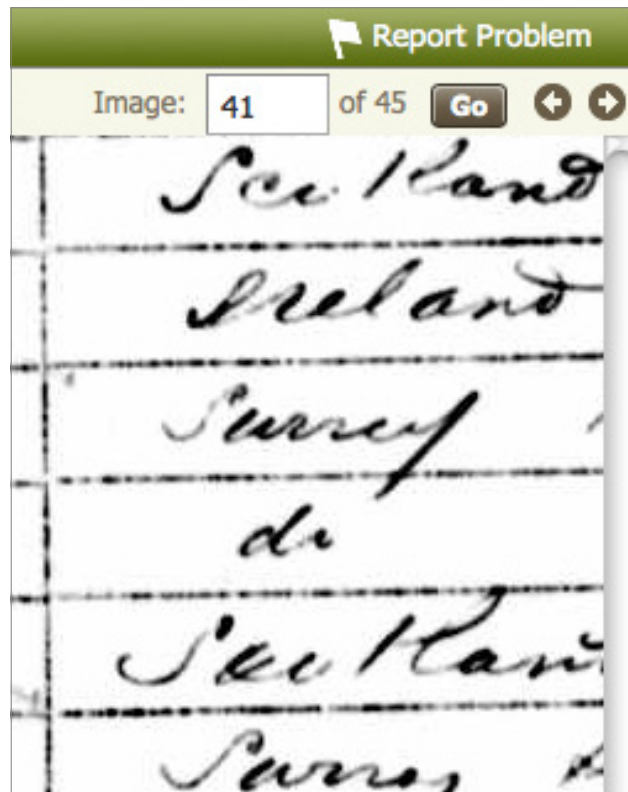
HOW: Click on the Search tab at Ancestry.com and choose Show Advanced. At the bottom of the form is a "Collection Priority" option. Select "UK and Irish" as the priority and then choose "Show only records from this location" to focus your search on records created in the UK and Ireland. Be sure, however, to undo these settings before conducting your next search of all records.



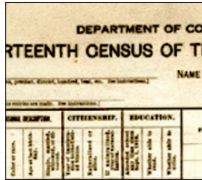
WHERE NEXT: UK records at Ancestry.com are vast – birth, marriage and death records for some locations in England date back to the 15th century and UK and Wales census records go back to the middle of the 19th century. Immigration records, too, are extensive – family lines may have migrated out to points in North America, Australia or any of a number of other locations. Use the details you discover in census records from the UK to explore all of these and more.

IRISH RECORDS at Ancestry.com include key collections centered around land ownership making the discovery of a hometown that much more important. Learn more about finding your family in these records in the appendix at the end of this guide.

***Tip:** Go forward and backwards. Often records at Ancestry.com are more than just a single page long. Be sure to click on the document image and use the arrows to page forward and backwards to see if there's more information about your ancestor.*



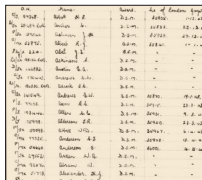
Key Resources at Ancestry.com for Researching UK and Irish Ancestry



U.S. FEDERAL CENSUS COLLECTION AND UK CENSUS COLLECTION — to help you discover more about your family's life in the U.S. and to give you the clues you'll need to follow them back through generations until you reach your family's immigrant ancestor and pick up his/her trail in census records from the UK.



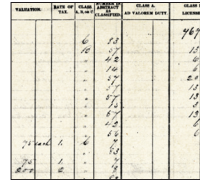
IMMIGRATION AND TRAVEL COLLECTION — to discover the moment your ancestor arrived as well as details reported to obtain citizenship; note that women and children may not have naturalization records and may have been naturalized through a parent or spouse, depending on laws at the time.



MILITARY COLLECTION — to learn more about military service in both the U.S. and other countries; look for key records associated with the Revolutionary War, Civil War and all the way through to World War II and beyond, some of which mention land, give personal stories and information about other relatives.



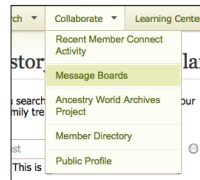
ENGLAND BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH COLLECTIONS — to find key moments in a person's life; includes christening, birth, marriage, marriage banns, death and more from select Catholic and Church of England parishes, plus civil records maintained by various government agencies



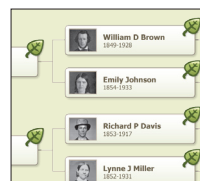
TAX, CRIMINAL, LAND AND WILLS (UK) — to gather information pertaining to the death of an ancestor as well as distribution of estate, family relationships as well as poor law records, criminal registers and other detailed documents; included are the National Probate Calendar, criminal registers, extracted probates, poor laws and more.



GRIFFITH'S VALUATIONS (IRELAND) — to see where your Irish ancestor lived including links to photos and maps of the location; more than 1 million Irish who occupied land between the years 1848 and 1864 in Ireland are listed.



MESSAGE BOARDS — to connect with other researchers who have experience researching UK and Irish family histories and discovering records in the same places where your ancestors lived.



FAMILY TREES — to link to other family members, possibly even previously unknown cousins, who are also researching the same family lines; one of them may have the details you're searching for.

Tip: Always view the original image. While the typed search result you receive includes a lot of information, the original image may include even more — including clues to other relatives.

Note the search result for Luigi provides his birthplace, arrival date and other details but page 2 (left) of the original passenger list record also states Luigi's destination in the U.S., health condition, physical description and more.

New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957									
Return to Record 1922 - November - 08 - Colombo - 60									
View All Print Order Options Share New									
Zoom In Zoom Out 100%									
Arriving at Port of NEW YORK, NOV 8, 1922, 19									
No.	Age	Sex	Color	Birthplace	When arrived in U.S.	When left U.S.	When left U.S.	When left U.S.	When left U.S.
1	30	M	B	Italy	Nov 8, 1922				
2	30	M	B	Italy	Nov 8, 1922				
3	30	M	B	Italy	Nov 8, 1922				

New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 about Luigi Ventura	
Name:	Luigi Ventura
Arrival Date:	8 Nov 1922
Birth Year:	abt 1909
Birth Location:	Italy
Birth Location Other:	corato
Age:	13
Gender:	Male
Ethnicity/Race-/Nationality:	Italian (South) (Italian)
Port of Departure:	Naples, Italy
Port of Arrival:	New York, New York
Ship Name:	Colombo



[View Passenger List](#)



[View image\(s\) of the ship](#)

GOOD TO KNOW:

ENGLISH COLONISTS MAY NOT APPEAR ON TRADITIONAL PASSENGER LISTS, BUT THEY MAY SHOW UP IN BOOKS AND STORIES RELATED TO AMERICA'S EARLY HISTORY. Search these local histories directly by selecting Stories, Memories and Histories from the Special Collections box on the Ancestry.com search page.

INSPECT SMALLER COLLECTIONS, TOO. You may find details about a family member in something like Irish Relatives and Friends, a collection of information-wanted classifieds from a New York City weekly, or the New York Emigrant Savings Bank, which was set up to assist Irish immigrants post-potato famine.

YOUR ANCESTORS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN MARRIED WHEN THEY CAME OVER. Try searching for female ancestors using a maiden name.



Directly search a single record type – like a local history – by clicking on it from the Special Collections box, accessed via the Search tab.

5 TIPS FOR TRICKY NAMES

What's in a name? A lot when an ancestor is using it to play hide-and-seek. These five tricks, however, may help you beat them at their own game.

TRICK 1. Lengthen and shorten names. And remember that more than one ancestor may have changed a surname. Search the Internet for variations and also check Ancestry.com message boards.

TRICK 2. Try a wildcard search in which you use asterisks to replace some of the letters in a name. For example, if the surname was Berlengauem, B*rl*g*m* would produce it as well as Burlingame and other variants.

TRICK 3. Search by criteria. Forego the surname and search using birthplace, age, gender, occupation and other details to find people who match the ancestor you're seeking. Pay special attention to the names in your search results. Do any of them seem to reflect your family?

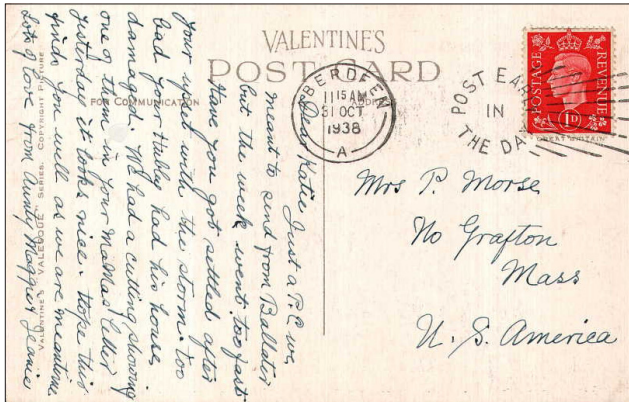
TRICK 4. Follow your ancestor backwards by address in a city directory – you may get lucky and discover that, while the name changed, the residence remained the same.

TRICK 5. Listen for stories. There may be more truth in those tales than you realize – including a clue about a person's birth name, a maiden name or a previous spelling.



Appendix: Irish Research

Once you find the Irish immigrant in U.S. records, you need to discover where he or she was from – either a county in Ireland or, better still, a hometown. Search the following U.S. records for mentions of the Irish home:



AT HOME

Search attics for mementos including wedding announcements, postcards and letters sent from Ireland, any of which could give you names of relatives who remained back home, other family members and addresses that point you to a hometown in Ireland.

IN THE CENSUS

Check birthplaces listed on census records. You may discover that the ancestor you thought was your family's first immigrant was actually the immigrant's child, cousin or in-law. Begin with 20th century records and search for the whole family – parents, siblings and grandparents, too – and look for year of immigration in those same records. Can't find the immigrant? Keep working backwards and follow siblings as well. One of them may lead you directly to the immigrant.

HOME DATA			PERSONAL DESCRIPTION				EDUCATION		PLACE OF BIRTH			
Value of home, if owned, or monthly rent, if rented	Race and nat	Does this family live on a farm?	Sex	Color or race	Age at last birthday	Marital condition	Age at first marriage	Attended school or college any time since Sept. 1, 1929	Whether able to read and write	Place of birth of each person enumerated and of his or her parents. If born in the United States, give State or Territory. If of foreign birth, give country in which birthplace is now situated. (See Instructions.) Distinguish Canada-French from Canada-English, and Irish Free State from Northern Ireland		
										PERSON	FATHER	MOTHER
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
53.00	R	710	M	W	57	M	42	71	Yes	New York	Northern Ireland	Pennsylvania
		V	F	W	46	M	31	70	Yes	Michigan	Wisconsin	Wisconsin
60.00	R	711	F	W	46	M	31	70	Yes	Austria	Austria	Austria

WITH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Ever notice how many people on a single page of a census seem to be born in the same country? It could be the result of chain migration. Often a single immigrant would arrive in America, land a job and send word of opportunity back home. Soon more family and friends would immigrate and send for their family and friends. For researchers, these ethnic enclaves can provide all manner of clues: maiden names, hometowns, extended family lines. Do a little digging and also check Member Connect to see who's researching the neighbors. They may have some details you're looking for, too.

ABOARD A SHIP. OR CROSSING A BORDER

Irish immigration to America peaked around the time of the Great Famine; unfortunately passenger lists were notoriously stingy with details then. But those mid 19th-

century lists do hold the names of other passengers, who may have been your ancestor's friends or relatives and fantastic record keepers. Snoop around their family lines, see where they went and if their paths crossed your ancestor's again. If you can't find a passenger list for your ancestor, consider that at times it was cheaper and simpler to travel to the U.S. via Canada. Your Irish ancestor may have crossed the border immediately or even a generation or two later.

IN CHURCH

Baptisms, weddings, funerals and more took place in churches. Use census records and city directories to find your ancestor's address, then search for surviving churches near the family home. Contact the church to inquire about records created when your ancestor lived in the neighborhood. Also call the local library, which may know of other resources you haven't yet considered.

Appendix: Irish Research

27	813	Mary x Barrett	381 1 st Ave	Minor	1861	Brooklyn NY	1
30	847	Mary x Conlan	Warren, NY	Domestic	Remerick	Oct 1879	Geo. P.
"	856		285 Ave C	None	Co Galway	1850	
"			21 Laurens	Domestic	Prussia	17th/18th	Phan
19	2	894	Patrick Delaney	St Nicholas White	Walter	Co Monaghan	1848

ON A DOCKET

Court records aren't just for the criminally inclined (although those records are full of detail you won't find elsewhere). In the Tax, Criminal, Land and Wills collection at Ancestry.com, you'll also discover real estate transactions, small business dealings, records from the emigrant savings bank, probates and more. Search for all members of the family, read records carefully and check to see if the names of witnesses sound familiar, too. They may also be family.

IN THE MILITARY

Draft registration cards from World War I and World War II can be brimming with family details, including hometown, occupation and name of nearest kin. For earlier arrivals to the U.S., Civil War-era records – pensions, muster rolls, the 1890 Veterans Schedule census, enlistments and others – may be even more revealing.

3	Date of birth	Nov 17, 1896
4	Where born	Ireland
5	I am	Irish
6	Place of birth	Ireland
7	Place of birth	Irish
8	Place of birth	Irish

BETWEEN THE LINES

Family stories may not always be entirely accurate, but they're often full of names, places and relationships and can help you figure out when your ancestor was where. Use them to build a timeline that you populate with details from the records you find. And enjoy the tales, which give you a better idea of the characters in your family tree.

MAKING HEADLINES

A graduation, engagement or even a visitor from out of town – any of these might have been big news at the time. Look in local newspapers for daily comings and goings as well as bigger events. And if your family is full of city dwellers, ask the local library if there were smaller, neighborhood or Irish-specific publications.

Frank Knox.
Frank Knox of Cambridge, a salesman of the J. B. Wright Seed Co., died suddenly in Cambridge yesterday from a heart attack. Mr. Knox was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the son of Mary

AT THE CEMETERY

A simple tombstone may hold the birthplace or middle name you've been trying to locate for years. The one next to it could offer an elusive maiden name. Families often stayed together, even in death, so a trip to the cemetery could introduce you to distant family lines you may not have heard of and other details your ancestor surely wanted you to know.



Image courtesy of Martha McCaffrey Dobbins, from the McCaffrey-Davis-Johnston-Stockard tree, <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/2450685/family>