# TRACING THE O MAHONYS OF THE DIASPORA

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#### CORK FAMILY HISTORY

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#### Always Begin the Search in the County of Emigration

This article is not for those who know where in Ireland their ancestors were born. It is intended to help the many thousands of Mahonys who know no more than "from Ireland" and far too often, that is the only location information found in the official documents in the country of origin. And that is where the search must begin in the country of origin. It is no use coming to Ireland seeking a John Francis Mahony that one *knows* was born in 1826 - and that is all one knows.

All genealogical research should be a movement from the Known to the Unknown, working backwards chronologically from oneself to the emigrant Mahony ancestor. When one is researching such a surname as Mahony it is very important to learn all one can - names of the emigrant's parents, siblings, and the children - and best of all - the location, the townland, in Ireland. The first step is to consult all members of the extended family, collecting all their information and copying all their documents. I am sure that you will acquire much 'conflicting' information - I believe as much as 50% of family folklore will be incorrect - but until everything is checked out, it is impossible to know which is reliable information. Perhaps the daughters (or daughters-in-law) were the only family members who listened to the older generation. Remember that even siblings will not have identical information about the earlier generations. Sometimes only part of the story is known to one; others may have the missing details.

Ideally, one should then repeat the visits to relatives, and query all the discrepancies. At the same time the next stage should proceed and that is to investigate all sources available, such as the legal records of births, marriages and deaths. See the Research Program for a list of the sources that are available. The most important findings should be in the legal marriage certificate, the death certificate, the naturalisation (if applicable) the census records and the headstone. What one is looking for is enough knowledge about a family group - structure and location - so that one can identify this family correctly in the Irish records. If the records of the direct ancestor do not contain these clues, check all the records of the siblings.

World-wide there are many genealogical societies, and several of these have an Irish Interest group. It is a good thing to join and learn from the experiences of the other members. Often the lecture program and the publications will contain information vital for successful Irish research. Many societies have excellent libraries to assist the research of their members. I also advise that you locate your nearest Family History Centre run by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, and availing of the computer, microfilm and microfiche collections of the Genealogical Society of Utah. This facility will be of the greatest importance in locating records, both abroad and in Ireland.

#### **Keep An Open Mind About Family Data**

It is very important that one does not have any preconceived ideas, such as deciding the date of birth from a marriage certificate. Genealogy is not an exact science, and the information in the official records depends on the accuracy of the family knowledge. For example, the USA census enumerators, rather than making a repeat visit, often took information from the neighbours. Therefore, it is not surprising that finding all possible censi will yield conflicting information.

# A RESEARCH PROGRAM TO FIND & IDENTIFY YOUR EMIGRANT ANCESTOR

Marriage	LEGAL firstly, because there is usually more family information than in the Church records, especially names of		
Certificate:	parents CHURCH		
Death Certificate:	Names of Deceased Parents; Deceased Possible Age, but mostly is incorrect Funeral Director Burial Place		
Census:	Gives information such as years of entry into the USA and naturalisation.  NB: ALL possible censuses should be found to compare ages and answers to questions		
Naturalisation:	The Application rather than Declaration of Intention, or the final Grant. This application - stage two of the process - is often the only place where the locality information is listed. The townland will probably be spelt phonetically, so care will be needed to identify correctly. Use any available index to the Townlands of Ireland, now on microfiche [1901] and reprinted [1851]		
Shipping Lists:	Very few are indexed, so searching can be very frustrating and fruitless. Unless one knows the exact year, this search can be tedious and frustrating without indexes. Normally shipping lists do not show location of origin, but the port of embarkation Check published sources, such as the Filby volumes, Glazier's Famine Emigrants, NEHGS Missing Friends. Remember that Ellis Island was not opened until 1892.		
Headstones & Graves:	Often the only place where the locality of origin is shown. If damaged - repair them. [Believe me, this has worked!]		
Family:	Talk to ALL Relatives, young or old; check and cross-check the stories you are told. No-one will tell you the exact same information.  Were any of the emigrant's siblings in religion? If so, check the archives of the order or diocese to see if the baptismal certificate has survived.  Search through photographs and family papers; It is surprising where there are clues to location, such as a family poem, a song or story.  Documents, Wills, Leases, Family Bible  Memories of any visitors from Ireland?  Any letters from Ireland?		
Miscellaneous:	Newspaper Obituaries and be sure to read all the newspapers published in the locality ANY, ANY, ANYTHING at all such as: Words used in speech can identify a location. Photographs (style of dress, etc.)? Family poetry?		
REMEMBER:	You may have the vital location among your folklore without realising it. Send exact copies of your documents to the genealogist rather than your analysis of researches. There could be clues therein that you have ignored.		
THERE IS HELP NEARBY:	Consult your local library/telephone book for: [1] Local/county/state Genealogical Society or Family History Society [2] Nearest Family History Centre [under Church of the Latter Day Saints] [3] Internet - but be sure what you are collecting is good information		

It seems that ages were recorded to suit the circumstances, A young boy might declare an older age at emigration, so that he would be admitted into the country; then as he approached old age, he would be likely to list himself as younger, to keep his employment. Frequently a woman would register a younger than she was because of both job and marriage opportunities. And, of course, people do forget how old they are! There is an Irish saying "I must get my age from the Priest" showing that the baptismal registers would be consulted, eg before applying for an Old Age Pension. Our forefathers knew that they could not rely on their memories. Therefore, a death certificate or headstone saying "65 years 3 months 2 days" cannot be used to find an exact birth date. The emigrants were usually older than the records indicate; the largest gap I have found is fourteen years.

Keeping an open mind about findings is particularly true in the terms of 21st century technology. There is much family and genealogical data available through the Internet. However, do not take this information as 'true' without checking it out. The same principle applies to the several genealogical CD ROMs now available. The source of information should be determined, and the data should be checked by other resources. Public records now online include Scottish Origins, Irish Transportation to Australia, the War Graves Commission and the International Genealogical Index, part of the the Genealogical Society of Utah's database. However, much of the 'genealogical' material found on family-history web pages and bulletin boards is very unreliable and needs to be verified from the source documents. The Internet can introduce relatives to each other, but as most of the Irish sources are not online, personal searching of baptisms, marriages, probate, local studies and other records is still essential.

Do not neglect locating the headstones of the emigrants. Often these memorials are the *only* source of townland location.

#### Research in Ireland

When one has exhausted all possible resources, and have collected as much information as possible, it is time to look in the Irish records. Some may be accessed through the Family History Centres, but for the Munster region most of the church registers are not filmed. Hopefully one has found the location - the townland. This information leads to identification of the civil parish [for official records and Church of Ireland BMDs] and in .turn to the correct Roman Catholic parish. I will concentrate on County Cork because the vast majority of the O Mahony records are to be found in this county.

#### A .Church Records:

Church of Ireland:

The civil parish is usually the same territory as the Church of Ireland parish, but there has been amalgamation of several parishes into Unions. For example, the Bandon Union comprised the parishes of Kilbrittain, Rathclaren, Ballymodan, Kilbrogan, Innishannon, Brinny, Knockavilla, Leighmoney and Ringrone [part]. The choice for research initially is to consult the local rector. However, many County Cork registers are now lodged in the Representative Church Body library, Braemar Park, Dublin 14; some parish records are on microfilm at the National Archives, Bishop St., Dublin 8. I recommend Noel Reid's *A Table of Church of Ireland Parochial Records and Copies* for help in locating the particular parish registers.

Several Church of Ireland parish registers were burnt in the 1922 Public Records Office fire, and most of these were not copied before lodgement, so that information is no longer available. The late Michael Leader collected and typed transcriptions of all the extant Church of Ireland registers for Co. Cork and his papers are lodged at the library of the Irish Genealogical Research Society, The Irish Club, 82 Eaton Square, London, SW1W 9AJ. This library is open for both members and none-members [fee payable] on Saturdays from 2.00pm. A full list of Co. Cork Church of Ireland parishes in the Michael leader Collection is printed in the *Irish Genealogist*, 1999 - the journal of the IGRS.

#### B. Roman Catholic:

Apart from Cork city, there are very few 18th century registers for Co. Cork. All the Baptisms and Marriage registers, up to 1880, are on microfilm at the National Library, Kildare St., Dublin 2. Episcopal permission is needed to consult the county Cork parishes that are in the diocese of Kerry - the Beara peninsula and the north-west portion of the county. However, the records of many of the parishes in these areas have been published by Dr. Albert O'Casey and Riobard O'Dwyer. The Mallow Heritage Centre has the computerised records from the diocese of Cloyne - the north and east of the county. Cork Ancestry is currently working on the records of the Cork city deaneries. Two of the Cork city parishes - Saints Peter & Paul and St. Finbarr's [South Parish] have computerised the Baptism and Marriage records.

A major restriction - especially for the earlier emigrants - is the dating of the baptism registers. The Cork City parishes - St. Mary's Cathedral [North Parish], Sts. Peter & Paul [Middle Parish] and St. Finbarr's [South Parish] - have Baptism and Marriage registers that begin mid-eighteenth century. The majority of Co. Cork registers begin in the 1820s, and two parishes - Castlehaven and Timoleague/Clogagh do not begin until 1842.

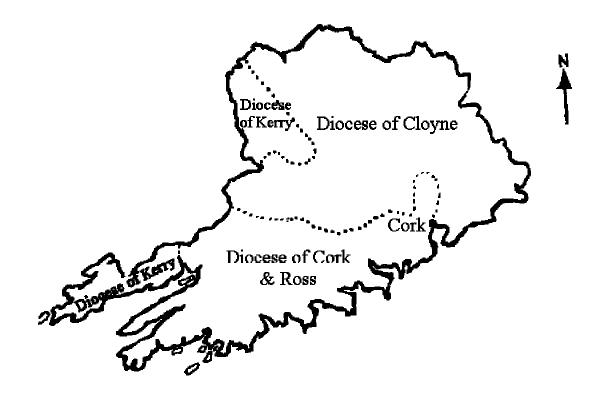


Fig 2: The Dioceses in County Cork

The Dioceses of County Cork

Diocese of Cloyne

Dioceses of Cork & Ross

Diocese of Kerry

showing year of earliest baptism

\*\*\*\*\*RC Parish maps in mail

#### Graveyards

The Cork city burial grounds of St. Finbarr's, Glasheen, and St. Joseph's in Ballyphehane have extensive burial records. However, knowledge of one family death date is necessary to access this information. Custodians are on duty during working hours. Several of the headstones in the country graveyards are recorded. Some, such as Cloyne are published, and most of this collection is available in

the County Library Local Studies Department. Other graveyards were transcribed by members of the Irish Genealogical Research Socity [IGRS], and these records are lodged in the Genealogical Office, Dublin. There is a partial list of Co. Cork graveyards in John Grenham's *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*.

#### **Vital Records**

Civil registration did not begin in Ireland for all Births and Deaths until 01 January 1864. Non-Catholic Marriages were recorded from 01 January 1845, and all Marriages by 1864. Legal records are based on territorial divisions known as Registrar's Districts. This approximates to the Poor Law Union of the nineteenth century. A group of these form a Superintendent Registrar's Area. Most counties have one Superintendent Registrar, but Cork has three offices - North, South and West. The BMD records are held in the specific area. Please telephone in advance of your arrival to make an appointment, as these offices are dealing with contemporary records, and need notice to provide research facilities.

The registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths was compulsory. However, there is evidence to indicate that as many as 20% of births were not registered in the early years of the system. There is often some weeks difference between the baptismal church entry and the civil records. One reason is that due to compulsory vaccination within twelve months, mothers did not register a child by the correct date so that the child would be older, and therefore stronger, for these injections. If your information is very reliable in both dating and location, postal applications for certificates [cost £5.50 IE] may be made to the relevant Superintendent Registrar's office.

#### Superintendant Registrar's Offices, Co. Cork:

NORTH: County Offices, Annabella, Mallow 022-21123 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 9.30am-12.30pm Fermoy, Kanturk, Mallow, Millstreet, Mitchelstown

MID & SOUTH EAST: 18 Liberty St., Cork. 021 275126 Monday - Friday 9.30am - 4.00pm Bandon, Cork, Kinsale, macroom, Midleton, Youghal It is vital to ring for an appointment for research at this office.

WEST: The Courthouse, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays: 9.30 - 12.30pm

Parters Could be a company of the program of the court of

Bantry, Castletown, Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Schull

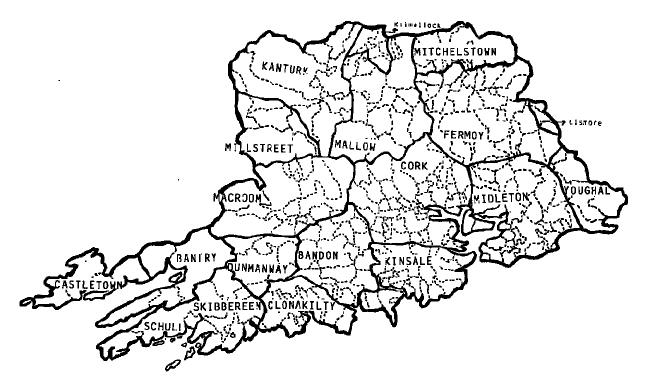


Fig 1: Registrars' Districts, Co. Cork.

Superintendant Registrars' Districts, Co. Cork

The national indexes are held at General Registrar's Office, Joyce House, Lombard St., Dublin 2. These may be searched, but the information given is limited - the year (and the quarter after 1878) and the name of the person and the Poor Law Union. The death indexes show the age at death. Each index entry shows a reference number, relating to the quarter of the year, the volume and page number, eg 3rd 5 304. A marriage record may be checked by finding both parties with the same reference number. A photocopy of each is obtainable from this office for £1.50 IE. It is not possible to look at the actual registers in Dublin. The post-1922 system for Northern Ireland differs.

However, microfilms of these national indexes are available world-wide by microfilms of the Genealogical Society of Utah, and it is possible to make postal requests to the GRO for photocopies. These are of the exact entry. However, for legal purposes such as Nationality/Passports the certificate is necessary.

Marriages are recorded in the churches and registrars' offices. Thus where there is only one volume for Births and Deaths in a Registrar's District, there will be several Marriage books. For example in Bandon town, there were at least five Marriage Records - Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian and Civil.

#### **County Cork Research Locations:**

Cork Archive Institute, Christ Church, South Main St., Cork (021) 277809

Cork City Central Library, Grand Parade, Cork (021) 277110

Cork County Library, Farranlea Road, Cork (021) 546499

Archives, Boole Library, National University Cork. (021) 903000

Cork LDS Family History Centre, Sarsfield Road, Cork (021) 897050

#### **Superintendents Registrars' Offices:**

West: The Courthouse, Skibbereen, Co. Cork. (028) 23140 Bantry, Castletown [Beara], Clonakilty, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Skull

North: County Offices, Annabella, Mallow, Co. Cork. (022) 21299 Fermoy, Kanturk, Mallow, Millstreet, Mitchelstown

South: 18 Liberty St., Cork (021) 275126 Bandon, Cork, Kinsale, Macroom, Midleton, Youghal

Cork Ancestry, c/o County Library, Farranlea Rd., Cork. (021) 346435

Mallow Heritage Centre, Bank Place, Mallow, Co. Cork. [Diocese of Cloyne records] (022) 21778

Saints Peter & Paul, Paul St., Cork: Mr. Frank Whelan (021) 276573

Saint Finbarr's [South Parish], Dunbar St., Cork: Mr. Joe Riley (021) 271551

#### Mahony Surname Distribution.

Having finished all possible research in the country of emigration, and having found a family group pattern for the ancestor, it is likely that one still does not know the location or rownland The next stage is to work out a Surname Distribution Analysis of the O Mahony locations in the country of origin. This is done using the mid-nineteenth century survey to establish a system of rates payments - the Griffith's Valuation, 1848 - 1864. Every house/land holding liable for the payments of rates was listed in every townland. Therefore this is the ONLY reliable guide in the nineteenth century for Surname Distribution, even if your ancestor left some generations earlier. Using the GV, one may plot the distribution of the surname throughout any county in Ireland. If a couple married in Ireland, both surnames should be noted. If both parties were not from the same parish they were not very far away. Griffith's Valuation is available world-wide on either microfiche or microfilm. Use either the Householders' Index prepared by the National Library staff or a reliable index, such as that published by All-Ireland Heritage. Please note that there are so many errors in the CD disc published a few years ago that its use results in a faulty analysis.

The Householders' Index locates each surname within the barony, a sub-division of a county. Further investigation shows the number of Mahony/O Mahony entries in each civil parish. From there it is possible to locate the actual entry in the townland. The information given in the Griffith's Valuation indicates the status and property-holding of each occupier, and thus provides genealogical clues, such as whether further research in the land and probate records is possible. As the majority of the Mahony ancestors were Roman Catholic, the next stage is to 'translate' the civil parish into the correct religious parish.

In the major urban areas, many families are not listed in Griffith's Valuation as the survey is that of ratepayers. So the number of Mahony/O'Mahony household listed in Cork city is very likely to be an underestimation.

There are maps for each entry in the Primary Valuation. The outlines of each land holding and the location of houses were traced on the Ordnance Survey 6" maps. Copies of these are now available from the Valuation Office, Irish Life Building, Abbey St., Dublin 1. Among the engineers' notebooks were the House, Field & Tenure books. These contain very interesting information about the ancestral method of living from the 1840s and are lodged in the National Archive, Dublin.

Once the land and houses had been surveyed it was necessary to keep these records updated so as name the person responsible for paying the rates. Thus from c. 1855/1860 Valuation Commissioners regularly visited and checked the properties. These Valuation Cancellation Books are in the Valuation Office, but as they have been filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, they are available world-wide. There are many genealogical clues in these records. For example, John Mahony being replaced by Mary Mahony suggests that John has died, and Mary is his widow. Therefore there are only a few years to search for John's death record. These books are particularly useful when there are several families of the same surname in one townland and they aid identification of the actual property.

Note that these volumes are based on Townland, District Electoral Division, and Poor Law Unions.

Written from 1855, and show the names of those responsible for paying the rates on property. Changes were recorded every two years after visits from the Valuation Commissioners. This is of great importance in showing who succeeded who in the various houses and land holdings. The year of emigration may be presumed if a occupier disappears from the listing. If succeeded by a family member [same surname], it is likely that the previous Occupier's death occurred during the preceding two years. A change of surname might be that of a son-in-law, rather that the family moving somewhere else or emigrating. Always check the far RHS column for the years of the changes and any notes made by the Commissioners. A change of surname does not mean that the family has left the property; it could be that a son-in-law's name is now shown.

### **Boundary Changes**

Be aware of the changes in boundaries during the nineteenth century. The townland is the smallest unit. From medieval times, a group of townlands formed a parish, initially the Christian parish, then due to the link of the Church of Ireland with rudimentary local government systems, this area became the civil parish - and all the records to c. 1860 were produced on this basis. However, when the Roman Catholic church was established from the mid-eighteenth century, the parishes were centred on the settlements that had developed in the previous centuries. An excellent example of this Dunmanway. The ancient graveyard of Fanlobbus is some miles to the east of the modern town.

The Tithe Applotment Books [TAB] of the 1820s and 1830s were listed according to the civil parish. The General Valuation of Rateable Property in Ireland, 1848 - 1864, was surveyed by the county, barony, civil parish and townland. This was also true if a settlement, town or village, had developed over the centuries. For example, the town of Bandon in Co. Cork was built across two civil parishes - Ballymodan south of the river and Kilbrogan north of the river Bandon. The valuation for this town is in three sections - Cloughmacsimon, Ballymodan civil parish and Coolfadda and Knockbrogan in Kilbrogan civil parish.

However, in the 1830s another civil boundary was introduced - the Poor Law Union. This consisted of a town, somewhere in the centre, and the countryside around. The PLU was divided into District Electoral Divisions, establishing the principle of some elected members of the Board of Guardians who would be responsible for the rate collection and the poor of the DED. Thus the non-Catholic marriages were registered from 1845 according to this new boundary system, a group of District Electoral Divisions being united into a Registrar's District. This system was continued in 1864 with the registration of births and deaths and prevails to the present time. Changes in local government in 1899 meant the abolition of the Poor Law Union, and the function of the Board of Guardians was assumed by the county council. A Superintendent Registrar was appointed for Births, Marriages and Deaths.

Thus, as the Valuation Cancellation Books came to be written, c. 1859, the new boundaries were used. The townland remained the same, but a group of townlands now was called a District Electoral Division. Access to these cancellation records is by DED. These divisions are still in use today, and another function now are the Electoral Registers.

#### Search for All Forms of Surname Spelling and Variations

Both the introduction to *The Surnames of Ireland* by Edward MacLysaght and the chapters on Irish surnames in *Special Report on Surnames in Ireland* by Sir Robert Matheson are clear statements of the complexity of Irish surnames. This is particularly true of the Mahony surname. Whilst spelling variations are not as complicated as those of other West Cork surnames, the complexities arises with the use of secondary surnames to distinguish one Mahony family from another in the same locality. The secondary surnames can be descriptive or topographical. Pre-Famine public records show the secondary surname added to the family name, eg Mahony Maol, but in the latter part of the 19th century, they may appear only in the church registers. Very often the secondary surname would replace the primary surname, eg Bawn, instead of Mahony Roe. The major source for identifying the various local secondary surnames is the Schools Collection, a folklore program of the 1930s now at the Department of Irish Folklore, National University of Ireland, Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4. These collection was national school based, so searching begins with the name of the school. There is a set of these microfilms in the Cork County Library.

Examples of O Mahony secondary names are: Ban, Baid, Meirgeach, Scimillihane, Keane & Kearney [all found in the RC parish of Barryroe], Drohid, Feigh, Glacy & Kenoe [Mizen Peninsula]. Canniffe are also Mahonys, being descended from the black-haired Cian - Ciam Dubh. The article by Padriag Ó Mathúna "Forms of The Name" in *The O Mahony Journal*, No. 14, 1990, pages 23 - 25. discusses several variations such as Mahon, Mathews, White [from Ó Mathúna Bán] and Kearney from Ó Mathúna Ceithearnaigh.

# ON THE WEB AT <a href="http://www.tommahony.com/genealogy/histories.htm">http://www.tommahony.com/genealogy/histories.htm</a> ARE THE FOLLOWING BOOKS AND ARTICLES:

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ALSO ON THIS WEBSITE: The O'Mahony Journal Table of Contents

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History Ireland

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Studea Hibernia

Studies

The O Mahony Journal, 1973 in progress

Journals & Publications of the many county and local Historical and Archaeological societies.

Federation of Local History Societies

Ulster Federation for Local Studies

#### Some Myths of Irish Family Research

- \* All my ancestors came over in the Great Famine
- \* I did all my genealogy on the Internet
- \* We are Irish, not Scottish, because we spell the surname with Mac
- \* The LDS have all the Irish records, so I do not need to go to Ireland
- \* All the Irish records were burnt
- \* All I know is the date of the emigrant ancestor's baptism

# GENEALOGICAL ADDRESSES, IRELAND

National Archives, Bishop St., Dublin, 8.	Public Record Office of N. Ireland 66 Balmoral Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6NY.	Maynooth College Library, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
Genealogical Office 2 Kildare St., Dublin, 2.	Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegal Square North, Belfast, BT1 5GD.	Trinity College Library, College St., Dublin, 2.
National Library of Ireland, Kildare St., Dublin, 2.	Registrar General of N. Ireland, Oxford House, Chichester St., Belfast.	University College Library, Galway.
General Registrar's Office, Joyce House, 8-11 Lombard St., Dublin, 2.	Presbyterian Historical Society, Church House, Fisherwick Place, Belfast, BT1 69W.	Boole Library, University College, Cork.
Govt. Publications Sales Office, Molesworth St., Dublin, 2.	Wesley Historical Society, Aldersgate House, 9-11 University Rd., Belfast.	Limerick Archives, The Granary, Limerick.
Department of Folklore, University College, Belfield, Dublin, 4.	Baptist Union of Ireland, 117 Lisburn Road, Belfast.	Valuation Office, Irish Life Building, Abbey St., Dublin, 1.
Ordnance Survey (Maps), Phoenix Park, Dublin,8.	Irish Jewish Museum, Walworth Road, Portobello,	Cork LDS Family History Centre Sarsfield Rd. Cork.
Marsh's Library, St. Patrick's Close, Dublin, 8.	Irish Huguenot Society, 41, Evora Crescent, Howth, Co. Dublin.	Dublin LDS Family History Centre, The Willows, Glasnevin, Dublin, 7
Gilbert Library, 138-141 Pearse St., Dublin, 2	Society of Friends Library, Swanbrook House, Morehampton Rd., Dublin, 4.	Belfast LDS F.H.Centre, 401 Holywood Rd., Belfast.
Royal Irish Academy 19 Dawson St., Dublin, 2.	Representative Church Body Library, Braemor Park, Rathgar, Dublin, 14.	Irish Family History Society, P.O. Box 36, Naas, Co. Kildare.
Registry of Deeds, King's Inns, Henrietta St., Dublin, 7.	The Palatine Society of Ireland, c/o Dr. Patrick O Connor, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.	Irish Genealogical Research Soc., 6 Eaton Brae, Orwell Rd., Dublin,14.
Central Catholic Library, 74 Merrion Sq., Dublin, 2.	North of Ireland F.H.S., Teachers' Centre, Q.U.B., Upper Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NT.	Cork Family History, Church Square, Kinsale, Co. Cork.
Ulster Historical Foundation 12 College Square East, Belfast, BTI 6DD.		

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