Irish Immigration Handout

PART I. Know Your History

In 1600s: 50,000-100,000 Irish immigrated to US (75% Catholic).

In 1700s: Scots-Irish, most predominant group immigrating, some 200,000 people. Scots-Irish were Scotsmen who settled in Ulster (Northern Ireland) in 1600s, but then clashed with their Irish Catholic neighbors. Went on to settle in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

In 1800s: Irish Potato Famine big cause for migration. 1845-1852 disease on potato crop caused 1 million deaths. Over 1 million Irish left the country to escape starvation and poverty. In 1840s large migration into **Canada** since it was British Empire so less immigration restrictions. In 1847 British government put more restrictions, making more Irish immigrate to US.

In 1900s: Most Irish immigrating in 1900s came because of changing economy in Ireland and the US's economic stability with high-paying jobs. An Immigration Act placed in 1921 to severely limit emigration from Ireland. Note: Ireland divided into Northern and Southern Ireland in 1920; before then all Ireland was part of the United Kingdom.

Why is it important to know history? **Because when your ancestor immigrated determines the kinds of records you'll be looking at;** many records that exist in the 1900s didn't exist in the 1700s. Also, historical context will help you understand your ancestor's choices in US:

- During Famine the head of household would immigrate first, then send for family when he made enough money in US.
- An Irish immigrant escaping the Famine may have come to the US through Canada.
- After Ireland was divided into Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the 1920s, an Irish immigrant will clarify which part of Ireland he came from in US documents (the Republic of Ireland was also called the "Irish Free State").

PART II. Know what to Look For

Roadblock: Irish records are scarce! Poverty, government administration, and disasters- like the 1920s fire- have severely limited the amount of records available. Therefore you must learn as much as possible about your ancestor in **US records** first, before trying to look for them in Ireland!

Key information to look for in U.S. records:

- The ancestral immigrant's religion (Catholic or Protestant)
- The ancestral immigrant's county of origin in Ireland (County Kerry, County Meath, etc.)

- The ancestral immigrant's year of birth (allow a 5 year range while searching)
- Names of the immigrant's family members. Preferably parent names, but try to construct the immigrant's family as much as possible in U.S. records.

Records that will give you this information and where to find these records:

U.S. Federal Census
- Ancestry.com
- Familysearch.org

Vital Records (birth, marriage, death)
- Ancestry.com
- Familysearch.org
- Family History Library
- State or County Recorder's Office where the birth/marriage/death took place

Newspapers (i.e. obituaries)
- Ancestry.com
- Newspapersarchive.com
- Genealogybank.com
- Newspapers.com
- The public library local to where your ancestor lived

Immigration Records (passenger lists and naturalization records)
- Ancestry.com
- Familysearch.org
- Ellisisland.org
- Family History Library

Church Records (baptisms, marriages, burials)
- Family History Library
- The parish church (if you know what church your ancestor married or was buried at)

Cemetery Records
- Findagrave.com
- The cemetery (if you know what cemetery your ancestor was buried in (Catholic immigrants were often buried in Catholic cemeteries).

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For the GFO Irish SIG meeting of 16 Aug 2023