

# Local History Report

March 2024

(Gavin Schmitt)

## General Housekeeping



As of this writing, I've presented two of the four "Founders Series" talks I have set up this spring. The February talk on Indian Agent George Boyd was one of our better-attended history programs, and this is great because I'm so proud of the work that went into it. This series combines previously published material with "new" sources from state and national archives. The series topics were chosen to avoid reliance on microfilm newspapers, because I did not know which reels would be missing each month. Also, these serve as something of a "rough draft" for a long-term project to get Kaukauna recognized as a key and central location in Wisconsin's founding.

Speaking of microfilm reels, by the time you read this the newspaper reels should be scanned and digitized from 1880-1965. We are authorized to continue right up through the newest reel (I believe roughly 2017). We have internal access to the scans (as opposed to public access) and I can confirm they look great. Some images are less than perfect because of scratched or poorly focused source material, but the third party doing the scanning has enhanced the images to their fullest. Within one week, I utilized the new link multiple times – which freed up time for other activities.

## RootsTech 2024

On February 29-March 1, I attended eight sessions of RootsTech, an annual genealogy conference sponsored by FamilySearch, the world's greatest family history website. I attended virtually, which had dozens of free sessions, so this continuing education opportunity was achieved at no cost beyond regular hours.

Topics I sat in on were German genealogy (two sessions), Irish Genealogy (two sessions), Quebecois genealogy, Dutch genealogy, Jewish genealogy, and an overview of genetic genealogy as it celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1999-2024). The quality of each session varied depending on the quality of the presenter, but I learned things in each one that can be used to assist patrons.

In addition to assisting patrons directly, I've created handouts to help them in self-guided research. See the next page for an example (I'll update it with new things soon.) Assorted "fun facts" for you to enjoy, and for me to fill this page:

- Prior to 1941, Germans used a kind of handwriting called *Kurrentschrift*. People born after that time cannot read it without being specifically taught!
- Irish women are notoriously hard to find. In addition to already scarce records, Irish women could not vote or hold property before 1870. Further, the Irish constitution *to this day* strongly encourages women to avoid employment outside the home.
- There are two distinct groups of "French-Canadians" – the Quebecois and Acadians. They have wide variations in language, culture, etc. The French who settled in Wisconsin are overwhelmingly Quebecois.
- No such country as "Germany" existed prior to 1871. Germany was formed from a fusion of 39 separate states. If your ancestor lists their birthplace as "Germany," this does not tell you very much about them.
- The Dutch have no middle names. They may have multiple first names, but no middle name. If a man is named John Henry but goes by Henry, he is not using his middle name – both John and Henry are acceptable first names.
- If you hit a brick wall, try the FAN method – searching friends, associates and neighbors. Immigrants often came in groups, so knowing where one family came from can lead you to another... never give up!

## Irish Genealogy 101

Revised 3/23/2022

**The Bad News:** A fire destroyed many wills, legal court records, Church of Ireland parish records and national censuses from 1821 to 1851. This could potentially create a large gap in what is available, especially for those whose ancestors came to America in the 1840s.

**The Good News:** Many other things remain, and those gaps can be filled in with supplemental material. Things to try:

1. **Ancestry.com.** Ancestry is free with your library card, though not all the records are available that a paid subscription will get you. If you only need select records, keep your eyes open for trial memberships and don't forget to cancel after! Ancestry is home to: Royal Irish Constabulary records (1816-1921) and the browsable Famine Relief Commission papers (1844-1847). Perhaps best of all, an indexed collection of more than 700,000 names in Roman Catholic parish registers: baptism, marriage, burial and very unusually, confirmations from 73 parishes in the counties of Armagh, Carlow, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Laois, Limerick, Londonderry, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Sligo, Tipperary, Westmeath and Wicklow. The earliest records date from 1763.
2. **FamilySearch.org.** FamilySearch is free, and they have an agreement with the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) that allows duplication of nearly all the NAI's records except the 1901 and 1911 censuses. Indexes to Landed Estate Court Records 1850-1885 and Irish Prison Registers 1790-1924 are online. Other potentially useful collections are Ireland Births and Baptisms, 1620-1881 and Ireland Marriages, 1619-1898 which, together, hold just under 6 million records. Some of these are only INDEXES and you will have to request the actual image from an LDS Center, but more documents are going online daily!
3. **Findmypast.com.** This is a paid site, but does have a large collection of Irish records, including the Poverty Relief Loans, 1821-1874 and 70+ newspapers going back to the 1700s.
4. **General Register Office of Northern Ireland.** This free site features an online database of civil registration records for counties Antrim, Armagh, Down, Londonderry, Fermanagh and Tyrone. Its birth records date from 1864, marriages from 1845, and deaths from 1864 to 50 years ago.

5. **JohnGrenham.com.** John Grenham's book on Irish genealogy is considered the best, and this is his website. It has no records, but does offer plenty of free advice on what steps to take. The Research Wizard tool analyses the details of what you already know about an ancestor and produces specific recommendations for further research.
6. **IrishGenealogy.ie.** This free database holds nearly 3 million transcriptions of pre-20th century church records of baptisms, marriages and burials for selected Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic parishes in counties Kerry, Cork and Carlow and the city of Dublin, plus one Presbyterian register for Lucan in County Dublin. Much of this is also available through FamilySearch.
7. **<https://genealogy.nationalarchives.ie/> (National Archives of Ireland).** This site is FREE and has Census of Ireland (1901, 1911), Census Search Forms (1841–51), Tithe Applotment Books, (1823–37), Soldiers' Wills (1914–1918), Calendars of Wills and Administrations (1858–1922), Prerogative and diocesan copies of some wills and indexes to others (1596–1858), Diocesan and Prerogative Marriage License Bonds Indexes (1623–1866), Catholic qualification & convert rolls (1700–1845), Valuation Office house, field, tenure and quarto books (1824–1856), Shipping agreements and crew lists (1863–1921), Will Registers (1858–1900).
8. **<http://www.nli.ie/> (National Library of Ireland).** This free site has a collection of Ireland's Roman Catholic parish registers dating from the 1740s to the 1880s. These registers cover 1,091 parishes and consist primarily of baptismal and marriage records.
9. **Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).** The site contains Will Calendars (1858–1965), Street Directories (1819–1900), the Ulster Covenant (1912), Freeholders Records (pre-1840), and the Londonderry Corporation Records (minutes, 1673–1901) and Valuation Revision Books (1864–1933). A Name Search database allows you to search a number of indexes to pre-1858 wills, surviving fragments of the 1740 and 1766 religious censuses, 1775 dissenters' petitions and coroners' inquest papers from 1872 to 1920.