Your Family Tree: 8

LANDED ESTATE RECORDS

During the 18th and 19th centuries the majority of the Irish population lived on large estates. The administration of these estates produced a large quantity of records, including maps, rentals, account books, etc. Landed estate records, particularly the rent rolls, rentals and maps listing the tenants on the estate, are a useful source of genealogical information. They may in fact be the only source available for the period before 1830. Although they rarely record information on under-tenants and cottiers, the records of the landed estates are of great importance as a result of the destruction of the 19th century census returns.

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) holds the largest collection of estate records in Northern Ireland. Some estates are better documented than others. In general, it can be said that the larger the estate the more likely it is that extensive and continuous records have survived.

Some of the landed estate archives to be found in PRONI relate to estates that are solely in what is now the Republic of Ireland. These include the extensive Kenmare estate in Co Kerry and many of the larger estates in Co Monaghan. Other estate records in PRONI for property in the Republic of Ireland are there because many Ulster landlords also had property outside of the present six counties of Northern Ireland.

If you do not know the name of the local landlord in a particular area you can normally find it by looking at the printed Griffith's Valuation Books for 1860, which are available on the shelves in the Search Room. The landlord's name normally appears in the column headed 'lessor'. When the name of the landlord has been identified the references to any records held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland can be located by:

1. Consulting the Guide to Landed Estate Records, which is available on the Search Room shelves. Estate names are arranged alphabetically within county, with a description of the records together with the relevant reference numbers.

2. Checking the Prominent Persons Index in the Public Search Room under the landlord's name; this can also be viewed on the PRONI website.

The rentals and rent rolls are often the earliest estate records to use, but they are not the only type of record in landed archives, which are useful for genealogical purposes. Leases, wages and account books and often maps, all contain names of tenants occupying land on an estate or of people working on or connected with the estate in some way.

In general the best order in which to consult the different types of estate records for genealogical searching is:

1. rentals/rent rolls: these normally list the tenants, townland by townland and will record the acreage of their holdings and sometimes details of arrears;

2. leases: give the tenant's name and often those of some of his children, with their ages where a tenant got a lease for 3 lives;

3. lease books; these will summarise details of the leases, often recording if the persons mentioned in leases for 3 lives are still alive or if they have left the estate;

4. rent ledgers: show how much and when each tenant paid his rent;

5. maps: these are usually on a large scale and plot tenants' holdings;

6. wages books: record the names of estate labourers, household servants and gardeners who may not appear as tenants;

7. account books: often record the names of persons supplying goods and services;

8. land agents' note-books: sometimes a page is devoted to a tenant and his family;

9. Militia, yeomanry and muster records can often be found in landed estate archives. They consist of lists of men liable for service in local defence forces.