

Your Family Tree Series: 5



Census Records: Nineteenth Century

The first properly organised census in Ireland commenced in 1821, and, thereafter, with some exceptions, a census was taken every ten years. Unfortunately, most of the 1831-1891 returns were either pulped into waste paper during the First World War or were destroyed later during the Irish Civil War. However, returns for a small number of parishes have survived:

1821

This census was organised by townland, civil parish, barony and county and took place on 28th May 1821. Almost all the original returns were destroyed in 1922, with only a few surviving for Cos Fermanagh and Cavan (PRONI Reference **MIC5A**).

1831

Once again this census was organised by townland, civil parish, barony and county. It only records the name of the owner/occupier of the property, the townland or street, the number of the house, the number of persons in the family (and whether male or female) the number of servants in the house (and whether male or female), the total number of people in the house and the numbers of each denominations (whether Established Church, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian or other). Very little of this census survives, with most of the remaining fragments relating to Co. Londonderry:

MIC5A/5 and 6
MIC5A/6 and 7
MIC5A/8A-B
MIC5A/9A

Barony of Coleraine;
City of Londonderry;
Barony of Loughlinsholin;
Barony of Tirkeeran.

1841

The government census, taken on 6 June 1841, followed the same general pattern as that of 1831 except that the returns were compiled by the householders themselves rather than government enumerators and the name of every person in the household is recorded. Unfortunately, no part of the census for Northern Ireland

has survived but some returns for Co. Cavan did survive (PRONI Reference **MIC5A/9B**). However, the 1841 census was the earliest to be of use when the Old Age Pensions were introduced in the early twentieth century. Proof of age was accepted if the claimant could be identified in the 1841 or 1851 census. The resultant searches in the 1841 and 1851 census are to be found in the Old Age Pension claim forms which have survived (PRONI Reference **T550**). There are also some individual returns (see PRONI Reference **MIC15A**).

1851

Taken on 30 March 1851, this government census added a column for religious affiliation. Most of the surviving returns relate to Cos Antrim and Fermanagh (see PRONI Reference **MIC5A/10-26**). There are also some surviving returns for Cromac Ward in Belfast that are held in the National Archives, Dublin but a microfilm copy is available in PRONI (PRONI Reference **MIC689**). The census returns for 1851 were also used for Old Age Pension claims (see comments above on 1841 census). There are also some individual census returns (see PRONI Reference **MIC15A**).

1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891

The census records for 1861 to 1891 were destroyed by order of the government during the First World War. Nothing survives for the Northern Ireland area. See *'Your Family Tree' Leaflet: 6 - Census Substitutes*.

Indexes

An index to the census returns for 1841 and 1851 that appear in the Old Age Pension claim forms (**T550**) is available on microfiche (see PRONI Reference **MF9/1-15**). The final version of this index is still being worked on.

