

Your Family Tree Series: 17



Registry of Deeds, Dublin

The Registry of Deeds, Dublin, is one of the most valuable sources of ancestral information for the eighteenth century particularly as many original wills were destroyed in the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922. The information contained in this archive relates not only to the wealthier landlords but also can include details of the most humble of tenants. More than half a million registered deeds were deposited up to 1832. However, this is probably only a small percentage of the land transactions which took place as during the early years registration was voluntary.

The Irish Registry of Deeds was founded in 1708. One of its main functions was to ensure the enforcement of legislation which prevented Catholics from buying or taking long leases on land. Up until the 1780s, Catholics could not invest in mortgages to take leases on land for a longer period than 31 years.

A very wide range of documents was registered since Irish registration was not confined to the major categories of deeds - leases, mortgages, conveyances and annuities, rents, rights of way, wills, dissolution of partnerships etc. The Irish memorials are much more detailed than those in England and usually comprise a complete copy or a fairly full abstract of a document. As a source the registry is invaluable, particularly for the eighteenth century, and has great interest for genealogists and for Irish economic and social historians.

When a document was brought to the Registry of Deeds, a written report of it was made. This was usually a complete copy or a very full abstract. These written records were kept in the Registry of Deeds as memorials. Copies of the memorials were then made and bound in date order in volumes known as Transcript Books. These are available on microfilm (1,914 reels) from 1708-1929, with only a few gaps, under the PRONI Reference **MIC311**.

There are 2 main series of indexes to the Transcript and Abstract Books:

- (a) **The Names Index of grantors**
- (b) **The Lands Index**

The Names Index

The names index can be found under the PRONI Reference **MIC7** which is an index to the years 1708-1929 and a consolidated index for the years 1905-24.

The names index, beginning in 1708, is arranged alphabetically by grantor, in periods of years. Up to 1832 it records the surnames of the grantors, the surname of the grantees (but there is no index of grantees), and the reference to the Transcripts Books (the volume number, page number and the number of the memorial). There is no description of the lands nor is the exact date of the deed given. After 1832, the townland or street, the county, city or town, and the barony or parish in which the lands are situated are recorded, as is the year of registration. From 1833 therefore, the details to be extracted to find the relevant information in the Transcript books are: the year of registration; the number of the file and volumes of the Transcript book; the number of the memorial; and the page of the Transcript book.

The Lands Index

The lands index can be found under **MIC7**, covering the years 1708-1929. It is arranged under townlands by barony and county. Not all the deeds relating to a particular townland will be found together e.g. deeds for Galtrim will be found in various places amongst the list of townlands beginning with 'G'. Town property is indexed under the towns in the County volumes. The exceptions are the cities and Corporation towns which are found in separate volumes in the county series. A list of the Corporation towns included in this series is found at the end of **MIC7** list. Houses in a city or town are searched for under their street name and again, deeds for a given street will not be found together e.g. deeds for Agnes Street, will be found in various places amongst streets beginning with 'A'.

