



Local History: 6

SOLICITORS' ARCHIVES



Solicitors' records are an invaluable source of local history comprising title deeds, testamentary papers, inventories, valuations, etc. Since its foundation the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has been collecting papers from solicitors offices in all parts of the Province. Not only do such collections provide numerous copies of destroyed Irish public records but they provide one of the larger quarries of material for the economic historian.

PRONI holds records of more than one hundred and forty Northern Ireland solicitor's practices. These include the records of L'Estrange & Brett, Belfast, which is the most important in the east of the Province. The variety of the material is staggering: linen manufacturers, distillers, chemical works, potato sales during the Great Famine, Belfast Improvement Schemes, the fortunes of the Belfast Philharmonic Society are just a few. **PRONI Ref D1905**

The records of Carleton, Atkinson & Sloan, Portadown, include the title deeds, legal papers, Irish Land Commission records, etc, relating to the Wakefield and Richardson families and their estates at Moyallen and Gilford, Co. Down and in the Lurgan and Portadown area, c.1780-c.1914. There are also letters and papers concerning a dispute over the Unionist nomination for the constituency of North Armagh, 1885. **PRONI Ref D1252**

The archive of Wilson & Simms, Strabane, has a similar importance west of the Bann. Consisting of more than 20,000 documents these include a number of political papers that reflect the firm's activities as election agents for Unionist candidates in the North Tyrone constituency, c.1885-1920, and which include printed election addresses, circular letters and accounts. **PRONI Ref D2298**

Solicitors' records fall into two broad types: those of the administration of a solicitor's office and then clients' papers. The clients' papers are of particular interest to genealogists and local historians as they include records of prominent families, landowners and estates – title deeds, testamentary papers, leases, rentals, maps and correspondence which bring together a corpus of information on a particular family or area