

# The Essential Guide to British & Irish Family History

Week /03

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*Your First American Ancestor pt.2*





## WEEK 03 / Your First American Ancestor *pt.2*

Welcome to the third instalment of your introduction to Findmypast. In this guide, we will be again looking at how you can use Findmypast and other resources to trace your first immigrant ancestor, and then use that knowledge to take your research across the Atlantic to Britain or Ireland. Given the complicated historical relationship between Britain and Ireland, much of this will apply to both countries, while some will apply to Britain only.

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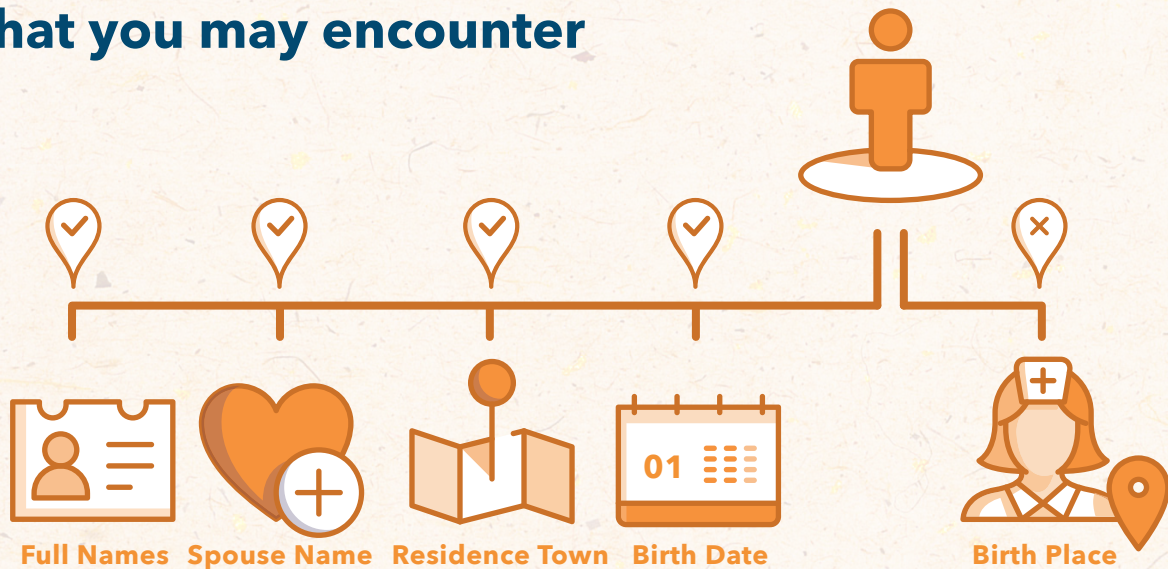
If you have any questions about anything in this guide, please just let us know on **Facebook** or **Twitter** and we'll help to clear things up.



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## PROBLEMS that you may encounter



**As outlined in pt.1, one of the most common problems is being unable to find your immigrant ancestor's birthplace. While this certainly can be a tricky obstacle to overcome, it's not impossible.**

There are ways to build theories and test them for accuracy to find your ancestor's original region. As long as you have some kind of lead, it's still possible to make this discovery using circumstantial evidence.

For instance, knowing the religious denomination and period of immigration of your ancestor could provide a vital clue: Most colonial immigrants came in groups, usually from very specific regions of England and Ireland. These groups settled in particular locations because of the way the colony itself was organized or designed, so even if you don't know their branch of religion, you may be able to infer that from the colonies that they chose as their new home.

In addition, not every immigrant stayed. While estimates differ on how many people travelled back home, it was far from uncommon and you may encounter multiple trips across the Atlantic. It's important to remember this possible solution to a mystery - realizing your ancestor went back home will greatly affect the areas and time periods of your search.

## STARTING TO SEARCH IN another country

**Once you're armed with the necessary information outlined above, you can begin to search for your immigrant ancestor in foreign records.**

The process is similar to the one you've already used in your US research, but the sources are a little different.

The good news (at least in the case of Britain, this does not apply to Ireland where many records were destroyed in the 1920s) is that record coverage is very strong in relation to other countries. The United Kingdom has census records available for England, Scotland and Wales dating back to 1841, and over 500 million parish records cover several centuries earlier, dating back to 1538.

## TRAVEL AND IMMIGRATION records

**If your ancestor bought a ticket to travel to North America, they're in a record somewhere. At Findmypast, we have millions of travel and immigration records that can help you to trace the individual journeys your ancestors made across the pond.**

Passenger lists vary in the information that they display. Our collection of passenger lists leaving the UK 1890-1960 will generally show **destination, port of origin, age, class, name** and whether it was their **intent to stay at their destination or return home** again.

One of our oldest – and really most wonderful to look at – record sets is **Britain, Registers of Licenses to Pass Beyond the Seas 1573-1677**. In those days, a license was needed to travel by sea, and this record set contains registers of these licenses. This rather lovely record set can tell you:



**First & second name(s)**



**Year of Birth**



**Name of Ship**



**Age**



**Departure Date**



**Destination**



**Residence**  
*(Town & County)*



**Departure Port**



**Regional Destination**



**Year of Departure**



**Archive Reference**



**Year Range**



**Description**



**Archive**



**Folio**

Common destinations included Maryland, Virginia, Barbados, St Christopher's, Austria, Holland, and Scotland.



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## Passenger Lists

### New York Passenger Lists and Arrivals

This massive collection of 62 million records covers 1820-1957, the height of immigration through Castle Gardens and Ellis Island in New York. If your family immigrated to America during that period, these records present a fantastic opportunity to find them.

### Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Passenger Lists 1800-1948

Over 3.3 million records that can help you to discover more about your ancestors who arrived in Philadelphia. These records tell you names, ages, citizenship, birth country, arrival year, arrival city and more. The beauty of arrival records is that they're not as limited by departure point as departure records, so these records contain details of people from all over the world.

### Boston Passenger Lists - 1846-1851

Taken from the height of the Great Famine in Ireland, this collection of over 90,000 records is part of the history of the Irish in Boston. A record of people fleeing devastation in search of a new life abroad, this could be essential to understanding your Irish family history. Similarly, our Baltimore Passenger Lists - 1846-1851 are a part of the same story.

## Maryland, Baltimore Passenger Lists 1820-1957

This record set includes transcripts and images for over 1.5 million records, with details of those who came to Baltimore over a 137 year period. Discover names, places of origin, ages, dates of arrival and more.

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**We hope this guide has helped to offer some insight into getting the most out of your research with Findmypast.**

Next week, we'll be covering the basics of **British genealogy**, and showing you how you can take your family's story farther.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the content in this guide, please do let us know over on **Facebook** or **Twitter**.



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