

# Some of my ancestors were Irish

By  
James C. Retson  
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## Foreword

It is anticipated that this file will become a summary file for the history, geography and general information file on Ireland the home of some of our ancestors.

## Introduction

Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic. It is separated from Great Britain to its east by the North Channel, the Irish Sea, and St George's Channel. Geopolitically, Ireland is divided between the Republic of Ireland (officially named Ireland), which covers five-sixths of the island, and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. As of 2016, 4.8 million live in the Republic of Ireland, and 1.8 million live in Northern Ireland. These two political divisions were created by the Government of Ireland Act (1920). The largest Protestant organization in Northern Ireland is the Orange Order which today has over 100,000.

## History Of Ireland

The island was Christianised from the 5th century onward. Following the 12th century Anglo-Norman invasion, England claimed sovereignty which it extended over the whole island by the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17th century. In the 1690s, a system of Protestant English rule was designed to materially disadvantage the Catholic majority and Protestant dissenters, and was extended during the 18th century. With the Acts of Union in 1801, Ireland became a part of the United Kingdom. A war of independence in the early 20th century was followed by the

partition of the island, creating the Irish Free State, which became increasingly sovereign over the following decades, and Northern Ireland, which remained a part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland saw much civil unrest from the late 1960s until the 1990s. This subsided following a political agreement in 1998. In 1973 the Republic of Ireland joined the European Economic Community while the United Kingdom, and Northern Ireland, as part of it, did the same. Irish culture has had a significant influence on other cultures, especially in the field of literature.

### Nine Years war 1593 to 1603 ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine\\_Years%27\\_War\\_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Years%27_War_(Ireland)))



The O'Neill rebellion of 1594 led to the emigration of Hugh O'Neil and the major families of Ulster, the confiscation of their lands and in 1609 the English plantation of Ulster by "adventurers".

### Penal Law Period 1660-1780

From our ancestors point of view, we can start the history from about the mid 1600s. With the exception of the Cliffords from County Cork, our ancestors were from Northern Ireland and came to the island some time during the 1600s from either England or Scotland.

Among the English adventurers given land in Armagh at this time included the families of Acheson who might have been our ancestors. The earliest Atkinson, Francis Atkinson was found to date was located in the townland of Money in the civil Parish of Kilmore in the County of Armagh. They may have come from England although the exact origin is as yet uncertain. This is where his John Atkinson was born in 1869. William Atkinson and wife and some children emigrated to Canada about 1840.

Ireland's administrative divisions in Ireland from largest to smallest are province, county, barony, parish and the smallest division townland. There were 4 provinces, 32 counties and more than 60,000 townlands. Baronies are today an obsolete division but play a role in historical genealogical searches. The parish system in Ireland is made up of civil and ecclesiastical parishes.

The Archibalds, Presbyterians, probably originally from Scotland settled in Londonderry. They like the Catholics were constrained by the Anglicans and left Ireland in 1719 or 1720 and arrived in America and shortly after arriving settled in New Hampshire close to the Massachusetts border.

Armagh, the County of the Atkinsons is one of the thirty-two counties of Ireland and one of the six counties of Northern Ireland. The town of Armagh was the ancient seat of the Kings of Ulster and the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland for some 1500. The Penal Laws passed following the accession of the Protestant King William restricted the civil and religious rights of Catholics and Presbyterians. Many Ulster Presbyterians ( Scots-Irish or Ulster

Scots) emigrated to North America during the 1700s. The County was relatively less affected by the Great Famine of 1845 – 47 yet still closed to about 15 percent between 1841 and 1851.

In the 1780s, County Armagh was the most populous county in Ireland and the centre of its linen industry. Its population was equally split between Protestants, who were dominant north of the county, and Catholics, who were dominant in the south. Sectarian tensions had been increasing throughout the decade and were exacerbated by the relaxing of some of the Penal Laws, failure to enforce others, and the entry of Catholics into the linen industry at a time when land was scarce, and wages were decreasing due to pressure from the mechanised cotton industry. This led to fierce competition to rent patches of land near markets.

By 1784, sectarian fighting had broken out between gangs of Protestants and Catholics. The Protestants re-organised themselves as the Peep o' Day Boys, with the Catholics forming the Defenders. The next decade would see an escalation in the violence between the two and the local population as homes were raided and wrecked. The Diamond, which was a predominantly Protestant area, is a minor crossroads in County Armagh, lying almost half-way between Loughgall and Portadown. For several days groups from both sides had been arriving at the crossroads. The Defenders had made their base on Faughart Hill in the townland of Tullymore, less than a quarter of a mile south-west of The Diamond. The Peep o' Day Boys, which historian Connolly states were of the "Orange Boys" faction, encamped on a hill in the townland of Grange More to the north-east. Word of a planned confrontation appears to have been widespread well before it took place, even being gossiped about by militiamen stationed Dublin and Westport. Catholic Bernard Coile, from Lurgan, County Armagh, who had rose to become a merchant in the linen industry, called upon the local two parishes to agree to a non-aggression pact. This appears to have succeeded in regard to the Lurgan area, with no Lurgan men amongst the combatants. There would also seem to have been adequate time for preparations, with one County Tyrone militia-man sending home a guinea to purchase a musket for the Defenders, and Peep o' Day Boys scouring Moy, County Tyrone for gunpowder.

On Friday 18 September 1795, a local magistrate, Captain Joseph Atkinson, who lived about a mile north of The Diamond, called for a peace conference between four Protestant landowners and three Catholic priests. A priest accompanying the Defenders persuaded them to seek a truce after a group called the "Bleary Boys" came from County Down to reinforce the Peep o' Day Boys. The landowners summoned by Atkinson were Robert Camden Cope, of the grand Loughgall Manor, MP for County Armagh, and Lieutenant Colonel of the Armagh Militia; Nicholas Richard Cope and his son Arthur Walter Cope, proprietors of the much smaller Drumilly estate; and James Hardy, the squire of Drumart. The priests were father's: Taggart, possibly Arthur Taggart, parish priest of Cookstown, County Tyrone, who was notoriously erratic; McParland, future parish priest of Loughgall from 1799, possibly Arthur McParland; and Trainor. William Blacker claims a leader of the Defenders, "Switcher Donnelly", was also present. According to Patrick Tohall, there is reason to doubt the sincerity of all the delegates at this peace conference. He claims some may have used it to blindside the genuine peacemakers, with the two-armed sides seeing the clash as inevitable.

On Saturday 19 September, the priests who had stayed the night in Atkinson's house, left apparently satisfied at the outcome. There are conflicting accounts of what happened next. According to Tohall, writing in 1953, the local Catholics had obeyed the priests, and this is evidenced by none of them being counted amongst the eventual combatants. He goes on to state that the priests seemingly failed to go to Faughart Hill and persuade the Defenders. Blacker, who was there on the day of the battle on the Protestant side, however said when he was being questioned by a government Select Committee meeting on the Orange Order on 4 August 1835, that the Defenders had agreed to disperse and that the Peep o' Day Boys would do likewise. Later that day there was sporadic shooting, which didn't trouble Atkinson, and this was followed on Sunday 20 September by overall quietness.

Some Defender reinforcements from County Tyrone however made it to The Diamond and appear to have encouraged their comrades to become "determined to fight", and a decision seems to have been taken that night to advance the next day. Blacker claims "a large body of 'Defenders' not belonging to the County of Armagh, but assembled from Monaghan, Louth and I believe Cavan and Tyrone came down and were disappointed at finding a truce of this kind made, were determined not to go home without something to repay them for the trouble of their march".

On the morning of 21 September, the Defenders, numbering around 300, made their way downhill from their base, occupying Dan Winter's homestead, which lay to the north-west of The Diamond and directly in their line of advance. News of this advance reached the departing Peep o' Day Boys who quickly reformed at the brow of the hill where they had made their camp. From this position, they gained three crucial advantages: the ability to comfortably rest their muskets, allowing for more accurate shooting; and a steep up-hill location which made it hard for attackers to scale; and a direct line-of-sight to Winter's cottage which the Defenders made their rallying point. This has been claimed as showing that the Peep o' Day Boys had more experienced commanders. The shooting began again in earnest in what has become known as the Battle of the Diamonds.

After Atkinson gave his weapon and powder to the Peep o' Day Boys, he rode to Charlemont Garrison for troops to quell the trouble. There was no effective unit stationed in the garrison at the time, despite the fact a detachment of the North-Mayo Militia was stationed in Dungannon and a detachment of the Queen's County Militia was at Portadown.

The Peep o' Day Boys were the victors, killing some 6 Defenders, with some wounded Peep o day boys in return. It led to the foundation of the Orange Order and the onset of "the Armagh outrages". In the aftermath of the battle, the Peep o' Day Boys retired to James Sloans inn in Loughgall, and it was here that James Wilson, Dan Winter, and James Sloan would found the Loyal Orange Institution, more commonly known as the Orange Order, a Protestant Masonic-style fraternity sworn to maintain Protestant civil and religious liberties. It is headed by the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, which was established in 1798. Its name is a tribute to the Dutch-born Protestant king William of Orange, who defeated the army of Catholic king James II in the Williamite–Jacobite War (1688–1691). Its members wear orange sashes and are referred to as Orangemen. As a strict Protestant society, it does not accept non-Protestants as members unless they convert and adhere to the principles of the order nor does it accept Protestants married to Catholics. The Orange Order, pledge to defend "the King and his heirs so long as he or they support the Protestant Ascendancy". The first Orange lodge of this new organisation was established in Dyan, County Tyrone, founding place of the Orange Boys. The winter of 1795-1796, immediately following the battle, saw Protestants drive around 7,000 Catholics out of County Armagh in what became known as "the Armagh outrages". In a sign that tension over the linen trade was still a burning issue, 'Wreckers' continued the Peep o' Day Boys strategy of smashing looms and tearing webs in Catholic homes to eliminate competition. This resulted in a reduction in the hotly competitive linen trade which had been in a brief slump. A consequence of this scattering of highly political Catholics however was a spread of Defenderism throughout Ireland.

## **The Act of Union 1800-1801**

### **Catholic Relief Laws**

## **The Great Irish Famine 1845-1849**

The Fourth Home Rule Act was passed as the Government of Ireland Act 1920; the six northeastern counties of Ulster became Northern Ireland, and the other twenty-six counties became Southern Ireland. This self-governing entity within the United Kingdom was confirmed in its status under the terms of the Anglo-Irish

Treaty of 1921, and in its borders by the Boundary Commission agreement of 1925. Southern Ireland became first the Irish Free State in 1922 and then in 1949 a Republic.

## **The Land Act 1870**

## **Easter Rising**

The Easter Rising began on Monday, 24 April 1916 and lasted for six days. It was led by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. It was ended by thousands of British troops brought in. Of the 485 people killed in the Easter Rising, 260 were civilians, 143 were British military and police personnel, and 82 were Irish rebels, including 16 rebels executed for their roles in the Rising. More than 2,600 people were wounded.

The Irish War of Independence (AKA Anglo-Irish War) was a guerrilla war fought in Ireland between 1919 and 1921. A ceasefire began on 11 July 1921 and the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed on 6 December 1921. The Irish Civil War began on 28 June 1922 when Michael Collins and the Free State government bombarded the Anti-Treaty IRA at the Four Courts. Many important records were lost. The civil war lasted 28 June 1922 to 24 May 1923 and around 2,000 people were killed.

On 29 December 1939, the country of Éire replaced the Irish Free State and in 1948 adopted the name Republic of Ireland to go along with Éire. The Republic of Ireland Act abolished the statutory functions of the British monarch in Ireland on 18 April 1949, thus officially cutting all governmental ties with Britain after about 780 years of English control.

## **The Troubles**

The Troubles were a period of conflict in Northern Ireland that lasted from the late 1960s to the Belfast Agreement of 1998. More than 3,500 people were killed during the thirty-year conflict which was more political and nationalistic than religious in nature.

An economic downturn in industries such as shipbuilding caused the Protestant 'c community sense of security. A belief arose within the Catholic community that they were being discriminated against by the unionist government controlling the Stormont parliament. Protestants became suspicious that the Catholics were seeking to take over by promoting a united Ireland. A rising educated Catholic middle – class demanded reform of the political and social system. Concern grew within the British government and civil service that Northern Ireland was a state lacking modernisation and equality. In 1968 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association men. Rioting and in 22 defend basic freedoms and access to housing, jobs and welfare, to protect religious and political rights of individuals and guarantee assembly and association. freedom of speech, Marches and demonstrations spiralled towards violence in 1968 and 1969. On August 15 1969, the decision was made to end British troops to Northern Ireland. Various paramilitary forces were formed. The Provisional Irish Republican Army (Provisional IRA) formed in 1970 split from the IRA to defend the Catholic community from attack. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) defended North Ireland's relationship with Britain. The Ulster Defence association (UDA) had similar aims as the UVF and claimed 40,000 membership in 1972. In 1972 men were shot by the Army and the Army arrested 342 men in three days 22 people were killed. In March 1972, the British government suspended the government of Northern Ireland and governed directly from London. Between 1969 and 1989 2761 people were killed as a result of conflict.

## **Good Friday Agreement And Post Good Friday Agreement**

## **Celtic Tiger**

The Republic of Ireland's economy between the mid-1990s to the late 2000s was called the Celtic Tiger because of the great economic success to what previously had been a poor country.

## **The Irish Identity in Canada**

The Atkinson had a history of association with the Orange order both in Ireland and in Canada. They set up the first Orange Order when they immigrated to Southern Ontario

The Society of United Irishmen was formed by liberal Presbyterians and Anglicans in Belfast in 1791. It sought reform of the Irish Parliament, Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Penal Laws. By the time the Orange Order was formed, the United Irishmen had become a revolutionary group advocating an independent Irish republic that would "Unite Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter". United Irishmen activity was on the rise, and the government hoped to thwart it by backing the Orange Order from 1796 onward. In 1796 the Irish Yeomanry containing 20,000 became a part-time force of civilians who provided military service to their own localities.

The United Irishmen launched a rebellion in 1798. In Ulster, most of the United Irish commanders and many of the rebels were Protestant. Orangemen were recruited into the yeomanry to help fight the rebellion. The Scullabogue Barn massacre saw over 100 non-combatant (mostly Protestant) men, women, and children imprisoned in a barn which was then set on fire. Partly because of this atrocity, the Orange Order quickly grew and large numbers of gentry with experience gained in the yeomanry came into the movement.

One major outcome of the United Irishmen rebellion was the 1800 Act of Union that merged the Irish Parliament with that of Westminster, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Many Catholics supported the Act, but the Orange Order saw it as a threat to the "Protestant constitution" and 36 lodges in counties Armagh and Monaghan alone passed declarations opposing the Union.

The Orange Order had a central place in the new state of Northern Ireland. From 1921 to 1969, every Prime Minister of Northern Ireland was an Orangeman and member of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP); all but three Cabinet Ministers were Orangemen; all but one unionist Senators were Orangemen; and 87 of the 95 MPs who did not become Cabinet Ministers were Orangemen. At its peak in 1965, the Order's membership was around 70,000, which meant that roughly 1 in 5 adult Ulster Protestant males were members. Since 1965, it has lost a third of its membership, especially in Belfast and Derry. The Order's political influence suffered greatly after the unionist-controlled government of Northern Ireland was abolished in 1973. In 2012, it was stated that estimated membership of the Orange Order was around 34,000. Membership of the Order was historically lower in areas where Protestants are in the majority, and vice versa. In County Fermanagh, where the Catholic and Protestant populations are close to parity, membership in 1971 was three times as high as in the more Protestant counties of Antrim and Down, where it was just over 10% of adult Protestant males.

Most jurisdictions require both the spouse and parents of potential applicants to be Protestant, although the Grand Lodge can be appealed to make exceptions for converts. Members have been expelled for attending Roman Catholic religious ceremonies. In the period from 1964 to 2002, 11% of those expelled from the order were expelled for their presence at a Roman Catholic religious event such as a baptism, service or funeral. This is based on Reformed Christian theology, which teaches that the Roman Catholic Mass is idolatry, a view promulgated by Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther.

The Order takes as its basis the Open Bible and historical Reformed documents such as the Presbyterian Westminster Confession, Anglican 39 Articles and other Protestant creeds. All prospective members must

affirm their Reformed Christian Faith prior to membership. All Lodge meetings commence with the reading of the Bible and prayers that non-practising Protestants, Roman Catholics and people of other faiths and none, 'may become wise unto salvation' (which is direct quote from 2 Timothy 3:15 in the Bible). As such the Order only accepts those who confess a belief in a Protestant religion. As well as Catholics, non-creedal and non-Trinitarian Christians are also banned. This includes members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Unitarians, Orthodox Christians, and some branches of Quakers. Previous rules specifically forbade Roman Catholics and their close relatives from joining but the current rules use the wording "non-reformed faith" instead. Converts to Protestantism can join by appealing to Grand Lodge. In Ireland, parades are a big part of the Order's activities. Most Orange lodges hold a yearly parade from their Orange hall to a local church.

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## **Appendices**

### **Irish Ancestors**

The latest Irish Ancestor of security to emigrate to Canada was Atkinson

Scot-Irish

John Major Archibald 1691 emigrated to US in 1719

Samuel Archibald b. 1719 emigrated 1719 to US, emigrated to Canada in December 1762

Catholic

John Clifford b. Cork County, arrived 26 Jun 1826 in Frenchman's Bay, Maine enroute to Nova Scotia

Londonderry

William Atkinson born 1791 arrived in Canada 1839-40

His wife Jane Coulter born about 1801

His son, Thomas Atkinson born 14 May 1830 Ireland

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National Archive of Ireland [NAI \(http://www.nationalarchives.ie\)](http://www.nationalarchives.ie)

<http://www.irish-roots.ie> <http://www.irish-roots.ie>

General Register Office Northern Ireland <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk/>

[National Library of Ireland](http://www.nli.ie) <http://www.nli.ie>

Representative Church Body Library <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/>

Presbyterian Historical Society of Northern Ireland <http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com/>

Ulster Historical Foundation [www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com) Antrim, Belfast, Down Counties

Armagh County <http://www.igp-web.com/armagh/>

Cork City and County Archives <http://www.corkarchives.ie/>

Trinity College Dublin Library <http://www.tcd.ie/library/>

<https://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/ireland-census-substitutes.html>

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[Ulster Historical Foundation \(http://www.ancestryireland.com\)](http://www.ancestryireland.com)

[Access to primary sources of Ireland](#)

[The A-Z of Irish genealogy \(links to websites\)](#)

<http://www.armagh.gov.uk/> City and County of Armagh

[A Useful Irish Resource Website](#)

[Irish Genealogy Toolkit](#)

[National Library of Ireland-Catholic Parish Registers](#)

[Irish Placenames](#)

[Irish Surnames](#)