

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS ROOTS EVENTS

BERKSHIRE, FRANKLIN, HAMPSHIRE and HAMPDEN COUNTIES in
MASSACHUSETTS

March 1, 2016 - Volume 03 *St Patrick's Day Extra*

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A note from the Editor:

We are sending out a Special Edition of our WMRE Newsletter because Ancestry.com is making all their Irish records free in Honor of St. Patrick's Day. This is a great opportunity for all of you with Irish ancestry to get on their website and do some serious research – FOR FREE!

Please scroll down to see the article from (Berkshire Eagle) to read the details.

Happy Searching



ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Going green: Ancestry.com indexes millions of Irish records

Website will make them all available for free for week

By Mark Pratt
The Associated Press

BOSTON » Just in time for St. Patrick's Day, genealogical research website Ancestry.com is making 10 million Catholic parish records from Ireland — some dating to 1655 — available online for free to help people trace their Irish heritage.

The goldmine of information, available without cost for a week starting Friday, includes baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial records from more than 1,000 parishes in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

"This will really help people reconstruct their family story," said Lisa Elzey, a family historian at Ancestry, which now offers access to 55 million Irish records. "There's all kinds of mysteries within these records."

More than 33 million Americans claimed Irish ancestry in 2014, according to the latest U.S. Census data, or about 10 percent of the nation's population.

The documents, usually in English but sometimes in Latin, and dating from 1655 to 1915, had already been digitized by the National Library of Ireland, but Ancestry took the information and indexed it, making it possible to do much quicker and more efficient searches using names, places and dates.

The trove contains infor-



SHAWN POGATCHNIK — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

In this file photo, a man walks past the statue of author James Joyce on the main shopping boulevard of Dublin, Ireland. Just in time for St. Patrick's Day genealogical research website Ancestry.com is making available 10 million Catholic parish records from Ireland available online for free to help people trace their Irish heritage. The documents, in English and Latin, date from 1655 to 1915 and include Joyce's baptism records.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

U.S. President John F. Kennedy smiles and waves to the crowd from an open car as his motorcade passes cheering people lining a narrow street in New Ross, Ireland.

mation on prominent Irish citizens as well as the forebears of famous Irish-Americans.

Included is the 1828 marriage record, in Latin, of President John F. Kennedy's great-great-grandparents: Edmundus FitzGer-

ald and Maria Lenihan.

The records also include baptism records of author James Joyce and Irish-born White House designer James Hoban.

They tell not only the stories of Irish families, but help explain the cultural and religious fabric of the island, said the Rev. Oliver Rafferty, a professor of history and Director of Irish Programs at Boston College.

The older records in particular, he said, are fragmented.

"There are enormous gaps in Catholic records, especially the older ones, much of it because of the periodic persecution of Catholics at various stages of Irish history," he said.

The records from parishes in the towns tend to

be more complete than those from churches in remote rural areas, said Rafferty, who is familiar with the records because of their availability from the national library.

Perusing the documents can help researchers make connections through maiden names, godparents' names, and marriage witnesses' names.

"It's absolutely key to look at things like witnesses and to study the people around a family in order to build context and the bigger picture," said Michal Brophy, a Massachusetts-based member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, who says Irish-American research is one of his specialties.

"This will be exciting to see," he said.

For more information regarding the following, please click on the web addresses. You may have to hold down your "Control (Ctrl)" key and click in order to follow the link:

1. Mission Statement:

<http://wmarootsevents.wordpress.com/mission-statement/>

2. Submission Requirements:

<http://wmarootsevents.wordpress.com/events/submit-an-event/>

3. Polish Genealogy Terms:

<http://wmarootsevents.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/polishtoenglishgenealogyterms.pdf>

4. Foreign to English Names:

<http://wmarootsevents.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/givennames-list.pdf>

The Deadline for submission in the April Newsletter is March 23, 2015. Thank you.