

School of Irish Genealogy Event 2016

The Friends of Irish Research will present The School of Irish Genealogy at the Irish Cultural Centre later this month. Richard Reid will present on advanced search methods on the genealogy search tool FamilySearch, and Robert Murphy will speak on dual citizenship.

Users only need some basic information to get started on FamilySearch, such as parents' and grandparents' names. Locations (county or town) are helpful, and even details such as what parish they attended can be entered into the system, said Reid. Primary sources like newspapers have also been digitized and made available on FamilySearch, so users can better understand their ancestors' lives in historical context.

FamilySearch is particularly useful to those hoping to obtain dual Irish-American citizenship, because it can provide access to the documents they need, like birth and marriage certificates, to present to the consulate. Before digitization, these documents may have been impossible to retrieve. Or, a person may not have known they existed at all.

For those hoping to do so, Robert Murphy will be speaking on how to obtain Irish citizenship. Having gone through the process himself, he will guide attendees through the steps and provide insight on unfamiliar idiosyncrasies they may encounter when dealing with the Irish government.

Murphy was born in Massachusetts but was able to become an Irish citizen because his grandfather was born in Innishannon, County Cork. To gain citizenship, the candidate must have a parent or grandparent who was born in Ireland. He or she will need a grandparent's birth and baptism certificates, parents' birth certificates and marriage certificate, and his or own birth certificate. Each document is necessary in order to trace the candidate's history back to the grandparent. These all must be original documents, so while programs like FamilySearch can confirm their existence, the person still has to send away for the original, physical documents.

While citizenship does provide tangible benefits like voting rights, retirement options, and work and educational opportunities, Murphy has found that so many who pursue it are looking for more than just faster airport queues. An Irish passport can represent an intrinsic connection and patriotism they have felt for a long time.

In Murphy's experience, the Irish welcome his and other Americans' efforts to become citizens, and appreciate that they want to claim the culture not just as their father's or grandfather's, but as their own. It could be considered an act of mending ties that were severed by hunger and poverty when so many people left the country years ago. "I've never met or heard of anyone who left Ireland because they wanted to," he said. "Those people in the 19th century didn't leave on their own accord. They were forced out. And the Irish have a very deep conscience. They like to right what they consider to be wrongs." For many, it's not so much obtaining citizenship, but regaining it.

The event is on June 25 at 1:00 p.m and is open to public. Prior registration is preferred to guarantee attendees will receive all necessary materials. Those interested can register by emailing friendsofirishresearch@gmail.com. n