

Genealogy Basics – How to find Vitals for Prince Edward Island

By Joe Petrie

Background:

Genealogy is one of my passions. Until 2011, it was a hobby that I got interested in about 30 years earlier.

In 2011, a few days after I retired from part-time teaching as an Adjunct Professor of Computer Science, I volunteered at my local library (Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood MA), specifically to help staff and members with genealogy. I started with seminars. Later I conducted workshops. Finally I branched out into free individual consultations (henceforth free consults), i.e., working one-on-one with individuals doing genealogy research. I repeated some or all of the activities for other organizations in Massachusetts including the Dedham Public Library in Dedham MA, Friends of Irish Research in Brocton MA (henceforth Friends) and the Irish Cultural Centre of New England in Canton MA. Also, for Friends, I did long distance individual consults by phone and by Email.

Currently, I am concentrating on free consults at Morrill Memorial Library in Norwood MA. Each free consult is limited to two hours. Since I started in 2012, I estimate that I helped over a hundred people. The goals are to help researchers add generations, break-down brick walls and eliminate other genealogy barriers.

I follow a pattern when possible. I use genealogy web sites.

I start with Census records. I gather information as much information as possible, for as many censuses as possible. I try to gather at least: Surname, Given Name, Location, Age and relationship to the head of household.

Next, I try to gather from official records: Birth, Marriage, Death and Wills.

Then I try to gather from Church records, Christenings, Marriages, Obituaries, Cemetery and gravestone information.

Finally, I try to gather from internet sources like: Ancestry Library's Public Trees, FamilySearch Trees, voter lists, directories, and published genealogies. For an individual consult, I also rely on the individual's "oral" history.

Introduction

I am continually amazed at the many people who are focused on trying to link their roots to Ireland. This article resulted from a recent free consult with a researcher who is trying to find a path to Ireland for PEI ancestor James McLaughlin (henceforth James), a PEI farmer who supposedly was born in Donegal Ireland between 1790 and 1800.

The article's examples are sets of transcriptions and images. Nearly all are from that free consult. Specifically, one set is from the 1881 Census of Canada record for James from Ancestry Library (a database that is comparable to Ancestry – a subscription database). Ancestry Library is available free to Morrill Memorial Library users. It is also available in a large number of Massachusetts libraries. Also from the free consult is a set from FamilySearch.org/Collections/List for James' 1888 PEI death record from his local RC Parish. (It really is a burial record with a note of James' age of 89.) More on this later.

The researcher had spent years searching for an official birth date. More importantly, because the death record image was from the ancestor's PEI RC parish, the calculated date of birth was credible.

Interestingly, the 1799 date was extremely important because the researcher could narrow the search of the National Library of Ireland (nli.ie) RC Parish database to Donegal parishes that had baptism records for 1799. Because of the limited time frame, I only demonstrated how the individual could browse the nli.ie records for Donegal County – the county where the researcher indicated that ancestor was born.

Near the end of this article, I recount my search of two sites later that day. I believe that the GenealogyLinks.Net web site shows that James was from Cookstown, County Fermahagh. At the end of the article, I included other web sites for PEI research.

PEI Information Gathering from Census Records:

For PEI gathering from censuses is challenging. The PEI Public Archives and Records Office (PARO) web site describes the Censuses as follows:

“The 1752 census taken by the Sieur de la Rocque gave careful detail regarding names and ages of heads of household, spouses and children. It included information about how long the land had been held and in what manner, an inventory of the stock held by the individual family, and personal observations.

The 1798 census, on the other hand, lists only the name of the head of household and the numbers of males and females within specific age categories. This pattern is repeated in the census records of 1841, 1848 and 1861, although these records also give place of birth, religion, years and manner of holding land, as well as considerable agricultural details about crops and livestock. Please note that the 1848 census is available for Charlottetown and Lot 31 only.

As of today, I could not access the 1841, 1848 and 1861 censuses.

There are no PEI records in 1871 Census of Canada.

The Canadian Census information for 1881 – 1921 is available on-line in Ancestry. Some Censuses are also available in FamilySearch, in the Automated Censuses of Canada and in Library and Archives Canada.

The PEI 1881 Census of Canada is a nominal census. For PEI, it identifies the members of a household without enumerating the relationship of each to the head of the household. The screen print follows is from Ancestry Library:

1881 Census of Canada for James McLaughlin

CENSUS 1881—RECENSSEMENT. Province of *P. E. Island* District No. *1* S. District *St. John's*

RECENSSEMENT 1881—CENSUS.

TABLEAU No. 1.—Énumération des Vivants.

No.	NOM						Sexe	Âge	État	Profession ou Occupation	Religion	Lieu de naissance	Années de présence en Canada					Autres renseignements
	Prénoms	Noms	Prénoms	Noms	Prénoms	Noms							1880	1875	1870	1865	1860	
1	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	M	34	Head	Scottish	Scotland							
2	Martha	McLaughlin	Martha	McLaughlin	Martha	McLaughlin	F	26	Wife	Irish	Scotland							
3	Robert	McLaughlin	Robert	McLaughlin	Robert	McLaughlin	M	16	Son	Irish	Scotland							
4	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	M	14	Son	Irish	Scotland							
5	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	F	13	Daughter	Irish	Scotland							
6	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	M	12	Son	Irish	Scotland							
7	John	McLaughlin	John	McLaughlin	John	McLaughlin	M	11	Son	Irish	Scotland							
8	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	M	10	Son	Irish	Scotland							
9	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	F	9	Daughter	Irish	Scotland							
10	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	M	8	Son	Irish	Scotland							
11	John	McLaughlin	John	McLaughlin	John	McLaughlin	M	7	Son	Irish	Scotland							
12	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	M	6	Son	Irish	Scotland							
13	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	F	5	Daughter	Irish	Scotland							
14	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	M	4	Son	Irish	Scotland							
15	John	McLaughlin	John	McLaughlin	John	McLaughlin	M	3	Son	Irish	Scotland							
16	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	William	McLaughlin	M	2	Son	Irish	Scotland							
17	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	Elizabeth	McLaughlin	F	1	Daughter	Irish	Scotland							
18	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	James	McLaughlin	M	0	Son	Irish	Scotland							

The Transcript for the 1881 record for James McLaughlin and other household members follows:

Name: James McLaughlin
 Gender: Male

Marital Status:	Widowed	
Age:		84
Birth Year:		1797
Birthplace:	Ireland	
Religion:	Catholic	
Nationality:	Irish	
Occupation:	Farmer	
Province:	Prince Edward Island	
District Number:		3
District:	Kings	
Sub-District Number:	J	
Subdistrict:	Lot 38	
	Name	Age
	James McLaughlin	84
	Thomas McLaughlin	44
	Anthony McLaughlin	34
Household Members:	Clementine McLaughlin	23
	Mary McLaughlin	6 months
	John McLaughlin	2
	Ellen McLaughlin	30
	Mary McLaughlin	32

Please note that Anthony and Clementine were married. It appears that Anthony's brother Thomas never married. I never established whether Ellen and Mary were related. In addition, there were other McLaughlin families living nearby who may have been related.

PEI Information from Official Records:

There is a paucity of PEI official records. Official records were not collected before 1906. PARO describes the situation on its web site as follows:

“... there was no civil register on Prince Edward Island prior to 1906, vital statistics information is not readily available for that time period from one specific source. **With the exception of some civil marriage records, church records provide the majority of early vital statistics information. Unfortunately, the quality of these records varies considerably, and some have been lost to fire, flood and general neglect.**

Beginning in 1906, civil records for births, marriages and deaths started to be collected in a consistent fashion. Due to privacy considerations there are restrictions on when these records are transferred to the Public Archives and Records Office to be made publicly available. These restrictions are as follows:

- Births: Restricted for 120 years after the date of the event
- Marriages: Restricted for 75 years after the date of the event
- Deaths: Restricted for 50 years after the date of the event; cause remains permanently confidential
- Adoptions: Never transferred to the Public Archives and Records Office”

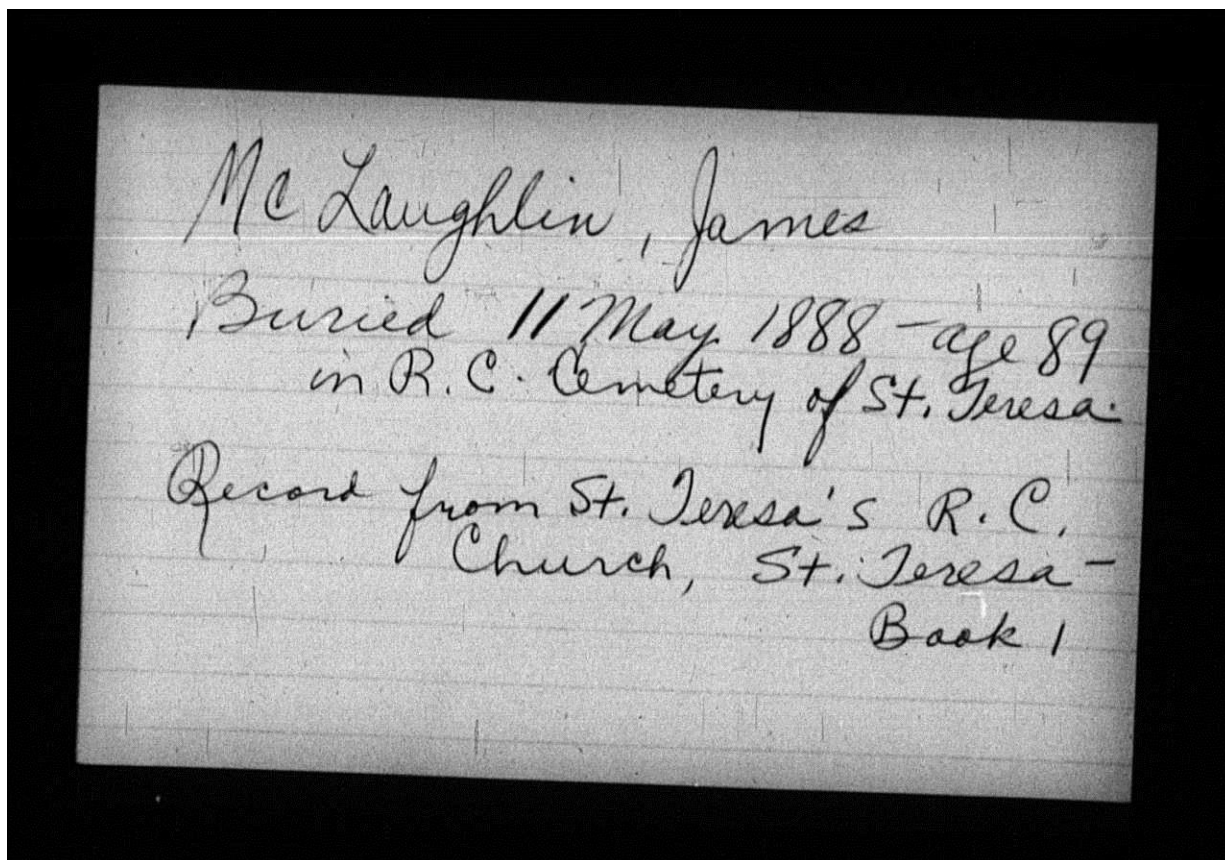
PEI Information from Church Records used as Official Records:

Church records provide the majority of early vital statistics information.

In FamilySearch.org/Collections/List there are 4 indexed databases as follows:

Prince Edward Island Baptism Card Index, 1721-1885	92,218	01 Oct 2012
Prince Edward Island Census, 1861	25,315	24 Mar 2010
Prince Edward Island Death Card Index, 1721-1905	16,778	21 Sep 2015
Prince Edward Island Marriage Registers, 1832-1888	20,548	11 Mar 2015

Only the Census is not from Church records. Using the Death Card Database (which was made available last September) the researcher and I found the following death record which contained the priest's notation that James McLaughlin was 89 when he died in 1888. The image and the transcript follow:



Name: James McLaughlin

Event Type: Death

Event Date: 11 May 1888

Event Place: Roman Catholic Cemetery St Teresa's, Prince Edward Island, Canada

Age: 89

Birth Date:

Birth Year (Estimated): 1799

GS Film Number: 001487743

Digital Folder Number: 004146253

Image Number: 03570

Citing this Record:

"Prince Edward Island Death Card Index, 1721-1905," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QK6V-J2N2> : accessed 20 October 2015), James McLaughlin, 11 May 1888; citing 11 May 1888, Roman Catholic Cemetery St Teresa's, Prince Edward Island, Canada, Division of Vital Statistics. Public Archives, Charlottetown; FHL microfilm 1,487,743.

Two Additional Web Sites that I used for this article:

[PEI Register](http://www.islandregister.com/) <http://www.islandregister.com/> - This is an on-line source for PEI Genealogy, with over 1100 PEI lineages, and 4500+ documents online. It also includes the PEI GenWeb project records with links to world, US and other Canadian GenWeb sites. In addition, it includes an index to geographical names. The records include the Abegweit Branch of the United Empire league of Canada. The database includes 1874 Regimental Muster Rolls. Hutchinson's 1864 Directory is available. Finally, it includes data from Terry Punch which the researcher's believed supported her oral information about James being born in Donegal. Specifically, Terry Punch's Halifax Register Repeal List shows records for McLaughlins that I suspect are the source of the Donegal information. One part of Terry's list follows:

Repealers resident at New London Settlement:

39. Matthew Corrick, The Rower, Kilkenny
40. John Deagan, Willan, King's
41. Alexander Finlay, Banffshire, Scotland
- 42. James McLaughlin, Sr., Donegal Town**
- 43. James McLaughlin, Jr., Donegal Town**
44. Neil Morrison, Scotland
45. Patrick Morrison, Tehallen [Tehellan], Monaghan

[GenealogyLinks.Net](http://www.genealogylinks.net/canada/prince_edward_island/index.html) http://www.genealogylinks.net/canada/prince_edward_island/index.html. - This is a link-to-links site. There are a large number of links. This site listed Irish in PEI born before 1846. Based on the list, I think that James McLaughlin was from Cookstown, County Fermanagh. The following 2 James McLaughlans and 1 James McLaughlin are listed:

McLAUGHLAN	James, Jr.	Donegal	Donegal Town	(ng)	REP-NewLndn	(ng)
McLAUGHLAN	James, Sr.	Donegal	Donegal Town	(ng)	REP-NewLndn	(ng)
McLAUGHLIN	James	Fermanagh	Cookstown	1830	OBITS	1799-1888; Peakes

Please note that that the last column for the third record has James at age 89. I have searched for the obituary without success. Also note that Peakes is a location. Specifically, according to Wiki, "Peakes falls inside the Statistics Canadacensus subdivision of Lot 38." The 1881 Census record for James identified his household in Lot 38.

Other PEI Web Sites:

Please note that none of the following sites were used in this article.

[Prince Edward Island Genealogical Society](http://www.peigs.ca) <http://www.peigs.ca> – The Society has a number of tabs including Links. Recommend starting at the Computerized Master Name Index (CMNI).

[Prince Edward Island Genealogy Records Online](http://www.genealogysearch.org/canada/princeedwardisland.html)

<http://www.genealogysearch.org/canada/princeedwardisland.html> - This site is a link to links. It has a large number of links to free databases. There are County and Parish records available.

[Archives PEI](http://www.archives.pe.ca/index.php3?number=1030124&lang=E) <http://www.archives.pe.ca/index.php3?number=1030124&lang=E> – This is the Archives Council database. There are some links.

[Provincial Library Catalogue](http://www.library.pe.ca/) <http://www.library.pe.ca/> - Access to the on-line databases requires a Gale System library card.

[Prince Edward Island Deaths](http://www.islanddeaths.com/) <http://www.islanddeaths.com/> - Records include PEI Death Notices, Funerals, Memorials and Obituaries.

[Prince Edward Island Gravemarker Gallery](http://gravemarkers.ca/pei/index.htm) <http://gravemarkers.ca/pei/index.htm> - This is the PEI Provincial web page which is part of The Canadian Gravemarker Gallery.

[Prince Edward Island Headstone Photo Project](http://www.canadianheadstones.com/pei/) <http://www.canadianheadstones.com/pei/> - This project is archiving headstone photos for all cemeteries in Prince Edward Island.

[The Guardian](http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/) <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/> - Prince Edward Island's provincial newspaper covers local news, death notices, etc.

[Prince Edward Island Genealogy](http://www.gov.pe.ca/infopei/index.php3?number=750&lang=E) <http://www.gov.pe.ca/infopei/index.php3?number=750&lang=E> - This official PEI government tourism site contains records for Cemeteries, censuses, ships lists, etc. Some of the ships have passenger lists.

[Automated Census of Canada](http://automatedgenealogy.com/census/) <http://automatedgenealogy.com/census/> - Records include the 1901 and 1911 Censuses.

[Bennett Family Genealogy Page](http://www.bennettgenealogy.net/) <http://www.bennettgenealogy.net/> - The site includes MacDougall, Boyce, Hume and Sanders ancestors who lived on Prince Edward Island.

[Marge Reid's Irish-Canadian Heritage](http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mvreid/mvrgen/irish.html)

<http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mvreid/mvrgen/irish.html> - Surnames include: Reid, Cullen, Curran, Furlong, Doyle, McManus, McNally, and McIsaac in Lots 15, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 49.

[PEI Research Data](http://www15.pair.com/buchanan/genes/peiindex.htm) <http://www15.pair.com/buchanan/genes/peiindex.htm> – The site includes records of Buchanans and Stewarts (Stuarts) of Lots 57, 58 and 67, and records of the initial settlers of the Belfast area.

[Robert M. McEachern and Virginia F. McEachern](http://home.comcast.net/~montemac/yorkshire2000/) <http://home.comcast.net/~montemac/yorkshire2000/> - Includes records of descendants of Yorkshire Settlers emigrating to the Chignecto Peninsula, Canada, 1772 – 1776, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island.

[Stewart Genealogy: From the Isle of Skye, Scotland to PEI](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~peistewart/index.html)

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~peistewart/index.html> - The site has genealogy of Stewart, Murchison, Nicholson and Docherty families who emigrated from the Isle of Skye, Scotland and settled in Prince Edward Island, Canada.

[The Faithfull Page](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~peistewart/index.html) <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~peistewart/index.html> - The site includes the Prince Edward Island families of MacNeill, McGuigan, O'Connor and Gill with a special Faithfull research section.

[The Van Iderstine Family Tree](http://www.vaniderstine.net/site/index.php) <http://www.vaniderstine.net/site/index.php> - The site contains a Register Report for the Loyalist Van Iderstine family who left New Jersey after the American Revolution and settled in PEI.

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Your corrections, comments and suggestions are appreciated. Please Email me at joe-appg@norwoodlight.com.

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