

Top ten tips on tracing your Irish roots - NY Irish Center's third session shares a passion for genealogy

From searching online to talking to relatives, Bridget Bray wants to get the community asking questions about their family history

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This September the [New York Irish Center](#) is set to host its third "The Top Tens of Genealogy" session, with the hope of introducing more of the Irish and Irish American community to genealogy and tracing their family's history.

The session, led by Bridget Bray, aims to break down the task of tracing your family's Irish into simple bite-sized "Top Tens" and aims at inciting a passion for genealogy which Bray found herself just over four years ago.

She told IrishCentral, "I'm not sure what triggered my search but I found out that my great grandfather was called Ryan and if you know anything about the Irish you know the name Ryan. It's in the top ten Irish names so it all started there."

Bray's own enthusiasm for this research is now something she wants to instill in the community. She explained, "If we can get more people involved and interested in tracing their roots, the more the better."

"I approached Paul Finnegan at the Irish Center and suggested that maybe we could do something to open genealogy up to the community and help get people started."

"That's when these sessions came about and this September's will be the 3rd."

The popularity of these sessions is certainly on the up and Bray's easy format guide to getting started on tracing your family's roots makes it accessible to even the most novice genealogists.

"It's based around "Top Tens," meaning I structure the event around top ten tips, top ten tools and so on, so it's bite-sized and not too overwhelming," Bray told IrishCentral.

During the session Bray will cover "tips, tools, sources, key historical facts and trivia."

Among her "Top Tens" she'll be pointing people in the right direction and showing them that it's easy to get started on their own quest.

She'll share tips such as the fact that "at New York City library you can access information online on websites like Ancestry.com and a personal favorite, an Irish website, RootsIreland.ie, for free."

"It's easy to get started and soon it could either be a cheap hobby, or maybe an obsession, who knows."

Bray will also talk about using historical events to structure and give clues during your search.

She explained, "The historical events aspect doesn't exactly mean the historical events in Ireland, rather how historical events could have changed how the information is available to you."

The detective work and research that goes into tracing your family roots might put some people off this task but to thousands of others, like Bray, it becomes a rewarding obsession.

She told IrishCentral, "Sometimes when you discover some little bit of your story or history, it's like a gold nugget. You want to scream it from the rooftops but then I realize that there's probably only one percent of the population who finds it as fascinating as me."

Bray's own research was sparked by her great grandfather Ryan who she found had moved from Ireland to England. Having attended a "Who do you think you are?" event in London, Bray's curiosity deepened.

In 2009, in New York she decided to continue her search.

"When I came back to New York, I thought maybe I'm not the only person out there thinking about their genealogy and you know what I wasn't!"

Having set up "The Irish / British Genealogy Group", on Meetup.com, Bray has now formed a community of 163 members and counting who are constantly sharing information and also meet up for events and outings. The numbers in this group are on the up and it's not just Irish and Irish Americans but people from all ethnicities who are curious about genealogy.

Bray's aim is to spread her own enthusiasm and get people asking questions about their family's past and where they come from.

She said, "As the older generations are getting older it's important to ask questions.

"I know when I meet people in their 20s and even their early 30s I urge them to ask their parents and grandparents, or even their great-grandparents questions... They get a head start on the research".

This October, Bray is also organizing [The Genealogy Event](#) in Chelsea, New York, where there will be stalls, talks, meetings, and events covering a mass of topics from meet ups with people who share your surname to how food can give us clues to our genealogy.

Spaces for her upcoming September session at the New York Irish Center are filling up so email

Bray at Genealogy@NewYorkIrishCenter.org to attend the event taking place on Saturday, 29th September at 2pm.

Also at the New York Irish Center every Wednesday from 1pm to 4pm Joe Buggy, a professional genealogist from Ireland, is on hand to help out anyone in the community with [genealogy research queries](#).

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