Scots-Irish Genealogy is the process of tracing your American ancestors across the Atlantic to one of the nine counties of the Irish province of Ulster.

The general assumption is that everyone who came from Ulster had ancestors in Scotland, this is not entirely true. Protestants from Scotland were the majority of settlers in Ulster, but Protestants from England and France also came there. And of course, despite the hardships they faced, many native Irish remained in Ulster, especially in Counties Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan. Over the course of time, people changed religions and intermarried, so you may discover that your ancestors do not fit the standard story line of the Scots-Irish.

One thing that makes genealogy for the Scots-Irish different from other types is that general direction of the research flow is known: **America →Ireland →Scotland** and if your ancestors did originally come from Scotland, they probably came from Ayrshire or another lowland county. While Highland settlement in Ulster was not unknown, it wasn't common until the 19th century.[1]

The **Scottish Diaspora** included large populations of Highlanders moving to the United States and Canada **'Nova Scotia'**, after the 'Highland Clearances' 1750-1860; as well as the Lowlanders 1760-1830, becoming **Ulster Scots** in Ireland and the **Scots-Irish** in America.

According to **Dr. David Dobson,** of the University of St Andrews, an authority on the origins of the Scots-Irish. The settlement of Scots in Ireland during the early modern period began in the late sixteenth century, from 1580 a force of 2000 'Redshanks', (Highland Scots mercenaries), who came to Ireland. Their objective was to support the native Irish in their struggle against the Tudor English, who were attempting to gain control of the whole island of Ireland, these fighting men differed from the later Scottish immigrants in that they were Gaelic-speaking Highland Catholics.

The next wave of emigrants from Scotland arrived in Down and Antrim as a result of two Ayrshire lairds, James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery, who acquired land there from Con O'Neill in 1606.

With the establishment of the Plantation of Ulster, King James then divided their land and allocated it to other English and Scottish landowners, known as "*undertakers*", who undertook to settle the lands with British Protestants. The Scots landowners overwhelmingly came from the counties of Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Kirkcudbrightshire and Dumfriesshire and would have recruited settlers for their Ulster estates from among their own territories in Scotland.

Scottish migration to Ireland unfolded in distinct stages: firstly the Highlanders and Islanders in the late sixteenth century, then the Hamilton-Montgomery Lowlanders, followed by the Plantation period from 1610 to 1630, in the 1650s following the close of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, in 1670s following the failure of the Covenanters Rising in Scotland, and finally in the 1690s resulting from successive poor harvests in Scotland. While the Highlanders arriving in the late sixteenth century were Catholic, the Lowland Scots arriving during the seventeenth century were mainly Protestant, Episcopalian at first and after 1641 overwhelmingly Presbyterian, apart from a few Catholics such as the Hamilton's from Paisley, and their servants who settled in Strabane.

The migrants of the seventeenth century sailed from various ports in south west Scotland, and landed in Ulster ports from Strangford to Londonderry. The Scottish ports were Girvan, Ballantrae, Irvine, Port Glasgow, Ayr, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, Glasgow, Port Patrick, Largs, and Greenock. These ports originally were engaged in trade or fishing, but as Scottish settlement in Ireland increased trade increased, and with more merchant ships bound for Ireland the opportunity to emigrate there increased. East Ulster ports had strong links with Largs, Ayr and Kirkdbright; Ayr also had such with Belfast and Londonderry. The Scottish port books of the period, though far from comprehensive, do reveal trading routes and commodities exported or imported, however little or no data survives which would identify passengers. Fortunately, burgh and church records (as well as certain family papers) do on occasion identify people bound for Ireland, and even refugees returning after the Irish Rebellion of 1641. The port books, the kirk session records, and certain family or estate papers can be consulted in the National Archives of Scotland. The port books of Londonderry, Coleraine, Carrickfergus and the Lecale ports for the years 1612-1615, have been transcribed and published, which provides insight to the trading links and therefore immigration routes at the time of the Plantation. [2]

David Dobson has published 10 books on this period of Scottish-Irish History, part of a large collection of over 100 books on Scottish History…

The Huguenots, French Protestants also relocated to Protestant states such as the Dutch Republic, England, <u>Scotland</u> and <u>Protestant-controlled Ireland</u> in 1572-1700s.

"Do you know where to look for your Scots-Irish ancestors"?

These resources might have the information you're looking for…

Scots-Irish Websites

- Belfast Newsletter newspaper index, 1737-1800
- Eneclann
- Findmypast.com
- Genealogical Society of Ireland
- Irish Genealogy Toolkit
- North of Ireland Family History Society
- Northern Ireland GenWeb
- RootsIreland
- ScotlandsPeople
- The Scots in Ulster
- Ulster Ancestry
- Ulster Gravestone Inscriptions

Citations:

[1] **FamilyTreeMag@Yankeepub.com** *'Ethnicity research'* (US online magazine)
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[2] **Genealogical.com** *The Origins of the 'Scotch-Irish'* (US online book seller)
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Roulston, William J. 2nd Edition 2018. ***Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors: The Essential Genealogical Guide to Early Modern Ulster, 1600-1800*** Published by the Ulster Historical Foundation

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