

Egan Family Names

Just like every other Irish family, the Egans of the past seem to use the same Christian/first names over and over again. If your ancestor had a name like John, Michael, Patrick or Thomas then you may have great difficulty in trying to work out where they originated from in Ireland. Going back through Birth, Marriage and Death records, Griffith Valuations or Tithe Applotments one is faced with a bewildering number of similar Christian names from almost every county. If only an ancestor had a name like Zachary Egan.....

Names mainly recur because of the naming convention used by Irish families down through the years. The pattern of naming children very often adhered to the following plan:-

- 1st Son named after the Father's Father
- 2nd Son named after the Mother's Father
- 3rd Son named after the Father
- 4th Son named after the Father's oldest Brother
- 5th Son named after the Mother's oldest Brother
- 1st Daughter named after the Mother's Mother
- 2nd Daughter named after the Father's Mother
- 3rd Daughter named after the Mother
- 4th Daughter named after the Mother's oldest Sister
- 5th Daughter named after the Father's oldest Sister

After a few generations of using this convention, particularly with large Irish families, when several generations could possibly be alive at the same time, the difficulties encountered by genealogists and family historians are easy to understand. Often the Church records have been written in Latin and Mary, Maria and Marie and similar can present problems with female names. Men's names can also be mixed up with female ones eg. John, Joan, Joanne etc. Poor writing often leads to poor transcription and so many errors can easily occur in records that have been committed to computerisation. Hence the strange names that appear from time to time.

One should always be aware that different original recorders may have spelled the surnames of the same family differently over a period of time. The best advice is simple - check any variants known to you!

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