

Trace Your Irish Roots

{ BY JULIA M. KLEIN }

If you happen to be of Irish descent, and if St. Paddy's Day has you thinking about tracing your family ancestry, then stop by the historic Shelbourne Hotel the next time you're in **DUBLIN** and see Helen Kelly — whom the hotel refers to as **THE ONLY GENEALOGY BUTLER IN THE WORLD**. Tracing family trees for the hotel since 2007, her expertise is so great that the Shelbourne even copyrighted the title.

For about \$130, Kelly provides an hourlong consultation at the hotel and a written report to help navigate a digital/paper trail that could potentially lead to the birthplace of Irish-born ancestors (many of whom immigrated to the United States following the 1840s potato famine). "My work empowers people to do their own research," explains Kelly, who is also president of the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland.

It helps when guests come prepared. "Family history starts with yourself," she says. Kelly, who once found a 106-year-old cousin with childhood memories of Kelly's own late grandmother, advises clients to search their attics and write down everything they know about their family history, including Irish county of origin. The next step is to research U.S. records, starting with the 1930 U.S. Census, available at Ancestry.com. Irish records, at repositories such as the National Archives of Ireland and National Library of Ireland (both in Dublin), will help pinpoint details.

With any luck, says Kelly, a visitor's journey back in time will end with a revelatory encounter in the Irish countryside. "We have long memories in Ireland," she says. "Walk gently in that area. Get out of the car and allow the landscape to speak. Talk to an older person on the road. Say, 'My people were



from here; they left 100 years ago.' The magic starts at that point. It's reconnecting, coming back — like the salmon does — back to the birthplace." www.shelbournehoteldublin.com