



The Launch of Beyond 2022: the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland

By Joe Grandinetti



The frightful scene on June 30, 1922, at Dublin's Four Courts Building, as the Record Treasury was destroyed. (Image from Wikimedia Commons)



The aftermath of explosions, flames, and collapse at Dublin's Four Courts Building on June 30, 1922. (Image accessed at <https://beyond2022.ie>)



The reconstructed, highly detailed 3D version of the Record Treasury building on the Beyond 2022 website. (Image accessed at <https://beyond2022.ie/>)

IN THE SUMMER OF 2018, I WROTE AN article on the *Beyond 2022 Project*, mentioning that its scheduled unveiling was planned for June 2022 in time for the 100th anniversary of the tragic event that caused its necessity. Right on schedule – the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland website was launched at the end of June at <https://beyond2022.ie>.

A Little History

On June 30, 1922, in the early days of Ireland's Civil War, Dublin's Four Courts building came under bombardment. The six-story repository, known as the Record Treasury, was heavily damaged. Seven centuries of Irish written history that was filed away in a vastness of cabinets and shelves, were destroyed in explosions, burned by ravaging flames, and drenched by water of futile fire hoses. Among the victims were estate papers, land ownership documents, maps, Church of Ireland parish registers, and countless other manuscripts of antiquity. But perhaps most heartbreaking for genealogists was the loss of essentially all the 1821-1851 Irish census records. (The 1861-1891 censuses had already been obliterated by the government in years prior through a variety of administrative objectives). This great abyss of pre-1901 censuses is one of the reasons that Irish roots hunting is so challenging.

What it is and What it's not...

The Beyond 2022 site is “freely and permanently available online to all those interested in Ireland's deep history” via an “extensive and growing treasury of digitized records – scattered over space and time, but now reunited on-screen.” The replacement of the lost documents is mostly not about physically piecing together brittle bits of burned