

## City Directories online

### Six Things to Find in City Directories (modified from Ancestry.com)

#### 1. Your Ancestor - and other family members.

Your ancestor, AND other family members - they may have lived nearby, others across town. Then follow the family year-by-year to note changes in occupation, living arrangements, even deaths of a head of household. Add it all to a timeline so you can keep track of the family's comings and goings.

#### 2. Streets and maps

Street names & house numbers can change over time. To get a real look at your ancestor's neighborhood, look for street directories and/or maps of the city or town in the directory. Street directories will typically give you cross streets, which you can use to orient you on modern day maps. You may also find a reverse directory that lists residents by address, as well as cross streets.

#### 3. Churches and Clerics

Religious records are incredibly valuable for discovering dates, places, and family relationships. For the years before states were required to keep records of births (as late as 1922), marriages and deaths, churches may be the only place to find that information. Use city directories to find the churches nearest to your ancestor. If you find the name of a cleric on records associated with your family, research the cleric in city directories, too. Use his address and compare it to the address of local churches to determine church affiliation. Also look to see if the directory you're viewing has a list of churches and synagogues that includes the names of clerics.

#### 4. Cemeteries

Check city directories for cemeteries near the homes of your relatives' homes at the time they lived there. They may point you to burial locations, possibly even a family plot, where you'll find details about more than one family member.

#### 5. Advertisements

Look at the ads carefully - you may discover more information about a family member's business or place of business, names of photographers, banks, organizations and other details that could appear elsewhere in your family's history. Advertisements were a big source of revenue for directories.

#### 6. Historical Information

City directories often included histories of the area, some with images of the city, too. A directory may have an Introduction that includes photographs of the city and its landmarks, and sections on early history and settlers, historic sites, street names, statistics, and more. There may even be sections outlining the history of various ethnic

groups in the town/city, for instance Polish, German, Italian, Irish, or Jewish. All of this can give you a little more background on your family and their home life.

Ancestrylibrary.com            available free if you are in the library

<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com>

From the library's access to Ancestry.com, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "City Directories"

**Heritage Quest**            use your library card for access from home

<https://www.ancestryheritagequest.com/HQA>

Right on the main page, just under the headline at the left.

**Internet Archive**            available free on the internet

<https://archive.org>            do a search for "city directory" including the quotation marks; all the ones in the archive come up. Or specify the city, or the dates, or both.

<http://www.cyndislist.com/directories/general/>

A list of directory index sites

<http://www.uscitydirectories.com/index.html>

City directories of the United States: another index of sites; scroll all the way to the bottom to start.

<https://sites.google.com/site/onlinedirectorysite/Home/usa>

United States Online Historical Directories – links by state to online directories