

City Directories in Genealogy Research

Santa Rosa County Library System

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- What is a city directory?

“A directory is a book containing one or more alphabetical lists of the inhabitants of any locality, with their addresses and occupations; also a similar compilation dealing with the members of a particular profession, trade, or association, as a Clerical or Medical Directory, etc.”

[*The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 393, accessed 18 September 2014 http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Overview_of_Directories]

- What can be found in a city directory?

- Advertisements
- Index to Advertisements
- Table of Contents (General Index)
- Front or back matter
- Abbreviations
- Alphabetical listing of residents
- Alphabetical business listing by business type
- Addendum to listings – removals, additions that did not make it by press time
- Street listings
- Maps

- Why use city directories?

- Locate a person in a particular place at a particular time and his/her occupation
- Locate people between census years, especially between 1880 and 1900
- Find other people of the same surname - possible relatives
- Find other people living at same residence
- Distinguish between people with same name living in the same locality in the same time period
- Approximate the possible death of an ancestor
- Use with marriage records to locate church records
- Use to limit the years of naturalization records to search
- Identify organizations associated with ancestors
- Use information to search for land records
- Use with other online tools to “put meat on the bones”

- Where can city directories be found?
 - Print copies in local libraries and archives
 - Online:
 - Ancestry Library Edition – in local libraries only
 - America’s Genealogy Bank – can be accessed at home through the Santa Rosa County Library website
 - HeritageQuest Online - can be accessed at home through the Santa Rosa County Library website
 - World Vital Records - can be accessed at home through the Santa Rosa County Library website
 - CyndisList – links to directories (not digital images themselves) www.cyndislist.com
 - Google Books – www.books.google.com
 - Internet Archive – www.archive.org
 - Hathitrust – www.hathitrust.org
 - Distant Cousin – www.distantcousin.com
 - Don’s List – www.donslist.net
 - Online Historical Directories – <http://sites.google.com/site/onlinedirectorysite/>

Some City Directories Online Free through Public or University Libraries

Fullerton, CA - <http://fullertonlibrary.org/city-directories/>
 Los Angeles, CA - <http://rescarta.lapl.org:8080/ResCarta-Web/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp>
 San Francisco, CA - <http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=2000540401>
 Jacksonville, FL - <http://jpl.coj.net/coll/florida/cdindex.html>
 Chicago, IL - <http://www.chicagoancestors.org/#tab-tools>
 Indianapolis, IN - <https://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/icd>
 Saginaw, MI - <http://dtsearch.saginawlibrary.org/index.asp>
 Minneapolis, MN – <http://box2.nmtvault.com/Hennepin2/>
 Brooklyn, NY - <http://www.bklynlibrary.org/brooklyn-collection/digitized-brooklyn-city-directories>
 Rochester, NY - <http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=1104>
 Akron, OH - <http://sc.akronlibrary.org/genealogy/city-directories/>
 Cincinnati, OH - http://virtuallibrary.cincinnati.library.org/virtuallibrary/vl_citydir.aspx
 Pittsburgh, PA – <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/p/pitttextdir/>
 Columbia, SC - <http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/sccitydirec.html>
 Oshkosh, WI - <http://www.oshkoshpubliclibrary.org/genealogy/city-directories/browse>

For many more links, go to www.google.com and search using the terms:

“city directories” digital

You will be amazed at the results you will get. You can also add a location search term (city, county, or state) to the previous terms to narrow your search.