City Directories – Uncovering Clues about Your Community

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A PCI Webinar For Florida Libraries

Genealogists are a special breed--and their appetite for information sometimes feels endless. No reference is too obscure, no tombstone too faded. Join us to learn about an often-overlooked resource to use when gathering information for family or local histories--city directories.

• Explore the wealth of information in city directories
• Access city directories online and in print
• Utilize directories to understand growth of cities and communities
• Supplement census information with city directory entries
• Compile House Histories
Common questions

• What’s available for my county? What years & cities?
• Reference question: I’m looking for information about the newspapers printed in my county or city in the early 1900s. What were they and what companies printed or published them? Can you also tell me which political party they supported or affiliated themselves with?
• I’m looking for information about the house where my ancestor lived? Who else lived in that house? I’m particularly interested in the years between the census since he seems to have moved or perhaps he died?

Questions continued

• When was my house built? Who else lived there? (later city directories with street listings.
• I’m tracking down ghost stories…I heard someone was murdered in my house. What will I find in the city directory to corroborate that story?
• Changes in street names or street numbers – where would I find that info in the city directory?
• What about smaller towns, where will I find lists of residents?
City Directories

Pensacola
https://archive.org/details/maloneyspensacol2190malo

Jacksonville
https://archive.org/details/polksjacksonvill8190rjpo

What can you find inside?

City and county history
Elected Officials
Schools, Churches, Public Offices and Departments
Secret Societies and Fraternities
Statistics
Maps
Street name changes and boundaries
Abbreviations
Names of residents and businesses
Advertisements
Phone numbers (in the 20th century)
Inside the City Directory

Names of Residents

Yellow Pages with Ads from Business

Inside the City Directory

Pink Pages with Street names & numbers

Clearwater - business ads
https://archive.org/stream/referencedesk_myclearwater_1931

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Online Resources for City Directories

- Ancestry [http://www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
- HathiTrust [http://www.hathitrust.org](http://www.hathitrust.org)
- Internet Archive [http://archive.org](http://archive.org)
- Fold3 (none for Florida) - [https://www.fold3.com/title_58/city_directories_cleveland/](https://www.fold3.com/title_58/city_directories_cleveland/) (most require a subscription or library card with access)

Through Public Libraries in Florida

- Memory Projects and local history pages [https://www.floridamemory.com/](https://www.floridamemory.com/)
- Miami - Dade County City Directories (LDS Genealogy) a list of extant directories and holding institutions [https://ldsgenealogy.com/FL/Miami-Dade-County-City-Directories.htm](https://ldsgenealogy.com/FL/Miami-Dade-County-City-Directories.htm) and [https://ldsgenealogy.com/FL/City-Directories.htm](https://ldsgenealogy.com/FL/City-Directories.htm)
City Directories on Ancestry

US City Directories on Ancestry.com
Using the Browse Option in Ancestry

Searching for Landon in Florida
Street Address Searches – use the KW option

Searching for Adams in Town Officials Colonial Boston 1634-1775; Ancestry
R.L. Polk & Co – on HathiTrust
http://www.hathitrust.org

Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory (on HathiTrust) 1895-6
A. M’Elroy’s Philadelphia Directory for 1837
https://archive.org/details/mcelroysphiladel1837a

1940 NYC Phonebooks through Stephen Morse
http://www.stephenmorse.org/census/nycphonebook.html
Digital North Carolina City Directories
http://www.digitalnc.org/collections/city-directories/

Bibliography

Bibliography

• “It’s in the Directory.” Florida Memory Blog (Dec 21, 2015)
  https://www.floridamemory.com/blog/2015/12/21/its-in-the-directory/

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