

Trace Your Family's Movements Using City Directories

City Directory History

- ✓ City Directories have been published since the late 1700s
- ✓ Two years after the end of the Revolutionary War
- ✓ Baltimore (1752?) and Philadelphia (1785)
- ✓ Produced annually
- ✓ Pre-cursor to modern day telephone books (late 1870s)
- ✓ Initially created for use by salesmen and business owners to locate potential customers
- ✓ A newly formed United States wanted its citizens to be listed by name
- ✓ The price of directories ranged from twenty-five cents to four dollars by the end of the 1850s
- ✓ As cities grew in the nineteenth century, directories became more detailed. They included special sections devoted to businesses, organizations, churches, and even steamship lists along with the list of general inhabitants
- ✓ Originally intended to be discarded each year so printed on low quality paper

What Information Can I Find in a City Directory

- ✓ Images of businesses
- ✓ Advertisements
- ✓ Occupation
- ✓ Address
- ✓ First and last name
- ✓ Widow of ?
- ✓ Lists people living in same address
- ✓ Maps (early Gazetteer?)
- ✓ Business listings
- ✓ Rural Route listings
- ✓ Legend of abbreviations used
- ✓ Changes, removals, deletions
- ✓ Street directories and ward boundaries

Why Look For City Directories

- ✓ Places ancestors' location in between censuses
- ✓ Shows occupation Year over year
- ✓ Shows who lived in same household
- ✓ Shows potential deaths by omission
- ✓ Early maps
- ✓ Lists widow status and husband name in parentheses
- ✓ Lists wife in parentheses

Where Can I Find City Directory Records (Digitized and/or Microfilm)

Family Search

Family History Library

Ancestry.com

Library of Congress

Fold3

Local or National Historical Societies

Local Genealogical Societies

National Archives

Local Public Libraries

University Libraries