

Seeking City Slickers

City families frequently rent their residences, so they won't be found in the county or city deed books. Despite this disadvantage, city families can still be identified through those residences.

Searching city directories and phone books

City directories and phone books provide an annual listing of city residents. Even those families who changed residences yearly can be traced in these publications – and tracing them will yield clues to birth dates, marriages, and deaths.

- Relevant city libraries usually have complete collections on the shelves or in microform.
- The Family History Library has many city directories available. Perform a **Place Search** of the Library Catalog. Microfilm, paper copies, and digital holdings will be listed under the category “State, City – Directories.”
- California Genealogical Society members have access to the holdings of the Stephen G. Harris City Directory Library. A listing of directories can be found at: http://www.californiaancestors.org/images/stories/us_directory_list.pdf.
- Many city directories are now available on line, providing easier access and, in some cases, the ability to search by address as well as name. Major online sources include:
 - *Internet Archive* (<http://www.archive.org/>) and *Hathi Trust* (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>). Search by city name and the word “directory”. Each volume can be searched internally, but *Internet Archive's* search function is rudimentary.
 - *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/>). Browse to the relevant city collection; then search for names within that group. Addresses can be searched within each directory.
 - *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com/>). *Ancestry* acknowledges that many pages are missing and title pages don't always correspond to the year being browsed, so be careful. Use the Keyword search field to search by address.
 - State archives and university library web sites.

Use maps to locate city homes

Locate homes on contemporary maps, if possible. Although city families may have relocated every year, they tended to remain in the same neighborhood. Maps will help you identify neighborhood churches, schools, and cemeteries, thus locating potential sources for more information. Even modern maps, such as *Google Maps*, will provide important information. Using the “My Maps” feature allows you to plot a city family's moves over the years, and its “Street View” may even provide a photograph of the family's home.

Fire insurance maps are a wonderful source when researching city families, especially those in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These maps show building “footprints” and provide dimensions for lots, streets, and sidewalks. They may be color-coded to show each building's composition, and may even include details on number of stories and location of doors, windows, and chimneys. The largest group of fire insurance maps is the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, and the Library of Congress holds more than 700,000 of these arranged by location. The collection was microfilmed – in black and white – and digitized by UMI. The UMI publication is available online through subscription only. The price tag is so high that only some libraries subscribe, and then, only to their local maps. Some universities and major repositories have undertaken their own digitization efforts, so an increasing number of freely available online collections of Sanborn maps now exist. Current online collections are listed in the bibliography.

Census enumeration district maps can be very helpful in pinpointing a city home, especially when a city's streets have been renumbered. Maps for the 1900-1940 censuses have been microfilmed as National Archives microfilm publication A3378. Those for 1930 have been microfilmed in color as National Archives microfilm publication M1930 and the maps for 1940 have been scanned and are available on

Ancestry and on the National Archives website (<http://www.archives.gov/research/census/1940/start-research.html>).

Search official city records

Most county or city tax assessors maintain an official web site that provides access to the city's tax database. Although the tax information included in these databases is current, historical information on each residence, such as age and description, may also be entered. Some databases even include photographs, building permits, recent sales, and even blueprints. The **Cook County Assessor's Office** maintains a website typical of these records: http://cookcountyassessor.com/Property_Search/Property_Search.aspx.

More Fun with Lists

Many of the records used to research city families, and county families as well, could be classed as lists: lists of residents, lists of phone numbers, and tax lists. Lists fill in the years between censuses, serve as census substitutes, and may contain information not found in any other extant record. The information most genealogists seek, birth, death, marriage, and relationship data, seldom appears in these lists, however. They are relegated to the category of records to be used only when all else fails. This is unfortunate, because thorough research into the various "lists" records can solve many genealogical problems.

Tax lists

When investigating families in areas and time periods known for a lack of records, it's important to remember the maxim, "Follow the money." Governments at every level need money to operate, and that money is usually raised by taxing its constituents. Whether your family owned a large farm in Delaware or was a tenant farmer in Kentucky, it's likely that he – occasionally she – appeared annually in the county tax records. In addition to local tax rolls and assessments, states and the federal government periodically passed legislation to raise tax revenues, creating additional records in which your family members will be found.

To get the most information from tax records, researchers must follow all relevant persons from year to year, noting changes in residence, changes in wealth and property, the addition of new names to the assessments, and the disappearance of people and wealth from the rolls. These changes, when carefully interpreted with close attention to the laws of the time, can uniquely identify individuals and families and document ages, marriages, deaths, and relationships.

- Complete collections of tax records are not commonly found on line. *FamilySearch* collections include early Ohio tax records, tax rolls from Texas counties, and Boston, Massachusetts, tax records (<https://familysearch.org/>). This site also has a large collection of New England town records that may include tax lists. Note that many of these collections are browse-only.
- Major *Ancestry* holdings include London land tax records, 1692-1932; Griffith's Valuation, 1847-1864; and the records created by the 1862 Internal Revenue Act. To locate other *Ancestry* tax and assessment lists, **Search > Card Catalog > Tax, Criminal, Land & Wills > Keyword(s)** "tax" (without quotes). Limit the list further by adding a location to the keywords.
- Many state, county, and town tax records have been filmed by the Family History Library. To find these, perform a **Place Search** for both **State** and **State, County** and look for the category "Taxation." Note that early local taxes may be found in town records, so search for these, too.
- Some early tax records may be available at the relevant state archives, some have been deposited in state and county libraries, but most remain in county courthouses.

Voter registrations

Voter registrations commonly include name, age, address, and occupation. Many also include state or country of birth, years resident in the town, county, and state, and party affiliation. Information on naturalized citizens can include date of naturalization and the court in which that naturalization took

place. Like tax lists, voter registrations have been used as census substitutes.

- Voter registers are usually created and maintained at the local level. Historical registers may be retained by the creating agency or they may be deposited in state archives and libraries.
- To find voter registrations filmed by the Family History Library, perform a **Place Search** for both **State and State, County** and look for the category “Voting Registers.”
- *Ancestry*’s largest voter registration collections are those of the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. The most significant U.S. collection is the “California Voter Registrations, 1900-1968.”

Membership lists

Our ancestors were “joiners,” just like us. Their names will be found on the membership lists of fraternal organizations and veterans groups, alumni groups and debating societies, churches and schools. They joined lineage societies and ethnic societies. Membership society lists may contain much more than just names. Published records may include member biographies and photographs. Society records may include admission applications, memoirs, and activity reports. Unlike the more official lists discussed previously, many of these records suffer from the bias of the members. The proof necessary for admission may have been forged; the biography might omit less honorable details of a member’s life; the battle exploits might be glorified. With that caveat in mind, the thorough researcher might break down many brick walls with these records. A few examples:

- **Lineage society:** The records of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution include patriot lists and lineage books, many available on *GoogleBooks*, lineage applications and supporting documentation, housed in the DAR Library in Washington, D.C., and more than 20,000 typescript volumes of records included in the DAR’s Genealogical Records Committee Reports. Databases derived from these “lists” are available online as part of the “DAR Genealogical Research System”: http://services.dar.org/public/dar_research/search/.
- **Veterans group:** The Grand Army of the Republic, founded in 1866, limited its membership to Union veterans of the Civil War. Records of the “posts” included lists of members, their military activities, biographical information, and brief reminiscences of their war experiences. These records, if they survive, may be found in local libraries or state archives. Begin your search with the *Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War* web site: <http://www.suvcw.org/research.htm>.
- **Alumni directories:** These include college and high school yearbooks, many available in local libraries. University alumni directories may be found on *GoogleBooks* and *Internet Archive*. These publications include name, year of graduation and degree, occupation, and current address. Some publications may include additional biographical details and many include annual lists of alumni who died during the year.
- **Fraternal organizations:** Access to membership information will vary from organization to organization. The New England Historic Genealogical Society’s web site, *American Ancestors* (<http://www.americanancestors.org/>), includes a database and images, “Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts Membership Cards, 1733 –1990.” Information includes name, occupation, residence, initiation, birth, and death.

Petitions

Family history researchers seldom use petitions, but these lists of signatures can prove residence, document military service and land ownership, and provide supporting evidence for identity, age, and family relationships. Thousands of original petitions can be found in the records of Congress held by the National Archives and state and local petitions can be found in relevant state archives. The “Early Virginia Religious Petitions” collection in the Library of Congress’ *American Memory* site provides a sample of that repository’s holdings: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/petitions/>.

Procedures and Points to Remember

- Follow city families in every available directory and list. **Record all moves, year by year, for every family member.**
 - When possible, identify all persons living in the same residence and determine their relationship to the subject family.
 - Locate all residences on a contemporary map, if possible, and note neighborhood churches, cemeteries, schools, and places of occupation.
 - Always correlate information with that obtained from land records, tax records, and census records.

Selected Bibliography (all websites accessed October 2015)

American Treasures of the Library of Congress. "Fire Insurance Map."

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr016.html>.

David Rumsey Map Collection. Cartography Associates, 2003. <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>.

Geographic Names Information System. <http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/>.

Green, Betsy J. *Discovering the History of Your House and Your Neighborhood*. Santa Monica, California: Santa Monica Press, 2002.

Historic Map Works. <http://www.historicmapworks.com/>.

Hoehn, Philip. *Union List of Sanborn & Other Fire Insurance Maps*. The Regents of the University of California, 2012. http://lib.berkeley.edu/EART/sanborn_union_list.

Land Ownership Maps: A Checklist of Nineteenth Century United States County Maps in the Library of Congress. Washington: Library of Congress, 1967.

Library of Congress. Geography & Map Reading Room. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps,"

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn/>. This site is an online checklist of the Library of Congress Sanborn Fire Insurance maps collection. Included are links to existing digital images from the collection; not many available, but still worth checking.

Maptech. "Historic Maps." <http://historical.mytopo.com/>. A growing collection of historic USGS topographic maps; currently contains fourteen states.

Petersen, Lisa. "Land Ownership Maps in the Library of Congress."

<http://www.kinquest.com/usgenealogy/lom.php>.

The Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia. "How to Read Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps."

http://www.learn.columbia.edu/courses/newyork/pdf/SanbornMap_instruct.pdf.

U.S. Geological Survey. <http://www.usgs.gov/>. See also their Fact Sheet 099-02 (September 2002), "Using Maps in Genealogy." <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2002/0099/report.pdf>.

Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands. See especially "Land Records: Online Records,"

<http://bcpl.state.wi.us/>.

Wisconsin Historical Society. "Map and Atlas Collection." <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/maps/>.

Good background articles on various maps.

Online Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps – Free Access

Alabama: http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/FireInsurance/1_County%20Index.html

San Francisco, California (black & white): <http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/sanborn/sanborn.htm>

San Francisco, California (1905): <http://www.davidrumsey.com/blog/2011/6/27/pre-earthquake-san-francisco-1905-sanborn-insurance-atlas>

Colorado: <http://cudl.colorado.edu/luna/servlet/UCBOULDERCB1~21~21>

New Haven, Connecticut: http://www.library.yale.edu/MapColl/print_sanborn.html

Florida: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/sanborn>

Georgia: <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/?Welcome>

Indianapolis, Indiana: <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/sanbornjp2>

Muncie, Indiana: <http://libx.bsu.edu/cdm4/collection.php?CISOROOT=/SanbrnMps>

Kansas: <http://lib.ku.edu/sanborn-maps>

Kentucky: <http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=maps>

Maryland (black & white): http://mdhistory.net/sc5458_000051_002747/html/index.html

Missouri: <http://library.missouri.edu/specialcollections/bookcol/sanborn/>

Nevada: https://contentdm.library.unr.edu/explore/NVMapsExplore/nvmaps/sanborns/historic_town_maps.html

New Hampshire: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/digital/collections/maps/sanbornmaps/>

New Jersey: http://libweb5.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/sanborn/sanborn-web.htm

New York City, New York: <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/> (search keyword: “insurance maps”)

North Carolina: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/dc/nemaps/sanborn.html>

Cincinnati, Ohio: http://virtuallibrary.cincinnati.org/virtuallibrary/v1_maps.aspx

Pennsylvania: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/sanborn.html>

South Carolina: <http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/sanborn.html>

Texas: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sanborn/texas.html>

Utah: <http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/sanborn-jp2>

Milwaukee, Wisconsin: <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/san>

Other maps may be available from major public library web sites if you hold a library card from that library. For example, all California maps are available via the San Francisco Public Library: <http://sfpl.lib.ca.us/sfplonline/dbcategories.htm>.

David Rumsey Map Collection – Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps collection:

http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/view/search/what/Insurance,%20Fire?q=sanborn&sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort,Pub_Date,Pub_List_No,Series_No

Library of Congress, “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps”: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn/index.php> (only some cities available online)

New York Public Library, Digital Collections, Map Division. <http://tinyurl.com/mrpd3w2> (not fire insurance maps, but a wonderful and growing collection)