

## City and Telephone Directories

City directories are published listings of residents and their addresses. A city directory places an individual or a business in a specific location at a particular time. City directories have been published in New York City since 1786. It was not until the mid-19th century that city directories began including immigrants as well as established residents.

### City Directories as a Genealogical Resource

#### Finding Census Records

City directories are particularly useful in connection with research in census records. For those censuses that have been indexed by name, the researcher does not have to know the precise address where a person was living in order to locate him. For censuses without name indexes, such as the 1910 U.S. census, New York State 1855, 1905, 1915, and 1925 censuses, and New York City 1890 Police census, a census search requires a street address. This information can be obtained from a city directory published in a year close to the census year.

#### Finding Vital Information

Prior to the 1933/34 New York directories, only heads of households and other employed adults were listed. A married housewife rarely was included. Because a widow usually was listed with her deceased husband's name (such as Mrs. Tom Jones), it is possible to use that entry as an indication of when the husband died. That clue can point to death records, obituaries, probate records, and cemetery plots.

New York City's 1933/34 city directories were unusual for their thoroughness, their inclusion of all adults in a household (wife and adult children), and even the apartment number. After that year, telephone directories became the only analogous source. However, many people did not have telephones until after World War II.

#### Tracing Relatives

It is also important to conduct a year-by-year search for a particular individual or family. Sometimes a person disappears from the directory for a year or two and then shows up again, sometimes at the same address. Careful examination of city directories can identify other individuals with the same surname. Through subsequent research, these same-surnamed people may be relatives not known previously.

### Where to Find City and Telephone Directories

#### New York Public Library

Because the New York Public Library Humanities and Social Sciences Library has an extensive collection of city directories and telephone directories for many places around the world, it is possible to conduct wide-ranging directory research in this one repository. The New York Public Library possesses microfilmed city directories for many U.S. cities, including Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, and many smaller cities. City directories that are available follow:

## **New York City**

These microfilms are available at the U.S. History, Local History and Genealogy Division.

- NYC City Directories (Manhattan and parts of the Bronx), 1786-1933/4.
- Brooklyn City Directories, 1796, 1802/3, 1811/12, 1822-1826, 1829-1910, 1912/13, 1933/4.
- Trow's Directory for Queens, 1898, 1912.
  
- Polk's NYC Directory, Boroughs of Queens and Richmond, 1933/4.
- Staten Island Directories, 1886, 1888, 1890/1, 1892/3, 1895/6, 1898, 1906.

## **Outside New York City**

These microfilms are available at the Microforms Division.

- Suburban NYC City Directories, ca. 1898-1920s.
- City directories for about 300 U.S. cities, 1752-1860 and 1861-1935.
- London City Directories, 1677-1855.

## **Telephone Directories**

These microfilms are available through the Microforms Division.

- New York (Manhattan), Bronx, Kings (Brooklyn), Queens, Staten Island, Nassau and Suffolk Counties, starting in 1878.
- Address telephone directories (reverse directories) for NYC and Westchester.
- Microfiche collection of telephone books for U.S. cities, starting in 1976.
- Microfilm copies of foreign telephone directories.

## **Other**

View a webpage with links to digitized historical phone directories at <http://www.oldtelephonebooks.com/pages/links>. The directories are for countries abroad as well as for states across the U.S.

View Handlowa ksiega adresowa Polski i Gdanska, a 1923 commercial directory for the entire country of Poland, including Gdansk (Danzig), at <http://genealogyindexer.org/directories>

A 596-page white pages directory of Warsaw and environs on the eve of World War II (1938/39) can be viewed at <http://genealogyindexer.org/directories>. It offers a listing of businesses and advertisements arranged by product or service, e.g., office machines, sporting goods, physicians. This directory should be of special interest to researchers who lost relatives, friends, and/or property during the war.

Paper copies of the following can be obtained at the New York Public Library's General Research Division.

- Foreign telephone directories
- U.S. and Canadian city and telephone directories (stored off-site).

## **Location**

The New York Public Library  
Humanities and Social Sciences Library  
5th Avenue and 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10018-2788  
Reference: (212) 930-0830  
[www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org)

## Other Locations

City directories from cities around the U.S. for the 1920's and 1930's can be found at National Archives and Records Administration regional branches and the headquarters in Washington, D.C. See [www.archives.gov/locations/](http://www.archives.gov/locations/) for the addresses of regional branches.

New York City Directories can also be found at these locations:

- New York City Municipal Archives
- New York Genealogical and Biographical Society Library
- New-York Historical Society Library
- Brooklyn Historical Society Library
- Brooklyn Public Library, Business Library
- Brooklyn Public Library, Central Library [Brooklyn directories only]
- Queensborough Public Library, Long Island Division
- Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, Library and Archives (Staten Island only)
- New York State Library
- National Archives—Northeast Region

For the addresses and contact information for these libraries, see *Genealogical Resources in New York*, published by the Jewish Genealogical Society, Inc., or the JGS web site at [www.jgsny.org/resource1.htm](http://www.jgsny.org/resource1.htm) .