Tips and Tricks for Using City Directories for Genealogical Research- Nick Cimino- www.ancestorpuzzles.com

Introduction and Context

1. City Directories are an indispensable tool for researching the family history of your urban ancestors
2. U.S. City Directories is one of the largest databases on Ancestry.com
3. OCR for text recognition is a limited tool
4. A City Directory is much more than a list of names
5. Strategies for researching City Directories are required
6. Presentation Overview

Overview Ancestry.com Database- U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995

1. Alphabetical list of citizens- names of the heads of households, addresses, and occupational information
2. To see what cities and years are currently available, use the browse table
3. Use the page forward function in the image viewer to find the table of contents
4. This collection was created using a new OCR indexing method that improves searching and results. The records were not transcribed.
5. Browse Table
6. Searching City and Area Directories
7. Directories were created for salesmen, merchants, and other interested in contacting residents of an area. They are arranged alphabetically giving lists of names and addresses.
8. In this collection, you'll find street directories, business advertisements, maps, hotel listings, lists of government officials, and information about charitable organizations, churches, cemeteries, and more.

Tips

1. Once you've located someone in a city directory, enter their street address in quotation marks into the keyword field of the Card Catalog to bring up other residents of that address.
2. Because directory records can place someone in a specific location in a particular year, they're often especially useful in tracking a person's whereabouts between census years.
3. If you have trouble finding someone, try searching by their last name only. Since the entries are alphabetical, you'll be able to see all the people with that last name. If the person's first name is abbreviated, you should be able to find them by skimming through the entries with that surname.
4. It's best not to rely solely on the names in directories, since many people share names. Cross-check addresses and occupations with information from censuses to ensure the name you find in a city directory matches your ancestor.
5. Multiple directories were sometime published for the same city in the same year; when you find one directory, check for more.

6. Widows are often listed with husband's name in parentheses in city directories. Narrow down a husband's date of death by locating the last directory in which the husband appeared and the first directory that lists the wife as a widow. Widows can sometimes be divorcees posing as widows.

Four Common Hispanic Surnames- U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

1) Garcia [Overall #6]   2) Rodriguez   [Overall #9]
3) Martinez [Overall #10]   4) Hernandez [Overall #11]

SOURCE: https://www2.census.gov/topics/genealogy/2010surnames/surnames.pdf

Demographic Context – Houston

1. 1900 – 500 people of Mexican origin
2. 1910 – 2,000 people of Mexican origin
3. 1910 – 78,800 Total Population

Six Things to Find in City Directories

1. Your People, 2. Your Places, 3. Churches & Clerics, 4. Cemeteries, 5. Ads & Business Listings, 6. Historical Information

Resources

- Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

- Ancestry.com. *Six Things to Find in City Directories* [PDF document on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.; https://www.ancestrycdn.com/legacy/offer/learning-center/2012/city_directories_short.pdf

- U.S. Census Bureau *Frequently Occurring Surnames in the 2010 Census* [PDF document on-line] https://www2.census.gov/topics/genealogy/2010surnames/surnames.pdf

- En.Wikipedia.org. *History of Mexican Americans in Houston* [Online encyclopedia]

- Treviño, Robert R. *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston.* UNC Press Books, February 27, 2006