

A Trifecta of Sources:

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Histories: Local, County, and State
City Directories
Sanborn Fire Maps



Histories: Local, County, and State

A wealth of genealogical information can be found in the histories written where your ancestors lived. Many of the histories for this presentation were written during the late 1800's and are copyright free. Many of these histories were published from 1870 to 1920.

Several web sites have listings which may help in your search efforts.

Missouri Digital Heritage: County History Project

<http://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/mocohist>

Joe Beine, a former St. Louis resident, has several genealogical guides available online. His *Online County Histories, Biographies & Indexes - USA* has a wealth of links to webs sites. He updates his sites regularly. The URL for the site is

<https://www.genealogybranches.com/countyhistories.html>

Bibliographies of county histories for various states can be found with a simple Google search for 'name of state' county histories.

Google Books is an excellent source for histories. In lieu of downloading the entire book you can do a search for the individual or locality of interest, then copy the page with the information. I advise that you also copy the title page for your citation information. You probably will have better luck with *Google Books* when looking for city histories, rather than using the standard Google search engine. The URL for *Google Books* is

books.google.com

Available at Amazon, and found at both the St. Louis City Library and the St. Louis County Library, is P. William Filby's *Bibliography of American County Histories*, published in 2000. This book lists over 5,000 county histories.

City Directories

A great source for census substitution especially for the years between 1880 to 1900 due to the loss of the 1890 census.

A few things to remember when using city directories:

1. The information found for a specific year was usually obtained by the company during the previous year.
2. A city, especially large cities, may have more than one city directory. It is important to have an accurate citation for the directory with the complete name, publisher and year.
3. Many of these directories are being digitized and placed online.
4. If you are lucky, you can obtain information such as occupation and other dwellers.
5. Individuals may not be listed every year. Do not be satisfied with one year or a few years. Check a few years after the last year found as they may show up again.
6. Lists of addresses and names of businesses, cemeteries, churches, schools, hospitals, fraternal organizations, plus other organizations may be found.

Web sites for city directories

Missouri Digital Heritage: Missouri City Directories

<https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/CityDirectories>

St. Louis Mercantile Library: St. Louis City Directories +

<http://www.umsl.edu/mercantile/research/research-guides/directories.html>

Online Historical Directories Website

<https://sites.google.com/site/onlinedirectorysite/>

Of course there are other sites but I found these three portals good for St. Louis, Missouri and points beyond. You can always do a Google search for the specific locality. Example: (use quotation marks) "New York City Directories"

Sanborn Fire Maps

Started in 1867, the Sanborn Fire Maps were created for insurance purposes. The maps were done for about 12,000 cities and continued until about 1970. These maps provide a wealth of information for family history research. Along with the Sanborn Maps, there are also some “non-Sanborn” maps available at some sites.

***Be forewarned that some of the maps are extremely large when you attempt to download them.

Original Sanborn Fire Maps were color coded by a buildings exterior material - blue for stone, yellow for wood, pink for brick, gray for metal and drab olive for adobe. Some web sites have black and white versions, which obviously makes determining building material more difficult.

The wikipedia site explains the history and importance of Sanborn Fire Maps.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanborn_Maps

Library of Congress: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps at
<https://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn/>

No one site will have all the Sanborn Fire Maps. Library of Congress has many but some years are missing and not all towns are available.

Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository: Has a rather impressive listing of Sanborn Fire Maps at:
<https://tinyurl.com/y4kftyay>

Once you click on a map, look to the bottom for the date.

University of Missouri: Sanborn Fire Maps
<https://dl.mospace.umsystem.edu//mu/islandora/object/mu:138690>

If all else fails, just Google it. Location + Sanborn Fire Maps. Try variations in you search, such as St.Louis Mo instead of St. Louis Missouri or Saint instead of St.

Unfortunately, St. Louis County cities are difficult to find online. You may have to revert to a black and white microfilm option, if available.

Environmental Data Resources, Inc. now owns Sanborn Maps. You need an account, with a log-in, to buy maps. **Since Sanborn Maps are being digitized and placed online by a variety of internet sources, you should search for a free copy of the desired map.**

EDR owns the entire collection. You must go to their website to contact about purchasing and the pricing of Sanborn Maps. I have not used their site to purchase any maps.

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