

Historical Directories

HISTORICAL DIRECTORIES, www.historicaldirectories.org, is a digital library of local and trade directories for England and Wales, from 1750 to 1919. It contains high quality reproductions of relatively rare books — essential tools for research

into local and genealogical history. The collection focuses on three decades: The 1850s, the 1890s and the 1910s.

Personally, I have used this website to confirm where certain ancestors lived, to see how they were listed in the directories and whether their occupa-

tion, location or extended family changed. I have also used the site to locate hard-to-find family members.

The website is straightforward to use and very powerful. You have three search options: Find by Location, Find by Decade and Find by Keywords.

FIND BY LOCATION allows you to identify the county in England that you are interested in, or you can simply select Wales. When you choose a county, you will see a list of appropriate directories: Title, Location, Decade and Key Name (Author). You can click on any of the

issue, as can the sequencing of names, etc. And, for those hard-to-read pages, you can zoom in and out on the image.

When you do a search, you will be told how many hits there were and then you can sequentially visit each hit. On each page, the search word or phrase will be highlighted in yellow. This is a very nice feature in that you don't have to read the whole page to find the entries that interest you.

You can view the directory page as a PDF, which you can also save or print.

FIND BY DECADE allows you to look at England and Wales as a whole from before the 1850s through to the 1910s. As a genealogist, this has probably been the least valuable of the search options, but for historians and social scientists, it is invaluable.

FIND BY KEYWORDS is the most powerful tool. You can be as broad or specific as you like. You can choose Location and/or Decade and/or Key Name (Directory Author) and/or your own keywords. Whether your ancestor has a unique name, unique occupation, lived in a little village or the exact opposite, the Keywords search gives you some options to consider. Frequently, you will get too many hits and then you will find yourself narrowing your search.

I have had great success finding some families and less success with others. I have been able to track families through a county for decades and follow them as they moved. If you are researching in England and/or Wales, this really is a valuable resource and, if



headings to order the directory list appropriately (e.g. alphabetically based on author or title, sequentially on decade, etc.). You are given a choice to either visit the directory or select Fact File, which tells you more about the directory.

Once on the directory pages, you can either browse or search the directory. Remember that when searching directories, name variants become an

you are like me, it is fun to see how everyone listed themselves.

A closing note: The funding for this project ended in October 2004 and, at that time, the addition of new material stopped. The site will remain a free resource until October 2007.