

Trade Directories

Today, if we are looking for goods and services we might use a website or a local newspaper or magazine. Those of us who are somewhat older will remember Yellow Pages and the like. However, such sources of information are nothing new and before the advent of the above, local trade directories were a common resource for local people and services.

These were published in book form as commercial enterprises by a number of publishers. Businesses had to pay to appear – which means that these records are not complete. Nevertheless, they provide an excellent source of information on your ancestors and the environment in which they lived.

The publication of these directories started in the second-half of the 18th century, initially just for the large cities but gradually spreading to cover smaller communities on a county-wide basis.

Typically, a trade directory will include the following types of information:

- Description of the town or city
- Details of officials such as the mayor, aldermen and councillors, magistrates and coroners
- Information on facilities such as schools, hospitals, banks, post offices and carrier services.
- Directories: classified (by trade), street directory, details of the local gentry

This might give some interesting information on the place where your ancestor lived. For example, the Durham Directory and Almanac for 1854¹ includes shows that Durham city then had, amongst other things:

- 93 Inns and Public Houses
 - These include the Shakespeare Tavern at 63 Saddler Street, which is still going strong today. In 1854 the Landlord was Thomas Bailes.
- 24 Butchers
- 14 Cheesemongers and Bacon factors
- 3 Lemonade Manufacturers
- 2 Mustard Manufacturers

If your ancestor was in business, you can follow their listing over time to see how long it lasted and how it evolved. You can also trace how certain businesses and premises changed hands.

My Bradshaw ancestors owned and ran a small earthenware pottery in Whittington Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. Over the years I have made various investigations into the origins of this pottery and its life before it came into the hands of my family.

¹ <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4> 3/12/2019

The earliest reference to the pottery I have identified so far is to the "Stone Bottle Works" which was founded by Aaron Madin in 1818^{2,3}. Aaron and pottery then appeared in the following:

Pigot's National Directory, North England and North Wales	1828	Earthenware Manufacturer (& stone bottle, & ground ware), Whittington Moor. ⁴
White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Derbyshire and Sheffield	1857	Earthenware Manufacturer, Whittington Moor ⁵ .

Using Trade Directories in combination with newspapers – another invaluable source of information on businesses – I been able able to trace the site of our family business through its career as a pottery, a bottling plant for beer and aerated water, and back to a pottery. Kelly's Trade Directories in Chesterfield Library were particularly useful in identifying when the Bradshaws bought the site. Up to 1922 it is listed as Clark and Mottishaw but in 1925 the entry is replaced by that for John Bradshaw and Sons, so John and his sons must have bought the pottery between 1922 and 1925.

Finding Trade Directories

Public libraries and county record offices generally hold a good collection of trade directories for their local area.

There are online collections available on the following:

- University of Leicester. Special Collections
 - <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4> Free
- www.ancestry.co.uk ££
- www.findmypast.co.uk ££
- www.thegenealogist.co.uk ££

The material on each site differs so you may need to check the details to find the best for you.

Hint & Tips

- You had to pay to appear in a directory – not every person or business will appear.
- There was a time-lag between gathering the data and publication of the directory. This could be significant – 12 months or so. Hence, there may have been changes to the details between data gathering and publication. For example, a person may appear even though they have died or a business might appear under its old, rather than its new, name.
- The free trade directories available via the University of Leicester are an excellent resource – you should probably start there.
- Searching trade directories can be clumsy – if you find one that covers the area and time period of interest, I suggest that you browse rather than search.

Disclaimer: This document is intended as a guide to get you started with researching your family history. It is not intended to be comprehensive and Cameo Family History does not accept responsibility for errors and omissions.

² <http://www.oldminer.co.uk/pottery.html>. 3/12/2018

³ <https://archive.org/stream/ceramicartofgreao2jewiuoft#page/n5/mode/2up> 3/12/2019

The Ceramic Art of Great Britain, Volume 2, Chapter VV, page 124, Llewellynn Jewitt, F. S. A., Virtue and Co. Limited, 1878

⁴ UK, City and County Directories, 1766 – 1946 www.ancestry.co.uk 3/12/2019

⁵ UK, City and County Directories, 1766 – 1946 www.ancestry.co.uk 3/12/2019