

Extracting Ancestors From City Directories

[Video Link to Extracting Ancestors from City Directories](#)

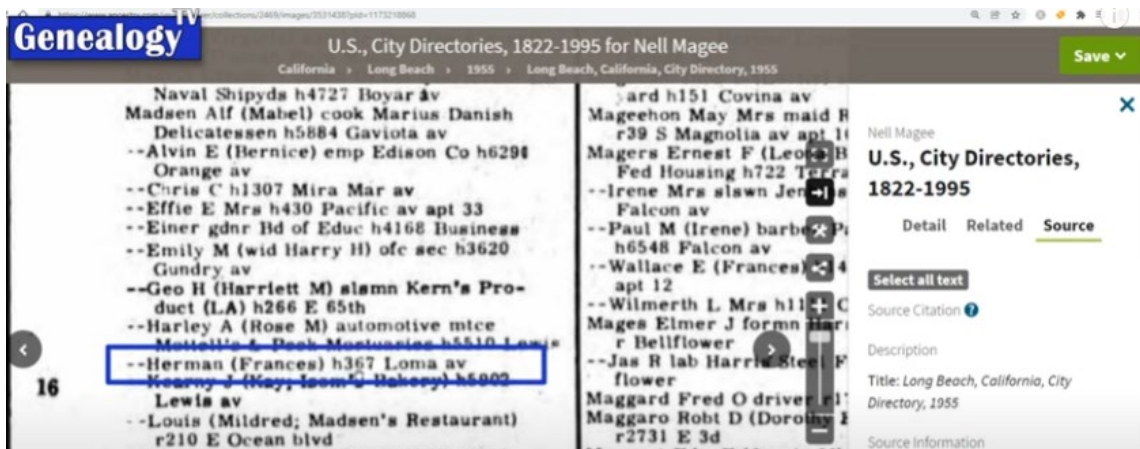
Extracting data from city directories can provide you with powerful information. When combined with a powerful strategy, you can really find your ancestors quickly. If you are not used to working with spreadsheet filters or how to break down brick walls, these two episodes will give you a better understanding of how to find all the ancestors in a community.

Here are two other videos with similar techniques.



Getting Started

You will need to access your Ancestry account, as well as open a blank Excel document. You can also use FamilySearch and Excel, or FamilySearch and Google sheets. Pick the software you are used to using. Start with any ancestor on Ancestry or FamilySearch that has a city directory saved as a source. Here I have selected a 1955 city directory for my ancestor, Herman Miller Madsen.



GenealogyTV.org



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Remember that directory entries are in alphabetical order. You will need to **find the surname** and then look under it for the various first names. When looking at the 1964 directory, Herman was at the same address on Loma Avenue.

Locate the Information

Before you do any work on a blank spreadsheet you will want to **save it with a name** that identifies the information you are gathering. I named this one "MADSEN Herman in City Directories."

Return to the Ancestry city directory image and click on the **people icon** at the bottom. This will show you the text for all the information listed in the image.

Click to the left of "Name" in the text area. **Holding your mouse key down**, scroll down to the bottom, which will highlight all the names listed.

Once they are highlighted, you can CTRL-C to copy it.



Name	Gender	Residence Year	Street Address	Residence Place	Death Date	Occupation
Marvin C. Macklin	Male	1955		Long Beach, California		Engineer
Dorothy B Macklin	Female	1955		Long Beach, California		
Aircraft Macklin		1955	Qlft F. 63d	Long Beach, California		
Mrs Sarah Macklin	Female	1955	745 E Ocean blvd apt 108	Long Beach, California		Employee
Margaret Macklin	Female	1955	16th	Long Beach, California		
William L. Macklin	Male	1955	16th	Long Beach, California		Painter
Frances T Mackner	Female	1955		Long Beach, California		
Rudolph R Mackner	Male	1955		Long Beach, California		Employee
Mrs Hazel Maclachlin	Female	1955	721 E 7th apt 212	Long Beach, California		
David S MacLagan	Male	1955	740 Dawson av	Long Beach, California		
Mona M. Maclean	Female	1955	740 Dawson av	Long Beach, California		
Sybil		1955	21 La Verne av	Long Beach, California		
Dor		1955		Long Beach, California		
Rita	Female	1955	234 E 47th	Long Beach, California		
Donald	Male	1955	234 E 47th	Long Beach, California		Painter
Donald A Maclean		1955		Long Beach, California		Construction Worker

Now it is time to open a spreadsheet...

Working With Spreadsheets

Note: This paste function only works on more recent versions of Excel. It also can be done using Google Sheets and using Paste, Special, Values Only.

Now you will want to return to your blank spreadsheet. You don't want to use the very first cell, A:1 so that you can put the year there.

Once I added the year 1955 to the first cell, I was ready to paste the text in from the directory. Click on the cell to the right of 1955 and **right-click** so you can "**Paste Special**" and select "**Text**." This will fill each of the columns in with the data you copied.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	1955	Name	Gender	Residence	Street Ad	Residence	Death Dat	Occupatio	Spouse	Publicatio	Title		
2		Agency Collection		1955		Long Beach, California				Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
3		It Away Throw		1955		Long Beach, California				Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
4		Blvd Bellflower		1955		Long Beach, California				Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
5		Calif Bellflower		1955		Long Beach, California				Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
6		George W Male		1955		Long Beach, Californ	Mechanic	Ellt A Mac		Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
7		Ellt A Mac Female		1955		Long Beach, California		George W		Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
8		Shipyards Mackley		1955	4560 Gunc	Long Beach, California				Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
9		George W Male		1955	4560 Gunc	Long Beach, Californ	Employee			Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			
10		Marvin C Male		1955		Long Beach, Californ	Engineer	Dorothy B		Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955			

Now you can **select the cell with the year 1955 and click on CTRL-Enter** (if you want the entire column filled) or use the bottom right corner to drag the year down and fill in that column so that each name has the year next to it.

About City Directories

Most city directories were created every other year. Using the **drop-down menu** under the year 1955 (top of screen), you can select the next available directory, which in this case was 1957. If you already have that directory record saved to the Ancestry profile, bring it up from there.

The wonderful thing about these directories is that they can be used to fill in a lot of gaps, where other records are not available. You could see if your ancestor lived in the same place, and if a spouse was listed as being in the home with them.

Now you will want to repeat the process of copying the text from other directories you want to add to your spreadsheet. You don't need to copy the headings this time (Name, Gender, etc.) you can simply copy the data below it. If you don't want to keep track of everyone on that page, you can simplify it further by just copying the row that your ancestor's surname. For my ancestor, I noticed there were several Madison entries. If the name was taken down incorrectly, or the spelling had changed for that branch; it could be that they were related to my Madsen ancestors. Now you will want to go to the **second cell** in the first empty row and **right-click** again so that you can **Paste Special** and choose **Text**. (See the example on the next page.)

1955	Bill Wilson	1955	7 -aM
1955	Mess Wine	1955	
1955	Book Encyclopedia W	1955	77' 77
1955	Review Statistical	1955	
1955	Government-City Cou	1955	
1955	Valuation Assessed	1955	
1955	Rates-City Tax	1955	
1955	Port-Long Beach Harl	1955	10 mil
1955	Dorothy E Female	1955	

Occasionally you will find a directory created by a different publisher, so your columns will not line up. In that case you will need to cut the text that shows up in the wrong column and paste it into the column, so it lines up with your first set of names. Once you have that information lined up, type the year 1957 under the last 1955 and **drag it down** to fill all the occupied rows.



Handy tip: You can click on the column heading "A" and while **holding down** your mouse key, drag it over to the last column (here that is "M"). This will highlight those columns you are using. Release your mouse key and **hover over the right edge** of your last column, until you see the line with the arrows through it. **Double-click** and it will resize all your columns to the maximum width of the text.

Using Spreadsheet Filters

Once you are done adding all the information you need, you will want to add a filter to the spreadsheet so that you can sort it. This is easier than you think. **Holding your mouse key down, drag it across the headings** until you get to the last one. Release your mouse and click on the **Sort & Filter** button and choose **Filter**.

The screenshot shows the Excel ribbon with the 'Sort & Filter' button highlighted. The 'Filter' option is selected in the dropdown menu. The spreadsheet below shows the following data:

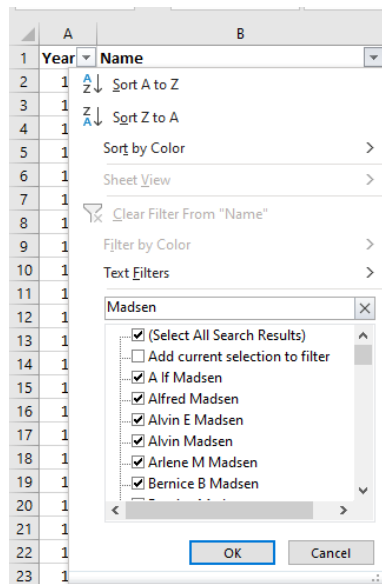
I	J	K	L
Spouse	Publication Title		
	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
Ellit A Mackley	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
George W Mackley	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
Dorothy B MackIn	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		
Marvin C MackIn	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955		

That added a drop-down arrow at every one of the heading columns.

Normally you could just click on the filter icon in the cell by the **Name** heading and select **Sort A to Z**. Because the directories combined the first name and surname you will want to use the **Text Filters** field, type in the surname you are looking for. I typed in Madsen, and it selected all the people with that surname. Once I clicked **OK**, only the rows with the word Madsen in them were visible. You can type just the first name also.



Handy tip: If you also want to search for any similar names (remember those Madisons?) you can type in **part of the surname** and get more returns. I used **Mad** and it gave me Madden, Madley, Madison, and Madsen.



Filtering Your Data

You've now seen how you can filter the information in several different ways.

- **Surname** – Look for a specific surname
- **Partial Surname** – Type in part of the surname to find variations
- **First Name** – Look for a specific first name (this works for the spouse as well!)
- **Gender** – Look for all males in those directory entries
- **Address** – Look for the street name your ancestor lived on

In the example below, it shows filters are turned on (arrows). The Text Filter Searches were for “Madsen” (Name) and “Loma” (Street) specifically.

1	Year	Name	Gender	Residence Year	Street Address	Residence Place	Death Date	Occupation	Spouse	Publication Title
333	1955	Frances Madsen	Female	1955	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Herman Madsen	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955
334	1955	Herman Madsen	Male	1955	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Frances Madsen	Long Beach, California, City Directory, 1955
545	1961	Frances Madsen	Female	1961	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Herman Madsen	Long Beach, City Directory, 1961
546	1961	Herman Madsen	Male	1961	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Frances Madsen	Long Beach, City Directory, 1961
861	1963	Frances Madsen	Female	1963	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Herman Madsen	Long Beach, City Directory, 1963
862	1963	Herman Madsen	Male	1963	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Frances Madsen	Long Beach, City Directory, 1963
1086	1964	Herman Madsen	Male	1964	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Frances Madsen	Long Beach, City Directory, 1964
1087	1964	Frances Madsen	Female	1964	367 Loma av	Long Beach, California			Herman Madsen	Long Beach, City Directory, 1964

Now it is time for you to give it a try.
Happy Hunting!