Tips and Tricks for Searching the Online City Directories

Online City Directories: [https://box2.nmtvault.com/Hennepin2/](https://box2.nmtvault.com/Hennepin2/)

Minneapolis: 1859-1944 (only published in even years in 1940s)
St. Louis Park: 1933-1977 (incomplete)

City directories allow users to find former city residents, their occupations, places of employment and spouses. Local businesses are also listed by name and subject category. The directories can also be searched by address for those researching house or building history.

(Example from the 1925 Minneapolis City Directory)

Use the “Simple Search” tab for searching across all directories:

I. General Tips

- Searches are not case-sensitive. You can enter your search terms in all capital, mixed case, or all lower case letters.
- **Your search string must exactly match the text as it appears in the city directory.**
- You may use wildcard characters like * to substitute for any number of characters or ? to substitute for a single unknown character. For example you could type "Peter*" as a search term, which would return "Peter, Peters, Peterson, Petersen, Petersburg, Peterman, etc.". Using the ? in a search term like "Pe?erson" would return "Peterson, Pederson". You cannot however use the * or ? as the first character of a search.
- Boolean search terms like AND, OR, NOT, HAS cannot be used in searches unless part of the phrase you are searching.
- Quotation marks (“”) cannot be used in searches to search for a phrase. The search already defaults to phrase searching.
- City directories for additional cities will be added over time. Deselect unwanted cities to help narrow your results. Currently city directories only include Minneapolis and St. Louis Park.
II. Searching Addresses
Your search string must exactly match the text as it appears in the city directory.

Common Abbreviations

- **Avenue**
  - Use: Av
  - NOT: Ave, Ave., Avenue
  - Example: 3224 44th Av (NOT: 3224 44th Ave. S)

- **Street**
  - Use: [leave blank]
  - NOT: St, St., Street
  - Example: 1130 Adams (NOT: 1130 Adams St. NE)

- **Numbers**
  - 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th (Note: second and third do not have an ‘n’. This applies to streets like 43d, 52d, etc.)

Resident Types

‘b’, ‘r’ and ‘h’ precede addresses to indicate the resident type. These abbreviations change meaning through the years. In early directories, ‘r’ means resident and ‘b’ means boarder. In later directories, ‘r’ means roomer/renter and ‘h’ means homeowner/householder. Check the abbreviations guide (see next page for instructions) if unsure.

**NOTE:** Occasionally, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, the type of residence will immediately precede the address number, without a space. In these instances, the address will not appear in your searches unless you type an ‘h’ or ‘r’ before the address.

**Example:** Search “h4521 Oakland” (searching just 4521 Oakland (built in 1932) will not return results for 1934, 1936, 1937, 1939, or 1942).
III. Searching People
Your search string must exactly match the text as it appears in the city directory.

People can be challenging to search because most directories do not list the first and last name in sequence. Usually all names following the first person on the page or column with the last name will use " in place of repeating the last name.

In the above example, “Hendrickson Henry” is listed first, followed by all the other people with the last name Hendrickson: Henry, Herbert, Hugo, Hulda, Hylgard, etc.

In order to search for someone like Ivan Hendrickson, you would need to first find the listings for all the Hendricksons (keyword search: “Hendrickson”), then browse through alphabetically until you reach the name you’re seeking.

Searching for Women
Finding women can be even more challenging. Women are often only listed as spouses in parenthesis beside their husband’s name. In early city directories, through the 1920s, spouses were not listed at all. Women will often be listed by name if they held an occupation or were widowed.
IV. City Directory Abbreviations

Abbreviations are used for names, job titles, businesses, street directions, and type of resident (boarder/renter or resident/homeowner).

Use the magnifying glass icon to search within each directory, as abbreviations can change from year to year. Type “abbreviations” then click search. Use the previous and next hit arrows until you reach the page of abbreviations.

(Previous and next hit: When arrows are yellow, more hits for your search term(s) exist in the directory.)

(Abbreviations from the 1919 Minneapolis City Directory. The meanings may change in other years.)