CITY DIRECTORIES AS "IDEAL" CENSUSES:
SLOVAK IMMIGRANTS AND PITTSBURGH'S
EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DIRECTORIES AS
A TEST CASE

June Granatir Alexander

During the past two decades "mobility" has emerged as an important conceptual theme in American history. Examining the geographic mobility of Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars have found that cities and towns experienced high rates of population turnover. The era has been described as one of "men in motion," with a floating proletariat drifting into and out of American cities and towns. And in the decades before World War I, immigrants comprised an important segment of this working class on the move. Several studies of immigrant mobility have, thus, significantly challenged the traditional concept of immigrant neighborhoods as ghettos trapping a city's foreign population. These studies argue that immigrant neighborhoods housed volatile, not stagnant, populations.¹

Historians who have investigated spatial and social mobility have provided a needed corrective view of urban life at the turn of the twentieth century. However, by focusing on mobility, these analyses have generated further controversy over the nature of immigrant neighborhoods and immigrant adaption to American society. In the recent past, some students of American immigration history have attempted to delve into the more stable aspects of immigrant communities and have approached immigrant neighborhoods from a different perspective than have mobility studies. These more recent examinations reveal varying degrees of skepticism about the findings of earlier analyses of mobility in America. Examining Buffalo's Italians, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin questioned conclusions that high rates of population turnover were characteristic of immigrant neighborhoods. Significantly, she also speculated that city directories — primary sources on which several mobility studies rest — were incomplete in their coverage of Buffalo's Italian immigrants.

Even some scholars who utilize city directories have noted serious problems of inaccuracy in these annual publications. In 1969, while lauding the research potential of city directories, Peter R. Knights warned that scholars "should not hesitate to look these gift horses in the mouth." A chief concern of researchers is that the compilers missed people.

The issue of missed persons is not, according to some scholars, a major problem. Stephan Thernstrom, with support from Knights, contended that the discrepancies between earlier United States cen-

---


3 *Family and Community*, 78-80.


5 Stephan Thernstrom found that Boston's 1880 directories included only 73 percent of the adult members of a sample he had derived for study from the 1880 U.S. Census. Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 283-84.
suses and city directories stem from the different goals of each enumeration. Decennial censuses, Thernstrom concluded, offer "actual" counts designed to include all persons present at the time of the canvass. City directories, on the other hand, represent "ideal" counts that aimed to determine the number of "residents" a city actually had. Hence, transients and recent arrivals were not included in city directories. Thernstrom explains, however, that compilers did not explicitly state this policy; rather, scholars must infer that the directories' function was to list city "residents" and persons "whom one might reasonably expect" to be in the city when the directory was published. Compilers, it is alleged, imposed an "implicit residence requirement" that governed inclusion in the yearly directories. This residence requirement had the effect of excluding the more transient members of society while including those who had been in a city for "some time" and who were "relatively settled." 6

Thus, as ideal censuses, city directories are, the argument goes, reliable sources for determining the social or residential mobility of a city's long-term or more well settled residents. Is that the case? How comprehensive were city directories as "ideal" counts? Did they miss long-term residents, especially immigrants who remained in the city "any length of time"? While urban historians have used a variety of statistical techniques and data in an attempt to gauge mobility, and other scholars are going beyond the "mobility" model in an attempt to understand the immigrant experience in America, the explanation that city directories function as ideal censuses remains as yet essentially untested.

Scholars have generally attempted to determine the accuracy of city directories by comparing entries to manuscript census schedules. School, death, or other public records have also been used to supplement or check some directory data. 7 These records, however, offer in-

---

6 This explanation is developed in ibid., 285-88, and in Thernstrom and Knights, "Men in Motion," 43, n. 16. For other examples of historians who optimistically accepted the usefulness of city directories for tracing studies, see, Barton, Peasants and Strangers, 196-97, n. 13, and Kessner, The Golden Door, xiv-xv and n. 9, 112-13, 141-42, 153-55, 166. Kessner expressed far more reservations about the directories' reliability for tracing studies than did Barton.

sufficient or only periodic data for ascertaining a person's yearly address or length of residence in a city. The purpose of this study is to use the membership rosters of a local Slovak fraternal organization to evaluate the reliability of Pittsburgh's 1902-1910 city directories as accurate counts of the city's residents. Using residential information derived from membership records of Branch 50 of the First Catholic Slovak Union, located in Pittsburgh's South Side, this study attempts to determine how accurately Pittsburgh's early twentieth-century directories reflected the residential and migration patterns of lodge members. An examination of the mobility patterns of a segment of the South Side's pre-1910 population offers one test case assessing the validity of Pittsburgh's directories as tracing instruments and sources of population data for immigrants who remained for some time in the city. The following discussion also offers a profile of the geographical mobility of a portion of the South Side's foreign population that tempers the image that immigrant neighborhoods served as mere way stations.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the South Side, located south of the Monongahela River, was one of Pittsburgh's most highly industrialized neighborhoods. The area owed its continual industrial growth in part to a constant influx of immigrants. Germans dominated immigration into the South Side during most of the nineteenth century, but the South Side became more ethnically diverse as the origins of America's immigrants shifted from western to eastern Europe. By 1910, Wards 16, 17, and 18, located in the South Side, claimed nearly 15 percent of Pittsburgh's foreign-born population.8

Slovaks from northern Hungary began to arrive in Pittsburgh's South Side during the 1880s. In December 1891, fifteen of these Slovaks formed the Society of Saint Anthony of Padua, a mutual-aid organization affiliated with the First Catholic Slovak Union as Branch 50.9 There are no extant membership records for the lodge before 1902. In January of that year, however, the lodge bookkeeper compiled a membership roster, the Učtovnica, that listed the name, birthplace, date

---


of lodge affiliation, and current address of each member. During the next five years, the bookkeeper noted the same information for all new members. He also recorded address changes for lodge members and indicated when members left Pittsburgh, were expelled, or quit the lodge. In January 1907, a new bookkeeper completely updated Branch 50's membership roster. Besides listing current addresses for all active members, he deleted the names of persons who had quit the lodge. During each succeeding year, this bookkeeper completely redid the roster and recorded current addresses for all members. Because the Učovnica provides yearly address updates, it is a valuable source for tracing the settlement patterns of Branch 50 members and for evaluating the accuracy of Pittsburgh's early twentieth-century city directories.

The procedure followed for this analysis involved comparing the residential data from Branch 50's membership rosters with information in Pittsburgh's city directories. In order to compare roster data with directory entries, the names and addresses of all men belonging to Branch 50 between 1902 and 1910 were transferred to index cards. Subsequent address changes, together with the year each change was recorded, were copied onto the cards. A search of the city directories was then made for the name of each member who lived in Pittsburgh. The years searched varied for each member. For the men who remained lodge members from 1902-1910, yearly directories covering this period were examined. For Slovaks who were not members for this entire period, directories coinciding with actual membership tenure as well as those for one year before and after lodge affiliation were examined. This procedure was followed because a goal of this analysis was to test the comprehensiveness of Pittsburgh's directories by comparing their entries with a source that provides reasonably reliable

---


11 It is possible that the 1902-1907 bookkeeper was not as conscientious about recording intracity address changes as this later officer was. Still, the 1902-1907 rosters indicate whether persons, who remained members, also remained in Pittsburgh.

12 Directories were not searched for the names of members who lived outside Pittsburgh in 1902. The directories also were not searched for Slovaks who joined after 1902 but who did not live in Pittsburgh when they joined and who did not subsequently move to the city prior to 1910.

13 Directories were checked for every year of membership prior to 1902 for those members who joined before 1902 and who remained members in that year.
corroborative residential data for each year under study.\textsuperscript{14}

Locating the names of Branch 50 members in Pittsburgh directories involved looking for them in three ways: (1) under the exact Slovak spelling; (2) under slight spelling variations within the same alphabetical division as the first letter of the members' last names; and (3) in alphabetical divisions different than the first letter of some members' surnames but which were the English phonetic equivalent of Slovak letters.\textsuperscript{15} If a member's name was not listed in any of the ways described above, he was considered as not included in the directory. In all cases, a member's first name (or English equivalent), together with the roster address, verified that a person listed in the directory was the Branch 50 member being sought.

Branch 50's 1902 membership list suggests that Slovaks had moved into and out of Pittsburgh at a relatively high rate. In January 1902, the lodge had eighty-five members: thirty-five of these members resided in the South Side; four others lived elsewhere in Pittsburgh; forty-four men lived outside the city; and, for two members no 1902 address was recorded. Thus in January 1902, nearly 52 percent of Branch 50's membership lived outside Pittsburgh. It is impossible to determine from lodge records how many of these 1902 out-of-town residents had previously resided in Pittsburgh. Still, it is safe to assume that some of them had migrated in and out of the Steel City. Moreover, since the 1902 list does not include the men who quit the lodge before 1902, the number of out-migrants was probably higher than the 1902 roster implies. Thus Branch 50's Učovnica shows that, at least between 1891 and 1902, some Slovak immigrants were indeed men on the move.

From January 1902 through December 1909, an additional 148 immigrants joined South Side's Branch 50. Eighteen of these new members definitely left Pittsburgh by 1910.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, twenty other new members resided outside Pittsburgh when they joined Branch 50. Finally, another eight men, for whom no address was given when they became Branch 50 members, lived outside Pittsburgh within two years of their lodge affiliation. It is not clear if these out-of-town residents

\textsuperscript{14} Once a member simply quit the lodge there is no way to ascertain from lodge records where he lived. If a man quit the lodge by transferring to another lodge, the bookkeepers recorded where he went.

\textsuperscript{15} Problems of drastic name alterations will be discussed in more detail later, see pages 215-16 below.

\textsuperscript{16} Forty-one other men were expelled and there is no subsequent residential information for them. Another eight men apparently quit the lodge without transferring to another lodge, and their names were simply struck from the roster. One man died.
members had lived in and left Pittsburgh or if they joined Branch 50 through a friend or relative. But eighteen of these twenty-eight members lived either on Pittsburgh’s outskirts or in a nearby town or borough.

Branch 50's membership rosters suggest that the rate of its members' out-migration from Pittsburgh was lower between 1902 and 1910 than during the previous decade. Counting only those members who records show had definitely resided in Pittsburgh after January 1902 reveals that between 1902 and 1910, twenty-five, or about 16 percent, of Branch 50’s Pittsburgh membership left the Steel City. If the eight members who had no address recorded when they joined are included, the members who left Pittsburgh increases to about 20 percent.17

Although some Branch 50 members left Pittsburgh, others remained for longer periods. It is this group that is important for determining if Pittsburgh’s city directories did serve as ideal censuses. Thernstrom and Knights decided that Boston’s compilers considered persons as residents “only after” they had resided in the city for two years.18 Therefore, in order to test whether this residence requirement was applicable to Pittsburgh’s city directories, the following analysis will use a longer time limit and focus on those lodge members who stayed in the city’s South Side three or more years.19

Branch 50’s records show that between 1902 and 1910 eighty-four lodge members stayed in the South Side three or more years. The task is to discover whether city directories included these Slovaks who

---

17 Percentages based on totals of 159 and 167 respectively. Totals include pre-1902 members who lived in Pittsburgh in 1902 and also those men who joined between 1902 and 1910.

18 Knights based his conclusion on an analysis of Boston’s pre-Civil War directories. (See, Thernstrom and Knights, “Men in Motion,” 43, n. 16, but cf. Knights, “City Directories,” 6, 7.) Thernstrom was implicit but less precise with his assessment of a possible residence requirement for late nineteenth-century directories. He noted Knights’s findings as support for his argument. However, after noting Knights’s conclusion regarding a two-year residence requirement in antebellum Boston directories, Thernstrom stated only, “it is clear that long after that [1858] the directory canvass was based on a conception of who was a true resident of the community. . . .” Thernstrom seemed to prefer an ambiguous definition of “temporary residents” or “long-term residents” and avoided stating precise time limits. At one point he even seemed to imply that a ten-year residency insured a person’s inclusion. Based on his general discussion, one must reasonably conclude, however, that Thernstrom accepted two years as the residence requirement for Boston’s post-Civil War directories (see, Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians, 286-88).

19 Before 1910, nine of Branch 50’s members lived in Pittsburgh for three or more years but they did not live in the city's South Side. Since these men did not live in the same section of Pittsburgh, the sample is too meager to yield a meaningful test of the directories' coverage of other parts of the city.
remained in Pittsburgh’s South Side for a reasonable length of time and, furthermore, if the directories accurately recorded their residential mobility.

Table 1 tabulates the result of a search of Pittsburgh’s 1902-1910 directories for Branch 50’s South Side members of three or more years. The table divides Branch 50 members into two categories: (1) the directory group — those members listed in at least one directory edition between 1902 and 1910; and (2) the nondirectory group — those members not listed in any edition of the city’s directories during their 1902-1910 tenure as lodge members. As Table 1 shows, fifty-one persons of the eighty-four who stayed in the South Side three or more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Lodge membership</th>
<th>Directory group</th>
<th>Nondirectory group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33**</td>
<td>51†</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes one member who was nineteen when he joined Branch 50 and whose father was also a member. Since the son lived with the father and had the same first name, it was assumed that in the one instance when a directory listed an entry with their surname, it was for the father. In this table, the father is included in the 6-9 year directory group.

**Includes one member (6-9 year group) who lived in Pittsburgh for at least three years but left the city and then returned to Pittsburgh.

†Includes one member (6-9 year group) who lived in Pittsburgh at least two years but left the city for two years and then returned to live in Pittsburgh at least three more years.

20 For the period 1891-1897, Pittsburgh’s directories were entitled J. F. Diffenbacher’s Directory of Pittsburgh and Allegheny Cities [with the appropriate year]. For 1898-1907, the directory was compiled by R. L. Polk & Co. and entitled Pittsburgh and Allegheny Directory [with the appropriate year]. Beginning in 1908, after Pittsburgh had annexed Allegheny City, Polk still compiled the directory, but it was entitled the Pittsburgh Directory [with the appropriate year]. For this discussion, all editions of the directory will be referred to simply as the Pittsburgh Directory with the appropriate years. None of the 1891-1910 directories included a statement regarding policies governing eligibility for inclusion.
years between 1902 and 1910 were not included in city directories. Overall, the nondirectory group comprised nearly 61 percent of the Branch 50 members who lodge records reveal lived three or more years in the South Side.

Based on the limited information provided in Branch 50's rosters, there were no discernible differences between the directory and the nondirectory groups. Lodge records show that the age range for men in both categories was the same. Unfortunately, the membership rosters do not include members' occupations. The UČtovnica also does not include members' marital status or whether members' families were living in Pittsburgh.21 Thus it is not possible to determine if married men with families were perhaps more likely to be included in directories.

The date of lodge affiliation was not necessarily the date when a member arrived in Pittsburgh. Still, members' joining dates can be used as one basis for attempting to assess whether length of residence was the influential factor determining directory inclusion. Table 1 shows that members of five years or less were more likely to be excluded from city directories. It appears that if Pittsburgh's directory canvassers silently imposed a residence requirement for directory inclusion, it was more than three and perhaps as long as five years. However, even such a relatively lengthy residential requirement does not explain why 19.6 percent of the members excluded from any directory resided in Pittsburgh at least six to fifteen years prior to 1910. Certainly Pittsburgh's directories failed to include some of the city's long-term residents.

It would seem logical that an analysis of long-time members listed in the directories might be especially useful in trying to estimate how long a person had to live in the city before being considered a "resident" by directory enumerators. However, a comparison of Branch 50's members of eleven to nineteen years with persons of less than ten years membership yields puzzling results. Prior to 1910, twenty members of the directory group belonged to the lodge three to nine years; nineteen of these men were entered in a directory within four years after joining Branch 50. It appeared, however, to take longer for directory canvassers to count members who had remained in the South Side more than ten years. While five of these long-term members were entered in a directory within three years after lodge

21 It was not uncommon for Slovak men to leave their families in Hungary while they worked temporarily in the United States; see, Emily Greene Balch, Our Slavic Fellow Citizens (New York, 1910), 106-7, 119.
affiliation, the remaining eight had been members between six and eleven years before they were eligible for inclusion.

Length of residence cannot explain why members of a shorter duration were included in directories in less time than members of a longer affiliation. Some differences may well have been due to varying lengths of time in the city before joining Branch 50. However, it seems highly unlikely that the nineteen men who fell into the "short-term" category had actually been in Pittsburgh a long time while Branch 50's longer-term members (ten to nineteen years) joined the lodge close to their arrival in the city. In short, it seems questionable to maintain that length of residence accounted for the differences between these two groups.

Analysis of the sporadic manner in which Branch 50 members were listed in Pittsburgh's directories reveals a socio-economic bias. Table 2 shows that 44 percent of the men defined as laborers were included in only one pre-1911 directory. Furthermore, twelve of these laborers who lived in the city at least six to nineteen years were counted only two or three times by canvassers. A close study of these multiple listings shows they followed two patterns: in six instances, the entries occurred in consecutive years and then the members' names were deleted from subsequent editions; and in the remaining six cases, there was a span of two to five years between entries. Thus, initial inclusion by no means guaranteed that a Branch 50 laborer would be listed subsequently and consistently in city directories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Times listed in a directory</th>
<th>Years of lodge membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One of these men died.

Since there is no residential information for those members who joined before 1902, it is possible that some of the long-term members who joined before that year did not live continually in the city once they joined the lodge. However, it is highly unlikely that all or even several of these long-term members failed to stay in the city before 1902.

All occupations derived from Pittsburgh city directories.
Unlike laborers, lodge businessmen were, once listed, usually entered in subsequent editions of Pittsburgh's directories. Between 1902 and 1910, the directories listed six Branch 50 members as businessmen: two grocers, two tailors, an undertaker, and a man who was described as a saloonkeeper in 1907, entered with no occupation in 1908 and 1909, and then merely designated as a "clerk" in 1910. Once recorded in a directory, four of these men (one grocer, two tailors, and the saloonkeeper-clerk) were included in subsequent directory editions. But entries for the undertaker reveal that the directories' coverage of businessmen was also at times inconsistent. In 1902, the directory described one man merely as an "agent." By 1904, he had become a South Side undertaker and was designated as such in the 1904 directory. Although he remained an undertaker in the South Side until his death in 1911, this man was not listed in any directory from 1905 through 1911.

Since Branch 50's rosters do not include members' occupations, it cannot be determined if there were other businessmen or professionals in the lodge who were excluded from directories. Still, the available evidence suggests that Pittsburgh's city directories gave more accurate information about businessmen than about laborers. Thus in the case of South Side Slovaks, occupation seemed a more important criterion for directory inclusion than length of residence. Unquestionably, after initially being listed, Slovak businessmen were more likely than laborers to be included consistently in succeeding directory editions.

Residential mobility cannot explain the inconsistent manner in which canvassers counted Branch 50 members, especially laborers. Many of the lodge members who did change residences remained in the South Side, as will be shown later in this article. Since they stayed in the same section of the city, they should have been found by a

---

24 One of the two grocers was not listed in a directory until 1910; but, then, he did not live continually in the South Side before 1910. Lodge records show he lived in the South Side from 1903 to 1907 when he moved to Mount Washington. He returned to the South Side in late 1909 or early 1910 and opened a grocery store. He was listed in the 1910 directory as a grocer. The other grocer joined the lodge in 1891 but was not listed in a directory until 1903. By 1903, he was a grocer; his occupation before that time cannot be determined.

25 Narodné Noviny [National News], Sept. 21, 1911.

26 Another businessman, who was not a member of Branch 50 but who had lived in the South Side since at least 1901, was not correctly included in city directories. Although he was a butcher in the South Side market by 1905, this man was not included in a directory until 1909, after he had become a saloonkeeper. Slovak v Amerike [The Slovak in America], July 25, 1905; Amerikánsko-Slovenské Noviny [The American-Slovak News], Mar. 21, 1901.
canvasser at either their old or new South Side address. Usually, they were not found at either. Moreover, data culled from Branch 50's membership rosters offer evidence that canvassers inconsistently recorded even some persons who remained at the same address for a relatively long period. For example, two brothers who joined the lodge in 1891 were not listed in a city directory until 1904. These two men, both laborers, were then excluded from all subsequent editions even though they remained at the same address until at least 1910. Two other lodge laborers who stayed at their 1902 address until 1910 were also listed in only one directory.

A close analysis of the addresses of Branch 50 members offers a different profile of their residential patterns than a search of city directories would reveal. Not all of Branch 50's long-term members remained permanently at one South Side address. Still, while most address changes occurred within the South Side and often involved moving only a few house numbers or blocks, these changes were rarely recorded in directories. Between 1902 and 1910, the bookkeeper recorded a total of thirty-five intracity residence changes involving twenty-two members of the directory group. Only seven of these address changes were also recorded in city directories. Moreover, Branch 50's rosters show that between 1902 and 1910, fifty-three of the lodge's eighty-four long-term (three or more years) South Side members moved at least eighty-eight times. All but five of these moves occurred in the South Side and usually within a ten-block radius. Although some members did change addresses, it is significant that these changes took place within a relatively small area. This intracity movement represented a measure of stability within Pittsburgh's South Side Slovak population: mobility was not always out of the area. Indeed, if Branch 50's membership is representative, it appears that intraneighborhood mobility was a common feature of life and adjustment for Slovaks migrating to Pittsburgh's South Side. Yet this was a feature that Pittsburgh's city directories failed to record.

Historians have generally recognized that estimates of population turnover are subject to some statistical error. However, relying on data derived from city directories to determine rates of population turnover could lead to flawed conclusions. For example, a tracing of the thirty-three men in the directory group would yield data suggest-

28 Members of the nondirectory group followed intracity mobility patterns similar to those of the directory group. From 1902 to 1910, thirty-one men of the nondirectory group moved fifty-three times.
ing twenty-one of these men had left the city by 1910. Branch 50's membership records, however, show that before 1910 only three men in this sample had left Pittsburgh and one other had died. A check of public death records would presumably reveal the one death. Still, based on city directories, it could be estimated that nearly 64 percent of the directory group had migrated out of Pittsburgh when, in fact, only three — less than 10 percent of the sample — had departed from the city by 1910. Thus a tracing study based on city directories would conclude that a segment of Branch 50's membership was much more outwardly mobile than was actually the case.

Various explanations could account for the discrepancies between Pittsburgh's 1902-1910 city directories and Branch 50's membership records. It is always possible that some Slovaks purposely avoided anyone seeking information about them. Trying to avoid "officials" had not been uncommon in Hungary. The high rate of illiteracy among Slovaks also must have thwarted the canvassers' ability to garner accurate, complete information. These possibilities notwithstanding, directory inaccuracies appear to have been due in large measure to the canvass and compilation process. An examination of Pittsburgh's city directories, together with a comparison to Branch 50's membership rosters, points to several explanations for omissions or sporadic inclusion of persons in the directories and show the difficulty of using these publications to trace persons.

Spelling variations could account for some apparent omissions of Slovaks from city directories that could cause them to be lost in a tracing process. Researchers have long recognized that name modifications marred directory entries. Minor name modifications involving one or two letters usually can be readily detected by researchers. Most radical name changes resulting from the complete Anglicization of foreign names, on the other hand, cannot be detected by researchers. However, some "changes" that occurred in Slovak and perhaps other Slavic names can be discovered by one familiar with Slavic phonetics. Name changes for two Branch 50 members listed in Pittsburgh's directories illustrate how a person who remained in the city may well have been listed as an out-migrant.

29 See, for example, Goldstein, Patterns of Mobility, 76-79; Dennis Kelly, "Linking Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Records: A Computer Strategy," Historical Methods Newsletter 7 (Mar. 1972): 73, 75-76.

30 I could find only two Branch 50 members whose names were considerably altered in different directory entries. It is, of course, possible that more members belonged to this category and, despite trying all logical spelling and phonetic variations, I could not find their names in the directories.
Entries for Andrew Kosmač (pronounced Kosmach) offer an example of name modification in Pittsburgh’s early twentieth-century directories. Fraternal records show that in 1902, Kosmač resided on St. Michael Street; by 1903 he had moved to 33 Hackstown where he remained until at least 1910. Directory canvassers found Kosmač, but anyone looking for his name in directories would have some difficulty finding it. In 1900, he was listed as Kosmos on St. Michael Street; in 1901 and 1902 there were no listings under any reasonable name variation. In 1903, he was recorded as Andrew Kosmat, residing on Hackstown, and for the next five years he was recorded as: Kosmack, Kosmus, Kosmach, and Kosmon. Finally in 1909 the directory entry read Kosmac. Since Kosmač had changed his address between 1900 and 1903, the name differences, together with the different address listed in the 1903 directory, would have been a reasonable basis for assuming that the 1903 “Kosmat” was not the same person as the 1900 “Kosmos” entry. Hence, based on directory data, it reasonably could be concluded that Andrew “Kosmos” was an out-migrant.

The name variations for Andrew Kosmač after 1903 would probably be easily discovered by most careful researchers because the changes occurred within the same alphabetical division of the directory. Other modifications of Slavic names were more drastic and therefore harder to detect. For example, since the Slovak “W” is pronounced as an English “V,” one member was listed under “W” one year and under “V” in a later directory edition.31 The only significant move involving this member was one that transferred his name from one alphabetical section of the directory to another. However, he too would probably be designated as an out-migrant if city directories were the source primarily used.32

Other deficiencies, besides minor and major spelling errors, are evident in Pittsburgh’s early twentieth-century directories. First, the accuracy and completeness of directories varied by year. For example, the 1902 directory listed only two of Branch 50’s thirty-five South Side members. The 1905 and 1910 editions each counted just four of the lodge’s members. Although by no means complete, the other directory editions included a larger proportion of the lodge membership

31 Examples of other variations that I discovered while trying to trace other samples of Slovak names in Pittsburgh directories include interchanging the Slovak “j” and English “Y,” the Slovak “C” and English “Ch” or “tch,” the Slovak “Č” and English “Ś,” and the Slovak consonantal diphthong “ch” and English “H.”

32 He was listed only once in each alphabetical division; so in a tracing process he would be considered as an out-migrant regardless of which spelling was followed.
for their respective years. Tracing six lodge laborers who remained at the same address from 1902 to 1910 offers further evidence that directory accuracy varied by year; only two of these long-term members were listed in every directory for the period 1902 through 1910. The possibility that directory editions differed in their completeness presents problems for researchers who select intermittent or sample years for tracing studies.

A comparative analysis of Branch 50’s directory and nondirectory members does offer a partial explanation for some of the errors this examination has uncovered in Pittsburgh’s directories. Besides the previously described socio-economic bias, for the South Side, the directories also evidenced a residential bias. There was a correlation between the section of the South Side where Branch 50 members lived and their inclusion in Pittsburgh directories.

Branch 50’s “long-term” South Side members resided primarily in two sections south of the Monongahela. From 1902 to 1910, forty of these men lived only in the hilly, residential area above the Pennsylvania-Virginia Railroad tracks. The majority of these men resided on Windom Street or on an alley or street within a few blocks of Windom. Steep hills and trees, however, sometimes made these blocks rather long. Thirty-four other members lived only in the South Side’s low-lying industrial-business area. Most of these men resided on Cabot Way or on a nearby street, but a few members lived near 19th Street where Saint Matthew Slovak Catholic Church was located. Before 1910, members tended to remain in the same section of the South Side even when they changed addresses. Just ten members, including a father and a son, resided at some time in both the South Side’s residential area and in the industrial-business zone.

An analysis of Slovaks living in different sections of the South Side shows a strong bias against Slovaks who lived in the area’s low-lying industrial zone. The directories failed to include nearly 73 percent of the Branch 50 members who stayed in this section of the South Side for three or more years. Members who lived in the Windom area, on the other hand, were more likely to be entered in the directories. Fifty-seven percent of the long-term members who resided in the South Side’s hilly residential area, especially near Windom Street, were listed in at least one directory edition. Moreover, only three of

33 The total number living in this industrial area was thirty-four. Only nine of the men who resided in this area were listed in a directory. Three of these men were businessmen, a class more likely to be included in city directories. (Totals and percentage do not include persons who lived in both sections of the South Side.)
the ten persons who resided in both areas of the South Side were recorded in city directories and in each instance their inclusion occurred when they lived in the Windom area.\textsuperscript{34}

Branch 50 members who stayed at one address in this hilly residential area were, however, typically excluded from city directories. From 1902 through 1910, only one of the at least fourteen members of the directory and nondirectory groups who lived at some time at 840 Windom were recorded in a directory.\textsuperscript{35} Residents of this apparent boardinghouse were excluded from directories even in those years when Branch 50 members living in neighboring or nearby houses were counted. The exclusion of the residents of 840 Windom suggests two possibilities: that the men, most of whom were probably laborers, were not at home when canvassers arrived and, therefore, were not counted; or that canvassers did, in fact, bypass dwellings they believed housed transients, not true city residents.

The residential biases revealed by an examination of addresses for Branch 50 members indicate that perhaps some canvassers did try to count only those persons they considered city residents. Lodge members who resided in the South Side's industrial-business sections were more likely overlooked by directory canvassers than were persons living in the area's residential section. Boardinghouses in a residential area may also have been purposely ignored by compilers. Branch 50's membership rosters show, however, that if canvassers assumed that "relatively settled" residents did not live in some sections of the South Side, they erred in their assumption. Moreover, if compilers based their decisions on a "conception of who was a true resident," such conceptions were at times limited, biased, and wrong. Scholars who simply trust the conceptions of directory canvassers or who rely on the assumption that Pittsburgh's directories and perhaps those of other cities excluded transients but recorded with reasonable accuracy "residents" who remained any length of time in the city may well be basing their final conclusions on faulty assumptions and incomplete data.

Further studies of Pittsburgh's early twentieth-century directories may show they were more comprehensive in their coverage of

\textsuperscript{34} The total number living in this residential area was forty-three. (Total and percentage include the three persons who lived in both sections of the South Side.)

\textsuperscript{35} Besides this total of the directory and nondirectory groups, another seven men who were members of Branch 50 for less than three years also lived at 840 Windom. None of these men of less than three years was included in directories.
other areas of the Steel City. Nevertheless, the foregoing analysis supports a fundamental point: Pittsburgh’s early twentieth-century city directories do not offer an ideal census of a segment of the South Side’s foreign-born resident population. In short, length of residence was not the key criterion influencing directory inclusion. Did early twentieth-century directories for other American cities, upon closer analysis, suffer deficiencies similar to those evident in Pittsburgh’s?

This examination has implications beyond raising doubts about the accuracy and comprehensiveness of Pittsburgh’s early twentieth-century city directories. As demonstrated, these yearly publications offer a distorted view of the migration and residential patterns of some South Side Slovaks. Branch 50’s records show that by 1910, a number of these Slovaks had lived in the South Side three or more years. Church records also reveal that some Slovaks stayed in the South Side for lengthy periods. Regardless of why, it appears that some Slovaks decided to stay for longer periods, if not permanently, in the South Side. Certainly these more long-term residents counter the image of constant mobility and dizzying rates of population turnover that some observers conclude reflected an instability and restlessness among the country’s laboring classes that inhibited the development of a sense of community.

Pittsburgh’s Slovak communities could not escape the impact of temporary migrants. Temporary migration was a feature of the Slovak immigration movement to the United States in general. Nevertheless, Branch 50 as well as church records reveal that the South Side’s Slovak population had a stable core. The fact that some Slovaks organized and subsequently supported a church indicates they planned to remain in the city for a while. The formation of churches which required financial sacrifices and commitments needed a solid base of community support.

36 For other types of discrepancies and problems with the directories’ coverage of the South Side, see, McIlvain, “Twelve Blocks,” 364.

37 St. Matthew Slovak Catholic Church, baptismal records, 1903-1910, maintained at St. Matthew Rectory, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.


Attempting to follow immigrants out of ethnic neighborhoods or up the social ladder, some scholars have too often overlooked immigrants who voluntarily chose to stay in the same section of a city for longer periods. Hence, some historians of social and spatial mobility have, in effect, tended to replace the trapped ghetto model with one of immigrants constantly on the move, leaving cities or neighborhoods at high rates. A study of Pittsburgh’s South Side Slovaks suggests that neither model adequately describes that area’s pre-World War I Slovak population. Some Slovaks did leave Pittsburgh’s South Side, others stayed.

No analysis of Pittsburgh Slovaks, and most likely that of other immigrant groups in other cities, should fail to examine both mobile and long-term residents of ethnic neighborhoods. Looking more closely at permanent residents, one is moved to ask several questions. Why did some immigrants remain in a particular city, especially during depressions or difficult economic times as some Pittsburgh Slovaks did? Did cities, like Pittsburgh, whose industries were expanding, perhaps experience less out-migration of their foreign-born than eastern cities like Boston?

Studies of immigrant groups in Buffalo, Philadelphia, New York, Steelton, Pennsylvania, and other urban areas have already demonstrated that a focus on permanent ethnic communities need not be a retreat to the concept of closed ghettos trapping homogeneous populations. And a closer examination of immigrant communities’ long-term residents can provide a clearer view of the various modes of immigrant adjustment to American society. In addition, by paying more attention to the cities’ more permanent residents, historians can better assess the effect immigrants had on the religious, educational, economic, social, and political structure of cities over time. When canvassers for city directories missed immigrants, this only made individual directory editions less complete. When historians relying on city directories overlook these permanent residents, it distorts our understanding of immigrants and their impact on American society.

42 Yans-McLaughlin, Family and Community; Golab, Immigrant Destinations; Gurock, When Harlem Was Jewish; Bodnar, Immigration and Industrialization.