



Guidelines for Genealogical Research

This guide briefly explains our most frequently consulted genealogical resources. If you find any of these records of interest, please ask our staff how to access them. During your visit, the reference staff is available to offer research assistance. The Norton Building in Springfield is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Census Records

The Archives holdings of Illinois census records, both federal and state, span 1810–1930. When requesting a staff search please provide the individual's name; census date; county residence and, if known, township residence; and spouse's and children's names, ages and birthplaces. Copies of original census entries will be provided.

- 1810–1860** The Archives has indexes covering decennial federal censuses and existing state censuses for this period. All state censuses and federal censuses prior to 1850 list only the names of heads of household with family members indicated by simple tallies. Beginning with the 1850 federal census, all family members are listed under the head of the household.
- 1865** This final state census currently is indexed only partially. County and township residences are necessary for efficient searches. Searches of unindexed townships with populations exceeding 2,500 cannot be performed because of limitations on staff research time. Again, only the names of the heads of households are given.
- 1870** The Archives has a published index to this federal census, providing access to heads of households.
- 1880** An index to this federal census, available as a CD edition, has been created by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Unlike the old soundex system, this database allows for a wide variety of searches, including all the names entered on the census.
- 1890** This federal census was destroyed by a fire in 1921 and consequently is not available for research.
- 1900–1920** The 1900, 1910 and 1920 federal censuses can be searched by the names of the heads of households.
- 1930** The 1930 Illinois population schedules are available at the Archives on microfilm. Because no index for this census is available, Archives staff members do not have sufficient time to conduct name searches. Visiting patrons are invited to consult this federal census themselves.

Special Schedules of The Federal Census

The Archives has the decennial special censuses for Illinois conducted by the federal government during 1850–1880. Two types of these censuses record individuals involved in specific professions: agriculture and industry (1850–1880). The 1880 census includes persons with disabilities, dependents and delinquents. These censuses are not indexed.

Published Census Records

Published census records produced by county genealogical societies are located in the reference room.

Vital Records

Birth Records

Most Illinois counties did not begin recording births until 1877. Birth records prior to 1916 were recorded only by county clerks. Beginning in 1916, county clerks and the Department of Public Health jointly maintained birth records.

The Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) system holds birth records for many counties in Illinois. Researchers should contact the county clerk's office in the county where the birth occurred if IRAD does not have birth records for the particular county in question. For births after 1915, researchers may also contact the Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Records, 925 E. Ridgely Ave., Springfield, IL 62702, (217) 782-6553.

Marriage Records

In cooperation with the Illinois State Genealogical Society, the Archives is developing a database for all Illinois marriages occurring prior to 1901. The index currently includes marriages from 98 of Illinois' 102 counties. At this writing 90 counties have been completed.

The IRAD system holds marriage records for many counties in Illinois. Researchers should contact the county clerk's office in the county where the marriage occurred if IRAD does not have marriage records for the county in which the researcher is interested.

Death Records

The Archives has records of deaths recorded in special census schedules and death records maintained by the Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Vital Records. The IRAD system has death records, including those prior to 1916, for many counties.

The Archives houses federal mortality schedules statewide for 1850, 1860 and 1880. The 1870 mortality schedule includes Kendall–Woodford counties only. The 1850, 1860 and 1870 schedules have been indexed. These schedules show only those deaths that occurred during the one year period prior to the census enumeration. For efficient searches, Archives staff need a specific name, the approximate death date, and the county where the death occurred.

Most Illinois counties did not begin recording deaths until 1877. Death records prior to 1916 were recorded only by county clerks. Beginning in 1916, county clerks and the Department of Public Health jointly maintained death records. The IRAD system holds death records for many counties in Illinois. Researchers should contact the county clerk's office in the county where the death occurred if IRAD does not have death records for that county.

The Illinois Department of Public Health has provided the Archives with microfilm copies of Illinois death certificates for 1916–1947. Researchers wanting an unofficial and uncertified copy of a death certificate may visit the Illinois State Archives Reference Room to obtain a paper copy of the microfilm. An index to death certificates maintained by the Illinois Department of Public Health, 1916–1950, is available on the Illinois State Archives' website.

Researchers who are unable to visit the Illinois State Archives Reference Room should direct requests for death certificates after 1915 to the county clerk's office of the county where the death occurred, or to the Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Records, 925 E. Ridgely Ave., Springfield, IL 62702, (217) 782-6553. In compliance with current legislation, the Illinois Department of Public Health and county clerks shall furnish for genealogical purposes certified or uncertified photocopies of death records not less than 20 years old for a specified fee (410 Illinois Compiled Statutes 535/25).

Military Service Records

Service Records

The Archives has service records for Illinois veterans of the following conflicts:

- War of 1812
- Winnebago War
- Black Hawk War
- Mexican War
- Civil War
- Spanish–American War

The following veteran databases can be searched from the Illinois State Archives website: War of 1812, Winnebago War, Black Hawk War, Mexican War, Civil War, U.S. Navy in the Civil War and Spanish–American War. Inquiries should provide the veteran's complete name; the conflict served in; residence, birthplace or place of enlistment; regiment and/or company; and rank. Archives staff will provide photocopies of requested entries found on the military rolls.

The Archives has a copy of federal World War I draft registration records for Illinois. These files cover all men who registered for the draft. A search of this record series can be made by Archives staff if the registrant's full name is given along with his county residence. For Chicago registrants, a street address is necessary for an effective search.

Veterans' Homes, Pensions, and Burials

The Archives possesses resident files for:

- Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, 1887–1967
- Illinois Soldiers' Widows' Home, 1896–1960
- National Home in Danville, 1898–1934

The resident's name and approximate date of residence are necessary for a competent search. For the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, an online database can be searched for residents admitted for the period 1887–1916.

The Illinois State Archives has microfilm copies of federal pension records for Revolutionary War veterans, 1800–1900, and an index to the War of 1812 pensioners, 1871–1900. When requesting a search the veteran's name, war of service, name or number of unit, and the veteran's state of residence when the claim was filed are helpful.

A database of veterans buried in Illinois prior to 1929 is available by consulting the 1929 Roll of Honor. The updated publication, Honor Roll of Veterans Buried in Illinois, 1774–1955, can only be accessed through microfilm indexes. The researcher must provide the veteran's name, war of service, and the name or number of the unit for an effective search.

County and Local Governmental Records

IRAD

The State Archives administers a system of Illinois Regional Archives Depositories (IRAD) to manage the archival records of local governments. These depositories are located on seven university campuses throughout the state and hold various county, township and municipal records detailing a wealth of genealogical information. For information on using records, contact: IRAD, Illinois State Archives, Norton Building, Springfield, IL 62756, (217) 785-1266.

County Histories

The Archives holds numerous published Illinois county histories. A surname card file index of selected histories is available.

Land Sales Record

The Archives has compiled the Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales Database, which is a searchable database of more than 500,000 first sales of the public domain by the federal government to individuals. Each purchase entry includes the purchaser's name, purchase date, number of acres, price per acre, numeric code indicating the county in which the land is located, legal land description (township, section, range), volume and page numbers of original entry, and variously, the sale type and the purchaser's sex and residence. Researchers may access this database at the Archives website.

Subsequent land sales are recorded in deed records. The IRAD system holds deed records for numerous Illinois counties. Should IRAD not include deed records for the county in which the researcher is interested, the county recorder's office for the county in question should be contacted.

Institutional Records

The Archives has records of residents of various state charitable and penal institutions. The Illinois School for the Deaf, Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Childrens' Home, and previously mentioned veterans' home records provide genealogical information. The records of Joliet, Stateville, Pontiac and Menard correctional centers and related parole files may also be useful. Some records may have statutory restrictions on access. All these records are available for research if the individual's entry in the record is more than 75 years old, with the exception of mental health records, which are permanently closed. These restrictions are in compliance with the State Records Act and other confidentiality statutes. Please consult our staff to determine access to these records.

Interlibrary Loan

The Illinois State Library provides libraries throughout the state copies of films of state census schedules for 1855 and 1865 and federal population schedules for 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930, as well as the 1900, 1910, and 1920 census indexes through its interlibrary loan system. The Name Index to Early Illinois Records, a census records index for 1810-1855, and the war indexes also are available. These microfilms should be requested by the surname for which you are searching. Your local librarian can arrange the loan request.

For Further Investigation

ISGS/GSU Microfilm Collection

Since 1985, the Illinois State Archives has worked with the Illinois State Genealogical Society on projects of mutual genealogical interest, such as the Statewide Marriage Index. The Archives maintains and makes available the ISGS/GSU microfilm collection of private manuscripts. Ask at the desk for a listing of these valuable records or address inquiries to the Society at their office in the Norton Building at: I.S.G.S., P.O. Box 10195, Springfield, IL 62791, (217) 789-1968.

Finding Aids of the Illinois State Archives

You may wish to consult the Archives' less frequently examined records. Archon is an online database containing descriptions of the records held by the Illinois State Archives and is the primary guide to the body of archival records created by Illinois government. The records described in this database are arranged to reflect the governmental structures that created them, and administrative histories explaining those structures are included. Access Archon at <http://archon.ilsos.net>.

For local government records, please consult the online Local Government Records Database or the Local Governmental Records Listings, which list all local records in IRAD, including Cook County and Chicago. These two resources can be found at www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/IRAD/home/html.

**Illinois State Archives
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www.cyberdriveillinois.com**