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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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White Announces New Genealogical Tool on Website

SPRINGFIELD — In a boon to genealogists, historians and researchers, Secretary of State Jesse White today announced that his web site now contains an index listing of deaths in Illinois covering the years 1916 to 1950.

"Our new web site database provides information about death certificates filed with the Illinois Department of Public Health for the years 1916 to 1950," White said. "Persons can go to our website to find out whether a death certificate exists, and then go to the state archives or the appropriate county clerk's office in the county where the death occurred to get a copy of a death certificate."

According to White, death certificates can contain valuable information to a researcher or genealogist, such as the deceased person's full name, date of death, marital status, birth date and birthplace, occupation, and father and mother's name.

The State Archives has death records beginning in 1916, because that was the first year the state was mandated to keep such records. From 1877 to 1916, only county governments were responsible for keeping death records, so researchers seeking information about a death occurring during that time span would need to contact the clerk's office from the county an individual died in for information. Previous to 1877, death records were not maintained publicly. The new database keeps records only until 1950 because of a state law that requires at least a 50-year wait before death indexes can be made available to the public.

The database is expected to be updated annually.

White, who in his capacity as Secretary of State also serves as State Archivist, said genealogists, historians and researchers have long been asking that this information be made available on the web.

"This office has tried to make more information available on-line for researchers and genealogists," White said. "The database of Illinois death certificates is the 51st database that is now available on-line at the Archives home site. More than 8 million people visit this site a year."

Other databases available on-line include a statewide marriage index covering the years 1763 to 1900, lists of Illinois soldiers who fought in 19th century wars, and various county and city records.

Many of the records, such as the death certificate database, are merely lists that acknowledge a record exists. It is then up to the researcher to get a copy of the record, which can usually be done by mail.

White cautioned that in the case of death certificates, certain restrictions apply. Certificates will be provided only for persons who were 25 years or older at the time of their deaths.

The database of Illinois death certificates can be found at the Secretary of State's homepage or by going directly to [Database of Illinois Death Certificates](#).