

# From Cradle to Coffin: Vital Records Research in Indiana Quick Guide

Genealogy Division, Indiana State Library  
<http://www.in.gov/library/>

## Birth and Death Certificates

- Not issued prior to 1882; not mandatory prior to 1907
- Births 1907-1940 and Deaths 1889-2011 available through Ancestry.com/Ancestry Library Edition (courtesy of the Indiana Archives and Records Administration)
- All birth and death records are kept by the county health department, but not all are publicly available due to privacy laws
- Locate an Indiana county health department: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/24822.htm>

## Census Records and Mortality Schedules

- Census conducted by the federal government every 10 years beginning in 1790
- Minimal detail recorded prior to the 1850 Census
- The most recent census available to the public is 1940; the 1950 Census will be available in 2022
- Census records are available from many places, including Ancestry.com/Ancestry Library Edition and Heritage Quest (subscription) and Family Search (free)
- Mortality schedules cover only the census year and are available through the Indiana State Library Digital Collections

## Coroners' Inquests

- Cover suspicious deaths
- Original records not always available, but abstracts/indexes often at libraries

## Social Security

- "Social Security Death Index" and "Social Security Applications and Claims Index" on Ancestry.com/Ancestry Library Edition
- May request original records of deceased individuals from the Social Security Administration

## Newspapers

- Announcements: Short, minimal information, most popular prior to 1900
- Vital Records Columns: Brief birth and death information, most common in papers from cities and larger towns, birth columns still published today
- Obituaries: Not common until after 1900, still published today
- News Articles: Often report on human interest stories or criminal activity

## Religious Records

- Records vary by religious group, usually kept locally but may be sent to central repository
- Not obligated to share records

## Funeral Home and Cemetery Records

- Business records, not public, not obligated to share
- If funeral home or cemetery is no longer active, records may have been lost/destroyed
- Records usually kept at the funeral home or cemetery office

## History Books

- Family and local history
- Available at genealogy libraries and online
- Not official records, often written by the family, may need to fact-check the information

## Family Records

- Bible records, diaries, letters, and other information kept by individual families
- May still be in the possession of the family, or may have been donated to local library/genealogical society/historical society

## Resources Cited

- Subscription (or check with your local library)
  - Ancestry.com/Ancestry Library Edition
  - Fold3
  - Heritage Quest
  - Newspaper Archive
  - Newspapers.com
- Free
  - Archive.org
    - <https://archive.org/details/texts>
  - Billion Graves
    - <https://billiongraves.com/>
  - Cyndi's List
    - <http://www.cyndislist.com/us/>
  - Family Search
    - [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
  - Family Search Family History Books
    - <https://books.familysearch.org>
  - Find a Grave
    - <https://www.findagrave.com/>
  - Google Books
    - <https://books.google.com/>
  - Hathi Trust
    - <https://www.hathitrust.org/>
  - Indiana State Library Catalog
    - <http://evergreen.lib.in.us/eg/opac/advanced?locg=73>
  - Indiana State Library Digital Collections
    - <http://cdm16066.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ISLdigitalcollections>
  - Indiana State Library Indiana County Research Guides
    - <http://www.in.gov/library/countyrecords.htm>
  - National Archives and Records Administration
    - <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy>
  - Social Security Administration
    - <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps9/eFOIA-FEWeb/internet/main.jsp>
  - Tombstone birthdate calculator
    - <http://www.searchforancestors.com/utility/birthday.html>