

Indiana Genealogical Society NEWSLETTER

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Indiana Vital Records

by Meredith Thompson

I work in the genealogy department of a local library, and there is one research issue that pops up regularly with patrons who are unfamiliar with Indiana: why 1882 is such an important date in Indiana research. Here is why.

Although Indiana became a state in 1816, it wasn't until 1881 that the state legislature passed an act (to go into effect January 1, 1882) providing for the creation of a state board of health. This is important to genealogists because this state board of health (known today as the Indiana State Department of Health) was required to supervise the keeping of public records, notably births and deaths. Additionally, all physicians and midwives (or the person in charge of the household where the event occurred, if no physician was present) were required to report births and deaths to their town or county's board of health.

Thus, the earliest birth records start in 1882, although with some counties, their records don't start until much later than that--for example, Daviess County starts in December 1897, and both Morgan and Parke counties don't begin until 1902.

The news is slightly better for researchers when it comes to death records. There was a little-used act in place since 1852 that gave cities the

power to keep their own death records. That is why there are a few cities in Indiana that have death records pre-dating 1882. Fort Wayne has death records since December 31, 1870, Indianapolis since September 1872, Logansport since July 1874, and Kokomo since August 1875.

There are other sources for deaths before 1882, such as the 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 mortality schedules. When the census enumerator went to each household, he also asked if there were any people who had died within the past year, and recorded that information (their name, age at death, place of death, and cause of death) separately, on a mortality schedule. These mortality schedules have been microfilmed and are available at repositories like the Allen County Public Library.

Birth and death records are kept by the county health departments, although the ISDH has copies of birth records since October 1907 and deaths from 1900 on.

Marriage licenses, on the other hand, do not fall under the state's jurisdiction. They have been a requirement since 1818 and are issued by the county's clerk of the circuit court.

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Publications

1850 Jay County (Indiana) Census has been published. The book is a transcription of the census and includes an every-name index. The cost is \$25 +\$5 shipping & handling. Order from Jay County Genealogy Society, 109 South Commerce St., Suite E, Portland IN 47371; e-mail jaycogen@jayco.net

1860 Population & Mortality Census Dubois County, Indiana (316 pp, hardbound) has been published. This is a transcription of the 1860 census for Dubois County, Indiana, as well as the mortality census listing all those who had died within the past year. An every-name index and map of the county are included. Cost is \$31.50 +\$2.50 shipping & handling. Make checks payable to Dubois County Genealogical Society and mail to: Dubois County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 84, Ferdinand IN 47532-0084.

The 1867 Fayette, Franklin and Union Counties (Indiana) Atlas has been reprinted. It has plat maps of each township and town and includes an index of landowners. The cost is \$30 +\$5 shipping & handling. Make checks payable to Franklin County Historical Society and send to: Don Dunaway, 11043

State Rd. 1, Brookville IN 47012.

History of St. Joseph County, Indiana by Chapman & Co. (1046 pp, paper) has been reprinted. Originally published in 1880, this 2-volume set includes portraits and biographies of some St. Joseph County residents and has an index. Cost is \$70 (does not include shipping & handling). Order item #C2081 from Heritage Books, Inc., 1540-E Pointer Ridge Place, Bowie MD 20716; Phone: 1-800-398-7709; Fax: 1-800-276-1760; email: heritagebooks@pipeline.com; www.heritagebooks.com

The Johnson County Museum of History (135 N. Main St., Franklin IN 46131) has **Cemetery Stone Listings** available for Blue River, Hensley, Franklin, Needham, Nineveh, Pleasant, Union, and White River Townships (Greenlawn Cemetery in Franklin Township has its own separate book). Each book has its own index, and there is also a County Master Index book available. The cost of each book is \$15 + \$5 shipping & handling (Indiana residents must add 5% sales tax). For more information, phone (317) 736-4655.

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One notable exception to this law is Quakers--from 1820 to 1940 people who were of the Quaker faith were not required to get a marriage license from the county.

Also helpful for genealogists is the fact that from 1838 to 1940 the license could only be issued in the county where the bride was a resident. Since 1940, that residency requirement has been waived.

Marriage licenses in general provide scant information--only the name of the bride and groom, the date, and the name of the person performing the marriage. Beginning in 1882, some counties kept what was known as a "supplement," listing the bride or groom's age at their next birthday, as well as the names of their parents.

It wasn't until 1905 that the state board of health was tasked to provide the county clerks with application forms for marriage licenses, and required additional information to be kept. It is these modern marriage applications that provide the real meat for genealogists--it asked the bride or groom's birthdate, occupation, and residence, as well as the names, residences, and places of birth for their parents, among other questions.

The subject of divorce has never been legislated by the state, but instead left up to the individual counties. These records usually fall under the jurisdiction of the clerk of the circuit court.

For further information, consult *Guide to Public Vital Statistics Records in Indiana* (The Indiana Historical Records Survey, 1941).