

## Vital Records at the Archives of Michigan

Statewide birth, marriage, death, and divorce records available at the Archives are listed in the table below. Please continue reading for descriptions of how the records were created and what information they may contain as well as information about where to obtain records not held at the Archives.

Record Type	Years Available	Microfilm Reel Numbers
Birth Index	1867-1872	
Death Index	1867-1914	5963-5975, 7693-7714
Death Registers	1867-1897	11489-11524
Marriage Index	1867-1921	5940-5961, 7715-7766
Marriage Index (grooms only)	1950-1969	7767-7819
Marriage Registers	1867-1925	9221-9407
Divorce Index	1897-1923	7820-7822
Divorce Index	1924-1977	7823-7842
Divorce Registers	1897-1923	7843-7864

Some statewide vital records are also available online.

Record Type	Years Available	Website
Birth Registers	1867-1902	<a href="http://www.familysearch.org">www.familysearch.org</a>
Death Registers	1867-1897	<a href="http://www.familysearch.org">www.familysearch.org</a>
Death Certificates	1897-1920	<a href="http://www.seekingmichigan.org">www.seekingmichigan.org</a>
Marriage Registers	1898-1925	<a href="http://www.familysearch.org">www.familysearch.org</a>

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## Birth Records

Beginning in 1867, Michigan Public Act 194 required township supervisors to collect facts related to all births occurring within their townships. County clerks forwarded this information to the Secretary of State in the form of ledger book entries. Prior to 1906, the following information was collected.

- Date of birth
- Name of child
- Sex of child
- Color of child (effective 1869)
- Place of birth
- First and last name of both parents
- Residence and nativity of parents
- Occupation of the father
- Date of record

Starting in 1906, the following additional information was collected.

- Whether a twin, triplet, or plural child
- Whether legitimate or illegitimate
- Color or race of mother and father
- Birthplace of mother and father
- Age of mother and father at last birthday
- Maiden name of mother
- Occupation of mother
- Number of child of this mother
- Number of children of this mother now living
- Physician attending or midwife

Public Act 343 of 1925 called for the transfer of birth records from the Secretary of State to the Department of Public Health. In 1996, the Department of Public Health merged with two other state departments to form the Department of Community Health. This department still maintains birth records. Public Act 368 of 1978 restricted access to all birth registers and indexes. **Only records that are more than 100 years old are open for research.**

Researchers wishing to obtain copies of birth records not listed in the table above should contact the Michigan Department of Community Health (517-335-8666) or the county clerk in the county where the birth took place.

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## Death Records

In 1867, Michigan's legislature passed Public Act 194, which required township supervisors to collect facts related to all deaths occurring within their townships. County clerks forwarded this information to the Secretary of State in the form of ledger book entries. Prior to 1906, the following information was collected in the ledgers.

- Date of death
- First and last of deceased
- Sex
- Color (effective 1869)
- Whether married or single
- Whether widowed or divorced (effective 1898)
- Age in years, months and days
- Place of death
- Disease or apparent cause of death
- Nativity of the deceased
- Occupation, if over 10 years of age
- If younger than age 10, the names and residence of the parents, if known
- Date of record

In 1897, the state began collecting death certificates rather than ledger book entries and the following additional information was collected.

- If married, age at first marriage
- Parent of how many children
- How many children are living
- Birthplace (state or country if not born in Michigan)
- Full names of both parents
- Birthplaces of both parents
- Proposed place and time of burial
- Signature and address of reporter certifying above facts
- Signature and address of undertaker

Public Act 343 of 1925 transferred responsibility for death records to the Department of Public Health. In 1996, the Department of Public Health merged with two other state departments to form the Department of Community Health. This department still maintains death records.

Researchers who want to obtain copies of death records created after 1920 should contact the Michigan Department of Community Health (517-335-8666) or the county where the death occurred.

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## Marriage Records

In 1867, Michigan's legislature passed Public Act 194, which required every individual who performs marriage ceremonies to report information about those marriages to county clerks. The county clerks then forwarded this

information to the Secretary of State. Prior to 1906, the following information was collected.

- Date of marriage
- Place of marriage
- First and last name of the bridegroom and bride
- Color of bridegroom and bride (effective 1869)
- Age and place of birth of each
- Residence of each at the time of marriage
- Occupation of the bridegroom
- Name and official station of person by or whom married
- Names and residences of at least two witnesses to marriage
- Date of record
- Father's name and mother's maiden name of bridegroom and bride (effective 1888)
- Number of times previously married (effective 1888)

Public Act 170 of 1921 transferred responsibility for marriage records to the Department of Public Health. The Department of Public Health merged with two other departments in 1996 to form the Department of Community Health. Marriage records are still held at the Department of Community Health.

Researchers who wish to obtain copies of marriage records created after 1925 should contact the Michigan Department of Community Health (517-335-8666) or the county where the marriage took place.

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## **Divorce Records**

In 1897, Michigan's legislature passed Public Act 9, which required all circuit court clerks to notify the Secretary of State of all divorce petitions that were filed. Prior to 1906, the following information was collected.

- Record number
- Full name of each party
- Age of each in years
- Date of marriage by month, day, and year
- Place of marriage
- Number of children in family
- Whether the complainant was the husband or wife
- Date of filing application by month, day, and year
- Date of final action by month, day, and year
- Alleged cause for divorce

- Whether the case was contested
- Whether granted, refused, withdrawn or otherwise disposed of, or pending at the end of year
- Whether divorce was absolute or conditions, if any

In 1923, Public Act 27 required court clerks to file records with the Department of Public Health instead of the Secretary of State. The Department of Public Health merged with two other departments in 1996 to form the Department of Community Health. Divorce records are still held at the Department of Community Health.

Researchers seeking copies of divorce records created after 1923 should contact the Michigan Department of Community Health (517-335-8666) or the county where the divorce occurred.

The Archives of Michigan also holds divorce records from numerous county circuit courts. The dates and formats of these records vary widely and records usually are arranged by case number. Complete name indexes do not exist for all counties. Researchers may still be able to find a case number by checking court calendars and journals. Please contact the Archives for more information or assistance with accessing these records.