

The Ohio Death Certificate Collection

1908 - 1953

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What information is included on a death certificate?

Death certificates contain information about the person and about the death.

Information about the person includes:

Full name	Marital status (including number of children)
Age	Spouse's name
Sex	Occupation
Race	Father's name and birth place
Date of birth	Mother's maiden name and birth place
Place of birth (state or country)	Signature and address of the informant

Information about the death includes:

Date of death	Place of death
Primary and contributing causes of death	Place and date of burial
Duration of the causes of death	Signature and address of undertaker
Signature and address of the physician	Date when the certificate was filed
Primary residence if death occurred away from home	Signature of the local registrar

Although death certificates can provide a wealth of information, most of the information listed above was not required to be filled in for the certificate to be valid, and an informant may not have known the correct information. Consequently, there are many certificates with empty lines or "unknown" in response to the questions.

Ohio Death Certificates

Ohio began issuing death certificates December 20, 1908. From 1867 to December of 1908, death records were kept by county government. In Summit County, the Probate Court recorded less information than is found on the state certificates. For more information about these records, see the Summit County Death Records Research Guide.

There are many ways to find an Ohio Death Certificate. Scans of the actual certificates are available at no cost online from www.familysearchlabs.org/. If a search there doesn't yield the certificate you are looking for, there are other options. There two partial electronic indexes to the certificates, one from the Ancestry Library Edition database and one from the Ohio Historical Society (www.OhioHistory.org/dindex). Success in either index will provide you with a certificate number that you can use for a new online search at www.familysearchlabs.org/.

If none of the online tools help, the Library holds the Ohio Death Certificate Collection on microfilm which includes an index. This collection contains certificates for all deaths occurring in the state of Ohio between December 20, 1908 and December 31, 1953. There is a separate stillbirth death certificate series for stillbirths occurring between 1918-1919 and 1922-1953. The other years (1908 - June of 1918 and 1920 - 1921) can be found interfiled with the regular deaths certificates for those years.

Ohio Death Certificates for deaths occurring after 1953 are held by the Ohio Department of Health and the local health department where the death occurred. For more information on how to order a death certificate from the Ohio Department of Health or a list of local health departments, see <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/vitalstatistics/vsmail/vsmail.aspx>.

Using the Ohio Death Certificate Collection on Microfilm

Step 1: Using an index, identify the correct year of death and record the certificate or file number (the volume number is not important in locating the certificate, but you may want to record it for citation purposes). Indexes to Ohio Death Certificates are available on microfilm or microfiche organized by year. A partial searchable index is available online.

- *Ohio Death Certificate Index, 20 Dec. 1908-1932, 1938-1954 Microfilm Cabinet 1, Drawer 1*
- *Ohio Death Certificate Index, 1933-1937 Microfiche box on top of the cabinet in front of the Microfilm Cabinets*
- *Ohio Death Certificate Index Searchable Database 1913-1944* at <http://www.ohiohistory.org/dindex/>
- *Ohio Deaths, 1908-1932, and 1938-1944*, available through Ancestry.com (home subscription) or Ancestry Library Edition in the Library.

Step 2: Using the year of the death and certificate number, locate the correct roll of microfilm in Cabinets 1 or 2. Each roll of film is labeled with the year and a range of certificate numbers.

- *Ohio Death Certificates, 20 December 1908-1953 Microfilm Cabinets 1 and 2, all drawers*

Note: Once you locate your certificate on the microfilm, sure to check the images both before and after it. If the deceased was a veteran or if the certificate was returned to the issuer because it was incomplete or required clarification, there may be an additional page or pages of information.

Searching Tips

When searching the online databases, be sure to try truncated searches (“Hunt*” for “Huntington”), as there are many typographical errors in the database. Using the Advanced Search screen will give you more search options. If you cannot locate someone using the online index, try the index on microfilm or microfiche, which **is** more complete.

- If you do not find an individual in an index, try looking under variant spellings or mistaken transcriptions of the name. For example, the surname “Schmidt” may be recorded as “Shmidt,” or the surname “Canfield” may be recorded as “Caufield.”
- The certificates on microfilm for a specific year are organized first by month and then by county so you can browse all of the certificates for a county for a specific month. This can be quite time consuming, however, if the death occurred in a highly populated county such as Cuyahoga or Franklin, which may have 700-800 death certificates for any given month. To browse a county’s death certificates for a specific month, use the appropriate year’s index to find a certificate number for a person who died in the county and during month and year in question. Locate that certificate and you should be able to view all of the certificates for that month and county by scrolling forward and back.

Additional Resources

- *How to Get the Most out of Death Certificates* (1991) 22-page booklet in **aisles 5B and 6A**
- *Obituary Indexes to the Akron Beacon Journal* **aisle 7A and online at** <http://www.akronlibrary.org/internetresources/sc/Obits/obits.html>.
- *Glendale Cemetery Burial Records 1839-1989 Microfilm Cabinet 6, Drawer 3*
- *Cunningham/Cunningham-McCafferty Funeral Home Records 1906-1966 Microfilm Cabinet 6, Drawer 3*

Further Research

In addition to death certificates, other records may provide information on a death. Funeral, Cemetery, and Obituary Notices have been published for various counties. See the book collection for the appropriate county for these publications or the Special Collections site at <http://www.akronlibrary.org/main-sc.html>.