



News for Immediate Release

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New Access to State Birth, Death Records Eases Genealogical Research

Harrisburg – Thanks to a new law, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Department of Health are expanding public access to birth and death records starting Wednesday, Feb. 15. The public can access the records online or in person at the Pennsylvania State Archives.

In December, Governor Tom Corbett signed Act 110 to make birth certificates available to the public 105 years after issuance and death certificates available 50 years after issuance. Beginning Feb. 15, births from 1906 and deaths from 1906 to 1961 will become available. One year of births and one year of deaths will be added each subsequent year. Records prior to 1906 are held at the county level.

“We are pleased that Pennsylvania’s older birth and death certificates are now open to the public,” said State Archivist David A. Haury. “We share the excitement of the genealogists and other researchers who will now be able to use these records to learn about their families and communities.”

To access the records online, go to www.health.state.pa.us and click on “Birth and Death Certificates.” Indices will be available online in PDF format and are searchable by name of individual and year of event. Once a record is identified, the state file number will be needed for the application to request a non-certified copy of the certificate from the Department of Health.

For in-person access, visit the State Archives at 350 North St., Harrisburg. Visitors wishing to see original records will first be provided access to the Department of Health’s online indices to identify the state file number. Once the file number is determined, patrons will use the Archives’ normal search room procedures to have the record pulled for them.

Before searching online or in person, researchers are urged to be prepared by knowing the year of the event, the spelling of the name they are searching for, and/or the county of the birth or death.

Access to indices is free; however, a \$3 processing fee will continue to be charged for non-certified copies ordered online through Department of Health. Copying fees may apply at the State Archives, as well as research fees for search requests received via mail or e-mail.

The Department of Health's Division of Vital Records is working on fully digitizing and indexing all certificates to allow for easier online record research. These changes will be rolled out within the next year. Researchers will eventually be able to search records by first name only, year of occurrence, county, or even by parents' names.

For more information visit www.phmc.state.pa.us or www.health.state.pa.us.

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