



Records of the Department of State Relating to Deaths of U.S. Citizens in Foreign Countries, 1789–1974

From the earliest days of the republic U.S. consular officers were required to report to the Department of State the names of U.S. citizens who died within their consular districts. These death reports commonly provide acceptable documentation in the English language for cases in which satisfactory proof of an American death might be very difficult to obtain in any other form. The reports are in General Records of the Department of State (Record Group 59) at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Death Reports, 1789–1906

Death reports are filed among the consular despatches sent to the State Department, arranged by the city where the U.S. consul was located, and then chronologically. The despatches have all been reproduced on microfilm in separate publications for each country. Check NARA's online Microfilm Catalog at <http://www.archives.gov/research/> to determine the National Archives Microfilm Publication for a specific country.

Finding Aids

1789–1827: There are no finding aids or indexes.

1828–1870:

___ **Registers of Consular Despatches, 1828–70** (I-15, Entry 81). The registers are roughly divided into four periods: 1828–53; 1853–64; 1864–66; and 1867–70.

___ **Key to Registers of Consular Despatches, 1829–70** (I-15, Entry 80). For each consulate, the key shows the city and country, the inclusive dates of the despatches, and the register volume and page number.

1870–1906:

___ **M17, Registers of Correspondence of the Department of State, 1870–1906**. 71 rolls. Registers of consular despatches or communications received for 1870–1906 are on **rolls 19–44**.

Death Reports, 1906–1910

Death reports are filed in the Numerical File of the Central Files of the Department of State. The records and available indexes are reproduced on microfilm.

___ **M862, Numerical and Minor Files of the Department of State, 1906–1910**. 1,241 rolls. DP.

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___M1889, *Card Index for the Numerical and Minor Files of the Department of State, 1906–1910*. 86 rolls. DP. There is a card index for each deceased person for whom a death report exists, showing the Numerical File case number.

Death Reports, 1910–1962

Death reports are filed in the Decimal File of the Central Files of the Department of State. The reports are arranged by the following periods: 1910–29; 1930–39; 1940–44; 1945–49; and then by file number (3**.113), where ** represents the number for the country of death. Later reports for 1950–54; 1955–59; and 1960–62 are arranged by file number (2**.113), with ** representing the number for the country of death.

There is a name card index to the Decimal File that shows the name of the deceased person and the decimal file number of the report. If there is no name card, no death report exists. The name cards are available for 1910–59 and are arranged according to the same chronological blocks as the Decimal File.

Death Reports, 1963–1974

Death reports are filed by year, then alphabetically by surname. It is necessary to know both name and year of death in order to locate a report. The reports are filed separately from the Central Files.

Death Reports After 1974

Reports of deaths occurring after 1974 are still at the State Department. Contact: Passport Services, Vital Records Section, 1111 19th Street NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC, 20524-1705.

Other Death Notices, 1835–1922

___**Record of Death Notices of U.S. Citizens Abroad, 1835–55** (I-15, Entry 848). This one-volume record book is arranged chronologically, with entries showing the date of each death notice sent by the State Department to a U.S. newspaper for publication, the name of the deceased, and the date and amount of payment for publication.

___**Notices of Deaths of U.S. Citizens Abroad, 1857–1922** (I-15, Entry 849). This series includes copies of form notices sent by the State Department to newspapers reporting deaths of U.S. citizens in foreign countries. Each notice contains the name of the deceased, the place and date of death, the consul and the consulate reporting the death, and the number and date of the despatch reporting the death. Each volume contains an alphabetical name index of the deceased.

Reports of Deaths of American Citizens Abroad, 1835-1974 (Ancestry.com)

The records are reports of deaths of American citizens abroad that were reported to an American consulate. To locate the records go to Ancestry.com and click on “card catalog” and enter “deaths abroad.” You can search by name, date of birth, date of death, place of death, and age at death. The files contain the consulate’s report of death and attachments.

Deaths Not Reported to the State Department

Deaths of active-duty military personnel are reported to the Defense Department. For information relating to individual casualty case files, write to: Army Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operation

Center, U.S. Army Total Personnel Command, TAPe-PED, 2461 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA, 22331-0482; or phone (703) 325-7960.

For information relating to American overseas cemeteries and former military personnel buried overseas, contact the American Battle Monuments Commission, Courthouse Plaza II, Suite 500, 2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, VA, 22201-3367.

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