

Death Record or Certificato di Morte

In the Town Hall

Usually death records provide the least amount of new information about an ancestor. In addition, death records are quite difficult to locate. Most of the people died in hospitals that were often far away from the Comune of residence in nearby cities. Therefore, their death could not be registered in their village.

However, death records can be extremely important to assure that the correct family line has been found because through them you can verify that each direct ancestor has not died in his or her infancy.

Burial records usually can only be found in the cemetery or in the parish and not in town offices.

Here is the information that you will find:

- Year, part, series and record number
- Full name
- Place of birth (only the Comune is listed and not the Frazione or hamlet)
- Age
- (Date of birth)
- Civil Status
- If married the death certificate will include the name of the husband or the wife of the deceased
- Date and place of death
- (The deceased's address)
- (Profession)

The brackets identify the information that can be additionally found in the extract of a death act.

As for birth and marriage records, also death records are made in double copy: one copy remains at the Comune, or *Ufficio di Stato Civile*, while the other copy is sent to the "*Procura della Repubblica*" (Country Court at province level), where is deposited in the chancellery of the competent court of the province, which is NOT open for public consultation. From that point on, the records are separately maintained.

In the State Archive (Napoleonic Records)

Napoleonic Death records held in the State Archives of the main Province are the original death acts. Through these records we are able to identify one or two generations of those ancestors who were born before 1809 (date of the beginning of the Napoleonic records).

Here is the information that you will find:

- Declaration by the witness/es (full name, age, profession, and domicile) regarding the death before the mayor
- Date and place the act was written
- Comune and Province
- Full Name of the deceased
- Civil Status
- If married the death act will include the name of the husband or the wife of the deceased, and also the name of a deceased partner, if the person was a widow or a widower.
- Place of birth
- Age
- Profession
- The father's name
- Domicile
- Final statement by which the mayor informs that he personally visited the deceased at home to testify the death (at that time most of the people died at home, hospitals did not have a good reputation)

Also Napoleonic records were made in two copies, one that today is kept in the State Archive and another for the *Pretura della Repubblica*, which is not available for consultation.

Most of these records have been microfilmed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS Church), and these reproductions are available to at the church's family history centers (FHC) throughout the United States and Canada.

In the Parish Church

Parish priests used to register all the deaths occurred in their parish. It is curious to notice that in these acts, especially the earliest in the late 1500s and the 1600s, they used to record also the causes of the death, whether they were natural, violent, accidental or for plagues. One of the most frequent forms of death was infant mortality. Death records related to infants had less information and most of the times if they were born already dead they did not even have a name.

From the most ancient acts that were written in Latin (the 1600s and the 1700s) we can find less information of the deceased, usually only the date of the death, the full name of the deceased, his age and sometimes, as stated above the cause of the death.

Based on the genealogical information recorded in parish records, we can separate the death data into three different historical periods:

First period: From the second half of the 1500s (when the Council of Trent made the transcription of these records compulsory to every parish) to the first half of the 1800s. Unfortunately the older the act, the less information is included. The data related to the

historical period until the late 1700s are usually transcribed in Latin carrying also some paleographic abbreviations. Obviously there are exceptions; in some parishes already in the late 1500s, one parish priest could already use the Italian language in writing the records and maybe his follower would go back to Latin.

The content was organized in the following way:

- In the left upper margin, the number of the deaths in the year in progressive order
- Date of death
- Name of the deceased
- It is rare to find an indication of the civil status of the deceased, whether married or a widower
- It is rare that the name of the wife or the husband
- Age of the deceased
- Sometimes there is the indication of the cause of the deaths

Second period: from the end of the 1700s to the first half of the 1900s. You will find records written in Italian and the content is organized as follows:

- In the left upper margin, the number of the deaths in the year in progressive order
- Full name of the deceased
- Date and time of the declaration of the death
- List of the holy sacraments (usually Repentance, Eucharistia, Extreme Unction with Papal Blessing) (*)
- Full name of the deceased
- Name of the father
- Full maiden name of the mother
- Age of the deceased (most of the times approximate)
- Date and time of death (Dates usually coincide)
- Name of the husband or wife of the deceased (maybe more than one if he/she married more than once)
- Date of burial
- Place of burial

Third period: From the first half of the 1900s to the present time. Birth acts are written in Italian and present the following information:

- In the left upper margin, the number of the deaths in the year in progressive order
- Full name of the deceased
- Date and time of the declaration of the death
- List of the holy sacraments (usually Repentance, Eucharistia, Extreme Unction with Papal Blessing) (*)
- Full name of the deceased
- Name of the father
- Full maiden name of the mother

- Age of the deceased (most of the times approximate)
- Date and time of death (Dates usually coincide)
- Name of the husband or wife of the deceased (maybe more than one if he/she married more than once)
- Date of burial
- Place of burial

Death was a very important religious moment in people's life. People used to die in their homes at the presence of all members of the family and close friends. The parish priest was always present in assisting and comforting the dying by dispensing several Holy Sacraments. (*) For instance: Repentance (to confess and repent from all the sins), Eucharistia, Extreme Unction (to receive forgiveness) and Papal Blessing (a prayer to be read to the dying) were the most common.

Unfortunately only more recent death acts carry the date of birth of the deceased, which is a very important element when conducting genealogical research. Unfortunately most of the times, the priest did not consult the birth records to verify the deceased's correct age and ended up in estimating his/her age also according to the word of the family.

Burial Records

Most of the times, knowing where our ancestors are buried is like feeling closer to them.

According to the Italian law, a cemetery plot and a gravestone can be rented for a period no longer than thirty year after that the remains are exhumed and the plot reused for a new grave. This is particularly true for big cities, due to the scarcity of land while in small villages maybe the period could be longer. In any case, there is no guarantee that you will find your ancestor's gravestone if older than ninety years.

Parish death records do carry information on the date and place of burial.