

1930-1939

1930

1,429,100 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



Illinois creates in-transit permits. The permits are to be displayed on the windshield of vehicles being used to transport vehicles from one location to another, usually from a factory to a vehicle dealership. The permits cost \$20 and are good for one year.

Truck weight prefix categories are placed on plates, with the letters A, B, C, M, and X used for the different categories. The M prefix was used for the lightest category of under 5000 pounds. Many plate collectors have obtained these plates under the assumption that they are Municipal plates.

1931



1,411,300 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office. This is the first decrease in the number of passenger vehicle registrations in Illinois history and the beginning of three consecutive years of decreased registrations. The Depression is blamed.

C.H. Hanson Co. of Chicago makes the license plates.

1932



1,311,800 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Three new truck weight categories, D, E, and H, are added to license plates.

For the first time, weight prefixes are used on trailer plates. The prefixes are W, J, S, Y and Z. W is used for the lightest category

of under 2,000 pounds through 1968.
National Colortype Co. of Bellevue, Kentucky makes the plates.

Official stars are created for the license plates of members of the Illinois General Assembly. Brackets attach the cast-bronze, five-pointed star to the front and rear license plates. The star contains the words "Member of the General Assembly, State of Illinois" and the district number of the lawmaker. The stars are issued from 1932 to 1941.

1933

1,276,900 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



National Colortype Co. of Bellevue, Kentucky has a plate contract to manufacture 1 million passenger plates and 243,000 non-passenger plates. In the meantime, a license plate shop is set up at the Stateville penitentiary near Joliet. By springtime, inmates at Stateville take over production from National Colortype, making 300,000 passenger plates. The cost of these plates are the lowest ever (this was the Depression) at 6.4 cents per set.

The Secretary of State signs a lease agreement with Wieboldt's Stores, Inc. of Chicago for floor space at the Wieboldt's store at Ashland and Adams Streets. The space is used to distribute automobile and chauffeur's driver's licenses and license plates. It marks the first time that a facility operates in Chicago.

1934

1,285,400 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office. This is an increase of 8,500 registrations over the previous year and the first increase since 1930.



Prisoners at the Stateville penitentiary make all the license plates, making Illinois the 30th state in the union to use prison labor. The cost to the state remains at 6.4 cents per set, the lowest cost ever. As this is a transaction between state agencies, a formal contract is not signed; instead, the Secretary of State's Automobile Department submits a requisition to the Department of Public Welfare, which administers the penal system.

For the first time, the word "ILLINOIS" is completely spelled out on license plates.

Two new truck weight categories, F and G, are introduced. B represents the most common category, 8,000 pounds, which

continues today. The weight letters on truck and trailer plates appear as suffixes this year. Road maps of the state of Illinois are sent out with new license plates until 1936.

1935

1,342,900 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



Municipal license plates are issued for the first time, using the letter prefix M. The truck prefix letter M is dropped.

The Secretary of State's Automobile Department orders 1.4 million passenger plates and 1.6 million plates total from Stateville at 6.4 cents per set. Almost as soon as they are bolted on, the paint darkens and the plates rust. Many thousands of plates that have deteriorated beyond legibility are replaced at no cost to motorists. This is the last year that inmates at Stateville prison make Illinois license plates. Disillusioned with their workmanship, Secretary of State Edward Hughes accepts bids from four private companies for the 1936 plates.

1936

1,459,200 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

In an effort to improve compliance with the law and increase automobile ownership, passenger registration fees are reduced about 18%.



C. H. Hanson Co. of Chicago receives the contract to make the plates. The contract calls for a price of 10.5 cents per set, up from 6.4 cents per set paid for plates made at Stateville prison.

The contract for 1936 plates is the first to specify that dealer plates be a different color than other license plates. Despite this, dealer plates remain the same colors as passenger car plates for both 1936 and 1937, but have DEALER on top in a third color.

Mileage Tax plates are issued for the first time. These plates have a T prefix. The mileage tax option allows second-division vehicles that log limited mileage to be registered at reduced fees.

1937



1,556,700 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

The plates are made by the Chicago Furnace Fitting Co. at about 9.8 cents per set.

1938

1,567,800 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Hemp and Company of Macomb, Illinois receives the contract for manufacturing the plates.



Having failed in his bid to return plate production to the Stateville prison, Department of Public Welfare Director A.L. Bowen takes legal action to try to force the Secretary of State to obtain license plates from the penal system. On December 20, 1937, the Illinois Supreme Court rules that manufacturing license plates in the penal system would violate the Prison Industries Act. The law prohibits the goods and services of prison labor from competing in the marketplace with those of free labor. Bowen claims that license plates are for state use, thus exempt under the act. The court rules that license plates are purchased by the Secretary of State for sale to and, therefore, use by the motoring public. License plates would never again be made in any Illinois prison.

For the first time, the state issues farm truck and farm trailer license plates. The word "FARM" is embossed on farm truck plates, and "FARM TRAILER" on farm trailer plates. These are for vehicles that have permanently mounted farm machinery on them.

For the first time, dealer plates have the reverse colors of passenger car plates. This color scheme continues for two decades.

1939



1,626,700 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Effective May 1, 1939, all Illinois motorists are required to hold a driver's license to legally operate a motor vehicle. The licenses cost 50 cents for drivers age 18 and older and 25 cents for drivers under age 18. The licenses are valid for three years.

Legislation for the establishment of driver's education programs leads to the creation of training programs at 593 high schools in 1939.

Traffic signs that reflect light are used for the first time in Illinois.

The General Assembly rejects a bill that would have placed the words "See Illinois State Parks" on state license plates.