



1970

4,557,700 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



The passenger plate fee increases and the number of horsepower categories is reduced to two.

The Metal Stamping Corporation of Conway, Arizona receives the contract for manufacturing the plates, with a bid of 58.6 cents per set. It won the contract over long-time manufacturer King-Seeley Thermos of Macomb, which bid 63.5 cents per set. From the 58.6 cent per set, 3.6 cents is earmarked as a "commission" to Secretary of State Paul Powell. A dummy company is set up by Powell associates to launder the monetary transactions. Before his death on Oct.10, Powell receives \$80,000 from the contract.

This is the last year that a chauffeur driver's license identification card is used.

This is the last year that a metal tag is issued for National Guard plates.

1971

4,701,500 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



Non-resident, drive-away permits are issued.

The state issues special license plates for vehicles used in soil and water conservation. The plates have the suffix CN.

1972

4,903,300 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



The prefix 0, which had appeared on taxi, livery, funeral home and ambulance plates since 1941, is no longer used on such vehicles. New plate categories are introduced:

- Taxi, with TAXI as a vertical prefix
- Livery, with LIVERY as a vertical prefix
- Ambulance, with AMB as a vertical prefix
- Funeral Home, with F/H prefix

Plates for vehicles used by farmers to transport their farm products begin to be issued. The plates have the word "FARM" on the left side and a V alpha suffix indicating the weight class.

Distinctive license plates for Secretary of State Investigators are issued for the first time.

1973

5,115,800 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office, marking the first time passenger car license plate production exceeds 5 million.



King-Seeley Thermos makes the license plates, this time at its Structo plant in Freeport.



Disabled Veteran license plates are made with red and blue silk-screened stripes. This is the first use of a pre-printed graphic image. It paves the way for a new era in license plate design.

Presidential inauguration license plates are issued for the first time.

Recreational trailer license plates are issued for the first time.

1974

5,264,100 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



Passenger plates with three-letter prefixes are introduced. Only about 2,500 are issued this year.

The Metal Stamping Corporation of Conway, Arizona is contracted

to make the license plates. Meanwhile, its president and two others are indicted on federal charges of bribery, mail fraud, tax evasion, and conspiracy for kicking back \$80,000 from the 1970-71 contract to the late Secretary of State Paul Powell. All three are subsequently convicted. U.S. Attorney Jim Thompson, who would later become Illinois governor, hands down the indictments.

For the first time, the state issues license plates containing the international handicapped symbol. They are referred to as the “Wheelchair Plate”.

Driver Education license plates are issued.

The vehicle age requirement for Antique Vehicle plates is reduced to 25 years.

1975

5,332,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office.



The passenger plate colors of black on yellow are chosen in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Caterpillar Tractor Co., headquartered in Peoria.

Recreational license plates change over from the truck fiscal year to the calendar year. Thus, the June 75 plate is followed by the December 75 plate.

Special license plates, with stick-figure boxers in a ring instead of a number, are issued to heavyweight boxing champion Mohammed Ali.

1976

5,535,500 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office.



Illinois commemorates the bicentennial of the nation with special bicentennial license plates. Twenty-four other states, plus the District of Columbia, also issue commemorative plates. More than 400,000 students participate in a contest to design Illinois’ bicentennial license plates. Ten-year-old Kelley Jordan of Normal, Illinois creates the winning design.

License plates for dealers, taxis, funeral home vehicles, liveries and ambulances are made in different colors than the bicentennial plates used for passenger cars.

The Secretary of State issues a collectable metal license plate, which is a replica of the 1976 Bicentennial passenger car plate. The replica sells for \$3. All collectable plates have “USA 200” and “COLLECTOR” vertically on both sides.

Charitable Vehicle (suffix CV) and Charitable Bus (suffix CB) plates are issued.

1977

6,028,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office, marking the first time passenger car plate production exceeds the 6 million mark.



The General Assembly passes legislation to switch Illinois from annual license plates to multi-year license plates. The length of time the plates were to be used was left to the discretion of the Secretary of State. Illinois was the 45th state to switch to a multi-year plate system. The multi-year plate system will go into effect in 1979.

Driver’s licenses begin to be issued with a photo of the licensee. State-issued photo ID cards are also available for those who do not drive.

Illinois adopts the International Registration Plan and begins issuing apportioned plates for second-division vehicles used by interstate operators.

1978

6,217,200 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office.



This is the last year that passenger plates are issued annually. It is the end of a 67-year run of annual issues, the longest in the United States.

State-owned U plates and Municipal (M) plates containing the international handicapped symbol are issued for the first time.

1979

6,873,800 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office.



Multi-year automobile license plates are introduced. The 1979

plates are made out of aluminum, the first time in Illinois since 1957. The Texas Department of Corrections manufactures most of the plates, but the New York Department of Corrections manufactures a small number.

Secretary of State Alan Dixon chooses blue on white for the colors of the multi-year plate in honor of the 150 years of existence of Illinois College in Jacksonville.

The multi-year plates have debossed areas in the upper left and upper right corners. These areas are for an annual renewal sticker, which is 1" x 1" in size.

A staggered monthly renewal system is implemented by issuing registrations valid between nine and 23 months, based on the last two digits of one's 1978 plates. One can choose a short term and receive a '79 sticker, or choose a long term and receive an '80 sticker. Fees are prorated accordingly.