

1950-1959

1950



2,287,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Aluminum license plates are issued for the first time.

A new truck weight category, "P", appears for the first time.

1951



2,406,200 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Plates have maroon characters on a natural aluminum background. This is the only year that the state issues plates with an unpainted background.

This is the last year that chauffeur badges are required of paid drivers and mechanics. The badges had been required since 1907. Greenduck Company of Chicago produces 250,000 badges at a cost of 81 cents a badge this last year.

1952



2,457,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

There are two issuances of truck and trailer plates, a result of a legal battle over registration fees. An increase in fees was scheduled to take effect on Jan 1. Several trucking companies go to court to stop the state from imposing the new rates. Circuit Court judges in Kane and Sangamon counties rule that the increase is invalid. But in March, the Illinois Supreme Court rules in favor of the state. Meanwhile, blue on orange truck plates are sold at the previous rates. In July, the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear

the case, but does not issue a stay on the rates. The difference between the old and the new rates becomes due in August, with black on pale yellow plates issued upon payment.

Many balk at buying the new plates; numerous citations are issued for having expired registrations. On Feb. 9, 1953, the U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of the state by a 6 - 2 decision. The state spends a decade collecting the delinquent fees.

The Secretary of State first issues "Historic Auto" State Fair plates. These would be issued every year from 1952 to 1967 in conjunction with the antique car parade at the Illinois State Fair.

Local Bus plates begin to be issued to buses engaged in public transportation. Buses with these plates are limited to a single city and those that border on it.

1953



2,580,700 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

A restructured Illinois driver's license law places the entire administration of driver's licenses under the Office of Secretary of State.

1954



2,694,300 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

The slogan, "Land of Lincoln," makes its debut. It appears on Illinois license plates, with few exceptions, to this day. In the bill that authorized the slogan, there was originally a provision for an image of Abraham Lincoln to appear on the plates. This provision is deleted because it is not feasible to make plates with such a feature at the time.

Mileage tax plates are in different colors from all other license plates. This continues through June 1995. Weight code letters begin to appear on them.

A license plate for trucks with permanently mounted equipment is introduced with the prefix PM.

1955

2,858,900 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



The colors of orange on blue are chosen in honor of the University of Illinois.

Although placed on 1954 license plates, "Land of Lincoln" is now approved as the official state slogan by the General Assembly on May 17.

1956

2,984,600 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



Plates are made in the standard size of 6" x 12" (152 mm x 305 mm). This standard is developed by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) together with the auto industry. Previously, the number of digits determined the length of the plates.

About 60 percent of the state's license plates are made out of aluminum to save on the cost of postage.

The state issues plates for amateur radio (ham radio) operators. The words "AMATEUR RADIO" flank the call letters on these license plates.

1957

3,076,400 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Passenger car plate production exceeds 3 million.



The colors of white on red are chosen in honor of Illinois State University in Normal.

For the second year in a row, about 60 percent of the state's license plates are made out of aluminum. There are some problems with peeling paint on the aluminum plates, attributed to a residue from a solution used to clean the plates before painting. Aluminum would not be used again for Illinois license plates until 1979.

Driver's licenses begin to be printed by computer.

Illinois adopts a uniform Vehicle Code, which had been promoted by national driving organizations.

1958

3,127,700 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



The colors of purple on white are chosen in honor of Northwestern University in Evanston.

Due to a labor strike at Hemp and Company, some truck plates are sublet to S.G. Adams of St. Louis.

This is the last year that plates for second-division vehicles are marked "FRONT" and "REAR". These markings do not appear on B-truck plates.

Municipal Bus plates replace Local Bus plates. These have a BM prefix.

1959

3,221,900 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



Three new facilities that sell license plates open in Chicago, bringing the number of such facilities up to four. The first facility, which opened in 1933 in a Wieboldt's store, is closed.

The colors of white on brown are chosen in honor of Quincy College in Quincy.

Dealer plates return to the use of passenger plate colors. The D/L prefix is introduced, which continues today.

Motorcycle dealer plates are issued for the first time. Previously, motorcycle dealers were registered with regular motorcycle plates.

Trailer dealer plates are issued for the first time. The plate has the word "TRAILER" vertically on the right side.