



National Archives and Records Administration

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The Dawes Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, 1893–1914

An act of Congress on March 3, 1893, established a commission to negotiate agreements with the Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Cherokee Indian tribes. The commission became known as the Dawes Commission, after its chairman, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts. The commission intended to divide tribal land into plots that were then distributed among the members of the tribe. As part of this process, the Commission accepted or rejected applicants for tribal membership based on whether the tribal government had previously recognized the applicant as a member of the tribe, and other legal requirements. Applicants were categorized as citizens by blood, citizens by marriage, minor citizens by blood, newborn citizens by blood, freedmen (African Americans formerly enslaved by tribal members), newborn freedmen, and minor freedmen.

Final Rolls

The Commission prepared final rolls and submitted them to the Secretary of the Interior for approval. The rolls include both approved and rejected names. Most rolls give the name, age, sex, degree of Indian blood, and roll and census card number of each person.

The published index to the Final Rolls is digitized in NARA's Archival Research Catalog (ARC) at www.archives.gov/research/arc/native-americans-final-rolls.html.

Additional descriptive information about the Dawes Rolls is also available on NARA's web site at <http://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes/intro.html>.

___T529, *Final rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory (as Approved by the Secretary of the Interior on or Before Mar. 4, 1907, With Supplements Dated Sept. 25, 1914), 1907–1914*. 3 rolls. The series is arranged by name of tribe and then divided into rolls for citizens by blood, citizens by marriage, and freedmen. In many of the groups there are separate rolls for minor and newborn children. The names are arranged numerically by roll numbers.

Enrollment Cards and Applications

An enrollment card, sometimes referred to as a census card, records information about individual applications submitted by members of the same family group or household and includes notation of actions taken.

___M1186, *Enrollment Cards of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1898–1914*. 93 rolls. DP. The information for each applicant includes name, roll number (if individual enrolled), age, sex, degree of Indian blood, relationship to the head of the family group, and parents' names. The cards often include references to kin-related enrollment cards and notations about births, deaths, and changes in marital status.

Enrollment cards are arranged as follows:

1. Tribe, including Cherokee, Choctaw, Mississippi Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. There is a small section of Delaware adopted by the Cherokee at the end of the Cherokee section.
2. Within each tribe, cards are arranged according to type of membership, including citizens by blood, citizens by marriage, newborn citizens by blood, minor citizens by blood, freedmen, newborn freedmen, and minor freedmen.
3. Within each enrollment category there are three kinds of cards: “Straight” cards for persons whose applications were approved; “D” cards for persons whose applications were doubtful; and “R” cards for persons whose applications were rejected. Persons listed on the “D” cards were subsequently transferred to the approved cards or to the “R” cards depending on the Commission's decision.

Roll 1 contains an index to names listed on the approved cards. You can also find the census card number for the approved cards in the Final Roll on T529 or on ARC.

Except for some Cherokee applications, there is no index to the “D” and “R” cards. For Cherokees, see National Archives Microfilm Publication P2089, *Index to Cherokee “Rejected” and “Doubtful” Dawes Commission Applications and Memorandum Case Files, 1899–1907*. 1 roll.

___M1301, *Applications for Enrollment of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, 1898–1914*. 468 rolls. These applications formed the basis for the enrollment cards described in M1186, above, and often contain additional information about the applicant. The records are arranged similarly to the enrollment cards in M1186. You can use M1186, **roll 1**, to determine the application number for the approved cards. **The enrollment card number, also called the census number, and the application number are the same.**

___M1650, *Applications from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Muskogee Area Office, Relating to Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes under the Act of 1896*. 54 rolls. DP. This series includes typical application files containing affidavits, depositions, letters, memorials, and answers of tribal attorneys objecting to enrollment. Some records provide background information on the applicant including name, post office address, age, degree of blood, lists of children and their ages, and other relatives. The records are arranged by tribe; there are no Seminole applications. **Roll 1** contains an index to applications from the other four tribes.

Land Allotments

There is a land allotment file for each approved enrollment number, but these files are available in textual form only. For copies of these files or for more information about rejected applications contact the National Archives at Fort Worth (Southwest Region).

Rev. September 2011