

Native American Research: The Five Civilized Tribes

Midwestgenealogycenter.org

mgc@mymcpl.org

816-252-7228

Background Information

- Five Civilized Tribes = Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole
- Originally in the Southeastern U.S., removed to the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) following the Indian Removal Act of 1830
 - Not all chose to relocate causing divisions within tribes such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida vs the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma (Class focus = Research methods for those ancestors from the Five Civilized Tribes who moved west into Indian Territory)
 - Some relocated and then moved back to their original lands later
- Called “Civilized” due to their adoption of elements of European culture – governmental structures, farming and animal husbandry, religion (Christianity), etc. – even prior to removal

Beginning Your Research

- Start with yourself (present). Push back (past). Gather names, dates, places, and stories from living family members and family artifacts, then collect the documentation/records to support this information.
- Learn what you can about the existence of local records – for example, OK began registering births at the state level in 1908, but these records were inconsistently gathered until the 1930s.
- Create a timeline for your ancestor with census records, city directories, newspapers, etc.
 - Access Research Checklist and Family Unit Charts at www.midwestgenealogycenter.org

Records to Search

- U.S. Federal Census (1860 – 1940)
 - Locate ancestor in 1900 U.S. Federal Census 1) to see where they were living during the Dawes Rolls (below) and 2) to learn tribal information in the “Special Inquiries Relating to Indians” section of this census and the next federal census in 1910. This special section located at the bottom of the regular census page in areas with predominantly Indian populations.
 - Info on access to each census - <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/online-resources>
- Dawes Rolls (1898 – 1907, 1914)
 - Only for members of the Five Civilized Tribes removed to Indian Territory and living in Oklahoma during this enrollment window (exception = Mississippi Choctaw)
 - Initial enrollment (1896) overturned, all 14,000 applicants had to reapply
 - Records available on Ancestry as *Dawes Commission Index (overturned), 1896*
 - Census/Enrollment Cards
 - Grouped by family
 - Watch for tribe, census/enrollment card number, Dawes Roll number, tribal information – blood degree, by marriage, freedman, etc. – plus added notes
 - Online access – Ancestry (*Oklahoma and Indian Territory, Dawes Census Cards for Five Civilized Tribes, 1898-1914*), Fold3 (*Dawes Enrollment Cards*), and others
 - NARA film # M1186 (FamilySearch.org/FHL # 1490261+)
 - Applications, Enrollment Packets/Jackets
 - Birth/death affidavits, marriage licenses, correspondence, etc.



- Online access – Ancestry (*U.S. Native American Applications for Enrollment in Five Civilized Tribes, 1898-1914*), Fold3 (*Dawes Packets*)
 - NARA Film # M1301 (FamilySearch.org/FHL #1439795+)
 - Final Rolls
 - Those eligible on Final Rolls entitled to an allotment of land
 - Doubtful (D) = enrollment card, but may not appear on Final Roll; Rejected (R) = enrollment card, but name will NOT appear on Final Roll
 - Once you know your ancestor's tribe, you can search the online index of people accepted by the Dawes Commission (Final Rolls) through the National Archives Catalog (National Archives Identifier #300321). Follow the process described at <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes/tutorial/final-rolls.html> (Note: These are listed by census card number.)
 - Online access – Ancestry (*U.S., Native American Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1895-1914*), Fold3 (*Dawes Packets*)
 - NARA Film #T529 (FamilySearch.org/FHL #830228)
 - Land Allotment Files
 - Jacket may include application for allotment, transcripts of related Commission hearings, annotated plat maps, and much more.
 - Online access – Ancestry (*Oklahoma and Indian Territory, U.S., Land Allotment Jackets for Five Civilized Tribes, 1884-1934*), FamilySearch.org – *Oklahoma Applications for Allotment, Five Civilized Tribes, 1899 – 1907*, and others
 - More information – <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes/tutorial/intro.html>
- Where next?
 - Tribal Rolls that predate the Dawes Rolls
 - Emigration Records/Muster Rolls
 - Indian Census Rolls 1885 – 1940 (NARA M595)
 - NARA info - <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/native-americans/1885-1940.html>
 - Access Genealogy - <https://accessgenealogy.com/native/free-us-indian-census-rolls.htm> (often redirects to the Internet Archive -- <https://archive.org/>)
 - FamilySearch.org - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2761958>
 - Other censuses – 1880 Cherokee Census, 1885 Choctaw Census, etc.
 - Military and School Records
 - Published Works – *Indian Pioneer Papers* of the Federal Writers Project, tribal newspapers, periodicals, published genealogies
 - *The Historical Atlas of Oklahoma* by Charles Robert Goins , Danney Goble, and others - <https://mymcpl.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S110C1135623>

Noteworthy Websites

- Oklahoma Historical Society – <https://www.okhistory.org/research/americanindians>
 - Additional Indian records and tutorials, more information on the removal to present-day Oklahoma
 - See especially their *American Indian Archives* which includes records of the Five Civilized Tribes and those of other Indian Agencies, and the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*
- Access Genealogy - <https://accessgenealogy.com/native-american>
- FamilySearch.org Research Wiki - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Five_Civilized_Tribes
- U.S. GenWeb Project's *OK/IT GenWeb* - <https://okgenweb.net/~itgenweb/>
- (Bonus) FamilySearch.org NARA to FHL film conversion - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/NARA_Series_to_FHL_film_Conversion

