

NATIONAL ARCHIVES CATALOG

Exploring the Dawes Rolls

The image shows two handwritten forms from the Department of the Interior, Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes. The top form is for Brown Wilson, a Choctaw, with a date of birth of Dec 18, 1844. The bottom form is for Elige Wilson, a Chickasaw, with a date of birth of Dec 18, 1844. Both forms include names of witnesses and a date of filing.

Are you looking to sharpen your research skills? We'll periodically explore some of the most requested records at the National Archives and how to search for them in the Catalog. Today we'll take a closer look at the [Applications for Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, 1898-1914](#), also known as the Dawes Rolls, a popular search by researchers in the National Archives Catalog.

What are the Dawes Rolls?

The Dawes Commission, known formally as the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, was appointed by President Grover Cleveland in 1893 and headed by Henry L. Dawes to negotiate land with the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole tribes.

Tribe members were allotted land in return for abolishing tribal governments and recognizing Federal laws. In order to receive the land, individual tribal members first had to apply and be deemed eligible by the Commission.

The Commission accepted applications from 1898 until 1907, with a few additional people accepted by an Act of Congress in 1914. The resulting lists of those who were accepted as eligible for land became known as the Dawes Rolls.



Did you know?

Entertainer Will Rogers, pictured here with Eleanor Roosevelt, was an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. Rogers' [application](#) to the Dawes Commission was accepted in 1900.

Why search the Dawes Rolls?

The Rolls contain over 101,000 names and can be searched to discover the enrollee's name, sex, blood degree, and census card number. Census cards often provide additional genealogical information and can contain references to earlier rolls, such as the 1880 Cherokee census. A census card is often accompanied by an "application jacket". The jackets can contain valuable supporting documentation such as birth and death affidavits, marriage licenses, and correspondence.

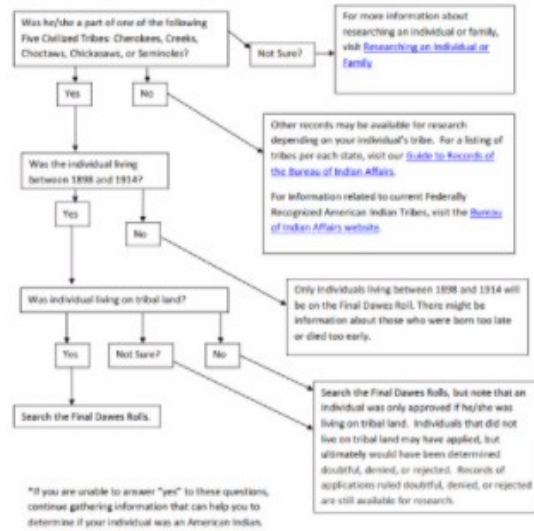
Today these five tribes continue to use the Dawes Rolls as the basis for determining tribal membership. They usually require applicants to provide proof of descent from a person who is listed on these rolls. ([Contact the tribes directly](#) for enrollment information).

Should I search the Dawes Rolls?

If you aren't sure if you need to search the records of the Five Civilized Tribes, this excellent [flow chart](#) can help you decide where to start your search.

Researching Dawes Records for the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma

Individuals and families applied to be listed on the Final Rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma. The Dawes Commission used the applications to determine if the individual or family were eligible for enrollment. The Commission kept applications of all individuals and families that applied even if the application was rejected or ruled doubtful.



Ready to search the Dawes Rolls?

We've put together a handy tutorial to help you get started. Head over to our NARAtions blog for [step-by-step instructions for searching the Dawes Rolls](#) by name.

Find more resources for searching [Native American Heritage](#) on archives.gov.



Did you catch our last [Newsletter](#) featuring our favorite Presidential Records in

the National Archives Catalog? In that issue we also put out a call for seasoned transcribers to join our **Transcriber Task Force**, a group of Citizen Archivists willing to tackle tricky transcriptions.

If you enjoy the challenge and puzzle of transcribing complex records, email us at citizenarchivist@nara.gov and join the team!

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