

History of Indigenous Peoples of the United States

[United States Genealogy](#) ➔ [Indigenous Peoples of North America](#) ➔ **Indians of the United States and Their Records**

To get started in [American Indian Research](#)

The native people who lived on the North American continent at the time of the first contact with European explorers and settlers were called Indians by the Europeans. They lived in families which often grouped themselves together in larger bodies, often given the name of tribes by the newcomers. For the purpose of studying the native population, they can be divided into classifications of different-sized groups -- [Indigenous Peoples of North America](#), [Indians of the United States](#), [Canada First Nations](#), [Indians of a particular state or province](#), or by individual tribes. All of these levels will be represented in this wiki. This article will begin to present the history and records of groups in the United States.

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American Indian History

The following events affected the American Indian way of life, determined political and geographic boundaries, and the records to be kept.
Much of the following calendar of events was taken from:

- *Chronology of the American Indian*, by Americana Indian Publishers, Inc. c. 1985. New Beach, CA 92663 (First published in 1975 by Scholarly Press, Inc.) FHL book 973 F25e no. 1 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220706042328/https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/257504>), no film available. 970.1 So59c (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220706042328/https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1472210>), no film available.

1710: Tuscarora Indians petitioned the Pennsylvania provincial government to move to Pennsylvania from their home in North Carolina, as they were losing their land and being enslaved by white settlers.

1711-1712: Angered at losing their land and being enslaved, the Tuscarora aided by Coree, Pamlico, Machapunga and other tribes fought the colonists.

1712-1713: Second Tuscarora War in North Carolina; the Tuscarora migrated north to join the Iroquois Confederacy.

1715: Chickasaw and Cherokee Indians formed an alliance to drive the Shawnee Indians out of the Cumberland Valley of Maryland and Pennsylvania into the Kentucky-Tennessee area.

1723: The First permanent school for Indians in the British colonies was opened at William and Mary College in Williamsburg, Virginia. The school was maintained by funds left for this purpose by the British scientist Robert Boyle, one of the founders of modern chemistry.

1751: The Delaware Indians left Pennsylvania to live among the Huron Indians in Ohio.

1754-1763: The French and Indian War, fought by the British and their Indian allies against the French and their Indian allies. The Iroquois Six-Nation Confederacy allied with the British, many Algonquian tribes sided with the French.

1758: The first Indian reservation was established in New Jersey in Burlington County. Edge Pillock a 3,000 acre tract was settled by mostly Unami Indians.

1763: The Proclamation of 1763 was issued by the British, forbidding settlers to move across the Appalachian watershed into Indian Lands.

1763: The Calusa Indians of Florida were forced to migrate to Cuba when the British gained control of the area.

1775: The Continental Congress created **three departments of Indian affairs** - northern, middle, southern and appointed eleven commissioners including Benjamin Franklin and Patrick Henry to staff these departments.

1775: The education of Indian youth at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, was the object of a five hundred dollar appropriation by the American Continental Congress on July 12. The amount was raised to five thousand dollars five years later. Dartmouth had been an outgrowth of Moor's Indian Charity School, founded by the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock in Connecticut in about 1754 providing a free school where Indian and white children could be educated together.

1775: Treaty of Sycamore Shoals -- the Transylvania Land Company acquired 20 million acres of Cherokee land.

Native American Topics



Buffalo Hunt under the Wolf-Skin Mask

Beginning Research

- [Beginning Your Search](#)
- [Finding Your United States Indigenous Ancestor](#)
- [Starting Native American Research](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples of North America - A Beginner's Guide](#)

Tribes

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▪ Tribes of the U.S. | ▪ Tribes by State |
| ▪ Fed Recognized Tribes | ▪ State Recognized Tribes |
| ▪ 5 Civilized Tribes | ▪ If the Tribe Is Unknown |

Record Types

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▪ Allotment Records | ▪ Health Records |
| ▪ Annuity Rolls | ▪ Heirship Records |
| ▪ Biography | ▪ Individual History Card |
| ▪ Cemeteries | ▪ Land and Property |
| ▪ Census Rolls | ▪ Maps |
| ▪ Census Schedules | ▪ Military Records |
| ▪ Church Records | ▪ Newspapers |
| ▪ Correspondence and Reports | ▪ Online Records |
| ▪ Court Records | ▪ Oral Histories |
| ▪ Enrollment Records | ▪ Probate Records |
| ▪ Dawes Rolls | ▪ Register of Families |
| ▪ Guion Miller Rolls | ▪ Removal Records |
| ▪ Factories/Trading | ▪ Sanitary Records |
| | ▪ Schools |
| | ▪ Treaties |
| | ▪ Vital Records |

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ▪ Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) | ▪ Area Offices |
| ▪ Agencies | ▪ Reservations |
| | ▪ Superintendencies |

Other Topics

1905: The Burke Act amending the Dawes Act, was passed by Congress. The intent was to slow down the process by which Indians gained citizenship under the Dawes Act.

1910: The Census figures indicated the the Indian population (excluding Alaska) had declined from about three hundred forty thousand in 1860 to about two hundred forty thousand in 1910. About one-third of the 1910 population lived in Oklahoma.

1919: (November 6,) By an act of Congress, Indian men who enlisted to fight for the United States in **World War I** could become citizens.

1924: (Curtis Bill, June 2,) **Citizenship** conferred on all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the U.S. The act preserved the tribal rights of the individual Indians and gave them in effect a dual citizenship.

1929: Charles Curtis, of Osage and Kaw Indian descent began his term as vice-president of the U.S., serving with President Hoover until 1933.

1934: The Wheeler-Howard **Indian Reorganization Act** passed by Congress.

1934-39: The New Deal on many reservations under the Civilian Conservation Corps. Tribal herds of deer, buffalo, elk, and antelope were developed under this program and continued into the 1970's.

1945: World War II. More than twenty-five thousand Indian men and women served in the armed forces.

1946: The U.S. Indian Claims Commission was established.

1947: (February) A **Termination** timetable listing Indian tribes that might be severed from federal supervision was submitted to the U.S. Congress by William Zimmerman, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Flathead, Hoopa, Klamath, Menominee, Mission, Six Nations, Osage, Potawatomi, Sacramento and Turtle Mountain tribes, totaling forty thousand Indians, were listed as ready for termination in 1947.

1948:(May 14,) **Indian Land Sales Act** (U.S. Public Law 80-529)

1955: (July) **Indian Health Services** were transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Public Health Service.

1957: (March 1,) The **Termination** of U.S. federal supervision and services to 260 Shivwits, Koosharem, Indian Peaks and Kanosh bands of the Paiute Indians of Utah became effective.

1958: (September 18,) **Termination** without tribal consent of U.S. federal services to Indian tribes was ended.

1959: (August)U.S. federal supervision of and services to nine hundred Wyandot, Peoria, and Ottawa Indians of Oklahoma ended.

Historical Background

The first contact of European settlers with the native population created a mutual and natural curiosity. Establishing relationships required trust and understanding. The mind-set of the European settlers became one of converting the natives to Christianity and the European way of life.

Before the establishment of the federal government, Indian affairs was handled by each colony or at the local level. The administration of Indian affairs was placed under the jurisdiction of the War Department early in the history of the United States. It was later transferred to the Bureau of Indian Affairs as part of the Department of the Interior.

There was a general recognition that the Native Americans had "title" (pre-emption rights or rights of first occupation) to the land. Efforts were made to "extinguish" those property rights by purchase and by treaty. Treaties included stipulations for the payment of benefits in exchange for the surrender of the property rights. Provision was sometimes made to reserve areas for hunting, fishing and burial. Later treaties also provided for the removal of the Native Americans from their home lands to unsettled areas and/or reservations.

From 1795 to 1822, the official policy was to trade with the Indians through "factories" or government owned trading houses. More than 20 such factories were established and records were kept by them.

Eventually most of the American Indians, by policy of the federal government (and in a few instances state governments), were confined to reservations.

With passage in 1934 of the Indian Reorganization Act (also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act), American Indian Tribes set up their own tribal governments. Many of these tribal governments began recording vital records, tribal enrollment records and other records of value to genealogists.

Records

Each government policy caused records to be created. The desire to "Christianize" the Indians led to records of the efforts of the respective denominations, or church mission records. Extinguishing property rights led to Indian deeds and to treaties in which the Indians gave up their property rights. Treaties often led to annuity rolls, or record of payments to the Native Americans.

The movement of groups of American Indians from one locality to another led to removal records or emigration records.

The management of reservations by agents of the Office of Indian Affairs (now the Bureau of Indian Affairs) produced a variety of records – Indian census rolls, allotment (land) records, school records, health records, vital records and a number of other documents.

Most of the records discussed in this article are those created by the federal government. American Indians were also included in other non-agency records, such as the general population schedules of the Census Bureau, local deed books, military records, and many others.

After the Indian Reorganization Act was passed in 1934, and in some cases earlier, tribes established governments which administered the affairs of the tribe and created records. These records often include enrollment records, vital statistics, tribal court records, employment records, minutes of meetings, etc.

Educational institutions have also studied the history, culture, and language of Indian tribes. Oral histories have been gathered from individuals.

Personal and business records of individual Indians have been gathered by historical societies and museums. Many of these records remain in the possession of the families.

Tribes of the United States

Many "tribes" of American Indians have existed in what is now the United States. Tribes have existed and become extinct. Some tribes are federally recognized, some are state-recognized and some exist without official recognition.

It is important to determine the tribal affiliation of supposed ancestors, since most of the records are associated with the tribe. If the tribal connection of an ancestor is unknown, it can sometimes be identified by determining the residence of the ancestor and studying the history of that locality to find tribes that resided there.

There are several lists of tribes available for various localities -- country, state, or local. Examples of such lists are:

- Native Tribes of the United States (includes federally and state recognized) -- dickshovel.com/trbindex.html (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220706042328/http://www.dickshovel.com/trbindex.html>)
- Indian Tribes of the United States -- accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/ (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220706042328/http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/>)

While these lists differ in their completeness, they are important tools to help identify the names of the tribes and where they resided. However, since this Wiki site is focusing on the records of the various tribes, their location, and their use, lists are being compiled with links to the tribal histories, offices, and records. It is hoped this will make it easier for genealogists and family historians to find the records needed to trace their ancestry and prepare the histories of those ancestors. These lists are being added to daily and are arranged in several ways.

References

- *Chronology of the American Indian*, by Americana Indian Publishers, Inc. c. 1985. New Beach, CA 92663 (First published in 1975 by Scholarly Press, Inc.)
- Deloria, Vine, ed. *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- Smith, Jane F. and Robert M Kvasnicka, eds. *Indian-White Relations: A Persistent Paradox*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1976.

Family History Library

Websites

See the [Bibliography of Native North Americans \(https://web.archive.org/web/20220706042328/http://www.ebscohost.com/government/bibliography-of-native-north-americans\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20220706042328/http://www.ebscohost.com/government/bibliography-of-native-north-americans) an online resource available at many libraries.

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