Historic Indian Publications by the US Federal Government

Part Two: Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs

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This is the second of three articles based on presentations called Historic Indian Publications by the United States Federal Government. This article on the Commissioner of Indian Affairs discusses what can be found within these reports and the two websites where the annual reports are available online. All of the web addresses in this article are accessible from the Native American Historical Resources web page (www.se.edu/library/government-information/native-american-historical-resources) at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

The Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs describes government interaction with Native Americans. The annual reports began in 1824, while the Office of Indian Affairs was under the administration of the War Department, and were published until 1849 when it was transferred to the Department of the Interior. It wasn’t until 1947 that the Office of Indian Affairs was officially called the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These reports have been digitized by the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections (uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/History/IndianTreatiesMicro) and the annual reports are available for the years 1826–1917 and 1921–32. Figure 1 shows an image of a list of annual reports from the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections.

After the establishment of the Office of Indian Affairs, there were correspondence to and from the Secretary of War, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, generals, governors, Indian agents, and superintendents. Throughout the years, there were reports by Indian superintendents, agents and sub-agents as well as school, missionary, and farm reports. One such individual was William Clark, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition that took place from May 1804 to September 1806. Clark became the first superintendent for the St. Louis Superintendency beginning in 1822, after Missouri became a state. As the years went on, there were reports from agents for many states and territories, especially those west of the Mississippi River, throughout the United States including reports of agents in Indian Territory from the years 1874 to 1898 and reports of agents in Oklahoma from 1890 to 1898.

One of the advantages of using the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections to access the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs is that it has a detailed table of contents from 1851 to 1906 whereby direct links are available to a specific section of an annual report. Consistently from 1872 to 1909 as well as for the 1912 and 1913 volumes, an index is available except 1905, part II.

Since the beginning, the reports have included statistics, primarily financial as well as statistics on Indian schools. There was a section of reports on the conditions of Indian tribes from 1837 to 1841. A section called Medical Statistics of the United States Indian Service was published from 1888 to 1894. From 1877 to 1905, there was a section on Indian legislation passed by Congress. For some years, executive orders (1877–87, 1889, 1892, 1893, 1895, 1900, 1904 and 1905) and proclamations (1891, 1892, 1896 and 1902–5) from the president of the United States were also included.

During the time that Thomas Hartley Crawford was commissioner from 1838 to 1845, he advocated education for the Indians. He wrote in the 1840 annual report that the arts of housewifery and farming would help the Indians become civilized. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. J. Morgan, wrote about unfortunate incidents in his 1891 annual report. These incidents were the death of Sitting Bull, which also includes the death of Indian policemen, and the massacre at Wounded Knee. The commissioner reports for these two incidents are found on pages 129 and 130. Turning Hawk and American Horse are a few of the Indians that give their accounts of the massacre on pages 179–81. James McLaughlin, Indian agent for
the Standing Rock Agency, gives his reports on the events that led to the death of Sitting Bull on pages 328–38. These reports can be found by using the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections website.

The University of Wisconsin Digital Collections digitized Indian reservation maps. They can be found for different years between 1876 and 1914. The titles for these maps are: Map of Indian reservations (1876); Partial map of Indian reservations (1877); Map showing Indian reservations in the United States and number of Indians belonging thereto (1878 and 1880); Map showing Indian reservations in the United States west of the 84th meridian and number of Indians belonging thereto (1881 and 1882); and Map showing Indian reservations within the limits of the United States (1889, 1892, 1894, 1895, 1897–1906, 1908, 1909, 1912–14). All of these maps are available in PDF format except for the 1901 map.

Another website where Indian reservations maps can be found is the McCasland Digital Collection of Early Oklahoma and Indian Territory Maps (omaps.library.okstate.edu/) from the Oklahoma State University Library. Figure 2 shows an image of the home page. These Indian reservations maps were digitized from the United States Congressional Serial Set, which are the official record of reports of the US House of Representatives and the Senate. Choose “Search the Collection” from the home page of the McCasland website and within the search box that is located at the upper right-hand corner of the page, type “Indian reservations.” As of March 10, 2015, there are 63 results for Indian reservations maps. The maps that include the entire continental United States or a large portion of the United States are from the years 1879, 1881–85, 1888, 1890–96, 1898–1901, 1903–5, 1907, 1908, 1910–17, 1919, and 1920. There are thirty-three years’ worth of Indian reservation maps. John Phillips from the Oklahoma State University Library is the project director for the McCasland Digital Collection.

Another place you can find the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reports is a record from the HathiTrust Digital Library for the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior (catalog, hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/1330434.html). Figure 3 shows an image of that record. Most of these volumes from this record were digitized by the University of California libraries, while a few of them were digitized by the University of Minnesota. By making a comparison from the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections and this record from the HathiTrust, different information can be found on Indian affairs. For example, the Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the years 1918–20 and after 1932 are available from this HathiTrust record that are not available from the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections website.

The following reports that can be found from the HathiTrust record for the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior but not within the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections are:

- yr. 1881/02 v.02; 1882:2—Report of the Inspector of Indian Schools pg. 1011–1028
- yr. 1882/83 v.02; 1883:2—Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools pg. 469–485; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 665–736
- yr. 1885/86 v.01; 1886:1—Abstract of proposals received and contracts awarded for supplies for the Indian Service pg. 684–919; Report of Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 921–1060
yr. 1886/87 v.02—Abstract of proposals received and contracts awarded for supplies for the Indian Service pg. 502–755; Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools pg. 757–910; Report of Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 911–1049

yr. 1887/88 v.02—Abstract of proposals received and contracts awarded for supplies for the Indian Service pg. 468–719; Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools pg. 721–731; Report of Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 733–856

yr. 1899/1900 v.01—Summary of Indian Affairs (as part of the Report of the Secretary of the Interior) pg. X–XLVII; summary of Arizona Territory pg. XCVIII–CI; summary of Oklahoma Territory pg. CXII–CXVIII

yr. 1899/1900:5:2 – The Indian Territory by the Hon. Henry L. Dawes pg. 1337–1341; paper was read at the Lake Mohonk Indian Conference and published in Volume 2 of the Report of the Commissioner of Education

yr. 1900/01 v.01; 1900/01:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. XVII–LVII; summary of Arizona Territory CXVIII–CXXIV; summary of Oklahoma Territory pg. CXXXVII–CXLIV; Exhibit D: Opening of Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, and Wichita Indian Lands in the Territory of Oklahoma CXXXVII–CCLVIII

yr. 1901/02:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 30–54

yr. 1904/05:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 38–55

yr. 1905/06 v.01; 1905/06—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 34–68; Report of Commissioner to Five Civilized Tribes pg. 256–317 (Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior)

yr. 1906:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 32–66; Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 255–316 (Report of the Secretary of the Interior with detailed table of contents)

yr. 1905/06:4—Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 121–148

yr. 1906/07 v.01; 1906/07:1:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 17–20; summary of Indian Territory pg. 20–29; summary of Oklahoma Territory pg. 48–50


yr. 1907/08:1:1—Summary of Indian Office pg. 18–20; summary of Five Civilized Tribe pg. 20–32

yr. 1908/09:1:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 23–27; summary of Five Civilized Tribe pg. 27–31

yr. 1908/09 v.02; 1908/09:1:2—Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 171–369; Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 371–457

yr. 1909/10 v.01; 1909/10:1:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 32–38; summary of Five Civilized Tribes pg. 38–47

yr. 1910/11 v.01; 1910/11:1:1—Summary of Office of Indian Affairs pg. 37–41; summary of Five Civilized Tribes pg. 41–43

yr. 1911/12 v.01; 1911/12:1:1—Summary of Office of Indian Affairs pg. 47–59; summary of Five Civilized Tribes pg. 59–64

yr. 1911/12 v.02; 1911/12:1:2—Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 324–421; Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 423–518

yr. 1912/13 v.01; 1912/13:1—Summary of Office of Indian Affairs pg. 33–35; summary of Five Civilized Tribes pg. 35–42

yr. 1912/13 v.02; 1912/13:2; 1913:v.2—Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 295–405; Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 407–509

yr. 1913/14:1—Of the Indian pg. 3–12; summary of Office of Indian Affairs pg. 35–42; summary of the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 42–49

yr. 1913/14 v.02; 1913/14:2; 1914:v.2—Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 203–312; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 312–335

yr. 1914/15 v.02; 1914/15:2; 1915:v.2—Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 217–323; Report of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 325–427; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 429–447
yr. 1915/16 v.02; 1915/16:2—Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 209–333; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 335–370
yr. 1915/16:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 24–28
yr. 1916/17:2; yr. 1916/17 v.02—Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 213–324; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 325–378
yr. 1916/17:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 38–46
yr. 1917/18:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 62–69; Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office—Indian allotments pg. 235–236
yr. 1917/18 v.02; 1917/18:2; 1918:v.2—Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs pg. 1–222; Supplies for the Indian Service pg. 223–328; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 329–419; Report of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 421–505
yr. 1918/19:1—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 70–79; Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office—Indian allotments pg. 279
yr. 1918/19 v.02; 1918/19:2; 1919:v.2—Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs pg. 1–214; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 215–337; Report of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 339–402
yr. 1919/20:1—The Indians pg. 9–10; summary of Indian Affairs pg. 41–49
yr. 1920:v.2—Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs pg. 1–206; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 1–146 (second table of contents); Report of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes pg. 1–56 (after five pages from section 35–142)
yr. 1922/23; yr. 1922/23—Summary of Indian Affairs pg. 36–41
yr. 1929/30—Current Operations—Indians pg. 24–31; summary of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 44–46; summary of Office of Indian Affairs pg. 60–63
yr. 1930/31—Current Operations—Indians pg. 9–13; summary of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 58–60; summary of Office of Indian Affairs pg. 83–89; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners 48 pages (last set of Table of Contents—131)
yr. 1931/32—Current Operations: General Activities—Indians pg. 19–22; summary of the Board of Indian Commissioners pg. 50–52; summary of the Indian Service pg. 74–77; Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners 39 pages (last set of Table of Contents—131)
yr. 1932–33—Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs pg. 68–152
yr. 1933/34—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 78–163
yr. 1934/35—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 113–177
yr. 1935–36—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 159–228
yr. 1936/37—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 198–261
yr. 1937/38—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 209–263
yr. 1938/39—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 23–68
yr. 1939/40—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 354–400
yr. 1940/41—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 407–452
yr. 1941/42—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 233–256
yr. 1942/43—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 273–296
yr. 1943/44—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 235–254
yr. 1945/46—Office of Indian Affairs pg. 351–384

The reports that were included from both the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior reports were the Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, the Annual Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes, and the Annual Report of the Indian Inspector for the Indian Territory. The Board of Indian Commissioners was an advisory committee to the Office of Indian Affairs that evolved in its duties from 1869 to 1933. The HathiTrust has a record for all of the Annual Reports of the Board of Indian Commissioners (catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/4235456.html). The Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, which was also known as the Dawes Commission, was a commission that would negotiate agreements with the leaders of the Five Civilized Tribes, that is, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole Tribes, that would cede tribal land ownership and divide these tribal lands into individual allotments. The Dawes Commission established its headquarters in Muskogee, Indian Territory. Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts was the head of the commission beginning in 1893. Between the HathiTrust record for the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior and the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, these three reports are accessible for these years: the Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners (1883, 1886–88, 1895, 1897–1901, 1905, 1906, 1914–20, 1931, 1932); the Annual Report of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes (1898–1907, 1909–15, 1918–20); and the Annual Report of the Indian Inspector for the Indian Territory (1899–1905, 1907).

There is a variety of specific information on tribes and policy that can be found from the HathiTrust records for the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior. For example, page 364 of the 1907 Report of the Indian Inspector for the Indian Territory includes a chart on the total enrollment of the Five Civilized Tribes, which is 101,211. This is accessible from volumes yr.
1906/07 v.02 and 1906/07:1:2. The number of citizens from the Five Civilized Tribes with three-fourths Indian blood or more is 30,244. This is available from the 1908 summary of the Five Civilized Tribes report on page 22 which comes from volume 1907/08:1:1. The 1888 Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, which is also the board's twentieth annual report, contains a three paragraph outline on the policy of justice, humanity, and peace toward the Indians that includes individual ownership of property and discouraging tribal relations. The outline can be found on page 733 from volume yr.1887/88 v.02. It can also be found from the Hath/Trust record for the Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners to the Secretary of the Interior. This outline, which originates from the first annual report of the Board of Indian Commissioners in 1869, can be found from pages 5 through 11. Also, from pages 3 through 5, is a letter from the first Native American who became Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Ely S. Parker, and an executive order from the president of the United States, U. S. Grant, on the act of Congress passed on April 10, 1869, that approved the creation of a board of commissioners.

References

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