# TRACE YOUR NATIVE AMERICAN ANCESTRY

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*Your American Indian ancestors' story—like this Nez Percé family's—may be one of migration. The Nez Percé of Chief Joseph's Band, now part of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in Washington, left their Idaho homeland in 1877 rather than moving to a reservation. They led US soldiers on a three-month chase, finally surrendering in Montana. After exile in Oklahoma, many of those Nez Percé moved to Colville in 1885.*

# NATIVE SONS & DAUGHTERS

by Paula Stuart Warren

## RECORD YOUR *American Indian Roots*: OUR GUIDE SHOWS YOU KEY RESOURCES FOR DISCOVERING YOUR TRIBAL TIES.

Lucy Pretty Eagle's gravestone was the first erected in the Indian Cemetery at the Carlisle (Pa.) Indian Industrial School. She died March 9, 1884, not even four months after arriving from South Dakota's Rosebud Indian Agency. The 10-year-old Sioux girl came to Carlisle in poor health—and with a different identity. Like other students, she was given an Anglicized name to replace her Indian name, Take the Tail. After Lucy died, her father, Pretty Eagle, wrote: "She had died the year before but had come back to life again." He didn't know that his daughter's death would spawn ghost stories and tales of her being buried alive—which have obscured the real details of her life.

Researchers Barbara Landis and Genevieve Bell culled these facts about Take the Tail's life (and death) from her student file and other sources, as part of their project to document the Carlisle School's history <home.epix.net/~landis>. The biographies they've pieced together would thrill any genealogist.

Luckily, if you have American Indian ancestors—Sioux or any of the 562 federally recognized American Indian tribes—similar discoveries may await you. Millions of today's Americans can claim family ties to the continent's first peoples: Officially, American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States number 4.3 million, including 3.1 million tribe members. And because government policies and intermarriage led many tribe members to assimilate over the centuries, even more people share American Indian heritage. Some might not realize they have tribal ties—or haven't been able to prove it.

Discovering that connection can be challenging, but you have many resources at your disposal. The United States' interactions with native tribes have resulted in a bounty of genealogical sources, from school records to censuses. In fact, the government has created more records about American Indians than any other ethnic group. Here, we'll guide you through some of the most useful sources for documenting your heritage.

Of course, those records are just one benefit of the pursuit. Researching your

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American Indian ancestry provides a sense of belonging and pride in your heritage. For some, it means funding or assistance for education or a business. Whatever the reason for your search, your discoveries will help you understand the turmoil in your ancestors' lives—and reclaim your heritage.

## Uncovering tribal history

If you're not sure you have American Indian ancestry, several clues could spark your search: Grandma may have told you her grandfather had Indian blood. Maybe you came across an *M*, *B*, *MB* or *I* in the color column of census records. (An *M* stands for *mulatto*, *B* for *black*, *MB* for *mixed blood* and *I* or *In* for *Indian*.) The mark could be arbitrary—or it may indicate Indian ancestry. Diaries, business transactions or other records might reveal an ancestor's association with local American Indians. The ancestor's movements might correlate with a tribe's migrations.

To investigate these clues, you'll need to place your ancestor in a tribe, place and time period. Begin by working backward from what you know, talking to relatives and documenting recent generations.

Next, narrow your search to a tribe by studying your ancestors' historical context. Create a timeline of places your family members lived, and learn about the history of Indian tribes in those places. Consult the books on the next page and look for tribal histories in libraries, especially those of major historical societies and universities. You'll want to answer these questions:

- What tribes were in an area when your ancestor lived there?
- What migrations (both forced and voluntary) took place?
- What reservations were in the area, and when?

American Indian traditions emphasize oral history—stories of people and customs passed through generations. You might find that a family member was involved in an oral history project such as the American Indian Research Project at the South Dakota Oral History Center <www.usd.edu/iais/oralhist/ohc.html>, with archives of nearly 2,000 interviews with Northern Plains Indians. Check with the area historical society or library—even if you don't find an interview with an ancestor, you'll discover valuable tribal history.

## Prepping for sources

Before you dive into American Indian records, know what to expect—and what to look for. You'll see terms such as *Alaska Native*, *American Indian*, *Native American*, *First Nations* (generally used for Canadian tribes), *tribe*, *band*, *community* and *clan*. Labels used to refer to American Indians vary by time, tribe and location. Names vary, too. US government personnel often called American Indians by Anglicized names (remember Take the Tail's being dubbed *Lucy Pretty Eagle*?). Language and education also affected how names were recorded. So expect to find multiple names and spellings for each ancestor.

American Indians who assimilated into the general population—by choice or by force—might not be called Indians or appear at all in Indian records. If your ancestor's tribe wasn't recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)—the federal agency formed in 1824 to guide government relations with tribes—you'll find few BIA records for your ancestor. Instead, concentrate on census documents, newspaper accounts and the other records mentioned here.

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*Watch for name changes, misspellings and variations—both individual and tribal—in old records. The Yakama tribe (members are shown here in 1911) changed its name from* Yakima *in 1994 to more closely reflect the word's pronunciation.*

Part of the Department of the Interior since 1849, the BIA (also called the Office of Indian Affairs in older records) is embroiled in litigation regarding its management of Indian lands and the funds it holds in trust. Its Web site was shut down by court order in 2001, but you'll find limited BIA information at <www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html>. Visit <www.indians.org> for a list of recognized tribes and <www.accessgenealogy.com/native/nofed.htm> for nonrecognized tribes. To download a PDF document listing BIA field offices, visit the Department of the Interior's Web site <www.doi.gov/ancestry.html> and click Contacting a Tribal Entity. Look in the Index of Tribal Entities for the office that had jurisdiction over the tribe you're researching. BIA jurisdictions have changed over time, so consult Edward Hill's *Guide to Records in the National Archives of the United States Relating to American Indians* (National Archives and Records Administration, $25) for help.

Each tribe has a unique history, so a record created for one tribe might not have been kept as carefully—or at all—for another. Inconsistencies in recording tribal affiliation, degree of Indian blood and family relationships are common. One BIA agent may have laboriously recorded a tribe's births and deaths. A lazier agent might have copied the previous year's data, increasing each person's age by one. Widely scattered tribes made contact difficult, and language was often a barrier. Ancestors sometimes gave conflicting information, or embellished tribal affiliations to qualify for government aid. In some American Indian communities, spiritual beliefs meant the dead weren't spoken of. Not until the late 19th to early 20th centuries did records detail American Indians with reasonable reliability. But don't give up. If you've exhausted all means of finding one of the following record types, look for another.

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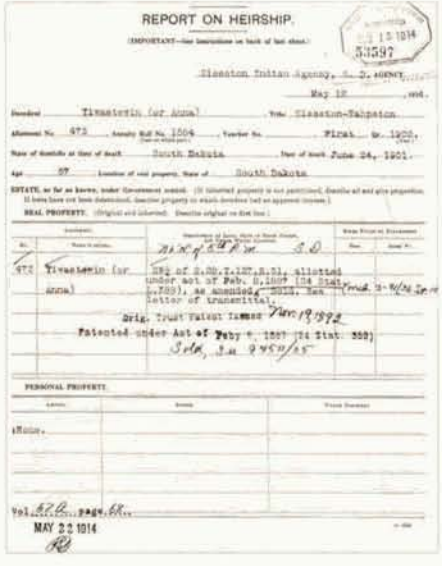
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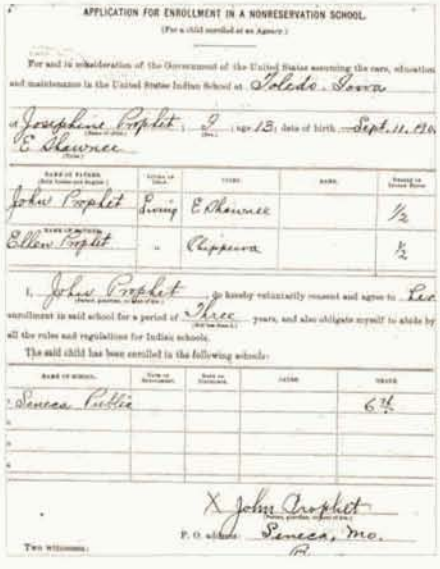
APPLICATION FOR ENROLLMENT IN A NONRESERVATION SCHOOL.

*The 1900 and 1910 US censuses include separate schedules of American Indians on reservations, such as these Winnebago tribe members (top). Heirship (above left) and school records (above right) can be treasure troves of details.*

## Reviewing the records

What kinds of documents should you try to turn up? These are among the most useful for tracking American Indian ancestors:

- **Federal censuses:** The government first included "Indian" as a race category on the 1870 US census. Before then, censuses counted only American Indians in the general population (not those on reservations), and usually didn't identify them as such. Thankfully, not all enumerators followed the instructions: You'll occasionally find American Indians designated on pre-1870 censuses, for example, in a household where an Indian married a white person.

The most significant federal censuses for American Indian research are 1900 and 1910, which include separate Indian schedules. These schedules look like regular census forms on the top halves of the pages, but the bottom halves have blanks for tribal affiliation, indication of blood degree and more (though this information isn't always correct). On microfilmed census records, you'll find the Indian schedules within the general population records.

Indian schedules for reservations appear in various parts of the census: They sometimes show up in the middle, and sometimes at the end of the records for a county or a nearby town. Schedules of American Indians who didn't live on reservations might show up anywhere.

Online indexes to the 1900 and 1910 censuses, such as those at Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com> and Genealogy.com <www.genealogy.com>, list American Indians' names alphabetically with everyone else. If you subscribe to those sites'

census databases, you can click on the names to pull up images of the actual schedules. American Indians also appear in the Soundex (a phonetic index) for those years.

Keep in mind that census entries may not include surnames because some American Indians didn't use them. Indexes sometimes list *Indian* as the surname. For more census hints, see *Your Guide to the Federal Census* by Kathleen W. Hinckley (Betterway Books, $21.99).

- **Tribal censuses and rolls:** Beginning in 1885, the federal government ordered separate censuses of many American Indian tribes. Their purposes varied from distributing supplies to collecting money. The records may note ancestors' Indian names and their degrees of Indian blood. They're on microfilm labeled with years spanning 1885 to 1940; however, the films also include earlier and later enumerations of some tribes. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) <www.archives.gov> in Washington, DC, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Family History Library (FHL) <www.familysearch.org> in Salt Lake City have microfilmed tribal censuses. You may be able to view them at one of the FHL's branch Family History Centers (FHCs) or a NARA regional branch.

You can find Indian censuses in the FHL catalog using keyword or place terms. For example, to find tribal censuses from South Dakota, you'd do a place search for that state, then check under the Native Races category. For keyword searches, enter a tribe name and the word *census*. Always check under the state's name, though: It may turn up possibilities you'd overlook with a keyword search.

Special counts were taken of various tribes for enrollment or government compensation. For example, the Dawes Commission Rolls list members of the Five Civilized Tribes—Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole—between 1898 and 1914. You'll also find applications for tribal membership, including those the commission rejected. The 1908 Durant Roll counts the Chippewa and Ottawa tribes of Michigan—and the films include field notes the compiler, Horace B. Durant, wrote in the margins. These rolls are also on microfilm from NARA, the FHL and elsewhere. NARA has indexed several tribal censuses, including the Dawes Rolls, on its Web site (see box, below).

- **Heirship and probate files:** If your American Indian ancestor owned land, it had to be dispersed after he died—which may have resulted in an "heirship" proceeding. BIA records contain a wealth of heirship case files and correspondence. The files can yield golden nuggets of information: People who knew the deceased and the family were interviewed about relatives, spouses, siblings and earlier generations, resulting in a wonderful family picture.

NARA's heirship-record holdings include paper copies and some original manuscripts; they begin around 1887, and end around the early 1940s. Most were created after 1900. BIA offices have some of these records on microfilm, but they aren't always accessible to the public.

Although NARA has an index to heirship files, it's not online and it can be cumbersome—it comprises thousands of cards, ledgers and the like. If your Indian ancestry is concentrated in one tribe or a specific locality, research the heirship files for a whole tribe or location at NARA. Looking at other tribe members' files might lead you to additional names and relationships. Heirship-file research is best done on site at NARA; however, you can call for a list of researchers who will do the work for a fee.

Check the county courthouse near the tribe's location for probate proceeding files regarding your ancestors, especially if they owned land or a business, or had children who needed a guardian.

- **Military records:** American Indians served in the US military as far back as the 1700s—during World War I, about 12,000 enlisted. So see if your ancestors appear in indexes to military service records and pension files. You can search

## Tribal Technology

You don't have to trek to NARA or a regional branch to view all the archives' American Indian records: You can search online through the Archival Research Catalog (ARC) <www.archives.gov/research_room/arc>. ARC catalogs most of NARA's holdings, and in some cases, links to images of actual records.

ARC indexes tens of thousands of American Indian records, including citizenship and tribal-enrollment applications submitted to the Dawes Commission; the Dawes Rolls, which listed applicants whom the commission allowed on tribal rolls; the Guion-Miller Roll and the Wallace Roll, lists of Cherokee applying for government compensation; and the Kern Clifton Roll, an 1867 tribal census of the Cherokee Nation. What's more, NARA has actually digitized many of these documents, so you can view an image of the original record within ARC.

ARC can be finicky about search terminology, so before you start querying the database, peruse NARA's instructions: From the ARC home page, click Search Hints for Genealogical Data in ARC. Under Native Americans, you'll find descriptions of the available databases, along with suggested search terms. For example, if you're looking for a Dawes Commission application, NARA recommends typing *enrollment*, the word *and* (ARC uses Boolean syntax), plus the person's name into the keyword box: for example *enrollment and paulina jones*. If the database has information on that person, you'll get a list of hits—just click on the title for details. When ARC has an electronic copy of a record, the results will include a Digital Copy Available link—that means you can view the card bearing your ancestor's name.

—Allison Stacy

indexes to some military records at online at Ancestry.com. See NARA's Web site for details on its microfilmed indexes. You'll also find published indexes, such as Virgil D. White's *Index to Old War's Pension Files, 1815-1926*. Check Edward Hill's guide to American Indian records at NARA (see page 41) for more on Indians in the military.

- **Newspapers:** Like many ethnic groups, American Indians had special-interest newspapers. Missionaries in Dakota Territory published *Iapi Oaye* (*Word Carrier*) from 1871 to 1939. It covered births, marriages, deaths, baseball, government programs and news from a wide area, with emphasis on Nebraska, the Dakotas and Minnesota. An English version was published from 1884 to 1937, but you'd need a translation dictionary, such as Stephen Riggs' *A Dakota-English Dictionary* (Minnesota Historical Society, $24.95), to read other issues. For listings of similar newspapers, consult *Native American Periodicals and Newspapers, 1828-1982* by James P. Danky (Greenwood Press, $97.95).

Mainstream newspapers varied in their coverage of American Indians, depending on current events, politics and proximity to reservations. Check libraries near your ancestors' homes for newspapers that ran articles about local tribes. For information on historical newspapers by state, visit the National Endowment for the Humanities US Newspaper Program Web site <www.neh.gov> (click on NEH Projects).

- **Vital records:** Although it's worth searching for earlier records, many American Indian births, deaths and marriages weren't documented at vital-records offices until the 20th century. Most BIA vital-record-keeping on reservations began in the late 19th century. The years and types of records vary by tribe and BIA agent. You may find duplicate vital-record entries, especially for the 20th century, when agents were more thorough and may have forwarded details to the county courthouse or a state government office. The FHL (search the catalog by place name and vital records category) and regional branches of NARA hold many BIA vital records.

Whether your Indian ancestors wed in a church or by tribal custom, a marriage record could appear in local church records, the county courthouse or a BIA agent's correspondence. Likewise, divorces might have happened at the courthouse or by tribal custom. Traditional American Indian marriages and divorces didn't leave much of a trail, but you can find evidence in census, heirship and other records.

Despite conflicts between Indians and other groups, intermarriage was common. In areas with an active fur trade, such as present-day Minnesota, British and French Canadian traders married Indians; so did Buffalo Soldiers in Western and Plains states, and white settlers who pushed west into Indian territories. In the South, American Indians intermarried with African-Americans. Members of different tribes also intermarried—so you may need to check records of both tribes.

- **Missionary records:** For hundreds of years, missionaries of many religious denominations made it their life's work to "save" Indians through conversion. That


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may or may not have been beneficial for the Indians, but it can help genealogists. Missionaries' records on christenings, deaths and marriages may be in a local church's record books, or in a journal tucked away in a library or archive. Read tribal histories to find out what missionaries were active in your ancestors' area and time, then find out where that denomination keeps its records (see the February 2004 *Family Tree Magazine* for information on church records). Check area historical societies, too.

- **School records:** The BIA operated boarding and day schools for American Indian youths, usually to assimilate them into white culture. Not all Indians welcomed the experience, nor were many treated kindly. *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928* by David Wallace Adams (University Press of Kansas, $17.95) is a good history of BIA schools. NARA and the FHL hold records—such as Lucy Pretty Eagle's Carlisle School student file—of students' grades, medical history, parentage, tribal affiliation, blood degree and school attendance. To find out what's available, try a place search of the FHL catalog, and select the Native Races category. Check NARA's Web site for regional centers' holdings (click Research Room, then Locations and Hours). Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis., also holds many Indian school records; see <www.marquette.edu/library/collections/archives>.

Churches ran similar Indian schools. Look for schools your ancestors might have attended in a guide such as *The Churches and the Indian Schools 1888-1912* by Francis Paul Prucha (University of Nebraska Press, out of print). Most records from church schools remain with the church or religious archive.

Records for Indian students who attended local public or religious schools may have been transferred to the archives of a state, school district or church.

- **Other records:** Because they traded with tribes and employed members as guides, fur traders left behind records documenting American Indians. You might even find evidence of a trader bilking your ancestor out of supplies, money or pelts. The Hudson's Bay Company, established in 1670, was active in Canada, present-day Minnesota and Wisconsin, and points westward. Other companies sprung up in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Consult county and tribal histories to learn which companies operated in your ancestor's area, then search online (use place names and terms such as *fur trade*) to find out where those companies' records are today. They're often at major libraries and historical societies. For example, the Archives of Manitoba in Canada holds records of the Hudson's Bay Company <www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca>, and many American Fur Company records are at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis <www.mohistory.org>.

Settlers, farmers, storekeepers, BIA agents and others also filled letters and diaries with references to American Indians. Some are unkind, and others are poignant. Look for these records in archives at museums, universities and historical societies near your ancestors' tribal territory.


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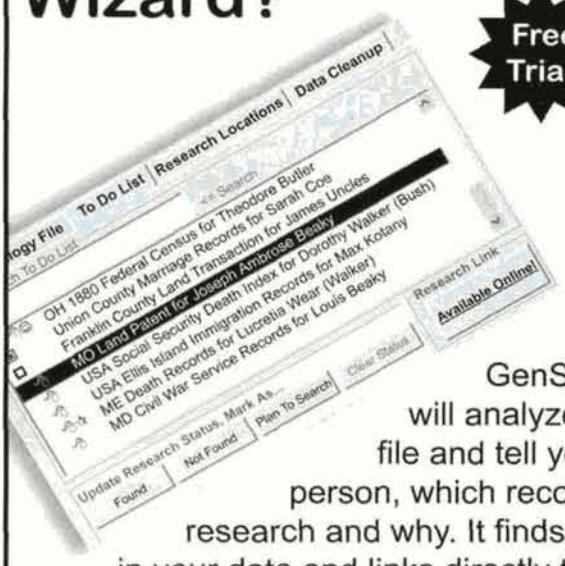


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**TRACING ANCESTORS AMONG THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES.** *By Rachal Mills Lennon.* 156 pp., indexed, hardcover. 2002. #3350. **$24.95**

This pioneering work is designed to help you determine the truth about your possible links to the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, or Seminoles. It focuses on the century or so prior to the removal of the Southeastern nations to Indian Territory and outlines a method of research that will take you as far back as the colonial and early federal periods and forward to the great tribal enrollment records of the late nineteenth century.

**THE FINAL ROLLS of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory (And): INDEX to the FINAL ROLLS.** *By The Dawes Commission.* 2 vols. 634 & 634 pp., cloth. (1907), repr. 2003. #5903. **$125.00 the set**

Out of print for nearly a century, this is the reference of choice for anyone claiming even a fraction of Indian blood. *The Final Rolls* contains the names of 101,000 Native Americans, who are identified by tribe and category and thereunder by name, age, sex, degree of blood, and the number of the census card.

**HISTORY OF THE CHEROKEE INDIANS and Their Legends and Folklore.** *By Emmet Starr.* 672 pp., illus., indexed, cloth. (1921), repr. 2003. #5551. **$60.00**

This is the classic account of the early Cherokees, their constitution, treaties with the federal government, land transactions, school system, migration and resettlement, committees, councils and officials, religion, language and culture, and a host of other topics. More than half the book is devoted to genealogies and biographies, of which there are several hundred.

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# Photo Finish

Round out your research with photos: These digital databases contain thousands of historical images of American Indians—and some may shed light on how your ancestors lived. Search on your ancestor's name, tribe, location, nearby mission, BIA district or Indian school.

- **American Indians of the Pacific Northwest** <content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw>: More than 2,300 photographs are searchable by subject, title or description.
- **Denver Public Library History of the American West 1860-1920** <memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/codhtml/hawphome.html>: This 30,000-strong collection encompasses all of Western history, including more than 40 American Indian tribes. A keyword search on *Indian* produced 5,000 hits.
- **Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian Photographic Images** <memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html>: More than 2,000 keyword-searchable images that span 1907 to 1930 and cover 80 tribes from states west of the Mississippi.
- **Indian Peoples of the Northern Great Plains** <libmuse.msu.montana.edu/epubs/nadb>: This database of photos, drawings, maps and artwork represents 10 major tribes. Search by subject, date, name, tribe, location or creator.
- **Labriola National American Indian Data Center** <www.asu.edu/lib/archives/schwarz>: Browse 270 of missionary Augustine Schwarz's photos of the Pima, Papagos and Apache peoples.
- **Online Archive of California** <www.oac.cdlib.org>: This vast archive includes 3,000 American Indian photographs from the C. Hart Merriam Collection.
- **Wisconsin Historical Society Indians of North America** <www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi>: Browse 182 images or search by keyword.

—*Diane Haddad*


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## Searching on site

One challenge of researching American Indian roots is that much of your work must be done on site at NARA and other repositories. The BIA doesn't keep many historical records, but most of its archives are available at NARA, as are military, land, school and other relevant records—which you also can get via the FHL. NARA's College Park, Md., location also holds Department of the Interior records, maps and photographs.

NARA's regional facilities house BIA records pertaining to the states each serves: the Fort Worth Region has records from Oklahoma, for example. On NARA's Web site, you can determine which centers have which records: From the home page, click Research Room, then Guide to Federal Records, which details records' scopes and locations. For example, check out Record Group 75, Records of the BIA. But remember: Not all federal records of Indians are in this record group. Study the online guide—it's more up-to-date than the published version: (see the Toolkit, page 41).

You also could hit pay dirt at smaller repositories, particularly in local, state or regional archives and historical society libraries. Check ones in the areas your ancestors' tribe inhabited—including the places they migrated to. To research Southern and Southeastern tribes, many of which were forcibly removed to what's now Oklahoma, visit the Oklahoma Historical Society Web site <www.ok-history.mus.ok.us>. You'll find information about the society's records on nearly 70 tribes, especially the Five Civilized Tribes. If you're searching for Cherokee ancestors, try the Cherokee Heritage Center <www.cherokeeheritage.org>.

Don't let the notion of trekking to distant libraries and archives discourage you. Instead, remember that stories like Take the Tail's are waiting for you to discover them. With diligence and determination, you can bring the details of your own ancestors' lives out of obscurity. The research is challenging, but you can persevere—just as your ancestors did.

*PAULA STUART WARREN* is a certified genealogical records specialist and co-author of *Your Guide to the Family History Library* (Betterway Books, $19.99).

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# Hawk Eyes

## Is this ancestor really American Indian? Our genealogy expert sets her sights on ways to solve the mystery. | By Maureen A. Taylor

Jonna Peterson's ancestor William Hawk Stout is one elusive fellow. She can't find a record of his birth, his parents' names or even his final resting place. This man's life has acquired a legendary quality—relatives still puzzle over his mysterious past and the few traces of his existence he left behind.

Peterson has found proof Stout isn't a figment of her family's collective imagination, though, and several clues hint he's American Indian. But she's had trouble discovering any new information. Let's take a look at what she knows and how she can start putting together the puzzles of this mystery man's life.

### Starting with censuses

When you can't find official birth and death documents, or if your ancestor was born before vital recording began (as is the case here), go to federal census records. Beginning in 1790, they give you glimpses of your ancestors every 10 years (except 1890; almost all those census records were ruined in a fire) through 1930, the most recent available census.

Peterson has taken this step. The earliest census she found for William Stout is 1850, where he's living in Indiana with his 17-year-old wife, Sarah Lawrence Stout. The enumerator noted William Stout's birthplace as New Jersey and his age as 28, which suggests he was born in 1822.

In the 1860 census for Denmark, Perry County, Ill., the Stouts appear with their 3-year-old son, G.W. (Peterson's ancestor) and a Nancy Stout, age 50, born in New Jersey. Peterson couldn't find William Stout in the 1870 census, leading her to believe he died during the previous decade.

Peterson looked for land records in Indiana and Illinois. If William Stout bought property, he would've left tracks between censuses. Indeed, in 1854 and 1856, he purchased land in Pinckneyville, Ill., along with his wife and a brother, James.

Peterson then searched the 1850 census for James Stout. He shows up at age 31 living near William in Indiana. In his household are his wife, their four children, and 49-year-old, New Jersey-born Nancy Stout. Since she's in both Stout households at different times, she's probably a relative—perhaps their mother. The age discrepancy from the 1850 to 1860 censuses could be the enumerator's mistake, the informant's wrong information, or an instance of two different women with the same name.

Researching earlier censuses for a Nancy with sons named William and James isn't possible, since counts before 1850 name only heads of households, with tick marks for everyone else. But Peterson should still research the family members. Learning where Sarah Stout was born, for example, could point to a county that might have William's marriage record. Since the brothers seem to have traveled together, other people might have joined the group and settled nearby, too. If Peterson can learn where the neighbors came from, she might have an answer about her ancestor.

Also, creating a timeline of her ancestor's life, including dates from research as well as historical events, will help Peterson identify additional resources to check. Ancestors of the right age, for example, may have gone to war.

### Research Plan

1. Review research to create a timeline of an ancestor's life.
2. Research those who appear in records along with your target ancestor.
3. Neighbors may be your ancestor's fellow migrants. Look for their names in census and land records, then search for their origins.
4. Confirm (or disprove) circumstantial evidence of Indian heritage by studying tribal histories and consulting experts when necessary.

**FORUM** Got a mystery man in your pedigree? Ask others for help in our Brick Walls Forum <www.familytreemagazine.com/forum>.

### Going to the grave

Peterson's cousin, looking for St. Louis court records related to a family tale about the 1869 murder of James Stout, stumbled upon an 1861 deposition mentioning William Stout's death that year. But an obituary for Sarah Stout in the Dec. 24, 1909, *Pinckneyville Advocate* states he died in 1859. (She remarried a couple of years later.) Neither man shows up in census mortality schedules (lists of deaths occurring in the 365 days before each US census date in 1850 to 1880).

Family folklore claims William Stout was buried in his Perry County backyard. Since Peterson can't find him in local cemeteries, she wonders if it's true. Her family still owns the land, so she shouldn't have any trouble getting access. Ground-penetrating

radar can locate graves, but the devices are expensive and hard to come by. Not one to give up, Peterson has found a university professor who's intrigued by her "problem" and may help look for the grave.

## Investigating rumors

A relative's photograph of a Stout descendant with a patterned blanket supposedly passed down from William Stout hints at American Indian heritage. Peterson's cousin believes the pattern proves William Stout was a member of the Delaware Indian tribe (also called Lenapi) of New Jersey, but I wouldn't jump to conclusions before seeking professional advice. An expert, such as a curator at the National Museum of the American Indian <www.nmai.si.edu> in Washington, DC, might be able to help. Peterson also should consider that the blanket may be just a photographer's prop.

Stout's middle name, Hawk, could be a clue, too, as many Indians adopted Christian names in addition to their given ones. It's not ironclad evidence, but New England Historic Genealogical Society <www.newenglandancestors.org> historian David Lambert tells me it's likely Hawk is an Indian name.

If Stout is American Indian, historical events explain how he might have ended up in Indiana. Over a period of 175 years, wars and treaties pushed the Delaware west, with many finally ending up in Oklahoma. Resources such as *The Delaware Indian Westward Migration* by C.A. Weslager (Middle Atlantic Press, out of print) and the Delaware Web site <www.tolatsga.org/dela.html> will help Peterson research possible American Indian roots. She also should explore the Indiana Historical Society <www.indianahistory.org> collections. Again, studying the neighbors is important, since tribal members probably migrated together. These steps should put Peterson on track for finding answers to her questions.

Contributing editor *Maureen A. Taylor* describes how 10 weather events altered the course of your family history on page 26.

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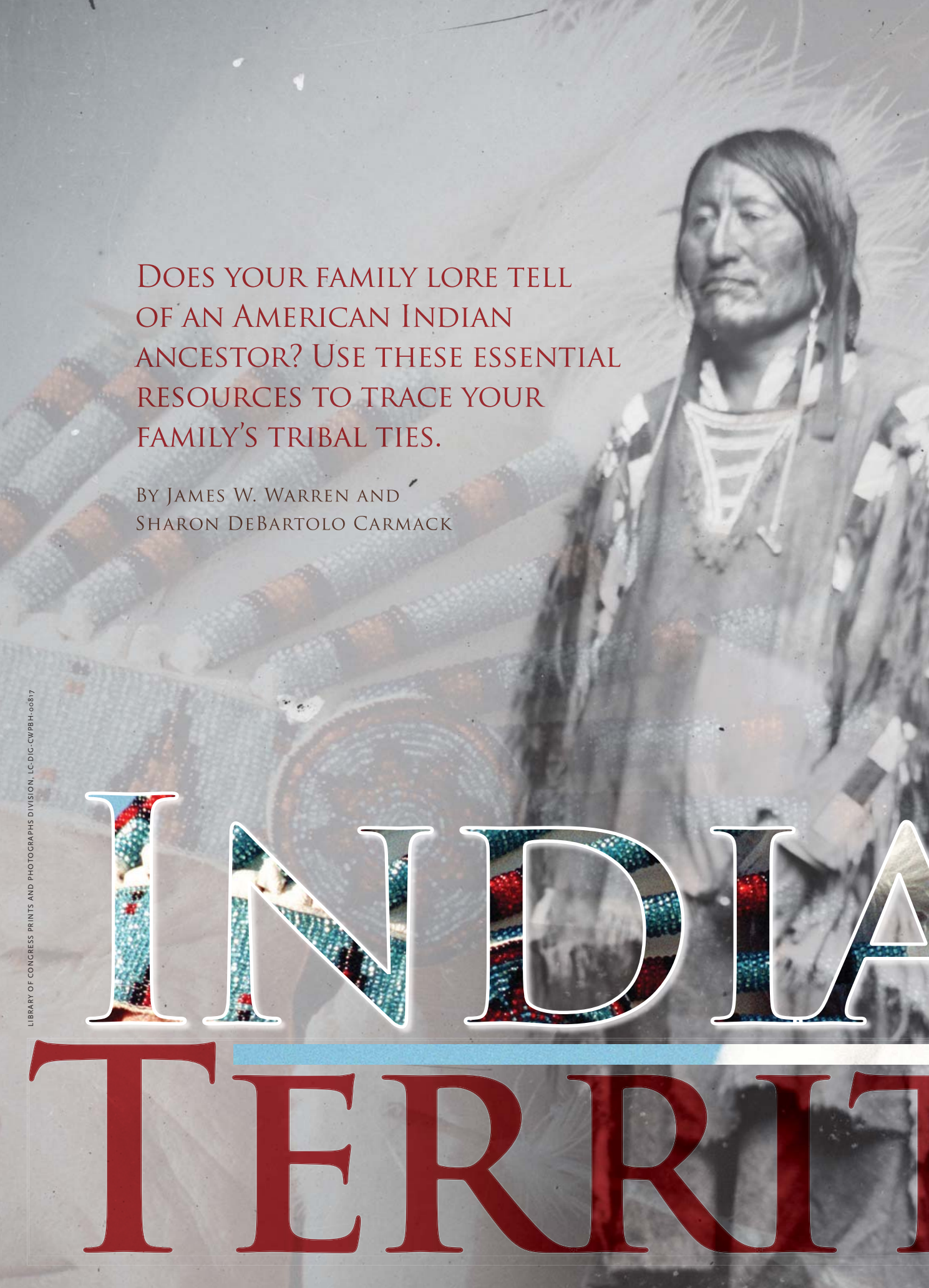

# INDIA TERRIT

Does your family lore tell of an American Indian ancestor? Use these essential resources to trace your family's tribal ties.

By James W. Warren and Sharon DeBartolo Carmack

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# N

# TORY

"Great-great-grandma was a Cherokee princess" tops many a list of genealogy myths passed down in families. Although the Cherokee didn't actually have princesses, such stories may hold a nugget of truth. Perhaps the clan that hands down this tale does have an American Indian somewhere on the family tree.

More than 4 million people claimed Native American ancestry in the 2000 census. The US government officially recognizes 562 tribes, making them eligible for certain rights and benefits. Starting in the 1850s and '60s, the government began setting aside land for tribes that signed treaties; the Department of the Interior now oversees about 310 reservations. Each tribe is self-governing, with a unique history and culture. Religious practices, customs and family structures vary among tribes, even among those in the same geographic areas. But not everyone with American Indian heritage is a tribal member (generally, you must have a certain amount of "Indian blood" for membership), and not all tribal members live on reservations.

All this can make for a challenging genealogy research proposition. Thankfully, American Indian groups and the individuals associated with them—whether officially or not—have enough shared history that some common research techniques and resources can help you trace them. Use these strategies to explore your family tales of Indian ancestry.

## Getting started

The Cherokee princess myth may have its origins in prejudice. Cherokee is among the largest American Indian tribes and its members intermarried widely, thereby increasing the likelihood that a given modern-day American will have Cherokee ancestry. For those who frowned upon a white male ancestor marrying an Indian woman, elevating the woman's status to princess might've made the truth easier to swallow. Follow these steps to begin getting at the truth:

- **Investigate the story.** Although many tales are embellished or flat-out false, a truth might be couched somewhere within the story. What led family members to believe and repeat the story? Did ancestors live near Indian tribes? Does a family photo show off high cheekbones? Did Grandma always say so? Try to get at the origins.

Oral history interviewing is an important first step. Ask siblings, cousins, parents, aunts and uncles if they've heard tell of the name of a tribe, whether the rumored Indian ancestor lived on a reservation and when, and what his or her Indian name was. Also ask where the relative's family lived and how they moved around the country.

- **Listen for a tribe name.** To research Indian heritage, it's vital to determine the tribe your ancestor was affiliated with. Sorting out an Indian family can be tricky: The use of kinship terms (sister, uncle, father) can differ from today's mainstream usage, and

from one tribe to another. If you have stories of American Indian ancestry but haven't been able to identify a tribe, try asking about the ancestor's language, religious beliefs and ceremonies. As you read about different tribes, some of these cultural traits may help you make a match.

If oral tradition gives you the name of Great-grandma's tribe, and you know all the places she and her parents lived during their lifetimes, your next step is to make sure people of that tribe would've been in those localities at the right time periods. For example, if the story says that Great-grandma was a Penobscot, but you know from other research that she lived in Colorado in 1860, you might have a problem: The Penobscot tribe is centered in Maine and was never pushed West; few Penobscots would've lived in Colorado in 1860.

For a list of Indian tribes by state, go to <www.native-languages.org/states.htm>. It's important to learn the history of the tribe or tribes you think an ancestor belonged to. Many tribes were partially or completely "removed"—sometimes more than once—to a new locality. Beginning in 1838, for example, most members of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole) were forcibly removed from their traditional home in the Southeast to Indian Territory (Oklahoma today) along a route now called the Trail of Tears.

Realize, too, that a tribe the federal government formally recognizes today may be one of several communities descended from one tribe, so you'll want to learn how your ancestor's tribe merged with or split from others over the years. The Seminole of Florida were composed of Creek, Muskogee and other Southeastern Indians, as well as African-Americans who'd escaped slavery. You also might find that tribal members called themselves a name different from how they're known to others. The Navajo, for example, refer to themselves as Diné, meaning "the people."

■ **Start with yourself.** No single record will give you a complete history of your American Indian ancestors. You won't even stick solely to records specific to Indians. In many ways, Indian research is comparable to that for any other ethnic group: Start with basic records, such as census and vital records, and work methodically backward from yourself, one generation at a time.

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*The Navajo, who call themselves Diné ("the people"), are today one of the largest tribes in the United States. Nearly 300,000 Americans report having Navajo ancestors. These tribal members, photographed about 1923, were probably silversmiths.*

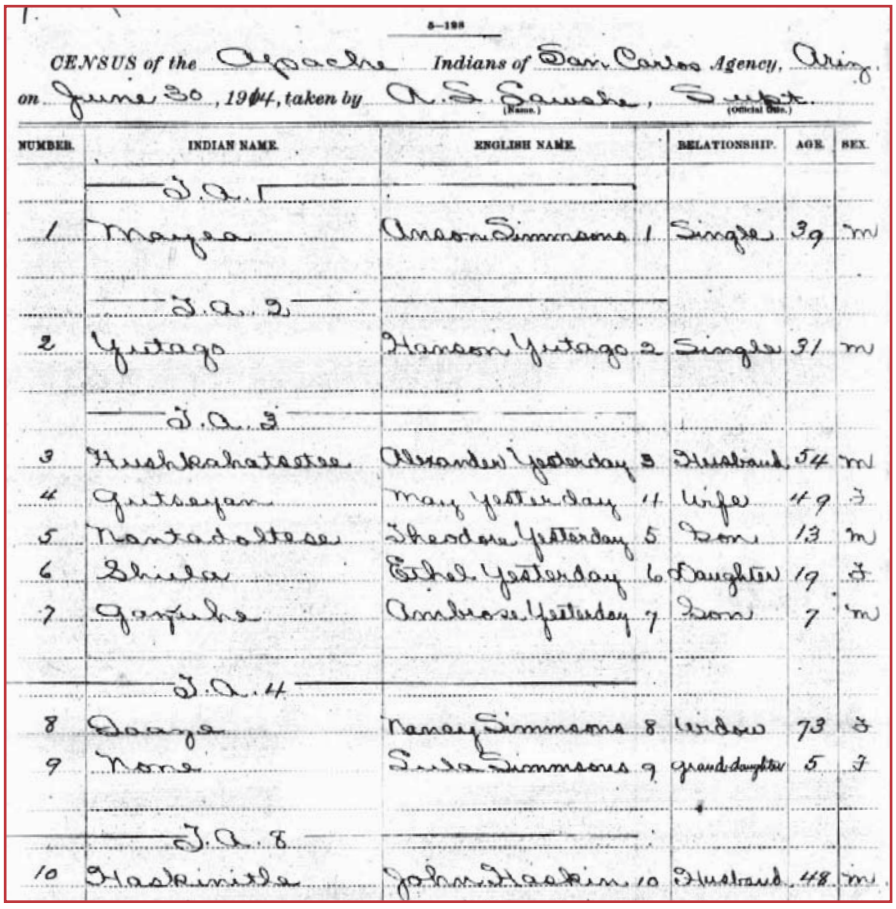
As your research progresses, you also begin to zero in on sources that are unique to your ancestor's ethnic group, nationality, religion, geographic area or time period. When you find an ancestor with a reasonable point of likely connection with an organized community—in this case, an Indian tribe—that's when you begin to focus on that tribe's history and records.

We're not saying that tracing Indian ancestors is just as easy as tracing anyone else. As for many ethnic groups, historical prejudice has created significant hurdles. For example, many American Indians and their descendants tried to hide their heritage. If Great-grandma assimilated into general society—by marrying someone of European descent, for instance, and adopting mainstream cultural practices—researching your American Indian origins will likely be tougher.

If you're methodical and work back in time, you'll be less likely to miss critical clues that link you to the American Indian ancestor. It's also important to study the area where your Indian ancestors lived, because they interacted with the surrounding community. The community's history and records may tell you about your ancestor.

## Reviewing the records

No one likes government red tape and bureaucracy, but you must admit that you smile upon discovering it created a record with your ancestor's name on it. Though Indian tribes didn't often keep early records on themselves, the US government did its best to document tribes, especially from the 1880s on. These massive collections, combined with standard



5—198

CENSUS of the Apache Indians of San Carlos Agency, Ariz.
on June 30, 1914, taken by A. S. Lawshe, Supt.
(Name.) (Official Title.)

| NUMBER. | INDIAN NAME. | ENGLISH NAME. | | RELATIONSHIP. | AGE. | SEX. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | T.A. 1 | | | | | |
| 1 | Mayea | Anson Simmsons | 1 | Single | 39 | m |
| | T.A. 2 | | | | | |
| 2 | Yutago | Hanson Yutago | 2 | Single | 31 | m |
| | T.A. 3 | | | | | |
| 3 | Hushkahatsetee | Alexander Yesterday | 3 | Husband | 54 | m |
| 4 | Gutseyan | May Yesterday | 4 | Wife | 49 | F |
| 5 | Nantadoltese | Theodore Yesterday | 5 | Son | 13 | m |
| 6 | Shiela | Ethel Yesterday | 6 | Daughter | 19 | F |
| 7 | Gayuhe | Ambrose Yesterday | 7 | Son | 7 | m |
| | T.A. 4 | | | | | |
| 8 | Saaze | Nancy Simmsons | 8 | Widow | 73 | F |
| 9 | None | Lula Simmsons | 9 | grand daughter | 5 | F |
| | T.A. 8 | | | | | |
| 10 | Haskinitle | John Haskin | 10 | Husband | 48 | m |

*Indian censuses generally give tribal members' Indian and English names, as on this 1914 enumeration of Apache Indians in the San Carlos agency of Arizona. From 1885 to 1940, the BIA was supposed to enumerate each reservation annually.*

genealogical resources, make Indians living with tribes the most extensively documented post-1885 US ancestors. The records that were created and their availability today varies depending on the tribe and the time period.

Records might be at National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) <archives.gov> research facilities, with the Department of the Interior and its Bureau of Indian Affairs, or at other federal departments. Some of the significant record collections have been preserved on microfilm or microfiche, but many are available only in their original paper form. Here are details on major resources covering American Indians:

- **Censuses:** One of the simplest ways to identify an American Indian ancestor is in the census. The 1860 US census identified Indians in the general population (but not Indians living on reservations) for the first time with "I" or "In" in column six of the census schedule.

In the 1870 and 1880 censuses, Indians were again enumerated in the general population. Also in 1880, a special census (found on NARA micropublication M1791) enumerated some Indians in California and the Washington and Dakota Territories. For more information, see <archives.gov/genealogy/census/native-americans/1790-1930.html>.

The 1890 federal census, of course, was virtually destroyed due to a fire. For the 1900 and 1910 censuses, enumerators recorded information about American Indians on special schedules called "Inquiries Relating to Indians," detailing people living on reservations. These documents are valuable because they ask the tribe and degree of Indian blood (for example, half or one-quarter) for the individual and his or her parents. Indians were enumerated along with the general population in 1920 and 1930, noted with "I" or "In" in the color or race column.

## To Do or Not To Do DNA?

Ads for companies that test your DNA for American Indian ancestry sometimes sound like a magical shortcut to your American Indian heritage. In reality, DNA testing is genealogically useful, but usually in a more limited way.

Geneticists can analyze part of your DNA for similarities to that of American Indian populations. The test you'd take depends where on your family tree you think the American Indian was: If the Indian was a woman on your maternal line, you'd take a mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) test, which assigns you to a haplogroup. Otherwise, you'd take an autosomal DNA test, which looks for certain types of genetic markers common to modern Indians.

Either way, it's unlikely the test would link you to a specific tribe, a recent time period, or any one individual. In addition, ethnic DNA testing is still a somewhat controversial science. Genetic genealogy tests are best used as a clue, not proof, of Indian ancestry.

But DNA testing still may be useful because of the growing numbers of people participating. If your test results match someone else's, that person's ancestral information will help you narrow your focus and find your common ancestor—and possibly, the American Indian at the heart of your family stories.

Genetic genealogy testing is rapidly changing, promising even more breakthroughs for the future. You can read up on these developments in the December 2009 *Family Tree Magazine*.

From 1885 to 1940, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agents were supposed to take annual censuses on each federal reservation. These actually occurred more randomly than annually. Visit <archives.gov/genealogy/census/native-americans/1885-1940.html> for more information and to see records available for each reservation. The schedules are on 692 rolls of microfilm in NARA Record Group 75, film M595. They're also digitized and searchable on the subscription sites Ancestry.com <ancestry.com> (as part of the Census and Voter Lists collection) and Footnote <footnote.com>.

The enumerations usually give the names of the tribe, reservation and BIA agency; nearest post office; number of people living in the household; the type of dwelling; and each person's Indian name and English name, relationship to the head of the household, marital status, tribe (sometimes with the degree of Indian blood), occupation, health, education and land ownership.

Almost all reservations were enumerated at some point, but there are notable exceptions. When the Five Civilized Tribes were relocated to Indian Territory, legislative action changed their governance and record-keeping. One result: You won't find them in the annual Indian census rolls. But they may be in special censuses, such as the 1880 and 1890 Cherokee censuses taken in Oklahoma; 1885, 1896 and 1900 Choctaw censuses; or a 1900 Chickasaw census. The Family History Library (FHL) <www.familysearch.org> and the Oklahoma Historical Society <www.okhistory.org> have these censuses on microfilm. Or you might find tribal members who stayed in the East on Indian census rolls of the Eastern Cherokee of North Carolina, for example, or the Choctaw of Mississippi (both are on FHL and NARA microfilm).

The free site AccessGenealogy links to a number of census indexes and records for various tribes and places at <www.accessgenealogy.com/native/census>.

■ **Treaty and annuity rolls**: These are usually the only federal documents naming tribal members prior to the establishment of reservations. Annuities were goods and/or money the government paid to tribal members in fulfillment of treaties. Even Indians who lived outside reservations—and their descendants—would often identify with the tribe again to apply for aid. Knowing the history of the tribe will help you identify times when the government paid claims.

A good starting point if you have Cherokee ancestry is the Final Rolls of the Five Civilized Tribes, more commonly known as the Dawes Rolls. In 1898, Congress authorized a commission to determine enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes, whose members would receive land allotments. Henry L. Dawes headed the commission, which enrolled more than 101,000 tribal members between 1898 and 1914.

Records include tribal census cards, available on Footnote, in Ancestry.com's

**WEB EXTRA** See more resources for Native American genealogy in our online toolkit <www.familytreemagazine.com/native_american>.

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*Elk Tongue and his daughter, A-ke-a (above, in 1891), were members of the Kiowa tribe—one of the many Indian nations and tribes that were allocated land in Indian Territory (left). Located in what's now Oklahoma (from the Choctaw term for "land of the red people"), the territory progressively shrank as the government opened land to settlement. In 1907, Indian Territory became part of Oklahoma. See the opposite page for information on Indian censuses from this area.*

census collection, and on NARA microfilm. NARA has the original census cards, as well as application jackets with enclosures (affidavits, correspondence and other evidence of eligibility) and allotment jackets. Access NARA's index to the Final Rolls of approved individuals at <archives.gov/research/arc/native-americans-final-rolls.html>. For help using the index and requesting an ancestor's file from NARA, see the tutorial at <archives.gov/genealogy/tutorial/dawes>. Footnote also has the digitized application packets.

The commission rejected more than 200,000 applicants. Rejected Cherokee and Choctaw applications and census cards are at NARA's Southwest regional facility in Fort Worth, Texas <archives.gov/southwest/finding-aids/native-american-microfilm.html>.

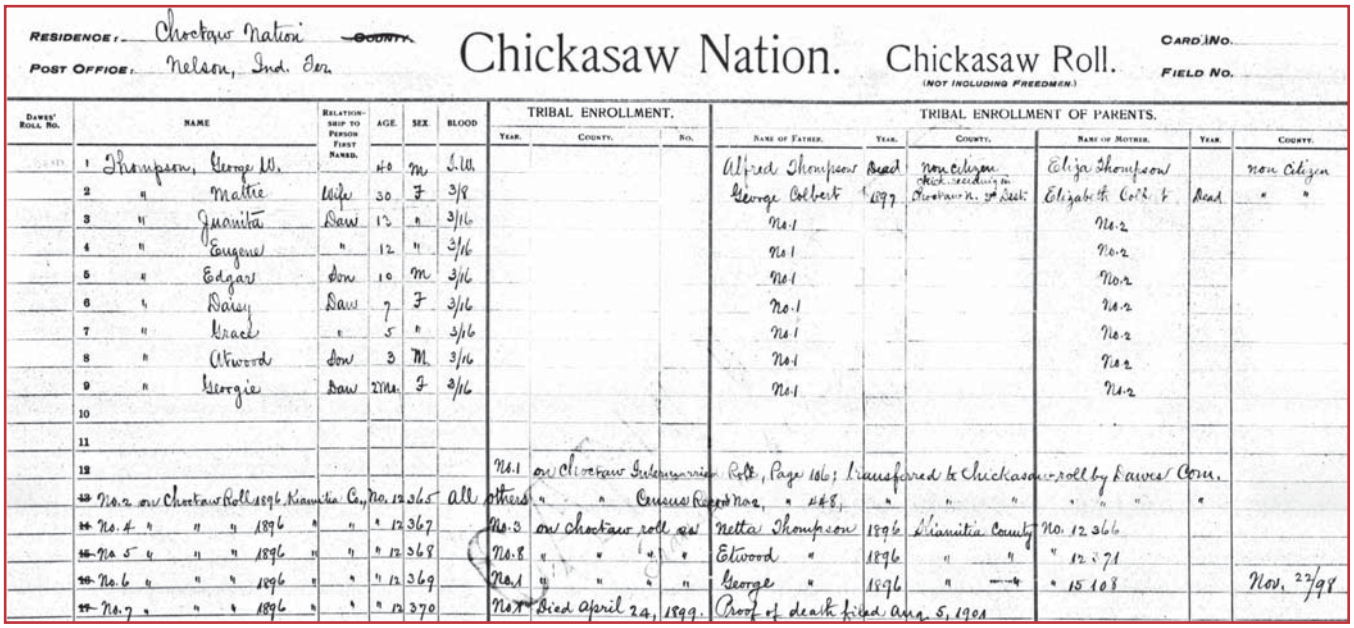
In 1906, Guion Miller was charged with determining who was eligible for funds under treaties with the Eastern Cherokee in the 1830s and 1840s. About 90,000 applicants are named in the Guion Miller Roll index, which is searchable on Footnote; it's also on NARA and FHL microfilm. Eastern Cherokee applications filed with the US Court of Claims are on Footnote, too.

■ **Bureau of Indian Affairs records:** The Department of the Interior and its new Office of Indian Affairs (later renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or BIA) took over tribal relations from the War Department in 1839. Each BIA field agent was assigned a geographic area or "agency." Remember that BIA records generally identify only Indians living as part of a tribe that had recognized ties with the federal government. Many tribes didn't, and many individuals dropped their tribal ties and assimilated into the general population.

BIA letters, reports, administrative records and Indian school records are in NARA's custody. Most cover 1830 to about 1970, and are usually arranged by tribe. The majority of administrative records are located in NARA's Washington, DC, headquarters, as are the bulk of tribe-related records before 1885. Most post-1885 agency records and correspondence BIA agents received, as well as Indian school superintendents, are usually at the NARA regional facility closest to the location of that agency. Footnote has records of the Cherokee Indian Agency in Tennessee from 1801 to 1835.

Correspondence files are filled with letters including reports and inquiries from BIA agents; inquiries and requests from Indians, missionaries, traders and other government entities concerning tribes or individuals; and applications for employment in the Indian Service at every kind of job from blacksmith to agent. Heirship records document who was to receive a deceased Indian's land. Because few BIA records are digitized, microfilmed or even indexed, you'll probably have to research in person at NARA or hire a local researcher.

Letters the Office of Indian Affairs received between 1824 and 1881 are on NARA microfilm series M234, with copies at the FHL and other major research facilities. You can use NARA's microfilm catalog (go to <eservices.archives.gov/orderonline> and click Microfilm)



RESIDENCE: Choctaw Nation — COUNTY
POST OFFICE: Nelson, Ind. Ter.

# Chickasaw Nation. Chickasaw Roll.

(NOT INCLUDING FREEDMEN.)

CARD NO.
FIELD NO.

| Dawes' Roll No. | Name | Relationship to Person First Named | Age | Sex | Blood | Tribal Enrollment: Year | County | No. | Tribal Enrollment of Parents: Name of Father | Year | County | Name of Mother | Year | County |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 Thompson, George W. | | 40 | M | 1/2 | | | | Alfred Thompson | Dead | Non citizen | Eliza Thompson | | Non citizen |
| | 2 " Mattie | Wife | 30 | F | 3/8 | | | | George Colbert | 1897 | Chick. residing in Choctaw N. at Last | Elizabeth Colb't | Dead | " " |
| | 3 " Juanita | Dau | 13 | " | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 4 " Eugene | " | 12 | " | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 5 " Edgar | Son | 10 | M | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 6 " Daisy | Dau | 7 | F | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 7 " Grace | " | 5 | " | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 8 " Atwood | Son | 3 | M | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 9 " Georgie | Dau | 2 Mo. | F | 3/16 | | | | No. 1 | | | No. 2 | | |
| | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 12 | | | | | No. 1 | on Choctaw Intermarried Roll, Page 186; transferred to Chickasaw roll by Dawes Com. | | | | | | | |
| | No. 2 on Choctaw Roll 1896 | Niamitia Co. | No. 12 | 365 | all others | " " | Census Card | No. 2, " 48, | " | " | " | " | " | " |
| | No. 4 " " " 1896 | " | " 12 | 367 | | No. 3 | on Choctaw roll as | | Netta Thompson | 1896 | Niamitia County | No. 12 366 | | |
| | No. 5 " " " 1896 | " | " 12 | 368 | | No. 8 | " " " | | Etwood " | 1896 | " " | " 12 371 | | |
| | No. 6 " " " 1896 | " | " 12 | 369 | | No. 1 | " " " | | George " | 1896 | " " | " 15 108 | | Nov. 22/98 |
| | No. 7 " " " 1896 | " | " 12 | 370 | | Not | Died April 24, 1899. | | Proof of death filed Aug. 5, 1901 | | | | | |

to pinpoint rolls of film pertaining to your ancestor's tribe and time period. A pamphlet included on the first roll of the series explains how to search these letters by agency and individual names.

Letters the BIA received from 1881 to 1907 are in paper form at NARA's main research facility in Washington, DC. The archives has a series of indexes for these letters called "Microfilm Publication P2187: Office of Indian Affairs/ Bureau of Indian Affairs: Indexes to Letters Received, 1881-1907." (It's not listed in NARA's online microfilm catalog.) Check these indexes for your ancestors' names and the tribe name. This is especially helpful for information on Indians' inquiries about claims or payments to tribal members.

Around 1900, most federal departments and agencies stopped filing their incoming correspondence chronologically and began using a subject system with decimal codes. Most of NARA's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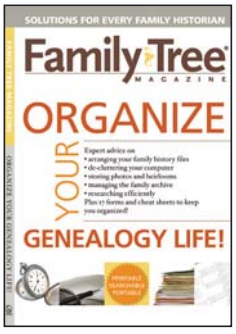

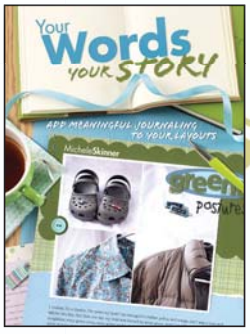


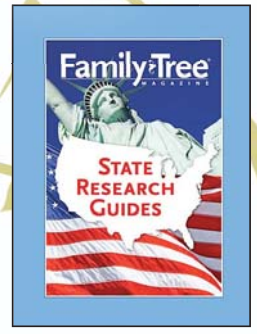


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*This Chickasaw enrollment card lists family members' names and where they appear in other records as evidence of tribal membership. The father, George Thompson, was an "intermarried white" (indicated by IW in the Blood column); his wife, Mattie, was 3/8 Indian. Mattie's father was a "Chick. residing in Choctaw" Nation.*

post-1907 BIA correspondence is filed that way in "Central Classified Files" arranged by agency, then by subject.

■ **School censuses:** From 1910 to 1939, the BIA took censuses of Indian schools, institutions where Indian parents were encouraged or compelled to send their children. Censuses list the names of children ages 6 to 18, their sex, tribe, degree of Indian blood, distance from home to school, parent or guardian, and school attendance. They often include the mother's maiden name. These schedules usually are in the NARA regional facility covering the area where the school was located.

For a good overview of other federal records related to American Indians, see *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives*, 3rd edition (NARA, out of print). If your ancestor was a member of the Five Civilized Tribes, also see George J. Nixon's list in the Native American Research chapter of *The Source*, 3rd edition (Ingram Publishing Services, $79.95).

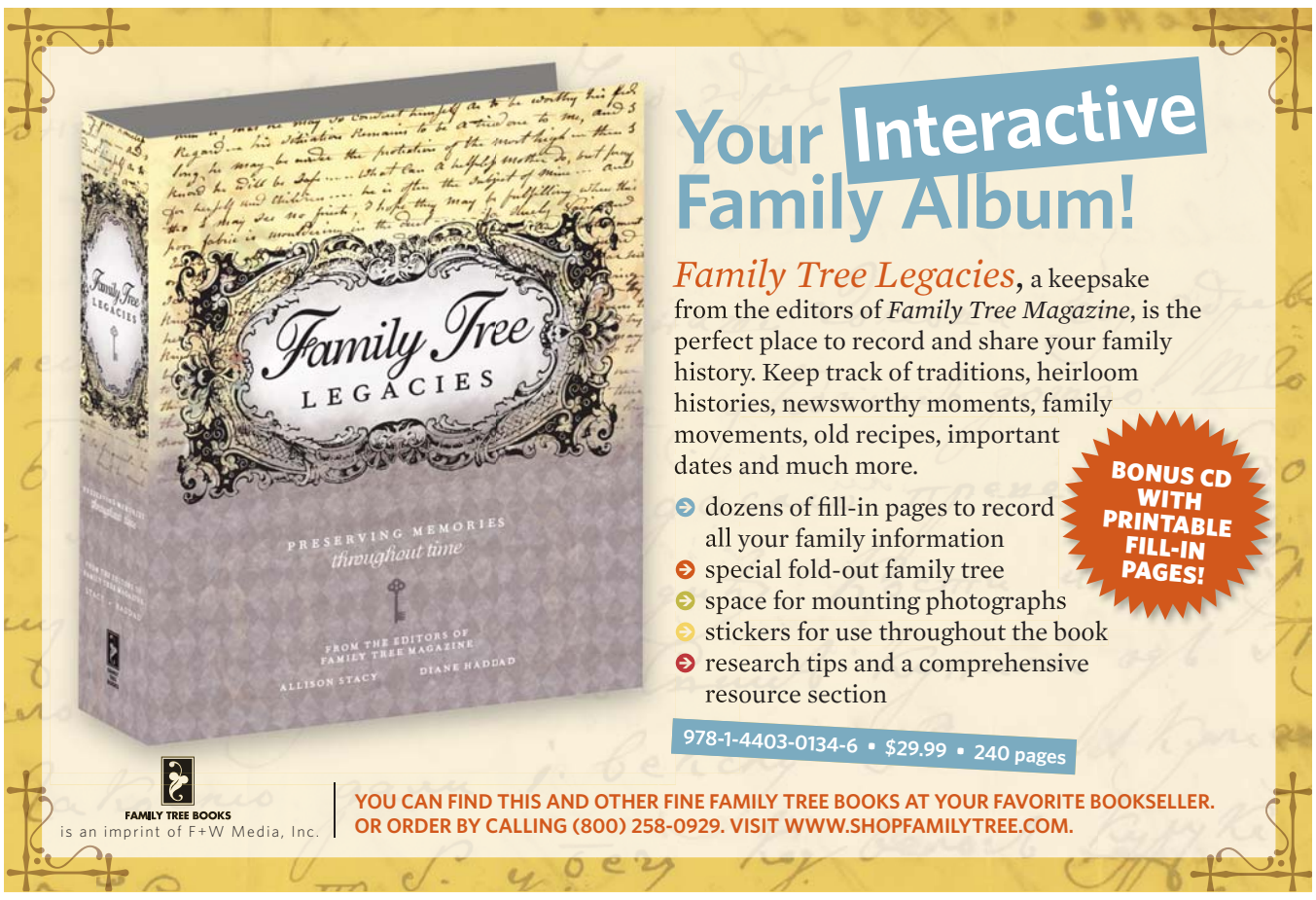
## Searching further

Your ancestor's tribe may have enrollment office records of tribal members, tribal histories and recorded oral histories—or it might've compiled little documentation and limit access to it. Once you've determined your ancestor's tribe, you can learn about its resources from its Web site or by contacting the tribal office.

Scattered among hundreds of repositories are records created by many institutions and individuals that could help your Indian research. Those include historical periodicals, church and cemetery records, newspapers, school records, diaries, maps, ledgers, biographies, and historical and ethnological series of publications. One such series is the Smithsonian Institution's 20-volume *Handbook of North American Indians*, which you can find at many large libraries (see what each volume covers at <bookstore.gpo.gov/collections/handbook-na-indians.jsp>).

In many cases, county government records, local histories, historical society collections, newspapers, USGenWeb <usgenweb.com> county resources, and other state and local history sources have information on Indians in the area. They'll also tell you about Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic or other denominations' missions on or near reservations—which may lead to registers of sacrament recipients, missionary correspondence and reports, school records, and mission or denominational newspapers. Find microfilm by running a place search of the FHL catalog and looking for a church records heading. Researching your American Indian ancestors can be challenging, but as you'll see, the rewards of exploring your family's true heritage are great.

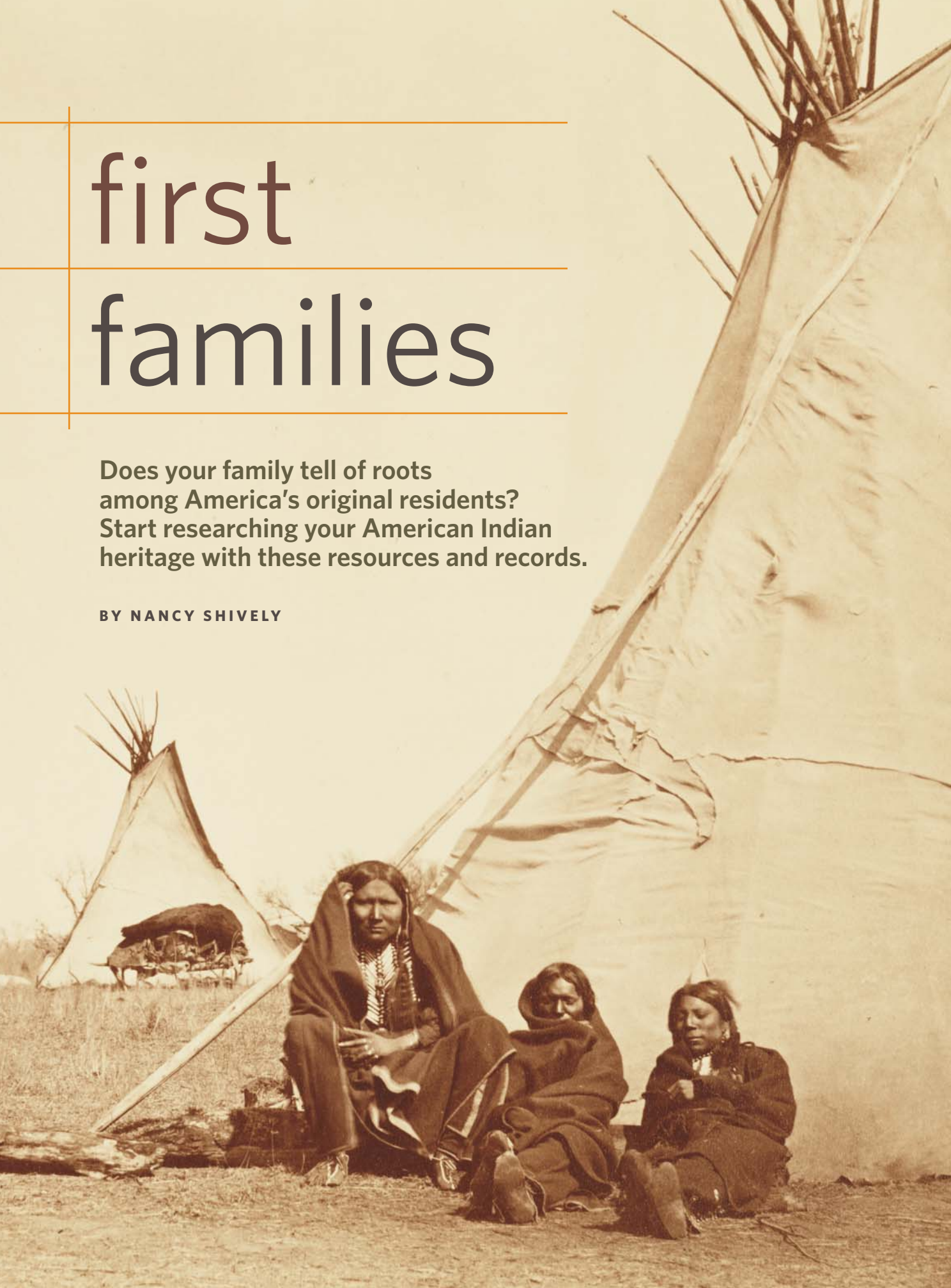
JAMES W. WARREN and contributing editor SHARON DEBARTOLO CARMACK trace American Indian ancestries from Salt Lake City.



# first families

**Does your family tell of roots among America's original residents? Start researching your American Indian heritage with these resources and records.**

BY NANCY SHIVELY



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-127674

The powerful Iroquois Confederacy, whose influence extended from New York to Canada and the Ohio Valley, was originally composed of five nations: Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga and Seneca. The Tuscarora were added in 1720, leading to the confederation's name of "Six Nations." By the time this photo of tribal members was taken in 1914, about 7,000 Iroquois lived in the United States and Canada.

**MANY FAMILIES HAVE** handed-down stories about American Indian ancestors. For a family historian, discovering the truth behind these tales and tracking down that elusive native forebear can be a challenging prospect. That's due to several factors:

- Native tribes didn't keep written records until the arrival of European settlers.
- Most surviving records were created only in the late 19th century or early 20th century. If your Indian ancestor enters your pedigree in the 1700s, it'll be extremely difficult for you to find him.
- Indians learned through bitter experience that the US government often didn't have their best interests at heart. They were sometimes denied their heritage by the officials who created the records you need to search.
- Being Indian carried a social stigma in the dominant culture of the 19th and early 20th centuries. An Indian might not make an effort to note his heritage or might try to "pass" as a white person.
- Not all Indians had an official tribal affiliation, making them less likely to appear in tribe records.
- Records may be wrong or incomplete. An Indian may be listed as white or mulatto, and vice versa. Bureau of Indian Affairs agents may have skipped a remotely located group in enumerations.

You might have only the oral history passed down in your family to point you toward Indian ancestry. Or you might have more substantive information, such as the name of Great-Grandma's tribe or even her name on a tribal enrollment. Wherever your starting point, our beginner's guide to American Indian genealogy research will help you get going.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ds-04366

To make way for American settlers, many Indian tribes were removed to other location—some, multiple times. Understanding the history of your relative's tribe will help you track down records. Comanche Indians, for example, originally occupied what's now eastern New Mexico, southeastern Colorado, southwestern Kansas, western Oklahoma and much of northwest Texas. The Comanche Nation is now headquartered in Oklahoma near Fort Sill, an Army installation built in 1869 and still in use, where these men were photographed about 1873.

## Beginning the journey

As with any research project, it helps to have a plan. Searching for an American Indian ancestor begins the same way as a search for any other ancestor. Starting with yourself, complete a pedigree chart going back to at least 1900 with help from census, vital and other records. It's particularly helpful if you can trace your family back into the 1800s, but you'll discover that American Indian records become scarce during this era.

Talk to your family members. Does anyone have memorabilia or records offering insights about Indians in your family tree? Does the family claim descent from a particular tribe? If so, research the history of that tribe to verify that its locations over time match up with where your family lived and when they lived there.

Then, lacking a time machine or the services of Sherlock Holmes, look for these clues to suggest that you may have Indian ancestry:

- Your family lived in a place and at a time when they might've come into contact with Indians. If you don't know the tribal affiliation of your suspected Indian ancestor, it's especially important to learn about the history of your ancestral places. Find out about local Indian nations and their migrations into and out of the area. The removal of tribes from their original homelands means records might be in several different locations.
- There's an *I* or *In*, indicating "Indian," in the race column of a relative's census records. Take special note of the 1900 and 1910 US censuses. Prior to 1900, few Indians are listed in the census. Indians living among the general population were identified as such beginning with the 1860 census, but it wasn't until 1900 that Indians were enumerated both in the general population and on reservations. In that year and in 1910, separate Indian schedules for those living on reservations provide added information. (Indians living off reservations with non-Indian families were enumerated with those families.) Look for these schedules at the end of the census pages for the county, though sometimes they're grouped together on last roll of microfilm for a state.

Later censuses indicate Indians but not on separate schedules. The 1920 enumeration gives the degree of Indian blood.

- An ancestor lived in Indian Territory around 1900. Indian Territory was formed in 1834, lost half its land to Oklahoma Territory in 1890, and became part of Oklahoma (a name that's Choctaw for "red people") in 1907. The territory became the home of many tribes that were removed from the Eastern United States.
- You have a known blood relative listed on a tribal roll. See pthe opposite page for more on these records.
- Your DNA test shows markers characteristic of Indian ancestry (see page 48).

Before you begin researching, though, it's helpful to identify your goal. Do you simply want to verify a link to the proud heritage of a Native American culture? Are you interested in pursuing tribal membership? If it's the latter, keep that in mind that you'll need documentation proving you're a descendant of a known tribal member. Be extra sure to thoroughly cite the sources of information you find.

## Far from home

Once you've completed the basic research and have a pedigree chart and some census records in hand, it's time to dig a little deeper. Because many families believe their link to Indian ancestry is through one of the Five Civilized Tribes, in particular the Cherokee, it's useful to know about the records of these tribes.

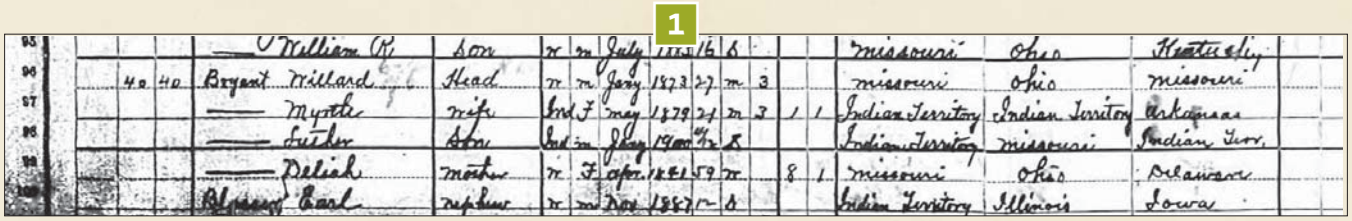
The Five Civilized Tribes—Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole—are indigenous to the southeastern United States, where European settlers' demand for land pressured native populations out of their traditional homelands. With the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the US government began a series of forced removals; see a timeline on the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) website **<www.okhistory.org/research/aireremoval>**. Among the most infamous is the Trail of Tears, a 1,200-mile forced march of about 16,500 Cherokee to Indian Territory from their homelands east of the Mississippi River.

## HOW TO USE THE DAWES ROLLS

**1 VERIFY YOUR FAMILY LIVED IN INDIAN TERRITORY IN THE 1900 CENSUS.** To qualify for enrollment, an individual had to be living with his or her tribe in Indian Territory in 1900. If your family wasn't there, it's unlikely you'll find them on the Dawes Rolls. Below is a portion of the 1900 US Census for Indian Territory enumerating the Willard Bryant family. Notice that Myrtle Bryant is listed as "Ind," as is her son, Luther.

**2 SEARCH THE DAWES ROLLS INDEX.** You'll find it at **<www.okhistory.org/research/dawes>**. Look for a married woman under her married name. If you find a person in the index, note the card number. Click on it to see other family members listed on the card. Do the ages and family members' names match your records? In addition to Luther, Myrtle Bryant's card lists the two sons she'd had since the 1900 census. All have the same census card number, 4166, but each has a different roll number. You'll need both numbers for each individual you research. Her husband, mother-in-law and nephew aren't on the card; the 1900 census indicates they're white.

1



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 95 | | | William R | Son | M | M | July | 1900 | 16 | 6 | | | | Missouri | Ohio | Kentucky |
| 96 | | 40 | 40 | Bryant Willard | Head | M | M | Jany | 1873 | 27 | M | 3 | | | Missouri | Ohio | Missouri |
| 97 | | | | Myrtle | wife | Ind | F | May | 1879 | 24 | M | 3 | 1 | 1 | Indian Territory | Indian Territory | Arkansas |
| 98 | | | | Luther | Son | Ind | M | May | 1900 | 8/12 | S | | | | Indian Territory | Missouri | Indian Ter. |
| 99 | | | | Delilah | mother | M | F | Apr | 1841 | 59 | M | | 8 | 1 | Missouri | Ohio | Delaware |
| 100 | | | | Bryant Earl | nephew | M | M | Dec | 1883 | 16 | S | | | | Indian Territory | Illinois | Iowa |

2

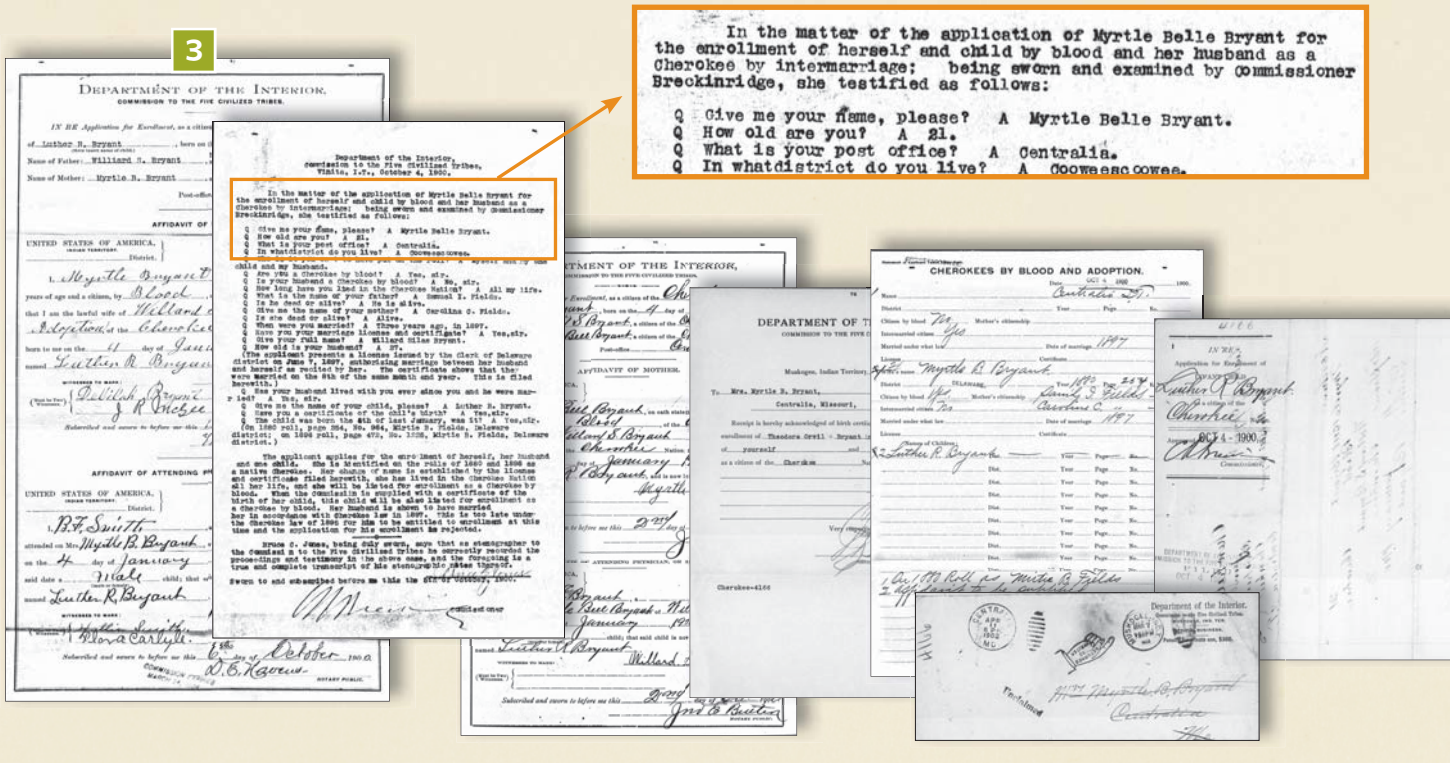
| Name | Age | Sex | Blood | Card No. | Tribe | Roll No. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Myrtle B. Bryant | 23 | Female | 1/8 | Card #4166 | Cherokee by Blood | Roll #10046 |
| Luther R. Bryant | 3 | Male | 1/16 | Card #4166 | Cherokee by Blood | Roll #10047 |
| Calvin A. Bryant | 2 | Male | 1/16 | Card #4166 | Cherokee by Blood | Roll #10048 |
| Theodore Orvil Bryant | 1 | Male | 1/16 | Card #4166 | Cherokee by Blood | Roll #10049 |

Indian Territory, which existed from 1834 to 1907 in what's now Oklahoma, became the home of many tribes that were removed from the Eastern United States.

Up to 5,000 died of starvation or disease along the way. Different tribes were moved at different times (and some more than once), but all shared a tragedy of loss—of homes, culture and lives. To this day in some tribes, any relocation of ceremonial grounds must be to the East. Always and only toward the East, toward home.

A major genealogical resource for the Five Civilized Tribes is the Dawes Rolls, officially titled the Final Rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory. Between 1898 and 1907, the Dawes Commission identified and registered members of the Five Civilized Tribes to distribute reservation lands to individual tribal members. The remaining lands were then opened for settlement. Included in this process were the Freedmen, African-American former slaves of the tribes who, as stipulated by treaties after the Civil War, were considered tribal

**3 OBTAIN THE APPLICATION PACKET.** Use the name and/or census card number from the index to search Native American Applications for Enrollment in Five Civilized Tribes at Ancestry.com or Fold3. Myrtle Bryant's packet includes her transcribed interview (which provides her parents' and spouse's names, marriage date and more) and affidavits of each child's birth. The interview page explains Willard was denied tribal citizenship because the couple was married "too late under the Cherokee law in 1895." That law declared no white person intermarried since Dec. 16, 1895, could participate in tribal property distribution.



Your Indian ancestor may have used both a traditional and an American name. Wis-Ki-Ge-Amatyuk, the Potawatomie ritual leader seated in the center of this photo, was also known as John Buckshot. Native to the Great Plains, upper Mississippi River and Western Great Lakes, the Potawatomi Indians were removed to Indian territory in the 19th century. Federally recognized tribes today are in Oklahoma, Kansas, Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan (where this group posed in 1906).

citizens. Following are the three main types of records in the Dawes rolls:

- **CENSUS CARDS,** also known as enrollment cards, list each enrollee's tribe, blood quantum (the percentage of "Indian blood" inherited from ancestors), name, age and sometimes family members. Each person on the card was assigned a tribal roll number.
- **ENROLLMENT PACKETS** include transcriptions of interviews, application forms and other documentation of a person's eligibility for tribal membership.
- **LAND ALLOTMENT PACKETS** document the land an enrollee received. They contain the enrollment number and name of the applicant, names of his extended family, the land's location and legal description, and other documents.

Search an easy-to-use, free index of these records on the OHS website **<www.okhistory.org/research/dawes>** or browse a printed index at **<catalog.archives.gov/id/300321>**. An advantage to browsing is that you can spot name variants and misspellings. The census cards and enrollment packets are digitized and searchable on subscription sites Ancestry.com **<ancestry.com>** and Fold3 **<fold3.com>** (your library may offer free access to these sites). Ancestry.com also has land allotment packets, as does the free FamilySearch **<www.familysearch.org>**. Follow the steps on page 44 to search the Dawes Rolls. Terms you may see used to describe enrollees include:

- **BY BLOOD:** The person has some degree of Indian blood.
- **BY MARRIAGE:** The person, usually white, is married to an Indian applicant.
- **MINOR OR NEWBORN:** A child was born to the applicant after the initial application was made, but before the rolls were finalized in 1907.

The commission rejected nearly two-thirds of applicants for tribal membership, and these applications aren't part of the Dawes rolls. An index to rejected cards is on National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) microfilm 7RA147. NARA's research facility in Fort Worth, Texas, has this film, as well as indexes to rejected applications from several tribes. OHS has many of these indexes as well. To find copies you can rent from the Family History Library, run a keyword search of the FamilySearch online catalog for *Dawes* **<www.familysearch.org/catalog/search>**.

In addition to the Dawes Rolls, you'll find two rolls for the Eastern Cherokee that also have valuable genealogical

From 1885 to 1940, Bureau of Indian Affairs agents were required to conduct annual censuses of the reservations they oversaw.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-132033

information, even if your ancestor's application wasn't ultimately approved. These are the Guion-Miller Roll (1906-1911), available on Fold3, and the Baker Roll (1924-1929), found on Ancestry.com.

Not all Oklahoma Indians were members of the Five Civilized Tribes. Today, 38 federally recognized tribes have headquarters there. For other rolls, tribal censuses and more resources on Oklahoma Indians, see the OHS website **<www.okhistory.org/research/genealogy>**.

## Stories to be told

Tribal rolls provide a good way to establish your family's Indian roots. But what if you can't find your Indian ancestor among the Five Civilized Tribes? You have 562 other places to look. The federal government recognizes a total of 567 tribes, although these don't necessarily align with traditional tribal groups. Research these types of records for Indian ancestors no matter their tribe:

- **INDIAN CENSUS ROLLS:** From 1885 to 1940, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agents were required to conduct annual censuses of individuals on the reservations they oversaw. The enumeration process wasn't standardized and compliance wasn't always a given; therefore, the information can vary by year and location. You can search these censuses on Ancestry.com and Fold3, and browse them at the free Access Genealogy **<www.accessgenealogy.com/native-american>**.
- **TRIBAL ROLLS OR CENSUSES:** All tribes have a base roll (or rolls) used to determine eligibility for tribal membership. But other rolls or censuses were taken at various times and places, for various reasons. For example, Paiute on Nevada's Walker River Valley reservation were enumerated from 1902 to 1906 (records are on Ancestry.com), and Sioux (Dakota) were enumerated several times between 1849 and 1935 (the Minnesota Historical Society has microfilm **<www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/m0405.xml>**).

Many of these rolls are available on microfilm or online at sites such as Ancestry.com, Fold3, FamilySearch and Access Genealogy. Also look for film from NARA (see **<archives.gov/research/native-americans/rolls>**), the Family History Library and state archives where a reservation is located. Search websites and online catalogs for the tribe name and *roll* or *census*. Ask at your library about borrowing film via interlibrary loan.

- **BIA RECORDS:** NARA has a comprehensive guide to BIA records at **<archives.gov/research/native-americans/bia-guide>**. These records, arranged by state and agency, vary in content; most aren't indexed or digitized (though below, we've noted some that are). Originals are housed at NARA facilities covering the areas where agencies were located. Three main types of records are:

» **EMPLOYMENT:** Thousands of government employees were tasked with administrating Indian reservations and BIA agencies. In addition, the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and '40s had an Indian Division.

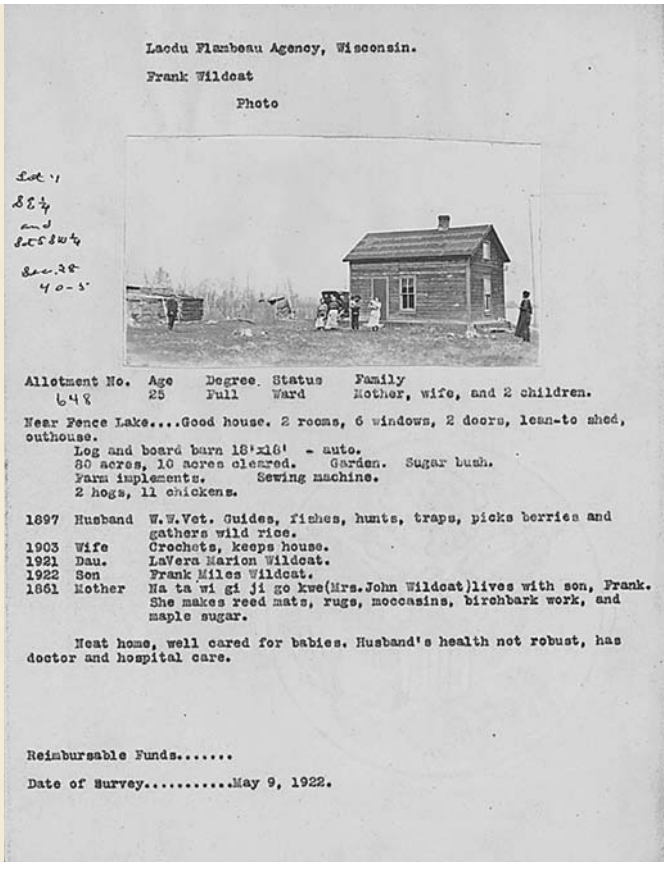
» **SCHOOL:** The BIA operated "Indian schools" across the country. Find a listing, along with the affiliated agency for each school, at **<archives.gov/research/native-americans/bia-guide/schools.html>**. Records may include school censuses,

### TOOLKIT

- Access Genealogy: Native American **<www.accessgenealogy.com/native>**
- Ancestry.com: American Indian Records **<search.ancestry.com/search/group/nativeamerican>**
- Ancestry.com wiki: Overview of Native American Research **<ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Overview_of_Native_American_Research>**
- Cyndi's List: Native American **<cyndislist.com/native-american>**
- FamilySearch wiki: American Indian Genealogy **<familysearch.org/wiki/en/American_Indian_Genealogy>**
- Fold3.com: Native American Collection **<go.fold3.com/native_americans_records>**
- National Archives and Records Administration: Native Americans **<archives.gov/research/native-americans>**
- National Congress of American Indians: Tribal directory **<www.ncai.org/tribal-directory>**
- Oklahoma Historical Society: Genealogy **<www.okhistory.org/research/genealogy>**
- TravelOK.com: Oklahoma genealogy resources **<www.travelok.com/genealogy>**
- Tulsa City-County Library Genealogy Center: Click American Indian Research **<guides.tulsalibrary.org/genealogy>**

student case files and group photos. You'll find some of these records online at Ancestry.com and Access Genealogy.

» **ALLOTMENTS AND ANNUITIES:** An allotment is a piece of land deeded to an individual Indian as tribal lands traditionally held in common were divided. Annuities are payments made to tribal members as stipulated in treaties. Related records document property and financial transactions. You can find some on Ancestry.com; keyword-search the card catalog for *allotment* or *annuity* **<search.ancestry.com/search/cardcatalog.aspx>**.



Lac du Flambeau Agency, Wisconsin.

Frank Wildcat

Photo

Allotment No. 648 | Age 25 | Degree Full | Status Ward | Family Mother, wife, and 2 children.

Near Fence Lake....Good house. 2 rooms, 6 windows, 2 doors, lean-to shed, outhouse.
Log and board barn 18'x16' - auto.
80 acres, 10 acres cleared. Garden. Sugar bush.
Farm implements. Sewing machine.
2 hogs, 11 chickens.

1897 Husband W.W.Vet. Guides, fishes, hunts, traps, picks berries and gathers wild rice.
1903 Wife Crochets, keeps house.
1921 Dau. LaVera Marion Wildcat.
1922 Son Frank Miles Wildcat.
1861 Mother Na ta wi gi ji go kwe(Mrs.John Wildcat)lives with son, Frank. She makes reed mats, rugs, moccasins, birchbark work, and maple sugar.

Neat home, well cared for babies. Husband's health not robust, has doctor and hospital care.

Reimbursable Funds.....

Date of Survey.....May 9, 1922.

■ **MILITARY RECORDS:** American Indians have been serving in the US military since the Revolutionary War. You can find them in many of the same service and pension records as the other soldiers in your family tree. But Indians did provide some unique services, creating additional records held at NARA and explained at **<archives.gov/publications/prologue/2009/summer/indian.html>**:

» **CODE TALKERS:** The Navajo "code talkers," who used their native language to encrypt military communications during World War II, are well known. During both world wars, Lakota, Cherokee, Choctaw and other Indians also served as code talkers. Learn more at **<www.nmai.si.edu/education/codetalkers/html>**.

» **SCOUTS:** Sometime hired, sometimes enlisted in the Army, Indian scouts served in the American West from just after the Civil War until 1947. Read more at **<www.army.mil/article/114646/Native_American_Scouts>**.

## In your DNA

Genetic genealogy has provided ways to break down long-standing brick walls. But keep in mind that although your DNA might have markers that indicate Indian ancestry, test results aren't accepted as evidence for tribal membership because they can't prove affiliation with a specific tribe.

On autosomal DNA tests in particular (offered by Ancestry DNA **<dna.ancestry.com>**, 23andMe **<23andme.com>** and Family Tree DNA's Family Finder **<www.familytreedna.com>**), it's unlikely that markers indicating American Indian roots will show up at all if your Indian ancestor is much farther back than five or so generations. If you do have American Indian

NARA has digitized some BIA records, such as Surveys of Indian Industry, 1922, describing 132 Lac du Flambeau (Wis.) Agency land allotments and the families that live on them. To find these surveys, search NARA's online catalog **<catalog.archives.gov>** for *Lac du Flambeau* and click Images at the top. Originals are at NARA's Chicago regional research facility. Search NARA's online catalog for descriptions of BIA records and digitized records with terms such as a tribe's or the BIA agency's name.

American Indians' traditional dress varied by culture, although as tribes were relocated, members began to adopt other tribes' and American settlers' attire. Chiefs and warriors of some Great Plains tribes wore eagle feather warbonnets, like those in this 1925 image, for formal ceremonies. Decorated headbands with one or two feathers are original to a few Eastern Woodlands tribes. Learn more about American Indian headdresses at **<www.native-languages.org/headdresses.htm>**.

genetic markers, research further in paper records, use your percentage of American Indian DNA to estimate your relationship to an Indian ancestor, and search your DNA matches for cousins who share that ancestor.

If your autosomal DNA test doesn't reveal American Indian roots, this doesn't necessarily disprove Indian ancestry—it's possible the ancestor lived long ago enough that you didn't inherit any of his or her DNA. For information on using DNA to trace American Indian or other ethnic roots, see *The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy* by Blaine Bettinger (Family Tree Books) **<shopfamilytree.com/guide-to-dna-testing-and-genetic-genealogy>**.

## Asking for help

It's often said that although many records are now available online, the vast majority still must be obtained on paper or in person. This is especially true of Indian records. Once you've exhausted online resources and what's available through your local library, turn to more-specialized archives and the archivists who work there. Meg Hacker, archival director of NARA at Fort Worth (home to many American Indian records), recommends reaching out to her staff. "We're not genealogists," she says, "but we are archivists and we can help you get to the records you need."

The archives is revamping its website to make finding records easier. A good place to start is **<archives.gov/research/native-americans/index.html>**. You can ask research questions by email (**ftworth.archives@nara.gov**), or phone (817-551-2051) and get updates on Facebook **<www.facebook.com/nationalarchivesfortworth>**. Check out local resources in the area where you're researching. Ask a local librarian or genealogical society about resources that might be helpful to you.

Your American Indian ancestor may reveal him- or herself when you least expect it. You can't tell when some small piece of the puzzle will turn up and lead to brick walls falling down like dominos. In the meantime, your research is familiarizing you with resources and records that will enlighten your knowledge of your entire family tree. ■

A technology trainer and self-professed "genealogy geek," **Nancy Shively** is a native "Okie" who lives and works within the historical borders of Indian Territory near Tulsa, Okla.

## MORE ONLINE

**Free Web Content**

- American Indian genealogy websites **<familytreemagazine.com/article/americanindianwebsites >**
- Podcast: DNA and genealogy **<familytreemagazine.com/article/episode78>**
- Tribal censuses **<familytreemagazine.com/article/inside-sources-keeping-tabs-on-tribal-censuses>**

**For Plus Members**

- American Indian genealogy guide **<familytreemagazine.com/article/native-sons-daughters>**
- Tracing an Indian scout **<familytreemagazine.com/article/now-what-scouts-honor>**
- Five steps to find American Indian Roots **<familytreemagazine.com/article/tribal-ties>**

**ShopFamilyTree.com**

- Digging Into the Dawes Rolls video class **<shopfamilytree.com/digging-into-the-dawes-rolls>**
- American Indian Genealogy Cheat Sheet **<shopfamilytree.com/american-indian-genealogy-cheat-sheet>**
- Navigate Native American Records on Ancestry.com video class **<shopfamilytree.com/navigatenative-american-records-on-ancestrycom-download>**