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

What are the Dawes Rolls?
The Dawes Commission, known formally as the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, was appointed by President Grover Cleveland in 1893 and headed by Henry L. Dawes to negotiate land with the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole tribes.
Tribe members were allotted land in return for abolishing tribal governments and recognizing Federal laws. In order to receive the land, individual tribal members first had to apply and be deemed eligible by the Commission.

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

Did you know?
Entertainer Will Rogers, pictured here with Eleanor Roosevelt, was an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. Rogers' application to the Dawes Commission was accepted in 1900.

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

Today these five tribes continue to use the Dawes Rolls as the basis for determining tribal membership. They usually require applicants to provide proof of descent from a person who is listed on these rolls. (Contact the tribes directly for enrollment information).
Should I search the Dawes Rolls?
If you aren't sure if you need to search the records of the Five Civilized Tribes, this excellent flow chart can help you decide where to start your search.

Ready to search the Dawes Rolls?
We've put together a handy tutorial to help you get started. Head over to our NARAtions blog for step-by-step instructions for searching the Dawes Rolls by name.

Find more resources for searching Native American Heritage on archives.gov.

Did you catch our last Newsletter featuring our favorite Presidential Records in
the National Archives Catalog? In that issue we also put out a call for seasoned transcribers to join our Transcriber Task Force, a group of Citizen Archivists willing to tackle tricky transcriptions.

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

New in the Catalog

Office of War Information: World War II Foreign Posters, 1942-1945
Posters produced by foreign information offices and war relief associations in the United States.

Questions or comments? Email us at catalog@nara.gov.