

NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS  
PAMPHLET DESCRIBING M825

**Selected Classes  
of Letters Received  
by the Indian Division  
of the Office of the  
Secretary of the Interior  
1849-1880**



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The records reproduced in the microfilm publication

are from

Records of the Office of the Secretary

of the Interior

Record Group 48

in the National Archives Building

SELECTED CLASSES OF LETTERS RECEIVED  
BY THE INDIAN DIVISION OF THE OFFICE  
OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
1849-1880

On the 32 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced letters received by the Indian Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior from some U.S. Government agencies and other sources, 1849-80.

When the Department of the Interior was established by an act of March 3, 1849 (9 Stat. 395), the Secretary was granted general supervisory control over the administration of Indian affairs. At that time the Office (now Bureau) of Indian Affairs was transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior and it continued to handle much of the administrative work relating to Indians. In addition, the Office of the Secretary had an Indian Desk that was assigned to a clerk who handled the Secretary's correspondence and maintained the Office records relating to the administration of Indian affairs. About 1870 a formal Indian Division was established in the Secretary's Office and A. S. H. White was appointed as Chief. Most Indian matters, including those brought to the Secretary's attention by the Office of Indian Affairs, were referred to the Division.

In 1907 the Office of the Secretary was reorganized, and several of the Divisions that served as intermediaries between the Secretary and the Department's bureau and offices were abolished. The records of the Indian Division were subsequently turned over to the Office of Indian Affairs, but all Division correspondence with the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Attorney General, and other Cabinet officers, Congressmen, and some private individuals and organizations was retained in separate series in the divisional files.

Letters received by the Indian Division relate to such subjects as contracts between Indians and claims agents; land allotments to Indians; surveys of Indian lands; Indian rights and Indian defense associations; annuity payments and trust funds; intruders on Indian reservations; negotiations with Indian tribes; contracts for Indian supplies, transportation, and buildings; deeds for Indian lands; depredation claims against Indians; employees in Indian service; Indian inspectors; and legislation.

Although the Office of Indian Affairs handled most of the routine administration of Indian affairs, including correspondence with superintendents and agents, Congress sometimes assigned specific responsibilities to the Secretary of the Interior. His approval was required for deeds, patents, leases, census rolls, land allotment schedules, and contracts. The Secretary also granted authority for individual expenditures, made recommendations on depredation claims, acted as trustee for Indian trust

funds, and occasionally made special reports to Congress.

The letters received from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that are reproduced in this microfilm publication consist of communications transmitting for approval deeds for land sold by Indians in Kansas, 1869-77. The other letters received from the Commissioner, 1849-80, and the Special Files of the Indian Division for the same period have not been included in this publication.

Letters received that were referred to the Indian Division by the Bureau of Indian Affairs have Bureau file numbers on them in addition to those of the Division. Some letters also have file numbers from other divisions of the Department of the Interior or of other Government agencies. Several letters are in files containing letters relating to trust funds and others are in special files.

Many letters received in the Indian Division were referred to other offices--usually to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Some were returned to the Division, separated from the letter of transmittal, and refiled in their original places rather than filed with the letter of transmittal, which had a later date. Usually referrals were not indicated by cross-reference slips but sometimes were noted in the endorsement on the wrapper or in the register entry. Letters received were folded in thirds and enclosed in a wrapper upon which was written the name and title of writer, the date and place where the letter was written, its subject, and the Division's action.

Most of the letters reproduced in this microfilm publication are arranged by name of Government agency or office that sent them to the Department of the Interior and thereunder chronologically. Letters from private individuals and non-Government organizations, filed in the "Miscellaneous" category, are arranged chronologically by the date of the letter. The date of a transmittal letter takes precedence over the dates of its enclosures. If the transmittal letter is missing, the date of the enclosure determines its placement in the files. If both the transmittal and the enclosure are missing, then the date on the wrapper, usually the date received in the Division, determines its location.

The letters received by the Indian Division, 1849-80, and reproduced in this publication, were entered in 14 divisional registers. At the beginning of each register are pages on which letters from the President and the executive departments were entered separately by name of office or agency in order of rank, followed by alphabetical sections in which other letters received were listed by initial letter of writer's surname and thereunder chronologically by date of receipt. Each entry also contains the date the letter was written, its general subject, and the

action taken by the office or the agency. In 1878 the Indian Division began to assign numbers to letters received, but the alphabetical arrangement of the registers continued until 1881. The registers have not been reproduced in this microfilm publication.

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication and the related 14 divisional registers are part of the Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48. In the same record group are Letters Sent by the Indian Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, 1849-1903 (reproduced as M606), and records relating to Indian affairs among the files of the Appointments Division and the Indian Territory Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior.

In Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49, are records of the former General Land Office relating to Indian land entries and allotments.

Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, contain documents relating to all aspects of Indian administration. Related records reproduced on microfilm are Letters Sent by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-81 (M21), Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-80 (M234), and Registers of Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-80 (M18).

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication were arranged for filming by Milton D. Ream, who also wrote these introductory remarks and provided the other editorial material.

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