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**Eastern Cherokee
Applications of the
U.S. Court of Claims
1906-1909**



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Records of the U.S. Court of Claims

Record Group 123

EASTERN CHEROKEE APPLICATIONS OF THE
U.S. COURT OF CLAIMS
1906-1909

On the 348 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced the applications submitted for shares of the money that was appropriated for the Eastern Cherokee Indians by the Congress on June 30, 1906. The Eastern Cherokee applications, August 29, 1906-May 26, 1909, are part of the Guion Miller Enrollment Records that are among the records of the U.S. Court of Claims. This publication also includes a general index to Eastern Cherokee applications (two vols.).

History

Before the U.S. Court of Claims was established in 1855 there was no procedure by which claims arising against the U.S. Government could be enforced by suit. Consideration of claims was provided for when the Treasury Department was established in 1789; later acts of the Congress authorized the Department to settle all claims by or against the Government. If a claim was rejected by the Treasury Department, the claimant's only course of action was to appeal directly to the Congress. Petitions to that body for relief had become so numerous by the middle of the 19th century that the Congress was beginning to find it impossible to make the proper and necessary investigations for actions on the claims.

The U.S. Court of Claims was established by an act of February 24, 1855, to hear claims against the United States including those referred to the court by the Congress, based on any law of the Congress, any regulation of an executive department, or any contract with the Government, whether explicit or implied. Under this act the court served only as a factfinding agency, and its conclusions were submitted to the Congress for approval and for the granting of awards. In 1863 the Congress enlarged the court's jurisdiction and gave it authority to render judgments against the Government, with the right of appeal to the Supreme Court. An act of 1925 abolished appeals from the Court of Claims to the Supreme Court and substituted writs of certiorari.

An act approved July 1, 1902 (32 Stat. 726), gave the Court of Claims jurisdiction over any claim arising under treaty stipulations that the Cherokee Tribe, or any band thereof, might have against the United States and over any claims that the United States might have against any Cherokee Tribe or band. Suit for such a claim was to be instituted within 2 years after the act was approved. As a result, three suits were brought before the court concerning grievances arising out of the treaties:

(1) *The Cherokee Nation v. The United States*, General-Jurisdiction Case No. 23199; (2) *The Eastern and Emigrant Cherokees v. The United States*, General-Jurisdiction Case No. 23212; and (3) *The Eastern Cherokees v. The United States*, General-Jurisdiction Case No. 23214.

On May 18, 1905, the court decided in favor of the Eastern Cherokees and instructed the Secretary of the Interior to identify the persons entitled to participate in the distribution of funds for payment of the claims. On June 30, 1906, the Congress appropriated more than \$1 million for this purpose. The task of compiling a roll of eligible persons was begun by Guion Miller, special agent of the Interior Department. In a decree of April 29, 1907, the court (1) vacated that part of its earlier decision that had given the Secretary of the Interior responsibility for determining the eligibility of claimants and (2) appointed Miller as a special commissioner of the Court of Claims.

The same decree also provided that the fund was to be distributed to all Eastern and Western Cherokee Indians who were alive on May 28, 1906, who could establish the fact that at the time of the treaties they were members of the Eastern Cherokee Tribe or were descendants of such persons, and that they had not been affiliated with any tribe of Indians other than the Eastern Cherokee or the Cherokee Nation. The decree further provided that claimants should already have applications on file with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, or should file such applications with the special commissioner of the Court of Claims on or before August 31, 1907. Additionally, applications for minors and persons of unsound mind were to be filed by their parents or persons having their care and custody, and applications for persons who had died after May 28, 1906, were to be filed by their children or legal representatives.

In his report of May 28, 1909, Miller stated that 45,847 separate applications had been filed, representing a total of about 90,000 individual claimants, 30,254 of whom were enrolled as entitled to share in the fund--3,203 residing east and 27,051 residing west of the Mississippi River. On June 10, 1909, the court confirmed and approved the roll, submitted by Miller in his report, of Eastern Cherokees who were entitled to a share of the fund except "so much as shall be expected (excepted) to on or before August 30, 1909." After the exceptions had been filed and investigated, Miller submitted a supplemental report and roll to the court on January 5, 1910. In this report he stated that about 11,750 exceptions had been made, that the names of 610 persons (238 east and 372 west of the Mississippi) had been added to the roll, and that the names of 44 persons (5 east and 39 west of the Mississippi) had been stricken from the roll because clerical errors in enrollment had been discovered. Thus the final figure on the total number of persons entitled to share in the fund was 30,820, of which 3,436 persons

resided east and 27,384 resided west of the Mississippi River. On March 15, 1910, the court finally decreed that the rolls be approved and that, after certain deductions for expenditures, payments were to be made equally among the Eastern Cherokees who were enrolled. The court also authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to issue a warrant in favor of each person.

In certifying the eligibility of the Cherokees, Miller used earlier census lists and rolls that had been made of the Cherokees by Hester, Chapman, Drennen, and others between 1835 and 1884. Copies of some of these rolls and the indexes to them are filed with the Miller records (filmed as M685). Other enrollment records used by Miller are among the classified subject files of the Bureau and are designated as "33931-11-053 Cherokee Nation."

Records

The applications contain sworn evidences of identity and were filed with the Interior Department's Office of Indian Affairs until April 29, 1907 (the last application was No. 22268), after which the applications were filed directly with the court. The application required each claimant to state fully his or her English and Indian names, residence, age, place of birth, name of husband or wife, name of tribe, and names of children. It further required the English and Indian names of the claimant's parents and grandparents, place of their birth, place of their residence in 1851 if they were living at that time, dates of their death, and a statement as to whether any of them had ever before been enrolled as Indians for annuities or other benefits and, if so, with what tribe. Each claimant was also to furnish the names of all brothers and sisters, with their ages and residences, and the names and residences of all uncles and aunts. Applications were required to be made under oath and to be supported by affidavits of two witnesses who were well acquainted with the applicant. With each application is a card showing final action taken and the reasons therefore. Filed with many of the applications are inquiries concerning the status of the cases, requests for further evidence, protests about unfavorable actions, form letters that had been sent by the special commissioner to the applicants as notices of rejection of their applications and returned by the Post Office Department as unclaimed, affidavits and statements of witnesses, powers of attorney, and last wills and testaments. The applications are arranged by the number assigned at the time the application was received. There are some gaps in the application numbers; these are explained on insert sheets at the appropriate places on the film. The index is arranged alphabetically by name (either English or Indian) of claimant.

Many of the files contain a cross-reference card to other applications. This cross-reference card often refers to the EX file, the report on exceptions filed by Miller on January 5, 1910.

Related Records

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication are part of the records in the custody of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) designated as Records of the U.S. Court of Claims, Record Group (RG) 123. Among related records in this record group are additional records relating to Miller's enrollment of the Eastern Cherokees. These include receipts for Treasury warrants and miscellaneous correspondence, 1906-11. The original of these records is in RG 123; a copy is in RG 75.

Some related records in Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 75, have been reproduced as NARS Microfilm Publication T496, *Census Roll, 1835, of the Cherokee Indians East of the Mississippi and Index to the Roll*. Also in RG 75 are the classified subject files of the Bureau.

Records Relating to Enrollment of Eastern Cherokees by Guion Miller, 1908-10, M685, contains the general index to Eastern Cherokee applications, 2 volumes; the report submitted by Guion Miller, May 28, 1909, 10 volumes; the roll of Eastern Cherokees, May 28, 1909; the report on exceptions filed, January 5, 1910; the supplemental roll of Eastern Cherokees, January 5, 1910; transcripts of testimony, February, 1908-March 1909, 10 volumes; various indexes and rolls of Eastern Cherokee Indians, 1851, 1854, and 1884; and miscellaneous notes and drafts.

Additional records relating to the enrollment of Eastern Cherokee Indians are in Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48.

These records were prepared for filming by Jestine Turner and William D. Grover, who also prepared these introductory remarks.

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