

Dawes Application CHECKLIST

Extracting important information from historical documents is an important skill in genealogy. Always look at copies of documents or the actual documents themselves. Indexes of primary source material usually do not contain all the information that can be gleaned from the document. This is especially the case for Dawes Commission records.

Use this checklist to examine Dawes Applications* for Freedmen of the Five Tribes: Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee. Dawes Applications for Freedmen and Freedmen minors are kept separately while minor children from the same family have applications grouped together.

- Cover Page.** This page contains associated Dawes card number(s) and may contain the name of the applicant and their tribal affiliation. Be sure to track down applications filed under all numbers associated with the applicant. Each file may contain different information.
- Application Details.** What date was the application made? Are there additional pages of testimony subsequent to the initial one? Create a timeline of based on the dates contained in the application.
- Locations.** Note names of towns, communities, and tribal districts that are referenced, especially before emigration, forced removal, the Civil War, and afterward.

- Associated People.** Create a list of all the individuals mentioned in the application such as witnesses, children, spouse(s), friends and neighbors and note what relationship they have to the applicant. Determine if the people listed have a Dawes card and application. Often, cards and applications for associated people are numerically close to an applicant of importance to them.
- Important Events.** Commissioners, applicants, and more would often refer to specific events to establish a timeline for those seeking citizenship. Take note of them and search other applications for reference to them and the applicant's involvement. For example, if reference is made to the applicant or a family member being a soldier, seek out their enlistment in well known territory regiments like the First Kansas (U.S. Colored Troops 79th Regiment), Second Kansas (U.S. Colored Troops 83rd Regiment), First, Second, and Third Indian Home Guards.
- Coding.** Some applications use a coding system. For example: 17-109 is code for Choctaw Freedmen(17) card number 109 and 19-465 is code for Chickasaw Freedmen (19) card number 465.
- Nature of Correspondence.** Figure out the nature of all letters in the application packet. Search to see if there are letters from the applicant when a commissioner that addresses an issue. These letters may or may not be organized in chronological order.
- Vital Records.** Birth, death or marriage certificates can be included within an application. Assess the dates on them and all individuals listed and determine their relationship to the applicant.
- Notarized Statements.** Some applications do not have formal question and answer interviews and instead have affidavits or sworn statements by the applicant and others. Review these documents to glean additional information on the applicant, their family, community members, and more.