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2011 - Published Government Sources Relating to American Indians

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National Archives and Records Administration

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Published Government Sources Relating to Native Americans

Published government sources contain information on Federal policy toward Native Americans, overviews of Indian wars, and reports of Indian agents. These sources may provide the background needed to use other National Archives records. Published government documents are usually available at large university or public libraries, and at U.S. Government depository libraries. For the nearest location of a depository library, go to <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html>.

American State Papers

The *American State Papers* reproduces many documents pertaining to Native Americans from 1789 through 1827, and is a valuable source of information on this topic prior to the establishment of the Office of Indian Affairs in 1824. The documents include letters from special Indian agents, reports to Congress, and records pertaining to Indian-U.S. relations. Researchers should consult the volumes pertaining to military affairs as well as those relating to Indian affairs. Each volume has an index. These volumes are available on the Library of Congress web site at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsp.html>.

Annual Reports

Congress required government agencies to submit annual reports, providing an overview of the agency's activities. The annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of American Ethnology, and the Secretary of War are particularly noteworthy. They are all reproduced in the *Congressional Serial Set*. Researchers can identify the citations for these reports in the Congressional Information Service's *Index to the Congressional Serial Set*. Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola's *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979) also contains the *Serial Set* citations for the Commissioner's annual reports.

The reports are also usually available as separate Government Printing Office publications; each section contains the Superintendent of Documents (or SuDocs) number; that number will enable a documents librarian to locate the report for you.

___ *Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (SuDocs number I 20.1)

When Congress created the Office of Indian Affairs, it gave the Office responsibility for handling most matters between the Federal Government and Native Americans. The Commissioner's annual reports address a wide range of topics relevant to any study of Native Americans. They are especially valuable for the 19th and early 20th centuries when the Commissioner included the annual reports of the Office's agencies and superintendencies. The reports often contain statistical data providing information on tribal population, supplies for the Indian Office, and reports of special Indian commissions.

___ *Annual Reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (SuDocs number SI 2.1)

The Bureau operated within the Smithsonian Institution and studied Native American languages, religions, architecture, and society. The reports often contain photographs, sketches, and charts.

Although the reports do not usually contain information on specific individuals, they may help you understand the culture in which the tribe lived.

____*Annual Reports of the Secretary of War* (SuDocs number W 1.1)

Although the Office of Indian Affairs had primary responsibility for administration of Indian matters, the War Department had significant dealings with Native Americans. The annual report of the General of the Army is an important section of the Department's report. In addition to an overall report concerning the operations of the army, the General of the Army's report contains the annual reports of the army's military district commanders. These reports frequently discuss Native Americans.

Congressional Serial Set

In addition to annual reports, the *Congressional Serial Set* contains many other reports, petitions, and statistics pertaining to Native Americans. Researchers can consult the CIS index, as well as Stephen L. Johnson, *Guide to American Indian Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817–1899* (New York: Clearwater Publishing Co., 1977), to locate such documents.

Indian Treaties and Laws

The texts of Federal laws and Executive Orders relating to Native Americans, as well as treaties between the Federal Government and Indian tribes are reproduced in Charles Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975). Each volume contains an index.

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