Vital Information
from
The Guion Miller Roll
(Eastern Cherokee Court of Claims)
1906-1909

transcribed and edited by
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Introduction

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What is the Guion Miller Roll?

The Guion Miller Roll is one of the most important sources for Cherokee genealogical research. It was created as a result of a successful lawsuit by three separate groups of Cherokees who had not been paid all the money due them as a result of the Treaty of New Echota (1835). This treaty resulted directly in the infamous "Trail of Tears" in which thousands of Cherokees were forced to march from their homeland in the Southeastern United States (Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia) to "Indian Territory", in what is now Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas. (U.S. Court of Claims 1905). These three groups represented the Cherokee Nation West, the Eastern Cherokee Band and a group of what were probably assimilated Cherokees from all over the United States, Canada, Mexico and Syria. This group also included members of the armed forces stationed in remote areas of the world. (Buswell 1997; Miller 1910a, 1910b, 1910c, 1911a, 1911b; National Archives and Records Service 1980a, 1980b, 1980c).

Between August 27, 1906, and May 18, 1909, nearly forty-six thousand (45,940) applications were completed by Guion Miller of the United States Department of the Interior. Each qualifying applicant received a warrant worth $133.18. In order to fulfill the major requirement for admission (which consisted of an ancestral connection to someone who had signed the 1835 Treaty of New Echota) extensive genealogical information was required. At least two generations of family information was included, which often included aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. One application was found that extended back nine generations. This was from a family that had separated from the tribe at an early date and who, by necessity, had to provide extensive genealogical information. There were no geographic limitations imposed on the applicants, as there had been in the Dawes Commission enrollment. Therefore, non-reservation Cherokees could apply.

For the purposes of this book, no references are given indicating whether individual Cherokee applicants were admitted or rejected by Miller. The most important reason for this omission is that, due to the nature of the lawsuits themselves, many applicants were rejected who had indisputable Cherokee lineage. Even among those Cherokee living in Oklahoma, a little less than two-thirds of the applications were "admitted." Only those whose direct ancestor actually participated in the Treaty of New Echota were approved. Those whose ancestors were classified as "Old Settlers" were rejected. (These Cherokees had left the old Cherokee Nation before 1835.) These "Old Settlers" were estimated by Emmett Starr to constitute one third of the Cherokee Tribe about the turn of the twentieth century (Starr, 1984, 1921).

Others were rejected as well. Those who applied after the "final" application date of 31 August 1907 were only admitted if they were filing for a minor child or could prove extenuating circumstances.
Illegitimate children were rejected even when their legitimate brothers and sisters were admitted. (Buswell, 1997)." Dual Indian citizens (such as Cherokee/Choctaw) were also rejected, even though dual Cherokee/white citizens were admitted. Cherokee/black citizens were rejected if any connections to a slave were indicated. Others were rejected because they failed to provide adequate proof of relationship to the tribe. It is important to remember that application was purely on a voluntary basis and it is impossible to determine exactly how many Cherokees failed to apply. (For a further analysis of the Miller Roll limitations and statistics, see Carol Buswell, "The Guion Miller Roll of 1906-1909: Cultural Geography of late 19th and early 20th century Cherokees", UCLA Master's Thesis, 1997)

Using the Miller Roll for your genealogical search

We have included several "finding aids" to help you determine if your ancestor was included in this record. The following sequence works the best for us.

1. Look up your ancestor by the usual spelling of his/her name. The main section of this book is organized by Surname/Maiden name.

2. Check for alternate spellings of your surname by looking at the end of an individual listing with a similar surname and making a note of the soundex code. Soundex codes begin with a capital letter and end with three numbers, such as "M300". Once the soundex code has been determined, turn to the "Surnames by soundex codes" (Appendix A) to find the alternate spellings of each name. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. Many times, a single application contained multiple spellings of the applicant's name. The spellings used in this book were taken from the signature of the applicant, where possible. Many applicants were less educated or in the middle of a transition from Cherokee names to English ones. This caused many variations in spelling. Additionally, since the original documents were written in longhand, there is also the possibility that we got it wrong. The soundex helps to correct these problems.

3. Look up your ancestor's name (checking ALL alternate spellings) in the main Vital Information section of this book.

4. Obtain a copy of the original application (see directions below) in order to add brothers, sisters, children, aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents to your record...or more if you are really lucky!

5. If your ancestor was a child between 1906-1909 and does not appear in the Surname/Maiden name index, look up the name of his/her parents, since children were often included on their parent's application. The only children included in this volume were those who were the actual applicants.

6. If you do not have the name of the parents, check all applicants with the same SURNAME as your ancestor, living in what you know to be your ancestor's geographic location. Check the original applications of these surname-matches for lists of minor children.
7. Since there is no way to estimate how many Cherokees applied to the Roll, it is possible that YOUR ancestor will have avoided this application process altogether. However, SOMEONE in your ancestor's family may have applied (money was involved after all). The best technique for finding one of these remote ancestors is to use normal genealogical techniques (U.S. census, home sources, cemetery records, military records, etc.) to take your family back in time as far as possible. THEN come FORWARD in time to 1906-1909, collecting the names of all possible descendants of your ancestor. Check all those names against the Index in the same way indicated above. This may seem tedious, but often is the only way to identify an ancestor as Cherokee. You will then have an ancestral name to use in the search for other Cherokee documents, necessary for definitive proof.

ORIGINAL APPLICATIONS can be seen on microfilm at the Washington D.C. National Archives and several of its branches including Fort Worth, Texas and Seattle, Washington. There is a complete copy at the main genealogical library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in Salt Lake City, Utah. A few branch LDS libraries have complete copies. They are also available in any LDS branch library, film by film for a small charge. Additionally, copies of individual pages can be ordered from Indian Scout Publications, 16212 Bothell Everett Highway, Suite #F-281, Mill Creek, Washington, 98012-1219 (call toll-free 1-888-832-0791) for a small charge.