



National Archives and Records Administration

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Employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Official Register of the United States, 1817–1925

An act of Congress on April 27, 1816 (3 Stat. 342), required the Department of State to produce a biennial register of the names of all U.S. civil employees, army and naval officers, and agents. The *Official Register of the United States* published pertinent information about the Federal workforce, including the name of every employee, his or her job title, the state or country of birth, the location of his or her post, and annual salary.

The Indian Affairs Office was a predecessor agency to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Prior to 1849, the *Official Register* lists the Indian Bureau, Indian Department, and Indian Affairs Office under the War Department. When Congress created the Department of the Interior in 1849, it transferred the Indian Affairs Office to the new department; the employees appear under the Department of the Interior.

Arrangement of Employee Information

From 1817 to 1905, the *Official Register* organized information in a tabular format, arranged by branch of government, and then by department. Bureau, agency, and commission listings appeared separately under each department and often changed over the years.

From 1907 to 1921, the *Official Register* used a directory consisting of one-line entries for all Federal employees arranged alphabetically by surname. The entries used an extensive system of abbreviations. Additional tabular entries identified the principal officials of each department, providing in more compact form an overall statement of departmental organization.

After 1921 the *Official Register* removed the all-name directory, reverting to lists in table format of administrators and supervisors in each executive and judicial department of the Federal Government and the District of Columbia, whose salaries were paid directly by the U.S. Treasury.

The Indian Affairs Office

The *Official Register* lists Indian Bureau/Department/Affairs Office special agents, commissioners, and employees at the headquarters level, Washington, DC, offices, and field offices. Each *Official Register* lists Washington, DC, employees first, followed by the field office employees. The *Official Register* often contains a miscellaneous section that lists special agents and commissioners. Beginning in 1885, the *Register* includes the employees of the Indian School Service as well as Native American employees. The number of Native Americans employed by the Office of Indian Affairs increased dramatically during the 1870s and 1880s. Native Americans held numerous positions including apprentice, interpreter, and Special Indian Police officer.

Prior to 1907, the *Official Register* lists a wide array of positions held by members of special commissions, special agents, employees in Washington, DC, and the field offices. Jobs in the Washington, DC, area included

- Architects
- Bookkeepers
- Charwomen
- Clerks
- Copyists
- Draftsmen
- Inspectors
- Laborers
- Messengers
- Secretaries
- Stenographers
- Watchmen

Field Office, special agents, and special commission employees included

- Apprentices
- Butchers
- Cooks
- Engineers
- Farmers
- Interpreters
- Janitors
- Laborers
- Laundresses
- Mail Carriers
- Mechanics
- Messengers
- Missionaries
- Nurses
- Physicians
- Indian Police & Officers
- Seamstresses
- Skilled Laborers (e.g., blacksmiths, carpenters, shoemakers, stone masons, wheelwrights, etc.)
- Store Keepers
- Stable Keepers & Stable Hands
- Tailors
- Teachers
- Teamsters
- Special Agents (e.g., to resolve disputes, investigate conditions on reservations, and to allot lands)
- Members of Special Commissions (e.g., the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes—the Dawes Commission)
- Wagon Masters

From 1907 to 1925, the *Official Register* lists upper-level employees of the Office of Indian Affairs including the Office of the Commissioner (the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, the Commissioner’s secretary, and chief clerks) as well as special agents, supervisors, and superintendents in the field. The chiefs of divisions, special attorneys, special commissioners, and the members of the Board of Indian Commissioners also appear in the *Official Register*.

Using the *Official Register*

The early volumes of the *Official Register* from 1817 to 1875 do not contain an index, but rather a table of contents arranged by department, office, or position. From 1877 to 1905, an alphabetical name index appears at the end of each volume. The switch to the directory format from 1907 to 1921 eliminated the need for a comprehensive name index.

Most U.S. Government depository libraries carry sets of the *Official Register*, as well as many large universities and public libraries. To identify a local depository library, go to the Government Printing Office web site at <http://catalog.gpo.gov/fdlpdir/FDLPdir.jsp> and select the link to “FDLP Public Page.” Some volumes of the *Official Register* (1883–1893) are published as well in the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*. See *Serial Set* volumes 2214–2215, 2410–2411, 2567–2568, 2764–2765, 2985–2986, and 3230–3231.

For more information, see the following reference report: *Indian Agents and Superintendents, 1849–1907*.

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