

Canton Asylum for Insane Indians

In 1898, the U.S. Congress passed a bill creating the an insane asylum for Indians, and the Appropriation Act of 1900 set aside funds for constructing the facility in Canton, South Dakota. The appropriation faced strong opposition from the Department of the Interior and the Superintendent of St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for the Insane in Washington, D.C., who felt that patients would be better served by expanding services in Washington. However, the act eventually passed thanks to Canton’s proximity to states with large Indian populations, and the influence South Dakota Representative O.S. Gifford and Senator R. F. Pettigrew. The Canton Asylum, sometimes known as the Hiawatha Asylum, opened its doors in 1902 and treated various forms of dementia, depression, mania, and other mental health disorders.

In 1929, asylum superintendent Dr. Harry Hummer requested an impartial evaluation of the asylum. Dr. Silk was hired to conduct this investigation and submitted a lengthy report detailing the deplorable conditions and recordkeeping practices of the institution. The facility was closed in 1933, and most of the patients transferred to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital.

Collections

ACCESSION #	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
H83-001	Silk Report and Related Correspondence, 1929-1933 (includes information on patient transfer)	Box 3600B, Digital Collections

Indian Census Rolls, 1910-1924 (M595).

Because Indians on reservations were not citizens until 1924, nineteenth and early twentieth century census takers did not count Indians for congressional representation. Instead, the U.S. government took special censuses in connection with Indian treaties, the last of which was in 1871. The result of many treaties was to extinguish Indian ties to land. Typically, the Indians agreed to reduce their landholdings or to move to an area less desired for white settlement. Some treaties provided for the dissolution of the tribes and the allotment of land to individual Indians. The censuses determined who was eligible for the allotments.

These census rolls were usually submitted each year by agents or superintendents in charge of Indian reservations, as required by an act of July 4, 1884. The data on the rolls vary to some extent, but usually given are the English and/or Indian name of the person, roll number, age or date of birth, sex, and relationship to head of family. Beginning in 1930, the rolls also show the degree of Indian blood, marital status, ward status, place of residence, and sometimes other information. For certain years – including 1935, 1936, 1938, and 1939 – only supplemental rolls of additions and deletions were compiled. Most of the 1940 rolls have been retained by the Bureau of Indian affairs and are not included in this publication.

There is not a census for every reservation or group of Indians for every year. Only persons who maintained a formal affiliation with a tribe under federal supervision are listed on the rolls.

CONTENTS	NARA ROLL #	MF LOCATION
Camp McDowell, 1905-1909, 1911-112 Camp Verde (Apache-Mojave Indians), 1915-1927 Campo (Mission Indians), 1916-1920 Canton Asylum, 1910-1911, 1921, 1924	15	4397

Canton Asylum: Superintendent's Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports from Field Jurisdictions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1912-1933 (M1011).

CONTENTS	NARA ROLL #	MF LOCATION
Camp Verde School, 1912-1926 Canton Insane Asylum, 1912-1922	7	4444
Canton Insane Asylum, 1923-1933 Cantonment School, 1928	8	4445