

Dakota Superintendency of Indian Affairs

The two principal types of field jurisdictions of the Office of Indian Affairs in the 19th century were superintendencies and agencies. Superintendents had general responsibility for Indian affairs in a designated geographical area. Their duties included the supervision of relations between the tribes and non-Indians, the supervision of the conduct and accounts of agents responsible to them, the communication of instructions from the Commissioner to agents, and the granting of leaves of absence to subordinates. It was also common practice for them to receive contract bids, enter into contracts, and issue annuities to the Indians. Under each superintendent were agents, subagents, or special agents immediately responsible for one or more tribes.

An act of March 2, 1861 (12 Stat. 239), which created the Territory of Dakota, authorized the Territorial Governor to assume the duties of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for that area. The Territorial Governor at Yankton served as ex officio superintendent until the superintendency was discontinued in 1870. From 1870-1877, the agencies in Dakota reported directly to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington. The Dakota Superintendency was reactivated in 1877 with a full-time superintendent, but disbanded permanently in 1878.

Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1851-1867 (M234).

The records in this microfilm publication consist of communications received by the Office of Indian Affairs from the Dakota Superintendency concerning the general situation of the Indians, their population, education, health, and medical care, and their agriculture and subsistence. The letters cover such matters of administrative concern as emigration, land allotments, annuity payments, depredations, claims, complaints, traders, buildings, supplies, employees, and accounts. Correspondence is grouped by year and thereunder arranged alphabetically by initial letter of surname or official position of the writer. Within each alphabetical section, correspondence is arranged by file number, which was assigned to each letter as they were registered.

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Records of the Dakota Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1861-1870, 1877-1878, and the Wyoming Superintendency, 1870 (M1016).

This microfilm publication was produced by the National Archives and contains records relating to almost all aspects of Indian administration within the Dakota Superintendency. There are documents relating to negotiation and enforcement of treaties; Indian delegations; intrusions on Indian lands; hostilities and depredations; enforcement of federal laws and regulations; traders and licenses; contracts; claims; location of agencies; construction and repair of buildings; purchase and transportation of goods and supplies; furnishing food and other subsistence to Indians; Indian education and farming; medical supplies and health; and agency accounts and employees. There is also documentation of general conditions among the Indian tribes, locations of Indian bands, hunting, and intertribal relations.

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