

Connecticut Native American Land Claims

INTRODUCTION

The State Archives of the Connecticut State Library serves as the official repository for historical records (one of a kind) of the three branches of State government and administers one of the largest Connecticut manuscripts collections and the largest collection of Connecticut local government records. The approximately 30,000 cubic feet of archives document the history of colonial and state governments and of Connecticut institutions, families and individuals from 1629 to the 1990s.

For several years staff from federal and state agencies and local governments, representatives of Connecticut Native American tribal councils, individual Native Americans, and property owners have been utilizing records in the State Archives in matters of federal recognition of tribes, Native American land claims, and tribal membership. The following summarizes the most important records for research into Connecticut Native American land claims.

COLONIAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT RECORDS

The Connecticut Archives

Earliest General Assembly records, 1629-1820, organized into broad subject categories, including two series under "Indians." The two series consist of 1,000 documents including Indian land disputes, the Mohegan land controversy and other Indian affairs. The *Connecticut Archives* is fully indexed and is available on microfilm.

Jonathan Trumbull Papers, 1631-1784

Colonial and early state government documents indexed under subject terms such as "Indian land titles."

Robert C. Winthrop Collection, 1631-1794

Documents covering early Connecticut history with an index pointing researchers to items relating to Connecticut Native American.

Post-1820 General Assembly Papers

Files of the General Assembly, including public acts, special laws, resolves and rejected bills from 1821 to 1983. Though not indexed, the papers are arranged by session. Files for the nineteenth century may contain petitions and reports of committees on the disposition of the bills.

LAND RECORDS

The History and Genealogy Unit of the Connecticut State Library provides reference services to state archival records and other library collections pertaining to Connecticut history. Among its collections are microfilm of early land records for all 169 towns filmed and donated by the Genealogical Society of Utah. The State Archives has original land records of some towns and collections of deeds and transcribed land records.

Fairfield Land Records

Five volumes of land records dating from 1649 to 1770.

Deeds

Several small collections of Indian land deeds dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as a 1665 deed between Uncas, Sachem of the Mohegans, and Old Saybrook.

Manuscript Transcripts

Handwritten transcriptions made in the early twentieth century of early local records documenting Native Americans.

JUDICIAL RECORDS

The State Archives serves as the official repository of archival court records and contains approximately 10,000 cubic feet of record books and civil and criminal files created by county, superior and town courts and courts of common pleas, and approximately 4,000 cubic feet of probate estate files.

Civil and Criminal Files

Papers of cases involving Native Americans. Some of the cases dating from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries are organized separately for easier access under "Papers by Subject – Indians" for Fairfield, Litchfield and New London Counties. Many cases involving Native Americans were not organized separately and may be found in court record books and files.

Overseer of Indians' Records

The courts appointed overseers who kept account books, made lists of Native Americans, and submitted reports. "Papers by Subject – Indians" often contain records filed by the Overseer. Overseer reports are also found in the Records of the Secretary of the State and include an 1861 report on the distribution of Mohegan Land. Other manuscripts in the State Archives contain Overseer records including a list of Mohegan Indians, 1827-1830.

Probate Estate Files

Files or papers for most of Connecticut's probate districts, including files pertaining to estates of Native Americans. Most files are indexed by surname, and files dating up to 1880 are available on microfilm in the History and Genealogy Unit of the State Library. The Genealogical Society of Utah currently is filming files from 1881 to 1915.

MAPS

The State Archives has several manuscript maps, many of which pertain to Indian lands such as:

- Map by Ezra Stiles of Connecticut in 1767 giving locations of Indian tribes.
- Boundary line around the Pequot Reservation in Groton, surveyed in 1793 by Daniel Morgan Jr.

CONCLUSION

For more details on records pertaining to Native American land claims and rules and procedure for gaining access to them, call the State Library's History and Genealogy Unit at 566-3692 or 566-3690.