AUTHORIZING AN APPROPRIATION FOR RECOPYING, REBINDING, AND OTHERWISE PRESERVING VALUABLE OLD RECORDS OF OFFICE OF INDIAN AGENCY AT MUSKOGEE, OKLA.

May 6, 1926.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. Harrell, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 3692]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3692) authorizing an appropriation for recopying, rebinding, and otherwise preserving valuable old records of the office of the Indian agency at Muskogee, Okla., having considered the same, report favorably thereon with the recommendation that the bill do pass with the following amendments:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

That there is authorized to be appropriated, out of the funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of $12,350, or as much thereof as may be necessary, for recopying, repairing, rebinding, indexing, and otherwise preserving valuable old records and papers in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes, at Muskogee, Oklahoma, the necessary work to be done and the expenditure therefor to be made under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior.

Amend the title so as to read:

Authorizing an appropriation for recopying, rebinding, and repairing various records in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes at Muskogee, Oklahoma, and for other purposes.

This legislation has the approval of the Department of the Interior, as is set forth in a letter from the Acting Secretary under date of April 30, 1926, which is attached hereto and made a part of this report.

There is also attached a statement prepared by the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes, estimating the amount required for this purpose.
Hon. J. W. Harreld,
Chairman Committee on Indian Affairs,
United States Senate.

MY DEAR SENATOR HARRELD: Reference is made herein to S. 3692, entitled "A bill authorizing an appropriation for recopying, rebinding, and otherwise preserving valuable old records of office of Indian agency at Muskogee, Okla.," and to your request of March 25, 1926, for a report thereon.

From information furnished by the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes, it appears that certain old records and papers in his office are in a tattered, torn, and dilapidated condition and in some cases almost illegible. The records and papers to which the superintendent refers include the records of his office relating to enrollment and allotment of members of the Five Civilized Tribes and also old tribal records of the Five Civilized Tribes. These records and papers are valuable as the foundation of title to all land within the area of the Five Civilized Tribes and are of great importance for the reason that they are the only records of the adjudication of rights between individual members of these tribes and fix and determine many matters such as marriage, divorce, tribal citizenship, land titles, and distribution of estates not only of Indians but of persons holding through or under them. The superintendent states that copies of the records are constantly required for use in determining the title to lands in eastern Oklahoma and especially for use in cases involving the question of heirship of deceased allottees, and that from furnishing certified copies of such records a revenue is derived which amounts to several thousands of dollars annually.

It is estimated that an appropriation of $10,000 will be necessary for the purpose of providing for the expense of copying, translating, repairing, authenticating, indexing, and preserving these valuable old records and papers. There appears to be a real necessity for taking steps looking to the preservation of these records and papers and to putting them in serviceable condition so that they may be readily available to the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes and that the public may, without unnecessary delay, procure information from and copies of such papers as may be desired.

In view of the importance of these old records and papers in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes and the necessity of providing for their preservation and for recopying, rebinding, repairing, and indexing of such records and papers, no objection is seen to providing an appropriation of not exceeding $10,000 for such purpose.

It is suggested that S. 3692 be amended and modified so as to read as follows:

A BILL Authorizing an appropriation for recopying, rebinding, and repairing various records in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes at Muskogee, Oklahoma, and for other purposes

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is authorized to be appropriated, out of the funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of $10,000 or as much thereof as may be necessary for recopying, repairing, rebinding, indexing, and otherwise preserving valuable old records and papers in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes at Muskogee, Oklahoma, the necessary work to be done and the expenditure therefor to be made under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior.

If S. 3692 be amended and modified as above suggested, its enactment as so amended and modified is recommended.

The inclosure of your letter of March 25, 1926, is returned herewith in compliance with your request.

The Director of the Bureau of the Budget advises that this report is not in conflict with the financial program of the President.

Very truly yours,

E. C. Finney, Acting Secretary.
Preserving Records of Indian Agency at Muskogee, Okla.

Estimate of amount required to revise, repair, index, and file various records in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes, Muskogee, Okla.

Rebinding 500 volumes of old rolls, court records, proceedings of the tribal councils, treasurers' and secretaries' reports, etc., $2.50 each... $1,250

Rebinding 15 large deed index books, $10 each... 150

Rebinding 200 stub books, $2 each... 400

Purchase of 150 new map portfolios, $3 each... 450

10,000 blank census cards and printing same... 300

Labor necessary for writing same... 3,000

Labor necessary in sorting, arranging, labeling, and shelving 100 boxes of old records... 5,000

Labor of draftsman in making 100 township plats... 1,800

Total... 12,350

Justification

In the annual reports prepared in this office for the last several years to be submitted to the department at Washington, a recommendation has been made for an appropriation of $10,000 to be used for the preservation of the records of the Five Civilized Tribes.

Many of these records are in a deplorable condition, in particular those known as the "old rolls," which have been in use for many years; also, the bound volumes of the old records such as tribal council proceedings, tribal court dockets, treasurers' and secretaries' reports, etc.

Many of the original bindings are practically gone entirely, or in bad condition. Not one of these records could be replaced in case they became destroyed or are lost. Certified copies are continually being made for court use, to establish heirships and other purposes.

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that they be kept in condition that will enable the proper photographing of same.

There are 10,000 census cards representing the enrollment of approximately 30,000 by blood, new borns and minor Creeks and Creek freedmen, new born and minors.

These cards were originally made about 25 years ago, and have been in constant use for that length of time.

Some 5,000 to 8,000 cards are handled every month in the regular work of this office. One thousand four hundred and seventy-five certified copies were made during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1925, for which $2,212.50 was received.

The result of constant handling has rendered hundreds of these cards almost useless, especially for photographic purposes, and every one of the 10,000 must be, or should be, replaced by new ones at once, and the work must be done by hand and by competent persons.

At least 100 township plats showing the allotments, in colors, of the allottees of the Five Civilized Tribes, must be made over and this must be done by competent draftsmen, who thoroughly understand work of this nature.

These township plats, also, from constant handling for 25 years, are in bad condition, and as they are indispensable in the work of this office should be preserved.

About 100 boxes of the old tribal records have been turned over to this office for safe-keeping by the former officials of the Five Civilized Tribes. These records should be sorted as to each nation, correctly labeled, indexed, and placed in jackets or filing cases, and proper shelving provided in order that they may be accessible when desired for photographic or reference purposes.

In their present condition it is impossible to find any particular record without going over the entire contents of some one box, and often several of them, before the particular record desired can be found.

Many orders are received for certified copies of these old records, for which a charge is always made and is a source of considerable revenue to this office.

Further, the historical value of a large number of the above-mentioned records should be taken into consideration, and I urge their preservation for that reason and in order that at some future time they may be placed in some historical society for safe-keeping.
It will be noticed that the largest item of expense in the above statement is for care of these records. I am convinced that it will be money well expended.

As stated above, an appropriation of $10,000 has heretofore been recommended in several annual reports. No definite survey was ever made as to the actual amount necessary until recently. Considerable work and care has been given this matter, and I am confident that $12,350 will be required to accomplish this needed work; therefore I would respectfully recommend that an appropriation of $12,350 be made for repairing and preserving the tribal records in the office of the Superintendent for the Five Civilized Tribes, Muskogee, Okla.