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DANIEL C. ROPER, SECRETARY

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

WILLIAM LANE AUSTIN, DIRECTOR



FIFTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES : 1930

THE INDIAN POPULATION OF THE
UNITED STATES AND ALASKA

PREPARED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

DR. LEON E. TRUESDELL

Chief Statistician for Population

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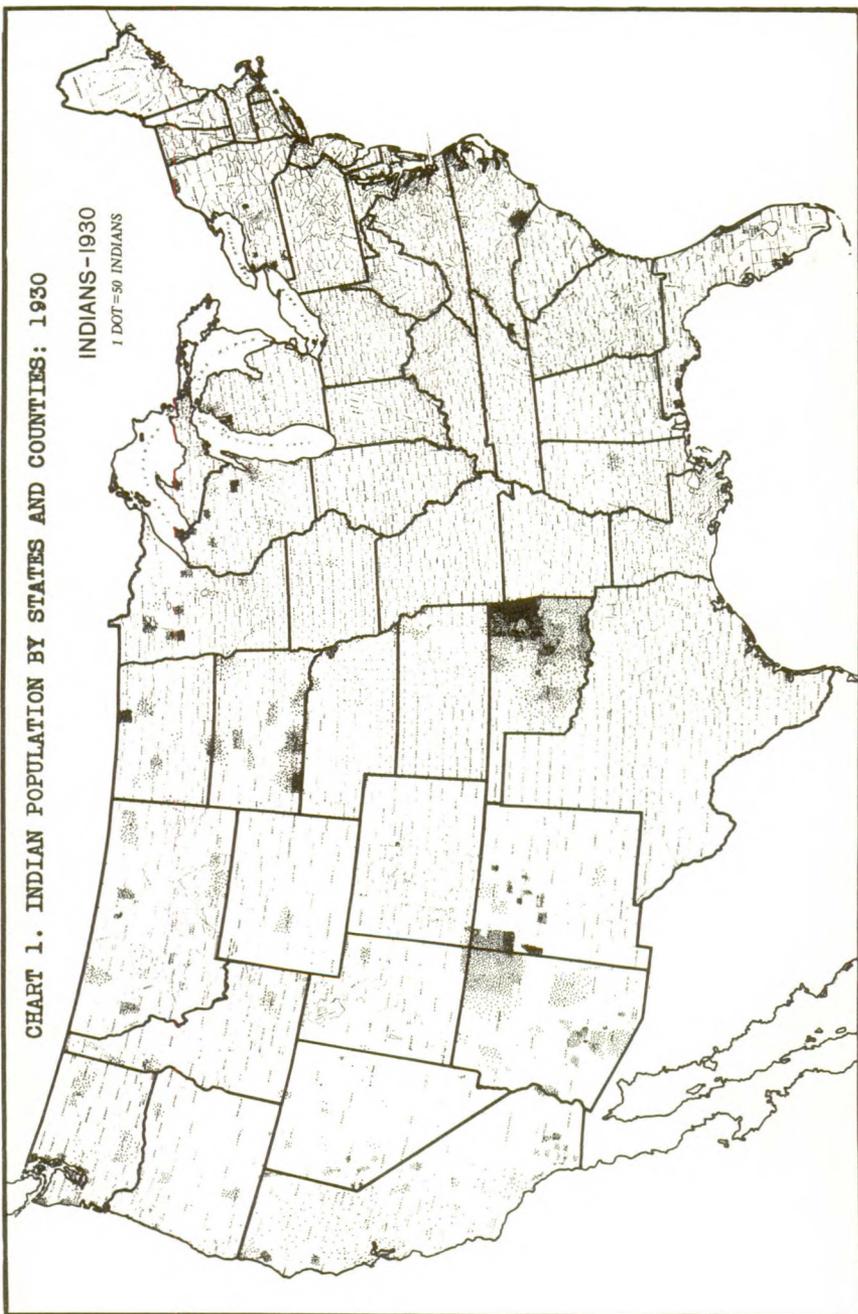
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THE INDIAN POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND ALASKA

By **GEORGE E. L. ARNER, Ph. D.**

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the statistics of the Indian population of the United States collected at the Fifteenth Decennial Census, taken as of April 1, 1930, with comparisons as far as practicable with the census of 1920, and with the special enumeration of Indians made as a part of the census of 1910.

The statistics of the Indian population in 1930 were obtained from the general population schedule. In the enumeration of Indians, however, instead of asking for the State or country of birth of the parents, the enumerator was instructed to ask whether the Indian was of full or mixed blood and for the tribe to which he or she belonged. A special tabulation was made of the Indian population, showing age, school attendance, illiteracy, marital condition, and ability to speak English, by tribe and blood.

At the census of 1910, the only other census in which information has been obtained in regard to tribe and blood, these questions were included on a special Indian schedule which was used in all enumeration districts containing Indians on reservations, and throughout counties from which 20 or more Indians were returned in the census of 1900. The material thus collected was tabulated and analyzed under the direction of Dr. Roland B. Dixon, expert special agent, and Dr. F. A. McKenzie, expert special agent. The final report containing the results of these studies was published by the Bureau of the Census in 1915.^{1/}

INSTRUCTIONS TO ENUMERATORS.— The enumerators in the Fifteenth Census were instructed to return as Indians, not only those of full Indian blood, but also those of mixed white and Indian blood, "except where the percentage of Indian blood is very small," or where the individual was "regarded as a white person in the community where he lives." The published instructions further specify that: "A person of mixed Indian and Negro blood should be returned as a Negro unless the Indian blood predominates and the status as an Indian is generally accepted in the community." Supplementary instructions in regard to the Indian enumeration also contained the following provision: "In New Mexico, Arizona, and California, enumerators should take special care to differentiate between Mexican laborers and Indians. Some Mexican laborers may endeavor to pass themselves as Indians. Persons residing in the region should have no difficulty in differentiating between the two types."

COMPARABILITY OF THE STATISTICS OF 1930 WITH THOSE OF 1910.—There were certain differences in these two enumerations of Indians which should be taken into account in making comparisons between the two years. The census of 1910 used a special schedule, which called particular attention to the questions in regard to tribe and blood, while the census of 1930 called for this information incidentally on the regular schedule. Special agents, most of whom had had experience in the service of the Office of Indian Affairs, were appointed to collect the statistics on the special schedule in 1910, while in 1930, the questions were asked by the regular enumerator, who may or may not have been familiar with the names of Indian tribes or the extent of mixture of blood. The census of 1930, on the other hand, did collect this information as to tribe and blood from Indians scattered in small numbers through the white community, who were not reached by the special enumeration in 1910. No specific tests have been made to determine the degree of accuracy in the returns of either census, but a general study of the statistics leads to the conclusion that both censuses were reasonably accurate and comparable with each other as regards those Indians who retained a close tribal organization and were universally recognized as Indians of some specific tribe. The census of 1910 was probably more accurate than that of 1930 in the enumeration by tribe and blood of those Indians whose tribal organization had broken down, and who were living as a part of the white community, or scattered through mountain areas. In North Carolina, and also in many other areas, the proportion of Indians shown in the census of 1930 as of full blood is much too high. This is particularly true of those tribes in which there is a large Negro admixture.

^{1/} Indian population in the United States and Alaska: 1910.