

Distribution of the Cree surname in the USA

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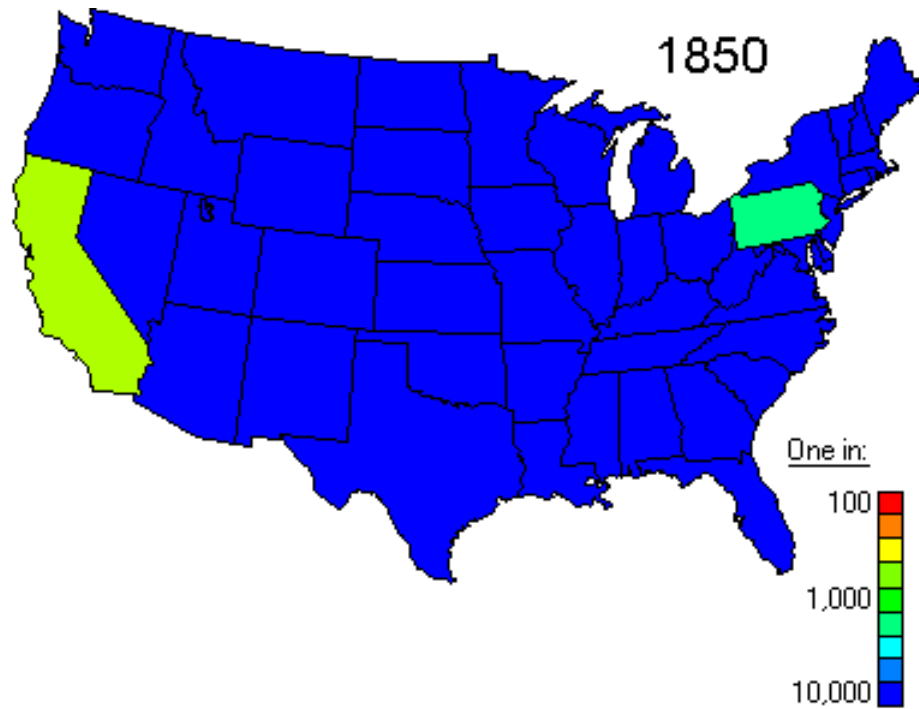
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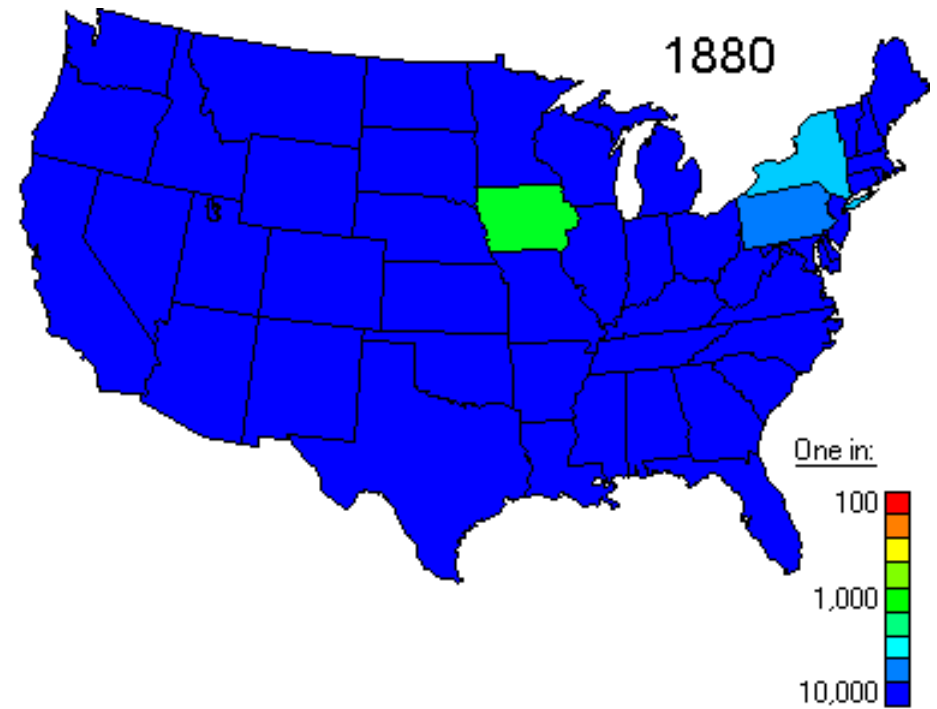
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In CREE NEWS 16 we showed the distribution of the name Cree in British counties in 1881 using data laboriously collected from the Census of that year. The same job can be done in a few minutes for the USA using a website at www.hamrick.com/names that delivers the maps already drawn for the four years shown here. We have no way of assessing the reliability of the data on which they are based. We presume they are based on Census material.

The Hamrick website explains: “The color of each state indicates how frequently you will find someone with this surname in each state. For instance, if a state is colored red, then 1 in 100 people (or more) in that state have the surname. Similarly, yellow means approximately 1 in 300 have the surname, green means 1 in 1000, and blue means 1 in 10,000 (or less).”

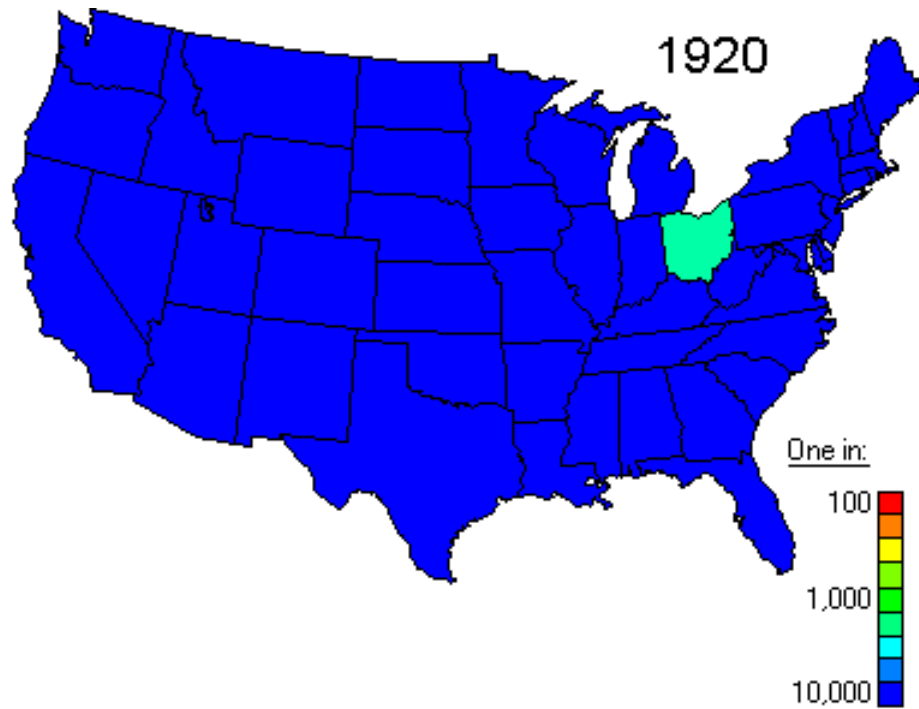


The 1850 map suggests that about 1 in every 1700 people in Pennsylvania bore the name Cree. I reckon that this means there were over 700 Crees in PA at that time. The figure for California of 1 in 500 places it ahead of any county on our British map for Cree density!

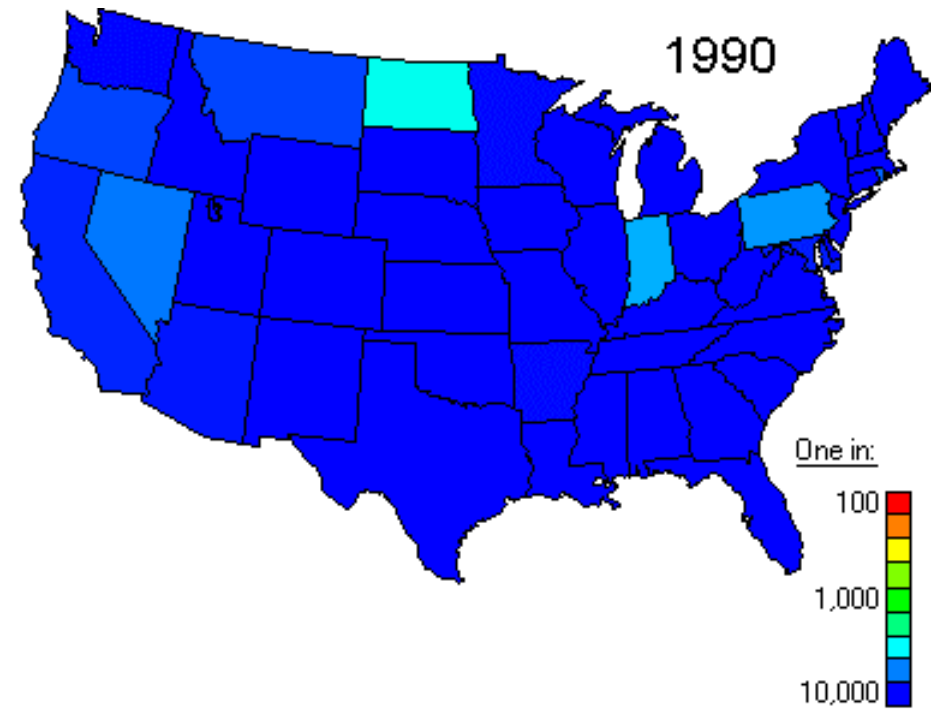


The 1880 map shows the focus of Cree residence moving to Iowa with about 1 in 1000 of that State having the name Cree. Pennsylvania has dropped down to 1 in 5200 while New York State has overtaken it to 1 in 3000.

We certainly know of several unrelated lines moving to Iowa around 1870. The change in PA may be not so much that the number of Crees was less but that the total population grew as major cities like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh expanded. From 1850 to 1880 the population of the State grew from 2.3 to 4.3 million, so the Cree population would have actually increased a little to over 800. I presume the effect of increasing total population had an even greater swamping effect in CA.



By 1920 the Cree name only shows up in noticeable concentration in one state – Ohio, where it achieves 1 in 3000 or 0.033%. Perhaps it was the turn of the Iowa Cree families be “swamped” by the growth of the total population.



The 1990 map shows a concentration of Cree families in North Dakota, which I was not aware of, while in Ohio the name has now returned to relative obscurity. But there are shadings of lighter blue in many states now – more shades than on the key even – with New York, Pennsylvania and Utah most noticeable after North Dakota. Oregon and Montana show up slightly above the main mass of dark blue.

One thing these maps suggest is that Cree families tended to be pioneers, pushing westwards while the population was still sparse and later seeming to “disappear in the crowd”. However the maps throw up more questions than they answer. There is reason to suspect the accuracy of the data shown and the lack of information about the sources of the data considerably reduces their value.