

Elizabeth Lightfoot Broach

Doctor, Leader, Census Supervisor

The U.S. Census Bureau has always been ahead of the curve when it comes to employing women. Ever since 1880, when it started using professional enumerators rather than U.S. marshals, the Census Office has employed women in that role. With the advent of the Hollerith tabulating machine in 1890, women moved into the role of keypunchers. By 1909, 10 years before the 19th amendment granted national women's suffrage, over 50 percent of the Census Bureau's 624 permanent employees were women. As women proved themselves as capable as the men, and with the increasing number of women in the workforce, it became harder for the Census Bureau to justify assigning all supervisory positions to men. By 1920, the Census Bureau would once again push forward appointing the first five female supervisors, as well as the first three female expert chiefs of divisions. Many of these pioneering women who worked on the census in these early years also broke through in other fields, such as law, medicine, education, activism, journalism, and the arts.



Photo courtesy of Kay Broach Suber.

Historic census records are maintained and released by the National Archives and Records Administration, not the U.S. Census Bureau.

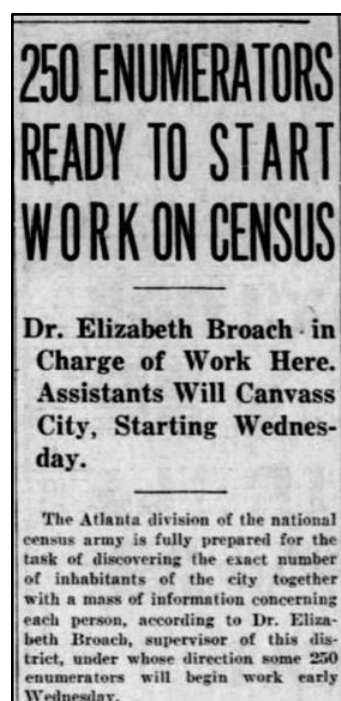
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Elizabeth's 1930 Census.

Mary Elizabeth Lightfoot Broach, who went by Elizabeth, was born on June 11, 1869, in Arkansas. Elizabeth's father, Clinton, travelled frequently as a minister and salesman, while her mother Catherine kept house and raised Elizabeth and her five brothers and sisters. As modern medicine evolved in the late 19th century, both Elizabeth and her father

studied osteopathy—the manipulation of muscles and bones—at the Southern College of Osteopathy in Franklin, Kentucky. After receiving their training and Doctorates of Osteopathy, Elizabeth and her father practiced in the Little Rock area starting around 1900, with Elizabeth also occasionally teaching at the Arkansas Woman's College. In 1903, Elizabeth briefly moved to Ohio before she, her parents, and her sister permanently settled in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1904.

In Atlanta, Elizabeth continued her practice as well as her involvement in both local and national osteopathic organizations. As part of her participation with those organizations and her general work at improving hygiene and educating women, Elizabeth collaborated with local and national groups of the Federation of Women's Clubs. This collection of clubs was for women who wanted to make positive changes in their communities at a time when women were beginning to exercise their power in the public sphere. These outreach and organization skills, as well as the trust and knowledge of her community gained from her medical practice, made Elizabeth a perfect candidate for census supervisor in 1930.



The Atlanta Constitution
(Atlanta, GA) April 1, 1930.



Elizabeth, left, at a women's training camp.
The Atlanta Constitution (Atlanta, GA) August 22, 1920

Following the 1920 Census, which for the first time included 5 women supervisors, the 1930 Census employed 30 women as supervisors out of a total of 575 supervisors. Since the 1920 Census also marked the only time for which census data was not used for reapportionment due to political gridlock, the results for 1930 held even greater significance than usual. Under these pressures Elizabeth proved herself to be perfect for the job.

After receiving her appointment in December of 1929, Elizabeth started recruiting for local enumerators and clerks in the early months of 1930. By mid-January she had already received over 1000 applications for approximately 250 jobs. In March, the Director of the Census, William M. Stewart, traveled to Atlanta to help train Elizabeth and other supervisors. One main aspect of census work was community outreach and

Elizabeth not only used traditional methods like newspapers, but she also advocated for word of mouth advertising, in which trusted people in the community would spread news about the process and importance of the census among their acquaintances. Following the main enumeration, which started on April 1, Elizabeth supervised post-enumeration checks to ensure complete coverage, which included surveying places that employed many people from different neighborhoods to check for specific locations that needed increased coverage.

Even with all of her preparation, Elizabeth still encountered some difficulties. Following World War I, some men held the unfounded belief that the census would be used for the draft in any future conflict and avoided the census takers. Another problem dealt with the segregated nature of Atlanta at that time. Rather than bow to political pressure to remove black enumerators, Elizabeth compromised by ensuring that takers only enumerated residences in their own neighborhoods. Another issue revolved around the recent stock market crash of 1929 and the beginning of the Great Depression. Supervisors needed to quickly provide



Photo by George Corneil, Constitution staff photographer.
 Miss Mary M. Graham, of Selma, Ala., (left) and Dr. Elizabeth Broach, of Atlanta, the only two women census supervisors in the six southern states, are shown in the above photograph, taken in Dr. Broach's office in the federal building. Miss Graham attended the supervisor's school which was conducted here Tuesday and Wednesday at the Biltmore hotel by Dr. W. M. Stewart, director of the census bureau.

Elizabeth, right, at training with a fellow supervisor.
The Atlanta Constitution (Atlanta, GA) March 13, 1930.



Dr. Elizabeth Lightfoot Broach, president of the Georgia Osteopathic association, also program chairman of the Osteopathic Women's National association, which holds its next meeting May 24 at Kirksville, Mo. Dr. Broach will preside over the meetings of the Georgia osteopaths being held April 18-19.

The Atlanta Constitution (Atlanta, GA)
 April 18, 1924

unemployment numbers to address the rising crisis, which they did within the year at the local census office level, even though those statistics normally took two years to compile at headquarters.

Despite these setbacks, Elizabeth completed the census and post-enumeration checks on schedule and issued her official report on the total population of her enumeration district on June 7, 1930. Following the successful completion of her census duties, Elizabeth returned to her professional medical practice. As measures of her success, Elizabeth regularly led local, national, and international osteopathic associations, and traveled widely to the many conventions and educational duties that they involved. Elizabeth never married and continued practicing until her retirement in 1947. Elizabeth passed away in Atlanta on April 4, 1952, survived by several nieces and nephews who affectionately referred to her as "Aunt Doc". The Census Bureau is thankful for Elizabeth's contributions, and of the contributions of all the members of our diverse workforce throughout the years.