

Minnie P. Lindsay

A Federal Woman in the Lone Star State

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 division.



Photo courtesy of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs Alumni Book

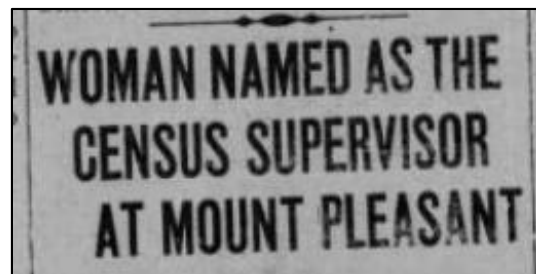
Pounders Family 1880 Census

One of the first female supervisors of enumerators in 1920 was Minnie P. Lindsay, of the first Texas district. Born April 26, 1873, in Titus County, TX, to Samuel P. Pounders and Claudia Fairer, Minnie was the oldest of their five surviving daughters. Samuel Pounders had started out as a farmer in Alabama, but by the time of Minnie's birth, he was a successful lawyer. He and his wife ensured that all of their daughters received higher education and work experience. Around 1904, Minnie married Robert Francis Lindsay, a Mount Pleasant banker. They had no children and remained married until his death in 1956.

In 1920, Minnie became one of the first five women appointed as the census supervisor over a team of enumerators. The positions usually went to people with strong local ties, both personally and politically.

Like the other four women,

Minnie had prior work and management experience—she had been a teacher, an insurance salesperson, and a soliciting agent for the railroad. Furthermore, her family was politically connected in Titus County, TX. Her husband, Robert, was a banker and her father was a lawyer and bank director, as was her brother-in-law, Milton Burford. Perhaps most importantly, another one of her brothers-in-law, C. L. Duncan, served two terms as Mayor of Mount Pleasant. Add this to her knowledge of the area and Minnie perfectly fit the mold of a 1920 Census supervisor.



The Eagle (Bryan, TX); 10 Dec 1919



The Houston Post (Houston, TX) 20 Feb 1922

The most important part of the supervisor's job is to ensure that enumerators cover every dwelling in the district without duplication. In December 1919, Minnie and her assistant, C. B. Fullerton, set out across their district to map it and meet with the enumerators. Immediately, Minnie encountered trouble. Census Day was a few short weeks away, on January 1, and not only were there not enough enumerators, but bad weather hampered their mapping. Despite a rough start, by January 20, Minnie had completed her second tour of the district and was guiding her enumerators through the return process for the census schedules and planning how to reach any uncounted people. By January 29, she told newspapers she felt that her enumerators completed the work "splendidly." Her team, which counted 18,128 people in Titus County, finished with only a few days extension required.

Minnie Lindsay was not only interested in being a successful woman herself, she also invested her time ensuring all women had the same opportunities. As early as 1904, Minnie volunteered in the Texas State Federation of Women's Clubs (TFWC), which began as a literary club in 1897 and soon moved into activism. Minnie worked

her way through the organization, becoming president twice, once in 1922–1923 and once in 1929–1931. Her tenure saw improvements to Texas highway laws, development of a children's hospital, and the building of a new TFWC headquarters in Austin called "The Mansion." Minnie also used her influence with the TFWC to support minority women. Not only did she help establish an African-American girls' school, but also worked closely with the Texas Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. In addition to her extensive work with the TFWC, Minnie supported the Red Cross, the Delta Kappa Gamma, a women's professional organization, and the Order of the Eastern Star, a mixed gender Masonic society.



Photo Courtesy of the Austin Public Library

TFWC members in front of their headquarters, "The Mansion," in Austin, TX, circa 1920s–1930s. Minnie is in the top row, fourth from the right.

A scan of a 1920 U.S. Census form for the Lindsay family. The form is titled "FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION". It contains a table with columns for name, sex, age, race, marital status, and occupation. The Lindsay family members are listed in the first few rows. A red box highlights the entry for Minnie Lindsay, who is listed as a "Welfare Worker".

Historic census records are maintained and released by the National Archives and Records Administration, not the U.S. Census Bureau. Visit <http://www.archives.gov> for more information about publicly available records like the one shown here.

Lindsay Family 1920 Census

Following the successful 1920 Census, Minnie left the Census Bureau, but not the federal government. In 1934, Minnie became the deputy collector for the Internal Revenue Service, charged with assessing oil fields in East Texas. Minnie continued to work for the Internal Revenue Service for 15 years, including time in Philadelphia where she lived apart from her husband. After a lifetime of service to her country and fellow women, Minnie Pounders Lindsay passed away at the age of 99 on May 4, 1972, in her lifelong hometown of Mount Pleasant, TX.