

# Family records: A Monologue by Terri Troncale

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By Terri Troncale, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

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I'm not the genealogist in my family, but I am the unofficial archivist and keeper of lore. So I, like millions of other amateur historians, couldn't resist the release last week of 1940 census records.



Terri Troncale's mother, Jeane, around 1940.

I knew where I wanted to go first: Three Notch Road, Pike County, Ala. That is where Annie Lee Hudgins Bowers, my maternal great-grandmother, spent her life. I had found her there years ago in the 1880 census. She was 8 and living with her parents and five siblings.

By 1900, she was 28, a mother of six, married to William and running 60 acres of farmland she had inherited. My grandmother, the 11th child, was counted in 1910. The census worker didn't note that Annie was expecting her 12th child, and no one could've known that William

would die a week after that daughter was born.

It is then that Annie's family legend started to grow. She and the children worked the farm. She pulled her two babies behind her on a blanket as she picked crops. It got harder to keep her children in school, but she managed. My mother remembered Annie's airy biscuits, made on a wood-burning stove, and what a voracious reader she was.

I found Mom and Annie on the farm in 1940. Annie, 67, was listed as unable to work. My mother was 4, and my grandfather was running the farm. Annie needed the help, but the farm also allowed my grandparents to weather the Depression.

The 1940 records list the property value at only \$300, but there was no mortgage, which was an achievement. For the first time in decades, Annie wasn't listed as head of the household.

But she certainly was its heart. I didn't need the census to tell me that.

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