

John J. “Black Jack” Pershing

Veterans and the U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau has always been a home to veterans of the United States Armed Forces. The first superintendent of the census, William Augustus Weaver, appointed in 1840, received wounds as a combat veteran in the War of 1812. Francis Amasa Walker, the highly influential superintendent of the 1880 Census was a veteran of the Civil War and former prisoner of war. In 1890, census legislation made it clear that honorably discharged veterans of the armed services would receive preference for employment as enumerators—a practice that continues to this day and one that has been further strengthened and expanded through civil service reforms. In 2015, for instance, the Department of Commerce, to which the Census Bureau belongs, employed 5,684 veterans (12 percent). The Census Bureau is proud to utilize the proven discipline and motivation of this unique and patriotic workforce.

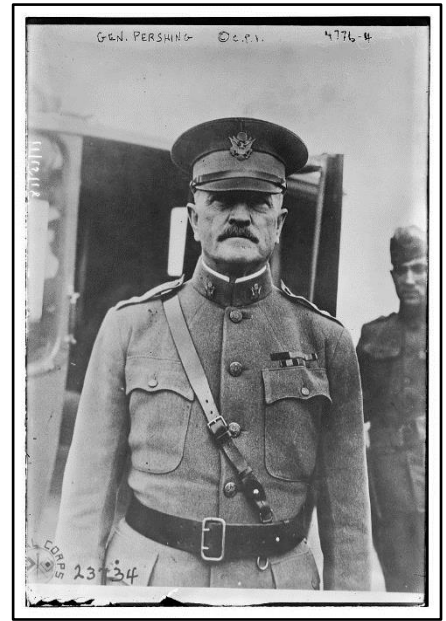


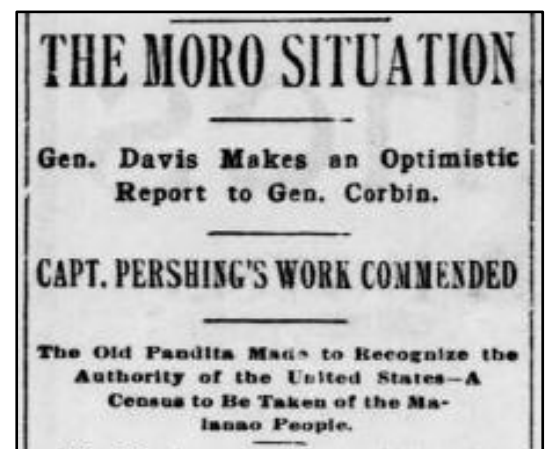
Photo courtesy of Library of Congress

Pershing Family 1870 Census
A later researcher marked the family.

One veteran that stands out is General of the Armies, John Joseph “Black Jack” Pershing. Born on September 30, 1860, in Laclede, Missouri, to parents John and Ann, Pershing was the oldest of six children that survived into adulthood. Originally interested in becoming a lawyer, Pershing found himself going to the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1882 due to the prospect of a high-quality and, more importantly, free education. Graduating 30th in a class of 77, Pershing’s first assignment was in the American West where he participated in multiple Indian Wars. It was on the frontier that Pershing served as an officer in the all African-American 10th Cavalry Regiment, thus earning his nickname “Black Jack.” Pershing also served in teaching positions before the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, where he participated in action on San Juan Hill.

The Phillipine-American War resulted as an offshoot of the Spanish-American War, and in 1899, Pershing moved to Manila as a major in a volunteer regiment. By June of 1901, Pershing left the volunteers and reverted to his Regular Army rank of captain.

He then transferred to a new command in Iligan, Philippines, in order to monitor the potential Moros uprising brewing in the area. The Moros are the Muslim population, often in conflict with the Catholic majority. Pershing was successful in conquering the natives mainly with kindness and respect. After hosting a local Moro leader, Pershing became perhaps the first American who was ever a willing guest of the Moros.



The Ottawa Daily Republic (Ottawa, KS)
3 April 1903

Pershing 1900 Census
Stationed in the Philippines

After this first state visit, Pershing remained in constant contact with the Moros around Lake Lanao, trying to learn as much as possible about their communities. Pershing’s efforts paid off, and when Moros began causing problems in other areas of the island, Pershing received the appointment to run Moros affairs, effectively making him, as a captain, second in command of the island.

With the end of the insurrection in July of 1902, the important tasks of governing and rebuilding came next. Thanks to the 1902 Philippine Organic Act, the newly-elected Philippine Assembly commenced a government reorganization. In order to properly elect a representational body, they needed a census. However, in the chaos of a former warzone that spread across hundreds of islands and people that spoke over 175 languages, the only

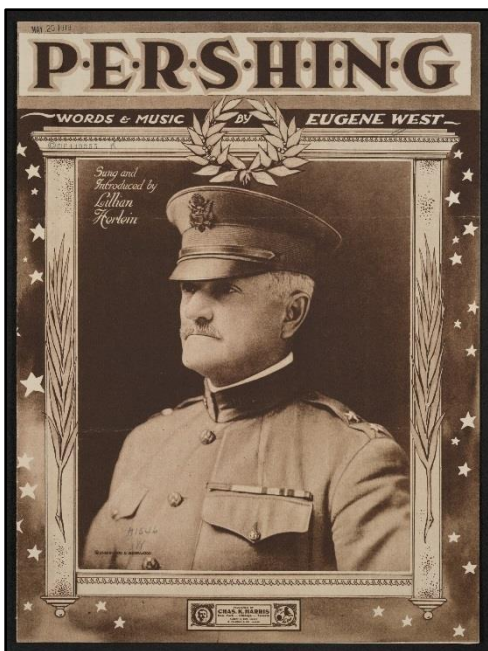
people who had the knowledge to act as enumerators of the fledgling territory were U.S. soldiers. In his position as a respected military commander, close friend of the Moros, and dedicated public servant who knew the area, Pershing perfectly fit the mold for a census enumerator in the backcountry of the Philippines in 1903.

Prior to the commencement of the census on March 2, 1903, Pershing received his schedules and maps by mail from Manila. Aware of the deeply suspicious nature of the Moros, the first act of Pershing as enumerator was to meet with the local *datos* and *sultans* to establish a plan for the census. The local leaders agreed that since the Spanish had conducted previous censuses for tax reasons, an American style census would be ineffective and possibly dangerous for the enumerators. Instead, Pershing decided to survey the village heads and ask for their counts, after which he would make comparisons between different estimates.



Pershing and Local Filipinos, c. 1900–1910
(Library of Congress)

Additionally, Pershing surveyed a few select communities that represented the population distribution of the district and used those numbers to create an estimate based on the total amount of settlements in the Lake Lanao district. Based on his extensive travels, campaigns and interviews, Pershing also added an additional 5,000 people for those that refused all contact with Americans and their allies. The combined total of the Moros for Lake Lanao and the neighboring district of Iligan was 95,893.



(Library of Congress)

The 1903 Census was one of the last details Pershing attended to before he submitted his final report to General Samuel Sumner on May 15 and returned to the United States via Manila in June. He then served as assistant chief of staff in Oklahoma and an attaché to Tokyo before receiving a promotion to brigadier general in 1905 from President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt—a controversial move that advanced him three ranks ahead of more than 800 senior officers. Pershing returned to the Philippines from 1909 to 1913 to quell another Moro uprising, before gaining further fame from chasing Pancho Villa in Mexico in 1916. In 1917, he commanded the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. After the war, Pershing received promotion to General of the Armies, a lifetime position and the last to hold that specific title (considered senior to later 5-star Generals of the Army), and became Chief of Staff of the Army. Pershing passed away on

July 15, 1948, after a lifetime of service that benefited not just the United States, but also the democracies of Europe and the fledgling country of the Philippines.