



Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

Meet the Originals

Texas Originals is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Minnie Fisher Cunningham. Then, answer questions about it.

Minnie Fisher Cunningham 1882–1964

Working as a pharmacist in Huntsville in 1901, young Minnie Fisher Cunningham discovered that her untrained male colleagues made twice her salary. That unfairness, she later explained, “made a suffragette out of me.” Cunningham soon gave up pharmacy and put her energy and keen sense of justice to work for progressive causes. She helped pass pure milk laws and other public health legislation but knew that truly to improve society, women must have the right to vote.

In 1910, Cunningham became president of the Galveston Equal Suffrage Association and was soon leading the cause statewide. Her efforts helped Texas women win the right to vote in state primary elections in 1918. But the victory did not come easily. She succeeded by forging savvy political alliances and spending endless hours building grassroots support.

Women in the United States achieved full suffrage in 1920, with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. But for Cunningham, the right to vote was only a first step. She went on to help found the National League of Women Voters, and, in 1928, was the first Texas woman to run for the United States Senate. During World War II, she worked for the Roosevelt administration, and it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt who gave her the nickname “Minnie Fish.”

Cunningham was active in the Democratic Party until her death in 1964. But every woman who votes, regardless of party, owes Texas’s “Minnie Fish” a debt of gratitude.

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Minnie Fisher Cunningham. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. What caused Minnie Fisher Cunningham to become a suffragist?
2. Cunningham was the first Texas woman to do what?

Going Further: Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Making Inferences.** Based on your reading of the episode, why would Cunningham have considered winning the right to vote “only a first step”?