

Julia Montrose Holder (1884-1970)

Julia Montrose Holder was born on December 24, 1884, in Bloomington, Illinois, to Dan and Kate Holder. She had one older brother, Samuel, who was born in 1874.

Julia's family had moved to Central Illinois in 1837. Her great-grandparents, Daniel and Sarah Holder, were Quakers from Massachusetts who settled in Tremont, Illinois, and started a farm. They had two sons, Charles Warren (Julia's grandfather) and Richard, who were both interested in birds and science. Richard later donated his collection of birds to Illinois State University and Illinois Wesleyan University. Sadly, Daniel died in 1840 while birdwatching when he fell into a stream and drowned.

Charles and Richard later moved to Bloomington and started a hardware store called C.W. Holder and Company, which sold tools, farming equipment, and other goods for local farmers. Charles's son, Daniel, took over the store in 1902, and Samuel became president after their father passed away in 1909. Julia worked at the store too, starting as secretary in 1924 and treasurer in 1926. She continued as treasurer until the store closed in 1962.

When Julia was a child, she went to a private school run by Mrs. F.A. Husted and later attended Bloomington High School. There, she helped organize a special program for Lafayette Day in 1898. She was also involved in community activities, including giving recitations and performing dances at local events. Julia was a lifelong Christian and was involved in several local churches throughout her life, including St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, where she remained active for many years.

After high school, Julia attended Illinois State Normal University (now Illinois State University), where she studied teaching, mathematics, and science, graduating in 1903. She also participated in the Philadelphian Society, a student group, and won a recitation contest in 1902. Later, she attended Illinois Wesleyan University, where she graduated in 1905 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. While there, she was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.

After graduating from IWU, Julia attended Smith College in Massachusetts, where she earned another Bachelor of Arts degree in 1907. She remained active in the alumni groups of all three universities, helping organize reunions and meetings with fellow graduates.

Julia began her teaching career in 1907 at Bloomington High School, where she taught mathematics and English. She earned \$88.88 per month, which would be about \$2,339 in 2016. Over the years, she taught bookkeeping classes, participated in school events, and was loved by her students. In 1928, the senior class dedicated the school yearbook to her in honor of her dedication and popularity. Julia taught for 30 years at Bloomington High School before retiring in 1941.

Julia was a dedicated teacher, community leader, and active member of her church and other organizations throughout her life.

Outside of her teaching, Julia was involved in many community organizations, including the YWCA, the Red Cross, and the Women's Club. She also played golf at the Bloomington Country Club, where she was a long-time member. She was passionate about history and was a member of the Four O' Clock History Club, where she enjoyed discussing local history with others.

The club, originally called the Four O' Clock Club, was founded in 1888 by twelve women who wanted to improve themselves and enjoy each other's company. At first, they each took turns presenting papers on various topics (not just history, despite the club's name). Early on, four papers were read at each meeting, meaning each member had to present six papers per

year. Later, the club grew to 24 members, and the number of papers presented at each meeting was reduced to one, so members only had to present once every six months. They also took turns hosting the meetings at their homes.

During her time in the club, Holder presented many papers on topics like “Education: Spanish vs. American” (1946), “Cultural Development of Australia” (1947), and “The Art of Teaching” (1958). She became the club president in 1955 and had been a member since at least 1944. In 1968, when the club celebrated its 80th year, Holder hosted the first meeting of the year at her apartment. She and another member presented a program on “Persons and Places” to celebrate the occasion. Holder stayed active in the club until she passed away in 1970.

Holder had a strong interest in history. She contributed to a book called *Hometown in the Corn Belt: A Source History of Bloomington, Illinois 1900-1950*, which was a history of Bloomington, Illinois from 1900-1950. The book was put together by Clara Louise Kessler, a long-time children’s librarian at Withers Public Library (today Bloomington Public Library), to celebrate Bloomington's 100th anniversary in 1950. In her contribution, Holder wrote about her family's history and the establishment of their hardware store in McLean County.

Holder was also involved in the Pan-Hellenic Association, which was a social group for members of Greek fraternities and sororities. In 1914, she helped organize a dinner for the group, and in 1915, she presented a paper on an opera called "Il Trovatore."

Throughout her life, Holder worked on many charity projects. She donated money and also helped organize charity events. One event, Charity Trolley Day, took place in 1911, when she and over 200 other women encouraged people to ride streetcars instead of using cars or horses. The money raised from streetcar fares went to help people in need. Holder also worked on a large charity carnival in 1922 to raise funds for people affected by World War I. The carnival included performances, games, and food, and raised a large amount of money to help those in need.

During World War I, Holder volunteered with the Bloomington chapter of the American Red Cross. She kept financial records, helped raise money, and worked in the Surgical Dressing Department, where she cut gauze to make bandages for soldiers. She also took part in a big Red Cross Parade in 1918, which had thousands of people marching through town to support the war effort.

Holder continued volunteering during World War II. At the age of 57, she worked with the McLean County Rationing and War Prices Board, which helped manage resources like tires and fuel for the war. She also volunteered with the Red Cross, making clothes and other items for soldiers. For her hard work, she received an award for volunteering over 144 hours during a year.

Throughout her life, Holder stayed close to her family. She helped care for her mother in her later years, and when her nephew moved to Springfield in 1930, she went with him to help out. She spent most of her life living in a house on McLean Street in Bloomington and later moved to the Lafayette Apartments on East Washington Street, where she passed away on October 22, 1970 at the age of 85. She was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.

Holder was known for her kindness and dedication to her family, friends, and community. She made Bloomington a better place through her hard work and caring attitude.