

## **Beulah Baker Locher (1881 – 1978)**

Beulah Baker Locher was born on January 7, 1881, in Gibson City, Illinois, to Frank R. and Cordelia (Shelton) Baker. When she was young, her family moved to Bloomington, where they lived in a brick house on West Wood Street, near Miller Park. Later, when Beulah was around eight years old, they moved to the Franklin Square area, where her grandfather, Hiram Baker, built a house for her father. The house was fancy and had many beautiful features, like a cherry wood library and oak woodwork in the reception room. Beulah liked to roller skate on the third floor in the winter because it was so large. Eventually, the house was sold to another family who turned it into apartments.

Beulah's father made money from the farmland he owned, but he didn't manage it himself. He also had the first car in the neighborhood but didn't let women in the family drive because he thought the cars were too unpredictable. Before they got the car, Beulah used to drive a pony-drawn cart, with her dog sitting next to her.

Beulah went to public schools in Bloomington. She attended the Model School at Illinois State Normal University and then Franklin School after they moved to the Franklin Park neighborhood. Although her father didn't approve of public school, Beulah convinced him to let her attend. She became good friends with her neighbor, Adlai Stevenson I, who later became Vice President of the United States. They had fun together, and Beulah would often bring him treats.

After graduating from Bloomington High School, Beulah went to the University of Michigan but had to leave because she became ill after an operation for appendicitis in Germany. She was later encouraged to transfer to Illinois Wesleyan University, where she studied music and graduated in 1904. While at Illinois Wesleyan, Beulah was a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.

Beulah married Cyrus Locher, a lawyer, on January 17, 1907, and moved to Ohio. They didn't have children, but Beulah enjoyed spoiling her niece Linda and buying clothes for other children. She was always dressed in the finest clothes, and her mother would take her shopping in Chicago.

Cyrus Locher had a successful career in law and politics. He served as a U.S. Senator for a brief time in 1928. After his death in 1929, Beulah moved to Colorado Springs to live with her brother Fred, a doctor. She later moved to Scottsdale, Arizona, but eventually returned to Bloomington in 1970, where she lived for eight more years at the Illinois House, which had once been a hotel.

Beulah was a member of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and was good friends with the priest. Although some people thought she was selfish for enjoying her wealth, others saw her as kindhearted, especially because she loved buying clothes for children. Beulah had a sharp sense of humor and was known for saying that her favorite part of the week was enjoying an orange freeze from Steak 'n' Shake.

Beulah lived to the age of 97 and was the fourth woman in the U.S. to survive pancreatitis, an inflammation of the pancreas, at the age of 83. She passed away on September 15, 1978, and is buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.