

Julia Montrose Holder (1884-1970)

Julia Montrose Holder was born December 24, 1884 in Bloomington, Illinois to Dan and Kate (Saltonstall) Holder.¹ She was one of two children born to the couple. Her older brother, Samuel, was born in 1874.

The Holder family came to Central Illinois in 1837. Julia's great-grandparents, Daniel and Sarah Holder, were both Quakers from Lynn, Massachusetts. They settled in Tremont, Illinois, in Tazewell County, on a farm, where they raised a family. The couple had at least two sons, Charles Warren (Julia's grandfather) and Richard. Both father and sons were well-read, especially in the science of ornithology. Richard later donated his collection of mounted birds to both Illinois State University and Illinois Wesleyan University. Tragically, Daniel died on a birdwatching excursion in the winter of 1840, after falling into a stream and drowning.²

Charles and Richard both moved to Bloomington as adults, and set up a hardware store bearing the name C.W. Holder and Company (later becoming Holder Hardware Company), selling farming implements, seed, glassware, cutlery, and other necessities for a growing farming community.³ Charles son, Daniel, took over the company by 1902. Julia's brother Samuel, became the company president after their father passed away in the fall of 1909. In 1924, Julia began serving as the company's secretary, and in 1926, she assumed the duties of the treasurer as well.⁴ By 1953, Daniel G. Holder (Samuel's son) took over as President, with Julia staying on as treasurer, a position in which she remained until the store's closure by 1962.⁵

When Julia was a child, she attended a private school run by Mrs. F.A. Husted at 517 Chestnut Street.⁶ The school offered classes for primary, intermediate, grammar, and preparatory grades. Students who attended were thoroughly instructed in "Latin, German, French, and the common branches."⁷ She then attended Bloomington High School and while there, coordinated a program in celebration of Lafayette Day in October, 1898.⁸ Throughout her school career she regularly gave recitations, and in her teens helped coordinate similar displays at school and community functions.⁹ Holder also took dancing classes, performing at Turner Hall (where the Turnverein, a German organization that was a gymnastics and family social club, met) in March of 1893.¹⁰

Holder was a life-long Christian and was very involved in all of the churches of which she was a member. During her childhood, Holder attended the Christian Church, taking part in

¹ "Miss Julia Holder," *The Pantagraph*, October 22, 1970, 39.

² Holder, Julia, "Holder Hardware Store," in *Home Town in the Corn Belt: A Source History of Bloomington, Illinois 1900-1950 In Five Volumes*, Vol. 1, compiler Clara Louise Kessler (Bloomington, Illinois: N.P., 1950), 263-267.

³ Holder, "Holder Hardware Store," Vol. 1, 263-267

⁴ *Polk's Bloomington and Normal City Directory 1924-25*, (Peoria: Leshnick Directory Co., 1924), 235; *Polk's Bloomington and Normal City Directory 1926*, (Peoria: Leshnick Directory Co., 1926), 249.

⁵ *Polk's Bloomington City Directory 1953* (St. Louis: R.L. Polk and Co., 1953), 182; *Polk's Bloomington City Directory 1959* (St. Louis: R.L. Polk and Co., 1959), 392; *Polk's Bloomington City Directory*, (St. Louis: R.L. Polk and Co., 1962), 237.

⁶ "The Kindergarten Closes," *The Pantagraph*, December 19, 1896, 6.

⁷ "Private School and Kindergarten," *The Pantagraph*, August 26, 1896.

⁸ How Time Flies: Oct. 19, 1898 Taken from the files of The Daily Pantagraph," *The Pantagraph*, October 20, 1927, 4.

⁹ "The Missionary Quarterly," *The Pantagraph*, September 13, 1893, 6; and "The Church Fair Season," *Pantagraph*, November 21, 1902, 3.

¹⁰ "Dancing Class Reception," *The Pantagraph*, March 24, 1893, 7.

Children's Day exercises and being named Queen of the Flowers in 1896.¹¹ Later she attended First Presbyterian Church, where she helped staff the Church Fair in 1902.¹² Finally, Holder became a member of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and remained a member the rest of her life. She was very active in the church, assisting with various events and being a member of the St. Matthew's Social Club.¹³ The relationships she formed within the church community evidently stayed strong throughout her life. For decades, she remained in contact with the family of Reverend William Baker, a former pastor of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. Father Baker had left Bloomington in 1922, but he and his wife often stayed with Holder when passing through town. In 1951, she hosted the couple while Father Baker underwent eye surgery.¹⁴

After graduating Bloomington High School in 1901, Holder attended Illinois State Normal University (now Illinois State University) where she completed the standard two-year course of study required for graduation.¹⁵ The standard program required 25 credits for graduation over the course of six regular terms of 12 weeks and one summer term of six weeks. Courses included in this program were pedagogy, practice teaching, mathematics, biological science, Latin, German, graphic art, and history. Holder most likely took additional elective courses since the focus of her teaching was in the field of mathematics. Those courses may have included advanced mathematics and bookkeeping.¹⁶ Her graduating theme was "The Purpose of Teaching Economics in the Elementary School," and commencement exercises were held in June 1903.¹⁷ She also gave a reading of Benjamin F. Taylor's popular poem "Money Musk" during a special program presented by the Philadelphian and Wrightonian Societies at the start of the 1903 commencement week on May 30.¹⁸ Holder was a member of the Philadelphian Society, a literary debate society that had been among the first student organizations established at Illinois State Normal University since the school's founding in 1857.¹⁹ On December 18, 1902, Holder participated in the forty-second annual contest between the Philadelphians and their rivals, the Wrightonian literary society. Holder won in the recitation category, which was the last Philadelphian victory in this category for several years.²⁰ During her time at the ISNU, she also participated in extracurricular activities outside of the school. On at least one occasion, she assisted in a demonstration for the Woman's Club in Bloomington.²¹

Along with her brother, Sam, Julia attended Illinois Wesleyan University.²² Graduating in 1905 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Holder was the assistant secretary-treasurer for the 1905 Senior class. For her senior quote, she chose a verse from Robert Herrick's *Hesperides*: "Some

¹¹ "Children's Day at the Christian Church," *The Pantagraph*, June 9, 1896, 5.

¹² "The Church Fair Season," *The Pantagraph*, November 21, 1902, 3.

¹³ "St. Matthew's Social Club," *The Pantagraph*, September 20, 1911, 9.

¹⁴ "Rev. Baker Has Eye Operation," *The Pantagraph*, May 22, 1961, 3.

¹⁵ "Anyone Know Where These Alumni Are?" *The Pantagraph*, February 3, 1957, 23

¹⁶ The Illinois State Normal University, *The Normal School Quarterly Containing the Annual Catalog, Course of Study and Announcements for 1903-04*, (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Co., 1903) 16-23, 50, 83.

¹⁷ David Felmley, *Semi-Centennial History of the Illinois State Normal University 1857-1907* (Normal, IL: Illinois State Normal University, 1907), 335; "Graduates Themes," *The Pantagraph*, May 30, 1903, 10.

¹⁸ "Graduates' Themes," *The Pantagraph*, May 30, 1903, 10; Robert Fulton, Thomas Trueblood, and Edwin Trueblood, ed. *Standard Selections: A Collection and Adaptation of Superior Productions from Best Authors for Use in Class Room and on the Platform*, (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1907) 373.

¹⁹ Felmley, 135-139.

²⁰ Felmley, 152-153; "The Annual Contest," *The Pantagraph*, December 15, 1902, 7

²¹ "With the Chafing Dish," *The Pantagraph*, February 4, 1904, 3.

²² "Class Reunions Slated for IWU Commencement," *The Pantagraph*, May 30, 1949, 6; "Kappa Kappa Gamma Annual," *The Pantagraph*, January 5, 1914, 10.

asked me where the rubies grew/ And nothing I did say; But with my fingers pointed to The lips of Julia.”²³ While attending IWU, Holder was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma and remained active in the sorority long after graduation. The Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma was the earliest sorority established at IWU on November 25, 1873.²⁴

After graduating from IWU, she also attended Smith College, a women’s college, in Northampton, Massachusetts, that was “committed to providing the highest quality undergraduate education for women to enable them to develop their intellects and talents and to participate effectively and fully in society.” She graduated in 1907 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.²⁵

Holder became an active alumnus at all three universities, helping to coordinate reunions of class members in Bloomington.²⁶ She regularly met with other Bloomington women in the Central Illinois Smith College Club at various locations throughout the state.²⁷

After graduating from Smith College, Holder began a long career as a teacher at Bloomington High School. She received her first teaching assignment in the Mathematics and English departments at the start of the school year in the fall of 1907 when she was twenty-three years old.²⁸ Her monthly salary as a new teacher was \$88.88, which in 2016 would be roughly \$2,339.²⁹ Shortly after receiving her appointment, she moved to 213 ½ East Jefferson Street in Bloomington.³⁰ She was later transferred to the Commercial department in which she was in charge of the bookkeeping classes for 15 years.³¹

In addition to her teaching duties, she was very active in school life for students and faculty alike. To open the new school year, she entertained all the "former and new members of the high school faculty" at her home on North McLean Street on September 11, 1920.³² She was also a member of the Faculty Fun Club, which arranged and implemented dinners and events for members throughout the school year.³³ Holder was a member of the High School P.T.A. and served as the chairman of the committee on reading material in 1926.³⁴ She also judged oratory contests similar to those she participated in as student herself.³⁵ Holder served as an adviser to

²³ *The Wesleyana* (Bloomington, IL: Senior Class of Illinois Wesleyan University, 1905), 18-21; “Graduates College of Liberal Arts, Former Chaddock Grads, College of Law Alumni,” *Illinois Wesleyan Alumni Roll-The University Bulletin*, November 1919, Series XVII, Number 5, 41.

²⁴ Elmo Scott Watson, *The Illinois Wesleyan Story 1850 to 1950* (Bloomington, IL: Illinois Wesleyan University Press, 1950), 109, 225.

²⁵ “Anyone Know Where These Alumni Are?” *The Pantagraph*, February 3, 1957, 23; “Smith History,” <https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/smith-history>; Illinois State Normal University, “*Alumni Register 1860-1927*,” *The Normal School Quarterly* series 26, , no. 104 (July 1927) 95.

²⁶ “IWU Alumni Dinner Saturday at Center,” *The Pantagraph*, June 4, 1952, 14; “Classes of 1893, 1903 Start Reunion Festivities,” *The Pantagraph*, May 31, 1953, 13.

²⁷ “Smith College Club Meeting,” *The Pantagraph*, October 12, 1925, 8.

²⁸ “Miss Kromer, New Primary Supervisor,” *The Pantagraph*, August 31, 1907, 7.

²⁹ Conversion Price Index (CPI) for 2016

<http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf>, Date Accessed May 30, 2017.

³⁰ Samson Directory Co., comp., *Bloomington and Normal City Directory* (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1909), 320.

³¹ “Julia Holder, High School Teacher for 23 years, Resigns,” *The Pantagraph*, January 23, 1930, 3

³² “Social and Athletic Life at High School,” *The Pantagraph*, September 14, 1920.

³³ “Miss Monroe is Guest of Honor,” *The Pantagraph*, January 26, 1924, 8

³⁴ “High School P.T.A. Holds March Meeting,” *The Pantagraph*, March 16, 1926, 8

³⁵ “50 Years Ago,” *The Pantagraph*, April 16, 1958, 4.

the BHS's alumni department in their work on the *Aegis*, BHS' annual yearbook.³⁶ And she served on the reception committee for the Senior-Junior dinner dance in 1928.³⁷ Holder was so beloved by the students at BHS, that in 1928, the students dedicated that year's edition of the *Aegis* to her, in honor of her twenty-one years of teaching, and her popularity amongst students. She was given the first copy of the book, with the following testimonial from the Senior class inside: "To Julia Holder, whose devotion and tireless efforts have raised the standard in the commercial department of Bloomington High School, and whose loyalty and kindness have secured for her a place in our hearts—we the senior class of 1928 gratefully dedicate this *Aegis*."³⁸ Additionally, outside her teaching duties at BHS, she taught bookkeeping courses at the Bloomington YWCA for at least a few years.³⁹

In 1930, Holder announced her resignation as a teacher, only to return to BHS as a bookkeeping teacher in 1934.⁴⁰ After another seven years of teaching, Holder retired permanently from BHS in July of 1941, having taught for a grand total of 30 years.⁴¹ She was an enthusiastic and dedicated teacher throughout her entire life.

Holder, much like the rest of her family, was also heavily involved in the community being an active member of many clubs and organizations such as: the YWCA, the Young Ladies Society of St. Matthews Episcopal Church, the Red Cross, the Women's Club, the Bloomington Association of Commerce, the Amateur Musical Club, the Brokaw Service League, the Junior Monday Afternoon Euchre Club, the Tuesday Bridge Club, the Bloomington Art Association, the Association of American University Women, the Commercial Club, the Margaret Fuller Club, the Goethe Verein, and the Pan-Hellenic Association, among others. She often hosted meetings for many of the organizations she belonged to in her home.⁴² Holder also played golf at the Bloomington Country Club, where she was a long time member.⁴³ In addition to playing golf at the country club, she hosted dinners there, sometimes purely social and sometimes for organizations she was a member of like the Pan Hellenic Association.⁴⁴

Perhaps due to her family's role in the development of McLean County, Julia took an interest in history throughout her life. She was a member of the Four O'Clock History Club. Membership in this club, in particular, provided her with intellectual company and stimulation for many years. Formerly known as the Four O'Clock Club, the club was founded in 1888 by twelve women with the objective of "mutual improvement and sociability." Members would take turns presenting papers on a wide variety of topics (not just historical ones like the name of the club infers). In the beginning, four papers were read at each meeting. That meant the twelve members of the club were each responsible for six papers per year. Membership was increased to

³⁶ "B.H.S. 'Aegis' Goes to Press," *The Pantagraph*, April 16, 1927, 3.

³⁷ "Senior-Junior Party at B.H.S. Featured by Aviation Program," *The Pantagraph*, May 26, 1928, 18

³⁸ "Annual Distributed to H.S. Students," *The Pantagraph*, May 11, 1928, 13.

³⁹ "Classes at Y.W.C.A.," *The Pantagraph*, October 7, 1911, 5; "YWCA Notes," *The Pantagraph*, September 30, 1914, 7

⁴⁰ "Julia Holder, High School Teacher for 23 Years, Resigns," *The Pantagraph*, January 23, 1930, 3; "Brick Taken, Board Learns," *The Pantagraph*, Jun 9, 1934, 3.

⁴¹ "Equipment Bids Opened by Board," *The Pantagraph*, July 16, 1941, 7.

⁴² "Pan Hellenic Association," *The Pantagraph*, January 17, 1916, 7; "Will Meet Wednesday," *The Pantagraph*, March 22, 1909, 9; "Amateur Musial Club," *The Pantagraph*, December 10, 1915, 7; "Add Many Members to New Art Association," *The Pantagraph*, "April 29, 1922," 8; "University Women," *The Pantagraph*, October 9, 1922," 8; *Pantagraph*, May 24, 1953, 25.

⁴³ "Plans for Friday," *The Pantagraph*, June 29, 1916, 2.

⁴⁴ "At the Country Club," *The Pantagraph*, July 25, 1903, 7; "At the Country Club," *The Pantagraph*, June 8, 1914, 7.

a maximum of 24 women and the number of papers read at each meeting was decreased to that of a single paper, which meant that members only presented on a semi-annual basis.⁴⁵ Members also took turns holding the meetings at their homes.

During her years of membership in this club, Holder presented papers on a variety of topics including “Education: Spanish vs. American” (1946); “Cultural Development of Australia” (1947); “Ordeal of the Union” (1948); “Teen Age America” (1949); a program about author Gertrude Stein (1950); “Pioneer Families of McLean County” (1953); “Leaders in the Making of South Africa” (1955); and “The Art of Teaching” (1958).⁴⁶ She was elected club president in 1955, and had been a member since at least 1944.⁴⁷ When the club began its 80th year in 1968, Holder had the honor of hosting the club for the first meeting of the year at her home in the LaFayette Apartments on East Washington Street. She and fellow member Grace Holton presented the program related to the theme “Persons and Places” that had been selected in honor of this milestone for the club.⁴⁸ Holder remained an active member of the club until her death in 1970.

Holder’s fascination with history is also evident in a piece she contributed to *Hometown in the Corn Belt: A Source History of Bloomington, Illinois 1900-1950*, a compilation of fifty-years’ worth of Bloomington history by Clara Louise Kessler, the long-time children’s librarian at Withers Public Library (today Bloomington Public Library). Kessler created this set in honor of the centennial of the city of Bloomington in 1950 and, in her own words, “as an attempt to recapture those particular days of my childhood and make them live again.”⁴⁹ The five-volume history contains 171 articles, which includes 39 biographies, and 52 poems contributed by 132 people (including Holder) in Bloomington and Normal.⁵⁰ The piece Holder wrote dealt with her family’s history after they moved to McLean County, and the establishment of the Holder Hardware Store.⁵¹

Holder was also a member of the Pan-Hellenic Association in Bloomington. This organization was formed in 1897 by members of several Greek fraternities and sororities to allow members of the two groups to socialize.⁵² Holder helped arrange dinner for the organization at the Bloomington Country Club in 1914, and read a paper on an opera entitled “Il Trovatore” in 1915.⁵³

⁴⁵ “Bloomington/Normal’s Literary History 1879-1987,” Bloomington Public Library, MCMH Library and Archives, p. 8; Interview with Sarah Butler and Susan Sears, May 11, 2015.

⁴⁶ “Mrs. Johnson Club Hostess,” *The Pantagraph*, February 10, 1946; “Mrs. Blake Holton to Entertain Club,” *The Pantagraph*, December 29, 1946; “Four O’Clock Club to Meet,” *The Pantagraph*, October 6, 1948; “Community Calendar,” *The Pantagraph*, October 21, 1949; “Bloomington-Normal Organizations,” *Pantagraph*, October 6, 1950; “Bloomington-Normal Clubs,” *The Pantagraph*, February 15, 1953; “History Club Plans Talk on South Africa,” *The Pantagraph*, October 16, 1955; “4 O’Clock History Topic: Teaching,” *The Pantagraph*, November 2, 1958.

⁴⁷ “Four O’Clock History Elects Miss Holder,” *The Pantagraph*, November 27, 1955, 26; “Miss Lucy Williams Writes Club Paper,” *The Pantagraph*, April 9, 1944, 16.

⁴⁸ “Four O’Clock History Club Beginning 80th Year,” *The Pantagraph*, September 22, 1968, 30.

⁴⁹ Kessler, Vol. 1, 7

⁵⁰ “Bulging ‘Home Town’ History Makes Bow,” *The Pantagraph*, December 27, 1950

⁵¹ Holder, “Holder Hardware Store,” Vol. 1, 263-267

⁵² “A Meetings of Greeks Called,” *The Pantagraph*, February 24, 1897, 6; “Pan Hellenic Dinner,” *The Pantagraph*, March 23, 1897, 7.

⁵³ “At the Country Club,” *The Pantagraph*, June 8, 1914, 7; “Pan-Hellenic Meeting,” *Pantagraph*, March 12, 1915, 10.

She also took part in charity work throughout her life, from simply donating money to various causes and organizations to direct involvement in the planning and implementation of charity events. On July 6, 1911, Holder and over 200 ladies participated in the annual Charity Trolley Day, which had been occurring since at least 1897.⁵⁴ A group of society ladies in Bloomington and Normal organized this event during which citizens were urged to “forego horses and automobiles” and travel via streetcar. Additionally, activities such as amusements, concessions, boat rides at Miller Park, and picnics were also planned. Young girls like Holder, accompanied by adult women as chaperones, served as conductors of various street car lines throughout Bloomington and Normal on this day. Holder was scheduled to be a conductor for one of the streetcars in Miller Park from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. that day.⁵⁵ Despite the rain that halted activities for a short time in the afternoon (and canceled the boat rides and the majority of the picnics planned for the evening), the almost \$700 (which would be \$17,500 in 2016) in fares collected on the designated lines that day were donated to the poor in Bloomington and the Baby Fold in Normal.⁵⁶

Holder was also involved in the Russian-Near East Relief carnival, which was touted as being the biggest charity event ever held in Bloomington up to that time. The carnival was held from June 29 through July 4, 1922 at “The Oaks,” (the lavish mansion and property formerly owned by local businessman, politician, and early settler Asahel Gridley) located at 301 East Grove Street and owned by Howard and Clara (Funk) Humphreys at the time.⁵⁷ What was originally supposed to be only a four-day event was extended by two days on account of poor weather. Thirty-five activities were arranged at the carnival, which included vaudeville acts, dancing, musical performances, ice cream parlors, demonstrations, booths for food and drinks, and boxing bouts. It was reported that the entire lawn of “The Oaks” was covered by “side-shows and booths.”⁵⁸ For many, the highlight of the entire carnival was children’s tableaux, which Holder was on the committee that coordinated these performances by local children. Twenty, half-hour tableaux were presented over the course of three nights of the event, during which children recreated scenes from art.⁵⁹

An estimated 50,000 tickets were sold over all at the gate during the four nights of the event. Holder, along with over 500 people under the management of Julia Vrooman, devoted a great deal of time participating on various committees to put on this highly successful relief. It was estimated that the four-day event raised over \$6,000, (which would be almost \$86,000 in 2016). This money was then sent to the Quakers who would then get the funds to the Near East relief organization to help the needy of Russia and surrounding European countries that had been devastated by the Great War (later known as World War I). *The Pantagraph* deemed the fete the most successful ever sponsored.⁶⁰

In 1917, Julia Holder’s life was touched by the calamity which had been gripping Europe for almost three years; The Great War. On April 6, 1917, the U.S. officially declared war on

⁵⁴ “Will have their turn later,” *The Pantagraph*, September 28, 1897, 7

⁵⁵ “All to Ride Street Cars for Charity,” *Pantagraph*, July 4, 1911, 7.

⁵⁶ “Charity to Get \$700 from Trolley Day,” *The Pantagraph*, July 7, 1911, 15; Consumer Price Index, <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf>.

⁵⁷ “Relief Carnival Brought to an End,” *The Pantagraph*, July 5, 1922, 11

⁵⁸ “Relief Carnival To Open Tonight,” *The Pantagraph*, June 29, 1922, 7; “Thousands Visit Big Relief Fete,” *The Pantagraph*, June 30, 1922, 5; “Battle Royal to be Staged,” *The Pantagraph*, July 4, 1922, 6

⁵⁹ “Thousands Visit Big Relief Fete.”

⁶⁰ “Relief Carnival To Open Tonight;” “Relief Carnival Brought to an End.”

Germany. However, in February that year, the Bloomington chapter of the American Red Cross received an alert to prepare for the possibility of the United States' entry into the war.⁶¹ Holder, who was 33 years old at the time, had been working with the Red Cross since March. She was in charge of keeping the financial records for the chapter. She was also responsible for preparing monthly reports that were sent to the Central Division office, "which contributed to the high standing" of the Bloomington chapter. It was reported that her expertise from her work as head of the bookkeeping department and teacher at BHS was invaluable to the chapter.⁶² Additionally, she worked as an assistant to the city fund cashier of the local Red Cross War Fund which raised over \$68,000 (or about \$1.3 million in 2016) for the Bloomington chapter, which surpassed their original goal of \$50,000.⁶³ The Chicago headquarters of the Red Cross in Illinois passed a resolution of thanks for all those who contributed to and worked on the successful campaign. Additional resolutions of appreciation were passed that specifically mentioned Frank Oberkoetter, the city fund cashier, and Holder, his assistant, for their hard work.⁶⁴

In addition to her work as a record-keeper, Holder volunteered in the Surgical Dressing Department of the local chapter of the Red Cross, cutting gauze for surgical dressings. Surgical dressings are different from a bandage. Surgical dressings are applied directly to the wound to promote healing and to prevent further harm. A bandage is often times applied over a dressing to hold the dressing in place.⁶⁵ To meet the need for dressings, an additional workroom was opened at the Bloomington Country Club, (where Holder was a member) called the "War Room." in the early summer of 1917.⁶⁶ Holder and another local woman, Lena Noble, were in charge of the "corps of efficient workers" in the "war room." Across the Surgical Dressing Department as a whole, volunteers at first laboriously cut bandages by hand and most women gave just a half hours' time occasionally. Soon, the department became a regular manufacturing plant where women gave entire days of their time and instead of cutting dressings by hand, used the more efficient and expeditious method of electric cutter. According to *The Pantagraph*, the combined output of dressings made by the shop at the headquarters and the "war room" at Bloomington Country Club from May 21, 1917 to December 1, 1918 was 331,172 dressings valued at \$11,247.68 (which in 2016 would be worth \$178,534.60) and was equal to five times the average output of other chapters.⁶⁷

By May 1918, the Red Cross had not slowed down in their efforts. On May 21, *The Pantagraph* described the Red Cross Parade that dwarfed "all previous events of its kind in Bloomington since American Declaration of War," with between 7,000 and 10,000 people from "all walks of" life marching. For over an hour thousands of people watched the four-mile long parade pass through the downtown. Holder participated by playing a refugee mother with eleven children on the "Children's Float," in order to remind the crowds of the plight of displaced

⁶¹ Hasbrouck, J.L., and Pierson, E.E., Eds., *McLean County, Illinois, in the World War 1917-1918* (Bloomington, IL: McLean County War Publishing Company, 1921), p. 7.

⁶² Ibid, p. 125.

⁶³ Ibid, 140; Consumer Price Index,

<http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf>.

⁶⁴ "Final Report of Red Cross War Fund," *The Pantagraph*, July 14, 1917, 7.

⁶⁵ "Surgical Dressings," definition from Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dressing_\(medical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dressing_(medical)), Date Accessed August 13, 2017.

⁶⁶ Hasbrouck and Pierson, 134.

⁶⁷ "Review of Red Cross," *Pantagraph*, December 9, 1918, 3; Conversion Price Index (CPI) for 2016 <http://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/sites/liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/files/polisci/faculty-research/sahr/inflation-conversion/pdf/cv2016.pdf> ; Hasbrouck and Pierson, 134-135.

families, often without husbands and fathers. The floats were part of a procession of police, veterans, Red Cross workers, nurses, industrial workers, and various community organizations.⁶⁸

In addition to her work with the Red Cross, Holder experienced the effects of the Great War in other parts of her life. Throughout the period of 1917-1918, the U.S. experienced a repression of German culture as a direct result of the war. This became especially apparent in Illinois and in McLean County, where a significant number of people were German immigrants or of German descent, and still spoke and understood the German language. Holder was a member of Goethe Verein, a Bloomington organization founded in late 1900 or early 1901 to study and discuss German literature, with the meetings conducted entirely in German.⁶⁹ The sessions were held at the homes of members, with the first part of the evening devoted to “the reading aloud of German poetry and fiction, then a music hour of German folk and national song,” followed by a social hour during which good German food was served.⁷⁰ With the entry of the United States into the Great War, the club was “allowed to lapse.”⁷¹ *The Pantagraph* lists a meeting of the organization at the home of Professor Wilbert Ferguson in April 1917.⁷² This is the last mention they received in this newspaper until 1932 when the centennial anniversary of the birth of the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (the club's namesake) was celebrated.⁷³

The end of this club can likely be attributed to the removal of the German language from schools and the resolution that was passed by the McLean County subcommittee of the Illinois State Council of Defense that ordered Bloomington's only German language newspaper, the *Bloomington Journal*, to cease publishing in German and to only be printed in English.⁷⁴ Fervor of nationalism and “superpatriotism” swept across the nation in response to the U.S.'s entry into the war. Councils of Defense were organized in states all across the nation. This organization (with subcommittees in counties and towns throughout the State of Illinois) did a lot of good for the war effort by organizing war bond drives, fundraisers, etc. However, this organization also fueled the fire of the fear of anything German and persecution of the German-American community.⁷⁵ Within a short span of time in April 1918, schools in Heyworth, Bloomington, and Normal all dropped German language classes, including Holder's own Bloomington High School.⁷⁶ The decision to drop German at BHS was debated by the Bloomington school board, which had been confronted by members of the McLean County sub-committee of the Illinois State Council of Defense to discontinue the teaching of German in the high school.⁷⁷ Some argued that students who had nearly finished a year of German would not receive course credit if the course was suddenly cancelled. The loss of the course credit was thought it would negatively affect students who intended to go on to study at a university (though an exception was made for students who intended to attend IWU that fall).⁷⁸ Others on the board argued that the “perpetuation of the German language” in the United States was integral to “world-wide

⁶⁸ “Red Cross Parade was Biggest During War,” *The Pantagraph*, May 21, 1918, 3.

⁶⁹ “Goethe Verein Meets,” *The Pantagraph*, April 28, 1916, 7.

⁷⁰ Grace Jewett Austin, “Memories of Goethe Verein Are Recalled,” *The Pantagraph*, October 23, 1932, 7-8.

⁷¹ Austin, “Memories of Goethe Verein Are Recalled.”

⁷² “Goethe Verein,” *The Pantagraph*, April 19, 1917, 11.

⁷³ Austin, “Memories of Goethe Verein Are Recalled.”

⁷⁴ “German Newspaper Must Change Its Language,” *The Pantagraph*, April 2, 1918

⁷⁵ Spoor, Jason. “Loyalty, Patriotism, and Survival: The Socioeconomic Factors of German American Assimilation in the Context of World War I,” History 490: Senior Seminar, April 26, 2000, 9-10

⁷⁶ Hasbrouck and Pierson, 25-27; “All County Schools May Cut Out German,” *The Pantagraph*, April 6, 1918, 6

⁷⁷ Spoor, 9

⁷⁸ “To Abolish German at High School Now,” *The Pantagraph*, April 12, 1918, 3

domination schemes” by the Germans.⁷⁹ The prevalence of such attitudes like this likely contributed to the decline of organizations like Goethe Verein.

Holder once again offered her services as a volunteer when the United States entered World War II. She was 57 years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Empire of Japan in 1941, thrusting the United States into war yet again. Never one to remain idle, Holder kept busy volunteering with the McLean County Rationing and War Prices Board. The Board started out as the Tire Rationing Board, and distributed the available tires for farm equipment and automobiles while maintaining a supply for the war effort. The Board later became responsible for rationing fuel as well, and began working out of the McLean County Courthouse in downtown Bloomington.⁸⁰ By January 1944, Holder had completed 100 volunteer hours with the Board. By September of that year, Holder had volunteered an additional 100 hours for the Ration Board.⁸¹ In the first two years, since the U.S. entered the war on December 7, 1941, volunteers had completed a total of 21,574 hours for the board.⁸²

Additionally, Holder once again volunteered her services for the local chapter of the Red Cross, this time in the knitting and sewing branches. In honor of her volunteer service, Holder, along with 118 other women, were awarded red service bars for working at least 144 hours during a 12 month period of time making surgical dressings or knitting and sewing socks, sweaters, gloves and mittens, and other clothing items that would be used by soldiers. The awards were bestowed upon these women at a special reception held at the surgical dressing workrooms located at 220 West Jefferson Street on December 10, 1943.⁸³ Holder’s nieces fondly remembered her “knitting for the troops” during the war.⁸⁴

Holder, who never married, spent much of her time with family and friends in her later years. Her brother, Samuel, married in 1904, in a ceremony where Julia served as a bridesmaid.⁸⁵ However, Samuel’s wife, Georgie, died young, leaving Samuel to care for their three young sons on his own. Julia remained close to her brother and nephews, as well as her nephews’ children.⁸⁶ When Dan G. Holder, her brother Samuel’s son and Julia’s nephew, moved to Springfield to oversee Holder Hardware Company’s work on the Lincoln Memorial in Springfield in 1930, Julia came along to keep house for him. The Abraham Lincoln Tomb in Springfield’s Oak Ridge Cemetery was in general disrepair (including major structural defaults) and needed to be completely rebuilt. Holder Hardware Company was chosen to do the work because of their experience with tile and marble work.⁸⁷ Julia had also cared for her mother in later years, before her mother’s death in February of 1929.⁸⁸

⁷⁹ “Citizens Committee Calls on School Board,” *The Pantagraph*, April 11, 1918, 7.

⁸⁰ “Rationing Gets a Start-Shortages Aren’t Tough,” *The Pantagraph*, December 7, 1942, 15.

⁸¹ “Ration Board Extras Serve 1,300 Hours,” *The Pantagraph*, October 4, 1944.

⁸² “Ration Board Members Serve 21,574 Hours,” *The Pantagraph*, January 6, 1944, 5.

⁸³ “Red Cross Workers to Get Service Bars,” *The Pantagraph*, December 8, 1943.

⁸⁴ Sarah Butler and Susan Sears, interview with McLean County Museum of History, May 11, 2015.

⁸⁵ “In Bonds of Love,” *The Pantagraph*, April 20, 1904, 7.

⁸⁶ Sarah Butler and Susan Sears, in interview.

⁸⁷ Dan W. Holder, interview with McLean County Museum of History; “Lincoln Tomb Reconstruction and rededication, 1930-31, <http://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=4832>, Date Accessed August 13, 2017; “Dan G. ‘Bud’ Holder,” *The Pantagraph*, January 26, 2008, 41.

⁸⁸ “25 Years Ago,” *The Pantagraph*, February 7, 1954, 8.

For most of her adult life, Holder lived at 801 North McLean Street, having moved there in 1915.⁸⁹ She continued to reside there until late in her life when she moved to the Lafayette Apartments at 410 East Washington Street, where she spent the last years of her life.

Julia Holder died on October 22, 1970, at the age of 85. It was reported that she had become ill a few minutes prior to her death. Services were held at Metzler Memorial Home with Reverend T. Nicholas King officiating and she was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery.⁹⁰ Julia Holder was a caring, energetic woman and citizen who committed herself to helping her family, friends, and community, making Bloomington a better place because of her.

By: Jim Gass, 2017

Edited: Candace Summers, 2017

⁸⁹ Chas. M. Samson, comp., *Bloomington and Normal Illinois City Directory 1915* (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationery Co, 1909), 325.

⁹⁰ "Miss Julia Holder."