



Lucille Bishop Smith

HIDDEN HERO OF HISTORY

Listen to the story: <https://jonincharacter.com/lucille-bishop-smith/>

Lucille Bishop Smith was a successful Black American entrepreneur, educator, culinary inventor, and the founder of her own food corporation.

Ms. Bishop Smith was born on September 5, 1892 in Crockett, Texas. There isn't any public information about what her life was like growing up, but we know that she graduated from college around 1912. She married her college sweetheart, Ulysses Samuel Smith, and together, they started a catering business.

Working in the food industry was a family affair for the Smiths. They were the **caterers** of an exclusive summer camp and worked there for most of their lives, from 1928 to 1973. In fact, Mr. Smith also catered for a popular traveling rodeo and became known as the Barbecue King of the Southwest.

In 1973, Ms. Bishop Smith was recruited to begin a **domestic service** training program for professors and instructors at **Prairie View A&M College**. Domestic service includes tasks such as housecleaning, cooking and child care. There are many people who work in the domestic service industry in both private homes, and public institutions like hotels.

Ms. Bishop Smith developed the first college-level "Commercial Foods and Technology Department." It was a culinary arts program that helped students train to be part of the food and baking industries. A profession in **culinary arts** involves the preparation, cooking, plating, presentation and serving of food. Her work as an educator inspired future generations to pursue roles in the field. In fact, her great-grandchildren—Chris and Ben Williams—opened a restaurant in 2012 called "Lucille's" in her honor.

In the 1940s, Ms. Bishop Smith invented "Lucille's All Purpose Hot Roll Mix." The mix was created as a fundraiser for her church and she ended up raising \$800—which would be valued at approximately \$16,000 today.

The mix was revolutionary and became a very popular product. Orders poured in from grocery stores that requested to carry it on their shelves. In 2004, an article in the Cleburne Times-Review newspaper reported:

"Grocery stores began placing orders for cases of the mix. [By 1948], the orders were for more than 200 cases per week of the 14-ounce boxes. Twenty-one different [recipes] could be made from the base. The product paved the way for the convenience cooking we know today."

In 1941, Ms. Bishop Smith published a cookbook called *Lucille's Treasure Chest of Fine Foods*. It was so popular it was reprinted many times—in





1945, 1947, 1960, 1969 and 1972. The 1960 version was very unique because, instead of a standard cookbook, the recipes were printed on 400 index cards and sold in a recipe box. It included recipes for hush puppies, spoon bread, and hominy casserole. Today, her cookbooks are treasured and the recipe box version is a collector's item.

At the age of 82, Ms. Bishop Smith founded Lucille B. Smith's Find Foods, Incorporated. One of her first clients was First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Throughout her life, giving back to her community was also one of Ms. Bishop Smith's priorities. She used funds from her catering and other businesses to support community service projects. She also fundraised for various causes to uplift under-resourced communities.

Her legacy of giving continues through "Lucille's 1913," a Texas-based non-profit founded by her great-grandson Chris Williams. The non-profit serves over 600 meals a day to people in need, and trains folks for jobs in the restaurant industry.

See images of Lucille Bishop Smith, her hot roll mix and Treasure Chest of Fine Foods cookbook in a recipe card box on the Prairie View A&M University website: <https://www.pvamu.edu/tiphc/exhibits/biscuits-and-business/>

Check out *Lucille's* restaurant by Lucille Bishop Smith's great-grandchildren: <https://www.lucilleshouston.com/>

Glossary

Caterer – One whose business is to provide food, supplies, and sometimes service at social gatherings. *Source: Collins Dictionary*

Prairie View A&M College – The second-oldest public institution of higher education in the state of Texas. It is a historically Black college/university.

Domestic Service – The employment of hired workers by private households for the performance of tasks such as housecleaning, cooking, child care, gardening, and personal service. It also includes the performance of similar tasks for hire in public institutions and businesses, including hotels and boarding houses. *Source: Britannica*

Culinary Arts – Covers everything from the preparation, cooking, plating, presentation and serving of food. If you are passionate about food and want to turn that into a profession, a culinary education can be the perfect springboard for an exciting career.

Give it Some Thought

- A groundbreaker is someone who changes the way things are done, especially by making new discoveries. What did Lucille B. Smith do that was groundbreaking?
- Why do you think Ms. Bishop Smith is considered a role model?
- What traits do you think Ms. Bishop Smith had that kept her innovating in her career, even at the age of 82?

Use Your Imagination

Take inspiration from Lucille Bishop Smith's story and learn more about a person through their favorite recipe. Talk to a grownup about one of their favorite recipes and find out more about its history and personal meaning. Use these questions to gather your information:

1. Where did the recipe come from—and if it is from one of their ancestors, ask them to tell you more about this person.
2. Does it make them feel closer to their ancestor when they make this recipe?
3. Does the recipe have any other special meaning for them?
4. How did it become one of their favorite recipes?
5. Is the recipe part of one of their holiday celebrations or traditions?
6. What kind of memories or feelings do they have about the recipe?

Take notes or record their answers so you can write a story from their responses or draw a picture that represents what you heard. Share your story or picture about what you learned with others.

Here are some ideas if you want to go even further with this activity:

- Ask the grownup you interview to teach you how to make the recipe. Enjoy cooking and eating it together.
- Do you have any favorite recipes? Go through the questions yourself and see if you can answer them about your favorite recipe.