



Photo: Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com)

Beulah Bondi

Valparaiso, Porter County

May 3, 1889 – January 11, 1981

Born and raised in Valparaiso, Indiana, Beulah Bondi was a character actress that became a favorite with directors and audiences and appeared in several films that remain enjoyable to this day. Among her many acting credits, she played Jimmy Stewart's mother four times on film, including *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *Vivacious Lady* (1938), and *Of Human Hearts* (1938).

At the age of 7, Beulah became a stage actress as "Little Lord Fauntleroy" at Valparaiso's Memorial Opera House. After the lead actress became ill, she memorized her lines in one week and was hooked on acting from there on. She graduated from Valparaiso University with a bachelor's (1916) and master's degree (1918) in Oratory. She made her Broadway debut in Kenneth S. Webb's "One of the Family" in 1925 and made her film debut at the age of 43 in 1931 in the movie adaptation of *Street Scene*. By the time she was 39, she was cast to play characters beyond her age and became known as "Hollywood's mother," despite never marrying or having children.

Beulah was one of the first five women to be nominated for a 1937 Academy Award in the newly created category of "Best Supporting Actress" for her work in *The Gorgeous Hussy* (1936). She was also nominated for the same category for her work in *Of Human Hearts* (1938). Her only award came when she was nominated in 1977 and won the Outstanding Lead Actress for a Single Appearance in a Drama or Comedy Series for her work on *The Waltons* for playing "Martha Corinne Walton" in the episode titled, "The Pony Cart."

Beulah died on January 11, 1981, at the age of 91 from complications from an accident, when she broke her ribs after falling over her cat.

- For more information about Beulah Bondi, go to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beulah_Bondi.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women's History Month



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