

**Kaila:** Today, Maricopa County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States. But it wasn't always that way. For people like Carole Lowe Beath, the ability to trace her family back generations means she can remember a smaller, more intimate Phoenix.

**Carole:** [00:01:47] My aunt, my mother's sister, came here in 1894 in a covered wagon. So we're early ones. [00:01:54][6.8]

**Carole:** [00:01:04] My mother and her four brothers and my grandparents came here in July of 1909. [00:01:09][4.9]

**Kaila:** Carole was born in 1937. She remembers small town Phoenix as a city of characters. And everyone knew who they were. You couldn't miss them.

**Carole:** [00:04:12] We've had so many legends. We have a man we used to call Bible Joe, and he wore the most pointed boots I ever saw. And he'd stand on the street corners with his Bible and he would preach to everybody. So he was well known. [00:04:27][15.1]

**Carole:** [00:04:32] There was a man that had no leg. And he rode what would be now a skateboard. And he sold newspapers and he would scoot up and down the sidewalks of Phoenix filling those papers. So, I mean, Phoenix was alive with characters. [00:04:47][15.2]

\*theme music comes in\*

**Kaila:** Today, we're diving into the story of one of those local legends. Someone Carole remembers seeing growing up. Her name was Hattie Mosher. And we can thank one of our listeners for alerting us to her.

**Duran 00:17** - My name is Duran Lugo. I'm from Phoenix.

**Kaila:** Duran's may sound familiar if you're involved in any Facebook groups about Phoenix's history. He's a local history buff who is pretty active in them. He said he'd heard of Hattie Mosher before, but he hadn't been able to find a lot of information on her.

**Duran 1:26** - I mean, just hearing you know, just hearing some of the stories over the past, you know, many years, you know, of her being rich and then going the opposite, going the opposite way to being, you know, poor and kind of destitute. That kind of led me to ask the question about what happened to her.

**Kaila:** Welcome to Valley 101, a podcast from The Arizona Republic and azcentral.com where we answer the questions you ask about metro Phoenix. I'm your host, Kaila White. Today, we're diving into the rise and downfall of one of early Phoenix's wealthiest denizens. Telling this story is podcast editor Katie O'Connell.

\*theme music fades out\*

**Katie:** When we first received Duran's question, I was really intrigued. I'd never heard of Hattie Mosher. There aren't any streets or buildings named after her, at least there aren't any now. Who was she? And what, if anything, do people remember her for now? I enlisted some help to find out.

**Paul 00:45** - So, Paul Scharbach. And I'm actually a second generation Phoenician.

**Katie:** Paul is a local history aficionado who's contributed to the books "Phoenix Then and Now" and "Phoenix Past and Present."

**Paul 5:57** - Well, I mean, there's, you know, quite an interesting, you know, story with her and it kind of starts with her family, the Lount family.

\*cue old timey music\*

**Katie:** I couldn't verify the exact place and year when Hattie was born. One record showed that she was born in Michigan in 1864, but since that was the only record I found, I can't say that for certain. We know that her family moved to Prescott in 1878, arriving in Phoenix the following year. That's when her father Samuel D. Lount started his business, then called Phoenix Ice Factory.

**Paul 6:20** - He just figured this this place needs ice. And, you know, it's not very it's not really available anywhere except for in the wintertime.

**Katie:** At the time, ice was used for refrigeration.

**Steve:** [00:02:42] But it was also used in different ice cream shops. There were actually several ice cream shops downtown Phoenix. [00:02:51][8.9]

**Katie:** That's Steve Schumacher. Steve is a semi-retired change consultant and local history buff who has also looked into Hattie's background.

**Katie:** Not only had Samuel Lount struck proverbial gold with his idea to sell ice in the desert, but he'd created the means to do so as well. An article from The Arizona Republic said that Samuel was credited with being one of the first men to invent the machinery necessary to manufacture ice.

**Katie:** Samuel Lount's ice factory was located in downtown Phoenix, from Fourth Street to Fifth Street, between Washington and Adams Streets.

**Steve 1:44** - Of course, if somebody's gonna come up with the idea and have the equipment and so forth to build it and start making ice, it's like instant millionaire.

\*music fades\*

**Katie:** Hattie and her brother William grew up in the lap of luxury, nestled in the private land their father purchased. He owned the tract in what's now downtown from Van Buren Street to Taylor Street on the north, and Central to Second Street to the east. It's where part of Arizona State University's downtown campus is located.

**Paul 9:55** - And certainly having a successful ice and, you know, making business, certainly they lived quite comfortably. They had multiple homes.

**Katie:** Their mother Julia was a socialite who was credited with growing the first date palms to maturity in Phoenix. Hattie and her brother were well educated. She loved music and played many instruments.

**Katie:** As one of the richest families in Arizona at the time, Hattie's comings and goings made headlines. I found an article in The Arizona Republican -- as it was named then -- noting which concerts she attended. It was even noted if she traveled somewhere.

**Katie:** But the attention she drew wasn't always positive. Hattie was a bold, pioneering woman. It was a tendency that didn't always sit well with the greater public.

**Paul 7:36** - She was one of the first, if not the first. Ladies, to actually ride a bike around town, which I guess I guess was not a thing that they were supposed to do or or just didn't do for whatever reason. So she was one of the first ones to do that.

**Katie:** Hattie would marry Charles Mosher, although I was unable to uncover when that marriage took place. Charles was an early editor of the Arizona Republican. The duo moved to Denver, where both Charles and Hattie worked for the Denver Post (cq).

**Paul 11:15** - And she was actually even a reporter at that time as well.

**Katie:** Hattie and Charles would have one child, a daughter named Julia, in 1886.

**Paul 11:28** - and but things started kind of unraveling with the with the marriage not too long after they had the baby girl. And he basically just kind of up and left them.

**Katie:** Hattie would have the marriage annulled in February of 1892. She claimed abandonment. Charles did not deny the charge.

**Paul 11:52** - And the you know, it was at that point where they basically Hattie and her daughter were were on their own.

**Katie:** Hattie and Julia moved back to Phoenix, where it seems like Julia developed her mother's spunk. At one point she was part of a surprise party that carried their shenanigans into the offices of the Republican to disrupt work that day.

**Katie:** Julia also developed her mother's love of music. Based on newspaper archives, Julia and Hattie lived in Germany together for at least a decade while Julia studied music at a conservatory in Leipzig. In 1913, Hattie wrote of her daughter, "Julia has just made her graduation. She is the only girl who was ever graduated here for orchestral work since the conservatory was founded by Mendelssohn."

\*sad music starts\*

**Katie:** After moving back stateside, Julia married, moved to California and had a daughter. But Julia would die shortly afterward in 1920. Her obituary didn't list a cause of death. Neither Paul or Steve were certain of a cause either. Hattie would live for two and a half decades without her daughter.

**Paul 12:55** And from everything I've read, they were happy and her daughter were, you know, extremely close. And that was kind of the kind of the beginning of the end, I think, for her, even though having lived many, many years later.

**Katie:** Hattie's parents had both died by 1907. Her daughter Julia died in 1920. And her brother would die a mere four years later in 1924. That left Hattie with her family's business and their land. I found two references in the Republic saying that Hattie inheritance was worth \$1 million, but it doesn't specify whether that was in 1920s currency or more modern currency.

**Katie:** No matter the value, she was alone.

**Paul:** [00:27:05] she really didn't have any close family members that maybe could have helped her out. [00:27:25][19.8]

**Katie:** The loss of her family -- particularly her daughter Julia -- was something Hattie never recovered from.

\*sad music fades\*

**Katie:** She tried to keep going. She started developing new projects on her land, including a building that would serve as a public market and hotel, as well as a building that would serve as a tea house.

**Katie:** She also ran for office. In 1922, she ran on a Democratic ticket to be a state senator from Maricopa County. Said she had "an equal interest in the conserving of the money paid for taxes so that her interest is the same as that of every other citizen." It's a rather fitting quote to keep in mind for what happens later. She lost in the primary election. Undeterred, she ran for the city commission in 1923, losing in that primary as well.

**Katie:** At the same time she attempted to develop her empire, she also began a long, increasingly fraught legal campaign against the city of Phoenix.

\*siccatto, plucky music to begin\*

**Paul 13:48** - Yeah, she was pretty much suing the city. I believe most of the time. She she had started quite a few properties within that acreage that she owned downtown. And when it came time to pay property taxes, she just, for whatever reason, didn't feel like she needed to have an obligation to for various reasons. I've heard some things where she didn't feel like contributing to a road resurfacing was going to do anything or that they'd have to resurface it anyway a few years later, or that a certain property wasn't worth a certain amount. So she just kind of started not paying property taxes.

**Katie:** In 1927, Hattie sued the city, saying that it had evaluated her property incorrectly. After all, the city had increased the value of her property by \$135,000 in ONE YEAR. Hattie took umbrage with that estimation and accused the city of trying to extort her for more money.

**Katie:** But the city argued that it was a necessary cost. Phoenix had started to grow and develop. Paved roads were replacing mud streets. Sewage and water systems were being installed instead of privies. Hattie's downtown property was part of that development, whether she liked it or not. The combination of her land's prime location and the development around it meant that its value was growing.

**Katie:** The court ultimately reduced how much her property value had increased. But it agreed that her land was becoming more and more valuable and that Hattie would have to pay taxes accordingly. She disagreed on principle. It was her land. Not the city's.

**Paul:** [00:27:25] And I do think she was probably somewhat misunderstood. If you read a lot of her quotations, she was always talking about it wasn't about the money. It was about the principle. [00:27:38][13.4]

**Katie:** Ultimately, Hattie's income wasn't keeping up with the growing value of her property. When she couldn't -- or wouldn't -- pay her taxes, a tax lien was placed on parts of her property. But once a lien was on something, she couldn't sell it, which meant her debts were compounding. And her legal battle with the city intensified.

**Katie:** At one point in time, Paul said that Hattie offered the city a parcel of land worth \$100,000. The city needed a place to build a new courthouse and county building. She tried to give them just that. But the city turned her down.

**Paul 17:24** - So to me, the only thing I can decipher from that is that they just really didn't want anything to do with her because of all the lawsuits. And I thought it might just bring on more problems by accepting that parcel.

\*music fades\*

**Katie:** I combed through the more than 400 archival results for Hattie Mosher. By the time I was halfway through, my head was spinning. At one point in time there was a headline that just said, "Mrs. Mosher Has New Grievance." I could not keep track of the number of times Hattie was sued or the number of times she sued someone else. Sometimes it was a matter of business, like when she sued tenants for missing rent. But her battle with the city was the most contentious and the results would not land in Hattie's favor.

**Paul 14:56** - And then slowly but surely she started, you know, losing all that property that she owned because, you know, if you don't pay taxes after a certain amount of time, even back then, you know, the city or whoever owns whoever you owe the taxes to is going to start foreclosing on those properties. And that's kind of what happened. She just started losing one parcel after another because of taxes. She didn't feel like she needed to pay.

**Katie:** Eventually, Hattie lost all but two parcels of land, which were valued at less than \$900 at the time of her death. The city repossessed the rest of her land and the buildings on them. The legal campaign she mounted with her attorney J.B. Woodward made no difference.

**Katie:** One of the buildings Hattie lost was known as Mosher's Folly. Paul said his research drummed up conflicting reports about which building that was. It could've been the public market or the tea house. At any rate, it was a building that was never completed.

**Paul 19:29** - It was actually it was almost like a building on stilts. It was three stories high.

**Katie:** That building was eventually nicknamed Mosher's Folly. When Hattie was evicted from her house, she lived in Mosher's Folly for a spell.

**Paul 21:26** - And then when it when she lost it and it got auctioned off for again, for the property taxes and there was a new owner. From what I read, he allowed her to stay there. And as I believe for us, a certain amount of times, she did live in the basement in that. And then eventually, I think there was a new owner of that building and she couldn't stay there anymore.

**Katie:** After that, Paul said she was allowed to stay rent free in a room that was south of the post office building on Central and Fillmore. Once one of Phoenix's richest denizens, by 1940, Hattie would be found roaming the streets of downtown in tennis shoes and outdated ball gowns. There are reports of her rummaging through garbage bins for scraps. That's when Carole saw her as a child.

\*music begins\*\*

**Carole:** [00:02:35] My main memory is we were walking down the street and my grandmother nudged my mother and said, there's Hattie. [00:02:44][9.7]

**Katie:** Carole said she was around four or five years old at the time, meaning it was around 1941 or 1942 when she bumped into Hattie. Hattie was wearing a ball gown, walking past stores like Kristy's and Woolworths downtown.

**Carole:** [00:02:51] And what I remember most, what caught my attention. (Laughter) Bless her soul. She had on bright red lipstick and she was really wrinkled and the lipstick had bled. Of course, all over her mouth. It was kind of a mess. And that's what I saw about Hattie.

[00:03:07][16.2]

**Katie:** Hattie Mosher died on November 1, 1945. The front page story of her death said she had collapsed four days earlier from an acute intestinal disorder. She gave her age as 62, but it was likely that she was older, possibly in her 80s. The story about her death said she was survived only by her sister-in-law. It did not mention anything about Hattie's granddaughter. Items such as her mementos from the years she spent in Germany with her daughter were auctioned off.

(pause -- let music swell)

**Katie:** Hattie Mosher's legacy would fade over the decades. She was remembered somewhat by locals like Carole. In 1973, there was a Ramada inn on First Street and Polk, land that had once belonged to Hattie. The owner named the restaurant at the hotel "Hattie Mosher's" in honor of her. But the restaurant eventually closed. The last time I saw it referenced in our archives was in 1981.

\*music fades\*

**Katie:** There are a few ways we can remember Hattie Mosher's story today. For Carole, it's a sad story.

**Carole:** [00:06:02] Well, it to me is sad. She just lost everything because she just decided she wasn't going to pay taxes. And if it was sad, it was a sad demise of a little princess that ended up. Like, sad and not demented, but lost, just lost. [00:06:26][24.3]

**Katie:** Paul agrees that it's a sad story. There's no doubting that. But there are elements of good to it as well.

**Paul 26:41** - I think she probably was stubborn to a fault, and a lot of that got her into trouble. I do think she was ahead of her time in a lot of ways.

**Katie:** And this is the assessment that I like to focus on. I was drawn to the story of Hattie Mosher because of her pioneering spirit. She wasn't afraid to make waves, whether that meant riding a bike when it was undignified for a woman to do so. Or working as a reporter. Or running for office just a decade after women in Arizona were allowed to vote. Hattie suffered losses like the rest of us. Those losses would shape her later years. But she certainly had a wild time in the beginning. And for better or worse, she had it on her own terms.

\*theme music comes in\*

**Katie:** So, that's the story of Hattie Mosher -- her life, her downfall and her legacy. Kaila, you grew up in Phoenix. Had you ever heard of Hattie Mosher?

**Kaila:** I had not!

**Kaila:** Well Katie, thanks so much for sharing that story with us. Listeners, let us know if there's anyone else in Phoenix's history who you'd like to hear more about. We love falling down rabbit holes in our archives, so we're glad to look into those stories. You can let us know your questions at [valley 101 podcast dot azcentral dot com](http://valley101podcast.com). Or you can find us on Twitter at [valley 101 pod](https://twitter.com/valley101pod).

**Kaila:** If you haven't done so yet, be sure to subscribe and rate our show on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts.

**Kaila:** That's all for today. I'm Kaila White, signing off until next week.