

# Beulah Louise Henry Biography

## Beulah Louise Henry

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# Biography

Known as the "Lady Edison" of the 1930s, Henry, 1887- is famous for holding fifty-two patents. A native of Memphis, Tennessee, and a descendant of colonial hero Patrick Henry (1736-1799), she moved to New York City in 1919. Her prolific inventiveness is especially intriguing in the face of Henry's condition: a psychological disorder known as synesthesia, a dysfunction whereby sound is perceived as color, or taste as touch. She never quite understood how she made the complex mechanical drawings for her inventions and attributed her ability to create mechanical contraptions while knowing nothing about mechanics to the same "inner vision" that caused her to see a color and shape for each note of the musical scale. Her first profitable invention was an umbrella with snap-on cloth cover that allowed the owner to coordinate the umbrella with clothing. This success earned her enough money to employ a staff of mechanics in her laboratory. After the snap-on umbrella came numerous inventions, among them the photograph, which made four typewritten copies without carbon paper, the bobbinless sewing machine, the "Dolly Dip" sponge containing soap and usually used to clean glasses, and the "Miss Illusion" doll, whose eyes and hair changed color.