

The Elizabeth V. Babcock Scholarship Fund

Elizabeth V. Johnson, a long-time resident of Rochester, was married to Charles C. Babcock in 1920. Their wedding was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J.D. Holman, where Elizabeth was likely doing housework in exchange for room and board while going to school. She attended Rochester High School and Rochester Normal University. Many residents of Rochester recall how fond people were of both Elizabeth and Charles.

Charles had been the sales manager of Finneren's Motor Sales Company, and he also served as the clerk in Sol Allman's clothing store. The Finneren agency was later renamed Charles O. Babcock Motor Sales and Fulton County Motor. "I remember stopping in there to have someone look at my car," a Rochester resident recalled. "They were wonderful." Another resident remembered seeing the company's large sign and feeling a sense of hometown pride.

The business was later sold in 1927 when Elizabeth and Charles moved to Indianapolis. There, Charles operated the Thirtieth and Central Sales Company. While in Indianapolis, the couple also attended the tenth running of the Indianapolis 500.

Evidence of Charles' new firm's success was reported in the News Sentinel when the dealership was awarded a state contract in 1929 for 73 vehicles—36 business coupes, 31 delivery pick-up trucks, and six deluxe delivery trucks, a major order in a time of economic hardship.

The firm weathered the Great Depression and operated throughout World War II. "It seems like Charlie received a dollar a year for helping the government," a family member recalled, indicating he may have been one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Dollar-a-Year Men.

Charles retired from the automotive firm in 1953 and devoted much of his time and attention to his farm in Marion County. He and his wife frequently visited Elizabeth's cousin, Alida Lease, and Alida's husband, H.J.

"They always had a new car," the Leases' son, Howard, recalled about Elizabeth and Charles. "The four of them made a lot of trips together."

"They always liked cars," friends and relatives of the Babcocks remembered. They also enjoyed traveling and playing bridge.

In 1963, Charles passed away after a long illness. Elizabeth continued to reside in the Indianapolis area until 1971, when she moved back to Rochester. She passed away a year later. Both Charles and Elizabeth were buried in Rochester's I.O.O.F. Cemetery.

H.J. had suggested to Elizabeth that she consider establishing a scholarship fund that would help high school graduates obtain a college education, which they may not otherwise have the opportunity to do. Elizabeth understood the financial difficulties that prevented many students from pursuing a college degree. Her family hadn't been very wealthy, and she had to work in order to get through school.

The Elizabeth V. Babcock Scholarship Fund was established in 1974. Through the scholarship, the couple's legacy lives on in the Rochester community. The scholarship gives financial assistance to Rochester High School graduates who have shown "promise, initiative, and achievement as a student" and who have been of service to the school or the community. Through this scholarship, Elizabeth will benefit students in their pursuit of a college education forever.