

The Dr. Russell L. & Pauline Whittenberger Sparks Memorial Scholarship

Dr. Russell Sparks & Mrs. Pauline Whittenberger Sparks spent most of their lives in the Rochester area, where Dr. Sparks practiced dentistry for around 45 years. His office was on Main Street across from the Courthouse. Mrs. Sparks assisted in the office as nurse and bookkeeper. They lived in a cottage on Lake Manitou, which is still owned by their family.



Pauline traced her Fulton County heritage back to 1836, when her grandfather, Joseph Whittenberger, and her great-grandfather, William Whittenberger, were among the first settlers in Akron. Her father, John Whittenberger, was born on a farm outside of Akron, and for many years, he ran a flour mill in Rochester, where Pauline was born in 1901.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Russell's father, Ed Sparks, was the Rochester station agent for the Erie Railroad. Ed and Russell were members of the Masonic Order in Rochester, and both were 33rd degree Masons. Russell's mother, Kenny Sparks, lived in Rochester for many years after her husband's death in 1938, and she had a host of friends throughout Fulton County.

Pauline & Russell both attended college, and they had a wide range of intellectual interests. They loved books and were founding members of the Great Books Discussion Group, which was started in Rochester shortly after World War II. They were also founding members of the Fulton County Historical Society. Both attended the Methodist Church, where Pauline served as Superintendent of the Sunday School and directed youth dramatic productions.

Russell followed Rochester High School sports and counseled many young people, who were his patients and often sought his advice. Over the years, Russell and Pauline became mentors to numerous young people outside of their own immediate family. Both influenced students by encouraging them to pursue a college education..

They believed that a liberal arts education is the key to a well-rounded and satisfying intellectual and spiritual life that transcends the choice of profession or trade.

Russell passed away in 1985. Pauline passed away five years later. Shortly before her passing, Pauline requested that part of their estate be used to fund scholarships for graduates of Rochester High School, who were planning to obtain a collegiate liberal arts education. Her two sons then formed the Sparks Trust in memory of their parents.

In December of 2005, the Dr. Russell L. and Pauline Whittenberger Sparks Memorial Scholarship Fund was established. The purpose of the scholarship is to support an outstanding Rochester High School graduate who is planning to pursue a degree in arts and sciences at an accredited four-year college.