Dwight and Lavina Bancroft Scholarships

The Dwight and Lavina Bancroft Scholarships were established in 1986 by Lavina Bancroft in memory of her recently deceased husband. Since the Bancrofts’ primary interests were music and accounting, Lavina wanted to limit the scholarship to students within these fields of study. Lavina was born and lived her entire life in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties and wanted to make sure that only dedicated students would receive this award. She asked that the scholarship be awarded to students at the junior or senior level, and that a student may only be awarded twice.

Dwight Bancroft was born in Minnesota and was provided with musical instruments by his family at an early age. He was very talented and began playing professionally with big names in the music world such as John Philip Sousa, Eddie Peabody, Lawrence Welk, and many others.

Lavina Bancroft was born in Smith River and moved to Eureka as a child. While still in high school, she became the sole support of her family. Determined to gain further education, Lavina spoke with the owner of a local business school, Mr. Craddock. She requested that he defer tuition until after she got a job, allowing her to enroll and study bookkeeping. Mr. Craddock agreed, and within two years Lavina was teaching some of the bookkeeping classes. She worked under a number of local firms as a bookkeeper before taking a job under an accountant. Lavina left to open her own business in 1934 and within six weeks she had opened an office, hired three employees and had a substantial amount of work. She went on to take the state accountancy exam, passed, and became one of the few women in California at the time to become a public accountant.

Dwight, who had planned to open a photo shop, became interested in accounting and began to assist Lavina in her practice. With Lavina’s guidance, Dwight also passed the state accountancy exam and became a public accountant as well.

Lavina and Dwight ran their bookkeeping business, Bancroft Public Accountants, together until Dwight’s passing in the late 1970s. Lavina continued on until 1990, completing some 56 years of business. The Bancrofts had no children, but employed their niece Lois at their business when she was sixteen; she continued working there until the business closed.

Lavina began the Dwight and Lavina Bancroft Scholarships program with a direct grant through the Humboldt Area Foundation. The grant’s success prompted Lavina to begin making donations to build the principal amount of the scholarships and to allow them to gain funds with the resulting earned interest. Over the years, a perpetual scholarship was established through the Humboldt Area Foundation investing funds and Humboldt State University selecting scholars. When Lavina passed away in 1995, the funds increased by $200,000. Before her death, she established that more than $1,000,000 would be added to the funds.