

Walter and Pauline Castner Memorial Scholarship announced

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By Ruth Hanson

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The first of many, many Theodosia Castner Memorial Scholarships will be presented to a Byron High School graduate at Commencement Exercises on May 25, 2007.

The \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded to a student who has attended Byron High School for at least three years and who is interested in pursuing higher education but who has limited means.

"The creation of the Walter and Pauline Castner Scholarship is a wonderful legacy to honor Walter's mother, Theodosia," Dr. Wendy Shannon, Superintendent of Byron Public Schools, said. "Leaving a legacy such as this is about doing something worthwhile for others to make this world a better place. Walter's mother was a teacher in many country schools in Kalmar Township and the area in the late 1800's and early 1900's. This very generous scholarship will be awarded each year to a Byron High School graduate to pursue a post secondary degree in an agricultural related field or elementary or secondary education."

Theodosia Castner was born on the farm two miles north of Byron, just north of where Byron High School stands today. She lived her entire life on that hill.

"Dosia was a special person to both Walter and me," Pauline said. "Everyone admired and loved her. She taught school for a good 40 years. There were few area families in the late 1800s and early 1900s who didn't have someone taught by her."

After she stopped teaching, she took in foster children, about 12 over the years. One child named Dwight Carlson stayed on and became a hired man on the Castner farm. He died there in 2002.

Dosia lived to be 97 years old and died in 1970.

"Farming and teaching were her life," Pauline said. "Walter and I are creating this scholarship fund to honor her memory."

The scholarship fund will be managed by the Rochester Area Foundation under the umbrella of the Byron School District Fund for Excellence, so that it will grow to keep up with inflation.

The Castner roots go deep into Byron history. His grandparents were Robert Wier Telford of County Antrim in Ireland and Mary Shields Telford of Belvedere, Illinois. He took the farm as a government claim, exercising his rights as a soldier of the Civil War. He had come to the Byron area in 1856 and then went into the service before filing for the land.

Walt's parents, Dosia and Arthur Castner, were married in 1910 in Red Wing.

Walter Castner was born in Beech, North Dakota, in 1912, where his parents were homesteading. After about three years of no rain, they came back to the home farm north of Byron. Walt graduated from Byron High School in 1930. He sold Federal Crop Insurance for many years.

Pauline was born in Mantorville and graduated from high school there. She worked in several jobs before going to Washington, DC, where she worked for the FBI as a fingerprint classifier from 1942-1945 during World War II. She came back to the Byron area and worked for 33 years in the ophthalmology department at the Mayo Clinic.

Walt and Pauline were married in 1953. They continued to live on the farm on the hill north of Byron where they raised crops and horses until their health made it too much for them. He died in March of 2006. Pauline lives in Shorewood Commons in Rochester.