

THE DORA WHEELER SCHOLARSHIP

In May of 1960 the first PTA Council scholarships under the name *Dora Wheeler* were presented, and have continued for the past forty-four years. Over that span, memories have become vague as to who, exactly, *was* Dora Wheeler .

Dora Rumsey Wheeler was born in Chicago, August 8, 1860, married Samuel H. Wheeler, a Bridgeport industrialist, and bore three children: a son, Nathaniel, and two daughters, Ellen, and a Mrs. William Finney. At the time of her death, September 1, 1959, at age 99, she was living at 415 Old Post Road. Fairfield, with her daughter Ellen.

Ellen Wheeler was the first president of the Fairfield Visiting Nurses Association (now known as United Home Care). In 1918, upon leaving that association to enter training for war nursing, Ellen was succeeded by her mother, Dora, who served in that position for fifteen years.

Dora Wheeler is also credited as being one of the founders of Fairfield Audubon with Mabel Osgood Wright.

In 1909 Superintendent of schools William Wheatley extended the first official invitation welcoming parents and citizens into the Fairfield public school system. In his 1913/14 Annual Report of the Town School Committee Wheatley commended parental involvement, particularly that of Samuel & Dora Wheeler in connection with the construction of a "boardwalk" at one of the Fairfield schools, as well as the construction of a new twelve--room Sherman School. In 1914, fifty mothers and teachers responded to Dora Wheeler's invitation to form an organization in the interests of child welfare -and we look upon that action as the beginning of PTA in Fairfield.

With that background it is not surprising that, in October of 1959, a month after Dora's death, PTA Council renamed its scholarship fund in her honor. In February of 1960, Ellen Wheeler presented a \$250 donation to the Fund and in May of that year the first four Dora Wheeler Scholarships were awarded to Jane Brunsko and Noreen Bartholomew, graduating seniors at Warde and Ludlowe, respectively, and to Andrew Kosh and Linda Ratkin, Fairfield students attending the New Britain State Teachers College, who were deemed to be in need of financial assistance.

Although accurate records are missing for eleven years scattered across the life of this Fund to date approximately over 100 Wheeler scholarships have been awarded by PTA Council with funds, in excess of \$125,000, derived principally from the various Fairfield PTA units. Certainly all PTA units can be proud of their Involvement with this scholarship fund and take satisfaction in knowing that hard earned monies were - and will continue to be - well spent to assist worthy students in furthering their educational goals.