

# Lynne Doti: Pioneer in Business and Economic History

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*Legendary entrepreneur Steve Jobs once noted, “people say you have to have a lot of passion for what you’re doing and it’s totally true. And the reason is because it’s so hard that if you don’t, any rational person would give up. It’s really hard. And you have to do it over a sustained period of time” (Interview with Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, 2007).*

To anyone who has closely observed Dr. Lynne Doti over the years, one thing is glaringly obvious: she has an amazing and enduring passion for her work. Less obvious is the breadth of what Lynne Doti actually does, and indeed, if she defines it as “work.” Many familiar with her fine scholarship and teaching may be unfamiliar with Doti’s numerous other contributions, such as her shepherding the growth of the Economic and Business History Society (EBHS). In her successful endeavor to help the EBHS develop into a major, well-respected academic organization, Lynne Doti has been a wise entrepreneur, exerting leadership when necessary, teaching others to take the reins, and with ceaseless energy, tackling new projects, like editing the Society’s peer-reviewed journal *Essays in Economic and Business History* (EEBH). In everything Doti does, she leaves a legacy of strength, expansion, and stability. She has helped immeasurably to grow not just the EBHS, but also the field of business and economic history. Undoubtedly, she would make a remarkable CEO of a start-up company, as she sees enormous potential in fledgling endeavors and provides concrete paths forward to achieve those ambitious visions. A lover of the history of the American West (and a major contributor to our understanding of it), Doti has the can-do spirit of the many pioneers who ventured into uncharted territories.

For Lynne Doti, one of those new territories she began exploring years ago was the EBHS. In 1975, the EBHS debuted as a small professional organization dedicated to interdisciplinary scholarship in the evolving fields of business history and economic history. At the time of EBHS’ founding, Doti was a bright young scholar who was just three years away from obtaining her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Riverside. Quickly becoming one of the foremost experts in the world on banking in the American West, Doti would go on to become a dynamic force that greatly enriched the Society. In many ways, and for decades, Doti has tirelessly helped shape

the EBHS into a leading international organization, with members located throughout the United States, Europe, Canada, and Asia.

Doti exudes a passion for scholarship, not only her own, but also as a champion for others. She is richly interested in fellow members' research projects, even when their topics are far removed from her own areas of inquiry. She often perceives areas of research overlap that others have overlooked, thereby spawning intriguing interdisciplinary connections. She is an unfailingly generous scholar, willing to share her insights and with a capacity to bring people together who may have never connected if it were not for her kind intercessions. One can easily see why she excels in the classroom. Lynne Doti is deeply interested in people and helping them become their best selves. For countless scholars at the EBHS and elsewhere, Doti has provided sage advice and much-needed encouragement at various stages of their careers.

Leading through her own example, Doti also has stressed the importance of the EBHS being friendly and welcoming to everyone. Years before nation-wide discussions of "inclusiveness" and "diversity," Lynne Doti in her own effective and warm way helped provide an atmosphere that was conducive to EBHS treasuring and promoting these values. She has a particular affinity and talent for mentoring emerging scholars. Recalling their first attendance at an EBHS conference, many members relate the common experience of being initially alone and then having Doti approach them and introduce herself. Lynne would then effortlessly begin to introduce the new person to other people, discerning commonalities and building bridges. For young Ph.D.s and Ph.D. students, she would make extra effort not only to attend their presentations (often their first scholarly talk), but also to provide useful and positive feedback afterwards. If the session occurred before a lunch or dinner break, she would also unfailingly make an effort to invite them along to join a group for a meal.

Notably, in her conversations, Lynne Doti rarely ever talks about her own projects or recent string of impressive accomplishments; rather, she focuses on other people. One might not initially guess one was interacting with someone as widely published as she. Easily approachable and affable, Doti is a formidable scholar, with numerous thoughtful books and engaging articles to her credit. At the latest EBHS conference in Montreal, Doti had recently finished her book, *Financing Real Estate in California: Missions to Subprime Mortgages* (Doti, 2016), yet she spoke little of it. Nor is she likely to tell people that *American Entrepreneur*, which she co-authored (Schweikart & Doti, 2009), has been translated into multiple languages. Doti has been prolific, writing a half-dozen books and too many articles to mention, yet has remained one of the most humble, down-to-earth individuals in academia today.

In her actions, Lynne Doti is guided by a deep sense of compassion for others. Her own early experiences as one of the few women in the business history field may have helped hone that sense of empathy for young colleagues seeking to feel included and nurtured. Ed Perkins, emeritus professor at the University of Southern California and one of the original founders of the EBHS, recalled that "back in those early days, there were few women who attended the annual meetings of either the EBHS or the Business History Conference. Lynne was, in a sense, one of the pioneers. And she was a great role model for other young women with similar career aspirations." Others concur. Larry Malone, professor at Hartwick College who served as Chair of the EBHS' Board of

Trustees for many years, recalled that Lynne Doti's "presence and advocacy for women has been consistent since her earliest days." Collaborating with the Board, she worked hard to foster more women joining the organization and remaining active within it. Interestingly, in her inclusive approach, Lynne avoided treating women (or any other group) as "special" or different. Many members fondly relate how she made them feel valued as a person and as a scholar, not because of any particular attribute like gender that they possessed.

Lynne is the longest-serving trustee of the EBHS, and has served in several leadership roles. She is the only person (male or female) to have been president of the organization twice (1992-1993, 2011-2012). At critical junctures in the organization's history, she helped aim the EBHS in fruitful directions, providing judicious counsel. For example, at the Anaheim, California meeting she organized, she strongly advocated for locating the association's meetings in diverse geographical areas, including abroad. Doti possessed a vision for what the EBHS could become, and she was bold enough to articulate and help execute that plan. Today, the organization is more than four decades old, and in many ways, it is stronger and more vibrant than ever before, due to Doti's patient guidance over the years.

Lynne Doti has continually expanded her repertoire of contributions to EBHS, responding to various organizational needs as they materialized. Notably, in addition to serving as president, she edited the association's peer-reviewed journal, *Essays in Economic & Business History* for several years. In many ways, Doti's willingness to take on this large task reflects her fundamental desire to give back. Prior to assuming the editorship, Doti had been a frequent contributor to the journal. Among the articles she authored for EEBH were "Nationwide Branching: Some Lessons from California" (Doti, 1991), "The Effect of Regulation on California Banking, 1878-1929" (Doti & Runyon, 1996), and "An International Survey of Free Banking Periods: US, California, Australia, Switzerland and Scotland" with David Cassell (Doti & Cassell, 1997). In writing these articles, she interacted with the various dedicated editors of EEBH, such as Ed Perkins and Williams Childs. For people who know Lynne Doti, it is no surprise that when the organization sought her to become the next editor, she accepted the role and proceeded with gusto to elevate the quality of the journal even further. In three short years, she reconceptualized the journal in key ways, and, in her characteristic way, left a blueprint for the succeeding editor (this author) to follow. It is fascinating to observe this entrepreneur at work; one cannot help but marvel at some of the habits of this remarkably effective person.

Delivering a commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005, Steve Jobs gave the wonderful advice to the young graduates there to "Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish. I have always wished that for myself. And now . . . I wish that for you." Always hungry for knowledge and eager to tackle new projects, Lynne Doti embodies that advice. Part of her wisdom resides in her humble recognition of the vast possibilities out there for entrepreneurs of all stripes, academics and practitioners alike, to tackle if they so dare. Lynne Doti's mentorship has inspired many individuals over the years to do precisely that, and thus, her accomplishments are inextricably linked with the successes of all of the lives she has so powerfully touched.

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