

Part I

Section 1

Rotary: Its Origin and Evolution

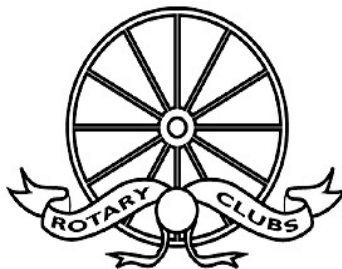


Paul Harris
Founder of Rotary

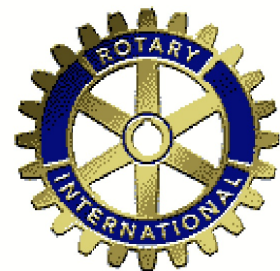
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION



1905



1915



1920-Present

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Chicago Lawyer Paul Harris Founded Rotary in 1905

Crime and corruption were an accepted fact of life in Chicago in the early part of the century and respectable businessmen were concerned about being able to survive the sorry circumstances.

But in the midst of the problems, a campaign was taking place to improve the quality of civic life. Some businessmen were resolved to band together to help fight complacency and point Chicago in a new direction.

According to Page 27 in Rotary's "Adventure in Service," "It is conceivable that Rotary might have been born under sunnier skies in a climate more equable, but there are many who contend that there could have been no more favorable birthplace for Rotary than in paradoxical Chicago. The motto 'I Will' was not only engraved on Chicago's municipal shield, it was also emblazoned upon the hearts of the farseeing men and women of this midwestern melting pot

The first Rotary meeting was held in a small, poorly lighted business office with a desk and three or four chairs, a coat rack, a picture or two, and an engineering chart on the wall.

The office was that of Gus Loehr, a mining engineer. He was joined by Hiram Shorey, a merchant tailor; Silvester Schiele, a coal dealer, and Paul Harris, an attorney.

It was Harris who weeks earlier had suggested starting a new club.

Harris told the others he thought it would be appropriate if a group of Chicago businessmen could meet on a regular basis to get better acquainted.

The date of that first meeting: Feb. 23, 1905.

Harris challenged his friends to dream their small dream. But none could have imagined the impact their dream would have on mankind before the end of the 20th Century.

Others soon joined the original four for informal meetings. They adopted a basic set of rules and established the Rotary Club of Chicago, known today as Rotary One.

"As with all human things, there were mixed objectives and ideas in this first Rotary group," it was written in Adventure in Service. "There was spirited discussion, and with the admitted hope that such a grouping would help the members get new business.

The members decided that the early meeting would be held in a rotating basis at their places of business.

And that is how the name "Rotary" came to pass.

In order to broaden their scope of acquaintances and get representatives from more new businesses to join, the members agreed to restrict members to one from each business or profession. This, they thought, would lessen the possibility of dissension within the ranks.

Also agreed was that Rotary would follow a path of service to the community.

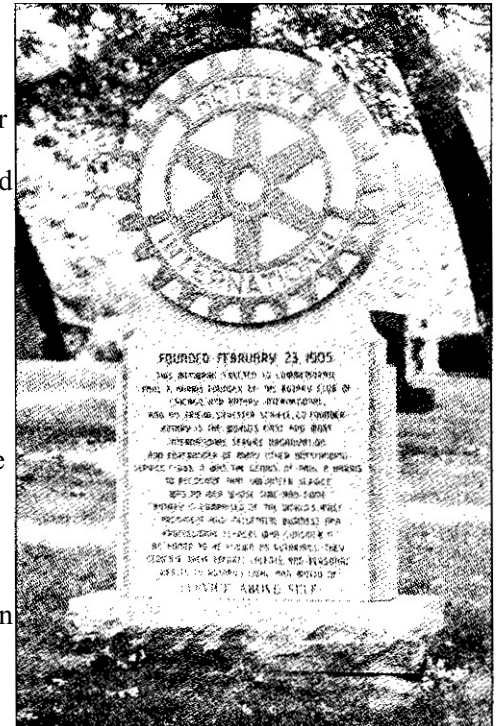
"Each of us would be having some thought for the welfare of the other fellow," Schiele said.

In 1907, the club led a city campaign to install public comfort stations in Chicago City Hall. This became the first service project in Rotary history, and the course of Rotary was set.

Harris said this of the early members: "They were friendly and congenial, and each represented a recognized and honorable vocation different from that of the others. They had been selected without regard to religious, racial or political differences. The group included members of American, German, Swedish, and Irish ancestry, and representatives of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths, all products of the American melting pot, and, in that respect, fitting progenitors of the international order which they were to bring into being."

The premise of agreement and acceptance of a man as a man instead of as a member of a specific group became the backbone of Rotary history.

Harry Ruggles, one of the first Rotarians, was a printer with a talent and love for music. Ruggles is credited with



The, Paul Harris Memorial erected at the burial site of Paul Harris and Silvester Schiele in the Mt. Hope Cemetery, near Blue Island, Illinois to commemorate the founding of Rotary-

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introducing one of the hallmarks of Rotary fellowship, club singing.

One of the first orders of business was a club emblem. One member suggested a locomotive drive wheel, another a buggy wheel, which was adopted. The 1912 convention approved the gear wheel as the basic design, and in '22 the present wheel, with 24 cogs, six spokes and a keyway, was adopted. The wheel has significant meaning: Modern society can't exist without gear wheels, which are the mechanisms of driving force, transmission of power, and work.

In 1908, Chesley R. (Ches) Perry, a staff member at Chicago Library, joined the club. When Paul Harris was elected the first president of Rotary International in 1910, Perry became the charter secretary. He was highly active at the international level until his retirement in '42, and at the '54 R.I. convention in Seattle, Wash. he was offered the post of secretary emeritus. But he declined, saying that he wanted to remain "just one of the members" of his own Rotary club.

"If I can in truth be called the architect," Paul Harris once said, "Ches can with equal truth be called the builder of Rotary International."

Rotary soon began to grow. The second club was formed in San Francisco in 1908, followed by Oakland, across the bay, in 1909. There were 16 clubs dotting the United States by 1910. When the first convention was held in Chicago in 1910 to organize "The National Association of Rotary Clubs," about 1,500 members attended. Just two years later 50 clubs were represented at Duluth, Minn. and there were delegates from Winnipeg. Hence, the organization became international. In 1911, Rotary crossed the Atlantic to Ireland and Great Britain. It was at this convention that Frank Collins, president of the Minneapolis Rotary, coined the phrase, "Service About Self."

In 1912 Rotary became the "International Association of Rotary Clubs." Also at the '12 gathering, the first model constitution and by-laws were approved with objects covering promoting the worthiness of all legitimate occupations; encouragement of high ethical standards; increasing efficiency by exchanging ideas; promoting acquaintance; and quickening the interest of members in public welfare and civic development.

The "Rotary Code of Ethics" was introduced in 1913 at the Buffalo convention and was adopted a year later in San Francisco, marking the major turning point from business to the principles of service and thoughtfulness to others.

The 1,000 club was chartered in 1921, same year that Edinburgh, Scotland hosted the first international convention held outside the United States. Born at this gathering was a new standard club constitution and the title which still stands today, "Rotary International." The final document was presented at the 1922 convention in Los Angeles and was approved as the basic structure of Rotary.

The convention urged clubs to appoint a classifications committee.

There were six objects of Rotary until 1935 when just four were adopted at the Mexico City Convention. In '51, R.I. agreed that Rotary had only one object with four parts: Club, vocational, community, and international.

After its humble beginnings on Dearborn St. in Chicago, Rotary spread around the world in its first 50 years, and continues to grow at a remarkable rate today.

When Rotary held its 50th anniversary convention in Chicago in 1955, it also dedicated a new world headquarters building. In 1920, President Albert S. Adams told the Atlantic City convention assemblage he envisioned the day Rotary would have its own home.

"It sounds like a dream, doesn't it?" Adams said. "But it can be done."

Unfortunately, Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary, died suddenly on Jan. 27, 1947, seven years before Rotary headquarters was finished.

At the age of three, Harris and his brother Cecil were sent by their father to live with their grandparents, Howard and Pamela Harris, in Wallingford, Vt.

For about 18 years, Paul lived with his grandparents and learned perseverance and thriftiness. They believed in higher education, and so did he. Harris received his education at Princeton University.

When Paul's grandfather died, he had a conversation with his grandmother:

"Paul, I wonder at times if you realize how much you meant to Pa. At times, it used to seem to him that his life had been a failure...and then you came to us quite providentially and Pa fastened all his hopes on you. Paul, you must not fail him. Work hard and live honorably for your grandfather's sake."

Many years later, Paul Harris wrote this:

"When you look back over a long period of years, much which once seemed important fades into insignificance, while other things grow into such commanding importance that one may say in truth, 'Nothing else matters.'"

"Sacrifice, devotion, honor, truth, sincerity, love -- these are the homely virtues characteristic of good, old-fashioned homes."

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It was on a day in April, 1919, that I first met Paul P. Harris. For 15 years I had been practicing law in Chicago, and on this spring day I had decided to find new office quarters for myself. Learning that a lawyer named Harris had some space to rent in his suite on the tenth floor of the First National Bank Building, I called upon him. We talked briefly and inspected the vacant office. In a matter of minutes I had signed a lease. Thus began a friendship, and soon a law partnership, which lasted until Paul's death in 1947.

There are thousands of men and women around the earth who knew Paul Harris longer and perhaps better than I did, but it was my privilege to know him in his professional, work-a-day role. It has often seemed to me that this aspect of his life had little emphasis in all that has been written about him -- surprisingly little when one considers that the entire basis of our movement, which he, founded, is vocational.

Paul was a good lawyer, a thorough, painstaking, conscientious lawyer -- a lawyer who held that "the practice of law is a trust relationship of the highest possible order." While he freely acknowledged that "no profession has been more dishonored by its members, it is also true that no profession has been more honored."

Because thousands will read these pages who know little of Rotary and perhaps nothing of its founder, I shall try to tell the Paul Harris story briefly, and then resume my narrative about Paul the lawyer.

Paul was born in Racine, Wisconsin on April 19, 1868, but when he was still a small child his parents took him to Wallingford, Vt. There his paternal grandparents took over his rearing. In the setting of the beautiful Green Mountains and the simple, prudent, religious life of New England, he attended grammar school, several academies, and the University of Vermont. After two years at that university and a year at Princeton, Paul enrolled in the law department of Iowa State University, and received the degree of LL.B. in 1891.

Then Paul did a daring and significant thing. Formally schooled, he now wanted to see the world and learn about people as they are. Thus he earmarked the next five years of his life for this pursuit. He had no money; he was on his own. He reported for a newspaper; taught school; and packed raisins in California he acted in a stock company and herded cattle in Colorado; he sold marble and worked as a hotel clerk in Florida, he made trips to Europe as a stock boy on cattle boats and later traveled commercially in Continental Europe, Britain, and Ireland. In due course the five allotted years ended and in March, 1896, Paul obtained a license to practice law in Illinois and hung up his shingle in Chicago.

Paul the lawyer? There is no great drama in the story. Paul was a quiet, exacting, scrupulously honest lawyer who as head of our law firm conducted a serene and happy office. Never in the 28 years of our association was a word spoken in anger by anyone to anyone of our office family. Paul set this standard. Paul wanted no criminal cases, no domestic quarrels, no trial work. Rather he chose the fields of corporate, real estate, and probate law, and in them he led the firm of Harris, Reinhardt, and Bebb to a very fair reputation in Chicago. Incidentally, that was Paul's Rotary classification; "Lawyer, Corporation, Real Estate, and Probate," and, as Paul's associate or additional active member, I held the same classification. Originally it had been "General Law," but Paul felt this did not exactly represent the truth and in the early '20's suggested that our club make the change.

Paul was, at all times, very patient with the young men who came to our firm directly from law school. His sincerity and kindness would not permit him to be otherwise, but he did insist that no person had any right to practice law unless he was prepared to give every legal matter submitted to him the most conscientious preparation and attention; he would never countenance the slightest neglect.

Proud of his profession, Paul took a deep interest in upholding and improving it. He was a member of the American Bar Association. Joining the Chicago Bar Association in 1906, he served on its committees. Through craft assemblies of lawyers at Rotary Conventions from 1911 onward he worked for higher standards, and in an article in 1912, he gave readers some wise and witty counsel on, "How to Get Your Money's Worth, Even Out of a Lawyer." In 1932 he represented the Chicago Bar Association at the International Congress of Comparative Law at The Hague.

Nothing, however, spells Paul the lawyer quite so clearly as a scholarly and yet very human paper he wrote for the Chicago Bar Association Record in 1927 titled, "The Evolution of Professional Ethics." The whole of it is worth any man's reading; I have room to quote but this bit: "...It seems a far cry to the millennium and yet, there is no prospect more alluring than that held out by the exaltation of vocation as the most available and appropriate means of contributing to social needs—if—the ideal which places service first and compensation second in the sequence of events can become the order of the day—there will be no further need of prisons or almshouses. Is the ideal possible of attainment? Very likely not, within the day of those now living; but there are other generations yet to come..."