

“The thought persisted that I was experiencing only what had happened to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others in the great city... I was sure that there must be many other young men who had come from farms and small villages to establish themselves in Chicago... Why not bring them together? If others were longing for fellowship as I was, something would come of it.”

— Paul Harris, *My Road to Rotary* (1947)

“It is conceivable that Rotary might have been born under sunnier skies, in a climate more equable, and in a city of mental composure; but many will contend that there could have been no more favorable birthplace for a movement like Rotary than paradoxical Chicago, where the battle for civic righteousness was being so fiercely waged.”

— Paul Harris, *This Rotarian Age* (1935)

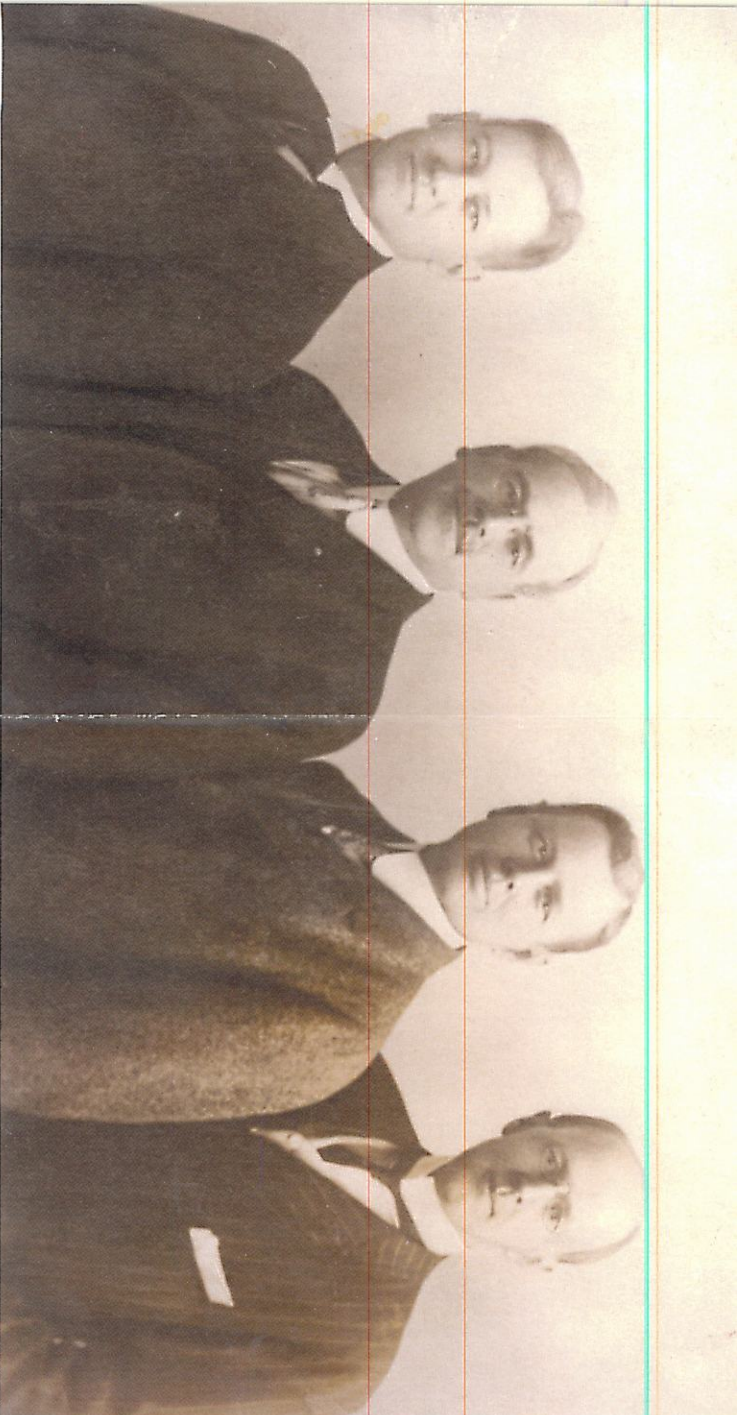


ROOM 711

Cover: The Unity Building (tallest building pictured) and Dearborn Street in Chicago, circa 1906. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Inside (top): The first four Rotarians (from left): mining engineer Gustavus “Gus” Loebl, coal dealer Silvester Schiele, merchant tailor Hiram E. Shorey, and lawyer Paul P. Harris (between 1905 and 1912).

Inside (bottom): Members of the Rotary Club of Chicago unveil a commemorative plaque at the Unity Building in 1955.



Step back in time to the first Rotary meeting

On 23 February 1905, Paul Harris met with three acquaintances in Room 711 of the Unity Building in Chicago. Their purpose: to start a club based on "mutual cooperation and informal friendship."

As they sat talking in Gustavus Loehr's office, these men could hardly have imagined the historic significance of their meeting. For Harris, Loehr, Silvester Schiele, and Hiram Shorey, this club, which they named "Rotary," simply offered a chance to have a little fun while making new business connections.

But that one club soon became dozens, and then hundreds, and finally thousands — with millions of members providing immeasurable

humanitarian and civic service around the world. And as Rotary grew, Rotarians came to fully appreciate the significance of that first meeting in Loehr's office. In 1980, the Rotary Club of Chicago rented Room 711 and gathered period furnishings and fixtures to re-create the look and feel of an early 20th-century office for Rotary's 75th anniversary.

In 1983, 22 Rotarians formed the Paul Harris 711 Club to maintain the room as a Rotary landmark and heritage site. When the Unity Building was scheduled for demolition in 1989, the 711 Club made arrangements to remove the doors, radiator, ceiling lights, and furniture, and temporarily reconstructed the room at other Chicago locations.

In 1992, Rotary International agreed to host a reconstruction of the room at One Rotary

Center. Since the room's dedication in 1994, visitors to Rotary's world headquarters have explored Room 711 and experienced the environment of that historic meeting.

Help preserve the birthplace of Rotary

In addition to its efforts to preserve Room 711, the Paul Harris 711 Club helps to support Rotary's archives, which provides access to Rotary artifacts, photographs, and documents. These materials are used in exhibits, stories, and research that celebrate and share Rotary's rich history.

You can help sustain Room 711 by contributing US\$100 to become a lifetime member of the Paul Harris 711 Club. As a member, you will receive a certificate, lapel pin, and Room 711 souvenir key. Learn more about the club and become a lifetime member at www.room711.org.

The Paul Harris 711 Club is a not-for-profit Illinois corporation.

