

Perry Rotary Club's 100th Anniversary

Here Comes Rotary to Perry:

It's the Roaring Twenties! ... prosperity between the Wars, but with Prohibition thanks to the 18th amendment. This means speakeasys, youth looking for fun, looking to break some rules and F Scott Fitzgerald writing it up during the social storm that brings it all on. The elders, our community minded business leaders, are seeking some sanity in it all, some standards, values, as well as some fellowship. Rotary, started in 1905, has gone international. It has come to the small towns in a big way...and up from the Southern Tier to the Genesee valley...from Elmira to Bath and Hornell, to Dansville and now in December 1923, over our way...to Perry.

The Perry Chamber of Commerce is strong at the time, and business is booming on Main Street. Members are approached by Dansville Rotarians but nearly unanimously agree they are not in need of the extra community commitment that is until Dansville Rotarians come to town "en-force" and "put them through" an intense "Rotary-style" meeting, a total exposure to what Rotary represents. Fun and Fellowship, and a whole lot of volunteer service within the community and world.

In 1923, Rotary had grown to 1500 clubs worldwide, was adding about 300 clubs per year, and had just hit 100,000 total members. Codes of business practices and codes of community service had been adopted for guiding local Rotary clubs. Even in a decade of prosperity, the year of Calvin Coolidge becoming President, communities had people in need...humanitarian, educational, and area development opportunities. Rotary organized relief for earthquake victims in Japan. The cogwheel was adopted as Rotary's emblem. Perry Rotary was formed to meet those needs, fulfill those standards, while having an educational and a relaxing and fun time at their weekly luncheons.

The role of a Rotary Club is something a Chamber of Commerce is not designed or equipped to do. The RC of Perry was organized on December 10, 1923, according to Guy Comfort of the Perry Herald who became one of 19 charter members of Perry's Rotary.

Perry Rotary was initially led by CM Smith of the Citizens Bank as its first President. Frank Roberts was Secretary, Bill as Treasurer, and G.M. Traber as VP. Three directors were Jim Wycoff, Sam Hart, and Dr. Washburn. That organizing meeting / dinner was at the Village Hall, but soon after, the Commodore was completed and meetings were moved to that venue by the end of 1924.

****Don't forget to mark your calendars for the **community celebration of Rotary**...Saturday, June 15, 2024 from Noon to 5 pm at the Village Park, with fun, raffle results, food, music for all. ****

Submitted by Eric S. Parker, February 2024

