

## **HISTORY OF ROTARY IN NORTH CAROLINA**

On a cold February night in 1905, at the encouragement of Rotary Founder Paul Percy Harris, four men met at an office in Chicago in what was to be the first meeting of the organization we know today as Rotary. In 1908 the second Rotary club was formed in San Francisco. By 1910 the 16 Rotary clubs then in existence sent delegates to the first Rotary Convention in Chicago.

North Carolina's first club and the first service club in our fair state, was formed in Raleigh in 1914. Both the Wilmington and Asheville clubs were formed on April 1, 1915 as charter numbers 150 and 152.

Thirty-five of the 48 Rotary Clubs which currently comprise District 7670 in Western North Carolina are direct descendants of the Rotary Club of Asheville.

Rotary also began organizing into divisions in 1912, large geographical areas under the leadership of a Vice President. In 1915 clubs were grouped into Districts under the leadership of a Governor. Originally, clubs in North Carolina were part of District 4, which included all clubs in the southeastern part of the United States, south of Washington, DC and Maryland. In 1918, Rotary clubs in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia were grouped together to form District 7. The phenomenal growth of Rotary throughout the Century has caused numerous District changes, causing them to become more geographically condensed leading to our present District 7670 - 54 clubs in the 22 western most counties of our state.

With the start of World War I in Europe in 1914 and especially with United States entry into the war, Rotary slowed its early growth. Due to a variety of events and circumstances, this growth was especially slow in Western North Carolina, with creation of a second club, the Rotary Club of Hickory, not occurring until 1921. Of the Rotary clubs comprising District 7670, only eight were chartered by the time of the Great Depression in 1929 and only five more were added in the next decade prior to the start of WWII. WNC was limited in population, isolated from the rest of North Carolina due to mountain barriers, and did not support many larger cities (a criterion considered critical in the early formation of Rotary clubs).

This criterion was later to be proven wrong with the formation of numerous very active clubs in small towns throughout our region. Our District has supported numerous service and exchange activities world-wide. Additionally, the clubs that comprise present District 7670 have supplied a disproportionate number of Rotarians who have served in District and International leadership positions, starting in the earliest days of the organization. This includes a Chief Sergeant-at-Arms to the International Conventions in 1920 and 1921, several Directors of Rotary International, two General Secretaries for the Organization and also a President of Rotary International in 1957-58.

Today the Rotary Clubs of District 7670 stand ready to serve Western North Carolina and the world, some 2,500 strong - men and women who represent virtually every community in our District.