

HISTORY  
OF  
ROTARY CLUB  
OF  
ALTOONA, PENNA.

*February 13-1940*

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF ALTOONA

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Pittsburgh, the Rotary Club of Altoona was organized in May 1916. The first meeting for the purpose of forming a club in Altoona was held in the directors' room of the Chamber of Commerce Building on the evening of May 5, 1916. This meeting was called at the direction of Oliver Rothert and those present were: Frank Hastings, E. G. Mateer, E. P. Beam, N. A. Stevens, C. F. Anderson, F. P. McFarland, W. H. Wolfe and G. G. Zeth.

An organization was formed and the following temporary officers were elected to proceed with the necessary details for the formation of a club in Altoona: President, Frank Hastings; Vice-President, W. L. Nicholson; Treasurer, E. P. Beam. Directors chosen were: Frank Hastings, W. W. Blake, G. G. Zeth and N. A. Stevens. It was agreed at this meeting that the regular meetings of the club would be held on the first and third Tuesday of each month with the first regular meeting to be at the Logan House on May 16 at 6:30 P. M.

Invitations were sent to a selected group to attend the meeting on May 16 and in response to this invitation the following men were present and all signified their intention to become charter members of the proposed club:

✓W. H. Wolfe	✓Chas. L. Salyards	✓W. H. Howell
✓Julian Maillard	✓Harry Slutzker	✓F. P. McFarland
✓Frank Hastings	✓C. F. Anderson	✓H. W. Turner
✓George Zeth	✓E. E. Shaeffer	✓A. L. Anderson
N. A. Stevens	✓N. W. Smith	✓J. F. Beck
✓Oliver Rothert	✓S. S. Crane	✓J. F. McWilliams
✓R. J. Fay	✓L. L. Palmer	A. E. Winter
✗Frank Goodfellow	✓J. E. Smith	✗J. C. Nugent
✓W. L. Nicholson	✓W. C. Westfall	✓F. P. Beam
✓H. J. Seeds	✓C. H. Cassidy	✓M. H. Neuwahl
✗O. R. Payne	✓W. W. Blake	✓C. E. Maloy
	✓E. G. Mateer	

At the meeting of May 16, 1916, a charter was applied for and the following permanent officers were elected: President, Frank Hastings; Vice-President, W. W. Blake; Secretary, G. G. Zeth; Treasurer, F. P. Beam. The annual dues of the club were set at \$10.00 and the Logan House was made the place of meeting.

The certificate of membership in the International Association of Rotary Clubs was received in Altoona on July 10, 1916, making the club a member of the third district of which Stuart McFarlan of Pittsburgh, was governor. Records show that the early growth of the club was rapid; so rapid in fact that there is recorded upon the minutes a motion to limit the number of new members to three each month.

During the early years of the club meetings were held twice a month with the exception of July and August when no meetings were held in the city; there was, however, one large summer outing usually at the Spruce Creek Rod and Gun Club, sometime in August. Because

it was felt that the Rotary Club was strictly of a business nature, parties for the ladies were tabooed for several years. Social events among the men were, however, quite frequent. The first recorded evening social gathering was held on election night November 7, 1916 when Oliver Rothert entertained the club members at a complimentary dinner. At this party baby pictures of the members were thrown upon a screen and those present guessed the identity of the pictures. It was not so long, however, until the Rotary-Anns were recognized as important factors in Rotary and ladies parties became a part of each year's program.

It was not until 1919 that the club decided to meet each week. In December of that year weekly meetings were begun; one meeting each month was held in the evening, the others at noon. These evening meetings, while much enjoyed by the club members, were discontinued after several years because of the fact that many of the members lived out of the city and it was difficult for them to attend at that time,

Early in its history the Altoona Rotary Club became interested in community activities. The first activity recorded was a resolution to cooperate with the Board of Education in Americanizing plans for the alien residents of the city. At the same time a committee was appointed to cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce in their efforts to secure work for boys on farms; to assist in this work the club agreed to contribute \$150.00.

This was only a beginning of community projects in which the club assisted for down through the years there extends a long list of worthwhile activities which the club either sponsored or assisted in promoting. Outstanding among the club's projects were these:

- I. Its interest in farm clubs for boys and girls. In November 1917 the Altoona Club entertained, for the first time, 30 boys and girls, prize winners in the farm clubs. W. W. Blake donated prizes and pins and entertained the group at the Strand Theatre where the children saw Mary Pickford in "Rebecca of Sunny Brook Farm".
- II. Its activities in war work from 1917 to 1919. Members of the club assisted in the distribution of information in regard to war income tax; they helped sell Smileage Books, (the club members sold \$2300.00 worth of these books); They canvassed for Liberty Loan Drives and assisted in securing athletic equipment for camps in the United States and overseas.
- III. Its sponsoring of the Boy Scout movement. The Altoona Rotary club may be called the "Daddy of Scouting in Blair County". On November 14, 1919, H. B. Cordon of Harrisburg spoke to the Altoona Rotary Club about Boy Scout Work and the club agreed to supervise the organization of this movement locally. A drive for funds was started and the club members raised \$22,000.00 of a total \$25,000.00 subscribed.
- IV. Its work with Crippled Children. In 1923 an intensive

investigation was made of the need for work among the crippled children of the city and surrounding territory. Many needy cases were discovered and for many years the work with the Cripples Child was the major activity of the club.

V. Its Student Loan Fund. In 1929 a Student Loan Fund was started for the purpose of assisting needy students to complete their higher education. At first this fund was combined with a similar fund of the Altoona High School Alumni Association but in 1932 contributions to this fund were discontinued and since that time the fund has been handled by a committee of club members.

VI. Its institution of a Hobby Show as an annual affair in the city. The first Hobby Show was held in the Y. M. C. A. building in the spring of 1933 and since that time has been an annual event in which thousands have participated.

The interest the club has always shown in worthwhile projects is best shown by the following partial list of contributions made from time to time:

Chamber of Commerce for Farm Boys	150.00
Liberty Bond	100.00
Red Cross	225.00
Camp Equipment	100.00
Bureau of Public Affairs	50.00
Women's Council of National defense	25.00
Victory Arch	100.00
Women's Club	25.00
Memorial Day Expenses	25.00
History of Blair County	25.00
Boy Scouts (solicited)	22,650.00
Pageant at Driving Park	163.97
Halloween Celebration	25.00
Cup at Fair	20.00
Carpenter Fund	500.00
War Savings Fund	112.00
Furnishings for National Armory	192.00
Mercy Hospital Room	250.00
Blair County Flower Show	25.00
Wilmer Stultz celebration	25.00
Development of Playgrounds	500.00
Oranges for Charity	100.00
I. E. F.	50.00
Community Chest	450.00
City Faint Up Campaign	10.00
State Society for Crippled Children	50.00
Tourist Publicity Bureau	10.00

Complete figures for Crippled Children expenses are not available.

Since its organization, the Altoona Rotary Club has been represented at every International Convention and every District Confer-

ence. It has belonged at various times in its history to the 3rd, 5th, 34th and 180th districts of Rotary International.

The Altoona club has entertained two presidents of Rotary International: Harry H. Rodgers and Clinton Anderson; Walter D. Head, the present president of Rotary International visited the Altoona club in February 1939. Altoona has furnished one district governor, Arthur E. Winter, having been governor of the 34th district for the year 1930-31. In May 1935, Harrison Howe, then governor of the 34th district, held his sectional assembly in Altoona and in May 1936, the district conference of the 34th district of Rotary International was held in Altoona with the Altoona Rotarians acting as hosts to the other clubs in the district.

The Altoona Club has sponsored the organization of the Rotary clubs in Roaring Spring and Tyrone and has assisted in organizing several near by clubs.

It may be interesting to note here the names of the presidents of the Altoona club since its organization:

Frank Hastings	1916-1917	Thomas C. Hare	1928-1929
J. Porter McWilliams	1917-1918	Charles E. Maloy	1929-1930
Oliver Rothert	1918-1919	N. Augustine Stevens	1930-1931
John C. Nugent	1919-1920	Robert E. Laramy	1931-1932
Herbert J. Seads	1920-1921	H. Foster Bollinger	1932-1933
Charles E. Torrance	1921-1922	Fred D. Miller	1933-1934
Harry L. Johnston	1922-1923	J. Clyde Cassidy	1934-1935
Charles L. Salyards	1923-1924	Robert F. Hare	1935-1936
J. D. Findley	1924-1925	Levi Gilbert	1936-1937
William F. Sellers	1925-1926	John E. Sheep	1937-1938
Arthur E. Winter	1926-1927	George F. Sheraw	1938-1939
Charles H. Cassidy	1927-1928	J. Floyd Buzzard	1939-1940

There have been four secretaries of the club: G. G. Zeth, Frank F. Hennaman, Harry L. Saul and J. Clyde Cassidy.

The Altoona Rotary club was organized with a membership of thirty-four; its membership today is one hundred active and one honorary members, the club now belongs to the 180th district of Rotary International and Edward M. Elliot of Coudersport, Pa. is present governor of the district. Walter D. Head is the present president of Rotary International.

That Rotary has meant much to the members of the Altoona club is evidenced by the fact that records show that there have been few resignations from the club for reasons other than removal from the city. Despite the fact that Altoona Rotarians suffered serious financial losses during the period of the depression, the club membership did not suffer on that account. There are today seven charter members of the club still active in its work. Rotary in Altoona looks back over its twenty-four years with a feeling of satisfaction; satisfaction that it has justified its existence through its works, and that through its works Altoona Rotarians have been made better citizens of the community. Altoona Rotarians look forward with faith in each other and faith in their community.

